

Jack McConchie interviewed by Glenn Wharton, January 8, 2020

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Glenn Wharton: Today is January 8, 2020. This is Glenn Wharton. I am here with Jack McConchie, time-based media conservator at the Tate. I welcome you and I look forward to our discussion about your work with the recent Joan Jonas retrospective at the Tate.

Glenn Wharton: First of all Jack, could you tell me a little bit about your position at the Tate and your role with the Joan Jonas retrospective?

Jack McConchie: Yeah. As you said, I'm time-based media conservator. Our department is slightly unusual in that we have an installation aspect to our department as well. So our department has three main sections: it has loans, acquisitions, and exhibition space. So I mainly, and for this Joan Jonas, was mainly concerned with exhibition space. Yeah, I mean I think that summarizes it.

Jack McConchie: So we would, as we briefly mentioned, we take great care over the documentation of our collection works, but our responsibilities also bleed into when loan in works come in; such as the Joan Jonas exhibition. We would oversee various aspects of those works taking shape alongside curatorial and the artists, and the artists' sake.

Glenn Wharton: Many of the works in this exhibition came in from other institutions. They were on loan. I understand there were a few that are owned by the Tate, but could you talk generally about your interactions with the curator, Andrea Lissoni and the curatorial team, and then for that matter, installers, AV technicians, and other museum staff?

Jack McConchie: Yeah. So I mean we're very lucky that the curatorial team is great to work with here at Tate, and particularly Andrea Lissoni I've worked with on a couple of major projects. It's really like a very, very close relationship. I think it's probably worth saying that I think that Joan Jonas seemed to have immense trust in what Andrea was doing as well; and that seems to make ... That was one of the main factors that made the whole thing seem very seamless.

Jack McConchie: So we would discuss a lot with curatorial in the planning stages, the layouts, and our concerns. In those initial planning stages, I think that it would mainly be Andrea and the assistant curator,

Monika [Bayer-Wermuth], who would take those concerns to Joan Jonas; those more high level concerns. Then it was as the planning stages progressed that we would start to kind of ... I guess through our meetings, collate for questions and have quite focused meetings in the times that Joan Jonas did come over when she was in person.

Jack McConchie:

We also worked with a subcontractor to do the installation. We don't always do this, but this is keeping in mind that the Joan Jonas retrospective was one of the first time-based media retrospectives in the new Tate Modern building. So Tate Modern having recently doubled in size, that just put a whole lot of extra pressure on our installation technicians. So this is the kind of model that started to happen a little bit, so we're very much still overseeing the conservation side of things; but some of the legwork is done, the groundwork, is done by subcontractors. In this case, this was EIDOTECH, who I believe Joan Jonas already had a very good working relationship with as well. So it was several factors that already led to this quite safe and comfortable working environment.

Jack McConchie:

Yeah, the curatorial would do a lot of ... Obviously they've done a lot of background research. They have these high level implementation meetings where they talk to a huge range of departments at Tate, such as press, and learning, and all the conservation disciplines. They talk us all through their ideas for the exhibitions, and then we would splinter off into smaller meetings with curatorial to discuss some of the finer aspects.

Glenn Wharton:

Well, I guess we can get into this a little bit later, but I am curious about if from your end, in conservation, you came up with questions and Andrea would answer them, or go back to the artist; maybe some examples of that if you have any, because I think that's ...

Jack McConchie:

Yeah, of course. Yeah.

Glenn Wharton:

The future users of the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base might be interested in that.

Jack McConchie:

Yeah.

Glenn Wharton:

Does anything come to mind now, or should we let it evolve a little bit later?

Jack McConchie:

I mean, it's ... shall we let it evolve?

Glenn Wharton: Yeah.

Jack McConchie: I mean I've got a kind of checklist of things that I'm anxious not to miss, so I shan't let us miss anything—

Glenn Wharton: Okay. Let's hold that thought.

Jack McConchie: Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: Then, you mentioned some of the outside contractors, but who else did you work with, and did you work with Joan directly, or her collaborators as you were doing the conservation and installation?

Jack McConchie: Yeah, I mean we did. It was a combination of in-person meetings and via email. Joan's assistant, whose name escapes me at this very moment, was very proactive on email. There were some other parties. There were also ... I was very much involved in refabricating the *My New Theaters*, because they came to us in name only, so we basically fabricated exhibition copies. I've got quite a bit to say on those. In doing that, we also worked very closely with our frames conservation workshop, which low and behold, magic-ed up the woodwork of the *My New Theaters*.

