Museums for America

Sample Application MA-30-16-0187-16
Project Category: Collections Stewardship
Funding Level: $25,001-$150,000

Wexner Center for the Arts

Amount awarded by IMLS:	$150,000
Amount of cost share:	$304,026

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing narratives for FY2017 applications differ from those that guided the preparation of previous applications. Be sure to use the narrative instructions in the FY2017 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

Abstract: Wexner Center Film/Video Studio Archive

The Wexner Center Foundation of the Wexner Center for the Arts (Wex) at The Ohio State University (OSU) is requesting a two-year grant of $150,000 from IMLS's Museums for America/Collections Stewardship program to support the development of a publicly accessible digital catalogue and archive of the works created with the support of its Film/Video Studio (Studio) over the last 25-plus years. This pilot project will not only bring this archive into the 21st century, it will contribute to the field of media arts as well as to the growing field of digitization in the museum world.

A nationally noted post-production video and audio editing facility, the Studio has supported approximately 400 media artworks by 300 artists since 1990. However, this set of works has never been easily accessible or searchable in a public catalogue, remaining largely unknown and inaccessible to the public after the films' initial screenings. IMLS grant funds will support an archive project that will encompass: the creation of an open-access **online catalogue** (year 1 and ongoing) providing robust contextual information about these works; **digitization** (years 1 and 2) of all of the works in a consistent, high-quality format on a platform with the capacity to stream the films; and **preservation** (years 1 and 2).

Not only will this archive finally gather together this collection of works in one place for access by a diverse audiences, the project itself will put into place a process for building on this archive through the years—and will create a road map for other kinds of cataloguing and digitization projects at the Wex and at other museums. To achieve our goals, we are partnering and consulting with metadata and digitization specialists at OSU Libraries and in the History of Art department, as well as with colleagues across the country.

We expect the archive to be used by scholars, artists, filmmakers, museums, curators, students, collectors, dealers, fans of film and the contemporary arts, and the general public. It serves as a cross-section and rich sampling of the trends, patterns, and concerns of contemporary media artists—and by extension, contemporary life and culture—over the last two-and-a-half decades. It encompasses a wide range of genres (documentary, experimental, animation, feature-length narrative); artists (including early work by such now-award-winning filmmakers and artists as William Wegman, Christian Marclay, and Kelly Reichardt); formats (including BetaSP, VHS, DVD, and digital files); and subject matter (including race relations, politics, GLBT and AIDS activist themes, and gender identity).

We will measure the success of the project through online metrics reflecting the number of hits and length of stay on the site; geographic scope of its users; number of films viewed (or log-ins requested, as the case may be given any contractual limitations); social media activity; media coverage; scope, depth, and breadth of the catalogue; quality and number of preservation files created; and quality of the long-term environmental care of the analog tapes.

As Los Angeles-based artist William E. Jones has noted, this archive will address an "urgent need to archive works in a consistent format that makes them accessible." And OSU professor Kris Paulsen writes that the archive will "revolutionize the teaching of film to historians and artists," adding that this is an "essential archive…that must be preserved and maintained."

NARRATIVE: IMLS MUSEUMS FOR AMERICA/COLLECTIONS STEWARDSHIP

1. STATEMENT OF NEED

What we propose to do: The Wexner Center for the Arts (Wex) at The Ohio State University (OSU) is requesting a two-year grant of $150,000 from IMLS's Museums for America/Collections Stewardship program to support the development of a publicly accessible digital catalogue and archive of the works created with the support of its Film/Video Studio (Studio) over the last 25+ years. This pilot project will contribute not only to the field of media arts but to the growing field of digitization in the museum world.

A nationally noted post-production video and audio editing facility, the Studio has supported approximately 400 media artworks by 300 artists since 1990. However, these works have never been easily accessible or searchable in a public catalogue, remaining largely unknown and inaccessible to the public after their initial screenings. IMLS grant funds will support an archive that will encompass an open-access **online catalogue** providing contextual information about these works in a cohesive, data-rich site, and **digitization** and **preservation** of all the works, including long-term storage and care of the physical works in their original formats. We will partner with OSU Libraries as well as an advisory council (see pages 5–6) to achieve our goals.

