The Museum
in the Digital Age

The Museum in the Digital Age

New Media and Novel Methods of Mediation

Edited by

Régine Bonnefoit and
Melissa Rérat

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New Media and Novel Methods of Mediation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations vii

Introduction 1
Régine Bonnefoit and Melissa Rérat

Chapter One 13
Video, a New Art
Melissa Rérat

Chapter Two 25
When Art Objects Come to Life: Animation of Artworks in the Digital Age
Régine Bonnefoit

Chapter Three 37
Video Journey
Catherine Gfeller

Chapter Four 45
Preserving Digital and Interactive Art: Museums and the Variability of Online Media Artworks
Jean Paul Fourmentraux

Chapter Five 55
The Large-Scale Search for Small Details: Redefining Patterns in Art History
Isabella di Lenardo and Frédéric Kaplan

Chapter Six 65
What About the Need for New Media Technologies in Museums
David Vuillaume

Chapter Seven 75
Digital Right Management
Vincent Salvadé

Bibliography 89

Contributors 103

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1-1: Catalogue of the *8e biennale de Paris. Manifestation internationale des jeunes artistes. 15 sept.-21 oct. 1973*, page relating to the “Telewissen-Gruppe.” Fonds Biennale de Paris 1959-1985, INHA-Collection Archives de la critique d'art

Fig. 1-2: Mary Lucier, *Paris Dawn Burn*, video installation, 1977, 10th Paris Biennale. Photo taken from Jean-Paul Cassagnac, “Biennale, des petits et des grands,” in *Canal*, no. 8 (15-31.10.1977), 9, © dr. Fonds Alain Macaire, INHA-Collection Archives de la critique d'art

Fig. 1-3: Dominique Belloir & Rainer Verbizh, *Flippers*, 1980, presented in the video section of the 11th Paris Biennale. Private archive belonging to Dominique Belloir, © Dominique Belloir

Fig. 2-1: Lesley Keen, *Creator*, 1983, cel paint on cel, overlaid on a background created using ink on artboard. Film still, 6’38’’, © Lesley Keen

Fig. 2-2: Peter Greenaway, digital performance on the replica of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper* in the Palazzo Reale, Sala delle Cariatidi, Milan, 15 April-4 May 2008, © Peter Greenaway

Fig. 2-3, 2-4: Rob and Nick Carter, “Digital painting,” 2013, 2.5-hour looped film, computer, frame, 48 x 61 x 8 cm, after the still life *Dead Frog with Flies* by Ambrosius Bosschaert the Younger, ca 1630, oil on copper, 12.5 x 17.5 cm, Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris, © Rob and Nick Carter

Fig. 2-5: Peter Greenaway, *The Dance of Death*, video installations in the former graveyard of the Predigerkirche in Basel, 31 October-30 November 2013, © Peter Greenaway

Fig. 3-1: Catherine Gfeller, *Champs et courbes en or et brun*, 1993, Ilfochrome print, 50 x 210 cm, © Catherine Gfeller

Fig. 3-2: Catherine Gfeller, *Watersky*, 1997, transprint on Rives paper, 46 x 140 cm, © Catherine Gfeller

Fig. 3-3: Catherine Gfeller, *He Is Coming*, 2000, pigment print on Hahnemühle paper, 90 x 160 cm, © Catherine Gfeller

Fig. 3-4: Catherine Gfeller, *The Waders*, video installation on six screens, *Pulsations* exhibition, Kunstmuseum Lucerne, 2011, © Catherine Gfeller

Fig. 3-5: Catherine Gfeller, *Ville de rêves*, installation of ten monumental photographs printed on canvas, Great Wall of the North Hill, Centre Paul Klee, Bern, February 2015-January 2016, property of the University of Neuchâtel since February 2016, © Catherine Gfeller

Fig. 4-1, 4-2: Antoni Muntadas, *The File Room*, 1994, Chicago Cultural Center, © Antoni Muntadas, www.thefileroom.org

Fig. 4-3: Christophe Bruno, *Non Conservation Laws*, 2010, © Christophe Bruno, www.christophebruno.com, www.cosmolalia.com/non-conservation-laws

Fig. 4-4: The Guggenheim Museum and the Daniel Langlois Foundation, *The Variable Media Network*, © Daniel Langlois Foundation, www.variablemedia.net

Fig. 4-5, 4-6: David Guez, *Hard Disk Paper*, 2013, © David Guez, www.guez.org

Fig. 5-1: Follower of Joachim Beuckelaer (?), *Kitchen interior*, ca 1530-1605, 157.5 x 198.1 cm, neg. 427557, Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence, © Foto Cooper

Fig. 5-2: Variants of the pattern of the “crouching woman” from Jacopo Bassano pictorial lexicon, 2016, © di Lenardo—Kaplan

Fig. 5-3: Samples of image queries and results on the *Sleeping Venus* by Giorgione, the *Holy Family with the Infant Saint John* by Bernardino Luini, the *Holy Infants* by Marco d’Oggiono, 2016, © Seguin—di Lenardo—Kaplan

Fig. 6-1: The Secretarial Workplace of the Future, Geneva, 1976, © Swiss National Museum / ASL

Fig. 6-2: Social Networks and Museums—Decision-Making Aids. Cover of the Swiss Museums Association publication issued in 2014, © Swiss Museums Association, photographs by Heike Grasser, design by Martina Lauterbach

INTRODUCTION

RÉGINE BONNEFOIT AND MELISSA RÉRAT

This book is a product of the 8th Seminar of the École du Louvre that was held from 14 to 18 December 2015 at the University of Neuchâtel. A partnership has existed since 2008 between the Institute for Art History and Museology at the University of Neuchâtel and the École du Louvre in Paris. Its aims are the joint expansion of their study programmes, the exchange of students and lecturers between the two institutions, and promoting research in the field of museology.

