

A DIY Approach: Creating Access to Home Movie Excerpts
Documenting the Art & Life of Kent Bellows

by

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I was hesitant to reenter the United States educational system since graduating from undergrad in fall of 2007. Now that I have, my time spent at NYU has served as a lesson and a reminder to be a little more kind to myself and to value my abilities.

“I THINK IN PICTURES. Words are like a second language to me. I translate both spoken and written words into full-color movies, complete with sound, which run like a VCR tape in my head.”

Temple Grandin, *Thinking in Pictures My Life with Autism*, 1995, 2006

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This project is dedicated to Kent, Vern, and the rest of my family.

We need an instrument
 We need an instrument
 To take a measurement
 To find out if loss could weigh

We need to know value
 We need to place value
 In case it all comes true
 Could it be loss could weigh?

Excerpted lyrics from *Instrument* by Fugazi, 1993

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COVID-19 Statement & Research Adjustments

As I write this, the Covid-19 pandemic is still underway with no end in sight. When I began my studies at NYU in the fall of 2019, I had no idea that by March of 2020 I would be learning from a laptop to complete the remainder of my Master of Arts degree. Nobody could have known that. Due to the lack of hands-on training and in-person physical inspection, some of the information in this document is incomplete or partially completed to the best of my knowledge and abilities.

I was lucky to visit Omaha, Nebraska in December of 2019 to set up a transfer station so that my father, Jim Griess, could begin to process and create digital files of our family's VHS and MiniDV tapes. Without this initial step, much of this project would not have been possible. To gather information and sources on my uncle, Kent Bellows, I received cell phone pictures and email scans of print materials from my parents that referenced him. Six months into the pandemic, I purchased an external hard drive to mail to Omaha so that a copy of the digital files could be stored and shipped back to me. I have had phone calls with my mother, Robin Griess, to verify facts about her brother. We have had email check-ins, and I have created video tutorials for Jim Griess to understand how to transcode video files.

All of this is to say that this time has been fruitful despite these challenges. I am very fortunate that I can continue to contribute to the archiving and preservation field under the current circumstances. This project has been a source of mental and physical stress and, at the same time, has provided moments of joy and respite from a world filled with immeasurable amounts of sacrifice, grief, and loss. There is hope, but not without first understanding and actively participating in the demands for a kinder, equitable, and just society. Until we can be with each other again in person to hug, laugh, and cry together.

Introduction

Since the 1940s, my family members have been creating and preserving moving images that document their everyday lives in the Midwestern state of Nebraska. The Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies span over seven decades (1940-2013) with audiovisual materials recorded on four source formats (8mm, Super 8, VHS, MiniDV). Over the years, these materials have been cared for and preserved through a collective family effort with a DIY (do it yourself) community attitude. The family did what worked for them within their means and with the best of their abilities while being open to teaching themselves and supporting each other. Thanks to the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann family members' early efforts, audiovisual materials have been stored, maintained, described, and transferred (while making sure to keep the original formats).

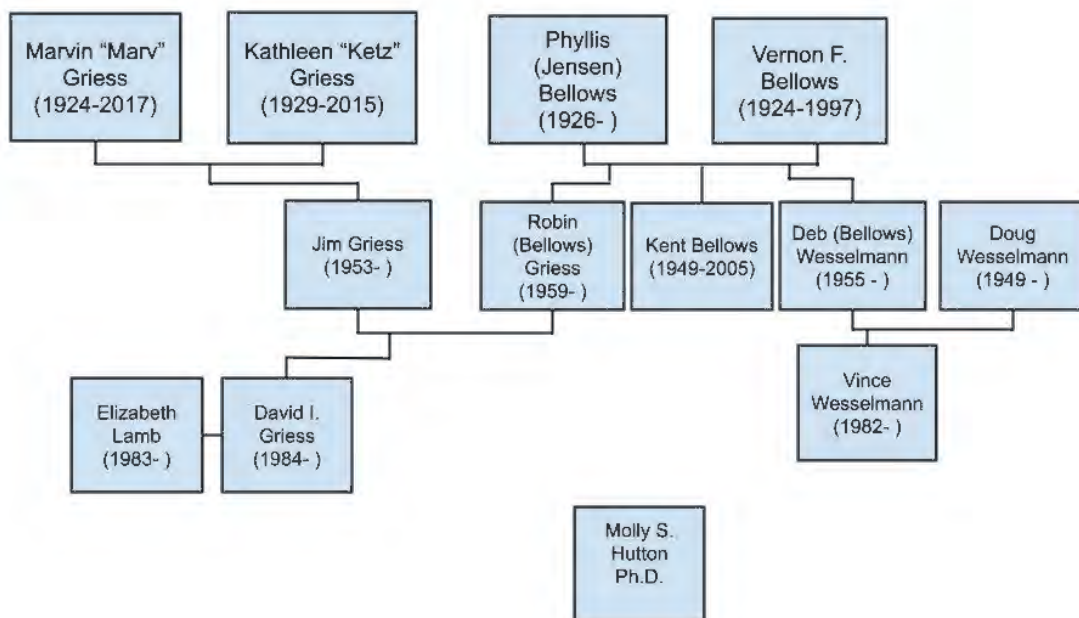


Figure 1. Abbreviated family tree illustrating individuals in this document & their relationship to one another.

Collaborators Identified in Various Stages of Preservation Process

Vernon F. Bellows (1924-1997) - archivist for the Bellows home movies, artist, father

Phyllis (Jensen) Bellows (1926-) - manager of the Estate of Kent Bellows, mother

- **Kent Bellows** (1949-2005) - artist, mentor, child of Vernon and Phyllis Bellows
- **Robin (Bellows) Griess** (1959-) - co-founder of The Kent Bellows Studio & Center for Visual Arts, child of Vernon and Phyllis Bellows, mother
- **Deb (Bellows) Wesselmann** (1955-) - co-founder of The Kent Bellows Studio & Center for Visual Arts, child of Vernon and Phyllis Bellows
- **Jim Griess** (1953-) - family home movie transfer technician, father
- **David I. Griess** (1984-) - audiovisual artist and archivist, child of Robin & Jim Griess

Molly S. Hutton Ph.D. - author of the essay in *Beyond Realism: The Works of Kent Bellows 1970–2005* and curator of the exhibition.

Upon entering the NYU MIAP program in 2019, I quickly learned that my family's initial steps stewarding our home movies would benefit from an update to their established procedures. By implementing a new series of digital preservation workflows, I wanted to ensure that these materials will be accessible to future family members. With my guidance and updated workflows, Jim Griess created digital files of nearly 200 VHS tapes, a handful of MiniDV tapes, and handwritten notes crucial to understanding the collection's contents. In 2020, I gained the ability to access these newly transferred digital files. Upon viewing the moving image files, I had

the desire to create digital excerpts of audiovisual content within the collection that documents my late uncle and nationally known Omaha, Nebraska artist Kent Bellows (1949-2005).

This project aims to create useful documentation archiving and preserving my family's collection in four parts. I write about Kent Bellows' art, legacy, and connection to our family in part one. Part two outlines the family collection using cues from collection assessment practices. Part three details my DIY approach to digital preservation of the collection while figuring out how to best identify and provide access to Kent Bellows art content. These intimate home recordings provide candid interviews and artist insight that detail how Bellows conceived and created some of his best-known artworks. Creating access to these audiovisual excerpts will allow me to share this valuable content with living artists (including students and mentors of the Kent Bellows Mentoring Program), home movie enthusiasts, art historians, curators, conservators, archives (Nebraska historical societies and university special collections), and museum collections that hold Bellows' work (Joslyn Art Museum, Museum of Nebraska Art, the MET, the Art Institute of Chicago, etc.). However, the digital preservation and the physical preservation of these materials do not end here. As I outline in the final part of this paper, there is more work to be done. Ensuring the collection's integrity beyond my lifetime will require encouragement and active participation from a continued collective effort. Beyond graduate school, this project aims to spark an interest within artists, their communities, and chosen families to implement DIY archiving practices of their own as a way to take charge of their work and legacies.

1. Home is Where the Art is: Kent Bellows (1949-2005)



Figure 2. Kent Bellows at his 3303 Leavenworth Street studio, Omaha, NE, 1994.
Photograph by Vernon G. Bellows (1968-).

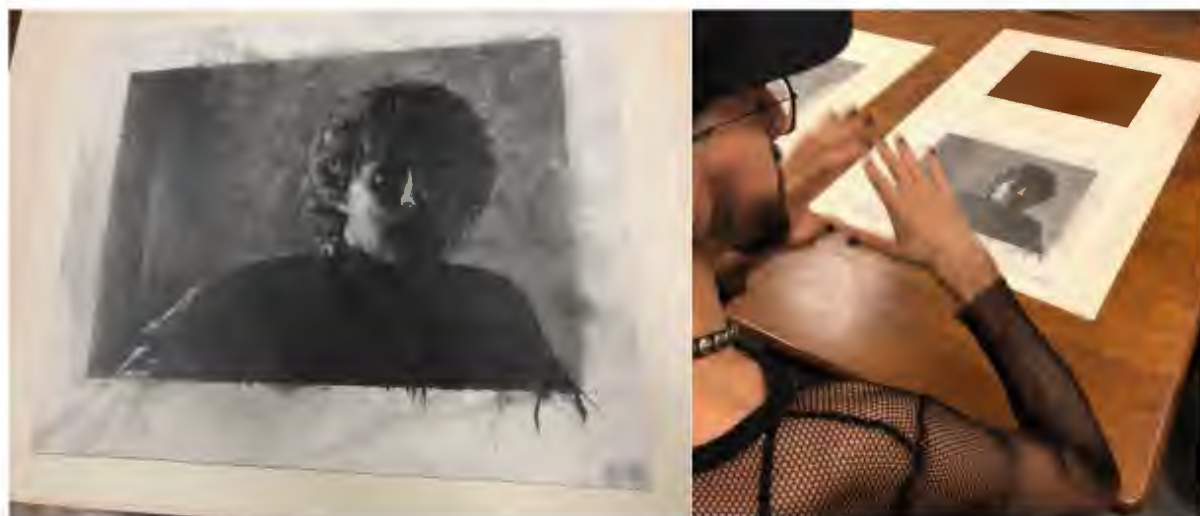
Kent Bellows is historicized by art institutions, scholars, and critics as an artist primarily known for his drawings and paintings which he rendered in high detail.¹ His first major exhibition took place in New York in 1985² while living and working in Omaha, Nebraska. His work resides with private collectors and permanent collections of institutions such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art.³ When Bellows died unexpectedly in 2005, he left behind his

¹ "Kent Bellows - Artists - Forum Gallery." Accessed January 25, 2021. forumgallery.com/artists/kent-bellows/biography.

² Molly S. Hutton, foreword by Richard L. Davidson, note of appreciation by Jack F. Becker, *Beyond Realism: The Works of Kent Bellows 1970–2005* (Omaha: The Kent Bellows Studio & Center for Visual Arts 2010), 32.

³ "The Met Collection," *Self-Portrait*, 1991, Kent Bellows, metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/486675.

studio and his personal effects.⁴ In the 2010 exhibition catalog published for his posthumous retrospective *The Works of Kent Bellows 1970-2005 BEYOND REALISM*, Molly S. Hutton, Ph.D. captures the nuance of Bellows' work, "Bellows' journey as an artist began as an effort to mimetically reproduce objective reality but culminated as a quest for truth—for the meaning of subjective existence."⁵



The Metropolitan Museum of Art viewing appointment, 2018-09-10. Photographs by Elizabeth Lamb
 Left: Figure 3. Artwork pictured *Self-Portrait*, 1991, Charcoal on paper, 15 ½ x 21 7/8 in.
 Right: Figure 4. David I. Griess with *Self-Portrait*, 1991.

In her 2010 lecture during Kent Bellows' retrospective at Joslyn Art Museum, Hutton details the influences that film had on him throughout his life.⁶ Early in the presentation, she cites his painting *Home*, 1973, which renders the artist standing in front of a movie theater's exterior. The theater depicted is a direct reference to the Home Theatre⁷ in his hometown of Blair, NE which played a crucial role in his initial exposure to film. The word HOME appears in

⁴ Dane Stickney, "Superrealist Bellows leaves artistic legacy," *Omaha World-Herald* (Omaha, NE), Oct. 23, 2005.

⁵ Molly S. Hutton, foreword by Richard L. Davidson, note of appreciation by Jack F. Becker, *Beyond Realism: The Works of Kent Bellows 1970–2005* (Omaha: The Kent Bellows Studio & Center for Visual Arts 2010), 11.

⁶ Molly S. Hutton, "Kent Bellows and the Influence of Film," 2010-12-02, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE, 00:51:09, Estate of Kent Bellows.

⁷ Blair Historic Preservation Alliance. "Block 46 Lots 1- 2 - Downtown Blair." Accessed January 26, 2021. <https://blairhistory.com/downtown-research-project/block-46/lots-1-2/>.

the painting in neon lettering reproducing the real theater's marquee. Bellows and his friend David O'Hanlon would go to the theater as teenagers growing up and going to movies together.⁸



Left: Figure 5. Kent Bellows, *Home*, 1973, Acrylic on canvas, 47 x 41 in.

Image courtesy of the Estate of Kent Bellows.

Right: Figure 6. Historical photograph of Home Theatre, Blair, NE. Source: cinematreasures.org.

