The 2012 celebration of Unesco’s annual World Day for Audiovisual Heritage, held by EYE Filmmuseum in its newly opened venue on the banks of the IJ in Amsterdam, was a remarkable event. The celebration consisted of a programme of newly restored films, dating from exactly 100 years earlier. Before the screening started, however, a dazzling display of pink, green, and blue light was projected onto the walls of the institute, suffusing them with colour. Then, a strange pattern began to appear, which slowly resolved itself into a full-colour projection of an art-deco interior, complete with lacquered wood panelling. This was a reproduction of the 1924 screening room of the Cinema Parisien, the film theatre launched by Jean Desmet in 1910, which had been carefully recreated in 1991 in the Vondelpark Pavilion, EYE’s former location. When the institute moved to its new home, it wanted to take the historical interior with it, but the wall panels proved too large to fit into the new building and they ended up in storage.

However, because EYE wanted to include the interior in the new institute, it created a digital reproduction of the room, which it still occasionally projects onto the walls of Cinema 4.

The projection of this interior can be read in several different ways, giving an insight into the main problems raised by the musealisation of films discussed in this book. In the first place, it is part of the history of silent film and, by recreating this historical object in the Vondelpark Pavilion, this history became part of the museum’s presentation strategy. Secondly, in its present-day recreation, the screening room also refers to EYE Filmmuseum’s own past. The projection is not just any interior, but a very particular one: the screening room formed part of the Desmet Collection that put the Filmmuseum’s archive on the cultural map at the beginning of the 1990s. Finally, the screening room’s two new functions as historical reference points differ great-
ly from its original, more commercial purpose at the Cinema Parisien. This is exactly what happens when a mass-produced commercial object is archived: it changes from a commercial object into an historical one.

However, these referential functions were not the only new meanings bestowed upon the screening room. The colour experiments in 2012 demonstrate the care with which the film institute created a high-quality projection of the wall panels in order to present the interior in the most attractive way possible. Apparently, the screening room also possessed an aesthetic value, alongside its function as an historical object. As we have seen throughout this book, EYE has always attached great importance to beauty and aesthetic value, not only in relation to old cinema interiors, but also to the films in its collection.

For the majority of film museums, the use of visual reproduction techniques to present the objects in their collections is part of exemplary curatorial practice – one that has been facilitated by the way digital technology has taken wing over the last few decades. It was, however, a practice born of necessity: historical film material is very vulnerable and hazardous, and this forced museums to project duplicates rather than the old nitrate films themselves. The decision to make a visual reproduction of Desmet’s wood-panelled interior and to project it digitally seems to be a logical consequence of this way of thinking.

Cinema 4, however, is not alone in referring to the past of EYE Filmmuseum: the entire building’s design and construction highlights many aspects of both the history of the institute and the progress of film historiography. For this reason, I am using it as the starting point for this conclusion. In doing so, I will argue that the past carries the future within it, and that the future can never escape the past.

For this, I would like to guide you on an imaginary tour through EYE’s four screening rooms, each of which boasts its own distinctive interior. As I argue in Chapter 7, the interior design of a screening room is part of the dispositif that allows the audience to adopt certain modes of reading the films presented there. Interestingly, EYE’s screening-room interiors are visual reminders of the various different spaces we have encountered throughout the history of the institute, and so the diachronic shifts in presentation strategies reemerge as a synchronous eclecticism in EYE’s new building.

