CHAPTER 5

Impressions: Restoration of the Film Image

In 1995, during the Filmmuseum workshop, ‘Disorderly Order’, mentioned above, Meyer (cited in Hertogs and Klerk de, 1996: 18) asked the participating film historians the following question: ‘[S]hould we preserve these films just as we find them, or should we try to get as close to the original as possible?’ Film museums and restorers are confronted with this choice with each restoration: either to restore the imaginary ‘original version’ of the film or to make the best possible duplicate based on what the starting material looks like at the time of restoration. What is fascinating is the way these two options were approached, and how this was related to the continually shifting discourse on film as an historical object.

As noted earlier, a large part of EYE’s nitrate collection consists of coloured films. Because of their predominance in its archives, and because their restoration appears to have caused the institute so much concern, the following chapter takes these films as its primary focus.49 However, they are also of interest because they crystallise the differences between classical and new film history – classical film historians did not consider early coloured films as either historically interesting or aesthetically valuable, but the new film historians embraced them. In order to unravel the interrelationship between the fluid pattern of theoretical beliefs and film restoration practices, I will discuss these two film historical discourses separately.

BLACK-AND-WHITE FILM ART

Before 1980, film restoration by duplication was the exception rather than the rule at the Filmmuseum; restoration of the film image was mostly done at the level of the nitrate print. One of the earliest examples of this sort of restoration
emerged in the 1950s and 1960s and involved the application of a coating to the nitrate prints, filling the cracks and other signs of damage in the images with lacquer to make them less visible during projection. In this way, the Filmmuseum tried to resurrect the film image in its initial, undamaged state, before its subsequent history of projections and other potentially damaging actions were registered on the print itself. However, the fact that film museums restored their nitrate prints in order to re-enable their projection implies that coloured nitrate prints were screened, showing the tinting and toning, stencilling, and hand-colouring in their original form.

This was different in the rare cases when film museums showed a duplicate of a coloured film. Film museums at the time usually used black-and-white material for duplication. Let me illustrate this with the aforementioned BALLET MÉCANIQUE as an example. The Filmmuseum possesses a coloured 35mm nitrate print of the film that originates from the Nederlandsche Filmliga. Correspondence between Oskar Fischinger and Ed Pelster shows that the Filmliga was very keen on purchasing the films directly from the filmmakers. This, according to Moritz (1988: 137), who spent many years researching the history of BALLET MÉCANIQUE (see Chapter 4), proves that the Filmmuseum print of the film originates from and very probably was coloured by Léger himself. In 1968, the institute had duplicates made of this vintage print: de Vaal ordered a 35mm acetate negative print, a 35mm master print, and 35mm positive print from Cinetone, all three in black and white, and also had a black-and-white 16mm duplicate made for Lindgren in London. The Filmmuseum archive still holds a number of the black-and-white 16mm positive and negative prints. The Cinémathèque française also continued to show a black-and-white 16mm print of the film for many years. As most people assumed that the Cinémathèque print was the vintage print, the idea became fixed that Léger and Murphy had intended the film to be black and white (Moritz, 1988: 137). Moritz believes this assumption is incorrect; he states that, during his archival work, he noticed that the Cinémathèque’s black-and-white print showed irregularities:

I happened to scrutinize a print of BALLET MÉCANIQUE which comes from the Cinémathèque française/MoMA prototype, and I noticed that several of the abstract sequences show definite signs that the original was tinted – both brushstrokes and painting over the frame edge are visible. (Moritz, 1988: 139)

He drew the conclusion that a black-and-white duplicate of a coloured vintage print was shown in France too. Another frequently cited example is the THE LONEDALE OPERATOR (Grif-
fith, 1911). For a long time, the Filmmuseum distributed a black-and-white 16mm print of this film, which subsequently became the subject of much debate due to the fact that the narrative structure of one specific sequence largely depends on changes in the tinting and toning (Uricchio, 1995: 197). The sequence shows a woman, standing alone in a room, armed with a wrench, while two burglars are outside trying to force an entry. The shots of the woman in the room are initially tinted yellow. After a while, however, the yellow tinting changes to blue, indicating that the woman has switched off the light (Cherchi Usai, 2000a: 26). When the burglars finally break into the room, the woman points the wrench at them as if it were a gun, and – because the room is dark – they fail to see she is deceiving them. However, this film was shown for many years in black and white, and since it is not clear on the black-and-white prints that the room is plunged into darkness, this sequence remained incomprehensible: there seemed no reason for the burglars to mistake a wrench for a gun.

