



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

The Lives of Internet Artworks in Institutions: How to Begin to Construct a
Long-term Conservation Strategy
Master's Thesis

Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage
Specialization Modern and Contemporary Art

Olivia Brum (11609648)
Supervisor: Ellen Jansen MA
Second Reader: Tamar Davidowitz MA

20-06-2019

Foreword

This research would not have been possible without the help of a number of people that I would like to recognize. Firstly, Ellen Jansen for her help and direction on many a version of this thesis, as well as Evelyne Snijders, Maarten van Bommel and Ella Hendriks from the University of Amsterdam for their feedback and assistance in the beginning stages of this research. I would also like to warmly thank Martine Neddam for her ongoing willingness to answer questions and openness with pointing the way to others when she might not have had the answer.

Secondly, I would like to recognize Tjerk Busstra, Geert Hogeveen, and Karen Archey from the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam for making the time to answer questions and being open with their resources on the work. I would also like to thank here Ward Janssen, of what was the MOTI Museum Breda, for his informative look into the work's acquisition process and David Jonas, Martine's programmer, for offering his technological perspective on the work.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my gratitude to my classmates: Lihi Levie, Daphne Kramer, Stefanie Janson, and Marieke Kruithof for their support and feedback through this long process.

Samenvatting

Internet kunstwerken zijn extreem vergankelijk, aangezien ze afhankelijk zijn van zowel software die onderhevig is aan veroudering, als een netwerk van mensen die kennis voor regelmatig onderhoud verschaffen. Door hun immaterialiteit creëren deze kunstwerken problemen voor instellingen over wat ze precies aanschaffen. Wanneer ze wel in een bepaalde vorm worden opgenomen in collecties, kunnen ze niet goed tegen verwaarlozing, waardoor een continue conservatie nodig is, waar veel instellingen niet op zijn ingesteld. Zodoende hoopt deze scriptie een begin te maken aan het creëren van een kader voor het verkrijgen van de benodigde informatie voor een onderhoudsstrategie op lange termijn. Hiervoor wordt Marine Neddams *mouchette.org-Version 01* (2016) dat in 2016 is verkregen door het Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam en het MOTI Museum Breda, als belangrijkste casus gebruikt. Geleid door literatuuronderzoek, mondelinge informatie en vergelijkende studies zal deze scriptie antwoord proberen te geven op de voornaamste onderzoeksvraag: Hoe kan men een preservatiestrategie ontwikkelen die rekening houdt met de unieke behoeftes van een internet kunstwerk?

Interviews met de verscheidene stakeholders onthulden dat de aanschaf van *mouchette.org-Version 01* uit het volgende bestond: een “time-stamped” data dump, die gereactiveerd kon worden met de juiste server omgeving, en een contract dat tentoonstelling van de “live”-website *Mouchette.org*, die onderhouden wordt door de kunstenaar, toestond. Er bestond echter verwarring over een tweede onderdeel van de aanschaf, een interactief aspect van het kunstwerk, dat nooit in werking is getreden, waarschijnlijk omdat het MOTI Museum Breda, dat de aanschaf in gang had gezet, intussen gesloten was.

Uit literatuuronderzoek en vergelijkend onderzoek bleek dat er soortgelijke gevallen waren waarin de aangeschafte materiële objecten die internet kunstwerken vertegenwoordigden, uiteindelijk het “live”-object vervingen. Dit stelt het Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, dat nu als enige de eigenaar van het kunstwerk is, voor de keuze om ofwel het object te preserven ofwel het “live” kunstwerk aan te schaffen en te preserven. Als preservatiestrategie om te bepalen hoe het nu verder moet, stelt dit onderzoek voor om op zoek te gaan naar een diffuus netwerk van kennis rondom het aangeschafte werk en hoe de “live” versie wordt onderhouden. Interviews en onderzoek naar primaire bronnen met de kunstenaar vormen het begin van een overzicht van welke taken de kunstenaar regelmatig uitvoert om de website te onderhouden, en wat er dus van het Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam verwacht kan worden als ze het volledige kunstwerk aanschaffen.

Summary

Internet artworks are extremely volatile depending on software that is subject to obsolescence as well as a network of people who bring their knowledge to providing regular maintenance. In their “immateriality” they create issues for institutions regarding what to acquire and when they do enter collections in some form, they do not withstand benign neglect requiring an ongoing conservation approach that institutions are in most cases unprepared for. This thesis thus hopes to begin to create a framework for acquiring the information necessary to create a farsighted preservation strategy that will address their ongoing maintenance needs. To do this it will take as its main case study Martine Neddam’s *mouchette.org-Version 01* (2016) which was acquired by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and the MOTI Museum Breda in 2016. Guided by literature research, oral history and comparative studies it will attempt to answer the main research question: How does one develop a preservation strategy that addresses the unique needs of an internet artwork?

Interviews with the varied stakeholders revealed that the acquisition of *mouchette.org-Version 01* included a time-stamped data dump that could be reactivated given the correct server environment and a contract permitting the exhibition of the live *Mouchette.org*, which is maintained by the artist. Confusion though persisted concerning a 2nd part of the acquisition that was supposed to concern the “participatory” aspect of the artwork that never happened, likely because the MOTI Museum Breda which had spearheaded the acquisition had shut down.

Literature research and comparative studies revealed similar cases of material objects that were acquired representing works of internet art that came in time to replace the “live” object. Leaving the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, now the sole owners of the artwork, at a crossroads concerning whether to lean towards preserving the object or acquiring and preserving the “live” work. To create a preservation strategy determining how to continue this research suggests looking to the diffuse network of knowledge surrounding what was acquired and how the “live” version is maintained. Interviews and primary source research with the artist provide the beginnings of a road map concerning what tasks the artist regularly undergoes to maintain the website and what the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam might be expected to conduct if they were to acquire the artwork in full.

Contents

Foreword.....	2
Samenvatting.....	3
Summary	4
Introduction.....	7
Chapter 1-Internet Art	8
1.1 Defining Internet Art	8
1.1.1 Technology	8
1.1.2 Characteristics	10
1.2 Conservation Obstacles	12
1.3 Current Conservation Approaches	13
1.3.1 Web Archiving	13
1.3.2 Web Maintenance and Network of Care	15
1.3.3 Remaining Issues	15
Chapter 2-Case Study: Martine Neddam’s <i>Mouchette.org-Version 01</i> (2016)	17
2.1 Artist: Martine Neddam.....	17
2.2 The evolution of <i>Mouchette.org</i>	19
2.3 <i>Mouchette.org</i>	20
2.4 Issues	25
Chapter 3-Maintaining <i>Mouchette.org</i>	26
3.1 “Generative Conservation”	27
3.2 Preservation.....	27
3.2.1 Managing Failed Automatisms and Manual Functions	28
3.2.2 Avoiding the Blacklist.....	30
3.2.3 Addressing Infections	31
3.3 Restoration	32
3.3.1 Aesthetics: Acceptance of Change	33
3.3.2 Functionality: Converting Flash	33
3.4 Documentation	35
Chapter 4-Net Art in Institutions	36
4.1 <i>Mouchette.org-Version 01</i> Revisited	36
4.1.1 <i>Mouchette.org-Version 01</i> vs. <i>Mouchette.org</i>	37
4.2 Reimagining Net Art in Institutions	38
4.2.1 Networks of Information	38
Conclusion	40
Works Cited	41

Appendix I-Interviews	46
Martine Neddham (N) interviewed by Olivia Brum (O), February 28 th , 2019	46
Tjerk Busstra (B) interviewed by Olivia Brum (O), April 1 st , 2019	65
Martine Neddham (N) interviewed by Olivia Brum (O), April 19 th , 2019	73
Karen Archey (A) interview by Olivia Brum (O), May 29 th , 2019	92
Ward Janssen (J) interview by Olivia Brum (O), June 3 rd , 2019	92
David Jonas (DJ) interview by Olivia Brum (O), June 6 th , 2019	92
Tjerk Busstra (B) interview by Olivia Brum (O), June 11 th , 2019	100

Introduction

In Annet Dekker's trail blazing PhD thesis, entitled *Enabling the Future, or How to Survive FOREVER: A study of networks, processes and ambiguity in net art and the need for an expanded practice of conservation*, she takes a moment in her acknowledgments to discuss how her research took form, "This change in direction (i.e. from analyzing the behavioral impact of interactive art installations in public spaces to looking at the disappearance of net art) was provoked through talks with several artists about their concerns over their net artworks from the 1990s. The artworks had not been acquired by art collections and the long-term maintenance had begun to take its toll."¹ By changing the tact of her 2014 thesis Dekker drew attention to an ongoing problem that internet artists have been plagued by and have been working to address since the first instances of internet art in the 1990s. These works are extremely vulnerable and require continuous maintenance to simply remain accessible. As they and their caretakers age they risk loss of context through degradation such as link rot and ultimately disappearance with lapses in server payment.² Thus in many cases their long-term survival lies in their ability to be acquisitioned by an institution. Yet in what form should these intangible works be acquired and what does the form in which they enter a collection mean for who is responsible for maintaining them? If it enters a collection?

In 2016, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and the MOTI Museum Breda acquired Martine Neddam's internet artwork *Mouchette.org-Version 01*.³ Thus, offering the opportunity to examine the complications surrounding ownership of a networked artwork by examining the relationship between the static version that was acquired and the live version that the artist still maintains online. This thesis, taking the starting point of what was acquired, asks **how does one develop a preservation strategy that addresses the unique needs of an internet artwork?** And what would be needed to form such a preservation strategy? To do this it will utilize a methodology that employs comparative studies, interviews with stakeholders and is reinforced by an examination of the literature as well as primary sources. By comparing the artwork to other internet artworks in collections and examining the diffused knowledge surrounding the work in the form of the artist, programmers, curators and technicians it is hoped to gain an overview of the current state of the acquisition. Literature and primary sources will then be used to hopefully shine light on the work's history, the treatments it has undergone in the past and what current types of preservation are being executed to keep the work "alive." To do this the thesis will be split into four chapters: the first will give an introduction to internet art; the second will concern the specifics of the case study *mouchette.org-Version 01*, the third will examine the tasks that Neddam and her programmers undertake to maintain *Mouchette.org* online; and the fourth chapter will look at *mouchette.org-Version 01* as an art object within an institution. Although this thesis will only touch on one case study in detail it displays a lot of characteristics in common to other works of internet art namely variability, interactivity and tendency towards obsolescence. Therefore, it is hoped that the outcome of this thesis can begin to contribute towards a conservation protocol as more of these works begin to find their way into collections.

¹ Annet Dekker, "Enabling the Future, or How to Survive FOREVER: A study of networks, processes and ambiguity in net art and the need for an expanded practice of conservation," (PhD diss., Goldsmiths University, 2014).

² Annet Dekker, "Preserving Digital Art, a Tension between Objects and Processes," (lecture, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 6 February 2019).

³ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 93.

Chapter 1-Internet Art

On New Year's Eve 1999 etoy shareholders, net artists, activists, and sympathizers sat down at their computers during the festivities to take part in the net art project, *Toywar*. Earlier that year the Swiss artist collective, etoy, had been approached by the online toy supplier, eToys, in regard to their domain name, etoy.com. The company wished to buy the domain name to reduce customer confusion and when the artist collective refused to sell for the sum of \$500,000 the company sued over trademark infringement. The artist collective, which had their domain name 2 years longer than the corporation, unleashed an internet attack on the unwary company. Motivating the masses to join the *Toywar*.

Toywar was shaped as an online game where players could collect points by attacking the online company, eToys. That New Year's Eve artists, programmers and activists were running denial-of-service attacks. Surrounded by partygoers and the sounds of fireworks participants worked frequently to check that scripts that would continually reopen the eToys website were still running in good order. The goal being to overwhelm the server with false requests for information and ultimately crash it preventing access to the website. In 2001 after many more onslaughts like this and a series of media attacks which slandered the company and encouraged employees to quit the corporation withdrew the lawsuit.

In 1999 the web was in the process of being commercialized by corporations like eToys who bought out the domain names of smaller organizations or individuals. Internet art with its sense of equality and community rebelled against that. Artists fought back using the strengths of the internet's interactivity and global reach to motivate participants all over the world to target the weak points in the infrastructure of such websites beginning an era of a new type of artwork. One that didn't just exist to be looked at but begged to be interacted with and utilizing the tools offered by budding technology broke ground, re-inventing what art could be. Thus, this chapter will briefly address the history of the internet how the buildup of technology created the ideal environment for the creation of a new type of art. It will look at what characterized and composed these new types of artworks, like *Toywar*, and how these elements can also form obstacles to these work's longevity and conservation. Lastly it will touch on current methods that have been taken to conserve works of internet art either by documentation or maintenance.

1.1 Defining Internet Art

It warrants taking some time to provide clarity before delving further into the matter of this thesis by providing a short succinct definition of what internet art is. Not to be confused with the term net.art, which has come to indicate a small limited group of internet artists, internet art spans a wide range of artistic works that exist on the world wide web.⁴ In this fashion, net.art falls into the category internet art but not vice versa. On the other hand, it does not include reproductions of object-based forms of art, such as sculptures or paintings. It is a completely different form of art that plays on the technology on which the internet is built and the characteristics that technology informs. Both elements will be discussed in detail in order to further define and create an understanding of what internet art is.

1.1.1 Technology

Internet art is based on the development of technology and its building blocks, which consequently influence its weakest links, are those that make up any website. To begin to

⁴ Julian Stallabrass, *Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), 11.

understand how it works there are four main components that contribute to a viewer being able to open a work of internet art on their computer. These are as follows: **the server, the browser, the database** and **the client**.⁵ In the most basic terms, the client represents what the viewer sees. This is retrieved by the browser from the database within the server. A database consists of a structured collection of information or data that is often controlled by a database management system (DNB). For utilizing a database management system to access and manipulate the database Structured Query Language (SQL) is the default programming language.⁶ SQL allows the user to execute queries against the database, to update, retrieve, and insert records as well as more giving full control over distant information.⁷ This is stored on a remote computer, called a server, designed to process requests from the browser using a specific software that serves up the requested data.⁸ To send an HTTP request for information to a server, which may be anywhere in the world, the internet utilizes a network of interconnected computers called routers and devices called switches and hubs.⁹ These direct information packets containing for one the IP address of the server on which the data that is being requested is stored and the IP address of the requesting computer. When the server receives the packet, it retrieves what is noted in the packet and it is directed back to the requesting computer once more by routers, switches and hubs.¹⁰

As has been briefly alluded to, to request this information and consequently view it on a computer screen a user needs a browser installed on their computer. A browser is essentially a software application, that has been designed to perform a set number of functions, in this case revolving around the retrieval of web pages from the server. There are five major browsers available today: Chrome, Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari and Opera which all perform slightly differently but execute under the same principle.¹¹ Each resource on the web is assigned a unique Uniform Resource Identifier (URI), which when submitted to a browser's address bar, it used to identify the specific location of that resource on the web and request it from that server.¹² A very basic web page with only text and no dynamic content, such as video or sound, exists first as a text file entailing all the content that the creator would like to convey. To standardize the text and give it coherence the text is formatted in Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML), a standard client-side markup language, which instructs your browser how the text should be displayed on your screen.¹³ This is often enhanced by the use of scripting languages like Cascading Style Sheet (CSS), when it comes to graphic elements, and JavaScript, which allows for the addition of

⁵ Carey Wodehouse, "Front-End Web Development: Client-Side Scripting & User Experience," Upwork, accessed 10 June 2019, <https://www.upwork.com/hiring/development/how-scripting-languages-work/>.

⁶ "What is a Database?" Oracle, accessed 10 June 2019, <https://www.oracle.com/database/what-is-database.html>.Be

⁷ "Introduction to SQL," w3schools.com, accessed 10 June 2019, https://www.w3schools.com/sql/sql_intro.asp.

⁸ Bradley Mitchell, "Servers Are the Heart of the Internet," Lifewire, accessed 10 June 2019, <https://www.lifewire.com/servers-in-computer-networking-817380>.

⁹ Bradley Mitchell, "The Difference Between Routers, Switches and Hubs," Lifewire, accessed 13 June 2019, <https://www.lifewire.com/differences-between-routers-switches-and-hubs-817707>.

¹⁰ "How does the internet work?" BBC, accessed 13 June 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/articles/z3tbgk7>.

¹¹ Tali Garsiel and Paul Irish, "How Browsers Work: Behind the scenes of modern web browsers," HTML5Rocks, accessed 13 June 2016, <https://www.html5rocks.com/tutorials/internals/howbrowserswork/>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "How Websites Work?" Media College, accessed 10 June 2019, <https://www.mediacollege.com?internet/intro/thewww3.html>.

interactive details such as drag and drop components.¹⁴ The software included in your browser has the full capabilities to interpret and display this kind of content without the use of plug-ins or extensions, which are software modules which can be added to a browser to extend the capabilities of the software to displaying dynamic content.¹⁵

The scripts, HTML, CSS and JavaScript, that have been described thus far run on the client-side, meaning that when a webpage is retrieved it is temporarily downloaded from the server and the browser processes it separately.¹⁶ Most webpages though contain some degree of server-side script which forms a bridge between the server and the user interface. Server-side scripts, which commonly consist of PHP, Python, Ruby, C#, C++, or Java, are executed on the server and are more secure from infection than client-side scripts which run on the browser.¹⁷ Both types of scripting can be used to create dynamic webpages, webpages that change with user interaction unlike static webpages, with different results. Client-side scripted dynamic webpages change depending on user interaction with the user interface for instance clicking on something with your mouse. These are written in JavaScript and HTML5.¹⁸ Server-side scripted dynamic web pages on the other hand concern web pages that change each time a web page is loaded or visited by grabbing information from the database.¹⁹

1.1.2 Characteristics

The technological components that make up the internet influence the qualities of works of internet art as well as give them a very specific set of characteristics. Tilman Baumgärtel in his book *net.art. Materialien zur Netzkunst* discusses briefly what he identifies as these main characteristics that describe internet art. He coins them as, “connectivity, global reach, multimediality, immateriality, interactivity and equality.”²⁰ Examples of these 6 characteristics will be provided with a definition below and then related back to the technology which contributes to them.

Connectivity

Connectivity refers first and foremost to the network that forms the basis of the internet. This system of switches, hubs, routers, satellites, and fiberoptic cables connect and relay information to each computer attached to this system.²¹ Allowing an artist to embed or link found information, not authored by the artist, that may be located in any number of different locations using HTTP.²² A good example of connectivity is Thomson and Craighead’s piece, *Pet Pages*

¹⁴ “Advantages and Disadvantages of Javascript,” Free Code Camp, accessed 10 June 2019, <https://guide.freecodecamp.org/javascript/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-javascript/>

¹⁵ “Plugin,” Computer Hope, accessed 13 June 2019, <https://www.computerhope.com/jargon/p/plugin.htm>

¹⁶ Carey Wodehouse, “Front-End Web Development: Client-Side Scripting & User Experience,” Upwork, accessed 10 June 2019, <https://www.upwork.com/hiring/development/how-scripting-languages-work/>.

¹⁷ Carey Wodehouse, “Server-Side Scripting: Back-End Web Development Technology,” Upwork, accessed 13 June 2019, <https://www.upwork.com/hiring/development/server-side-scripting-back-end-web-development-technology/>

¹⁸ “What is a Dynamic Web Page?” Doteasy, accessed 10 June 2019, <https://www.doteasy.com/web-hosting-articles/what-is-a-dynamic-web-page.cfm>

¹⁹ “What are Database Driven Websites, and how are they built?” Killersites.com, accessed 13 June 2019, https://www.killersites.com/articles/articles_databaseDrivenSites.htm.

²⁰ Tilman Baumgärtel, *net.art. Materialien zur Netzkunst* (Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 1999), 15.

²¹ “How does the internet work?” BBC, accessed 13 June 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/articles/z3tbgk7>.

²² Sir Tim Berners-Lee, “History of the Web,” World Wide Web Foundation, accessed 17 May 2019, <https://webfoundation.org/about/vision/history-of-the-web/>.

(1998), which when loaded fills the screen with images of people's pets that resemble trading cards. Each image forming a link to someone's personal page dedicated to their pet.²³

Representing an element of internet art that connectivity makes possible, that of repurposing and giving new meaning to found media.

Global Reach

The characteristic of global reach is only possible because of connectivity. Due to the networked aspect of the medium communication of ideas is possible to a general audience through the posting of a website or more directly by messaging services which connect one user to another. Furthermore, artists know that when they post a work of internet art, they are addressing a worldwide audience. Vuk Cosic, one of the main members of the net.art group, refers to this quality when in an interview with Tilman he states, "It's like me and Heath Bunting and Alexej Shulgin and Olia Lialina and Jodi had studios next to each other, where we could look at what the others were doing."²⁴

Multimediality

Not to say that an internet artwork cannot be composed of static webpages but many works make use of the internet's ability to share dynamic content. This relied largely in the past on plugins to extend the rendering capabilities of browsers, one of the most well-known of which being the now defunct Adobe Flash.²⁵ For 23 years Adobe Flash held the monopoly on the display of dynamic content but it is now being phased out for HTML5 which is run on the server-side increasing security.²⁶ Meaning also that more strain is exerted on the server now when a dynamic webpage is loaded in one's browser.

Interactivity

As stated above most internet art works make use of the networked aspect of the internet and encourage communication between participants all over the globe. This is done by promoting interactivity be it between the website and the user or between users. Although there are many approaches to this a common way in early internet art was through the use of a form. A visitor supplied with a form would fill it out and their answers would be sent to the server. A form processor on the server would process the data and send an email with the information to the creator of the form while saving another submission to the database. When this process was completed a response would be sent back to the visitor.²⁷ Other ways to include interactivity took the form of pieces like Douglas Davis' *World's First Collaborative Sentence* (1994) which likely made use of a combination of JavaScript and PHP to represent a sentence on a webpage to which visitors could add their two cents as long as they didn't type a full stop. Douglas Davis, described the instigation for his work as, "The huge difference between broadcast TV and the Web is the keyboard. With that people can say anything; they have full expressive capacity. This means a

²³ Julian Stallabrass, *Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), 43.

²⁴ Vuk Cosic, interview by Tilman Baumgärtel, *nettime*, June 26, 1997.

²⁵ Brian Barret, "Adobe Finally Kills Flash Dead," *wired*, accessed 15 June 2019, <https://www.wired.com/story/adobe-finally-kills-flash-dead/>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "How to make Web Form," JavaScriptCoder.com, accessed 15 June 2019, <http://javascript-coder.com/html-form/how-to-make-a-form.phtml>.

more intense and personal link could occur between me and the audience. So why not get the whole world together to write a sentence?"²⁸

Equality

All of the characteristics relate and contribute in one way or another to each other which is no more true than in the case of equality and the technology as well as ideas associated with interactivity. Interactivity gives rise to the idea that everyone has a voice and that everyone's contribution is significant. Be this in supplying knowledge to a question and answer forum or participating in a work of internet art. In the early days of the web before commercialization when the web was still uncharted territory this idea resounded quite loudly with artists. John Perry Barlow, internet activist, gives an idea of this mentality in his *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace* when he states, "...anyone, anywhere may express his or her beliefs, no matter how singular, without fear of being coerced into silence or conformity."²⁹

Immateriality

The last obstacle which will be covered here is immateriality. In reality, nothing is immaterial, a website still exists as bytes of information on a server somewhere in the world even if it's material form is not visible. Yet this characteristic of immateriality is very strongly associated with internet art as the interconnectivity of the web makes the necessity of seeing an "authentic original" moot. What becomes important then for an internet artist is this concept of accessibility that a work of art can be loaded in any browser and visible from any device 24 hours per day anywhere in the world. To do this artists often adapt their work to and use to their advantage new forms of technology. The internet artist, Rafael Rozendaal, talks about the implementation of the touch screen and adapting his works that had been created before the touch screen to respond to touch as well as a mouse.³⁰

1.2 Conservation Obstacles

As this brief definition of internet art makes evident these works are highly influenced by their "medium" and this also consequently makes them more susceptible to forms of degradation specific to that. According to Ben Fino-Radin, former digital conservator of Rhizome, a not for profit that provides a platform for new media art, in his short overview of preservation practices for the institution, "There are three essential threats to the preservation and permanent access to works of new media: diffusivity, data obsolescence and physical degradation."³¹ For works of internet art physical degradations, in the traditional sense, plays a very minor part due to the large sense immaterial nature of the works. Works of internet art of course need a screen and a keyboard to be viewed and interacted with but what is in large part maintained is the accessibility, as has been described in the **Immateriality Section**. The ability to be accessed by any device attached to the Wi-Fi from anywhere. Diffusivity and data obsolescence therefore form the largest obstacles when it comes to the conservation of internet art. Diffusivity, a characteristic that is specific to digital media art, concerns works that are dynamic and do not exist solely in one

²⁸ Tilman Baumgärtel, (*net.art*) *New Materials Towards Net Art* (Nürnberg: Verlag für modern Kunst, 2001), 60.

²⁹ John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," Electronic Frontier Foundation, accessed 17 May 2019, <https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence>.

³⁰ Rafael Rozendaal (artist) in discussion with the author, 22 March 2019.

³¹ Ben Fino-Radin, *Digital Preservation Practices and the Rhizome Artbase*, (New York: Rhizome, 2011), https://www.academia.edu/1613220/Digital_Preservation_Practices_and_the_Rhizome_ArtBase.

location.³² Which means that they cannot be easily copied and pasted as their interactive nature makes every copy simply a copy in the face of the works ongoing dialogue.

Obsolescence, the last of the three obstacles that will be discussed here, is by and large the biggest hindrance to time-based media art but takes a very specific form when it comes to internet art. Elements of technology are governed by corporations, developers and commercial demand which can create a quickly changing technological world as companies vie for the next money-maker.³³ The interconnected nature of internet art makes this especially apparent as each internet artist is dependent on the hardware on which they view the website, and the software by which they write the code and access the work. Problems arise when large companies initiate an update for certain software or in an even more dire case end-of-life, as Adobe has for Flash. Flash, a multimedia software platform often used in the production of animations, was introduced in the early 2000s and has taken center stage in the delivery of dynamic content.³⁴ With Adobe's declaration of end-of-life they will stop updating and distributing Flash Player at the end of 2020 and will encourage programmers and artists to shift their creations to open standards such as HTML5, WebGL and WebAssembly.³⁵ This poses problems for artists who are then forced to phase out old software or lose access to dynamic content.

1.3 Current Conservation Approaches

There are two main methods with two very different approaches that exist currently for combating these obstacles: web archiving and web maintenance. Web archiving entails basically making a "snapshot" of a website as it was at a specific date in time, these "snapshots" can be interactive and can have the ability to be reactivated but until then they exist as frozen entities that cannot generate new content. Their success lies in creating documentation of the stages in a variable website's life or in the case of websites with extremely volatile content, documentation that the work existed. Web maintenance on the other hand is an ongoing process where a website's owner regularly executes tasks to keep a website bug-free, live and accessible. This obviously requires more ongoing labor on the part of the website's owner, but it allows the website to remain on the web generating new content.

1.3.1 Web Archiving

In the late 1990s libraries and institutions began to adapt ways to retain and preserve transient cultural heritage found on the web.³⁶ The three main methods that were developed and are still used today are: database archiving, transactional archiving and remote harvesting. Many of these methods were adapted from the archival sector for the documentation of important information concerning works of net art. Yet as will be shown by the individual descriptions of each of these methods they give extremely different end results that can affect how a work of net art is contextualized.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Christina Warren, "The Life, Death and Rebirth of Adobe Flash," Mashable, accessed 17 May 2019, <https://mashable.com/2012/11/19/history-of-flash/?europa=true>.

³⁵ "Flash and the Future of Interactive Content," Adobe Blog, accessed 17 May 2019, <https://theblog.adobe.com/adobe-flash-update/>.

³⁶ *Web Archiving Guidance*, (Surrey: The National Archives, 2011), <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/web-archiving-guidance.pdf>.

Database Archiving

Database archiving involves the transfer of content, database management systems and scripts directly from the server of the website to be archived.³⁷ This often involves their conversion into an opensource format like XML which allows them to be accessed without having to reconstruct the working environment of the original website.³⁸ Context can easily be lost unless this is executed under the supervision of the artist who can construct an XML Schema that will determine the structure of the database.³⁹ What the museum then retains is an archival XML document that combines the file data with the database data of the net artwork to be preserved. This method works best on works of internet art that record elements of user interaction and are thus database driven.⁴⁰

Transactional Archiving

With transactional archiving information can be collected either server-side or browser-side and happens remote to the conservator or technician. It works by documenting the HTTP requests that are exchanged between the web server and the web browser making it most successful with websites that have a high degree of variability over time, as it functions by time stamping what information on a website was accessed and what changes were made when.⁴¹ It is also successful at recording dynamic content that may be part of a net artwork and creating a representation of a web page at a certain point in time.⁴²

Remote Harvesting

The last web archiving method that will be discussed here, remote harvesting is the method most commonly used by the archival sector as it allows the speedy acquisition of large amounts of information with relatively little labor involved. Yet for the preservation of net art transactional archiving and database archiving are largely preferred as they allow more control and they document the work from the server-side.⁴³ This method can be handy though in the documentation of the client-side of diffusive websites that change often through the interactions of participants. In this case, methods of remote crawling like batch crawling can provide snapshots of how the website appeared to visitors over time.⁴⁴ The way remote crawling does this is by the utilization of targeted programs called crawlers which starting with the URI move through the website methodically, following links and copying information as they come across

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Jinfang Niu, "An Overview of Web Archiving," *D-Lib Magazine* 18, no. 3 (2012): doi: 10.1045/march2012-niu1.

³⁹ Michael Rumianek, "Archiving and Recovering Database-driven Websites," *D-Lib Magazine* 19, no. 1 (2013): doi: 10.1045/january2013-rumianek.

⁴⁰ Olivia Brum, "Web Archiving: An Assessment of the Options for Documentation of Born Digital Media," (essay, University of Amsterdam, 2019), 2.

⁴¹ Robert Sanderson, Lyudmila Balakireva, Harihar Shankar, and Herbert Van de Sompel, "Transactional Web Archives," (presentation, Web Archive Globalization Workshop, Ottawa, June 16-17, 2011).

⁴² Olivia Brum, "Web Archiving: An Assessment of the Options for Documentation of Born Digital Media," (essay, University of Amsterdam, 2019), 3. Unpublished.

⁴³ Gaby Wijers in discussion with the author, April 2019.

⁴⁴ Denis Shestakov, "ICWE' 13 Tutorial: Current Challenges in Web Crawling," (presentation, 13th International Conference on Web Engineering, Aalborg, Denmark, July 8, 2013).

it.⁴⁵ Batch crawling crawls websites periodically over a determined time providing ‘frozen’ web pages that can be interacted with in a similar way to their “live” counterpart.⁴⁶

1.3.2 Web Maintenance and Network of Care

Web maintenance concerns tasks that must be conducted regularly to keep a website running smoothly. This often consists of quite simple tasks, like completing updates or paying the hosting, that only become more complicated the longer they are neglected. Neglecting software updates can leave websites open and susceptible to hackers or infections that can be detrimental not only to the contents of one’s website but also to its reception by the public.⁴⁷ Some tasks that are included under web maintenance are as follows: renewing the domain name, paying the hosting fee, reviewing a web site for broken links, testing forms, backing up content, completing software updates, testing browser compatibility and monitoring for security threats.⁴⁸ This conservation approach is preferable in that it retains a work of internet art in its intended form retaining all the characteristics and meaning derived from that, but it is detrimental in that it requires time, money and dedication to provide that kind of routine attention. Annet Dekker in her book *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Traditional Methods* suggests an approach to this need for ongoing conservation labor by suggesting a “network of care” whereby maintenance tasks are spread over a group of stakeholders.

Dekker describes how in the past collaborations between the artist/programmer and the institution have been successful in preserving specific software-based artworks but that they have not provided a standard by which to approach the conservation of internet artworks in general.⁴⁹ She suggests organets, organized networks that come together for a common purpose and could in effect bring, “goal driven organization to the Internet.”⁵⁰ Creating something of a diffused intelligence where all participants know something but nobody knows everything. She states that it is common to see networks form around artworks that have not been collected by an institution for several reasons, be it to protect the work from censorship or to preserve it. She deliberates briefly over the sustainability of such a network over time suggesting that its strength may be analyzed by examining the different roles and motivations of the stakeholders. This can be enhanced by, contrary to the organet concept, making all of the information concerning the project available in one place and accessible to all. In this way knowledge is not lost with the exiting of a participant from the network instead knowledge is dispersed across a network, rather than a hierarchy, with a common knowledge point promoting fluidity versus standardization.

