Reshaping the Collectible: performance, activated objects and the registrar

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Reshaping the Collectible: When Artworks Live in the Museum

Core areas of research:

- works which unfold over time and exist in multiple forms.
- works or objects that challenge the boundaries between artwork, record and archive.
- Works which rely on complex networks of people, skills and technologies outside of the museum.
Tony Conrad (1940-2016) *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* 1972

- Tony Conrad led each activation of the performance in his lifetime
- Many variations between performances
- Acquisition was not complete at the time of the artist’s death
- Absence of the artist posed challenges

Can Tate acquire this work?

Tony Conrad *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* 1972, performance at The Kitchen, New York 2005
Tony Conrad *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* 1972

Tate Liverpool performance 17\textsuperscript{th} May 2019
Tony Conrad (1940–2016) Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain 1972

Can Tate acquire this work?

Performance elements and the Long String Drone

- **Performance:**
  - Projectionist
  - Violinist
  - Bass guitarist
  - Long string drone player

- **Long string drone:**
  - Invented by artist
  - Retained as part of the artwork
Long String Drone and sculptural objects in performance

Why are we talking about this?

- Sculptural object vs musical instrument
- Status
- Value
- Documentation
- Care
Strategies to approach this type of material

- Agreement and institutional understanding of re-fabrication.
- Building institutional capacity and knowledge to collect.
- Necessity for bespoke responses to individual works.
- Registrars need to:
  - know what questions to ask
  - know when to intervene
  - know what information we need from the artist/estate
Comparisons from within Tate’s collection
Tony Conrad (1940-2016) Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain 1972

Can Tate acquire this work?

Yes!
Next steps for...
Any Questions?

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