Film Museum Practice and Film Historiography

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Published by Amsterdam University Press

Lameris, Bregt.
Film Museum Practice and Film Historiography: The Case of the Nederlands Filmmuseum (1946–2000).

Amsterdam University Press, 2017.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/66504.

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Each film museum is embedded in a history of performances. Sometimes they attempt to deny this history, showing their films in screening rooms stripped of any historical reference. In other cases, however, they choose to show films in a ‘historically accurate’ way, which often results in hybrid forms of display, a mixture of historical reconstruction and modern experimentation. What seems central to the choice of display at the Filmmuseum is the way it defined its films – as individual works of art, to be displayed and viewed in isolation, or as examples of the way films were presented in the past and, hence, as performance art.

The problem that occurs with museum reconstructions of former display practices is that they use a mimetic code that implies that they faithfully represent historical facts; the audience is encouraged to interpret the historical reconstruction as true to life (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998: 20). These displays easily give the impression that they are accurate reflections of the past, while they are like all other forms of historiography, a reconstruction of the past – which is a very different matter. In fact, they are performed reconstructions of the past. As Frank Kessler (2012) explains in his article, ‘Programming and Performing Early Cinema Today’, ‘as the lecturers are played by actors and the texts are delivered according to a fixed script, which is repeated during every show, the screenings literally are performances’. The crucial question here is whether the Filmmuseum indeed inferred that its reconstructions were truthful facsimiles of past screening practices or, instead, encouraged its audience to adopt a different type of reading.
MUSIC AND LECTURES

By imitating ‘original’ programmes, the Filmmuseum attempted to summon the atmosphere of yesteryear. The emergence of this programme format occurred at the same time as film museums focused their attention on ‘film culture’. This meant, first and foremost, taking a new perspective on the presentation of silent films. The Filmmuseum wanted to create performances of a more authentic but also more surprising and diverse character: its screenings were accompanied by music and, if possible, a lecture, as well as by song and sometimes even dance. A good example of its array of presentation formats for silent films is the 1992 programme Sprakeloos en ongehoord – geheimen van de zwijgende film (Speechless and Unheard – The Secrets of Silent Film). The aim of this programme was to present a number of the Filmmuseum’s ‘discoveries’ about silent film, including the discovery that, before 1930, most films were accompanied by lectures and music. In order to familiarise the audience with this rediscovered historical fact, its screenings incorporated a musical accompaniment and a lecturer who explained the film.

However, the programmes were not solely designed as factual presentations; the Filmmuseum also sought to showcase the beauty of many of its early films, and, in order to do this, it deployed a number of different strategies. First, the institute believed that early film performances had been ‘bustling and animated’, and it wanted to revive these performances in ‘all their splendour’. The aim was to reconstruct an atmosphere that approached the sort of experience audiences would have had in the past. In this sense, its intention was not to render the reconstruction of historical facts perfectly, but to evoke, above all, the excitement of early cinema screenings. As a consequence, the Filmmuseum hardly ever used the ‘original’ scores, which generally contained elements that an audience of today would not understand, such as certain (now obscure) musical jokes and forgotten melodies.

The Filmmuseum allowed itself a free interpretation of the musical accompaniment of silent films, inviting well-known Dutch musicians such as Henny Vrienten, Joost Belinfante, and others, giving them carte blanche to compose new scores. This resulted in experimental screenings that positioned the screened films in the domain of experimental art. By using musicians, actors, or writers from the contemporary art world, the Filmmuseum was also able to present early film and its presentation context as part of that artistic world. Thus, music gained a permanent place in the screening of its silent films.

This was not unique to the Filmmuseum. During the mid-1990s, the Cinémathèque française and the Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC), for example, also organised performances of silent films that were combined...
with the experimental use of music and theatre. The same was true for Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, which even named itself a ‘live-music’ film festival. Indeed, every screening is accompanied by a live solo piano or ensemble performance. In addition, the festival organises evening events with special musical performances.

