

# **Empowering Artists To Be In Control**

**The Artwork Documentation Tool**

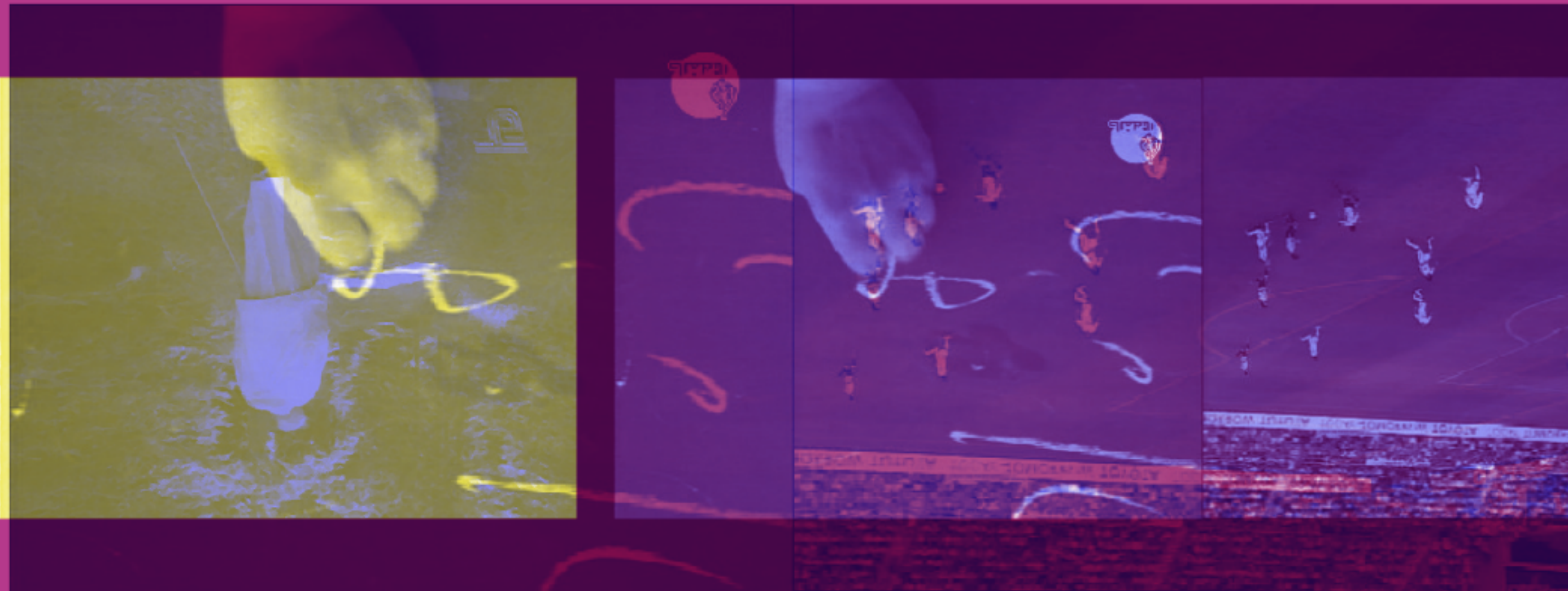