The archive will be of great use and interest to scholars, artists, filmmakers, museums, curators, students, fans of film and the contemporary arts, collectors, dealers, and the general public. It serves as a cross-section and rich sampling of the trends, patterns, and concerns of contemporary media artists—and by extension, contemporary life and culture—over the last two-and-a-half decades. It encompasses a wide range of genres (documentary, experimental, animation, feature-length narrative); artists (including early work by such now-award-winning filmmakers and artists as William Wegman, Christian Marclay, and Kelly Reichardt); formats (including BetaSP, VHS, DVD, and digital files); and subject matter (including race relations, politics, GLBT and AIDS activist themes, and gender identity). Notes Evan Meaney, former Studio artist and a faculty member at the University of South Carolina, the archive will support "a meaningful commitment to transporting the important artistic works of the present into the future." And L.A.-based former Studio artist William E. Jones pointed out the "urgent need to archive works in a consistent format that makes them accessible, especially when their original formats are obsolete, or nearly so."

In addition to such Oscar winners and nominees as Laura Poitras, Todd Haynes, and Sam Green, the collection includes work in other disciplines, as befits a multidisciplinary arts center. Examples include work by 2015 National Medal of Arts recipient and visual artist Ann Hamilton; cross-disciplinary artist and Cannes winner Miranda July; MacArthur "genius" grant recipient Bill T. Jones; and Bessie Award-winning choreographer Bebe Miller.

This archive will help document and preserve works created in the Studio, a facility not only located in the heart of the Wex building but situated at the heart of the Wex's mission to serve as a laboratory for the creation of new work. It's a haven for risk-taking, offering a nurturing environment for media artists to explore new directions or try new techniques. The selection process, while rigorous, is also highly individualized. One or two filmmakers or video artists per year are selected to receive a high-profile **Artist Residency Award**, which comes with a significant honorarium and access to academic experts across the

university. Studio artist Shimon Attie called it "a one-of-a-kind resource to artists around the world." And Ken Brecher, formerly of the Sundance Film Institute (currently head of the Library Foundation of Los Angeles), noted that the Wex is "always ahead of the curve and able to attract to it the most creative and original filmmakers working today." For more information on the program, please see the **_Picture Lock book_** and the testimonials and awards in supporting doc #2.

How it will address a need: While a small percentage of the works are available, if hard to find, through various unofficial outlets on the Internet (e.g., UbuWeb), the collection as a whole—a permanent, searchable, comprehensive, high-quality, data-rich catalogue of Wex-supported media artworks—does not exist in one place nor in one format. Some of these artworks, especially those created in limited-edition series, are completely inaccessible save for a rare gallery exhibition.

Scholars, curators, artists, and more have requested access to the works over the years. Most recently, at this fall's four-day festival _Picture Lock: 25 Years of Film/Video Residencies_, patrons, scholars, and artists asked how they could access the works. Currently, they have to come here to watch the films or videos—often on outmoded formats—or to check them out of the OSU Fine Arts Library, which keeps a limited selection of VHS versions on file. In some cases, the works are available on YouTube or other services but without the assurance of top quality (and often without the artist's permission). Humanities professors at OSU, library professionals, and our own Film/Video staff now realize that a high-quality catalogue and digital archive would be widely used, accessed across the country and globe.

To our knowledge, no other video art archive of this kind exists. Following are some of the key differences between what we are creating and what already exists.

- The Studio is a living archive, rooted in a cross-disciplinary residency program at a research university, and will continue to grow as new work is created here.
- Unlike other archives that are a part of collecting institutions that focus on a particular theme or time period (such as the Pacific Film Archive at UC Berkeley Art Museum's focus on Soviet silent films and NYC's Anthology Film Archive's emphasis on the '50s, '60s, and '70s), the Studio's archive consists solely of work that has been created with the assistance of its residency program.
- Unlike the model at Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago—where educators must buy a screening license to view the work—the Studio will make work available for free.
- Finally, we will make all of our metadata and contextual information open and accessible to all.