In the 1980s, film historians and producers Kevin Brownlow and David Gill began to promote, with composer Carl Davis, the presentation of silent films with an orchestral accompaniment, initiatives that inspired the Film-museum to adopt the practice (Kuyper De, 2006: 146). In 1984, for example, the institute organised a Lubitsch retrospective in which each of the films had a musical accompaniment. The highlight was the screening of LADY WINDERMERE’S FAN (Lubitsch, 1925), accompanied by the Residentie Orkest. A year later, in 1985, the Filmmuseum again organised screenings accompanied by music, in the context of the programme, A Homage to Jean Desmet (mentioned in Chapter 8), which took the performance history of silent film as its central theme. Remarkably, although the Filmmuseum generally announced these events by referring to the titles of films by famous directors such as Lubitsch, the accompaniment of the Desmet films was presented as merely part of the
reconstruction of the old cinema environment. This corresponded to the Filmmuseum’s programming strategies at that time, in which it promoted the canonical films it screened as artistically valuable and intrinsically interesting, in contrast to its unknown silent films, which it presented as historical artefacts.116

In 1992, the institute wrote that film museums had, until 1990, presented silent films in a historically incorrect way: namely, in silence, in black and white, and using inferior prints. Interestingly, this ignored the developments that had taken place in the 1980s.117 It is, of course, correct to say that the Filmmuseum screened almost all its silent art films without music during a certain period – this was during the time when the idea of the Invisible Cinema held sway, with its emphasis on minimising any elements that could distract the spectator’s gaze from the experience of the film. In this kind of setting, it seems obvious that the Filmmuseum would not add music or explanations of the film. However, in the preceding period, it experimented with music and film. One example is a programme in December 1958 called Francesco Bertini en Asta Nielsen, which was accompanied by Pim de la Fuente on the piano.118 According to the Filmmuseum, the combination of silent images and music presented in this programme was intended to produce a distinctive atmosphere, with a very different audience effect.119 This performance was one of its earlier experiments in linking film and music in order to provide the audience with an exciting new experience.

Other film museums experimented in similar ways. For example, in 1945, in Paris, the famous film composer, Joseph Kosma, composed the accompaniment to Langlois’ projections after Jean Renoir introduced them to one another (Mannoni, 2006: 214). Film museums also released well-known silent films with soundtracks, although, in 1958, the Filmmuseum explicitly announced that the screening of DIE NIBELUNGEN (Lang, 1922-1924) would be the ‘original’ silent version rather than the new version with music.120 It seems that, in the 1950s and 1960s, film museums had an ambivalent attitude towards the combination of silent film and music.

In the period before 1970, the Filmmuseum mainly showed the silent films it considered to be works of art silently. This was in contrast to the historical-romantic programmes, in which it presented unknown silent films as ‘curiosities’, and accompanied with music. In some cases, the Filmmuseum even introduced lectures or reconstructed entire performances. For example, the 1961 reconstruction of a travelling cinema (referred to above), called Images Fantastiques.121 This consisted of objects from the Willigers Collection, which, besides old films, also contained ‘many attributes that belonged to the equipment of the former “travelling cinema” of Mr. Riozzi’.122 The result was an ‘authentic’ travelling cinema, with an ‘authentic’ musical accompaniment.
played on the Hupfeld Phonolisztr Violina, also one of Riozzi’s artefacts. Dirk Huizinga, the Filmmuseum’s vault-keeper, acted as lecturer.

The Filmmuseum constantly pointed out to journalists (and other commentators) that this reconstruction comprised authentic archival artefacts. The fact that these were objects from the archive was emphasised to enhance their aura of authenticity and historical weight. This resulted in a very particular form of in-context presentation, in which films and objects were placed side by side; they were not isolated but were part of a larger whole: the reconstructed fairground cinema. The way the films resonated with the objects meant the display environment was reconstructed in a similar way to that of the Cinema Parisien decades later. The reconstruction framed the films in such a way as to denote them as ‘fairground films’.