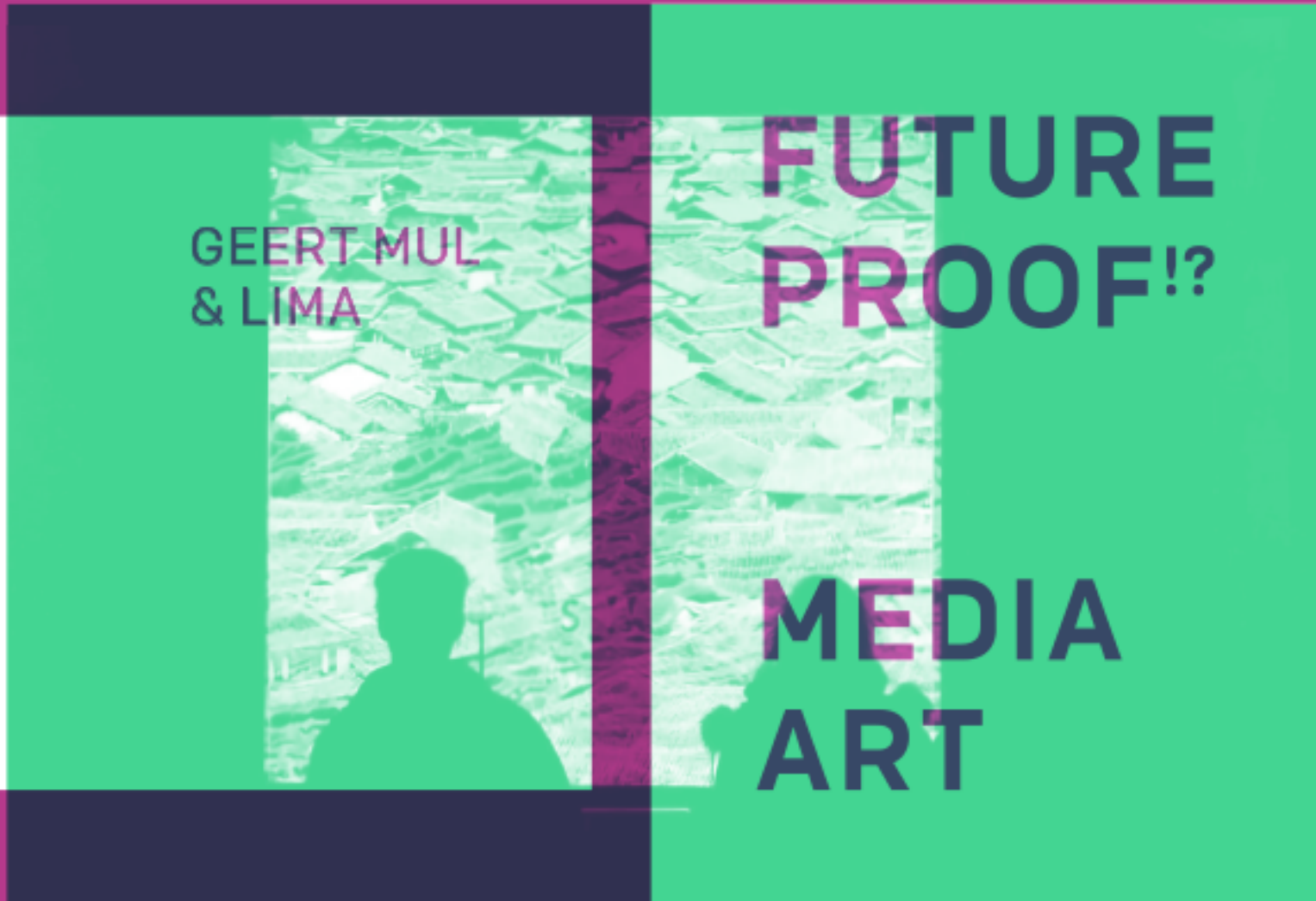
**Rachel Somers Miles  
Researcher, LIMA**