Each December since 2008, the Swiss partner has organised a seminar in Neuchâtel on current issues in museology, in collaboration with the Maison Borel Foundation of Auvernier.[1] Over the course of a week, professors in museology come together with museum directors and conservators, internationally known exhibition curators, restorers, cultural mediators and others to discuss different aspects of the seminar's chosen theme before an audience of students from both institutions.

The topic of the 8th Seminar of the École du Louvre was *The Museum in the Digital Age. New Media and Novel Methods of Mediation*. Such a complex topic can only be developed within an interdisciplinary framework. For this reason, alongside the museum professionals present, specialists from such varied fields as the communication sciences, jurisprudence, the social sciences, economics, information technology and media psychology were invited to engage with the Seminar's topic from their own perspective, as were entrepreneurs and restorers of electronic and digital works.[2] Their dedication and enthusiasm are responsible for the success of the 8th Seminar of the École du Louvre, and for the publication of the present volume.

One of the recent developments in museum practice is the manner in which museums have tackled the rise of digital technology. The spread of personal computers during the 1980s and then the arrival of the Internet in the ’90s was a phenomenon that has since been historicised with the terms “digital revolution” or “digital era.” This revolution has affected most of the realms of our activities, in particular the domains of communication, creation and the safeguarding and transmission of knowledge. Museums—whose mission, according to the International Council of Museums (ICOM) is to be open to the public, to acquire, conserve, research, communicate and exhibit the heritage of humanity[3]—have thus been directly concerned by this revolution.

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[1] http://www.maisonborel.ch/index.php/fr, 29.06.2017.

[2] The Seminar's programme can be found at https://www.seminaire-museo.ch/archives-séminaire-2015/, 29.06.2017.

The expression “new media” is very often employed instead of “digital tools.” However, it covers a wide variety of meanings owing to the mingling of the history of contemporary art with the history of communication in a much broader cultural history. The definition of the adjective “digital” given by the website *Oxford Dictionaries* specifically refers to signals or data

> expressed as series of the digits 0 and 1, typically represented by values of physical quantity such as voltage or magnetic polarization. Often contrasted with analogue. […] Relating to, using, or storing data or information in the form of digital signals. […] Involving or relating to the use of computer technology.[4]

Digital technology implies a system based on information, message and process, and not on the existence of a fixed support and being in an unalterable state (the conditions that determine an analogue system). Digital data require a computer not just so that they can be created but also for their transmission and thus for them to be seen by the user or viewer. The transmitted data can be represented on different forms of support (screen, paper, etc.) without this undermining the digital creation. The term “new media” refers to

> means of mass communication using digital technologies such as the Internet.[5]

It is thus no longer a question of the nature of the data but of the means by which they are transferred. The definition given by *Oxford Dictionaries* implies that other, not new, means exist and that these employ non-digital technologies. Furthermore, it is confined to the domain of communication, and it is here that the two main elements on which theoreticians struggle to agree appear: the boundary between the old and new media, and the focus on communication. Is the realm of new media restricted to that of communication by digital tools? Is it possible to include the artists who make use of these tools creatively? If that is the case, how are the computer graphic works created by engineers during the 1960s to be treated? And, similarly, what fate can be expected for the video art of the 1970s, which was then a new medium but not yet digital?[6]

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[3] http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition, 29.06.2017.

[4] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/digital, 29.06.2017.

[5] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/new-media?q=new+media, 29.06.2017.

New media have entered the museum space in two contexts: first, as digital tools used for purposes of communication (for cultural mediation, internal and external communications and promotion)[7] and data storage (conservation); second, as new materials appropriate for creation, at times not digital. This reality mirrors the dual derivation of the term “new media.” The expression refers to communications media and it is in this sense that the term is used in English in both the singular and plural forms. However, it can also be used as the plural version of “new medium,” where “medium” denotes a material used for creation. Thus, video, plastic and performance were understood in the mid-1960s as new materials available to artists. In consequence, new media are not necessarily digital or used for communication if the notion is historicised. This publication is not based on a precise definition of the new media, which is almost impossible to encompass, but on the contrary it aims, by means of the diversity of its contributions, to offer the reader an applied overview of the different senses of the term.

For a number of years research into new media has enjoyed strong interest in public universities and among a wider audience, focusing on both conceptual debates of this nature and the uniquely digital meaning of the expression. The enormous existing bibliography (in English, French and German) in the realms of museography and the arts can be organised in four categories. First, studies that aim at exhaustiveness with the goal of establishing a history if not a system for new media. Second, works that study the impact of digital technology on the history of art as a discipline. Third, publications written for museum professionals regarding the conservation, exhibition and mediation of digital works or using digital technology. Lastly, exhibition catalogues dedicated entirely to new media.

Regarding the first category, the art historian Michael Rush and computer science researcher Lev Manovich have published two reference works: Rush’s *New Media in Late 20th-Century Art* appeared in 1999 and

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[6] On this, see Melissa Rérat’s essay (chapter 1) in this book.

[7] On this, see David Vuillaume’s essay (chapter 6) in this book.