In the same year, Charles Boost wrote *Biopioniers* (1961) to accompany the *Images Fantastiques* exhibition. In the book, he reinforces and legitimises the epithet, ‘fairground films’. Boost describes the history of three showmen from the Netherlands, and justified his choice of subject by proposing that film was
born in the fairground. By claiming this as an historical fact, he enhanced the
importance of fairground cinemas in film’s historical narrative. Boost was
aware that those who passionately advocated the idea of film as an art form
would find his assertion that the fairground was the cradle of film hard to
accept; nevertheless, he stated that even they would have to accept this histori-
cal fact in the end. Boost (1961: 5) advised these ‘friends of film’ to ‘watch the
noisy, spectacular introduction of a new art form with mild appreciation,’123
because the art form could never have emerged without this initial period as a
fairground amusement. Indeed, he claimed that it was due to these fairground
pioneers that art film was finally able to separate itself from the commercial
side of film. Boost gave the travelling cinema a place within the dominant film
historical discourse by arguing that these pioneers allowed film to develop
and, in this way, he transformed this part of film history into a vital step in the
classical historical timeline that traced the evolution of film towards its eman-
cipation from its commercial origins and its emergence as an art. Huizinga,

18: Filmmuseum vault-keeper Dirk Huizinga
(left), informs the audience about the films (Photo
by Anticapress Haarlem, Collection EYE Film
Institute Netherlands)
in his lectures, also guided the audience in the direction of a historicising reading by drawing attention to his uncle, ‘the famous Leiden professor Johan Huizinga’. In this way, he embedded himself, as a film lecturer, firmly in the academic discipline of history, and imbued his presentation lecture with serious, historical connotations.

All in all, the Filmmuseum presented the *Images Fantastiques* as a historical reconstruction, even though this revival of early films also contained a high degree of entertainment. For example, Huizinga’s comments were comical and amusing, and he even turned a melodrama such as *Een telegram uit Mexico* (Chrispijn Sr., 1914) into a highly comical performance. Yet, the Filmmuseum most especially wanted to give its audience the impression of travelling back in time.

The show was praised for its special atmosphere – one that also characterised other historical-romantic programmes. At least one, if not several, of the performance elements that had characterised the screenings of that early period was always present. Once, in 1953, the Filmmuseum even presented ‘authentic’ musicians and lecturers to accompany the screening of four of its so-called ‘curious’ films. The films were introduced by Henry Wessels, who had been a lecturer at the Rembrandt Theatre in Haarlem from 1912 to 1922, and the trio that provided the musical accompaniment also dated from the period of silent film. The Filmmuseum emphasised the ‘authenticity’ of the lecturer and the music in its announcement of the programme. Here, we see another example of a show that programmed its audience into adopting a historicising reading of the films by presenting them within a nostalgic, historical frame. The Filmmuseum, however, was not the only institute to present early films with a musical accompaniment: a similar example can be seen in 1936 at the MoMA Film Library, which showed six early films accompanied by music from that era (Wasson, 2005: 159).

The Filmmuseum’s presentation of its historical-romantic programmes strongly differed from that of its silent art films, which it showed mostly without music or spoken explanation. With these films, the Filmmuseum did not celebrate the history of film culture; instead, it stripped them of their past by presenting them as separate, unique entities. This was reinforced by presenting these films in screening rooms such as the auditorium of the Stedelijk Museum and, later, in the institute’s imitation of the Invisible Cinema.
Film museum practice has always displayed a special interest in the technological side of film projection. Because nitrate film is flammable, its projection can endanger both the projectionist and the audience, and consequently the projection of this material was prohibited in the mid-1950s. However, the prohibition did not apply to film museums, which were allowed to continue to project nitrate into the 1970s. This was also the case for the Filmmuseum: it even screened nitrate films inside the Stedelijk Museum, in close proximity to the museum’s valuable paintings, statues, and other artworks (Hendriks, 1996: 72). However, although this meant that the Filmmuseum screened vintage nitrate prints until the 1970s, there was no mention of this, even in the Mededelingen. Yet, it presented the screenings of preservation prints as special film museum events; for example, its Images Fantastiques project. The institute had 16mm preservation prints made specifically for these performances – a fact it brought to the attention of the press. By contrast, it stressed the authenticity of the objects it used to reconstruct the travelling cinema. It appears that the materiality of the film prints played no role in this game of authenticity; the Filmmuseum used other objects to produce an ‘authentic’ presentation of the old footage.