The question this raises is why film museums duplicated coloured nitrate prints on black-and-white material. The primary sources, such as the Filmmuseum annual reports and correspondence, do not offer a direct answer, but it was one of the topics discussed in the 1995 Filmmuseum workshop. Participants put forward several hypotheses: first that film museums most likely did not have enough funds to purchase the more expensive colour material (Hertogs and Klerk de, 1996: 74). Besides this more practical explanation, another suggestion referred to the fact that film museums were embedded in the sensibilities of the 1950s and 1960s, which connected early art cinema with an aesthetic of austere simplicity, and this meant that early art films were almost exclusively associated with black-and-white rather than colour film. This association dates to the 1930s, when authors such as Rudolf Arnheim and Béla Balázs defined the absence of colour and sound as one of the vital characteristics of film art (Hertogs and Klerk de, 1996: 21; Lameris, forthcoming 2017). The use of colour in film supposedly had a restrictive effect on its artistic possibilities and hampered the film artist’s freedom to use more radical camera and editing techniques; additionally, colour was thought to weaken the expressive use of light.

The Dutch film historical tradition had its origin in the discourse emanating from the Nederlandsche Filmliga during the same period (Schoots, 1999: 150). These ideas on the aesthetics of cinema, which excluded both colour film and coloured film, found their way into the broader film historical discourse. During the 1995 Filmmuseum workshop, Ansje van Beusekom noted that the ‘purists’ or advocates of film as art continued to believe that the essence of cinema was the moving photographic image and the colour was, in fact, added later. This belief gave rise to the idea that if they wished to reach the ‘true’ film, film museums would do better to omit the colours altogether.
As it was, tinting, toning, and colouring fell outside of film museums’ area of interest, with the result that these films were indeed duplicated in black and white (Meyer and Read, 2000: 3). This explains the existence of black-and-white duplicates of The Lonedale Operator and Ballet mécanique. It is quite possible that film museums considered colour to be an unwelcome addition to the ‘original’ black-and-white films of artists like Griffith and Léger, despite the fact that, as we have seen above, its absence sometimes renders the film incomprehensible.

Because the Ballet mécanique circulated in several black-and-white prints, the black-and-whiteness of the film was increasingly considered to be the mark of its authenticity. The black-and-white duplicates reflected the image of its ‘original version’ that prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, the belief arose that the coloured nitrate prints had to be forgeries (Moritz, 1988: 132), completely ignoring the fact that the colours in Ballet mécanique are perfectly in tune with the tradition of abstract film in the 1920s. Indeed, a number of artists in this period experimented with the moving photographic image, animation, rhythm, form, and also colour. Nevertheless, the classical film historical discourse, which set black-and-white art films in opposition to commercial colour films, appeared to carry more weight than the actual historical facts about the Ballet mécanique and its makers.

