

Amy Brost, Ellen Moody, and Annie Wilker interviewed by Barbara Clausen, Deena Engel, and Glenn Wharton, October 12, 2018.

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Glenn Wharton: Today is October 12th, 2018, I am Glenn Wharton here with my colleagues from the Artists Archive Initiative and three conservators here at the Museum of Modern Art, Amy Brost, Assistant Media Conservator, Annie Wilker, Associate Paper Conservator and Ellen Moody, David Booth Associate Sculpture Conservator, and my colleagues from the Artists Archive Initiative are Deena Engel and Barbara Clausen.

Glenn Wharton: We're here to talk about Joan Jonas's *Reanimation*, which is currently owned and installed here at MoMA and the three of you worked well, with curators, installers and other staff members as well as the artist and her team in installing *Reanimation*, so I am hoping we can talk today about your experience as conservators with this work going through the research that you did. Any conservation work that you did, assisting with the installation, documentation and so maybe we should just start that way, if we could go around and if each of you could just briefly tell us about your role with the work.

Amy Brost: Well, I'll start because I see myself as having had two roles, one I was the media conservator working on the installation team, and secondly I've kind of been the lead internal investigator following that installation to interview people who participated, and consolidate that documentation. So those have kind of been my two roles.

Ellen Moody: All right, and this is Ellen speaking, my role came at the very end of this installation which was in the placement of the crystal; of the dangle-y crystal sculpture that sits in the middle of the installation and actually, the placement of it had already happened by the time I got involved. I came down to look at it and was a little concerned about it being nudged, because there's nothing holding those rods that the crystals dangle from at the top, to the supporting structure. So my role was very simple in that it was just to wax down those rods where they had been placed, and then put little silicone bumpers around the base of the sculpture to make sure that it wasn't nudged or moved throughout the exhibition, and yeah, that's about it.

Glenn Wharton: Annie.

- Annie Wilker: Yeah. I came in kind of at the end, also. I actually didn't start working with the piece until after it had been installed and my role was mainly involved with thinking about how the works on paper were going to handle being up for a solid year without any glazing, so that was a concern for us. It's not something MoMA typically does, and I'm also contributing a little bit to the documentation that Amy started.
- Glenn Wharton: Well maybe, before we get into the weeds as conservators tend to do, you could talk about the people involved. Just on a high level who the curator was, who from the artist team you worked with, and who else was involved with exhibition designers, AV team.
- Amy Brost: Mm-hmm (affirmative), so I'll go ahead and refer to my notes because we did install this a year ago, but I'll tell you who was on the core team. So the curators for *The Long Run* exhibition were Paulina Pobocha and Cara Manes, the exhibition designer was Matthew Cox. For AV it was Aaron Harrow and Travis Kray, those of us here as well as Erika Mosier from paper and Lynda Zycherman from objects. Registrars, Sarah Primm and Sydney Briggs. The artist also visited numerous times throughout the installation. The fabricator of the furniture was Caleb Engstrom, but the designer was Ed Gavagan. For exhibition planning and administration it was Chloe Capewell. And we had Emily Bates from Gavin Brown's enterprise, the gallery. She was also actively involved, so that's the core team.
- Ellen Moody: And Sarah Wood was the head art handler.
- Amy Brost: Oh, excellent, adding that to my document.
- Glenn Wharton: So I think that already, would be surprising to some people that at a museum like MoMA there's this cast of hundreds it seems like, involved in putting an exhibition like this together.
- Glenn Wharton: How much interaction did you actually have or did MoMA staff have with the artist. Was she around all the time, was she rather hands off?
- Amy Brost: As a matter of fact, she was closely involved at various points throughout the installation and the planning. So my understanding was that the exhibition design and production team, Matthew's team, had the schematics drawn up and kind of went back and forth with her studio about the plan.
- Amy Brost: Then she visited the gallery and they talked about where things

were going to be placed, then once everything was placed she came back again to kind of look at those relationships between the elements again. As you could see in the space in the gallery, the ceiling mounts for the projectors, there's certain things [such as] running cables that made it very difficult to make changes once those kinds of things started to happen. She had come here a few times to just sign off before they made those more permanent attachments to the walls and so forth. And they wanted to secure the screens and so forth to the floor, so there was a point where we couldn't do any further moves.

Amy Brost: Then once the media went into the space she came back, looked at all the media, because we'd received master files but they gave us permission to make the exhibition files. We made them with a light touch but optimized them for our display equipment and then she looked at all of those, commented on the exhibition files, so we made some adjustments, tuned the piece also a little bit, looking at the relationship between the sound levels, and supervised the wall drawings. So she was very much involved in the installation.

Glenn Wharton: I would say that's very involved, for an artist to pay that much attention to detail, that she is an artist that really cares about public experience of her work.

Amy Brost: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Glenn Wharton: And while we're still on the artist, did she have an assistant or was there anyone else with her or from her studio, or?

Amy Brost: Yeah. And I can't believe I would have forgotten to mention this, she provided a lot of instruction on the placement of those crystals, and the crystal sculpture as well.