1.3.3 Remaining Issues

A number of the characteristics that are specific to internet art and the technology that composes it are difficult to quantify when it comes to the methods that have thus far been devised for taking care of vulnerable material on the web. Characteristics such as equality are inherent in the making process and ongoing performance of the work but don’t really have a place in

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Olivia Brum, “Web Archiving: An Assessment of the Options for Documentation of Born Digital Media,” (essay, University of Amsterdam, 2019), 2. Unpublished.

⁴⁷ Andrew Kucheriavy, “Your 10-Step Guide to Website Maintenance,” business collective, accessed 15 June 2019, <https://businesscollective.com/your-10-step-guide-to-website-maintenance/index.html>.

⁴⁸ Bryan Hoffman, “The Basics of Maintaining a Website,” spigot design, accessed 15 June 2019, <https://spigotdesign.com/basics-maintaining-website/amp>.

⁴⁹ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 84.

⁵⁰ Adib, 89.

conservation except in perhaps the approach that Dekker suggests of dividing conservation tasks over a network of care.⁵¹ Global reach and immateriality are also difficult to pinpoint when looking at the methods of web archiving because this details only a method not where the information is stored or its accessibility. For instance the Internet Archive offers a large selection of archived websites that have been gathered by remote harvesting on their platform the Way Back Machine.⁵² It could be said that these archived webpages still have global reach and that they still have a myth of immateriality about them as they still exist online. Yet counter to this the same method of remote harvesting could be used and the information could be downloaded to a hard drive giving it limited accessibility and no global reach. Thus, these three characteristics will be put aside when comparing these four methods to one another. Instead the remaining characteristic will be joined by 3 other aspects that are important to examine when looking at the feasibility and resemblance to the “original” that is possible by these methods of conservation (see Table 1). That is generativeness and ongoing conservation resources required such as time and funding. The generative aspect of a work indicates whether the result of the conservation treatment is still able to produce content an aspect that is important in many works of internet art. Lastly, resources required looks at the funds and time needed to execute the conservation treatment and retain the result.

Conservation Approaches	Database Archiving	Remote Harvesting	Transactional Archiving	Web Maintenance
Characteristics:				
Interactivity	-	+	+	+
Connectivity	-	-	-	+
Multimediality	+	-	+	+
Generative	-	-	-	+
Resources:				
Funds	+	+	+	-
Time	-	+	+	-

Table 1-Chart detailing the success of each conservation approach: + indicates successful and – indicates unsuccessful.

By looking at the chart it is clear to see that when it comes to retaining a resemblance to the “original” and the intention of the artist web maintenance is by far the most successful. As in this case the “original” is simply maintained in its native habitat and none of the characteristics are therefore lost.

Yet this approach has an ongoing demand on time and funds that artists or institutions, if it is acquired, may be unprepared for. Unlike the traditional “museum object” which can stand a degree of benign neglect internet art, like other types of time-based media art, becomes more difficult to restore and retrieve the longer it is left without maintenance. In Ben Fino-Radin’s online paper concerning digital preservation practices at the Rhizome Artbase he discusses the case of Golan Levin’s *Floccus*, an applet designed to either run as an individual piece of software or an element to be embedded in a web page. Seven years after its original creation in 1999 it was found to no longer run on contemporary computer systems.⁵³ The artist recreated the applet in a new format and then embedded it in his site again but only a few years later the applet was

⁵¹Ibid, 88.

⁵² “Internet Archive,” internet archive, accessed 15 June 2019, <https://archive.org/>

⁵³ Ben Fino-Radin, *Digital Preservation Practices and the Rhizome Artbase* (New York: Rhizome at The New Museum), <http://media.rhizome.org/blog/8332/rhizome-digital-preservation-practices.pdf>.

found to be defunct once more. The artist found that the 32 bit system that the piece had been compiled on had been traded in for a standardized 64 bit system instead.⁵⁴ This case study shows the ongoing conservation needs displayed by works that inhabit the net, where restoration acts simply as a short-term band aid in the face of obsolescence.

So, faced with these methods of documentation and the ongoing conservation needs presented by traditional methods of web maintenance where does that leave institutions that either own or want to acquire a work of internet art? With the generally slow acquisition of internet art by institutions *mouchette.org-Version 01* which was acquired by the Stedelijk in 2016 offers a unique case to examine what these different approaches to conservation might mean within an institution.

Chapter 2-Case Study: Martine Neddams *Mouchette.org-Version 01* (2016)

"I didn't remember Bresson's film very well at the moment I got this girl character. The name was free, you know? Most names I was thinking of were taken. And I remembered this name of a little girl from a film, it was a vision of a little girl character who is not all pink and sweet. It was a very dark film and I like that dark aspect connected to young girls."⁵⁵ Thus, with the deliberation over a name for a character in the virtual reality, MOO, begins the internet artist, Martine Neddams, ongoing 20 plus year project, *Mouchette.org*. This chapter will introduce the artist and trace the life of the website *Mouchette.org* alongside the history of the web; touching briefly on how technological innovations impacted the understanding of the work. It will examine the case study that will form the core of this thesis, *Mouchette.org-Version 01*, introducing how it entered the Stedelijk collection and what components it is comprised of. The issues with what was acquired and the questions it raises, and that this thesis hopes to address, will follow.

2.1 Artist: Martine Neddams

Neddams studied linguistics in Lyon followed by a class in stage design, the influence of both which can be seen across the span of her artistic career.⁵⁶ In her early works she often focused on how to create art with words that could be brought into the public space. This often took the form of speech acts, notions of address and text banners, like *Connard* (1991), purchased by the Museum Helmond in 1991 (See Figure 1).⁵⁷ In these works she investigated text and the public's reaction to it as in this specific case by addressing the Dutch viewer with a French swear word. By using French beyond the borders of France she exoticizes herself and the word creating an innate intimacy with those who understand the banner's message. An intimacy which is immediately thrown off by the word's aggressive meaning.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Michael Conner, "A Girl Made of Language," About Mouchette, accessed 17 May 2019, <http://about.mouchette.org/a-girl-made-of-language/>.

⁵⁶ Martine Neddams, "Martine Neddams-About," Wordpress, accessed 6 June 2019, <https://www.neddams.info/about/>.

⁵⁷ Martine Neddams, interview by Karen Archey, Gert Hoogeveen, Tjerk Busstra, and Jeanette Bisschops, October 30, 2017, interview, transcript.



Figure 1-*Connard* (1991) in the collection of Museum Helmond

Source: Martine Neddham, "Museum Helmond," Martine Neddham, accessed 16 June 2019, <https://www.neddham.info/museum-helmond/>

Words also formed the backbone and provided meaning for her sculptural works created on public commission. In 1993 she designed *La Scala* for the theater De Meerse in Hoofddorp.⁵⁸ The depiction of a ladder composed of neon tubing lit up the sky from the top of the theater creating a ladder of words into infinity (see Figure 2). The title of the work inspired by the famous theater in Milan of the same name translates to ladder in English and further into scale from the French word for ladder, l'échelle. This last translation promoting the idea of perspective, of objects moving from small to smaller until vanishing.⁵⁹



Figure 2- *La Scala* (1993) commissioned by De Meerse

Source: Martine Neddham, "La Scala," Martine Neddham, accessed 16 June 2019, <https://www.neddham.info/public-commissions/>

⁵⁸ "La Scala," Martine Neddham, accessed 10 June 2019, <https://www.neddham.info/la-scala/>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

This object-ness had well and truly vanished with the introduction of the internet. The internet provided the ideal stage that Martine had been looking for, one where a performance could remain live and present around the clock and, even better, where the keyboard provided the public a voice with which to react to her artworks. On the internet she could embrace her love of linguistics and create virtual characters that literally were composed of words i.e. code. An important aspect of these online personas was the anonymity of Neddham herself which allowed the artist to play with the concept of identity. How would the viewer understand the website if they believed its author to be a 45-year-old man versus a 13-year-old girl? A good example of this is her net artwork David Still created in 2001 in which a hypothetical David Still offers up his identity to any visitor of the site.⁶⁰ Yet above all these characters functioned as tools by which to communicate with and engage the public. This is not more obvious than with the ongoing conversation offered for the last 20 plus years by Neddham's first and most memorable internet work, *Mouchette.org*.

2.2 The evolution of *Mouchette.org*

In 1992 Neddham was allowed to use a computer from a university with which she was teaching herself how to do photoshop. A skill that was very handy in visualizing proposals for large scale public commission projects.⁶¹ This access to a computer allowed her to become active on the internet, even before it became a visual medium in 1993, and become involved on the text only virtual reality, MOO.⁶² It was in MOO that Neddham first explored the character of Mouchette and discovered her love for that element of participation that this platform made possible. In her own words, "It was a space for creation and participation at the same time. You could reprogram parts of the MOO itself. That was really the founding experience for me. It took me some time to make something for the web because it didn't have that participatory element."⁶³ Neddham was warmed to the idea by the development of the, often times kitschy, personal home page.⁶⁴ Presented with a small moment in the birth of the browsers in which an editor was included Neddham was finally able to write her first webpages resulting in the introduction of the character Mouchette to the world of the web in 1996.⁶⁵ Yet to maintain the element of participation that she had first fell in love with in MOO Neddham created an email interface to which visitors to the site could contribute answers to questions supplied by the character Mouchette.

The year of 1994 had offered the first internet server providers, but browsers alone could not make sense of the large amount of information that was available on the web.⁶⁶ At this time users were surfing the web by jumping from link to link so visits to *Mouchette.org* were less common because you either had to stumble upon it or know the URI. This allowed a more personal connection with participants, Neddham describes collecting each answer to Mouchette's queries by email and then rewriting them into HTML pages to post, but then in 1999 search

⁶⁰ Martine Neddham, "Martine Neddham-About," Wordpress, accessed 6 June 2019, <https://www.neddham.info/about/>.

⁶¹ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

⁶² Jon Ippolito, "Ten Myths of Internet Art," *Leonardo* 35, no. 5 (2002): 485.

⁶³ Michael Conner, "A Girl Made of Language," About Mouchette, accessed 17 May 2019, <http://about.mouchette.org/a-girl-made-of-language/>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

⁶⁶ Julian Stallabrass, *Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), 19.

engines exploded.⁶⁷ There was no longer an element of chance in whether someone visited the site or not it could be searched for directly and visitors were coming to the site en masse. Changing in effect also the way that visitors interacted and accessed the work. It was at this point that some elements of the work also had to be improved collecting each email and rewriting them in HTML was no longer feasible. In 1999 the artist working with a programmer created the early version of what was to become the automated database at the core of the work.⁶⁸

2.3 *Mouchette.org*

Visitors to *Mouchette.org* today are still greeted by the innocent overture that greeted visitors at the site's inauguration, "My name is Mouchette. I live in Amsterdam. I am nearly 13 years old. I am an artist. May I invite you? (See Figure 3)."⁶⁹ Yet delving further into its pages *Mouchette.org* instantly takes on a darker character. Based originally on the novel *Mouchette* by Georges Bernanos and the movie by the same name directed by Robert Bresson, about a young impoverished girl in rural France, the work addresses themes of alienation, death, sexuality and suicide.⁷⁰ An html drop-down menu on the first page offers access to a series of further pages that bear the names of projects like *My Last Birthday Party*, *Lullaby for a Dead Fly*, *Wattlechick*, and *Dead fly*. Many of these pages beg for the visitor to interact with them as in *Dead Fly* where a fly labeled simply with "me" buzzes over a backdrop formed by a dinner plate and two hands (See Figure 4)⁷¹. If by some masterful act the visitor manages to click on the "me" button on the fly the screen goes black and the sounds of a crying girl fills the room. Letter by green letter a message is spelled out on the black background that abuses the viewer for clicking buttons without first understanding what they do and saying that now the girl is dead. It then asks the viewer, "BUT HOW CAN I WRITE THIS SINCE I'M DEAD?? TELL ME!!"⁷² Prompting the viewer to submit their answer to this question and provide their name and email address. The answers of which are stored in the website's database and are published on the *Lullaby for a Dead Fly* page where they slowly pan by as mournful dirge plays in the background (see Figure 5).⁷³

⁶⁷ Michael Conner, "A Girl Made of Language," About Mouchette, accessed 17 May 2019, <http://about.mouchette.org/a-girl-made-of-language/>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Martine Neddham, "My name is Mouchette," Mouchette, accessed 25 February 2019, mouchette.org.

⁷⁰ Georges Bernanos, *Mouchette* (New York: New York Review, 2006).

⁷¹ Martine Neddham, "Dead Fly," Mouchette, accessed 11 June 2019, <http://mouchette.org/fly/index.html>.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Martine Neddham, "Lullaby for a Dead Fly," Mouchette, accessed 11 June 2019, <http://mouchette.org/fly/flyies.html>.

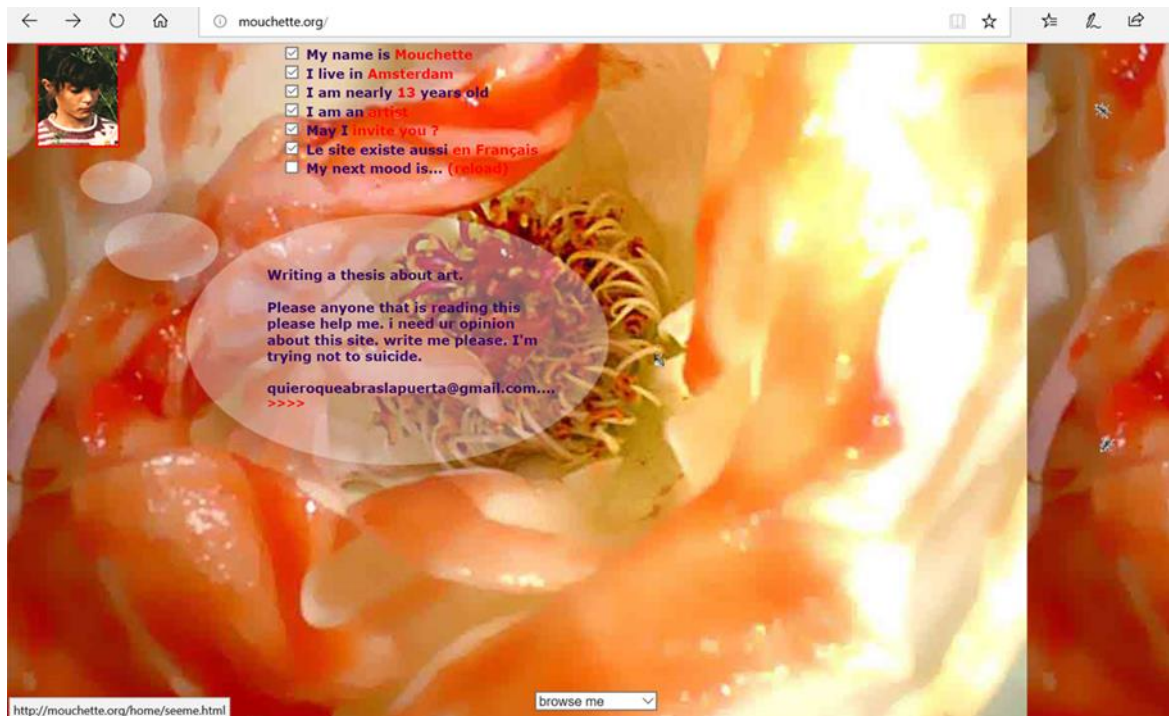


Figure 3-Screenshot of opening page of Mouchette.org

Source: Martine Neddham, "My name is Mouchette," Mouchette, accessed 25 February 2019, mouchette.org.

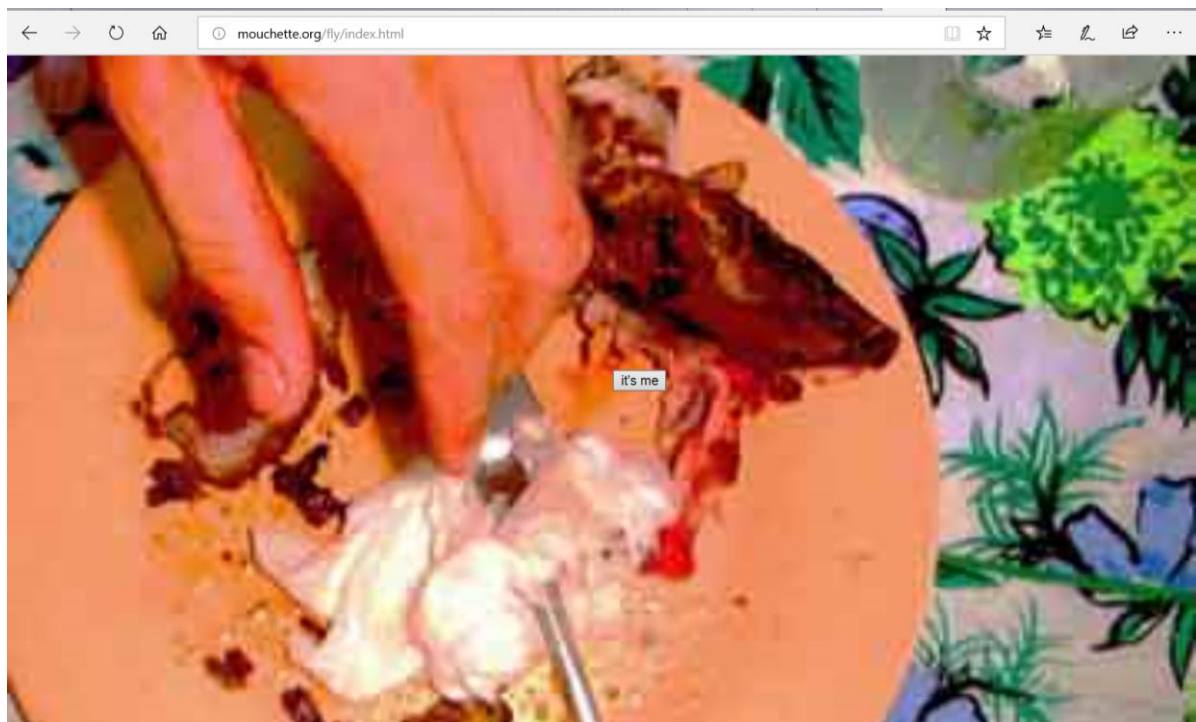


Figure 4-Screenshot of *Dead Fly*

Source: Martine Neddham, "Dead Fly," Mouchette, accessed 16 February 2019, mouchette.org.

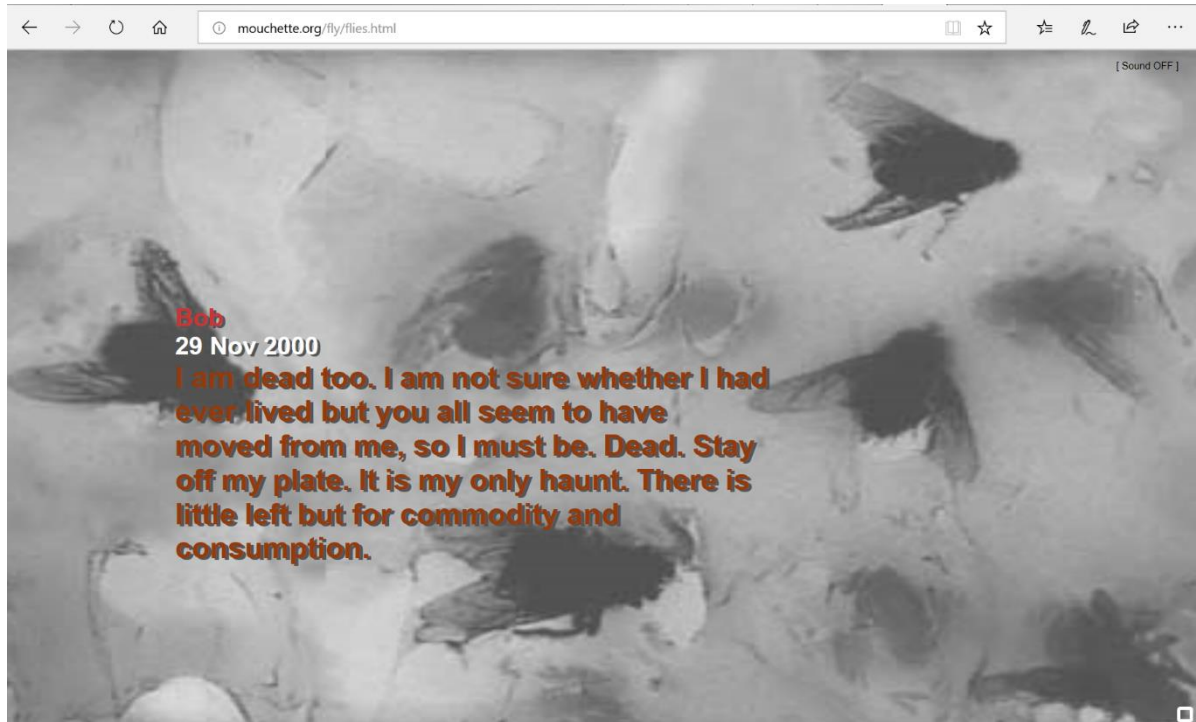


Figure 5-Screenshot of *Lullaby for a Dead Fly*

Source: Martine Neddham, "Lullaby for a Dead Fly," Mouchette, accessed 16 June 2019, mouchette.org/fly/flyies.html.

By providing their email address the participant opens another aspect of the narrative and expands the conversation between Mouchette and themselves. For example, if the visitor clicks on "invite you?" in Mouchette's opening introduction they are whisked off to a page that asks, "Would you like to have a private encounter with Mouchette?" and then where it prompts the viewer for their name and email once again.⁷⁴ What ensues two days later after entering one's email address is a three-part narrative prompted by the artist through the website's email interface. The first email "come to see me!" offers links that bring the viewer to three different webpages that can only be viewed once (see Figure 6). After they have been viewed the links only offer a blank beige backdrop with the text, "the page you are looking for is not here you will never see it again."⁷⁵ All emails "come to see me!," "I want to see you again!," and the final email, "finally together," sent by the artist when the email interface registers that the first email has been opened, address the participant by name the intimacy of which the artist admits has been challenged by its contemporary use in spam.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Martine Neddham, "Would you like to have a private encounter with Mouchette?" Mouchette, accessed 11 June 2019, <http://mouchette.org/to/you/only/private.html>.

⁷⁵ Martine Neddham, "The page you are looking for is not here you will never see it again," Mouchette, accessed 11 June 2019, <http://mouchette.org/to/you/noway.html>.

⁷⁶ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

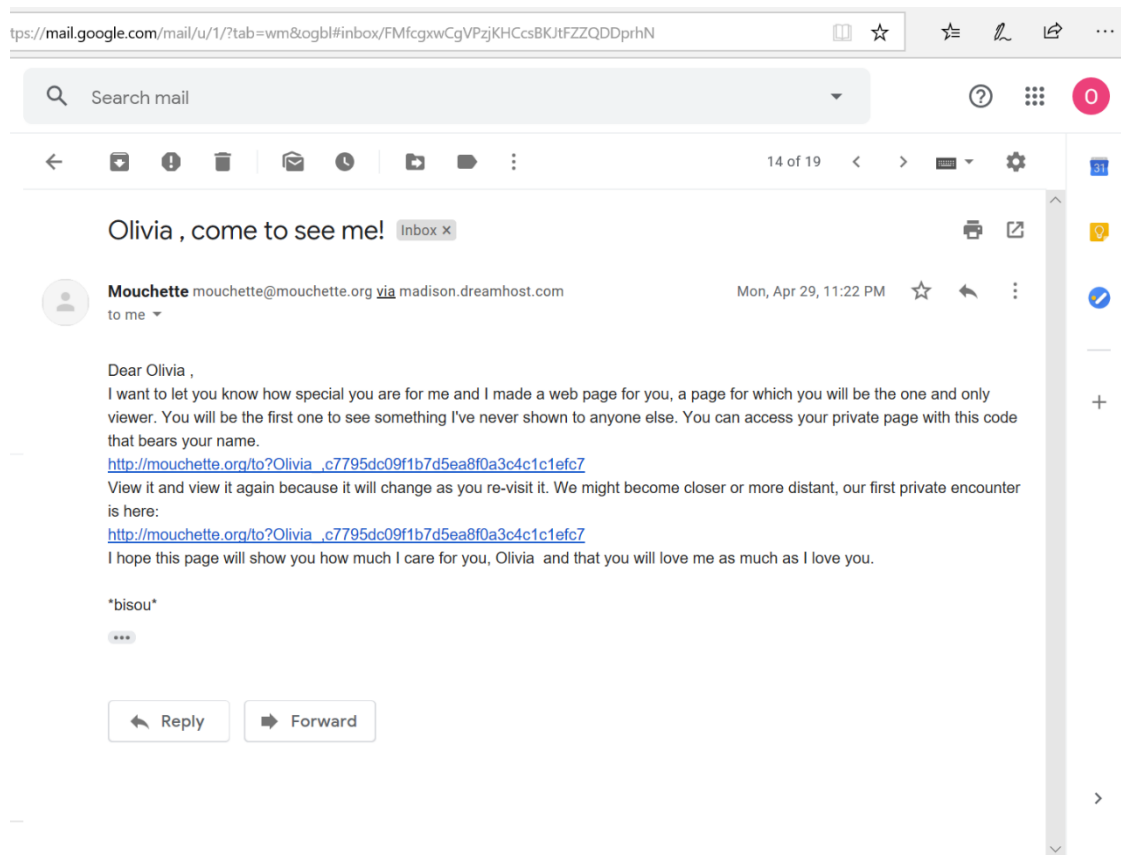


Figure 6-Screenshot of 1st part of email narrative, “Come to See Me!”

Source: Mouchette, email message to author, 29 April 2019.

To make matters more complicated, many of the pages that make up the website represent projects that also existed first in real life. The artist describes this aspect of the work by saying, “I live in my studio which means it could happen at night or...so it was not separated from my personal life. So I mixed it. I often mixed it with the work of Martine Neddham.”⁷⁷ For her the work was so much a part of her everyday life that it made sense when possible to make the work exist beyond the net but always with a reference to it. An example of this is *Last Birthday Party* which took place on December 14th 2001.⁷⁸ Prior to the event Neddham, who was still anonymous at the time, sent out both paper and online invitations inviting people to join her in celebrating by watching a moderated performance of all the works of her favorite internet artists.⁷⁹ Guests attending expecting to finally meet the elusive Mouchette were confronted with another element that was common for Neddham’s early performances that of the fake reveal. Instead of Mouchette they were met by internet artist, Peter Luining, who claimed to be Mouchette for the duration of the evening.⁸⁰ She commemorated the evening by creating a web page of the same name that stated, “My_Last_birthday_Party is a net.art group show which took place in Amsterdam in De Balie, on the 14th of December 2001, and will happen again in other places of the world in 2002, 2003, and forever. It’s my last birthday party before I commit suicide. Everytime the last one

⁷⁷ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

⁷⁸ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 76.

⁷⁹ Karin De Wild, “Internet Art and Agency: The Social Lives of Online Artworks,” (PhD diss., University of Dundee, 2019).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

again.”⁸¹ She would not reveal herself until May 2009 when she was invited by the Maison de Métallos, along with a number of other French artists, to reflect on her career on the net.⁸²

With her acceptance of *mouchette.org*’s authorship the way was paved for the purchase of the work and she was approached by the MOTI Museum Breda in 2016.⁸³ The MOTI Museum knew that it was slated to become the Stedelijk Museum Breda in only a matter of time and had a set amount of money and the opportunity to acquire works that would by default become part of one of the largest modern art collections in the Netherlands. Ward Janssen, the curator of the MOTI museum, working together with its director, Mieke Gerritzen, put together a list of important digital media works with many of them happening to be by Dutch artists, of which Martine Neddam was included. When the final list was decided upon Janssen approached the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, along with Gerritzen who knew the Stedelijk’s current head of collections well, and proposed, in view of the MOTI becoming the Stedelijk Museum Breda, a joint purchase of this suite of works. The Stedelijk accepted, so the artists were contacted to be interviewed and a list was created that compared the options of what the museum could acquire regarding each work. This list avoided creating a hierarchy but instead examined the ways in which a work could accurately be represented and appreciated from numerous viewpoints. No option was seen as the highest ideal not even the live version which in Janssen’s words, “...would render the core of the work functioning throughout time, throughout digital technological environments, of lesser importance.” Even a screenshot of a website while considered an inactive version of a work could in terms of this analysis, given a certain exhibition function become a more valuable representation, displaying a more accurate image of how a work was experienced when it was first created.⁸⁴

At this point in the process Annet Dekker was hired by Janssen as a conservation consultant to work specifically with Neddam on how to acquire *mouchette.org*. Neddam had initially put forward the suggestion to purchase a part of the website or an individual project that had clearer boundaries, for instance her flash projects such as *To be or not to be Mouchette* or compiling some parts of the database, yet the institution insisted on purchasing *mouchette.org* in its entirety.⁸⁵ Since a decision that would please all parties could not be initially reached, Neddam proposed the idea of transferring the work to the institution in stages. The first stage would consist of transferring a version of the website and the second stage would consist of handing over the participatory aspects of the artwork.⁸⁶

When the MOTI Museum finally shut its doors for good the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam received a signed contract and *mouchette.org-Version 01* which consisted of the following:

HTTP content of the domain name time stamped 10 January 2017 (see Appendix II Download Log)
→For mouchette.org
→For Ihatemouchette.org

⁸¹ Martine Neddam, “My Last Birthday Party,” Mouchette, accessed 11 June 2019, <http://mouchette.org/birthday/index.html>.

⁸² Karin De Wild, “Internet Art and Agency: The Social Lives of Online Artworks,” (PhD diss., University of Dundee, 2019).

⁸³ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 92.

⁸⁴ Ward Janssen (MOTI curator) in discussion with the author, 3 June 2019.

⁸⁵ Martine Neddam (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

⁸⁶ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 93.

- For *mouchette.net*
- For *aboutmouchette.org* and more
- Zip file of all files hosted on MySQL server time stamped 6 February 2017
- Database of *mouchette.org*
- Database of *lhatemouchette.org*
- Database of *mouchette.net*
- Media materials representing the workings and online visitor experience
- Screenshots
- Publications
- PDF materials from catalogues
- Video Captures (some by Rhizome)
- Ongoing licensing approval for presentation of the live version of *Mouchette.org*
- All files stored in *Mouchette* root folder⁸⁷

Basically, what was acquired was a data dump, given the correct server environment the database and content management system could be installed once more. In which case, the websites *mouchette.org*, *lhatemouchette.org*, *mouchette.net* and *aboutmouchette.org* as they were on January 10th 2017 could then hypothetically be run again. Other information supplied in the acquisition provides context as to how the website has functioned since its origin. In screenshots and video captures it shows how the website has grown project by project and adapted to new technologies as seen through the visitor's eye. Also provided with the acquisition was a clause in the contract allowing the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam when it exhibits the work to present the live version of *Mouchette.org* as it has been maintained by Neddham.⁸⁸

2.4 Issues

Not only was *Mouchette.org* included in the purchase as has been described above all websites created by Neddham which bore what she describes as the Mouchette "brand" were included such as *lhatemouchette.org*, *aboutmouchette.org*, and *mouchette.net*. Yet besides an initial interview with Karen Archey, Curator of Contemporary Art and Time-based Media, Gert Hoogeveen, Head of Audiovisuals Department, Tjerk Busstra, Art Handler Audiovisual, and Jeanette Bisschops, Freelance Curatorial Assistant of Time-based Media, no further conversation was had about what the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam had acquired and what the expectation was from the artist to deliver the participatory elements, and if that was even still expected now that the work had changed hands.⁸⁹ This lack of further conversation concerning *mouchette.org-Version 01*, and what exactly Neddham was supposed to deliver as the participatory elements of the website blur the line between the live website, *mouchette.org*, and the frozen time stamped *mouchette.org-Version 01*. Which became even more evident in the course of the interviews that make up this thesis. Due to the nature of the acquisition and the current state of affairs information gaps have appeared all over the network of parties associated with the work contributing to the fact that all of the stakeholders interviewed appeared to have a different opinion concerning what exactly the relationship is between *mouchette.org-Version 01* and *mouchette.org*. Making it unclear whether the purchase of *mouchette.org-Version 01* makes the institution also responsible for the maintenance and longevity of the live version, *mouchette.org*, to some degree or if this

⁸⁷ Martine Neddham, email message to author, 8 June 2019.

⁸⁸ Ward Janssen (MOTI curator) in discussion with the author, 3 June 2019.

⁸⁹ Martine Neddham, interview by Karen Archey, Gert Hoogeveen, Tjerk Busstra, and Jeanette Bisschops, October 30, 2017, interview, transcript.

acquisition could turn into a full out purchase of the website especially in the event of the artist's death.

