Search this site

Symposium | Is This Permanence: Preservation of Born-digital Artists' Archives

Symposium

Is This Permanence: Preservation of Born-digital Artists' Archives
Friday, May 11, 2018, 10 am–5 pm

The internet pioneer Vint Cerf has said "preservation by accident is not a plan." Without a plan, will born-digital art last even one lifetime? If we do not develop solutions now, we risk losing not only born-digital art but artists' archives as well—effectively erasing the work and memory of this generation and subsequent generations' art history.

Today, an artist's studio ephemera likely consists of old laptops, iPhones, professional websites, and social media accounts, as well as traditional analog materials. Artists' archives are increasingly hybrid collections, requiring adaptable preservation methods. This symposium will explore the challenges of born-digital preservation and artists' archives, including artists' use of born-digital methods as part of their practice and as a means of documentation; the state of the digital preservation field for artists and those who steward their archives; and preservation strategies for artists, museums, collectors, archives, and libraries.

This program is free and **onsite registration will be available on the day of the symposium.** For a full schedule of events, visit the calendar, or for more information, please contact Cate Peebles, Postgraduate Research Associate at the Center's Archives (catherine.peebles@yale.edu | +1 475 202 2390).

This program will be live streamed.

This event is co-sponsored by the Yale Center for British Art, the Robert B. Haas Family Arts Library, Yale University Library Digital Preservation Services, the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA), and the National Digital Stewardship Residency for Art Information (NDSR Art).

Keynote Lecture

Your Archival Format Will Not Save You
Friday, May 11, 2018, 3:30 pm

Jon Ippolito, Professor and Program Coordinator of New Media, Co-director of the Still Water Lab, and Director of the Digital Curation Program, University of Maine

From the 1700s forward, solander boxes, flat files, and climate-controlled vaults were the mainstays of an artist's archive. The last fifty years have seen these analog bulwarks against decay displaced by a successive wave of digital counterparts, from boxes of videotapes to shelves of hard drives to cloud storage subscriptions. To cope with this rotating panoply of obsolescing hardware, professional archivists have increasingly focused on saving bits instead of boxes, digitizing analog art materials, and extracting bits from floppy drives and CD-ROMs to save them in so-called archival formats.

Each archival format is designed to be universal, self-contained, and platform independent, distilling images, movies, and websites into an immaterial medium free of the dependencies that plague specific hardware like Dell, DAT, or Digibeta. Sprinkle some metadata and funding on archival files, and the original artworks, or ephemera, are supposed to spring back to life for exhibition and/or scholarly review.

This keynote will aim to debunk this pipe dream, considering specific cases where today's archival formats completely fail to produce their intended benefit. Drawing on themes from the book *Re-collection: Art, New Media, and Social Memory* (http://re-collection.net), the talk will conclude with alternative strategies that are expansive and creative enough to capture the vibrancy that makes the art of our era worth preserving in the first place.

This program will be live streamed.

About Jon Ippolito

Ippolito is a new media artist, writer, and curator whose work has been recognized internationally. He has received awards from the Thoma, Tiffany, Lannan, and American Foundations. At the Guggenheim in New York, he curated the first art museum exhibition that focused on virtual reality, as well as the Nam June Paik retrospective with John G. Hanhardt in 2000. As Professor of New Media at the University of Maine, Ippolito has founded a peer-to-peer digital badges initiative and a graduate Digital Curation program. At the Still Water lab, co-founded with Joline Blais, he helped build social software such as the Variable Media Questionnaire, The Pool, ThoughtMesh, and the Cross-Cultural Partnership. He has published articles in periodicals ranging from the *Art Journal* to the *Washington Post* and has contributed chapters to over twenty books. Ippolito co-authored *At the Edge of Art* (Thames & Hudson 2006) with Blais and *Re-collection: Art, New Media, and Social Memory* (MIT 2014) with Richard Rinehart.

In addition to Ippolito's talk, this program will feature presentations by Clifford Allen and Deb Verhoff, Watermill Center, Robert Wilson Archives and New York University; John Bell, Dartmouth College; Deena Engel and Glenn Wharton, New York University; Sara England and Mikhel Proulx, Concordia University; Josh Franco and Hilary Price, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Laura Molloy, University of Oxford; Colin Post, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; and Farris Wahbeh, Whitney Museum of American Art.

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