

Institution: University of Dundee		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Digital Archiving for Curation and Dissemination		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2003 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Elaine Shemilt	Professor	1988 - Present
Arthur Watson	Senior Lecturer	1993 - Present
Adam Lockhart	Lecturer	2004 - Present
Sophia Hao	Lecturer	2010 - Present
Laura Leuzzi	Research Fellow	2015 - Present
Stephen Partridge	Professor	1984 - 2019
Euan McArthur	Senior Lecturer	1993 - 2017
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

Research conducted at the University of Dundee investigating European avant-garde art through video and photography archives has led to the following impacts:

- Halted the deterioration of key works of art-historical and cultural value, leading to major exhibitions in Bucharest and Sao Paolo of previously unknown or inaccessible materials;
- Created accessible online archive resources revealing the histories of video and performance to new generations;
- Built new audiences through publication, broadcast and exhibition, including the direct initiation of seminal exhibitions in Edinburgh, Venice and Shanghai; and
- Engaged with the museum sector to ensure works which we have restored are preserved within national collections in London and Edinburgh, ensuring ongoing benefit through public access.

2. Underpinning research

Research into the histories of the post-war British and European avant-gardes was initiated through two AHRC funded projects: *REWIND Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s* (**Partridge** 2003-2007), and *The Demarco Archive: Accessing a 40-year Dialogue between Richard Demarco and the European Avant-Garde* (**McArthur** 2004-2008).

REWIND researchers investigated the first two decades of British video art, addressing gaps in the knowledge of early and pioneering work conducted in the UK between 1970-90. The research involved the investigation of over 400 seminal artworks. These were archived and conserved using emerging technologies, simultaneously researching and developing restoration techniques for obsolete analogue video formats, thus revealing and preserving lost works in their original conceptual and technical context [R5]. This innovative work led to the establishment of the *REWIND Media Preservation Lab* in 2005, this is now a key research centre in the UK for the

investigation of improved methods by which we can preserve a wider range of obsolete media. In 2006 we established the first of our online databases: *REWIND Artists Video*.

From this, further AHRC projects were established: *REWIND Italia* (**Partridge** 2011-14) and *European Women's Video Art* (**Shemilt** 2015-18). Both studies re-evaluated marginalised practice in the canon of media art history. The results of this research were published in two books with chapters by **Partridge, Shemilt, Lockhart** and **Leuzzi** [R2]. *REWIND | Italia, Early Video Art in Italy*, which brings seminal, early video experimentation into the international spotlight and provides a vital resource for research and study with key Italian texts available for the first time in English [R2]. *European Women's Video Art in the 70s and 80s* provides a reassessment of women artists' involvement in early video art and strengthens their profiles and identities within the art historical canon [R3] – on its launch, the Director of Civic Museums Venice (5/9/19) stated:

'Finally a book is published that collects the most significant evidence of extraordinary work often on the sidelines of knowledge and art history' [E1].

The *Demarco Digital Archive* [R4] was established in 2008 (updated 2017) by a team of six, led by **McArthur**. It created a fully searchable online resource of over 10,000 photographs and 700 supporting documents. In the course of the research over half a million photographic prints, slides and negatives were viewed and selected according to agreed criteria. The content covered the extensive range of Demarco's engagement with the visual art, theatre and post-war cultural milieu, particularly from Eastern Europe.

An enduring function of the research preserved in the Archive is to reveal the lost art of the post-war period, particularly by the artists of Poland, Romania and the former Yugoslavia who, along with parts of Germany, were trapped behind the Iron Curtain. The discovery and restoration of the video footage of Tadeusz Kantor's *The Water Hen* [R1], shot in an obscure format even for 1972, is detailed later in this case study. There is growing interest in these countries among younger and independent curators working to reclaim the 'unofficial' art proscribed by the art establishments of the communist era; through its preservation of culturally significant artefacts Archive is enabling the curation of public exhibitions and performances of historical and cultural importance that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

Elements of research initiated within REWIND and Demarco Digital have now been consolidated and further expanded through *Richard Demarco: The Italian Connection* (AHRC 2018-20) led by **Shemilt** with **Partridge, Leuzzi** and **Lockhart**.