Issues also lie with what was acquired by the MOTI Museum Breda and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. What they acquired consists of scripts harvested from the client-side that compose the user interface, the part the visitor experiences when the webpage is loaded, as well as a database archive in the form of an extraction of a MySQL database which contains a lot of the dynamic content, for example the alternate webpages that interchange in place of the introductory page (see Figure 7). As well as all of the comments submitted by visitors to the site up until the date that it was extracted on February 6th 2017.⁹⁰ It keeps its multimodality in this way but it loses its connectivity, its interactivity and worst of all in Neddham's opinion its ability to continue to generate new content. In short what the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam owns is the closest thing to a website without it being a website. As Neddham stated in our first interview about the acquisition, "Okay so saying that she was acquired is a bit weird because I still have her," and even more essentially all the knowledge that entails.⁹¹

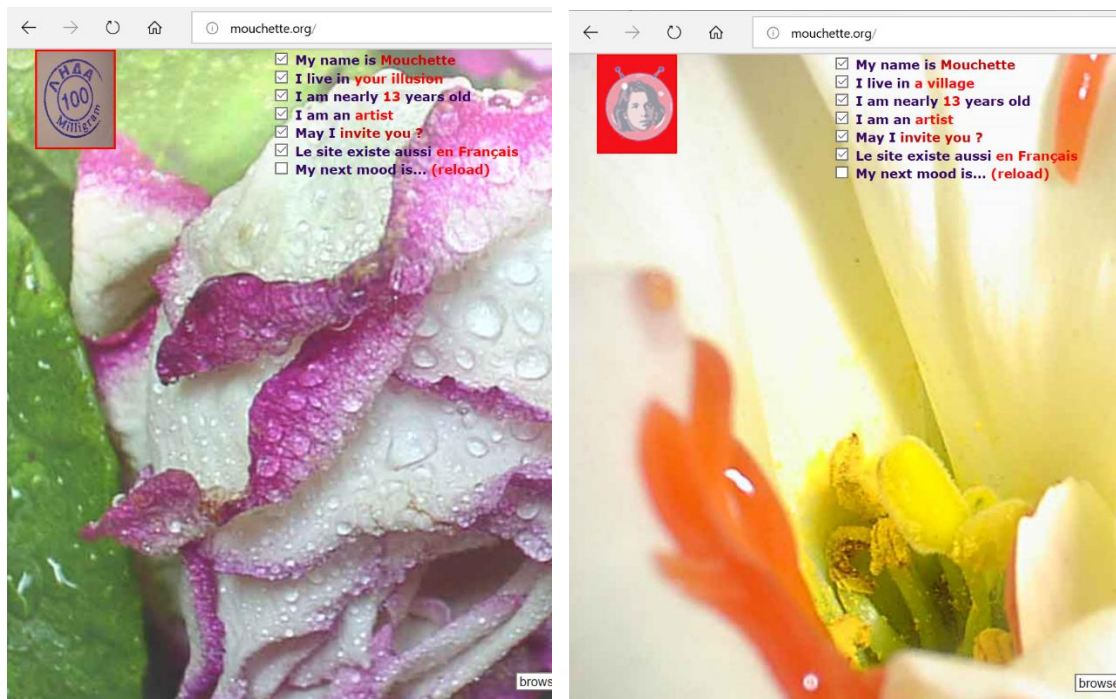


Figure 7-Screenshot of alternate opening pages of Mouchette.org

Source: Martine Neddham, "My Name is Mouchette," Mouchette, accessed 16 June 2019, mouchette.org/

Chapter 3-Maintaining *Mouchette.org*

To clarify her approach to maintaining *mouchette.org* Neddham offered a metaphor ironically based on a monster composed of "found" parts brought to life once more, "It was very significant that the monster born of body parts found in churchyards was an unnamed creature and yet now its named and it took over the name of its (creator)...When we think of Frankenstein we don't think of the scientist. We think of the creature."⁹² As the story describes Neddham's approach to conservation involves maintaining the accessibility, in the case of the metaphor, keeping *Frankenstein* in print, but allowing the work to continue to grow and take on its own meaning as

⁹⁰ Martine Neddham, email message to author, 8 June 2019.

⁹¹ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

⁹² Ibid.

provided by its audience's interpretation. It is important to examine it here as the "live" version informs what was acquired without which the ownership of *mouchette.org-Version 01* becomes simply the ownership of a "frozen" object. This chapter will describe Neddham's approach to website maintenance which she coins as "generative conservation," and it provides a concise idea of how Neddham moderates the site, look at its weakest points and how some of its pages have been restored. Then lastly it will examine the documentation that Neddham had begun to compose with her past assistant, Nikos Voyiatzis, concerning the tasks she does on a daily basis to keep *mouchette.org* interactive.

3.1 "Generative Conservation"

The concept of "Generative Conservation" that Neddham has developed to describe the work that she does on *Mouchette.org* to keep it alive is a variation on web-maintenance. It concerns providing ongoing care that allows a website to remain live and to continue to generate content. An aspect that Neddham describes as the most important part of the work describing the contributions to the database by visitors to the site as, "micro-poems."⁹³ As part of a presentation for *Besides the Screen* at King's College, London, she described some of the tasks that she completes regularly in filing her role as defacto conservator. She describes paying the webhost, re-registering the domain name, tasks that are normally associated with maintaining a website, but then she delves into the specifics of her role in conserving *mouchette* and it becomes clear that her idea of generative conservation also relies heavily on this concept of changing as little as possible to remain interactive and yet the same.⁹⁴ Custom interfaces that were created between 1999 and 2004 are still utilized on the website which only the artist at this point knows how to utilize and "patches" are regularly applied to the code to translate the "original" code into new settings.⁹⁵ Making it clear that although the artist rebels against the idea of authenticity there is a line between what must be preserved, for instance the custom interfaces, and what is allowed to change and continue to generate, such as the adding of new pages. The knowledge of where this line exists can begin to be understood by what conservation tasks the artist executes and those that she authorizes through her programmers. They provide a glimpse into the artist's intentions for the work and put in sharp contrast *mouchette.org* and *mouchette.org-Version 01* begging the question of what exactly the relationship between the two is and how internet art can exist in an institution.

3.2 Preservation

Preservation describes the idea of completing tasks to keep an artwork or the components that make up an artwork in as close a state to the "original" as possible. The preservation tasks that Neddham deems important and implements on the work on a regular basis, point to what the artist recognizes as the historicity of the work. At the heart of this is the domain name *mouchette.org* which Neddham renews herself every couple years.⁹⁶ It not only provides the name to the work but also functions as the term by which it is remembered and relayed by its audience. Neddham's virtual character Mouchette leaves her name not only in the domain name of the main website but also in all the websites that surround *Mouchette.org* such as *Ihatemouchette.org*, *mouchette.net*, *Ilovemouchette.org* and *aboutmouchette.org*. These projects Neddham considers

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Martine Neddham, "Besides the Screen," *Mouchette*, accessed 16 June 2019, <http://about.mouchette.org/besides-the-screen/>

⁹⁵ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 86.

⁹⁶ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

all to be part of the output of *Mouchette.org* describing them as a “brand.”⁹⁷ A brand can be defined as an element that “...identifies a product and differentiates it from its competitors” and in the case of a website often exists in the domain name.⁹⁸ Neddham also recognizes it’s importance in the early history of *Mouchette.org* when she first moved into the domain name, “...I first started without the domain name because (I had a) space that was in my XS4ALL account. I had a space, an online space, which I could use and maybe it was the only time when I modified the organization of the website and re-arranged the files, and then I never did it again because I was aware that people kept the links.”⁹⁹ By examining this it can begin to be seen how detrimental to the meaning of the work the loss of the domain name could be.

In her book *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* Dekker examines other instances in which preservation proves the importance of elements of the work to the artist’s intention. Examining in depth Neddham’s attachment to the original code and software used she likens the act of programming to painting, drawing conclusions that point to how the code can show the artist’s touch in a medium that most recognize as immaterial. In this way, writing styles may differ especially depending on from whom a programmer may have learned.¹⁰⁰ Not only this but the code can also display elements of the artist’s intention that may not have been realizable based on current handicaps in technology.¹⁰¹ Neddham holds onto this idea in the adjusting of the code in its current language (PHP4) where possible and the continued use of the custom-made interfaces and the old mailing list manager even though they have now contributed to daily labor for the artist as in her words “...some of it (serves as) witnesses of another time...”¹⁰²

3.2.1 Managing Failed Automatisms and Manual Functions

As *Mouchette.org* has grown up organically around the needs of the artist, components were made specifically for it and for it alone such as the custom-made interface and mailing list manager. Even though they have been maintained to the best of the artist’s ability being now 15 plus years old some of the automatisms have begun to fail requiring the artist to manually prompt them or provide corrections.¹⁰³ For instance, when a visitor submits their name and email to the form that asks, “Would you like to have a private encounter with Mouchette?” (an element of the work that was briefly described in the **Case Study Section**) the artist receives the participants name and email in the php mailing list manager.¹⁰⁴ As described in the **Definition Section**, this data is received from the server and the php mailing list manager queries the database for the correct template needed for each level of the narrative.¹⁰⁵ The system was originally set up to send the 1st email beginning the narrative within two days but now no longer works and the emails must be sent by hand.¹⁰⁶ When the first email has been received by the

⁹⁷ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 76.

⁹⁸ “Brand,” Business Dictionary, accessed 19 June 2019, <http://businessdictionary.com/definition/brand.html>.

⁹⁹ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 82.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 83.

¹⁰² Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Martine Neddham, email message to author, 24 April 2019.

¹⁰⁵ “How to make Web Form,” JavaScriptCoder.com, accessed 15 June 2019, <http://javascript-coder.com/html-form/how-to-make-a-form.phtml>.

¹⁰⁶ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

participant and the hyperlinks opened it is registered as a count of 1 in the far-right column of the php mailing list manager (see Figure 8). At this point sometimes the system will then automatically upgrade the level indicator, as it was intended to, indicating that the 2nd email has been sent and other times it will not. This requires the artist to check whether it has been sent and if not, conduct this part manually and so on for the 3rd part of the narrative.¹⁰⁷

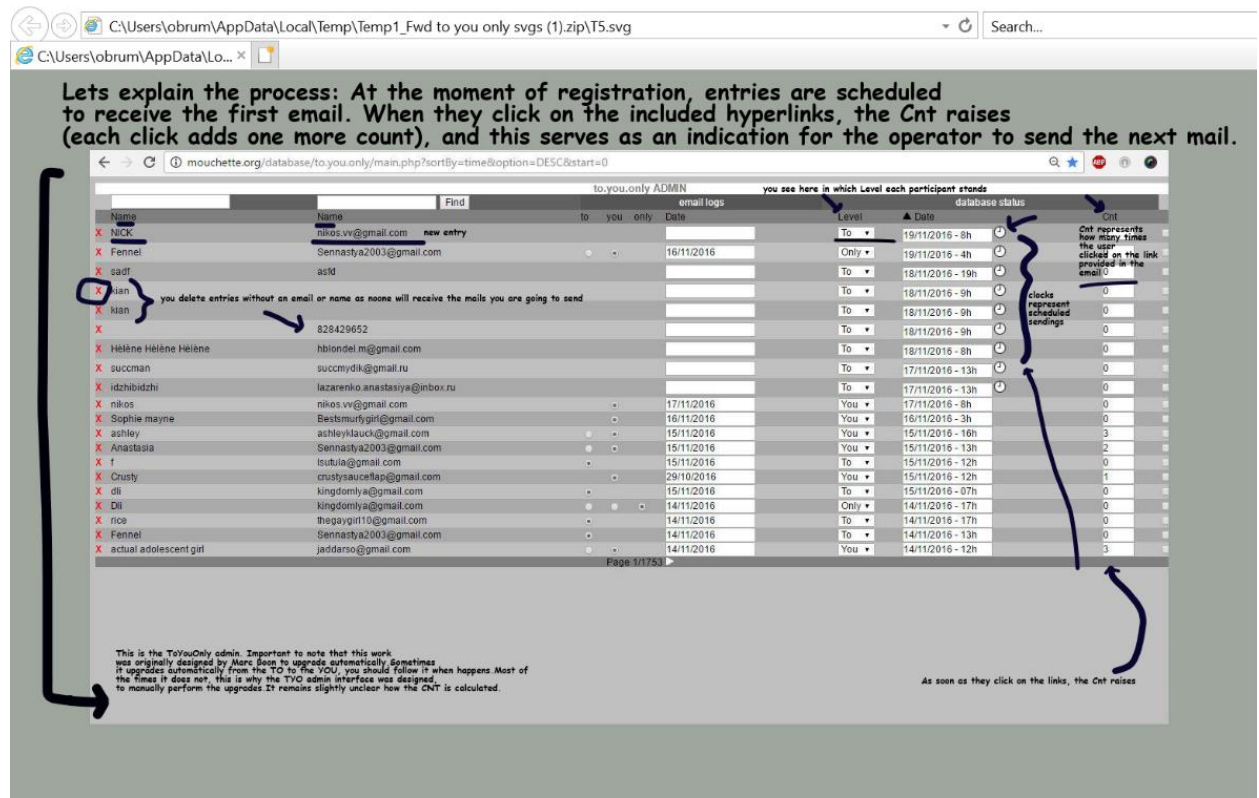


Figure 8-Screenshot of SVG detailing count mechanism

Source: Martine Neddham, email message to author, 24 April 2019.

Other failed automatisms and manual labor revolve around the custom interface on the php database browser. Submissions are received from participants that submit answers to any of the many forms that populate the site such as for the *Suicide Kit* or for *Kill that Cat* and then a moderator is required to manually approve and publish each submission which the artist does on the basis of the *Suicide Kit* every two weeks.¹⁰⁸ Submissions not utilizing the Roman Alphabet also pose problems as they do not automatically retain their native character set instead sustaining a glitch in the publishing process and appearing in gibberish on the page. This requires the artist to go through and manually change each submission in Korean, Russian or you name it into the Roman alphabet before it can be published (see Figure 9).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Martine Neddham, email message to author, 24 April 2019.

¹⁰⁸ Martine Neddham, "Besides the Screen," Mouchette, accessed 16 June 2019, <http://about.mouchette.org/besides-the-screen/>

¹⁰⁹ Nikos Voyiatzis, "SVG cat-checking svgs in blog" (Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddham, 6 February 2017).

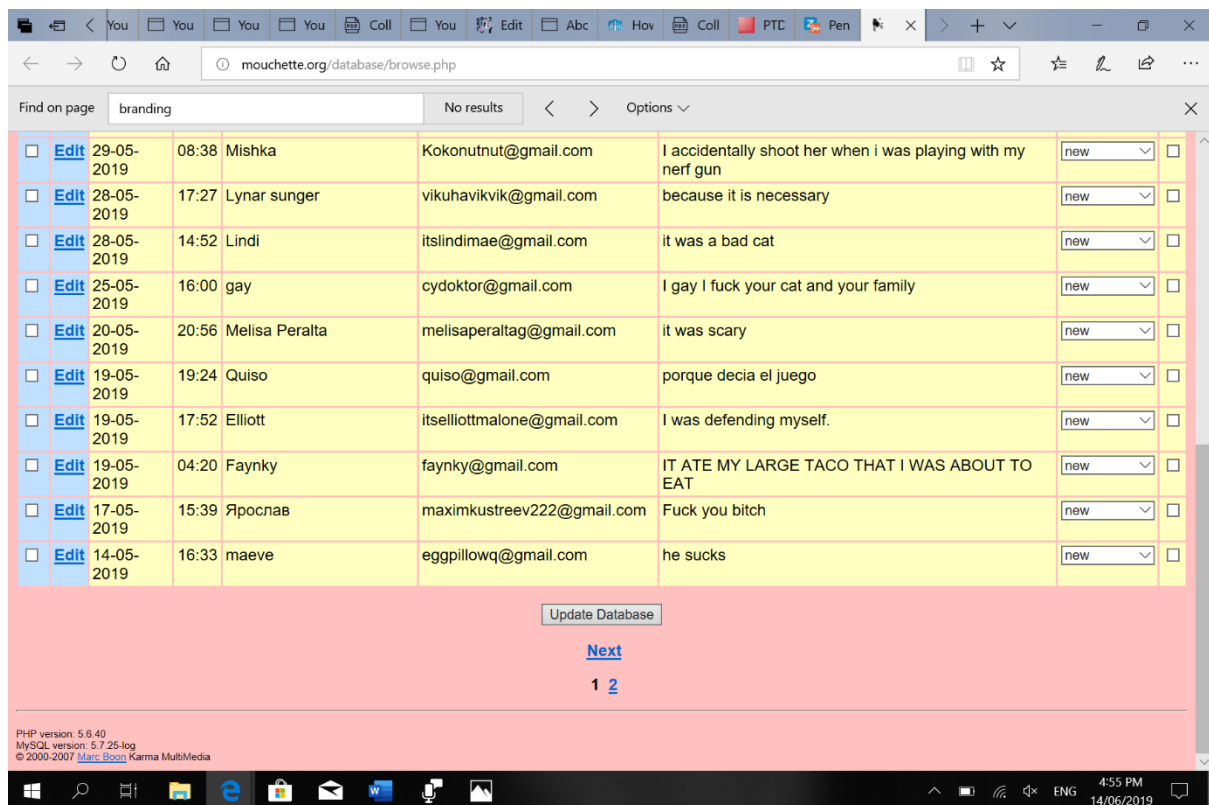


Figure 9-Screenshot of content management system with Russian text that needs to be corrected for posting

Source: Martine Neddham, "Database Browser," Mouchette, accessed 17 June 2019, mouchette.org/database/browse.php

3.2.2 Avoiding the Blacklist

The artist also takes great care to continue to utilize the mailing list manager the way it was intended to be used, opting against more up to date email interfaces that keep in line with new security policies. She states instead, "The rule for the mail have changed so much and just implementing the sort of cookie system and the DPS for my personal website. It would be so crazy to try and implement it here..."¹¹⁰ With the implementation of spam filters, a software routine that diverts incoming spam into your "junk" box, or firewalls, that provide protection from unauthorized access to private networks, it is easier for email addresses to end up on the blacklist.¹¹¹ Of which Neddham states she is sure she is now on a couple of blacklists and has to constrain the number of emails she sends at a time to be below a certain number not to be flagged as spam.¹¹² There are three main types of blacklists: enterprise spam firewalls, private blacklists and public blacklists. The last is the only one that is publicly available and can be checked directly. For the other's Neddham relies on bouncing emails, which she documents, to inform her.¹¹³ Once on a blacklist though there is not much that can be done in terms of requesting to be removed and yet Neddham states, "But I think in some way...it's interesting to keep that on. To keep some memory of the old uses. Also narratively people, even when they put

¹¹⁰ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

¹¹¹ "Definition of spam filter," PC, accessed 17 June 2016, <https://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia/term/51792/spam-filter>

¹¹² Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

¹¹³ Nikos Voyiatzis, "a closer investigation into BOUNCING EMAILS" (Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddham, 4 February 2018).

a fake email, sometimes I don't delete it because this fake email is a piece of the narration. (It) has a story."¹¹⁴ All of these technological elements on which the website is built even as they age and the environment of the web changes around them, they continue to contribute to the narrative and the meaning of the work.

3.2.3 Addressing Infections

Yet the use of old software also makes the work more susceptible to infections, hackers, and malware of which Neddham works tirelessly with her programmer to protect it against. In 2016 Dreamhost, the server, on which all of the works are hosted was compromised and *about.mouchette.org*, part of the Stedelijk acquisition of *mouchette.org-Version 01* was hacked.¹¹⁵ The malware changed not only a lot of the code supporting the site but spammers were also recording links to malicious media, and creating content on the website that was not supposed to be there (see Figure 10).¹¹⁶ To begin to handle the attack the vulnerability that the hackers had exploited had to be identified to prevent another attack happening by the same gap in defenses.¹¹⁷ David Jonas, Neddham's programmer, hypothesized after the attack that it was likely the code that serves the site which was at fault because unlike the server operating system it isn't necessarily updated.¹¹⁸ What was then required was an extensive clean-up of the website including the identification and removal of all links and files created and modified by the hacker (see Figure 11).¹¹⁹ Neddham reflecting on this process stating, "For amateurs like Nikos (Neddham's assistant) and me, not trained in programming languages and coding, and not familiar with system-admin, this is not a piece of cake!"¹²⁰ Requiring more code savvy parties like Neddham's programmer, David Jonas, to complete the restorative parts of treating the work after the attack such as cleaning and correcting the code. Not only this but Jonas' more technical input was also needed for restoring other projects made in conjunction with the website whose format are now outdated.

¹¹⁴ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

¹¹⁵ Nikos Voyiatzis, "DreamHost Security Alert-Site Compromised" (Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddham, 12 February 2016).

¹¹⁶ David Jonas (programmer) in discussion with the author, 6 June 2019.

¹¹⁷ Garenne Bigby, "10 Steps to Recover from a Hacked Website," Dyno Mapper, accessed 17 June 2019, <https://dynomapper.com/blog/21-sitemaps-and-seo/241-how-to-recover-from-a-hacked-website/amp>.

¹¹⁸ David Jonas (programmer) in discussion with the author, 6 June 2019.

¹¹⁹ Nikos Voyiatzis, "DreamHost Security Alert-Site Compromised" (Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddham, 12 February 2016).

¹²⁰ Martine Neddham, "Memory of an attack," (Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddham, 8 December 2016).

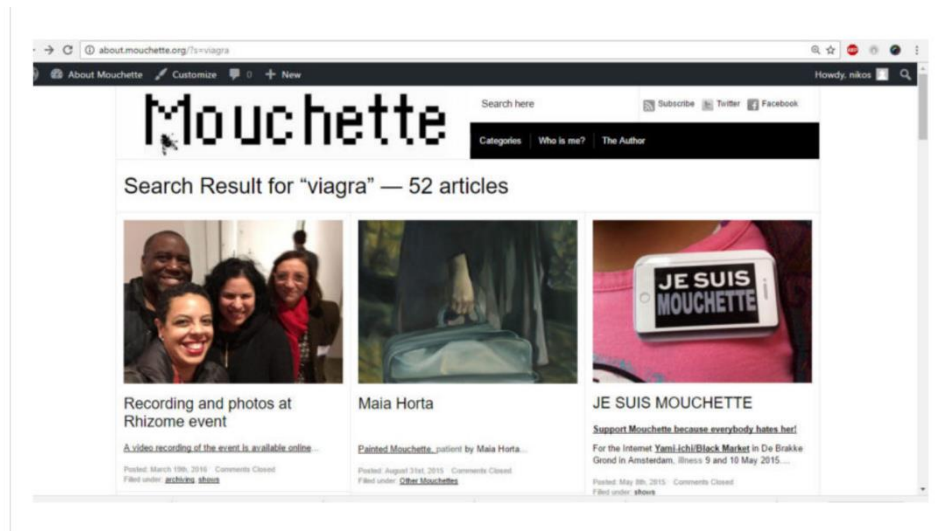


Figure 10: Screenshot of report of the infection showing malicious content
Source: Nikos Voyiatzis, "infection goes on?" (Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddham, 5 January 2019).

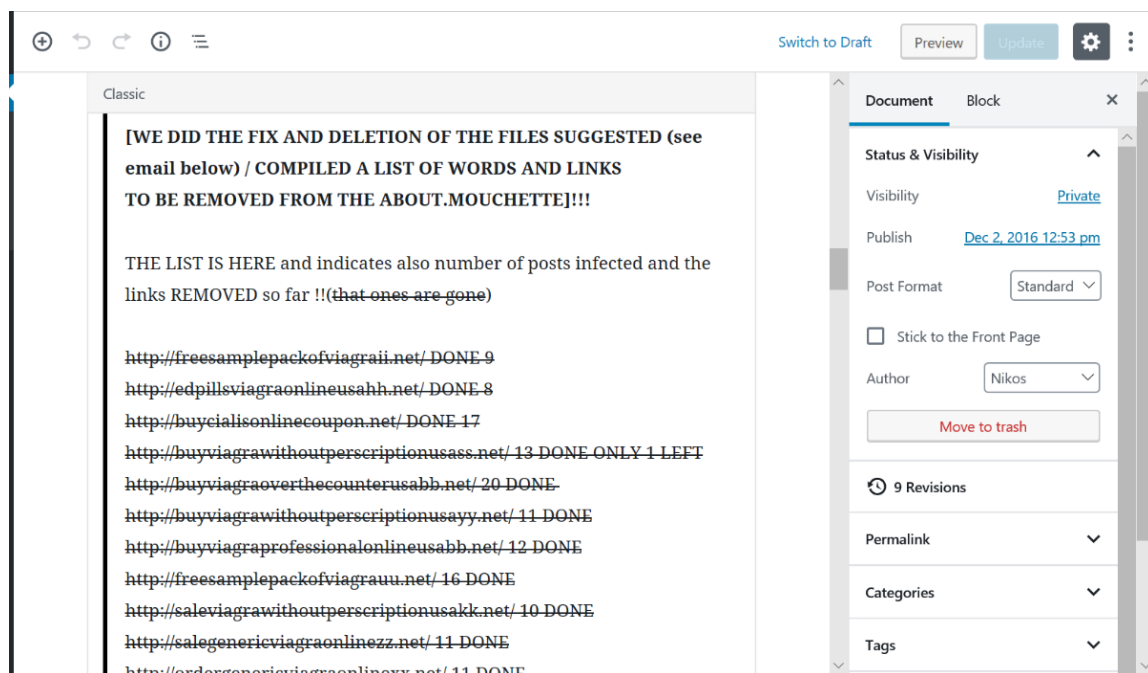


Figure 11: Screenshot detailing infected links removed from *about.mouchette.org*
Source: Nikos Voyiatzis, "DreamHost Security Alert-Site Compromised" (Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddham, 12 February 2016).

3.3 Restoration

Restoration, in traditional art conservation, refers to all tasks undertaken to repair, treat or otherwise return an object to a semblance of an "original" state. In the restoration of internet art, it has an added meaning of updating a work to keep it accessible. As the environment around a work of internet art changes these works must "change to remain the same" as Neddham says but

there appears to be another facet where they must remain contemporary and not become an “antique.”¹²¹

3.3.1 Aesthetics: Acceptance of Change

In some cases, Neddham accepts the changing of the times, for instance on the introductory screen the background covers two thirds of the frame and then is tiled across the remaining third, representing a typical browser screen in 1996 with an 800 by 600 pixel resolution.¹²² When asked in an interview if the aesthetic of the work was important and must be preserved at all costs Neddham was quick to point out that it has changed, “The aesthetic, the original resolution? For me no the aesthetic is, well the aesthetic has been transformed by material facts of how the size of (the) screen changed and I accepted it. You can’t change it. I liked it the way it changed.”¹²³ When then prompted further concerning how she would describe authenticity she described some of the research Rhizome has been conducting concerning their tool oldweb.today in which visitors can browse internet archives in an emulation of a legacy browser.¹²⁴ She stated, “Then you have a small screen in the middle of your big screen. How much does it re-produce the intention of the work? Not at all. For me it really, really sort of...exoticizes it.”¹²⁵ Perhaps these small changes in the aesthetics and ways that the user interacts with the website don’t bother Neddham because they draw the viewer’s attention to the workings of the technology that makes up the work and how it has changed over time. For instance, the visitor used to be greeted with the sounds of yawning girls, screams, short groans, and sobbing until an image would load drawing attention to the act of a page being rendered.¹²⁶ Yet now loading times have become significantly faster and there is only time for one short yawn, or moan before a page is loaded.

3.3.2 Functionality: Converting Flash

Other restorations that the artist was required to make also follow this pattern of recognizing the process and keeping evidence of earlier iterations of *mouchette.org*. The declaration of end of life for Adobe in 2020 posed the artist with the non-negotiable choice of phasing out all uses of Flash in *mouchette.org* or loosing accessibility to its dynamic components.¹²⁷ This was true for not only moving elements of the work, such as the shaking effect in *Kill That Cat*, but also for all the sounds that populate the work like the screaming, crying and groaning that was just described. For these Neddham was able to work with her assistant Voyiatzis, to extract the sound from the SWF file and then convert it to MP3.¹²⁸ The MP3 they were then able to embed in a short JavaScript to emulate the original effect.¹²⁹ For the parts that employed Flash graphics, such as

¹²¹ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

¹²² Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 79.

¹²³ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

¹²⁴ “Cyberspace, the old-fashioned way,” Rhizome, accessed 17 June 2019, <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2015/nov/30/oldweb-today/>.

¹²⁵ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

¹²⁶ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 79.

¹²⁷ Brian Barret, “Adobe Finally Kills Flash Dead,” wired, accessed 15 June 2019, <https://www.wired.com/story/adobe-finally-kills-flash-dead/>.

¹²⁸ Jacqui Lane, “How to Convert Swf to MP3 Online,” itstillworks, accessed 17 June 2019, <https://itstillworks.com/convert-swf-mp3-online-6578691.html>.

¹²⁹ Nikos Voyiatzis, “SWF issue” (Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddham, 21 February 2017).

Lullaby for a Dead Fly, this was more complicated and Neddham was required to enlist the technical help of her programmer at the time, David Jonas.

In *Lullaby for a Dead Fly* responses from the form on the *Dead Fly* page slowly float by on a sketchy background depicting numerous flies which also cycles by on a loop. It is accompanied by low sad repetitive music which can be muted if wanted by pressing a button in the top right corner. The work ran on a certain version of Flash which already in 2017 did not function properly with current technology.¹³⁰ Neddham attempted to emulate the work, as she had with Voyiatzis, on the other works on *mouchette.org* which included Flash Sound but, in the process, numerous mistakes were made resulting in malfunctions in the order of how the text ran.¹³¹ Working with David Jonas the work had to be completely rewritten in open-source HTML5, after which discussion continued by email concerning its accuracy in representing the “original.”¹³² Unlike with her approach to preservation that involves invisible labor Neddham again in this instance recognizes the process and the change in technology by including in the right corner a button detailing the origin of the original version, the programmer, and a link to it as well as the programmer, and date of the reprogrammed version (see Figure 12). This being said, Neddham has begun to speak out at conferences against the ignorance towards the invisible labor involved in maintaining a website and part of that effort is the assembling of documentation that hopes to provide a road map for *mouchette.org*’s future preservation.

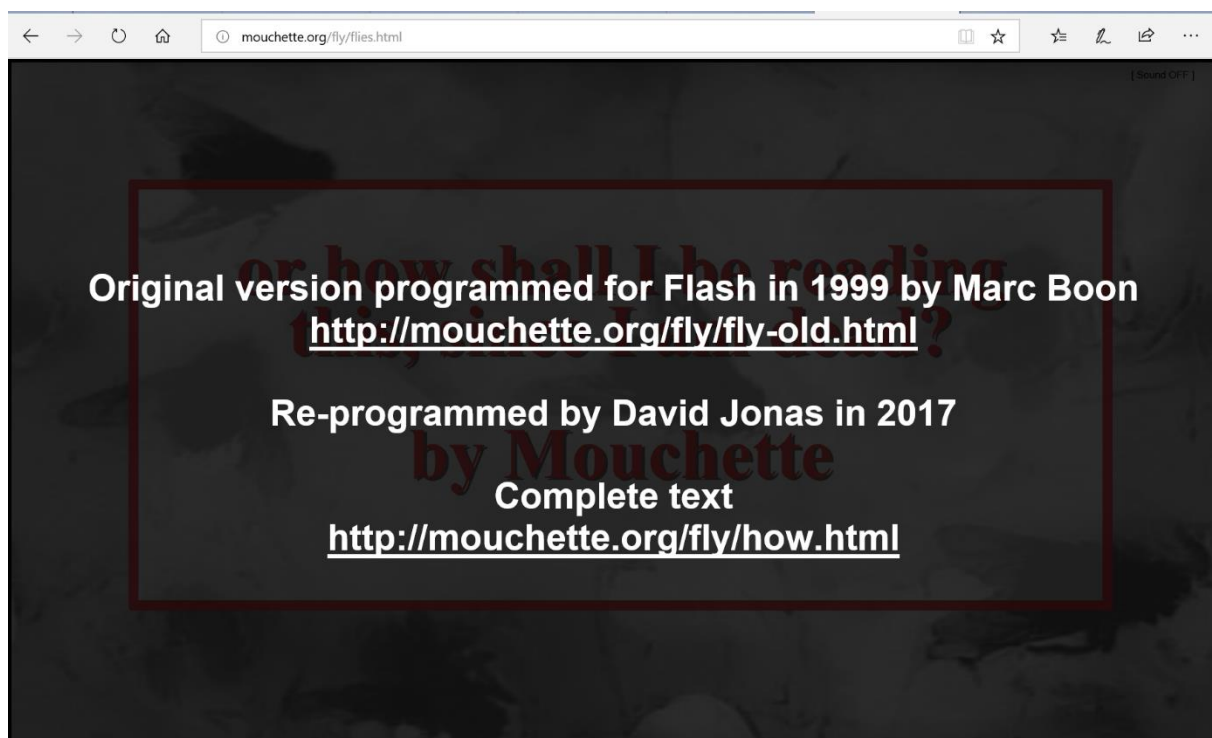


Figure 12-Screenshot depicting restoration acknowledgement on *Lullaby for a Dead Fly*
Source: Martine Neddham, “Lullaby for a Dead Fly,” Mouchette, accessed 17 June 2019, mouchette.org/fly/fly.html.