Bellows and O'Hanlon formed Watchdog Graphics, which took out ads in sci-fi fantasy magazines like *Starlog*, Number 7, August 1979. The ad's purpose was to sell limited edition art print reproductions of a painting Bellows had made called *Not of This Earth*, which captures documentation of a young couple encountering and reacting to an extraterrestrial for the first time.⁹ Kent Bellows was an avid admirer of all forms of creative endeavors. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of painters, writers, musicians, and filmmakers, made evident by his extensive collection of books, movies, and music.¹⁰ His love of movies is further emphasized in a statement he made in 1992, comparing them to his own artistic practice calling his work, "little movies that don't move... I try to make art that is really part of me, that there is just no question about it. I get that from a Bergman film. I get that from Scorsese. I get that from David Lynch."¹¹

⁸ Molly S. Hutton, "Kent Bellows and the Influence of Film," 2010-12-02, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE, 00:51:09, Estate of Kent Bellows.

⁹ *Starlog Magazine Issue 007*. Accessed January 25, 2021. archive.org/details/starlog_magazine-007.

¹⁰ Appendix I. Kent Bellows Libraries - Compiled by family and staff of the Kent Bellows Studio.

¹¹ Kyle MacMillan, *Magazine of the Midlands, Sunday World-Herald* (Omaha, NE), Apr. 5, 1992.

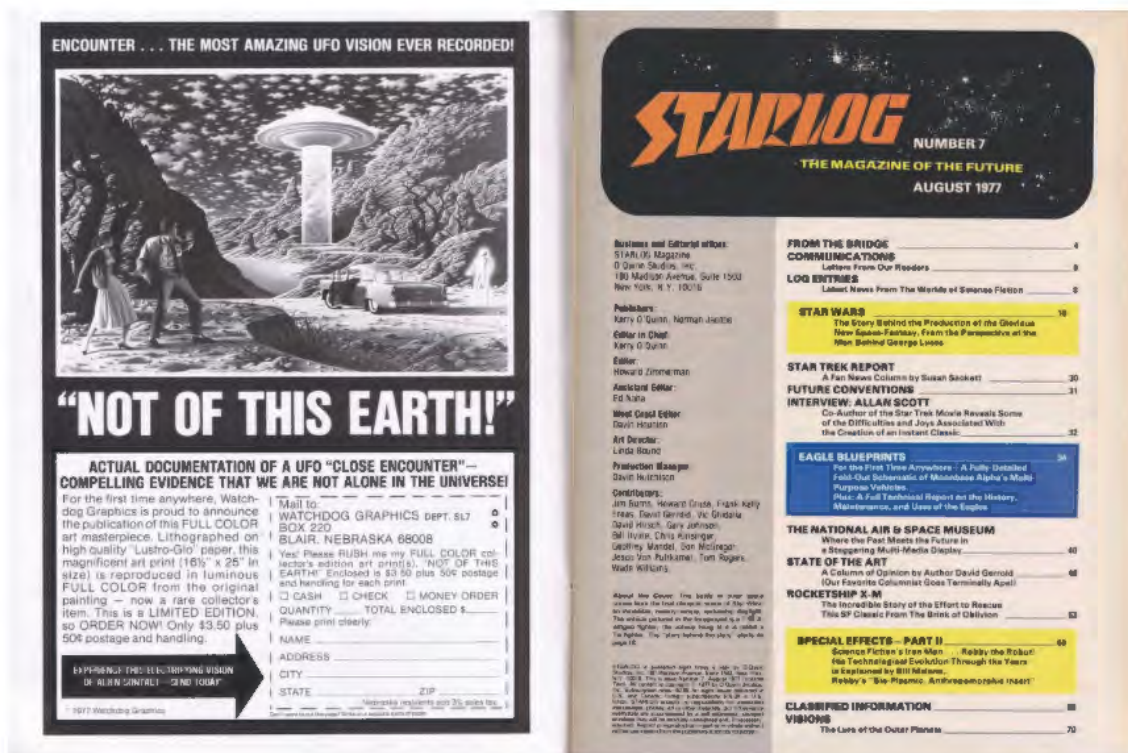


Figure 7. Advertisement for a limited-edition art print appearing in *Starlog*, Number 7, August 1977. Kent Bellows, *Not of This Earth*, 1977, Watchdog Graphics.

For much of his artwork he would imagine, and then fabricate, human-scale environments that he would photograph. Using the photos as reference only, he would draw or paint to create a composition on paper or panel. In 1989, Bellows began to renovate a gutted building at 3303 Leavenworth Street (Figure 10.) that would become his studio. Once the remodel was complete, he had dedicated space to develop his own photographs in the darkroom in the basement, construct larger sets in the front room and on the second floor, and work at his easel and live in the backrooms. As his career progressed, these real and imagined spaces became increasingly more elaborate and began to resemble full-scale movie stages, as illustrated in one of his last completed artworks, *Wrath*, 2001. The painting was part of an incomplete series of artworks depicting the seven deadly sins. *Self-portrait with Wine Glass (Gluttony)*, 2000 was the only other completed artwork in the series.

In the summer of 2000, I was one of Bellows' assistants for the building of the *Wrath* set. In 2010, I received an email from Molly S. Hutton Ph.D. asking me to describe my role in the fabrication of the set. Hutton at the time was interviewing friends and family as research for her essay to be included in the exhibition catalog for *The Works of Kent Bellows 1970-2005 BEYOND REALISM*.

(This email is slightly edited for readability)

To: Molly S. Hutton, Ph.D. May 11, 2010, 2:18 AM

Subject: Re: Wrath set

Again, sorry for such a late response. I worked with Kent off and on, over the course of a summer on the Wrath set (maybe 2-3 months). My cousin Vince also worked on the set but on different days. Work would usually start with us going to pick up supplies at his local Ace Hardware or just heading to the studio. Before I started working with him, a 2x4 structure was framed out in the studio by Kent and a carpenter friend.

My first task was hanging sheets of cardboard to the 2x4 frame with an electric staple gun to create the interior walls. Once that was complete, I then started to spray "Great Stuff" foam over the cardboard to give the room a "cave-like" feel. Finally, I went back in with finely shredded papier-mâché in order to mask the foam and to build up the walls of the dugout basement structure. After I completed my work, Kent went back into the set adding paint, more texture, and props. He then would light it and shoot it for reference.

I had no involvement with "Lust" though I would come over from time to time to visit him during that construction. I hope this helps, and if you have more specific questions feel free to ask.

David

By far, the set for *Wrath* was one of his most engrossing and difficult sets that Bellows had ever built. I am very grateful to have been able to work on *Wrath* with Bellows and my cousin Vince Wesselmann. The experience taught me a lot about what it means to dedicate yourself to your craft as an artist and allowed me to witness my uncle actively creating, which was something I had never really been able to do. Even though Bellows spent many hours on his artmaking, he was incredibly generous and made sure that his family was informed and involved

in his art and life. In turn, Bellows had a loving family that was incredibly supportive of his creative endeavors, no matter how difficult the subject matter.



Left: Figure 8. *Wrath*, 2001, acrylic on panel, 41 x 26 in. Image courtesy of the Estate of Kent Bellows.
 Right: Figure 9. The set for *Wrath* under construction at Bellows' studio, 2000. Photograph by Robin Griess.

After Bellows' death his mother, Phyllis Bellows, became manager of his estate. Without a will or plan, what to do with the studio building and its contents was left entirely in the hands of his immediate family. Bellows' artwork had all been sold but audiovisual and print material, as well as objects used to create his works, remained at his studio. His family decided to use Bellows' legacy to create an arts nonprofit in his name that would serve as a mentorship program for local high school students. To do this, Bellows' sisters, Robin Griess and Deb Wesselmann, started by purchasing a copy of the book *Nonprofit Kit for Dummies*. Within the next two years, paperwork was filed with the state, a board was established, and startup funding was secured through grants and donations.

In February of 2008, The Kent Bellows Studio & Center for Visual Arts initial mentorship program began offsite at Bemis Underground while renovations were being made to the Bellows studio.¹² The Bemis Underground was started in 2005 as a programming and exhibition space located in the basement of Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts. The space was geared towards supporting emerging regional talent.¹³ Bemis closed Underground in 2012 in an effort to consolidate its operations.¹⁴

The design plan for the studio remodel needed to accommodate staff, students, and artist mentors. Randy Brown Architects designed an office, classrooms, and a public exhibition space, all while keeping Bellows' studio intact.¹⁵ Many of Bellows' personal materials were moved to Phyllis Bellows' Omaha basement for safekeeping during the construction. The program was able to move into the 3303 Leavenworth Street studio in 2010. Joslyn Art Museum took control of the studio building and operations in 2014.¹⁶ From then on, the name of the program has been known as the Kent Bellows Mentoring Program (at Joslyn Art Museum) and the name of the studio was shortened to the Kent Bellows Studio (Figure 11.). The contents of the building that belonged to Bellows remain under ownership of the Estate of Kent Bellows, however, much of the Bellows personal effects are still stored at the home of Phyllis Bellows nearly untouched to this day.

¹² Mary Day. "The Kent Bellows Studio Mentoring Program." The Reader (blog), April 9, 2013. <https://thereader.com/visual-art/literary/the-kent-bellows-studio-mentoring-program>.

¹³ "Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts: Exhibitions : Past Exhibitions : UNDERGROUND," March 28, 2016.

web.archive.org/web/20160328104115/https://www.bemiscenter.org/art/past_section/underground.html

¹⁴ Michael Krainak. "Bemis Underground." The Reader, December 12, 2012.

<https://thereader.com/visual-art/mixed-media/bemis-underground-2>.

¹⁵ "Kent Bellows Studio, Randy Brown Architects." Accessed August 19, 2020. randybrownaarchitects.com/project/bellows.

¹⁶ Joslyn Art Museum, "Kent Bellows Mentoring Program," *Joslyn Now*, (2014 Winter): 10.



Figure 10. Kent Bellows' studio at 3303 Leavenworth Street, Omaha, NE, 1989.
Image courtesy of the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies.



Figure 11. Kent Bellows Studio at 3303 Leavenworth Street, Omaha, NE, 2019.
Source: Google.

1.1 Vernon F. Bellows (1924-1997)

Kent Bellows' earliest influence and arguably his first mentor was his father, Vernon F. Bellows, who died in 1997.¹⁷ Vernon F. Bellows was, among other things, a painter whose primary medium was watercolor. When he came back from World War II, he attended classes at the Omaha Art School and the Kansas City Art Institute. He worked as a commercial artist for over 30 years, hand drawing advertisements for local businesses in Omaha and the surrounding areas. However, it was in his landscape and still life watercolors where he was able to realize his artistic practice to its fullest potential. In *The Art Spirit* Robert Henri writes: "When the artist is alive in any person, whatever his kind of work may be, he becomes an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressing creature. He becomes interesting to other people. He disturbs, upsets, enlightens, and he opens ways for a better understanding. Where those who are not artists are trying to close the book, he opens it, shows there are still more pages possible."¹⁸

Vernon F. Bellows' passion for art, literature, music, culture, and creative expression also translated to his love of television, I think in a similar way to what Kent Bellows experienced through movies. Vernon F. Bellows spent hours watching daytime and late night talk shows, soap operas, and football. I speculate that he saw some part of himself in television and wanted to replicate and represent those thoughts and feelings through the use of film and video. By recording home movies in various formats, Vernon F. Bellows was also able to document and connect to his family and the people he loved, including his son.

¹⁷ Robert McMorris, *Omaha World-Herald* (Omaha, NE), Nov. 8, 1986.

¹⁸ Henri, Robert, Margery Ryerson, and Paul Avrich Collection (Library of Congress) DLC. *The Art Spirit : Notes, Articles, Fragments of Letters and Talks to Students, Bearing on the Concept and Technique of Picture Making, the Study of Art Generally, and on Appreciation*. Philadelphia : Lippincott, 1960. archive.org/details/artspiritnotesa00henr.



Figure 12. Screenshot of Vernon F. Bellows from *1986 First Video Xmas 1986*, Source format: VHS. Image courtesy of the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies.

1.2 Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann Home Movies (1940-2013)

The Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies contain content such as: birthdays, holidays, family reunions, and many other types of family gatherings. Bellows family 8mm and Super 8 films from 1940-1980 capture the early life of the family as well as some of the earliest Kent Bellows art content in the collection. The Griess Super 8 films contain footage of their young children and life in Omaha, Nebraska in the early to mid 1980s. The VHS tapes started in 1986 captured the majority of Kent Bellows art content. There are also VHS recordings of school recitals, vacations, and even an occasional school project. Broadcast television such as Nebraska football, late night talk shows, cartoons, soap operas, along with documentation of Kent Bellows' art practice, are sprinkled in between and throughout these moving images. The lack of home movie recordings after 1996 appears to correlate with the death of Vernon F. Bellows on August 15, 1997. In addition, there was also a technology shift to a MiniDV camcorder in 2006 by the Griess family which correlates with home movie recordings appearing around the 2006-

2013 timespan. At least one of these recordings captures a posthumous exhibition of Kent Bellows art in 2006 at Bemis Center for Contemporary Art in Omaha, Nebraska. There is a single VHS tape from Marvin Griess (1924-2017) and Kathleen Griess (1929-2015) who are the parents of Jim Griess. Wesselmann content is scattered across both Bellows and Griess tapes as well as recorded on their own tapes and stored at their home.