Manovich's *The Language of New Media* in 2001.[8] Rush considers new media in the domain of art and contextualises their impact within the history of art since the pre-cinema period of the 19th century. He treats analogue video and performance as new media in contemporary art although they are not digital. He also discusses the digitalisation of analogue media. Digital is thus a sub-category of the new media. Broad historical contextualisation and the digitalisation of "old" media are subjects also treated in Manovich's book, which highlights two historical developments—those of the "computing technologies" and "media technologies"—that existed in parallel before being drawn together in the 1980s as a result of digital technology. It was this merger that lay at the origin of the new media.[9] According to the scientist, new media are thus limited to digital technology. However, in order to understand the new media, write their history and define a system—what Manovich understands by "language"—they must be contextualised in a broader history that embraces the development of the computer and that of communication and creation media. In both the comprehensive vision of Rush and the restrictive definition offered by Manovich, the approach taken springs from cultural history.

The question of the impact of the new media on the history of art as a discipline has given rise during recent years to an extensive literature and the organisation of conferences. Examples are the study by Murtha Baca, director of the Digital Art History Program of the Getty Research Institute (Los Angeles), which was published in 2013 as *Digital Art History*,[10] the *Digital Art History: Challenges and Prospects* study day held in Zurich in June 2014 by the Swiss Institute for Art Research (SIK—ISEA),[11] and the article "Malraux Reloaded: digitale Kunstgeschichte nach dem digital turn. Versuch einer Standortbestimmung"[12] by Thomas Hänsli, published in 2014 in the review *Kritische Berichte. Zeitschrift für Kunst-*

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[8] Michael Rush, *New Media in Late 20th-Century Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999); Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).

[9] Manovich, *The Language*, 20.

[10] Murtha Baca and Anne L. Helmreich, *Digital Art History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013). For further information on the programme, the Getty Research Institute's website: http://www.getty.edu/research/scholars/digital_art_history, 29.06.2017.

[11] See the SIK—ISEA's website: http://www.sik-isea.ch/de-ch/Aktuell/Aktuell/Veranstaltungen/Digitale-Kunstgeschichte, 29.06.2017.

[12] Thomas Hänsli, "Malraux Reloaded: digitale Kunstgeschichte nach dem digital turn. Versuch einer Standortbestimmung," *Kritische Berichte* 42, no. 4 (2014): 75-85.

und Kulturwissenschaften. The article indicates that a "digital turn" has taken place in the history of art, which, as a scientific discipline, finds itself classified among the "digital humanities," themselves a variable concept.[13] In 2016, the book *Ein Bild sagt mehr als tausend Pixel? Digitale Forschungsansätze in den Bild- und Objektwissenschaften*[14] by Celia Krause and Ruth Reiche appeared and, with the support of the Getty Foundation, the Summer Institute of the Department of Architecture at the ETH Zurich focused attention on *Digital Collections. New Methods and Technologies for Art History*.[15]

In that same year, Chiel van den Akker and Susan Legêne published the anthology *Museums in a Digital Culture: How Art and Heritage Become Meaningful*, which debated interactive art installations, art as an encompassing and participatory experience, and the development of virtual museums.[16]

Awareness of the impact of digital technologies on the history of art, its tradition and practices has spurred consideration of the discipline's future and advice for professionals working in art history and museums. Instances are given by the books by Beryl Graham, *Rethinking Curating. Art after New Media*[17] and *New Collecting: Exhibiting and Audiences after New Media Art*,[18] by the international symposium *Cloud Collections. Legal, Scientific and Technical Aspects of the Digitization of Art* organised in March 2015 by the SIK—ISEA, ICOM, the Association of Swiss Museums and the University of Geneva,[19] and the book *(e)Pedagogy—Visual Knowledge Building: Rethinking Art and New Media in Education* published in 2005,[20] which offers an international overview of the representational changes instigated by the introduction of new media in the teaching sphere. To conclude, the Association of Swiss Museums has recently published a brochure on the use of social networks. Neither theoretical nor exhaustive, it is rather a practical manual that offers solid advice for museum professionals of all disciplines.[21]

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[13] See Brigitte Kossek, "Einleitung: digital?" in *Digital turn? Zum Einfluss digitaler Medien auf Wissensgenerierungsprozesse von Studierenden und Hochschullehrenden*, ed. Brigitte Kossek and Markus F. Peschl (Vienna: V & R unipress, 2012): 7-8.

[14] Celia Krause and Ruth Reiche, *Ein Bild sagt mehr als tausend Pixel? Digitale Forschungsansätze in den Bild- und Objektwissenschaften* (Glückstadt: Hülbusch, 2015).

[15] https://www.gta.arch.ethz.ch/events/digital-collections, 29.06.2017.

[16] Chiel van den Akker and Susan Legêne, *Museums in a Digital Culture: How Art and Heritage Become Meaningful* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).

[17] Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, *Rethinking Curating. Art after New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010).

[18] Beryl Graham, *New Collecting: Exhibiting and Audiences after New Media Art* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

[19] http://www.sik-isea.ch/Portals/0/IcontelContent/Documents/Communiquedepresse_CloudCollections_f_240215.pdf, 29.06.2017.

The increase in number and success of exhibitions that utilise and are dedicated to new media provide a broad overview of the practices and participants affected by the digital revolution. In 2001 the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art mounted the exhibition *010101. Art in Technological Times*, which, though featuring contemporary art, focused primarily on architecture and design in order to represent, by means of the works exhibited, the changes and contributions made by digital technologies to these forms of creation.[22] During summer 2014, the Barbican Centre in London staged the exhibition *Digital Revolution*, whose intention was to present the impact made by digital technologies on art, design, cinema, music and videogames.[23] In addition to being the theme of the exhibition, digital tools were also actually presented in the event in order to offer visitors an immersive experience. In Washington, D.C., the Smithsonian American Art Museum held the exhibition *Watch This! Revelations in Media Art* in 2015, which concentrated on contemporary art. In this show, the shift from an "electronic age" to a "digital age" was demonstrated by the presentation of 44 objects dating from 1941 to 2003.[24] In Switzerland, in 2015 the Art Centre Pasquart in Bienne staged the collective exhibition *Short Cuts*, which brought together two generations of creators (1960-

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[20] Stefan Sonvilla-Weiss, ed., *(e)Pedagogy—Visual Knowledge Building: Rethinking Art and New Media in Education* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005).

