Interview Metadata and Transcript[1]

Interview with Martine Neddam, Cafe, Amsterdam, February 28th, 2019

Title	Interview with Martine Neddam on *Mouchette.org* and *Mouchette.org-Version 01*
Subtitle	The Lives of Internet Artworks in Institutions
Interviewee	Martine Neddam (1953), Artist
Interviewer(s)	Olivia Brum, University of Amsterdam Conservation and Restoration Masters' Student
Others present	N/A
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Summary (Description)	These interviews were held as part of the interviewee's Masters' thesis that examined the acquisition of a version of Martine Neddam's internet artwork *Mouchette.org* by the Stedelijk Museum Breda (now Amsterdam) and the MOTI museum (no longer in existence). This interview includes an overview of the artist's recollections about the early internet, how it influenced her making process for *Mouchette.org* and the decision-making that influenced the compilation of the version that was acquired.
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Transcript by	Olivia Brum, OH-SMArt and Smart Care Research Assistant / University of Amsterdam (January 19th, 2024)
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Language	English
Date available	Available upon deposit (January 24th, 2024)
Depositor	Olivia Brum

Setting

The interview was held at the artist's regular café near their house. Therefore, the audio track features interference from conversations of other clients to the establishment as well as background music. As the artist and the interviewer were sitting close to the audio recording device this is not overly disruptive and they speak clearly enough that they are easily understandable.

Transcript

00:00:00

00:00:03

Martine Neddam   University? Archive? What are you studying?

00:00:08

Olivia Brum   Conservation of Modern and Contemporary Art at the University of Amsterdam.

00:00:11

Martine Neddam   Okay, and you're having classes with Annet Dekker?

00:00:16

Olivia Brum   Yeah, so we had a lecture with her actually. She came in and lectured us. But we don't usually have... because she's more information studies. Yeah.

00:00:25

Martine Neddam   Okay, so you're studying conservation.

00:00:27

Olivia Brum   Mm-hmm. Yeah.

00:00:29

Martine Neddam   And is that...

00:00:31

Olivia Brum   Yeah.

00:00:36

Martine Neddam   So, they also deal in the digital arts or...

00:00:37

Olivia Brum   Yeah.

00:00:38

Martine Neddam   A little bit.

00:00:43

Olivia Brum   Yeah, so we've been doing a whole section of time-based media this semester. So, looking at electronic art, net art, you name it. Anything under the sun programming.

Martine Neddam   Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:00:53

Olivia Brum   Mm-hmm. But... ... Mouchette came up for thesis discussion. So... and I was really interested in its case basically.

00:01:07

Martine Neddam   Yeah.

00:01:10

Olivia Brum   So, I'm so excited that I get to have this conversation with you.

00:01:12

Martine Neddam   Of course, you're welcome.

00:01:14

Olivia Brum   Yeah.

00:01:17

Martine Neddam   It's not the first time actually. Well, several PhDs regularly communicating with me or even devoting a significant part of their thesis to the case of Mouchette. And recently someone just finished her PhD but then in Dundee.

00:01:42

Olivia Brum   In Dundee, okay.

00:01:48

Martine Neddam   Which is specialized in digital art with Sarah Cook.

00:01:49

Olivia Brum 00:01:52	Oh.
Martine Neddam 00:01:53	And that was Karen De Wilde.
Olivia Brum 00:02:00	Wilde. Because I think that... Annet actually referenced Sarah Cook's work as well during...
Martine Neddam 00:02:24	Yeah, because she would, she would... She would be I would say in Europe, the one person who does PhDs in digital art and curating digital art. Yeah. And really a sort of herself a senior curator and also, she's not that old but she's been doing that all the time. Curating and teaching and...
Olivia Brum 00:02:28	Yeah.
Martine Neddam 00:02:38	So... and I was making myself maybe I shouldn't say that too early. I was making myself the reflection. Recently with Karen we also, together with Karen De Wilde. So, we did...
Olivia Brum 00:02:49	Yeah.
Martine Neddam 00:03:38	And we also did some communications in lecture, special lectures things. One in London, was it in... ? Well, I don't quite remember but some university in London where they had a special thing about digital conservation and all these things. And so, wondering the interest that... well putting all the, institutions in the same basket of course the case is much more complicated than it is but the museum institutions, the art institutions and the research and academic institution, it feels because I gets so... well so often, quite regularly that, that attention. And meanwhile the work itself is not being preserved at all.
Olivia Brum	Yeah.
Martine Neddam 00:03:48	So, I often feel like okay it's like it's not an individual remark but something that concerns the institution as well.
Olivia Brum 00:04:00	Yeah.
Martine Neddam 00:04:01	And that it's like leaning over a disease because you have interest in that case but not really caring about what would help.
Olivia Brum 00:04:14	Yeah.
Martine Neddam 00:04:15	So, because every time I'm sort of also go towards the institution for help would it be well money or interest or whatever.
Olivia Brum 00:04:19	Yeah.
Martine Neddam 00:04:20	I do get a sort of deaf ear.
Olivia Brum 00:04:24	Yeah, I understand.
Martine Neddam 	Or it will come back or later or you know. So, as well as from the museum, as from LI-MA. You know LI-MA?

00:04:31
Olivia Brum   Yeah.

00:04:41
Martine Neddam   Or I would get probably same with... so yeah. So that's how it feels.

00:04:46
Olivia Brum   Yeah, it's super complicated.

00:04:55
Martine Neddam   Yeah, well just like having interest while dying as a work of art let's say. As a case but not trying to keep it alive.

00:05:04
Olivia Brum   Yeah, well that's what I want to examine how we can keep it alive. How some sort of reasoning can be found.

00:05:11
Martine Neddam   Yes. Well, it's interesting.

00:05:19
Olivia Brum   Yeah, well so see if I can... I mean that's a tall order so. Start step by step.

00:05:23
Martine Neddam   Where are you from?

00:05:24
Olivia Brum   I'm from the US.

00:05:26
Martine Neddam   So, you study here. You came to Europe for that.

00:05:39
Olivia Brum   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...

00:05:47
Martine Neddam   You're from New York?

00:05:51
Olivia Brum   No, I'm from Pennsylvania but we don't have a set-in stone program for that. Yeah, usually you would have to come in through objects and then sort of move into that.

00:05:58
Martine Neddam   Into that.

00:06:02
Olivia Brum   Yeah, but it's kind of... yeah there's not really a way to enter it so. Yeah, so that's why I was hoping to start here because then you can go right into what you're interested in. Yeah.

00:06:12
Martine Neddam   Because they have a special department for that?

00:06:13
Olivia Brum   Yeah, they do.

00:06:18
Martine Neddam   And people who do PhDs. So, you're doing your PhD with some...

00:06:19
Olivia Brum   I'm doing my Masters.