# Background

GEERT MUL  
& LIMA

**FUTURE  
PROOF!?**

**MEDIA  
ART**



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# Variable Media Questionnaire

3rd generation beta

A **Forging the Future** project

**Home**

**Background**

**What's new**

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**FAQ**

**Credits**

Works of creative expression don't lend themselves to a one-size-fits-all preservation solution. Yet the number and complexity of preservation options can confuse even the most informed conservator or archivist.

The Variable Media Questionnaire can help by recording opinions on how to preserve creative works when their current medium becomes obsolete.

## Learn more

Choose from the menu at left to learn more about the variable media paradigm and the structure of this newest release of the Variable Media Questionnaire.

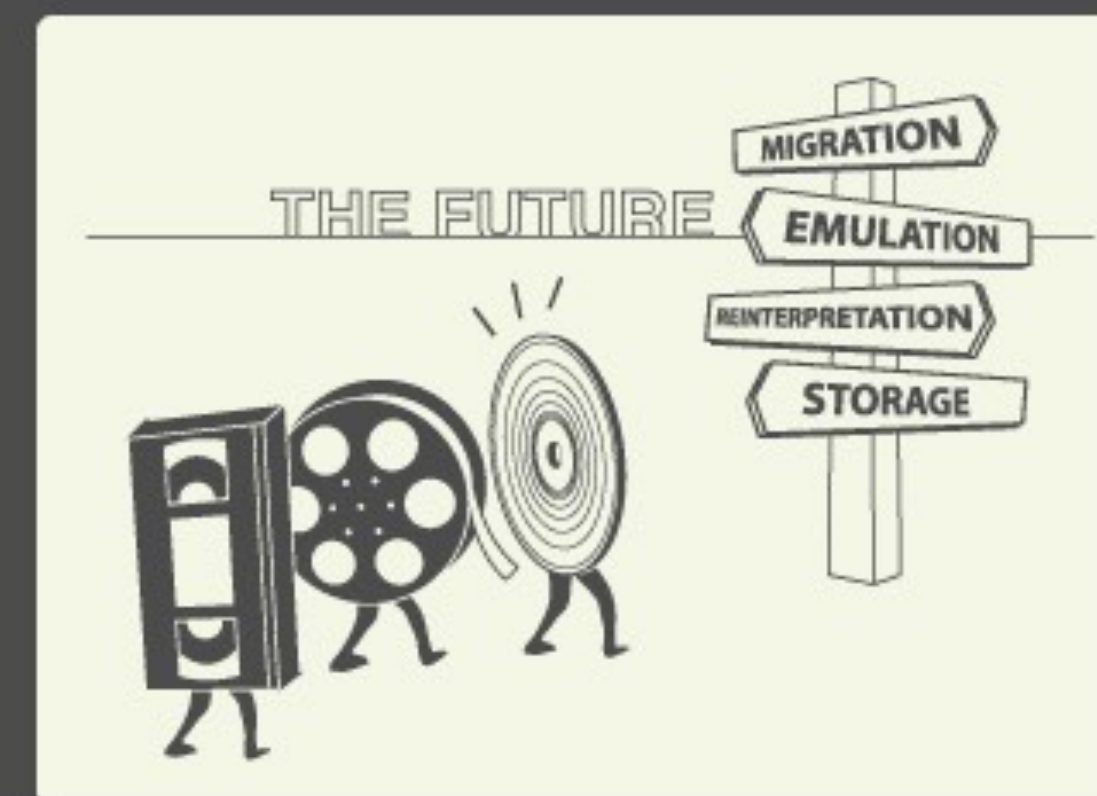
## Try it

Click **here** to launch a demo version of the Variable Media Questionnaire. Anything you add in this "sandbox" version will be erased periodically, so you can experiment with the interface by creating fake works and interviews.

This beta version works best with **Firefox 3.5+**. **Safari** and **Chrome** users may experience some glitches; **Internet Explorer** users are out of luck, at least for the time being.

## Use it

If you've given the demo a whirl and want an account for your own use, please **contact us**.



The Variable Media Questionnaire is a project of Forging the Future, an alliance dedicated to building tools to help rescue digital culture from oblivion.

Learn more from these screencasts:





## Best practices for conservation of media art from an artist's perspective

RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER · SEPTEMBER 28, 2015

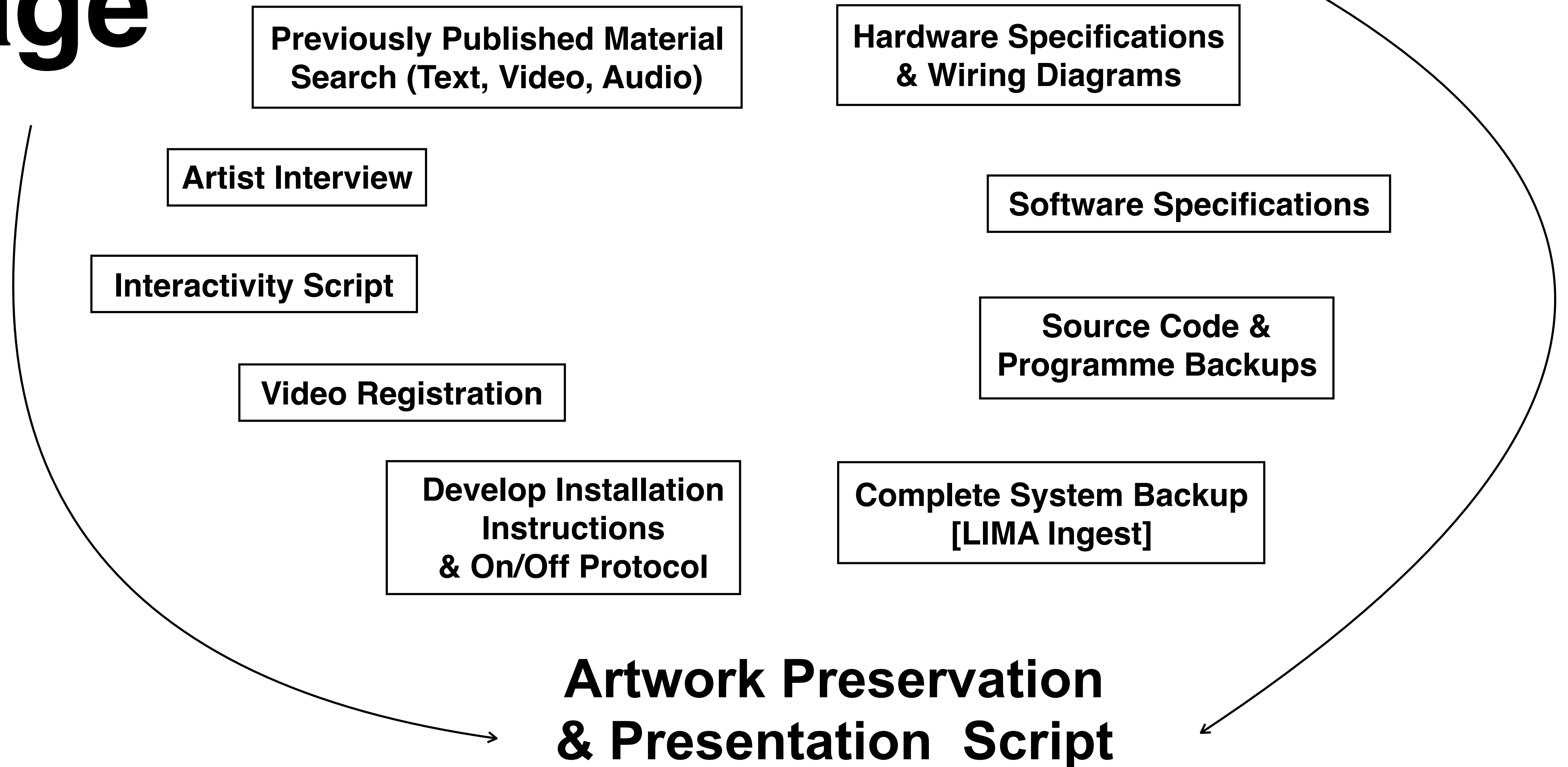
Dear colleague,

For most artists I know "Art conservation" is a troubling affair: we are already too busy maintaining operations as it is, we think of our work as a "living" entity not as a fossil, we are often unsure if a project is finished, we snub techniques that may help us document, organize or account for our work as something that stifles our experimentation and creative process. In addition, especially when we are resentful that institutions are not collecting and preserving our work in the first place, we reject the whole concept of an Art collection, —agreeing with critical historians for whom collecting and preserving contemporary Art represents an obsessive-compulsive vampiric culture of suspended animation and speculation that is grounded in a neo-colonial, ostentatious, identitarian drive: Nietzsche's "will to power" mixed with Macpherson's "possessive individualism".

For this text let's assume you are already at peace with the contradiction that is conservation: you are now interested in both creating the work and overseeing its death or zombieification. Perhaps despite being a staunch democratic socialist you now have your own Art collection. Or maybe you have met a few collectors who take risks with you, acquire your work and help keep your studio afloat financially. Most importantly, especially if you are an insecure megalomaniac like me, you don't want to disappear from history like so many great artists who are not collected by important Museums.

So here we are, thinking about the topic of conservation in media art. As you know, there is a plethora of existing initiatives to preserve media artworks, but these are always from the perspective of the institutions that collect them. While most institutional programs include excellent artist-oriented components like interviews and questionnaires, the programs are all *a posteriori*, almost forensic, as they look at the work in retrospect, as a snapshot of time.

