

Paradoxes of Archiving Performance: Tino Sehgal's Constructed Situations and Hans Ulrich Obrist's Interview Project

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This dissertation concerns the problematic of preserving performance art. The ephemeral nature of performance challenges the way in which artworks are preserved and archived in the museum context. Besides this ontological feature of performance art, a recent trend in performance art has emerged that is capable of challenging the traditional view on and practice of the archive. This dissertation primarily focuses on two series of works by Tino Sehgal and Hans Ulrich Obrist whose aesthetic strategies reveal fundamentally different attitudes towards the preservation of performance. Despite their differences however, they share an intense preoccupation with questions of documentation and archiving of the art work.

This dissertation will present how these works deal with the (un)documentation of the artists' own work and, to a certain extent, how they self-archive themselves. More specifically, it will show how they produce an object of performance art capable of operating within the archive, thereby allowing the possibility of challenging and transforming it. In essence, this dissertation will address the way in which recent performance contributes to the (re)definition of the object of performance in particular and art in general, and its possible modes of existence in time and space beyond the classical understandings of both art and its afterlife.