00:06:20
Martine Neddam   Oh, you're a Masters.

00:06:24
Olivia Brum   Yeah, and then we do Post Masters as well which is more hands-on. Working for the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands. Yeah, so this

	is my final year of my Masters. Yeah.
Martine Neddam 00:06:37	Okay.
Olivia Brum 00:06:42	Yeah. But I was wondering if we could just kind of take a...
Martine Neddam 00:06:43	Let's go through your questions then.
Olivia Brum	Yeah, please. Maybe I'm hoping to move from broad to maybe a bit more specific.
00:06:48	
Martine Neddam 00:06:55	Yeah.
Olivia Brum	So, my first ones just have to do with your making process because in everything that I could read I couldn't find...
00:06:57	
Martine Neddam	You have your thing on? Your...
Olivia Brum	Yes.
Martine Neddam 00:07:03	Okay.
Olivia Brum 00:07:05	I couldn't find a lot of details about... yeah. So how does an art work...
Martine Neddam 00:07:06	My making process.
Olivia Brum 00:07:18	Yes. So, how does an artwork take shape for you?
Martine Neddam	That's not general I would say because these particular works took shape because of the existence.
00:07:19	
Olivia Brum 00:07:33	Okay.
Martine Neddam	So, I couldn't compare to anything else because the work was born with not only the existence of the medium but with me being able to access some of the medium here in Holland. Which I wouldn't have access to in France, for example.
00:07:37	
Olivia Brum 00:07:40	Yeah.
Martine Neddam	At the same moment and in the same circumstances. So, I could only have a specific answer. It is born from my encounter with the internet when it came here over and the way it was received also.
00:07:53	
Olivia Brum 00:07:57	Okay.
Martine Neddam	So, because... So yeah, that's only... that's one of the kind... even the second digital character I did wasn't born in the same way because I had an opinion but that was... I had already an experience with the internet over a number of years. But that was just a sort of discovery. So just... Testing the possibilities.
00:08:25	
Olivia Brum	Yeah. But did you... so it's inspired a lot by how the web was growing at that...
00:08:32	

Martine Neddam	Totally. That was my discovery. I was... and also the way it was brought to us really. Now I'm... very aware that if it had been in France or while in the States it would have been a different thing but it would have been in the country where I was brought up and where I did all my studies and started as an artist. I would not have encountered the same... well the same enthusiasm for a media that offered possibilities and that offered a sort of what I call a utopia of communication. So where... and at the same time I worked with language because I was a... I was, I am still a language artist.

00:09:23

Olivia Brum	Yeah.

00:09:26

Martine Neddam	Individual art, not a poet. But someone uses language as a prime material, also interested in linguistics. And then comes this medium where every receiver can be a sender.

00:09:41

Olivia Brum	Mm-hmm.

00:09:50

Martine Neddam	Which you could say hasn't existed... hasn't ever existed before. So...

00:09:52

Olivia Brum	And how did you...

00:09:54

Martine Neddam	At that scale, in any case.

00:10:03

Olivia Brum	And how do you think that... you say that there's a difference between how it landed in the US versus how it landed here? How do you think it was different?

00:10:10

Martine Neddam	I'm not all that well 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.

00:10:15

Olivia Brum	Yeah.

00:10:26

Martine Neddam	And that the people, artists in the US and readers, for being, for example, supported by the government, with grants also... Although it didn't really connect with the internet itself, but having the possibility of having the research, or funded research that we didn't call like this, were just art-making.

00:10:40

Olivia Brum	Mm-hmm.

00:10:43

Martine Neddam	Without the said government, let's say.

00:10:44

Olivia Brum	Yeah, definitely.

00:10:45

Martine Neddam	So... So, in that, I think it was received politically very much here.

00:10:51

Olivia Brum	Yeah.

00:11:02

Martine Neddam	As... also as the sort of the ideal democratic medium. So, people who were in politics, if you've heard before then, or people who were in broadcasting TV, on channels, on local channels, people who had certain ideas on the political use of medium, were very active here.

00:11:22	
Olivia Brum	Mm-hmm.
00:11:30	
Martine Neddam	They had special broadcast, free broadcast radios, people like, I don't know, craft-loving, if that tells you something?
00:11:31	
Olivia Brum	Yeah.
00:11:54	
Martine Neddam	But many others had that sort of... reception, enthusiastic reception of this medium, as the one that will change our lives and our political institutions, and our ways of communicating. So, even the city of Amsterdam invested in things called the digitale stad, the digital city, where they offered an email for free to everyone who'd ask it. Some people still have them.
00:12:13	
Olivia Brum	Wow.
00:12:19	
Martine Neddam	And that was very early, like, I think '94, or, yeah, sort of. So very, very, early, that thing of... this is, this belongs to us. One of the first providers before was called XS4ALL. Access for All. And it was born from another provider called the hacktic, which also had a sort of connection with the hackers. Not in the sense of pirates that destroy, but that do their own things. So, you had this atmosphere, very strongly. And it resonated with me, let's say, in 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. So, I wasn't technical. 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 a way. Because I was... Before I could afford a computer, they were very expensive at that time. I'm talking '92 or, yeah, '92, '93. The university lended me a computer. So even, I think, because they had one to do graphics, so they had a map with 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. It has changed immensely since then. But people also believed in a sort of... I don't know if it's a democratic idea about art, but that art was beneficial to the society and to the political citizen and the access of...
00:14:50	
Olivia Brum	Which also probably has to do with what was happening with the BKR at that time.
00:14:58	
Martine Neddam	BKR ended long before it came, but grants were still quite easy. But that idea resonated with all the parts of the society, also with the artist-run centers, also with the way the society was done. So, for all the things, how art resonated in the society, how the internet 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 with Photoshop because I taught myself from a free computer first, so 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 them because they thought it was something emancipating. So, this idea also of emancipation prevailed also, as well in the art as in the reception of the internet as a medium. Emancipation of the citizen and emancipation of

