

Toshio Iwai Archive and Research

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Abstract

Toshio Iwai, who has been internationally acclaimed as a leading Japanese new media artist since the mid-1980s, and Hiroko Kimura-Myokam launched the "Toshio Iwai Archive & Research" project in 2021. This project aims for digitizing and for organizing archival materials which has been stored by artist himself. Due to non-public papers, it is difficult to access to them and research has not progressed.

Although in recent years Iwai has been known as an old media artist; a picture book artist, until the early 2000s, he was an artist in the not only field of new media art, but also in a variety of other "new media" industries including video games, virtual sets for television programs in the early 1990s, and the electronic musical instrument "TENORI-ON" (2007, Yamaha). While his various achievements have had a high impact on the next generation, there are currently few opportunities to see his past works. In addition, A comprehensive evaluation of his work has not been conducted due to the interdisciplinary knowledge required to contextualize and understand his broad range of activities.

Usually, what is required of an archivist is to be as objective as possible and to organize the materials for any future reevaluation. In this project, however, the artist himself is engaged in organizing the materials, and Kimura-Myokam is rather seeking ways to push Iwai's subjective viewpoint as an archivist.

Keywords

Individual Artists & Archiving, Personal Papers, Media Art, Digital Archive, Video Game

Introduction

The research report of the DOCAM project (2004-2009) by the Daniel Langlois Foundation have been referred for re-creation and restoration of many technology/time-based artworks. One of the results of this project is the model of "authenticity" and "integrity"[1] in such art works, to which the concept of "originality" with its strong connotation of uniqueness is difficult to apply.

Iwai's representative work, *Piano - as image media* (1995), had been displayed with a significant loss of authenticities (Function, Concept, Material's significance, Work's behavior, Viewer's experience, Aesthetic) due to the incomplete inheritance of the work's integrity (Original Materials and Historical Inscriptions) incompletely (see Fig.2). This case exposed how a work could be transformed in the

future in the absence of the artist and sufficient related archival materials.

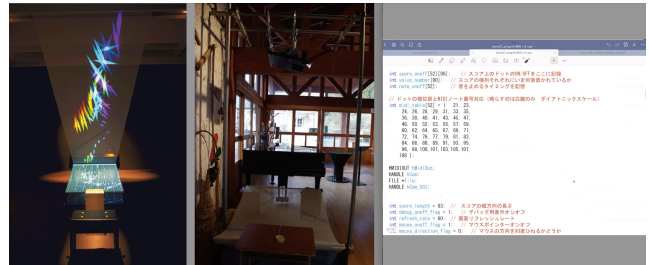


Fig.1 Exhibition view in galerie deux in 1998, Courtesy of Toshio Iwai.
Fig.2 The work being exhibited in Sasayama Children's Museum. Photographed in 2010. Courtesy of Sasayama Children's Museum.
Fig.3 Programming Code by Iwai. He analyzed his original code and added comments for future generations of programmers.

Twenty-seven years later, in 2022, Iwai re-produced it. In the re-creation, he rewrote the program so that it could be exhibited with one computer and one projector, although it had been required two computers with different programming languages and characteristics (SGI and Amiga) and two projectors. The entire installation process was filmed with pin microphones on the artist and installer.

Thus, from the standpoint that it is impossible to create a work that will last forever, this project aims to organize archives that do not compromise the authenticity and integrity of the work by placing importance on the artist's subjectivity. Toward this end, not only organizing objective information from such as ephemera, catalogs, and tech riders, Toshio Iwai himself continues to scoop out the elements that identify variable works from archival materials and their core as works.

References

- [1] Émilie Boudrias, Alexandre Mingarelli, Olfa Driss "Conservation Guide (2009)", Documentation and Conservation of the Media arts heritage: DOCAM website, accessed January 16, 2022, <http://www.docam.ca/en/about-cons.html>

Author Biography

Hiroko Kimura-Myokam is a curator and a researcher. She specializes in the archiving and conservation of new media art. She holds a MA in MediaArtHistories from Danube University. Lecturer at the Kanazawa College of Art and the Kyoto Seika University.

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