As with film theatres and cinemas, film museums are ‘other spaces’, with very different rules, customs and time dimensions to those we are accustomed to in daily life (Foucault, 1984: 48). These other spaces, which Foucault also calls ‘heterotopias’, are separated from the world we normally live in and can only be entered after performing a number of rituals. To step over the threshold of one of these institutions is literally to make the transition from our everyday world into that other space (Poppe, 1989: 21). From the moment that the visitors enter a theatre, for example, their expectations are streamlined in a certain way and, as such, they are programmed into the desired spectator for the performance. This effect is, to a great extent, created by the architecture and furnishings, which are part of the heterotopia’s presentation strategy. This leads to the specific question of how the Filmmuseum produced film museum audiences with the help of its various interiors.

**THE ART MUSEUM DISPOSITIF**

The first Filmmuseum screening room was located at the Stedelijk Museum. The institute moved there in 1952 and, soon afterwards, it began to show films twice a week in its newly completed auditorium. The Stedelijk Museum had extended its invitation to the Filmmuseum in imitation of New York’s MoMA, where popular art, film, photography, and design were assembled together and exhibited with the aim of taking ‘high art’ out of its ivory tower and bringing it closer to popular art forms. At the same time, MoMA also insured that ‘the institution of cinema was now intertwined with the institution of art’ (Wasson, 2008: 124). For the Filmmuseum, this move had an effect similar to the latter: it was an opportunity to place its archival films in an art-museum.
context, giving them an artistic *kudos*. This meant, for example, that the Stedelijk's art-loving visitors were also able to attend the Filmmuseum's screenings in its auditorium (Hendriks and Blotkamp, 1996: 11).

The Stedelijk's director, Willem Sandberg, ensured that the museum's interior design was executed in a simple, transparent style, in order to make the artworks it held accessible to all. The purpose of the design was to bring modern art to the ordinary person on the street. This aim was most evident in the design of the windows in the newly built wing that faced the Van Baerlestraat; their vast size meant that the art on display was visible from the street, and the street, in a sense, became part of the museum's artistic space (Jansen van Galen and Schreurs, 1995: 108).

However, for audiences at the Filmmuseum's screenings, the Stedelijk Museum's interior design and style of architecture had the opposite effect: they were confronted at every turn with visual (high) art. First of all, before entering the auditorium, they had to pass through the ‘Appelbar’, which was

6: Museum auditorium with artworks on the wall and a view through the door of Karel Appel’s ‘Appelbar’ (Collection EYE Film Institute Netherlands)
decorated with a 1951 mural by Karel Appel (Hendriks, 1996: 72). Pictures of the auditorium confirm this experience.

As a result, functionality, modern art, and the upcoming film screening were mixed together in this heterotopia. In his novel, *De Rokkenjagers* (1963), Isaac Faro describes a visit to the Filmmuseum. The excerpt shows, that the other parts of the Stedelijk Museum and the modern art they housed were accessible to the Filmmuseum audience – for example, during the intermission (Faro, 1963: 53-62). Apparently, the Stedelijk allowed popular art forms, including film, to be literally surrounded by the ‘higher’ arts. In their annual reports, Sandberg and Jan de Vaal invariably mention that the development of cinema (and modern music) ran in parallel to that of modern art. As a result, Filmmuseum audiences were constantly reminded of the fact that the films they saw were part of a modern art tradition. In the sense described by Stephen Greenblatt (1991) (as outlined in Chapter 3), the history of modern art resonated with the films on display, and this resonance produced the effect of wonder that, according to Greenblatt, is intimately connected to the artistry of an object. The continual confirmation that the Stedelijk Museum afforded the Filmmuseum that the films it presented belonged within the tradition of the visual arts amplified the sense of wonder that seeing these films invoked in the audience. In this case, resonance and wonder clearly functioned together.

The spare, unembellished design of the auditorium where the Filmmuseum screened its films further stimulated a reaction of wonder in the audience, echoing Greenblatt’s (1991: 49) description of the moment when the intensity of the gaze eliminates all surrounding sounds and images. The auditorium was a clean, simple space with white walls and a platform at the side, which was covered with a shade when not in use. When the audience arrived in large numbers, the Filmmuseum made use of the space on the platform; however, if there was a smaller attendance, it closed the shade, and the platform became invisible again.

