INDEPENDENT MEDIA
ARTS PRESERVATION
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ANN BUTLER: Good morning. It's a pleasure to be here. My name is Ann Butler; I'm the senior

archivist at the Fales Library & Special Collections at New York University. I'd like to welcome

everyone to the panel "The Documentation of Electronic Media Arts: Addressing Preservation

Challenges." I'd like to first thank Dara Meyers-Kingsley and Sarah Ziebell for spearheading this

symposium and shouldering most of the planning and coordinating tasks.

To introduce this session, I'd like to provide a basic conceptual overview of some of the issues related

to the documentation of electronic media art. To do that, I'd like to begin with three basic premises.

The first, that documentation is basically evidence—evidence of process, materials, activities, and

works. The second premise is that documentation is inherently fragmentary, that the most

comprehensive documentation will always have gaps. The third premise is that documentation is

essential for all collection-management activities, and those activities are used to substantiate all

decisions, actions, and events regarding the life of a work. Collection-management activities include

appraisal and accessions, preservation reformatting and migration, exhibition installation,

transportation, storage, and the support of curatorial and academic researcher needs and activities.

There are essentially two types of documentation, each differentiated by intent. The first is

documentation created as a by-product or the residual remains of creative activity. This seemingly

mundane material is generated by the artist as part of the process—or the creation, production,

reception of a work—and is not necessarily generated with the intent of serving as documentation. It

becomes so only retrospectively. This material is often collected by archives that focus on the

contemporary arts by acquiring the personal papers and archives of artists and arts organizations. The Fales Library at NYU is such a repository. We actively collect the personal papers and organizational archives of various contemporary artists and arts organizations. The second kind is documentation created by the owning repository as part of general collection-management activities. This material is proactively generated by the owning repository through original research, cataloguing and description, condition assessment, interviews with the artist or their representative, all with the intent of documenting the work as fully as possible.

So what types of materials are encompassed within the term "electronic-media arts" or "time-based electronic works"? Analog or digital video or audio works that potentially rely upon hardware for playback, physical carriers or tape formats, computer code or software, site specificity, and/or sculptural elements. What are the goals of documentation? To provide as comprehensive as possible description of the full life cycle of a work from inception and evolution to exhibition, installation and reception, conservation, and long-term preservation. This is a labor- and resource-intensive process, with no beginning, no middle, or end. Because documentation is essentially an additive process whereby others will build on the documentation that you create, it must be based on a set of shared and documented best practices and methods.

So what tools do we need to achieve these goals? We rely on dynamic descriptive systems and methodologies to provide as comprehensive as possible documentation over time; development of a common set of vocabularies and descriptive terms for the documentation of time-based media works; institutional support and funding to support a collaborative environment for the mingling of ideas from the various stakeholders, including artists, archivists, conservators, curators, registrars, computer programmers, and electronic media specialists. With time-based electronic media increasingly being recognized as the contemporary art form of our time, it's incumbent upon us to collaborate across disciplines to devise common solutions and best practices to sustain these works over time.

Currently, there's a great deal of interest in documentation methods for electronic-media and new-media works. Evidence of this comes from various international initiatives developed and implemented over the past five or six years. The first one was the Variable Media initiative, which then became the Variable Media Network (http://variablemedia.net). InterPARES 2 (http://www.interpares.org) was another multi-year international initiative; Media Matters (http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/majorprojects/mediamatters), a project involving a collaboration between the Tate, MoMA, SFMOMA, and the New Art Trust; and Electronic Arts Intermix's *Online Resource Guide for Exhibiting, Collecting, and Preserving Media Art* (http://resourceguide.eai.org); and the current DOCAM Initiative, (http://www.docam.ca), based at the Daniel Langlois Foundation in Montreal.

What I'd like to do is to end my comments with a question that I think will carry through many of the sessions today. And the question raises issues relevant to the development of best practices for time-based media/electronic works. The question is, is it possible to develop a set of common best practices for the care of unique works, or will custom solutions prevail? I think that that's the tension that we're riding through today in this session and the following session. Dealing specifically with unique works, how do we—or is it possible to— come up with methodologies and standards-based best practices for unique works?

I'd like to introduce our first speaker, Jeff Martin. He's a research fellow at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. He was one of the principal authors of the preservation component of E.A.I.'s *Online Resource Guide*. He's the project coordinator for the IMAP Equipment Registry project. And Jeff is also a 2005 graduate of NYU's Moving Image Preservation and Archiving program. Jeff?

JEFF MARTIN: Good morning. Thank you for the introduction, Ann, and thank you, Dara, for having me here. I'm going to start, sort of, the formal panel with a clip. It may seem like a bit of a digression, but it seems like also a good way to wake up and start the day. But I look back at American daytime television, 1973, and a very peculiar piece of evidence of the kinds of things we're talking about today.

I chose this clip for a couple of reasons. Partly because it is, obviously, a document. And I think that one of the things we'll be talking about today is that dealing with new-media art requires different ways of thinking about what is a document, what is to be documented, and how these things should be documented. When you're dealing with new media, obviously, the idea of the document does expand, the idea of what is the evidence expands. What also expands is what you do need to document. As far as electronic art goes, I would argue that those issues begin with video equipment and videotape technology. This is both, sort of, in a historical sense, because single-channel video— artist video—is where electronic art can be considered to begin. I think this is also a useful framework for thinking about the larger issues of documenting this type of art. Now, the challenges facing videotape preservation in general are well known, two major issues being physical decay of the videotape itself—often caused by poor handling and storage—and the obsolescence of the playback equipment. As most of you know, there have been something in the neighborhood of sixty different videotape formats in the fifty-plus years of videotape use. Most of this equipment, it's safely said, is very difficult to come by now. Videotape technology began as something restricted only to the largest institutions and corporations, as seen here in this photo dating to 1956. It was a full decade before portable and affordable video technology was introduced into the market. That consists of things like half-inch open-reel videotape—widely adopted, widely used—and the less successful, less widely adopted formats, of which the Akai system that we just saw is an example, a format that used quarter-inch tape, not half-inch, and that was only available for a very few years. The deck that that woman actually didn't win on *Let's Make a Deal* would probably be extremely desirable to more than

a few people in this room. And it's sad to think if she did make any home movies on that deck how short lived they actually might have been.

Now, these technologies are driven not by the thought for the long term, they're driven by the short-term needs of corporate interests. They're looking for the durability of tape stock during repeated playback rather than longevity on the shelf; they're looking for miniaturization of equipment rather than format compatibilities; they're looking for "instant movies;" and they're looking for something smaller, easier, better. That Akai deck was actually quite a bit smaller than a standard Portapak, but at what cost to longevity?