3. References to the research

[R1] Demarco, R., **Lockhart, A., McArthur, E., Watson, A.** (eds.) (2015) *The Water Hen: Kantor, Demarco and The Edinburgh Festival with a Legacy of Kantor in Scotland* = *Kurka Wodna : Kantor, Demarco & Festiwal Edynburski Z Dziedzictwem Kantora W Szkocji*. Edinburgh: Royal Scottish Academy of Art and Architecture.

[R2] **Leuzzi, L., Partridge, S.** (eds.) (2016) *REWIND | Italia, Early Video Art in Italy: I primi anni della videoarte in Italia*. New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing

[R3] **Leuzzi, L., Shemilt, E., Partridge, S.** (eds.) (2019) *European Women's Video Art: European Women's Video Art in the 70s and 80s*. New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing.

[R4] *Demarco Digital Archive* (2008, new edition 2017) Available at: www.demarco-archive.ac.uk (Accessed 13 March 2021); archive version available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20180605014040/http://www.demarco-archive.ac.uk/>

[R5] *REWIND Artists Video* (2006, new edition 2020) Available at: www.rewind.ac.uk (Accessed 13 March 2021) [PDF of archived pages available]

4. Details of the impact

Two teams of researchers within the *Visual Practice, Curation and Critique* research grouping at DJCAD have, over the last sixteen years, investigated aspects of British and European art practice from the 1960s onward, having drawn on expertise developed within our Digital Archives. Projects informed or initiated by these archives have created a global engagement of over half a million visits. The online databases currently receive an average of 700 active users per month, the majority in the younger age bracket of 18-44 (Google Analytics retrieved 10/12/20); in addition, the Demarco Digital Archive has 164 subscribers, each of whom have made their own online curations.

Preservation and democratisation of cultural assets

McArthur and Watson's research into the Demarco Digital Archive uncovered original video reels of Tadeusz Kantor's *The Water Hen* from a performance in 1972. The previously unknown footage was digitized and restored by Lockhart, transcribed by researchers at Kantor's archive in Krakow, then translated in Edinburgh. This formed the basis for McArthur's subtitling, moving the raw translation into English that paralleled the colloquial nature of the original dialogue.

The significance of the footage was confirmed by the leading Kantor scholar, who spoke at the press launch of the *UNESCO International Year of Kantor*:

'The efforts of the Media Archives Team cannot be overstated... prior to the discovery and digitization of the Kurka Wodna/Water Hen footage, there was no recording available of Kantor's productions from his object/machine theatre, 1944-1975... Consequently, any effort to provide analysis of performance style or on-stage dramaturgy in Kantor's theatre was speculative and inconclusive.' [E3]

In 2015 *The Water Hen* was screened in Venice during the Biennale, and subsequently in Gdansk, Warsaw, Berlin, Dusseldorf and Tokyo. The restored *Water Hen* was central to a major exhibition in Sao Paolo (18/8/15-14/11/15) attended by 90,000 visitors.

The exhibition *24 Arguments: Early Encounters in Romanian Neo-Avant-Garde 1969-71* at The National Museum of Romania similarly drew on materials restored and preserved by the research team, in this case the digitization of a film capturing two seminal performances made by Paul Neagu during his thirty-year exile in the UK, described as:

'an essential act in the exhibition, given the fact that the Romanian public have never had access to the works and documents presented in the exhibition.' [E2]

The REWIND *Media Preservation Lab* has ensured the preservation of footage that would otherwise have been lost to future generations, as evidenced by projects such as the *The London Community Video Archive* (with Goldsmiths), which provides a significant record of counter-cultural events and happenings in 70s & 80s London. The Lab's work in transferring obsolete video to digital formats has been praised as *'recovering and revising this history... as a resource for contemporary debates and activism'* [E4].

