

*Patricia Falcao, Chris King and Melanie Rolfe, Tate*

It takes a Village to raise a Puppet- Conservation practice stretched to the limit

How do we approach preserving the most complex artwork we have ever come across?

Jordan Wolfson's *Colored Sculpture*, created in 2016, is a large scale animatronic installation that was on display in the Tate Modern Oil Tanks over the Summer of 2018.

The work is described as featuring "a menacing puppet over 7 feet tall, which is lifted, pulled, dragged and dropped to the floor by mechanised chains attached to each limb. The figure has digital screens for eyes and is equipped with sensors which allow it to spot passing visitors and stare back at them."

*Colored Sculpture* requires technological infrastructure and expertise usually seen in large scale West End shows. It involves an elaborate system of hardware, software and sculptural elements that are used to create a performance and which for multiple reasons cannot be preserved in their existing form for the long term. The physical and electronic elements of the work are strained to their limits and in some cases were destroyed by the puppet's violent movements. It required a high level of maintenance, replacement and recalibration of parts during the display

Displaying and acquiring such a work brought together sculpture and time-based media conservation along with curators, installations and art handling team, AV technicians and the registrars. We communicated with and worked alongside the artist, his producers and fabricators and theatre rigging specialists to understand the complexity of the work.

In this talk we discuss how we analysed "*Colored Sculpture*" and built on this analysis to identify risks and define the best processes to maintain its integrity over time.