Glenn Wharton: Interesting. Okay, let's definitely get into that.

Jack McConchie: Yeah. Sorry, is that enough detail for you?

Glenn Wharton: Yeah, that's fine. Maybe still staying on a high level, could you talk about the research process that you did? Well, or that you typically do for an exhibition like this, and more specifically, were there questions that came up that you needed to do outside research, either technical or specifically about Joan and her interests?

Jack McConchie: Yeah. I think they're always inevitably ... I mean my—and this is I guess speaking from my own personal approach—in the first instance for an exhibition like this, I would usually just do some refresher on the artist's practice just to get myself refreshed on the ways of working that we're dealing with. I think that's an important way to start a conservation approach is to realize that they're broader methods.

Jack McConchie: Then I guess the next stage is in discussion with curatorial; what kind of lists of works they are thinking of putting in the exhibition. Then, that would dictate maybe some more focused research from that point. Tools to research. From that point, I

guess I'm more ... Loan in specifications wherever possible from other lenders, exhibition catalogues where possible. For works and Tate collection, obviously that research is a lot easier because we hold a wealth of documentation on those works in the collection. That would include any previous email communications with the artists would be filed, any previous email communications with the acquiring curators would be filed. Also, we would have reports of each of the display iterations, and that would be summarized in what is hopefully a fairly easily digestible and on point display specification.

Jack McConchie: I guess images, as well, is actually a main source of research as well. It's amazing how often in meetings with curatorial, we find ourselves pouring through the finer details of some casually captured image from many years ago, or something. And that's reflected probably in any documentation that we do, we'll try and be as detailed as possible with things like that.

Glenn Wharton: Then specifically with Joan and her works, did you find that she had particular concerns that came into play, and that you were made aware of?

Jack McConchie: Well, it was kind of funny. When I was thinking about this question a little bit, and I think more I had the concerns, and Joan more put me at ease.

Glenn Wharton: Uh-huh. That doesn't surprise me.

Jack McConchie: Yeah. She was very ... I think one of the main concerns that I had around this exhibition was that this was a new building, and that level two where this exhibition was, was sort of very big. Without Joan's works in them, it felt like very big, cavernous spaces with very high ceilings. There was a lot of ... Going by the plans, there was going to be a lot of these works in the same spaces together. I was very curious just how that was going to work together, both from an aesthetic point of view, and also from an audio point of view; knowing that there would be a lot of these works that ...

Jack McConchie: I think she was very used to this way of working, and was very comfortable with there being some sort of cross talk from an audio perspective between her works, and very comfortable with the idea of how to arrange them visually so that there would be the maximum of ... I'm sort of at a loss for words here, but the minimum interruption and the maximum co-existing possible with the works. They were my initial fears, and she of course was just very comfortable with the idea of all of her works coexisting in the same space together.

Glenn Wharton: Did it seem like she actually wanted that? That sort of bleed, audio bleed from one work to another?

Jack McConchie: Well, I mean I got the feeling that like it was ... I mean it was definitely something that I was asked very early on. I'm not sure if I would go as far as saying she wanted it, but definitely it was very much accepted that, that would be a part of doing it the way that we did do it for this exhibition. There was a couple of things that we did to ... once we got into the space, the refined way that those works sang together, which I can talk about in more detail maybe a little bit later on, more to do with the *My New Theaters* and things.

Jack McConchie: So yeah, the one thing that springs to mind is the work *Stream or River, Flight or Pattern*, talking again about the architecture of these spaces. For that work, the ceiling has this variety of bird sculptures in the ceiling that's alongside these kind of projections. We talked quite a lot about that work in terms of how we would realize it with projectors, without causing any visual confusion between these projectors occupying a similar part of the spaces as the birds. This gets a little bit technical here, but we used some of these ultra short-throw rear projection lenses to really bring the projectors really, really close to the screens. That meant that they seemed visually like very much a part of this video screen and set up, and the speakers were hung from the ceiling as well; but they seemed very spatially distinct from the birds that were on the ceiling.

