



University
of Glasgow | Department of
History of Art

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***Preserving digital art: Art Theory, Methods
and Experimental Applications***

**Digital Preservation Coalition Seminar
30th March 2011, London, UK**

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www.gla.ac.uk/historyofart/



Digital art as process of components interaction



Vuk Ćosić: *ASCII History of Moving Images*
December 1, 2010 - February 28, 2011
NetArt, Berkeley Art Museum <http://netart.bampfa.berkeley.edu/ascii>



Digital art as performance





Examples of digital art from ZKM Media Museum



Preventing digital casualties

Digital Preservation

- ↘ ongoing activity to ensure **recurring value** of digital objects
- ↘ ensure that **future users** will be able to discover, retrieve, render, manipulate, interpret and use digital information in the face of constantly changing technology
- ↘ **involves** conservation, renewal, restoration, selection, destruction, enhancing, updating, and annotating



Digital art

- ↘ art produced and mediated by a **computer**
- ↘ recent history
- ↘ **hi-tech** landscape
- ↘ **new ways** of creating, distributing and seeing artworks
- ↘ **risks** for long-term accessibility, integrity, authenticity

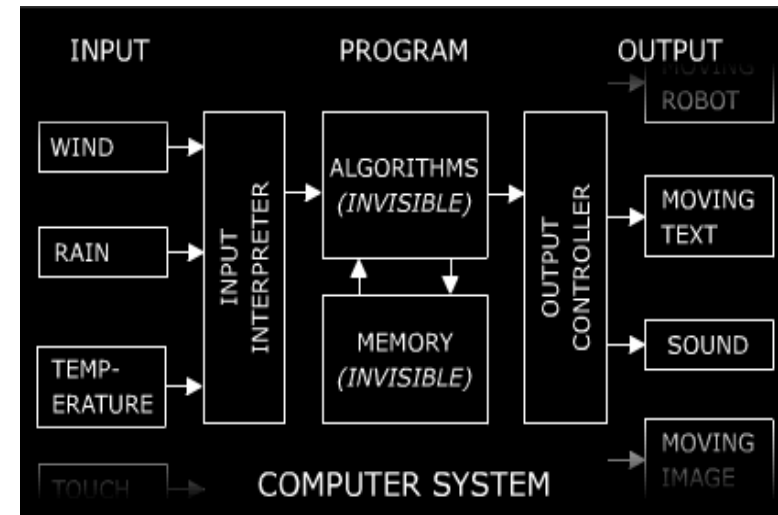


Previous initiatives for media and digital art preservation

- ↘ EAI - Electronic Art Intermix, 1971
- ↘ IMAP - Independent Media Arts Preservation, 1999
- ↘ INCCA - International Network for Conservation of Contemporary Art, 1999 - ongoing
- ↘ Variable Media Network, 2000 [Questionnaire, MANS]
- ↘ Matters in Media Art, 2003
- ↘ Inside Installation Project, 2004-2007
- ↘ DOCAM - Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage Project, 2005-2009

Questioning assumptions

- What is it a **work of art** in the digital age?
 - What should be **retained** for the future?
 - Which aspects of a given work can be **changed** and which must **remain fixed** for the work to retain artistic intent?
 - How do you **collect** and **preserve**?
 - What is **ownership**?
 - What is the **context** of digital art?
- What is a **viewer**? A human, an agent? Does the work only exist in the mind of a viewer?



Screenshot from Jim Campbell's Flash presentation on the Formula for Computer Art http://www.jimcampbell.tv/portfolio/miscellaneous_references/

Onsite visits and in-depth interviews

- ↘ Leading museums
- ↘ Digital artists



Experimentation

- ↘ EU-funded FP7 collaborative Planets Project: Testbed
- ↘ EU-funded FP7 collaborative SHAMAN Project: Preservation Framework