Beneficiaries: We expect the Studio archive to be accessed and used by researchers, faculty, students, curators, museums, artists, film fans, collectors, dealers, and the general public, in addition to the Studio artists, who will benefit from raised awareness of their work and careers. In fact, some of our residency artists have asked us for help migrating their works to a digital format, pointing to a growing need for a digital archive. It will serve as an important teaching resource at both OSU and other higher-education institutions, with potential use in undergraduate courses, graduate seminars, and academic conferences. Its range of topics would be of interest to scholars and others focused on contemporary history, political science, gender studies, sociology, and other fields, in addition to film studies, art, and art history. It could be used by scholars and filmmakers to trace the creative evolution of specific filmmakers over the years. In addition, the Wex will benefit from having a robust record of what we've supported, as well as a set of preservation master files for posterity; the archive will also bring awareness to not only our Studio as a laboratory for the creation of new art, but of the center and its mission more generally (which in turn could

expand our reach to new audiences and funders). In addition, as this project is the first of its kind, we plan to share our findings and challenges with other museums considering such projects.

How it addresses our strategic plan: The archive will address several of the items in our strategic plan: to support artists and the creative process (the archive would help disseminate the work and allow other artists to study the work made here); to serve the community and the academy by offering instructional and research resources across fields (including art, art history, film studies, classics, history, and more); to foster integral relationships with multiple campus departments and institutions to make this a robust, user-friendly, easily discoverable, and widely used site; to offer this archive to the global community, thereby "feeding and leading" the culture; to support the Studio's efforts as a laboratory for creative experimentation and interdisciplinary endeavors; to remain ever porous to possibility; and, overall, by staying innovative and ahead of the curve.

How it addresses Museums for America/Collections Stewardship: This project will help us serve our many and diverse publics at the university, throughout our community, and around the world, allowing access in one place to the eclectic collection of film and video work generated here over 25 years. Currently, only a small portion of the collection is available to OSU University faculty, staff, and students as VHS tapes deposited in OSU's Fine Arts Library, and accessible for viewing only in person. This project will bring the archive into the 21st century, making those works and hundreds more available digitally for the OSU community and well beyond. Even more importantly, this project will allow new access to the archive and offer full public access to the robust catalogue featuring detailed information and related materials about the individual works in the collection.

2. IMPACT

How the results will address the need: With its substantial catalogue and digital streaming capability, this archive will bring much-needed visibility and unprecedented access to an abundant and wide-ranging collection of film and video works for generations to come. The deliverable files will be, for the first time, available in a consistent, high-quality format, with the digital files undergoing a rigorous preservation process, with back-up files in their original formats also stored for the long term. Dr. Roger Beebe, a professor in the OSU Department of Art who teaches experimental cinema, noted that "a resource that draws on the Wexner's Studio-produced works would be invaluable—a big deal." Already using Studio works in his curriculum, he looks forward to having access to an online resource in a centralized place that could be easily searched and "readily integrated" into coursework.

With this digital archive, a hypothetical scholar doing research on gender issues in the STEM fields could access the site (whether via Google, a link forwarded by a colleague, social media, or directly from our web site); search for "gender issues" or "STEM"; peruse search results; click on a particular film, such as *The Gender Chip Project* by Helen DeMichiel; read about the film's development, the director, the premiere screenings, awards, and technical information about the film; view images and perhaps a trailer; watch the film, if available—either right then on the site, or by requesting log-in credentials (depending on the artists' contracts). In a few rare cases, for a film with on-site-viewing-only access, the scholar could travel to Columbus to watch the film here, in a dedicated screening room.

Please see the support letters in supporting doc #1 for other details about how the archive will be used.