[21] *Réseaux sociaux et musées* (Zurich: AMS [coll. "Normes et standards de l'AMS"], 2014), available at:
http://www.museums.ch/fr/publications/standards/réseaux-sociaux.html, 29.06.2017.

[22] *010101. Art in Technological Times* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2001). Also see the website of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: https://www.sfmoma.org/exhibition/010101, 29.06.2017.

[23] Neil McConnon, Conrad Bodman and Dani Admiss, *Digital Revolution. An Immersive Exhibition in Art, Design, Film, Music and Videogames* (London: Barbican, 2014). Also see the Barbican Centre website:
http://www.barbican.org.uk/digital-revolution, 29.06.2017.

[24] See the website of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.: http://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/archive/2015/watch_this_2015, 29.06.2017.

2015)[25] as part of the “Digital Culture” Swiss-focused programme directed by Pro Helvetia, Swiss Arts Council from 2013 to 2015.[26] To conclude, it should be mentioned that, in parallel to the activities of museums, the organisation of exhibitions on new media and the rationale behind their subject also ensue from specialised centres and festivals, in particular the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe (ZKM), Ars Electronica in Linz and the Cube in Issy-les-Moulineux.[27]

The contributions to this publication have been divided into four groups that illustrate the extent of the impact of digital technologies on museums: (1) exhibitions devoted to new media and exhibitions mounted with the use of new media (Melissa Rérat, Régine Bonnefoit, Catherine Gfeller); (2) the hidden face of the museum, the conservation of digital works of art (Jean Paul Fourmentraux); (3) cultural mediation and the communication/promotion of museums using digital tools (applications, tablets, audioguides, etc.) (David Vuillaume, Isabella di Lenardo & Frédéric Kaplan); (4) legal aspects of the digitalisation of content, whether for creative purposes or preservation (Vincent Salvadé).

This volume by no means includes the complete contributions to the Seminar, but a selection of papers that illustrate the four main focus areas in exemplary fashion. The selection of issues surrounding the “digitalisation” of the museum is necessarily subjective and not exhaustive. It does not provide a history of the new media in the museum environment—an undertaking that would go well beyond the scope of this book—but offers a few of its milestones that illustrate the versatility and dynamism of “new media.”

The first chapter is by **Melissa RÉRAT**, and investigates the origin and development of the concept of “new media” in the visual arts. This concept first appeared in 1968 in the catalogue for the exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity* that was organised by Jasia Reichardt at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Although the technology of video art has been continually developed since the appearance on the market of the Sony Portapak half a century ago, the concept of “new media” is also applied to the most recent examples of digital video. By focussing on the Paris Biennale between 1973 and 1980, Rérat shows how video conquered a place for itself in the system of the arts. By analysing the arguments offered in the Biennale catalogues to legitimise the inclusion of video in exhibitions, the author here demonstrates different historiographic models.

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[25] See the Art Centre Pasquart website: https://www.pasquart.ch/en/event/short-cuts/, 22.07.2017.

[26] See the Pro Helvetia Internet site: http://prohelvetia.ch/en/press-release/call-for-cooperation-projects-on-digital-culture, 29.06.2017.

[27] The ZKM Internet site: http://zkm.de, 29.06.2017; the Ars Electronica website: http://www.aec.at, 19.07.2016; the Cube Internet site: http://lecube.com, 29.06. 2017.

The next chapter is a study of the animation of artworks in the digital age. The idea for it came to **Régine BONNEFOIT** during a visit to the Venice Biennale in the summer of 2015. In a square-shaped room created by six giant partitions in the Italian pavilion, the English film director Peter Greenaway projected a homage to Italian art history. It had the programmatic title *In the Beginning was the image*. Greenaway projected computer images of close-ups of the most famous Italian works of art, from the early Middle Ages to Giorgio de Chirico, which then moved to the sound of classical music by Venetian composers. When the Biennale was opened, Greenaway gave an interview surrounded by his projections in which he explained the interrelations between painting and film. He emphasised the significance of the "new technologies" and the "new digital revolution" for the interaction he desired between these two media.[28] His projections onto famous paintings such as Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* (2008) and Veronese's *The Wedding at Cana* (2009), which Bonnefoit analyses in her chapter here, were described by Greenaway in his interview as "digital performances." Since the ancient myth of Pygmalion, the dream of rendering a static object "alive" has never stopped haunting artists. This chapter questions the reasons, the methods and the limits of the desire to animate works of art that are, by definition, static.

Catherine GFELLER's chapter shows how the development from analogue to digital photography and video since the 1980s is reflected in her own art and in how her works are presented. In keeping with the possibilities of analogue photography, Gfeller's series *New York: Urban Friezes* (1996-1998) still employed multiple exposures of one and the same negative, using scissors and glue to make friezes bringing together details from different photographs. Since 1998 she has been constructing complex compositions with digital images on her computer screen, which she calls multi-compositions. Since then, her preferred means of capturing images has been the video camera, because her ordinary camera does not react quickly enough for her. She whittles down the resultant flood of images she captures, choosing at the end just a few that she copies out using the film-editing program *Final Cut Pro*. She then assembles them, juxtaposing and superimposing them on each other using an image processing program. In this chapter, Gfeller reports on her own experiences of the metamorphoses that one and the same video installation can undergo, depending on where it is exhibited, and the benefit that artists can gain from difficult spatial situations if they deal with them imaginatively.

