

## Remembrance of Things to Come



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### Re-imagining the Past and Constructing the Future in the Film School Archive

Online conference June 21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021. GEECT and the University of Westminster

This two-day conference exploring the making and the meaning of Film School Archives was initially scheduled for June 2020. However, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was postponed in the hope that a physical conference, including practical workshops, could take place in 2021, but finally a decision was made to hold it as a virtual conference in June 2021.

The conference was held on Zoom on June 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, with 54 participants from 24 countries, representing 28 film schools (22 from GEECT and 6 from other CILECT regions).

Many film schools have significant archives of student work, as well as teaching materials and other records, going back many years, and the aim of the conference was to share ideas and knowledge about their historical, cultural and social significance, and about the practice of the preservation and restoration of these collections.

24 papers were presented and discussed over two days, and the conference concluded with a plenary discussion. All the presentations and discussions are now available to view on the conference website at: [www.westminsterfilmarchive.com/conference-recordings](http://www.westminsterfilmarchive.com/conference-recordings) Abstracts and biographies of the speakers are also on the website, and a link to a Padlet of resources relating to the presentations. <https://padlet.com/hortp/grb2blxy9ydam2um>

The conference began with an introduction from GEECT's chair Manuel Damasio and a presentation by the conference organiser Peter Hort (WFS, UK) about remembering and forgetting, followed by a keynote by David Walsh of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAPF), who reflected on '**Why is Film Archiving so Difficult?**' and explored the factors that make the survival of this branch of our cultural heritage so intractable.

Panel 1, 'How can we use film school archives', chaired by Barry Dignam (IADT) began with ***Bringing an Archive to life***. Donna Lyon (*Victorian College of the Arts, Australia*) discussed her work transforming a dusty archive room into an online resource that can be updated by the students themselves. In ***Film School Archives and African film histories*** Gabrielle Chomentowski (*Guest speaker CNRS – Université Paris 1*) focussed on the work and experience of African students at the VGIK and IDHEC film schools. Marcin Malatyński (*Lodz Film School, Poland*) outlined the way that an archive has been set up to serve both film professionals and cinema lovers in ***Lodz Film School Archive – ways to use the legacy***.

Panel 2, Technology and Aesthetics 1 (chair Peter Hort) began with Matthew Epler (*Kinograph designer, USA*) discussing his reasons for ***Designing and building a 'DIY' open source film scanner***. Matthew demonstrated his prototype Kinograph, which aims to make film collections more accessible by enabling people to build their own low-cost scanner. In

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**Students' digital remastering of an INSAS film**, Gilles Bissot (*INSAS, Belgium*) outlined an initiative where each student on an MA programme is entrusted with the digital restoration of an old film from the school. Dimitrios Latsis (*Ryerson, Canada*) discussed **Archival Pedagogy** in the context of a cross-pollination between the teaching and practice of film archiving, and students' fiction and documentary production.

Panel 3, 'Re-imagining Archives' (chair Ines Gil) began with three short presentations. In **Archives – the pleasure and the pain** Claire Barwell (*NAHEMI, UK*) questioned the urge to keep material. Looking at images of rust and dust, she explored some ideas around archives, and the paradoxical nature of keeping and not keeping records. Dan Geva (*Beit Berl Israel*) explored philosophical ideas of archives in his talk **Archiving students' 'non-filmic' virtues**, arguing that the concept of 'student work' should not just be ascribed to the limited scope of the conspicuous film object, and archives should also embrace students' 'infinitely rich, internal, abstract ethical space'. In **Future Archives: the virtual depositories** Thomas Brennan (*SADA Sweden*) explored new approaches to documenting creative work. The final presentation of the first day was **The Dormant Archive and the Alarm Clock** Julia Clever (*RITCS Belgium*), which considered the way that 'open source' challenges the repositories of a film school.

The second day of the conference began with Panel 4: Archival Strategies (chair Jana Keeble). In **An Archaeological Project of Film Academy Vienna** Claudia Walkensteiner-Preschl and Kerstin Parth (*UMDK, Austria*) outlined a collaboration with the Austrian Film Museum, treating film history as media archaeology, and placing student work in the perspective of cultural history. In **Aesthetic merit, historicity and economics** Sharad Raj (*Whistling Woods International, India*) examined the difficulties of, and resistance to, archiving student films in India. In **A media historical approach to the films of HFF Munchen** Judith Fruh and Catalina Torres (*HFF, Germany*) outlined a book publication approach where the films are presented through material such as stills and production documents, accompanied by interviews with the former students.

Panel 5, Film School Case Studies (chair Marcin Matalynski), began with three short presentations that outlined the work that's going on in an individual School's archive: **Capturing the zeitgeist** Ginette Harrold (*London Film School, UK*) **The FAMU VoD project** Alexandra Hroncova (*FAMU, Czech Republic.*) and **Creating the VSMU Archive** Peter Csordas (*VSMU, Slovakia*). The panel continued with **The Archive as Educational Tool**. Mieke Bernink (*Netherlands Film Academy*) presented a preview of an archival platform developed by the NFA that's also an educational tool, an exhibition space, and a collaborative workspace.

After the lunch break Panel 6, Filmmakers' Archives (chair Patrick Geeaerts) began with **The Archives of Tomorrow** presented by Barbara Turquier and Julie Tingaud (*La Femis, France*) who discussed working with film historians on histories of film techniques, drawing on La Femis's archive of masterclasses, which is still being added to. The panel continued with **The Kubrick Archive: an online tour**, hosted by Sarah Mahurter and Georgina Orgill (*LCC, University of the Arts, UK*). The archive, which covers the entirety of Kubrick's career, and is held in the University, has altered the nature and subject matter of publications about Kubrick.