A final possible reason for film museums to duplicate coloured films in black and white can be illustrated with the example of the use of coloured films from a rather different category – namely, early popular and commercial films. In film museum discourse, these films were predominantly used to explain the various steps in the then-dominant teleological history of film, which described a process whereby film was supposed to have developed from a simple registration device into a pure art form. One of the films used to illustrate this story was the hand-coloured Le voyage à travers l’impossible (1904) by Georges Méliès. The Filmmuseum processed a black-and-white fragment of this film, which it integrated into Eerste stappen (NFM, 1954), a film the institute made to demonstrate this developmental history. The fragment’s only function was to illustrate one of the steps in the process. Because it was not considered to be an element of art film, colour was not assigned a place in its history: a coloured fragment had no place in Eerste stappen simply because it had no function in the particular historical story the Filmmuseum wanted to tell. Méliès’ colourings also were not afforded much aesthetic appreciation. In light of this belief, there were neither film historical nor aesthetic reasons to spend extra money on ensuring that these films could continue to be presented in colour.
In 1983, the Filmmuseum duplicated Ballet mécanique on colour film – one of its first colour restorations. At this point, the coloured print was considered the vintage one, whereas, in the 1960s, it was believed that this film must have originally been made in black and white; the imaginary ‘original version’ had shifted from a black-and-white film to one with coloured inserts. From 1986 on, colour restorations of coloured silent films increased in importance. After 1989, when Peter Delpeut and Eric De Kuyper systematically began to watch all the films in the archive, they discovered even more early films in colour, which they decided to preserve and restore. As a result, different techniques for restoring such films were developed and put to use. In the following section, I describe and analyse these techniques, and investigate what the choice of technique tells us about the different restoration philosophies that influenced Filmmuseum practices in this period, which, in turn, resulted in a particular representation of early colour in film.

The first restoration technique the Filmmuseum used is known as the ‘internegative method’ – that is, the institute duplicated coloured films on an internegative and then used this as the basis from which to make a colour projection print. This involved making a photographic reproduction of the starting material (Fossati, 1996: 87): a reproduction was made of the colourings that included all the signs of wear and tear caused by years of use, giving the internegative restoration print the special status of a photographic reproduction, with all the characteristic properties attributed to photography. As Roland Barthes ([1980] 1993: 120) describes in La Chambre Claire (known in English as Camera Lucida), we interpret the photographic referent as if it were a real object because we know it must once have been present in front of the camera lens. A photograph is always seen as direct proof of the ‘former presence’ of the photographed object. Barthes (1980: 121) calls this the ‘ça-a-été’ (‘that-has-been’) nature of the referent. In the same way, the nitrate print must have been present in front of the camera of the duplication device in order to produce the duplicate. Restorations made by the internegative method therefore have an important side effect: the image on an internegative restoration and its projection not only refers to the restored film (the text), but also to the material vintage nitrate of which it is a direct photographic reproduction.

The fact that the uneven quality of the nitrate print is duplicated when using this technique allows researchers to draw conclusions about the history of the starting material and its colouring just by viewing the restoration print, without the need to retrieve the vintage print from the vault. An example of this is the 1987 colour restoration of The Lonedale Operator. When the Filmmuseum showed the restoration print made with the internegative method
during the 1995 workshop ‘Disorderly Order’, film restorer Nicola Mazzanti noted that the colours were paler in the middle of the photogram than at the sides, and conjectured that this was because the projector’s beam had caused the colour in the centre of the nitrate image to fade (cited in Hertogs and Klerk de, 1996: 24). Mazzanti could only make this hypothetical statement about the effect of its screening history on the vintage print because the restoration was made using the internegative method, which had faithfully reproduced the faded areas in the nitrate.

However, the advantage of the internegative method – namely, that it is a photographic reproduction of the state of the vintage print – is also its biggest drawback. It is almost impossible to make a reconstruction of the ‘original’ colours, and, in the case of The Lonedale Operator, this proved to be a problem. The colours on the Filmmuseum’s nitrate print of this film had almost completely disappeared in some places; remnants of the tinting could only be distinguished along the perforations. This was, inter alia, the case for the sequence mentioned earlier, in which the change of tint from yellow to blue is essential to the understanding of the film. Because the colour of the nitrate had virtually disappeared, the colour restoration appeared just as incomprehensible as the black-and-white prints film museums had previously exhibited and distributed.