	the individual in the society.
00:16:29	
Olivia Brum	And how do you think that the context of Mouchette has changed over time?
00:16:40	
Martine Neddam	The context depends which context, the artistic context or the internet context?
00:16:42	
Olivia Brum	The Internet context. First.
00:16:56	
Martine Neddam	Well, for example, I was one of the first to have something, an interface which 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 same. People would help me or would suggest... information also circulated from person to person and from... how can I say... non-expert to non-expert. And so that's how I learned how to, for example, make a form when it was a bit more technical than made an HTML page. HTML page also I learned because there was a small moment in the birth of browsers that an editor was included. So, you didn't even have to write. I'm very bad at writing code. 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 three or four months. I don't think it even lasted a year, maybe a year, that the editor was included with a 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... They would spend time with me to help me do it. So, that sort of also personal connection and also collaborative atmosphere prevailed a lot. There was also a time when the artistic situation was also much more favorable for artists. So, artists would help each other or the city would help people with giving them spaces for very little money. And this was when... was also so artists who had easy access to grants were also prone to collaborate and help each other. So, it was a sort of, I don't know, yeah, also 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.
00:20:12	
Olivia Brum	Yeah. But in the ways also that like search engines being introduced and commercialization.
Martine Neddam	Not yet, I'm talking of a time when...
Olivia Brum	But earlier?
00:20:24	
Martine Neddam	Not yet. I would say like previous to 2000 you had AltaVista or... They didn't do much of a job.
Olivia Brum	Yeah. But how the context changed as these things happened.
00:20:33	
Martine Neddam	And I saw it. I could see it changing through my works. Some works are really... and I have all these databases with the dates. So, so, of course people would not interact the same. For example, people would when, 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 completely. Or some parts of the site changed completely. So yes, I really saw it happen and could... And participated to this 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 all because the web 2.0 what they call web 2.0 wasn't existing yet. I was offering a platform to people because that's where they came to. So, I have lived within very special periods and in a very special atmosphere also as, as a way to acknowledge with the changes and to move on or not with them according to what I wanted and the new.

00:22:10
Olivia Brum   And when you begin one of your works, do you do brainstorming ahead of time?

00:22:19
Martine Neddam   Not for this one. Not for Mouchette I did for a later work. For example, I did 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 files of different people which I casted and I can still tell why I didn't choose this one. Why I didn't choose this one. Why I chose 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 then you mess up with your access if you change things. So, now I would say that's maybe the sort of blessing is that I didn't have to, to try or to 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 the form appeared in the browser. That would have been very, very handy for a lot of sites. But by the time they knew it we'd already made a lot of work perverting the use of buttons. So, 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 wall. So, and practically because they were independent, inquisitive the possibility was still very limited. What you could do was still very limited. So, we were all on the front row and we could not just as spectator but we could use everything. So, a little bit of sound. I would do everything myself and a little bit of sound and 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 GIF. So, yeah, we could be smart because there were... meanwhile the official scene was not yet aware of the interest. The museum 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, for their lack of understanding or for their authority. So, yeah authorities were very questioned and it wasn't even that questions authority has changed so much since then. But at that time, it was.

00:26:19
Olivia Brum   And what are you looking for while you are building up the artwork as you're adding pages, as you're putting sound in?

00:26:28
Martine Neddam   What I was looking for. For example, one of the things I think few people were as much 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 but in an intimate sphere. So, you didn't have social medias yet and the fact that you could be in that sort of intimate relationship or even sensuous because of this intimacy. Your imagination was connected also 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 it's not by chance for example that some of the first works, even pre-internet works, but even pre-web were dealing with the situation of a person with a psychoanalyzer. Eliza was one of the first chatbots you could say from 1980. Maybe the end of the 80s. So, this idea of this intimacy with an absent but present person was...

00:28:22
Olivia Brum

But in the instance that you just talked about with David Still where you said that you auditioned all of these people, what made you pick the one person?

00:28:27
Martine Neddam

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

00:30:04
Olivia Brum

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

00:30:05
Martine Neddam   Consider what?

00:30:08
Olivia Brum   Considerations come into play?

00:30:12
Martine Neddam

Well of course it was sort of myself. So, it was 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 these sort of virtual characters. They were originally I think might have been born from my... The sense of limitation I felt in language. So, when you're 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 were at universities. They were interested. Some of the first interactive spaces in 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 connected also to coding. But I could sense that I was talking like a kid. And even if you say I'm a foreigner. So, I guess that made me choose for a young age or that sort of opened up maybe that type of connection where you... There's also something I call a connection from imagination to imagination, where the body itself or the trace of your own history like your accent when you talk or what is incarnated, what is in your flesh, doesn't appear because something has been... Every analog element has been disconnected, replaced by digital equivalent. So, yeah, so maybe that was born from that particular type of situation. What was I answering to what consideration made you choose?

Olivia Brum 00:33:19	When you add pages?
Martine Neddam	I do... a bit difficult to explicit... I did become another person. You do find certain resources that you didn't know you had or certain imagination or certain fantasy. You become... you saw the consideration. No, it's not it's not very deliberate. You could say if you compare it to writers, some writers have a plan, when they write a book but some others, they discover the book while they're writing. So, I would say in the case of Mouchette that was pretty much so. And I could never have the blessing of being able to do a work of art in the same way. Many reasons you have to plan to announce to define. So, I would say no consideration would be the right idea or, or unconscious consideration. I was blessed enough to be able to discover the art while I was making it. So only one element at a time. Sometimes it would be technical, but of course it was not a technical exploration. I would use certain resources for myself, which were there and I didn't know.
00:34:43	
Olivia Brum	Do you ever determine a limit to what changes can be made to the artwork?
00:34:54	
Martine Neddam	Well, for example, I mentioned if I had to reorganize. For example, it was very disorganized. I didn't have a fixed plan. It was very organic. One file 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, but a space that was in my XS4ALL accounts, I had a sort of 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 and 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 that only exists. That was the number one, how can I say, incentive. Its broken, let's repair it. Or it doesn't look the same that I made it for many reasons. So, what shall I do? And then I considered. So well, preparing JavaScripts. So, a lot of change to remain the same. That's a big, big work. It's like running on the... What do you call it? At airport you have it.
Olivia Brum 00:36:45	Treadmill.
Martine Neddam	... on the treadmill, but on the, yeah, the other way around, catching up and you know you're always losing it. You never... So, it goes in the opposite direction and you run on that treadmill in the opposite way and you never reach a stable point because there is no stable point.
00:37:03	
Olivia Brum 00:37:17	But do you think that you could add to the work now?
Martine Neddam	I'm still doing it. Everything is still possible. Only I'm still in that situation and running, so I'm much more busy keeping up, not letting it being damaged. But I've been adding constantly. So, sometimes using things which I knew were not, so I made them. Yeah, to this day I could still do a... I have an exhibition using some of Mouchette's work in Utrecht now.
Olivia Brum	I saw.
Martine Neddam 00:37:42	You saw it?