The first screening room we visit is Cinema 3, which is designed along the lines of the Invisible Cinema discussed in Chapter 7 – that is, it is a completely black room where films are presented as aesthetic objects. The purpose of the Invisible Cinema was to starve the senses of any stimuli except those needed to perceive the film, an approach inspired by a modernist conception of art. As a consequence, Cinema 3 can be placed in the tradition of experimental
cinema, alongside the canon of the avant-garde, which is represented in EYE by the films in the Uitkijk Collection. Modernist ideas were, of course, integrated into the classical historical perspective on the value of film as an art form, which was often combined with theories about what comprises a film’s artistic essence. However, the silent films that were ‘rediscovered’ during the emergence of the new film history (discussed in the introduction) also have a place in this type of room. When these films were newly discovered, restored, and shown, academic attention focused, for the most part, on the material’s formal, aesthetic qualities and its ‘strangeness’ – two elements that, like the Invisible Cinema, are strongly rooted in the traditions of formalism and modernism. This leads to the conclusion that the link to the modernist tradition persists in film historical discourse as defined by film museums. By contrast, the actual writing of film history is much less inclined to accept this stance.

As mentioned above, Cinema 4 stimulates a rather different reading of the films it screens – an historical-sensual one. As Chapter 7 recounts, EYE recreated the interior of the Cinema Parisien’s screening room in the Vondelpark Pavilion in the early 1990s, presenting it as a cultural monument. Although the institute did not include the physical interior in its new waterfront building, it decided to reconstruct the interior visually with the help of LED lighting, in order to summon up the atmosphere of the old Parisien. Despite the fact that the lack of the original wooden panels somewhat diminishes the historical sensation, its visual reconstruction means that silent films can still be presented in an interior that refers back to the history of Dutch cinema. To add to the sense of authenticity, EYE acquired a Weber Aeolian piano from 1912 to accompany the screening of the silent films; by retaining the historical interior and by combining the screenings with a live piano accompaniment, EYE has continued to propagate the history of Dutch film culture. In this way, the idea of film as a performance art reemerges and, by extension, this means that EYE approaches film history not only as the history of film culture but also of film screening. This is directly related to the history of restoration practices, which often reveals the choices behind the presentation of certain versions of films, in terms of both images and editing. In addition, the decision to preserve the Desmet and the Uitkijk collections in their entirety was based on the assumption that they both reflect part of the history of Dutch film culture. The emphasis of the museum’s film historical discourse on the history of screening shows striking parallels with the way academic research in film history, since the 1980s, has also focused on the context in which films are experienced.

The interior of the Cinema Parisien screening room itself has found a new role. It has been reconstructed in one of the screening rooms (Room 7) of the Filmhallen in Amsterdam, which opened in 2014. EYE is responsible
for the programming in this screening room, which concentrates on showing restored versions of the film canon and special art house films. As a result, the institute is now able to refer to Desmet’s history and, as a consequence, to its own history, in two different places in Amsterdam.

To recap, the visual references to the Invisible Cinema and the Cinema Parisien are both rooted in the history of EYE. Moreover, they also symbolise two angles of the film museum’s approach to film historical discourse.

The combination of film with other art forms – a presentation strategy that the Filmmuseum adopted several times during the course of its history – continues as a feature of EYE’s new building. Cinema 1, the largest room in the building, with 300 seats and a built-in cinema organ, can be used for large events such as movies with orchestral accompaniment or other theatrical additions. This enables EYE to present museum films as performance art on a more or less continuous basis. In such a setting, there is space to show both canonical and unknown films from the collection. The screening of these films principally activates an aesthetic reading (as outlined by Roger Odin). Indeed, the aesthetic theories developed by film museum discourse have influenced the institute’s overall collection, restoration, and presentation practices over the years, resulting in a collection of ‘beautiful’ films. In some cases, showing these aesthetically pleasing films in combination with other art forms gave them an added artistic cachet. The new main screening room provides the ideal environment in which to continue this presentation strategy. It is interesting to note, however, that the academic study of film history during the 1990s rejected this type of normative attitude to early film, and the two opposing perspectives comprise one of the major distinctions between the film historical discourses emerging from academia and those that developed out of film museum practice.

