Film sound in preservation and presentation
Campanini, S.

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CHAPTER 4.  
Film Sound Presentation:  
Space and Institutional Context

4.1 Film Sound Presentation

In the previous chapter I examined the preservation of early sound systems, namely the Biophon, Chronophone, Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre, and Vitaphone systems. In the analysis of preservation practices, I highlighted the importance of relevant elements of film sound: the material carriers, the technological devices and human actors, the dispositif situation, the film text, the screening performance, and the history of exhibition. These elements of preservation practices contribute to understanding and defining what film sound is and how it relates to film image. The analysis of the preservation of these early sound systems further demonstrated how preservation and presentation are two highly interconnected activities. As the shown by the example of the Tonbidler, the choice of a certain carrier in the preservation process is often incited by the context of presentation. As I will now argue in this chapter, decisions about the presentation of film sound similarly depend on decisions made during preservation.

Preservation and presentation practices, intended as the core activities of film heritage institutions, point to a number of factors important in defining film sound and its core dimensions. The preservation practices examined in the cases of early sound systems highlighted in particular the three dimensions of film that I defined as carrier, dispositif, and text. The presentation practices that will be analyzed in this chapter will bring attention to other dimensions of film sound, namely the spatial and institutional dimensions, which are less evident in preservation practices. Film presentation concerns the screening situation, where the dispositif and the audience are central. Additionally, the presentation of archival film depends on the film heritage institution where it is performed; through presentation, institutions create the space and context for the cinematic experience of film heritage. The space and institutional context of
presentation will turn out to be important factors in understanding the nature of film sound.

In presentation practices, film sound is primarily considered in the screening of early films. The question of how to deal with sound is more evident in the case of early “silent” films, for which a sound accompaniment has to be found in order to present them. It is in fact very rare that an early film is presented without any live or recorded sound, probably because it is believed that the public would not accept the silence during the screening. In early “silent” films either there is no sound available or the sound can be reconstructed by contextual information, such as scores and reviews of historical performances, which need to be interpreted.

In the past decade, film sound has gained attention in screening practices of archival films. The live musical accompaniment of early “silent” films was enhanced with the recovery of original scores or the composition of new scores, mainly in occasion of film festivals or special events, such as the following: Il Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna, Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in Pordenone and the San Francisco Silent Film Festival. Many people are involved in this rediscovery, by promoting or conducting the rediscovery of original musical accompaniment or the composition of new scores: music composers and conductors such as Carl Davis; film historians and documentarians such as Kevin Brownlow and David Gill; conductors and musicologists such as Gillian Anderson, Berndt Heller and Donald Hunsberger; musicologists such as Theo van Houten and Lothar Prox; as well as orchestras and music groups that are actively involved in performance of film music. The topic of the musical accompaniment of early cinema has been investigated by academic literature, which mainly analyzes the original scores or the newly composed scores in musicological terms.\(^\text{190}\)

In the frame of this research, musical accompaniment is considered as only one aspect of the presentation of early films. Since musical accompaniment has already received broad academic attention, I will focus on the other, still largely neglected core elements of film sound, such as the \textit{dispositif}, the space, and the institutional context of


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presentation. For this purpose, I refer to the definition of museum presentation as outlined by cultural heritage scholar Julia Noordegraaf:

The presentation comprises all elements that mediate between the museum and its audience, such as the location, architecture and layout of the building, the order and arrangement of the object in display, the various display techniques and different means of communication and visitor guidance.\(^1\)

This observation prompts me to include in my analysis aspects that are usually not considered pertinent in film presentation, namely architecture, the configuration of the spaces, and the display modes. These aspects indeed play a role in how an audience experiences film sound.

In order to examine the spatial and institutional context of presentation, I will take as an example the activity of a specific film heritage institution: the EYE Film Institute Netherlands, the former Nederlands Filmmuseum.\(^2\) The Filmmuseum-EYE is an instrumental case to study with regard to film sound presentation, since this institution has a rich history and prominent reputation concerning experimentation with different forms of film sound presentation. Moreover, the recent institutional reorganization and geographical relocation of this institution provides a unique perspective for analyzing the institutional and spatial dimensions that define film sound.

To link the topic of preservation analyzed in the previous chapter and the subject of presentation, I start the analysis in this chapter by discussing the reconstruction of two “silent” films, Zeemansvrouwen and Beyond the Rocks, which were restored by the Filmmuseum. These examples show how it is possible to experiment with film sound through preservation and presentation practices, offering a first example of the experimental tradition of the Filmmuseum-EYE and its particular attention to the issue of sound. Moreover, their activities will once again show how preservation and presentation practices are two activities that are closely intertwined.


\(^{192}\) I use the term Filmmuseum-EYE when a condition or situation involves the institution both before and after the reorganization of the institution. Otherwise, I refer to Nederlands Filmmuseum (abbreviated into Filmmuseum) to indicate the institution’s previous incarnation, while EYE Film Institute Netherlands (abbreviated into EYE) to designate the new institution.
4.2 Sound in Early Films: Experiments between Preservation and Presentation

Zeemansvrouwen (Sailor’s wives, Henk Kleinman, 1931) was restored by the Nederlands Filmmuseum and presented in 2003 at the Filmmuseum Biennale. The restoration is elaborately described by Giovanna Fossati, former curator of the Nederlands Filmmuseum and currently head curator of the EYE Film Institute, in her book From Grain to Pixel.¹⁹³ My analysis will concentrate specifically on the issues related to the sound aspects of this preservation and is largely based on Fossati’s description of the case. From the perspective of sound, Zeemansvrouwen offers peculiarities relevant to this analysis: the new musical score composed specifically for the restoration was recorded on film presentation copies, and most importantly the dialogues and sound effects were also recorded together with the musical score. The intent was to create a soundscape of the movie, not just with extradiegetic music but also with intradiegetic voices and sound effects. This is striking because usually the recreated soundscape of early silent films is composed only of live music accompaniment, and not of recorded voices or effects.

Zeemansvrouwen depicts the life of Leen, a female fish merchant who is forced to choose between a relationship with the father of her children, who is a petty criminal, and the love for an honest young sailor. The drama also documents working-class life in Amsterdam in the late 1920s: many scenes were shot in real locations, with non-professional actors, such as the initial scene at the open air market.

The importance of Zeemansvrouwen for Dutch film heritage lies not just in the documentation of the realities of Dutch life, but also in the fact that this film was originally conceived to be the first Dutch sound film. Problems with production, however, ended up making it the last Dutch silent film. Director Kleinman cast two professional singers in the leading parts because he wanted to do a part-talking soundie: the majority of the film would have been silent with intertitles, but in some scenes there would have been songs with synchronized sound.¹⁹⁴ The sound was meant to be recorded on gramophone records, probably using one of the sound-on-disc systems

¹⁹³ See Giovanna Fossati, From Grain to Pixel, 231-235.
available by the end of the 1920s, such as the Vitaphone system discussed in chapter three. The difficulties in managing the sound recording and the synchronization led the production to abandon the idea of making a sound film. This demonstrates once again how the relation between human and technological actors is fundamental in film production, in determining a film’s form and text. The last considerations recall some aspects of the Tonbilder case, such as the importance of the dispositif in the frame of preservation; the restoration process of these two projects have in fact some analogies, in particular regarding the issue of synchronization.

As Fossati describes, during the restoration process the restorers decided that the reconstructed version of the film would contain a new soundtrack with musical accompaniment, composed by Dutch musician and composer Henny Vrienten. The practice of adding a newly composed score is very common in the contemporary presentation of silent films. What is notable in this case is that the soundtrack not only included music, but also sound effects and dialogue. The dialogue, which was recorded by contemporary Dutch actors Jeroen Krabbé and Nelly Frijda, was not always synchronous with the filmed actors’ lip movements. Nevertheless, the final result of the new voices joined with the old images is not disruptive.

The practice of adding voices and effects to early silent films was new in the archival field. The Filmmuseum partially justified this decision by referring to the fact that the film was originally meant to have sound. The Dutch writer Lodewijk de Boer wrote the dialogue based on the namesake theatrical play by Herman Bouber. The writing also involved the work of a professional lip-reader for deciphering the words pronounced by the actors during filming; this helped align the voice actors’ dialogue to what the characters in the film were saying.195

The decision to add a recorded soundtrack with music as well as dialogue and effects shows that the sound component of the film experience was used by the Filmmuseum as a field for experimentation in the restoration process. This was not the first experiment of its kind: in 1995, the Filmmuseum produced Cinéma Perdu under the direction of Peter Deleput. This TV series, coproduced by the Dutch television station VPRO, involved presenting early silent films from the Filmmuseum’s collection to the television public with recreated sound scores. Frank Roumen, the Filmmuseum’s producer who supervised the Cinéma Perdu series, was also involved as a producer in

195 See Giovanna Fossati, From Grain to Pixel, 232.
the Zeemansvrouwen project. The Cinéma Perdu series served as a role model when deciding whether to recreate a sound score in the case of Zeemansvrouwen.