Olivia Brum 00:37:58	Yeah, I haven't got to see it yet, but I'm going this weekend actually.
Martine Neddam	Okay. So, I didn't make anything new, but I made a print installation and it also was meaningful in a way because in fact what I consider for me, the big treasure of Mouchette is the participation. And it's an incredible database where I have a huge... I give an enormous value to what people have sent me in which I republished on the site. And so, like say, when making a choice here, I took a site I did quite a long time ago called Ihatemouchette.org, which was also anonymous, like a sort of anonymous hater who had made a site called Ihatemouchette. In the pre-Web 2.0 time, you had these things, you know, expression needed a new website. You couldn't just... So, you had all kind of sites like I hate Microsoft or whatever. Or I hate my boss. So, I made that site called Ihatemouchette.org because I was... I received a lot of insults and that was also a way to sorta put them in a special site. But of course, the quality of the insult was also, people used a lot of imagination and played the game. Most of the time they didn't believe in the haters, they played the Mouchette game alone. So there... 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 where what defines, well... That hate is triggered to give a definition and that is how hate speech is. You could say people are haters, but some people want to be hated because it gives them an identity. It makes the... That's why they trigger hate. Finding an easy target and it's for the rest they might be practically nothing. So, all the right-wing parties also, or far right also, use the hate in that way to be defined. They're defined by their enemies, not by what they can bring to their citizens if they're elected, but by what they're going to protect them from, like the immigrants. So, they don't even say... In Hungary now they're making advertising for the upcoming European elections. They're only advertising about hating immigrants when they hardly have any in Hungary. So, this, and they get enough interest while not saying what they're going to do for their citizens or what they are receiving from Europe, like Meta, but by triggering interest and emotion and identity through hate.
00:41:41	
Olivia Brum 00:42:10	So, then how does this piece relate to Mouchette?
Martine Neddam	Well, because she's a... Mouchette. I always designed Mouchette in a way also in a 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, I thought using hate was a good one because people know what they hate, or even if it's just for a game that is, they hate what they want. And sometimes not, because, well, why do they hate? They hate it because she's a foreigner or because she's French, or because she thinks she's doing art, or because she's... So, they use their hate faculties or, I don't know, targets. So, this sort of defining the relationship through hate or triggering emotions. So, I was also very aware that, or always manipulated that. I'm not a linguist for nothing, I studied linguistics... So, how to manipulate the situation, to awaken emotions by the intimacy, secrecy, physical closeness, or the hate.
00:43:22	
Olivia Brum 00:43:31	But it's two different works, right?
Martine Neddam	Well, Ihatemouchette and... It depends if you consider Mouchette as a

	work, then everything that belongs to Mouchette is a work. Otherwise, there's hundreds of works of which Mouchette is the author of nothing. So, with different situations, with different also physicalities. I also made physical works, editions, so it's hard to say. Is Mouchette the artist or the work of art? That's the question. She could be an alternate artist, as could be the case for, for example, certain writers?
Olivia Brum	It's kind of the line that I'm trying to understand.
00:44:22	
Martine Neddam	If I understood it myself then... I think it's very hard to understand. Also, for yourself, once I, so I protected the anonymity for a long time, and that's a big job. You have to erase the traces, or every time you online. But also, when you work with art institutions, you have to explain everyone. One by one, not just like one person, not just the curators, but everyone along the chain that communicates with you. You have to explain them that you are being anonymous, and that it's okay. That is not a bad thing. That is for the art, because the anonymity or changing your identity has a very, very strong stigma. You must be pervert to do that. So having, for example, an institution, having to inform everyone along the line. Also, the person who buys your plane ticket or you know... So, it costs a lot of energy. It's also nice because it can get you a lot of complicity. And, it's also a very special relation, but it's also a lot of energy to block all the possible leaks. So, when I decided it was not interesting anymore, and I could do, I thought it was just a very rational decision. People were not so crazy looking for the true identity of the author, or, you know. I'd done everything I could do in that direction. I could just sort of loosen it up. I had a sort of personal breakdown, you could call it, or a grieving period, you could say. Which was very unexpected to me. I didn't realize it would happen as with my decision it was very rational. It was just sort of made to ease my working condition, and had no artistic necessity anymore. But the personal benefits, if you want, if you can call it like this, or... I wasn't evaluating them, I realized them. And what sort of helped was to resort to certain authors who had used alternate persona, and how they had dealt with it, sometimes much more difficult, and with much more difficulty than mine. So, at least it concerns me. I might have been crazy, but I wasn't the only one to be crazy in that way. Yes, it certainly satisfied a lot of unconscious... I don't know what's the difference.
00:47:41	
Olivia Brum	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?
00:48:05	
Martine Neddam	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 may be how I would define it, a sort of a way to blur boundaries. So, maybe for myself I would define it more like this. Like it's another artist with their own style, their own approach, their own motivation to do art, or a sort of imaginary environment, because of the freeness, of the freedom of circulation on the web, and distribution of information. Then you were also free from the authority of institutions, the arts, whether they're commercial or whatever. So, it was not such an imaginary situation. Of course, it has become much more... It wasn't imaginary in the sense that freedom is only imaginary because you haven't met the boundaries. To the moment you met the boundaries and you negotiated, then of course you could say how it has

shaped what you do. So, freedom, I would say, in creation, would be an imaginary state of not reaching your boundaries, of having lots of space where you don't have the feeling that you're compromising. Not necessarily compromising but operating with certain limitations, within certain frameworks and limitations. So, I would define it more like an alternate persona, more than a work of art. An alternate persona producing different things of art.

00:50:36

Olivia Brum   And what do you think are the inherent characteristics of the work?

00:50:38

Martine Neddam   Inherent characteristics?

00:50:41

Olivia Brum   What defines it?

00:51:05

Martine Neddam   For... The personality of the imaginary author, for example, certain qualities or characteristics that I would not allow myself. She's vain. She thinks she's a star. All the things I wouldn't allow myself even if I had them somewhere hidden in myself. I wouldn't allow them in the open. They would come with quotation marks. The character would be very easy with that. And really would gain sympathy and would gain friendship, through being very open with her own. And because she's a child, of course, it's easier to comply with the ego and vanity. But a child, especially if she's gifted. So, for example, these... So that sort of... The inherent qualities would be that these particular set of qualities. That she had a certain spontaneity. And also a way to express in a very simple language certain philosophical idea about art. The way I experienced them, but I think the way they were also experienced. What defines art now? Of course, few people would really be bothered about what defines art on the internet. But because you had a very small crowd, sort of redefinition of art in its circulation... It was very significant, I would say, for the work. I was a sort of... Duchampian artist. Artist in the eye of the beholder. So, this idea of... Yeah, restructuring the definition of art or the approach of art as well. So, for example, I consider the most precious art in Mouchette is what she received, Is 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 the art of Mouchette in a way. For example, restructuring the fact that it's a relation is something that happens between me and you. So, all these philosophical ideas about art in general, also literature, I already... I sorta had them already when I started in Mouchette. Also with literature, which I studied. The quality of the readership, like 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, that made me also sort of very happy and very excited about doing it. I had the impression of exercising it live through that medium.

00:55:11

Olivia Brum   And there's also a part in Mouchette that happens in real time, like Guerilla Gift Shop.

00:55:14

Martine Neddam   You mean like real time or real world?

00:55:15

Olivia Brum   Real world.