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[28] This interview can be found on YouTube BiennaleChannel under the title *Biennale Arte 2015—Peter Greenaway (Padiglione Italia)*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKRTMKB2ijw, 29.06.2017.

Jean Paul FOURMENTRAUX's chapter sketches out the beginnings of interactive Net art in which the Internet functions as a creative tool, an online workshop and a virtual exhibition space, all at the same time. The consumer of this art form is no passive recipient, but becomes an active co-creator. The result is a collective work that can be further developed by its participants on a continuous basis. As an example of one of the earliest online artworks, Fourmentraux discusses *File room* (1994), conceived by Antoni Muntadas together with the team from the Randolph Street Gallery in Chicago. This is a virtual archive that users of the World Wide Web are constantly updating with examples of censorship—particularly in the realm of art and culture. Fourmentraux also engages with the international debate about the conservation of digital works of art that are fundamentally at risk because of the rapid onset of obsolescence of the machines, data carriers and software that they need. As an example of how important collections might counter this danger, he describes the project *variable media network*, which was founded in 1998 on the initiative of Jon Ippolito, the curator of the Solomon Guggenheim Museum with support from the Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology.[29]

Isabella DI LENARDO and **Frédéric KAPLAN** then present several results from their research project *Replica*, which they are developing at the Laboratory for the Digital Humanities at EPFL (École Polytechnique Fédérale Lausanne) and are testing with the support of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice. On 1 March 2016, the Photo Library of the Fondazione Cini began scanning its collection of circa one million reproductions using the scanner *Replica 360r/v* developed by the company

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[29] Further initiatives to prevent the decay of digital art have been proposed as part of an EU research project entitled "digital art conservation," which has organised two symposiums: *The Digital Oblivion. Substanz und Ethik in der Konservierung digitaler Medienkunst*, at the ZKM in Karlsruhe on 4 and 5 November 2010, and *Digital Art Conservation. Practical Approaches: Künstler, Programmierer, Theoretiker*, at the École supérieure des arts décoratifs (ESADS) in Strasbourg on 24 and 25 November 2010. The results of these two symposiums were published in Bernhard Serexhe, ed., *Konservierung digitaler Kunst: Theorie und Praxis. Das Projekt digital art conservation* (Vienna: Ambra, 2013).

Factum Arte.[30] In traditional photo archives such as Foto Marburg (the German Documentation Centre for Art History), art historians can search holdings only by means of verbal terms such as the name of the artist, the place of origin, the work title, topic, etc.[31] In future, the search engine *Replica* is intended to enable one to search for artworks in the image database of the Fondazione Cini according to their morphological appearance or their visual patterns. In this manner, images that have similar structures and motives are brought together in work groups or genealogical series. The two authors demonstrate their innovative development here by means of the motive of the "crouching woman" from a painting by Jacopo and Francesco Bassano, which was made famous throughout Europe in the form of an engraving by Jan Sadeler I.

David VUILLAUME is Managing director of the German Museums Association and President of the Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO). He here weighs up the pros and cons of the new media in communicating exhibition content and as an integral component of scenography. His chapter is a plea for a meaningful, proportionate use of digital technologies in museums. Museum directors and curators are being increasingly harried by the producers of digital devices, and they fear that failing to acquire these will mean missing the much-heralded "digital turn," which will then make them seem backward-looking.[32] But technology must not be a means in itself, nor cast such a spell over its user that the actual content of an exhibition becomes of secondary importance. A device intended to communicate knowledge should not hijack the user and take him to a virtual realm that allows him to forget the physical experience of actually visiting a museum or the materiality of the exhibited objects. Vuillaume engages with the question as to what tasks such a device should fulfil if it is to be meaningful to use.

Vincent SALVADÉ is the deputy general director of SUISA (the Cooperative Society of Music Authors and Publishers in Switzerland) and an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law at the University of Neuchâtel. He here investigates how copyright for digital works can be brought in line with the needs of museums. In Switzerland and the EU, museums, libraries, archives and educational establishments all enjoy certain special rights with regard to the conservation and publication of their collections. These free them from current copyright laws and allow them, for example, to make copies of their works on up-to-date digital carriers for conservation purposes, on condition that they make no commercial profit from them. The author here explains various digital rights management systems that are intended to guarantee the legal use of digital works, and he discusses whether non-profit institutions such as museums should be allowed to disregard these laws. Salvadé here discusses Swiss solutions and institutions such as the Technological Measures Monitoring Office (OMET), which could also be of interest to other countries.

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[30] Website of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini: http://www.cini.it/news/progetto-replica, 29.06.2017.

[31] See the image index for art and architecture of the image archive Foto Marburg: http://www.fotomarburg.de, 29.06.2017.

[32] With regard to whether it is at all legitimate to speak of a "digital turn," see Kossek, "Einleitung: digital?," 7-18.

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[33] See http://www.seminaire-museo.ch/archives-séminaire-2015/, 29.06.2017.