The addition of the recorded soundtrack to Zeemansvrouwen led to a migration practice that was similar to the one used in the sound-on-disc systems analyzed in the previous chapter: in fact, in this case as well, the film image and the soundtrack ran at two different speeds, so a way to synchronize the two would have to be found. In this case, however, the running speed of image and sound were not variable, as in the case of the Tonbilder films, but fixed: the film had a speed of 22 frames per second, while the soundtrack was recorded at 24 frames per seconds, the standard speed for sound projectors. In order to synchronize image and sound, the film’s length had to be stretched to cover the length of the sound. First, Vrienten composed and recorded the soundtrack using a VHS video reference of the film; the recorded sound was then synchronized to the image. The procedures of stretching and synchronizing are described in a report by Paul Read, who supervised the digital restoration process at the Digital Film Lab in Copenhagen:

The VHS image was cut into several approx. 5,000 frames sections, and each section of the new data was matched with the offline. From this, it was possible to calculate the additional time, and therefore the number of frames, required. The Inferno calculated the frame repetitions needed (for example one section needed a new frame every seven alternating with every eight), and carried out the addition. As a final check, the new data was played out to Digi Beta (PAL resolution) and the playout and offline were run in parallel through a vision mixer to create a split screen image and recorded this on another videotape. Each section matched at beginning and end perfectly but due to some omitted frames there was a maximum drift of three frames at one point.196

Once the sound and images of Zeemansvrouwen were matched, they were recorded together on film negative and then printed on a positive projection print.

Read’s report is a valuable record not only for the documentation of the Zeemansvrouwen restoration project, but also for the documentation of a method for obtaining synchronization between sound and image according to the technology of 2002. Comparing this practice to the one applied to the Vitaphone films in 1987 or the

196 Internal report by Paul Read to the Nederlands Filmmuseum (April 2003), reported in Giovanna Fossati, From Grain to Pixel, 234.
one used for the *Tonbilder* films in 2012, it is possible to trace the changes in technology and technique in sound preservation. In the Vitaphone case, synchronization was obtained through analog processes by copying the sound first onto magnetic tape and then onto film together with the image. In the case of the *Zeemansvrouwen*, the first digital technologies were applied, but in order to match image and sound, multiple passages were required to line up the analogue image with the digital sound. In the *Tonbilder* case image and sound could be worked together in the digital domain and with a great degree of manipulation: the speeds of image and sound could be changed in real time with only one click, so different solutions for synchronization could be tested. This flexibility would not have been possible in the analogue domain. The comparison of these three different synchronization practices is possible thanks to the survival and accessibility of the reports and documentation related to the restoration process. The documentation of preservation practices provides an invaluable source for understanding the way film sound is shaped through these practices, how film sound changes over time and how it is possible to preserve it.

*Zeemansvrouwen* premiered at the Filmmuseum Biennale in April 2003, and a year later it was presented at the Samuel Goldwyn Theatre in Los Angeles as well as in other theatres in the USA and Canada. Regarding the reception of the restored version, Fossati observes:

> While some fellow film archivists raised the question of whether a film archive should be the promoter of such an experiment, most reactions were not against the creation of an alternative version of *Zeemansvrouwen*. I must admit that, at the time, I was expecting many more critical, and even negative, reactions. But there should be no misunderstanding: this was a new version and not a restoration. Probably, since *Zeemansvrouwen* was an unknown title to most before the sound version was made, few people felt like objecting to the initiative of the Nederlands Filmmuseum. In the end it was also a way to present the film to a larger audience. In the case of a well-known title, the reactions might have been different.¹⁹⁷

The last consideration is very interesting, especially in relation to the restoration, supervised and documented by Fossati, of *Beyond the Rocks* (Sam Wood, 1922) which

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¹⁹⁷ Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel*, 234.
was carried out at the Nederlands Filmmuseum in 2005. This restoration spurred in fact much more discussion in the archival field, even though the level of experimentation was lower compared to Zeemansvrouwen.

In Beyond the Rocks the two Hollywood stars Gloria Swanson and Rudolph Valentino act out the drama of an impossible love between the young and beautiful Theodora, forced by her family into an arranged marriage, and the charming Lord Brancondale. The film was believed to have been lost for decades before being found and restored by the Filmmuseum and subsequently presented at the second edition of the Biennale in 2005. The original material, a nitrate print with Dutch title cards, was found reel by reel in unlabeled cans within the institution as part of the collection of the Haarlem-based collector Joop van Liempd. The film was almost complete and only a few frames were missing.

Besides the restoration of the silent version of the film, it was also decided that a new sound version with a new soundtrack would be created, again composed and performed by Henny Vrienten. Coming from the experience of Zeemansvrouwen, Vrienten decided to elaborate on a fairly experimental soundtrack, adding sound effects.

The policy of the Filmmuseum in the Beyond the Rocks case was to preserve the film in its original form but also to distribute it in new experimental restored versions for contemporary audiences. The restoration project produced different versions, including two restored silent versions (one with the original Dutch titles, one with newly added English titles), two sound versions for distribution (one with musical accompaniment, one with music and sound effects), one digital sound version for distribution, and two DVD versions with two soundtrack options. The film was presented with the newly recorded soundtrack at the Filmmuseum Biennale in Amsterdam in April 2005, in the Cannes Classic section in May 2005 and at the Il Cinema Ritrovato festival in July 2005. At the Le Giornate del Cinema Muto silent film festival in October 2005 the film was presented in the recorded sound version but also in the silent version with live musical accompaniment; the decision to present the silent version on this occasion was taken in consideration of the very specialized public of this festival.

Even though this soundtrack was less “experimental” compared to the one made for Zeemansvrouwen since no dialogue was added, the reception of the Beyond the

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198 Ibid., 235-252.
Rocks restoration by the professional public was much more critical. Fossati attributes this difference to the fact that Zeemansvrouwen was an unknown Dutch film, while Beyond the Rocks was a well-known, popular film:

Indeed, although the score was widely appreciated, the sound effects (such as opening doors, barking dogs, and such) became the main point of criticism from colleague archivists and scholars. [...] it is quite interesting to notice that what was considered acceptable for an unknown title such as Zeemansvrouwen, became the topic of fiery discussions within the film archival field in the case of a much more popular title like Beyond the Rocks. Mainly for this reason, the Nederlands Filmmuseum decided to add an alternative sound option to the DVD edition where sound effects are reduced and well integrated in the score.¹⁹⁹

In other words, experimentation in film sound presentation seems to be much more tolerated in an unknown film rather than in a classic film. It is interesting to note that this film was considered a classic not for having a long and successful history of favorable reception, since the film had always been considered lost and nobody could have seen it before its restoration. It is most likely the presence of Swanson and Valentino in the starring roles that led this film to be considered a classic, and therefore less suitable for experimentation as compared to an unknown film. This observation recalls the concept of traceability described in chapter two: it shows in fact how a film can become an object of cultural memory without actually being experienced. The criticism of the professional audience also indicates that the sound reconstructed in the restoration was not correspondent to the imagined or supposed trace of the film, which would not include sound effects.

Using some of concepts examined in this research, it can be argued that adding sound effects is to a certain extent faithful to the original, if we consider the original as not just the material object carrying the film content, but as including the dipositif situation and the related cinematic experience: silent film screenings were often accompanied by live sound effects performed by musicians or rumorists. According to Fossati, although it received criticism from the professional archival field, the score with added effects was well accepted by the general public.²⁰⁰ All things considered, it

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 241.
²⁰⁰ Ibid.
was decided to produce a restored version eliminating the sound effects and keeping the music, in order to please a more traditional expert public. This decision is also indicative of certain dynamics in the film archival field and shows the social dimension of film preservation: some decisions in restoration projects are influenced by the reception and response of the general and professional public.

The question of if the preservation of Zeemansvrouwen and Beyond the Rocks can be defined as a restoration, a reconstruction, a reinterpreted version or a fake version is debatable in the theoretical field. The production of a preservation copy of the film as it was found, before the restoration process, guaranteed that the “original” version was preserved, making it safe to experiment and produce different restored versions. Experimentation in preservation is allowed on the condition of following the principles of documentation and reversibility. These principles are even more important if the interventions are invasive or experimental. Once one copy of the material in its original state for preservation purposes has been produced and the reversibility of the restoration has been guaranteed, the definition of the experiments as restoration, reconstruction, reinterpreted version or fake version becomes a nominal matter. More important is to understand why these experiments were carried out. Fossati explains that the Filmmuseum “opted for a creative addition to the original artifact on the one hand to make it more accessible for a larger audience, on the other hand to reinterpret it.”

The proliferation of restored versions can be interpreted as a vindication of the multiple natures of film against the supposed uniqueness of the original. The decision to produce multiple sound versions can be interpreted as a demonstration of the idea that film preservation can account for the variability of film in exhibition, instead of just sustaining the idea of an original object that should only be recovered in its original state. Moreover, the production of different versions is also facilitated by the use of digital technologies. For instance, in the DVD version of Beyond the Rocks, it is possible to play the film with a soundtrack consisting of music and limited sound effects, one containing full sound effects, or one even with the wire recordings of the voice of Gloria Swanson.