¹³⁰Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 81.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²David Jonas (programmer) in discussion with the author, 6 June 2019.

3.4 Documentation

In 2016, the artist began to compile documentation along with Voyiatzis concerning the small tasks that the artist conducts regularly to preserve the website and that the **Preservation Section** begins to describe. She likened the maintenance tasks she undergoes normally to say putting on socks or brushing one's teeth stating, "Something that is so familiar that it feels very unpleasant to have to tell these things to yourself as if you don't know... So, the first use was to really tell these things to someone and find a way to get them archived."¹³³ Together they devised a method of annotated screenshots in SVG format that would allow extensive scrolling in and out so that more and more information could be added to flesh out the process.¹³⁴ The screenshots were used to address a lot of the maintenance tasks particular to the site that the artist completes relating to the custom-made interface and the old mailing list manager. For example, if we revisit the email narrative that begins with the form, "Would you like to have a private encounter with Mouchette?" once more Neddham provides 7 SVGs concerning how to run the work showing both what the participant receives and interacts with and what is required of the moderator (See Figure 8 and Figure 13).¹³⁵

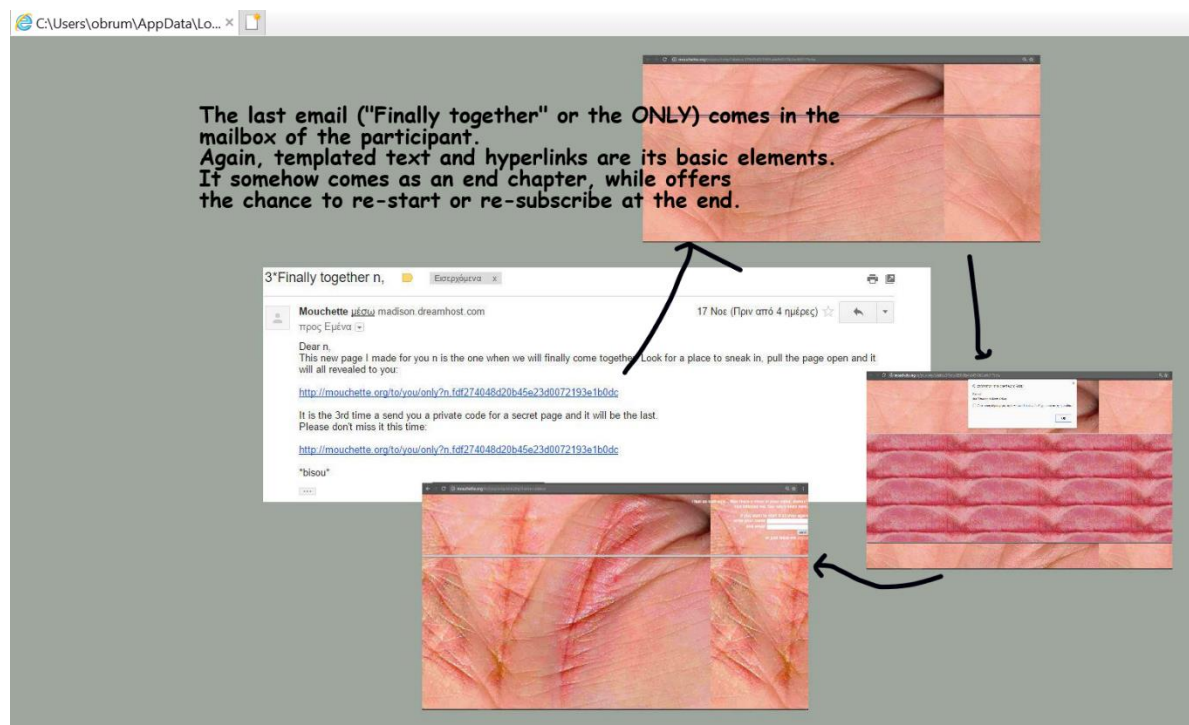


Figure 13-Showing the final email in the narrative and linked websites

Source: Martine Neddham, email message to author, 24 April 2019.

They also created a private archive of documentation addressing other maintenance of a more dire nature required around the website such as dealing with infections and larger restorations prompted by obsolescent software, aspects that have already been described prior in this section using the resources from the archive. Yet this project and all of the important information that it was beginning to detail ended in 2018 when the funds ran out and it became clear that Voyiatzis'

¹³³ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Martine Neddham, email message to author, 24 April 2019.

move back to Greece was permanent.¹³⁶ Of the loose ends that had been left the artist stated, “Let’s say, you need three partners actually: the artist, the preservation sort of the preservation master whatever you want to call it, and the institution in whatever configuration. So, a sort of institution that guarantees it is interested in that dialogue otherwise if it stays between these two: the artist and the preservation, person in charge of preservation then, it’s not going anywhere.”¹³⁷

Chapter 4-Net Art in Institutions

In 1995, *The World’s First Collaborative Sentence* (1994) entered the Whitney collection as part of a larger donation from the widow of Eugene M. Schwartz in honor of his passing.¹³⁸ The innocent seeming acquisition of a MF 2HD Maxell diskette signed by the artist, Douglas Davis, actually represented a sprawling website representing the accumulation of hundreds of thoughts, quips, and inanities.¹³⁹ All contributed by visitors to an ongoing sentence with no sign of a full stop in sight. As the years went on and the capabilities of the internet grew the dynamic content contributed to it increased including: links, different colored, and flashing text etc. but in 2005 the sentence had reached an impasse.¹⁴⁰ It had been shifted to another server and all maintenance of it had lapsed prompting the museum to take a moment to consider what exactly had been purchased. This chapter will consider the acquisition of works of internet art by institutions, revisit the case of *mouchette.org-Version 01* and consider the differences in opinion concerning how exactly *mouchette.org-Version 01* relates to *mouchette.org*. It will then conclude with a look at the limitations posed by the acquisition of “frozen” representations of works of “live” art. It will argue that before the “Network of Care” that Dekker suggests can exist a diffused network of information exists the vulnerabilities and dependencies of which need to be identified.

4.1 *Mouchette.org-Version 01* Revisited

When *mouchette.org-Version 01* was acquired by the MOTI Museum Breda and the Stedelijk Museum discussions between Ward Janssen, the curator of the MOTI, Annet Dekker, conservation consultant, and Neddam not only described what was to be purchased in terms of materiality but they also discussed the terminology of what was being purchased.¹⁴¹ The terminology by which a work is addressed defines not only its distribution, how many can be sold, but also the authenticity of what has been purchased and, in an institution, it also often has a crystallizing effect. The idea of purchasing an edition was at first put forward, as other works in the suite that was being acquired had been purchased as an edition, but Neddam rejected the idea as she stated in an interview later, “I think edition, edition. You come tomorrow and it’s

¹³⁶ Martine Neddam (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ “Douglas Davis: The World’s First Collaborative Sentence Launched 1994, Restored 2013,” Whitney Museum of American Art, accessed 17 June 2019, <https://whitney.org/artport/douglas-davis>.

¹³⁹ Karin De Wild, “Internet Art and Agency: The Social Lives of Online Artworks,” (PhD diss., University of Dundee, 2019).

¹⁴⁰ Melena Ryzik, “When Artworks Crash: Restorers Face Digital Test,” New York Times, accessed 17 June 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/10/arts/design/whitney-saves-douglas-daviss-first-collaborative-sentence.html>.

¹⁴¹ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 93.

another, another one.”¹⁴² Finally with Dekker’s help they settled on the concept of a version which signaled the variability of the work along a linear timeline.¹⁴³

Yet there was still the problem of how to parcel the websites participatory aspects which in the artist’s perspective were the most important, so she was given a year to complete this, but confusion continues as to what exactly this was supposed to entail. Dekker describes the second part of the acquisition that never happened as investigating, “...how the participatory aspect of the work can be transferred to others, potentially in the form of a network of care and/or by teaching someone else how to maintain the database.”¹⁴⁴ A project that Neddham was beginning and has been briefly described in the **Documentation Section** but stopped a little over a year ago when Neddham ran out of funds and her assistant, Voyiatzis, moved away.¹⁴⁵ Neddham described her past hopes for the year as getting involved in preservation research with the institute, in terms of devising a way to sell the work but also of selling it in pieces, perhaps ensured by blockchain technology.¹⁴⁶ From this cross section of opinions concerning the acquisition it can be seen that uncertainties still remain over what exactly the relationship between *Mouchette.org* and *mouchette.org-Version 01* is? Does the second part that Neddham is supposed to deliver obligate the institution to take part in some degree of maintenance of the live artwork or does it entail a fragmentation of Mouchette, ensured for the institution by blockchain technology?

4.1.1 *Mouchette.org-Version 01* vs. *Mouchette.org*

These are questions that still have no answers even a year and a half after the year Neddham was given has ended. What remains is the ambiguous situation between the two works and the question about what a preservation strategy might look like. When asked to describe the current relation between the two works Tjerk Busstra, the Art Handler of Audiovisual, stated, “I think *mouchette.org-Version 01* is a snapshot of the live work. I think that’s the relation but you don’t have any interactivity at all in this state, and if the domain and/or the work now is lost we would only have the non-interactive snapshot version, until it is reinstalled... There could be more snapshot-versions of the site in the future.”¹⁴⁷ Identifying just how complicated the considerations around *mouchette.org-Version 01* can be and how much information is still needed to begin to imagine what a future for the acquisition might look like. Karen Archey, the Curator of Contemporary Art and Time-based Media, described the live version as, “the tip of the iceberg,” representing a large degree of history and different configurations that the archival quality of *mouchette.org-Version 01* begins to speak to.¹⁴⁸ Yet if the user interface that one interacts with when they load *Mouchette.org* on their computer screen can be called the “tip of the iceberg” it can be argued that *Mouchette.org-Version 01* is also the “tip of the iceberg,” like the MF 2HD Maxell diskette that the Whitney acquired it represents an extensive website containing 25 years of content. In the case of the *World’s First Collaborative Sentence* Whitney curator, Christiane Paul, worried that over time the diskette would come to be identified as the artwork and initiated the work’s transfer to the museum server and its subsequent conservation

¹⁴² Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

¹⁴³ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 93.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 19 April 2019.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Tjerk Busstra (technician) in discussion with the author, 11 June 2019.

¹⁴⁸ Karen Archey (curator) in discussion with the author, 29 May 2019.

in 2013.¹⁴⁹ Neddam also mentioned this tendency of museum's to "fetishize" the remains of performances citing the Fluxus movement, "If you take the case of, I don't know, say Fluxus. Well of course all of these sort of spontaneous re-questioning of the authority, of the object and of the art situation ended up...50 years later showing a number of fetish of these in showcases in museums trying to imagine what it could have been, but sometimes not even that. So you could say the spirit of Fluxus in a way is preserved in a jar."¹⁵⁰ Examining these facts *mouchette.org-Version 01* currently stands at a crossroads that could take the future preservation of the artwork in either a direction of further identifying *mouchette.org-Version 01* as a crystalized object or in a direction that further identifies it with the live website. Yet there is only one way to move forward towards determining the future preservation of the work and that is first by assessing the diffused network of knowledge concerning the maintenance and current situation of the live version.

4.2 Reimagining Net Art in Institutions

As the programmer Ellen Ulman states about obsolete technology, "The longer a system has been running, the greater the number of programmers who have worked on it, the less any person understands it."¹⁵¹ This can also be said about networked artworks especially ones that have had the extended and varied life that *mouchette.org* has had. In their very make-up networked artworks depend on a whole range of interconnected technologies to function. One mishap in this web of dependencies could spell the difference between whether a viewer is able to experience a work of internet art on their computer screen or not. This network of interdependencies surrounding a work does not stop offline instead if anything it becomes more complicated. In conducting this research, it became clear that even in the span of three years diffuse knowledge concerning the life of an artwork, be it inside an institution or outside an institution, can be easily lost. Gaps in the understanding of what a museum object is and how to approach its conservation can be formed easily by a move between collections, employee turnover, or in a drastic case the artist passing away. These gaps only become worse over time as memories fade and parties with knowledge that could help inform decisions move further out of reach. With all artworks but especially with networked artworks that exist through participation it is important for a conservator to take a proactive approach in identifying the vulnerabilities in the "network of care" that surrounds an artwork and create a central depository of knowledge.

4.2.1 Networks of Information

"Living" artworks demand a different approach than objects and works composed of digital media even more so require a conservator to form a "road map" or a schedule that will address an ongoing approach to conservation.¹⁵² Returning to Dekker's concept of a "network of care" (see **Chapter 1, Web Maintenance**) before there can be a "network of care" or an institution driven conservation approach there is a web of information that needs to be collected and concentrated in one place. To do this first the connections and the dependencies have to be identified.¹⁵³ If we take *mouchette.org-Version 01* as an example important information concerning the acquisition was already lost when the MOTI Museum Breda shutdown and became the Stedelijk Museum

¹⁴⁹ Karin De Wild, "Internet Art and Agency: The Social Lives of Online Artworks," (PhD diss., University of Dundee, 2019).

¹⁵⁰ Martine Neddam (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

¹⁵¹ Ellen Ullman, *Close to the Machine: Technophilia and its Discontents* (London: Pushkin, 2013), 117.

¹⁵² Tjerk Busstra (technician) in discussion with the author, 11 June 2019.

¹⁵³ Annet Dekker, *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 88.

Breda.¹⁵⁴ Personnel who were involved in the acquisition, determined what would be acquired and what terminology should be used had already moved on taking their reasoning for their decisions with them. Other instances of knowledge being lost inadvertently abound such as the moving away of Neddham's assistant and a wave of different programmers who leant their technological know how to the repair of *mouchette.org*.¹⁵⁵

If we take the conservator as the center of this web, they bring their conservation ethics, their hand skills, an approach to problem solving and an ability to identify an artwork's weakest links that can contribute to identifying a preservation strategy aimed at extending the lifetime of an artwork (see Figure 14). Faced with a work of internet art, like *mouchette.org*, their strongest dependency should be on the artist who brings their intention for the work and identifies the line between what must be preserved and what must be allowed to continue to "live" (as was briefly discussed in **Chapter 3**). The artist's strongest connection should be to their programmer or assistant who remedies technological gaps that an artist might have and executes restorations that are outside the artist's ability. When Neddham's current programmer, David Jonas, was questioned about where his largest dependency lay in completing his job he replied, "...all I need basically is access to the server so I can change the code and access to Martine... When there is artistic decisions to be made she needs to make them otherwise the artwork would stop being hers."¹⁵⁶ Yet these interdependencies can change as in the case of the *World's First Collaborative Sentence*, when the restoration was undertaken in 2013 the artist was no longer able to comment so the conservators worked as much as possible with the artist's programmer.¹⁵⁷ It is identifying where this information is available and where the dependencies are now that can contribute to making a system where this information is more readily accessible.

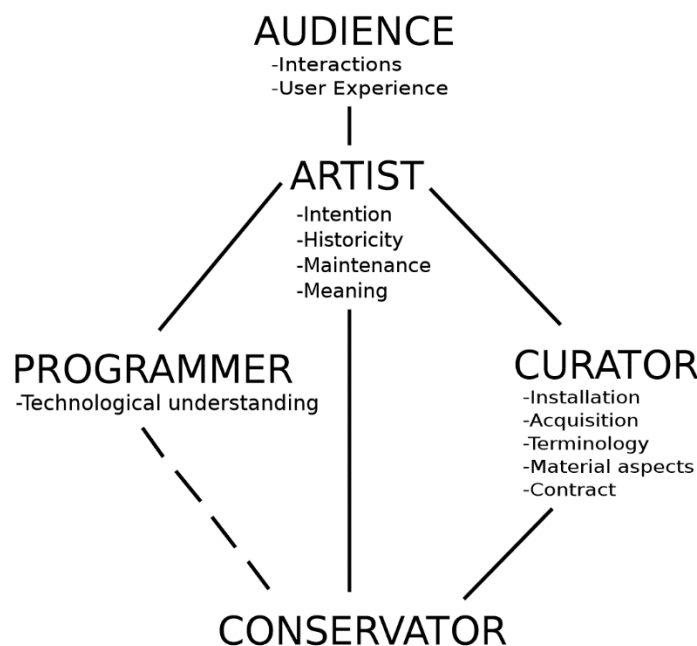


Figure 14-Diagram depicting connections, independencies and diffused knowledge surrounding an internet artwork's conservation

¹⁵⁴ Ward Janssen (curator) in discussion with the author, 3 June 2019.

¹⁵⁵ Martine Neddham (artist) in discussion with the author, 28 February 2019.

¹⁵⁶ David Jonas (programmer) in discussion with the author, 6 June 2019.

¹⁵⁷ Melena Ryzik, "When Artworks Crash: Restorers Face Digital Test," New York Times, accessed 17 June 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/10/arts/design/whitney-saves-douglas-daviss-first-collaborative-sentence.html>.

Conclusion

Internet artworks are based upon complicated interactions of technology and knowledge that contribute to the ongoing existence of a “living” work of art. These overlapping layers of meaning and the myth of immateriality surrounding a work of internet artwork can challenge institutions in regards to what to acquire and how to create a preservation strategy addressed to its unique needs. Yet without their acquisition by institutions internet artworks may find their lives cut short by the limitations of aging caretakers or by artist’s decisions to abandon demanding preservation tasks in favor of creating new works of art. By examining the case of *Mouchette.org-Version 01* this thesis hopes to have offered some ideas considering how the “materiality” of what is acquired may influence preservation considerations and how to begin to move beyond that in the development of a farsighted preservation plan that will address the ongoing conservation needs of these vulnerable artworks. A diffused network of knowledge lying around the acquisition and the work’s maintenance may offer guidelines for what can be expected depending on which direction the institution decides to take. If an institution decides to acquire a work in full the artist and their programmer may offer insight into the conservation labor required, as Chapter 3 tries to begin to describe for *Mouchette.org*, and if the institution decides to adhere to the objecthood described by what was acquired, Chapter 2 examines an overlay of what actually entered the collection in regards to *Mouchette.org-Version 01*. Yet all decisions addressing the long-term life of a “living” artwork need to begin with mapping out where important information about the artwork, its maintenance, and “materiality” in the collection can be found and creating a central depository of knowledge.

Works Cited

- "Advantages and Disadvantages of Javascript." Free Code Camp. Accessed 10 June 2019. <https://guide.freecodecamp.org/javascript/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-javascript/>.
- "Brand." Business Dictionary. Accessed 19 June 2019. <http://businessdictionary.com/definition/brand.html>.
- "Cyberspace, the old-fashioned way." Rhizome. Accessed 17 June 2019. <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2015/nov/30/oldweb-today/>.
- "Definition of spam filter" PC. Accessed 17 June 2016. <https://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia/term/51792/spam-filter>.
- "Douglas Davis: The World's First Collaborative Sentence Launched 1994, Restored 2013." Whitney Museum of American Art. Accessed 17 June 2019. <https://whitney.org/artport/douglas-davis>.
- "Flash and the Future of Interactive Content." Adobe Blog. Accessed 17 May 2019. <https://theblog.adobe.com/adobe-flash-update/>.
- "How does the internet work?" BBC. Accessed 13 June 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/articles/z3tbgk7>.
- "How to make Web Form." JavaScriptCoder.com. Accessed 15 June 2019. <http://javascript-coder.com/html-form/how-to-make-a-form.phtml>.
- "How Websites Work?" Media College. Accessed 10 June 2019. <https://www.mediacollege.com?internet/intro/thewww3.html>.
- "Internet Archive." Internet archive. accessed 15 June 2019. <https://archive.org/>.
- "Introduction to SQL," w3schools.com. Accessed 10 June 2019. https://www.w3schools.com/sql/sql_intro.asp.
- "La Scala." Martine Neddham. Accessed 10 June 2019. <https://www.neddham.info/la-scala/>.
- "Plugin" Computer Hope. Accessed 13 June 2019. <https://www.computerhome.com/jargon/p/plugin.htm>
- "The World's First Collaborative Sentence" Elimcip. Accessed 31 March 2019. <https://elimcip.net/creative-work/worlds-first-collaborative-sentence>.
- "What are Database Driven Websites, and how are they built?" Killersites.com. Accessed 13 June 2019. https://www.killersites.com/articles/articles_databaseDrivenSites.htm.
- "What is a Database?" Oracle. Accessed 10 June 2019. <https://www.oracle.com/database/what-is-database.html>.Be

"What is a Dynamic Web Page?" Doteasy. Accessed 10 June 2019.

<https://www.doteasy.com/web-hosting-articles/what-is-a-dynamic-web-page.cfm>

Barlow, John Perry. "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace." Electronic Frontier Foundation. Accessed 17 May 2019. <https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence>.

Barret, Brian. "Adobe Finally Kills Flash Dead." Wired. Accessed 15 June 2019.

<https://www.wired.com/story/adobe-finally-kills-flash-dead/>.

Baumgärtel, Tilman (*net.art*) *New Materials Towards Net Art*. Nürnberg: Verlag für modern Kunst, 2001.

Baumgärtel, Tilman. *net.art. Materialien zur Netzkunst*. Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 1999.

Bernanos, Georges. *Mouchette*. New York: New York Review, 2006.

Berners-Lee, Sir Tim. "History of the Web." World Wide Web Foundation. Accessed 17 May 2019.

<https://webfoundation.org/about/vision/history-of-the-web/>.

Bigby, Garenne. "10 Steps to Recover from a Hacked Website." Dyno Mapper. Accessed 17 June 2019. <https://dynomapper.com/blog/21-sitemaps-and-seo/241-how-to-recover-from-a-hacked-website/amp>.

Brum, Olivia. "Web Archiving: An Assessment of the Options for Documentation of Born Digital Media." Essay, University of Amsterdam, 2019. Unpublished.

Collaboration in Conserving Time-Based Art. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2010.

https://www.si.edu/content/tbma/documents/Time-Based-Art_Report.pdf.

Conner, Michael. "A Girl Made of Language." About Mouchette. Accessed 17 May 2019.

<http://about.mouchette.org/a-girl-made-of-language/>.

Cosisc, Vuk. Interview by Tilman Baumgärtel. Nettime. June 26, 1997.

De Wild, Karin. "Internet Art and Agency: The Social Lives of Online Artworks." PhD diss., University of Dundee, 2019.

Dekker, Annet. "Assembling Traces, or Conservation of Net Art." *Necsus* 3, no. 1 (2014): 171-193.

Dekker, Annet. "Preserving Digital Art, a Tension between Objects and Processes." Lecture, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 6 February 2019.

Dekker, Annet. *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving Beyond Conventional Methods*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Dekker, Annet. "Enabling the Future, or How to Survive FOREVER: A study of networks, processes and ambiguity in net art and the need for an expanded practice of conservation." PhD diss., Goldsmiths University, 2014.

Fino-Radin, Ben. *Digital Preservation Practices and the Rhizome Artbase*. New York: Rhizome at The New Museum, 2011. <http://media.rhizome.org/blog/8332/rhizome-digital-preservation-practices.pdf>.

Garsiel, Tali and Irish, Paul. "How Browsers Work: Behind the scenes of modern web browsers." HTML5Rocks. Accessed 13 June 2016.
<https://www.html5rocks.com/tutorials/internals/howbrowserswork/>

Hoffman, Bryan. "The Basics of Maintaining a Website." Spigot design. Accessed 15 June 2019.
<https://spigotdesign.com/basics-maintaining-website/amp>.

Ippolito, Jon. "Ten Myths of Internet Art." *Leonardo* 35, no. 5 (2002): 485-498.

Kucheriavy, Andrew. "Your 10-Step Guide to Website Maintenance." Business collective. Accessed 15 June 2019. <https://businesscollective.com/your-10-step-guide-to-website-maintenance/index.html>.

Lane, Jacqui. "How to Convert Swf to MP3 Online." Itstillworks. Accessed 17 June 2019.
<https://itstillworks.com/convert-swf-mp3-online-6578691.html>.

Laurenson, Pip. "Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations." *Tate Papers*, no. 6, 2006, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/06/authenticity-change-and-loss-conservation-of-time-based-media-installations>.

Martine Neddham. By Karen Archey, Gert Hoogeveen, Tjerk Busstra, and Jeanette Bisschops, October 30, 2017, interview, transcript.

Mitchell, Bradley. "Servers Are the Heart of the Internet." Lifewire. Accessed 10 June 2019.
<https://www.lifewire.com/servers-in-computer-networking-817380>.

Mitchell, Bradley. "The Difference Between Routers, Switches and Hubs." Lifewire. Accessed 13 June 2019. <https://www.lifewire.com/differences-between-routers-switches-and-hubs-817707>.

Neddham, Martine. "Besides the Screen." Mouchette. Accessed 16 June 2019.
<http://about.mouchette.org/besides-the-screen/>

Neddham, Martine. "Dead Fly." Mouchette. Accessed 11 June 2019.
<http://mouchette.org/fly/index.html>.

Neddham, Martine. "Lullaby for a Dead Fly." Mouchette. Accessed 11 June 2019.
<http://mouchette.org/fly/flies.html>.

Neddham, Martine. "Martine Neddham-About." Wordpress. Accessed 6 June 2019.
<https://www.neddham.info/about/>.

Neddam, Martine. "Memory of an attack." Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddam, 8 December 2016.

Neddam, Martine. "My Last Birthday Party." Mouchette Accessed 11 June 2019. <http://mouchette.org/birthday/index.html>.

Neddam, Martine. "My name is Mouchette." Mouchette. Accessed 25 February 2019. mouchette.org.

Neddam, Martine. "My name is Mouchette." Mouchette. Accessed 25 February 2019. mouchette.org.

Neddam, Martine. "The page you are looking for is not here you will never see it again." Mouchette. Accessed 11 June 2019. <http://mouchette.org/to/you/noway.html>.

Neddam, Martine. "Would you like to have a private encounter with Mouchette?" Mouchette. Accessed 11 June 2019. <http://mouchette.org/to/you/only/private.html>.

Niu, Jinfang. "An Overview of Web Archiving." *D-Lib Magazine* 18, no. 3 (2012): doi: 10.1045/march2012-niu1.

Rumianek, Michael. "Archiving and Recovering Database-driven Websites." *D-Lib Magazine* 19, no. 1 (2013): doi: 10.1045/january2013-rumianek.

Ryzik, Melena. "When Artworks Crash: Restorers Face Digital Test." New York Times. Accessed 17 June 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/10/arts/design/whitney-saves-douglas-daviss-first-collaborative-sentence.html>.

Sanderson, Robert; Balakireva, Lyudmila; Shankar, Harihar; and Van de Sompel, Herbert. "Transactional Web Archives." Presentation, Web Archive Globalization Workshop, Ottawa, June 16-17, 2011.

Shestakov, Denis. "ICWE' 13 Tutorial: Current Challenges in Web Crawling." Presentation, 13th International Conference on Web Engineering, Aalborg, Denmark, July 8, 2013.

Stallabrass, Julian. *Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce*. London: Tate Publishing, 2003.

Ullman, Ellen. *Close to the Machine: Technophilia and its Discontents*. London: Pushkin, 2013.

Voyiatzis, Nikos. "a closer investigation into BOUNCING EMAILS." Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddam, 4 February 2018.

Voyiatzis, Nikos. "DreamHost Security Alert-Site Compromised." Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddam, 12 February 2016.

Voyiatzis, Nikos. "SVG cat-checking svgs in blog." Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddham, 6 February 2017.

Voyiatzis, Nikos. "SWF issue." Wordpress Post, Private Archives of Martine Neddham, 21 February 2017.

Warren, Christina. "The Life, Death and Rebirth of Adobe Flash." Mashable. Accessed 17 May 2019. <https://mashable.com/2012/11/19/history-of-flash/?europa=true>.

Web Archiving Guidance. Surrey: The National Archives, 2011.
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/web-archiving-guidance.pdf>.

Wodehouse, Carey. "Front-End Web Development: Client-Side Scripting & User Experience." Upwork. Accessed 10 June 2019. <https://www.upwork.com/hiring/development/how-scripting-languages-work/>.

Wodehouse, Carey. "Server-Side Scripting: Back-End Web Development Technology." Upwork Accessed 13 June 2019. <https://www.upwork.com/hiring/development/server-side-scripting-back-end-web-development-technology/>

Appendix I-Interviews

Martine Neddam (N) interviewed by Olivia Brum (O), February 28th, 2019

N: University...archives...what do you study?

O: Oh conservation of modern and contemporary art at the University of Amsterdam.

N: Okay okay and you are having classes with Annet Dekker?

O: Yeah so we had a lecture with her actually, she came in and lectured us, but we don't usually have...because she is more information studies

N: Okay so you are studying conservation.

O: Yeah.

N: And is that...? So they also deal in the digital arts?

O: Yeah.

N: A little bit?

O: Yeah so we have been doing a whole section on time-based media this semester so looking at electronic art, net art, you name it anything under the sun programming related.

N: Yeah yeah.

O: But Mouchette came up for thesis discussion and I was really interested in its case basically so I am so excited that I get to have this conversation with you.

N: Of course your welcome. Its not the first time actually I have had well several PhD's actually regularly communicating with me or even devoting a significant part of their thesis to the case of Mouchette and recently one just finished her PhD but then in Dundee.

O: Dundee okay.

N: Which is specialized in digital art with Sarah Cook. That was Karen de Wild.

O: I think that Annet actually referenced Sarah Cooke's work as well...

N: She would be I would say in Europe the one person who does PhD's in digital art and curating digital art so she herself is a sort of senior curator. She is not that old but she has been doing that all the time curating and teaching...so and I was making myself, and maybe I shouldn't say that too early, I was making myself the reflection recently with Karen we also...Karen de Wilde...we recently...we also did some communications in lectures, special lectures and things one in London was it in...I can't quite remember but some university in London where they had some special thing about digital conservation and all these things and uhh so wondering the interest... Well putting all institutions in the same basket of course the case is more complicated than it seems but the museum institution, the art institution and the research and academic institution. It feels because I get so often, quite regularly in fact, that attention and meanwhile the work itself is not being preserved at all and I don't get. So I often don't get, and its not an individual remark, something that concerns the institution at large and that is like leaning over a disease because you have interest in that case but not really caring about what would help. So because every time I am also sort of go towards the institution for help be it well money or interest or whatever I do

get a sort of deaf ear or it will come back or later so as well as from a museum or as from LIMA, you know LIMA?

O: Yeah, yeah.

N: Or get as probably the same with...so yeah...so that's how it feels...

O: Yes, its super complicated.

N: Just like having interest while dying as a work of art as a case but not trying to keep it alive.

O: But yes that's what I want to...I want to examine how to keep it alive. How some sort of reasoning can be found.

N: Well that's interesting.

O: So see if I can...well that's a tall order.

N: Yeah.

O: Start step by step.

N: Where are you from?

O: I am from the U.S.

N: So you study here? You came to Europe for that?

O: Yeah because so originally I was looking at the American conservation programs as well but I wanted to do something that was specific to contemporary and modern and only the NYU program is beginning to kind of build that but we still don't have a set in stone...

N: You're from New York?

O: No, I am from Pennsylvania, but we still don't have set in stone program for that yet usually you would have to come in through objects and then sort of move into that. Yeah but it's kind of...yeah there is not really a way to enter it. Yeah, so that's why I was hoping to start here because then you can go right into what you are interested in.

N: Because they have a special department for that?

O: Yeah.

N: And for people who are going to do a PhD so you're doing your PhD?

O: I am doing my Masters.

N: Oh, your Masters.

O: And then we do a post masters as well which is more hands on working for the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands. So, this is my final year of my Masters. I was wondering if I could just kind of...

N: Lets go through your questions then.

O: Yeah please maybe I am hoping to move from broad to maybe a bit more specific so my first ones just have to do with your making process because in everything I could read I could not find...

N: You have your thing on...

O: Yeah. I couldn't find a lot of details about...

N: My making process?

O: How does an artwork take shape for you?

N: That's not general I would say because these particular works took shape because of the existence of...so I couldn't compare to anything else because the work was born not only with the existence of the medium but with me being able to access some of the medium here in Holland which I wouldn't have had access to in France for example at the same moment and in the same circumstances. So I could only have a specific answer it was born from my encounter with an internet when it came here over and the way it was received. So that's only...that's one of a kind even the second digital character I did wasn't born in the same way because I had an opinion I had already an experience with internet for a number of years so that was just sort of the discovery so just uh certain testing the possibilities.