In the mid-1970s, the Filmmuseum stopped its practice of projecting nitrate prints. According to former employee Arja Grandia, it switched to the projection of acetate after it moved into the Vondelpark Pavilion. During this period, the international film archival community increasingly emphasised the vulnerability of nitrate prints, and stressed the need for their preservation. Hence, film archives started to prioritise film preservation over other activities, and this, in turn, enabled them to cease the projection of nitrate prints. It is striking that the Filmmuseum also began to emphasise the aesthetic qualities of its preservation prints, pointing, for example, to the artistic value of the images, which, due to the institute’s preservation techniques, had become visible once more. One example of this is the 1994 programme Joris Ivens – de nitraatcollectie (Joris Ivens – The Nitrate Collection). The Filmmuseum had new preservation prints made of all Ivens’ films, using nitrate prints of the best possible quality as starting material – even if it had to borrow these from foreign archives – in order to do justice to the ‘pictorial qualities’ of his work. As such, these preservation prints were supposedly able to safeguard the aesthetic qualities of the films and, hence, Ivens’ genius.

The Filmmuseum also spoke of ‘beautiful, often newly preserved colour prints’ when discussing the screening of early films. The institute believed that, by projecting these ‘dazzling’, clean new prints, it could reveal these unknown films’ ‘pictorial qualities’. The screenings also helped to stimulate
a reaction of wonder in the audience. The absence of explanation about the restorers’ interventions confirms the institute’s emphasis on the aesthetics and beauty of early film. In contrast, some film museums added explanatory titles with information about the restoration of these prints. The reference to restoration automatically drew attention to the toll time had taken on the vintage print. As a result, these film museums presented the films more as archival objects than aesthetic ones. The Filmmuseum did not do this – it appeared to consider the restoration of silent films and the screening of the new prints as primarily a means of reproducing the aesthetic experience of these films.\textsuperscript{133}

Interestingly, in the period after 1988, the Filmmuseum often screened older preservation prints of canonical films. A clear example is *Intolerance* (Griffith, 1916) – the institute showed a particularly bad 16mm print of this film at least until the beginning of the 21st century. There was a practical reason for this: the films from the existing canon were often already available on old acetate prints\textsuperscript{134} and, as a result, it was not necessary to make duplicates in order to project them. However, what is remarkable is the fact that the Filmmuseum (and film historians who watched these prints) apparently accepted lower-quality prints of well-known titles. This shows that, after 1988, presentation strategies aimed at inducing a sense of wonder seemed less important in the case of canonical films than for the unknown, newly discovered silent films, confirming my hypothesis that, in this period, film museum practice interpreted films from the canon more as film historical objects than aesthetic ones. In addition, there was not much need to convince the audience that these films, which had already been established as art films at an earlier stage, were beautiful; it was hardly necessary to make an extra effort to persuade audiences to come and see them.