These two cases also demonstrate that preservation and presentation are two activities closely interconnected and reciprocally influenced: the choices made during

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201 For the principle of restoration in fine arts, see Cesare Brandi, Theory of Restoration, 57.
202 Ibid., 173.
preservation influence the possibility of presentation, and the prospects considered for presentation influence decisions made during preservation. For instance, the choice during preservation to record a soundtrack onto the film carrier instead of creating a silent film to be accompanied by live music is also a way of addressing a limitation in presentation. The Nederlands Filmmuseum venue in Vondelpark could not have hosted a concert orchestra for accompanying film presentations since the two cinemas were too small, so the recording of the musical performance on the film copy allowed the film to be screened in environments where live music could not be performed. On the other hand, some choices for presentation also influenced the film’s restoration, as for instance in the issue of synchronization of the added soundtrack with the image. The analysis of these practices demonstrates how preservation and presentation activities and outcomes are closely intertwined. It is sometimes difficult to say whether a choice or decision pertains to one domain or the other.

Preservation and presentation practices highlight different dimensions that define the nature of film sound, such as the carrier, dispositif, the space, and institutional context. Upon examination of preservation projects involving early sound systems the dimensions of film sound carriers and dispositifs in particular became apparent. The presentation practices that will be analyzed in this chapter highlight the spatial and institutional dimensions. Film presentation activities depend on the space and setting where they are performed, which in this case indicates film heritage institutions. The institutional dimension plays a very important role in presentation activity: through presentation, institutions create the space and context for the cinematic experience of film heritage.

4.3 The Case of the EYE Film Institute Netherlands

In order to describe the activity of film sound presentation performed by a film heritage institution, I use the EYE Film Institute Netherlands, the former Nederlands Filmmuseum, as a case study. There are two reasons why I chose this institution. First, EYE has a long tradition of experimenting with new ways of presenting film sound; the evaluation of these experimentations provides an ideal context for the analysis of film sound in presentation practices. Second, this institution has recently come to the
conclusion of a ten-year transformation that involved rethinking its role and activity as a film heritage institution. This process consisted of a technological transition that involved the digitization of a consistent part of its analogue film collection, as well as an institutional transition beginning in 2010 with a merger with other Dutch film institutions. This culminated in 2012 with the opening of EYE’s new building, which offers a new space and context for the presentation of film sound. As previously noted, space influences how film sound is perceived and experienced, so the analysis of the relation between space and film sound offers further considerations in the definition of film sound itself.

Even if these technological and institutional transitions were originally conceived independently, in my consideration it is possible to detect, in retrospect, an interrelation between them. The digitization of a large part of the film collection was originally planned mainly for online access. In the same years theatrical projection was converting to digital projection, through a process that started in 2011 and which was almost complete within about a year. The digitization of the EYE film collection was adapted to the digital standard so that the film heritage could still be distributed in cinemas around the country. Moreover, EYE also needed to expand its theatrical space, since according to the situation at the time of writing it will soon be the only public theatre in the Netherlands that has the ability to screen analogue films through analogue projection. The Filmmuseum’s previous venue was no longer suitable since its theatres contained only a limited amount of seats.

In this frame, I want to highlight the concept, already expressed within Noordegraaf’s definition of museum presentation quoted above, that the presentation and exhibition activity of a cultural heritage institution is closely related to the physical space where it is performed: the space where a work of art or a cultural form is placed and its modes of display greatly influence the public’s experience of that object, and, as a consequence, affect the way that object enters individual and collective memory. The physical space of a cultural heritage institution assumes the function of a symbolic space in the experience and memory of the public.

In the case of the EYE Film Institute Netherlands, the value of physical space is particularly relevant since the new building was specifically designed and built for the

purpose of hosting this institution. It is common for the venues of cultural heritage institutions to be adapted from existing buildings, as in the case of the former venue of the Filmmuseum-EYE in Amsterdam’s Vondelpark. Since the new venue of EYE was built specifically for the institution’s activities, it is relevant to consider how a state-of-the-art film heritage institution, with the ability to influence the construction of its new venue, configured this space for its presentation activities.

From this premise, the new space of the EYE Film Institute will be analyzed specifically in relation to sound presentation and with the propose of further understanding the nature of film sound. This particular aspect will lead to more general considerations regarding the policy or idea of presentation that this institution carried out before and after the realization of the new space. For this purpose, I outline in the following section the history of film presentation of the Filmmuseum-EYE, which I define as an “experimental tradition,” especially with regard to sound.

The history of a film heritage institution influences the preservation and presentation work performed by that institution. As noted in the second chapter, film heritage institutions are subject to movements of transition and transience similar to their objects of preservation. In order to understand a particular moment in the history of a cultural institution, its previous periods should also be considered. Consequently, when analyzing the latest moment of transition, which covered a period of almost ten years and concluded in 2012 with the opening of the new building, I will briefly reference the previous phases of the institution’s history and the process that led to the construction of this building. I take as reference the account made by Giovanna Fossati, who distinguishes three phases in the history of the Filmmuseum-EYE. In resuming the history of the institution, I focus on the presentation practices adopted, the role of sound in such practices, and the effect of the spatial and institutional contexts of presentation on those practices.

205 See Giovanna Fossati, From Grain to Pixel, 171-178.
4.4 An Experimental Tradition in Film Sound Presentation

The first phase of the history of the Filmmuseum-EYE covers the first thirty years of its existence, during which the Filmmuseum established itself as an institution. This initial moment began with the foundation of the Dutch Historic Film Archive in 1946 as part of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. From this, the Nederlands Filmmuseum was created as a non-profit foundation in 1952: it received money from the state without being a state institution. Under the direction of Jan de Vaal, the Filmmuseum acquired its core film collections (the Uitkijk and Desmet collections). The institution did not have its own venue at that time and instead rented facilities to store and screen its film collection.

In 1975, the Filmmuseum opened an exhibition space in the Vondelpark Pavilion, located in the main central park of Amsterdam’s Vondelpark. The Vondelpark Pavilion, built in Italian Renaissance style by architect Willem Hamer, was used since its opening in 1881 as an exhibition space for the fine arts, becoming also a meeting point for modern artists (fig. 34). The Pavilion was adapted for the Nederlands Filmmuseum when it was chosen as the venue to house this institution in 1975. Two screening rooms were built from the existing spaces of the Pavilion: the rooms were small and narrow, and the number of seats was limited (eighty in one room and sixty in the other). In addition to the two theatres, there was a cinema book shop at the entrance and a café in the vault. The opening of the Filmmuseum in the Vondelpark Pavilion considerably increased the presentation activity of the institution, which previously had to rent presentation spaces in other cinemas or venues.

The second phase of this institution’s history covers the 1980s and 1990s and witnessed the direction of Hoos Blotkamp. At this time, the Filmmuseum was very active in both the restoration and presentation of its collection. While other institutions positioned themselves either more on the side of preservation or of presentation, the Nederlands Filmmuseum found a balance between the two pursuits and established an experimental tradition in the restoration and presentation of archival films.

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206 See Penelope Houston, *Keepers of the Frame. The Film Archives*, 60-77.
Since 1980, the Ministry of Culture had guaranteed regular funding for the Filmmuseum, so resources were available for restoration projects. This allowed the Filmmuseum to increasingly engage in film restoration and not only concentrate on the recovery of masterpieces of film history, but also of early non-fiction and little known silent films.

Along with restoration, the presentation of the films from the collection was considered a primary mission of the institution. When presenting films, the Filmmuseum paid particular attention to the sound component, especially when screening silent films. For this purpose, the Filmmuseum hired musician and composer Martin de Ruiter, currently head of the music department at EYE, to curate the musical accompaniment program in 1999. This decision demonstrates the attention that this institution has given to sound presentation: hiring someone specifically to curate the sound presentation is exceptional in film heritage institutions. Another sign of this attention is the opening of the Cinema Concerts series, a monthly event where silent films were presented with an orchestra performing a score especially composed for the occasion. Since the Pavilion screening rooms were too small to host an orchestra, the Cinema Concerts were held at the Tuschinski theatre at Rembrandtplein, which is equipped with an organ for special music accompaniments, or in other venues in the city, such as the music hall (Muziekgebouw) and the city theatre (Stadsschouwburg).

The Filmmuseum’s approach to the practice of presentation can also be detected in the remodeling of the larger auditorium in the Pavilion: in 1991, the original 1924 Art Deco interiors of the Cinema Parisien were installed. The Cinema Parisien was an historic cinema in Central Amsterdam that opened in 1910 and was designed by architect Jos Hegener. The inside was decorated in Art Deco style by the Dutch film pioneer Jean Desmet, who was the Director of the cinema from 1910 until 1956. When the Cinema Parisien was about to be demolished, its Art Deco interiors were saved from destruction and mounted in the Pavilion’s cinema. This installation allowed the preservation of a historic artifact of cinema and its presentation to a contemporary public, thus sustaining the idea that the setting of the film experience has a historical value that is worthy of preserving if possible. The historical value of these panels is linked to cinematic collective memory and experience: the installation of the wood panels enriched with beautiful Art Deco decorations gave the Pavilion auditorium the atmosphere of an old cinema theatre and made it a more authentic setting for screening silent films.
The presentation activity of the Filmmuseum was not meant to only involve screenings of classical masterpieces: an experimental attitude towards the content and modality of film presentation developed thanks to the work of director Hoos Blotkamp (1987-2000) and deputy-directors Eric de Kuyper (1988-1992) and Peter Delpeut (1992-1995). De Kuyper, an art critic and experimental film director, and Delpeut, a found footage filmmaker, brought new attention to unconsidered material held in the archives and to experimental ways of presenting this content. As Fossati observes, “the focus of the Netherlands Filmmuseum shifted from the celebrated centerpieces of official film history to its margins.”