Finally, EYE contains a fourth room, Cinema 2, which contains a flexible stand and the equipment required to display projections on all the walls, enabling it to show films and other media products in various different ways. In 2007, when the plans for the new building were still under development, this room was known as the ‘laboratory’, since it was intended as a setting for experiments with different apparatuses and programming strategies. Indeed, such discoveries are now a central feature of the cinema, in an apparent continuation of the experimental programming strategies and workshops the Filmmuseum introduced in the early 1990s. It is also a space where film and other arts – namely dance, performance art, video, and multimedia art – can be easily combined. The arrival of this ‘laboratory’, therefore, offers the possibility of experimenting with many different sorts of collaborations and film performances.

The desire to combine film with other art forms is also reflected in the
way EYE presents its new building on its website, flyers, and other types of publicity. The prominence given to the architects responsible for its design, Delugan Meissl of Vienna, is striking: the institute portrays the new building as an example of architectural art, emphasising the strong connections between this discipline and film. In this, EYE follows its own historical precedents: first, film was presented alongside the other modern arts at the Stedelijk Museum; then, in combination with music, literature, and poetry in the Vondelpark Pavilion; and now, by linking it to contemporary architecture, EYE reaffirms the belief that film belongs among the established arts. Architecture in particular appears to have a permanent and very prominent presence – there are regular tours of the building showcasing its architectural features. In addition, EYE now features an exhibition space, where it organises displays about and with film. In this way, it has positioned itself, its building and its film collections in the tradition of art museums and, thus, within the category of ‘art’.

Besides the various rooms, which contain a multitude of different types of technological apparatuses, EYE has also found other ways to display its diversity and stratification. To prevent any overlap and to keep the programmes as rich and varied as possible it presents diverse but highly complementary programmes in the different screening rooms. At the same time, this strategy reflects the history of the institute, which is strongly characterised by a hetero-chronic cacophony. EYE’s programming shows many similarities to the screenings in the Vondelpark, except that the museum has four (rather than just two) rooms, where better projection facilities and larger screens offer wider programming opportunities. In some respects, the programming is also more diverse: for example, short films are shown in a more structured way. EYE often precedes official screenings with shorts and unknown films from its archive that are crowded out of the programme elsewhere. In this way, a larger proportion of films that are usually difficult to programme can be shown in the screening rooms.

In 2007, the institute drew up plans envisioning a much larger transformation in its programming format. These described two different formulae: one for daytime and one for evening. The evening programme would be similar to its current integrated one; the daytime programme, however, was intended to be ongoing, echoing the period of early film and the Cineac. The aim was to enable the public to walk in and out of the different cinemas. The films shown were supposed to ‘contaminate’ each other, not only on a vertical or programmatic level, but also horizontally (between rooms). The audience would also be able to move from one screening room or apparatus to another and directly experience the ways the interiors induced different modes of reading the films. The programming strategy, therefore, introduced a novel concept: it
assigned the spectator a role that mirrored that of the moviegoer at the turn of the 20th century, while also exhibiting similarities to today’s internet surfer, with the viewer changing rooms and activities in much the same way as we move between sites and pages online. Finally, this apparatus corresponded to the museum display of video art: again, the visitor would be able to walk from one installation to another and produce his or her own ‘assemblage’ of images. Unfortunately, this idea, whereby visitors buy a ticket for admission to the whole building, after which they can wander at will through the screening rooms and other spaces, never materialised.

Finally, we reach the basement of the new building where the collection can be seen in entirely new ways. This novel viewing experience is related to another important development: digital technology. The use of digital media and technology has represented a momentous change for film museums, and it continues to hold great importance, opening the way for many new opportunities in the collection, restoration, and presentation of film museum material. The Filmmuseum has indeed always been at the forefront of the latest developments in museum practice, as displayed in curator Giovanna Fossati’s 2009 book, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*.

