THE CULTURAL MEMORY OF CLASSICAL CINEMA* IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT: The Cultural Memory of Classical Cinema in the Digital Age. The centenary (1995) and the turn of the millennium (2000) constitute Cinema[1] as a medium of the past and from the past. Aged 100 and affected by the arrival of new technologies, we ask ourselves the question: is classical Cinema a human value worth preserving in the digital age? What role do artists- in their collaboration with art museums and galleries- play in this process? The digital threat to classical cinematography has caused many reactions among artists and filmmakers working with analog techniques. As a response, they engaged Cinema's materiality and historicity: their renewed interest was not only in the personalities (directors, actors, etc.) but mainly in the tangible dimension and hidden mechanism that made Cinema create moving images: the celluloid, the cinematic apparatus (projector, screen, etc.), and also the phenomenology of film viewing in a theatrical setting, as well as film archives and the memories that movies had instilled. *The cultural memory of classical Cinema in the digital age* refers to these projects that create a tangible connection with Cinema at the center of cultural change. The global discourse of the research is completed with a project that focuses on locality and represents the source that inspired the current study, only to conclude that probably the most precious human value behind analog Cinema is a united community that shares a common sentiment: their sincere love for Cinema overall.

Keywords: *black box; white cube; cultural memory; prosthetic memory; archival art, analog.*

Black Box in the White Cube

The occasion of Cinema's 100th birthday (1995), and the turn of the millennium (2000) that brought along the implementation of digital technologies promoted centered attention on the analog medium. Also, the consecutive closing of cinemas and other belonging buildings as well as the subsequent discovery of abandoned or hidden cinematic materials opened a conversation about an ongoing debate: is classical Cinema a human value worth preserving in the digital age? Since this question have been asked by scholars, archivists and many other professionals, institutions such museums and galleries have responded by increasingly accommodating the traditional conditions of cinematic exhibition, creating de facto black boxes that by today exist easily alongside their familiar white cubes. "The archive and the museum can and must take over from the film studio, the distributor and the exhibitor, to save, restore, preserve and valorize as artworks as well as heritage and cultural patrimony. So why not make museums the permanent home of cinema?"[2] asks German film historian Thomas Elsaesser. When there is no turning back from classical cinema's digital turn, the museum, the art gallery—and by extension, the art world—has become a place to create its memorial and remembrance at the same time. Under the protective custody of the museum, Cinema becomes the object of the retrospective consciousness. The process of the musealization of analogue Cinema has the potential to reflect upon, and to encourage reflection in audiences: "cinema, finally come of age as the art form of the 20th century, and has earned the right to enter into the traditional temple of the arts."[3] Or as author Andrew V. Uroskie formulated, "Walter Benjamin described the manner in which technologies become uniquely visible in their birth and obsolescence—how a technology's obsolescence can trigger remembrance of the utopian aspirations of its birth."[4] In the twilight of the analog, and the emergence of the digital, the gesture of placing the black box under the reflexivity of the white cube informs Cinema's past, but this tendency also shows that classical Cinema is, on its own, a human value worth preserving for future generations. The museum's role is not

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2   Elsaesseer, Thomas, *Ingmar Bergman in the museum?, Thresholds, limits, conditions of possibility*, p.1.
3   Ibid., p.1.
4   Uroskie, V. Andrew, *Between the Black Box and the White Cube*, p. 13.

only to collect, preserve, and interpret objects of cultural importance, but also to foster dialogue, curiosity and self-reflection by making them available for public viewing through different exhibits. Alfred Hitchcock was the first mainstream director who in 2000/2001 'entered' the Museum with an exhibition devoted to him in Montreal and at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Entitled *Hitchcock et l'Art: Coincidences fatales,* the show presented film fragments, home movies, cameras, special effects devices, props from the sets, scripts, letters, director's sketches, drafts, and photos both from private collections and from studio locations, as well as documentation of all the many unfinished and abandoned projects. In a similar manner, Stanley Kubrick was presented in Frankfurt in 2004, an exhibition that also toured Berlin, Melbourne, Zurich, and Rome. Alongside Hitchcock and Kubrick, year by year, the seats placed in the 'Cinema Pantheon' began to be filled more and more by classical personalities through the process of organizing similar retrospective exhibitions: Michelangelo Antonioni and Martin Scorsese were presented at the Dutch EYE Film Museum, Fritz Lang at the Austrian Film Museum, and Jean Renoir at the Cinémathèque Française. Also, entire museums dedicated to film directors such as the Sergej Parajanov Museum in Armenia, or the Chaplin Chaplin Museum which got opened in Chaplin's own home at the Manoir de Ban in Corsier-sur-Vevey, Switzerland, are only a few examples to mention. Thus, the 'retrospective fever' clearly demonstrates that the exposition of biographies and filmographies of classical personalities in the digital age supports the fact that artistic and intellectual innovation represents a common human value that needs to be shared. But what happens to the technical apparatus of classical cinema? Is this valorized in some way? What role artists- in their collaboration with art museums and galleries- do play in this process? The digital threat to classic cinematography has caused many reactions among artists and filmmakers working with analog techniques, who in return engaged with cinema's materiality and historicity. The renewed interest was shown not only in the personalities (directors, actors, etc.), but mostly in the tangible dimension and hidden mechanism that made Cinema create moving images: the celluloid, the cinematic apparatus (projector, screen, etc.), and, the phenomenology of film viewing in a theatrical setting. In the following, a series of projects that create a tangible connection with Cinema at the center of cultural change will be presented. The global discourse of the research is completed with a project that focuses on locality and represents the source that inspired the current study.

