



FUTURE PROOF!?

Transformation Digital Art 2017

International symposium on the preservation of born-digital / software based art

February 8 & 9
Stedelijk Museum
Schiedam

Digital artworks increasingly find their way into public collections. Museums, collections and archives find themselves confronted with the questions and challenges related to presenting and preserving digital art to a greater and more pressing extent. Technological environments are constantly in flux. Born-digital artworks adapt or perish. Still, collections do not have much experience in dealing with these types of artworks; artists and producers do, but their focus lies not in archiving. So how to bridge this gap? Through collaborations with artists, museums, archival professionals, scholars and collections, we want to share our knowledge on this complex topic, and respond to the question: What new strategies can we develop in order for born-digital art to become future proof?

In the scope of the collaborative research project 'Future Proof Media Art' with Dutch media artist Geert Mul, LIMA researches software-based and interactive media artworks from the oeuvre of Mul, currently presented as the solo exhibition 'Geert Mul, Matchmaker – 25 Years Media Art' at the Stedelijk Museum Schiedam. This research is at the service of the future display of these works, and revolves around the preservation, documentation and sharing of knowledge gained during this process with other media artists and conservation professionals to preserve digital art in a more sustainable manner for the future.

CONTRIBUTORS

WEDNESDAY FEB 8 2017

- Geert Mul (Artist, Rotterdam, NL)**
 For almost 20 years media artist Geert Mul has been exploring the possibilities of generating visual poetry by re-combining images from collections and databases in videos, photographs, installations and audiovisual performances. In both digital and analogue works Geert explores the possibilities of data-based mediation: the moment when a meaningless collection of data turns into something meaningful. 'Meaning' in Geert's work is not based on logic, but instead based essentially on correlation, association, connotation and speculation. Mul regards his work foremost as a form of poetry, a creative play with a data-based language.

Geert Mul has produced over fifteen commissioned art installations and has performed and exhibited in the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen (Rotterdam), Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, The National Museum of Modern Art (Kyoto, Japan), Museo Nacional Reina (Sofía, Madrid), National Gallery of Modern Art (New Delhi India), Institute Valencia Arte Moderne, Witte de With (Rotterdam), Museum of contemporary Art Chicago, the International Biennial Turijn and Ruhr European Capital of Culture 2010. In 2010 Geert received the Dutch Witteveen+Bos Art & Technology Award for his oeuvre.

The exhibition 'Geert Mul, Matchmaker – 25 Years Media Art' is now on show at Stedelijk Museum Schiedam (05.11.2016 – 12.02.2017)
<http://www.stedelijkmuseumschiedam.nl/nl/520-geert-mul-match-maker>

- Sabine Himmelsbach (HeK, Basel, CH)**
PART I, PRESENTATION: Museums and the Future of Media Art. Building up a Collection of Media Art at HeK (House of Electronic Arts Basel)

Digital art, in its countless manifestations, has become an integral part of contemporary art production. Its cultural relevance is unquestioned, but its conservation does present new challenges to museums and collections alike. After all, we are not talking about static objects that can be "stabilized" in the classical sense. In an era of rapid technological change and short-lived technologies, the question of how best to conserve our digital heritage is becoming increasingly urgent. Conservation of digital content and digital born art faces many problems—fragility, digital longevity and technological obsolescence are some of the concerns that have had to be dealt with for many years. Digital culture consists of "practices, not objects"—art, technology, media and social relations are merged into a networked process. We constantly have to adapt our tools and practices to fit the performative and processual practices of artworks we seek to preserve, works that are in a constant state of flux. With examples of works from the collection of HeK as a unique institution with a pioneering role in Switzerland, this presentation gives insight into software-based artistic practice and the complex tasks of preservation of digital art that can be described as a networked process. Sabine will focus on some of the challenges and opportunities in the conservation and contextualisation of these media art practices for museums.
<http://www.goethe.de/kue/bku/kur/kur/hl/him/sta/enindex.htm>

- Jon Ippolito (Professor of New Media, University of Maine, USA)**

PART I, PRESENTATION: Does Time Fold or Unfold?