Initially, these technologies appeared to be particularly useful for the restoration of photographic images. Over the past fifteen years, film archives have frequently experimented with new techniques, resulting in new kinds of restorations that have given museum collections’ restoration prints even more diversity: prints from the early days of analogue restoration differ from later ones, which, in turn, differ from the digital restorations produced in recent years. The museum collections thus reflect the history of restoration techniques. Moreover, ideas about which versions should be reproduced are themselves in continuous ferment. Film museum collections offer a multitude of film historical interpretations, turning them into a reservoir of information about the different ways film historians have perceived museum films in the past.6

Digital technology also offers new ways of providing access to archival films. For example, the digitisation project, ‘Images for the Future’, which ran from 2007 to 2012, has changed the way in which the EYE archive is handled. The project’s original aim was to digitise the entire collection of Dutch films, consisting of both restored and unrestored films.7 Currently, EYE makes this material available through digital media – for example, via the EYE website, which includes a movie database containing films made in the Netherlands.8 Digitised films from the collection can be viewed in digital format, provided that rights arrangements do not present an obstacle. The selections made by film museum staff for the museum collection in the (recent) past, therefore, play a much smaller role in this format, but all the other past collection activi-
ties that formed the archive, such as its active and passive acquisition practices, or the shedding of unwanted or badly deteriorated prints, will be sustained in future presentations, including the digital ones.

Presentation and projection practices have also changed under the influence of new technology and media. Digital projection, for example, is available in all of the new building’s screening rooms, while film festivals such as Le Giornate del Cinema Muto now also show digital versions of archive films. This has advantages and disadvantages as not all digital versions of archive films are of a high enough quality. The 2007 plans for EYE recognised this, explicitly mentioning that future digital projection should be used exclusively for digitally released movies, while analogue projection should remain the screening preference for archival films. In addition to the problems of print quality, which persists despite recent improvements, the main reason for the analogue projection of silent films was and is a similarly practical one: digital projectors cannot project film at 16 or 18 frames per second. This is a problem the international film archive world has been trying to solve for some time now, and it has been much discussed at the FIAF level. The solution has to (but probably will not) come from the industry.  

In addition, many filmmakers and archivists still cherish the idea that analogue projection plays a key part in strengthening the authenticity of the cinematic experience. The question is, however, to what extent can analogue projection be considered an indispensable part of the cinematic apparatus? What makes the experience a cinematic one if it is not, for the most part, the act of simply watching a film in the dark in a large screening room as part of a group? Besides which, the conclusion reached in Chapter 9 – that film museum practice has never been able to fully reconstruct ‘original’ experiences – raises the question of whether it is essential to maintain analogue projection at all costs. And yet, the view that analogue projection distinguishes film from other media retains strong support. This also forces us to think of it as a part of our audiovisual heritage – one that includes many types of exceptional formatting and projection techniques, such as 8mm, 70mm, Surround, Odor-rama, and Cinerama.Remarkably, film scholars do not seem particularly rigorous when it comes to the techniques used to show films. For example, they often use video, DVD, or YouTube to illustrate their lectures and presentations. However, there is a growing interest in studying the screening situation or taking the cinematic apparatus as a subject for research. For example, Annie van den Oever and Andreas Fickers (2013: 272-278) in their article, ‘Experimental Media Archaeology – A Plea for New Directions’, propose an experimental methodological research approach that makes use of reenactments and focuses on how the media archaeologist experiences the material constraints of media technologies. Perhaps this relatively new focus
in film historical research has been stimulated by the imminent disappearance of analogue film-screening in cinemas, film museums, and even archival film festivals.