O: Did you...so its inspired a lot by how the web was growing at that...?

N: Totally totally that was my discovery. I was uh...and also the way it was brought to us really now I'm really aware that if it had been in France or in the States it would have been a different thing. It wouldn't have been in the country that I was brought up and did all my studies and started as an artist I would not have encountered the same...well the same enthusiasm for a medium that offered possibilities and that offered a sort of what I call it a utopia of communication. So where umm..and at the same time I worked with language because I was....I am still a language artist. Visual art not with poems one uses language as prime material. I was also interested in linguistics and then comes this medium where every receiver can be a sender which you could say hasn't existed, hasn't ever existed before.

O: And how do you think that... you say that there is a difference between how it landed in the US versus how it landed here? How do you think it was different?

N: I am not all that aware of how it landed of course we had more connection with the US than with Europe. I think Europe was pretty...very important for artists and that people artists in the US envied us for being for example supported by the government with grants although it did not really connect with the internet itself but having the possibility having the research, funded research that <incomprehensible> so in that...I think it was received politically very much here as a...also as the sort of ideal democratic medium so people who were in politics or people who were in broadcasting tv on channels or local channels people who had certain ideas on political views and media were very active here. They had special broadcast, pre-broadcast radios...people like Geert Lovink but many others had that sort of...reception enthusiastic reception for this medium as the one that will change our lives and our political institution and our ways of communicating so even the city of Amsterdam invested in things for the digital city where they offered an email for free to anyone who'd ask it so some people still have it. And that was really early like '94...sort of...so yeah really early this thing of this belongs to us. One of the first...provider before it was called XS4ALL and it was born from another provider called Hectic also had a sort of connection with hackers not in the sense of pirates that destroy but do their own things. So you had this atmosphere really strongly and it resonated with me...and uh this idea of a new medium and a new political attitude towards the circulation of information or the circulation of art and in practical terms people were very willing to help you with anything you

needed. I wasn't technical but I did have a computer because I used digital photography, I was working with digital photography. At a very early stage which I sort of taught myself in way because I was before I could afford a computer (they were very expensive at that time I think '92...yeah '92, '93) the university lent me a computer so even I think they had one to do graphic so they had one for graphic possibilities but they didn't use it that much so they had a sort of artist in residence where someone could come and use the computer so I taught myself. So this idea also of a certain political idea about art was also present and its changed immensely since then but people also believe in a sort of, I don't know if it's a democratic idea about art, but that art was beneficial to society and the quality of the city and the access of...

O: Which probably also has to do with what was happening with the BKR at that time?

N: BKR had ended...long before I came but funds were still quite easy and...but that idea resonated with all the parts of the society and artist run centers and the way the society was...so and for all the things are resonate in the society. How it was received. It was really a unique moment for these things to happen. So people would come and help me install my modem, because it was complicated for me. I could operate...I could work in photoshop because I taught myself from a free computer first until I could buy myself one and they would help me do the modem or if I couldn't figure out how it worked they would help me install the...because they thought it was something emancipating. So this idea also of emancipation prevailed also as well in the arts as in the reception of internet as a medium. Emancipation of the citizen, emancipation of the individual in society.

O: And how do you think then the context of Mouchette has changed over time?

N: The context depends which context the artistic context or the internet context?

O: The internet context.

N: The internet context.

O: The internet context first.

N: Well for example I was one of the first to have something...an interface allows participants to interact so I had what people call a blog or whatever. I had a self-made interface to do that so to receive the mail so I had interactive narratives, little stories, and then...since I would people would just help me or people would suggest a certain...information also circulated from person to person and from how do I say...from non-expert to non-expert and so that's how I learned how to for example make a form and if it was a bit more technical...html, html page I also learned from. There was a small moment in the birth of browsers that an editor was included so you didn't even have to write (I am very bad at writing code actually I can't remember it) so... it had an editor so that's how I started writing my first pages through the editor and then it stopped after 3 or 4 months. I don't think it even lasted a year maybe a year that the editor was included with the browser. It was netscape...I don't know which number...so and even then some people would spend time with me either artists who had figured out a little bit of code by themselves or uh...they would spend time with me to help me do it so that sort of also personal connection and also collaborative atmosphere...yeah prevailed a lot. It was also time where the artistic situation was also much more favorable for artists. Artists would help each other or the city would help people with giving them spaces for very little money and this was when also...so artists who had easy access to grants were also prone to collaborate and help each other so um...it was sort of...

don't know...yeah a utopian time in the sense of collaborative, emancipatory time because of the place and because of the political atmosphere this free space given to....yeah...

O: But in a way also that search engines being introduced and commercialization....

N: Not yet I am talking of a time...

O: Earlier.

N: Yeah so say previous to 2000 you had Alta Vista or...they didn't do much of a job.

O: But how the context changed as things happened...

N: And I saw it. I could see it changing through my works. Some works I really... and I have all these database with the dates so of course people would not interact the same. For example when people started coming to my site because of keywords in search engines or just sentences in search engines then the access changed and the meaning of my site changed. Some parts of my site changed completely. So yes I really saw it happen and could participate in these change really as they went on. So I can say in certain works, I can say, I did that because search engine has happened. This happened because or because the Web 2.0, what they call Web 2.0 wasn't existing yet, I was offering a platform to people cause that's where they came to. So I have lived within very special periods and a very special atmosphere also as a way to acknowledge the changes and to move on or not with them according to what I wanted and yeah.

O: And when you begin one of your works do you do brainstorming ahead of time?

N: Not for this one. Not for Mouchette. I did for a later work for example I did for another virtual character called David Still. I did lots of research. For example, I didn't know who to choose for the face of the person and I did a casting. I even kept the ads of different people that I casted and I can still say why I didn't choose this one. I didn't choose this one. Why I choose that one. So I had something clear in mind that wasn't the case for Mouchette. I didn't have anything clear in mind so it changed by and by and sometimes for certain reason I couldn't allow a sharp change because than you mess up your access if you change things. So no I would say that's maybe a sort of blessing that I didn't have to try or research or to plan anything it was just, I was just running after the first idea that came to me and I would say in that period we were also as artists we were also much faster to react to changes, technical changes for example, even the moment where the possibility of using a form appeared that would have been very very handy for a lot of sites but by the time they knew it we had already made a lot of work perverting the use of <indecipherable> and such. It was very yeah...it was very exciting we were on the first row for everything that was going on. Artists were on the first row so... And practically because they were independent, inquisitive, the possibility was still really limited what you could do was still very limited so we were in the front row and not just as a spectator but we could use everything like a little bit of sound. I would do everything myself, a little bit of sound, a little bit of pictures. I was already sort of good enough in that because I was a good photoshop user but a bit of sound. I didn't know how to edit sound but you had easy little programs for free, or a gift, or...so...Yeah we could be smart because there were meanwhile the official scene was not yet where the interest museum's didn't have websites yet. It was easy to sort of cheat on them or pretend to be them or also mock authority because we were also having the impression later on that we were in a very emancipatory space. We would mock the authority for their inertia, their lack of understanding or for their authority. So yeah authority was really questioned and it was a media that questions authority. It has changed so much since then but at that time it was.

O: And what are you looking for as you are building up the artwork? As you are adding pages, as you are putting sound in?

N: What I was looking for? For example one of the thing that I think few people were as interested in...a sort of...one of the elements I was aware of is a sort of intimacy so it was a medium that connected one to one, one on one, but in an intimate sphere so you didn't have social media's yet and that fact that you could be in a sort of, yeah intimate relationship or even sensuous because of this intimacy. Your imagination was also connected to your presence to your senses and to another one. So yeah I was very aware of that and many of the things were felt...so I think its not by chance for example that some of the first works, even pre-internet works even pre-web, were dealing with this situation of a person with a psych-ELIZA. ELIZA was one of the first chatrooms you could say in 90...80...maybe the end of the 80s you could say. So this idea of this intimacy with an absent but present person. But yeah...

O: But like in the instance you just talked about with David Still where you said that you auditioned all of these people what made you pick the one person? Was it just...?

N: No I had particular ideas. I wanted him to be sort of...so it was a personality that would, well a web character, that could hand out his personality. One could be him so you had to have sort of not medium but sort of average friendly look. He couldn't have been from a minority he had to be a majority of something so white and male and his age at that time in the age of internet users in the 2000 was more in the 30s so it was not a kid, young kids. So that's how I sort of...so even...sort of includes people who had too much. I don't know. Who could too much identify as this, or that or racially so and yeah I also sexually you could identify him as gay as well as...you didn't particularly have to identify it could work for both. Was not really identified but also to identify as either so that's..yeah that how I as a sort of friendliness.

O: And with Mouchette as you were adding pages did some of these same considerations come into play?

N: Consider what?

O: Considerations come into play?

N: Well of course it was a sort of myself so it was a sort of myself as a young person of course so which I had experimented before the web on things that were called MOOs. M-O-O-s which were interactive spaces only using text so of course I had this sort of virtual character they were originally I think it might have been born from my...a sense of limitation I felt in language. So when you are talking to someone who doesn't see you, you can't say that language is not your first language though you often feel the level of discussion because at that time also spaces, interactive spaces, were for educated people. They were people who had access to internet at universities. They were interesting. Some of the first interactive spaces MOOs were at the MIT or other universities. So I could sense if I had a talk inside these spaces they had other playful elements to it connecting also to coding but I could sense that I was talking like a kid. And even if you say I'm a foreigner you...so I guess that made me choose for a young age that sort of opened up maybe that type of connection where you...There is something I also call connection from imagination to imagination where the bodies themselves or the trace of your own history like your accent when you talk or what is incarnated in your flesh doesn't appear because something has been, every analogue element has been disconnected and replaced by digital <indecipherable> so yeah maybe that was born from that particular type of situation. What was I answering to? What consideration made you choose...

O: When you add pages?

N: So I do. Its difficult to explicit but because I did become another person. You do find certain resources that you didn't know you had for certain imagination or certain fantasy or certain. So the consideration, I don't know, its not really deliberate you could say if you compare it to writers some writers have a plan when they write a book but some other they discover the book when their writing it so I would say in the case of Mouchette that was pretty much the same and I could never have the blessing of being able to do a work of art in the same way for many reasons you have to plan, to announce, to define so I could say no consideration is the right idea or unconscious consideration. I was blessed enough to discover the art when I was making it so only one element at a time sometimes it would be technical but of course it was not a technical inspiration. I would use certain resources from myself which were there and I didn't know.

O: Do you ever determine a limit to what changes can be made to the artwork?

N: Well for example I mentioned if I had to reorganize for example it was very disorganized I didn't have a fixed plan so it was very organic one pile would be there and another one would be there so I remember only once I reorganized everything and it must have been at the moment I moved from...into the domain name because I first started without the domain name because space that was in my XS4ALL account I had a space an online space which I could use and maybe that was the only time and then I never did it again because of that...because I was aware that people kept the links that's the way things were traveling so for these things and then as it went by of course many things...of course as the web changes you had to change to remain the same. So in fact that was the case of changing something in order to exist that was the number one, how can I say, incentive. Its broken lets repair it or it doesn't look the same as I made it so what shall I do and then I considered that...so well repairing java scripts...so a lot of changes to remain the same and that's a big big work its like running on the what do you call it at the airport you have them...

O: Treadmill.

N: On the treadmill but on the...yeah the other way around catching up and you know your always loosing it your never...so it goes in the opposite direction and you run on that treadmill the opposite way and you never reach a stable point because there is none.

O: But do you think that you could add to the work now? Or has it...

N: I am still doing it! Everything is still possible only I am still in that situation I am running so I am much more busy with keeping up not letting it be damaged but I've been adding constantly so sometimes using things which I knew when no so I made. Yeah to this day I could still do a....I have an exhibition using some of Mouchette's work in Utrecht now.

O: I saw.

N: You saw it?

O: Yeah. I haven't gone to see it yet but I am going this weekend actually.

N: Okay so I didn't make anything new but I made a print installation. It was also meaningful in a way because in fact what I consider for me the big treasure of Mouchette is the participation and this incredible database where I have a huge...I give enormous value to what people have sent me and which I republished on the site and so like when making a choice here I make a site that did quite a long time ago called I Hate Mouchette.org so which was also anonymous like a sort of

anonymous hater. Who had made a sort of site called lhatemouchette in the pre-web 2.0 time you had these things expression needed a website you couldn't just...so you had all kind of site like I hate Microsoft or I hate my boss. So I made that site called I hate mouchette.org because I was...I received a lot of insult and that was also a way to sort of park them in a special site but of course the point of the insult was also...and people used a lot of imagination and played the game most of the time they didn't believe the hater they played the mouchette game along so that was also my proposal for this exhibition around truth and fake news and that was a sort of hate speech. A work around hate speech. What defines...well that hate is triggered to give a definition that's how hate speech is. You could say people are haters. Some people want to be hating because it gives them an identity lets say it makes...that's why they trigger hate finding an easy target. Its for the rest they might say practically nothing so all are right wing parties also far right but also use the hate in that way. It defines, they define by their enemies not by what they can bring to their citizens that they directed by what they are going to protect them from like the immigrants lets say...so they don't even say the...in Hungary now they are making advertising for the coming European election they are only advertising about hating immigrants while they have hardly any in Hungary these things...and they get in an interest by not saying what they are going to do for their citizens or what they are receiving from Europe for that matter but by triggering interest in the motion and identity of hate.

O: So how does this piece relate to Mouchette?

N: Well because she's...Mouchette...I always designed Mouchette in a way also in the negative by who...that she never said too much about herself or never in a narrative way but more in letting people imagine who she is so imagine who made it or imagine...so as a surface of projection so sort of using hate was a good one because people know what they hate even if its just a game that they hate or stuff like that. And sometimes not because well what do they hate they hate it because it's a foreigner or because its French or because she thinks she is doing art or because...so they use their hate faculties or I don't know targets so this sort of defining the relationship between them and triggering motion. So I was also very aware that or always manipulating that. I am not a linguist for nothing yeah I studied linguistics so I knew how to manipulate the situation to awaken emotions by the intimacy, the secrecy, the physical closeness, or the hate.

O: But its two different works? Right?

N: What lhatemouchette and mouchette. It depends if you consider mouchette as a work than everything that belongs to mouchette is a work otherwise there are hundreds of works of which mouchette is the author with different situation also physicality. I also made physical works, editions so its hard to say. Is Mouchette the artist or the work of art? That is the question. She could be an ordinate artist, as could be the case with for example certain writers.

O: But that's kind of the line that I am trying to understand.

N: If I understood it myself then haha I think its really hard to understand also for yourself when once I...so I protected anonymity for a long time and that's a big job. You have to erase the traces or every time your online but also when you work with art institution you have to explain everyone one by one not just like one person, not just the curators, in that chain that communicates with you. You have to explain them that you are doing anonymous and that its okay that its not a bad thing. That its for the art because the anonymity or changing your identity has a very very strong stigma. You must be pervert to do this. So having for example an institution

to inform everyone along the line also the person who buys your plane ticket or you know. So it costs a lot of energy. Its also nice because it can get you a lot of publicity and also a very special relation but its also a lot of energy to block all of the possible leaks so when I decided that it was not interesting anymore and I could do I had a sort of I thought it was just a very rational decision that people were not so crazy looking for the true identity of the author or you know I had done everything I could possibly do in that direction just sort of loosen it up. I had a sort of personal break down you could call it or a grieving period you could say which was very unexpected to me I did not realize it would happen as my decision was very rational. It was sort of made to ease my working condition and it had no artistic necessity anymore but the personal benefits if you want to call it like this or...I wasn't evaluating that and now I realize that what sort of helped was to resort to certain authors who had used alternate persona in how they had dealt with it sometimes much more difficult to them. So at least it consoled me. I might have been crazy but I was not the only one to be crazy in that way. So yes it certainly satisfied a lot of unconscious, I don't know, motivations.

O: And how, I mean this is a very difficult question, but how would you describe the meaning of the work if you had to describe it?

N: The meaning of the work that it's a virtual persona, a virtual character. Sometimes I would say that it is...for example the idea that I do not know whether it's a work of art or another artist so that's maybe how I would define a sort of way to blur boundaries so yeah maybe for myself I would define it more like this. Its another artist with another, with their own style, their own approach and their own motivation to do art or a sort of imaginary environment because of the freeness of the free...circulation on the web of the distribution of information so you were also free from the authority of institutions in arts let's say. Whether their commercial or whatever. So it was an I don't know it was not such an imaginary situation now of course it has become much more it was imaginary in the sense that freedom is only imaginary because you have not met the boundaries to the moment you met the boundaries and you negotiate that or then of course you can yeah...then of course you could say how it had shaped what you do so for instance freedom I would say in creation would be an imaginary state of not reaching your boundary. Of having lots of space where you don't have the feeling that you are compromising, or not necessarily compromising but, operating in certain limitations within certain frameworks and limitations. So yeah I would define it more in an alternate persona then a work of art. An alternate persona.

O: And what do you think are the inherent characteristics of the work?

N: Inherent characteristics of the work?

O: Yes what defines it.

N: Yeah for... the personality of the imaginary author for example there are certain qualities or characteristics that I would not allow myself. She's vain, she thinks she's a star. All of the things that I wouldn't have allowed myself even if I had them somewhere hidden in myself I wouldn't allow them in the open. They would come with quotation marks. I would be very easy with that and would really gain empathy and would gain friendship through being very open with her own...and because she's a child of course. Its easier to comply with the ego or vanity of the child especially if she is gifted. So for example these so that sort of...the inherent qualities would be that particular set of qualities that she had. A certain spontaneity and a way to express in a very simple language certain ideas about art. The way I experience them but I think the way they were also experienced. What defines art now also of course is few people would really be bothered

about what defines are on the internet but because you had a very small crowd sort of redefinition of art in its circulation was very significant I would say for the work. I was a sort of Duchampian artist I would say. Art is in the eye of the beholder or...so this idea of yeah restructuring the definition of art or the approach of art or...as well...so for example I consider the most precious art in Mouchette what she received. It's the fact that she could trigger all these beautiful little pieces of text micro-poems or whatever I want to call them sometimes. Although I didn't make it I still consider it the art of Mouchette in a way yeah for example restructuring the fact that it's something that happens between me and you or like also all these philosophical ideas about art in general so like literature. I already...I sort of had them already when I started Mouchette so also with literature which I studied like the quality of the readership how the reader finishes the book or the creativity of the reading as such so I was very aware of all that and I had the feeling of impression which also sort of made me very happy and very excited about doing it. I had the impression of exercising time through that medium.

O: And there is also a part of Mouchette that happens in real time, like Guerilla Gift Shop and...

N: You mean real time or real world?

O: Real world.

N: I made since the beginning when I had situation where I could make the character exist beyond the net but with a reference to the net I would do it of course. So it was not just a set of page but...this situation would also trigger the possibility of making a new work of art. So one of the first work I did would be...I was invited by a magazine, a film magazine, to create a centerfold as an artist and I made a quiz for Mouchette which could be published in the film magazine so it had, it had on both sides. It was a quiz about the film Mouchette and a quiz about my character but made first design on paper, I don't know if I first designed it on paper or translated it for, but the two were closely related so yeah it was. For me it always worked hand in hand as I could make it work when people would accept the anonymity to try and...I also did a gallery show. One of the first things in '97 where I had made also a printed pictures and made an installation in '97 which was very, very early and then I would not...so no I did not...it was always parallel you could say so one would react on the other.

O: But how does it form the whole picture?

N: How does it form the whole picture?

O: The real time, the net?

N: Its hard to know...I live in my studio which means it could happen at night or...so it was not separated from my personal life so I mixed it. I often mixed it with the work of Martine Neddham. Martine Neddham was already an artist in public commission and space and worked with language as visual art so when people would accept, because I was so excited about this creation. When people would accept, the gallerists I worked with would accept to have show on Mouchette then I would do it so I would use...I would use the connections of Martine Neddham to make a Mouchette work in the real world or times which were very unlikely one of the first...for example things we did in the community of artists denial of service actions we had in 200...in the year of '99 I think because we were protecting a group called etoy.com which was getting a lawsuit because of its name and it was the first one and we would sit...As artists we had like scripts with which we would bombard these commercial sites and I remember it was from...one of the best

moments was for Christmas night and I had friends over...no it was not Christmas it was Oude Nieuwe how do you call it? 31 December.

O: Oh yeah New Years Eve.

N: New Years Eve. It was on New Years Eve and I had friend. I had a party but I would go to the computer and check that the scripts for denial of service for EToy were still running so it was totally...because at that time you did not have portable computers so I had a big sort of thing and then I was rushing every now and then to check that it was still working and fortunately I had that party at my house so that I could check. Not for that reason but it was so mixed to my personal life so I don't know what was your question?

O: Just how it all interacts basically.

N: It was the first person who helped me with the database was my partner at the time. I wouldn't have known that I could have a database. I would republish things by making new html pages and he was sort of studying well not really studying but he was more of a self-studier. At that time people who were doing things on the web was self-study so he...and then he had made something for his grandad who had just died, who he had been a painter, and he had put all of his paintings online and then he said yeah but I can help you with that stop writing stop spending hours just rewriting by hand all these emails that you have...so yeah it was totally mixed with my private life totally.

O: Wow so then Mouchette was acquired by the Stedelijk and the MOTI Museum in 2016...

N: Yeah.

O: And I just...maybe some general questions first so over all...

N: She was not acquired.

O: She was not.

N: No, it's a version Mouchette-Version 01 okay so saying that she was acquired is a bit weird because I still have her. I still run the website so their not hosting it so it was not acquired as such. I am still the one who hosts it. I am still the one who moderates it. I am still the one who knows how it works. I am still the one who re-registers the domain name so something of Mouchette was bought and if you go to the Stedelijk museum where she's in the artbase. Its my website its not what they bought.

O: What did they buy exactly?

N: That's a good question they bought what I could sell them. Well it was a question to know what to sell them so we sort of...we didn't have much time to ponder over what exactly they could buy because it had to be made before a certain date, or deadline. So MOTI knew they were acquiring a number of net artworks and they were trying to choose them. They knew what budget they had left. They knew these works would go to the Stedelijk they were making. So the whole situation was set already when the approached me somewhere in September. It had to be totally signed in December so...so the situation was very...I proposed to sell a work that had a definite, well which you could put on a CD lets say or a DVD. Even if in this case of course the questions of preservation still remain but yet it was a sort of autonomous work which of course I had a number of done but for some reason they say they want all mouchette.org so what can I sell you. And they had some sort of...well in certain cases they said yeah we got some editions

you know in certain works we bought an edition lets say for Olia Lialina they had these gifs. It was gifs and the most were editions. She had 10 copies or 3 copies or whatever. It changes everyday so you can't have a copy. It took a lot of time to discuss it with the help of Annet Dekker who knew Mouchette very well since the very beginning and knew the situation and said yeah a copy doesn't make sense but we can sell them a time-stamped version of all of the contents which doesn't infer (interfere) with the infrastructure which is present in the server. Content which is specific to this particular hosted site. So we ended up agreeing that it would be that and I had some...because they really wanted that like the whole thing the real thing as if...as I said for me it is much more like an alternate artist then a work of art because then its not a work of art its 50 works of art which I can name and date specifically. So...but which are all interconnected of course. So well we had this talk we also had this talk with Annet. Annet already was...it was important to have Annet in the process because she was the, how do I say, scientific instance that legitimated our, the use of certain words. It was very bizarre and we ended up. I had some sleepless nights I'll say no no whatever we do we shouldn't yeah. They shouldn't buy that it doesn't make sense, they should buy, but somehow they didn't want... I proposed to them three works that had their autonomy. They're works which are maybe with flash but could be kept as videos without changing their nature or you know things that would hold better and wouldn't depend on me and later could be preserved but no they wanted that. And I finally accepted because I thought this discrepancy might open to, well, the possibility to fill that gap by helping me to seriously preserve it. So in fact at one point I sort of gave into that lets say...of course its not like I sold them something that has no value. Or no that we didn't give it serious reflection. We had many talks with Annet. We had also a talk with the museum, Ward Janssen, and the museum, the three of us, she even was remunerated for her consultation so all the things were sort of discussed as seriously as we could with each of us our, I don't know, personal interest in sight. So but for me in a way it didn't make much sense either then the fact of making a certain gap manifest and hoping that at some point the institution will give some interest in this gap. But because of course they do have that sort of quantity of data and the would, if they would, if everything I did would disappear lets say if we are talking not about sort of decade time but in 50 years if this has had stayed and not the rest. Of course they could revive that particular moment but they would have to revive the whole, you know, architecture. And they would pay whoever would do that that, they would pay 20 times more than what I have been paid to deliver that piece so in fact it didn't make much sense for the material but for really making this gap manifest hoping that someone, that the institution, would give some interest in collaborating with preservation.

O: And what falls into this gap would you say?

N: Everything I do all the time: the moderation, the preservation, the resurrection. What I call keeping it alive and I have been also expressing myself quite a bit about that although I am getting a bit now tired communicating with academia because I think as I was telling you communicating with academia is...I don't think its worthless for Mouchette. I think it's a way also to preserve her memory so I don't think its worthless. I don't do it out of pure, I don't know, altruism or generosity its also, I think, it does give something to the work but a certain type of interest but it doesn't, it doesn't lead to anything concrete in the help of preserving it.

O: And what part would you want the institution to take in the preservation? How do you see their role?

N: It could be anything from money to pay for...I have been working also...well I have already done a lot myself but from observation and acknowledging my way of preserving by keeping that

re-definition. Actually I was saying how I thought this situation could redefine the role of art within a society lets say just as Duchampian approach or the renegotiating the authority and the partners present role. So yeah I would say the preservation of that as well. You could say that they could still participate in the, you know, not turn it into something that has, into a fetish of itself. If you take the case of, I don't know, say Fluxus well of course all of these sort of spontaneous re-questioning of the authority, of the object and of the art situation. Ended up to 60 years later, 50 years later showing a number of fetish of these in showcases in museums trying to imagine what it could have been but sometimes not even that. So you could say the spirit of Fluxus in a way is preserved in a jar.

O: Like as an artifact?

N: Yeah but also the spirit itself. Re-questioning the participation of the public, re-questioning the validity of an object for example. They would throw away...and now people are getting rich from the leftovers or fetishizing things that were just made on the moment so...and that was the spirit. It was not by chance. It was of course the spirit of the...and so I find a lot of that sort of killing the spirit is still at work in the institution so art that had an emancipatory attitude. For example redefining the interaction between the art and the public has been like...lately even being revisited in a way that really totally kills the spirit. In a way which...at least, you know, when sometimes when you see a number of artifacts and you realize that they are just what is left over just like elements in the life of someone who has died. Its not that life its just what you can approach and the rest you imagine. But now lots of these leftovers are gaining the status of the art and changed completely the spirit so I think this is a bit heartbreaking, I'd say. This is heartbreaking.

O: Yeah, so how do you think they can make a preservation strategy that would not do this?

N: I have been expressing myself a few times with, like giving these lectures together with Karin, Karin de Wild, and I have even formed some concepts. One of the concepts being generative preservation. How to preserve something alive. So its not the...so I have some answers or I try to formulate them for example the idea of generative preservation I think is a concept that has quite something to say especially in the situation of the net where it generates data constantly. How can you preserve things by still keeping their ability to generate something in the large sense, alive would be a sort of metaphor of course, but I think... Meaning that its not just a sort of individual case but a case that could enlighten a certain relationship to art on the net. So well I've been doing that but once you have done it, you have done it, you know. So I think for example the concept of generative preservation could be interesting in the sense that if you like show an interactive work, lets say, whatever the interaction then you would make sure that it's still interactive or that its something that triggers interactions or posts. That it can still triggers this reaction and that this reaction being republished so that this still exists for example.

O: So basically as far as degradation goes for this work you wouldn't want it to be beyond this interactive level to reach a point where links don't work where...

N: That's it. Also and its also ethical to, how can I say, control. I mean its like for example easy enough to see that a work is not linked because it doesn't when you have your statistics it doesn't, it doesn't have traffic anymore or... So there can be, how can I say, there are ways to keep things alive lets say and so this sort of generative status is really, that's why I use this notion which seems to be a contradiction that preservation is generative that preservation can be generative. Meaning that it can preserve its generative functions is that it can apply in a lot of

things also making sure, lets say, making sure that part of the site is still being accessed. Every time you go on a site you generate the data that you visited with your statistics lets say so in fact everything is...so that concept of the generative I think can be applied very widely in the sense of the preservation. How do you, for example, make sure that things are still being visited. Its not enough to know that it is online, for example, so that fact that it generates traffic.

O: So do you want the institution to take more of the role that you yourself are filling right now?

N: What I would want is to collaborate with the institution. At least to observe a dialogue and have a dialogue on the mutual interests. This is also the way I want to work when I am approached by an institution for an exhibition, for example. I wouldn't come with a ready-made solution saying well you, we do this. I have a dialogue, with like in Utrecht we have had a lot of dialogue. The curators are from Croatia because they were invited by Impakt to curate this show so we had a lot of skype talks and we came, this was maybe the 4th or 5th version of what could have been there and so... And it was quite pleasurable I mean like it was, that's how I understand the relation, for example, to an exhibition is that there is no fixed way to show it in a space only the one you agree on according with the curators. So I never come with a ready-made solution but I wouldn't also so much appreciate a ready-made, well if curators would come and say we want to exhibit this on a link and I would say well okay send me money for that, you know. I wouldn't refuse it but I wouldn't find it interesting so this is what I find interesting is that dialogue. I opened, a sort of, with LIMA, now I saw they were reusing the formula. I was asked to make a communication and I called it conversation on conservation for the tongue twister but also because this idea that conservation could be a sort endless conversation. That you always go back and forth which it is actually...

O: I think it is. Yeah definitely.

N: Its also what exists for architecture or you know things that...it changes constantly and it's a conversation with the actual situation and ever decade brings its own ideas on what...so I do believe in that in the conversation, well the conservation as a conversation, but I might have the feeling at least, maybe the Whitney, but that it hasn't happened yet at least I couldn't say so but its one word. For example, what I sold is one word in the conversation but certainly that doesn't mean much for the future. I would say.

O: And umm oh I just lost the question I was going to ask...its gone.

N: About conversations?

O: No it was not about...

N: I was answering a question but I don't know which.

O: No I just asked what role you wanted...oh my question came back to me. I was going to ask, how you imagine its lifetime after your gone? If you can't have this conversation?

N: I wrote a text once about that for Annet. She asked me. She had a symposium publication, and I was pondering how long would it take after I die, how long it would take for the web hosting to disconnect, for the registering, for the spam to kill. So it was more a sort of...so it's more an imagination of what would happen. Who would be at your funeral or something. These kind of imaginations haha. But more in a sort of like fantasy. So I have started working with a collaborator which I paid myself to preserve how I, the database, to help preserve the database because I moderate it. I have been working for 2 year on my own and I stopped because at some point we...

it was... I don't know if it was the document we used. So I stopped because, well its not that we achieved something. We did do something but I found that, in fact I think it needed a real institutional method and conversation. So I was just talking with someone I had employed and although we started making a sort of screenshot sessions and commentary on the screenshot and finding also a good format to... what format we produced. So these screenshot of the database, of the not the database itself but the interface because the interface, like when you had an admin like for a blog well this was self-designed at least with a technician I worked with so its all customized its not like, and there was no info because I was the only one to use them so I knew if something was broken or useless or how it had to be operated. No one else knows so I would archive some instructions some information so we started on that and produced some documents and produced a discussion. Also we archived the discussions about the documents. So there is an archive of some documents I don't know if someone not knowing would be able to operate it like I do or to operate it at all because he was instructed in operating it. So a year and a half ago I broke my wrist and I couldn't really use a mouse so he did it. But yeah at some point I also had that impression that this institutional dialogue hadn't happened yet. One day people will find these things and they will not know what it means and it can also be destroyed just like the rest of what I did. So yeah I thought it was attempt indeed to preserve the functioning of what was the database and to introduce someone. But also to find the ways to understand myself what I think should be preserved because I don't know it myself I just do it.

O: So you need perhaps an outsiders perspective on how you yourself moderate and what you yourself preserve?