When someone you love dies, there can be nothing more than a few memories or stories shared among living family, friends, and acquaintances. Or, perhaps you have various moving images, audio recordings, photographs, and correspondence. These home movies hold intense meaning for me, as memories that document the importance of supporting one another and nurturing creative expression in an almost ordinary way. A recorded memory helps maintain a relationship or bond beyond death with you and the person who passed away.

“Naturally, films may hold intense and private meanings to the people who shot them, and to those who appear in them. As the materials are passed along to successive family members or friends, they can retain an almost magical power to bring absent loved ones back into the room. And it’s not just the people in the movies, of course — rooms and yards, toys and clothing, cars and pets, a whole world of the small details that make up a life are captured there to spur memory and invite reflection.”¹⁹

Center for Home Movies, *Question of Value*

Efforts to preserve these home movies have been ongoing, with various family members creating systems of organization, describing content, and transferring source formats in order to keep up with changes in technology and avoid issues of playability for the movies. These home movies provide valuable private memories of my family while documenting important aspects of Kent Bellows’ artistic practice such as how he worked, what he thought about artmaking, and

¹⁹ Center for Home Movies. “Questions of Value.” Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://www.centerforhomemovies.org/questions-of-value/>.

how he lived. These preservation efforts continue with the goal of creating excerpts of Kent Bellows art content. Due to privacy concerns or unrelated content within these home movies, Kent Bellows art content needs to be identified and then edited into appropriate excerpts that would be valuable for public access.

1.3 Kent Bellows Art Content (1950-1996) & (2006-2013)

As of now, the priority of this project is to examine, transcribe, and make available content recorded while Bellows was alive. Currently, there are 25 tapes and 51 occurrences of Bellows art content. In order to understand this visually, the graph (Figure 13.) is broken up into two timespans to correspond with content that was recorded during the majority of his life (1950-1996) and content that was generated after his death (2006-2013). Potential audiences for this content include: living artists (including students and mentors of the Kent Bellows Mentoring Program), home movie enthusiasts, art historians, curators, conservators, archives (Nebraska historical societies and university special collections), and museum collections that hold Bellows' work (Joslyn Art Museum, Museum of Nebraska Art, the MET, etc.).

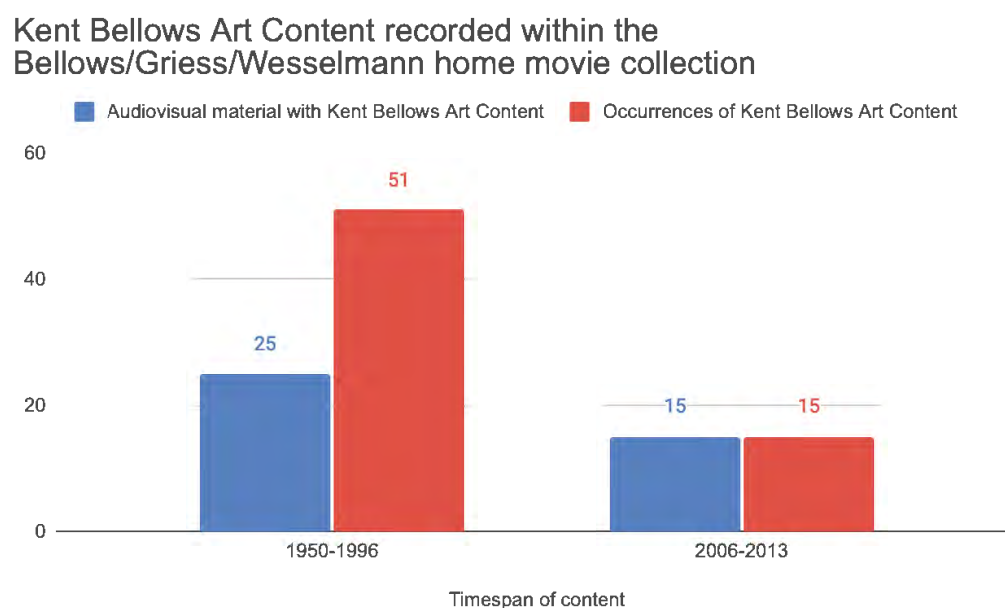


Figure 13. Graph displaying preliminary amounts of Kent Bellows art content.

2. Collection Background & Preservation History (1940-2019)

I have been giving recommendations to improve the care and transfer of the material in the collection based upon readings and knowledge gained in the beginning of my MIAP studies. In my fall 2019 Cine-GT 1800 *Introduction to Moving Image Archiving and Preservation* course, I completed a research paper which gave a general overview of the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movie collection.²⁰ During this period of research, I interviewed my mother Robin Griess over email in order to understand and get a general sense of what source formats existed and what procedures were currently in place to maintain and take care of the collection.²¹ Since then, workflows have been adjusted and additional processes pertaining to care and accessibility have been introduced to the collection. The following sections, 2.1-2.4, are guided by principles of collection assessment and the spring 2021 document for CINE-GT 3401- *Collection Management Guidelines for Preparation of Collection Assessments*.²²

2.1 Physical Appraisal

2.1.1 Audiovisual Material

Audiovisual material in this collection includes 8mm, Super 8, VHS, MiniDV, and recordable optical media (DVD-R, DVD+R, and DVD+RW). The source elements still need to be located for the Bellows 8mm and Super 8 films made during the 1940s to the 1980s. At this

²⁰ David Griess, *Home Memory: The Mind Will Fail So We Must Record*. Accessed November 17, 2020. archive.org/details/homememorythemindwillfailsohemustrecord.

²¹ Robin Griess, "Managing The Family Home Movie Archive: VHS to DVD Transfer as a Short-Term Solution," Interview by David I. Griess, 2019.

²² These guidelines were authored by NYU MIAP professors over the years, beginning with Mona Jiménez with additional updates and contributions from Grace Lille, Juana Suárez and Pamela Vízner. The guidelines have aided in facilitation of working remotely, internship recruitment, and APEX (The Audiovisual Preservation Exchange) created by Juana Suárez and Pamela Vízner.

time, total counts for each source format are not confirmed, but there are nearly 200 Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann VHS tapes. There are 26 reels of Griess Super 8 that have been confirmed by Robin Griess in our 2019 interview.²³

2.1.2 Print material

Print material consists of content that includes writing about the art and life of Kent Bellows. There are publications such as newspapers, books, and magazines. Newspaper articles include clippings or a portion of the pages where Bellows is mentioned. The books are academic or instructional texts, as well as exhibition or private collection catalogs. If a magazine mentions Bellows, the whole magazine is often kept. Page numbers are often marked with a small sticky note or a piece of paper, although libraries and archives often have a no sticky note rule as the adhesives can potentially cause damage.²⁴ Internet articles are usually printed out and saved as well.

2.2 Arrangement, Intellectual Control & Metadata

It is unclear when, but the Bellows 8mm and Super 8 films were likely given to a vendor and were transferred to VHS tapes sometime during Vernon F. Bellows' lifetime. Jim Griess transferred the Griess Super 8 films to VHS by projecting the films and recording the projected image with a VHS camcorder. The VHS camcorder used to capture the majority of these Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies was purchased in December of 1986 by Vernon and Phyllis Bellows.²⁵ A large portion of the home movie recordings were made by Vernon F. Bellows from roughly 1986-1996. During this time, Vernon F. Bellows served as the main

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Kirsten Tyree. "To Post-it or Not to Post-it." Smithsonian Institution Archives, September 5, 2013. <https://siarchives.si.edu/blog/post-it-or-not-post-it>.

²⁵ *1986 First Video Xmas 1986*, Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies, (1986, Omaha, NE), VHS (original format).

family archivist. Bellows stored VHS tapes in a closet and on shelves at his home in Omaha that he shared with his wife Phyllis Bellows. After recording each tape, he handwrote an individual shot list with a timestamp and a description and slipped it into the respective tape's cardboard case.

These descriptive notes by Bellows prove to be a crucial early step to understanding the content recorded on these VHS tapes and how it relates to the family and identifies Kent Bellows art content. For his labels, Vernon F. Bellows would note one or several things that occurred on the tape. For instance, if a particular person or a specific event took place, he would use that as a title, such as a birthday or a holiday or another significant event taking place at the time (sometimes including a date). There are some abbreviations of words due to the size of the label on the tape or the piece of paper Bellows used. Griess home movies were originally recorded on Super 8, VHS, and MiniDV. The Griess VHS tapes are stored with handwritten notes made by Robin Griess.

The information about tape length, recording mode, and recorded duration of each Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movie tape has yet to be collected. VHS tapes can vary a great deal in length of tape and length of recording. A NTSC²⁶ VHS tape could be set to record in SP (standard play), LP (long play), or EP/SLP (extended play/super long play) mode.²⁷ A MiniDV tape can usually be set to record for 60 minutes (SP) or 90 minutes (LP).²⁸ The MiniDV camcorder and the tapes used are much smaller and more portable compared to VHS which also subsequently make the format that much more at risk. MiniDV tapes are fragile and,

²⁶ NTSC stands for National Television System Committee which is the North American analog color television standard.

²⁷ "VHS." *Tape Lengths*, February 1, 2021. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VHS#Tape_lengths.

²⁸ "Canon Knowledge Base - MiniDV/HDV Tape Recording Times." Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://support.usa.canon.com/kb/index?page=content&id=ART100920>.

because of their size, they can easily be damaged. The tape that is used to record content is much thinner and can degrade over time.²⁹ The longer the tape is set to record, the lower the quality of the recording.

In 2012, Jim Griess began to transfer Bellows and Griess VHS tapes to recordable optical media using a consumer machine similar to the one pictured in Figure 14. When I interviewed Robin Griess, she stated that 56 Bellows VHS tapes and 24 Griess VHS tapes had been transferred to recordable optical media (DVD-R, DVD+R, and DVD+RW). In 2019, I learned that optical media was not a long-term preservation solution due to the lifespan of the format and recommended this workflow should come to an end.³⁰ It is important to note here that through the VHS to optical media transfer process, VHS tapes were never discarded and that keeping original source formats is recommended as a best practice in archiving and preservation.



Left: Figure 14. VCR/DVD combo player and recorder. Source: lifewire.com.

Right: Figure 15. VHS tapes and recordable optical media on the floor of the Griess family basement. Photograph by Robin Griess, 2019.

²⁹ Elgrito. "Gather: Digitize MiniDV's." Accessed February 11, 2021. <https://elgrito.witness.org/portfolio/gather-digitize/>.

³⁰ "CD / CD-R and DVD-R RW Longevity Research - Research Projects - Preservation Science (Preservation, Library of Congress)." Web page. Accessed February 11, 2021. https://www.loc.gov/preservation/scientists/projects/cd-r_dvd-r_rw_longevity.html.

2.3 General Handling & Care

All of the audiovisual and print material is kept cool and dry. There is air conditioning in each family member's home to help materials remain cool although there is no dedicated equipment, such as a dehumidifier, to help maintain a relative humidity. There are specific temperature recommendations for relative humidity for paper and photographs³¹ as well as audiovisual material.³² VHS tapes from the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movie collection have been primarily stored in the basement. However, VHS tapes also remain in a closet at the home of Phyllis Bellows. Both homes are located in Omaha, NE. VHS tapes at the Griess home are housed in cardboard sleeves that are then stacked and stored in plastic bins. The Griess Super 8 film source elements remain on reels and are stored in archival grade plastic canisters purchased by the Griess family. Other formats such as MiniDV tapes have their own plastic holders and are also stored in the same plastic bins. The recordable optical media is stored in paper sleeves and remains available to view if desired. Print material is stored on shelves and in binders at the homes of Phyllis Bellows and Jim and Robin Griess. Acid-free sleeves are used to house anything that is paper material.

2.4 Rights Status

Audiovisual materials are primarily overseen by Phyllis Bellows and the Griess family as they are located at their respective homes. Content in the home movie collection is owned collectively by the family members represented within the video and audio files. The Vernon F. Bellows notes help identify individual family members. There are instances where it is unclear who is present in the home movie footage and who is creating the recording.

³¹ National Archives. "Storing Family Papers and Photographs," August 15, 2016. <https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives/storing>.

³² National Archives. "Resources - Publications: Managing Audiovisual Records," August 15, 2016. <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/publications/managing-audiovisual-records.html>.

Content recorded within the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies should be considered under the rights of the family members who created it. The content related to the work of Bellows could be held under copyright of the Estate of Kent Bellows if the material is made public, which is currently under the care of Phyllis Bellows. There is broadcast television recorded on many of the tapes that should most likely be considered the respective broadcaster's copyright. However, as long as that content is being consumed for private personal use, there should not be a legal issue.³³

3. Digital Preservation Project (2019-2021)

3.1 Home Movie Digitization & Migration Workflows

The 2019 research paper I wrote also included the beginning ideas for a workflow to begin the transfer of the VHS tapes.³⁴ This workflow would later be revised to include MiniDV tapes as well. The workflow was devised using the concept and documentation of a minimal viable station³⁵ which was created by self-described archivist, developer, and technologist Ashley Blewer.³⁶ In the creation of this documentation, Blewer provides several station options that range both in cost and amount of equipment used to transfer audiovisual material to digital files. Blewer acknowledges that the process of making preservation level transfers can be extremely pricey. At times, equipment can also be hard to come by new or used, even if you have the money to buy it.

³³ Sony Corp. of Am. v. Universal City Studios, Inc., 464 U.S. 417 (1984). PDF file. <https://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/summaries/sonycorp-universal-1984.pdf>.