Jack McConchie: So that was one kind of work that we spent a lot of time talking about because it was also like in a throughway as part of the exhibition. The work already has this feeling of like the performance is being overlaid onto other video footage. We were just very conscious about how people ... Because the projection screens were started from the floor, we were very conscious that whether people being in the space would cause another layer of shadows on top of this. By bringing the projectors closer to the screens in that way with these offset and up high mirror lenses, then we dealt with those two problems in that way.

Jack McConchie: It was interesting, her approach to people's interactions with her projections, and also not just people, but also objects. Because in the example of *Reanimation*, it feels like it's this whole kind of shrine to interacting with a projection or something, and maybe this will work in the middle of some ... What was I thinking? Maybe *Double Lunar Rabbits* or something where you almost feel purposely like this ... She's teasing your ability to see all of

this work at the same time, and maybe that goes some of the way to embracing some interactivity with the projection.

Jack McConchie:

So I guess these are the higher level discussions that were happening when we're looking at the ... I mean I say "high level", I guess they can become quite detailed very, very quickly, I suppose, when you're looking at these layouts and trying to establish how these works should be viewed, or potentially interacted with.

Glenn Wharton:

It's very interesting. I think this is exactly the kind of information that people in the future will be concerned with, in future exhibitions. Could you elaborate a little bit more? Do you remember anything specific she said, or the types of things she said, or what her approach was for addressing concerns like this?

Jack McConchie:

I mean, I really can't unfortunately pinpoint anything particular that she said; but I distinctly remember arriving at these conclusions through very careful discussion with both curatorial and her. Yeah, she has a very casual manner, as I'm sure you're aware. So sometimes she'll just be like, "Oh yeah, of course. Let's just have that. That's fine."

Jack McConchie:

This was also combined with something like ... As I reflected on the whole experience, I think perhaps more than any other artist, she was someone that put faith, I think, in the teams working for her as well. This lent the conversations a particular character. As we would raise these issues, she would be very interested to hear what we wanted to say. She would be very interested to hear Andrea Lissoni's ideas of whether these works should be interacted with; because I guess it depends a little on the level of visitors that you have at the museum and things as well; the kind of visitor flow that you're expecting, how you plan for these things.

Jack McConchie:

At Tate Modern, I mean the footfall is just ... It's mind blowing. So I guess some of these issues have to be thought about more so than they might have been before. So yeah, I only wish that I could offer you more quotes or something, but all I can do is summarize in that way.

Glenn Wharton:

No, and what you're saying rings true from when I worked with her at MoMA as well, when I was the time-based media conservator there.

Jack McConchie:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Glenn Wharton: She's very thoughtful, and she listens, and processes, and doesn't come to a problem with a set idea of how things should be, or she doesn't feel restricted on how things were last time.

Jack McConchie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Glenn Wharton: And is very open to new interpretations.

Jack McConchie: Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: And that invites discussion.

Jack McConchie: Yeah, and I was thinking about that when thinking about conservation issues for the future. I was thinking one of the main things that I see that institutions struggle with, maybe in the absence of an artist, is maintaining some sense of spontaneity that might be in an artist's work. That can be very hard, I think, to maintain. But, then I also think that in some ways, that is offset by what we were discussing, which is that Joan does put a lot of faith in those around her. So I think you've got an interesting combination there, of very much welcoming crosstalk, and re-imagination, and not being tied to original forms perhaps; which is hard for an institution to continue in that vein. I sometimes think it's much easier if you have very strict specifications, you know? But also, yeah, this freedom that could potentially be afforded by her attitude to trusting professionals around her. So definitely a very, very interesting case. Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: Do you have any examples of what I might call conservation interventions, or work that you did on specific works? You mentioned the work that you did on *My New Theater*, but that or other works?

Jack McConchie: Yeah. So, I mean I'd be interested to know your experiences of the *My New Theaters* as well, but my understanding of those is that those early 1997 ones were originally designed with a rear projection screen and a projector in there, and an audio amplifier in there. I think the projectors of that time generated a lot of heat. We could see evidence as we look back on photographic evidence of previous versions that there was ventilation holes drilled into the top of the theaters and things to try and keep them cool. Our understanding through speaking with Joan is that she started to give up on that way of doing things because of the unreliability of the heat build-up, and had started to use flat screen monitors in the theaters.

