

## *A Million Pictures.*

*Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefacts in  
the Common European History of Learning*



## **Discussion Notes: Experiences with Creative Re-Use**

**Discussion held at the Research Team Assembly**

**13 January 2018, Exeter, UK**

*These discussion notes document the evaluation of experiences with the creative Re-Use projects and activities that were developed in the course of the A Million Pictures Project. We publish these here as a working paper with the idea that the insights in this discussion are useful for others.*

Notes by Sarah Dellmann, Utrecht University

Participants: Karin Bienek (illuminago), Mary Borgo (IndianaU), Richard Crangle (Lucerna CIC, MLS), Ana David Mendes (Mimo, Leira), Sarah Dellmann (UU), Ine van Dooren (SASE), Richard Feltham (MLS), Javier Frutos (USAL), Emily Hayes (Oxford Brookes), Joe Kember (UE), Anastasia Kerameos (BFI), Frank Kessler (UU), Sabine Lenk (Uantwerp), Carmen López San Segundo (USAL), Martin Rush (MLS), Daniel Pitarch (UdG), Angel Quintana (UdG), Kurt Vanhoutte (Uantwerp), Ludwig Vogl-Bienek (Uni Trier / illuminago), Nele Wynants (Uantwerp).

**Sarah Dellmann:** When writing the grant application, I first looked at the notion of “creative re-use” that was requested in the call for projects with distance and scepticism. How could we possibly include “creative re-use” in a convincing form? I did not know in the beginning how to include the cultural heritage approach in a sensible and productive way, but while writing the application, it became clearer that it actually works well. In the end, creative Re-use projects provided a useful way for re-thinking the meaning of historical objects for today’s research and artistic practice. I learned a lot from this approach as it was not part and parcel of my way of doing research so far. What are your experiences?

**Joe Kember:** A big merit of creative re-use is that we brought the lantern slides out to people and they

came up with ideas I never could come up with myself. In this sense it helped to share the passion and get new perspectives on my work and the material.

**Ine van Dooren:** Approaching the research under “creative re-use” brought to life how research can have different functions. Personally, I found it refreshing and inspiring to see academic work being so open to other forms of expression and other forms of engaging with the historical material we study. From the standpoint as an archivist, I am used to working with different user groups, but the “creative re-use” really achieved the aim to bring together different communities in this project: archivists, curators, artists, scholars, lanternists, collectors, and I think that was a strong point of this project, and an eye-opener to me: that this is possible and productive and can work.

**Richard Crangle:** From the perspective of a long standing member of the Magic Lantern Society, I found it rather normal that lantern slides inspire creative re-use: what else? But AMP really broadened up my ideas of *what* we could do with the material, and there were several cases when I said “I did not expect anything like that”.

**Joe Kember:** Indeed, one of the words that occurred most often in the feedback papers for yesterday’s show “Magic and the Muse” was “magical”.

**Karin Bienek:** Through the creative re-use projects, Ludwig and I got in contact with other artists. We worked together with Sarah Vanagt and learned a lot from her way of approaching lantern heritage. This synergy of collaborating together lead to more creative experiments and a mutual inspiration for each other’s work.

**Kurt Vanhoutte:** Something I like to stress is that “creative re-use” is an artistic form of *research*, and I wish to stress “research” here. It is more than barely “disseminating” the results of scientific work but a methodology in its own right. We should stress that, also for future projects and funding applications.

**Nele Wynants:** I am a scholar in historical performance studies and approach my work as a historian. It was an amazing experience to work together with Sarah Vanagt and other artists. It really was another perspective on the material, a different way of dealing with historical sources, that inspired new questions, also for me as a historian.

**Mary Borgo:** Creative Re-use in my work on 3D-printing and laser cutting put me to think differently of the question “how things were made”. I also agree that creative re-use changes your perspective on the materiality of the researched objects in a productive way.

**Karin Bienek:** This discussion reminds me of talk we had at the workshop about approaches of curators and archivists yesterday: we need to not simply document the object but also the magic around it. Through creative re-use we address the question how old experiences get transformed into new forms. It helps placing historical references about the experience to historical research.

**Daniel Pitarch:** Opening up the magic lantern slide collection to art students was a great way to explore the repertoire and the artistic styles of lantern slides. There is much more we could do than we have done with the slides in the AMP project. I think of students in illustration, but also about discussions in contemporary theatre and performance as the lantern is also part of these cultural domains.

**Frank Kessler:** For me, “creative re-use” projects were a form of experimental, hands-on media archaeology. We could see this in the work of students at Utrecht University and Utrecht Art School that Sarah Dellmann organised and where the students linked their experience with engaging with the historical media to their media environment today. Creative re-use could be a pedagogical strategy for teaching.

**Carmen López San Segundo:** Creative Re-use is a method that our disciplines can use to take up insights and methods from other disciplines, such as ethno-archaeology. Through creative re-use we recreated a medium experience and knowledge not just for academics but also for people outside of academia. It enabled us to share our insights and our knowledge.

**Ludwig Vogl-Bienek:** I want to take up what Kurt said: theatrical research is *scientific* research indeed, and this theatrical research is especially relevant and necessary for a research object that is as performative as the magic lantern! Creative re-use is a necessary methodology for a well-structured way of exploring media uses, its effects and meanings.

**Joe Kember:** I agree. It sounds so straight-forward, but I only understood it really when I was reading Tony Lidington’s practice-based PhD thesis where he writes that his creative practices are a form of research.

**Mary Borgo:** ... yes, indeed. And those results in turn connect to questions of how to present objects in museum environments, the design choices made, and the way that museums use objects to engage with their publics.



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It was published online on 20 March 2018.