CHAPTER ONE

VIDEO, A NEW ART

MELISSA RÉRAT

The 1980s were the decade in which Western society experienced a particular upheaval, the digital revolution, triggered by the arrival on the market of the personal computer and the spread of the World Wide Web.[1] This turmoil comprised a technical but also a cultural dimension that would affect the worlds of the fine arts and museums equally. Although video made its early appearances during the first half of the 1970s, it was in the second half of the decade and the 1980s that the practice enjoyed increasing recognition as an art form. This process of legitimation was observable: the events in which video was either included or to which they were devoted grew in number, and video works entered museum collections.[2] However, this temporal coincidence should not lead us to the conclusion that the recognition of video's artistic status was the outcome of conversion to a digital format. Electronic, but not yet digital,[3] the art videos of the 1980s straddled two domains: the fine arts and new media. Their analogue nature meant they were more likely to be related to the fine arts, however, it did not embody the nobility of either a physical intervention or a material object. In addition, the moving nature of the image, the need for a device to read the work, and above all its close relationship with television classified it as one of the new media. These observations rely on a normative definition of the fine arts[4] and "new media," and not on a material definition. Much more than a simple bracketing together of artistic practices, these two domains prove to be sophisticated systems. The situation is all the more complex as a rapprochement occurred between the new media and the fine arts during the 1980s.[5] According to observers, the impact of this confluence on the fine arts varied, ranging from unruffled coexistence to the overturning of an established system of artistic norms. This paper will consider some of these observations and highlight the historiographic models that they entail.

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[1] Michael Rush, *New Media in Late 20th-Century Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 171, 176, 193; Philippe Dubois, "Machines à images. Une question de ligne générale," in *La question vidéo entre cinéma et art contemporain*, Philippe Dubois (Crisnée: Éditions Yellow Now, 2011), 55; Dominique Moulon, *Art contemporain nouveaux médias* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Scala, 2011), 64. See also the article by Olivier Donnat, "Les pratiques culturelles à l'ère numérique," *Bulletin des Bibliothèques de France* 55, no. 5 (2010): 6-12.

[2] With regard to Switzerland, mention should be made of the exhibition *Swiss Video repères: Bauermeister, Minkoff, Olesen, Otth, Urban*, held in 1978 at the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne, the festival VIPER held from 1979 in Kriens, close to Lucerne, the VideoArt Festival of Locarno, which began in 1980, the Videowoche im Wenkenpark in 1984 in Riehen in the canton of Basel-city, as well as the creation that took place in 1985 of the Centre pour l'image contemporaine Saint-Gervais in Geneva and its International Video Week. In 1979, the Kunsthaus in Zurich initiated the largest collection of art videos held by a Swiss museum; in 1980 it mounted the exhibition *Schweizer Video* and in 1989 presented the travelling show *Video-Skulptur: retrospektiv und aktuell*. In France, the Nouveaux Médias collection was begun at the Centre Pompidou in 1976, shortly before the Centre was officially opened. The MoMA in New York started to collect video works right at the end of the 1970s. And it was also in 1979 that

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the Ars Electronica festival premiered in Linz, Austria, which has been held annually since 1986. The ZKM, Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, was founded in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 1989. See Melissa Rérat, *L'art vidéo au féminin. Emmanuelle Antille, Elodie Pong, Pipilotti Rist* (Lausanne: PPUR, 2014), 15-27; Irene Schubiger, ed., *Schweizer Video-Kunst der 1970er und 1980er Jahre. Eine Rekonstruktion* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2009), 156-166; the website of the Kunsthaus Zurich: http://www.kunsthaus.ch/en/the-collection/video-collection, 29.06.2017; Christine Van Assche, ed., *Collection New Media Installations* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2006); "Les Nouveaux Médias," a learning resource created by the Centre Pompidou: http://mediation.centrepompidou.fr/education/ressources/ENS-nouveaux-medias/ENS-nouveaux-medias.html#collection, 29.06.2017; the MoMA Internet site: http://moma.org/explore/inside_out/2015/04/08/digitizing-momas-video-collection, 29.06.2017; the Ars Electronica website: http://www.aec.at/about/en/geschichte, 29.06.2017; the ZKM Internet site: http://zkm.de/ueber-uns/gruendung-geschichte, 29.06.2017.

[3] Philippe Dubois, "Pour une esthétique de l'image vidéo," in *La question vidéo entre cinéma et art contemporain*, Philippe Dubois (Crisnée: Éditions Yellow Now, 2011), 77.

[4] The terms fine arts, plastic arts and visual arts are used here synonymously. Limitations of space prevent their nuances from being explored in depth.

[5] Rush, *New Media in Late 20th-Century Art*; Van Assche, ed., *Collection New Media Installations.*

New media, art and video: Cybernetic Serendipity and the New Media collection at the Centre Pompidou

The term "new media" made its first appearance in the field of contemporary art in 1968. From 1 August to 20 October the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London presented an exhibition mounted by Jasia Reichardt called *Cybernetic Serendipity*, which brought together an assortment of very different objects: works by pioneers in infographic art, sound works, computer-generated texts, poems and drawings, cybernetic environments and remotely controlled robots. The aim of the exhibition was to highlight the possible links between art and certain cybernetic devices, such as the computer.[6] Although it was not elaborated upon, the term "new media" appeared on page 5 of the catalogue.

> New media such as plastics, or new systems such as visual music notation and the parameters of concrete poetry, inevitably alter the shape of art, the characteristics of music, and the content of poetry. New possibilities extend the range of expression of those creative people whom we identify as painters, film makers, composers, and poets.[7]

At first glance, it seems that "new media" is meant as the plural of "new medium," where "medium" is understood to be a material for creative expression, such as plastic. A closer look, however, reveals that the term "new media" describes much more than a variety of materials, relating to a process of transformation that affects the shape, characteristics and content of art, and entails an increase in its scope. Here, art is not viewed as a natural, fixed and finite domain, but as a system in which the status of artist is acquired by means of a form of identification, in other words upon completion of a process of recognition. The emergence of the new media modified and thus broadened the art system.