³⁴ David Griess, *Home Memory: The Mind Will Fail So We Must Record*. Accessed November 17, 2020. archive.org/details/homememorythemindwillfailsohemustrecord.

³⁵ Ashley Blewer, "Minimum Viable Station Documentation · BLOG Progress Process." Accessed October 23, 2020. <https://bits.ashleyblewer.com/blog/2016/12/02/minimum-viable-transfer-station-documentation/>.

³⁶ "Ashley Blewer." Accessed March 5, 2021. <https://ashleyblewer.com/>.

The main piece of hardware that was purchased in the workflow for VHS is a used Canopus ADVC (analog to digital video converter) that was found on eBay. I would have liked to use a TBC (time base corrector) between the VCR (video cassette recorder) and the Canopus ADVC to correct timing errors during the playback³⁷ and transfer of the VHS tapes. Due to the cost and availability of the TBCs being sold on eBay at the time of the workflow setup, this did not happen. For playback and transfer of MiniDV tapes, a MiniDV camcorder was purchased used on the internet. Both the VHS and the MiniDV workflows use a FireWire (IEEE 1394) cable which connects to a FireWire (IEEE 1394) capture card housed in the desktop home computer used by Jim Griess. The desktop computer is running in a Windows 10 environment with capture software NCH Debut that was downloaded for free from the internet.

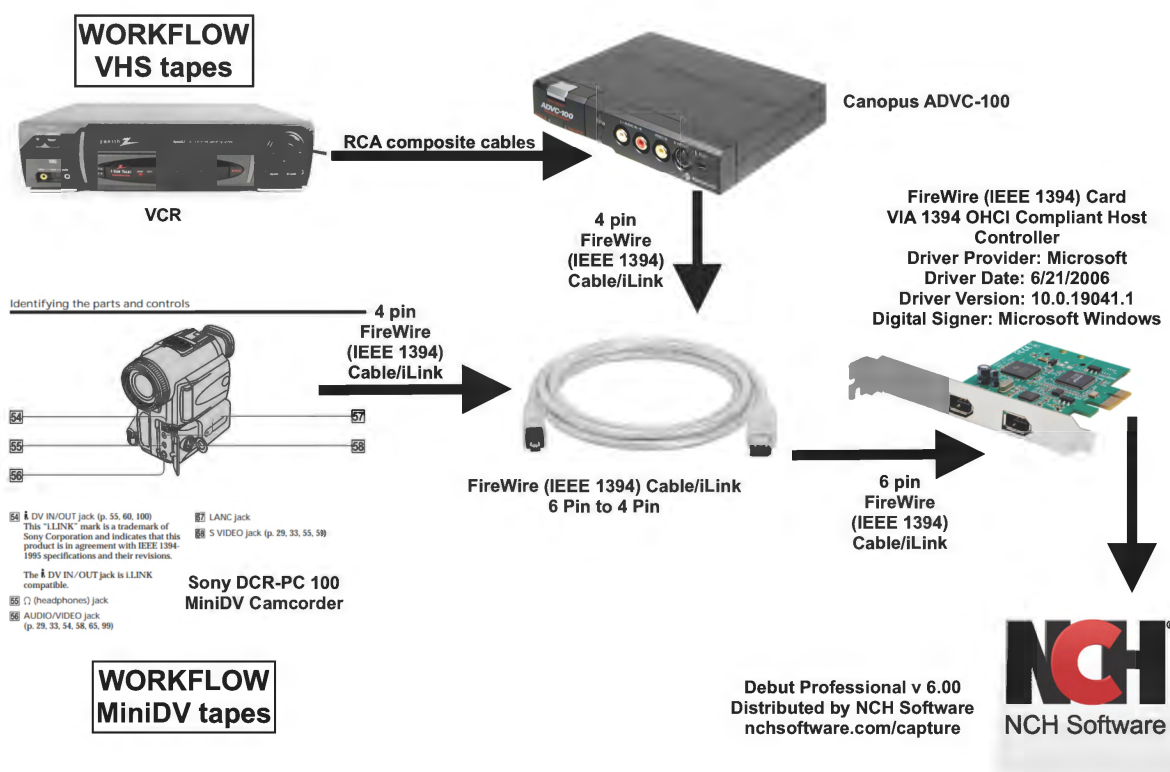


Figure 16. Digitization & migration workflows for the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movie collection.

³⁷ “AV Preservation Glossary | AVAA.” Accessed November 17, 2020.
https://www.avartifactatlas.com/preservation_glossary.html#t.

In 2020, the Griess Super 8 films were scanned at 720P in MP4 format with the assistance of Rockbrook Camera and Video in Omaha, NE and a vendor in Las Vegas, Nevada. I purchased a 5 TB external hard drive to ship to Omaha, NE in order to have access to a copy of the newly created digital files. Since I work in a macOS, the drive needed to be reformatted to exFAT³⁸ in order to be able to have cross platform compatibility with a Windows 10 operating system. When I reformatted, I also renamed the hard drive MERMAID_NY to pay homage to an artwork by Bellows, *Over the Mermaid Lounge*, 1992. In the title of the artwork Kent Bellows makes reference to the Mermaid Lounge, the bar that occupied 3303 Leavenworth prior to the renovation of the studio. The NY component of the name is to identify New York as the hard drive's final intended geographic location. Three geographically dispersed locations are recommended for storage in digital preservation.³⁹ Once in Omaha, NE, copies of the home movie files were dragged and dropped onto MERMAID_NY. The hard drive now resides back in Brooklyn, NY, and I have been able to research the digital files of the family home movies.

Kind: Volume
 Format: ExFAT
 Capacity: 5 TB
 Available: 1.45 TB
 Used: 3,553,606,238,208 bytes (3.55 TB on disk)
 Purchased from Best Buy on 2020-09-13
 Brand: [WD - easystore 5TB External USB 3.0 Portable Hard Drive - Black](#)
 Model: WDBAJP0050BBK-WESN
 SKU: 6406512

Figure 17. MERMAID_NY Specifications.

³⁸ Memory Lab - Online Resources | Los Angeles Public Library. *Formatting an External Hard Drive to Work Seamlessly Between Mac + PC*. lapl.org/memorylab/resources.

³⁹ Smith, E. A, Chodacki, J., Elings, M., Grappone, T., Janée, G., Macquarie, C., et al. *UC Digital Preservation Strategy Working Group: Phase One Report*. PDF file. April 10, 2019. https://libraries.universityofcalifornia.edu/groups/files/doc/docs/DPS_Phase_One_Report_20190410.pdf.

3.2 Processing Kent Bellows Art Content

3.2.1 Identification Process & Methods

Before I could begin to identify Kent Bellows art content, I first created a spreadsheet with metadata fields to log and collect information from each corresponding recording. The word metadata can be understood as data about data. The spreadsheet which is referenced in the appendix⁴⁰ currently contains 24 fields of data to collect various types of metadata. Metadata fields are broken up into three categories: administrative, descriptive, and technical. As the project continues, there will potentially need to be more fields created to input data such as the duration of the recording or whether or not the write protect tab has been removed from each tape. It is recommended that write protect tabs be removed in order to make sure tape recordings are protected from being recorded over again which would delete the original recording.

Administrative – Information about copyright, location of the recording, unique identifier number, or if there are notes about condition or quarantine due to mold.

Descriptive – Details about the content of the recording such as contributor name and role, location of the recording, or artwork(s) that are seen or mentioned in the recording.

Technical – Specifications of the recording such as the generation, in this case original or dub are the main options. Some tapes have both original and dub material on them. Duration of the recording and format of the tape can be included as well.

In order to identify currently accessible Kent Bellows art content, I researched the contents of MERMAID_NY in three ways; by looking at titles of the video files, viewing the

⁴⁰ See Appendix I. MERMAID_NY (Kent Bellows Art Content) working 2020-11-04.

videos, and consulting scans of handwritten notes about each recording. Upon examining the content of the home movies, I came up with three main categories related to Kent Bellows art content.

Ideas and Concepts: Much of Kent Bellows' artwork involved a great deal of research and planning. In these recordings, Bellows talks about where an idea came from, often citing reference material or insight into what certain symbols, gestures, or content in the artwork might mean to him. In these recordings, Bellows does not always have artwork to show, and he might just be sitting in a chair talking.

Art/Life Process: Recordings where Kent Bellows shows or talks about the artwork in any stage of completeness (often in a studio setting but sometimes in a domestic space). He could be talking about the process he used (possibly a technique) to complete the artwork. This category includes the recordings of the build-out of his 3303 Leavenworth Street studio. Note: Recordings exist where Vernon F. Bellows is filming and narrating about a given artwork with or without Kent Bellows' presence.

Commercial Art World: In the home movie recordings, Kent Bellows was very candid with his thoughts, feelings, and experiences within the commercial art world. He would talk about art dealers, art shows, fellow artists, gallery owners, collectors, and what it was like for him to exist in that environment. These recordings appear with or without an artwork present.

When looking at titles of the video files, there were some clues as to whether or not they might contain the desired content. A file title with a date in it was an immediate indicator that there might be Bellows art content. Likewise, if phrases like “Kent’s Studio 3 stages” or “1989 Kent’s NY Show” were located, those files were immediately flagged. Not every date or title gives an accurate enough description of what exactly is in the video so actually viewing the file was a necessary next step. All video files that had titles of interest were viewed first. Due to time constraints, and the sheer number of minutes recorded, multiple spot checks were conducted on each video. It was easiest to identify content when an artwork was being shown on screen and more difficult to identify content if Kent Bellows appeared to be speaking. Sometimes the length of the segment with Kent Bellows art content would be extremely short, so it would be difficult to catch on the first viewing pass. There were instances where the video needed to be played back in real time to make sure that the video had a thorough viewing. It is possible, too, that not every single piece of desired content has been identified.

Vernon F. Bellows noted both the content he was recording and a timestamp for when the described content appears. Sometimes he would write who appears in the video or what was seen during the recording. Often, he would take two tapes to make dubs with original recordings, and he would note that as well. There are also instances where he would make a note about something related to a recording that was not actually on the tape. An example of this appears in Figure 19. where he uses an asterisk symbol to denote that Kent Bellows’ painting sold for \$30,000 in Chicago.

All of those notes were scanned and labeled with the same name as the video file. In Figure 18. you can see that Bellows wrote “copy of old video” with a bracket to indicate that this content is not the original recording. These particular notes pertain to recordings made of the

construction build-out progress of a gutted building that would become Kent Bellows' studio at 3303 Leavenworth Street. Vernon F. Bellows would also write notes about topics discussed during the filming or he would report information that was recorded. If the recording was Kent Bellows art content and an artwork was being shown or discussed, Vernon F. Bellows might have written some of the influences or meanings behind the artwork mentioned.

- (2760 - 1st video Kents bldg. (Deb, Doug, Vince, Sarah
- (2937 - 2nd video (Robin + kids) stairs + other frame work
- 3369 - new video - after walls, painted, toilet, heating, electric, air cond. etc, (look at tile) new windows upstairs etc. Shot around 1st of April '90.

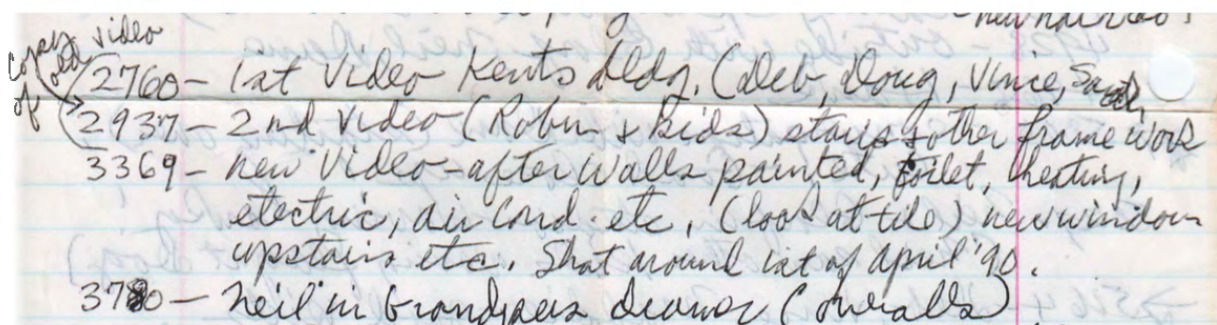


Figure 18. Excerpt of Vernon F. Bellows notes from *Kent's studio 3 stages Family Vid 1990 Jan 23 thru Spring*.

This next set of notes (Figure 19.) chronicles the documentation of the creation of *Rachel in White*, 1988. Vernon F. Bellows had an interest in filming the painting multiple times, up until the finished stage. As Bellows' notes indicate, he was not able to film the completed artwork because Kent Bellows had a tight deadline and needed to send the artwork off to the Navy Pier exhibition in Chicago. Alternatively, Vernon F. Bellows filmed a poster of the completed painting that was produced for Bellows' solo exhibition in New York at Tatistcheff Gallery.