The internegative method had even more disadvantages. First, the colour film material that was used for the restoration was of a totally different nature than that of the starting material – that is, black-and-white material with applied colour. The nitrate prints were modified with dyes, while the restoration prints consisted of photographic colour material. It turned out to be an illusion to think that such a different technique could achieve a similar effect. For example, this method was not particularly suitable for the restoration of starting material that had been tinted because it was difficult to reproduce the blacks of the nitrate: the colour the internegative material produced was never really black, but was always tinged with blue or brown (Hertogs and Klerk de, 1996: 13-14), in contrast with black-and-white nitrate, which exhibits extra-deep, saturated blacks. In addition, the colouring of the white is often not visible in internegative restorations of tinted films. The absence of white is a characteristic of tinted films: because the emulsion was stained with dye, the effect was to filter the light shining through, so that what would have been white appeared as another colour. All these imperfections made it nearly impossible to faithfully restore tinted films using the internegative method. The shift of black to brown or blue and the disappearance of the colouring of the white resulted in a colour effect that was closer to toning than tinting.

The colour effect of hand-coloured and stencilled films was similarly near-impossible to replicate using modern colour material. To begin with, both
the validity and the nuances of the colours were very hard to achieve; it was extremely difficult for a grader to get all the colours correct in one attempt.\textsuperscript{69} In fact, each preservation print relied on colour corrections contained in a so-called ‘answer print’,\textsuperscript{70} and because there was often not enough money for this process, the colours on the projection prints usually differed from the tints and tones on the starting material. Deviations also arose as a result of the limited colour spectrum of the Kodak internegative material (Hertogs and Klerk de, 1996: 13-14). This was particularly problematic in the case of hand-coloured or stencilled films. For example, it was difficult to reproduce magenta and pink with this material, so faces and other body parts that were initially coloured pink appeared as black and white in the restoration prints, leading Gunning (1994: 254) to hypothesise that the early techniques were not suitable for colouring bodies and, therefore, those parts of the image were originally left as black and white.\textsuperscript{71} Had he been able to see the nitrate material, however, Gunning would have noticed that, in a significant number of cases, the faces and bodies \textit{were} actually coloured pink.\textsuperscript{72}

The greatest disadvantage of the internegative method, however, was the fact that the material lacks sustainability. Even when film museums keep such prints under the right conditions, the colours fade particularly fast.\textsuperscript{73} The restorations, which were meant to secure the coloured images of the vulnerable nitrate material into the future, appeared to be more vulnerable than the nitrate prints themselves.

All in all, although this method held the potential to reproduce an image of the coloured starting material the way it appeared at the time of its restoration, the limitations of the technology and the film material meant there were too many serious differences between the restoration print and the starting material to realise this potential. As a result, these \textit{photographies} should always be approached with caution.\textsuperscript{74} In practice, this method ended up mainly being used for the restoration of coloured and stencilled films and those films that had acquired a very particular look due to the decay of the nitrate. In the first case, the decision to restore the colour of the films was of a film-historical nature, while the second type of restoration was usually aesthetically motivated. In both cases, the internegative method was the only one suitable for reproducing the colours on these films and rendering them visible again.

The colours of coloured silent films, whether red, blue, green, or yellow, have one common characteristic: they are extremely unstable – to the extent that their volatile nature was remarked on even in the early years of the 20th century. In 1912, for example, Frederick Talbot wrote in his book, \textit{Moving Pictures, How They Are Made and Worked}:
The circumstance that aniline dyes have to be used is a distinct handicap owing to their fugitive nature. The colours during the first runs through the projector are brilliant, but repeated exposure to the intense electric arc tones them down to a remarkable degree. In the end, the film tints have a washed-out appearance which is far from pleasing. (Talbot, 1912)\textsuperscript{75}

This meant that the audience at a premiere saw a particular film in colours that differed from those seen by audiences just a few weeks later. With each screening, the colours became a little paler.\textsuperscript{76} Because the nitrate collection in the archives of the Filmmuseum almost exclusively contains old projection prints, we can conclude that the colours on all the starting material must have faded due to repeated projection. In addition to the transience of the dyes, Meyer pointed to another problem: the dye may or may not react to the nitrate, changing its chemical structure and, thus, radically affecting the colour – for example, blue often becomes rusty brown. Obviously, this makes the reconstruction of the ‘original’ colours very complicated (cited in Hertogs and Klerk de, 1996: 78).\textsuperscript{77}

