



ARCHIVING VFX

a research project to
preserve evidence of film
digital VFX production

Evanthia Samaras

PhD Candidate

University of Technology, Sydney



UTS

@CyberKittyFace

FILM: *BLACK PANTHER* (2018) | STUDIO: MARVEL STUDIOS, WALT DISNEY PICTURES | VFX: LUMA PICTURES | IMAGE SOURCE: www.artofvfx.com/

NTTW3 LIGHTNING TALK | 25 OCTOBER 2018

AGENDA

ABOUT FILM VFX

Brief introduction to film VFX and the current state of archiving in the industry.

ABOUT MY RESEARCH

Introduction to UTS ALA and outline of research thesis, aims, objectives and approach.

Q&A

Question time.

NTTW3 LIGHTNING TALK

EVANTHIA SAMARAS | 25 OCTOBER 2018

PART 1

FILM VISUAL EFFECTS

NTTW3 LIGHTNING TALK

EVANTHIA SAMARAS | 25 OCTOBER 2018



FILM: *THE AVENGERS* (2012) | STUDIO: MARVEL STUDIOS, WALT DISNEY PICTURES | VFX: ILM | IMAGE SOURCE: <http://cinefex.com/blog/greenscreen/>

ABOUT THE VFX INDUSTRY

Visual effects (VFX) are one of the many creative toolsets available to filmmakers to visually represent concepts, themes, environments, characters and performances to audiences via the big (or small) screen.

VFX work spans from pre to post production. It includes such tasks as pre-visualisation, tracking, modelling, rigging, texturing and surfacing, lighting, matte painting, effects and digital compositing [1].

The industry is made up of over 500 companies situated all over the world. VFX companies bid on film VFX work to work on “shots” in film projects. Much of the industry relies on work from Hollywood film studio projects.

[1] Jean Chung, H. 2011, 'Global visual effects pipelines: an interview with Hannes Ricklefs', *Media Fields Journal*, no. 2, pp. 1–9.



FILM: *GRAVITY* (2013) | STUDIO: WARNER BROS. | VFX: FRAMESTORE | IMAGE SOURCE: <https://brightside.me/>

VFX ARCHIVING CURRENT STATE

VFX practitioners presently view archiving as a process of back up and ongoing maintenance; as opposed to a series of managed activities designed to facilitate the long-term digital preservation of their records.

Film studios, the content “owners” of many VFX records, do not stipulate consistent requirements for VFX records delivery and archiving.

As a result:

- there are no established archival and preservation practices within the VFX industry
- the records are currently at high risk of becoming unmanageable and lost over time.

CHALLENGE #1 Complex

VFX records are diverse in size and format and are created and stored in vast volumes on varied mediums

CHALLENGE #2 Multiple agents

VFX records are manifested and controlled by multiple creators and owners situated in varied global locations.

CHALLENGE #3 Obsolescence

VFX records are destined for obsolescence. They are produced within evolving production pipeline environments using tools, software and hardware that constantly change from project to project.



CASE STUDY

FILM: *FINDING NEMO* (2003) | STUDIO: PIXAR ANIMATION STUDIOS, WALT DISNEY PICTURES | IMAGE SOURCE: <https://www.wallpaperup.com/>