- 3270 - Adam's birthday - Kent's new painting
- 4121 of Rachel -1st of series as painting progresses, 2/7/88 (expects to take 7 weeks)
- 4460 - 2/19/88 - study of Angie for new painting (with abstract in background)
- 4575 - 3/16/88 - 2nd Taping Kents painting (sold \$30,000 in Chicago)
- 4870 - Best lighting (Kent finished + sent off before I could get camcorder shot of finished)
- 4970 - Poster 2

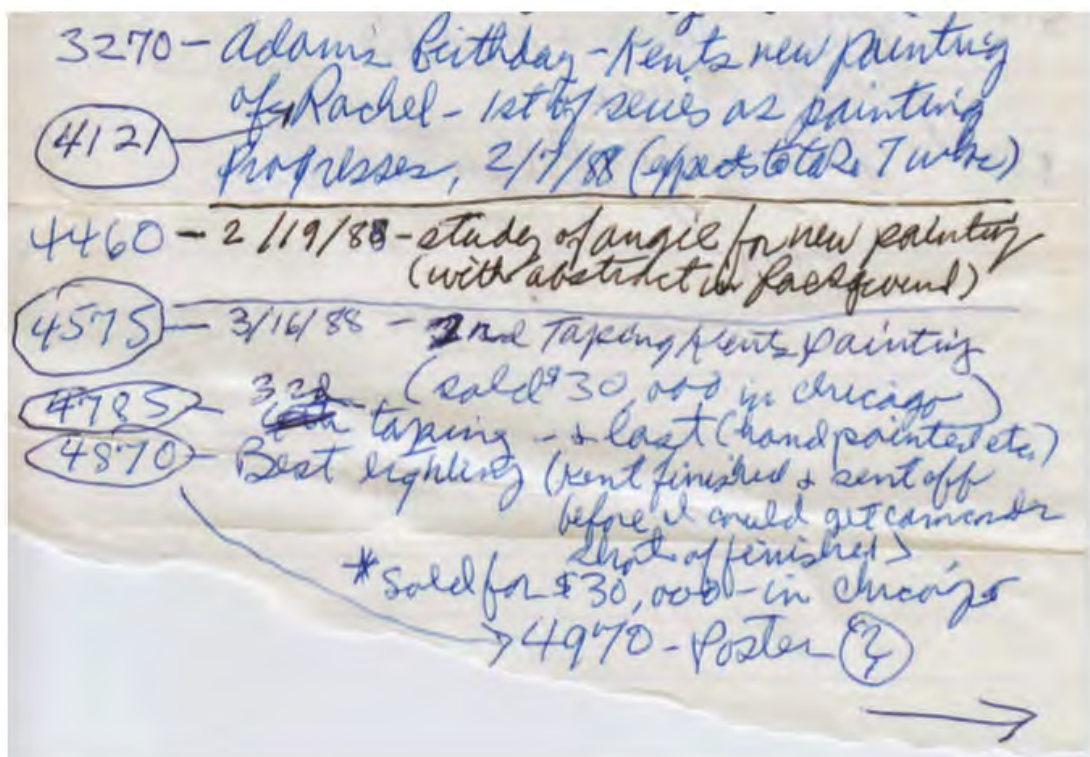


Figure 19. Excerpt of frontside of Vernon F. Bellows' notes from Xmas 87 Kids review, Pete movie, Sport bloopers Adams 15th BD, Kent's Painting 88.

3.2.2 Digital Video Excerpt Workflow

The DV files created from the digitization and migration workflows 2019-2020 turned out to be quite large. A VHS tape that was roughly two hours of recording ended up being around ~20 GB in size. In order to be able to work with the files on a 2012 refurbished MacBook Pro laptop environment, file sizes needed to be reduced while maintaining a reasonable level of quality. The workflow shown in Figure 20. is meant to illustrate the steps these large videos will take to have new Kent Bellows art content files created, transcribed, and subtitled. The following sections detail the methods used for transcoding, transcription, and subtitling Kent Bellows art content.

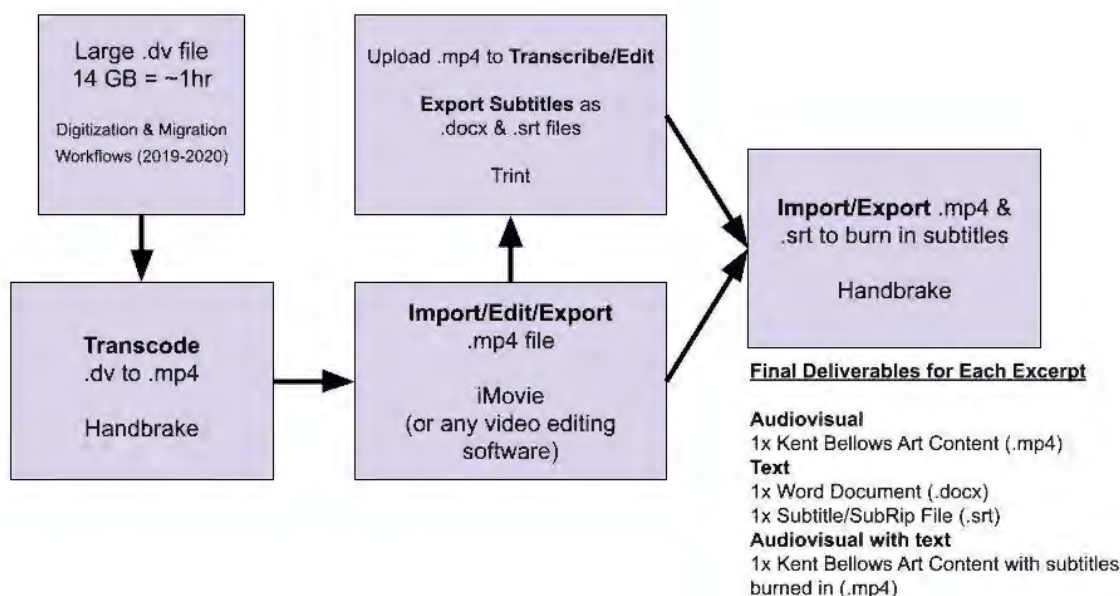


Figure 20. Workflow devised for creating Kent Bellows art content excerpts, 2021.

3.2.3 Transcoding

The free open-source program Handbrake⁴¹ was used to transcode the DV file to an MP4 file that was significantly smaller than the original size. Transcoding a file can potentially help with playback as well as reduce the size of the overall file. If you have top-level preservation files and want to make your content available to a broader audience, it is recommended to make an access-level copy. These files will take up less storage and allow the file to be digitally transmitted at a more efficient speed. If you have many files in need of transcoding, using FFmpeg⁴² as a Terminal command is a great tool to consider for batch processing. Many archivists in the field have widely adopted the use of FFmpeg and have created resources to help others use it.⁴³

⁴¹ "HandBrake: Open Source Video Transcoder." Accessed January 25, 2021. <https://handbrake.fr/>.

⁴² "FFmpeg." Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://ffmpeg.org/>.

⁴³ "FFmpeg Cookbook for Archivists." Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://avpres.net/FFmpeg/>.

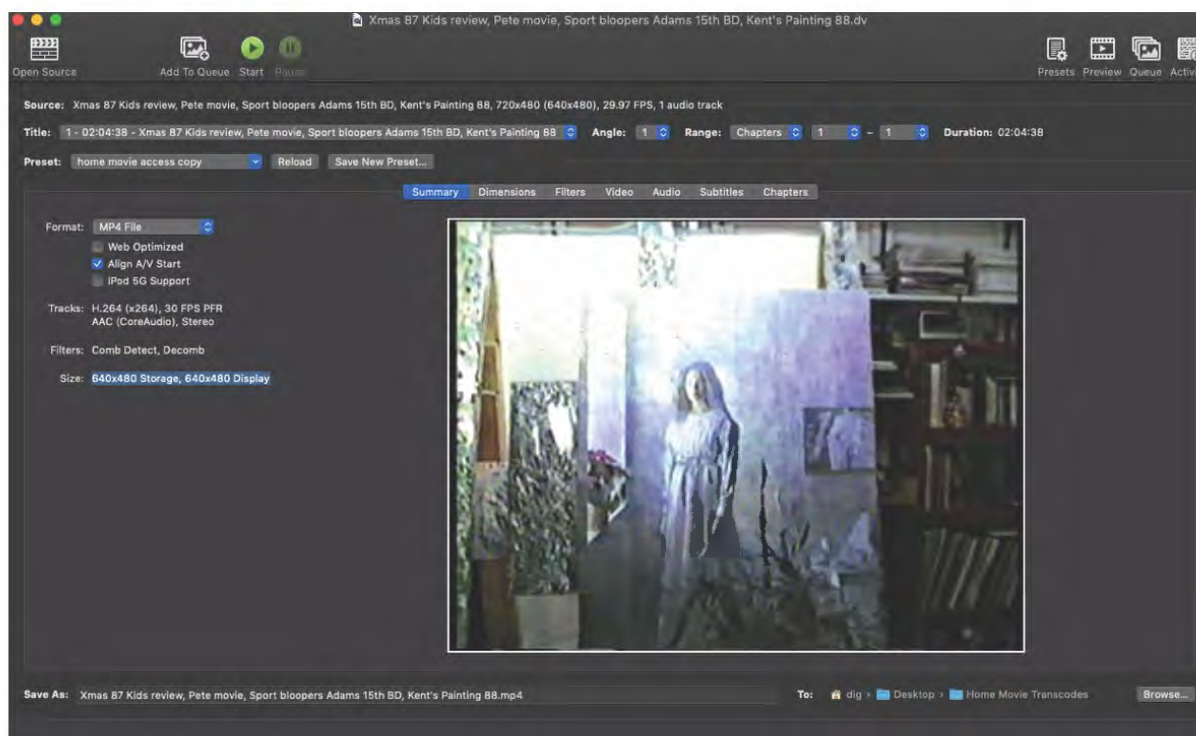


Figure 21. Home movie video file ready for transcode using Handbrake.

3.2.4 Transcription

Kent Bellows was not known for giving many interviews or artist talks about the meaning behind his work. Instead, he often opted for letting the art speak for itself. One significant exception was a televised feature called *Is It Art?* produced by Nebraska ETV Cultural Affairs and originally aired on local public access on August 30, 1993.⁴⁴ The program provided viewers with a discourse between John McKirahan, Director of the Museum of Nebraska Art, and Bellows as they talked about art and life while touring his home and studio. Through this valuable dialogue, the program asks its viewers to consider what makes something a work of art.

[John:] "How close are you to being done with this?"

[Kent:] "Maybe 40 hours."

[John:] "His drawings and paintings are exquisite pieces of some of the highest degree of technical sophistication I think I have ever seen and so much so that a lot of people can't tell them apart from photographs. Almost, I might say, a mystical sense of realism."

⁴⁴ "Nebraska Painter and Draftsman Kent Bellows," December 4, 1996.
<https://web.archive.org/web/19961204014936/http://net.unl.edu/~swi/arts/bellows.html>.

Later on in the program, Bellows is prompted to discuss what he sees as his role as an artist and as a human being:

[Kent:] "I'm a good actor. The role is my life. I mean, I'm playing myself so it's like the mask in the old horror movie where they wear the mask and then they can't take the mask off. The mask becomes the face. Or, what we were saying about acting, you know, it becomes real."

Through audiovisual material and transcripts from *Is It Art?* the public is able to better comprehend the psychological and physical elements involved in the artwork that Bellows created. By researching the private audiovisual content from the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies, we can expand our understanding of the value of art and its role in our individual and collective lives while expanding upon the art and life of Bellows.

Transcription can become pricey, as well as time consuming, which is unfortunate because it is a valuable asset to the audiovisual material in a given collection.⁴⁵ Transcription increases access to content by creating another way to understand audiovisual material through written text while also increasing discoverability within a collection. Certain words or phrases that are repeated in individual files can then be linked to each other to create relationships in a collection to broaden the context of the content.

With preliminary excerpts, I did a test with one file by uploading it to two different web-based applications that transcribe audiovisual content through the aid of machine learning. A test file was first uploaded to NYU Stream,⁴⁶ and after that I uploaded a file to Trint.⁴⁷ NYU Stream was only tested because it was included in the cost of my tuition while attending NYU. Trint charges by the month or by the year depending on how much you can pay and how many files

⁴⁵ "About | Smithsonian Digital Volunteers." Accessed March 5, 2021. <https://transcription.si.edu/about>.

⁴⁶ Bond, Patrick. "Research Guides: Qualitative Data Analysis: Transcription Software." Accessed January 25, 2021. <https://guides.nyu.edu/QDA/transcription>.

⁴⁷ "Trint, Beyond Transcription." Accessed January 25, 2021. <https://app.trint.com/>.

you need to transcribe.⁴⁸ There are many different services for transcription out there, all of which have a varying degree of accuracy and ease of use. In the end, Trint was chosen as the better service due to several factors. Trint is easier to use and more accurate than NYU Stream. There are far more options for working with, and editing, a file, and there are many more options for exporting and using your transcription file.⁴⁹ Through the initial use of transcription, subtitle files and text document transcription files were created for Bellows art content.

