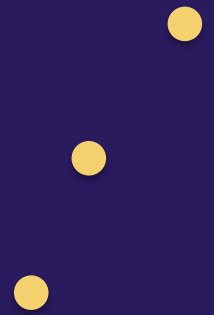


CHAPTER 12

Cultural Digitization

Digitizing Art · Music · Theater · Institutions

Felix Mayer – Marco Heiner · 2026



Overview

What we will cover in this chapter

01 Introduction

What is Cultural Digitization?

02 Projects

Digitization of art institutions · Digital Art · Digitization of music & theater productions

2.1 Digitization of Art institutions

2.2 Digital Art

5 Perspectives & NFTs

2.3 Digitization of music and theater productions

03 Federal Cultural Foundation

Funding structure & programs

04 Digital Culture / Kultur Digital program

The three-part funding program

Introduction: Cultural Digitization

Chapter 12: What is Cultural Digitization?

- ▶ **Broad definition**

Digitization of culture across all areas: music, theater, visual arts, and cultural institutions.

- ▶ **Three main project areas**

Digitization of art institutions · Digitized artworks · Digitization of music & theater.

- ▶ **Ongoing & expanding**

A large number of projects are currently underway, with new ones added daily.

- ▶ **Key institutions covered**

Museums, theaters, cultural foundations — all transforming through digital tools.

Projects of cultural Digitization

Overview

► The following selected projects illustrate how cultural digitization is applied in practice and demonstrate how technology enhances accessibility, preservation and audience engagement.

1

Digitization of art institutions

- Transformation of museums through digital and interactive technologies
- New ways to engage and involve audiences

2

Digital Art

- Creation and distribution of art in digital formats
- Emergence of new forms like NFTs and digital ownership

3

Digitization of music & theatre productions

- Expansion of performing arts into digital spaces
- Development of new formats beyond the traditional stage

Area 1: Digitization of art institutions

Key Idea

Transformation of museums into **interactive, digital** and **collaborative spaces**

▶ **Project Example: “Museum as a Co-Laboratory”**

Development of digital applications and interactive formats (e.g. serious games, installations)

Co-creation through workshops and collaboration between experts and participants

▶ **Technologies Used:**

Augmented Reality (AR), Mixed Reality, LiDAR scanning & photogrammetry

Goal

Long-term integration of digital solutions into exhibitions

Making museums more engaging, participatory, and future-oriented

Area 2: Digital Art

5 Perspectives:

- ▶ 1. Historical Perspective

Explores the history of computers and machines in the service of art

- ▶ 2. Art Genre

Found across visual arts, performing arts, literature, and music

- ▶ 3. Computer Science

Spans digitization, digital humanities, and data archiving

- ▶ 4. Video Games

Entire digital worlds — e.g. Ghost of Tsushima (Game Developer Choice Award, visual design)

- ▶ 5. Computer as a Tool

The machine as an adequate, contemporary means of making art

- ▶ **Notable observation**

Digital art still receives surprisingly little visibility in museums & archives

Area 2: Digital Art - NFTs

NFT Art – Non Fungible Tokens

- ▶ **What is an NFT?**
A non-fungible token — a purely digital, unique asset that exists only in the digital universe.
- ▶ **What can be an NFT?**
Works of art, articles, music, memes, tweets — any digital file.
- ▶ **The boom**
NFT art took off around April/May 2021; by end of 2021 the market exceeded \$40 billion.
- ▶ **Ownership & copyright**
NFTs are "mined" on a blockchain, enabling true digital ownership for the first time.
- ▶ **Revenue for artists**
Royalty fees of 8–10% on resales; fast, direct income without printing or customer feedback cycles.
- ▶ **Risk**
NFT value is tied to cryptocurrencies (Ethereum) — a declining crypto market reduces NFT value.



Example: „Bored Ape Yacht Club“ NFT from 2021

The 5 Most Expensive NFTs



Everyday: The First 5,000 Days

Beeple — 5,000 daily digital works compiled. Sold March 2021.

\$69.3M



CryptoPunk #7523

Pixelated character wearing a surgical mask — pandemic era icon.

\$11.75M



CryptoPunk #3100

Owner hopes to resell for \$91M — potentially the most expensive NFT ever.

\$7.67M



Crossroad

10-second video with political commentary on the 2020 US election.

\$6.66M



First Tweet Ever

Jack Dorsey's first tweet: "just setting up my twttr". Proceeds to East Africa.

\$2.9M

Area 3: Digitization of music and theater productions

- ▶ **Conference: Theater and the Internet**

Since 2013, annual conference exploring digitalization's impact on theater. Topics include Fake & Fiction, Digital Extremism, and community formation.

- ▶ **Pandemic as catalyst**

COVID-19 forced theaters to explore digital formats — streaming, Zoom workshops, online calendars.

- ▶ **Burgtheater (Austria) response**

Created 'MyHomelsMyBurgtheater': ensemble members filmed personal readings → 50,000 Facebook viewers.