EYE also presents digitised archive material in a new dispositif that is a cross between a cinema situation, a museum dispositif, and one that displays similarities with the way we perceive digital images in everyday life. This form of presentation can be experienced in the basement of the new building. There, the visitor first encounters a couple of yellow viewing devices called ‘pods’, which can accommodate up to three people at a time. On examination, it is possible to place this dispositif within a number of existing presentation traditions. At first sight, it reminds us of the Invisible Cinema: the seats are comfortable and the interior is darkened. However, the pods are placed in a fairly busy area that includes some media art installations, which are often accompanied by sound. This disrupts the similarity with the experience of the Invisible Cinema, in which absolute silence is required, ensuring that no noise (other than the sound of the film) can intrude on the cinematic experience. Besides, these pods stimulate ongoing encounters with other visitors, as people regularly look into them to search for a free spot. Some visitors find a place in an already occupied pod, and end up watching a film chosen by a stranger. Because of the arrangement of the pods in a room with passersby and various media art installations, the apparatus provokes a similar response to that created by a piece of installation art in a museum – that is, it replicates the experience of the flaneur, the passerby who moves from one artwork to another, while he or she is both looking and being looked at. Meeting other visitors and hearing the sounds of other media installations is often part of the whole experience. However, there is one major difference: a visitor to a pod sits in a comfortable chair in semidarkness, while a visitor to a museum predominantly walks around the galleries (Rebentisch, 2003: 189).

Finally, the pod dispositif displays elements of the current digital cultural field, with the corresponding ‘pull model’: the digitised images are made easily retrievable so that the user can determine what he or she is going to see by means of a search engine or system. Fossati (2009: 17) explains that, as the advent of digital technology has allowed for the development of other approaches to archival material, it has changed spectators into ‘users’ ‘who expect to participate actively and have open access to archival collections’. But, of course, the archival collections that are opened up digitally do not contain the material objects themselves, only the moving images these objects carry.

The pull model is also reflected in a number of the web pages EYE has developed, such as filminnederland.nl. As with surfing the web, the visitor can search for and watch the films of his or her choice. This again creates a new dispositif, comprising a one-to-one relationship between the visitor and
the images, which encourages them to select the images they want to view. The experience and the reading mode are fundamentally different to the traditional cinematographic experience, not least because the passive film viewer has now become an active image user.

Remarkably, these ways of presenting the digitised archive mimics the functioning of a material one: for example, in the multitude of images it contains and in the presence of a database that makes them available to the viewer. However, the big difference is that the digital images are dematerialised, or maybe even rematerialised as buttons, pods, and screens. As a consequence, the digital does not so much reflect the material characteristics of the archive as mimic its theoretical approach, including the questions of access and lack of access, information, knowledge, and discovery. Still, these new ways of presenting archival material with the help of digital technology give film museum practice greater depth at various levels. It enables the creation of projects that lend a fresh impulse to the relationship between audience and film archive material: for example, by integrating the archive into the presentation, by encouraging the user of the archival material to be proactive, or by making use of digital formats offering archival film fragments for the public to make their own films with. This dovetails with recent developments in academic research into the new media, which focuses on the distinction between the positions considered traditional for spectators of film and those adopted by new media users of digital images.

A final example of a format in which EYE presents the pull model is the Panorama, another installation in the basement. This consists of a rectangular space, with projections on each wall. There are seven larger projection devices, where several preselected movie clips can be watched. Numerous smaller ones that repeat archival footage in horizontal rows frame these larger projections. There are only a few seating areas, which makes the dispositif similar to that of installation art – that is, it reflects the experience of the museum visitor. There are seven different touch screens on which visitors can indicate which images they want to see, and each console allows them to select from a series of fragments connected by themes – colour, conflict, exploration, film stars, the Netherlands, slapstick, and magic – which label and frame the pieces offered in much the same way as the programmes discussed in Chapter 8. For example, by presenting a colour clip with the theme, ‘the Netherlands’, the viewer will be directed towards an historical rather than an aesthetic reading. Besides the fact that these themes direct the reading of the fragments, they also refer to the history of EYE and the development of film history. Themes such as ‘the Netherlands’, ‘colour’, and ‘exploration’ are particularly closely intertwined with the institute’s history. They are also strongly linked to themes that have received a great deal of attention in new film history: the theme of ‘magic’.
for example, has been studied by scientists such as Tom Gunning, Vanessa Toulmin, and others. In addition, it is one of the central themes in Gustav Deutsch’s history series of found footage, FILM IST... (1998-2002), which uses a lot of material selected from the EYE archive. Within these themes, EYE has once again opted for beautiful, special, unknown, or, in some cases, already canonised fragments.