Jack McConchie:

But of course, those ... It felt to me like, and in discussion with Joan, this confirmed that they were very much designed with these proportions, and I didn't want to ... I guess I should clarify and say that they came to us as loans in name only, so we were tasked with rebuilding these. I very much didn't want to even think about messing with any of the proportions of these works, of the physical objects. And yet, it quickly became apparent that it was going to be very hard to match up monitors with the internal dimensions of the theaters. So we'd recently had some experience with these very, very small compact LED projectors, and also these very, very small compact digital amplifiers. The benefit of these is that the amount of heat they generate is minuscule compared to a bigger lamp-based projector.

Jack McConchie:

So in discussing this with Joan, it felt like she had sort of ... That was her dream for these works, and she'd given up on that. It felt like there was this opportunity to go back to how they originally should have been with this newer technology; which felt like a really neat example of, I think, as time-based media conservators, we're perhaps used to the idea of advances in technology being the death of old works, or obsolescence being the only thing that happens. But I thought it was a nice example of how sometimes the opposite can be true.

Jack McConchie:

So we worked very closely with Joan, as I said, with the frames conservation workshop. This is a whole new challenge for them building these theaters. In particular, some of the shapes are so beautifully complex. There's one theater, and I can't remember the name of it now ... What's the name of it? Is it *My New Theater VI: Good Night Good Morning '06*? There are no two sides that are parallel or perpendicular, or anything. It's an absolute celebration of complex angles.

Jack McConchie:

They were like, "Yeah, no, of course. We'd love to work on this super exciting project," I don't think fully understanding how complex some of those theater objects are.

Jack McConchie:

So we used rear projection. They sort of routed out space for like a rear projection Perspex to go in. That rear projection Perspex comes with either a matte side or a gloss side, so we were really able to start refining the quality of the projection. The projectors were 16:9. An interesting point on aspect ratio in those theaters is that again, something that leads me to think that somehow their sculptural presence takes some priority over the video is that the aspect ratios of the boxes don't necessarily match up to the aspect ratios of the video that's projected inside them.



Jack McConchie: Joan's just very casual about this, she's just like, "Oh yeah," you know? So with those little 16:9 projectors, you're able to lose the sort of over still that they have within them, within the inside of the theater so you don't see that. Yeah, and she seems really happy with that as a solution.

Jack McConchie: In terms of the woodwork, some of the theaters came with RAL codes and things for their colors. Some of them had varnish wooden finishes, and so we would show her a selection of samples of beautifully finished bits of wood. She would choose from those.

Jack McConchie: Some of them have these objects in front of the screen, in line with them being theaters, I guess. Therefore, the ones that have sound, the speakers also took on this sculptural presence, I guess. Previously, she'd used just speaker cones without an enclosure, so just the speaker drivers. The interesting thing about that is that a lot of the lower end of speakers' responses comes from when they're in a cabinet. So we were finding that they actually sounded a little bit trebly when playing back the audio of the video works. This was something that in isolation, Joan was quite happy with; but then it actually transpired when we got to the space that as I was describing to you that we had to embrace a certain amount of audio bleed between the works.

Jack McConchie: The trebly-ness of those speakers really seemed to carry across the space, and because they were lacking a kind of fullness, it meant you had to turn them up just that little bit louder to make them a pleasant listening experience in isolation. Then, when in combination with the other works, this trebly-ness really caused them to carry in what we considered quite an unpleasant way at the time.

Jack McConchie: So we had used these little speakers before, but they're basically like a little satellite speaker, what you would usually use in combination with a subwoofer or something. They're maybe ... I'm trying to say this in imperial for you, sort of three inches cube, or something like that. But they are like a small speaker, but in an enclosure. So it was interesting to deviate from the ... to be involved in this compromise between aesthetics and sound quality, and it was interesting to see her flexibility in that, when it came to the space. What was initially this aesthetic consideration became a consideration about the space as a whole, I guess.

Glenn Wharton: That is a wonderful example. Thank you for sharing that. It says a lot about her, but also you and the Tate, I think, to take the level of concern to that extent. I'm just now curious. So you were

actually rebuilding some of these works that were owned by other institutions.

Jack McConchie: That's right, yeah.

Glenn Wharton: What kind of documentation then goes with that, and the communication with the other owning institution? Do they then get the rebuilt theaters, or does the Tate keep them, or?