Now, when you're dealing with artist video, video art, media art, these familiar problems can be magnified many times over. In part, when you're looking at the durability of the media, artists working with video may not be working with substantial financial means; may not have the wherewithal—or occasionally, even the inclination—to handle video works properly for the long term. Priority is quite obviously in a very different place for many artists, and by the time an artist may recognize the issues of longevity and his or her legacy, it may be too late. An equally pressing issue of obsolescence technologically for playback equipment is perhaps even more serious among this type of work than among so-called mainstream producers. Artists who are interested in working with media art with new technology tend, by definition, to be early adopters of new technology, new ways of making work, for better or for worse. The accessibility and the new potential of a new tool and the excitement that lies behind it is oftentimes driving these choices, not issues of the long term. Early adoption, in fact, plays a role in what could be considered the sort of media-art creation myth, the legend of Nam June Paik's purchase of the first Sony half-inch open-reel Portapak to arrive in New York City, in 1965. At least in this case, Paik was adopting a technology that would prove to be relatively long lived and relatively widely used. This is not always the case, of course. To take one example, in 1965 Andy Warhol was given access to a then state-of-the-art Norelco one-inch slant track videotape recorder, which, among

other things, he used in the production of his amazing film *Outer and Inner Space*, starring Edie

Sedgwick. He was given access to this free for a magazine article, and now the Norelco format, for all

intents and purposes, is gone. It never really went anywhere. And thirty-some years later, it was only

with great difficulty that the Warhol Foundation eventually was able to gain access to the material

Warhol shot with the Norelco machine. And this is by far not the only example of Warhol's work that

was made nearly extinct by his choice to use a technology that was not widely adopted and that

faded from use relatively quickly. Artists can also be what would be considered late adopters or

outsider adopters, for lack of a better term, of technology for its aesthetic rather than accessibility

issues. Sadie Benning's work with Pixelvision comes to mind. Her work created using the camera

developed for children that recorded its video images on audiocassettes—that had a very short life in

the mid-1980s.

Third, video art, and media art in general, faces a problem that video preservation as a whole doesn't:

the potential obsolescence not only of video playback equipment, but of display equipment.

Preservation of a videotaped television broadcast, or a home video, or a political or activist work, in all

likelihood, is not dependent on its playback on a specific kind of monitor. I think in general that issue

actually should be taken into consideration more than it is where television and home-video

preservation are concerned. But the fact of the matter is that there are many video artworks that are

irreparably compromised or rendered meaningless if the display monitor is changed in any way. The

most obvious example is the imminent extinction of the cathode ray tube, with very serious

implications for an array of works. An extreme example would be a Paik piece like this one, entirely

dependent on the existence of a cathode ray tube monitor for its meaning, purpose, and, again, its

existence. Other artists can be extremely specific, and rightly so, about the type of display equipment

their work calls for. I would suggest if you're interested in this that you check the EAI/IMAP

preservation Web site for a statement by artist Bill Viola about a relatively recent work of his in which

he is extremely explicit that he understands four-by-three monitors are reaching obsolescence, but

that a sixteen-by-nine monitor is not an acceptable means of display for his work. It's a fascinating document. I can't recommend reading it highly enough if you're interested in this type of issue. There's also the fact that media artists often were creating their own equipment, modifying things for their own needs—things like the Rudd-Etra synthesizer of the early 1970s.

So with media art, even in its "simplest form"—single-channel video—there's a much wider range of information that may need to be gathered if we're to keep a work alive in a manner compatible with the artist's original intention. There's a need for tools that can help archivists and conservators gather and share information, not just about the work itself, but about the equipment that goes along with it.

And that is the genesis, really, of the project that IMAP has undertaken in this area, the development of an online documentation tool for obsolete playback equipment, and a resource for sharing that information. That's the survey that Dara mentioned, which we are launching right now, reaching out to sites across the country. And if you are interested in, need access to, or hold obsolete video playback equipment, we highly encourage you to participate. The project actually had its roots in work done by Mona Jimenez in 2003. You may have seen her presentation on the previous AMIA, when she developed, for the Langlois Foundation, a cataloguing tool for artist's video equipment, the type of equipment like this that is unique. She developed a FileMaker Pro database specifically to record information about the myriad details necessary to understand, catalogue, and keep these pieces of equipment alive. Thanks to some grant money from the National Endowment for the Arts, I've been working for IMAP on an expansion of this into a tool for registering, cataloguing, documenting mass-produced playback equipment—mass-produced in the broadest sense of the term, from the ubiquitous U-matic to the obscure Akai quarter-inch. Part of the problem that all of us face is the people who have these tapes don't necessarily know where to get access to the necessary equipment. This registry has been evolving, with the goal of getting access to that information up on the Web and out to the world. Part of the survey also includes gathering information about sources of

manuals, written documentation—the things that are necessary to keep these pieces of equipment alive and thus the works themselves alive.

I hope that this has been a useful introduction to the issues, and I look forward to seeing what's next. Thank you.

BUTLER: Our next speaker is Carol Stringari. She is the chief conservator for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. She was recently promoted to this position from senior conservator. Carol is widely involved in a number of international conservation initiatives, including INCCA, the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art. Carol?

CAROL STRINGARI: Thank you, Ann. I'd like to thank all of the organizers—Dara and Sarah and IMAP—for bringing us here today. Let me just start by saying I've been on leave for about a year and I haven't been actively involved with the preservation of new-media art. But I've had a lot of time to think about it. Upon my return, I was greeted with all of the issues, and complex issues, of our collection. And then I immediately went off to Montreal to the DOCAM conference, which I'm coming from now. And I guess, you know, one of the things that I'm most concerned about is this issue of collaboration, which has been mentioned here a number of times. And being at DOCAM just reinforced the idea that the field of conservation is…we're very far along, in terms of our own practice and philosophy, and there are so many people doing incredible work in documentation that I tend to think…I'm a little bit anxious about getting to the preservation and the conservation of the works and letting these brilliant people who document things come up with the tools. I think there are actually now quite a number of excellent tools. And I'm just putting up some of the various organizations that were involved with DOCAM and have been involved over the last ten years. I think probably you know most of them.

The DOCAM conference brought together archivists, curators, conservators, film and video preservation experts, Internet artists, and organizations like Franklin Furnace, who you will hear from later today. And all of the Variable Media initiative partners attended. There were also professionals from the field of philosophy, information technology, and music.

It appears to me that it is time for us to take a look at all of the tools that are out there and try to integrate them in some way. I don't think we need more tools. Some of the available resources are at the IMAP site, Franklin Furnace, Rhizome, VKM, and the Tate Media Matters and INCCA Web sites. Rick Rinehart at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive has developed a software system for media arts notation, the Digital Asset Management Database (DAMD), which is able to export EAD, METS, and XML documents. I believe he is releasing it now for use.

MUSTICA, a group which has been a part of the Interprets 2 project, have an excellent method of capturing the score of contemporary music. It's very clear and concise and it is done at the time of production. As you may know, for those of us who are working with complex installations from the past we are not able to capture things at the time of production.