Ellen Moody: Right.

Amy Brost: So it was basically her feedback on every element. And she did have assistants who came, but they primarily worked on the wall drawing, when they were here in the gallery, but she had a studio assistant who worked with me on receipt of some updated master files as well. So, she seemed to have a team working as well, on her side.

Glenn Wharton: What kind of research did you do, any of the three of you can jump in, either prior to the work or during the installation or even after the installation, about her work, materials, technologies, physics of hanging crystals? Did you as

conservators do any kind of technical or historical work or did you just jump in and start dealing with problems?

Amy Brost: Well, I would add earlier that when we first got the paper elements, I think that they had said we could work with the curators to place the paper elements, the drawings, and then ultimately, she worked with us to place them.

Annie Wilker: Right.

Amy Brost: But Annie, I don't know if you want to speak a little bit to ... I know there was a lot of discussion about the paper, like what she used and how we might display the paper that I felt was really interesting.

Annie Wilker: Yeah, when the pieces first came in there was discussion of maybe putting up facsimiles actually, halfway through the show, and that was an idea that came out of her studio actually. I think she had done that with other similar pieces and her assistant Gretta mentioned that they were looking into that for, I think it was a version of *Reanimation* that was going up at the Tate almost simultaneously as this one. And so we had a lot of discussions about that and in the course of that, we looked kind of carefully at the paper surface and it proved pretty difficult to replicate that kind of thing in a facsimile.

Annie Wilker: I'm just thinking about the other elements of research, this is more kind of just scientific and that is, a lot of the crystals shoot these direct beams of light at the paper, so I was in touch with our scientists about that to see if that would cause any kind of differential aging of the paper just in those small little areas, but it turned out that our scientists thought that it was just too dim in there for something like that to happen, even over the course of a year.

Ellen Moody: But wasn't it a concern with an adjacent gallery?

Amy Brost: I think so.

Ellen Moody: Or maybe that was just the aesthetic, right? They had to move a screen to block the rainbow effect of those-

Amy Brost: Yeah.

Amy Brost: Yes, actually.

Glenn Wharton: It was hitting other art works in adjacent galleries.

Amy Brost: Yes. When those rainbows spilled over into the adjacent gallery onto other artworks then it became an issue so we did get permission from the studio and from Joan, to slightly modify the screen of the Ice Drawing video by 18 inches, just to intercept a few of those rainbows, so they didn't do that.

Glenn Wharton: And this is ... We may get into this a little bit later, but this concept of bleeding, of sound bleeding or light bleeding from one artwork into another artwork's space is something that a museum needs to be concerned about.

Amy Brost: Well, from my perspective in terms of the research that I was interested in, the videos have these really interesting characteristics. There's a lot of pixelation, jitter, stutter, blocking, ... So there's digital artifacts but also some analog artifacts, but I was really interested in the production process and just trying to think about what was intentional and what might be an error that I'd want to flag that came from outputting these for delivery to us.

Amy Brost: And ultimately that's what's so wonderful about having the artist visit the gallery, because then I don't have to consolidate all of these observations and ask for feedback on each one. I could sit and look at each one of those videos with her and just confirm that's absolutely the way these are supposed to look. I think that our curators were talking a lot about the layering that she does in her work and collage, and this superimposing one image over another [occurs] in the videos as well. That in the space, this kind of layering also happens, so it happens in the video, and then it also happens in the gallery [with] sound, when you talk about bleeding over into the next gallery, it's like the sound from one video channel sort of bleeds into the other. The sound of the other is in the third. There's three channels of video with sound, and the light that's cast around the gallery, so there's a lot of that layering, and a lot of that bleed in the piece itself as well. But I thought that was interesting from a technical standpoint, looking at the video.

Glenn Wharton: Were there other conservation concerns that you had either before, during or after installation?

Amy Brost: I ... Did you?

Ellen Moody: Well, with the sculpture, the framework is made of iron and there was some incipient corrosion, areas of corrosion on that frame. There's nothing to worry about for a temporary installation of a loaned in work to our climate controlled

galleries, for however long--I think it was originally going to be six months and maybe it's being extended now--but for that period of time it wasn't really a worry. But, now that we've acquired the work, and it's a work that we might consider loaning to other venues and might not always be in a perfect climate, that's become a question for the artist and our curators. How acceptable is that degree of corrosion, should it be treated if it gets any worse, should it be treated now? How crazy do we want to make ourselves about keeping those rods looking pristine and black? So that's a question that wouldn't have occurred to me had we just been borrowing the work, but now that we're thinking about it long term, it's definitely something we would ask the artist in an interview.

Amy Brost:

And we are looking forward to scheduling a conservation interview with the artist and we have not done that yet, so our impressions are very much formed by her visits to the gallery during the installation. But, I do think that's interesting about the sculpture because that rectangular frame is one thing that we haven't had permission to re-fabricate. She mentioned we could purchase back-up crystals, or the wire to hang them with; we could re-fabricate the furniture, the benches, the screens and we have the paint colors and the schematics to do that, and so I've personally found it interesting that that's one piece that we didn't get instructions for re-fabricating, and we would like to understand that better. And for me, from a conservation perspective, I wonder about the variability [of the installation as a whole]. It's such a variable work I feel like I have many questions still, even about things we were able to ask her in the space, how she decided where to place drawings, and those wall drawings based on her sight lines.