00:55:17

Martine Neddam   Yeah. I mean, since the beginning, when I had the situation where I could

make the character exist beyond the net, but with the reference to the net, I would do it, of course. So, it was not just a set of web pages, but that 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 on both sides, it had... So, a quiz about the film Mouchette and a quiz about my character, but made first design on paper. I don't know if I designed it first on paper or translated it for, but the two were closely related. So, yeah, it was, for me, it always worked hand in hand also, as I could make it work when people would accept to keep the anonymity to try and... I also did a gallery show, one of the first things. In '97, there was a gallery show where I had made also a printed picture. The pictures were made into an installation. In '97, which was very, very early, then I would not. So, no, I didn't... It was always parallel, let's say. So, one would react on the other.

00:57:19

Olivia Brum   But how does it form the whole picture?

00:57:22

Martine Neddam   How does it form the whole picture?

00:57:25

Olivia Brum   The real time, the net...

00:57:32

Martine Neddam   It's hard to know. I live in my studio, which means that 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 Neddam. Martine Neddam was already an artist with the public commission in space and worked with the language as visual arts. So, when people would accept, because I was so excited about this creation, when people would accept like my... the galleries that I worked with accepted to have a show on Mouchette, then I would do it. So, I would use the connections of Martine Neddam 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 the year of '99, I think, because we were protecting a group called etoy.com, which was getting a lawsuit because of its name, only was the first one. And we would sit... As artists, we all had scripts where 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... No, it was not Christmas, it was oud en nieuw, what do you call it, the night of 31 December.

Olivia Brum   Oh yeah, New Year's Eve.

00:59:31

Martine Neddam   New Year's Eve. It was on New Year's Eve, and I had friends at my apartment and we 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 didn't have so many 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. Fortunately, I had that party at my house, so I could check it, not for that reason. It was so mixed to my personal life. So, I don't know what was your question.

01:00:13

Olivia Brum Yeah, just how it all interacts, basically.

01:00:19

Martine Neddam   It was the first person who helped me set the database was my partner at

the time. So, I wouldn't have known that I could have had a database. I would republish things by making new HTML pages. And he was sort of studying, well not studying, but he was just... It was more like a self-study. At that time, people who were doing things on the web were self-studying. And so, he... Then he had made something for his granddad who had just died, who had been a painter. He had set all his paintings online. And he said, "Yeah, but I can help you with that. Stop writing. Stop spending hours just rewriting by hand all these emails that you've... " So, it was totally mixed with my private life.

01:01:25
Olivia Brum   Wow. So, then Mouchette was acquired by the Stedelijk and the MOTI Museum in 2016. And...

01:01:29
Martine Neddam   Well, that was very bizarre. You have questions.

01:01:33
Olivia Brum   Maybe some general questions first, like... So overall...

01:01:35
Martine Neddam   She was not acquired.

01:01:36
Olivia Brum   She was not.

01:01:39
Martine Neddam   No. It's a version, Mouchette version.

01:01:41
Olivia Brum   Yes. Okay.

01:01:49
Martine Neddam   So, saying that she was acquired is a bit... is a bit... weird. Because I still have her.

01:01:52
Olivia Brum   Yes.

01:01:57
Martine Neddam   I still run the website. So, they're not hosting it. They're not... So, it wasn't acquired as such. I'm still the one who hosts it and still the one who moderates it. I'm still the one who knows how it works. I'm 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 art base, it's my website. It's not what they bought, which is presented.

01:02:40
Olivia Brum   So, what did they buy exactly?

01:02:43
Martine Neddam   That's the big question.

01:02:44
Olivia Brum   Exactly.

01:02:52
Martine Neddam   They bought what I could sell. Well, it was a question to know what to sell them. So, we sort of... We didn't have much time to ponder about what exactly they could buy because it had to be made before a certain date. There were deadlines. So, MOTI knew that they were acquiring a number of... a number of net artworks and then they were trained to choose them. They knew which budget they had left. They knew that these works would go to the Stedelijk. They were making the... So, the whole situation was set already when they approached me. It must have been somewhere, I don't know, in September and it had to be totally signed in December. So, the situation was very... I proposed to sell a work which had the definite... well

which was... which you could put on a CD, let's say, or a DVD. Even if, you know in this case, of course, the questions of preservation still remain. But yeah, it was an sort of autonomous works. I proposed a number of them. But for some reason they say, "No, we want only 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." In certain works, we bought an edition. Let's say for Olia Lialina they had some GIFs. So, there was GIFs. Then they bought an edition. So, maybe she had three copies or ten copies, whatever. I say, "It changes every day 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 who knew the situation. She said, "Yeah, a copy doesn't make sense." But we can sell them a time stamped...

Olivia Brum 01:05:42   Version.

Martine Neddam   Version of all the contents, which doesn't infer with the infrastructures which is present in the server. It's just the content which is specific to this particular hosted site. So, we ended up agreeing that it would be that. And I had some really... Because they really wanted that, like the whole thing, the real thing. As I said, for me it's much more an alternate artist than a work of art. Because then it's not the work of art, it could be 50 works of art, which I can name and date specifically. 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 scientific instance that legitimated our use of certain words, or you know. It was very bizarre. We ended up... I had some sleepless nights, like I said. No, no, whatever we do, we shouldn't buy that, it doesn't make sense, they should buy... But somehow, they didn't want... I proposed two or three works which had their autonomy and they are works which were made with flash but could be kept as videos without changing their nature. Or you know, things that would hold better and would not depend on me later, could be preserved, but no, they wanted that. And I finally accepted because I saw this discrepancy might open to, well, the possibility of fill that gap by helping me to seriously preserve it. So, in fact, at one point I sort of gave in to that. Of course, it's not that I sold them something which has no value or know that we didn't give it serious reflection. We had many talks with Annet, we had also a talk with the museum, with Ward Janssen and the museum, the three of us, she even was, I don't know, remunerated for her consultation, so all the things were sort of discussed as seriously as we could with each of us, our own personal interest in sight. But for me, in a way, it didn't make much sense either than 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 if they would... If everything I did would disappear, let's say, if we're talking not about sort of decay time but maybe in 50 years, if this has stays and not the rest, then of course they could revive that particular moment but they would have to revive the whole architecture. And they would pay... Whoever would do that would be paid 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 revealing, making this gap manifest, hoping that someone, that the institution would give some interest in collaborating with preservation.

01:10:16
Olivia Brum   And what falls into this gap, would you say?

01:10:19

Martine Neddam Everything, I do all the time. The moderation, the preservation, the reparation, what I call keeping it alive. And I have been also expressing myself quite a bit about that, although I'm getting a bit now tired with communicating with academia because I think, as I was telling you, communicating with academia is... I don't think it's worthless for Mouchette. I think it's a way also to preserve harmony. So, I don't think it's worthless. I don't do it out of pure altruism or generosity. So, I think it does give or bring something to the work, but a certain type of interest, but it doesn't lead to anything concrete in the help of preserving it.