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The final panel, the second devoted to Technology and Aesthetics, was chaired by Guido Lukoshek. In ***New aesthetics of digitally reconstructed film*** Anna Huth (Guest speaker, Kieslowski Film School, Poland) discussed film restoration as a creative process requiring aesthetic judgement, and the potential effect of this on the emotional impact of a film. In ***Preservation versus optimisation?*** Hasan Matar (Westminster, UK) took aspects of this idea further, discussing the scanning process, including sharpness settings and the treatment of grain, and how these affect subsequent preservation work. He also considered the effect of modern colouring trends on the restoration of some specific classic films. Finally, in ***A laboratory/restoration facility in a film school*** Ondřej Šejnoha (FAMU, Czech Republic) conducted a live tour of the CPA Lab, a new film restoration facility and lab at FAMU.

### Conclusions and future plans

In the closing discussion, a recurring theme was that the conference had made people feel less alone, and that they had been inspired by the examples of archives that they had seen. The value of archives is not always appreciated in Universities and Film Schools, making the connection and sharing of knowledge, between schools even more important. There was a general wish to continue the conversation and exchange, perhaps through a 'Part 2' GEECT conference in the future.

### Some quotations from the closing plenary discussion:

"It has been very inspiring not to feel alone. The presentations have given me a completely different perspective on archives." *Catalina Torres, HFF Munchen*

"I leave this conference with a lot of hope. We should continue to energise each other, because what we are doing is important." *Dan Geva, Beit Berl, Israel*

"I loved the level of dedication I've seen". *Hasan Matar, WFS, UK*

"We feel less alone in our archives" *Gilles Bissot, INSAS, Belgium*

"We are living in almost the same situation as in the silent era that lost 80% of the productions, and with the digital era we are going to lose most of the productions too. It's very important that young film makers understand that they are going to lose their projects if there is no archival awareness." *Ines Gil, Lusofona, Portugal*

"I was brought up thinking that digital was timeless". *Alice Franchi, student, WFS, UK*

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Attendees:

<b>1st Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>School or organisation</b>	<b>Country</b>
Amala	Akkineni	Annupurna College of Film and Media	India
Elizabeth	Allen	University of Westminster	UK
Claire	Barwell	Nahemi	UK
Mieke	Bernik	Netherlands Film Academy	Netherlands
Germana	Bianco	MCSC - Civica Scuola di Cinema Luchino Visconti	Italy
Gilles	Bissot	INSAS	Belgium
Thomas	Brennan	Stockholm University of the Arts	Sweden
Juan Guillermo	Buenaventura	Escuela de Cine y Televisión	Columbia
Gabrielle	Chomentowski	University Paris 1	France
Julia	Clever	RITCS	Belgium
Daniele	Cogliati	MCSC - Civica Scuola di Cinema Luchino Visconti	Italy
Nathalie	Coste Cerdan	La Fémis	France
Peter	Csordas	VSMU	Slovakia
Manuel	Damasio	Lusofona	Portugal
Keith	Dando	Leeds Beckett University	UK
Barry	Dignam	IADT	Ireland
Matthew	Epler	Kinograph	USA
Alice	Franchi	University of Westminster	UK
Judith	Freuh	Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, München	Germany
Patrick	Geearts	RITCS	Belgium
Dan	Geva	Beit Berl College	Israel
Inês	Gil	Lusofona University	Portugal
Ginette	Harrold	London Film School	UK
Peter	Hort	University of Westminster	UK
Alexandra	Hroncová	FAMU	Czech Republic
Joost	Hunningher	University of Westminster	UK
Anna	Huth	University of Katowice	Poland
Cagri	Inceoglu	Yasar University / Turkey	Turkey
Michael	Kalb	Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, München	Germany
Jana	Keeble	VSMU	Slovakia
Gabrielle	Kelly	American Film Institute	USA
Dimitrios	Latsis	Ryerson University	Canada
Manolo	Lozano	Arts University Bournemouth	UK
Guido	Lukoschek	Filmacademie Baden-Württemberg	Germany
Kevin	Lutz	Film Museum Vienna	Austria
Donna	Lyon	Victorian College of the Arts	Australia

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Sarah	Mahurter	University of the Arts London	UK
Marcin	Mataliynski	Polish National Film School, Lodz	Poland
Hasan	Matar	University of Westminster	UK
Georgina	Orgill	University of the Arts London	UK
Olivia	Otts	University of Westminster	UK
Kerstin	Parth	Film Academy Vienna	Austria
Sarah	Presenti Campagnoni	MCSC - Civica Scuola di Cinema Luchino Visconti	Italy
Sharad	Raj	Whistling Woods International	India
Mark	Rance	Watchmaker Films/University of Westminster	UK
Daniel	Scroggins	University of Westminster	UK
Ondrej	Sejnoha	FAMU	Czech Rep
Monica	Swarinska	Polish National Film School, Lodz	Poland
Julie	Tingaud	La Fémis	France
Catalina	Torres	Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, München	Germany
Barbara	Turquier	La Fémis	France
Constant	van Panhuys	Netherlands Film Academy	Netherlands
Claudia	Walkensteiner	Film Academy Vienna	Austria
David	Walsh	International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP)	UK