- ▶ **Wiener Stimmung series**

22 prize-winning commissions: 10-minute monologues filmed via video conference with minimal crew.

- ▶ **#vorstellungsänderung (Twitter)**

Hashtag inviting users to narrate imaginary performances. Reached trending status in Germany & Austria — 3,000 tweets.

- ▶ **Key question raised:**

"Is the idea that theater takes place in separate rooms already passé?"

Federal Cultural Foundation

Funding Structures for Digital Culture

- ▶ Mission

Supports innovative programs & projects in an international context across all cultural genres.

- ▶ Budget & reach

Annual budget of €35 million — supported ~4,000 projects since 2002

3 Areas:

- ▶ 1. General Project Funding

Up to €10M per project; open twice a year for applications by cultural workers. Covers mainly international & innovative projects in music, art, theater, etc. (e.g. DOMiDLabs, Kultur Digital)

- ▶ 2. Program Funding

Priority-driven: Focus on Climate, Digitalization, Structural Change, Diversity. Includes Kultur Digital (next Chapter)

- ▶ 3. Cultural Lighthouses

*Multi-year fundings for leading institutions & renowned festivals: documenta Kassel, Donaueschinger Musiktage, Berlin Theatertreffen, World Cinema Fund
→ Provides multi year planning security*

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Cultural digitization spans institutions, artworks, and live performances.
- ✓ Technologies like AR, LiDAR, and blockchain are reshaping how culture is created and experienced.
- ✓ NFTs represent a paradigm shift in digital art ownership, with a \$40B+ market by end of 2021.
- ✓ The pandemic accelerated theater's digital transformation — proving that art can thrive beyond physical spaces.
- ✓ The Federal Cultural Foundation provides €35M/year to support these innovations sustainably.

Digital Culture

Current Situation and problem:

- ▶ *Only a small number of cultural institutions have actually developed digital concepts*
- ▶ The main reason for this situation is a lack of specialist know-how in within these institutions



Solution: **Digital Culture funding program**

Digital Culture

What is digital culture?

Overview:

- ▶ *Digital Culture is a funding program*
- ▶ It supports cultural institutions in shaping digital opportunities and challenges
- ▶ The program mainly focuses on projects that are still in an early stage

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNECnd2s-Lk&t=11s>

Digital Culture

The Structure

The Digital Culture program follows three key principles:

Open Access

Open Source

Open Content

The program consists of **three components**:

- ▶ **The Digital fund**
- ▶ **The Cultural Hackathon „Coding da Vinci“**
- ▶ **The Academy for Theatre and Digitality**

The 1st component: Digital Fund

The Digital Fund:

- ▶ *Association of cultural institutions*
- ▶ Aimed to institutions that already have some experience in digital behavior

The total budget available for the Digital Fund is about 15.8 million Euros

Main Goals

- ▶ Further development of their transformation process
- ▶ Strengthen their profile

The 1st component: Digital Fund

Digital Fund projects:

- ▶ *Each cultural project is carried out by a partnership of **two cultural institutions and one digital partner***

Funded projects typically focus on:

- ▶ digital curation
- ▶ digital artistic production
- ▶ digital communication and mediation

Institutions get supportet mainly through:

- Digital Labs, colloquia, training courses, international excursions

The 2nd component: Coding da Vinci Hackathon

Main Goal: To motivate institutions to prepare cultural data for the public

Coding da Vinci:

- ▶ Supports digital transformation
 - ▶ Creates opportunities for the online community
 - ▶ Engages with culture
- ▶ In addition, there are available scholarships to support the participants

Interesting fact:

The Hackathon is a joint project of several organizations:

- ▶ the German Digital Library,
- ▶ the Research and Competence Center for Digitalization,
- ▶ The Open Knowledge Foundation Germany
- ▶ and Wikimedia Germany

The 3rd component: The Academy of Theatre and Digitality

Overview:

Academy of Theatre and Digitality:

- ▶ Duration of five months
- ▶ Takes place at the theatre in Dortmund
- ▶ 54 artist scholarships were awarded
- ▶ Total budget of around 18 million euros

The goal:

To combine artistic creativity with digital technologies

The 3rd component: The Academy of Theatre and Digitality

2 Examples for the theatre and digitality program:

The House – Reinventing the Real

UnBoxing Stages – Digital Practice in Theatre

Summary

We talked about...

- ✓ The different types and projects of Digital Art
- ✓ NFT, Music and theatre production
- ✓ Cultural Foundations
- ✓ Digital Culture (Digital Fund, Cultural Hackathon „Coding da Vinci“, Academy for theatre and Digitality)



New opportunities through the combination of technology and culture

"Digitization is no longer the future, but already the present."

Summary

We talked about...

- ✓ The different types and projects of Digital Art
- ✓ NFT, Music and theatre production
- ✓ Cultural Foundations
- ✓ Digital Culture (Digital Fund, Cultural Hackathon „Coding da Vinci“, Academy for theatre and Digitality)

"Digitization is no longer the future, but already the present."