



**Interview with Heiner Holtappels. Netherlands Media Art Institute  
Marti Manen**

**As an institution, you take care of the production, presentation, distribution, preservation of contemporary art, and you also take care of education. In one way, we could say that you cover all the facts that traditionally define the institution.**

**But, at the same time, as you are working with video and new media, you know (as you are doing it) that it is necessary to work using different timeframes. Is it difficult to follow the aims of the classical institution while you are working with time-based formats?**

The NMAI takes care of the production, presentation, collection, distribution, preservation, education, research and development and reflection.

This are the main functions of art (same for science). Of course we can not do it all of the same scale. I understand media art or TBA as a discipline of art, like sculpture or paintings. And our activities - described as functions – do not make it more or less difficult than being an institute for photography, or paintings. Every discipline demands specific manners how to distribute, exhibit or preserve the artifacts. Form follows function, but is also always trying to escape from these boundaries.

In fact we talk about the management of products, and a good manager can run a hospital, a factory or an army. The difference is the preference for his personal mission, the rest is translation into strategy, operational targets and products and markets. (When I became director of the NMAI one of the first things I did was to write a Business plan.)

**Your video collection is excellent, and also the way how one can consult it on-line. Is an idea of democratization of the access to the information behind it? Can you see some results after facilitating the approach to the collection?**

For me a collection without access for all (XS4ALL) is not collection but preservation. But XS4ALL is the first step of the long history of democratization of society and arts, which became possible by education and mediation.

Of course we can see results: how could you have asked me about our “excellent collection” without Internet? But this is just a beginning (XS4ALL), the next step is to stream the video in his original quality (there are no copies – only originals) to the audience and to give it the visitors the chance to curate their own exhibition.

**The Artlab is another of the interesting elements of the Netherlands Media Art Institution, as it is possible to see that you understand that the place where to present art and the place where to produce art can be the same one. Is there a big gap between these two concepts or, after the computer, it is not possible to find a clear boundary?**

The advantage of bringing production and presentation together is that the curator understands more about the artwork, the intention and the demands for presentation and vice versa: the artists understands more about the conditions of presentations and context. For me the understanding of the world is based on the creation of continuity of past, present and future: (preservation/collection – collection/presentation – presentation/(re)search of the new). To pass boundaries.

**Education seems to be something very important for the Netherlands Media Art Institute. You offer different workshops and activities for different kinds of users. What is the role of the exhibition under educational terms?**

The exhibition is the moment of interpretation, of meaning and contextualization of artwork(s). A moment of sayings. Those who are familiar with the grammar and language will discuss the value of the thesis, those who understand the grammar but not all the words, will ask for a dictionary, and those who cannot read will demand a translator/ interpreter.

That structures our educational program: the insiders/specialist need seminars, conferences; the interested art-public can be reached with lectures/additional information/discussions; those without any background in contemporary arts can only be reached by teaching a new language. And we all know how long it takes to learn a new language.

**How the Net has modified the Netherlands Media Art Institute?**

The Net is the model how we have now to organize an art-institution: as network-society, as long distance communication, as sharing community, as identity building organization, as free-ware, as open-source access for all, as enrichment of diversity and mainly as preparation for all the new that has to come...