Ellen Moody:

Exactly, yeah.

Amy Brost:

I don't think we understand that.

Ellen Moody:

Yeah.

Amy Brost:

Yet.

Annie Wilker:

Or I don't know how she decided to put an extra set of binder clips at the bottom of all of those drawings because that wasn't in the original plan. And I have some other conservation questions: about all of the dust that's accumulating on all those drawings and three of them, the ones that are on black paper with white media that's friable white media, so there's no way to clean that dust off of there, once it's accumulated. Storage of

those black drawings is also going to be an issue, and I took a look at the transparencies that she uses to make the wall drawings and I'd be a little bit concerned about the long-term aging of those too because they're already kind of turning yellow.

Amy Brost:

Yeah.

Glenn Wharton:

Well, let's talk about that. Again, it came in as a work you didn't own, so you weren't so worried about the longevity of some of these elements, but now you are because the museum owns it and traditionally I would imagine, a paper conservator would prefer that something be framed and matted and protected, especially with such fragile media as chalk, and yet the artist doesn't want it to be framed and matted and protected, but there are other conservation options like fixing it possibly with some kind of a matte resin that would make it less friable, but how would you ... What are your thoughts about those issues?

Annie Wilker:

So, I would probably really shy away from fixing the works on paper. That's just sort of not a standard paper conservation practice. I think it's changing the original object too much. That idea—

Glenn Wharton:

By adding plastic, [crosstalk 00:18:23].

Annie Wilker:

Yes. Yes.

Annie Wilker:

I think it would change the surface sheen, I mean if Joan had put that on there originally and that was her decision, I mean of course that's fine, but for us to do that, that's not something that would happen.

Annie Wilker:

But the idea of fixing did come up for the wall drawings actually because that is another concern. You know if somebody bumps into those, we didn't really have a game plan for what to do if something got really smudged, if me or one of my colleagues should go up there and repair that or try to redraw it somehow, if it's smudged, or if we need to hire one of Joan's assistants to come back in and take care of that, or if we should just fix the whole thing completely ahead of time.

Amy Brost:

I think one theme that came out of the installation and subsequent conversations with our curators, is how the work has this free and spontaneous quality but it's very controlled. So the drawings that are the wall drawings, they look so gestural and free, but it took multiple days for the assistant to trace

every piece of what's on the transparency, taking water breaks and it's a physically awkward position, it's a very slow process to execute these, the curator described that as "athletic." Initially the message to the museum would be, "Oh yes, you can place the drawings and oh, the hanging system, it doesn't matter what it is, as long as everything's unglazed." But then when she [the artist] came, she would make these very small adjustments, like adding those binder clips to the bottom or saying, "Actually, I want to help you place these drawings."

Amy Brost:

And she was very ... She remixed the sound of the *Glacier* video, because the sound effects she felt were too loud versus the voice over, so I mean, that's a bit extraordinary, I think. To come and ... She sat at the fish video and just watching and saying like, "You know ... " Originally the artist questionnaire said, these can loop with one or two seconds of black. So I put a second of black at the end of each one. She said, "They could be seamless." And only the main *Reanimation* video fades out, but then there's a single frame of black. I mean, but it's just that she was in the gallery and looked at them all and then I did them all with seamless loops on her feedback.

Amy Brost:

So again, this tension between this apparent spontaneity... Even like how the crystals are not fixed, they slide around the sculpture. But the way they're placed, the shadows are not supposed to cross over onto the floor, for example. So the height, the distribution--they're not supposed to be ... The shadows are not supposed to make blobs, they're supposed to be distinct shadows. And there's that effect on the Ice Drawing screen. The projector is projecting the video through the sculpture and it creates an illusion of a tunnel, actually a perspective illusion, so that's very controlled, the positioning of everything. So I love that, the tension of that.

Glenn Wharton:

Fascinating. Barbara, would you say that that's characteristic of Joan and her work?

Barbara Clausen:

Absolutely. Absolutely. I've experienced that a few times installing with her from a curatorial perspective and that description of spontaneity and at the same time subsequently controlled or vice versa, is I think one of the key pleasures and also challenges of working from an institutional standpoint of working with Joan.

Barbara Clausen:

And it makes it so unique in a way while having different variations and forms.

Glenn Wharton: Is there anything else that you've learned, or that you learned during the installation process or subsequent maintenance on view, now that it's been up for a few months, that you think you'd like to discuss, or have we covered most ... We can move on.