N: Yeah so that was at least something that I was starting to achieve and we did it for about 2 years what made me stop also was that he was in Athens and I thought he would... He is Greek, but he was studying in Rotterdam but he had, he was sort of at the moment we started he said, "I am just temporarily in Greece but I will come back in Rotterdam." Cause he finished his study he was doing a masters at...but then somehow he didn't come back so we did one or two...It was too hard to work online on Skype it was. So for a year he could never manage to come back and we worked and we would have <indecipherable> so then I thought that was enough. I couldn't. I had enough working online and all our sort of planned achievements were blurred because they only happened 3 weeks later or he didn't know what I had been asking or he didn't know what he was delivering. So then conditions also made it...One reason of these conditions was I didn't have too much budget to offer him. So of course if I had knew he would be all the time in Greece I would not have started but what that's it. But this idea of needing someone to observe is really something. I do, do things but there is a level in the preservation where I need someone to observe with me because a lot of the things I do with it are all so much mixed up with my life that I don't even know that I do them.

O: And you hope that you can have this dialogue with the institution about...?

N: Yeah or someone related to the institution of course which has also a sort of a legitimacy and also expertise in certain ways of preservation. Which might not be the same as mine. For example Karin, Karin de Wild, her interest in preserving is very, very, very different from mine. We have a <indecipherable> and we can understand but what she wants to preserve is not at all what I want to preserve or what she feels interested to preserve. She wants to preserve documents, or she...but in a way for me that's okay as long as the dialogue... So she isn't preserving for me she's preserving for her but she was also preserving for me after all. So I think yeah I think at some points these conversations. In fact in some ways I would like to lead the conversation and this is what I haven't been able to do until now. Not so yeah.

O: Do you think that your concept of generative conservation could be adapted to other cases?

N: I think so. Of course, you know, like obviously if someone would buy a blog which is still active and still has reactions. Of course if you form...then you could buy a work that constantly changes for the time being. For example Karin has studied another work which has been Lynn Hershman. That she has sold to the San Francisco, SFMOMA, and then... But they put it online sometimes because it costs a certain well... So this work can generate as well have a conversations and the conversations are also preserved in the work but they can't put it on time, all the time, because they put it online when there is someone to moderate it to make it run to make it... so it's a bit like a performance with a script you could say. Although you could say more and more the idea of preserving performance is being examined. It has its, how can I say, conservation ideas but its not the same when you have digital versus a live work. So sometimes its even more helpful to compare it to a performance than to compare it to an object because a performance has to be re-performed reinterpreted. A performance has a script. Performance has a document and then you can... So sometimes its more relevant to compare it to performance although its very different but more relevant to compare it to performance re-activated than to an object being restored. But even though I formed these concept of generative preservation because I was invited by LIMA on the theme of reinterpretation and I thought no reinterpretation does not make sense because then it is redesigned and its "re" supposes an original and a second.

O: So it's something that's living?

N: Yes, but there is a one and a second. And I think in the generative you don't have an original and a copy but a performance that was made real by a <indecipherable> and 20 years later someone re-performs a script from a recorded document. And so you have an original and a copy. But I think in the case of why I used this concept of a generative preservation is that in the case of generative preservation there is not an original but there is an origin and you cannot name what it <indecipherable> So I think my site and also my artworks embodies very much this idea of generative preservation. For example, lots of artworks I made with found material, so is this found material the art or not, you know, so found material online. Found software. Found material. So, what is the object? What is the original? I reuse the film which was made after a book. I often believe...So, this film it's inspired for a part by Bresson in the '60s. So I think that's why I also hold onto this idea of generative instead of using the idea of reinterpretation. Any "re" would remove this authentication of something that has a fixed origin whereas if you have an idea of generative preservation you know it already came from somewhere. So you don't have to get...You don't have to rely on an original and something to reproduce it but to keep it generative means to keep it changing. So, you might need to repair the software that's really simple enough. So change to keep the same that sort of... Already simple enough. Sometimes it cannot be kept the same because the whole medium changes so then a decision will be made by whoever, you know. That's why I think this idea there's not an original or a copy is still important cause if you say the original... For example, people reproduce some works that were made in the early 2000s or the end of the 90s but then the resolution of the screen was not clearly produced as the resolution of the screen today, like Rhizome does for example with the old web. Then you have a small thing in the middle of your big screen. How much does it re-produce the intention of the work? Not at all. For me it really, really sort of make it sort of exoticizes it. But makes it different from what its...It alienates it from... So for me this is sort of, for example, this comes from the idea that the work has an original resolution. Of course it does because if you have the files, if you have the software that can reproduce the browser size the way it came to the screens then you could say that's the original but you look at it as a this which is absolutely... Which is miles away

from...It doesn't give the feelings. For example, I always worked on backgrounds in a very immersive way so my backgrounds were larger, larger than the screen. Their not anymore now their tiled so it has changed. In some cases I modified the code or when it was relevant or whatever or possible. Sometimes it wasn't possible at all. I modified the background to make them full screen again and sometimes I didn't so it has changed. It looks vintage. So for example, the idea of a large screen or an immersive background is more important than reproducing the resolution of that time.

O: So how would you describe authenticity?

N: Hmm?

O: How would you describe authenticity then?

N: I would exclude the idea of authenticity that's why the generative idea bypasses it and doesn't make it imperative to become...say when you have a tree and a seed what is more authentic? The first tree or the you know? When you have that idea of things being generated one from the other then you don't have authenticity but you have the possibility of making things exist and you have some very...That's why I still hold on...When I give examples of generative preservation I particularly enjoy the example that have been modified or altered very significantly the authentic, or the original artwork you can say. One of my favorite things of course is Frankenstein, the novel, by Mary Shelley. We do have the original but Frankenstein...for example there is a lot of live Frankensteins you could say not only films but you even have...see like very bizarre Frankenstein. Frankenstein everybody thinks is the monster but it's the scientist so the monster is... It's a very significant element in the book that the monster has no name and a nameless monster. Well this has disappeared. It was very significant that the monster born of body parts found in churchyards was an unnamed creature and yet now its named and it took over the name of its. That's a really bizarre twist that is absolutely against the original spirit of the work and yet the dissemination of the work and all the different layers has made it happen. When we think of Frankenstein we don't think of the scientist. We think of the creature. No matter how important it was to the author that... and nobody bothers very much like, "Stop it, its really an unnamed creature!"

O: But so you don't think that a work can have authenticity as it changes, that authenticity is a freezing word?

N: Yes, because of the way we think. Yeah because you could say what is authentic to Frankenstein is the way Mary Shelley wrote it so its really not authentic to call the, because it's a significant part of the definition of this monster that it is nameless, and the intentions of the, maybe of the scientist should be seen as more important because the book is named after the scientist and not after the creature. Yet uses the way it took on a life further... also in popular culture give that <indecipherable> importance to the creature. So that's it that's more authentic. Reception is more significant to the work of art than something more original. So it's more Frankenstein to, it's more true to, because it lives on to say well this is not the book. So, these are and of course it has become conceptualized. You have the...when, you can call it, a Frankenstein. There is a cooking show called Frankenfood where a monstrous mixture of different meats are put into the same dish and people are like. Its very bizarre and repulsive but promoting this idea of monstrousness in food for what was that kind of food. So, there is a real concept of what Frankenstein could be with a real positivity towards monstrosity that has lived and gone very far from the original book and the original concept and original ideas of what seemed to be important to Mary Shelley when she wrote the book. So you could say for me that's a typical

example of what generative preservation is. Like Frankenstein has been preserved through a lot, and a lot of not misunderstanding but transformation of the meaning through the reception not through, it's never you know, it's the viewers of the film that did it, it's not the author of the you know. Well there is a certain type of reception that... So maybe it's the fact that Frankenstein became... It was probably maybe not even the idea of the one who made the film because in the film he's not called Frankenstein, the famous one, the one that we remember as that. There were several so this particular face has stayed and not the others. So it's not the makers of the film who said the monster is never called Frankenstein either so things happen during the reception.

O: But the idea of generative conservation that you are thinking of is something that is continuing so not like the example you gave of the SFMOMA where they put it on sometime and then it's not there.

N: No, I don't mean that. That is not. That is not, I mentioned this example because of... because it compares preservation of a digital work to a performance. That is the only reason. It doesn't have a... so it can't continue, but in fact it doesn't function is what I call. It's just more a concept to say that the work is preserved by transformation especially when they happen in interaction with the public. So not necessarily my decision of...so nobody decided it for the monster Frankenstein. It's a mistake of the reception. People started calling the monster, but none of the one's who adapted the book to another medium decided it. So, the popular use and then it's accepted and then it's taken off. So that's maybe what I call generative preservation that things are transformed so the, by the reception of the public, by how it circulates, the circulation transforms the medium. So yeah let's say maybe if they had, if the people who had the copyright, you know, had refused to give the rights for the film because the monster...because someone...then it would have stopped. These are not made by authority who keep the meaning of the work but by the way they have received and they are transforming the minds of the ones, of the viewers. So, the transmission is not made by, the preservation is not made by an authority but by person's opinion of the reception. Viewers. It circulates on another level on an uncontrolled level.

O: So what can change? The viewers perceptions determine what can change?

N: In principle I do not know what can change. When I am not there to keep it the way it is, to keep it. Everything can change.

O: But maybe a better question is what must stay?

N: Well for me as long as I'm here what must stay is the participation of the public to the works.

O: And the aesthetic of the work?

N: No, the aesthetic has changed. Sometimes by a, depends what you call aesthetic if you define them in terms of its material components... That's also why I use generative preservation because there is no... If you talk about the aesthetics the fact that these works are online so they depend on the server. The server serves a page that appears on your laptop. That's already generative so whatever the server is going to serve will appear as interpreted <indcipherable> So already something is being generated at each viewing it's a new page. So if you talk about the aesthetic of a page where I mentioned the size so is the size the original resolution? The aesthetic, the original resolution? For me no the aesthetic is, well the aesthetic has been transformed by material facts of how the size of screen changed and I accepted it. You can't change it. I liked it the way it changed. So, I don't think, the aesthetic is defined in material terms, no. That's why I would like to sort of be able to explicit certain elements which I think are important not the aesthetic. I'd

say...but otherwise I don't think it might... If I am not there to keep them, it might change as long as it's being received by the public. As long as someone doesn't define it saying this is, well that it's allowed to change. That's what maybe I mean by generative preservation. That it's, that these things are... Yeah can be changed by the viewers but I don't have a definite... Maybe yeah I don't have a definite point where I say this has to stay the same but for sure what we understand as the material elements lets say the code, the pixel. If we consider them as fixed then we're wrong. So freezing them in a certain moment in time I think for me it goes against the aesthetic of the work for sure.

O: And reduces its adaptability.

N: Yes.

O: Because then it cannot be generative anymore.

N: Yes, if it says it should have the size of the screen it was made for then yeah then it becomes really a sort of copy of it. So yes I would really, that's why if I had to choose between how I should want it to be considered more like a performance than an object. It's very dangerous to think that a website is a thing of which you can preserve the material...material

O: Materiality.

N: Materiality, codes and whatever is preserved on a hard disc. So yeah it would be very dangerous to think that, and I think, the danger exists because you still already have to convince, because the material can't exist. I put it on like what I sold to the Stedelijk, the thing with time stamp and now it sits on a hard disc somewhere, on a shelf, or on a computer, or even on a shelf. Yeah so that would be very dangerous to think that this is the work of art because it seems to give legitimacy to an object whereas if you bought a performance at least you would think it needs to be redone. It needs to be reinvented so you would try to connect to certain source or have an aesthetic appreciation of what the world used to be or reconnect to documents of that time. The idea that you could preserve a material form and revive it from this material form is very wrong. So it's a bit silly of me to say so because I did said that and not by lack of, by the tension or lack of understanding. The circumstances made me do it but I think the danger of fetishizing or using the object to kill the spirit or abusing the materiality is there very badly.

O: But there was also a contract too, right?

N: Yeah lots of pages to which I hardly understood like how I wanted some people who had sold things that could be installed in a particular way could define how it should be. I left it unspecified because it was nothing...one element of preservation that I would say was meaningful is that Karen Archey when she came to Stedelijk and she acquisitioned the work. She did a specific interview that lasted maybe 2 hours and has been transcribed and is probably accessible if asked. And she had a real long set of questions as well as specific. It was in the presence of the person also who was in charge of the digital thing. That also...well there were three people at the table who participated in this talk which was transcribed so at least I would say... And it also had questions related to aesthetics in a very general, general sense like she ask me my artists that were inspiration or things like this. And I said well I didn't know maybe Sophie Calle so for example these, well autobiography, invented autobiography, would make more sense than a lot of other...So I think that, that has a certain value the way it was recaptioned by Karen Archey as a dialogue maker and just to say how significant the lack of, how can I say, expertise or even interest in the material form is that they did in fact when the works were taken over from MOTI

to the Stedelijk they had lost a significant part, like half of it, all the HTML was there but the database which is a separate part and not in the same, you don't download them in the same way. They had lost it so I gave it back. Fortunately I had it so I gave it again. So that was a part of it was lost in the process because this data was not really well identified.

O: And this was attached to the mirror version? The HTML?

N: To the mirror version what you mean? I gave them a number of files, one file was the root folder so they have much more than Mouchette. They also have lhatemouchette.org, they also have archive.mouchette.org. They have a lot more. Everything around it. Much more than the domain name so just the root folder I downloaded in the interim. I have repaired many so it has changed a lot and the database which has to be sort of extracted in a different way and some documents. So some, for example, I have a file of a screen capture of 20 minutes which was really well documented by Rhizome for a show so that's a document of the circulation. One circulation. So I gave them these sort of documents.

O: Still a lot of work to be done.

N: Yeah, yeah, its sort of what could maybe... This data could one day be exploited. So, I don't regret that they have a, just that gap of interest, so I went into that idea of maybe that gap can be filled one day but I am not going to say well to imagine really close that gap. Its getting...yeah it's a huge gap in what they bought and what Mouchette is really.

O: How do you think you could begin to close this gap?

N: Well for example that conversation we had is a beginning to close these gaps but that's just one conversation. In practical terms the act of keeping the site alive and how much work it gives me to keep it alive, to moderate, to repair it...

O: Well thank you.

[Tjerk Busstra \(B\) interviewed by Olivia Brum \(O\), April 1st, 2019](#)

O: Martine did... She mentioned that interview with Karen Archey when the work was firstquisitioned.

B: Yes, yes I was there with the interview.

O: Is there...I was also wondering if there is anyway that I could access that? If that was...?

B: Yeah because it was written down the whole interview so...

O: All transcribed?

B: Yes, all transcribed and I was asked to make installation instructions specifically for when the work would be installed in an exhibition so in my installation instructions, I used a lot of parts of the interview but you can get the interview as well.

O: Yes, that would be very wonderful.

B: Formally I have to ask Karen Archey about it if that's possible, but I don't think it should be a problem.

O: Because also Martine was saying that she though that was a very descriptive interview of the work, like a very successful interview, so then again, I was very interested to see that from that perspective.

B: Yeah there's a lot of info in there so yeah. Yeah no that's okay.

O: Perfect. But I wrote up some questions and I think a lot of kind of... what I got from Martine and a lot of like the direction that I think I am heading in with my thesis is more into kind of a conservation gaps sort of direction. So, division of labor across different parties. Things like that is kind of what I am curious about.

B: That's the most exciting thing, exciting thing of the work, I think.

O: Yeah, I think so also especially as a museum object like where a lot of the questions, I think, lie so I am also just really interested to get your perspective then about everything. Maybe I just kind of move through it and then the interview can go whatever way its going to go. But I just wondered because I know in 2016 you acquired like 5 software and net art-base pieces and I was wondering what preceded this acquisition?

B: Um well the works... It was then called MOTI, they wanted to acquire the works but there was a plan to close parts of it and then head of department collections and presentations. Where we as department are in, and his idea was... I think it was his idea to acquire these works together with MOTI so but specific what went decision-wise before that I don't know because I was, I was, only asked to join the process when it was in the future already planned and the acquisition was in fact already done. So, I don't know a lot about, know a lot about the background of that acquisition.

O: Or what instigated it. Yeah, I had a lot of...I was very curious about it because I was talking to some other people in the field and they were talking a bit about the deliberation when it comes to acquiring net art, especially institutions acquiring it.

B: Uh deliberation.

O: Yeah as in institutions aren't acquiring it as much.

B: Not as much.

O: Yeah not as much.

B: No, no, not as much and we have just a few years Karen Archey has served her media art so I think... and with our she had a lot of conversations with Rein Wolfs last director we had. They were very interested in acquiring media art, so I think they were the, how do I say, they started the idea I think. Which I think is great because it's a great gap I think in art in museums when it comes to digital and net art and sound. These were probably our first works acquiring digital and net art.

O: And, well I think also in that way because this is yeah, the first acquisition that Stedelijk made what obstacles do you think generally stand in the way of institutions acquiring net art?

B: I think one of the obstacles is I think institutions but also artists don't really know what they are giving away or acquiring. The institutions themselves don't know what the artwork itself is. What do we get? If you buy a painting you get a painting you know you have to care for it, it has boundaries. I think, if you buy a digital work or a work of net art you really have to define it what are the boundaries? What is the work? I think it is a thing where a lot of people are afraid so not really knowing the digital realm and not really...they don't really know what the boundaries are and how to set those so you don't have really an idea of what to acquire and the next thing is what to do with it? Okay you get the artwork, but then next thing is how to maintain it how to

store it and how to document it and how to display it in an exhibition in the future maybe in 20 years. I think with digital artworks its very... I think they are the most volatile artworks there are. So, it's like gasoline you know it's gone before you know it. I think it's with digital artwork as well they are very vulnerable. I think these are the obstacles.

O: Yeah, I mean I agree and then I had just... What was the acquisition process for Mouchette, like how did the process... and I mean maybe you don't know this because you said you came in later.

B: Yeah because I was asked, I was asked to be with the interview and that was the first time I actually saw the work and met Martine. So that was my first time getting to know the work. But we got... I think the work was bought and then at the interview... Oh yeah when we had the interview, we got the database already. We got a database dump from her side and it's called Mouchette.org-Version 01. That's its version number so now the site has developed since so if you would make a new dump it would be Mouchette.org-Version 02. So we got the 01 version and its just a raw dump of the whole server.

O: And was it... What format or?

B: Oo yeah I think its just a dump so a SQL database with a content management system of which I don't know still what it is. I still have to look into that and HTML. So its...it could be word press for instance but I don't think it's wordpress. But it's a SQL database with all the info in it and mail addresses, links, content and the raw HTML files. So I think its 1.3 GB so we have got that in a zip archive and that's what it is so if we... You know the real work is the online version actually in the interview Martine said the work itself is the work online, the archive... uh what did she say?

O: And also the participatory part of it like the performance and stuff.

B: Yeah it is a performative element is what she said so that's all part of it so and a domain name is really important often times people forget that. I think the domain name isn't there anymore you can't access the site. Its... some artists see it nearly as a frame you have the scrollbarcomposition... what is the name I forget... Oh Jan Robert Leegte! He said oh well domain name scrollbarcomposition.com is yeah, its nice to have but it could be anything it's a framework. With Martine Neddham her work its really, its part of it. We should be, we should be very careful it isn't lost because also domain names are very volatile as well. If you forget to pay or maybe she dies, its on her name, and she gets an email like hey you have to renew for the upcoming 5 years and she doesn't do it, it's gone and somebody else takes it then you lost the work.

O: Exactly and she told me also that there's different branches of Mouchette so of course there is the page where visitors can take part and be part of the website and then there's Mouchette.org the main part of the website and then lhatemouchette.org and she was telling me that the Stedelijk also has parts of lhatemouchette.org as well?

B: Yeah they're included in it. I think... its here <incomprehensible> Lets take a look. Yeah we have mouchette.org with the subdomain See You Again, puntmouchette.org, and puntmouchette.org, aboutmouchette.org, then lhatemouchette.org, and mouchette.net. That's what we have and that's what we acquired. Yeah these are all the database you see it here. See You Again, Mouchette.org...see all the HTML files. Yeah that is what is here and what we have in the database.

O: Cause I was asking her if it was separate works or if it was all the same work.

B: And what did she answer?

O: She answered that Mouchette is like a brand so...its kind of I mean its not the same work but it is under the same heading per say.

B: Umbrella. Yeah I was curious because I read the interview again and I thought oh wow this is complicated.

O: Yeah extremely because also there was an exhibition that was just a couple weeks ago with lhatemouchette.org.

B: Oh okay. Where?

O: At Impakt in Utrecht. Yeah so that raised some questions that I was also curious about.

B: Interesting. Yeah. Okay that's fun. Wow. We got a lot of comments right after we installed the work again with the other five works when we opened last year the new part of the building and we immediately put these five works in and there was a lot of critique I heard a few months later where people said hey its not interactive. It should be interactive. We only put a mousepad in where there should be a keyboard to make it interactive. I don't know how did they installed it at Impakt?

O: It was just...basically and Ipad screen I would say with different write ins that people had written kind of going by and then just all of the images of things people had written into lhatemouchette.org. There was no keyboard or anything where you could interact.

B: So it was a sort of part of the work was shown so a slide show.

O: Yeah a part of the work.

B: Hmm interesting yeah because there was something Martine was really open about that like, like how to install it she said oh it could be wallpapers or Mouchette.org or in another way and she would like to be involved with installing it. She was very open to how the work could be installed.

O: And in this case she said also that she thought it was a successful iteration that she had really collaborated a lot with them. Yeah so then I find it interesting that she also said this thing about wallpaper to you as well.

B: Yeah it was interesting. It stood out from the interview she spoke openly of how to install the work or exhibit it. Yeah.

O: Do you know besides the interview that Karen Archey did if there were other types of documentation that were executed when it was acquired?

B: I only know about the interview but that there were... There must be a contract or something like that, an acquisition contract following standard procedure so but I don't know about other documents. Yeah, we got documents within the archive, so we got some photos and video material about the work. That's it. Sometime... I don't know if you want a specific thing. Do you need contracts or?

O: Yeah stuff like that like what exactly was recorded essentially when it was... Because I heard that there was a contract as well that was more from here side that the Stedelijk signed and I was curious what was involved in that.

B: Yeah that's not, not something I know anything about. I think you better ask Karen Archey on that. She has more info. I can give you her e-mail, e-mail address.

O: Yeah that would be perfect.

B: She knows a lot about acquisition itself. I am more into technical skills so...

O: Yeah, I will ask her. And I guess also what obstacles do you think have come up in the work's conservation since it was acquired?

B: No obstacles yet because we just stored it plain on our server but that's secure so that wasn't an obstacle but... Yeah not yet but I think the acquisition is still an ongoing process. What was said in the interview as well with... Martine is still maintaining the work so that's what we have. If she isn't alive anymore what happens? And will somebody else take over or multiple people? She was in the process I believe of making documentation about how everything works and how to maintain the site and yeah maybe allow other people in the future to work on it. So, I think that would be the first obstacle. It will be there if Martine is not here anymore. What do we do? Yeah do we get another database dump or will that, will the site stay online, or do we acquire as the museum the domain name? Do we have to take care of the space where it is hosted or not? So that's a difficult thing.

O: Yeah because what server does it exist on right now?

B: I don't know uh she...She said it... I don't know if that's in the interview as well. It is with a hosting company just a general hosting company could be in France or in the Netherlands. I don't know but it's just general hosting company that hosts websites, so it is pretty standard. A computer in their data center like that has websites that runs backups everyday or so and that's it. Yeah, she pays for the domain names and the hosting so there aren't really obstacles yet, but we have to think about what does the future look like? So, like what Karen also suggested like an ongoing conversation of what is the documentation like, and Martine agreed that the museum should be involved in this conversation because we own a part of the work.

O: And wasn't there also an agreement that the participatory aspects of the work per say were going to be transferred later?

B: Yeah that's...That's not... I don't know that actually. So that's a thing Karen is working on. But if the work would stop being online and we should install the offline version, the database we have now, or say somebody wants the version 01, instead of version 09. The first obstacle would be we have to, we would have to make a server environment in house and install the whole database and content management system so that it would work, and it would be even more complicated if it should be interactive. So that would be a huge obstacle so that is something that I am doing research on now when I have time like how would we go about this? What would we need?

How to install it?

O: And because right now the artist is doing the majority of the maintaining how do you that that... or do you think that this maintenance should be separated more across all of the different parties that are involved or?

B: I don't know, she stated in the interview that... The question was asked like how Martine would see a future. If the museum should maintain her site and she said no in the interview pretty clear so...but the museum still has a voice because they bought the work so I don't know actually how that will unfold. Yeah because she has an assistant whose helping her with everything, and she is

making documentation and there are technicians that help her with all the technical stuff cause she can't do everything. She needs people to execute some of her ideas. So, I think that's why she is doing the documentation right now so the works can sort of be handed over to one or more persons. I think that is her vision on that.

O: Can you imagine a process or a series of conversations or what form it could take by which that information could be transferred over?

T: Yes, yes, in the future it would be necessary. Otherwise it would be very in vain it would be just a cloud you know. Can't do anything about it. You can't do anything with it so yeah...

O: And well in face of a situation where yeah she passes away or it become... then obstacles come up how much of this knowledge do you think is required and how much is required in house related to how to take care of this sort of object

T: Oo that's... You need a lot of technical knowledge a lot of web knowledge how to create a server environment how to install the whole database and if it's about the work that is already online you still need a lot of documentation to know how everything is related to each other different sites different branches. What still can be changed? And what should not be changed that is very dependent on documentation.

O: But I was wondering if a schedule has been developed or a concept schedule for when these conversations would happen with the artist and how this knowledge is going to be transferred?

B: That's a good question definitely and that is something I don't know so when I read the interview this morning, I thought okay that is something I thought we should definitely do. I don't know in which way Karen Archey is now still involved with this work and involved with Martine at this moment so that's maybe also a question for her. So yeah but I don't, I don't yet have a clear timetable. Yeah I mean if I, if I see the work now I think yeah that's something I should work on in the upcoming year together with the other works we acquired but yeah I made installation instructions already but I'm also doing some research into what do we need more? If we have to install it on let's say a computer. That should be, that should be documented as well.

O: And also, just...How... Like if it became a situation where other parties would be maintaining it how much do you think it is able to crowdsource or opensource to have other parties help maintaining the artwork?

B: Mm that's a really interesting. Yeah that should be a dialogue with Martine and the museum, I think. I don't think it's impossible, but I don't see it happening in the near future. I think it will be a few persons doing it at the Stedelijk from our side. You know the work is pretty personal pretty personal work from Martine it would be a different work if a lot of people would work on it. You could then get different visions and it would branch out like crazy you know with even more multiple domains. Maybe that is something she would like to see. I don't know. So, she talked a little bit about block chain technology passing things on by block chain but she abandoned the idea for now.

O: Cause she also discussed keeping the code basically as much the same as she can besides basically just the adaptations that need to be made to keep it running and accessible.

B: But block chain would be a very good idea in a sense that it would... size would be sort of set in stone you know? Because there would be copies everywhere and when some would change the old copies would be like nope not doing that. I am reverting back you know. That would be the

advantages of blockchain: It would stay the same. But from the interview I read it was pretty hard to accomplish at this moment blockchain is a pretty complex technology so the work is already complex haha with all that for a museum that would be catastrophic, I think blockchain. It's awful I think because you don't own the work anymore. That's really hard for a museum to... It's all a paradigm.

O: But I think, and this is going a bit off my questions, I think it's a bit question because I was also looking at another piece, of a net art piece that had been acquired by an institution. The World's First Collaborative Sentence that the Whitney acquired. I don't know if you've heard about it?

B: No. No.

O: Um but basically they acquired this work and it was part of a larger donation and then it kind of sat and wasn't maintained by the museum and the artist had passed so it was kind of an open question mark for a really long time of what to do with it because it wasn't accessible anymore.

B: Okay, it was a digital work?

O: Yeah, it's a website so yeah and all of the links had basically stopped working and the idea of the work was that basically you could write into it and continue the sentence that wasn't allowed to end but at a certain point...

B: They got a question markahaha.

O: Yeah exactly or you couldn't write into it anymore it was just a block because it had been basically antiquated like it was still there, but you couldn't do anything with it.

B: But it was still online at a hosting service but because they didn't care for it...

O: Yeah, I think they didn't care for it. They just didn't know how to care for it.

B: Yeah that's one of the obstacles of acquiring these works.

O: Definitely so then they crowdsourced parts of the maintenance and parts of the restoration of the work but then there was a big question of where the line should be as to how much of the you know intellectual property of this should be released.

B: Yeah, I am pretty conservative in this field I think when it comes to digital works, I tend to say yeah let's leave it as it is but then again if it's a performative work. It has to stay performative. Yeah, I can understand if multiple people can work on it but I am a bit hesitant about it. It's what you say where do you draw the line then? Yeah that's a difficult one.

O: Do you think, this is kind of a bit like questions I already asked, but do you think that there is any other information that the institution should have acquired when they acquire the work? That should have come in with the work.

T: That we don't have? Yeah well, I was looking at it this morning and I thought hmmm we should have more info about where it is hosted and what technical specificities that is what I do... I am more with... I am a technician, so I am looking at the technical stuff so when I was reading the installation instructions. I thought okay I haven't written a lot about offline installations so if the work disappears and the database is all... I mean I couldn't even tell you what content management system was used and I thought hey that should be that should be something that we should have gotten as well so but that's more on the technical side I would like to have more technical information about versions, what server, how it's running, domain name and stuff where

its registered how many years its registered. That sort of stuff. Yeah. That's hopefully something I will be asking in a few months. Next to the technical stuff no. I mean the interview was very extensive. There is a lot of useful things said. Karen is very thorough she came up with good questions, I think. I mean we didn't have always the artists we would like but that's just the nature of the work so I don't always have a clear answer on certain questions like how it will go in the future but besides that I think we've got enough information.

O: What technical information did you get specifically from her? Besides the dump of the database?

B: Well I read... I asked her a few questions, so I prepared myself a little bit before going into the interview. I then asked her if it was a static site or a dynamic one, if there was a content management system or not and if php was involved or not and these are they things I want to know first and also who maintains it. Are there parts of the website that are renew because it doesn't work anymore because for instance, she used flash? Flash is being phased out now there will be no flash player so I asked her about that is it necessary in the future to have flash installed because that would be problematic and she had a lot of flash versions downloaded also a lot of browsers that can still work with flash because you can have a flash installer but if you don't have. If you have a newer browser it probably won't work with flash anymore, so I asked her about it, and she said that she gave info about it. That it was phased out old flash animations were replaced by java script, but these are really things I want to know.

O: Me too hahah.

B: So these were things I asked in the interview and then a lot of other stuff but I don't know it now. I should read it again because a lot of things were said there.

O: And where is it kept now just on the museum server? The version that you have?

B: Yeah, we have a uhh we have a server with a backup unit and we serve all our digital works on it. Mostly videos but net artworks as well.

O: And are they ever moved around?

B: No, they stay on there and there is an offline version we have for safety purposes at LIMA and we store also a copy on tape. Yeah but our server here in the museum is actually synchronized with each other or actually backed up so one backs up the other unit. One server is here and one server is in our depot on the other side of the city so should one server should crash we have another copy but these servers are more for so you can get a copy fast if we need it if we want to check what's in store. Work with it or do some research. The offline copy at LIMA is more for disaster. The copy.

O: So, if you needed to emulated it or?

B: Yeah for instance if we would have a floor or earthquake or power outage and the servers really go down and all the data would be... should be lost in that way its highly unlikely but it could happen and we have to buy a new server you should have your data somewhere else. So then we would get the data from LIMA lets say and we would have our whole digital collection restored so that's the workflow.

O: And I guess just is there anything else you want to say about the work? Or that comes to mind when you think about...?

B: I think of the digital works we acquired that Mouchette is the most volatile one. The most cloudy haha in aspects of conservation. And I think that the other works are already done conservation-wise and Mouchette is an ongoing process and its making the work really special but also really hard to conserve but I think its good we have such a work even though its so difficult to put boundaries around it or to maintain it cause if it wouldn't be now it would be in the future so it's a good case study for us on how to deal with such a work especially for me because I am pretty new to digital works like not video works but the net art. I think everybody is. It's a good case study for me as well for the upcoming years. How to do this.

O: And I also think that if these works would be acquired, they also have a better ability, or better chance or longevity, of a certain longevity.

B: Yeah I think so as well because if you go into this process questions are being asked that aren't normally being asked I mean in the interview with Martine a lot of things asked she didn't really know how to answer to but that's okay because then she starts thinking about it so its an ongoing process and that's really interesting.

Martine Neddham (N) interviewed by Olivia Brum (O), April 19th, 2019

O: But so I went through basically the whole interview and then, their interview with you, and I had still some more questions from it because I thought the interview with them it seemed like it focused a lot on installation for one?

N: Of course they have a set of standard questions like practically everybody had the same questions and umm a lot of it would be how should we handle that in the contract. They were things to fill where you could specify the rights for example, if you want people to name the museum as or...how you want things to be seen or... a number of... how you want. Yeah you could specify these... a number of concerning rights, concerning installations but yeah I didn't fill it in.