This interior design of the auditorium was in line with that of the rest of the Stedelijk Museum, which had undergone a physical metamorphosis initiated by Sandberg. The walls were painted white, the doors and rooms were made smaller, focusing attention on the individual artworks. As John Jansen van Galen and Huib Schreurs (1995: 103) describe it, ‘the arrangement of the museum should not be based on the sheer pulling-power of large quantities of works, but should take as its starting point an isolated, carefully selected piece’. The Stedelijk Museum presented these pieces as individual works of art, evoking an effect of focused wonder. This was the opposite of nineteenth-century presentation strategy, which involved placing large quantities of artworks next to one another, producing a resonance between them and providing an overall context for each individual piece.
The effect of wonder was reinforced by taking the focus away from the architecture; in a sense, the building withdrew – no more variegated decorations or panelling that could distract from the art, just plain white walls that allowed the individual artworks to stand out. This perspective was in tune with ‘modern architecture’, which was characterised by – among other things – the absence of ornament, polychromy, humour, or any other distractions (Jencks, 1986: 31). In addition, its simplicity stimulated the sense of wonder experienced during the film screenings. This approach can also be positioned within the broader modernist move towards breaking with traditional forms of spectatorship, which had flourished during the interwar period, and which returned to favour following the Second World War, taking a lead from playwright Bertolt Brecht. Brecht wished to encourage a critical audience by producing a ‘Verfremdung’ or ‘distancing effect’ in his theatrical productions, which was interpreted as ‘a stripping of theatrical performance down to its basic components’ (Bordwell, 1997: 85). This desire to pare back the presentation – be it of a play, a film, or an artwork – was clearly evident in the post-war interior design of the Stedelijk Museum, including the auditorium that hosted the Filmmuseum screenings.
Yet there were also elements of the auditorium that militated against inducing a sense of wonder – for example, it was equipped with rather uncomfortable wooden seats. In 1956, Sandberg partly replaced these with designer wicker chairs, but these tended to creak, disrupting the silent films that were mainly shown (although not always) without a musical accompaniment (Hendriks, 1996: 72).  

The bare interior of the auditorium, with its uncomfortable chairs, was also indicative of its aspiration to multi-functionality. In addition to film screenings, the space was used for lectures and performances of modern music. However, the interior of the screening room at the Stedelijk Museum was also attuned to what could be called a broader art film dispositif. For example, Amsterdam’s Kriterion, the famous arthouse cinema that was founded immediately after the Second World War, was also furnished with seats that looked anything but comfortable.
The seats at the first arthouse cinema in the Netherlands, the Uitkijk Theatre, were equally as punishing.

Mannus Franken, director of De Uitkijk from 1934 to 1936, explained that he kept the hard seats in his theatre to prevent the spectators from getting too comfortable; he was of the opinion that the soft armchair-like seats so typical of commercial movie theatres made the audience lazy. By choosing hard seating that kept the audience awake, Franken therefore deliberately placed De Uitkijk in diametrical opposition to the commercial, popular film institutions. The audiences of commercial cinemas were often labelled as ‘passive’: the theory was that sitting immobile in the dark encourages the viewer to enter a sort of artificial state of regression, which could be compared with a dream state (Baudry, 1999: 773), and comfortable seating only reinforced this tendency. This sort of dream state did not fit with modernist ideas about how art should be experienced. After all, the prevailing view was that, whereas commercial entertainment set out to lull the spectator, art should be actively expe-
rienced (Beusekom van, 2001: 115). Franken’s explanation of why the seats in De Uitkijk were deliberately hard and unwelcoming was completely at one with this theory.

The Filmmuseum and the Stedelijk Museum were also part of this discourse. This became apparent in their first joint project, the 1948 exhibition, ‘De Film’, which was held in the Stedelijk. The sense conveyed by the exhibition was that the passive spectator ‘happily searched for consolation’, led by instinct; in contrast, the active spectator wanted to formulate judgments to recognise which films were ‘bad’ and which ‘good’ (Schmidt, Schmalenbach and Bächlin, 1948: 56).