The phenomenology of film viewing in theatrical setting

It is well known that today going to the cinema, is only one option among the possibilities of watching audio-visual material right at home on a computer or TV. These new options amplified by the changes in the film distribution method led to the closing of many cinemas. To capture this phenomenon, artist couple Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller focused on the phenomenology of film viewing in theatrical setting, an experience which today could be the best described with the expression 'nothing has changed and everything has changed'. The project entitled *Paradise Institute* was originally produced for the Canadian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. As visitors approach and climb a few stairs, they enter a dimly lit interior complete with red carpet and two rows of velvet-covered seats. The interior of the installation resembles a mini theater: once seated, they peer over the balcony onto a miniature replica of a grand old movie theatre created with hyper perspective. Seventeen viewers can be seated for each 13-minute screening. After having this sensation of entering a cinema, visitors put on the headphones provided and the projection begins: "at least two stories run simultaneously. There is the 'visual film' and its accompanying soundtrack that unfolds before the viewers; layered over this is the 'aural action' of a supposed audience. The film is a mix of genres: it is part noir, part thriller, part sci-fi, and part experimental. What is more particular about the installation is the personal binaural 'surround sound' that every individual in the audience experiences through the headphones.[5] Within the 'doubly enclosed space', the visitor of the gallery turns into a spectator who experiences the two narrative threads- the dark and mysterious narrative of the movie which blends with the 'audio events' of the supposed audience. This state of mind creates the 'spectator's double consciousness'—the simultaneous experience of real and recorded sounds, and the spectator's ability to distinguish between them which is fundamental to the experience the work."[6] As the story evolves, this two narrative threads break down completely when a diabolical man merely evoked in the narrative seems to become detached from it, crossing over into our space on this side of the screen. A sense of vertigo overtakes us as we are constantly

5   Cardiff, Janet and Bures Miller, George, *The Paradise Institute*. Retrieved from https://cardiffmiller.com/installations/the-paradise-institute/ (accessed July 7, 2022).
6   Uroskie, V. Andrew, *Between the Black box and the White cube*, p.2.

thrust into new and different locations. The diabolical man, now beside us in the audience, laughingly describes our predicament: "You thought you were pretty smart—playing both sides. How long did you think it could last?" We hear a crowd of people pounding on the plywood theater within which we are seated, demanding that we "get out!" As the crowd begins shouting a countdown, we see a burning house on the screen before the film abruptly ends, the doors to the outside open up, and we file out of the black box for the newly comforting light of the gallery."[7] Cardiff and Bures Miller are immersing viewers in this simulated environment where visitor's reflect on the phenomenology of film viewing in theatrical setting: "we can give ourselves over to the spectacle because we are secure in the knowledge that it is a spectacle and that we are situated on the outside of that spectacle, looking in." All the elements are created to draw our attention to the staged character of the illusion: the miniaturized diorama, the replica of the grand old movie theatre created with hyper perspective engaging the tradition of realistic trompe l'oeil in contrast with the full-sized chairs, in which the spectator's sit; the headphones betray the importance of the audio and the binaural technology used re-creates the spatial location of the cinema theater- "while aurally isolated from the actual people around us, we hear the conversations of people who seem to surround us".[8] The audio component is at the core of the work forasmuch as guides the two narrative threads and 'aims to trigger emotional and physical reactions, which in turn affect visual perception.'

Analog film technology

By today, the industrial context of analog film technology is almost entirely switched by the possibilities of the digital. The projection rooms remained empty, and the celluloid simply no longer runs on the usual projection devices, or better said, does not run at an industrial level anymore. Thus, the technological mechanism that has always been isolated from the spectators is now revealed. Out of use, the working mechanism behind these devices can finally be presented and admired by spectators. Matilde Nardelli's essay, *Moving Pictures: Cinema and Its Obsolescence* launches with a quote from philosopher Régis Debray, who in his 1997 book *Transmitting Cul-*

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7   Ibid., p. 4.
8   Ibid., p. 2.

ture, draws a distinction between art and technology through comparison of their respective afterlives in the museum. Thus decontextualized, "the art object transmits futurity. The once-revolutionary industrial object, however, once it is withdrawn from circulation, transmits only pastness."[9] She disagrees and re-addresses Debary's statement: "despite their emphasis on oldness or decay – or, in fact, by very virtue of this process – these re-enactments ultimately 'transmit', to use Debray's expression, not only a less negative picture of cinema's fate, but a less negative picture of the idea of cinema as such: one in which, paradoxically, cinema's continuation and future are articulated precisely through obsolescence and transience."[10] A re-mystification of the cinematic apparatus appears when cinema's 'original' materials shown as part and parcel of an artwork- cinematic materiality, its machines and mechanics- if not, indeed, as the artwork itself. While the works she chooses to analyze are original old cinematic machines, current artists seem to inverse their gaze and create projects through which they expose the old using new technologies. The 'machines' that they create to seem old in fact use new contemporary materials. For example, Julien Maire builds a stereolithographic projector where instead of film images he is using 3D printed Objects. The display looks like we have stepped back in time, but when you learn of the technology used, you realize that this would not have been possible in any decade but the one we currently live in. Julien Maire not only reproduce, but also re-invent the apparatus creating the phantasmagoria, i.e. the illusionary effect of film, in order to 'allegorize the machine' itself. His works are hybrids of genres and media, exploring the physicality of the moving image.[11] Maire is known for his uniquely innovative cinema producing methods, which create 'films' without the actual 'film'.[12]

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9   Nardelli, Matilde, *Moving Pictures: Cinema and Its Obsolescence*, The Journal of Visual Culture, p.261.

