



The Independent Media Arts Alliance endorses the submission made by the Canadian Arts Coalition (of which the IMAA is a member) as part of this consultation process. We have also signed a collective letter along with AQTIS, AQAD, ARCA, CQAM, Doc Québec, RAIQ and RCAAQ and submitted by CQAM.

This short brief focuses on one additional topic of particular importance to the independent media arts sector. We believe that the present recommendation is crucial to Pillar 1.1 of PCH's approach: "Enabling choice and access to content". Specifically, we believe that urgent action is required in order to continue to offer this choice to future generations of Canadian citizens.

Canada currently has no adequate national strategy to ensure the preservation of media art works for the audiences of the future. The Audiovisual Preservation Trust was extinguished nearly 10 years ago, exacerbating the already high fragility of audiovisual and media arts in Canada. The works of artists and creators speak to us today, but must also be able to speak to future generations. Unfortunately, audiovisual media such film, videotape and even digital formats are not immortal. It is our hope that Canadian creativity not be consigned to oblivion simply because of the evolution of technology or the degradation of media.

The digital revolution presents an important opportunity, since digitizing technologically fragile content can help to safeguard this memory in the long term. It must be recognized that digitization is a continual process, not a one-time solution, since digital media are just as susceptible to degradation and obsolescence over time. It should also be noted that digitization is not necessarily the appropriate preservation strategy for all forms of audiovisual content, as some analog works conceived to be shown on celluloid film lose their aesthetic integrity when transferred to digital (in much the same way that a photograph of a painting is only a documentation of the work, not the work itself). In addition, art works created for specific hardware platforms such as mobile devices or gaming consoles present particular challenges in terms of long-term archiving and preservation for future generations.

In the absence of a comprehensive strategy for audiovisual preservation in Canada, multiple actors continue to pursue initiatives in decentralized ways. Important preservation efforts are taking place within institutions such as the NFB, LAC and the Cinematheques. Resources such as the CHIN, the CCI and the DOCAM Research Alliance have played important roles in advancing research and disseminating best practices. The TIFF's project recognizing and restoring 150 "essential" Canadian moving image productions, recently announced under the Canada 150 program, is certainly to be welcomed. However, the vast majority of independent filmmakers, artists and authors do not have access to the programs or infrastructure mentioned above. Of particular concern are the thousands of highly significant works that are not in the collections of large national institutions. Many are in the care of small non-profit production centres, artist co-operatives or independent distributors, which despite holding important collections of artworks dating from the 1960s to the present, do not generally qualify for the Museums Assistance Program. Many other important works, both historical and contemporary, are in the possession of the artists themselves or their estates, partly

because of a continued hesitancy on the part of institutional museums and galleries to collect technologically dependent work. The Canada Council for the Arts has no mandate to support the preservation of art work, meaning that valuable public investments in this area are being lost to the Canadian public in the medium and long term.

In order to better enable Canadians to access cultural content both today and into the future, we strongly recommend that modernized federal cultural policy toolkit prominently feature a comprehensive, inclusive national strategy enabling the preservation of our country's audiovisual and media art heritage. This strategy should permit stakeholder in the arts sector to:

- **identify** bodies of work of historical, artistic and cultural significance which are at demonstrable risk of loss due to technological fragility;
- **stabilize** fragile media art works with a view to enable audience access, applying strategies including restoration, format migration or hardware replacement, as appropriate;
- **offer** programming, including screenings, exhibitions, circulation and on-line distribution, that celebrates Canada's media arts legacy by presenting newly stabilized work to the public;
- **partner** with other organizations in the heritage sector that offer existing collections management infrastructure;
- **facilitate** acquisitions of historically, artistically and culturally significant works by museums, galleries and other institutions equipped to ensure their long-term conservation;
- **provide** training, mentorship and knowledge transfer between organizations, sharing and disseminating best practices for media arts collections management;
- **research and establish** best practices for new and emerging fields of media art, recommending and adopting proactive approaches to longevity of media art works.

By comparison with many other countries, Canada lags behind in the area of preserving long-term access to its media arts heritage. As the Canada's independent media arts sector approach 50 years of history, a national strategy would allow Canadian audiences to better celebrate our rich heritage of film, video, audio and electronic/digital art by ensuring its longevity and accessibility to the public.