Sometimes, however, the projections of older and worn-out prints also resulted in audiences producing other kinds of readings, interpreting these films as ‘old’, ‘historic’, and ‘from the past’. In 1961, for example, journalists responded to the screening of the reconstruction print of *The Robber Symphony* (Feher, 1936) by claiming they were charmed by the imperfection of the images on display. The *Haagsche Courant* noted that a certain imperfection seemed somehow intrinsic to this film, providing it with its own allure;\textsuperscript{135} a ‘hygienic version’ would strip the *The Robber Symphony* of its particularity. Apparently, the projection of this crumbly nitrate print gave it a ‘charm’ that evoked a sense of history. Another newspaper explained this ‘healthy need for a friable projection’ as a reaction to the perfection of the latest film technology: ‘Nothing is a better cure for the stupid glorification of Cinema-Scope than the first Lumière newsreel.’\textsuperscript{136} As the ‘friable’ projection was apparently the antithesis of what could be seen in the commercial cinema, an imperfect projection seemed to have become synonymous with ‘non-commercial’. The
connotation carried by these nitrate projections was therefore two-fold: anti-commercial and historicising. In this way, the patchwork restoration print of The Robber Symphony was granted an authenticity that the Filmmuseum itself probably did not have in mind.

From the 1980s on, film museums and archives only exhibited nitrate prints on exceptional occasions – for example, during the FIAF conference held in London in 2000. Whereas, initially, the projection of nitrate prints was seen as quite normal, even a necessity, it became a rarity during the 1990s, a museum event to be cherished. In addition, stories about the projection of nitrate took on mythological proportions: the image was thought to be clearer, the depth of field of a higher quality, and the blacks deeper than could ever be accomplished with an acetate print. In 2015, the George Eastman House even started a yearly event called ‘The Nitrate Picture Show’, during which it shows nitrate prints from its archives, which implies the institutionalisation of its celebration.137

Meyer (1997) also commented on the additional value of viewing an ‘original’ film print. He claims that nitrate material possesses an immediacy and directness that a preservation copy could never have, describing, among other things, how the nitrate image produces the feeling of almost being in direct connection with the people who once stood in front of the camera. This is in contrast to the preservation print that, because it is one generation removed from the ‘original’, draws the curtain of time across the ‘original’, blocking access to the immediacy of the photographic image and the feeling that you might be able to touch the past (Meyer, 1997: 59-60). In fact, Meyer describes Huizinga’s historical sensation in relation to the researcher who feels the touch of the past through the source material he or she studies.

The specific viewing experience Meyer refers to, of course, takes place in the archive, behind the editing table. This connects the nitrate experience to another dispositif, one that differs greatly from the experience of watching a film in a screening room. Within this dispositif, the spectator not only watches the images, but is also responsible for their projection. This gives the spectator the possibility of intervening in the projection either to accelerate the film or reduce its speed. It is also possible to watch fragments of a film, to watch it in a totally different order, to rewind and watch part of a film again, or to watch it backwards. In short, it is possible to discover a film in a unique way. All of this contrasts with the experience of the passive spectator sitting in a movie theatre. Meyer declares that it was often difficult for him to accept the latter position:

Frequently, I sit in the auditorium and experience the same restlessness as I feel behind the viewing table; I want to be able to experiment with the
Because Meyer wished to share this ‘editing table experience’ with the audience, he searched for a way to transpose the experience into the movie theatre, and he discovered it in the found-footage film. He believed that this genre of films presents film footage in a way that is similar to the way in which film museum employees experience nitrate prints. Found-footage films are comprised of film fragments deriving from the archive that are presented in different ways: delayed, accelerated, sometimes even backwards. This produces an ‘archival reading’ of a film. However, I believe that found-footage films only partly evoke this type of reading because, even with such a film, the ultimate spectator is passive. It remains a film, even though it was made by a curator or filmmaker as evidence of his or her own experience in the film archive. This is different from the archival experience itself.

Video and DVD offer another entry point into archival reading. Indeed, these carriers can also be slowed down, accelerated, and played backwards. Moreover, in the case of video and DVD, viewers can also, if they so choose, watch fragments or assemble their own ‘programme’. The difference between the curator watching nitrate films on an editing table and the visitor watching a video or DVD is that films on digital carriers have lost their material connection to the nitrate prints in the vaults, eliminating the nitrate experience that Meyer defines. However, the dream of a dispositif that allows the spectator to experiment with the material in a similar way to the person behind an editing table has come a step closer with the emergence of digital technologies. A good example is the ‘scene machine’, a digital installation that allows the user to choose from a number of topics or series of films. This machine is available on the EYE website. Furthermore, the EYE basement contains various presentation formats, which guide the viewer to an archival reading, using digital images.