Amy Brost: I would add one thing [crosstalk 00:22:35] that I thought was interesting. Actually, two things I think are very interesting. One is, the video channel of the Tate performance, *Draw Without Looking*. That video is a wide screen, a 16:9 aspect ratio and that screen is not, and so when we Google a work to see how it was installed in the past, I saw a few images where it had been installed with a little bit of a black space at the ... an empty space to float that 16:9 frame. People are very reluctant to distort the aspect ratio of a video provided by the artist but in her case, when she visited she explained it should go edge to edge on that frame and just to use the scaling feature of the projector and scale it to fit the screen. And I just think that's very important because I think that the natural decision would be to take a very light touch with it and certainly not to scale a video, to change its display aspect ratio.

Glenn Wharton: And allow there to be borders.

Amy Brost: Yeah, you would think because the other videos have borders. They're projected onto the screens and there's either some pillar boxing, or a border so I thought that was interesting. And the other thing is that the theater boxes that are on the sawhorses, they're very deep.

Glenn Wharton: Could you describe those?

Amy Brost: Yeah, where they are, they're on the outside perimeter created by the screens. There are these two boxes where there are flat screen monitors inside and they are sitting on sawhorses, and so they're referred to in the installation planning documents as "theater boxes" and they have very ... The monitors appear to be sort of recessed in the front of the box and then it has a protrusion in the back, almost like the old monitors that had a CRT inside, it has that type of shape, but I think it's interesting that I had heard that she had used rear projection as a way of showing that in the past. So that partly accounts for the size and the shape of the theater box, and now there's a flat screen monitor placed in there. So with permission from the studio and the artist, we have braced the monitor up against the front of the theater box, and it's [affected] our thinking about the equipment that we might need in the future to continue to

show the work because they fit just precisely in the box.

Barbara Clausen:

Was this for *Glacier*, or was this for Fish video?

Amy Brost:

They're both monitors, they're both flat screen monitors and they're not rear projection.

Barbara Clausen:

So that is changed from the Montreal installation where she really insisted on a back screen because of the luminosity that a back-lit screen would have.

Amy Brost:

Interesting.

Glenn Wharton:

This is very interesting, so she has—

Barbara Clausen:

Like it was a real issue, it was very important to have a kind of ... Like early cinema individual viewing machines in the '20s.

Amy Brost:

Oh, interesting.

Barbara Clausen:

And theatrical ... It's between a dollhouse, it's like a personal viewing cabin and then the Venetian shadow theaters, and it's a very specific reference.

Glenn Wharton:

Well I'm just curious, because I've been learning that she does care very much about CRT box monitors for some of her works and that they should never be flat screen, but here she has changed the technology.

Barbara Clausen:

It's a contradiction.

Amy Brost:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Glenn Wharton:

Because it works for her apparently, to have the monitors. Maybe they're bright enough, but-

Barbara Clausen:

Do you know at Tate in *Reanimation*, if they used monitors in the [theater boxes] or if they used back projections?

Amy Brost:

I don't know about that but I will say that these flat screen monitors are made for those monitor walls. A lot of times the new digital signage monitors are much brighter because they're made to be bright enough in a fully lit or brightly lit space.

Barbara Clausen:

Oh, yeah.

- Amy Brost: So it may just be that the technology became available.
- Barbara Clausen: So they have within a year basically, that's also interesting, so it's like projective light from a monitor instead of absorbing light which a monitor will sometimes suck in light visually.
- Amy Brost: And it's also, one of them [the videos] is 16:9 as well, so it's the full monitor edge to edge but the *Glacier* one, to make the exhibition video for that was interesting because you can't use the remote control for the monitor, because the sensor is blocked by the box so we went ahead and made it [the 4:3 video] pillar-boxed so that it would be the right aspect ratio, and we wouldn't have to use the remote to correct the display of it and so ... But it's great because you make this pillar-boxed video, but the [theater] box masks out the pillar-boxing. They're very different boxes in shape and also in their screen size [masking].
- Glenn Wharton: So you made these decisions based on her thoughts on the floor about how she wanted each one to look.
- Amy Brost: Yes, especially in terms of the looping and the sound levels for *Glacier*.
- Glenn Wharton: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Very interesting, and now that it's on view has there been a lot of maintenance involved with this work? I would imagine that there is a lot of dust. So there's probably regular superficial cleaning. Anything else aside from dust that you worry about?
- Amy Brost: Well I don't know about from a housekeeping perspective, like with the dusting, I haven't been involved in that but I know that people do still occasionally nudge the projector that's sitting on the floor at least. Perhaps also the sculpture--that we reposition things when they get nudged.
- Ellen Moody: Yeah, I had noticed that the sculpture ... I can't tell [what's changed] based on where the sculpture is because it doesn't seem to move because of these silicone bumpers, but the projected shadow it casts on the screen does differ. It does change a little bit from time to time and never enough to ... I mean, I've never alerted [the team] ... Curatorial does its rounds and they usually check to see if anything is upsetting to them, and then Conservation does their rounds to see if there's anything [upsetting to us]. So we're looking for different things. I'm looking for dust and damages, but I had just happened to notice that the shadow that it's casting is different from that very precise shadow that we were chasing during installation

and that was a huge process.