The Panorama only shows fragments of films. The preservation and display of fragments is part of a long tradition at EYE – for example, through its series Bits & Pieces. The Panorama, therefore, appears to refer to this earlier presentation strategy. I analysed these fragments in Chapters 3 and 7 and described how they made visible the incompleteness of the film archive and, thus, the incompleteness of film history. The Panorama equally confronts the audience with gaps in the archives. In similar fashion to a film curator who discovers a fragment of a long-lost film, and then immediately regrets that he or she cannot see the rest because it is quite simply absent or lost, the visitor to the Panorama also notices the lacunae in the remains from the past. In this way, the presentational format visually reproduces the archive, whose amputated state is displayed in all its beauty.

The Panorama also gives an impression of plurality and diversity similar to the plurality, diversity, and breadth of accumulation so characteristic of an archive. Moreover, the installation could almost be seen as a visual representation of this book’s conclusions: it replicates the diversity that has found its way into the archive over the years as a result of a multitude of different perspectives, a diverse conservation policy, and a broad outlook on film history. Showing so many fragments at the same time within an immersive panoramic setup renders these aspects clearly visible.

The shift in the mode of presentation from a cinematic one to one that also evokes the archive experience parallels current trends in media culture. Arguably, such trends appear close to comprising a new paradigm, in which the ‘user’ ‘pulls’ the images towards him or herself. An interest in databases and digital disclosures is also growing in academia. Media researchers are developing research projects whose sources are presented in new and different forms: for example, websites such as The European Film Gateway (part of Europeana), EU-Screen, Inventing Europe, or The Timeline of Historical Film Colors, present database projects in combination with (media) historical research.

In terms of further developments, the potential exists to place critical editions of archival films on digital carriers, presenting the archival versions – the digital duplicates of titles the way they were found in various archives – next to the final restorations. Another option might be a presentational format that combines the various preservations and restorations of a particular film.
In this way, film museum practice could provide access to the history of film reconstruction and restoration, which, in turn, reflects the various film historical interpretations. Subsequently, visitors could also choose which version(s) they want to view, and maybe even compare them. This way of presenting film titles would fit perfectly with the diversity that characterises the history of film museum practice in a synchronic and diachronic way, a diversity that is already explicitly reflected in EYE’s building, programme, and basement, which refer to both the diverse history of the Filmmuseum and historical taste.

In view of this diversity, however, it is remarkable that EYE has permanently focused on only one medium: film. Traditionally, the archiving of Dutch television has been the task of the Institute for Sound and Vision in Hilversum, while photography is principally housed at the Fotomuseum in Rotterdam. Internationally, too, the different media remain segregated – for example, film museums and television archives have separate international umbrella organisations: FIAF and FIAT (Fédération Internationale des Archives de Télévision), respectively. In this respect, the plans put forward at the end of the 20th century for an Institute of Visual Culture – a serious, even radical, attempt to accommodate the three different media of photography, new media, and film in one building – were unique. It is highly regrettable that the plans were never realised, because they forced the institutes involved to think about how certain problems affect different media in similar ways. For example, many facets of new media have not been (and are not being) collected or archived. Obvious gaps in the current collection culture include, for example, game consoles and digital art installations, both of which featured in the plans for the Institute of Visual Culture. Given the active role of the new media user, it is obvious that such equipment is an essential element of digital culture; a shooting game played with replica guns in an arcade provides a very different media experience and meaning to that offered by the same game when played on a PC at home. With the Institute’s cancellation, all the plans and new ideas were put on ice – or were, so to speak, ‘archived’.