01:11:32

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

01:11:42

Martine Neddam It could be anything from money to pay for... I have been working, well... I've already done a lot myself. But from observation and acknowledging my way of preserving, by keeping that redefinition. Actually, I was saying how I thought these situations could redefine the role of art within the society, lets say, just as the Duchampian approach or the renegotiating the authority and the presence and their 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 these sort of spontaneous requestioning of the authority of the object and of the art situation ended up in to, 50 years later or 60 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.

01:13:28

Olivia Brum Like as an artifact?

01:13:31

Martine Neddam Yeah, but also the spirit itself. Requestioning the participation of the public. Requestioning 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. And that was the spirit. It was not by chance. It was, of course, the spirit of the... So, I find a lot of that sort of killing the spirit is still at work in the institution. So, art which had an emancipatory attitude, for example, redefining the interaction between the art and the public, has been... is lately even being revisited in a way that really, totally kills the spirit. In a way which... At least, you know, when sometimes you see a number of artifacts and you realize that they're just... what is leftover. Just like elements in the life of someone who has died, it's not that life, it's just what you can approach and then the rest, you imagine. But now, lots of these leftovers are... Gain the status of the art and change completely the spirit. So, I think this is a bit... heart-breaking, I would say. In my case, it's heart-breaking.

01:15:36

Olivia Brum Yeah. So how do you think they could make a preservation strategy that would not do this?

01:15:50

Martine Neddam I've been expressing myself a few times with... with... like giving these lectures together with Karin de Wild. And I've even formed some concepts. For example, one of the concepts being generative preservation. How to

preserve something alive. So, it's 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... their ability to generate something in the large sense? Alive would be a sort of metaphor, of course. But I think... meaning that it's not just a sort of individual case, but a case that could enlighten a certain relation to art on the net. So... well... I've been doing that, but then once you've done it, then you've done it, you know? So, I think, for example, the concept of generative preservation could be interesting. In the sense that if you show an interactive work of art, let's say whatever the interaction, then you would make sure that it's still interactive. Or that something that triggers reaction or posts, or that it can still trigger this reaction, and that this reaction being republished, so that this still exists, for example.

01:18:01
Olivia Brum

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...

01:18:02
Martine Neddam

That's it. And it's not so difficult to... how can I say, to control, you know? I mean... for example, it's easy enough to see that the work is not linked because it doesn't, when you have your statistics, it doesn't have traffic anymore. Or... so there can be... how can I say... There are ways to keep things alive, let's say. And so, this sort of generative status is... Maybe, that's why I use this notion, which seems to be a contradiction, that preservation is generative. That preservation can be generative, meaning it can preserve its generative functions, is that it can apply in a lot of things, also making sure, let's say making sure that part of the site is still being accessed. If... every time you go on a site, you generate the data that you visited. Your statistics, let's say. So, in time, everything... 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? It's not enough to know that it's online, for example. So, the fact that it generates traffic...

01:20:03
Olivia Brum

So, do you want the institution to take more of the role that you yourself are fulfilling right now?

01:20:18
Martine Neddam

What I would want is to collaborate with the institution, at least to observe and dialogue, and have a dialogue on the mutual interest, let's say. This is also the way I want to work when I'm asked 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 fourth or fifth 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's no fixed way to show it in the space. Only the one we 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,

"Okay, send me money for that." I wouldn't refuse it, but I wouldn't find it interesting.

01:21:52
Olivia Brum   Yeah.

01:21:57
Martine Neddam   So, this is what I find interesting, is that dialogue. I opened a sort of... with LI-MA. Now I saw they were reusing the formula, but 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 of endless conversation. That you always go back and forth. Which it is, actually.

01:22:29
Olivia Brum   I think it is, yeah. Definitely.

01:22:42
Martine Neddam   It's also what exists for architecture, or things... It changes constantly, and it's a conversation with the actual situation. Every decade brings its own ideas on what... So, I do believe in that, in the conversation. Well, conservation as a conversation. But I might have the feeling, at least maybe the way... that it hasn't happened yet, I couldn't say so. But it's one word, for example, what I sold, it's one word in the conversation, but certainly that doesn't mean much for the future, I would say.

01:23:18
Olivia Brum   No. And I just lost the question I was going to ask.

01:23:28
Martine Neddam   About conversations.
Olivia Brum   Yeah, uh no it was not about...

01:23:33
Martine Neddam   I was answering a question, but I don't know which.

01:23:36
Olivia Brum   No, I just asked basically what role you wanted... My question came back to me. I was going to ask how you imagine its lifetime after you're gone? If you can't have this conversation...

01:23:52
Martine Neddam   I wrote a text once about that, for Annet. She asked me, she had a sort of symposium publication. And I was wondering how long would it take after I died, how long would it take for the web hosting to disconnect, for the re-registering, for the spam to kill. So, it was more a sort of... So, it's more an imagination of what is going to happen. Who will be at your funeral or something, these kinds of imaginations. But more in a sort of fantasy. A fantasy I have. So, I have started working with a collaborator, which I pay myself to preserve how I... The database, to help preserve the database, because I moderate it. I've been working for two years on my own. And I stopped because at some point we... I don't know if the document we produced... So, I stopped because, it's not that we achieved something, we did do something, but I found like... In fact, I think it needed a real institutional method and conversation. So, I was just talking with someone I had employed. Although we started making a sort of... screenshot sessions and commentary on the screenshot, and finding also a good format. So, what format will we produce. So, the screenshot of the... not the database itself, but the interface. Because the interface, like when you have an admin for a blog, well this was self-designed, or at least with a technician I worked with. So, it's all customized. It's all made up. And there were, 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. At least if I would archive some instructions, some information... So, we started on that and produced some documents, and produced a discussion... Also 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 when I broke my wrist for a while, I couldn't even use a mouse, so he did it. But yeah, at some point I also had that impression that this institutional, how can I can say, dialogue, hadn't happened yet. One day people will find these things and they will not know what it means. And it will also can be destroyed just like the rest of what I did. So, I thought, yeah, it was an attempt indeed to preserve the functioning of the database, and to introduce someone. So, 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.

01:28:02
Olivia Brum

So, indeed, perhaps an outsider's perspective on how you yourself moderate and what you yourself preserve.