In 1990, for example, De Kuyper and Delpeut started the *Bits & Pieces* project to shed light on unidentified film fragments found in the vaults. Short and unidentified film fragments were usually not considered, or even catalogued, in normal preservation practices. In order to reevaluate such fragments, De Kuyper and Delpeut created twenty minute long found footage compilations with this material and presented them to the public. With *Bits & Pieces*, a project still active today in which one compilation is still produced each year, the Filmmuseum anticipated a tendency that has since been very successful: the recovery and restoration of marginal cinematography and orphans works.

In this second phase, the Filmmuseum also “started experimenting with a new exhibition practice in which silent films were presented in unexpected settings with contemporary musical accompaniment.” The use of contemporary musical accompaniment, such as rock or electronic music, was in opposition to the use of classical piano or orchestral music popular at the time. The choice of unexpected settings also depended on the spatial limitations of the screening rooms in the Pavilion. The first screenings of early films with an experimental approach, which often involved the choice of the space and the sound accompaniment, received positive feedback from the local public. This positive outcome, along with a strong vocation towards presentation, led the institution to organize its own film festival, the Filmmuseum Biennale, which started in 2003 under the direction of Mark-Paul Meyer, senior curator of EYE, and Martin de Ruiter, musician and silent film programmer at EYE.

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207 Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel*, 172.
209 Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel*, 172.
The festival presented recently restored movies often accompanied by newly composed scores performed live. In the first edition of the festival in 2003, the films were presented in different venues in the city: not only film theatres (like the Filmmuseum Cinerama and the Pathé Tuschinski), but also other spaces, such as the Concertgebouw concert hall and the Paradiso music club. This music club, a symbol of the underground music scene in Amsterdam, served as a stage for the screening of experimental films, such as Walter Ruttmann’s *Opus II, III, IV* (1921-1925), which were presented with scores by Dutch composer Louis Andriessen. In the following editions of the festival, other venues were used, such as the Stadsschouwburg theatre in Leidseplein, the previous home of the Dutch National Ballet and opera. In 2009 this building hosted the premiere of the restored version of *J’Accuse* (Abel Gance, 1919) with a new musical score by Gary Lucas and Reza Namavar performed live by the Ensemble Caméléon.

The first Biennale was notably titled *See the sound, hear the image*, which emphasized the importance of the sound accompanying the image, but also the value of the cinematic experience as an event comprising both image and sound. In her account of the history of the Nederlands Filmmuseum, Bregt Lameris observes that the intention behind this attitude towards presentation was to:

[…] create a situation similar to the one experienced by the film audience in the past. The Filmmuseum tried in this way to (re)create the fascination of a silent film program. The intention was not to recreate authentic programs, but mainly to simulate a feeling in the audience similar to the one felt by early cinema audiences. […] The Filmmuseum allowed itself room for free interpretation for the musical accompaniment of silent films, by inviting well known musicians such as Henny Vrienten, Joost Belinfante and others, and giving them carte blanche. This resulted in experimental programs, which place such film presentations in the domain of experimental arts.²¹⁰

This account testifies to the institution’s consistent plan to experiment with film presentation. It also highlights the increased role that sound played in the Filmmuseum’s screenings: as the years progressed, what was once an experimental practice became a well-established tradition. Another element emerges from Lameris’

statement: the intent to simulate the “feeling,” the original cinematic experience, rather than trying to be faithful to a supposed original text. The Filmmuseum’s experimental tradition in film presentation expresses a focus on cinema as an event and performance, and on the experience of the audience, rather than on the film as text. The focus on the dimensions of the event and performance were intended to bring a particular attention to the spatial and institutional context of film presentation.

Zeemansvrouwen was presented as the main event of the first Biennale, while Beyond the Rocks was the main event of the second Biennale: this was yet another sign of the establishment of an experimental tradition in presentation. Other restoration projects demonstrate the Filmmuseum’s experimental tradition in film sound presentation. For example, Regen (Rain, Joris Ivens, 1929), which was presented at the 2005 Biennale, was reconstructed with the musical score composed for this film in 1941 by Hans Eisler. The score and the image did not match perfectly when they were combined, so it was deduced that some parts of the film roll were missing. Some black frames were used to fill the missing parts in order to safeguard the integrity of Eisler’s musical score and keep the original synchronism between the music cues and the images. In other words, the sound component of the film was given priority over the image component.

Another example is the presentation of the restored version of Man with a movie camera (Chelovek s kino apparatom, Dziga Vertov, 1929) during the 2010 Biennale. A score composed by music composer Michael Nyman was produced especially for this restoration, and the Michael Nyman Band performed it live. The screening took place in one of the Muziekgebouw aan’t IJ’s concert halls instead of a movie theatre in order to provide the best acoustics possible for the musical performance. However, the aspect ratio was incorrect since the concert hall was not specifically equipped for film screenings, resulting in part of the image being cut off. There was also too much light coming from the orchestra that reflected onto the bottom of the screen: this similarly shows how preference was given to sound presentation over image quality.

The examples of Regen and Man with a movie camera, where sound presentation was favored above image presentation, are very rare: in screening situations, the image is usually prioritized over the sound. This is also because the audience tends to recognize and complain more about errors or mistakes on the screen rather than ones concerning sound. If the presentation practice of giving priority to the image can be read
as a manifestation of the hegemony of the visual, these last examples can be interpreted as an exception to this assumption.

Regarding the case of *Man with a movie camera*, it is interesting to note that presenting a film in an institutional space devoted to a media other than film, in this case music, also has consequences on the presentation quality. The space of a music hall entails different purposes, different technologies, and different audience expectations than a film theatrical space. In a music hall in fact the space is designed according to characteristics of music acoustics, the dispositif concerns music performance, and the audience expects to hear well rather than see well. This example shows how much film presentation is conditioned by the dispositif, the space, and the institutional context where it is performed. Each presentation can therefore be considered, to a certain extent, a performance. With this in mind, the following sections will analyze, using the Filmmuseum-EYE case as an example, the role of the physical space and the institutional context in film sound presentation.

### 4.5 A New Space for Presentation

Before analyzing in the next section the presentation of film sound in the new venue, I summarize here the main events that led to the opening of the new building. The first decade of the twenty-first century, defined by Fossati as the third phase of the Filmmuseum-EYE, is characterized by two transitions of the institution: a technological transition consisting of the digitization of its collection, and an institutional transition that led to its relocation and the inauguration of the new site. This phase began in the late 1990s with the first use of digital technologies for restoration and access purposes. During these same years, the Filmmuseum started the search for a new location in order to bring together its different departments which were scattered among various venues throughout Amsterdam. Director Hoos Blotkamp proposed a move to Rotterdam, but the Filmmuseum’s board refused, and, thus, the Filmmuseum stayed in Amsterdam.

This phase of the Filmmuseum coincides with an attempt to rethink and reorganize cultural institutions founded by the Dutch government, which was looking for new funding models in order to reduce public investment in culture institutions and
encouraging public-private partnerships. In 2005, the Ministry decided to consolidate the film public sector by merging three institutions: Holland Film, the Filmbank, and the Netherlands Institute for Film Education that worked in production, distribution and education, respectively. However, this merger was stalled for some years.

In 2005, the director and board evaluated the feasibility of a relocation of the Filmmuseum and considered the new urban plan of the municipality of Amsterdam that was trying to relocate cultural centers outside the restricted area of the city centre to less-attractive areas in order to make them more livable. The part of the city designated for the new Filmmuseum was Amsterdam Noord, the Northern part of the city. Delugan Meissl Associated Architects won the public competition for the architectural design of the new building with an ambitious building plan and innovative design, which was one of the main selling points for finding private founders (fig. 35). In fact, the elevated cost of the project called for a public-private partnership.

Parallel to the relocation of this institution, the Dutch government supported the project titled Images for the Future, which was envisioned in 2005, approved in 2006, and initiated in 2007. The project aim was “the broad availability of audiovisual material for everybody,” and this objective was facilitated through the digitization of the audiovisual collections of the main Dutch audiovisual archives: the Nederlands Filmmuseum (with mainly film collections), the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (holding broadcasting materials), and the National Archive (with a large collection of still photographs). This consortium of audiovisual institutions and archives came together to digitize, preserve, and allow access to the Netherlands’ audiovisual heritage. By June 2012, the total number of hours of digitized material was as follows: 15,007 hours of film (at the Filmmuseum-EYE and Beeld en Geluid), 85,006 hours of video and 81,000 hours of audio (at Beeld en Geluid), and 2,000 photos (at the National Archive).

The Images for the Future project had a budget of 154 million euros and was backed by the Ministry of Economics with funds for significant infrastructural works.