Eight years after this exhibition, the Musée National d'Art Moderne de Paris initiated a collection called *Nouveaux Médias*, responsibility for which it entrusted in 1982 to a newly appointed Head Curator, Christine Van Assche.[8] In 2006 the Collection Nouveaux Médias at the Centre Pompidou, more specifically the section dedicated to installations, was documented in a catalogue. In the foreword, Bruno Racine, the President of the Centre Pompidou, attempted a definition.

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[6] At that time, computers were enormous machines used only by large companies. The concept of free public access was still very remote.

[7] Jasia Reichardt, ed., *Cybernetic Serendipity* (London and New York: Studio International, 1968), 5.

[8] Van Assche, *Collection New Media Installations*, back cover.

> The term “new media” encompasses a reality that is forever evolving, since the techniques used by artists involved in this movement go back some 40 years, in the case of the oldest ones. From the earliest video works to the latest digital developments, these practices now have a history, and at the same time their horizon is constantly either expanding or shrinking.[9]

Racine insisted on the fact that at that moment the signifier “new media” had no fixed or defined meaning. However, this lack of precision does not imply that the artistic practices concerned, in particular video art inasmuch as the earliest ones are concerned, should not be included in the historic context. These practices have a history but one that is distinct from the normative and teleological history of the fine arts. Like Lev Manovich, Racine considers the new media to be a category apart, distinct from the fine arts, whose development should be established, so that on the one hand its history might be defined, and on the other it might be theorized.[10]

The director of the Musée National d’Art Moderne, Alfred Pacquement, also discussed video, which he described as the origin and principal constituent of the collection.

> These video works, as they were first called, were primarily the product of a handful of fringe experiments, aimed mainly at keeping some kind of record of ephemeral performances. But the television object, together with image manipulations on the cathode tube, the idea of projecting a moving image, and the various ways of renewing its presentation have all developed over the years, eventually becoming one of the most present of art forms in the last decades.[11]

Unlike Racine, Pacquement considered the videographic origin of the practices that are today grouped under the heading “new media” not as indicative of the root of a new category, but as an unimportant detail. Even the expression “video works” is seen in perspective, indeed almost denigrated as being an ephemeral term destined to disappear. The marginal nature of these practices implies the existence of a reference domain in relation to which the video work is peripheral and nothing more than a material support used to keep a recording of short-lived artistic performances. It also suggested that the reference domain is none other than that of the fine arts. In Pacquement's opinion video creation must utilise the "television object" (the monitor), manipulate the image, take the form of a projection or incorporate a mise-en-scène in order for it to be considered art. In other words, video has to model itself on the paradigms of recognized art forms (sculpture [object], visual arts [image], cinema [projection] or theatre [mise-en-scène]) for it to be promoted from the status of a recording support to that of an artistic medium.

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[9] Bruno Racine, “Forewords” in *Collection New Media Installations*, ed. Christine Van Assche (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2006), 11.

[10] “[…] an attempt at both a record and a theory of the present.” Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 7.

[11] Alfred Pacquement, “Forewords” in *Collection New Media Installations*, ed. Christine Van Assche (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2006), 12.

Thus, within the same institution, two normative definitions are given of the new media, of which video is a part: for Racine the new media are a category distinct from the fine arts, while for Pacquement they evolve under the umbrella of the fine arts, whether they are insignificant and destined to disappear, or are fully assimilated into it, embracing its norms and allowing their particularities to abate.

The art of video-making: the Paris Biennale

The transition from a "material" definition of the category new media—meaning as a set of new materials—to a normative definition—as a system of practices and rationales—whether through empowerment or by their inclusion in the fine arts as discussed above, would have an impact on the legitimation of video. It was in relation to the fine arts that video needed to position itself at the end of the 1970s. Its inclusion in the Paris Biennale occurred during this period.

With the goal of being an "international presentation of young artists," the Paris Biennale aimed to stage a comprehensive perspective of contemporary creation. As from its second edition in 1961, the Biennale was organised in sections, within which the artists were presented by country.

- plastic arts (painting, sculpture, drawing, engraving)
- musical composition (chamber music, orchestral music)
- book illustration
- books on art
- films on art
- theatrical decors.[12]

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[12] Translated from the original French rules, which can be seen in *Extraits du Règlement de la 2ème Biennale de Paris*, on the website of the archives of the

These sections reflect the system drawn up by the organisers of the Biennale to structure the creation of the day. Surprisingly, instead of proposing a system that mirrored the art of 1961, they pasted together bits from various earlier systems. The category "plastic arts" represents the four arts taught at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture founded in 1648.[13] "Musical composition" combines the two forms of music subsumed by opera, a structure that in France dates back to the Académie Royale de Musique created in 1669.[14] Book illustration, traditionally associated with painting, drawing and engraving, was given its own category. This may be explained by the blossoming of the artist's book in the 20th century, which also benefited from having its own category at the Biennale. Regarding films on art and theatrical decors, the former focused on the use of video and film as simply a medium for documenting art, while the latter centred on a particular practice in the same way as the book illustration section did. Thus, it was within this hotchpotch of categories taken from different systems that video art had to find its place.

When video made its debut at the Biennale, in 1973, two video works were included in the plastic arts section.[15] Its inclusion in the visual arts was discreet and does not seem to have required any explanation (Fig. 1-1). In 1975, 28 artists entered videos.[16] A new article was included in the rules.

Biennale de Paris: http://archives.biennaledeparis.org/fr/1961/gen/reglement.htm, 29.06.2017.

[13] Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics Part I." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12, no. 4 (1951): 522. See also Christian Michel, *L'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* (Geneva/Paris: Librairie Droz, 2012).

[14] Music was considered distinct from dance, which was the concern of the Académie Royale de Danse, founded in 1661. See Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics Part I," 522.

