



Paik's Virtual Archive: Time, Change, and Materiality in Media Art

By Hanna B. Hölling

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In *Paik's Virtual Archive*, Hanna B. Hölling contemplates the identity of multimedia artworks by reconsidering the role of conservation in our understanding of what the artwork is and how it functions within and beyond a specific historical moment. In Hölling's discussion of works by Nam June Paik (1932–2006), the hugely influential Korean American artist who is considered the progenitor of video art, she explores the relation between the artworks' concept and material, theories of musical performance and performativity, and the Bergsonian concept of duration, as well as the parts these elements play in the conceptualization of multimedia artworks. Hölling combines her astute assessment of artistic technologies with ideas from art theory, philosophy, and aesthetics to probe questions related to materials and materiality, not just in Paik's work but in contemporary art in general. Ultimately, she proposes that the archive—the physical and virtual realm that encompasses all that is known about an artwork—is the foundation for the identity and continuity of every work of art.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

“Starting with the wincing crash to the ground of one of Paik’s ‘proto–new media’ works, this book meticulously picks up the pieces, and wrestles the conceptual and the material challenges back into shape. A spirited and useful analysis for ensuring a lively future for media art. Decidedly un-dusty.”—Beryl Graham, Professor of New Media Art, University of Sunderland

“This book makes an invaluable contribution to the field of preservation and media art history by using the works of Nam June Paik—one of the pioneers and most important figures of media art—to philosophically and practically rethink approaches to media art conservation. Hölling reconsiders concepts of the conservation object in light of the emergence of digital media art, which has reframed our understanding of (im)materialities, time, change, and the archive. In highly original ways, the book addresses how transformations of multimedia artworks over time affect their behavior, their presentation and the ways in which audiences engage with them. Hölling brings unique expertise to the subject since she has not only thoroughly researched the history of Paik’s oeuvre but also actively participated in the conservation and curation of his work.”—Christiane Paul, Adjunct Curator of Digital Art/Associate Professor, School of Media Studies, The New School

“Developing strategies to preserve and ensure access to electronically encoded information is one of the major challenges of our era—in art, and in the culture at large. Hanna Hölling’s wide-ranging study is essential reading for its insights regarding the ongoing interpretation and updating necessary to address the impact of technological change on Nam June Paik’s work and for what this process tells us about the inherent fragility of all aspects of the modern archive.”—Martha Buskirk, Professor of Art History and Criticism, Montserrat College of Art

“It is wonderful to see a new generation of media and art historians offering a fresh view on this global artist. Hölling is one of the leading scholars helping us to understand Nam June Paik’s work in the digital age.”—Wulf Herzogenrath, art historian and curator

“Time is slowly erasing the work of entire generations of media artists from our potential art history. The loss is irreparable and urgent action is needed. Fortunately, Hanna Hölling’s excellent research will guide us through this darkness!”—Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, media artist

“The restoration and the conservation of media art is one of the greatest challenges for the future of our culture. Hanna B. Hölling’s compelling book is one of the most important contributions to this subject.”—Peter Weibel, Chairman and CEO ZKM Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany, Professor at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna

About the Author

Hanna B. Hölling is Lecturer in the History of Art and Material Studies at the Department of History of Art,

University College London. She was Andrew W. Mellon Visiting Professor, Cultures of Conservation, at the Bard Graduate Center in New York and Visiting Scholar at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. She teaches material culture, cultures of conservation, and postwar art history. Among her many publications is *Revisions—Zen for Film*.

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