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213 This data were presented at the Economies of the Commons 3 Conference, Amsterdam October 2012, see the presentation by Paul Keller, http://ecommons.eu/day-1-session-1-after-images-for-the-future-what-images-for-the-future-has-delivered/, accessed June 2013.
To date, it is the largest and most expansive publicly financed audiovisual digitization project. Thanks to this project, the Filmmuseum-EYE was granted a budget of about 35 million euros for preserving, digitizing, and providing access to a large part of their film collection. As Fossati reports “Images for the Future is probably the most challenging project in the Filmmuseum’s history, enabling to assess, preserve, restore, digitize, describe, and making accessible its own collection in the period 2008-2015.”214 By June 2012, the Filmmuseum-EYE has preserved 1,300 hours of film in 35 mm; digitized 3,800 hours in 2K DPX; encoded 4,200 hours in JPEG 2000, HD and SD; contextualized 5,500 hours of material (of which 500 are for education purpose). In terms of titles, the Filmmuseum-EYE has digitized 6,000 titles out of the 40,000 collected in the archive. The institution was also active in the copyright clearance of the collection, hiring three lawyers full time. The project is still active, even though funding has presently been reduced.

With this project, the Dutch government guaranteed the long-term safekeeping of the Filmmuseum’s collection and its status as an independent national museum, meaning that the continuing management of the collection is subsidized by state money. In return, the Filmmuseum was obligated to adhere to the Ministry’s plan for a unified public film sector. Therefore, in 2010, the previously planned merging of the three film institutions (Holland Film, the Filmbank, and the Netherlands Institute for Film Education), with the addition of the Filmmuseum, took effect. Throughout this process, the Filmmuseum-EYE was placed under the direction of Sandra den Hamer, who was appointed in 2007 and previously served as the director of the Rotterdam Film Festival.

The Wieden and Kennedy advertising agency was hired to create a new brand for this institution. They were asked to come up with a new name, which had to be different from those of the constituent institutions, and a new logo. A name change is very significant for the positioning of an institution in the social sphere.215 In this case, after reviewing the proposals of the advertising agency and consulting the boards of the constituting institutions, the name EYE Film Institute Netherlands was finally chosen. EYE also evokes the name of the IJ (pronounced “aye” in Dutch), which is a large body of water between Amsterdam and North Amsterdam that the new building overlooks.

215 For a better understanding of the identity construction of a film heritage institution, see Ray Edmondson, *National Film and Sound Archive: The Quest for Identity. Factors Shaping the Uneven Development of a Cultural Institution* (Canberra: University of Canberra, 2011), particularly the section 2.6 “Marketing, Positioning and Branding.”
EYE further refers to the form of the building, which recalls the form of a human eye, and the logo, which is an outline of an eye. The explicative ‘Film Institute Netherlands’ was added to the EYE name.

This name also heralded the change in the physical space of the institution: on April 5, 2012, the new EYE building was inaugurated with a big ceremony (fig. 36). The building cost forty million euros and was financed by ING Real Estate, the city of Amsterdam, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ymere housing association. It was purchased by ING after completion and is leased to EYE for a period of twenty-five years. The original plan also contained a building to house the collections and the library near the new presentation building. This so-called Collection Center is still planned and should be completed within a few years.\footnote{http://www.eyefilm.nl/nieuws/eye-tekent-huurovereenkomst-voor-collectiecentrum, accessed June 2013.}

The position of the site of the institution in the geographical and urban space, as well as the architecture and configuration of the physical space, are very relevant in defining the symbolic value of the institution for the user community. Considering the position within the city, the location changed from the very frequented and lively Vondelpark to the decentralized and developing area of Overhoeks in Amsterdam Noord. In terms of architecture, the relocation is characterized by the passage from a nineteenth century pavilion to a twenty-first century futuristic building. Both these aspects contributed a change in how this institution is perceived by the regular public and occasional visitors. The new building represents a turning point, nevertheless some continuity in the activity of the institution can be detected, as for instance in the presentation of film sound following the experimental tradition of the Filmmuseum.

### 4.6 Film Sound Presentation: Sounds in Spaces

In this section, I describe EYE Film Institute’s new building in relation to sound presentation. The configuration of the physical space constitutes an important variable in sound presentation. This is predominantly because the physics of sound diffusion and its perception by the human ear are greatly influenced by the configuration of the space.
To clarify this point, I recall here the definition of sound by Read and Meyer reported in the first chapter:

The total amount of energy in movement, the surface area covered, and the type of vibrating movement involved (depending on the material and its shape) determine the properties of these waves. When the waves strike and penetrate different mediums, their properties vary and change through the process of reflection, refraction or diffraction.217

The architectural structure of the space, the construction materials, and the interior design influence the reflection, refraction, and diffraction of sound waves in the space, and consequently how it is perceived. In other words, the same sound signal resonates differently depending not only on the dispositif which plays it (playback and amplification system) but also on the space where it is played. For instance, the sound rendition of a film in a small cinema is qualitatively different from when it is projected in a larger theatre hall.

In order to describe film sound presentation in the new building, I use Schafer’s concept of soundscape, intended as the acoustic field of study and introduced in chapter one. In applying this concept to film sound presentation, a first distinction has to be made between filmic and cinematic soundscape. With the term filmic soundscape I indicate the soundscape of a particular film as it is recorded on the film carrier. The cinematic soundscape refers to the actual sound of the film perceived by the audience in a particular screening situation: this is composed by how the filmic soundscape resonates in a specific space and thanks to a specific dispositif situation (technological device and human actors), and also by the sound coming from the public.

Considering this distinction, I will analyze the different soundscapes of the new building. As Schafer observes, it is very difficult to analyze and describe soundscapes:

We can isolate an acoustic environment as a field of study just as we can study the characteristics of a given landscape. However, it is less easy to formulate an exact impression of a soundscape than of a landscape. There is nothing in sonography corresponding to the instantaneous impression which photography can create. With a camera it is possible to catch the salient features of a visual panorama to create an impression that is immediately evident. The microphone does not operate this way. It

217 Paul Read and Mark-Paul Meyer, Restoration of Motion Picture Film, 9.
samples details. It gives the close-up but nothing corresponding to aerial photography. […] To give a totally convincing image of a soundscape would involve extraordinary skills and patience: thousands of recordings have to be made; tens of thousands of measurements would have to be taken; and a new means of description would have to be devised.218

On this basis, I will not pursue a complex analysis of the *soundscape* with technological means to obtain a description of sound, but rather consider sound perception in the different spaces from the point of view of the audience experience, considering my own auditory experience as representative for that of an “ideal listener.” In this way I could personally test and evaluate the hermeneutic categories used in the following analysis of the *soundscape*.

In particular, I recognized the usefulness of some perceptual categories expressed in the article “Listening from Within,” which reports the results of a psychological study conducted by Claire Petitmengin and others academics.219 The study describes the auditory experience from a psychological and perceptive point of view, on the base of interviews: after listening to different kind of sounds, the subjects interviewed were asked to describe their personal auditory experiences. Upon comparison of the answers, the study argues that the auditory experience is based on three modes of listening: “source of the sound,” “object sound” and “bodily felt sound.” In these categories I found some tools that could help trace the auditory experience in a cinematic setting in general, and then specifically in the new EYE building. These categories allow for an analysis of the perceptual dimensions of film sound in space, or, as defined above, the *cinematic soundscape*.

The first mode, *source of the sound*, regards the identification of the object or procedure used to produce the sound. As the study reports:

> If I am asked to describe my experience of the sound, what I ordinarily immediately describe is the physical event which is at the source of the sound. […] The sound provides me with information about the characteristics of the object which have produced

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it: their direction, their distance, their speed, the matter of which they are made, their density, their solidity or hollowness, and the consistency of the surface.\footnote{Ibid., 260.}

The process of identifying the source of sound is usually pre-reflective, meaning that it is not conscious but “usually hidden by the absorption of attention in the object or content of the experience.”\footnote{Ibid., 256.} The source can be identified in a verbal, visual, or non-symbolic form: “the subject pronounces the name of the source in an inner voice and/or sees an image or a visual scene representing the source.”\footnote{Ibid., 261.} The identification can also happen when a memory is evoked. The subject’s attentional disposition is focused on the source of the sound, and the experiential space seems to extend in the direction of the source: “The imagination of the source extends lived space far beyond the space which is visually perceived,”\footnote{Ibid., 263.} while the sound and the subject’s body seem to become transparent. This point was elaborated by a participant of the study as follows: “Instantaneously my lived space is extended, changing itself to go and touch the source of the sound in geographic space.”\footnote{Ibid.}

If we apply this category to the cinematic experience, an interesting situation occurs. There are two possible sources of sound: the sounds coming from the fictional reality of the film and the sounds coming from the physical reality of the theatre. The cinematic soundscape, as previously defined, is composed of both these sources of sound: it comprehends the sounds coming from the film reality (the filmic soundscape) but also the sounds coming from the reality of the physical screening space. The attention of the subject is focused on the sound coming from the mediated reality and being diffused in the theatre through amplification devices. The filmgoer is usually bothered by sounds from the theatre unrelated to the film, which he or she perceives as disturbing noise. Usually the viewer-listener tries to ignore or minimize the sounds coming from the unmediated reality and focus his or her attention on the sound coming from the film.

A cinematic situation can also present bizarre sounds, which are described in Petitmengin’s study as sounds of which the source is not immediately recognizable.\footnote{Ibid., 254.} For instance, the noise and crackles of an old movie soundtrack can be considered as
bizarre sounds, because the subject usually cannot identify the source of such sounds neither in the unmediated nor in the mediated reality.