THE MUSEALISATION OF PROJECTION TECHNIQUES

Of course, archival films have been watched on carriers other than analogue film for some time now; the advent of video, DVD, and the internet has made early films increasingly accessible. At the same time, however, this easy digital access threatens the survival of the cinematic experience, as well as that of analogue film projection. The transition of cinemas to digital projection, led by the commercial cinemas, began in the 1990s and became an established fact by 2011. In anticipation of a time during which digital projection would
be the only future, the Filmmuseum decided to maintain and collect analogue projection for all the films that were originally released on film material in an attempt to preserve the historical cinematic experience. This decision has also been reflected in film restoration practice: analogue projection requires the production of preservation prints on cellulose acetate or polyester. In the case of a digital restoration, the Filmmuseum started to transfer the final result onto photographic film material so that ‘in a projected form [it would] retain a quality that rivals that of the current film projection’. However, because large amounts of film were already digitised for the Images for the Future project, it was no longer possible to transfer all the archive onto analogue film material and, as a result, a large part of it is now only accessible on digital carriers. Moreover, digital projection has become more commonplace in the film museum world and, even festivals such as Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, no longer avoid using it.

Although the Filmmuseum initially tried to retain analogue film projection as part of its duty as a museum, this ideal has proved unattainable. Still, this was the moment that analogue projection began to be recognised as valuable and in need of preservation – it was only when the traditional cinematic projection technique appeared to be under threat that film museum practice declared these technologies part of ‘cinematographic heritage’. This response can be explained by our habit of regarding any endangered art form as ‘heritage’ (Kuyper De, 1999: 23). Once film museums started to consider analogue projections in this way, archivists began thinking about projection practices: for example, the idea of projecting films from the 1930s with mono sound rapidly gained momentum (Meyer, 2000b: 3). Yet, there were also elements of historical projection techniques that the Filmmuseum did not want to reconstruct. During the earliest period of film, the projector was manipulated by hand, meaning that the speed of the screening could vary considerably. This variable component, so common in the early screenings, was not revived in the institute’s presentations. It also almost never showed films with the authentic projection equipment, because that would require a different projector for each period in film history: for example, the Lumières’ films should be projected using an authentic Cinématographe, and the films of the Mutoscope and Biograph Company needed 68mm projection equipment with transportation rubbers. Clearly, the Filmmuseum decided that this level of diversity in projection techniques was impracticable; instead, it chose to limit projection technologies to 35mm and 16mm.

This limitation, of course, impacted restoration practice: film museums generally duplicated films in these two formats, which meant that, when the Filmmuseum preserved the 68mm films of the Mutoscope and Biograph Company, together with those of the National Film and Television Archive (NFTVA)
in London, it had to restore the 68mm film as 35mm. As a consequence, it was impossible to project the films with the same sharpness and in the same size as in 1900. Conversely, in the case of the restoration of small films, 16mm was generally used, resulting in restoration prints of, for example, 8mm and 9.5mm films that could no longer be screened using the original projectors. Film museums had to resort to projecting these films with 16mm equipment, using a stronger light source and a larger screen, thus creating a fundamentally different projection and cinematic experience.

