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Conclusion

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On the 22nd and 23rd of March 2018 LIMA organised the 3th Transformation Digital Art Symposium to highlight and exchange its current research projects together with international participants from an array of professional backgrounds. Strategies, best practices, research and cases studies concerning both artist-led and institutional strategies geared towards the future presentation of born-digital and software based art were presented and discussed.

How to act on change that comes with digital art was this years focus. I suggested embracing the uncertainty as an answer to this question and as inspiration and encouraging selected this year mostly innovative practices, often initiated by and developed in cooperation with artists.

Collaboration between institutions in the same discipline and further.
Current research of LIMA and partner organisations TATE, iMAL and ZKM was presented and further discussions and collaboration on software preservation, emulation, storage and access of complex (online) digital artworks has already started. The result of our survey on present approaches to the storage and management of digital art collections with an emphasis on net art and complex digital artworks will be published soon. The moderators showed our network in cultural heritage, contemporary art conservation and archival studies. Collaboration and conversation is key in preservation not only between institutions to share knowledge, exchange issues and solutions and the ever rare resources but off course also between the institutions and the artists.

Involve the artist | Let the artists take a larger part in all aspects

We presented Art Host developed by Constant Dullaart end LIMA as example were artists and institutions together, in this case facing the really technically challenge to host and store net art as a kind of escrow service. Also our the DIY Artwork Documentation Tool to facilitate artists to describe their own artworks for future presentations and the documentation videos protocol both created in cooperation with Geert Mul in the Future Proof Project.

Preservation and propriety | No way one size fits all
At the symposium artists, museums and cultural heritage institutions discussed the complexities that come with the ownership, archiving, and transfer of digitally-based artworks.
This also involves questions of ownership and propriety, to which different artists had different solutions. Artist Martine Neddam mentioned how, ideally, she would like to make versions of her work and sell parts of her work piece by piece, but maintain authorship and decision-making rights over the whole work. On the other hand, Constant Dullaart appears to want to opt for a more hands off approach; ideally he would hand over his decision-making to a third party that would confer with an escrow service and the owner of the work. Were others like Harm van den Dorpel had set up his own system of financial enterprise, in which his work can be transacted directly in bitcoins on his website, and tokens can be bought in anticipation for 'future work' in an attempt to create commodity value for his immaterial work.

Alive and kicking
To keep the digital artworks alive and working within the ever changing technological future iterations will be needed with all related questions to authenticity and originality. Museums are used to other art forms with a need for future iterations to stay alive as conservator Louise Cone showed us. But the institutional museum preservation practice is often still based on static objects and not yet equipped for the liveliness and complexity of digital objects and other artworks that need to change to stay active and to survive. Luckily Time Based Media departments and awareness are growing as assistant Curator Jeanette Bisschops and multiple participants from the museum field showed us. And Marcel Ras encouraged us to live long learning and exchange of knowledge.

Alternative strategies?
Even if ensuring the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next is an

ancient cultural activity, it is critical to instigate new conversations around knowledge transmission, and in the case of digital art works this includes exploring possibilities of preservation beyond a permanent process of continually changing operating systems. The variable nature of digital art stretches the boundaries of traditional preservation methods and requires insights from both the artist and curator to determinate the future viability of re-staging the piece. How do we deal with the changes of digital or media artworks over time, and how can the performative aspect of a work be preserved and mediated? Reinterpretation is a method that brings us perspectives on the potential of media articulations to live a "life" beyond the medium that generated them and gives space for creativity. In an educational sense as Fabian van Sluis and Serena Canigagio presented, to open the work, the pioneers, the code, the technology. But also in a more reflective, theoretical sense of thinking about the work not as something that lives in isolation, but rather that coexists in a network. The duality between, on the one hand, the idea of conservation as a creative act and, on the other, artists reinterpreting and contributing to conservation processes, have pivoted and oriented our thoughts from the very beginning. Our intention throughout the projects has always been to signal the tensions and resistances that have resulted from proposing Reinterpretation as a preservation strategy. An alternative one?

Documentation

The complexities that come with the ownership, archiving, and transfer of digitally-based artworks also involves registration and documentation. To which different collections had different solutions as we saw in the friday afternoon session with the collections. This defining and documentation is key in and source for further and future preservation strategies and actions and an emerging topic as a. As Julie Boschard showed. Also when recreating/re-fabrication an ephemeral/immaterial work; authentic art object documentation is needed to gain clarity over what defines the authentic art object. Documentation seems to have a focus towards to past were interpretation has a future centered one. The first concept for the next symposium program is focused on artist archives and/or documentation.

We ended up with a clear call for collaboration between institutions in the same domain to share knowledge, exchange issues and solutions.

-        to be continued -

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