Ellen Moody: I don't know, did we talk about that, how we got the sculpture to look square on the gallery floor. Square to the projector and square to the screen, so it would throw off the desired effect on the screen, and at the beginning I think when she first was placing it, she was most concerned about the projected shadow and when-

Barbara Clausen: Can we look at the installation and the floor plan?

Ellen Moody: Yeah. There's a picture at the ... The floor plan might help. So at first she was after this [shadow], what it looked like on the screen, but then when we looked down, realized that the sculpture didn't look square so in the end, what did we do to fix that? Was that ... Did they alter the projector?

Amy Brost: I recall the same multi-day process where at first when it cast the perfect shadow, it didn't look right in the space, this position of the sculpture and the projector. Aaron Harrow was telling me that it was really difficult to work with the lens. They chose these projectors because they all have the keystoneing and lens shift features that enable you to position the projector, but move the lens independently a little bit. So they were doing everything from nudge the projector, tweak the lens, move the sculpture, move the projector, move the lens, move the sculpture and just repeat until they got both the desired effect on the screen and the shadow they wanted as well as the position of the elements, the spacing of those three elements, screen, sculpture and projector so he said, "I hope we lock this down."

Ellen Moody: Or at least mark on the floor where everything is supposed to be so if somebody bumps it you'll know.

Amy Brost: Right.

Ellen Moody: Right. But yeah, as far as maintenance, it's only been dust but that sculpture is very low and as conservators know, the lower the object the dustier it gets... And the closer that the public can get to it--and this doesn't have stanchions or any sort of platform--the dustier it'll get, so it gets very dusty and one thing that concerns me is that we've been dusting in the gallery when we've been just about to open to visitors. We're open seven days a week so the gallery's always dark when I'm in there, so I'm worried ... I don't know what it's going to look like when we turn on the lights. I feel like it looks okay now, but yeah ... I don't know, do you [to Annie] know how the drawings are faring?

Annie Wilker: I went and checked at about six months, and they weren't nearly as dusty as I was expecting actually, it's probably like what you say because those are up so high.

Ellen Moody: Yeah.

Annie Wilker: There was a bit [of dust] and you could see probably the most on the binder clips themselves, just because it's a smoother surface, but it wasn't really too bad.

Glenn Wharton: Could we talk about documentation? Standard documentation for a museum if they acquire a work is to do an artist interview to get some kind of an installation manual or create a manual, possibly do it, well, other kinds of documentation. What came in with this work and what have you created, and what would you like to create in terms of documentation for future curators and conservators?

Amy Brost: My sense is that what came in was very piecemeal. It wasn't like we received a manual, and I think that as I described, I think that's also part of the evolution of what this is, I mean, in part I kind of recall that this started as a performance and then there was the video *Under the Glacier*, and then there was *Reanimation* but it sort of ... It's not like it has been shown so many times that it just has an identity and people know what it is, and the artist has put it in some kind of binder and can hand it off. It feels like very much still a living, evolving entity, and so we didn't get a manual, but we started by asking our standard pre-acquisition questions about how ... The production history and the elements, and then we had visited the gallery storage to see what they had taken off of view in the gallery, so we had what this was at Gavin Brown's enterprise, that was kind of what documentation it came in with.

Glenn Wharton: When you said production history, what does a museum want to know in terms of how a work was shot, edited and so on?

Amy Brost: What we're really interested in and when we ask that question from a media standpoint, is to understand the files that we get and what their characteristics are, and what they might have been made from, so that if we think we've gotten something where there might be something better, what was the master format and what have we gotten.

Amy Brost: So, to know the production history is to understand a little bit better what we've gotten. What generation or what

format, so for instance, like you can see in the videos there's a few that were ... Some footage that originated in DV format, so non-square pixels and some of those standard definition formats-- PAL, NTSC--and then some of it's HD, so just thinking about what are we getting for a master when we have such diverse material that's become part of the work. That's really helpful. So that helped us from a technical standpoint.

Glenn Wharton:

And what kind of documentation have you produced since it's been here and what would you like to produce for the future life of the work in the museum?

Amy Brost:

In media conservation we use some of the documentation templates that we've adapted from Joanna Phillips's Iteration Report and Identity Report, so we've been populating those, but we've also looked at SFMoMA's project on their media wiki, where they use a wiki-style platform for an internal documentation platform and that [documentation] is collaboratively created.

Amy Brost:

This kind of became one project where we thought, if we were ever going to pilot or try to collaboratively create documentation of an installation of an art work, this would be a great one to work on because it had such a large team. Everyone had their own interactions with the artist and the studio, and it becomes very difficult to say, "Well it's media's [media conservation's area of responsibility]... It should be localized in media." When there's paper and sculpture and so many different elements, things that are re-fabricated, or could be re-fabricated.

Amy Brost:

That's one thing we have on our horizon, would be, let's perhaps try to take all of this, which amounts to filling out an Iteration Report which we call a Display Documentation report, interviewing various staff and putting this into a very lengthy document, taking photos, taking measurements and this type of thing, but what if we could put it into something that is built more collaboratively by the extended team.