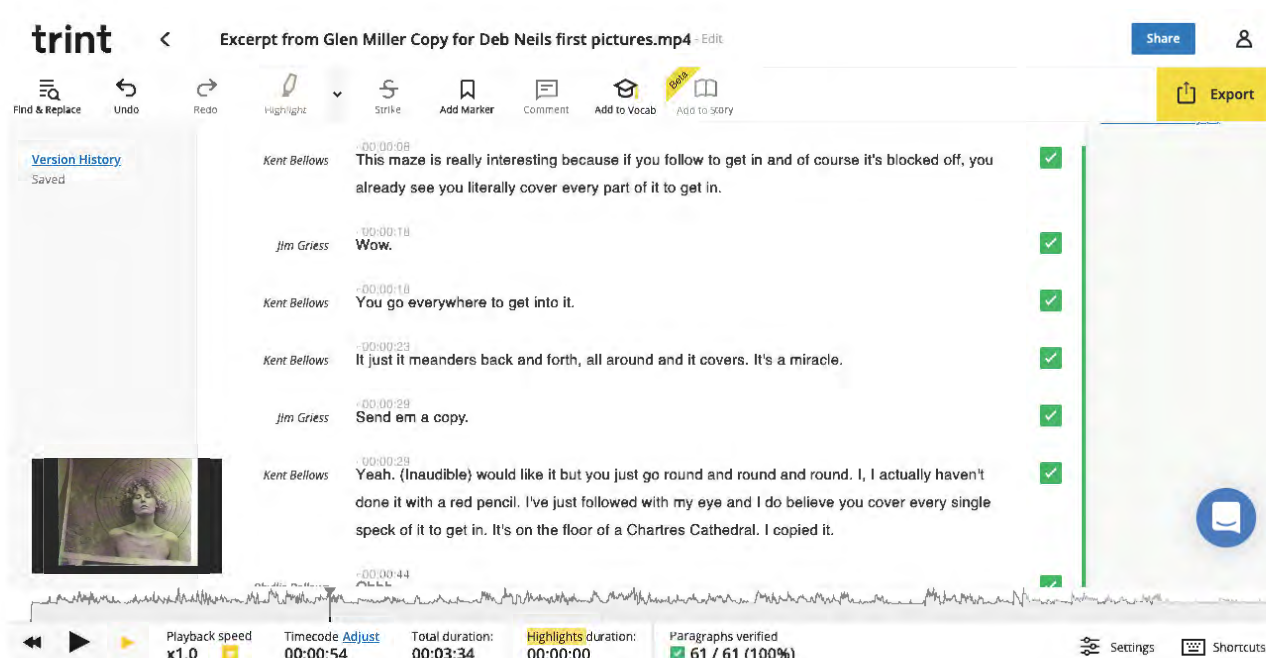


Figure 22. Transcription process using Trint.

3.2.5 Subtitling

From Trint, I exported a Word document (.docx) file and a SubRip (.srt) or subtitle file. The Word document reads as a transcript which is very useful if you just want to read what someone is saying in the recording. Trint allows you to assign a contributor to each line of dialogue, which is extremely helpful for understanding who is saying what. This attribution is

⁴⁸ "Trint, Beyond Transcription." Accessed January 25, 2021. <https://app.trint.com/account/new-plan>.

⁴⁹ "Exporting Your Trints." Accessed January 25, 2021. <http://support.trint.com/en/articles/3004392-exporting-your-trints>.

maintained in the exported word document. The SubRip file maintains an embedded time code so when audiovisual material is played back, the subtitles will show up based off the time code that was assigned to them in Trint.

For the project, I have found use for the SubRip file in three ways. First, if a SubRip file and a video name are the same, they can playback together when VLC Player is used. A SubRip file can also be uploaded with a video file on sites such as YouTube and the Internet Archive, and, again, subtitles will play along with the video based on the embedded time code set in Trint. One final example of SubRip files is being able to burn them into a video file using Handbrake.⁵⁰ With Handbrake, a video file and a SubRip file can be imported together and then transcoded together by selecting “Burned In” under the subtitles tab.

This project's central goal is to create a collection of audiovisual material of Bellows art content that students, artists, and historians can experience. I want to prepare for any number of scenarios that might arise when presenting or disseminating this content in physical or virtual space. For this project, I decided that I want to have four deliverables for each Kent Bellows art content excerpt to give me a wider range of accessibility options; 1x video file, 1x subtitle file, 1x transcript as a text document, and 1 x video file with subtitles burned in.

3.2.6 Preliminary Excerpts

There are three preliminary excerpts that provide excellent examples of what kind of content exists within these home movies. Those excerpts can be viewed through unlisted YouTube links mentioned in the footnotes. The first excerpt from *Xmas 87 Kids review*, *Pete movie*, *Sport bloopers Adams 15th BD*, *Kent's Painting 88* is a conversation that took place in

⁵⁰ “HandBrake Documentation — Audio and Subtitle Defaults.” Accessed February 24, 2021. <https://handbrake.fr/docs/en/latest/advanced/audio-subtitle-defaults.html>.

1988 in Bellows' living room in the house he lived in until the completion of the 3303 Leavenworth studio. In this excerpt, Bellows is discussing an idea for an artwork with family members while making reference to reflections about his life. Bellows also mentions the surgery he received in 1972 to remove a ganglion cyst in his left wrist to continue to be able to have the use of his drafting hand.⁵¹

Kent Bellows: [00:05:36] I'm really fascinated by how the way, you know, your life goes.

Kent Bellows: [00:05:41] It could just as easily have gone another direction.

Vernon F. Bellows: [00:05:44] Ah true.

Kent Bellows: [00:05:46] You know that feeling?

Vernon F. Bellows: [00:05:47] Yeah, I know that feeling.

Kent Bellows: [00:05:49] And I and it also relates to dreams because you have these dreams and sometimes they, they projections of these alternate realities. What could have been at the road forked another way.

Kent Bellows: [00:06:02] But, you know, I'm doing well now, even a simple thing like had I not found these two surgeons in Rochester, Minnesota, at the Mayo Clinic to do this surgery.

Vernon F. Bellows: [00:06:15] Right right.

Kent Bellows: [00:06:16] I guarantee I wouldn't be doing this. I'd be doing something else.

Vernon F. Bellows: [00:06:18] Yeah, that's right. Like selling pencils on the corner.

Kent Bellows: [00:06:21] Exactly.

Kent Bellows: [00:06:25] Had I well, you know, on and on all the different possibilities.

Kent Bellows: [00:06:29] So I'm going to do these self-portraits of me in these situations really, very real, almost as real as the reality I am in. These, these alternate incarnations.

⁵¹ Molly S. Hutton, foreword by Richard L. Davidson, note of appreciation by Jack F. Becker, *Beyond Realism: The Works of Kent Bellows 1970–2005* (Omaha: The Kent Bellows Studio & Center for Visual Arts 2010), 108.

In another excerpt from later on in the same video, Kent Bellows brings over a drawing to Vernon and Phyllis Bellows' house in order for the drawing to be filmed before being sent off to the framer. The artwork in the recording *Angela Looking Out*, 1988 was sold through Tatistcheff Gallery Inc., New York to The Metropolitan Museum of Art later that year.⁵² In this recording, Kent Bellows provides important details about the painting he rendered in the background of the drawing and his justification for using that element in the artwork. He goes on to convey his views on realist versus abstract art and how the respective forms function in this artwork as an allegory for a larger conversation.⁵³

Vernon F. Bellows [00:01:27] And that background is?

Kent Bellows [00:01:29] A painting by a friend of mine, an abstract painter, John Sparagana.

Vernon F. Bellows [00:01:32] Yeah.

Kent Bellows [00:01:34] But, I think it's neat because there's a real irony in a... Using another artist's work to kind of augment one's own expression. Plus, sort of a... Funny... A paradox in that on the one side of the spectrum, it shows the humility of the realist who is submissive to the motif, even if it's another man's art. I mean, I was very careful to copy John's painting as closely as I could on the other end of the spectrum.

Kent Bellows [00:02:12] The arrogance of the realist, who figures he can contain everything, even abstraction. And of course, that's my real position.

Vernon F. Bellows [00:02:19] Yeah, yeah.

Kent Bellows [00:02:21] I've always felt realist art can contain abstraction. Abstraction by definition, cannot contain realism.

Vernon F. Bellows [00:02:26] Yeah, good point. Yeah, I like that.

⁵² "The Met Collection," *Angela, Looking Out*, 1988, Kent Bellows, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/485030>.

⁵³ "Kent Bellows - Realist vs Abstract Art - YouTube." Accessed January 25, 2021. https://youtu.be/qMe_ydI-QGw



I've always felt realist art can



contain abstraction.

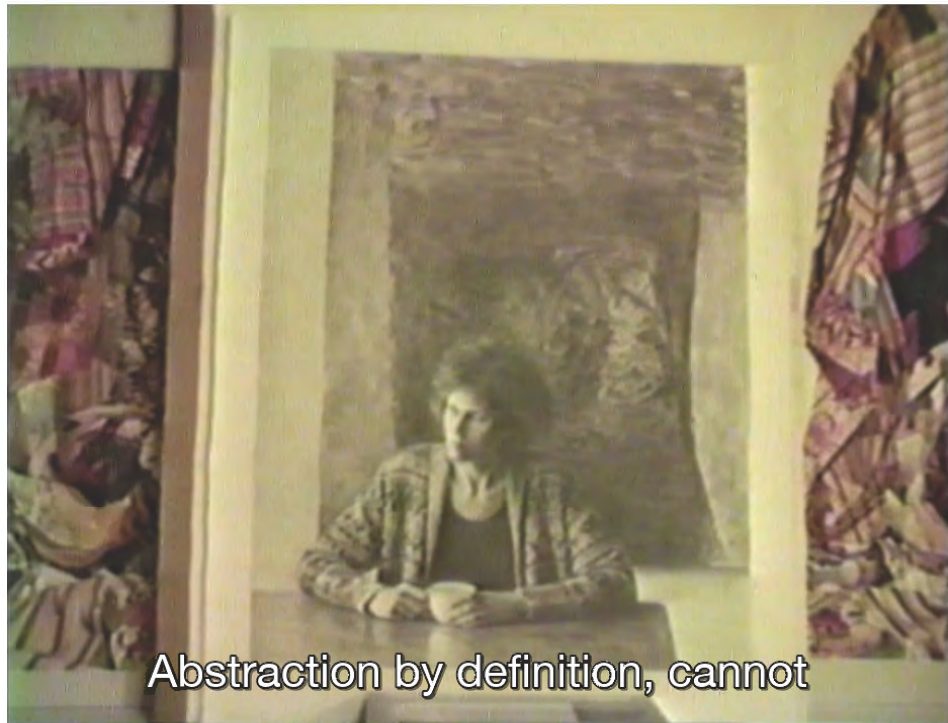


Figure 23-26. *Angela, Looking Out*, 1988 in front of watercolors done by Vernon F. Bellows.
Images courtesy of the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies.

In a different video excerpt from the file *Glen Miller Copy for Deb Neils First Pictures*, Bellows is sitting on the couch of the Griess family's home with several family members present.⁵⁴ He has a portfolio with four drawings propped up against the cushions of the couch and proceeds to talk about them. The first two artworks *Angie with Maze*, 1989 and the larger *Mandala*, 1990 have a depiction of a maze in the background that Bellows explains is a copy of a labyrinth on the floor of Chartres Cathedral, located in France.⁵⁵

Kent Bellows This maze is really interesting because if you follow to get in and of course it's blocked off, you already see you literally cover every part of it to get in. You go everywhere to get into it. It just it meanders back and forth, all around and it covers. It's a miracle...you just go round and round and round. I, I actually haven't done it with a red pencil. I've just followed with my eye and I do believe you cover every single speck of it to get in. It's on the floor of a Chartres Cathedral. I copied it.

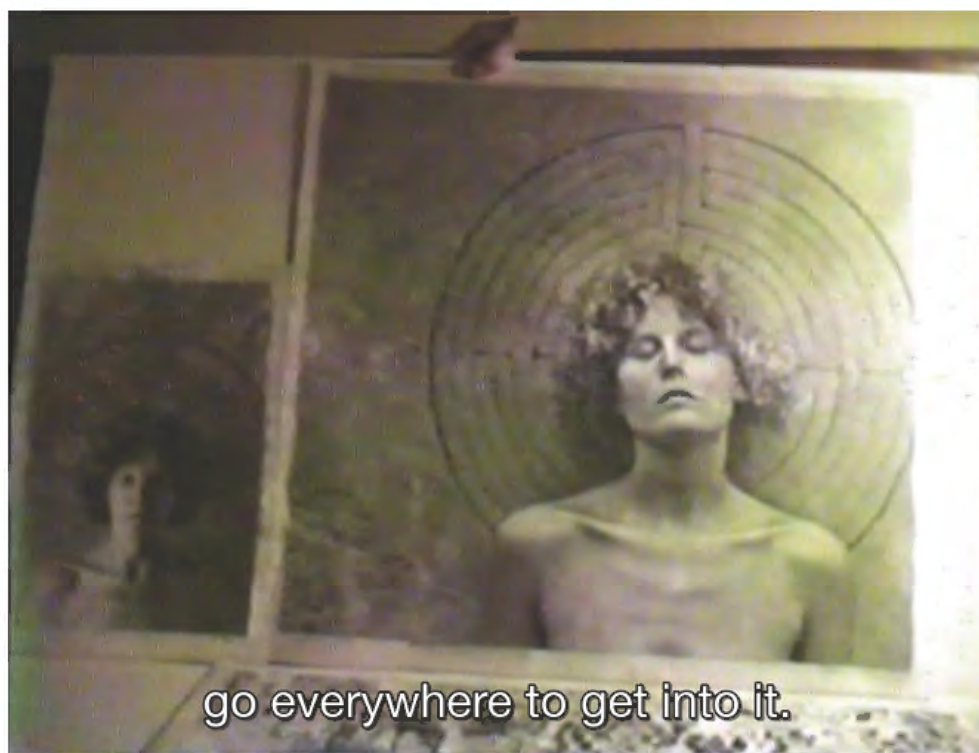


Figure 27. *Angie with Maze*, 1989 (Left) and *Mandala*, 1990 (Right).
Image courtesy of the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies.