Once again, the views of post-war modernism are clearly recognisable. Brecht preached the merits of audience activation using the technique of *Verfremdung* on the stage, but he also claimed that it was necessary to keep the audience awake by physical means – and hard seats were seen as a useful strategic tool. It was obvious that soft, comfortable seats had no place in the art cinema, where the viewer was expected to stay alert and active. In this respect, the uncomfortable seats stand for the way the dispositif contributed to the construction of the ‘ideal spectator’ of art film as perceived at the time.

10: Jan de Vaal’s exhibition, De Film, with panels about the NHFA (ABP Foto (Amsterdam) Collection EYE Film Institute Netherlands)
The art-film institution also believed in its role of enlightening its audience. This is illustrated by Charles Boost (1967: 24), who wrote that Franken thought that De Uitkijk was ‘more an effective lecture room where film art was taught, than a cinema with oriental carpets, springy armchairs and a wonder-organ, where one [goes for] a night out’. This remark not only positioned De Uitkijk outside the dominant institution of commercial film, but placed it within an educational tradition. The Filmmuseum too had educational ambitions. In 1952, for example, it reported that the films it acquired should be shown ‘with the aim of spreading a correct understanding of quality film’. In addition, it wrote in 1956 that it wanted to ‘encourage that one will not undergo film passively, but approach it in an active and critical way’. De Uitkijk, Kriterion, and the Filmmuseum first ensured that their audiences were alert and actively engaged with what they were seeing, and then tried to teach them about what was considered to be quality film. The uncomfortable, creaky chairs, which constantly reminded the viewer of his or her own physicality, were part of this educational dispositif. Screening the films in a theatre with such hard seats, and introducing the programmes of films with serious lectures, gave the Filmmuseum evenings an (art) educational character.

This educational function helped position this group of films and its related institutions within the art field, in which the idea of education was frequently employed. It was (and continues to be) the general opinion that true art has an educational function, and this equally applies to film (art). As Dutch film critic Bob Bertina (1950: 90-91) says, ‘[o]ne must learn how to read a poem, one must learn how to listen to music and one must learn to see Film’.

Thus, the Filmmuseum presented its museum films within a dispositif that positioned film in the field of the high arts. This was, first of all, because the films were screened in the Stedelijk Museum, within the context of modern art. In addition, the furnishing of the screening room (or auditorium) was designed to produce an active spectator, a common aim in the modernist tradition in relation to the contemplation of art. As a result of all these elements, the audience was guided into a specific reading of these films as (modern) art.

**TWO FILM MUSEUM TRADITIONS**

In 1972/3 the Filmmuseum gradually moved into the Vondelpark Pavilion. After a period of presenting film as the ‘seventh muse’, surrounded by its sister arts, the institute now had the opportunity to establish its own museum, exclusively in celebration of film. This also raised the possibility of creating a dedicated screening room and exhibition space. In its search for the ideal
presentation environment, the institute created an area inside the Vondelpark Pavilion that revealed the influence of two film museum traditions.

Because the transformation of the Vondelpark Pavilion into a film museum took some time, the Filmmuseum screenings continued to be organised at the Stedelijk Museum until 1973. It is striking that the institute began to voice an increasing number of complaints about the auditorium, including its lack of comfortable seating and poor ventilation. No doubt its reason for disparaging the auditorium was primarily political: it needed money for the construction of a cinema in the Vondelpark Pavilion, without which the Filmmuseum would not be a film museum. Yet its emphasis on the absence of comfort also points to a change in perspective on how the viewer should approach a museum film – that is, it signalled a change in the film museum dispositif. This is reflected in the design of the new film theatre in the Vondelpark, which was halfway ready by 1974. The museum cinema was totally black: the walls, ceiling, and even the windows were black. In addition, it contained no ornamentation, polychromy, or any other potentially distracting elements. As such, the screening room was a typical modernist building – but it had a purpose that differed from that of the Stedelijk Museum in various ways. The idea of screening art films in a completely black auditorium was derived from the experimental filmmaker Peter Kubelka, a well-known figure in the modernist movement in cinema (Bordwell, 1997: 83). Kubelka made his first designs for what he called the ‘Invisible Cinema’ in 1958, which he later displayed in the Anthology Archive in New York (he was co-founder of the archive). This version of the Invisible Cinema existed from 1970 until 1974 (Alfaro, 2012). Albie Thoms, writing in 1974, describes the Invisible Cinema as follows:

It is something of a space capsule, and when one enters it one is plunged into a sort of sensory deprivation chamber in which all one sees is the film on the screen and its sound (if it has any) is all one hears. Everything inside the cylindrical cinema is black, except for the screen, and the seats have hoods and blinkers so that one only looks at the screen. The cinema is tiered so that the seats of the row in front cut across the bottom of the screen just below head height. All visual and aural impressions extraneous to the film are eliminated. No one is admitted once the program has begun. (Thoms, 1974: 33)

Whereas the earlier, more educational dispositif of film art stressed the materiality of the body, in this dispositif, the body and its senses were stimulated as little as possible. At first sight, this might appear similar to the dispositif of the dominant commercial institutions; however, whereas commercial cinemas use comfort to encourage the spectator to relax, the Invisible Cinema's
audience was intended to remain alert. The under-stimulation of the body was intended to enable the viewer to concentrate his or her visual senses.\textsuperscript{22} Instead of the pleasant physical experience of the soft, comfortable seating of a commercial cinema, inside the Invisible Cinema, the body of the spectator was supposed to become invisible and impalpable. The lack of physical stimulation of the other senses would, it was believed, allow the visual senses to become even more acute.\textsuperscript{23} In addition to this, the chairs were constructed with ‘hoods’, separating but not isolating the audience members from each other. As a result, they barely heard or saw each other, which was supposed to reduce the potential distraction caused by the presence of the other spectators to a minimum (Hanich, 2016: 351). At the same time, however, the members of the audience continued to enjoy the communal experience that is so characteristic of the cinema dispositif. Although the Invisible Cinema grew out of modernism, the concept leads us back once again to Greenblatt’s concept of wonder. The Invisible Cinema ensured that nothing and no one could distract

11: The black cinema in the Vondelpark Pavilion, with its white faux-leather chairs (Collection EYE Film Institute Netherlands)
the spectators from the artwork it displayed there – even more so than in the auditorium at the Stedelijk Museum – thus enabling a way of looking that was filled with the sense of wonder.\textsuperscript{24}

In the 1907s de Vaal also felt that nothing should distract from the aesthetic experience of the films he screened.\textsuperscript{25} In fact, his construction of a ‘black box’ cinema seems to have been inspired by Kubelka’s Invisible Cinema. However, the Dutch version remained somewhat limited. There was a makeshift projection booth at the back of the screening room, a kind of carton box holding the projector, and the audience heard the projector running during the screening, something that surely must have distracted from the visual experience of the films. In addition, the seats differed from those in the Anthology Archive in many respects. In the first year, the cinema was furnished with white faux-leather chairs.

Although the testimony as to the comfort of these chairs varies, it remains a fact that they were very different from those in the Anthology Archive, which completely individualised the spectators and turned them into a sort of visual-experience machines. They were then replaced with cast-offs from the Circus Theater Carré, which offered a little more comfort – yet they were still not comparable to the seats in the Invisible Cinema. Despite these practical limitations, the idea behind the Filmmuseum’s soberly designed cinema was connected to Kubelka and the ascetic modernist conception of what film was and how it should be shown and seen. Compared with the auditorium at the Stedelijk Museum, this new modernist-oriented screening room was even more austere and simply furnished, and as a result, it had even fewer distracting elements.

In the upstairs hall of the Pavilion, the Filmmuseum organised temporary exhibitions that visitors could peruse before entering the cinema. This hall, with its parquet floors and wooden doors, had been added to the Pavilion in 1924. During an exhibition, most of the old wood-panelled walls were covered with black partitions, which the Filmmuseum used to display posters, photos, graphic designs, or other materials from the collection. Sometimes the institute also arranged more official and extensive exhibitions. At these moments, it would divide the space further by using more black partitions. In this way, the Filmmuseum built a modernist, ascetic exhibition space inside and on top of the old interior of the Pavilion. It particularly organised exhibitions about filmmakers from the canon, such as Dziga Vertov and Joris Ivens. However, it also put on temporary exhibitions that were much less in the art-film tradition, such as the exhibition \textit{De eerste dertig jaar film in Amsterdam} (\textit{The First 30 Years of Film in Amsterdam}). This exhibition is a reminder of the fact that the municipality funded the Filmmuseum to preserve films about Amsterdam; most probably, the staging of this exhibition was a gesture to the city council.
that made the institute’s move to the Pavilion possible. The Filmmuseum also organised the exhibition *Caligarismus* on German Expressionism in 1985 – its first collaboration with Hoos Blotkamp, who was to become its new director just a few years later.\(^{26}\)