O: And it seemed like there was still a lot of questions and also I...they asked a lot of questions, I think, about rights like if someone wanted to loan the piece what exactly. It seemed that there still was...

N: Irrelevant when I was...so I didn't fill it in.

O: Cause did they ask, are you saying that they sent like a questionnaire afterwards or?

N: No they had a certain questionnaire, live questionnaire, and that was really important for them. The important part being they interviewed everybody live also people who didn't live in Amsterdam they managed. They didn't pay for trips, but they managed to catch them when they were coming. For example, Olia Liliana or um other people. So that was the sort of other main point, a live interview, and get all the information which were not in the questions actually. But they had already prepared a standard questionnaire and probably adapted a number of questions for each so. But I think the live element was absolutely important.

O: I think so too because then so much more information gets across if you are talking face to face and I also liked that you also went through with them the files that you were giving the Stedelijk at the end.

N: They did not have them all.

O: Yeah I also. That was a bit interesting that the database wasn't there, or the downloaded database wasn't there, when they went through the files.

N: Yeah so we have corrected it in the interview. But that, so that part even data was dealt with in a very unprecise way because it went from MOTI to them.

O: Yes and was...you said that part of it got separated was that the, were you talking about the database?

N: No it's a bit my fault. I sent them two, not all in one piece, so in one piece I sent the HTML and the documentation and later on because I didn't exactly know how to... So maybe a month later I sent the database but they only got maybe a year later all of the information. So these two pieces sort of, didn't sort of stick together. But there is a lots of good reasons why these things would happen not too much carelessness of people but because the MOTI has totally changed and it changed directors. So some of the decision were huh...so you couldn't, you couldn't, also Ward Janssen and Mieke Gerritzen went too so the one who was the director of MOTI and Ward Janssen was also dealing with sales. They stopped their jobs somehow and they were not technical also so they just gave you a... So I mean there are good reason its... I think it might be an exception but there are many in a career you see its not an exception and an acquisition goes through sometimes very unlikely processes.

O: Yeah and I mean the Stedelijk was also between directors yeah at the time as well?

N: And it still is.

O: I did not know that.

N: They don't...they are after getting a new director now. There's a preselection of five or six candidates and we will hear it when...its very weird story.

O: I heard part of it but not the whole thing but yeah so strange.

N: You also might hear very different versions. Yep so it's a long story.

O: Yep long story but basically what I saw was missing a lot of was questions about what exactly you do to maintain it and...

N: Okay I think I didn't tell much of that cause maybe this is very specific to Mouchette. Actually this is why I have problems with maintenance because people don't have that. Or even when they have work with that dialogue then they open them for the public for a small time. San Francisco has a piece, SFMOMA has a piece, by Lynne Herschmann Niesen that's also maybe a form like thing. But its not that its all the time or so I have something special which I really like to continue which I still think has a good value some kind of interactive narrative you could call them which I have been maintaining since maybe 20 years. So and I wouldn't think that this should stop but of course maintaining an interface like this has lots of question and for me that's the number one preservation question but nobody really wants to address it because they might not be solving several problems at the same time only mine.

O: Yeah but I mean I was reading that you talked about also, and maybe I am kind of going a bit out of order of my questions but I can come back to it, you also talked about putting together this document where you wrote a bit about your method and how...?

N: Yeah I have been starting to do that with Nikos, my assistant, and then we stopped working because at some point he was in Greece and it didn't go forward. Well it didn't... working was very difficult so I...so we started something I still wish to continue it but yeah I am also doing my own thing. I am not waiting for people to find solutions. I am trying to find solution but I realized

that in the deal if you have a... Lets say, you need three partners actually: the artist, the preservation sort of the preservation master whatever you want to call it, and the institution in whatever configuration. So a sort of institution that guarantees it is interested in that dialogue otherwise if it stays between these two: the artist and the preservation, person in charge of preservation then its not going anywhere. If you don't have a third party which is the one that will benefit of it the one who will listen to the conversation. So I am not totally done I have been discussing with a friend whose doing, maybe I might continue with her. I am not done.

O: And but Nicos is the one that you did the majority of the work with?

N: Yeah.

O: Okay, is there anyway that I could contact him and ask him some questions also?

N: Yeah I can give you his email.

O: I would really like that.

N: I should give you access to a number of things maybe you can also read. Cause at some point we realized that the conversation also between us, sometimes email conversation. We did like 99 percent on the work online so only maybe twice he came in here and we did intensive work together and then all the rest. So we were often writing these emails into the archive blog. We have an archive blog. Yeah I could already leave you that.

O: That would be very nice and then I would also like to talk to him as well that would also be nice.

N: Sure sure but if you have already a bit of that...

O: Then I can structure my questions better.

N: Yeah I will when we go to the computer then I'll show you that I'll give you... I think its locked so I'll give you the, we didn't want to leave it open, so I'll give you the code to sort of read into it. Or maybe I'll create a user I think maybe that's the best thing well whatever. But we'll figure it out. That's exactly what it's meant for just to keep the conversations and you can email him. The documents he made are there I can should them.

O: Yeah that would be really nice, because I was also wondering, that was going to be my next question, I can see those as well?

N: Sure, I am not sure but you might have an opinion on that if it can really do the job like these documents should be doing the job to inform someone, since I have this very sort of old database which has no info it was just made for me so whatever should be clicked or...is things I do since many, many years and I don't even know that I do them. The first like work was to say, "Oh I do these this and I do that and oh yeah and I do that. What's that button for? Oh nothing."

O: Its very specific and it makes sense because it's just been built up over time.

N: So yeah already it had that sort of functions to make me, and some of it so was. Yeah I can show you all of that. Let me show you all of that but also the database.

O: Yeah that sounds perfect.

N: If you're a....

O: Yeah and I can take it with me.

N: No it's a computer its not a...you have a...?

O: Oh its like a...

N: I mean like you can browse and...

O: Yeah definitely.

N: Then I can show you when I send you the...

O: On here? Did you want to show on here?

N: To go in the studio.

O: Yeah.

N: I have a beautiful studio.

O: Oh wow so you are really lucky. Have you had a lot of different computers over the years?

N: Not so many I am not so much very in love with the equipment. I wishes to keep the same one as long as possible. No, of course, I mean, I'm not. I am not afraid of computers but I am not in love with them they are like appliances or something.

O: Their just a tool.

N: Yeah I didn't have so many. Fortunately this one I had since, since 6 or 7 years and its still doing the job very well. Yeah I have had like two generations of ipads since this time and is still...

O: I think that macbooks work for a really long time. They have good staying power.

N: So I have this sort of, certain yeah this certain databases for example. I have a work maybe you don't know it but...certain, certain some of the complex work did you recei.... Did you ever try that work called Come To See Me where you have sort of fleshy things.

O: No I didn't see it.

N: Yeah, if you go...if you want to see it working you, if you go to Mouchette. Lets say Mouchette dot this. You have an invitation, "May I Invite You?" and then if you write your name. Write your name.

O: Yeah.

N: And your email.

O: o-b-r-u-m-@-p-t-d-.n-e-t And then it will show up in mine?

N: Oh no I have to sort or set it...there, there, somethings should supposedly be, no it will show up here and it should be sent automatically but a number of these automatisms do not work properly so its like half hand half automatic when you're here. I'll give it, I'll send it now by, you're supposed to receive an invitation 2 days later and the automatic thing is not working anymore so it has to be fixed. So there is a lot of little fixes which I am in charge of but here you are let me see... So here...and then you have received it.

O: Should I look? Oh I don't have any web but I do on my phone.

N: Oh on your phone or I can give you a password and a...do you want?

O: Oh that's okay I can just...maybe this is quicker. I have not received it yet though. Hmm well time haha

N: We'll check it. So do you have a connection now or...? So we'll see, we'll see to it in a moment. So this is what, for example, I have several database. They have been made at different moments sometimes they have been...they have been sorted to fit the needs but sometimes they have a number of details not working which I fix by hand because I know how it works but nobody else does because who needs a nympho system so part of the preservation is that to make sure that these jobs are done and that the database is maintained and people continue... so here I know that you, it has been sent and when you will click on it I will also know it and I will send you to the next stage so it's a sort of story in three stages. When you receive a mail unless your spam box eats it, you receive a mail that talks to you in personal and has a code where you have...so that sort of

O: But it has to be self-prompted, you have to prompt it?

N: Yeah well because the automatism has been broken I can not fix that so next time I meet my...the sort of...there are a number of things I can do on the server but a number of things not, not so well. So for example, the automatism, otherwise it would be in 2 days. Automatically it should be in 2 days. So I sort of... That's for different works so you might have seen, did you see some of Mouchette works? Like the Fly? Or these kinds of things? Yeah so they are, the answer are stored here when people answer the fly like, "How can I write this since I'm dead?" It comes in here. "How can I write this since I'm dead?" "Well I've been dead for awhile but I guess only being readily dead isn't good enough for some people so now its time for me to be scientifically dead. You are bringing me that." So here I have also a number of, its not visible here, but characters sets, <incomprehensible> is also a...so I receive those, I receive also the Suicide Kit, the Suicide Kit, so I receive them and these are... So what I do when I have a sort of big, I have always done it like this when here its like 20 but I would wait until 40 or something. I would go to the mailing list manager. So these are controls that were build sort of long ago. So for example, the rule for the mail have changed so much and just implementing the sort of cookie system and the dps for my personal website. It would be so crazy to try and implement it here and I...apparently it matters in how you are being referenced by google cause they don't reference... So they're really changing the policies of a lot of sites since so many people depend on them and these cookie policy and consent its all on their rules but... So you see it says that its not secure. Well I have this when I receive a number of these I have a standard mail for example for the suicide... So the suicide knows how many mails there are and then I would....

O: And what are the red ones?

N: That I am not sending them. They have some...

O: Some sort of block or?

N: Yeah they block the sending because here the old ones I just keep. Me. And also some sort of yeah. There's a computer person I worked with who needs to check... I have character problems so I keep example of the character problem because they are, well it messes up and I have to sort of. It was at that time you didn't need to, you didn't, you couldn't have, old characters in the same page but now you can.

O: Or do you mean also maybe things that are like foreign script or something? Like symbols and stuff?

N: Yeah, for example lets say these are Russian, so Russian transforms into another <incomprehensible> and I don't know where to change that. So it works here it doesn't work there. It's a very sort of...because it has been made. So that's also some Russian but you sometimes have Korean. In fact now you should be able to read everything. When these works had been creates so people would for example interact with the Fly and then the would receive a certain mail that was the continuation. So say if they would interact with the Fly. So there was a sort of continuation between the website, that participation and the email they were receiving with the rest of the story. From the Fly you had for example that mail. So here for example I would correct the Russian words because I know they are going to make mistakes so I have all these sort of little things. And so this has been built to be able to do that to have that sort of storytelling that goes from website to email and come again and get a sort of one on one relation. It was a sort of, that dream of this intimate relation and how you get it through the available tools. So this mail calls your name, of course now it's a well known trick of the spammers, but still like, it still has that, sort of suspension of disbelief that someone is still calling your mail and saying they love you or they want to see you again or whatever. So this is what I sort of keep alive and I still have I would say active communication, I would say, from per week I would say 20 to 50. People who put their emails, so really communicating with the database, and receive and email and maybe come back to the email.

O: Do you also actively respond to them or just the scripts?

N: No, this is just the script messages. Sometimes they send email to Mouchette@mouchette. Very rarely but it can happens its not like forbidden. So they might say "Do you exist?" or "Are you a robot?" Whatever and I will answer. Or write to the little girl. Very few people would write to the little girl believe it but some do or reciev... yeah but most of it of course is... Especially at the time when I created the Suicide Kit I was really careful not to be involved personally and not to respond to messages but stay within the interface.

O: And how often do you back up the database?

N: Not often enough I am a bit sort of not really good in that. I should download the backup or...yeah. Nicos was not very technical so I couldn't count on him for all the server. He also didn't have a sort of culture of the early internet so for him like sending things all the way to the website was sort of normal and when I started trying to work with him with like say ftp where you have a local version and a remote version. That was totally alien to him. So I was a bit, sort of, forcing the way but he was not used to sort of keep track of what he was sending cause that's how he got started. He was not a computer person but more a library person that has done a master about... So sometimes I was like phew. But he was also very, what do you call it? Sort of not a hacker but just like fixing things or finding solutions. Like a...

O: Like a handyman.

N: He had this sort of a handyman attitude. So although he was not technical he always had this good willingness and sometimes smartness of the handyman. So its not like... not every...of course we had, we did fix a number of things interestingly at one point... So yeah I can show you what we were doing but it has to do mostly with that so one of the sort of roles. So how to make it, to teach him that. That he could do it for me, lets say, or as well as me. But there's

interpretation, well that for example when the Fly goes which of these mail do you choose? I am like, the only one who knows it, you know?

O: Cause its not in a specific order or?

N: No and there is...no. You can read them here so that's about the Fly and it says if I preview it... So this for example that would pose a problem, a lot of error messages, so we changed the characters. Although its not this mail. That is the wrong mail. "I remember your words." Lets see, no I don't have a... It was not built, it was just sort of built piece...very organically so sometimes I have 3 version of the same mail and I forgot to remove the old version. I could still put a mail template up. So no its very, its that sort of thing.

O: Did you start to like make a list maybe in your documents your putting together like which email gets sent when? To? At like what stage?

N: That's the reason why I needed the like... I don't tell it to myself its like impossible to tell it to yourself its just like when you, you know brush your teeth and when you change your socks, you know. Something that is so familiar that it feels very unpleasant to have to tell these things to yourself as if you don't know what what... So the first use was to really tell these things to someone and find a way to get them archived. So I also thought of like a list... so say you go on to making a list: do this, do that, do this. But I thought it was a bit of a...because he was a librarian I thought maybe we should find a specific method and we agreed on a method of annotated screenshots. Because the order also in certain cases the order do not matter. Yeah I thought like these sort of rules and lists I don't know maybe I had something... You, you how do you name these things? They don't have names and previously I had done a project where we...also when you download a new piece of, I don't know, artistic software or you need info. I've done that to a previous project, my desktop life. I've downloaded the whole info system and some of it was working based on annotated screenshots that's also the way you talk with programmers for example instead of explaining. These things do not have names. So instead of explaining the menu on the left and the third column and go to the, you know, pull down menu on the left and check the third column and... You make a screenshot and you write things.

O: Yes it makes more sense and this also on the conversation thing that you were having with Nicos?

N: Yeah, yeah. So yeah you have these things and then you... The takes are made also to sort of resonate in terms of... and then I send them and I update. So also there was a sort of alert so that people know they have their email published. So this I still do it and I still have good contributions or quite a quantity of it and that's my favorite part of the work actually. All these sort of... So yeah... So we were working on that mostly and...

O: And when you extracted the database to send to the Stedelijk do you know how you extracted it? Or how it was extracted?

N: First I didn't know how to do it and then I could, I got help from someone. So through PHP manager. PHP where is it...? Log into this archive blog. Yeah. See I don't exactly know what this password is. I know it because its there but...

O: But to remember what exactly is entered there.

N: Yeah I will look for it. Because I also didn't enter the thing like this. Here of course here you. I entered it to the dashboard and places. I could look for the...look for the... We would send when

we would have a number of questions. For example, we exchanged questions through this interface and then would send me a sort of list of questions and then I would fill in the answer. It was a bit sort of not...we weren't very systematic and at some point it looked like it was worth keeping these emails so... Let me see how we enter. Enter post. A closer for example, Nicos published this post. He also published this one. "A closer investigation into Bouncing Emails." As discussed with Martine, for example blah blah. "An attempt to understand why these emails bounce." If I am blacklisted so that's an example. That's why. Why do these emails bounce.

O: And was this accessible...this was not accessible to the public you said though?

N: No.

O: Okay.

N: Just our conversations.

O: And there is not other one. Nobody else who was in this conversation?

N: No.

O: I was just wondering because he is talking kind of third person.

N: Sometimes, sometimes but yeah I think in the beginning we would just write the emails and yeah sometimes... Yeah "Tasks for Nicos." So cleaning... Oh we had an infection. And was great collaboration to fix it. Like these two handymen, well more or less sort of clumsy hand person that we both were who managed it. So he...he got... Also he was keeping the old code. He... A lot of the things we did together is that he replaced flash sound which is not supported by Apple. But at some moment flash was very useful for compatibility with sound. So everybody had flash sound even if you don't see any Flash animation or things its still you had an invisible. These things with flash was used for a lot of things with solving a lot of compatibility problem. Putting the flash object there so we were fixing that like changing sound, Flash sound, into embedded sound and these things and also... So what was a very clear and easy loop in Flash had to be refixed cause the principle if you rewrite something. In Flash everything is contained inside the Flash but if you rewrite it in HTML5 then all the pieces are loose and they might change. So for example, a loop still depends and leaves a little mini second, maybe a quarter of a second, to loop and you hear it. So these kind of fix sometimes its really detailed fix. Like its not technical. You couldn't do that with someone just technical because you have to listen and get the same effect.

O: And it also requires a sort of sensitivity to what needs to be preserved.

N: Yeah. That's why we had all these sort of talks. And also... So maybe I should, I think I'll give you, I can check for the...

O: For the password.

N: For the password. Or another simple thing I don't think you're gonna break the blog. I could give you a user thing and then you could be in it at all times. That would be also...

O: Yeah that would also be nice but whatever is easiest.

N: That might be a sort of...yeah...instructions there are our... Yeah I think that's...that's the idea also to archive the discussion even and...I haven't been working on this for a year maybe I just sort of update the wordpress thing and just make sure it doesn't die or get infected. If you don't do it they get infected and then sometimes if you are not in time you even lose your content.

O: And by infected its some sort of?

N: Hacked.

O: Oh hacked. Okay. And are you working to convert over from these Flash sounds or?

N: Uh yeah we did nearly all. Okay we also have pages you see. I think. That's why I would say you should, you can travel to all the... We were doing that like making this thing and then... I can give you that.

O: Okay yeah. That would be great.

N: For example, if you want to go yourself to the database then, that's I think, I think that still works. _____.

O: Do you have a pen should I write it down?

N: I can send you that to your email?

O: Oh that also works maybe that's easier. Then I don't have the chance of miswriting it or something.

N: You don't have to type it out again. I'll just send an email. Okay you're in there. So yeah I think, I think...

O: Cancel right?

N: Yeah then you can travel through the page. Through the pages cache instructions.

O: But that's for the database, right?

N: Mhm.

O: Okay.

N: Yeah. Oh, it has information we also. Yeah, you also towards this. It was created then its... So maybe its there as identified information. Lets see, I have lots of...

O: Screenshots.

N: Screenshots and where it goes from the work to the database. So the elements of the work. Yeah, I think there is a lot to read.

O: I think so too.

N: Yeah, and then of course we can get information using the database. Where's that?

O: Oh there's nothing there.

N: "You only" instructions. Okay. That's the work I sent you did you receive it?

O: Oh, let me see. Maybe it's in my spam let me see. I find that unlikely because I think I get everything in my inbox. I didn't get it but maybe its just my thing is slow or something. Its so strange. I am sure I will get it at some point. See I got some other spam.

N: You get a spam?

O: I get lots of...nothing goes to my junk box at all. Nothing and I get all...

N: Did you check your junk box and its not?

O: I did but nothing goes there so I figure it must be in my inbox but its just slow. Sometimes its slow. Cause I also didn't get your email yet so hmm. Yeah I don't know.

N: Okay. What I am going to do is, maybe you might have more questions but as soon as you click on the work I will. I could give you a user I think that would be really nice because then you would be able to travel it anywhere. So umm...I click that obrum and when its... oh I'm not used to it.

O: @-p-t-d.net

N: Oh what can we do for password? Do you want to just like choose yours?

O: Oh sure.

N: And I will give you, I'll give you that so you can circulate. I am sure you will not...

O: Cause any trouble.

N: So write down. Write your favorite...

O: My favorite. I don't know. Maybe I just make it something like _____

N: Okay because you won't be able to find it but I think you can ask through your email. Okay add new user. Send new user email about their account. Okay. Supposedly I should receive also mail. I am not sure. Yeah but then... yeah. You should receive also a mail where you can...

O: When I receive any emails.

N: Well you can check it now because it should work if you want to enter. So...

O: Its so strange. Okay. Well then I need your...

N: So its like Mouchette, Mouchette.net/archive and then...

O: I need... oh also your wifi or I can just do it on my...

N: Yeah you can. The most simple one is _____ or _____ has a longer there.

O: Nice.

N: And is it good?

O: Yes and then I am going to w-w-

N: Mouchettenet, Mouchette.net/archive and then you enter archive/wplogin. Yeah I think its. Wp let me see. Wp...

O: Dash?

N: Login. Try this. Login.php.

O: Dot oh no. Okay well it should remember.

N: I am not sure it has a...

O: Dot p-h-p.

N: Good?

O: Yes. And it was just my email and then... Oh, perfect.

N: And then you can...

O: See the pages. And this is for the different...

N: I am just checking for maybe the front page has maybe the password... No just looking for a link to the but its not there. Sometimes its here. Yeah. Categories or...yeah. But you will be better in. You can publish if you have a sort of, I don't know. It can stay here.

O: Yeah. And is all of this supported by the same server?

N: Yes I have different, I have a version server Dreamhost and there I have all my sites. So I have maybe 10 different domain and then they host it there. Somewhere in the west coast. I think.

O: And do you, I think I asked this last time, but you do the domain name renewal and the server payment?

N: Yeah I do it. Lets see Dreamhost...but sometimes I sort of look for things so that's...that's the Dreamhost system company and I have all these domains. So yeah I do these things. That's just the sort of main domain that rules all the <incomprehensible> and I have all these domains and subdomains for different projects. If I keep them I have to... Oh we did that. He was very handy. I love Mouchette he just found practically all the file it was really sort of... these two aspects the technical aspect and the like a sort of handy man. Well so he had one, really not, but the other one he had very well. He would find anything in archive.org and he could really lay his hands on. So yes that's the thing I do the registration. A number of things I do one click install, when I do. I have lots of wordpress. There is also a site which is, has a lot, if you go to aboutmouchette.org. You can find a lots of information. I have been working a lot on that. You either do the category, like I have 41 articles on conversation or conservation.

O: In conversation.

N: Yeah haha. And so this is sort of open you can read a lot of stuff here.

O: But I am sure I have already read quite a bit of this.

N: And also if you have a certain question to ask you might find the answer here. I also use it mostly as an archive for myself when I'm asked questions I don't remember I just...

O: Search for it.

N: Yes search for well its easy for me because I know what I'm looking for but that's, that's my main conservation sort of instrument. Sort of updated. I archive articles which have been written. I archive things like these LIMA thing but not with very much order except with category. Yeah and the time order. So yeah now you are one of them.

O: One of them.

N: Archiving Mouchette...

O: Definitely.

N: User. Oh yeah I worked with someone but she's not the first, I opened it with Elina but we just did a little bit and it didn't work out. But she did do the first descriptions so...

O: Description of the website?

N: Yeah with the... these things works and... I should find this password. Of course you can... I think its... So what was on the first page is things that Elina did just showing if everything goes in flames then there are a number of things which are..

O: Yeah cause I think most of this I can't access without the password.

N: That's why there are pages that are not filled because I think we had plans and then we didn't. We did a little bit with Elina and we didn't go on so that might be the reason why there are pages... So all these loose ends is, you know, its all made of that. But I think you have like sort of material here. Now where are... I could still show you but where. I don't know where they are. I gave some space to Nicos. I think he had stopped using it. I'll look into it.

O: Yeah definitely.

N: I'll look into the mail...See we were fixing, we had an infection I think... Oh yeah when, the only time we did anything without me was when I broke my wrist and I couldn't choose the and then he did and it was the... And sometimes he was doing these things like drawings. I thinks its cute but...

O: It is but it doesn't give a good...

N: Yeah it doesn't...yeah well... I am just... I don't remember where the work we did has been... Cause we started publishing these...

O: But I mean its okay if you find it...

N: If I find it I send it to you.

O: Yeah send it to me. I would like that.

N: He's really the one, he's really the one who sort of rewrite llovemouchette.org. So...I see...Yeah that will give me a good reason to look for it. Because we started publishing them and sort of, so it's a series of annotated screenshots really. That's what it is but he made them in a certain format. I know maybe where I can find a... He made them in a certain format which was making very... We chose for it because it's a graphic format that we could expand it in. That we could zoom in and zoom out. Well it was really... Okay I'll find it... And at some point we were sort of using that blog to name the tasks and then... Oh Karin is someone who also, who did a PhD, Karin...

O: Yeah you told me last time.

N: Yeah and at some point she also interviewed him and I don't know what she. She also asked to be a user. She sometimes, we had lots of, so... And then we, he had a very bad connection so sometimes we had to make an appointment like a week in advance because he had to go somewhere for a connection. He had a very bad computer so he would be all green because his camera was old. In the end we like went into lots of disagreements, at the end we were sort of at some point on not talking terms for a while but the last thing I did was I could get, when I got the thing bought, I had money enough to buy him a computer. So at least we ended in a sort of...because I didn't pay him really well either, you know. So yeah we had sort of disagreements. We did, we did like some work and its there on the... so I am trying to find the hahaha. Oh let me see. What's going on here? Yeah that's something that I did. Well these were the... I don't know if its still there it was here in these... I gave him a space in virtual person where he could have tp maybe he's still there. Well lets see. No, he removed it. No. I'll look for it. I think these are the

documents themselves and they are in that format svg. These are... yeah you can find them here, conversation as conservation. I did show a little bit of that and if you click you find the docs...an example of the documents so they are made into that format as a svg, which is a graphic format...

O: So they can be expanded?

N: Yeah so if you click on them, that's a sort of example, of annotated screenshots that assemble the mail and some of the... That's the work you haven't got yet. So here you have at least two samples but we did publish, a sort of, so another version because its, they... you only see the work when you click on the link, the unique link you get. Otherwise you don't see it so it was important to archive but also to archive it from the point of view of yeah what happened.

O: From both sides. From?

N: Yeah so at least you have a here two of these examples because I presented them in a LIMA sort of...

O: Oh in the last Trans... I don't know if its called the same thing every year but their last conference which was like the one they just had.

N: Which year was it 2000 in February 2nd. I just was...I was asked a bit at the sort of last moment so I just gathered and Nicos was just leaving also otherwise he would have, sort of, propose or showed. But I just gathered these things so we were half way we hadn't published them and we had like two examples of what we were doing. The idea of using the svg format... does it have a... it still was that, oh it does not have a... The final one had a, a sort of, you could enlarge it and make it small. So the idea was in order to, there was a concept behind, in order not to make a list with do this, do that, do this, do that or just a scroll was to make an expandable document and add more and more information at any time. That was the concept it was not so easy to, sort of... So he had proposed this format, svg, because you could scroll in and scroll out. Not scroll but...

O: Yeah like scale in and scale out.

N: Well we had some... He was... Instead of scrolling some case what I miss, for example, on the web is that we sort of lost dimensions. In the beginning of the web it was a big, you had a big surface. Of course you didn't have much space to but you could consider a webpage as unlimited, like you could travel inside of it, and now we are just scrolling up and down you hardly ever see something being scrolled that way and yeah we lost a lot of dimension. And zooming in and zooming out of course. So that was the idea here was to just add up information, to create some hierarchy of information, not in scrolling and not in these instructions like a, b, c, d but to annotate to add and just fill in information on top of it. This sort of so yeah you get a little example of the annotated screen shot and here it resembles the mail you receive and how you have to click and the second time you click you don't see the page anymore. So its very organized into a sort of, back and forth with the user...

O: And how it appears in all of these...

N: How it appears and then how I follow, I follow it from here. So here I know if you, I know that you haven't clicked. Here is people who sent things without putting text so I just, I remove them. So here I follow the several version. There are three version the "to you" and the "only" version so I know when they have been clicking. I can... Ideally the thing was meant to just roll by itself and some automatisms in the beginning worked but now they don't work anymore but I know

how to sort of follow it. Its not much work as I say I don't even say these things to myself like its just like...

O: Its natural.

N: What's a good moment when brushing your teeth? What's a good moment when putting your, I don't know, your plates back on the, inside the... If you ask yourself then you have some answers. Why would you?

O: And were you... I know you were thinking about some methods of kind of ordering this information because now this is like a lot of different forms and you know types of documentation of how to approach it.

N: I have done some work on the server side, not myself but, not Nicos but David Jonas whose much more technical but so he has been doing a lot of cleaning. So the version that is running now is quite different from the version which is owned by...because a lot of cleaning has taken place in the meantime but not everything. We still need to go through these <indecipherable>, character set issues and a few but yeah for example I did a big sort of cleaning thing with... because I have been working with different programmers. Some of them were very neat and tidy some of them were very messy and sometimes they left inbetween versions but I didn't know or... So a lot of that has been done but it has to be... Well I'm... It has to be done regularly like. I might... There won't be one stage where I think now its done as it goes you change things and the standards for publishing are different and yeah.

O: And when...do you have a certain time where you work with a programmer? To do the updates? To do this kind of server side maintenance?

N: It happened last year, we had a big... I wanted to rework this year with the same because it takes so much time to explain you know. But he was not available, and he said oh I can give you a student because he is teaching and somehow I thought of... I gave up also because I was not working with Nicos anymore so at some point I got stranded in my good intentions. A lot was done, lets say, I had these two years working with a... with Nicos and a good cleaning through David Jonas so I must say... There was a... But now I need to get into a new phase of... I just had a word with Stefanie and said would you be that next one and she is also very different. She is not messy. She is very organized. But still we know each other since long time and she did her masters on Mouchette but on a sort of 15 years ago and now we have a friendship connection so it could... I do need I think to have... I need to have that sort of and to be you know rebuilding as it goes. That's how I see the conservation keeping the spirit, fixing little tidbits, keeping track of when it has been fixed.

O: But when you work with the programmer do you also sit there while they are going through what their doing?

N: That's the biggest work. That's why I got a bit discouraged when he said that he did not have time because I can't totally trust that a student can so oh I have to go sit through another two hours and... I got a bit sort of... I think I will still do it but not now haha. That's the longest thing and of course not every programmer wants to sit through you know and give attention to this detail and they have to have some love for art. Just that.

O: Which is not always present I feel.

N: No no so for example David Jonas he has... He did art also so... They need... Now he is mostly doing computer stuff and really technical stuff but he also can teach. He has been doing art. He has collaborated in projects. That leaves... Then you don't have to explain why its interesting to keep that on clunky thing.

O: Yeah because I was wondering how much like if your sitting with them where you draw the line at how much can be intervened with?

N: Yeah I will... Sometimes its, it's a really, that's why we had all these conversations because its also interesting to draw the line together with someone else. Basically on the technical side I would really like to keep it as simple as possible. Keep the interfaces the way they were made just do little fixes to keep them the way they are and but there are some lines that are very bizarre. Like when we are talking about emails. Nothing works the same as email and I never wanted to have a email interface with the option of doubt and all the regulation. So I am still trying to work and use, and I am still using it in some way this very very, so this database, that, and using email the way that people used to do it 15 years ago. Because now there has been regulation there has been so I can't send, I can't send too many emails at the same time because I get black listed. I am never sure my mail do not end up in the spam box and I am sure I am black listed on certain website. Maybe I could...I can't even ask to remove the black list because they will, they might come after the fact that... But I think in someway I think its interesting to keep that on. To keep some memory of the old uses. Also narratively people even when they put a fake email sometimes they don't delete it because this fake email is a piece of the narration, has a story. They enter some part of the story in writing an email, fake email. So...yeah some of it is to keep like old standards, well to keep the trace of old standards, to keep the interface and the php. One day maybe the php also will disappear and database. Up to now it has been... So to keep that the way it has been made so the nice sqr database and the php. To keep it and to just yeah to maintain that, maintain that technical part and some of it witnesses of another time of how email was used. As I say I am blacklisted in some ways. I do it illegally because I should... When you start an emailing list... I did do that also with Stefanie because she knows the rules and she... I only sent one mail from Martine Neddham not from Mouchette because it was...and then I don't know it didn't suit me. So its like things that were devised for companies you know same as the cookie policy, same as you know. So... So here I think I wish to still keep the illegal... not to transfer it and then send and email, "Do you accept?" I wouldn't do that you know.

O: But it makes sense because then it is completely different in a way to how it originally was.

N: Its still a miracle to think that it still works. I still have, some of that is still going on. Its like maintaining a wooden cabin inside a city maybe...

O: So cool. Let's see if I have...I think you answered a lot of the questions. But yeah so you have also... Jonas is that the programmer that you were talking about?

N: David Jonas.

O: David Jonas. Okay. But there were also a number of programmers also before him, that worked on it as well?