The second listening mode individuated in the study of Petitmengin et al. is object sound, which is characterized by the perception of pure auditory qualities of the sound without a clear identification of the source: “The sound is not considered as a clue, a sign, a means giving me information about something else, but it is perceived immediately for itself.”226 The sound is perceived independently from the object or event that produced it: the source is obliterated, while the atttentional disposition of the subject is focused on the sound qualities (volume, pitch, timbre, persistence), which are often associated with vision or touch. For instance, one interviewee, quoted in the study, states: “As soon as the sound starts I have the impression of something sharp, aggressive, grating.”227

In a cinematic setting, the object sound can be experienced, for instance, during the screening of experimental films, where the viewer might appreciate the quality of sound without actually being able to identify what caused that sound. This is because the source of sounds in experimental films is often not detectable in the images. A particular case of object sound is spatial sound, which occurs when the sound completely fills the space of the auditorium.228 This situation is made possible in present-day theatres thanks to multiple loudspeakers surrounding the public. It is common for contemporary film sound design, by enhancing the surround effect of sound amplification, to create spatial sound experiences.

The third listening mode, bodily felt sound, occurs when the sound resonates in the body, thereby involving different senses. As Petitmengin et al. indicate:

This resonance is sometimes easily perceptible, like that of the bass in a rock concert or a nightclub, or that of a pneumatic drill. But a certain amount of practice makes it possible to become aware of more subtle resonances, such as that of the voice (whether someone else’s voice or my own voice), of music, of the sounds of nature, or of any other sound.229

The bodily felt listening mode is activated, for instance, when we hear music that triggers the body to dance, and we start tapping our foot on the floor or moving other

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226 Ibid., 264.
227 Ibid., 265.
228 Ibid., 278.
229 Ibid., 268.
parts of our body to the rhythm of the music. The felt sound involves “a transformation of the texture of the lived space, associated with a synchronization between interior space and exterior space, which makes the frontier of the two spaces more permeable.” In the cinematic experience, a similar situation can happen when the viewer is captivated by a film’s music (e.g. with famous pop songs or pieces of classical music), or when the use of sound effects creates a resonance in the body (as in the use of bass for sound effects in a battle).

In the following section, I will use these categories regarding auditory modes as well as the concept of the *soundscape* to describe the EYE Film Institute’s new space. These auditory modes can be applied in a cinematic setting in general, as explained in the previous paragraphs, but they are also appropriate to describe the auditory experience in a specific space and situation. Therefore, these auditory modes can help in describing the cinematic soundscape of the current EYE space.

To assist with this analysis, I divide the new building in four areas that correspond to four kinds of *soundscape*: the theatrical space (the four cinemas), the exhibition space (the museum), the access space (the Panorama and Pods in the Basement), and the public space (the Arena). Each of these areas has a particular *soundscape* and presents film sound in a different way. To describe the auditory experience in these spaces, I use the preceding concepts of auditory modes distinguished by Petitmengin et al.: the *source of sound* (what is this sound), the *object sound* (what this sound is like), and the *bodily felt sound* (what the experience of this sound is like). In this description I will highlight which modes are prevalent in the different spaces, acknowledging that the modes often overlap in auditory situations and one mode does not necessarily exclude the others.

In addition to the division into four areas, I assemble the spaces into two groups according to their purpose: for presentation and for access. The notions of presentation and access differ with regards to the role of the public: in presentation, the institution chooses the cultural object to exhibit or display to the public, while in access, it is the user who selects the material he or she wants to consult from the archival collections.

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230 Ibid., 274.
4.7 Spaces for Presentation: Cinemas and Exhibition

I begin my analysis from the traditional presentation spaces of a film heritage institution—the theatrical space and the exhibition space—and focus on how the sound is presented and perceived by viewers in the different places. The theatrical space in the new EYE building is composed of four cinemas: each of them has a specific structure and design and a specific presentation purpose. In terms of presentation equipment and possibilities, all four cinemas can project both analogue and digital films in the following formats: 35 mm, 16 mm, 70 mm, 2 K, 4 K. Cinemas 1 and 3 can also project 3D digital films.

Cinema 1 is the biggest theatre with 315 fixed seats, and it is therefore used for premieres and films that draw larger audiences (fig. 37). Regarding sound presentation, this cinema is characterized by the presence of a historic built-in organ (fig. 38). The organ, dated 1929, came from the Passagebioscoop cinema in The Hague, where it was used for the live accompaniment of silent films: characteristically, it cannot only play music, but also some sound effects, including the sound of a siren, a bird or castanets, which were used in historic screenings to replace the rumorist.231 Fallen into disuse for decades, the organ was later restored and then installed adjacent to the left wall near the screen. The restoration of the organ is an interesting example of how a film heritage institution can preserve not only film objects but also devices and dispositifs in order to safeguard a certain film experience. The organ is played on special occasions for live music performances. With this new structure, EYE finally gained the ability to present in-house silent films with live musical accompaniment performed by an orchestra.

The organ was used for the first time during the main event of the building’s inauguration: the screening of the The Spanish Dancer (Herbert Brenon, 1923), starring Pola Negri (fig. 39). The film was previously restored at the EYE Film Institute, and it was presented with a new soundtrack composed by Martin de Ruiter. This soundtrack was performed by musicians playing the organ, piano, violin, and guitar, as well as a soprano singer. The musicians performed on stage in front of the screen, and were

231 Confirming the well-established use of sound effects in early film presentation, the presence of the sound effect function in the organ reveals another element to justify the use of sound effects in Beyond the Rocks.
therefore visible to the audience. Having attended the screening, it was particularly noticeable the way the sounds produced by the organ completely filled the space. I could not detect a specific point from which the sound originated, rather it seemed as though it was coming from the surfaces of the walls. Therefore, I associate the organ performing in this cinema to the spatial sound listening mode, in which the subject perceives the sound as filling the space. The music coming from the piano, violin, guitar, and the singing were associated to the instrument and musician visible on stage, and therefore activated the source of sound listening mode.

Cinema 2 has 130 seats and it differs from the other cinemas in that its rows of seats can completely retract so that the hall can become an open space, and, if necessary, be filled with other elements that do not usually pertain to a film theatre. This cinema is used for events that include film installations and film-related performances. During the inauguration, this space hosted an installation titled Circo Togni Home Movies (fig. 40 and 41). This installation was composed of a cube with four-screens hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the room. Each screen projected images of home movies recorded and collected by the Togni circus family from the 1940s to the 1970s. During the projection, the band Available Jelly improvised a live jazz performance. The performers were situated beside the cube, while the audience moved around the space to see the screens from different angles and perspectives and hear the music from different places. This situation recalls the bodily felt sound listening mode: the audience listens to the music, which is played among the people in the auditorium. The body, not forced to remain seated but free to move in the space, becomes even more permeable to the resonance of the music. Aside from film-related installations, this room can also be used as a ballroom or for music concerts; these functions once again recall the concept of bodily felt sound. In general, during live musical performances that accompany film screenings, the object sound listening mode is activated: the audience, concentrated on following the story, and reading the intertitles if present, perceives the musical accompaniment in its pure auditory qualities without a clear identification of the source.

The Circo Togni Home Movies installation and performance was realized by the Associazione Home Movies – Archivio Nazionale de Film di Famiglia (Bologna, Italy), in collaboration with La Camera Ottica – Film and Video Restoration (Gorizia, Università degli Studi di Udine, Italy). It was first presented in the Filmforum Spring School in Gradisca in 2008, and at the Courtisan Festival in Ghent in 2009.
Cinema 3, with 130 fixed seats, was designed following experimental filmmaker Peter Kubelka’s concept of Invisible Cinema: the hall is completely black so that there are no elements that could distract the audience from the film experience. Albie Thoms describes Invisible Cinema, which was realized under the supervision of Kubelka at Anthology Film Archives in 1970:

It is something of a space capsule, and when one enters it one is plunged into a sort of sensory deprivation chamber in which all one sees is the film on the screen and its sound (if it has any) is all one hears. Everything inside the cylindrical cinema is black, except for the screen, and the seats have hoods and blinkers so that one only looks at the screen. The cinema is tiered so that the seats of the row in front cut across the bottom of the screen just below head-height. All visual and aural impressions extraneous to the film are eliminated.233

The intention to eliminate “extraneous” aural impressions relates to the source of sound listening mode: the sounds within the cinema should be reduced as much as possible, and the sounds of the film should be the only ones that fill the cinema. In other words, the cinematic soundscape should coincide with the filmic soundscape. Cinema 3, however, does not completely follow Kubelka’s project, which contained separators between the seats so that the audience would not be disturbed by the presence of the other people (fig. 42); the separators are absent in Cinema 3. Nevertheless, the idea to provide a pure cinematic experience, and to make the cinematic soundscape coincide with the filmic soundscape, is found in the design of Cinema 3, in which the listening mode of the source of sound prevails.

Cinema 4 has 75 seats and is decorated in Art Deco style. The original plan was to install the panels of the Cinema Parisien that were previously mounted in the Pavilion’s auditorium. However, their installation was not possible, since the panels would have had to been modified and, as part of the Desmet Collection (declared part of UNESCO World Heritage in 2011), they could not be altered and placed in the new cinema. Since the original panels could not be installed, it was decided that a similar Art Deco decoration would be produced with new panels, so that the old style setting would be recreated. Moreover, in order to create a particular atmosphere in the theatre, a LED lighting system was especially designed by light artist Rob Looman. The idea of an old-

style atmosphere for this cinema was also applied to the cinema’s program: this cinema is used for screening silent films, classics, and educational programs. The decision to build a link between the physical space and the type of films shown further reinforces the idea that the space influences the cinematic experience. Since this theatre is dedicated to the presentation of silent and early films with live music accompaniment, it can be associated to *object sound*, because live performances directs the attention of the audience towards the pure auditory quality of sound.