The exhibitions were used to teach the Filmmuseum visitors about how to adapt and assimilate their contextual knowledge. In this way, it guided them towards the screening and turned them into a more uniform audience. The library was also located directly across from the screening room and, consequently, this area of study became part of the presentation space. Visitors could immediately access information about what they were going to see or had just seen.
The remaining space in the Pavilion was decorated in a strikingly loud way. For example, two life-size female figures – former ornaments from a travelling cinema – flanked the fireplace in the upstairs hall. They were replaced in the 1980s with a Hupfeld Phonoliszt Violina, which came from the Willigers Collection.

The female figures were moved to the downstairs hallway next to the cash register, which was crammed full of old projectors and other devices illustrating the history of cinema. The downstairs entrance, with its square marble pillars and marble floor, was also built in 1924; thus, from their very first step, visitors were ushered into an environment suffused with an historical atmosphere (Hendriks, 1996: 17, 24).

The Filmmuseum exhibited the technological history of film, combined with the history of film as entertainment in this more or less permanent setup. By exhibiting objects derived from the history of film technology, the institute seems to have promoted the idea of film as ‘cinema’ over its connotation as ‘art’. This may have helped to clarify the institute’s position within the film field, but it was also a way of arranging the film museum that corresponded with a broader, international movement. This kind of exhibition on the history of film was rather popular during the late 1960s and early 1970s – for example, the Cinémathèque Royale opened a permanent exhibition of such
artefacts in Brussels in 1968, and Henri Langlois’ Musée du Cinéma opened in 1972. In 1973, even Ernest Lindgren, who was never enthusiastic about gathering ‘associated materials’ together, began to think about how the BFI could host such an exhibition (Robinson, 2006: 251-252). Clearly, this kind of presentation strategy was in vogue during this period. Considering that this was also the time when video emerged and old films were frequently broadcast on television, it seems natural that the function of film museums changed, since they were no longer the only media providing access to old or forgotten films. Langlois (cited in Trope, 2001: 39) believed the film museum was increasingly the place where all the different elements of film should be preserved and contextualised, and this implied exhibiting the history of cinema with material objects. This change in presentation was synchronised with the change in film history away from a constant repetition of the canon as part of a teleological narrative relating the development of film into an art form towards that ‘other’, not yet written history of film.

The spartan modernist screening room seems to contrast strongly with such an exhibition, full to the brim with historical objects. However, by using both these models, the Filmmuseum represented the different ideas about film museums – and the way they should be constructed and decorated – that
existed at the time. While the screening room imitated the strictly modernistic Invisible Cinema, the exhibition of equipment and paraphernalia from the history of cinematography revealed its connection to the activities of Henri Langlois, Jacques Ledoux, and others, showing that side of film history that could not be presented on video or television.

The overall interior design of the Vondelpark Pavilion as a film museum was therefore the result of the search for the way of designing and furnishing an independent film institute. The Invisible Cinema may be seen as the ultimate consequence of the presentation of museum films as art. In turn, the exhibit of cameras and other objects illustrated the shift in film historical interest towards other histories of film, such as film as entertainment and the technological history of film (Fielding, 1967). In its entirety, the building represented an institution where film as an independent museum object was placed centre stage.