N: Many, many but at different phases and sometimes they intervene on things done previously. I know the base is quite good. The programmer still exists. He was my partner at that time, Mark Bone, but we separated. For awhile he still worked with me but he still has his name somewhere. Although now he has, he is not working on that anymore. So now I maybe a number of years ago I

asked him to fix a number of things. That's him. Not even sure he had the certain business which he doesn't have anymore. He lives in China now and he might.... But he's a... But he's not, he's not, he doesn't do these works anymore so his job... he's just... You know programming if you stop for a year its like the piano you loose all these automatisms. If you don't keep up with the new software so I think he's a sort of... And originally these people at that time... like he... its not what he... He didn't learn programming. He was an electronic engineer but at that time in the late '90s people were teaching themselves, even later. Cause many people who learned programming who are now in their say 40s or early 40s. They can tell you that maybe that went to University but the teachers didn't know. They couldn't teach them that so they were working together finding solutions, collaborating but it didn't learn. You know the base of programming but not finding programming solutions for the web because their teachers didn't know java script and they did not, they were not learning, so they did know C++ but they didn't know java script. Because java script was just being created so you could say and even... So Mark was teaching himself and for him it was an opportunity to create something and sort of have material to create things. So nobody was teaching that to no one at that time they were just following the instructions and putting things together. Even in like the... until yeah until... Many people who came after and who were studying at that time were not learning that from their teachers. They were teaching themselves and now of course people who are still doing the job they keep learning because it moves. They start, you know, so it's a... and as soon as you stop, stop for a year or if your not interested anymore. You're stuck cause things have changed. Yeah its moved on without you. You don't know how to do an app anymore. Your not interested. You might not even like to... yeah so this happens. Also lots of programmers are overworked or they don't, they sort of... Its not a job you can keep for a long time because you need to learn, sort of, how to manage your concentration. Which I think young people are learning but yeah its... Or then you continue by... The things you do when your young when you teach yourself, when you... After awhile then they change. I think even new schools for programming they have other methods they don't have a teach who tells you how to. They send you on projects in a group and because they know what you'll find out cannot be taught by a teacher whose older than you actually. So its not a way to...its more like this.

O: And I mean its just so fast moving that, that's the way that it works that there really is no way to teach it and sometimes I also feel that with contemporary conservation a bit because its on the edge of things. That we are working with a lot of materials that people don't quite know how they age or how don't quite know what is going to happen to them over time. So it's a lot of the same sort of experimenting and trying to problem fix and... yeah.

N: But museums have such another time scale. So how to make the two communicate its really weird.

O: It's really complicated.

N: So you took on the sort of challenge.

O: Yeah definitely. Yeah but I think really in institutions like contemporary art conservation is kind of a bit rebelling against that because the art itself is also rebelling against that. Its not this typical idea of an object-based thing that can just sit there and undergo benign neglect and be fine so many years later. Which is something I really enjoy. You also... in the interview I remember you discuss a version of block chain? Putting a lot of this documentation or?

N: At that time I was just trying to... My hope was when the, when the thing was bought, when the work was bought, because I knew I was just selling a version and it was lots of loose ends you know. Still up to this day nobody knows what the future of that bunch of data... But my hope was they would get involved in to a preservation research where I could devise, try and devise methods, for preserving but also for example selling in pieces. Imagine selling in one piece doesn't make much sense because nobody...unless you know...but I would...I could think of having for example the possibility of having a sort of cooperative of owners, for example, or trying to lay the basis for that by selling small pieces but I think that the market is not right for that. These are my sort of wild imagination so that's where it went because now you have a sort of maybe a market where block chain is used to sell unique, well a digital file, with unique certificate. Maybe not unique content but unique certificate. You have galleries which sells jpegs for example but with a unique certificate and authenticated by the block chain. So you may put it online and it might be copied endless times and then you will still own a digital file which has a... In that kind of ideas I always thought that should we have a, how can I say it, one of my dreams but I don't know how that the work would be not only... That it would be indexed on its public lets say. Imagine a work which has, someone did it someday but as joke and I thought its an idea that really philosophically appeals to me that, that the work... On youtube someone was proposing to sell their work according to the number of viewers. The more viewers the more expensive. I thought, "hey that great!" no just a trick but it tells something different from the unique, a sort of... So well this idea of selling the work in pieces, selling the work so that it still remains in the on view. Still remains interactive that the database gets a value for example but its still sort, I don't know, utopic. So I'm not getting any closer to being able to have specific preservation budget for the work so I guess in the coming time its still, will still be on my own expenses. With a limitation that if you are paying it yourself you cannot name...yeah you get a little hundreds of euros here and there but you cannot go very far and yeah I still wish to do that. But that someone would invest in a sort of serious, I don't know, value system for a work of art its not yet... Because if you think of what block chain is being use for it's a bit silly when you think of...Its creating rarity instead of creating, giving value to circulation. Whereas lets say blockchain from the bitcoin works in such a way, at least bitcoin works in such a way that its value increase as it gets exchanged. So some people say if you buy bitcoin you keep half but you resell half because if everybody keeps their bitcoin its going down. So this idea that there is a value gained in the exchange or in the circulation seems very attractive and that you can preserve things by still letting them continue and create data. So that was around this concept of generative conservation, preservation, what could that be? It could be...So blockchain is not a solution for anything its just a lock or the blockchain from Ether might be permitting some contract, I don't know, some contract kind of thing but it's a bit of a sort of speculation.

O: Of what could be a possibility. And I was also wondering if a definition...because this was also something that they brought up with the Mouchette-Version 01. If a definition was ever reached for what exactly it was. Okay.

N: No one was interested so the only work we did was with Annet Dekker and we had a number of talks with Ward Janssen, Annet Dekker, and... She was a sort of consultant and helped to sort of help to put words onto these things and legitimize also cause she has... Are you studying with her?

O: No so she came in she did a lecture for us but I also have read everything that she has...

N: So I think nobody needed it at that point you know. Not the technical person. He's not into that. He's only into technical...yeah technical computer environments. Karen Archey, she's into

media but in the large sense. So nobody needed it so why should I? Of course I would love to make a definition of what yeah could be Version 2. Maybe if a buyer for Version 2 turns up I might. I think it might never come.

O: Yeah I don't know. I think its interesting with loaning or yeah its just an interesting relationship between it and the website.

N: I would certainly if someone would want to buy Mouchette again the same way I could give you... I mean it has changed a lot it has updated a lot a number of things happened inbetween. So I could definitely sell the same version 2 to someone who wants to buy it.

O: So you think it would be possible than to have 2 Version 1s in circulation.

N: What you mean? Oh well these versions are not in circulation their sitting on a hard disc.

O: No I just wondered because with statues, with different statues like the Rodin statues where you have an edition or something.

N: That's why we came with the idea of versions because what they were proposing was an edition. I think edition, edition. You come tomorrow and its another, another one so you can't have... Actually Olia Liailai was selling gifs and but she was selling an edition of gif because she had been selling to several institution her gifs. So they were, they were, just proposing to an edition because Olia...well you have also you have the artist's copy and this was and then I could sell in editions. So instead of using edition we used version because it means it has a timestamp.

O: But if you were to sell Version 01 to another...per say another institution wanted to buy Version 01 maybe Version 01 edition 2.

N: No it would be Version 02 because it would have another timestamp. Yeah it would...But it's sort of a static archive because its not running, its not operating, its not communication with the viewer, its not... I think that part the problem also which is not addressed in the preservation discourse is the, the distribution, its like and like it happens without a viewer, or a user, or a visitor like the whole discussion happens between the storage and the ownership and keeping this for later. But what does the... It doesn't include the viewer in the preservation so what will they say or they wouldn't have changed as well... They will have other ways so yeah that's uh... And in my case if you don't include a viewer and these viewers online then what preservation can happen. So and often the discourse really excludes a viewer. Say a painting has been preserved or stored or repaired but all this is sort of well known but what do people see? Did you ever see that film called The End of Fear about the preservation of a painting by Barnett Newman. You know the story?

O: I know of the story. I don't think I ever actually watched the film but its ringing a lot of bells.

N: It played last year or the year before or last year.

O: I also did a project...

N: By Barbara Visser. It was created by an artist and it discussed, I think, well not the issues but the fact that a painting was restored and once it was hanging, a painting by Barnett Newman called Whose Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue. And once it was hanging there with a lot of sort of without even addressing the technical issues and there is lots of rules... When the painting was hanging in its place again the public screamed that it was not the same painting and without that nothing would have happened. It would have been accepted. If there hadn't been a protest from

the viewers. When viewers specialists or not or just like with... It wouldn't have been accepted and now it doesn't hang there anymore because its considered not the same painting. Technically of course acrylic was painted over oil.

O: Yeah oh my gosh.

N: And even the, not only the maker of the restoration wasn't sued but he sued for...how do you say it when you speak badly of someone?

O: Uh larceny. Larceny, right?

N: Uhh I don't...

O: Oh libel sorry. Libel. I think.

N: No when you... When you destroy someone's reputation with... So he even sued and won for having his name ruined and won lots of money. When the rule, the most obvious rules of the restoration showed that he'd done a terrible job that could not be undone like painting acrylic over oil. But this would have been kept secret, and under the... Because the Stedelijk museum did lots of mistakes and I don't know whatever. This would have kept silent because museums don't like to admit their errors but they ended up not showing the painting anymore and there was enough protest and clearly its being acknowledged that its not the same because its flat and the red is gone. There was this big surface of red where people had slashed, someone had destroyed the canvas by slashing, so the repairation of the canvas was really good but the specialist who redid that, who was advised by the widow, who is the official person in charge. The official, like who knew how Barnett Newman himself did it and he was advised by the widow of Barnett Newman is the one who repainted acrylic over oil.

O: Oh my god. I can't imagine.

N: And won his, he won his was not sued but...

O: He won the case.

N: So...You like... How? Yeah he won the... He sued so he didn't get a case he... How absurd how wrong can a museum can be with dealing with things that it ends up like this and it ends up to being a painting that they don't want to show anymore or is... has lost all its aura, has really been acknowledge as not the same painting. So its not just a question of rules but a question of reception by the public. It had huge protests on the...

O: And I mean with this too, with Mouchette the public is such a big role.

N: And because I am sort of constantly like in contact I have that sort of... Yeah without a public there is no Mouchette and without a type of dialogue.

O: And I mean Version 01 exists without a public. Exists without a...

N: It's a trace. It's a sort of data trace but without the context, without the screenshots, without the...and without the fact of keeping that...

O: Which makes it much more inter...ah complicated with the maintenance, with what to do.

N: But maybe we'll think of... That's why I keep it maybe one day we'll think of works of art as enabling an ongoing conversation.

O: But and I think I asked this last time would you envision a passing over of the domain name and a passing over of the...

N: If I could set the basis for that I would love it.

O: Because that would also facilitate the passing over of a lot of the labor that you do.

N: That's what I would...well that's what I would like to have as a conservation process but as it goes for now. I am still mostly busy with fixing things here and there but yeah of course there are so many things and then I leave all the keys and say bye. Haha yeah of course I would imagine it but nothing is ready for it yet.

O: No and I think like you said a lot of conversations have to happen before this beginning of transfer to happen. And the documentation too, exactly where and how far you can correct the code.

N: And also leaving a trace of something that you... Cause this moment of the early times had a lot, really had another atmosphere another ideology, so keeping a trace of that. Its still sort of valuable.

[Karen Archey \(A\) interview by Olivia Brum \(O\), May 29th, 2019](#)

On request of the author.

[Ward Janssen \(J\) interview by Olivia Brum \(O\), June 3rd, 2019](#)

On request of the author.

[David Jonas \(DJ\) interview by Olivia Brum \(O\), June 6th, 2019](#)

O: So, when did you first begin doing maintenance on Mouchette?

DJ: Uh that is a good question. I don't have my notes on me, but I will try to figure out the dates. Umm its been awhile. So, I met... Give me one second Mouchette...Yes, no that's not what I was looking for. Mouchette. Okay so that's since 2017 when that's I first met Martine and I met her through a common colleague who was working with her in the university and yeah and I had worked with him and he kind of recommended, "Oh if you need somebody to do some of that work I know this guy who works with software and art." And I have been doing that for a bunch of years and she approached me, and she had very specific problems with the website that she wanted to fix. But yeah, we started talking and we started kind of thinking in a little bit of a broader sense as well. The actual work I did was very much focused on just fixing specific problems or remaking works with newer technologies so they can survive the changes of the platforms and try to remake them as accurately as possible while keeping the concept the same. But we did talk about a lot of other things and how can digital art be sold. How can digital work be versioned in the way that makes sense? So, we had a lot of talks about that and we tried to think together about that but actual coding until now has been just limited to either remaking works in different platforms or just fixing little bugs or problems that show up with that.

O: And how long did you do it for?

DJ: Well its been...its very on and off. My time is very scattered so uh... In 2017 I did most of the work and then it was just really tiny things now and then. One hour here. One hour there. But in 2017 I worked...I could even count the days. They add up together 2 weeks of work, but all spread out. Probably a year from April to November.

O: And how often would you suggest it undergoes this kind of maintenance?

DJ: Um well that depends. Mostly like the major things normally don't need that frequent maintenance, like actual remaking works or readapting them to new technologies. In my experiences it changes with time, of course, but in my experience a live website that is stable will stay more or less stable throughout around 3 years. I think that's kind of the, until it needs some major work. Uh that's, those are websites that take quite a lot of data quite a lot of input, so they are changing quite a lot. Works like Mouchette they do take quite a lot of data in but its quite contained. The types of data, the types of input that they have are quite contained. So they tend to survive a little bit longer. So the main issue is technology advancing and the platform itself where they are running kind of becomes obsolete. That's kind of work within the code base of the site itself. Another problem is like maintenance of the servers and security updates and all that stuff because sites tend to be attacked and servers get hacked and you kinda need to keep up with that and that is a much more frequent thing. Luckily most services now that host websites they do that work for you or at least the minimum amount, the minimum necessary to keep it relatively safe. But with Mouchette we actually had some problems already. There was a big attack that kind of changed a lot of the code of the site and caused a few problems. Spammers were kind of recording on the website links to malicious websites and creating content that wasn't supposed to be there. So that needed a major clean up. But as far as we know that was the only problem that happened until now and that was of course because the server itself was more or less well protected but the software that's running the, the software that was running the website itself, was already a little bit old and it had some holes in security that they could exploit.

O: And so, what do you mean by it being contained versus...?

DJ: Just the effect that the input from users has on the website. So different types. If you have like thousands of users inputting content like pictures and poll and you have a website that is sort of like a social network kind of a thing with enormous amounts of data coming in that takes a lot of maintenance of course. But a website like Mouchette where the input is very limited, maybe the website is quite visited but the input is maybe a sentence and its limited just to text. So, there is not so much that is maybe the site grows and changes with the input data.

O: And so, you said some of the servers are starting to put, maybe protect more these websites but the server...

DJ: Well when you get a service to host your website in a way there is of course a lot of options. You can have full control over the server, and nobody does any updates or anything. You have to do everything. Then you have like full control or there are services where they update some things like for example the operating system of the server itself that they update that every once in a while. You have some that will host updates to the software as well. They offer different support. Mouchette does lots <incomprehensible> already something. <Incomprehensible> but in terms for example the operating system where it is running, they update it frequently does updates but that can also cause problems. Are you still there?

O: Yeah, I am.

DJ: Because I am hearing weird sounds coming from... So, they update the operating system itself but as for the code the serves the website, the web server itself, it doesn't necessarily get updated. Somebody else needs to do it. So yeah there are all these different levels it really depends on the server that you have but a lot of, or all the hosting services that you can buy these days, they offer some sort of protection and updates. A little bit of maintenance like that.

O: So, the updates that you did, the moving it from one format to the other on what pages was it that you did this? Because she was saying that they were updating from Flash Sound, did you do some of that work as well?

DJ: So, the specific was... oops I am sorry. I am getting feedback. Wait a second let's see if we can. So the specific work was The Lullaby for a Dead Fly. That was fully built in Flash and Flash was obsolete and it wasn't running on web browsers anymore, so I completely recoded it from scratch in HTML 5 and the effects in Java Script. So that locally saying we made slight improvements but we tried to keep it as accurate as possible, but it was completely remade. Something like a new work. It just looks exactly the same.

O: So, what are some of the limitations that Martine enacts when she is looking at how to maintain the site or how to repair certain things?

DJ: Well its umm... It's a little bit of tricky process in the sense that when, especially when you have to remake the whole work, it becomes a little bit of a question of how much. Do we just really try to mimic the original? How much room do we get to play with the new possibilities in terms of technology? Right because at some point you get forced to because the technologies they work differently. The possibilities are different. Some things you were doing before cannot be done exactly, exactly the same. But this you can do it very close but that small difference triggers you to think but then this is also possible well then, we could just, if we are going to go different might as well just make it better. Then its sort of like your artistic mode triggers and then you start almost having this tendency to start creating again and that's very conflicting because your... Yeah, your trying to maintain something that has a certain historical value as well. So, there is always a little bit of an internal struggle. I think both on the artist and on the programmer between sticking to the original or making small improvements and how much of those improvements can you put in there before changing into a new thing. A new artwork.

O: Yeah cause I think that... She herself also has all these ideas about generating these new parts of the website and stuff so then when you are trying to keep something the same it conflicts with all of these ideas.

DJ: Yeah especially with Mouchette which is an artwork which is supposed to evolve and that's kind of recurring theme on internet art that a website is not necessarily a snapshot in time of what it there now. Its something that evolves. Its something that is based on a community that a lot of people interact with and if people with it, it just doesn't exist. So that's another big limitation that like if we, if the, if we don't allow the site to evolve then is it really the same artwork? Its out of the question because, because one of the big characteristics of the artwork was that it was evolving. If it stops evolving and stay the same, then it's not really the same artwork anymore. It lost a part of it. So, there is also that problem of that: What happens when a work is evolving? Should we keep it evolving? Should we keep versions of it? Or should we just take snapshot of it and say well now this not the work but a documentation of the work. A version of how it was at this point in time and then let the work evolve. Both by input of the people who visit and by actively developing on it. Because that was also a thing like Mouchette was for many many years actively, actively improved and changed and added to while it was being exhibited. While it was online, and people were interacting with it. So yeah that is a little bit the tough questions. How much of it is maintaining and preserving? And how much is just making an artwork that is continuous? That is just still existing and continually evolving.

O: So, what do you then about the acquisition by the Stedelijk?

DJ: I found it really interesting. Especially because... because it plays with the concept of ownership. When what is in principle the owner of the website is the person who has access to the server and who can basically change it or shut it down. <Interference> But in the end if it is just existing on a hard drive is that really the same artwork? <Interference> But at the same time I understand and then it comes from the whole tradition of art being something that you can purchase and that you can have and I also think it has some value having this snapshot of what the internet was because digital data is really volatile. It keeps changing and its far from permanent. People are still like oh yeah paper archives are a thing of the past. Now everything is digital. You can store much much more data in much much less space, but actually digital data lasts an insane amount less than even a piece of paper. Paper degrades with time and if you even don't know... if you don't keep it in a good temperature, in a good humidity and so on then it deteriorates relatively fast but digital data on hard drives it doesn't last long. It doesn't last long. You leave your hard drive five years on a shelf and then you try to get the data back and it's not working and its gone. So, its very volatile. The big advantage is copying it does not really change the content. Like if you, if you copy text from a piece of paper to another piece of paper. It is not the same content. There is... always something gets lost there but with digital data that is not the case. You copy it and you get the exact copy. They are both the original in a way because they are both exactly the same. So, I see... I understand the concept of the Stedelijk wanting to buy this snapshot of the website. I also understand their struggle which there was. There was a lot of things and that's what triggered this whole situation. I was thinking of how do we, how do we certify this? How do we make that piece have the value of the money they put into it?

O: Because how do you think what they bought relates to what is still online?

DJ: I'm not sure. It's a really hard thing to answer. In a way the code base is really similar. There are things that are completely different like the work that I did is not on the purchase of the Stedelijk so that was made after. So, there are definitely differences. The historical value is sort of there. All the things that happened on the website the input of people who interacted with the website who actually kind of made it come to life is there but its like... It can also be compared as like taking a picture of a live performance or a video of a live performance even better something that could be reenacted. <Interference> If you have the video of a live performance you don't really have the live performance you have something different. <Interference>

O: Which I think is my question if they own this essentially picture of the website do, they have a lot of responsibility to the live version of the website?

DJ: That is a really good question. I don't think, I don't think many people can answer that question.

O: But if you think that, if you were to imagine they take some responsibility for the live website and you were going to be asked to do work on the website what would you need from all the different parties to do your job?

DJ: I don't think it would influence that much especially on my job because all I need basically is access to the server so I can change the code and access to Martine with making all the... When there is artistic decisions to be made she needs to make them otherwise the artwork would stop being hers. So that's basically all I need in any case so if those artistic decisions can be influenced by the Stedelijk for some reason or if there is some need of authorization to change something that would probably more be... That would be covered by Martine so for me it wouldn't make any difference, I think.

O: Cause I am just thinking of a long term plan if something was to happen to Martine and the museum wanted to step up and take responsibility how the life of this artwork would look differently.

DJ: Yeah that is... That also kind of goes back to the point of maintenance versus evolution of a website. So the evolution of the site itself happens in two parallel ways: one is people accessing the website and putting data into it and another one is Martine deciding to create more parts of the website or changing the ones that are there. So, it would be... So, the part of Martine of course that would stop happening. The other one if we could maintain the website working and accessible to people that could continue on, should continue in my opinion then the question would be does somebody else come in and contribute to the work? And does it then become kind of a, deviate from Martine's... It's like having a piece of music that get played over and over and covered by other people <interference> and makes it into a different work. So I see those possibilities that somebody else wants you to take over and evolve the work or maintain it as good as we can and try to keep it working and when its time to remake things try to remake them as much, as close to the original, or there is a point where platforms are just so different it doesn't work anymore. In that case what do we do? That happens already a lot with... around media art and art for example that uses specific computers from the mid-80s and they only run on those then the only thing we can do is to create this time capsule in a way where you have that computer. You maintain that hardware well which has a limited lifetime as well, so you also have to maintain that. You maintain the whole hardware with the software and everything together in one place and available for people to access it. Of course in installation artwork, in kinetic sculpture, for example, or on interactive artworks that uses a I don't know Super Nintendo from the 90s that's a bit easier to do than something that is connected to the internet. The internet is not a home computer its something that is widely available you can create a tiny part of the internet locally and then for instance it could be in another museum where you just plug in a, in a ethernet cable and you can visit a website or you plug into a WiFi-able called WiFi and you have a website that's running on an old server with the software it was running originally but not connected to the rest of the world. It loses something in that process but it is possible. And it's the best way I could come up with. To think of something after the platforms change so much.

O: I think in that case it loses its accessibility because then it's got limited accessibility. You can only access it in the institution then.

DJ: Yeah absolutely or as wide as you can make it. It could be a whole city like a funny example of that is Cuba. Cuba didn't have internet for a long time and so just now in the last few years its starting to have a little more access and what happens there is that people just created their own. So, there are actual boats with hard drives full of the internet: all the famous websites, all the famous stuff. They just download everything put it on hard drives and smuggle it in boats to Cuba and there networks that span literally whole cities with cables passing over the rooves so that everybody can have this content and share this content with each other and they have their own version of like Facebook and their own version of social networks. That only works within the city where cables pass through the rooves haha. So, it can expand haha. But then, but then yeah of course then there is also a lot of technicality.

O: Did you also... I wondered if you helped at all with extracting the database when the work was acquisitioned?

DJ: No. No when I met Martine the work had already been sold so.

O: Okay because it was sold in 2016 but I know that the database went later because she didn't know how to extract it.

DJ: Yeah it was just when I met her. She had just sent it. It was like the same month.

O: Yeah cause I was just wondering what method she used to extract it. Do you know what method she would have used to extract the database?

DJ: So, it's just like, just a very simple dump. So, she has a, she has basically a thumb drive with all the files from the website server and then a SQLR dump of all the database. All the data on the database so with that you can recreate the website easily.

O: From 2016? The website as it was in 2016?

DJ: Yes, that exact moment. And the thing is, if you do that, and you really create the website as it was in 2016, and then you interact with it, then it changes.

O: Yeah.

DJ: So that, I actually cannot... If they exhibit it somehow, they're actually creating a branch. So, it goes on in a different direction, because people are including different date. As soon as it becomes available it starts evolving again, but then it evolves on a parallel branch it goes on in a different place.

O: But I think they have an agreement with Martine, that if they exhibit it, they exhibit the live version, actually.

DJ: Yeah, I think that's... I am not completely a hundred percent sure, but I think that's the case.

O: I think that was most of my questions is there anything else that you would want to add?

DJ: Well...I would love to ask all those questions back to you. What was in your brain about it because its definitely an interesting subject. I have been involved on and off with preservation of artworks for around 11 years now and I find it a really hard problem to solve. A really scary thing when you start thinking about it because you always think oh yeah museum and institutions, they have it covered. They have these huge archives of everything that happens and things are safe these days but then when you work on archives and you work on these things and you know how they work and you know how things are its really scary because we don't have it under control at all. We're losing content and knowledge every day.

O: Yeah, no I think the more research I've done into this the more I have just come up with other questions because it was actually... The piece was acquired through the MOTI museum. I don't know if Martine told you?

DJ: I'm sorry I didn't understand.

O: It was acquired originally through the MOTI museum in Breda, the piece, and then it was... It was basically the MOTI museum was becoming the Stedelijk so they made this huge acquisition of digital media works because they wanted to get it into a large collection in the Netherlands basically and they knew that it was turning this way and that there was like no, that there was a huge gap in these collections, that they didn't own stuff like this, like digital media works and things like this. So it was kind of an acquisition like that and I don't know how big the suite was of artworks they acquired. It was quite large but then it came into the Stedelijk and the way it came

in, in this fashion. It was like... a lot of information was lost on its way into their collection as well because it came in through a back-door kind of.

DJ: Wow.

O: So, when they had the interview with her, in like, I think it was in 2017 maybe that they had the interview with her, they were missing the database. Like it hadn't made the way across from the MOTI to the Stedelijk.

DJ: Wow that's crazy and it's like, its data.

O: Yeah exactly and for her...

DJ: How simple it is to screw it up.

O: Yeah and this is for her I think what she sees as like the most important part of the piece didn't even make the... So, to me that's insane and just this whole still they don't seem to know whether they have acquired the website or the picture of the website.

DJ: It does actually... In the end they are very philosophical questions and they make sense and they are really tricky to solve because there is not something you can go back and be like, "Ah this is what it is!" Like no there is a lot of what it means to everyone. Its literally like dealing with money. Money in the end is just paper but it's the value that people put into it that really matters so we are used to doing that with money but we are not used to doing that with digital art because one has been here for so long. So yeah its really tricky so when I say that we don't have it under control I don't mean only that we don't have the kind of infrastructure to move these things around and that we don't really have enough knowledge within the institution to do it properly cause that we kind of have. What we don't have is just solutions to our problems. People just don't know how to do it. Data is exponentially growing, and we have the biggest companies in the world expanding as fast as they can to handle all this information and all this knowledge. But its limited and we only have a limited amount of space for this data and we are generating more and more and more. There is no limit to the growth but there is limit to the storage capabilities and once you store something, even if you have the space for it, the physical space for it because digital also takes physical space even if you have the space and kind of the environment for it and you know how to put it there and you know how to put it there in a way that it doesn't degrade the data you still have a problem of maintaining it. Because everything has a time of life that is sort of short. Like when we were storing everything in magnetic tapes which are sort of... They really don't last long. A little bit of humidity and they completely kills everything that's in there. We are talking about damages that are microscopic that can completely destroy the whole thing, the whole artwork. Can you imagine one byte of the whole thing can just screw up the whole hard drive. The whole work and there is just no way to get it back. Now we have solid state which... but that means you have to take all the data from the magnetic tapes find a way to translate it to newer more lasting mediums and then even those you know will have some sort of a lifetime which by the time you need to replace them you already have, like the whole knowledge base has been tripled or quadrupled. So how do you maintain something like that, that is growing exponentially? Its like we have no clue how to do it and we are not doing it. We are not storing everything. We are storing a lot. Priceless amounts of information every second but we are not storing everything.

O: And also, museums move very slow so how do we adapt them like make them ready for maintaining and storing digital data?

DJ: Absolutely. Absolutely. Museums are still kind of very traditional institutions <interference> in the end because they have this fear of... They have always kind of been safety first because they are protecting the artworks, so they had to be very strict very conscious of everything and every decision had to be made very carefully. They handle things of a lot of value so the whole evolution of museums was towards being very strict, very careful with everything. The less you move the less dust goes in the air that and now all of a sudden, its required of them to evolve very fast. Like everyone else. Fast also means a certain, maybe making some mistakes it also means kind of having this flexibility and agility of finding out things and trying to correct them and sometimes loosing things. So that's a tough thing for museums to deal with and they're trying, they're trying. I was very involved in the museum world in both archiving and communication strategies, so I have a lot of experience with trying to get something done in a museum. Its really hard and it takes so long that once its done its almost time to do it all over again. But I also understand the conflict there and its tough. It's a really tough situation.

O: And what do you think, like what do you think could be done to improve the situation? What knowledge do they need on board?

DJ: Yeah they need... Wow they need a lot of things but to start with I think they just need to put attention to it and to get people that are in the field and know the technology and art to kind of try and figure out solutions. They need to be on the edge, so they need to also risk a little bit so then I also understand that, that is a big shift in focus, in where they put money in how they make money. So that implies a lot of risks that maybe museums should like end up not being museums anymore but just being something else. That's, that's just what happens when we evolve like things need to evolve and they need to find this balance of how much do we evolve and how much do we preserve. And those choices are very hard to make so they need information. They need people that are focused on how to deal with this. How to deal with digital art. How to deal with the amounts of digital data that are generating these days. How to deal with artworks that use people as a community because maybe it just cannot preserve those. You can keep them in a way. You can keep them going up to some point but maybe we can't preserve them. Maybe we can just document them as well as we can. Because even that if you make an artwork that becomes super popular now. Let me see if I can...oh for example its still really interesting but it's a little bit old already, the suicide mach... the social media suicide machine. It's not exactly the name but it's something like that.

O: I know what you ah...I know what piece you're talking about. The one that you could put your facebook info or your like twitter or something and it would just... Yeah everything would be gone.

DJ: So that is something that became really popular and became an artwork and became something that was really relevant because of a specific time and a specific social environment and a specific social problem that is still here today and that we are still really engaged with. It still makes sense but in a relatively short amount of time things can change dramatically and all of a sudden people are not interested in social networks anymore and they are interested in something else that came along. And that thing, that artwork, that was there that you could experience it and the experience was not just the concept of, "Oh funny." It's the experience of actually putting your name in there and loosing things. That's the strong part of the artwork and it wouldn't be there anymore. The community wouldn't have the interest to generate that artwork anymore so how do you keep that?

O: At that point though I think it becomes an antique it becomes like a lot of other artworks that were born in a certain context, but they can't live that way anymore. It becomes just a documentation of the work.

DJ: Yeah exactly. Yeah and yeah you can even see that on a painting that portrays something that is very specific to a specific time. If you don't... if you're not in that context you experience it differently but you can still experience it and if you know about the context you can put yourself in that situation and imagine what it would be, right? But you can still look at the painting and have the experience of the painting as it was. With a digital artwork that doesn't happen fully because you just can't experience it anymore. You can know it was there. You can know what it looked like, but you can't experience it. You can't interact with it anymore.

O: And how do you think that we can like, how... Why is artwork like this not getting into museums? Why is digital media artwork not making it there? Is it because of this main obstacle where museums aren't adapted to it?

DJ: I think that... Well I don't have like a clear answer to that...

O: But I don't think anyone does.

DJ: But my opinion of what I think happens a lot of time is that it is very hard to justify the costs. Its business. So, a digital artwork is hard to exhibit, hard to maintain and costs money constantly. It's something that is there dragging you down especially when it comes to money and it is very hard to exhibit it continuously. And so that is kind of the cost of it and the value of it which is sort of abstract about artworks on digital works is exponentially more abstract and more complexed to judge. Like how much is it worth? How much potential value is stored on that artwork? Its really risky. Its really unknown it could be like all of a sudden oh that's nothing because its just a copy and its not the real artwork and all of a sudden all the money they injected into it to acquire it and to maintain it is just worth nothing all of a sudden. So, it is very risky in terms of business to acquire... to buy digital artworks. And I think that's how the main issue and then of course the practicalities of maintaining a digital work is tough and making it...making it...sexy is of course really hard outside of its complex outside of its little <incomprehensible> it was born.

O: Yeah definitely but perfect. Thank you so much for making the time to speak with me.

[Tjerk Busstra \(B\) interview by Olivia Brum \(O\), June 11th, 2019](#)

On request of the author.