Digital Colour Restoration of Applied Colour Silent Era Films

Dilemmas, Practice and Digital Presentation

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Does one go to the direction that respects most the history and materiality of the film or to a representation that recreates the inherent beauty of the artwork that is adapted to a newer audience?

This research explored not only the solutions for the digital colour restoration but also the digital presentation of such difficult historical films using current technologies. It investigated why, despite the wide array of solutions, film preservationists still need to settle for a compromise in terms of image quality.

Duplication, simulation, and emulation are considered to be the fundamental techniques in digital colour restoration with addition to colour analysis and matching to provide the right references of the colours endangered by aging and fading.

Without careful analysis, research and documentation, the line between colour grading for enhancement and for maintaining the look close to the original is blurred and that apart from talent and technical skills of the technician, being informed about conservation disciplines is also necessary when dealing with archival material.

An “eye for colour” is not enough.