Jack McConchie: I mean, I noticed in your questions, you had something about concerns for the future. I had a very general concern, which is the sustainability of museums. I'm sorry to bring in sustainability into a very focused discussion, you know? But, those *My New Theaters* were shipped back to us to be destroyed, which I found ... for better or worse ... There was a great level of care going into their manufacture, and we did sort of raise through the avenues, whatever avenues we could: is there any desire for these to live on?

Jack McConchie: But that's the nature of an exhibition copy, I think. We're just very used to making things and for them then to be disposed of at the end of their exhibition run. So as well, I mean I know we're not talking about sustainability, obviously there's a whole ... There would be the cost of potentially shipping those back across the world to the States, or wherever the lending institutions might be. So obviously that, it's kind of ... there are many complex things at work which would determine what the best things to do with those objects would be.

Jack McConchie: But my understanding was that Joan was very ... They certainly ... The different theaters came with a variety of level of instruction, but certainly they all came with enough instruction that made remaking them a very easy ... I say "easy." I wasn't the one putting the woodwork together, but at least we had all the information that we needed to do it. Joan certainly seemed very comfortable with the idea of them taking shape in London, and not being shipped across from a lending institution. I'd be very interested to know what is the individual lenders' approaches to the life of these objects. I can think of examples, I guess, in other artists, where we hold a copy and we lend it in name only.

Jack McConchie: Recently, to think of a Nam June Paik work we recently restaged, one of his interactive *Random Access*, the work that you use a tape head on the wall. So this is something that I think more and more, we're going to ... Sorry, I cut you off there a minute.

- Glenn Wharton: No, my mind was going off in many different directions; one environmental sustainability.
- Jack McConchie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Glenn Wharton: But also just the ... Well, the tragedy of putting all of this effort into something and working with the artist to realize a work, only to have it live for one installation; but it is complex because as you say, it—
- Jack McConchie: Sorry, it was a tour, sorry. So it went on to subsequent tour venues. So I think, I can't remember exactly how many venues there were, but there were three, I think, maybe three venues after us; so sorry.
- Glenn Wharton: Okay. Yeah, thank you for reminding me. But of course, many artists want their works to be realized again each time they're exhibited in part so that they will take on a new life—
- Jack McConchie: Yeah.
- Glenn Wharton: ... through a new group of people.
- Jack McConchie: Yeah.
- Glenn Wharton: Making decisions all over again.
- Jack McConchie: Yeah.
- Glenn Wharton: And that can be very integral to what the work actually is.
- Jack McConchie: I guess that ties in with what we were saying about Joan's trust, and her keenness to engage with experts around doing things, so yeah. It's a very good point. Do you consider that a part of those, of the theaters, would you say, in your experience?
- Glenn Wharton: I never ... I didn't work with her on those theaters. MoMA has one that is a sculptural object, and yeah, there were some technical concerns similar to the ones that you mentioned with the screens and the heat; but it wasn't reconstructed every time it was shown; so no.
- Glenn Wharton: Well, let's move on. Do you have other examples of working with her specifically on an individual work that might be interesting?
- Jack McConchie: Hmm ...

Glenn Wharton: If not we can move on to other questions.

Jack McConchie: I think yeah, maybe let's just move on, yeah.

Glenn Wharton: Okay. That was a good one, I have to say. Then stepping back out again, you referenced sound bleed, and some of the issues in installing the works that came up. Do you have other thoughts about lighting, or her concerns about wall color, or floors, or even foot flow, or traffic flow through the room, that she was concerned about?

Jack McConchie: Yeah. I think the way that I'm used to working, and she seemed to be very familiar with this way of working, is that there was so much video projection in each space that I think that, that dictates in many ways the lighting. I think it feels to me like the familiar struggle in the museum is to want it—from a conservation point of view, or from the artist's perspective—often to want it as dark as possible for those projections to be as bright as possible. Then of course comes the health and safety requirements of a large amount of visitors moving through those spaces.

Jack McConchie: So I think we very much started from the principle of like, let's get all these projections up, and then for instance, there was a room in that exhibition where with *Lines in the Sand*; but it was quite a lot of sculptural works as well, on a quite broad and large scale. I guess we would just start to look at lighting those individually to a sort of complimentary level to the projectors. And then hope that that is sufficient for health and safety, and then we would have like a health and safety walk around. They might dictate that some seats need to be lit a bit brighter, or that some passages be a little bit better.

