



CALL FOR PAPERS

IDOS_Arts 2026 30 Nov-2nd December 2026

Avignon Université, France

III Global Congress on *Digital Innovation in the Visual and Performing Arts* *Illuminating the Archive, Tracing the Shadow: Performance and Digital Heritage*

The rapid development of digital technologies is profoundly transforming the ways in which cultural heritage is created, preserved, and transmitted. In the fields of the visual and performing arts, these transformations bring both new forms of visibility and new zones of obscurity. Digital tools allow unprecedented possibilities for documentation, archiving, and dissemination, while at the same time generating traces that escape traditional archival frameworks. Between light and shadow, contemporary cultural practices produce new kinds of records, data, and memories whose status remains uncertain, raising important questions for artists, scholars, archivists, and technologists alike.

This third conference continues the work initiated during the previous meetings of the IDOS_Arts network, which have brought together scholars, artists, archivists, and technologists to explore the impact of digital innovation on the visual and performing arts. The first two conferences concerning the Hyperstage Project highlighted the importance of digitisation, metadata, ontologies, and virtual reconstruction in expanding access to cultural heritage, and in developing new tools for research, preservation, and dissemination. They demonstrated how digital platforms, databases, and immersive environments can illuminate artistic practices that were once difficult to document or analyse, opening new perspectives across disciplines.

Building on these foundations, the present conference proposes to extend the discussion by considering not only what digital technologies bring into the light, but also what remains in the shadows. As our methods of recording, modelling, and visualising cultural heritage become more sophisticated, they also generate new forms of data, new layers of documentation, and new kinds of traces that do not always fit within established archival frameworks. By placing this third edition under the theme of light and shadow, we aim to continue the dialogue opened in previous conferences while inviting participants to reflect on the limits, the blind spots, and the unexpected by-products of digital approaches to the arts.

In this context, “light” can firstly be understood as the domain of the official archive: the materials that are selected, stabilised, and made visible through institutional processes of preservation. “Shadow,” by contrast, refers to the unstable, residual, and often unintended traces produced alongside artistic creation. In digital environments in particular, performances generate layers of data, recordings, and interactions that exist beyond the boundaries of the authorised archive, forming what might be described as a “digital shadow archive” of contemporary cultural practice.

In this perspective, the theme of light may also be taken quite literally. Digital technologies now allow us to illuminate what once remained stubbornly in the dark: lost environments, vanished stage settings, dispersed decorative programmes, and fragile works of art that can no longer be experienced under their original conditions. Through virtual and extended reality, 3D modelling, photogrammetry, and advanced rendering, it becomes possible to shed light on the material and visual qualities of objects, to observe how they react to changing lighting conditions, and to reconstruct the spaces in which they once existed. Such projects do not simply preserve cultural heritage; they bring it out of obscurity, allowing us to see familiar works from new angles. Yet, every act of illumination produces its own shadows, raising questions about what is revealed, what remains hidden, and what is inevitably

reinterpreted when the past is reconstructed through digital means.

Within this framework, we propose the notion of the “digital shadow archive”, a term intended less as a fixed category than as a way of bringing into view what remains partially hidden in contemporary archival practices. The expression may be understood in at least three complementary senses. First, in line with Alan Sekula’s conceptualisation (1986), the shadow archive designates what lies outside official collections: the informal, the residual, the marginal, and at times the commercial, the materials that circulate beyond institutional repositories, yet often prove essential for understanding artistic processes, creative communities, and cultural memory.¹ Second, the shadow archive can be taken in a more metaphorical sense. After several years of work devoted to the definition of ontologies, the digitisation of theatre archives, and the construction of increasingly precise databases and thematic platforms, one may ask what remains in the shadows of these systems. Which data escape classification? Which contents resist indexing? And what new forms of distant or close reading might be required to engage with materials that remain partially hidden behind ever more detailed inventories? Finally, the notion may also refer to the new kinds of traces produced by digital and computational performance itself. Immersive and networked works generate prompts, logs, algorithmic outputs, spatial recordings, and user interactions that do not belong to the performance in any traditional sense, yet persist as a dispersed and often unintended archive of the event. These shadow traces raise new questions for the preservation of contemporary performance, extending current research on digital heritage toward forms of artistic practice that exist simultaneously on stage, in code, and in data.