Glenn Wharton:

Could you expand a little bit on what an Iteration Report is and why it would be significant for a museum or maybe anyone to create one?

Amy Brost:

Yeah, the documentation strategy that Joanna Phillips developed – she was at the time Senior Time-based Media Conservator at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum here in New

York – was based on both an Identity Report and Iteration Reports.

Amy Brost:

The Identity Report would be the ever-evolving story of the life of an artwork, encompassing where it began its evolution-- technically, physically, conceptually, with photographs of different exhibitions in which the work was installed--and then for each discrete installation there would be an Iteration Report.

Amy Brost:

The distinction would be that the Iteration Report is much more narrow in scope; it has a finite period where you're working on it and then it's completed. We actually attach those to our records in The Museum System [TMS], our database of record here at the museum, because those are completed every time a work is shown. That captures all of the details of one installation and then you update the Identity Report with anything you learned about the work from that installation.

Glenn Wharton:

You know from a conservator's point of view, I know much of conservation is all about documentation and you had mentioned that this work was perhaps variable before, so where does that come into it and how would you want to capture the artist's thoughts about how the work could be shown differently in the future.

Amy Brost:

That's great, I can say I can perhaps describe the Identity and Iteration Report a little bit better with the example of *Reanimation*, in the sense that the Iteration Report that we're working on is much easier when you think about it, as complex as this work is, because we can say this wall drawing appeared at these dimensions on this wall, with this paint color with this wall texture, et cetera. But, we don't understand how to approach this installation in a slightly different gallery, a slightly different space. We can take some of these decisions as input to that, but we really need to have the conservation interview with the artist to hear from her how we should approach those questions in the future. That's the piece that we haven't done yet. I feel like we have a very solid document about this installation but we have a lot of questions about how we would do it next time.

Glenn Wharton:

Who else would you want to interview to create that full documentation package? You mentioned that you might even have some conversations with people internally at the museum, so yeah ... Who might that be?

Amy Brost: Well I would add to this, I think for example Exhibition Design and Production [team]. In the gallery [Gavin Brown's enterprise], the speakers were freestanding and there were cables that could just run to them on the floor for instance, and the spacing of elements, maybe she could just freely decide. But you know when working in a museum where we have such high foot traffic, I know there were considerations like making the space ADA compliant, not having cables on the floor. Thinking about having 30,000 visitors a day, so we can't ... Even though we know from her visiting, that this is a great installation. She was very happy with it. We can't deduce that every decision is something that she made and would want us to replicate in the future. So, really trying to understand more from Exhibition, Design and Production [team], where were the compromises, where were we coming from as an institution and where was she coming from as an artist.

Amy Brost: That's an example, but even our registrar Sarah Primm, she speaks of these screens as being very storage hungry, so whether we decide ... We know they're significant. This paint is specified. The screens are flat white but the theater boxes are silver actually, metallic silver with a gloss. So we're thinking, "So we know what they are, we could re-fabricate them, but these came in with the work." They've been slightly modified, again for the museum's needs, secured to the floor.

Amy Brost: The benches, we realized if one person is sitting on the far, far end and someone gets up from the other end, you could flip it. So in our context, maybe she would say, "I don't really love the aesthetic of this silver plate." I didn't hear that from her, but let's ... We could say for instance, the plate that's anchoring that bench to the floor, but we have to have it. But it just would help, those interviews would help, looking at the Iteration Report, detangle what is a creative decision and what was a decision that we needed to make based on the needs of the museum.

Glenn Wharton: I sometimes like to think of installation elements as being on a spectrum or a hierarchy of importance in terms of their physical authenticity, and you referenced possibly throwing the screens out and making new ones next time. How does a museum even begin to think about what is important to save in, especially in a place like New York city where real estate's expensive and so storage is expensive, how does the museum go about deciding what to keep, what not to keep?

Amy Brost: That's such an interesting question because of course, much like Annie was saying with the exhibition copies, that is a proposal that came from the studio, so we as the institution acquiring the work, we have to think through all of that ourselves, meaning that when the question came up, "Oh this will be a really long time for unframed works to be up."

Amy Brost: They said, "Well, you could use exhibition copies" and, you know, they're volunteering that to us, but it's not necessarily something we would do and same with discarding and re-fabricating something.

Amy Brost: That's the suggestion they made to us, "Oh, you know you can remake that, if you would like to remake it." But it's something we are really thinking about a lot here, about whether or not that's something we would do. It is not something where just because it's volunteered as an option that we would automatically assume that something's disposable, so there's an ongoing conversation about the furniture at this point.

Glenn Wharton: I know the Whitney Museum has a replication committee, where they would bring questions like this to a committee, of people across the museum that could sort of hear the arguments and weigh in, and make decisions. I've always thought that was a very interesting model.

Amy Brost: Yes.

Amy Brost: This might be a chance to convene a group for a discussion about that furniture when we get closer to actually needing to make the decision.