These are just some of the many tools that we have access to, including the Variable Media questionnaire and paradigm, which was developed at the Guggenheim with the input of other partners. This program continues to evolve tangentially. I've been involved with the Variable Media initiative since the outset. We have had intense debates with the team, which include conservators, archivists, curators, technicians, and artists. What is the Variable Media questionnaire? Do we actually need something like this? After hearing the various voices, I feel that this methodology lives parallel to various databases and notation systems—as a plug-in. Essentially we tried to come up with a system where we took contemporary art and attempted to define it independent of its media. Thus we identified certain behaviors to describe the work and how it might live into the future. We worked with the artists to come up with how things were installed in the past, what they thought of as

the "ideal" state—which is also something to be debated, because many of these things transform themselves over time—and how they see their work in the future. This is not a formula. I think that's where people got very confused with the whole idea, and they thought it was too artist-centric. It generated controversy and discussion among traditional conservators, although I believe there was some misinterpretation of the approach.

The Variable Media questionnaire comes in very handy when you work with living artists who create time-based or installations/fabrications. It is not designed to be used with the artist sitting there while you input the information. I don't think that that's actually an appropriate way to conduct an interview. The questionnaire provides a point of reference for questions. When you return to it and fill in these various fields, you can see if you've actually gotten the information you need. What we're looking for with this model is something like a kernel of information, or information about the essence of the work. Ann mentioned the fragmentary quality of documentation, and I think we must accept that as part of our work, along with the transitory nature of an artist's intent or feelings about the long-term care of their work.

I am presently struggling with the terminology of "media art" and "new-media art" and these labels that we place on groups of artworks. I have chosen a few fairly traditional case studies from the Guggenheim collection that may illustrate that in a hundred years "media art" or "new-media art" is going to mean very little. When I was in art school, media was just what you used to create art. As time passes, many technologies are no longer cutting-edge or avant-garde. And it happens so quickly that I think we have to be careful not to generalize, because artists use all kinds of materials to create art, often using similar media to arrive at very different end results. I think of technology as more of a continuum and not necessarily something that fits into neat packages. Some of you might disagree with me, but I tend to look across disciplines all the time to make sure that I'm not pigeonholing things.

You can view the Variable Media Web site (www.variablemedia.net) for more information on both the philosophy and the questionnaire. There are also several case studies on the site. Jon Ippolito, who is the original creator of the Variable Media Network, is now at the University of Maine. He is rewriting the whole Variable Media questionnaire, and it's going to have a completely different focus. I am hoping that the present version will stay as it is and be available to everyone; the new version, which is being updated by an engineer at the University of Maine, will also be available for your use. I think it's really important for us to use the tools to document our works and then start looking seriously beyond documentation at real preservation issues, because time passes swiftly. One thing that's quite different from a traditional approach to conservation is that we often have to act much more quickly to preserve media art. "Put it in a closet and think about it" used to be a sound methodology. In the case of much technology-based or time-based work, that is, in fact, a very bad strategy.

This is a site-specific work by Jenny Holzer, which was created at the Guggenheim Museum in 1989, and its title is *Untitled (Selections from Truisms, Inflammatory Essays, The Living Series, The Survival Series, Under a Rock, Laments, and Child Text)*. And as you see, these are Holzer's iconic aphorisms that have been created along the parapet walls, with light-emitting diodes and an electronic display signboard. This work raises a number of preservation issues. We have actually just started an inventory of the collection, and we brought out this work and started to catalogue it. I brought this form created in TMS to demonstrate the numerous elements that needed to be catalogued.

We have tried to adapt some of the functions of TMS to come up with a conservation survey report. Unfortunately the TMS system is not friendly to conservation needs and we cannot capture all of the information we need in a logical fashion.

We are trying to determine how we can use the internal museum database and then use all of the supplementary tools, such as the Variable Media questionnaire, as plug-ins or linked materials. If you are working in an institution, you may have these systems imposed upon you. I believe various museums have tried to address this and many of them are creating external databases that link to a main database.

So here you see the documentation of the Holzer on a component level. We catalogued every single component of the existing hardware. We then realized that we had a number of different issues here and we needed the artist to clarify how we would preserve or conserve the work. Here is an image of it looking down into the rotunda. So as you can see, the architecture is an extremely important part of this piece. Site specificity is one of the most important questions to begin the discussion. Can we ever install this in any other way or in any other venue? Secondly, the technology itself is not totally obsolete, but there are many parts and certain diodes that you can't get any longer. The whole work is being run off of a 1980s PC UNIX system. We discovered that we had floppy disks sitting in storage and no one had actually addressed how the piece would run once the software program was obsolete or the code needed to be rewritten. The work had been de-installed and stored without documenting these concerns. Jenny Holzer is very helpful with the problems that crop up with the technology, and we conducted a preliminary Variable Media interview. She gave us a tremendous amount of information. It remains, however, very complex. We have the light-emitting diodes themselves and the computer program that's running the installation. We have issues of obsolescence and what will happen over time. The programmer…it is a proprietary program written by an engineer at Sunrise Systems. He is now deceased, although Sunrise Systems has agreed to work with us to rewrite the code. But as you can see, there are several levels of preservation. Luckily, the artist is willing and able to assist us with this. I think this could be a very difficult work to reconstruct without the artist…and the issue of transformation over time and different states or versions, which is something also that the Variable Media initiative has spent a lot of time on. When Jenny Holzer came in to speak

with us, she started—and this is not an unusual circumstance—to talk about how she would like to see the whole work emitted as white light and how that would work so beautifully in the Guggenheim. When we asked her about future ideal states, she began to imagine what it could be. We have the original, which can be installed now, and we are putting a preservation program in place for the existing equipment.

We're also trying to preserve what it is that she wants going forward—how she sees this work living into the future. Therefore one has the complex conceptual and philosophical discussion, and then there are the very practical storages and maintenance issues of all of this hardware. These are the practical matters that we confront every day. For example, we can use this material called Intercept, which was created for packing electronics—a polyethylene film that is infused with copper particles, which act as a scavenger for pollutants. We use it to wrap all of our electronic components. This packing material plus an appropriate climate are practical methods of preserving the elements.

Artists are always exploring this relationship between technology and culture. And, you know, L.E.D.s are technology that is now somewhat historical and it now becomes a material to be preserved as the technology changes. We need to really get in there and start fabricating or migrating things forward and deciding how we're going to rewrite the software codes that run these works. And it takes an extraordinary amount of time and resources to address every work with multiple electronic components.

