



## **Archiving the Unarchivable – Das Unarchivierbare archivieren**

International conference by the documenta archiv  
in preparation for the future documenta Institut

Thursday, 22 November – Saturday, 24 November 2018  
documenta Halle, Kassel

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### **Third Session:**

### **Time-based Media Art: Bearing the Challenge of Lifecycle Management**

**Saturday, 24 November 2018, 12:15 – 13:00**

**Tilman Baumgärtel**

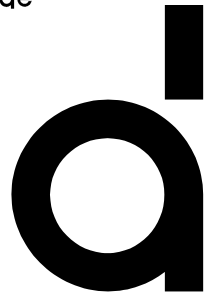
*Archiving on the Verge of the Digital:*

*Van Gogh TV and "Piazza Virtuale" at documenta 9*

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The media project "Piazza Virtuale" was a seminal experiment in what today is known as "Social Media" – shortly before the internet made the leap from academic network to emerging mass medium. When the artist collective Van Gogh TV undertook this daring enterprise during the 100 days of the 9<sup>th</sup> documenta in 1992, they had to use the media that were at their disposal at that time – television, telephone, fax and computer mailboxes – in order to realise Brecht's vision of a medium where the consumers would be turned into producers of media content.

"Piazza Virtuale" has not become part of the canon of telecommunication art projects so far, partly because very little material was accessible until recently. Since April, a research project of the Hochschule Mainz and the Universität Bonn, sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), has finally been putting "Piazza Virtuale" back on the map. With full access to all the recordings of the television and satellite broadcasts, the complete paper files of the organization and by means of extensive interviews with many of the over 100 artists and hackers involved, we want to reconstruct the many ways how "Piazza Virtuale" antedated the net culture of today. Although the current project is still in a relative early stage, we have already learned many valuable lessons on how to process the kind of material that was created during



the run of "Piazza Virtuale" - and also about the challenges that future historians might encounter when working on similar projects that were subsequently created on the internet.

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Tilman Baumgärtel is a writer. He lives in Berlin and teaches media studies at Hochschule Mainz. Previously, he was a professor at the University of the Philippines in Manila (2005-2009) und at the Department of Media and Communication at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (2009-2012). He has written or edited eleven books on various aspects of media culture, including internet art, computer games, the aesthetics of loops and the director Harun Farocki.  
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