



BEST BEFORE / USE BY ... ?

Seminar on the preservation of analogue and digital carriers

Practical tips for the sector of arts and cultural heritage

October 28, 2008

Film theatre MuHKA_Media, Photo Museum Antwerp

Should you wear gloves when handling film? Is it best to store a videotape vertically or horizontally? Should you digitise vinyl-lp's? How long does a CD-R last? What if the monitors of an installation artwork need replacing? Is there an optimal climate for the storage of a hard disk?

The preservation of media art is different from the preservation of other heritage because of the specificity of the carriers. In contrast to a painting, carriers do not show anything of their visual content, unless they are played on compatible playback machines. Many of these carriers (filmstrip, videotapes, vinyl disks, ...) suffer a decrease in quality each time they are played. Besides this kind of tear and wear, carriers can also be affected by the obsolescence of their playback equipment. Factors like too high temperature, humidity, illumination, ... speed up the aging process of analogue and digital media. Humidity can cause mold, heat deforms the container of the carrier.

But how can you prevent those things from happening? And what can you do in case the carrier has already been damaged? Will it still be possible to save the work? Although good preservation starts with easy and straightforward principles, practice shows that artists are not always familiar with the accurate guidelines. In the preservation of their analogue or digital media, they often do what they feel is best. The exchange of information resources and practical knowledge does not run smoothly because professionals and artists do not share a common knowledge platform. With this seminar, PACKED wanted to present and disseminate this lacking knowledge by bringing media artists in contact with experts from the field.

All video lectures below are in Dutch.

Ramon Coelho works almost 25 year actively with the medium video. At the Dutch Institute for Media Art / Montevideo he is in charge of video editing and video preservation, presentation of exhibitions and general consultation.

Presentation | What does the practice of video preservation looks like? What role can an institute on video preservation play? Is it necessary to digitise videotapes for the purpose of long term storage?

Presentation | In his second presentation, Ramon Coelho suggested that the preservation of a media art installation requires an individual approach. This was illustrated by two preservation cases.

Jean-Pierre Sens is board member of the Stichting Amateurfilm from the Netherlands. In daily life, Jean-Pierre is the owner of SuperSens, a film lab that is specialised in the digitisation of 8mm and 16 mm film. Presentation | Jean-Pierre spoke about the importance of a good preservation of film material, how one should handle this material and the possibilities that are offered by digitisation.

Johan Favoreel has been working with the VRT (Flemish Radio and Television) since 1981 as a director of music. Since '99 he works at the sound archive of the VRT as co-organiser of the collection and restorer of endangered audio carriers. Presentation | Johan Favoreel spoke about analogue versus digital audio carriers, and the advantages and disadvantages of both systems.

Filip Boudrez is a consultant on digital archives at the City Archives of Antwerp. He advises on the formation of the digital archive of the city services and builds a digital archival depot for the city of Antwerp. Within the expertise centre DAVID (Digital Archiving in Flemish Institutions and Services), he continues his research in the field of digital archiving. Presentation | Using the title 'Digital precaution, active digital preservation', Filip Boudrez illustrated the preservation of digital carriers within the broad perspective of digital archiving.



Els Vermang is a member of LAb[au] - laboratory for architecture and urbanism - from Brussel. LAb[au] creates interactive installations, audiovisual presentations and scenographies and develops own soft- and hardware to realise their creations. Presentation | Els Vermang presented LAb[au]'s methodology concerning digital art by two case-studies: PixFlow (1-2006 + 2-2007) and Binary Waves (2008), with special attention for technological aspects concerning maintenance and preservation. (no video available)

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