Jack McConchie: I guess for a space such as *Stream or River ...*, then there was also the desire to light the birds and the ceiling, so that would naturally take shape. We have some very skilled lighting people that would take care of that. It felt like *Stream or River ...* was one of the more distinct works, and that it occupied an entire space. Joan had this color in mind for that.

Jack McConchie: The other spaces, it was I guess a little more fluid in the way that the colors were arrived at. I remember like the first three rooms had quite a familiar kind of white cube aesthetic. Then as you went into one of the big main rooms, this room was painted black. That was in contrast, I think, to the white cubes, and it felt more experimental, I guess as a space. That was the space I guess I'm referencing, had a lot of these kind of theaters in, all

that were making sound, and you had the *Lines in the Sand* work and sound and things.

Jack McConchie:

So I guess part of those decisions around wall color partly was dictated by the works, partly was dictated by the different themes of the rooms. And then in the last space, we actually used, I think, what was originally designed to be a bookshop at the end of the exhibition. We used that as part of the exhibition. That's got a very distinct architecture. It's got windows, I think *Double Lunar Rabbit* went into that space, and so we were very concerned about the ambient light. The architects went to great levels to make these windows really tiny and intricate, which we went to get lengths to then cover up with vinyl to block out light. But that space has very much more of a ... It feels very much more part of the building rather than the gallery. So it's all concrete, and the walls are at funny angles.

Jack McConchie:

Yeah, Joan was very happy to work with that. Actually, the *My New Theater* that has the most complex angles sat right at the end of that exhibition. It just so happened it was a very similar color grey to the concrete, and similarly sort of architectural in its presence there. So I think yeah, she was just very comfortable with responding to some of the building architecture. I guess similarly, *Reanimation*, which was in the East Tank at Tate Modern, which is this huge thirty meter diameter concrete space and brings with it its own highly unique acoustics ... I mean the reverberation just seems to go on forever.

Jack McConchie:

I think initially, there was talk about two works going in there to fill up this huge space, but I think as we become more comfortable with putting works into that space, we realize that the less sort of interventions we make into that space, the more successful it is. I think there was talk about somehow dividing the space into two for like two installation works. Somehow to not use the architecture of the space, and to try and divide it up never seems to be as successful as just letting one work fill and occupy that space, which *Reanimation* did really admirably; and that's like one of the more interactive works with all these beautiful crystals, and the projector shining through the crystals. That space is also outside of the paying exhibition space as well, and it gets a lot of footfall, so it was lovely I think for people to have that as an introduction to her work that might not otherwise have paid the exhibition money to get in.

Glenn Wharton:

Yes, I remember it was magical. People were lingering when I was there.

Jack McConchie:

Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: You described before that the decision-making and discussion was very collaborative. I'm wondering if you could just mention again how decisions were arrived at in terms of placement, lighting, and so on. Was it often Joan, or was Andrea, or you, or other people on the technical team?

Jack McConchie: It's a real combination. I mean I think more broadly, it was Joan and Andrea. They would be in sort of constant dialogue. Some of that dialogue we would be witness to, and it would be during a meeting. Some of that would be a discussion that we would cover with Andrea. Some of it would be an idea that Joan would have out of nowhere, and something would radically change.

Jack McConchie: Yeah, I mean I think it was changing quite a lot, perhaps until the last moment. That can be challenging sometimes for an institution because you've got a large amount of contractors, and subcontractors, and electricians that want to know where to put things, and riggers that want to know where to put hanging points in the ceiling.

Glenn Wharton: And a budget.

Jack McConchie: And a budget. Yeah, yeah. But I think a lot of them are kind of, to an extent, are quite self-contained. I think we've just got used to the idea that she was going to want to be there and just witness how this all felt in a space for putting it together, which I can completely sympathize with from an artist point of view. I can completely sympathize with the contractors that just want to know what they're doing.

Glenn Wharton: Yes. Okay. Well, I think we've hit on a number of topics that I wanted to cover in terms of the installation. I'd like to move on to other topics now, unless you have anything else you'd like to say?