01:28:10
Martine Neddam

So, that was at least something that I was starting to achieve, and we did it for about two years. What made me stop also is that he was in Athens, and I thought he would... He's Greek, but he was studying in Rotterdam. So, he was sort of, at the moment we started, he said, "I'm just temporarily in Greece, but I'll come back to Rotterdam." Because he finished his study, was doing a Master's at there. But then somehow, he didn't come back, so we did one or two... It was too hard to work online, on Skype. So, for a year he could never manage to come back and work, so then we would have mails. So, I thought that was enough, like I couldn't, I had enough working, online and all our sort of planned achievements were blurred, because it only happened three weeks later. And he didn't know what I'd be asking, and he didn't know what he was delivering. So, then the conditions also made it... But also, one reason of these conditions is that also I didn't have so much budget for him. So, of course if I knew he would be all the time in Greece, I wouldn't have started. But what? That's it. But this idea of needing someone to observe is really obvious. I do, do things, but there's a level in the preservation where I need someone to tell of it, because a lot of the things I do with it, since it's all so much mixed up in my life, that I don't even know that I knew it.

01:30:06
Olivia Brum

And you hope you could have this dialogue with the institution about...

01:30:25
Martine Neddam

Yeah, or someone related to the institution of course, which has also a sort of legitimacy and also expertise in certain ways of preservation. Which might not be the same as mine. For example, Karin de Wild, her interest in preserving is very, very, very, very different from mine. We have a good complicity, she 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, so she... But in a way for me that's okay, as long as the dialogue... So, she wasn't preserving for me, she was preserving for her, but she was also preserving for me after all. So, I think at some points that these conversations... In finding in some way I would want to lead the conversation; in a way I think. And this is what I haven't been able to do up till now. Not so... yeah.

01:31:43

Olivia Brum   And do you think that your concept of generative conservation could be
                   adapted to other cases?

01:32:04

Martine Neddam   I think so. Of course. You know. Obviously, if someone would buy a blog,
                   let's say, or whatever, which is still active and has reactions... Of course, if
                   you perform, then you can buy a work that constantly changes. For the time
                   being, for example, Karin has studied another work that has a... of Lynn
                   Hershman. That has a... That she has spoke to the San Fran... SF MoMA. But
                   they put it online sometimes, because it costs a certain... Well, so this work
                   can generally have conversations, and the conversations are also preserved
                   in the work, but then they can't put it online all the time. Because they put
                   it online when there's someone to moderate it, to make it run, to make it...
                   So, it's a bit like a performance with a script, per se. 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 it's not the same when you
                   have digital versus a live work. So, sometimes it's even more helpful to
                   compare it to a performance than to compare it to an object. Because a
                   performance has to be re-performed, re-interpreted, performance has a
                   script, performance has a document, and then you can... So, sometimes it's
                   more relevant to compare it to a performance, although it's very different,
                   but more relevant to compare it to a performance, reactivated, than to an
                   object being restored. But even though I formed this concept of generative
                   preservation... Because I was invited by LI-MA on the theme of
                   reinterpretation, and I thought no, reinterpretation doesn't make sense,
                   because there's this re-insight and this "re-" supposes an original and a
                   copy.

Olivia Brum   So, it's something that's living?

01:34:36

Martine Neddam   But there is a one and a second. And I think in the generative, you don't
                   have an original and a copy, let's say. That performance was made real by
                   an artist, and 20 years later someone re-performs it from a script or from a
                   recorded document. So, you have an original and a copy. But I think in the
                   case of why I used this concept of generative preservation, is that in the
                   case of generative preservation, there's not an original, but there's an
                   origin. And you cannot name where it starts. And I think my site and also my
                   artworks also embodies very much this idea of generative preservation. For
                   example, lots of artworks are made with found material. So, is this found
                   material the art or not? Found material online, found software, found
                   material. So, what is the origin? What is the original? I've reused a film,
                   which was made after a book. I often believe... So, this film is inspired for a
                   part by a film of Bresson in the '60s. So, I think that's why I was also holding
                   on to this idea of generative rather than using the idea of reinterpretation.
                   Any "re-" is to remove this authentification of something that was fixed
                   origin. Whereas if you have an idea of a generative preservation, you know
                   it already came from somewhere. So, you don't have to rely on an original
                   and something that reproduce it but to keep it generative means to keep it
                   changing, actually. So, you might need to repair the software, that's really
                   simple enough. So, change to keep the same, that's already simple enough.
                   Sometimes it cannot be kept the same because the whole medium changes.
                   So, then a decision will be made by whoever. That's why I think this idea
                   that is not an original and a copy is still important. Because if you say the
                   original... For example, people reproduce some works that were made in

the early 2000s and the end of the 90s but then the resolution of the screen was... Now if you reproduce the same resolution of the screen, what Rhizome does for example, then you have a small thing in the middle of your big screen. How much does it reproduce the work intentionally? Not at all. For me it really sort of makes it, sort of exoticizes it. But makes it different from what its... It alienates it from... So, for me this is, for example, that 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 a browser size the way it came to the screens. Then you could say that's the original, but you look at it as something which is absolutely... Which is miles away from... Doesn't give the feelings. For example, I always worked on backgrounds in a very immersive way. So, my backgrounds were large, larger than the screen. Not anymore. Now they're tiled. So, it has changed. In some cases, I modified the background when I could or when it was relevant or whatever, or possible. Sometimes it wasn't possible. So, 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 and an immersive background is more important than reproducing the resolution of that time.

01:40:07
Olivia Brum   So, how would you describe authenticity then?

01:40:18
Martine Neddam   I would exclude the idea of authenticity. That's why the generative idea bypasses it. That doesn't make it relevant anymore. You can 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 that things are 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 examples that have been modified or altered very significantly from the authentic or original artwork. One of my favorite examples is Frankenstein, the novel by Mary Shelley. We do have the original but Frankenstein... For example, there's a lot of live Frankensteins, not only films, but you even have... See like very bizarre, Frankenstein... Well, Frankenstein, everybody thinks it's the monster, but it's the scientist. So, the monster... It's a very significant element in book, that the monster has no name. The nameless monster, well, this has disappeared. It was very significant that this monster born of... body parts found in churchyards was an unnamed creature. And yet now it's named and 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 layers and all... 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 for the author that... And nobody bothers very much like, "Stop it! It's really an unnamed creature."

01:42:51
Olivia Brum   So, you don't think that a work can have authenticity as it changes? That authenticity is a freezing word?

01:43:04
Martine Neddam   Yes, because of the way we think. Because you could say it was authentic to Frankenstein, is the way Mary Shelley wrote it. So, it's 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, it uses the way it took on life further, also in popular culture, to give that particular importance to the creature. So, that's it. That's more authentic. This reception is more significant to the work of art than something more original. So, it's more Frankenstein to... It's more true because it lives on than to say, "Well, this is not the book. Go away." So, these are... and of course also it has become conceptualized. You have... you can call it "A Frankenstein" or there's a cooking show called Frankenfood. Where monstrous mixture of different meat are put into the same dish and keep whatever. It is very bizarre and repulsive. But promoting this idea of monstrousness and food for the lovers of that kind of food. So, there's a real concept of what Frankenstein could be with a real positivity to this monstrosity, that has lived on very far from the original book. And the original concept and the original ideas. 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... it's the viewers of the film that did it. It's not the author of the you know. Well, there's a certain type of reception that modified it. So, maybe the fact that Frankenstein became the... It was probably maybe not even the idea of the one who made the film. Because in the film it'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.

