

## Panel G3

Sala Emiciclo

### Animation Archives

Mette Peters

#### Animation art: materials and meanings



Many animation artists and studios, such as Laika, Pixar and Aardman, have used animation artwork to create well-attended exhibitions in museum and gallery spaces or lavishly illustrated making-of books. The importance to preserve original artefacts is evident when it's used for promotional and educational activities after a film production is finished. Developing an archival strategy though might be challenging for a studio or an individual artist because storage, conservation, providing access and monitoring an artwork collection is time-consuming, costly and requires specialist knowledge. Preservation strategies for historical animation artwork collections (for example of non-active studios or filmmakers) found in museum or archive collections who are not specialized in animation, are usually determined by political agendas of different stakeholders and archival practices. In these contexts the importance to preserve original artefacts might not be so evident.

Currently I'm involved in the research project 'Materials in Motion' and collaborate with a team of conservation and animation specialists in order to develop a preservation plan for the animation art collection at EYE Filmmuseum in Amsterdam. EYE is the Dutch national film museum and 'aims to collect and preserve the entirety of Dutch film heritage for perpetuity.' The animation artwork collection is one of many collections and establishing priorities depends on political and directive policies. The research team therefore is keen to address the importance of safeguarding animation artwork and the urgency to develop sustainable preservation strategies. And simply has to respond to questions like: 'why should we preserve the animation artwork, if we have the finished film?'

The purpose of the research project is to gain insight into the magnitude, composition and condition of the collection. Furthermore guidelines will be developed to help the identification and registration of the wide variety of archival materials such as concept art, storyboards, drawings and cels. In a recent, careful estimation, 80.000 cels were counted. The collection includes work of more than 50 Dutch filmmakers, dating from the period between ca. 1930 and 2000, who played with form and content and experimented with a wide variety of techniques and materials such as plastics, paper and photos and artist's materials such as pencils, crayon, markers and adhesive foils. The combination of materials found in the collection makes the development of conservation guidelines a challenge. Especially since different forms of decay have been established: papers are discoloured, layers of paint flake and give way, old adhesives cause brown stains in papers and photographs and plastic cels begin to warp, lose colour and acidify. The decay of the plastics is particularly worrisome because it is a self-catalytic process: once it starts, it is not possible to stop and without intervention the process will accelerate.

In this paper I will focus on artwork as an important subject when studying the animated form, while comparing it with the relevance of materials and materiality in conservation studies and art history. Art historian Ann-Sophie Lehmann for example suggests to address 'materials as active components in the conception, production and interpretation

of artworks, in order to foreground the relation between materials and meanings.’ The artist’s choice of specific materiality is informed by the state of technology and the availability of materials and techniques, and has a decisive role in the final design of a film. A large part of the EYE collection consists of art from individually working animation filmmakers who experimented with unconventional materials and self-built techniques in their creative practice. To establish the relation between materials and meaning several of these historical artefacts will be analysed, such as original wooden puppets that George Pal used for his replacement technique, called ‘puppetoon’, or a series of black and white photographs of staged actors, hand-coloured with pencil by Karin Wiertz and Jacques Verbeek.

## Biography

PhD candidate at Utrecht University [M.C.Peters@uu.nl](mailto:M.C.Peters@uu.nl)

Project manager at EYE Filmmuseum, Amsterdam [MettePeters@eyefilm.nl](mailto:MettePeters@eyefilm.nl)

Lecturer in Animation at Mediaschool, University of the Arts Utrecht [Mette.Peters@hku.nl](mailto:Mette.Peters@hku.nl)

Mette Peters is a film historian and animation specialist. She is active as lecturer, curator, archivist and project manager for higher education institutions, film archives, festivals and museums internationally. Her research focuses on the history of (Dutch) animation and preservation of animation heritage.

She engages in conservation issues through her publications and cooperation with archives and specialists. Currently she works at EYE Filmmuseum (EYE) on the two-year research project ‘Materials in Motion’, in which a conservation strategy is developed for the analogue Dutch animation artwork collection at EYE. EYE holds an artwork collection from the period between 1930-2000, with work by more than 50 Dutch filmmakers: individually working artists like Karin Wiertz, Jacques Verbeek, Børge Ring, Paul Driessen or Gerrit van Dijk as well as animation studio’s like de Toonder Studio’s or Joop Geesink’s Dollywood. Mette Peters is PhD candidate at the [Institute for Cultural Inquiry](#) at Utrecht University and her research focuses on the earliest period of animation filmmaking in The Netherlands, between 1918 and 1940. She is lecturer at the animation course of the University School of the Arts.

Mette Peters is co-author of the book *Meestal in ‘t Verborgene* (2000) about animation film production in The Netherlands during the Second World War and the article ‘The Dutch Animation Collection: A work in progress’ in *Animation Practice, Process & Production* (2011). She was guest editor of an animation special of the Dutch peer-reviewed magazine *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* (2012), for which she wrote the article ‘Archiving the animation film-making process: The earliest Dutch animation films’. Her text about the artwork collection of Jacques Verbeek and Karin Wiertz (2016) was published on the website of EYE.

<https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/collection/search-and-watch/dossiers/jacques-verbeek-and-karin-wiertz-animated-artwork>

<https://nl.linkedin.com/in/petersmette>

<http://www.uu.nl/staff/MCPeters>

<http://uu.academia.edu/MettePeters>