⁵⁴ "Excerpt from Glen Miller Copy for Deb Neils First Pictures - YouTube." Accessed January 25, 2021. <https://youtu.be/ZzY02o4m7rg>.

⁵⁵ "Chartres Cathedral." In *Wikipedia*, January 20, 2021. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartres_Cathedral#Labyrinth.



Left: Figure 28. *Mandala*, 1990, Pencil on paper, 18 x 19 ½ in. Image courtesy of the Estate of Kent Bellows.
 Right: Figure 29. Labyrinth rendering, Chartres Cathedral. Source Wikipedia.



Left: Figure 30. *Angie with Maze*, 1989, Pencil on paper. Image courtesy of the Estate of Kent Bellows.
 Right: Figure 31. Interior Floor of Chartres Cathedral. Source: Wikipedia.

The second artwork discussed is titled *Danuta Waiting in the Cold*, 1985. Bellows again explains elements of the artwork. This time the footage includes the process for how, and where, he photographed images to create the work. Bellows would often combine many photographic references while also imagining and rendering additional elements within the composition. This process debunks any perception that Bellows merely copied a single photograph in a mechanical fashion. Here is an excerpt of the recording:

Vernon F. Bellows [00:01:09] Danuta what?

Kent Bellows [00:01:12] Waiting in the Cold.



Left: Figure 32. Close up of *Danuta Waiting in the Cold*, 1985.

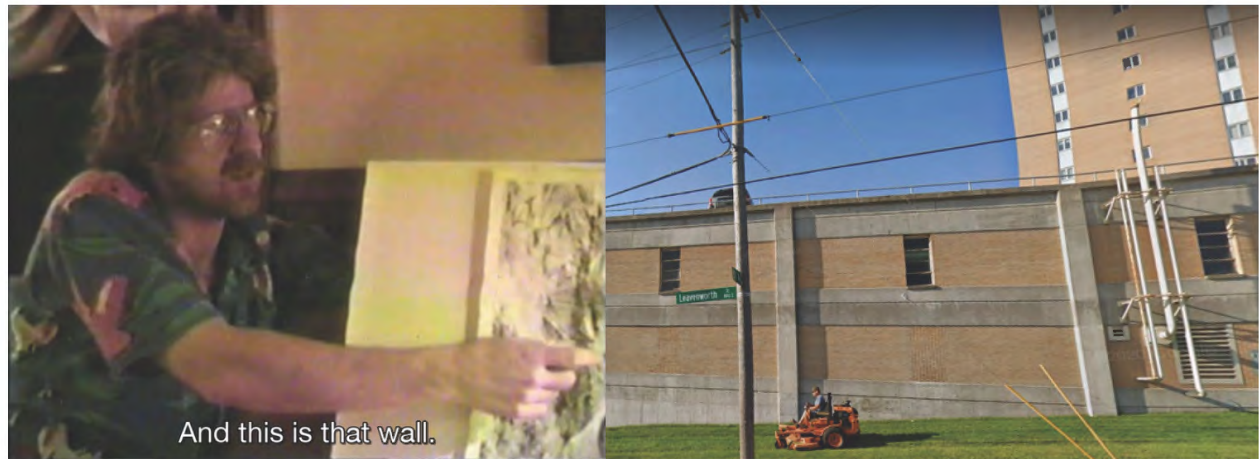
Image courtesy of the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies.

Right: Figure 33. *Danuta Waiting in the Cold*, 1985, Pencil on paper, 23 x 29 1/2 in.

Image courtesy of the Estate of Kent Bellows.

Kent Bellows [00:01:23] And the way I did it, I went over and shot this background, which is over by Five Star Video on Leavenworth.

Kent Bellows [00:01:32] If you go further west, just that there's a big, tall building. I think it's an old folk's place or something. There's a wall all along Leavenworth.



Left: Figure 34. Kent Bellows showing family members *Danuta Waiting in the Cold*, 1985.

Image courtesy of the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies.

Right: Figure 35. One of the cited photography locations for *Danuta Waiting in the Cold*, 1985. Source: Google.

Kent Bellows [00:01:41] And this is that wall.

Phyllis Bellows [00:01:42] Oh, Masonic Manor (Elmwood Tower).

Kent Bellows [00:01:44] This is the wall. So, I shot that rushed home and shot Danuta within probably 20, 40 minutes of that. So, the light wouldn't change in the direction is identical and the distances are all measured and, and set up identically. So, she was never there. She was out back by the garage but then put the two together.

Bellows' history with the University of Nebraska at Omaha goes back to when he briefly attended the school as a student in the fall of 1967.⁵⁶ Shortly thereafter, he elected to pursue his artmaking full time and departed from the university. Then in 1992, he lent his talents to the UNO Print Workshop⁵⁷ by creating and demonstrating to the students the process for creating an edition of untitled landscape prints. The prints were made by a process called lithography.

KENT BELLOWS



Untitled Landscape
1992, color lithograph, image: 18 7/8 x 24 (47.853 x 60.96), sheet 23 3/8 x 27 3/4 (59.334 x 70.485), edition of 75

Figure 36. UNO Print Workshop website, *Untitled Landscape*, 1992, Kent Bellows.

Contrary to the finished lithograph for the UNO Print Workshop (Figure 36.), this home movie excerpt illustrates Bellows' original intention to print a self-portrait of himself lying in an

⁵⁶ Molly S. Hutton, foreword by Richard L. Davidson, note of appreciation by Jack F. Becker, *Beyond Realism: The Works of Kent Bellows 1970–2005* (Omaha: The Kent Bellows Studio & Center for Visual Arts 2010), 108.

⁵⁷ College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media. "UNO Print Workshop," March 12, 2018. unomaha.edu/college-of-communication-fine-arts-and-media/art-and-art-history/about-us/print-workshop.php.

arrangement of house plants. The study seen in the home movie excerpt and in Figure 38. is rendered in pencil and would actually end up as a larger and much more detailed drawing in charcoal and white crayon on paper titled, *Self-Portrait, Resting*, 1989 (not pictured).



Left: Figure 37. Kent Bellows' hand with *Self-Portrait, (Resting)*, 1986.

Image courtesy of the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies.

Right: Figure 38. *Self-Portrait (Resting)*, 1986, Pencil on paper, 11 ½ x 15 ½ in.

Image courtesy of the Estate of Kent Bellows.

Vernon F. Bellows [00:02:40] But it's a gonna be a litho down at UNO.

Kent Bellows [00:02:45] Yeah.

Vernon F. Bellows [00:02:46] That's fascinating.

Kent Bellows [00:02:48] They're bringing in my printer, Richard Finch for me.

Vernon F. Bellows [00:02:50] Oh, they are?

Kent Bellows [00:02:50] Oh, yeah.

Vernon F. Bellows [00:02:51] Well, that's right, UNO's gonna.

Kent Bellows [00:02:53] And we're going to do it as a workshop.

Kent Bellows [00:02:57] So the kids will be up there during the printing and everything.

These brief preliminary excerpts yield a great deal of information in a short duration of time while showing how open and comfortable Bellows was with vocalizing his views about his artwork and profession. These excerpts convey the range of knowledge Bellows had about

artistic techniques while demonstrating how he used Omaha's surroundings and influences from global cultural sites as reference material. There is no doubt that these home movies document content that is inspiring to watch.

3.3 Digital Media

The digital material that is physically accounted for at this time is stored on the MERMAID_NY hard drive. There are digital scans of the home movie notes, but there are also books, newspaper clippings, and articles pertaining to Bellows that have been transferred by email and smartphone to me by Jim and Robin Griess. Those PDF and .jpeg image files are currently stored and organized into two Google drive folders “Bellows - Book and article scans from Jim via email” and “Bellows - Images sent by Robin via cell phone”. At some point, there will also be subtitle and transcription files that will need to be considered for preservation as well.

The MERMAID_NY hard drive primarily holds video, audio, and text/image files with a few miscellaneous files as well. As seen in the workflow documentation, access copies of the VHS tapes were predominantly generated in the DV container format with a few exceptions, including .mp4, .avi, and .m4v container formats. The MERMAID_NY Inventory was generated utilizing the Terminal command line.⁵⁸

ls -lhR “volume here” in my case “/Volumes/MERMAID_NY”

This command line is what allowed me to see everything located on the external hard drive. The folders, subfolders, and files with extensions are arranged alphanumerically, and corresponding file size and date modified information are located in the spreadsheet.⁵⁹ As Figures 39. and 40.

⁵⁸ McKay, Dave. “How to Use the Ls Command to List Files and Directories on Linux.” How-To Geek. Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://www.howtogeek.com/448446/how-to-use-the-ls-command-on-linux/>.

⁵⁹ See Appendix I. MERMAID_NY Inventory 2020-11-15.

illustrate, video files (specifically .dv files) take up the majority of the disk space on the hard drive with a utilization of 3.5 Terabytes of 5 Terabytes of storage. Image/text files are the next largest in total disk usage. There are two audio files, one recording of Marvin Griess and one of Phyllis Bellows in .m4a Apple MPEG-4 audio format.

File Types, Count, Sizes & Percentages

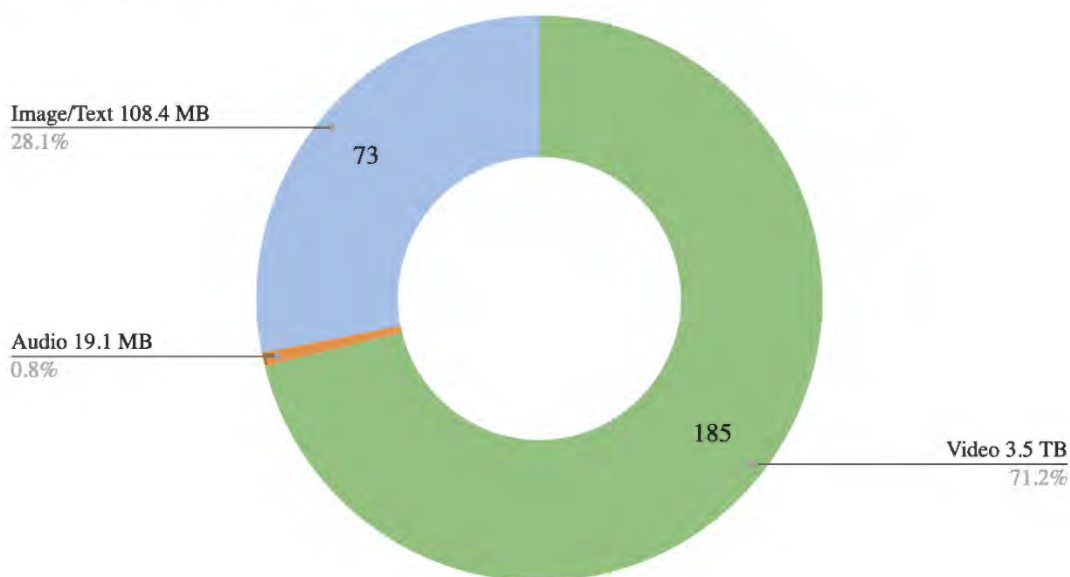


Figure 39. Pie chart showing only the collection stored on the MERMAID_NY hard drive. 2020.

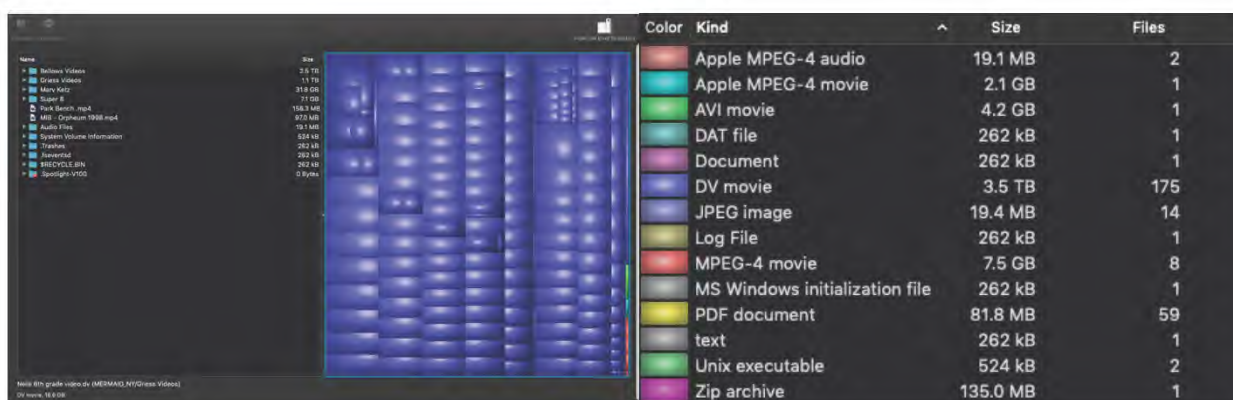


Figure 40. MERMAID_NY file types broken down by format and sizes using Disk Inventory X.

