

Fully funded Collaborative PhD studentship at London South Bank University in partnership with Tate.

Performativity and Preservation in the Archive of Online Born-Digital Art

The Centre for the Study of the Networked Image, in the School of Arts and Creative Industries at London South Bank University invites applications for a funded Collaborative Doctoral Partnership with **Tate**, commencing in October 2023 for a period of up to three years (Full Time). The studentships include a fee waiver, UKRI rate scholarship and yearly allowance for travel/material.

The Project

The research seeks to understand and potentially resolve problems closely associated with the preservation and archiving of born-digital artworks, which are not single objects but assemblages that change and sometimes mutate over time, or lack clearly definable boundaries. The studentship offers the opportunity to develop a ***practice-based doctoral research*** focused on Tate's collection which will establish new understandings of the relationship between the technical and cultural coding of software, and methods through which new works are made accessible. Access is considered in two modes: firstly, how born digital works (both the software and associated equipment) used to create, access or display an artwork requires interaction; and secondly how this practice of archiving can be made visible to audiences. Born-digital artworks are some of society's most vulnerable cultural materials, where obsolescence and loss of cultural history are perpetual risks. From interactive software-based art, to early hypertext literature, these works ('born-digital' because they were created in digital form, rather than having been converted from print or physical equivalents) are an important record of our cultural and aesthetic history as a digital society. Born-digital archives hold heterogeneous types of artworks that require new frameworks, workflows and methods.

Whilst there has been significant research exploring the transformation of physical objects into digital surrogates in museum digitisation projects, the problems of preserving and maintaining access to born-digital art has been less explored. Born-digital artefacts still tend to be treated like objects ('content') independent of systems ('platform') that handle them. This misunderstanding leads to the idea that the systems can be switched out and it is only the 'content' that needs to be curated, archived or preserved, turning a blind eye to what has been a key mode of production and expression in digital art: the design of systems and the negligibility of a separation of 'content' and 'form'. The research therefore aims to develop perspectives on born-digital artworks as a process of cultural and technical mediation. The relevance of theories that describe and analyse ephemeral or changing artworks, such as performance and dramaturgy and their emerging models will be considered. Furthermore, it will develop a methodological overview of how born-digital art in archives, can take into account the specific dynamics between artwork, user and software environment, considering the preparation,

display of such artworks in a gallery setting and how the 'work' of archiving can be made visible The PhD project will take the form of an embedded, qualitative study, developed in partnership with Tate, in which the researcher will become part of the organisational culture of this world-class art institution.

The Partnership

This Partnership offers a collaborative supervisory team, including Professor Andrew Dewdney at London South Bank University, Dr. Annet Dekker at Amsterdam University, working alongside Tate professionals. The successful candidate will profit from the academic and practical resources of both partner institutions, becoming a full participant in the community of research students at The Centre for the Study of the Networked Image and embedded in the organisational culture of Tate's Research and Interpretation Division.

The Centre for the Study of the Networked Image is part of London South Bank University and brings together a group of researchers who are seeking new knowledge and understanding of how network and computational culture has and is changing the production and reception of art and photography.
<http://www.centrefortheStudyof.net>

Eligibility

To be eligible for consideration for a scholarship you must be a UK resident/ citizen. Prior curatorial or programming experience, demonstrated interest in current and past forms of digital art, and software design is desirable.

Application process:

Please submit your application by email to ACI-Research@lsbu.ac.uk by Friday, 18 August 2023. Interviews are planned for the week of 4th September 2023 and candidates should be able to enrol and start the work in October 2023.

As part of your application, you will be required to submit:

- a CV
- cover letter
- a research proposal (max 2 A4 pages)

For enquiries, please contact Prof Andrew Dewdney dewdnea@lsbu.ac.uk