Due to fading and discolouration it was (and is) difficult to figure out what the ‘original’ colours looked like based on the vintage prints alone. For this reason, film and photography manuals from the 1910s and 1920s are potentially a better source of information on early colours. Among other things, they describe how the dyes were made and applied.\textsuperscript{78} Unfortunately, however, they do not inform us about other important parts of the process, such as the exact concentration of the dyes and the amount of time the filmstrips had to be submerged in the dye baths. These decisions were left to the technicians, resulting in differences in colour between various films, and even between various scenes (Meyer and Read, 2000: 194). Due to the absence of this information, it remains unclear how bright or dense these colours were in the past. In fact, none of the existing sources on the colour in early films are sufficient to form a truly authoritative picture and, as a result, it remains impossible to know what the colours really looked like some 90 years ago (Fossati, 1996: 87). This implies that the ‘original’ colours cannot be retrieved and, as such, will always be imaginary. Still, in addition to the internegative method, film museums developed other restoration techniques whereby they attempted to retrieve the ‘original’ colours, with methods known as the ‘imitative method’ and the ‘Desmet method’.

The imitative method made use of old tinting and toning techniques. First, a black-and-white copy of the film was struck, after which the restorer provided tinting and toning using, as much as possible, the ‘original’ techniques and dyes (Hertogs and Klerk de, 1996: 73). The dyes were based on the recipes in the manuals mentioned above. The Narodni Filmovy Archiv
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(National Film Archive or NFA) in Prague in particular experimented with this
old method of tinting and toning. First of all, some of the ingredients for the
dyes were no longer available, and then it was discovered that a number of
dyes and chemicals were toxic, which meant they could not be used safely. The
result was that it was not possible to reconstruct all the dyes that were used
in the early 20th century. Furthermore, film museums discovered that it was
difficult to apply the colour evenly onto the film, and information on the con-
centration of the dyes and the length of time the filmstrips should be left in
the dye baths was not available. All this made an adequate reconstruction of
the colourings very difficult.

A further problem was that the acetate material used to make the duplic-
cates differed from the starting material and, thus, from the imaginary ‘origi-
nal version’ of the film. For example, as mentioned earlier, the vintage prints
contain deeper blacks than those obtained with the acetate emulsion layer.
The new acetate carrier, made of a different plastic to the nitrate and with a
different emulsion layer, which, among other differences, contained a lot less
silver, resulted in a black-and-white image that deviated from that produced
in the early years of the 20th century.

The aberrant black-and-white images made an exact reconstruction of
the coloured films from that period virtually impossible. However, by experi-
menting with the old colour techniques, film restorers did discover some new
historical facts about tinting and toning. For example, the experiments with
the imitative method made clear that recently applied colourings significantly
differed from the colours on the vintage prints: they were much clearer and
brighter (Meyer and Read, 2000: 194). This changed film museums’ image of
the ‘original’ colours. In addition, colours on the new restoration prints faded
so quickly that they rapidly approached those on the vintage prints and, as a
consequence, the new restoration print once again began to differ from the
alleged original within a relatively short period of time. However, the rapid
decomposition of the colours enabled restorers and film museums to observe
the fading process of these dyes.

The imitative method therefore provided more information on the ‘origi-
nal’ colours. Besides which, other characteristics of the vintage nitrate were
also preserved – for instance, one characteristic of tinted and toned vintage
prints is their large number of splices, due to the fact that tinting and toning
techniques require each piece to be dipped in a chemical bath separately. A
restoration print that has been made with the imitative method will exhibit
splices at exactly the same places as the starting material. Of course, this is
also the major disadvantage of this method; after all, splices make a film
more vulnerable. It is partly for this reason that the Filmmuseum only used
this imitative method a few times. The films QUO VADIS? (Guazzoni, 1912),
Blood and Sand (Niblo, 1922), and South (Hurley, 1914-1917) were restored using this technique; however, the method the institute mainly used to restore tinted and toned films is called the Desmet method – in fact, this method was even standardised in 2002.  