As a consequence, the present-day archiving of digital media products shows striking similarities to that of film at the beginning of the 20th century. Media art, for one, is much favoured over other more popular media objects such as games; for example, the acquisition practices of the Netherlands Media Art Institute (Montevideo) (NIMk) before it was forced to close in 2012 by severe cuts in funding. NIMk collected all the digital art it had exhibited since its inception in 1978; however, given this institute’s artistic angle, the result was that most of these products derived from the champ de production restreinte. In some respects, this is reminiscent of the history of film museums: art films in particular found their way into the collections in the 1920s and 1930s. The result is that several series of media objects have escaped
attention, not only the aforementioned games but also a huge amount of amateur video material from the 1980s and 1990s. The plans for the Institute of Visual Culture anticipated these problems – learning from the mistakes of the past, its aim was to ensure the acquisition of these less artistic media objects. In the future, therefore, new media archives are likely to encounter similar problems to the ones film museums and film historians currently experience. These institutes will form a similar patchwork of various collections gathered together by a range of institutions and private collectors, and containing similarly obvious omissions. This will, in turn, mean that media history will always reflect the history of film museum and archival practices.

However, EYE’s eclecticism, in relation to the interior design of its screening rooms and its various contexts for digital presentation, summarises all that is most remarkable about the institute’s new building. In fact, the four screening rooms and, of course, the basement reflect its eclectic way of dealing with the films themselves – their collection, restoration, and presentation. This demonstrates that the institute’s pluralistic historical tastes have stabilised over time, partly due to shifts in the debates on film history. As such, EYE materialises the continuation of old patterns alongside new ones in its archival practices, and this has led to an accumulation of film historical and aesthetic perspectives and ideas that have resulted in a variety of presentational formats.

Yet, there is also an element that is missing in the new building, namely, the physical collections. For example, the library, with its impressive collection of books (both old and new), is not located in the new building, and neither are the photographs, personal archives, nor poster collections. As a result, its research facilities are separated from its film screenings, unlike the situation in the 1970s. The decision not to include a library or knowledge centre in the new building, excluding written sources from the presentation space, seems to fly in the face of an increasing trend in collaboration between film museums and universities. Initiatives such as Domitor (an association that includes film archivists and film historians), the film festivals in Pordenone and Bologna, and the cooperation between film archival institutes and universities in training upcoming young media archivists have served to bring film museums and the academic world closer together. In addition, student internships have often led to the production of dissertations yielding new historical insights. This has given rise to a new audience of professionals, one that experiences film museum practice on a different level – from within the field. A library and study centre could have accommodated this new dynamic.

Fortunately, however, the institute has recently opened a Collection Centre, located in Amsterdam North at the Asterweg, ‘within walking distance of the museum building, allowing for improved synergy between Collections
and Presentation’. All the collections are housed here, which means that films prints (except, of course, nitrates), photos, posters, film equipment, and paper archives are stored in one building. The library is also located in this new building, which implies that the collection centre will have a public function as a facility where researchers and other interested parties will be able to study this beautiful, rich, and fascinating material. In addition, the new building functions as an area for research, exchange, and education, for example, by hosting the students of the MA course in Preservation and Presentation at the University of Amsterdam, of which EYE Filmmuseum is a partner.

Remarkably, a small exhibition containing historical objects such as magic lanterns, film projectors, and a Mutoscope has also been added to EYE’s basement, which – until recently – had mainly consisted of digital presentations of archival films and media art. The question is whether this shift is related to the opening of the new Collection Centre or to the increasing interest in materiality and imperfection on a broader international scale.

In conclusion, we can see that, whereas the writing of film history has turned from its previously more normative and aesthetic critical perspective, the Filmmuseum has continued to regard the aesthetic qualities and artistry of film as paramount, reintroducing the notion of ‘beauty’ in the film historical debate through the back door. The presentation of film as an aesthetic object, an art form, has always been one of the main principles of the institution. In the Filmmuseum’s early days at the Stedelijk Museum, film was surrounded by modern art, design, and photography; now, EYE’s media installations, architecture, and exhibition space continue to frame film as an artistic medium or art form. As long as the collection is largely shaped by selection and restoration policies that focus on the aesthetic, the institute will continue to display the surprising and the beautiful, presenting a gilded narrative of the history of film.