# Artwork Documentation Package



# Art Host



# Development



# Challenges

## Conceptual & Development

- **Different Artwork Formats/Media**
- **Different Artist Working Processes**
- **Different Moments In Artwork's Life**

## Getting Artists to Use the Tool

- **Artworks Adjusted Over Time / Mutable / Living**
- **Time**
- **Money**

# **Workshops**

- 1. Use ADT As A Teaching Aid To Inform Participants Of The Important Steps/Questions Involved In Caring For Preservation & Future Presentations Of Their Works.**
- 2. Through This Conversation Prompt Feedback On ADT Connect With Artists We Want to Use The Tool To Test Ideas & Improve The Tool Based On Their Needs**

# What It Is & How It Works

## Account & Artwork Overview

### START DOCUMENTING AN ARTWORK

To begin documenting an artwork, select from the options below.  
The content you fill in for your artwork is saved automatically as you go. This means you can...

[Read More](#) ↓

To start documenting an artwork select one of the two options below:

[Document an Artwork in Progress](#) >

[Document an Older Artwork](#) >

### MY ARTWORKS

Re-visiting an artwork documentation you already started? See the list of your artworks below and toggle between "Artwork in Progress or "Older Artwork" depending on the stage of the artwork. This does not change the content already filled in or the steps required, but rather re-orders the steps to be more productive for the stage of the artwork.

#### Data Architecture

Open documentation as:  Artwork in Progress  Older Artwork   
Documentation created 2018-02-23  
Last updated 2018-03-21  
✖ Remove artwork

#### God's Browser

Open documentation as:  Artwork in Progress  Older Artwork   
Documentation created 2017-12-01  
Last updated 2018-03-21  
✖ Remove artwork

#### Match of the Day

Open documentation as:  Artwork in Progress  Older Artwork   
Documentation created 2018-02-23  
Last updated 2018-03-21  
✖ Remove artwork

# ADT Steps

- **Artwork Basic Info**
- **Step 1: Save Your Sketches & Working Notes**
- **Step 2: Make Backups & Store Appropriately**
- **Step 3: Document Software**
- **Step 4: Document Hardware & Playback Equipment**
- **Step 5: Create Wiring Diagram & Installation Manual**
- **Step 6: Document Key Information About The Artwork**
- **Step 7: Make A Video Registration Of Your Artwork**
- **Step 8: Gather & Store All Additional Available Material**

## Menu

### ✓ Artwork Basic Info

Step 1: Save Your Sketches & Working Notes

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Printing & Sharing Options

Additional Resources

Return To: Account & Artwork Overview

## Artwork Basic Info

Artwork Title

God's Browser

Year(s) of Creation

2010 to

Artwork Form (e.g. Software-based interactive installation, net artwork, etc.)

Born-digital interactive installation

Names of Collaborator(s) & Their Role(s)

Geert Mul

Artist

Carlo Prelz

Programmer

Erik Overmeire

Tech Assistant / Programmer for 2016/2017 installation

[+ Add Collaborator](#)

Context of Creation (Commissioned, Funded, Self-Funded, Etc. & How)

While God's Browser was presented at the Witteveen+Bos exhibition for the 2010 prize that Geert won, the artwork was already in development by Geert while he was working from Baltan Labs in Eindhoven. The creation of the artwork just happened to coincide with its first main presentation being at the church for the Witteveen+Bos exhibition. The artwork was not specifically developed for the Witteveen+Bos presentation, but Geert believes he took some of the prize funds and contributed this to further developing God's Browser and to ready it for presentation, which happened to coincide with the Witteveen+Bos exhibition. In fact, God's Browser took about 1.5 years to build due to the complicated nature of the software as described above.

Geert believes it's possible the artwork was first presented at Baltan in 2009, as a kind of in progress presentation but never formally exhibited before the Witteveen+Bos prize exhibition.

History of Artwork Presentations (Exhibitions, Showcases, Fairs)

2010-11-12 to 2010-12-05

Solo presentation

Exhibition of Geert's work as a result of winning 2010 Witteveen+Bos prize for art and technology

Bergkerk, Bergkerkplein 1

Deventer, The Netherlands

2018-11-17 to 2011-11-27

Solo presentation

STRP 2011 festival

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## Step 4: Document Hardware & Playback Equipment

To document the artwork's ideal hardware & playback equipment please fill in the following fields. For example:  
Equipment: Projectors x 3 / Types & Specifications: Panasonic PT-VX420, XGA 1024x768 resolution, 4500 Lumens

### EQUIPMENT

### TYPE & SPECIFICATIONS

+ Add Equipment

### QUESTIONS

If the exact types and specifications of the hardware and playback equipment listed above are not be available, what are some aesthetic ideas, specific behaviours or functions of the artwork that cannot be effected if alternative technology were used (e.g. the look of the technology, speed of functioning, response time, etc.)? In other words, what aesthetic or behavioural changes would not be acceptable if alternative technology were used?