10   Ibid., p.245.

11   Interview Maire, Julien. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGT-u PgJrao (accessed July 7, 2022).

12   Maire, Julien's project *Demi-Pas (Half-Step)* transforms the image machine into a time machine by evoking both mechanical and physical movements. The adapted projector of his earlier work becomes a computer-assisted one in this work. The "stepper motors" and the "half steps" of human motion are linked as the projected images establish a dynamic relationship between image and movement, sensation and narrative. Maire's performances play in the interstices between machine and image and provoke a serious reconsideration of the "cinemaginary" interface. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAKsczdPiFs (accessed July 7, 2022).

The title of the work *Relief*[13] refers to the conceptual game around 3D-cinema, what the French used to call 'relief cinema' (as in 'bas-relief'). Like so many prototypes from early cinema, the piece consists of just a short loop: we see an endless animation titled called *Man at Work*[14] of a human silhouette digging in the ground and accumulating the earth on a heap. *Relief* evokes materiality, while '3D' is commonly understood as a mathematical and computational concept. Julian Maire's installation[15] is deeply ambiguous in the sense of double-awareness that characterizes the spectator's viewing attitude during the projection of even an action movie. The realist conception of film viewing states that the viewer, while being immersed in the optical illusion of the film narrative, is also secondarily aware of the cinematic situation (screen, projection, projector, etc.). In other words he or she does not cease to be conscious of the film apparatus. His other works reactivate pre-cinematic technologies such as magic lantern and camera obscura, to showcase the developmental history of new media including the projection technique of film. Another project entitled *Exploded Film* by Sandy Claes & Daan Wampers[16] uses a technique which reminds us of the of pre-cinematic animation devices like the zoetrope and phenakistoscope. *Exploded Film* returns to these early principles in a new, digital way: "in our contemporary visual culture there are a lot of ways to manipulate the image; the viewer doubts the authenticity of digital film. That's why not only the resulting film is important, but also the production process needs attention."[17] The installation consists of a rollercoaster shaped track onto which are placed sequential drawings. When the camera passes this track up and down is moving through the short sequences producing a 'live' animated film in which the viewers are part of. The artists reversed the process of classic animation-filmmaking- instead of placing drawings under a

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13   Interactive Media Art Laboratory. Retrieved from http://imal.org/en/relief (accessed July 7, 2022).

14   Maire, Julien. Retrieved from http://v2.nl/events/julien-maire-man-at-work (accessed July 7, 2022).

15   Maire, Julien. Retrieved from http://julienmaire.blogspot.com/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

16   Claes, Sandy & Wampers, Daan, Exploded Film. Retrieved from https://vimeo.com/48133460 (accessed July 7, 2022).

17   Claes, Sandy & Wampers, Daan. Exploded Film. Retrieved from https://www.werktank.org/projects/13/sandy-claes-daan-wampers-exploded-film (accessed July 7, 2022).

fixed camera; they fix the drawings and move the camera through it.[18] This experimental technique is based on their previous film called *Domino*.[19] It is obvious that these modes of exhibiting cinematic experiences carry reference to the very beginning of cinema's birth. Tom Gunning, the author who contextualized cinema's early reception and its exhibition practices as "cinema of attraction", explained that early audiences went to exhibitions "to see machines demonstrated", thus to watch the newest technological wonder, rather than to view film.[20] Importantly, part of the allure of the cinema of attractions is the very display of the technology itself, a tendency that these instances of cinema in the gallery seem to display: a fascination with the apparatus and the spectacle it is able to produce.

Celluloid

"Film, the material that created the existence of cinema, the photochemical analogue film, is our dream and our cultural memory on a silver screen."[21], affirms the acclaimed visual artist Tacita Dean. The diminution of film as a photographic and analogical medium for recording images is another contemporary debated problem that transcends the film industry and enters the art world. In its obsolescence, recent tendencies in art have chosen to emphasize the medium and expose its materiality: Tacita Dean herself, to sustain her affirmation quoted above created the installation entitled FILM[22], which was at once monumental and a monument to the medium

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18   Claes, Sandy & Wampers, Daan. Animation. Retrieved from https://vimeo.com/26269641. (accessed July 7, 2022).

19   Claes, Sandy & Wampers, Daan. Domino. Retrieved from https://vimeo.com/8821153 (accessed July 7, 2022).

20   Gunning, Tom, *The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde*, in Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, London: British Film Institute, p.58

21   Dean, Tacita, *Save Film*: "I love it for its physicality, its materiality, it is one of our greatest inventions, and has enabled us to watch and imagine ourselves for over a 100 of years." Film is chemistry, chemistry that has produced the miracle of the moving image: the internal light that film has and the deep relationship to time: "the celluloid keeps the light within its fabric and holds in its emulsion the imprint of time. It is our cultural and historical memory: a place of imagination, poetry, art and life. *It is the Rosetta Stone of our time*." Retrieved from http://www.savefilm.org/savefilm-org/# (accessed July 7, 2022).