Regarding sound presentation in the theatrical space, an acoustic problem must be noted: the acoustics of each of the four theatres do not allow live music to be performed without amplification because of the sound reverberation in these spaces. In other words, live musical performances must always be amplified. In general, music played without electronic amplification has a different effect and texture compared to when it is amplified. The possibility to play without amplification also depends on the instruments played and the musical genre. This kind of concern mainly regards the acoustics of the music halls. It is usually not a concern in modern cinemas, since the soundtrack is recorded and then diffused in the theatre through amplification systems. However, since this institution specifically hosts live musical performances as well, this aspect was considered, but ultimately left unresolved in the acoustic design of the cinema spaces.

If the four theatres present this lack in acoustic design, an analysis of the exhibition space reveals a great attention to the acoustic issue. The exhibition space consists of an area of approximately 1,200 m², and is composed of one large room that can be divided in smaller sections with wall panels (fig. 43). The versatility of this space is very important, since it hosts four temporary exhibitions each year rather than one permanent exhibition. The exhibitions already realized at the time of writing are: *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed* (April-June 2012, fig. 44), *Stanley Kubrick: The Exhibition* (June-September 2012), *Expanded Cinema: Isaac Julien, Fiona Tan, Yang Fudong* (September-December 2012, fig. 45), *Oskar Fischinger – Experiments in Cinematic Abstraction 1900-1967* (December 2012- March 2013), *Johan van der Keuken / Up to the light* (March-June 2013), and *Fellini – The Exhibition* (June-September 2013).

The configuration of the space as a single room creates some issues with regard to sound. This is particularly relevant because various types of audiovisual material are featured within these large-scale exhibitions: the sounds of different screened materials could in fact interfere with one another when they are displayed within the same section. For this reason, this space was soundproofed with a very expensive sound
absorbing ceiling. The use of such a system demonstrates how the combination of the building materials and the configuration of the space influence how sounds are diffused and perceived. Without this system, the exhibition area would be much noisier due to echoes. This soundproofing system enables this space to be isolated from external sounds coming from not only the theatres or the Arena, but also the smaller exhibition areas. These sections are acoustically isolated since the wall panels are also made of soundproofing material. This way, the sounds of small areas do not interfere with the ones nearby. For each exhibition, it is necessary to find the right reconfiguration of the space through the use of the panels to accommodate the quantity and type of audiovisual material that will be displayed. The acoustic isolation system in the exhibition area recalls the source of sound listening mode: the aim of this system is to contain the sounds of each section inside its physical boundaries, so that the public is not disturbed by sound coming from other sections.

For instance, the exhibition dedicated to Oskar Fischinger contained multiple sound projections. The exhibition was composed of four sections with simultaneous projections on big screens as well as video material displayed on TV monitors, while glass cases displayed hand painted works and other documents (fig. 46 and 47). In the first three sections, the curators and designers decided to project the films in sequence, the following one starting only after the previous one had ended, so that the sound of one projection would not interfere with the others. This particular decision to not superimpose different soundtracks in the same space also underlines the importance of the sound element in Fischinger’s work, which is significantly called visual music. In these films Fischinger experiments with the relation between music and abstract visual art. In the bigger, final section (fig. 48), the visual parts of the projections were simultaneous, while the audio came from one clip at a time. In such situations, the listening mode activated is the source of sound: the subject is guided through the room by the sound sources, and he or she is attracted by and compelled to pay attention to the screen in the room that is accompanied by the sound.
4.8 Spaces for Access: Panorama, Pods, Arena and the Web

If the four cinemas and the exhibition space refer to the traditional presentation activity of a film heritage institution, the Panorama and the Pods, two areas in the building’s Basement exhibition area, are dedicated to access. These installations allow users to browse and view film materials from EYE’s collections. The Basement is in fact characterized by the attempt to engage visitors interactively with its audiovisual collection. All spaces in the Basement are free to the public.

The Panorama is a 360-degree interactive immersive installation (fig. 49 and 50). In a dark room, four digital wide angle projectors project sixteen running strips of moving images on all four walls and seven projectors present film clips as they were photographed one frame at a time (fig. 51). There are seven consoles dedicated to a specific theme (i.e. Film Stars, Colour, Magic, Slapstick, Exploration, Battle, The Netherlands) that contain twelve film clips related to each theme (fig. 52). The preview window shows all the clips related to a specific theme. The users can choose which clips they want to see through the touchscreens installed within the consoles, which also serve for offering some contextual information about the clips (fig. 53). Users can also play the selected film backwards or forwards, using a lever. Each control panel is connected to a digital projector that displays the selected clips on one of the walls.

The Panorama space can be considered as a bridge between exhibition and access: the installation of the running film strips on the wall addresses the exhibition and presentation aspect, while the consoles, which must be activated by the user, relate to access and interaction. Access to EYE’s collection is limited to the clips loaded in each station, but the selection of clips nevertheless allows a form of access to the collection, even if in the context of exhibition. Fossati explains that “[t]he EYE Panorama is an example of how a film collection can be shown to an audience in a more

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234 The installation was produced as a collaboration between EYE, the Submarine production studio and the Beamsystems equipment provider.
235 The idea to present short film scenes that have a common theme or motif recalls the assembling of film fragments in the Bits and Pieces programs; this is an example of how the approaches related to the experimental tradition in film presentation are still present in the new building.
flexible fashion than that of the traditional cinema setting (or dispositif) where the films shown are decided solely by the programmer or curator.\textsuperscript{236}

The concept behind the Panorama is mainly visual: film images running in strips around the walls of a dark room. As the name declares, this installation is inspired by earlier eighteenth and nineteenth century panoramic dispositifs. However, the sound component plays a role in this installation as well. The Panorama was designed not only as a visual but also as a sound installation: each control panel is equipped with a sound tile, a sophisticated version of a sound shower, composed by a square loudspeaker mounted on the ceiling right above the console, so that it is possible to hear the sound of the selected clip. When the user plays the clip forward or backwards with the lever, the sound also goes forward and backwards and produces an impaired noise, which can be related to what I defined as the noise of the device in chapter one.

The challenge of the Panorama installation with respect to sound was to isolate sound diffusion areas without using physical barriers, so that the person who is using the console hears only the sound of the clip he or she chooses and not the sound of other stations. Moreover, a solution needed to be found for limiting the amount of disruptive noise in a situation where all seven consoles would be used simultaneously. This goal was achieved, since the soundscape of the Panorama is not disruptive or distracting, and the sounds of the clips are audible only in the area below the sound tile.

When considering how the viewer perceives the film, it is interesting to note that the sound associated to the film clips comes from the ceiling: this is an unusual position for the source of sound since film sound usually comes from either behind the screen or from the walls surrounding the cinema theatre. Walking into the space while many consoles are showing clips creates an interesting listening experience, making it possible to cross film sound bubbles and pass from the sound of one film to another. Such an experiment shows the difference between the filmic soundscape, which is the sound of each sound bubble, and the cinematic soundscape, intended as the sound of the whole space in which film is screened.

Outside the Panorama, there are five Pods, viewing cabins where the visitors can watch parts or complete films from EYE’s collection and also play a film quiz (fig. 54 and 55). In these cabins, the sound is diffused through built-in loudspeakers. Even if the cabins have two open accesses, the sound is contained in the cabin space through the

\textsuperscript{236} Giovanna Fossati, “Filmmaking, Film Archiving and New Participatory Platforms,” 182.
loudspeaker system. The sound is audible only to the people in the cabin, thus here the 
\textit{spatial sound} listening mode can be detected. The sound amplification of the \textit{Pods} 
initially experienced some problems, since the volume of some of the clips was low and 
could not be clearly heard from inside the stations; later on the volume of the clips was 
calibrated and the problem was solved. Similar to the \textit{Panorama}, the \textit{Pods} can also be 
considered as a renewed form of an archaeological media device, recalling early forms 
of experiencing moving images, such as Edison’s Kinetoscope.

Besides the \textit{Panorama} and \textit{Pods}, the Basement also hosts the \textit{Playground}, a space 
with interactive installations that intend to engage visitors in a playful way; this space is 
in fact primarily designed for families. Here sound can be associated to the \textit{object} and 
\textit{spatial sound}: the sound of the installation, if any, is mixed with the sound of the people 
interacting with them, especially the lively clamor of the children involved in the 
discovery of the media attractions.

This analysis of the physical spaces of the new building concludes with the \textit{Arena}, 
which is an open public space (fig. 56, 57 and 58) with a café, restaurant, and a 
panoramic view of the IJ and Amsterdam. The same sound absorbing ceiling system as 
in the exhibition space was utilized in this area because of its large size and because it is 
commonly used as a meeting and event space. This sound absorption system helps to 
reduce noise when the area is overcrowded. This \textit{soundscape} has a prevalent mode of 
\textit{object sound} listening: the murmur of people talking in the café or on the stairs helps to 
perceive the quality of sound itself rather than the source of sound. During special 
events, live music or DJ performances are held in this space and are sometimes 
accompanyed by visual projections of film clips, often containing material from the \textit{Bits} 
& \textit{Pieces} collection, onto the walls and the large window of the building (fig. 59). On 
these occasions the \textit{bodily felt sound} is also activated, since the musical sound can 
engage the body in a more or less explicit dance.