Barbara Clausen: Especially about the screens, the furniture, did they ... Were they ... The sizing of these, the measurements, were they calculated in relation to the space that was given to this installation or did they come already preset, this is what you need to have ... This is the type of space you need to find so that these elements can fit in.

Amy Brost: These are the elements that were at Gavin Brown's enterprise.

Barbara Clausen: Okay.

Amy Brost: But that's something that Matthew, our exhibition design lead had said. He was curious about how well this ... Could this scale up. Could it scale down, could what ... The ceiling height was still pretty high in our gallery but different from

Gavin Brown's enterprise, so just the question of, "How does this fit in other spaces?" That's an example of something we need to ask the artist. But these are the same elements so we didn't scale anything.

Barbara Clausen: I remember in Montreal, we changed scale but according, because it was a very low ceiling relatively, but the dimensions of each element would still stay ... Keep its logic.

Amy Brost: So it would be the same proportions, basically.

Barbara Clausen: It would have the same proportions. And I'm also thinking of the Tate Tanks where you have an enormous space where I'm not sure now if those are really the identical... If it's really that many grids.

Amy Brost: Right.

Barbara Clausen: Or if it was a little bigger or smaller. Definitely from the experience it wasn't, but that of course doesn't mean anything about the proportions.

Glenn Wharton: So over from your experience, having seen the same work installed in different places and it being-

Barbara Clausen: Like five times or something-

Glenn Wharton: And being a curator in-

Barbara Clausen: Yeah, yeah.

Glenn Wharton: At least one of them. Has it always been the same elements?

Barbara Clausen: Yes, some of those-

Glenn Wharton: The same number of videos, same number of crystals, same number-

Barbara Clausen: Well ... Not necessarily, depending on the space in Montreal because it was a ... But that was abnormal, it was almost like a version of the piece. We only had two wall furniture, the crystal grid, the projector, then we had one wall drawing and we had *Glacier* and they built the box for it, the *My New Theater* box and a bench. I've seen the piece at Documenta where it was first shown in 2011, I think it was '11, where it was in a little hut, where the piece was only visible from the outside, that was the first condition of *Reanimation*, then it was shown in Turin and

then Yvon Lambert, that was always her ideal kind of way that it would be presented in Paris. And that Paris space is very much relatable to the one at Gavin Brown's and what you did here at MoMA, it's varied ... It's really changed. Slightly, but the element, the vocabulary is the same, the word ... You know the elements are the same-

Amy Brost: But you can't imagine the theater boxes and the benches scaling too much because they have this intimacy-

Barbara Clausen: No.

Amy Brost: And the scale of the monitor's rather fixed and so it would be-

Barbara Clausen: No. Those stay-

Amy Brost: Yeah.

Barbara Clausen: It's just the screen, the house.

Amy Brost: Yeah.

Barbara Clausen: That can change.

Amy Brost: Yeah.

Barbara Clausen: But the *My New Theater*, that's like a sculpture, that's not ... That's why I was so surprised when you said that you had a file on it, I mean...

Amy Brost: Right.

Glenn Wharton: Well, we're getting to a very core question with Joan's work that, prior to the museum acquisition many of these works have been shown in many different ways and she has always been deeply involved in deciding how it should be shown, but then when it does become a museum acquisition, it gets fixed in certain ways but maybe not in other ways. I think that's what your job right now is, to start learning to what extent it is fixed, and where ... What kind of interpretive decisions can the museum make in the future that would follow her wishes.

Amy Brost: Right.

Glenn Wharton: Very interesting.

Glenn Wharton: Well we've covered most of the topics I wanted to cover, but I'd like just to ask you, are there any other conservation or exhibition concerns that you have either in the past or things ... Other questions you would have for the artist?

Annie Wilker: I have just some technical questions, like would we want to buy an overhead projector to keep with this piece, this is assuming that that will become obsolete at some point, or would we want to buy white china markers supposing that that brand will probably go out of circulation at some point? So I don't think we've really sorted those kinds of things out, because I know that comes up in what you do, when media conservation [deals] with monitors and things like that, right?

Annie Wilker: And then I was also wondering if this piece has to be shown as a whole all the time because often works on paper can be pulled out of something like this and then shown just separately, maybe in a paper show. I don't know if she would be amenable to something like that too.

Glenn Wharton: Like a single channel video installation.

Amy Brost: Right.

Ellen Moody: Or the crystals.

Barbara Clausen: Or the crystals.

Glenn Wharton: Or just the crystals.

Amy Brost: Right.

Glenn Wharton: So those would all be good questions for the artist. But also you were asking about the overhead projector, I think that's always interesting for museums because a lot of the equipment that the works are shown on becomes obsolete, and so it's a question for the artist to begin with, how important is that specific piece of equipment, even that specific model to the meaning of the work. Can it just be any kind of an overhead projector, or could some new technology be used?

Amy Brost: Right.

Glenn Wharton: And so I know museums, including MoMA sometimes acquires media equipment and dedicates it to the artwork, meaning it's given an accession number and

stored with the artwork and can only be used for that artwork, but then they also have equipment pools so maybe if an overhead projector was acquired, that any number of works could use it or employ it.

