



Frank and Patrik Riklin, Atelier für Sonderaufgaben: *Null Stern Hotel* (Land Art Version), 2016. Installation with double bed, bedside lamp, pavers, and butler. Art Safiental, 15.7.–31.8.2016, Safiental, Grisons (Switzerland). (Image and courtesy: Atelier für Sonderaufgaben)



Com&Com (Johannes Hedinger and Marcus Gossolt): *Bloch*, 2011–ongoing. Performance at Shanghai's Power Station of Art, 23.2.2013, 9th Shanghai Biennale (2.10.2012–31.3.2013). (Image and courtesy: Com&Com)



Filippo Minelli: *Making of Silence/Shapes*, 2016. Art Safiental, 15.7.–31.8.2016, Safiental, Grisons (Switzerland). (Image: Johannes Hedinger, courtesy: Com&Com)

Institute Materiality in Art and Culture

## Performance: Conservation, Materiality, Knowledge

**Abstract:** This research focuses on the questions of conservation of performance-based works, their temporal specifics, the involvement of the human and non-human body, the world of their extended trace history, memory, and archive. Explored are notions of care, the ideals of traditional conservation and their relations to tacit or explicit knowledge, skill and technique. Taking as a starting point the necessity for conservators to access and deepen this area of study, and unlike queries that situate these questions within other disciplines, we approach performance as a necessarily 'conservable' form.

Dieses Forschungsprojekt konzentriert sich auf die Fragen der Konservierung von performativen Werken, ihren zeitlichen Besonderheiten, die Beteiligung des menschlichen und nicht-menschlichen Körpers, die Welt ihrer erweiterten Spurengeschichte, Erinnerung und Archiv. Dabei erforschen wir die Konzepte und die Ideale der traditionellen Erhaltung und ihre Beziehungen zu implizitem oder explizitem Wissen, dem technischen Know-How und der Technik. Ausgehend von der Notwendigkeit, dass Restaurator\*innen auf diesen Studienbereich zugreifen und ihn vertiefen müssen, betrachten wir Performance als eine konservierbare Form.

**Introduction:** This project centres on the conservation of performance-based artworks. Being of intrinsically short duration and involving human or non-human body, performance-based artworks challenge the common assumptions that a work of art can be fixed, static and 'conservable' – an object easily constrained by the established systems of documentation and archival ordering. Because such a performance materialises only within a short temporal frame and thus refuses any enduring, material manifestation, its conservability seems beyond the bounds of possibility. As this project demonstrates, the temporal specifics of performance-based forms are additionally complicated by the very notion of traditional conservation, which too often disregards the intangible aspects of heritage conveyance – the transmission of memory, skill, technique, and tacit knowledge.

**Methods and results:** Unravelling the complexities involved in the conservation of performance-based forms, *Performance: Conservation, Materiality, Knowledge* aims to expose the theoretical and practical apparatuses of conservation, its attachment to traditional paradigms, and the resultant shortcomings in the sphere of the intangible. Taking as its starting point the need for conservators to access and deepen this area of study, the project sets out to accomplish three principal aims: (i) Using selected examples of institutions and artworks, the project reviews and systematises emerging approaches to the newly established subfield of the conservation of performance-based artworks; (ii) In order to ensure that these works are preserved and accessible in the future, this project also explores new methods for conserving performance-based works through: (a) forms of documentation and archives, (b) material residues and (c) the transmission of knowledge; (iii) In pursuing such a focus, the project reflects on conservation as a knowledge-generating activity, and tests its potential contribution to broader discourses in performance studies, anthropology, art history and aesthetics.

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**Duration:**  
10/2020–09/2024

**Financed by:**  
Swiss National Science Foundation, SNSF

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