Jack McConchie: I had a note here to ... almost contradicting what I've just said. In *Reanimation* in the East Tank, we actually ended up putting one of her video works, projecting that onto the wall, *Wind*. Now, is *Wind*, I can't remember now, but is that silent? I think that's a silent work, isn't it?

Glenn Wharton: I don't remember.

Jack McConchie: She wanted the minimum of infrastructure, I guess, in showing this work, and that was in part in order to interfere with *Reanimation* as little as possible. What we ended up doing, something that we hadn't done before, was projecting straight

onto the curved wall of the East Tank. So it's a very large circle, so the radius is very ... the curve is very shallow; but with that came this challenge that those walls are also listed. So drilling into them or hanging on them is a big no-no, and quite problematic. So we ended up putting this very low adhesive matte vinyl onto the wall in the correct aspect ratio for the video. This was kind of the same color as the concrete.

Jack McConchie: We actually experimented with just projecting straight onto the concrete. It certainly wasn't ... a definite "no" from Joan, so I think that's just another interesting example of how she was just ... She was comfortable with projecting onto a curved surface, or potentially incorporating some of the texture of the wall into one of her established video works. Even though we put that vinyl onto the wall, the texture of the wall was still visible. The projection was big enough, and the video was kind of low resolution enough that you're not really losing any definition, but it was just an example, another aspect of embracing the building.

Glenn Wharton: Yes, that is interesting. Also, I didn't know that the Tanks were actually listed for their architectural significance, but—

Jack McConchie: Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: That's another topic we could explore another day. That must provide you with some challenges.

Jack McConchie: Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: Okay. If we could go on just to maintenance and management during exhibition, what was it like to keep all of these running? Did problems come up? Was there day-to-day activities?

Jack McConchie: I mean, we do have day-to-day activities which are largely checking things are in alignment, checking that projectors haven't been knocked out of place. I think in some of the *My New Theater*, some of the objects would tend to go walk about, and we would maybe replace those. Some of the theaters that did have just the speaker cones, they seemingly proved irresistible to fingers, and they would sometimes be prodded or torn. So we would maybe replace those.

Jack McConchie: General cleaning and sculptural cleaning is handled by a dedicated team, and there's also a team of art handlers that handle the switch on every morning. I think this is the kind of thing that varies from museum to museum because us as a time-

based conservation department, we have to be across the four sites of Tate; two of which aren't in London. So it's impossible for us to be switching on works every morning, and so that's handled by people that have very detailed instructions from us, and then the switch off is handled by security at night.

Jack McConchie: So people report anomalies to us, and then we would endeavor to fix those as quickly as possible. Those reports can come in from the people doing switch on in the morning. They can come from the maintenance teams. Often they might come from a curator who's visiting the space again to take a visitor around.

Jack McConchie: Sometimes you might get a frantic call to say, "I've got someone very important here, and this speaker isn't working," or something.

Jack McConchie: But largely, they were all very reliable. I guess we replaced a lot of the media players with solid state players, et cetera, so they're all ... You can forget about those, and the more modern technology that I mentioned in the theaters, the projectors that proved very reliable before. So yeah, it was ... as far as shows goes, it was pretty trouble free; certainly in comparison to the Nam June Paik show that we've got at the moment.

Glenn Wharton: Okay. Well again, subject for another interview.

Jack McConchie: Yeah, yeah.

Glenn Wharton: Well, and I imagine at the Tate specifically, given all of your experience and the terrific conservation team that you've got, you're used to putting out fires and dealing with things that come up pretty quickly; so with a lot of experience. Could you talk about the documentation? You referenced it before, but could you talk a little bit more about how you documented these works? Could you talk a little bit about the documentation that you created for your own archives, and also to go back to the lenders?

Jack McConchie: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So we do try wherever possible, when we have a loan in artwork, we ... Often a lender would have some sort of installation report or iteration report. That's a super useful thing for us to consolidate our thoughts on a loan in installation process. But largely, that isn't the same onus on us to create documentation for loan in works.

Jack McConchie: So the documentation that we do is, we obviously have a document of all of the, as much as possible, the email



discussions that have gone on to have the layouts the way that they are. We have the official Tate photography. We have the documentation of the way that the artworks operate from a switch on and off procedure, because of the switch on and off procedure that I described to you just previously.