One of the most pervasive idioms concerning time in the English language is the metaphor whereby events "unfold in time." Because it evokes a seed or blueprint that contains all the instructions necessary to build the tree or house that will result, this Newtonian metaphor suggests that only conceptual or algorithmic works can be "unfolded" in the future, and therefore qualify for reinterpretation as a preservation strategy. To argue that reinterpretation is productive for more than just conceptual and process art, this talk offers a contrary perspective in which events *fold* with time. According to this updated metaphor based on contemporary thermodynamics and cosmology, a work's meaning derives not from its implicit essence but from additional meanings accrued as it is enfolded in new media and embraced by new publics in its future.
<http://www.three.org/ippolito/>

- Ward Janssen (curator MOTI/Stedelijk Museum Breda, Breda, NL)**

PART I, PRESENTATION: PROCRASTINATION: SPACE, TIME, BACK UPS. Museums' High-strung Struggle to Acquire and Present Digital Art in a Collaborative Model

In 2016 two museums, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and MOTI/Stedelijk Museum Breda, together acquired 17 digital artworks from national and international artists. Acquiring digital artworks for a museum collection requires an open stance towards a collection policy that is completely unbefitting the conventional, slow-paced museum standards of exclusivity and ownership. To avoid the ever-present procrastination game museums have played for far too long, for this big acquisition a new standard of buying artworks had to be set up from scratch for both institutions. But defining a standard approach hardly covers all of the works in their digital nature and full artistic integrity. And how could— or perhaps should—museums imagine future presentations of the artworks to their audiences, translating artwork of a digital nature into a physical experience in a museum?
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ward-janssen-4a1a627>

- Tom Ensom (King's College, London, UK)**

PART II, PRESENTATION: Technical Narratives: Documenting Software-based Artworks

While much work has been done to develop strategies for the conservation of software-based artworks, there is little consensus as to the documentation required to support these strategies. In this presentation Tom Ensom will discuss his practice-led research into the documentation of structurally and behaviourally complex software-based artworks. The approach developed has emerged from close work with a set of artwork case studies at Tate, and has involved a novel synthesis of knowledge from art conservation, software engineering and digital preservation. Tom will reflect on what each of these domains offers to guide us in the effective analysis and description of such works, and on the relationship of such an approach to the realities of institutions, collections, and artistic practice.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Tom_Ensom

- Josef Gründler (FH Joanneum, Graz, AT)**

PART II, PRESENTATION: Minimundus - 4 Historic Electronic Artworks

For Ars Electronica Josef Gründler replicated four famous works of media art. *TV Buddha* by Nam June Paik (1974), *Pendulum Music* by Steve Reich (1969), *Il Treno di*

John Cage by John Cage (1978) and *Drive In Music* by Max Neuhaus (1967) were replicated in miniature and fully functional. The goal of this work was to investigate the impact of these works in a small format and over time, and to raise questions about copyright and the conservation of media art. Seppo Gründler will present the project and reactions from the field.
http://www.sonambiente.net/en/04_artists/4M2gru_werk.html

- Rachel Somers Miles (Researcher LIMA, Amsterdam, NL)**

PART II, PRESENTATION: Inside Future Proof Media Art: Developing Documentation & Preservation Approaches for Complex Software-Based & Interactive Media Artworks

Over the past 12 months LIMA has collaborated with Dutch artist Geert Mul on defining the research project 'Future Proof Media Art' to explore and develop documentation and preservation approaches (a script) for complex software-based installations and interactive media artworks. In addition, this research has sought to look into different ways artists can take care of their own complex software-based artworks, taking the manifesto "Best Practices for Conservation of Media Art from an Artist's Perspective" of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (September 2015) as a jumping off point. Beginning with a collection of 9 artworks by Geert Mul as case studies, this presentation offers an inside look at this research project including the different stages, documentation approaches and technical investigations used, and concludes with a forecast of what's next for LIMA's 'Future Proof' research. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rachel-somers-miles-a119963a>

- Marcel Ras (NCDD, The Hague, NL)**

PART III, MODERATOR

Marcel Ras has been the program manager for the Netherlands Coalition for Digital Preservation (NCDD) since 2014. The NCDD was established in 2008 to promote national collaboration to ensure the long-term availability of digital information in The Netherlands. Marcel's career in digital preservation began at the National Library of The Netherlands (KB) where he set up a web archiving program. He received his Masters degree from Nijmegen University in the fields of Ancient History and Archaeology in 1992. From 1999 to 2005 he worked as a consultant for the Digital Heritage Association and was involved in many digitization and standardization projects in The Netherlands. As of 2005 Marcel has been dedicated to digital preservation

- Annet Dekker (University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, NL)**

PART III, PANEL PARTICIPANT

Annet Dekker is Assistant Professor Media Studies: Archival Science at the University of Amsterdam, and Visiting Lecturer and Co-Director of the Centre for the Study of the Networked Image at London South Bank University. Annet is also an independent researcher and curator. Previously she worked as Researcher Digital Preservation at Tate, London (2014-16), was Fellow at The New Institute, Rotterdam (2014-16), and Core Tutor at Piet Zwart Institute, Master Media Design and Communications (2011-16).