22   Dean, Tacita. FILM. Retrieved from http://www2.tate.org.uk/tacitadean/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

of film. The work commissioned by Tate Modern was projected in a continuous loop onto a gigantic white monolith standing 13-metre-tall at the end of a darkened Turbine Hall. The 11-minute silent 35 mm colour and black & white film with hand-tinted sequences, was made using analogue film-making techniques. The sprocket holes that run vertically along both edges, created by masking in-camera, reinforces a sense of the installation's materiality, heightening our awareness that we are watching a celluloid film. "The vertical film is a portrait of the medium itself", says in an interview the artist.[23] She sustains her argument by further explaining that "the filmstrip as the material support for the image makes a different cinema and different art as film and digital are different mediums; thus they create two different support for the image. Every single frame of film is formed by photochemical reactions of light upon crystals, every one of 24 frames per second is like a snowflake, its grain is compositionally unique, and it gives depth and darkness and internal movement. The celluloid is actually inimitable despite in billion dollar industry invested to copy its look, digital is a brilliant semblance, surrogate, a reproduction of the film, but in the end is like a fake flower, the copies are near perfect, but it doesn't t smell and it doesn't transform in unanticipated ways", concludes Dean.[24] In relation to her ongoing championing of medium specificity, she celebrates the masterful techniques of analogue filmmaking as opposed to digital: the element of chance in what is being made with film, the spontaneity and blindness, emphasize the chance, the accident. Film mistakes are beautiful, the over-exposure or the shadow of the under-exposure, the bleaching of the frame, a flare are only emphasizing the celluloid relationship to alchemy, to magic. A randomness that's part of the medium and part of the process- "the in-between things, the things we don't imagine that just happen is what constitutes its poetic texture, the spontaneity, the mistakes, the silence and the

23   Dean, Tacita, *Interview*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dO-EXl_3lzI (accessed July 7, 2022).

24   Dean, Tacita. "My relationship to film begins at that moment of shooting, and ends in the moment of projection. Along the way, there are several stages of magical transformation that imbue the work with varying layers of intensity. This is why the film image is different from the digital image: it is not only emulsion versus pixels, or light versus electronics but something deeper – something to do with poetry." Retrieved from https://www.starkwhite.co.nz/tacita-dean-asks-why-the-film-industry-is-so-invested-in-destroying-film/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

blindness. This is where the emotion is born."[25] The installation is made by means of returning back to the origins of early cinema using the energy of a new medium-the handmade 'antique' techniques that produce effects of glowing, flickering and shimmering. Dean continuously emphasizes the tactile nature of film and the fact that it must be physically cut and stuck together with tape to create edits or run through the camera multiple times to create montages and layers.[26] *FILM* feels like a surreal visual poem, the colors are blinking and flashing across dreamlike collages and montages as Dean uses multiple exposures within a single film frame to mix time in one frame. She is also including images from the natural world such as waterfalls that run backwards, a pink flower, a grasshopper and a snail: "in water, Dean had found an apt metaphor for film—for its continual but spasmodic movement, its translucence, and its ability to capture light."[27] It is obvious that the artist wanted her installation "to be spectacular." To achieve this, she saw no paradox in the fact that her masks owed their existence to digital technology: in her experiment, Dean together with architect Bölling utilized the technology of the 3-D printing to create a plastic mask for the aperture gate masking, sprockets and other shapes inside the image. Dean's seventy-eight 3-D masks were made with a digital machine.[28] "It's just a tool," she said.[29] Tacita Dean's work demonstrates that, in the digital age, there can be a distinctly auratic quality about film.

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25   Dean, Tacita. Save Film, Cinema as Language. Retrieved from http://www.savefilm. org/frontpage/tacita-dean-save-this-language/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

26   Dean, Tacita: "Working alone on a cutting table over many weeks, I cut my film out of the rush print. Using tape, I stick the shots together, working as both artist and artisan. It is the heart of my process, and the way I form the film is intrinsically bound up with these solitary hours of watching, spooling and splicing." Retrieved from https:// www.theparisreview.org/blog/2012/06/25/dance-to-the-music-of-time-tacita-dean-at-the-new-museum/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

27   Eakin, Emily. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/10/31/ celluloid-hero (accessed July 7, 2022).

28   Dean, Tacita: "Despite of digital's immediacy; celluloid is mysterious- after the shooting you cannot watch back the material, a certain time passes by until the film is processed in the laboratory, while the digital image is immediate- "With film, you become more aware of what you are shooting - due to its very nature you are limited, you can't go on shooting indefinitely as you can with digital - you inevitably become more aware of the film that you are making during the filming process, which would be a shame to lose…"

29   Dean, Tacita. Celluloid hero. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/10/31/celluloid-hero (accessed July 7, 2022).

Cinema and the Computer

These complex processes can only arouse admiration in every human being, but to further enhance the wonder, some artists such Wim Janssen, combines and imitates visual elements from three generations of visual media: the material aspect of film, the empty signal of video and the binary logic of digital. In his installation called *Continuization Loop*, the most important attributes of these media are absent: there is no construction of an illusory filmspace, there is no real video image and there are no computers involved.[30] The exchange between the photographic, the cinematic, and the electronic in contemporary art marks the transition between the disappearance of film, and the rebirth of cinema in the form of programmable algorithms: *Cinema Gives Birth to a Computer* and *Cinema becomes a slave to the computer*, are titles through which scholar Lev Manovich defines these moments as being a synthesis of the two histories: "Zuse's film with its strange superimposition of the binary over iconic, anticipates the process which gets underway half a century later: the translation, which is taking place today, of all existing media into numerical data accessible for the computers, the convergence of all media[31], including film, to digital code. Cinema and computer - the Jacquard loom and the Analytical Engine - merge into one".[32] The consequence of the dialectic between the old and the new technologies is two-fold. On the one hand it reactivates and reinstates old apparatuses; on the other hand it allows the new to be thought of in terms of the old by highlighting continuities between the two phases of the history of moving image technology, and accentuating memory (reference to the past) and movement (reference to the future). These continuities, in turn, transcend the transience and obsolescence[33] of both physical and dig-

30   Janssen, Wim, *Continuization Loop*. Retrieved from https://vimeo.com/22082408 (accessed July 7, 2022).

31   On convergence culture read also Jenkins, Henry, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press, New York.