Some of you may remember the *Seeing Double* exhibition that was done at the Guggenheim in 2004. Here is a work by Grahame Weinbren and Roberta Friedman called *The Erl King*. And there was a remark made in Canada this week—actually, it was by John, who was very involved in the emulation of this work—and he said, "Well, yeah, we spent how many thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars and all of this time, and we restored one artwork." I said, "Oh, dear." Yes, that's very true;

this is a real concern. However, I can't tell you how much we learned from this process. And by

bringing in the artists, a computer engineer, and various other technicians, and walking through the

entire process of trying to recreate *The Erl King*…what you see on your left is the original version of

this interactive video piece, which was, for its time, actually quite cutting-edge. The participant-viewer

sits in this area and interacts with a small screen. And then up on the larger screen, the public can

see what the participant is actually doing in their intimate little area. The work was originally playing

off of an SMC-70 computer running Pascal code, which the artist had written at the time of

execution—pretty complicated for its time. It had various external hardware devices, such as a video

switcher and a multiport controller…these three laser discs, which were being told to cut to different

scenes as the participant was pressing this touch screen. The concept [was] that the viewer was

controlling the work, when, in fact, the artist was retaining the control because cuts *seem* random, but

they are predetermined relationships. When we tried to reinstall it, it was obviously running on its last

leg and we would probably have not been able to resurrect it without the working version and the

artist. Obviously the laser disc technology is obsolete now. So we restored the original images, which

were shot in film and transferred to videotape, and then we brought in a computer engineer to look at

it. We had been working with Jeff Rothenberg, a computer scientist very famous for his emulation

expertise. He was convinced that it could be emulated. After we discussed our needs with the

computer engineer, it was clear that this required far more than straight computer emulation. There

was the video image that had been transferred from film and we needed to create digital files that

would give the rich appearance of the original files. There were three separate laser disc players

extracting different portions based on the program controlling the switcher. The interactivity and the

touch screen had to be maintained virtually the same, and there was a graphic overlay that could not

be created with the new hardware. This was not a one-to-one transfer; there was no emulator for this

particular program, although there are emulators for CP/Ms. And when the programmer started to go

into the original source code, basically, he said, "The only way that I can do this is take this apart and

write an interpreter." So basically, we couldn't emulate the work, so the engineer—he wrote an

interpreter to interpret the original source code. Luckily, we had the original source code and the artist still remembered how it was written and what he was trying to achieve.

That's another completely separate issue. When something is acquired that has a source code attached to it, I think it's very important to have access to that code. We've put this provision into our legal documents for acquisitions. What you're looking at is the completely digital version on your right, which is now entirely stored on a hard drive. And, you know, if someone opened the box fifty years from now and found this hard drive—let's say a hundred years from now—you know, all of this history of this emulation and re-presentation of the work, without the documentation, would be very difficult to reinstall. I haven't even mentioned the whole idea of versions and states and the physicality of the installation. Each time it is installed it has a completely different design and configuration, although certain elements must remain the same. We chose to create one particular configuration, which the artist helped design.

Although I would like to say that we have a systematic, standardized policy for preservation and conservation, this cannot be true, due to the unique quality of every artwork. I think everything has to be approached on its own terms. The idea of collaborating with people from the outside with specific expertise is essential. Obviously, the computer engineer knew nothing about conservation or preservation. And we spent hours and hours trying to explain why we wanted to preserve glitches in the system, and the timing—because any time you bring in someone who is working with contemporary code, of course they want to make things better, because they can and they have the tools to do it. It was a learning process for all of us.

And the next work that we do like this will be a different process. We'll probably bring different people in to work on it. We don't have conservators in the field who are trained in the technical aspects of conserving these works—very few, let's say. There are some at the Tate, and Jeff Martin is now at

the Hirshhorn. Proper training for this field is still under discussion and exactly how we're going to do that as a profession is not clear. Are we going to have people in house that only work on electronic media? Or is it more of a process where you bring the right scientist or specialist to bear on each project? Due to limited resources and personnel, I think resources need to be shared, and we need to come up with some protocols for training a different breed of conservator.

I cannot stress enough that we need to act. I think conservators tend to be very reticent about doing something if they don't know exactly what they're doing. With many of these types of technologies, if you don't actually roll up your sleeves and try to preserve them or migrate them, we are going to lose a lot of material because we are concerned that we don't know what to do. My approach is to try and restore everything to its original version when possible, but try to create a newer, more advanced version while the artist can still approve it. That said, I am also stockpiling laser disc players, CRT monitors, and slide carousels, even if I am not sure that is the way to go. I think the idea of a resource for playback materials is excellent. And I think we should really, you know, continue that quest and people should get involved in it.

I'm also concerned that many times the works that we are choosing to preserve may be somewhat arbitrary. It seems to be about what resources you have at a certain time, what interests the person who's working on the collection has, if the technology is fascinating or easy to troubleshoot…and at the moment, it's not always driven by either a curatorial philosophy or some overarching collecting philosophy; it's really somewhat arbitrary, determined by what we're afraid of losing. There needs to be a bit more of an overview. What we're trying to do in our institution is look at things globally and see…so that we don't pick and choose without considered reasons. History has shown us that fragile artworks have disappeared and we're probably going to have to deal with that throughout history. For example, when I work on a nineteenth-century painting, many times there's no documentation at all. And colors have faded and things have deteriorated way beyond what the artist might have intended.

And it's always this sort of forensic research that we do. So it's not that unusual to do this, it's just that the time lapse is shorter now. And so we need more people, and I think we need to share resources and I think that collaboration is essential. That's why we are all in the same room today.

So just quickly, I want to also show you these still images of a Robert Morris work, which was also shown in our *Seeing Double* exhibition. Because these are still images of a 1960s seminal performance by Robert Morris, *Waterman Switch*, which some of you may have heard of. There is no video footage, there are just these still images. This was an attempt to preserve that moment, that performance. We now have these images, and in 1993, Robert Morris came to the Guggenheim to do his retrospective. Motivated by the curator, Morris re-created these performances with new actors, choreographed by the original artist, because he was there and decided he would be willing to set it up. And they set it up, and Babette Mangolte, who's quite a famous filmmaker—she recorded it on film. So we now have these 1993 films by Babette Mangolte, with a completely different cast and era; basically, a reinterpretation of the sixties performance. So we have now to preserve these new documents as what they are.

Because what happens is that, you know, history often redefines these things. And now, for example, we are getting loan requests for *Waterman Switch*, which would be the film by Babette Mangolte of the original. And it is not clear to people that we don't even have a film of *Waterman Switch*, we have a film of this re-creation of the original performance. And in fact, Robert Morris, after he saw the films, said, "This is Babette's work, and it's really nice for what it is, but it's not my work, and probably I wouldn't do this again." The film was transferred to video, and when we told Babette that, she was unhappy because it should be shown as a film. The rights belong to her and anyone who wants to borrow these films has to go back to Babette.

I want to end with this quote by Babette, because it's really interesting in terms of context and history:

"This film is a reconstitution of the seminal performance work done in the early sixties by the sculptor Robert Morris. The filmmaker's problematic was to create a film which, in the nineties, can give a sense of the aesthetics of another generation without debasing it by transforming it. In particular, the Modernism concerns of the sixties performance artists and dancers were centered on casual gestures and duration. Several of those preoccupations have been integrated in today's dance vocabulary, like the concept of theatrical time, which at the time was totally renewed in the performance work of the period, due to John Cage's enormous influence. Film is the medium of duration. But what we call duration is historically determined. Film spectatorship expectations greatly change in different generations. My biggest question was how to represent the sense of time of another generation."

So I think we as archivists, conservators, and curators of collections will have to keep in mind this context and this time, and perhaps that those things are some of the most important things to document—viewers' experience, how things have transformed over time, where we are, and how we look at things today with our own aesthetic preferences.