- Patrícia Falcão (Tate Modern, London, UK)**

PART III, PANEL PARTICIPANT

Patrícia Falcão is a time-based media conservator with a background in video and photography conservation. Patrícia has worked at Tate since 2008. Currently her main focus is the acquisition of time-based media artworks into

the Tate Collection. She also collaborates with both the Research and Information Systems departments in the development of Tate's strategy and infrastructure for the preservation of high-value digital assets. Her main area of interest is the preservation of the digital components of contemporary artworks. Patricia completed her Masters at the University of the Arts in Bern with a thesis on risk assessment for software-based artworks. She continues to develop research in this field within PERICLES, a pan-European project that aims to address the challenge of ensuring that digital content remains accessible in an environment that is subject to continual change.

■ **Tjarda de Haan (Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam, NL)**
PART III, PANEL PARTICIPANT

Tjarda de Haan is a web-archaeologist and guest e-curator at the Amsterdam Museum. She studied contemporary history at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam and at the Humboldt University of Berlin. Currently she works on the project 'The Digital City revives. A case study of web-archaeology'. It aims to answer the question of how to excavate, reconstruct and (sustainably) preserve the born-digital 'De Digitale Stad' (DDS: The Digital City), the first virtual city in the world, and make it accessible for future generations.

■ **Eef Masson (University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, NL)**
PART III, PANEL PARTICIPANT

Eef Masson is an assistant professor in the department of Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam. She is a teacher of the University of Amsterdam's Masters in Film Studies and Heritage Studies: Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image, also acting as coordinator for the latter programme. Her teaching and research interests include: film and media histories (specifically non-theatrical ones) and historiographies, media archives and preservation, media literacies, museums and media, digital tools for media history research. and archival presentation.

■ **Florian Cramer (Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, Rotterdam, NL)**

PART IV, PRESENTATION: Low-tech Approaches to Preserving Digital Electronic Art

For the long-term storage of born-digital electronic art, two strategies seem to prevail: moral appeals to produce work in open formats and preservational remediation into more contemporary and frequently more complex technical formats. In this talk, Florian will point out the pitfalls of both approaches and make a pragmatic proposal for settling on the lowest common technical denominators. <http://cramer.pleintekst.nl>

■ **Jochem Van Der Spek (Artist, Amsterdam, NL)**

PART IV, PRESENTATION: Remodelling My Work in 3D

According to Jochem van der Spek, in archiving practices as well as in sustaining artworks for future presentation, simulation and 3D re-modeling is key. Currently he focuses on remodelling his artworks in 3D. <http://www.dynamica.org>

■ **Lara Garcia Diaz (PhD student at Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts, researcher LIMA, NL)**

PART IV, PRESENTATION: UNFOLD: Mediation by Reinterpretation

UNFOLD: Mediation by Reinterpretation is a research network aiming to examine reinterpretation for the conservation and documentation of media art and draws upon the practice of producing a reinterpretation of work

by the Vasulkas by Dutch artist Joost Rekveld in 2016/2017. Using the symposium FUTURE PROOF!? as a reflexive platform, this presentation offers the first results extracted from a one year project in which researchers, dancers, performers, musicians, artists, curators and conservators opened up a debate that was able to contextualize and define the paradigms of reinterpretation as a preservation strategy. Reinterpretation refers in this framework to artistic creation rather than a recreation or imitation of a historical artefact or event. It is not about a reinvention of the original intent, but rather a rethinking, or, as Judith Butler argues, a rearticulation of artistic thought as it unfolds in the original work. <http://www.lara-garcia.net>

CONTRIBUTORS THURSDAY FEB 9 2017

■ **Claudia Röck (PhD student University of Amsterdam (NACCA), researcher LIMA, Amsterdam, NL)**

PART I, PRESENTATION: Presentation and Discussion NACCA PhD Research on the Preservation of Software-based Art

Geert Mul's *Shan Shui* is an interactive installation. Before any preservation measures will be executed, it has to be clear, what exactly has to be preserved. How can the significant properties of an artwork be defined? What is their variability? What conservation strategies could be suitable? Claudia Röck will introduce the artwork and suggest answers to the above questions. She will further discuss these questions in front of the artwork with her supervisors Prof. Dr. Julia Noordegraaf and Dr. Klaus Rechert. <http://nacca.eu/research-projects/computer-based-art-conservation>

■ **Julia Noordegraaf (University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, NL)**

PART I, DISCUSSION

Julia Noordegraaf is Professor of Digital Heritage at the University of Amsterdam's Faculty of Humanities. In this role, she focuses on bringing together and promoting research about the reuse and meaning of digital heritage as well as the impact of digitization on the perception and appreciation of cultural heritage. Her future research will focus on digital source criticism (oriented towards search engines and heritage databases) and the preservation of digital heritage. She is affiliated with the European Association for Digital Humanities, the Netherlands Research School for Media Studies, the Huizinga Institute of Cultural History, the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Analysis, and the European Network for Cinema and Media Studies. At present she is a member of the Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art Research (NeCCAR) and serves as a board member for CLARIAH, the NWO-funded Common Lab Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities.