This method, which was named after one of its inventors, Noël Desmet, used a black-and-white negative (based on the coloured vintage print) to make a positive colour print with the help of colour filters. This means that the colours were added to the positive print during the printing process. The Desmet method also allowed for the reconstruction of tints and tones with a black-and-white vintage print as starting material – for example, with a camera negative. In such cases, the information on the ‘original’ colours was based on the colours of a tinted or toned vintage print, or on instructions written on the vintage negatives about which colours to use for the tints and tones (Meyer and Read, 2000: 193). As such, the Desmet method is similar to the techniques used in the early period – in both cases, the colours were added to a black-and-white film print (Fossati, 1996: 87) –; however, the colouring with the Desmet method was not done with aniline but with a photochemical process.

The advantage of the Desmet method was that it restored the imaginary original colours without duplicating the damage or the fading on the starting material. A good example is the ‘new’ 1993 restoration of The Lonedale Operator, which was intended to replace the ‘failed’ internegative restoration. As mentioned earlier, the yellow and blue tints that are so crucial to the understanding of the film had almost entirely disappeared; the only place where there was any visible residue of the original tints was around the perforations. Using only these sparse clues, the Desmet method was able to reconstruct the tinted film images, and the differences between the blue and the yellow became visible once again, clearly showing that the woman had switched off the light at the crucial point in the narrative.

Yet the Desmet method also had its problems. First of all, the reconstructions of the ‘original’ colours were based on the faded vintage prints; these were the main sources of information. The colours of the Desmet restorations, therefore, were a mixture, falling somewhere between a reconstruction of the ‘original’ colours and the colours on the vintage prints. The ‘original’ colours were restored in the sense that they were equally distributed over the image, as they were in the 1910s and 1920s, but the brightness of the colours was based on the appearance of the vintage prints. Despite this drawback, the Filmmuseum took the decision in 2002 exclusively to use the Desmet method for the restoration of tinted and toned films, instead of the internegative method, since black-and-white negatives are more tenable than the internegative material. This method, however, did not, in fact, secure the colours, so the film museum continued to be dependent on the transient vintage nitrate prints, and, as a
consequence, the risk remained that all the information on the colours would disappear with these prints.\textsuperscript{86}

Besides the fact that the Desmet method was a better way to save the photographic image, the Filmmuseum’s choice to use only this method also reveals something about its general policy. It seems that the desire to restore the ‘original’ colours was greater than the wish to capture the state of the starting material. As a result, the Filmmuseum approached film restoration more as a way of reconstructing the past than as a method of rendering its remains visible.

In addition to these three techniques for restoring coloured black-and-white films in colour, the Filmmuseum during this period sometimes chose to restore coloured films in black and white.\textsuperscript{87} This decision was guided by certain parameters. First of all, colours with an essential narrative function were always restored. In other cases, the Filmmuseum took into account the aesthetic function of the colour: if this was not significant – for example, in a film that was entirely tinted or toned in the same colour – the institute often chose to restore it in black and white. It also preferred to restore films with only a few, very short tinted or toned fragments in black and white, the reason being that, with the use of colour film material, as mentioned earlier, the blacks and whites showed bluish and brownish effects.\textsuperscript{88} The choice of black-and-white material was therefore aesthetically motivated because, in these cases, the restorations are integrally more beautiful on black-and-white material.