So where are we going? I think we need to evaluate all of the existing systems. And some of them will serve our purposes and some of them won't. We need to work towards at least a standardization of metadata, because I think that will help us to share across platforms. Education is paramount. I think students now have a greater ability to work on these types of technological issues, and perhaps we should bring them into our community through various disciplines. I think we're starting to do that. We need to share our results, even if they are not always entirely successful, because I think we learn a tremendous amount by these attempts. Collaborate across disciplines. There are disciplines that we haven't even thought of that we can call upon to help us negotiate all of these technologies. Documenting your rationale for doing things—a really important step in the process, because

sometimes things are not so clear. Things are done for all different reasons, and sometimes it's just

time, lack of resources, or, you know, very carefully thought-out compromises. And those kinds of

things, I think, are really important to document. And please try, whenever possible, not just to

document but to focus on conserving some these things that we know are about to disappear. And

thank you very much.

BUTLER: Our last speaker is Michael Katchen. He's the senior archivist for Franklin Furnace, one of

New York City's foremost alternative arts venues. He's been affiliated with Franklin Furnace since

1980. Michael presents often on electronic- and new-media preservation issues, including his

participation last year in the New Media and Social Memory symposium at U.C. Berkeley. The title of

his presentation is "Vocabulary Terms for New Media."

MICHAEL KATCHEN: Good morning, everybody. I'm happy to be here. I'm going to talk about

vocabulary terms for new media. Now, this is very exciting for me. I mean, I know maybe some of you

do this, but a lot of times it keeps me up at night wondering if it's a genre term or it's a format term.

It's like a hobby. I mean, I really enjoy this type of work. So the topics I'm going to cover [are] Franklin

Furnace metadata; definitions of new media; a case study, an interesting case study; and "Forging

the Future" vocabulary initiative.

So let's talk about the words Franklin Furnace. Okay, if you do a Google search, Franklin Furnace is

a city in Ohio, a mineral mine in New Jersey, and an arts organization in New York. Now, if you add

metadata to that and you know that Franklin means a street, and that furnace is a hot spot for the

arts, and Franklin Furnace is on a mission to make the world safe for avant-garde art, and you also

know that the name's implied metadata is misleading, then you're talking about the arts organization.

But if you really look at the words "Franklin Furnace," all three are exactly correct. So a lot of it just

depends on how you would tag the exact same word and what meaning it has. Now, if you would also

tag who wrote the definition for the term—if it was written by Martha Wilson, the founding director, or

if it was written by an artist who performed there, or a sculpture student in Australia, that's another way of searching. So if you tag those, that's another level. So what you do then, if you tag everything, you combine them, you have a very effective searching tool. And this is really the essence of what I'm going to talk to you about today. I'm going to talk about a lot of other things, but this is what I'm going to end up with, and this is what the vocabulary initiative is really about.

So let me just give you a little history of Franklin Furnace (http://www.franklinfurnace.org). A lot of people don't know about it. Franklin Furnace was started as an artists' bookstore for artists' books. And the artists began to read from the books. This is Wegman; he's reading *War and Peace* to his dog. And you know, the artists, they would read in increasingly animated and theatrical ways. And this is pretty much the way that performance art was born. I mean, people just started acting out and acting out. It became a whole genre unto itself. So then you ended up with something like the Blue Man Group. Now, all this time, we were saving this stuff. So you wonder, "What does this have to do with me being here?" But everybody who worked at Franklin Furnace—we saved every scrap of all the stuff we had for these ephemeral pieces, because there was really nothing there. So sometime in the nineties, we decided, "Well, this stuff is really, really valuable. And you know, we save it all, we should do something with it. We should catalogue it. You know, what are we doing to do?" And that's when we got involved with new media and what to do with this and how you would catalogue it. So we've been working on this stuff from the mid-nineties.

Now, what new media used to be for Franklin Furnace was artists' books. Artists' books were really cutting-edge at the time. You know, I remember we showed the books to MoMA and MoMA said, "Oh, we can't look at these. These are not art. Get these away from us." Twenty years later, they bought the entire collection. So it's just a matter of time sometimes how things work. So definitions of new media, old new media…you know, there's artists' books, performance art, installation art, all that kind of stuff. *New* new media, it's all kind of words—collider, cyberspace, intermedia. I mean, the words

change all the time; it's very, very transient. And I kind of think of it as, like, the soup of the day—like you just don't know what it's going to be today, what it's going to be tomorrow. And it actually, really, really doesn't matter, as long as you preserve it in some way. You know, and these guys are preserving the stuff. The main thing you want to do is be able to find it later. If you save it and you can't retrieve it later in any sort of reasonable way, you'll never find it. It'll be somewhere and you're never going to recover it and be able to use it or curate from it.

So what is new media? Well, you can get a B.A. in new media in Maine. I mean, it's very ephemeral, but that doesn't mean that it's not offered as a course of study. So they describe it as a field that spans a variety of practices from software art to student cinema to game design. They teach course sequences in documentary, interactive, narrative, time-based, and network media. And that's pretty good. That's about right. Now, new media is obviously not a good candidate for controlled vocabulary. It's basically outdated as soon as it's assigned. So the last time the word "new" really worked as a descriptive term to me was describing F.D.R.'s social programs. So Franklin Furnace uses the term "digital mixed-media" as a more viable term, because it more accurately reflects the great number of digital formats a complex piece may utilize.

So this is the case study, *Bikes Against Bush*. It's by Yuri Gitman and Joshua Kinberg, and it was during the Republican National Convention. So what I'm going to do is bring up a description and read it to you. It's a silent, short video. Okay, so *Bikes Against Bush* was supposed to be an interactive protest performance occurring simultaneously online and on the streets of New York City during the Republican National Convention. Using a wireless Internet-enabled bicycle outfitted with custom-designed printing devices, the *Bikes Against Bush* bicycle can print text messages sent from users directly onto the streets of Manhattan in water-soluble chalk. Now, needless to say, he was only describing the project when five to six police officers arrived. They arrested him. He was booked, fingerprinted, and photographed. They had the bomb squad investigate the device. They questioned

him about violent protestors, but seemed disappointed to learn that he was an artist and knew only

other artists and had no knowledge of any violence being perpetrated. Of course, they confiscated

everything. They have yet to give it back. Once the police get their hands on something, you never

see it again. So let's look at how we catalogue something like that. So what I'm going to bring up now

is the Franklin Furnace database. So what we use is we use it…it's based on Dublin Core

(http://dublincore.org). Let's see if this works again. So we have the usual suspects—identifier, title,

creator. You know, we do it in order. This is the entry order. I would have subject—you could see

what the subjects are. Now, we split the subject now. The way we look at our terms is in a very…we

look at them as form and content. So the subject is the content, and we break it up into keyword and

topic, just to conceptualize it. So the keywords are kind of the throw-away words. There just could be,

like, "bicycle," stuff like that. It's not really the essence of the piece, but it's in the piece. And if you

would search that, it would be something that you would want to find. But we like to split that off. And

there's a lot of argument with the other members of my group that it's too granular. But I think it's

very, very important to what the overall topic is. Like if it's about censorship, freedom of expression,

or public space, it's very different. It's not really about bicycles, even though bicycles are in there. So I

really think it's extremely important to differentiate between that.