Another reason why film museum practice did not reconstruct historical projection techniques to the letter was that the standard of acceptable film screening in the 1990s was a lot higher than for example in 1900. Cherchi Usai compares a film screening with a performance of music by Bach. In some of his compositions, Bach used the sound of a hunting horn,

\[\ldots\] whose performance was so uneven that it could not be played with precision even by a proficient musician. What sense would it make then, nowadays, to feature an early eighteenth-century hunting horn in a performance for original instruments? In our case, this would be like demanding a projector which could not guarantee the steadiness of the projected image or an even intensity of light on the screen. (Cherchi Usai, 2000: 161)

If films were to be shown in exactly the same way that they were at the time of their premiere, the screening (and therefore the performance) would probably seem intolerable to a present-day audience. The Filmmuseum emphasised that it wanted to enable a new experience of early cinema, aimed at creating an appreciation of these films among a new, ‘modern’ audience. It saw this as the only possible way of reviving these films (Roumen, 1996: 156). This corresponds to what film historian Nicholas Hiley said during the 1995 Filmmuseum workshop, ‘Disorderly Order: Colours in Silent Film’, mentioned in Part II:

\[T\]he level of restoration that we carry out will reflect our own sense of history. It won’t be an exact recreation of the original, because none of us wants bad projection and bad music, we don’t want scratched prints and talking audiences, we don’t want to go back to that; we want to create something which satisfies our needs, as historians approaching a period that interests us. (Hiley in Hertogs and Klerk de, 1996: 22)

Film museum practice opted for the quality projection and display of these early films, which, as a result, only resembled the original way they were shown in some respects. As such, these screenings referred to the history of
the film but clearly were not exact reconstructions. The aesthetic aspect of the screening and, therefore, of the film images, remained a priority; the cultural historical aspect took second place.\textsuperscript{143}

In conclusion, then, the 1980s witnessed a crucial transformation in attitude: films were no longer considered as individual art objects; rather, film was defined as a performance art, which entailed a change in approach to film history. This shift in the definition of film was evident in the programming of unknown films as ‘curiosities’, presented in an event-based setting. By contrast, the canonical films were presented as ‘art’, whereby little was allowed to distract from the focused experience of the film. However, as soon as film began to be seen not only as an art form but also as a performance art, a new understanding of cinema arose, and other elements of the cinematographic performance, such as music and lectures, started to become an integral part of film museum screenings. Interestingly, film museums always returned to the elements that were part of the film performances of the past. As a result, this ‘new style’ film screening fell somewhere between a contemporary experimentation and a film historical reconstruction.

Overall, the canon was no longer central to film museum philosophy, and it had to make space for the film performance as an event. This also made it possible to present unknown films artistically; films that the Filmmuseum, for example, had selected for its ‘new style’ museum collection – that is, films that did not (yet) have the status of film art. These new ideas, however, also filtered into the approach to film as an art form, and allowed for the combination of contemporary classical music alongside the projection of unknown silent films. Film museums placed films not only literally, but also figuratively, side by side culturally deified modern music, increasing the perception of their artistic value. This strengthened and legitimised the screening of silent films as museum artefacts.

This was contrary to the previous way the Filmmuseum used reconstructions of the environment in which early films were historically screened – for example, in the case of the \textit{Images Fantastiques}, the central focus was placed not on the films but on the reconstruction of the travelling cinema. In this way, the Filmmuseum contrasted its ‘curious’ films with the art films it presented in the Stedelijk Museum auditorium. This also shows that, when the museum staged a reconstruction of the ‘original’ screening of an early film, it not only used the mimetic code to generate meaning and to guide its audience’s reading of the film, but also to position these reconstructions within its whole presentation strategy and, therefore, within the film historical discourse it helped to propagate.

After the 1980s, the Filmmuseum adopted another way of enhancing the artistic value of these unknown films by increasing the projection quality. The
institute was more than ever devoted to ensuring that the projection of its films was of the highest quality, in order to enable its audience to have an aesthetically pleasing experience when viewing these newly discovered treasures from the archive. This concern for the quality of the projection paralleled the increasing care lavished by film museum practice on the restoration of early films. Both these elements ensured that the films became more attractive to modern audiences and made their ‘beauty’ even more apparent. Film museums thus enabled these films to become more visible, and, as a consequence, they have made a far more emphatic mark in the pages of film history.