[15] Doywe Jan Bakker (Netherlands) and Telewissen-Gruppe (F.R.G.). Information retrieved from the *Index exhaustif des noms et groupes d'artistes ayant participé à la Biennale de Paris de 1959 à 1985*, available on the website of the Archives de la Critique d'Art, Rennes, http://www.archivesdelacritiquedart.org/uploads/isadg_complement/fichier/80/BDP-Index_des_artistes_de_1959___1985.pdf, 29.06.2017.

[16] Marina Abramovic, Lynda Benglis, Christian Boltanski, Pinchas Cohen-Gan, Juan Downey, Michael Druks, Valie Export, John Fernie, Terry Fox, Hermine Freed, Rebecca Horn, Pierre-Alain Hubert, Wolf Knoebel, Darcy Lange, Barbara and Michael Leisgen, Urs Lüthi, Ronald Michaelson, Miloslav Moucha, Antoni Muntadas, Hitoshi Nomura, Jacques-Louis Nyst, Friederike Pezold, Fabrizio

> The 9th Biennale de Paris aims at providing information about international artistic activity. In addition to the presentation of works, it is open to any kind of event, to any mode of expression, including film and video as an extension of the visual art.[17]

This article is founded on a discrepancy between the presentation of works of art and the presentation of videos as a means of providing supporting information. The introduction of video at the Biennale was represented as being a constituent part of a general process of information, which was the event's primary objective. Video was therefore not included among the arts exhibited. However, the inclusion of this information offered the visual arts with a means to expand their scope. That they were able to benefit in this way is because their category was not normative. The model of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, mentioned with regard to the rules for the 1961 Biennale, seems to have been abandoned.

The discrepancy reappeared in the organisation of the event. While a special committee was formed to select the video works, the works themselves were not assigned to an independent section.[18] In order for the video works to be selected, specialised knowledge was required in addition to that relating to the fine arts, but, when it came to presenting the works to the public, recognition of this fact was dissipated by the absence of an independent video section. The catalogue included the first Biennale text on the subject of video, which was written by the artist and critic Douglas Davis, "Video in the Mid-70's: Beyond Left, Right, and Duchamp," which explains the reasons for the discrepancy. Davis used the expression "video art" with the greatest caution and placed it between inverted commas.

Plessi, Ulrike Rosenbach, Keith Sonnier, Francesc Torres, William Viola. This list is taken from Douglas Davis, "Video in the Mid-70's: Beyond Left, Right, and Duchamp" in *9e biennale de Paris, Manifestation internationale des jeunes artistes. 19 sept.-2 nov. 1975* (Paris: Biennale de Paris), 1975, n.p.

[17] "Excerpts from the Rules," Clause 4, in *9ème biennale de Paris*, n.p.

[18] "The International Committee is responsible collectively for all the decisions taken, the choice of the broader aesthetic issues, and the selection of the artists invited to the 9th Biennale. Regarding those artists that have employed video, it has delegated its powers to a committee formed by Walter Hopps, Douglas Davis and Wolfgang Becker (chairman). With respect to the films, each member of the International Committee was able to invite three artists." In: *9e biennale de Paris*, n.p (own translation).

> In the face of a similar cut into its own frame of experience, the world of art is standing firm and inflexible, acting as though the phenomenon we have come to call (unfortunately) “video art” had not let any blood whatsoever. On the right, there is a steady barrage of criticism aimed at the supposed inability of video artists to create entirely new image-systems, devoid of the memories of painting. On the classic left, among the members of what is now the congealed avant-garde of the 1950’s and 1960’s, there is an anxious attempt to join and to re-form a movement in the name of anti-art populism, thus establishing it as no more than the electronic extension of Duchamp (not to say McLuhan).
>
> It is to remind you that video fits potentially into neither frame—it is not concerned either with image-making or with demolishing the object (a futile and fraudulent enterprise in any case)—that I presently write. It is not my intent here to boost or to hail “video art” as art (in fact, I often find it tedious and infantile, when so judged) but to define its meaning and intent properly, at a time when it is being both praised and attacked for the wrong reasons.[19]

For Davis the question was not one of knowing whether video is an art, nor, if that is indeed the case, whether this art falls within the domain of the fine arts. Much more than a new medium, video was above all a phenomenon that influenced the entire art world.[20] It did not fall within the fine arts (creation of images) or contemporary art (destruction of the object). Video was an independent domain whose specificity needed to be studied as a whole for its system to be clearly identified. It was undoubtedly this condition that brought about the desire for a video selection committee but the lack of a separate exhibition section.[21] This anomaly was rectified in 1977 at the 10th Paris Biennale. The selection of the artists and their works continued to be made by a dedicated committee but this time they were given their own section. The idea of an autonomous practice independent of the plastic arts, as argued by Davis

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[19] Davis, “Video in the Mid-70’s: Beyond Left, Right, and Duchamp,” n.p.

[20] He begins his text by referring to the sociologist Erving Goffman, a colleague of Howard Becker, who coined the concept of “art worlds.” See Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008 [1982]).

[21] My archive investigations (Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Pompidou, Paris; Archives de la critique d’art, Rennes) and reading of the Biennale’s catalogues turned up no mention of an autonomous section in the 1975 Biennale. My conclusion runs counter to that of the Archives de la critique d’art, which specifies a video section in its *Index exhaustif des noms et groupes d’artistes ayant participé à la Biennale de Paris de 1959 à 1985*, available on the site: http://www.archivesdelacritiquedart.org/uploads/isadg_complement/fichier/80/BDP-Index_des_artistes_de_1959___1985.pdf, 29.06.2017.