**TOWARDS A HISTORICAL SENSATION**

In the late 1980s, a number of further developments took place in the film museum field. In 1988, for example, institutions such as the Museum of the Moving Image (MoMI) in London and the American Museum of the Moving Image (AMMI) in New York were created, where the history of film and media was exhibited in large-scale installations (Trope, 2001: 64). As mentioned earlier, the Filmmuseum also underwent a number of changes during this period, including a change of management, which led to the introduction of a new policy based on the idea that film should be regarded as a performance art, rooted in the history of performance. As a result, the Filmmuseum shifted its attention towards the history of film as a cultural-historical phenomenon, with an emphasis on the history of Dutch film culture. This change took shape, for example, in the institute’s reconstruction policy, which turned towards the Dutch versions of films, focusing on the films as they were shown in the Netherlands rather than on the previously valorised director’s versions. It was also reflected in the way the Filmmuseum refurbished the Vondelpark Pavilion. The Pavilion was totally renovated: it was stripped of its modernist, ascetic 1970s interior, unveiling walls and woodwork that dated from the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries. This not only changed the upstairs hall, but also the room in which the library had been located. This room was stripped of its suspended ceiling that dated from 1974, revealing one that was constructed in 1881. The Filmmuseum started to use this space as a film theatre and, from that moment on, it screened films in a room with decorations that harked back to the nineteenth century, the period in which early cinema is artistically rooted. In 1988,
the Filmmuseum programme noted: ‘It is striking how film at the beginning of its history reverted to the “Art” of the last century.’

The Filmmuseum, therefore, was able to link the popular medium of film directly to the traditional ‘arts’ of the nineteenth century by means of its screening room. This also implicitly referred to the hidden artistic side of the unknown silent films the museum had started to exhibit. So, once again, it showed its films in a space with artistic connotations. However, this new cinema differed greatly from the Invisible Cinema, which minimised the presence of any possible distracting ornaments; by contrast, the new interior was not meant to encourage the visual experience of wonder and an artistic reading of the films, but to create a historical sensation. The term ‘historical sensation’ was introduced by Johan Huizinga to refer to the feeling of contact with the past that was evoked not only by encountering historical details, but also by the materiality of the sources and the way they are rooted in the past. As Huizinga explains:

> It may be that such a historical detail [...] suddenly gives me the feeling [of] immediately be[ing] in contact with the past, a sensation as deep as the pure enjoyment of art, a (do not laugh) almost ecstatic sensation of no longer being myself, of flowing into the world outside me, of being in contact with the essence of things, the experience of Truth through history. (Huizinga, 1948: 566)

In other words, the auditorium interior made these museum films resonate with their history during their screening. However, despite the fact that this screening room breathed the atmosphere of the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries, it had never actually been used as a cinema.

The Filmmuseum also reconstructed the Invisible Cinema, which it turned into a room that literally had its origins in the history of Dutch film culture. When Jean Desmet’s Cinema Parisien, which he founded in the 1910s, closed its doors, his granddaughter Ilse Hughan donated the interior to the Filmmuseum, and the institute used it to reconstruct the screening room of the former cinema. From then on, the early films that, for a large part, derived from the Desmet Collection could be screened in a room that the institute called ‘an entirely appropriate architectural historical monument’. With the reconstruction of the Cinema Parisien in the Vondelpark Pavilion, the Filmmuseum made the historical screening context part of the museum presentation. This happened simultaneously with the theoretical shift from film art to film culture, and from the history of film as art to the history of its presentation.

Initially, the intention was to use this room primarily for the screening of silent films and early sound films. These were mostly descended from the
time when Desmet showed films in the Parisien, so their screening resonated with the room’s interior, and the audience became part of the reconstruction of a historical film-viewing scenario. The walls and lamps of the old Desmet screening room could be touched and the panelling emanated the special smell of old wood. Additionally, the screening of silent films was always accompanied by live music. This new presentation strategy reflected broader developments in the theoretical understanding of the way we perceive and learn.

Today, minds and bodies are understood to be interrelated. The behaviour of the body cannot be separated from the mind and the emotions, and, equally, mental activity (cognition) works in partnership with bodily responses. Learning is understood to involve tacit, felt knowledge in addition to knowledge that can be verbalised. (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000: 113)

In line with this change in thinking, exhibitions were designed to address all the senses, not just that of the eye. The shift from visual dominance to an appeal to multiple senses was reflected in the Filmmuseum’s new look: its spectators were very much a part of its reconstruction – they sat inside it, breathed it, smelt it, and felt it.