The opposition between light and shadow echoes a familiar tension in performance and archival studies. As Diana Taylor reminds us, not everything that matters enters the archive, and Rebecca Schneider and Matthew Reason have shown how live performance leaves remains that cannot be fully stabilised in documents. More recent work in digital performance and media theory (Dixon; Bay-Cheng; Giannachi), alongside ambitious digital humanities research projects currently underway such as Clarisse Bardiot’s *From Stage to Data* (STAGE), signals how new technologies may cast fresh light on theatrical history through databases, ontologies, and virtual reconstructions. Yet, every attempt to illuminate the past also produces new shadows: materials that escape classification, data that linger outside official repositories, and digital traces that accompany performance without ever quite becoming the performance itself.

This conference proposes to explore this shifting territory between light and shadow, inviting contributions that examine how contemporary artistic practices, archival methods, and digital technologies redefine what can be preserved, what remains hidden, and what new forms of archive are emerging in the age of computational culture.

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¹By “commercial,” we refer to materials produced and circulated within market-driven contexts, often governed by proprietary platforms and economic imperatives, rather than archival concerns.

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Key questions:

How do digital technologies transform the ways in which performance and cultural heritage are documented, preserved, and transmitted?

How can we conceptualise the interplay of light and shadow in performance archives: the materials that are rendered visible, and those that persist as partial, obscured, or residual traces?

What new forms of archival material emerge from digitally mediated artistic practices, particularly in immersive, networked, or AI-assisted environments?

How can we conceptualise the digital shadow archive: the dispersed traces, data outputs, and residual artefacts generated by computational performance systems?

In what ways do shadow archives challenge the authority of official or institutional archives, particularly in relation to marginalised voices and alternative historical narratives?

How do artists working in documentary or verbatim theatre mobilise informal or personal archives (interviews, recordings, testimonies) as forms of shadow archival practice?

What political, ethical, and historiographical questions arise when shadow archives become sources

for artistic creation or scholarly research?

How might cultural institutions, researchers, and artists engage with shadow archives while preserving their critical and counter-hegemonic potential?

These questions are intended as starting points rather than a definitive framework, and contributions are welcome that address other aspects of performing arts archives in relation to cultural heritage, performance, and information technologies.

This III Congress is organised by **Idos_Arts** in collaboration with **Avignon Université (Institut Culture, Patrimoine et Sociétés Numériques, the Agorantic Research Federation, and the ICTT Research Team)**, reflecting a shared commitment to exploring the integration of digital technologies in the arts. Keynote speakers will include prominent figures from the visual and performing arts, as well as information technology, whose contributions will illuminate emerging questions surrounding digital (shadow) cultural heritage.

Organization : Cyrielle Garson, Paola Ranzini, Charly André-Guibaud, Valentina Citterio

Steering Committee:

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Esther Merino Peral, Art History, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Paola Ranzini, Aesthetic issues, Theatre theory and practice, - IUF, Paris and Avignon Université

Date and Venue

30 Nov-2nd December 2026, Avignon Université/Villa Créative

The congress will feature a series of lectures and panel discussions across various sessions. We expect to publish the proceedings with a renowned scientific publisher and provide opportunities for demonstrations and product showcases.

Proposed Topics

Planned sessions may address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Digital shadow archives and alternative archival practices
- Enhanced metadata and semantic relationships in digital archives
- Linked Open Data applications in the arts and cultural heritage
- User interface design and user experience in digital cultural platforms
- Virtual reality and immersive environments for visual and performing arts
- Artificial intelligence and new approaches to digital archiving in the arts
- Copyright, intellectual property rights, and the re-use of digital cultural materials
- Cyber humanities and the security of digital cultural heritage
- The impact of digital visual and performing arts on pedagogy and education
- User engagement in digital cultural platforms, including services for specific audiences and studies of user behaviour

Primary Objectives of the Event

The congress aims to:

- Explore emerging technological developments and their impact on the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of cultural heritage in the visual and performing arts
- Foster critical discussion around new concepts such as digital and shadow archives within the context of digital cultural heritage
- Introduce participants to recent technological advances shaping research, artistic practice, and archival methodologies
- Encourage participation from new content providers, researchers, artists, and cultural institutions working with digital heritage
- Promote networking, interdisciplinary dialogue, and collaborative initiatives within the digital cultural heritage community.

The conference will be conducted in **French** and in **English**.

Coffee breaks and lunch will be provided. No registration fees will be requested. The conference will also cover two nights in a nearby hotel for selected participants.

Submission Guidelines and Timeline

Proposals should include a title, an abstract of 300-500 words, and a short biographical note (approximately 100 words). Abstracts should clearly outline the proposed paper and its relevance to the themes of the congress.

Timeline

- 10 June 2026 - Deadline for submission of abstracts
- 30 June 2026 - Notification of acceptance or rejection

Further information regarding the conference programme and practical arrangements will be communicated to accepted participants in due course.

Contacts

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