And then if you go down further, you know, we have our description. And then down here is where we

deal with type. Now, what I do…you know, we enter stuff. You have the little pop-up box that says,

you know, "The Dublin Core Media Initiative vocabulary has to be used." Okay, so when you click on

that, you're only allowed those terms. Because a lot of what we try to do…like people talk about

there's just so many tools. And I'll show you some other tools. And our tools are really more

interpretive tools, rather than tools about themselves. We try to be able to map to every other

standard. It's kind of just like a holding tank. The standards aren't that important; you just need what

they call the tombstone data, the really essential stuff. And the rest of the stuff's going to change all

the time. And you want it to change. You want it to be in as many formats as possible and as many

places as possible, because that's how stuff gets saved. You can't just keep it in your organization

and think it's going to be preserved, because things happen with organizations. You want to get it

around and have it very, very flexible. So if you look at type, we're very limited. We could only have

the Dublin Core type. But that particular piece has a lot of different things. It's an event, interactive

resource, it's a physical object, you know, it's a service, it's a text—it's all these different things. And

it's great because you just throw all those things in there, and I think it's very, very accurate. We really

take our time when we assign these terms. It takes a long time. We're very nitpicky. And there's two

different approaches I'm going to talk about later. So we're kind of at the extreme end.

Then there's event-type genre. This is more from the vocabulary database, where you have— oh, it's

interactive art, it's net art, it's street performance art, it's political art. Now, that's something different

than the type. The type doesn't have content, right? The genre has a little bit of content. I mean, not

so much, but just a little bit. And then there's the behavior. Now, behavior comes from the Variable

Media (http://variablemedia.net) questionnaire they were talking about before. It's from that, but it's

actually the MANS (Media Arts Notation System) terms (http://www.docam.ca/en/?p=197), which we

were also talking about before. So this piece is, you know…the behavior of it—it's performed, it's

network, it's duplicated. And then besides that, you also have the format. So we take this, you know,

literally. We figure, what do we have to do to fit in the terms that really describe the piece. And so in

format, you have Wi-Fi, graffiti, and text messages. So we wanted to cover everything, but put it in the

right places, so that it's just not lumped into "subject," which is what a lot of people do. So a lot of

times all this stuff would be with all the other stuff, and it would all be in "subject."

Now, when we catalogue, you know, we set up the database so that you can kind of go back and

forth and see what's going on. So if you look at censorship, you could just click on the censorship

word and you'll come up to the "join" table, and then you could just click on the term. And you could

see what the term is and you could see how we describe it and where it came from and how it's used,

where it comes from, and, you know, some scope notes. Anything about that. So anything that needs

to be done, we put in there. You could also, then, just search by event and see what other artworks,

you know, use the same term of censorship. So we're just starting doing this, a lot of this. This tool's

going to be done in a year and a half. We've been working on it for a long time. But it's not a tool unto

itself, it's just a FileMaker Pro database, because it works online and offline. And that's a really

important factor, because usually you have—let's talk about censorship—you usually have two

archives. One is the legal archive, which—you have all the rights to everything—you could publish.

The other is the not-so-legal archive, which—you have all this other stuff you don't have any rights to,

but you're not going to throw it away. So you keep it in your archive, you digitize it; but you can't show

anybody. But you still are going to save it. So that's why the FileMaker tool works out pretty well. So

that's how we deal with our terms. So now I'm going to go back to…let's go back to this. So we're

finished with the case study, and let's move forward.

Okay, so where do we get our terms from? So we have a best-practice prescribed search order. And

we created a Vocab Wiki, which we just started. And I'll talk about it in just a couple minutes. We

have the Franklin Furnace Term Database. You know, if we already have it, we're going to use it. And

we also have the *AAT*; that's a really good source. We have the *LCSH*; Langlois; the V2 for Unstable

Media is a really great source; we have Rhizome. And you know, as a last resort, we have to create a

new term. But only at the very end. I mean, we try to—you know, there's a term out there. Like I said,

we're not out to do stuff. We're out to find stuff and kind of be a clearing house and a translator and

pool this stuff together, because there's so many terms out there, there's so many standards that it's

really, really difficult to make sense of it. So a lot of what this is trying to do is make sense of things.

And it does it in a kind of creative way.

So Franklin Furnace is working on this project called "Forging the Future"

(http://newmedia.umaine.edu/feature.php?id=685). And let's see if I have some notes here about

"Forging the Future". So while the number of tools for making and distributing culture has exploded, it's hard to find a tool for really preserving this stuff. Okay, so let's go back. So here's the people that are involved in it. Now, we've been working together off and on with different people, but the same basic group since 1996, working on these same core issues. I mean, we really want to get something that will go across boundaries, that everybody could use; that it's not a new tool, but it just reconstitutes and reuses all the stuff that's out there and all the standards that are out there. That's really important. You know, the previous project we did was called "Archiving the Avant-Garde" (http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/about/avantgarde). And that was a really interesting project. And, you know, many times we don't get funding, but we still keep working on the project. You know, we'll go two, three years, we don't get any funding, but we still advance the project because we all believe in it.

So these are the tools for the new project, the "Forging the Future". Again, people are going to look at this and say, "Oh, my God, just what we need, some more tools." But it's really not tools. I mean, if you looked at my Franklin Furnace Database, that's not a new tool, it's just all the stuff that's out there put into some sort of organized format that works for new media. It's very, very simple. So if you look at the tools, we're working on three tools. The past is the Franklin Furnace Database. The present is a digital asset management database. So what we do is we take the old stuff, we digitize it—the stuff that's not born digital. And that's primarily what the database does. But it also works with digital, because I think a lot of the new tools and standards that are being created now are done specifically for digital new-media stuff, and they don't work for the old media. And that's a real problem because there's no bridge between the two. So we want our database to work for both. You could do it for old-style performance art and mail art, and you could also do it for digital new-media. Now, the digital asset management database (http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/media/DAMD%20Online%20Documentation.pdf), that's the present. That's when you have this stuff digitized, you need to control it. But also it's a translator. You know, it

translates into the EAD. We're hoping it translates—I'm pushing to translate into MARC. A lot of

people use MARC. Part of our Franklin Furnace Database—you know, we translate to that. Because

you should just be able to click and button and say, "Okay, what standard is it? Let's import it in, let's

put it into this standard." You just want to move this stuff around and be able to use it all the time. It's

very, very important, because everybody's using different standards.

And the future is the Variable Media questionnaire. And that talks about the future. What do you do

with the piece, you know, if you can't replicate it? All these different things. And Carol talked about

that at great length. And then the combined effort is you mix these three tools together, and the

vocabulary is what does that. That's kind of the glue that puts all this stuff together, that makes all this

stuff work. It's the shared terms. We use the same terms across all the different tools. And you know,

these terms will be used in any other standard.