Anticipated outcomes

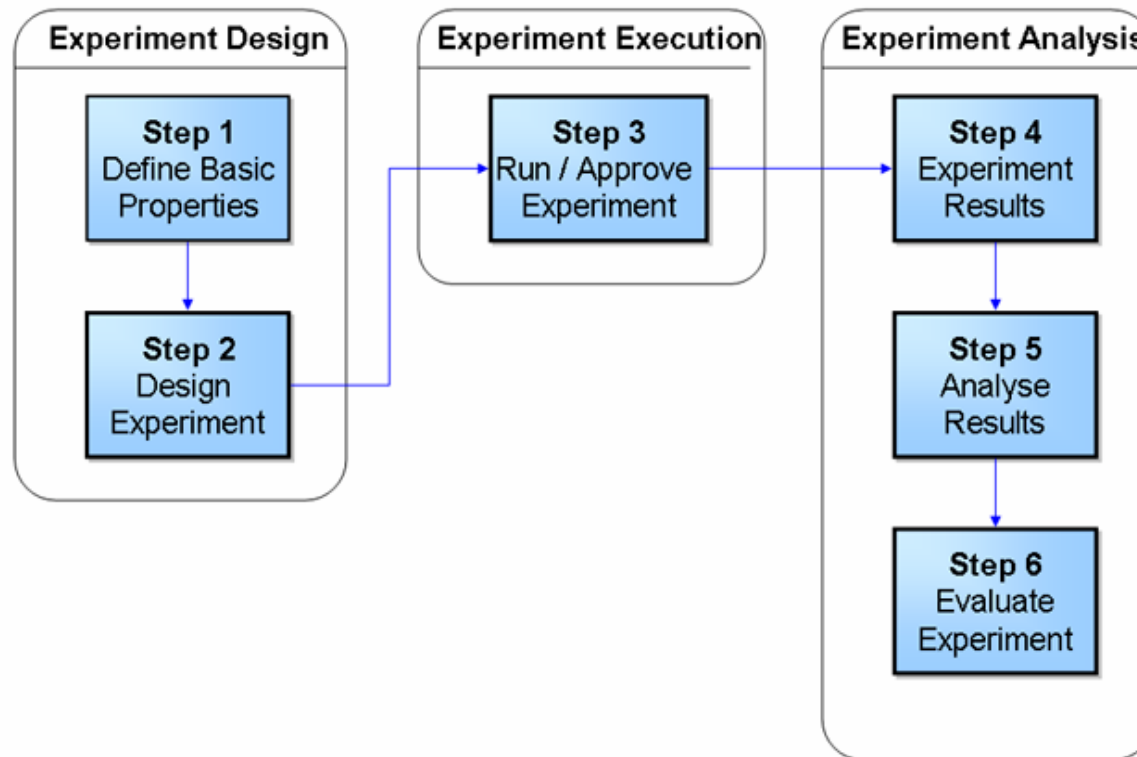
- ↘ Laying the foundations for a preservation assessment framework of digital art (policies and notation system)



Planets project: testbed

<http://testbed.planets-project.eu/testbed/>

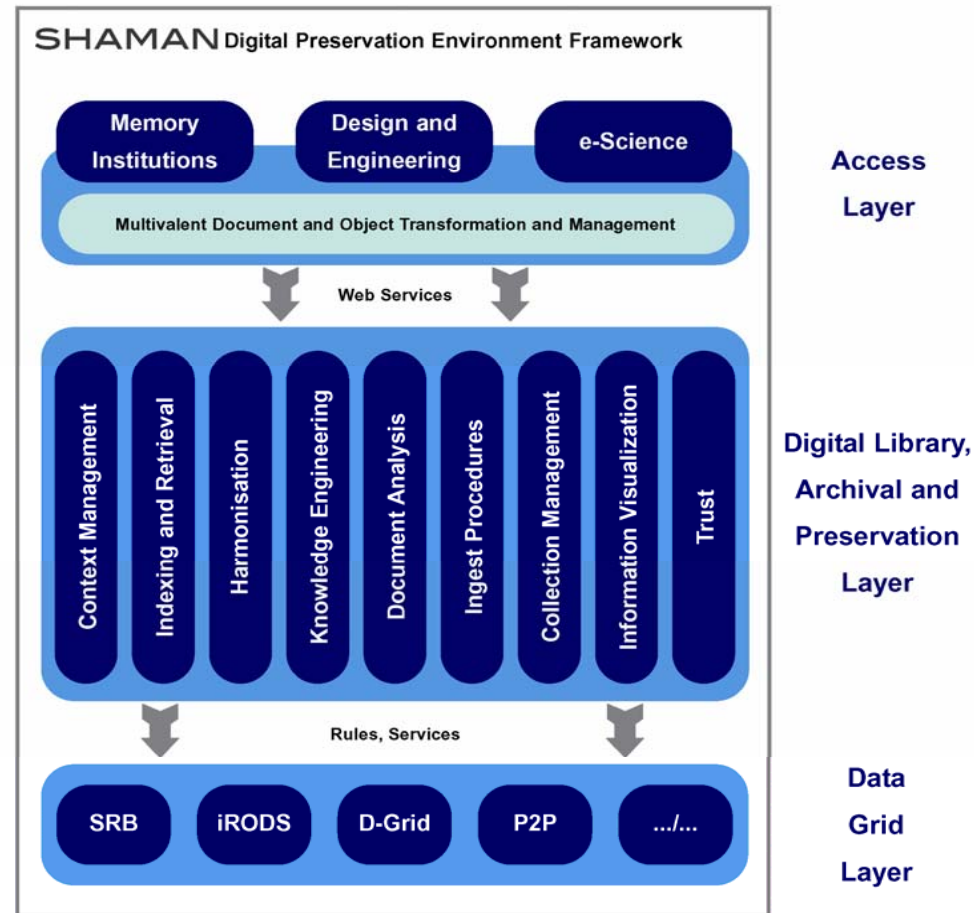
The Planets Testbed Six-Step Experiment Process





SHAMAN project: Preservation Framework

<http://www.shaman-ip.eu/>





Reflections on some challenges

ART THEORY

Context(s) of digital art

Authenticit(ies) and surrogates

Preserving the idea and/or the medium

DIGITAL PRESERVATION

Digital art lifecycle

Passive/active preservation

Curation and/or preservation

Evaluation and Assessment

ORGANIZATION

Mission, Resources and Expertise

Data models

Legal and ethical constraints



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John Gerrard, Austria

Jeffrey Martin, Hirshhorn Museum, Smithsonian

Helen Ingalls, Hugh Shockey, Lunder Conservation Center



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