How care, condition, and management of the works will improve: In addition to preserving and documenting in a streamlined fashion the works that have been produced here in the past 25+ years, this archive project will put into place—for the first time—a protocol to continue to catalogue, preserve, and make accessible Studio works produced in the coming decades. To ensure that the Studio archive project conforms to industry standards, we have assembled an external advisory council, which includes professionals in the fields of cataloguing, digitization, and libraries to help us develop a work plan and processes (see pages 5–6). We plan to include an artist on this council, too, and hold focus groups with artists during this project to assess their thoughts on issues of copyright and open access.

The planning and completion of this project will also allow us to create a set of guidelines and best practices for the digitization of another, separate set of videos (following the grant period)—namely, videos documenting the center's lectures, visiting filmmaker visits, gallery openings and installations, performing arts, symposia, award ceremonies, youth programs, and more, including broadcast media coverage (about 1,200 tapes). The protocols set up during the Studio archive process will be invaluable in completing this complementary project, which may eventually provide additional links and content to enhance the Studio archive.

The timing for this project is ideal in terms of broader campus infrastructure build-up and changes vis-à-vis digital streaming and storage. In addition to OSU's Visual Resources Library's recent migration to the Artstor Shared Shelf platform, the OSU Libraries overall are working to improve their streaming capabilities, testing such products as Avalon Media System, a streaming service developed by Indiana University. OSU is also researching options for digital storage and content delivery. In addition, the university recently announced the hiring of its new vice provost and director of University Libraries (previously with Columbia University), who comes with vast experience in managing collections and who will eventually advise on this project as well.

Tangible products: The catalogue itself as well as the storehouse of digitized works will serve as the most tangible products of the initiative.

Sustainability: Once the archive structure is in place, we plan to continually update it as artists complete new residencies and projects. We will add new work with accompanying metadata/contextual information, in addition to updating previous entries with additional information as works are screened, distributed, reviewed, or honored. We will build it so that it can be migrated onto other platforms as technology changes, or as the library moves to different platforms; we will also continue to promote the site as a resource to ensure continual activity and usage. As we formalize our partnership with the University Libraries, we will secure their commitment to maintaining this work and continuing to make it available for research and as their cataloguing and public-interface technologies change. We will also pursue additional funding opportunities to ensure the archive's sustainability and growth.

3. PROJECT DESIGN

Specific activities include cataloguing, digitization, preservation, publicity, evaluation, and dissemination of findings. All activities will be carried out and overseen by Studio staff or other members of the Wex staff, as noted below and in the Budget Justification. To address the IMLS performance goals as stated in the Project Information Form, our goals and how we intend to measure them are as follows:

- **Performance goals and measurements:**
  - ➢ **Create access to the catalogue** encompassing all work in our archive, creating for the first time an easily discoverable and user-friendly site for scholars, curators, artists, and the general public to learn about specific filmmakers, their work, and their career trajectories, and about contemporary media art created here in the last 25+ years. We will also provide **online access to the digital artworks (films and videos) in the archive**, as openly as possible given potential contractual limitations. This goal's success will be measured by:
    - ▪ Number of visits to the catalogue site (we will also track the entry point—e.g., Google, social media, other web sites, OCLC, etc.).
    - ▪ Length of time spent on the site.
    - ▪ Geographic scope of visitors to site.
    - ▪ Partner and artists' links to the site.
    - ▪ Number of artworks available for streaming.
    - ▪ Number of films opened/viewed.
    - ▪ Number of log-ins or requests.
    - ▪ Number of requests to view on-site (as applicable).
    - ▪ Social media activity.
    - ▪ Media coverage.
    - ▪ Anecdotal feedback; we plan to consult with artists and our advisory council (see below) about what's working and what's not.
  - ➢ **Improve the management of this collection.** This goal's success will be measured by:
    - ▪ Scope, depth, and breadth of the catalogue; number of catalogue entries.
    - ▪ Quality and clarity of the process for future expansion of the catalogue.
    - ▪ Quality and clarity of the process for addition of future artworks.
    - ▪ After the grant peiod: Use of the process in eventually creating an archive of documented, substantive events at the Wex (e.g., signature/endowed lectures, performances, visiting filmmaker talks, exhibitions, panel discussions, symposia) that can be linked as appropriate to the Studio archive.
  - ➢ **Improve preservation and care of this collection of works**, measured by:
    - ▪ Number and quality/resolution of the preservation master files created.
    - ▪ Quality of long-term environmental care for the physical tapes and other formats.