32   Manovich, Lev, *New Media: a User's Guide*, p.6. Retrieved from http://manovich. net/content/04-projects/026-new-media-a-user-s-guide/23_article_1999.pdf (accessed July 7, 2022).

33   Krauss, Rosalind, *A medium's own obsolescence*. Rosalind Krauss asserts that Cinema's obsolescence offers these artists the opportunity for 'reinventing the medium' by hinting at how they fabricate their expressive means, therefore demonstrating that the medium enters into 'a new relation to aesthetic production that can be both projec-

ital, ensuring the continuation of the cinematic despite the ongoing decay and disappearance of its (once) current apparatus.[34] Film survives only in galleries and museums where the physical encounter becomes so critical. While institutions focus on the physical encounter, "the materiality of the cinematic experience remains tangible."[35] The decision to work in an old medium presupposes the artists´ self-consciousness of the medium and their self-avowed intent to do so. The continual transformation among the mediums discussed above reveals the consciousness with which moving image makers turn back to an old(er) medium, especially when faced with the power of new(er) media enter and the zones of production and creation which once belonged to the old: "for this is an artistic phenomenon aware of its own historicity and transience – aware, in short, of its own location in time."[36] For this very reason, in the following, the global discourse of the research is completed with a case study that focuses on locality.

From global histories to local stories: MEMORY REEL

The current research was inspired by a fairly recent discovery of an abandoned Film Warehouse located in Cluj Napoca city. Previously, during communist Romania, the movies that were going to be played in cinemas were distributed from Bucharest to several designated centers in the country. Here, the celluloid was controlled to have no defects and was sent to cinemas for viewing. Firstly the quality films were shown in the bigger cities. After the projection, the film rolls returned to these centers where they were checked and repaired. A team made up of qualified personnel, manually checked every square of the film. Already showing wear and tear, these films were further sent on to the villages that owned cinemas, then again were returned and stored in a kind of archive room. The Film Warehouse located in Cluj-Napoca city was one of these centers, which became

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tive and mnemonic'. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXi4pDicSu8 (accessed July 7, 2022).

34   Nardelli, Matilde, *Moving Pictures: Cinema and Its Obsolescence*, The Journal of Visual Culture, p.260.

35   Rodowick, David Norman, *The Virtual Life of Film*, p.26.

36   Nardelli, Matilde, *Moving Pictures: Cinema and Its Obsolescence*, The Journal of Visual Culture, p.245.

outdated both in technological and economic terms. After '89 smaller private film distribution companies could much easily organize a cheaper distribution of reels to cinemas, so the deposit was less and less needed. Besides, the arrival of digital technologies completely surpassed the whole system, so as it usually happens in Eastern Europe, where the past is so fast forgotten, after the collapse of the company, everything was completely abandoned. When the place was re-discovered, it became the main topic of discussion, especially among moviegoers and cinema professionals. Intensely publicized, it began to be visited by many people, and each took home films, boxes, and documents left on the spot before they were destroyed in the campaign to clean up the space. From such a pile of film, the celluloid installation entitled *MEMORY REEL* was created, and on the spot of the Film Warehouse was made the film that presents the cinematic memories of the various visitors, a project whose artistic statement will be presented in what follows.

Archival Art

"...the archive not only preserves the past or takes action against contemporary forms of amnesia, but it is a place where the suture between past and present is located in an indeterminate zone between the document and the monument."[37]

       MEMORY REEL is inscribed within the category of archival art[38] and uses material from an abandoned film warehouse that contains almost the entire range of films traded in Romania's cinemas between 1964 and 2005. The abandoned celluloid is part of the work and also makes the work: wrapped around as a 'memory-reel' and illuminated from below, the circularly patterned memory layers become visible. The looped videos featuring interviews accompany the memory sculpture to re-create and rethink the meaning and loss of identity, history, and memory, of the abandoned 'Ar-

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37   Enwezor, Okwui, *Archive Fever. Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, New York, *International Center of Photography*, 2008., pp. 46-47. See also the exhibition *Archive Fever. Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* . Retrieved from https://www.icp.org/exhibitions/archive-fever-uses-of-the-document-in-contemporary-art (accessed July 7, 2022).

38   Artspace Editors, *Archival Art*. Retrieved from https://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/art_market/the_art_worlds_love_affair_with_archives-51976 (accessed July 7, 2022).

chive' and Cinema; and also investigates the impact of this process and the role of the artist who becomes more and more a filter, a collector, an archivist, a post-producer of already existent cultural material.[39] As archival art pays homage to a historical figure in the form of a monument, or by using the figure's life and or work as an organizing theme,[40] Adela Negustor used film stills, photographs, and other recollections, to re-create a rich history culled from the real life and stories told by Szende Bulbuca, a woman who was a film restorer at the Film Warehouse for 37 years, from the early days when the place opened.[41] Through Szende's character, Adela began conversations about the issues that risk being forgotten. Archival art[42] uses public or private collections or found materials to create new public archives, placing the information within a new context to be interpreted by the viewer. The rapid emergence of digital media makes possible and necessary a new form of public cultural memory: the proposed long-term intermedia project is devoted to forging to establish a creative framework that reanimates the past and creates access to cinematic memories. This importantly includes the bridging of the personal and the collective. Adela's interest lies in constructing/developing a creative attitude toward the past that challenges/invite the audience to think of cinema in ways never tried before, to adopt a critical approach, reflect upon the medium itself and the cultural formation of cinema; and also to seek further knowledge and understanding. The project can be accessed on the website called www. transcinemaexpress.ro[43] in the section MEMORY REEL, where a review made by scholar Gyenge Zsolt describes the work as follows: "Adela Negustor collected the damaged film strips that were still in the deposit a few years ago, and by creating this installation saved them from complete dis-

39   As defined by Domenico Quaranta, The artist as an archivist in the Internet Age. Retrieved from http://www.linkartcenter.eu/archives/2120#more-2120 (accessed July 7, 2022).