Lockhart's curation of works from REWIND featured along with >>FFWD Artist's Moving Image from Scotland, as part of CURRENT, Phase Two at the Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum (17/12/16-15/1/17). This was the second in a series of exhibitions across China and brought seminal early UK video works to China for the first time, exhibited alongside contemporary Scottish video art. The exhibition received 7,500 actual visitors and 157,000 online visits, garnering media attention across 45 outlets including the Shanghai Daily (22/12/16), which stated:

'Excavating the radical history encapsulated in seminal artists video works from the 70s & 80s, REWIND provides an in-depth perspective on the moving image.' [E5]

A catalyst for physical and digital cultural legacies

In 2014 Creative Scotland commissioned a consultancy which recommended uniting the materials still held by Demarco with those in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (this had been prompted by an earlier exhibition curated by McArthur and Watson which had provoked a debate in the Scottish Parliament committing the Scottish Government to housing the Demarco Archive). An extensive site was purchased in north Edinburgh and plans for the new building were passed in 2018. The consolidated archive will be housed as a discrete unit within the planned £75 million National Galleries of Scotland (NGS) Collections Hub. This is described by the Director General NGS as a:

'significant infrastructure development in a socially deprived area in Edinburgh...construction is scheduled to start 2022/3... A significant part of this building will be publicly accessible facilities for research, study, exhibitions and education.' [E6]

A further impact of our growing reputation for digital archiving has led the internationally renowned performance artist, Alastair MacLennan, to deposit his entire archive (21/12/18) documenting over 600 performances and installations to join existing holdings of his work within REWIND and *Demarco Digital*. This gives a unique opportunity to capture the development of this growing legacy through a living archive.

Several major acquisitions were made, by Tate, of historic works made visible by REWIND, embedding a significant body of under-represented work within a national collection and consequently ensuring the long-term conservation and further dissemination through one of the most important collections of modern and contemporary art in the world. The expertise of the research team is acknowledged by the Tate:

'...only 2 or 3 possible laboratories in the world with this set of skills and knowledge... that not only could transfer this early video format, but would also understand the context of video art in the 70s...' [E8]

The acquisitions include David Hall's *TV Interruptions: The Installation* acquired in 2014; Stephen Partridge's *Monitor* in 2015, exhibited 2016-17. Tina Keane's *Faded Wallpaper* (1988) and her *In Our Hands Greenham* (1984) were acquired in 2017 and 2020 respectively, following research into, and reconstitution of, the original installation [E7]. *The Lab* also collaborated with Tate in 2019, (prior to accession and exhibition) on the digitisation of Darcy Lange's pioneering social documentary video practice: *Studies of Teaching in Four Oxfordshire Schools* (1977).

These 'pioneering but previously overlooked' [E7] video works are now central to Tate's digital legacy. The contribution of REWIND and its related projects are described by the responsible acquisitions manager (now at The Museum of Modern Art, New York) as 'crucial to re-assessing the canon of UK video art' [E7].

Stimulating and showcasing creative works

Publications stemming from REWIND activity led to wider impact by opening artists' video to a general audience. *REWIND | Italia, Early Video Art in Italy* brings seminal, early video experimentation into an international spotlight, providing a vital resource for research and study by making important Italian texts available for the first time in English [R2]. The UK Launch included a performance at CCA, Glasgow by artist Claudio Ambrosini described by *Art Monthly* (9/16) as:

'a significant piece of research and a vital contribution to any library of video art history' and Italian Journal Arshake (2/3/16) 'a useful and extremely valuable tool' [E9].

Conversely an extended, non-specialist audience of 300,000 (production company academy7) were introduced, most for the first time, to artist's video in *Kill Your TV, Jim Moir's* (Vic Reeves) *Weird World of Video Art* (BBC4 24/11/19 with further audiences via iPlayer and repeat

broadcast). Lockhart was both consultant and interviewee whilst works by Partridge and Shemilt were among twelve selected from the REWIND archive featured on the programme. All unedited interviews from the programme were deposited in the REWIND archive [E10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[E1] Interview with the Director of Municipal Museums of Venice <https://vimeo.com/359869251> (Accessed 23 March 2021)

[E2] Letter from the Curator, Institute of the Present

[E3] Letter from leading Kantor expert and Professor in Theatre History, University of Minnesota

[E4] Letter from the London Community Video Archive

[E5] Shanghai Daily, 22/12/16

[E6] Letter from Director General, National Galleries of Scotland

[E7] Letter from Chief Curator for Media and Performance, Museum of Modern Art, New York

[E8] Letter from Senior Time-Based Media Conservator, Tate

[E9] *Art Monthly*, October 2016. <https://www.arshake.com/en/rewinditalia-early-video-art-in-italy/> (Accessed 23 March 2021)

[E10] *Kill Your TV: Jim Moir's Weird World of Video Art* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000bpjw> (Accessed 23 March 2021)