EYE’s website can be considered as a virtual space for accessing film heritage 
materials. It is nowadays an important access point to film heritage and film sound and 
should thus also be analyzed as a film sound space. The following remark by Nicola 
Mazzanti regarding the role of digital access on demand with respect to traditional 
presentation outlines how these two aspects are complementary in the new role of film 
archive as institution:

I see [the library function – “access on demand” – and the museum function] not only as
two facets of the role archives should play, but as two aspects which are so inherently interrelated and interdependent that one could not exist without the other. I am deeply convinced that the film archives’ system as a whole – if not each individual archive – should be able to fulfill both these functions, and that it would be a serious mistake to prioritize or undermine one against the other.237

EYE has initiated different web projects in order to provide online access to the digitized material in the collection.238 For example, the Film in Nederland239 portal provides access to the collection and allows users to view clips and films that are related to the Netherlands for free. Another instance of web access is the Instant Cinema240 platform, where it is possible to view experimental and art films from EYE’s collection.

Besides the website that allows access to film material in general, there are also platforms that allow users to reuse and remix film material that is in public domain and therefore does not require copyright clearance. A large amount of EYE’s digitized material will be soon available on Open Beelden, an open media platform that permits the downloading of the digitized material and its reuse using a creative commons license.241 The Scene Machine242 is an online application that mixes clips (around one thousand) from the film collection using keywords. This platform allows users to browse the collection, compose their own compilations, and share it on social networks. Celluloid Remix,243 a related project, is an online contest that invites professional and amateur filmmakers to remix film fragments from the collection and make found footage videos with the option of also adding a new soundtrack.

Regarding the sound presentation in these virtual spaces, it should be noted that in the case of websites and online platforms it is not the institutions but the users that decide in which space and through which dispositif the film or segment is perceived. As a projectionist, the user can control the playback of the film, start and stop it at any moment, browse forward or backwards, control the volume of the sound or decide to mute it. This situation can be related to the source of sound listening mode, in the sense that the user is focused on the source of sound that he or she can control through the

dispositif. The user’s control over the sound is even more accentuated in the cases of the reuse and remixing of film. In these cases in fact the user can manipulate the sound acting as a postproduction technician, he or she can change or add a new soundtrack, controlling the source of sound at the source.

4.9 Conclusion: Presenting Film Sound in Space and Institutional Context

In this chapter, I illustrated EYE’s activities with regards to film sound presentation. I highlighted how the presentation practices of a film heritage institution, together with the physical space and the institutional context, contribute to creating a specific cinematic experience. In particular, the Filmmuseum-EYE is distinguished for its creative and experimental use of devices, dispositifs, spaces, and carriers in the creation of cinematic events and experiences. Therefore, I defined the activity of this institution as an “experimental tradition” in film presentation. Moreover, EYE recently went through a transition with a technological dimension (the digitization of the collection) and an institutional dimension (the move to the new building).

The relocation of this institution can also be interpreted as a symbolic change in values: relocating from a nineteenth century pavilion to a twenty-first century futuristic structure symbolizes the passage from the old “chaperone model” of archiving to an “open and direct model,” following the process of “audience” becoming “users.” The symbolic value of this institution and its new location is also influenced by evolving technology and the new media context: it could be argued that EYE wants to offer a new public space for commonly sharing visual and aural experiences at a time when personal portable devices allow users to listen and view media content in every context and moment.

The decision to build four unique cinemas that differ from one another in style, design, and concept demonstrates a great attention to the configuration of physical space by influencing a viewer’s perception and experience of a film. The attempt to install the original Art Deco panels of the Cinema Parisien in the new building also indicates the

244 Giovanna Fossati, From Grain to Pixel, 175.
The dedication of the Filmmuseum-EYE to preserving cinema theatres as the space and context of the film experience. Moreover, the restoration and installation of an historic cinema organ reveals the preservation of cinema dispositifs.

The principle and practices of presentation that define these theatrical spaces are based on the idea that in this innovative complex it should be possible to show all kinds of films, and each film should be presented in an appropriate setting. Therefore, the choices of programming also take into account the screening space as well as any required musical accompaniment. It is very different to see a silent film in Cinema 1 accompanied by an orchestra and the organ, in Cinema 4 with piano accompaniment, or in Cinema 3 with the improvisations of jazz band or an electronic DJ set. Considering these elements, it could be argued that the presentation practices of this institution emphasizes an idea of film sound as performance and event, where the physical space and the institutional context are not neutral, but play an active role in the viewer’s experience and memory of a film.

In this chapter, I delineated the experimental tradition of the Filmmuseum-EYE regarding film preservation and presentation in general and film sound presentation in particular. From the 1980s onward, this institution stressed the importance of the role of musical accompaniment in the presentation of film heritage by experimenting with live music during performances but also in restoration practices. This experimental tradition in sound presentation can be also explained as a consequence of the spatial limitations of the previous building. The two cinemas in the old venue in Vondelpark Pavilion were small and not suitable for live music concerts during the screening of silent films; therefore, the Filmmuseum had to rent other theatres and event locations for showing films with a live music performance. This reiterates how film presentation is influenced to a certain degree by a physical space.

The limitations of the physical space of the old venue can also be interpreted as a reason for certain preservation choices. When the Filmmuseum-EYE engaged in the restoration of two important silent films, Zeemansvrouwen and Beyond the Rocks, it was decided that new musical accompaniment would be commissioned and that the soundtrack would be recorded on projection copies. One motivation for this decision was to allow the possibility to screen the movie with the new score also in cinemas that cannot accommodate live music performances, like the venue in Vondelpark. The composition of this new sound for the films was also experimental with regards to the addition of sound effects and voices. In other words, the experimental practices in film
sound presentation were sustained by experimental practices in film sound preservation and vice versa. These practices created a tradition inside the institution and also instilled regular audiences with new habits of perception.

The new building can be considered as a new receptacle and context for old practices of presentation that belong to the experimental tradition of the Filmmuseum-EYE. It is interesting to individuate the elements of this tradition that persisted also into the latest phase of the institution’s history. Considering film sound presentation, a persisting practice is the attention and consideration given to live performances and musical accompaniment for screenings of either early or experimental films. The practice of film sound presentation at EYE is a legacy of the former Filmmuseum, one that is still pursued and adapted to the new building. Moreover, there is a proliferation of live musical accompaniment with two fixed monthly events: a Cinema Concert every second Sunday of the month and a jazz film concert every fourth Sunday of the month. The Cinema Concerts represent an element of continuity in the tradition of film sound presentation: in contrast to the past, there is no need to use other venues because the concerts are held within the institution’s new venue. Another element of continuity is the Biennale film festival in which sound presentation plays an important role given the consistent programming of early films. For the festival as well there is no longer the need of other venues; the upcoming 2014 edition, which is named Celebrate Cinema and will become an annual event, will take place in the new building.

The presentation of film sound heritage in the new building has been described using the notion of soundscape on one hand, and the listening modes of auditory experience (source of sound, object sound, spatial sound, bodily felt sound) on the other. In this frame, I consider film sound presentation as the related cinematic soundscape shaped by different factors: the sound signal played by the playback device or produced live during the performance, the playback and amplification system through which the sound is diffused, the configuration of the space and its acoustics, and the sounds produced by the audience.

Considering the new structure from the point of view of the “hegemony of the visual,” it should be noted that there are some aspects that reinforce the idea of this hegemony: the choice of the name and the logo, which refer explicitly to the eye; the visual impact of the building design that recalls the shape of an eye, and the visual

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impact from the inside, where the big glass wall embracing the Arena offers a
panoramic, “filmic” view of the IJ and the Amsterdam Central Station. However, there
are also elements that indicate a particular attention to the sound factor, such as the
restored organ, the soundproofing system of the exhibition space, the sound showers in
the Panorama and the live performances. Above all, this active and experimental
practice of film sound presentation is a sign that the sound factor is not underestimated
or forgotten by this institution.

To conclude, the analysis of presentation practices highlighted crucial dimensions
of film sound: the dispositif, which already emerged in preservation practices, but also
some additional elements, such as the space, the institutional context, the performance
characteristics of sound in presentation. The brief analysis of the different auditory
modes that can be activated in film presentation demonstrate in fact the role of the
physical configuration of the space as well as the institutional context in which film
sound is perceived and experienced by the audience. The institutional context can be
defined as the context created by the activities and decisions of the people working in
the institution, as curators and programmers.

The institutional and experiential dimensions of film sound are overlooked by film
theories, which are usually focused only on the textual dimension, the recorded
soundtrack of the film. The consideration of these dimensions serves as a contrast to the
definition of film sound as a static and fixed text composed of music and dialogues. The
spatial, institutional, and experiential dimensions suggest describing film sound as a
dynamic event, a performance that changes according to the space and institutional
context where it is performed. In the next and final chapter, I will consider all the
elements and dimensions of preservation and presentation practices in the elaboration of
a multifaceted definition of film sound.