40   Artspace Editors, *Archival Art*. Retrieved from https://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/art_market/the_art_worlds_love_affair_with_archives-51976 (accessed July 7, 2022).

41   Bulbuca, Szende, the woman who worked her entire life at the Film Warehouse in Cluj-Napoca.

42   Foster, Hal, *An Archival Impulse*. Retrieved from https://otherreality.wordpress.com/2009/05/01/an-archival-impulse/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

43   Negustor, Adela, *MEMORY REEL*. Retrieved from www.transcinemaexpress.ro (accessed July 7, 2022).

appearance. However, we have to point out, that this is not a museological action, as we don't know what films in which order has been integrated into the work – so there is no real archive here but a mere archive of memories. This installation is a sort of monument to cinema, to the classical cinema, but without the nostalgic aura that surrounds similar works. And this was a real danger, as one could easily fall into the trap of hipster fashion and nostalgia for technologies that have passed away. Instead what we get here is a mixed feeling of sadness and of realization of the fact that without light, projector, and spectators film itself is just a dead thing with no value and magic. The MEMORY REEL as an installation, as an object to be shown in galleries or museums, is a huge film reel composed of the celluloid remains of a Film Warehouse. The celluloid installation is not the memory of the media nor film or cinema in general, but it is the memory of a small community and of a physical place built around this media. It is not the movies that have been lost here, but decades from the life of those people, who now have to acknowledge, that what they were doing for so many years, is meaningless today. The fact that the film strips were glued together in an accidental order is important also because it brings us to the second part of the project which deals with the availability of old cinema through new technology, research that is published under the title: *The Algorithmic Turn in Found Footage Filmmaking: The Digital Remake*.[44] This associative logic of these film fragments does not belong to the cinema anymore, but to the logic of the internet, where most people don't read or watch full articles or videos, but just jump from one fragment to another. And this is one of the main reasons why classical, linear cinema struggles to survive in the digital age –the installation points out this feature in a very subtle way."

The (An)Archival Impulse

The art historian **Hal Foster**'s essay *The Archival Impulse*[45] defined archival art as a genre that "makes" historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present. To this end, archival artists elaborate on the found im-

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44   Adela, Muntean (married Negustor). *The Algorithmic Turn in Found Footage Film-making: The Digital Remake.* Retrieved from http://transcinemaexpress.ro/wp-content/uploads/Disegno2016_1_2_08_Muntean.pdf (accessed July 7, 2022).

45   Foster, Hal, *An Archival Impulse*, pp. 3-22. Retrieved from https://monoskop.org/File:Foster_Hal_2004_An_Archival_Impulse.pdf (accessed July 7, 2022).

age, and object, and favor the installation format." Foster also suggested that "this impulse"[46] could perhaps be more accurately described as *anarchival*, speculating on the complicated and dynamic relationships between remembering and forgetting, keeping and discarding, preserving and destroying.[47] *Anarchival* is just another face of the archival: forgetting is a function integral to memory as it is remembering. Professor Anna Maria Guasch[48] established two large "machines" of the archive: one that emphasizes the principle of nomos (or law) and the topographical order, which is "the archive based on the object culture and the logic of material memory systems", and, second, that accentuates the contradictory actions of storing and saving and, simultaneously, forgetting and destroying traces of the past, a drive that informs an anomic principle, which is "the archive-based in virtual information that follows a rationality closer to the flexible and non-stable, not ordered linearly and independently of any hierarchy". These *Machines* could also be studied concerning the archive's physical nature.[49] That is, exactly the fact that was pointed out by Gyenge Zsolt in his review of MEMORY REEL, when he stated that "the film that was glued together in an accidental order is important also because this associative logic of these film fragments does not belong to the cinema anymore, but to the logic of the internet, where most people don't read or watch full articles or videos, but just jump from one fragment to another. And this is one of the main reasons why classical, linear cinema struggles to survive in the digital age –the installation points out this feature in a very subtle way." Thus, MEMORY REEL integrates both Machines as is based on the object culture of classical Cinema, but the associative logic of the film fragments prefigures the virtual information enabled by the digital.

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46   See also *Mnemoscope Magazine*, founded in April 2013, dedicated to contemporary art practices and visual culture exploring issues of memory, history and the archival impulse.

