Technological Revolutions and Art History
Thursday, January 14, 2021
The Frick Art Reference Library and The Museum of Modern Art

Keynote by Alonzo C. Addison
Digitizing a Disappearing World: Crowds, Clouds and Culture

As we approach the 50th anniversary of the landmark World Heritage treaty, threats to culture seem sadly more present than ever. From aging artifacts to the perils of pollution, from conflicts to climate, and even the new burdens brought on by COVID, our past is disappearing.

In the race to preserve and protect our shared heritage for future generations, digitization is now a necessity. But what are we encoding, and how can we ensure that these new digital records outlive the artifacts they are designed to preserve? After all, the pyramids have survived for thousands of years, yet even digital files from a decade ago are often a challenge to read. Digitally recording the past is fraught with challenges, from rights and ownership, to complex issues of access, and perils of digital obsolescence. What should we digitize, by what means, for whom, in what medium, and from which stage in an artifact's often changing history? Despite the challenges, there is hope, with the growing digital "crowds" and "clouds" offering new possibilities to help document and save our past.

An international leader in the application of digital technology in the service of society, for more than a decade **Alonzo C. Addison** served as Special Advisor for World Heritage at UNESCO, and later Director for External Relations and Information, creating one of the first online repositories in the UN. The founding Director of UC Berkeley's first Visualization Center, he led field conservation and documentation projects at heritage sites from Cambodia to Myanmar, Peru to Egypt, and Belize to Bhutan. The former Vice President of 3D terrestrial laser scanning pioneer Cyra Technologies (now Leica Geo), he has served on numerous heritage technology initiatives, including as Co-Chair of the Digital Heritage Congresses and President of the Int'l Virtual Systems and Multimedia Society among others. The author/editor of numerous publications, his book *Disappearing World* (2007) has been translated into nine languages. He is a frequent speaker on culture and technology.

Bringing Scientific Imaging to a Broad Base of Cultural Communities

This short talk will share our experiences working with local and indigenous communities enabling them to adopt photography-based imaging including 3D and Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI). Central to this work is the creation of data that can be reused for scientific purposes by others, both now and in the future. We will present our "Digital Lab Notebook," which records the process of scientific imaging.

In 2002, **Carla Schroer** and **Mark Mudge** co-founded the nonprofit corporation Cultural Heritage Imaging (CHI). CHI develops and implements imaging technologies for cultural, historic and artistic heritage and scientific research, and helps people around the world to adopt these technologies. For additional information, visit: CulturalHeritageImaging.org

Developments in Online 3D Visualization

During the last ten years or so, the ability to publish interactive 3D experiences online has become simpler and more widespread. As this ability has been discovered by artists, commercial companies, and cultural organizations alike, new use cases for online 3D are being tested, developed, and deployed. This presentation will highlight some existing examples of the benefits of combining 3D with the power of the internet and look to possibilities for the future of the medium.

In his role as Cultural Heritage Lead, **Thomas Flynn** supports cultural organizations and projects of all sizes in developing and delivering 3D digitization display and outreach programs. Thomas is also the co-chair of the IIIF 3D Community Group. For more information about this work or to contact Thomas, please visit: http://sketchfab.com/museums

Access for whom, access to what? African Cultures in the Corporate Digital Enclave

In a context of widely unequal digital access worldwide, many tech corporations have invested in a range of projects to increase connectivity. In this talk, I focus on one of the most prominent of these initiatives across the African continent: Facebook's Free Basics. By exploring its expansion, its impact on local media production, and its reception by local communities, I offer a critical examination of these types of initiatives and their relevance to cultural heritage. Following the lead of other scholars and activists opposing "digital colonialism," I relocate this phenomenon within a broader history of inequalities pervading global knowledge production in fields as diverse as art history and computer science.

Toussaint Nothias is the associate director of research at the Digital Civil Society Lab and a social science research scholar at the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society. He is a communication scholar whose research explores digital technologies, journalism, culture, and civil society across different African contexts. His work has notably been published in the *Journal of Communication; Media, Culture, and Society; Visual Communication;* and *African Journalism Studies*, and he is the recipient of 2018 Stuart Hall Award from the IAMCR.