So there's two tools, the Vocab Wiki

(http://www.variablemediaquestionnaire.net/vocabwiki/index.php?title=Main_Page) and the Franklin

Furnace Database. So the way that we look at these tools is we're taking a two-sided approach—the

folksonomy and taxonomy—but we look at them as completely equal and existing simultaneously. It's

very, very important. So if you know anything about folksonomy, it's a practice and method of

managing content description by ongoing collaboration. So metadata is generated by anybody—

creators, consumers. There are keywords. It's very, very loose. And our Vocab Wiki is based on that,

and the Rhizome ArtBase (http://www.rhizome.org/art/) is based on that. Now, taxonomies are

different. That's the practice and method of managing content from a formal classification system.

Now, the Franklin Furnace is more on that side of the fence. So metadata is designed by trained

professionals. And it's chosen from a list of controlled vocabulary. And it's more a database tool, and

the folksonomy's more of a server-based tool. So this is…and Rhizome actually does both. Rhizome

had started this. Rhizome was one of our partners, and these are their terms. Now, we learned a lot

from their folksonomy terms. So these are the taxonomy terms that they set up. And if you notice, the type's larger; that means it's used more. You know, the more it's used, the larger the type gets. It's just tagging clouds. But now the artist terms—the main thing we learned about the artists assigning their own terms is they engage in what's called "tag spamming". So they like to put fifty terms on their piece, so that no matter what you search, their piece is going to come up. So it becomes meaningless. So what we're trying to do is maybe install some sort of filter where it's like, okay, you could put fifty terms—because we want the artist to have freedom—but how about, you know, put your favorite five first, and then put the other forty-five. So that maybe you could filter and say, "Okay, let's see what words they really think are important before I look at all this spam."

Okay, so "anonymous" is totally inclusive. These are the anonymous-type contributors. So anybody could do anything. It only works for folksonomy. Identify—you have to put your legal name. Now, you could do that for folksonomy or taxonomy. But these are the type of people. So anybody's going to…the main thing about this is you want anybody and everybody to do your cataloguing for you. As many people as you could enlist to do your cataloguing, that's what really needs to be done. So the artist-creator enjoys special privileges. They could do either approach…library students…this is a really good resource, because a lot of the organizations that show this really cutting-edge stuff are really poor; they can't afford full-time cataloguers. And you see the degree of description for *Bikes Against Bush*. That took really a long time to catalogue; we can't afford to do that. So I have interns all the time, but I try to get real, professional students that are really, really good. They usually take it for credit, and they do an excellent job. And I think this is a resource that is overlooked. I think, you know, small arts organizations should solicit these people. Then you have the cataloguer. So the cataloguer has to comply with the best-practice manual. And that's only for the taxonomy level.

Okay, and then basically, we have four types of records. Now, one event may have four variations of the exact same record. You know, depending on how you want to search. It's similar to the words

"Franklin Furnace." You have to decide: what level of clarity are you seeking? Do you really want…both are really, really good. Do you want a really wide, expansive thing—you know, the most inclusive? Or do you want something just a little more thoughtful? Or you want something really restrictive and really tight. And you should be able to choose how you want to search and they should all be equal. A lot of people, you know, hate the really restrictive stuff and they just want to—"I want to see all the terms" or "I want to see what the artist did."

So that's how it breaks down. The general public could contribute to these three things and should be encouraged to do so. The artist-creator would most likely contribute to those two things, library students to these, and then a professional cataloguer would contribute to that. And then the workflow would look something like this. It would all be going on at the same time. You don't know when people are going to catalogue stuff. People should catalogue all the time. And then you could kind of tag these things. So you could tag the general public, maybe, with one star or something. It's not a quality thing, it's just a tagging, similar to the words "Franklin Furnace," so that you know what you're searching for and what level of clarity you're seeking. So these two things will change all the time, and these two things might stay the same. So you'll be expecting certain things to change, and certain things won't change so much. But the most important thing is the artists are always far ahead of the cataloguers. So the creators have terms for everything they do. And the creators are the trailblazers. Cataloguers could later look at their stuff and say, "Wow, what's all this stuff out there?" They don't have to start from scratch. They have lots of stuff to deal with, and they could do a much better job of cataloguing. So basically a system like this really has to work. It's really the only responsible, inclusive way to handle the explosion of new media and new-media vocabulary. Thank you very much.

BUTLER: I'd like to open it up to the audience for any questions. I'd also like to open it up to the panelists and to first ask you if you have any questions for each other. No? Okay, we're going to open

it up to the audience. There are two mics in the middle of the aisles. Please use the mics to ask your

questions and please identify yourself. Thank you.

KENNETH SCHLESINGER: I'm Kenneth Schlesinger. I work for City University of New York. I'm also

involved with IMAP; I have to disclose that. Question for Carol Stringari. I find emulation fascinating,

but oftentimes an academic exercise, particularly when you have the artist involved. So you gave the

example of Jenny Holzer and, in a sense, the reconstruction of the piece. But what do you do in a

situation of emulation when the artist is, in a sense, revisiting the work and wants to reinterpret it? So

you gave the example of Jenny Holzer coming back and wanting to do the LCD with a white light

diode. So you talked about different variations of the work. So when an artist comes back and is

reconstructing it and revisiting it, but is also wanting to move it ahead, how do you reconcile those two

issues?

STRINGARI: Well, I think it's an important question, and we have had many debates about this

because it's not unusual. Actually, it's not unusual even in traditional media. But as opposed to, for

example, an artist coming back to look at a painting that's deteriorated—and it has, in fact, happened

in a number of institutions, that artists have decided they would like to repaint something or, you

know, fix the background, or something has faded—they can redo it. It has happened. I'm very

skeptical about this, because I feel as if I have…I mean, our mandate is to preserve cultural

patrimony and the history of an object. So to answer your question, I think it is about documentation.

If a work has some sort of transformation during its life…because I think there are many objects, or

many artworks that are not even objects at the moment, and they exist as certificates, or scores, or

things of that sort, and they are reinterpreted by either the artist or curators. I think the important thing

is to document that process, and to document, again, the rationale behind why you might do

something like that. And to be able to reconstruct what was the original is also extremely important.

So I am not on the extremely conservative side that everything should always be shown in its

historical context, because sometimes the work isn't meant to be that way. But I think it's really important to document what you're doing. And it's not always the artist who decides. I think we need to document how the artist feels and what they would like. And I think it's important for us to know all that information. But perhaps the museum or the curator has a certain contextual reason for doing the historical version or the updated version. And I think that's always a debate.

BUTLER: I've got a quick follow-up question for you, Carol. And that is, you mentioned that you have worked on the preservation or the conservation treatment of objects without any documentation. Do you think documentation is essential for preservation?

STRINGARI: Oh, absolutely. I don't want you to think that I think that the documentation isn't essential. I just feel that so many people are actually doing it fairly well. I mean, considering what I have from earlier works in our collection, there are a lot of things actually being captured now that were never captured before. And I think it just informs the process more and more. I guess the question is, within an institution, who is responsible for the documentation? And that always becomes a bit of an issue because everyone is documenting from their own perspective. And I don't think that's a bad thing, but I do think people need to discuss what they're doing. Number one, so they don't overlap and duplicate efforts, and also so that other people know why you're capturing certain things as opposed to other things in your own realm.