47   Adami, Elisa and Ferrini, Alessandra, *Mnemoscope Magazine*. Retrieved from http://www.mnemoscape.org/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

48   Guasch, Anna Maria, *Art and Archive, 1920-2010.*; Genealogies, typologies and discontinuities. Retrieved from https://globalartarchive.com/anna-maria-guasch/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

49   Ibid.

A digital Archive of Memories:
between Dynarchive and Megarchive

The contemporary debate about archive is accentuated by the digital turn and the impact of new technologies of storage on the conceptual and empirical aspects of archival collections. Wolfgang Ernst coins the term *dynarchive* to denote the condition of permanent change, constant update and migration of contents in digital migration. As Foster notes in his essay, the Internet has normalized the collecting and compiling of information to the point where information itself can be viewed as a found object. Foster's happiest intuition was to realize that the ideal of the archive would be the Internet "megarchive" and the rhetoric of "interactivity", pointing out how some of the most recurrent terms in the recent contemporary art, such as platforms evoke the "networks" of electronic archives.[50] Derrida advances one of his most brilliant insights, which helps us in concluding our discussion: the immaterial condition of the archive that connects the psychoanalysis of Freud with the archive on the Internet. The online digital archive is characterized by a continuous flow of data (the equivalent of "impressions" in Freudian psychoanalysis), without time or geographical restrictions, with the subsequent reevaluation of the notion of storage, classification and retrieval of information as navigation and the hyperlinks that connect the pieces of information. The desire to create these connections comes from a cultural-memory that already appears disordered and disconnected, a way "to recoup failed visions in art, philosophy, and everyday life into possible scenarios of alternative kinds of social relations, to transform the no-place of the archive into the no-place of a utopia". In recent years, the significance of the archive as a central means through which history is collected, housed, presented, and interpreted, and in turn, artists have appropriated the archive into their postmodern explorations of culture's past, present, and future.[51] The archive acts, then, as a site in which creative productivity occurs in conjunction with dissemination, indexicality and fragmentation."[52] *MEMORY REEL* celluloid installation is completed by

50   Ibid.

51   Pistell, Gillian, *Ray Johnson: Artist as Archivist. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/18811675/Ray_Johnson_Artist_and_Archivist* (accessed July 7, 2022).

52   Guasch, Anna Maria, *Art and Archive, 1920-2010.; Genealogies, typologies and discontinuities. Retrieved from* https://globalartarchive.com/anna-maria-guasch/ (accessed

a short, 12 minutes long documentary presenting testimonials on cinema memories of younger and older people from Cluj. As the video is uploaded on the internet, these memories circulate freely in the virtual environment. Computer's takeover of culture provides and creates endless immersive experiential, interactive spaces of sorting, searching and filtering cinematic memories through accumulated information. This kind of treatment of the past as an extended present could be realized just in the digital environment of new media: Marshall McLuhan defined the electronic media as the extension of our nervous system[53] and Vilém Flusser sees "electronic memories as simulations of the memory functions of the brain"[54] turning the Internet into a "memory machine" similar to Vannevar Bush's memex, a device which can closely mimic the associative processes of the human mind, but it would be gifted with permanent recollection. Remembering the past, experiencing the present and imagining the future all meld to become part of a seemingly equivalent imagery in digital space.[55] Derrida's connection with Freud's "impressions" in his psychoanalysis gets extremely interesting when we further understand how movies function as *prosthetic memories*, and as *sequence-images*, terms defined in the following.

Personal history mixed with recollections from films: the sequence images

Cultural and individual memory are constantly produced through, and mediated by, these new technologies of memory: with the rise of social media the personal attachment and ownership of movie memories created in spectators become visible: users have an active participation in the creation of memories and making them shareable. Networks provide the framework and unprecedented resources for the construction of individual and collective memories: in the supposedly "open" society where an in-

July 7, 2022).

53   McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994. Print.

54   Flusser, Vilém, *On Memory*, p. 398: "Electronic memories are simulations of the memory functions of the brain within inanimate objects. A simulation here means an imitation which exaggerates a few aspects of the original while disregarding all other aspects."

55   Digicult, *The Future of Memory*. Retrieved from http://www.digicult.it/news/future-memory-exhibition-infinity-present-time/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

teraction between large audiences occur the process of tagging, naming, collecting and organizing movie fragments becomes at the same time an act of making memory and remembering. Through the World Wide Web Facebook has grown to be the new town-hall meeting for the global village offers unlimited access for sharing: posted as the 'mood of the day', as profile or cover photo or simply in the photo albums movie fragments are mixed with personal photos: in Victor Burgin's book *The Remembered Film* we can read an interesting sociological study conducted during ten years from 1977 to 1987, when more than 400 recorded interviews were made with residents of the Marseille/Aix-en-Provence area. Subjects were asked to describe their personal memories of the years 1930 to 1945. As Burgin further write 'they found an almost universal tendency for personal history to be mixed with recollections of scenes from films and other media productions'. "I saw at the cinema" would become simply "I saw".[56] Burgin develops the notion of a memory image in which moments of saturated intensity co-exist with temporal flow.[57] He calls this *the sequence-image*, similar to Walter Benjamin's *dialectical image* in which the past and the now flash into a constellation which disrupts temporal continuity, it condenses different times and places as well as different kind of memories-film memories become entangled with autobiographical memories.

Movies as prosthetic memories

Alison Landsberg examines how films create and instill memories in their audiences arguing that memories especially those afforded by the cinema, "become part of one's personal archive of experience." Film makes it possible for the audience to acquire new memories[58] and Landsberg theorizes this 'privately felt public memories' as 'prosthetic memories'. For a generation whose actual memories are strange combination of film and media fragments social networks provide unprecedented resources and support for emotional needs fostering dialogical relationship. These personal memories are valuable insights into how members of the public provide deep and affective responses to media as heritage. The memories shared by users

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56   Burgin, Victor, *The Remembered Film*, p. 68.
57   Burgin, Victor, *The Remembered Film*, p.207.
58   Landsberg, Alison, *Prosthetic memory-Introduction*: Memory, Modernity, Mass Culture, p.2.

sometimes include short narratives in which they expound on their lived or mnemonic experience(s) related to the movie(s) related in different groups[59]. Pages such as Noir Nostalgia[60], 35 Millimeter - Das Retro Film-magazin,[61] Memories of yesterday[62] explore what our experience of cinema could be in the age of social media and immediate audience feedback. Guess the film[63] fosters remembering old movies and follows the mechanism through which Facebook functions also as a film recommendation engine.[64] Elsaesser sees a great chance in the possibilities of the digital and he explains that "the afterlife of films and filmmakers, if it cannot be the big screen, should be television, the Internet, every medium and on any platform, including the ever more readily available DVDs, with their "bonuses", extras and other enticements to consumption. Or, simply put: "The cinema was made for the people, and belongs to the people"[65].