NTTW3 LIGHTNING TALK | 25 OCTOBER 2018 | EVANTHIA SAMARAS

PART 2

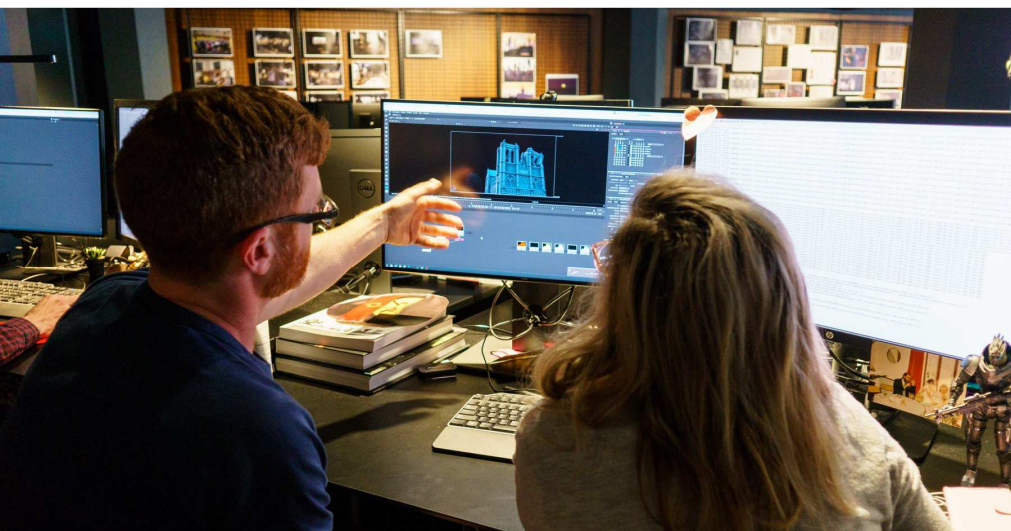
DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT

NTTW3 LIGHTNING TALK

EVANTHIA SAMARAS | 25 OCTOBER 2018



FILM: *DEADPOOL* (2016) | STUDIO: MARVEL STUDIOS, 20TH CENTURY FOX | VFX: DIGITAL DOMAIN | IMAGE
SOURCE: <http://www.artofvfx.com/deadpool-alex-wang-vfx-supervisor-digital-domain/>



UTS ALA

UTS Animal Logic Academy (ALA) is a professionally equipped studio providing experiential learning in animation and visualisation, located at the University of Technology Sydney.

It was established to respond directly to the challenges of the VFX, animation and visualisation industries.

UTS ALA works very closely with the VFX industry to provide up-to-date knowledge and skills to the academy's cohort.

Currently I am one of three PhD Candidates at the Academy.

RESEARCH THESIS

The ongoing digital preservation of significant records (including computer generated imagery) produced by the film VFX industry requires the application of archival methods—appraisal and selection, preservation, arrangement and description.

RESEARCH AIMS

01

Improve records management
and archiving practice within
the VFX industry

02

Ensure that significant VFX
records are digitally preserved
over time as culturally rich film
VFX archival collections.

FILMS & IMAGE SOURCES: *THE AVENGERS* (2012), <https://www.premiumbeat.com/> | *HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON 2* (2014), <https://www.iamag.co/> | *THE LEGO MOVIE* (2014), <https://www.premiumbeat.com/> | *THOR: RAGNAROK* (2017), <http://www.artofvfx.com/> | FILE # 82230551, <https://stock.adobe.com/>

NTTW 3 LIGHTNING TALK | 25 OCTOBER 2018 | EVANTHIA SAMARAS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

01

Identify records that have historical and/or cultural value and which warrant ongoing retention and preservation as archives.

02

Determine which archival and metadata standards and models could be applied (or created) to arrange and describe archived VFX industry records.

03

Co-develop an industry resource that outlines archival concepts and recommended approaches to support archiving practice in the film VFX industry.

WHY ARCHIVE VFX RECORDS?



Ensures first-hand evidence about the *how, why* and *who* of various film projects is preserved and accessible over time.



Provides valuable knowledge to support current and future VFX productions and process.



Offers historical and cultural insights into general filmmaking, visual storytelling, technical production and digital design practices.

PART 3

Q&A

NTTW3 LIGHTNING TALK

EVANTHIA SAMARAS | 25 OCTOBER 2018



FILM: *ALICE IN WONDERLAND* (2010) | STUDIO: WALT DISNEY PICTURES | VFX: SONY PICTURES IMAGEWORKS
IMAGE SOURCE: <https://brightside.me/>



THANK YOU

CONTACT

Email: Evanthia.Samaras@student.uts.edu.au

Twitter: [@CyberKittyFace](https://twitter.com/CyberKittyFace)

More on UTS ALA: <https://animallogicacademy.uts.edu.au/>

FILM: *LIFE OF PI* (2012) | STUDIO: FOX 2000 PICTURES | VFX: RHYTHM & HUES | IMAGE SOURCE:
<https://fxrant.blogspot.com>

NTTW3 LIGHTNING TALK | 25 OCTOBER 2018 | EVANTHIA SAMARAS