MOIRA KELLY: Good morning, everyone. My name is Moira Kelly, and I'm an independent artist and curator. I would just like to ask the panel, what do you do about artworks—time-based artworks—that were done before any of these concerns were really being addressed? In other words, there's a lot of work from the sixties and seventies concerning these issues, and the artists may still be alive, but the works of art were neither documented nor photographed nor recorded in any way. Can these works of

art be substantiated, remade, or re-created? Or would this be entirely up to the artist concerned?

Thank you.

BUTLER: Who would like to take a first stab at that? Jeff?

MARTIN: I don't know that I could give a generalized answer to that question. You're talking about things that may simply have been lost and disappeared. And I think that that reality is something that Carol touched on, and, I think, is something that needs to be grappled with. The piece that you described was almost something close to that—a performative piece that was documented only [through] still photographs. I think that's actually a very concrete example of what you're talking about. And the can of worms that is opened when that happens—that the original artist creates something, documented in a certain way that, in hindsight, seems inadequate to the task, revisits it, and, in a sense, sounds as if [he] regrets it a bit, or doesn't feel that his work was being accurately reflected. And I think that's the danger. But I also think that it's a possibility. I haven't seen the film, but it sounds striking. So this may have opened an opportunity for the creation of something entirely different.

STRINGARI: Well, I think that's a good point because, I mean, some things are just going to die, and I think we have to accept that. But there have been numerous reinterpretations of things that have very little documentation. And some of them are successful and others are not so successful. I mean, with this 1960s performance piece, I think Babette is an incredible filmmaker. So the actual film that was created is now a Babette Mangolte, which lives on as something else. And I guess we just have to realize that it's something else. I don't know if anyone saw the Marina Abramovic recreations at the Guggenheim called *Seven Easy Pieces*, where she redid performance pieces from the sixties—Vito Acconci and various other seminal performances. And it was very…it was incredible to be involved in that, but you know, in the beginning, everyone was really uncomfortable with it and, you know, "What is this?" And, "Can she do it?" And when she went to the artists or the estates, some agreed and

some didn't. And it was a whole new exhibition with her own stamp and reinterpretation on it. So I

don't think that we should…I don't think it's up to us to say these things can't happen. But I think that

they need to be documented as to what they are, because I think in the future it's going to be

confusing when people see this.

KATCHEN: That's kind of like how Franklin Furnace handles it. Like, if the artist redoes a piece, we

just treat it as a totally separate piece of artwork. It's not the same at all; it's totally different. And it

has a source reference, but it is absolutely not the same piece.

STRINGARI: This is just an aside, but in January, the Getty is sponsoring—it's a conservation

seminar, but it's related to what we're talking about now because what they're doing is they're

bringing in—they're actually bringing the objects to the symposium. And for example, there is a piece

at the Museum of Modern Art and a piece at the Menil, and they're both paintings by David Novros,

which became discolored over time and the artist no longer felt that they represented what he was

trying to do. One museum decided to work with the artist to resurface it, so it has a new surface that

he endorsed; and the other museum decided to create a reproduction or a facsimile of [it], so that

they now have both iterations. I don't have a value judgment on that because I can see the reason for

doing either one. I think we get into a real issue about storage and so many objects in the world, and

we continue to make mock-ups or reproductions or, you know, copies of the copies of the copies,

that, I mean, we have to stop somewhere. But they were just two methodologies for restoring the

work.

MARTIN: That just makes me think about your remark about your desire to just get in and start

conserving works and working on the things and getting things done before works fade away. And I

think, especially when you move into the digital realm, you have this really great advantage that you

don't have with a painting, is that you can work on it without doing irreparable things to the work,

without damaging the work. You can just start trying different ways, because you are inherently going to be making a new one anyway. And so you can— the boundaries for experimenting and trying and working and working and working are so much broader. And it, to me, is so much less frightening than doing something irreparable to a work on canvas, when you're really just going to be creating something anyway. And then your goal is almost sort of matching it back, as if you were sort of, you know, matching back a negative when you're cutting a film. You know, it just seems less threatening once you get into especially the digital realm.

STRINGARI: Yeah, there's something actually reassuring about that. That, you know, at this point, we can save the original and create something new, and not have to…and many times, it's just a media format or a hard drive, so there's not an issue of storing something enormous.

LAURA KRESNOW: Hi, my name is Laura Kresnow, and I have a comment—I guess it's a question. And one of them is, I think a lot of these formats, new media, become unique to a particular time. And so when I see some things, the Happenings of the sixties, I mean, in a way, to reinterpret them, it becomes something else completely. I mean, I don't even think that that's a substantial thing to do. I mean, it becomes…where you say why someone did it? I think the interpretation that you give to that piece, even in the cataloguing process, has to be connected to that particular time. And the other thing is, I know I produce artwork. And where I may have been…a reason why I did something. Later on, I have a whole different sensibility to it. It becomes a raw source of material to me. So how do you deal with those kinds of things? Or was that a question?

BUTLER: Are you directing the question at anyone in particular?

KRESNOW: No. No.

BUTLER: And the question is about iteration?

KRESNOW: Well, one of them is, is that I think that especially in time-based work, it has to be so unique to the time it was produced. And are these concerns that you have, in terms of the preservation process? Because I don't think a lot of that is being, you know, spoken of. And I think a lot of times, preservation for the media—it's always talking about the equipment and that type of thing. But that type of work has been so unique to the time that it was created that when we look back on it and talk about preservation, we're talking about it with a whole different sensibility. And so in a way, we're reinterpreting the work itself, even in the cataloguing process.

BUTLER: We are. And I think that's something that Carol got at, in terms of the Variable Media initiative, finding the means to examine a work based on its original context and essentially, self-consciously re-create something new, et cetera.

STRINGARI: I think, you know, it's problematic inherently. But, you know, I keep going back to historical examples because it is not so different from many things, it's just that it's the degree to which we're reinterpreting, I think. I mean, in terms of, like, an artist—I mean, younger artists are always looking to the past and sort of reinterpreting in their own way what they see as a different era. Just as in the conservation lab, the only way we have to look at things…yes, we have documentation, but we look at it through our own aesthetic, our own sensibilities. Just issues of how surface looks, for example, have been debated over years of conservation history. There was a whole movement of, sort of, stepping back and not doing anything, because people had wax-lined and varnished paintings to protect them, and they looked completely different. And everyone stepped back and said, "Oh, my God, these are not supposed to be shiny and glossy and…" you know, "We have to take them all off." And so someone did that, well meaning, back in the seventies, because they thought they were protecting these works, but when someone really looked back at how these things were supposed to

look…different things become more important as history develops. And I think, you know, we'll see how things play out in fifty, a hundred years, with these kinds of works. And I think we can only do what we can. And I think different artists have different feelings about that. Because the whole issue of hardware versus software and what is the art varies from artist to artist, for example. I mean, I have plenty of artists who I've interviewed who basically say the hardware has absolutely nothing to do with the work and you should use whatever is available, and that's not where the work exists, and others who feel very strongly about retaining, you know, a CRT tube or a Nintendo box. And it is unique to each and every artist, as well as, you know, who's looking at it.

BUTLER: Thank you very much for coming.

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