Conclusions

"Traveling from the Silver Age of film, through the Iron Age of video tape, we have now fully arrived in the Silicon Age of computers,"[66] resumes Rodowick. Now, more than ever, the decision to work in an old medium

59   *Motion Picture Technology*. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/groups/ movietechnology/?ref=br_tf (accessed July 7, 2022); *Pre-Code Hollywood (1929-34): Sin on Celluloid*. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/groups/362753733748240/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

60   *Noir Nostalgia*. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/pages/Noir-Nostalgia/1396233143956516 (accessed July 7, 2022).

61   *35mm Das Retro Filmmagazin*. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/35MMretrofilm/?fref=nf (accessed July 7, 2022).

62   *Memories of yesterday*. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100050415793017&sk=photos (accessed July 7, 2022).

63   *Guess the film*. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/groups/276861542513529 (accessed July 7, 2022).

64   Facebook as film recommendation engine. Retrieved from http://filmvis.tumblr.com/post/69287295652/facebook-as-film-recommendation-engine (accessed July 7, 2022).

65   Elsaesseer, Thomas, *Ingmar Bergman in the museum? Thresholds, limits, conditions of possibility, p.2*: "The afterlife of films and filmmakers, if it cannot be the big screen, should be television, the Internet, every medium and on any platform, including the ever more readily available DVDs, with their "bonuses", extras and other enticements to consumption". Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3402/jac.v1i0.2123 (accessed July 7, 2022).

66   Rodowick, David Norman, *The Virtual Life of Film*, p.133.

presupposes the artists´ self-consciousness of the medium and their self-avowed intent to do so. The continual transformation among the mediums discussed above reveals the consciousness with which moving image makers turn back to an old(er) medium, especially when faced with the power of new(er) media enter and the zones of production and creation which once belonged to the old: "for this is an artistic phenomenon aware of its own historicity and transience – aware, in short, of its own location in time."[67] The consequence of the dialectic between the old and the new technologies is the reactivation and the accentuation of memory (reference to the past) and movement (reference to the future). These continuities, in turn, transcend the cinematic obsolescence[68] ensuring the continuation of the cinematic despite the ongoing decay and disappearance of its (once) current apparatus.[69]

The same self-consciousness is awakened in the spectators also: this new availability of old cinema through new technology, the looking back into the cinema's history 'out of passing time and refracted through new technology'[70] attempts to activate the creative potential in moving images and the way 'they can be remixed in acts of memory or participation.'[71] Since the apparition of new technological developments spectators have radically changed the way they experience film: VHS, VCR, zapping, computers, posters, trailers, memorabilia and television[72], among other, have created

67   Nardelli, Matilde, *Moving Pictures: Cinema and Its Obsolescence*, The Journal of Visual Culture, 2009, p.245.

68   Rosalind Krauss asserts that a medium's own obsolescence, offers these artists the opportunity for 'reinventing the medium' by hinting at how they fabricate their expressive means, therefore demonstrating that the medium enters into 'a new relation to aesthetic production that can be both projective and mnemonic'. Rosalind Krauss on Tacita Dean's FILM, Tate Talks. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXi4pDicSu8 (accessed July 7, 2022).

69   Nardelli, Matilde, *Moving Pictures: Cinema and Its Obsolescence*, The Journal of Visual Culture, 2009, p.260.

70   Mulvey, Laura, *Death 24x a Second*, p.12.

71   Griffiths, Dave, artist and curator. Retrieved from http://www.davegriffiths.info/blog/ (accessed July 7, 2022).

72   Uroskie, Andrew V., *Between the Black Box and the White Cube*, p.13: "The most interesting about the appearance of televisions is that the lost glamour of cinema's past was being newly presented to millions of people in their homes, between commercials, on television: despite its technological novelty and its unique ability to broadcast live, much of early television actually consisted of Hollywood cinema. Broadcasters, suddenly faced

and continue creating new kinds of spectators. 'The manipulation that new technologies are making possible for the spectator when watching a movie can produce a similar experience of reflexivity like placing the cinema object among the white walls of the museum. As Mulvey reminds it in her book *Death 24x a second*: 'Bellour makes the crucial point that a moment of stillness within the moving image and its narrative creates a 'pensive spectator' who can reflect 'on the cinema."[73] It seems to me that that idea of a pensive spectator anticipated the kind of thoughtful reflection on the film image that has now become possible when we can see into screen images, shift them, stretch them, and delay them to reflect on different dimensions of temporality. Probably the most eloquent conclusion would be the fact that the most precious human value behind analog Cinema is a united community that shares a common sentiment: their sincere love for Cinema overall.

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with hundreds of hours to fill, turned to a dead stock of feature films often unseen for decades. In the days when it was nearly impossible to see films more than a few months old, television brought this previously neglected work to public consciousness with a newly historical distance. Even as it threatened its future, the television industry paradoxically helped establish an interest in cinema's forgotten past."

73   Mulvey, Laura, *Death 24x a Second*, The pensive Spectator, p.18.

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