Glenn Wharton:

Since you haven't done the research Amy, you probably don't know what the answer's going to be on this.

Amy Brost:

Well I know that the projectors we had in our AV pool, and we had provided the gallery with a few options in the studio to ask what would be most suitable. Joan wanted the brightest one, so these are high lumen projectors, they're 6200 lumens so they're very bright and so we decided that it wasn't necessary to dedicate or have them stay with the work because on the other parameters she was fairly flexible. It was really a question of the lumens, and so it's always an interesting decision though because maybe, that decision can be temporary like we don't do it now, but as we revisit works in a few years down the line, maybe you find out that something is becoming scarce that turns out to be an important property and you have to revisit those decisions.

Amy Brost:

Also, because we have them in our pool right now, so as soon as the pool ceases to have this projector type then maybe you want to take it and dedicate it to the work. It's interesting how it's a decision, but it's not a set in stone decision. It's for the moment, we don't purchase and dedicate projectors.

Amy Brost:

I am curious about ... I have a research interest in sound, so I was very interested when she came to listen to the work that the main *Reanimation* video has two speakers for it, a left and a right speaker. The Tate performance, the *Draw Without Looking* video, has two channels of audio but she asked for one speaker and it's placed slightly behind the screen. And the *Glacier* video has the speakers sitting on the theater box on the edge, and I thought this was interesting because they're not ... None of the videos are synced, they're just looped and they have different durations so it's very hard to tune to the space because it's really dynamic, the channel from the Tate performance. And so, you have to sit a long time and listen for that channel while you're watching the *Glacier* video and stay by the main *Reanimation* screen and listen to the singing, and kind of make sure that you've set everything so that the dominant- -as she describes it--

the thing you hear most is the *Reanimation*, the main screen. Secondary would be the Tate performance but you ... If you're watching *Glacier*, you should be able to hear it [*Glacier*]. You should be able to sit there and be able to hear, because she's reading from the book, *Under the Glacier*. So yeah, the voice over's just very important to her, that it be legible. Hence, remixing actually, the sound for that video.

Amy Brost:

I thought that was interesting because the speakers we have in the *Glacier* theater box are from our pool, they're round white speakers and they will go back to the pool but they're kind of distinctive, have a certain look to them and so I'd like to ask her about what she's thinking about speakers and if there's a certain aesthetic. Should we buy something, should we dedicate it? I'm thinking about the monitor, should we buy some back-ups because of the dimensions, they have to fit right in those boxes. And of course, you're thinking about budget so if we're going to purchase and dedicate equipment maybe I would think about the speakers and monitors before the projectors for instance. But it's, yeah, it's a question you keep coming back to.

Glenn Wharton:

Very interesting. Any other thoughts?

Barbara Clausen:

I think when listening to you speak about the sound, which I think for Joan is so important in her work, and in the installation presentation of her work, and often just taken for granted or overlooked. Again, I just want to say how interesting it is that depending on the distance of the viewer to the sound source, that kind of determines the type of sound, one more being environmental, one being a documentary that might ... Sometimes it just comes from one as if you're looking onto something and with the *Glacier* video it's really the sense of drawing the person in who watches. Again, I find that so interesting really, the distance, it almost is a marker for the distance the viewer ideally should take to the work in some way. I wonder if that's ever kind of what happens when you would look at all different examples, if that's one of the things she always does, which you should never say of course, but if there's a rule to this method, but I'm starting to hear that.

Amy Brost:

I think that's really something fascinating if you were up in the gallery and you have this ... The ambulant audience, right? So there's these seating, there's places where you can [sit] that invite a longer experience of watching and listening, because I

love to see people who sit and watch the Fish video, it has no sound and it's so meditative. It's so beautiful.

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah.

Amy Brost:

And then to see ... Yeah, you are drawn into these different kind of areas of sound where you're focusing your attention, they kind of pull you in and they capture your attention and then you move to another part of the installation and something else is capturing your attention, but you can always hear what's going on ... You can always hear the other channels and I think what's ... That layering, the superimpositions in the videos, the layering of sound and space and that's also why when AV [the Audiovisual team] was asking early on, "You know it's very reverberant here, do you want any acoustic paneling?"

Amy Brost:

And they [the artist's studio] said, "No, no." Both for the aesthetic reason that you have almost the Japanese screen aesthetic of the screens, but also that the layering is intentional, that sound is supposed to move throughout the space and then you move throughout, and then you're having these different experiences.

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah.

Amy Brost:

I think it's very beautiful.

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah.

Glenn Wharton:

All right. Other thoughts?

Glenn Wharton:

Well thank you very much, all three of you. This has been a really wonderful interview, so I really appreciate your time.

Amy Brost:

Thank you.

Annie Wilker:

Thank you.

Ellen Moody:

Thank you.

*This transcript is intended to provide an accessible form of interview audio content. It has been edited for factual accuracy and clarity. Any alterations are noted with brackets.*