Jack McConchie:

If there was any refabricating of an artwork, then we obviously have the documentation of that as well. But in case of like a loan in single-channel video work, or something like that, if the lender didn't request some installation report from us, then just due to the law of the fact that we've always feel like we've got a million and one things to do, then that might be the kind of thing where we might not have any end documentation on that. Or the documentation would be limited to photographs, and email, or something.

Jack McConchie:

In the case of a collection work, that looks very different. We would have any installing technicians fill in an installation report in which they would describe any issues that arose on the ground when they were installing it. As I'm sure you're familiar with, I think that any opportunity to show an artwork is an opportunity to explore some of your existing understanding about it, and maybe explore some of the parameters of what you understand its space specifications to be. We always treat the display of a collection work in that way, and it's an opportunity to gather new information about it, maybe to discuss with the artist. There are no particular examples of this with Joan Jonas, but maybe to discuss existing equipment specification, maybe technology has moved on to such an extent that there might be a new conversation to have around that. Yeah, and that would all be folded into a document, a sort of summary of changes document, and also this would be reflected, perhaps if there was any changes, this would be reflected in an update of the display specification.

Jack McConchie:

We didn't do any on the Joan Jonas exhibition, but we're also becoming increasingly interested in spatial documentation, I guess. We've started to look at examples where we're using vinyl or audio recording, or ambisonic audio recording, in conjunction with maybe 360-degree video to get maybe something a little bit more immersive than just photographs. It's something that we're very carefully exploring.

Jack McConchie:

The Joan Jonas exhibition actually would have been a good example of that, I think, especially that big space that I mentioned to you with all of the various works all coexisting next to each other. I think it would be really interesting for future researchers to be able to be within that space, within a 360-

degree environment that they could look around. With some of these recording techniques the sound changes, is decoded, depending on the position of your head. You really get a sense of what it sounds like to be in that space, and to look in the direction of various artworks. So it's early days for us exploring that kind of documentation. There's a lot of stigma around it, I think, because of the VR tools that are being used and things, and some confusion sometimes around what you're trying to do.

Jack McConchie:

But I think it's really interesting when you look at these audio and video works that are designed to document space, and you look at what you've got as a remnant of that. It's a photograph, and you think that seems quite a long way away from what the work is, or something, you know?

Glenn Wharton:

Yes, and I think you're right. We are in the early days of these technologies. There's certainly concern right now about preservation and playback.

Jack McConchie:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Glenn Wharton:

In the future. But, it would be interesting to be a researcher twenty years from now listening to this interview, thinking, "Well of course. That's what we do."

Jack McConchie:

Yeah. We do have a project at Tate called *Preserving Immersive Media*, which I'm involved in where you can look at some of our inputs to think about how we might start to preserve virtually all the artworks.

Glenn Wharton:

That, too, will be looked at in the future, I'm sure. We seem to have a lot of background noise in this interview. Now, the garbage pickup is happening outside, so sorry about that.

Jack McConchie:

Don't worry, I got you. It's fine.

Glenn Wharton:

Moving on, do you have any lingering concerns? Does anything come to mind about either conservation or exhibition? Questions that came up that weren't answered, or that could benefit from additional research in the future?

Jack McConchie:

I mean, there's the very obvious case of obsolescence in the case of the works of hers that use slides or CRT monitors, and in a sort of sculptural way. So, there's that aspect. But beyond that, I think we kind of touched on how an institution might maintain that sense of spontaneity or multilayered approach to working, and I think we kind of ... I made my thoughts clear on that.

Jack McConchie: Yeah, and I think, we talked about the concerns, and I think that's a really interesting debate around the construction of her works as exhibition copies, and whether that should be embraced, the remanufacturing of those. So I think that, that pretty much covers my thoughts for the future.

Glenn Wharton: Okay.

Jack McConchie: Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: Do you have anything else to add? Any other thoughts before we close?

Jack McConchie: I don't think so. I did make some notes. No, I think that ... I'm sure I'll think of something that will frustrate me later, and the opportunity will be gone; but for now, I think that just about covers it. Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: Well, we covered a lot. You had some really wonderful insights. So I think people will be very interested in this interview in the future. I want to thank you for your time, and for all of your good work at the Tate.

Jack McConchie: Thank you so much. Yeah, real pleasure.

Glenn Wharton: Okay, goodbye.

Jack McConchie: Thanks.