

Filmmuseum Amsterdam

The Filmmuseum is Holland's museum for cinematography. Its collection of films covers the whole of the history of cinema from the very first silent films, dating from the late 19th century, up to the latest contemporary digital productions. The museum houses the largest film library in the Netherlands and possesses a large collection of magazines, posters, photos, scenarios and publicity material. It also acts as distributor of classics and contemporary, independent films.

The main aim of the museum is to preserve the film heritage from decay. One of its most important tasks is to conserve and restore the collection. 7 million metres of nitrate film from the first half of the 20th century need permanent attention: this extremely flammable material is falling apart and has to be copied to preserve it so it can be screened again. 'Ordinary' celluloid also demands special care as part of it is in danger of fading and suffering from the vinegar syndrome, the 'ghost of acidification'.

The Filmmuseum has a wide range of activities. It screens classics, children's films, historical documentaries, underground productions and new films from all over the world. These films can often only be seen in the museum. The museum also organises exhibitions, lectures, debates and shows in which films are combined with theatre, music and other media. Once every two years, there is the Filmmuseum Biennial, a festival when recently restored major works from the collection can be seen.

Users can also access the film collection by watching videos of many films in a video cabin in the museum (by appointment). Researchers can have access to the large collection of personal and company archives in the possession of the museum.

With these activities the Filmmuseum serves a varied and growing group of film buffs and professionals. Over the last five years the number of visitors increased from 70,000 to 175,000.

Therefore the Filmmuseum is presently building on two fronts.

A new museum building is being built on the north shore of the river IJ in Amsterdam. In 2010 the museum will be occupying its new premises.

Also the museum is building its collection. Together with, among others, the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, it is a partner in the project *Images for the Future*, funded by the Dutch government. The museum will use its share, 35 of a total of 173 million euros, to preserve and digitize the core of its collection so the general public can access it. The museum has already selected the material it wants to digitize and knows how they want to do this. Since prices are decreasing it hopes to be able to digitize more material than originally foreseen.

The museum expects that in three years time this digitized collection will be accessible on the internet and digital tv channels. Users will then be able to browse the collection and do research from their homes. Thus they can put together their own film program.

This new development means that the role of the Filmmuseum will change. From a keeper of the material it will much more become a guide, doing more research on its collection and providing the context for the material shown on the web. It will have to tell the story of the material. The museum will continue to act as an intermediary between the collection and academic research. Researchers will thus contribute to the museum's collection policy.

Access to the digitized material will not be free of charge. Users, the general public as well as academic researchers will pay a fee to view the, previously unknown, material. The Dutch government expects a return of investment of 65 out of the 173 millions. Mostly this will come from the creative industry that is expected to be interested in re-using the material.