## QUESTIONS

If the exact types and specifications of the hardware and playback equipment listed above are not be available, what are some aesthetic ideas, specific behaviours or functions of the artwork that cannot be effected if alternative technology were used (e.g. the look of the technology, speed of functioning, response time, etc.)? In other words, what aesthetic or behavioural changes would not be acceptable if alternative technology were used?

The installation God's Browser consists of a Theremin, an analog/digital converter, a Linux computer, a Mac mini, a video projector, a square projection screen, a midi interface and a sound shower speaker with amplifier.

Why do you use the hardware and playback equipment specified above? For example, because it is integral to the concept of the artwork, it is necessary to run the software, because of aesthetic preferences/choices, because it was available. Please describe and explain how these are important to the functioning, concept of aesthetics of the artwork.

Are there any objects used in the installation that are neither hardware nor playback equipment? For example a hanging screen, plinth, support structure, sculptural or installation component? Please describe these elements, their function and significance.

Are there any irreplaceable parts used? E.g. hardware that you have personally built or hacked? Yes or no? Please describe what these are and in what way they are irreplaceable.

[Go to Step 5: Create Wiring Diagram & Installation Manual >](#)



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Printing & Sharing Options

Additional Resources

Return To: Account & Artwork Overview

## Step 7: Make A Video Registration Of Your Artwork

When the artwork is installed it's important to make a video registration. The purpose of this registration is to: give an impression of the functionality and key parameters of the artwork; document how it is installed in an exhibition space; capture the proper functioning of the artwork such as how it is activated, its response behaviour and timing when interacted with; and audience behaviour. The intent of the video is to create a document that can assist in installing, running, or recreating the work for future presentations. The video should be 10-15 mins maximum.

Ideally the video will capture you, the artist, answering the following points in front of the artwork as it is running and, if interactive, while interacting with it. It's helpful to have someone film and ask you the questions.

- I. State your name, the title of the artwork, the date it was created and a version number if required, the location of the video documentation and the date of recording. This information can also be captured by writing it down on a piece of paper and shooting it as a kind of title card.
- II. Briefly describe the concept of the artwork and shoot the artwork as installed in the space.
- III. Describe & show step-by-step how the artwork functions & how it's activated.
- IV. Describe & show how the artwork should behave when interacted with. How does this change with the addition or removal of people?
- V. Share something you find significant about the preservation or presentation of the artwork. Perhaps it requires a certain sized space, or there's a special physical component of the installation, there's an irreplaceable part, etc. If the artwork is not installed in ideal conditions in the registration, here is a good place to explain in what way the exhibition space would ideally be different.

Use whatever technology and resources you are able to make available to create the video registration.

### QUESTIONS

Check if you've completed the video registration of your artwork.



List all locations where you have saved your video registration, its carrier (e.g. computer, hard drive, DVD, etc.), including folder path if saved on a computer or hard drive, and the title given to the files.


There are 2 video registrations of God's Browser. The first was created early November 2010 at [Bergkerk](#) in [Deventer](#), when the artwork was displayed as part of the exhibition associated with Geert's win of the [Wittenveen+Bos](#) prize.

# **Next Steps For Artist**

- **Leave & Return To Later - Automatically Saves Your Content So You Can Work On Over Time**
- **Download PDF Of All Content To Save & Print As Package**
- **Email PDF To Self For Storage**
- **Email PDF To LIMA For Storage And/Or To Engage In Further Preservation Activities**

# Next Steps For The Artwork Documentation Tool

**[www.li-ma.nl/adtd](http://www.li-ma.nl/adtd)**

The background of the slide is a blurred photograph of a museum gallery. In the foreground, the silhouettes of three people are walking away from the camera. The gallery has high ceilings and large windows. On the right wall, there is a large, detailed mural depicting a traditional East Asian landscape with mountains, a pagoda, and a body of water. The overall lighting is soft and even.

# **Questions, Thoughts, Feelings? Get In Touch.**

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