01:46:56
Olivia Brum   But the idea of generative conservation that you are thinking of is something that is continuing. So, not like the example that you made of the SF MoMA where they put it on sometimes and then it's not there.

01:47:15
Martine Neddam   No, I don't mean that. That is not... I mentioned this example because it compares preservation of the digital work of art to a performance. That's the only reason. It doesn't have a... So, it can continue but in fact it doesn't function, is what I call a... It's just more a concept to say that the work can be preserved by transformation, especially when they happen in interaction with the public. So, not necessarily by decision of... So, nobody decided to call the monster Frankenstein. It's a mistake of the reception. People started calling it that. But none of the ones who adapted the book to another medium decided it. So, the popular use and then it's accepted and then it's taken out. So, that's mainly what I call generative conservation. Things are transformed by the reception of the public, by how it circulates, the circulation transforms the medium. So... yeah. Let's say maybe if the people who had the copyrights, had refused to give the rights for the film because the mon... you know, because someone... Then it would have stopped. These are not made by authorities that 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 authority, but by a sort of opinion of the reception.

01:49:18
Olivia Brum   But... so...
01:49:22
Martine Neddam   Circulates on another level, on an uncontrolled level.

01:49:36

Olivia Brum   So, what can change? The viewer's perceptions basically determine what can change?

01:49:39

Martine Neddam   In principle I do not know what can change. When I'm not there to keep it the way I want to keep it everything can change.

01:49:48

Olivia Brum   But maybe a better question is what must stay?

01:49:58

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

01:50:01

Olivia Brum   And the aesthetic of the work?

01:50:19

Martine Neddam   No. The aesthetic has changed sometimes by... It 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's no... if you talk about the aesthetic, 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 is generative. Whatever the server is going to serve, will appear as interpreted by your desktop. So, already something is being generated and 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 original resolution? For me, no. The aesthetic is... Well, the aesthetic is being transported 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... So, the aesthetic, if it's 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 to the aesthetic. Let's say... But otherwise, I don't think... But it might... if I'm not there to keep them, they might change as long as it's being received by the public. As long as someone doesn't define it saying, "That 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... They can be changed by the use. 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. Let's say, the code, the pixel... If we consider them as fixed, then we're wrong. So, freezing them in certain moment of time, I think... for me it goes against the aesthetic of them. For sure.

01:53:19

Olivia Brum   And reduces its adaptability.

01:53:25

Martine Neddam   Yes. Yeah.

01:53:27

Olivia Brum   Yeah. Because then it cannot be generative anymore.

01:53:34

Martine Neddam   Yeah. If it says it should have the size of the screen on which it was made for... Then, yeah. Then it becomes really a sort of copy of it.

01:53:54

Olivia Brum   Yeah.

01:54:04

Martine Neddam   So... So yes, I would really... That's why I would... If I had to choose between, how should I want it to be considered, more like a performance

	than an object. It's very dangerous to think that a website is like a thing of which you can preserve the material...
Olivia Brum 01:54:38	Materiality.
Martine Neddam	Materiality in the forms of codes and whatever is preserved on a hard disk. So yeah, it would be very dangerous to think that. And I think the danger exists because you still already have to convince... Because this material exists, I put it on like what I sold to the... To the...
Olivia Brum 01:55:00	Stedelijk.
Martine Neddam	Stedelijk. The thing with time stamp and now it sits on a hard disk somewhere.
01:55:08	
Olivia Brum 01:55:10	Yeah.
Martine Neddam	On a shelf or on a computer or... Even on a shelf. Yeah. Turning, 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 do 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 work used to be or reconnect to documents of that time. And the idea that you could preserve a material form that revive it from this material form is very wrong. So, it's a bit silly of me to say so because I did sell that and not by lack of, by bad attention, or by lack of understanding or... The circumstances made me do it. But I think the danger of fetishizing, using the object to kill the spirit or using the materiality is there very badly.
01:56:41	
Olivia Brum	But there was also a contract too, right? Between the Stedelijk and yourself?
01:56:42	
Martine Neddam	Yeah. Lots of pages to which I hardly understood like how I wanted. You know 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 was, I would say, meaningful is that Karen Archie, when she came to the Stedelijk, and she receptioned the works. She did a specific interview that lasted two hours, has been transcribed, is probably accessible if asked. And she had a real long set of questions as well, specific. It was in presence also of the person in charge of the digital thing. But also, well there were three or four people at the table who participated in this talk which was transcribed. So, at least I would say... And it had also questions related to the aesthetics in the very general, general sense. Like she asked me, my artists that were inspirational, things like this. I said, "Oph," I didn't know, "Maybe Sophie Calle?" So, for example, this autobiography or the invented autobiography would make more sense than a lot of other... So, I think that, that has a certain value. The way it was receptioned by Karen Archie as a dialogue with the maker. Just to say how significant the lack of expertise or even interest in material form is that they 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. They're 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 process because this data wasn't very well identified.
01:59:39	
Olivia Brum	And this was attached to the mirror version of it?
Martine Neddam	The?
01:59:43	
Olivia Brum	To the mirror version, the HTML?
01:59:47	
Martine Neddam	To the mirror version? What you mean? I gave them a number of files. So, one file was the root folder, so they have much more than Mouchette. They also have a ihatemouchette.org. They also have archive.mouchette.org. They have a lot more, everything around it. Much more than the domain name. So, just from the root folder, I downloaded... In the meantime, I've repaired many, so it has changed a lot since... 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 very well done by Rhizome for a show. So, that's a document of the circulation, one circulation. I gave them a sort of document of yeah... That's it.
02:00:56	
Olivia Brum	There's still a lot of work to be done.
02:01:00	
Martine Neddam	It's a, yeah. Maybe this data can, one day be exploited. So, I don't regret that they have... It's just that gap that interests me. So, I went into the idea of maybe that gap can be fruitful one day. But I'm not going to say, well, to imagine really a frozen gap. It's getting, yeah... It's a huge gap between what they bought and what Mouchette is really.
02:01:38	
Olivia Brum	How do you think you could begin to close this gap?
02:01:44	
Martine Neddam	Well, for example, that conversation we had is beginning to close this gap. But that's just one conversation. In practical terms, the fact of keeping the site, website alive, and how much work gives me to keep it alive, to moderate, to repair it. That's the new gap.
Olivia Brum	Well, thank you.
Martine Neddam	You have so much talking.
Olivia Brum	I have so much!