Furthermore, the recreation of an old film theatre created a sense of authenticity as a museum object gives weight to interpretation and signification by its physical presence. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000) calls this the ‘thinginess’ of objects: they seem to have a one-to-one relationship with the past they refer to, which gives them an aura of authenticity (in Benjamin’s sense). However, Hooper-Greenhill warns that objects’ alleged ‘authenticity’ should simultaneously prompt a critical attitude. Despite the aura possessed by a historical object, its meaning will be just as flexible as that of a word or an image. In fact, the meaning bestowed on objects that are used to signify something are even more arbitrary than linguistic signs; the possible meanings of an object are less clear and the production of meaning can vary considerably, depending on the context in which it is presented and on the eye of the beholder (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000: 115).

In order to ensure that the spectator is clear on exactly what the object is intended to communicate, the referent and thus the interpretation of the object is often anchored in its contextual presentation. Objects are displayed alongside other objects with predetermined reference functions, and their meanings are also steered in a certain direction with the help of text or pronouncements. For example, the Filmmuseum underwrote the significance of the Cinema Parisien with its remarks about the interior as an ‘appropriate architectural historical monument [in which] to exhibit silent films’. In
addition, whenever the Filmmuseum explained to audiences why the Cinema Parisien screening room was so special, it always referred to Desmet, his collection, and the early years of the 20th century, even though the interior could also refer to many other moments in the history of film. Indeed, the Cinema Parisien closed in 1987, screening films until that time. For example, in the 1970s, films like Blue Movie (Verstappen, 1971) and Deep Throat (Damiano, 1972) were screened in this theatre.\(^{32}\)

However, the Filmmuseum presented the Parisien as a screening room that reflected only its early years. As a consequence, the later films that were shown more recently in the Cinema Parisien were not included in its historical contextualisation of film. Here, we see a striking parallel with the film restoration policies of the time, described in Chapter 6: film museums concluded that
the director’s (and possibly the premiere) versions of films were the ‘original’ ones, automatically dismissing all later versions, and they concentrated on reconstructing these particular films’ editorial structure. Similarly, the Filmmuseum made the Parisien refer to its historical starting point – to the 1910s and to Desmet –, which had the effect of excluding all the other moments in its history.

This does not mean that films from another period were never shown in the Parisien, although such screenings automatically produced a sense of anachronism. Still, this was not necessarily a problem, because a museum space does not have to form a homogeneous whole with all the historical moments it presents. On the contrary, museums are so-called ‘heterotopias of time’; they are special, isolated places, wherein time is stored and presented in a discontinuous way. As Foucault (1984: 49) says, ‘there are heterotopias of time that accumulate unendingly, for example, museums and libraries; museums and libraries are heterotopias in which time never stops dividing itself’. In museums, this heterogeneous accumulation of time, of periods, is automatically included in the displays. The Filmmuseum accomplished this, for example, by showing films from 1900 or from 1960 in a screening room that specifically referred to the 1910s, leading to an eclectic presentation format that could be called ‘historical bricolage’.

The Filmmuseum also redecorated the Pavilion’s upstairs hallway, which it stripped of the black panels nailed against the wood panelling that were previously used for exhibitions. It replaced the original doors with doors from the Cinema Parisien, giving the entrances to the screening rooms a material reference function, pointing to Dutch cinema history and film culture. The downstairs hallway, however, broadly retained its 1920s appearance. In this way, the Pavilion promised a journey back into the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries, to the romantic beginnings of film.

What is most remarkable, however, is the excessive focus on the early period of film history in the decoration of the Pavilion. This preference might be related to the fact that the Filmmuseum decided to start its work of preservation with its oldest films and so placed these high on the agenda, especially in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of a location is far more permanent than decisions over the priority of a certain part of a film collection. Another reason why it might have favoured objects from the early period of film history is the fact that they are older and rarer, which, as we saw in Part I, increased their (financial and cultural) value. A final explanation is that the Filmmuseum was influenced by the new film historical discourse, with its strong focus on silent film.

The move towards eclecticism during the last period is something we have already come across in the previous sections in relation to, for example, broad-
er ideas on the value of films as museum artefacts, which turned the collection into an accumulation of different sorts of films. There was also a similar move in the direction of a greater diversity in restoration policy, which expanded the potential versions of films to be restored from an emphasis on director’s versions to screened and archival versions. All these different opinions and ideas about film and film history left traces in the archive, which means they were incorporated into the Filmmuseum’s physical and material history.