The choice to restore certain tinted and toned films in colour and others in black and white meant that the totality of early silent film restorations provided a distorted perspective on the tinting and toning of the films in the archive. The Filmmuseum’s moment of selection had a long-lasting impact on the film historical discourse and the perspective on film history, referred to in Part I. Still, the choice to restore a tinted or toned film in black and white was, to a certain extent, historically justifiable. Production houses from the early years of cinema often sold film titles both in black and white and in colour; the tinted film was often slightly more expensive than the black-and-white version.\textsuperscript{89} Hence, it is very likely that every tinted or toned film also existed in black and white. As a consequence, a black-and-white restoration of a tinted print could also be seen as the reconstruction of one of many different versions of a film – a version that probably existed but presumably did not survive. However, what the Filmmuseum did not take into account was whether the black-and-white version of a certain film had actually been shown in the Netherlands, so that it is uncertain if the black-and-white reconstruction, based on a coloured nitrate print, comprises part of the history of Dutch film or not. In this respect, the fact that the Filmmuseum preserved 20 percent of the coloured films from the Desmet Collection in black and white is striking,\textsuperscript{90} as the collection represent-
ed the Filmmuseum’s decision (referred to in Part I) to promote the history of Dutch film culture. Nowadays, due to the fact that tinted and toned films were sometimes preserved in black and white, whenever EYE wants to produce a new preservation print, it always checks the nitrate print to see if it is in colour, in which case, the new print will also be made in colour.91

The hypothesis that film historians and archivists in the 1950s and 1960s considered black-and-white films as symbolic of the pure, unadulterated form of early cinema, and that this idea strongly influenced the way films were preserved for posterity, appears to be substantially vindicated. Yet, this was not the only influence on the decision to duplicate films in black and white: it may often have been more the result of indifference and limited budgets than a conscious choice to restore a film to its ‘original’ state. However, this practice led to assumptions about the role of colour in film in the early period that were not always correct.

The 1980s witnessed a revision of the film historical discourse and film museum practice, which manifested itself in a new approach towards early coloured films, as they came to be regarded more and more as aesthetic objects. Restoration practice also changed to reflect this new approach. Although it is difficult to say exactly how discursive changes or revisions begin, it seems safe to conclude that the final restoration prints made during the years under investigation bear striking parallels with contemporaneous film historical beliefs, and vice versa. Consequently, the restoration prints in the Filmmuseum collection (and archive) reflect the different types of ‘film historical taste’ over successive periods. In addition, the intensity of the discussion that arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s around the earlier practice of duplicating (some) films in black and white shows that the growing interest in coloured silent films was, to some extent, a reaction to the previous dominance of classical film history.

The Filmmuseum’s restoration and presentation of early coloured films demonstrates a previously unremarked historical practice: the institute prioritised the reconstruction of the (imaginary) ‘original’ colours over producing a duplicate of what Meyer calls ‘the film as it was found’ (cited in Hertogs and Klerk de, 1996: 18). This reflected the Filmmuseum’s policy to preserve and exhibit the history of Dutch film culture, which it interpreted as the history of a (possible) cinematographic experience. This approach also enabled it to create restoration prints with a high-quality image, making the old films shine in a new way and, thus, allowing the institute to take into consideration the aesthetic experience of future film museum audiences. Nevertheless, the colours were never the same as those on the nitrate, either ontologically or aesthetically. As Chapter 3 explains, colour in early film became one of the important historical questions prompted by the material in the archive – questions
the institute attempted to answer with the help of these various simulations that imitated the early colours but were far from reproductions. We need to take this into account when discussing the 1995 workshop ‘Disorderly Order’.

All in all, the result of the development of restoration techniques over the course of time can be seen in the variety of colour restorations in the Film-museum’s collection, turning it into an eclectic assemblage of colour restoration prints. The same applies to institutes in other countries. For this reason, Thomas C. Christensen (2009, 65) of the Danske Filminstitut, advises film historians not to accept an early film at face value, but to investigate the duplicates of the film to be found in the archives: ‘Especially in cases when the object of study is not studied in its original form, the path of representation should be considered when attempting to analyse a film at face value.’ Unfortunately, however, there is often no information about the chosen restoration techniques, which means that the best source of information for historians who wish to research the use of colour in early film remains the nitrate prints. Yet, without the preservation and restoration of these early colour films, they would not have been visible at all. Or, as Delpeut said in his keynote speech at the 2015 conference, *The Colour Fantastic*: ‘We were right to be wrong’.\textsuperscript{92}