■ **Klaus Rechert (University of Freiburg, Freiburg, DE)**

PART I, DISCUSSION

Klaus Rechert is a post-doctoral researcher at the professorship in communication systems of the Institute for Computer Science at Freiburg. His research focuses on the functional preservation of scientific processes, and privacy protection in the context of complex data and digital forensics. Recently he has become increasingly specialised in the emulation of cultural heritage and artworks in collaboration with Rhizome and Tate Modern.

■ **Jesse de Vos (Netherlands Institute for Vision and Sound, Hilversum, NL)**

PART II, PRESENTATION: Let's Play the Archive - On Documentation Strategies for Computer Games

In the scope of the collaborative research project Game On!, the Netherlands Institute for Vision and Sound together with Utrecht University, researches the possibilities of preserving video games as part of Dutch cultural heritage. One of these preservation strategies is filming and recording videos in which (amongst others) visitors of the museum play the different archived video games. What exactly are we keeping in this archive? Which layers of meaning are added to the archived object by doing this? And what is lost in this process? <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jesse-de-vos-b867092a>

■ **Sandra Fauconnier (Independent Art Historian, Rotterdam)**

PART II, PRESENTATION: Why Is There So Little Digital Art on Wikipedia?

Sandra Fauconnier, art historian and active Wikipedian, would like to write more articles about the history and protagonists of digital art on Wikipedia. But at this moment that's still quite difficult. Sandra will give examples, and explain how institutions and artists could make this easier. Her tips are very closely aligned with general best practice guidelines for archiving, preserving and documenting digital art in general. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Spinster>

■ **Rachel Somers Miles (Researcher LIMA, Amsterdam, NL)**

PART III, WORKSHOP I: Documentation for Artists: The What, When, Where and Why of Caring for the Future of Your Own Artwork

This workshop seeks to invite artists to gain an understanding of the different components involved in documenting their artwork for the sake of preservation and future presentations. In particular, this workshop is geared towards artists who create complex software-based installations, meaning those that have specific physical parts, as opposed to CD-Rom or browser-based artworks for example.

The aim is twofold: 1) To inform artists on some of the important steps and questions involved in caring for the preservation and future presentation of their artworks through proposing a general to-do list and question sheet that each artist will work through. 2) Have artists reflect on these steps and questions and share feedback on whether they feel such an approach is plausible, beneficial, frustrating etc. for their work? In other words, a workshop to help artists understand how to document their own work, to help us understand if these approaches are realistic and how to improve on them to benefit artists. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rachel-somers-miles-a119963a>

■ **Nina van Doren (Researcher LIMA, Amsterdam, NL)**

PART III, WORKSHOP II: Collections: Documenting Digital Art'

Artworks that are dependant on a number of technologies seem difficult or almost impossible to preserve permanently. They challenge museum professionals to reassess their workflows and preservation strategies. Documentation of digital art is of crucial importance in all stages, from acquiring the artwork to its registration, presentation and preservation. This workshop discusses best practices, methods and models of digital art documentation.

■ **Paulien 't Hoen (coordinator of SBMK, Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art, NL)**

MODERATOR

Paulien 't Hoen graduated from the University of Utrecht in 1992 with degrees in art history (specialisation on modern and contemporary art) and arts administration. She continued her training in management, public relations, writing, communication and philosophy. She worked as PR manager and visual arts advisor for several companies before starting her own communication and project management business. Paulien has been Coordinator for the Dutch Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art since 2004.

■ **Gaby Wijers (LIMA, Amsterdam, NL)**
MODERATOR

Gaby Wijers is Director of LIMA. Previously she was Coordinator of collection, preservation and related research at the Netherlands Media Art Institute (Montevideo/NIMk), Amsterdam. She has a background in librarianship, theater and informatics. Gaby initiated and has participated in multiple national and international projects dealing with the documentation and preservation of media art, such as Inside Installations, GAMA, Inside Movement Knowledge, Obsolete Equipment, and Digitizing Contemporary Art, amongst others. She participates in national and international networks such as the Foundation for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (SBMK), Netherlands Coalition of Digital Preservation (NCDD) and is Honorable Research Fellow of the University Exeter.

The symposium will take place at Stedelijk Museum Schiedam (near Rotterdam), Hoogstraat 112, 3111HL Schiedam, The Netherlands.

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This project is made possible by the generous support of Creative Industries Fund NL, Mondriaan Fund, the municipality of Rotterdam and hosted by the Stedelijk Museum Schiedam.

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