

Ever seen the inside of a film can? Ever seen the inside of a film vault?

From Monday June 3rd to Friday June 7th we will have a major Nitrate Control action going on in our bunker in Heemskerk. Who wants to help us out and learn a few things about film archiving?

EYE needs 40 volunteers (8 per day on 5 days)!

Call for volunteers for the "Heemskerk Nitrate Control 2013"

EYE is the proud keeper of one of the world's finest collection of nitrate films, among which we count the originals of the Desmet Collection, registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Nitrate film was the material of choice for the first 55 years of cinema's history, but has been discontinued around 1950 because of its flammability.

We have more than 40 000 reels kept in 3 different vaults in the dunes of Noord-Holland. One of our vaults in Heemskerk is situated in the middle of a forest. The area is a Nature resort, which calls for a few special rules. The owner of the grounds requests that we open all the cans containing nitrate films once every two years. Since the vault contains about 12 000 cans of nitrate, this calls for a special project.

In the week of Monday June 3rd to Friday June 7th, we will work at the vault with a team of 14 people per day. 4 of them will be specialists of nitrate films and vault management, the other 8 will be volunteers with no special knowledge required, but with dedication and enthusiasm. These volunteers will retrieve the cans from the shelves in piles of three, bring them to a control table and open them. They will look for eventual signs of material decay (instructions will be available). If any signs are noted, the cans will be inspected by the specialists. Once eventual problems have been registered, the volunteers will return the cans to the shelves.

Nitrate film tends to decompose over time, and produces a dust which reacts with the metal of the cans. The volunteers will be equipped with lab coats, gloves and dusts masks for protection. Please note that research has shown that the gasses produced by decomposing nitrate, while emitting a strong smell, contain harmful particles only in very low concentrations. These particles would come above the permitted daily values only if you would stay with your nose directly over extremely decomposed material for a long time, which no-one will be allowed to do! The vaults are cool (around 10°C) for better conservation conditions. A fireman will be present at all times to keep us safe.

The work will require climbing up and down a small ladder to reach the upper shelves and bending down to reach the lower shelves, the ability to carry from 3 to 15 kilos, and good legs to walk back and forth from the shelves to the control tables. This work is not suitable for pregnant ladies (sorry!).

The conditions at the vault are rather "rustic". We will have tables and chairs, a chemical toilet and some bottles of mineral water for drinking, but there is no public transport, telephone, coffee machine or bakery in the near surroundings. We will organize a bike rental from the Castricum train station (5km) but if someone has a car and is willing to transport other people it will be appreciated. Transport costs will be refunded by EYE.

If you are an employee of EYE, please check with your coordinator for permission to participate. External people are very welcome to join. You can join for one or several days, but not part-time.

Please announce your availability to Catherine Cormon, Coordinator Behoud&Beheer catherinecormon@eyefilm.nl before Thursday 23rd of May. If you have any more questions, please call 020 58 91 495 from Tuesday to Thursday 11:00 to 17:00

- Dates: Monday June 3rd to Friday June 7th
- Complete days only, one or several
- Place: Heemskerk, vault in the forest in the dunes
- Requirements:
 - o ability to cycle 2x 5km or usage of other means of transport
 - o ability to climb up and down a short ladder
 - o ability to carry from 3 to 15 kilos
 - o ability to carry weights over short distances (max 15 meters) during a whole work day (with breaks)
 - o ability to work in a cool environment (around 10°C)
 - o ability to work in a systematic and precise way.

