Archiving the Unarchivable – Das Unarchivierbare archivieren

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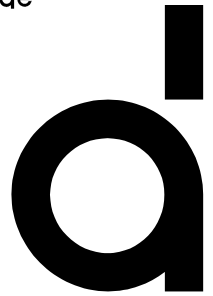
Thursday, 22 November – Saturday, 24 November 2018
documenta Halle, Kassel

Second Session: Time-based Media Art: The New Discipline in Conservation

Friday, 23 November 2018, 17:30 – 18:15

Ethical challenges in the conservation of time-based media. Do we need a digital Code of Ethics?

Ethical considerations have always played an important role in the conservation and restoration of works of art. Several ethical guidelines and rules for conservators have been discussed and developed since the Venice Charter of 1964 was published. Most of these guidelines relate to cultural heritage, buildings, historical sites and traditional artworks. As a relatively young genre, media art has not yet been included in these guidelines. Although the conservation and restoration of time-based media art is a new discipline in conservation, it has already undergone many changes in its young history: initially, the preservation and restoration of historical data carriers was the primarily aim of conservators. However, with the disappearance of dedicated carriers the focus has shifted. More and more, the unaltered preservation of the content and the ability to keep it playable and "alive" has become the main concern. One reason for this is that copying and transcoding can lead to unwanted changes to the character or appearance of the artwork and its authenticity. The other reason is that the obsolescence of technology and/or software is threatening complex digital artworks. This leads to the question if we need a separate set of rules and guidelines for the preservation of time-based media art.

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Andreas Weisser studied conservation and restoration at the University of Applied Sciences Cologne. Since 2003, he has worked as a conservator for time-based media and as a preservation manager for audiovisual collections. His work focuses on the support of public and private collections for analogue and digital long-term preservation and storage of contemporary and time-based media art.

In 2015, he joined Doerner Institute, Munich in a part-time position. There he is responsible for the preservation of the time-based media art collection of the Pinakothek der Moderne and the Museum Brandhorst. He has held lectures on conservation at the Universities of Applied Sciences in Cologne and Berlin and worked as Consultant for Deutsche Welle Akademie in North Africa and the Middle East.