Based on all of this information, we will continually assess the success of the archive—especially its discoverability and use—and make improvements where needed. To help us evaluate our efforts over time, we have assembled an **External Advisory Council**, which includes: **Sarah Falls**, Head Fine Arts Librarian at OSU, who will advise on digitization, cataloguing, and storage; **Darnelle Melvin**, Metadata Transformation Librarian for OSU, who will advise on catalogue/metadata; **Kris Paulsen**, OSU Department of the History of Art and Film Studies Program, who will advise on dissemination; **Lauren**

Sorensen, Digital Asset Manager at UCLA's Hammer Museum, who will advise on methodology, processes, and best practices; **Stephanie Bernhardt**, who curates the Visual Resources Library at OSU, and who has overseen a data migration to Shared Shelf, will advise on cataloguing and migration; and others to be added (artists, other museum curators or collections stewards). Please see attached bios and résumés for more on these council members.

- For the **cataloguing process**, we will hire a temporary, fulltime Cataloguing Specialist to create robust contextual data and metadata for the archive, overseen by Wex Studio and editorial staff and a graduate assistant. We are exploring using Artstor's Shared Shelf—a robust and customizable cataloguing utility and streaming platform into which metadata could easily crosswalk from FileMaker Pro or other sites (e.g., the Wexner Center's own site). Shared Shelf hosts not only their images for teaching and learning, but also the Ann Hamilton Archive (works created by the OSU professor and internationally noted artist). We plan to consult and cost-share with the art history department on Shared Shelf as the storage management and content delivery platform for the archive. Another benefit of Shared Shelf: OSU users (including about 64,000 students and 33,000 faculty and staff, some of whom are artists themselves) and users at other universities subscribing to Artstor will automatically have access to the works through the OSU Libraries' website. We are currently creating a database in FileMaker Pro that is compatible with the widely used PBCore and Dublin Core metadata standards for the approximately 400 existing works. The organizational structure of the database is roughly 50% finished.

  Here's how the cataloguing process will unfold:
  - ➢ Our current database uses PBCore elements with a controlled vocabulary that ensures streamlined interoperability with Shared Shelf or other platforms. (Please see supporting doc #3 for an example of a Shared Shelf template.)
  - ➢ The Cataloguing Specialist will expand that working database with fields for all 400 works that include basic information such as artist, title, year, original format, but also descriptions about the works and contextual information about the artists, as well as activities on-site at the Wex.
  - ➢ From the existing Wexner Center website, a fully designed, user-friendly portal will be developed and designed by the Wex's creative/branding team and web staff, populated with images and links, and reviewed by our editorial staff to ensure compliance with house style (Chicago).
  - ➢ A collection-level record will be created in Online Computer Library Center for scholars.

- **Digitization** will begin when the cataloguing reaches the midway point, and will encompass inspection, consultation, repair, and creation of preservation master files and deliverable files. Staffing includes the Studio editors and the Digitization Specialist, as well as the graduate assistant. Please see the **Digital Stewardship Form** for details on the process.

- See the Digital Stewardship Form as well for more information on **long-term storage**.

Timeline:

Before the grant period: Work will include updating of artists' contracts (a project that will likely continue through the grant period), finalization of the Studio's FileMaker Pro database, consultation with the advisory council, and equipment purchases, as well as the hiring of the cataloguing specialist, the digitization specialist, and the graduate assistant.

Year 1: The Cataloguing Specialist catalogues the collection (with guidance from Studio and editorial staffs, advisory council, and graduate assistant). <u>Benchmark: Finish by September 30, 2017</u>. The Digitization Specialist digitizes the collection (with guidance from Studio staff, advisory council, and GA) and creates deliverable files. DS also creates a preservation master file with additional metadata. <u>Benchmark: finish by March 2018</u>.

Year 2: Catalogue migrated to Artstor's Shared Shelf. Wex creative/branding/web/editorial staffs create public-facing entry point. Publicity/dissemination begin. Long-term storage of digital and physical artworks begins. Evaluation begins. <u>Benchmark: Catalogue accessible on wexarts.org and in Shared Shelf by Sept. 2018; publicity/dissemination follows, through the end of the grant period (and beyond)</u>.

After the grant period: Archive will continue to be updated, enhanced, publicized. Following the grant period, work on the long-term storage continues; evaluation continues.

Please see the **Schedule of Completion** in the attachments for a visual snapshot of the timeline.

Resources required: In scope and ambition, this archive is a significant undertaking that requires a sustained commitment from many parties, as well as significant external funding to realize. In addition to the full-time Studio staff, we will be engaging staff from across the center and university to assist and/or advise on various aspects the project, and will hire two temporary fulltime staffers (the Cataloguing and Digitization Specialists), as well as a graduate assistant. We will also be purchasing equipment and creating an on-site screening room in the Studio specifically for visitors who are interested in viewing a film or video in its original format—or to view a work that is otherwise unavailable online (for contractual/legal reasons). In addition to the funding from this grant, we will support this project with the Corporate Annual Fund of the Wexner Center Foundation, operating support from Greater Columbus Arts Council and Ohio Arts Council, and foundation grants that we're pursuing specifically for the archive.

Publicity, dissemination, and sharing of results: When the archive is live, we will harness all of our communications channels to maximize awareness and use, including social media, email, print pieces, personal outreach (especially to faculty), and media outreach, with updates as new material is added. We will also leverage our advisory council, artists, and network of media arts, museum, and academic partners to help disseminate information digitally and distribute such print material as a brochure about the archive.

The archive's catalogue will be accessible and discoverable in a variety of ways, among them (confirmed or potential): Google searches, and we plan to work with peers and partners in the field (e.g., Anthology Film Archives, Banff, FIFA) to help us maximize Google search results and to be part of a broader collaborative online presence**;** the Wex's website, wexarts.org (about 400,000 hits a year); Wex and Ohio State social media—a combined reach of about 1.25 million across the major feeds (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram); Artstor's Shared Shelf; Online Computer Library (OCLC)'s WorldCat**;** The OSU University Libraries' catalogue; OSU's web site**;** Visual Resources Library at OSU; artists' web sites; and a Wikipedia page about the Studio.

We also plan to share our findings and best practices—and challenges along the way—with other institutions at conferences, symposia, webcasts, and through other means (perhaps culminating in a white paper), thus contributing to the broader museum and library field.

Film/Video Studio Archive: Schedule of Completion

	Review/update contracts; complete FVSP database; consult with Advisory Council; purchase equipment; etc.	Hire Cataloguing and Digitization Specialists (CS & DS), Graduate Assistant (GA)	Catalogue the collection	Digitize the collection	Migrate to Artstor Shared Shelf; long-term storage	Create public-facing catalogue and Shared Shelf entrance on wexarts.org	Publicize and evaluate the archive (ongoing)	Maintain and update the archive
Before the Grant Period	STUDIO w/ Wex	STUDIO w/Wex						
October 2016 / *Cataloguing begins*			CS					
November			w/Studio and GA					
December								
January 2017								
February								
March								
April / *Digitization begins*				DS				
May				w/Studio				
June				and GA				
July								
August								
September / *Cataloguing ends*								
October								
November								
December								
January 2018								
February								
March / *Digitization ends*								
April					Studio	Various Wex		
May								
June								
July								
August								
September							Various Wex	
After the Grant Period								Studio

Studio = Film/Video Studio Program staff; **Wex** = Wexner Center for the Arts staff; **w/** = supported by; **CS** = Cataloguing Specialist; **DS** = Digitization Specialist