In addition to using Terminal commands, Disk Inventory X⁶⁰ was used to get another view of what exactly is on the MERMAID_NY hard drive (this includes the miscellaneous files). With this GUI (graphic user interface), users can explore a given volume with an interactive graphical representation, as well as file type, size, and count, which in some ways is similar to the Terminal output. By executing `mediainfo`⁶¹ in Terminal on a sampling of files (audiovisual, text, and image) on the MERMAID_NY hard drive and outputting that information to a text document,⁶² a record of the technical metadata for each type of file is created. This information allows a present or future user to understand what might need to be done with the file to ensure things like playback and general usability

3.4 Digital Storage

The digital materials that make up the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies are located on network-attached storage (NAS) that Jim Griess set up in the Griess home in Omaha, NE. A copy of those digital files is stored on MERMAID_NY, a 5TB External Solid-State Drive (SSD). A small zip-up carrying case was purchased, along with the drive, to protect the housing and the drive for transport and for general storage ease. The hard drive usually sits on a desk or in a closet drawer of a Brooklyn, NY apartment with no consistent climate control. Regardless of that, the hard drive is kept as cool and as dry as possible.

3.5 Naming Conventions

Jim Griess used the titles on the VHS tape labels to generate the titles for the digital files. In some cases, information from Bellows' notes appears in the title of the corresponding digital file. The digital file names that Jim Griess created do not conform to best practices for digital file

⁶⁰ "Disk Inventory X." Accessed November 17, 2020. www.derlien.com.

⁶¹ twoBit Preservation. "TwoBit Script Library." Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://twobitpreservation.com/script-library>.

⁶² See Appendix I. MERMAID_NY Technical Metadata File Samples.

naming.⁶³ Several file names are too long, there are spaces in between words, and in some, special characters are used. These can include: ~ ! @ # \$ % ^ & * () ` ; < > ? , [] { } ' " and |. Some special characters are reserved for the computer operating system environment, so including them in a digital file name can potentially cause errors or loss of information being digitally processed.⁶⁴ If there are diacritics present in a collection you are archiving, special guidance for preserving these characters will also need to be taken into consideration.⁶⁵ Therefore, potential adjustments in regard to the file names of these home movies should be considered.

3.6 File Organization

- Audio Files
- Bellows Videos
 - Albert Sports Fish Reviews 91 Vinton Motors Dale Munson
 - Family Video July 90 to Dec 1990
 - Husker Football
 - 1994 Orange Bowl
 - 1995 Fiesta Bowl
 - KBS Newson TV
 - Mickey Donald Vol II Disney Xmas
 - Pete's comm, Bloopers, Xmas 88, Pete Com, Regan, k-4 figure drawings Vince Pee Wee
 - VHS From Kent's Studio
 - Vern's Directory
 - 1988 Mickey, Disney, Chip Dale Hairspray
 - Class pics, Nancy's Rain, Painting, Godzilla
 - Hollywood reviews Pete com Betty Boop
 - Super Dave Letterman Bloopers Home Video 1990
 - Xmas 94, Casey on bike, Vince review, Kathy visit 95 Robin's Party
- Griess Videos
 - Mini DV
 - Neil
- MIB - Orpheum 1998.mp4
- Park Bench .mp4
- Marv Ketz
- Super 8
 - nonfamily

Figure 41. Hierarchical folder structure for MERMAID_NY created by Jim Griess. 2020.

⁶³ "Best Practices for File Naming." Stanford Libraries, Stanford University, California. Accessed February 17, 2021. <https://library.stanford.edu/research/data-management-services/data-best-practices/best-practices-file-naming>.

⁶⁴ Special Collections. "File-Naming Tutorial." Accessed April 15, 2021. <https://specialcollections.williams.edu/recordsmanagement/file-naming-tutorial/>.

⁶⁵ Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez. "Invisible Defaults and Perceived Limitations: Processing the Juan Gelman Files." Medium, October 31, 2016. <https://medium.com/on-archivy/invisible-defaults-and-perceived-limitations-processing-the-juan-gelman-files-4187fdd36759>.

Individual files are now organized into five top level folders: Audio Files, Bellows Videos, Griess Videos, Marv Ketz, and Super 8. A few stray files are left unorganized such as ‘MIB - Orpheum 1998.mp4’, which should be in the Griess folder. The scans of handwritten notes are located in the Bellows and Griess folders, respectively. A full inventory of MERMAID_NY is referred to in the appendix.⁶⁶

4. Future Preservation & Access

The Bellows 8 mm and Super 8 films need to be located, assessed, and hopefully digitally scanned at 1080p or ideally 2K+ if the cost is not too high. The digital files created from the VHS and MiniDV tapes could be preserved at a higher archival standard with additional preservation equipment and procedures. However, because of the cost and availability of equipment such as a time base corrector, this may be the best copy of the original format available. MiniDV tapes would benefit from further analysis with DVRescue⁶⁷ to check for migration errors. The digital files of this home movie collection were generated with very few resources in terms of actual hardware and cost. Many hours have been spent transferring, viewing, and identifying desired Kent Bellows art content. However, by identifying and isolating desired content (in this case, the audiovisual content related to the art of Bellows) within this collection, the potential cost of digitizing and migrating a selection of this collection could decrease drastically.

4.1 Preservation with a Budget

Working with an organization like Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) and their Preservation Access Program⁶⁸ for artists and arts organizations would help ensure that

⁶⁶ See Appendix I. MERMAID_NY Inventory 2020-11-15.

⁶⁷ *Mipops/Dvrescue*. 2019. Reprint, MIPoPS, 2020. <https://github.com/mipops/dvrescue>.

⁶⁸ “Preservation Access Program.” BAVC, October 14, 2015. <https://www.bavc.org/preserve-media/preservation-access-program>.

appropriate equipment and procedures are followed. If successful with the application, the Preservation Access Program cost of services are reduced by 50%. An initial quote was obtained by contacting BAVC through their Preservation Services Inquiry form.⁶⁹ The quote is based on a count I provided for 25 VHS tapes, along with each tape's duration. With this quote, and with the knowledge of the cost of a year's subscription to Trint, a preliminary budget that includes tape to digital transfer and transcription costs has been drafted. This budget does not include additional digital preservation costs such as physical or digital storage. Since the Kent Bellows Studio and the Kent Bellows Mentoring Program are part of an arts non-profit with 501(c)(3) status, it would be advised to consider submitting this budget to a grant funding organization such as the National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF) in order to offset these preservation costs.⁷⁰

| Product | Sales Price | Quantity | Subtotal | Discount | Total Price |
|--|-------------|--------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Preservation Shipping: Extra Large | \$60.00 | | \$60.00 | | \$60.00 |
| Preservation Transfer fr VHS to Digital File (121-180 min) | \$195.00 | 1 | \$195.00 | 50.00% | \$97.50 |
| Preservation Transfer fr VHS to Digital File (181-240 min) | \$215.00 | 1 | \$215.00 | 50.00% | \$107.50 |
| Preservation Transfer fr VHS to Digital File (61-90 min) | \$155.00 | 9 | \$1,395.00 | 50.00% | \$697.50 |
| Preservation Transfer fr VHS to Digital File (91-120 min) | \$175.00 | 14 | \$2,450.00 | 50.00% | \$1,225.00 |
| | | 25 VHS tapes | | | |
| Trint Subscription for One Year | \$480 | | | | \$480 |
| | | | | Grand Total | \$2,187.50 |

Figure 42. Potential Budget for Preservation of Kent Bellows art content with the Family Home Movies. Transfer quotes provided by BAVC and reproduced here with their permission.

4.2 Storage

Even though digitization and data migration have occurred, not all of the home movie collection has a digital file associated with it. Furthermore, the original source materials that

⁶⁹ "Preservation Services Inquiry." Accessed February 4, 2021. <https://bavc.tfaforms.net/320912>.

⁷⁰ "National Film Preservation Foundation: Overview." Accessed February 4, 2021. <https://www.filmpreservation.org/nfpf-grants>.

created the digital files need to be retained to follow best practices for preservation. Write-protection tabs on VHS and MiniDV tapes should be removed to ensure content on the tapes is not recorded over. It is recommended to continue to store these materials in a cool and dry environment and to use acid-free storage containers. Because MERMAID_NY is on an SSD hard drive, it should not be overlooked that there is potential for disk failure.⁷¹ This hard drive is a reasonably inexpensive consumer product. In cases where archives can afford it, the use of a combination of storage devices is recommended which involves backups being made to LTO tapes or migrated to cloud storage.⁷² Because two versions of this collection exist, one in Omaha, NE and one in Brooklyn, NY, it will be important to keep in mind that if changes are made to the digital content on one, the other will need to be updated to ensure continuity.

4.3 Metadata

To know what to do with digital content, understanding and analyzing the metadata should be an active part of a digital preservation workflow. A digital preservation standard such as the one developed by NDSA (National Digital Stewardship Alliance) will need to be implemented to ensure these home movie digital files are understood and remain viewable for the long term.⁷³ Metadata fields such as filename, size, creation date, modified date, duration, format, bit rate, standard, frame rate, scan type are all important information. As mentioned before, running commands such as mediainfo will collect technical metadata for a given file and be considered for the entire collection.

⁷¹ Reine, David, Mike Kahn. *In Search of the Long-Term Archiving Solution — Tape Delivers Significant TCO Advantage over Disk*. December 23, 2010. PDF file. <https://www.clipper.com/research/TCG2010054.pdf>.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ National Digital Stewardship Alliance - Digital Library Federation. "Levels of Digital Preservation." Accessed April 15, 2021. <http://ndsa.org/publications/levels-of-digital-preservation>.

4.4 Fixity & Checksums

Fixity and checksums help ensure data integrity.⁷⁴ Data can be lost or corrupted in both the hardware and the software used. Data can be damaged during transfer (example: flipped bits) and in the storage of digital content (example: bit rot). Ideally, checksums should have been run in Omaha, NE before files were transferred to the MERMAID_NY hard drive. A program such as rsync⁷⁵ should have been used instead of dragging and dropping the files. This process would ensure that all data being sent was being received properly and completely.

4.5 Access

Ensuring that audiovisual files will be playable in the future is a crucial aspect of digital preservation. With a program like VLC Player,⁷⁶ most audiovisual files stand a chance of being playable. However, it should be noted that some formats are recommended more than others and the list of files can change over time.⁷⁷ Software such as QCTools⁷⁸ should also be used to further analyze digital video files.

A key ethical concern that needs to be addressed is the future access to this content. There is no way of knowing if Vernon F. Bellows or Kent Bellows ever meant for these recordings to be seen outside of the family viewing audience. It has been demonstrated by the preservation steps outlined here that there is potentially useful information regarding the art and life of Kent Bellows within these home movies, but perhaps there is also unusable or potentially

⁷⁴ De Stefano, Paula, Carl Fleischhauer, Andrea Goethals, Michael Kjörling, et al. *CHECKING YOUR DIGITAL CONTENT AN NDSA PUBLICATION*. PDF file. <http://webarchive.loc.gov/all/20180208112216/http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/documents/NDSA-Fixity-Guidance-Report-final100214.pdf>.

⁷⁵ “Rsync.” Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://rsync.samba.org/>.

⁷⁶ “Official Download of VLC Media Player, the Best Open Source Player - VideoLAN.” Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://www.videolan.org/vlc/>.

⁷⁷ “Recommended Formats Statement – Table of Contents | Resources (Preservation, Library of Congress).” Web page. Accessed November 17, 2020. loc.gov/preservation/resources/rfs/TOC.html.

⁷⁸ “QCTools.” Accessed November 17, 2020. <https://mediaarea.net/QCTools>.

sensitive and private documentation as well. Several of the conversations I have viewed, contain what I might consider private information about Kent Bellows' personal life that I do not believe are relevant to the potential audiences outlined in this document. In these instances, I have made notes about restricting that content, but how much of this is up to me to decide? Family members close to Bellows and the Estate of Kent Bellows should be consulted and involved in the decision-making process.

As an archivist, there are times when you might come across a home movie collection, or any other collection for that matter, where an author is unknown or little information is known about where the collection came from. How much responsibility does an archivist have to someone or something when they have no familial relationship to content? There is no one right answer to this very complicated question, but there has been some general consensus that institutions should have a published statement about their core values and code of ethics. Those statements are required to be acted out by said institutions. In the area of access and use,⁷⁹ the Society of American Archivists states:

“Access to records is essential in all personal, community, academic, business, and government settings. Archivists should promote and provide the widest possible accessibility of materials, while respecting legal and ethical access restrictions including public statutes, cultural protections, donor contracts, and privacy requirements. While access may be justifiably limited in some instances, archivists still seek to foster open access and unrestricted use as broadly as possible when appropriate.

The goal of use should be considered during every phase of acquisition, description, and access. Even individuals who do not directly use archival materials still benefit indirectly from research, public programs, and other forms of archival work, including an increased awareness that records exist, are being cared for, and can be accessed when needed. Accordingly, use of documentary records should be actively promoted and protected by archivists.”

⁷⁹ “SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics | Society of American Archivists.” Accessed February 15, 2021. <https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>.

In some ways, a familial relationship to the collection can make the question of what to do with the material even more difficult. What if family members disagree with how to handle the materials? In the case of Kent Bellows materials, there was no will or statement written by him detailing what to do with his material and related content once he was gone. The decision to start a mentoring program in his 3303 Leavenworth Street studio building had many challenges during the process of its creation, but it was decided that the program would be a way to preserve the building, its contents, and provide the public (especially high school students and artists) with a valuable community space. The decision to open Bellows' studio to the public continues to prove to be an integral step in expanding and reshaping the artistic landscape in Omaha, NE and beyond. Public access to the audiovisual Bellows art content located within the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movies would further enrich this established community program while contributing meaningful public discourse to Kent Bellows' legacy.



Figure 43. Kent Bellows at his Unitah Apt #5 Studio, 1976, Omaha, NE.
Photograph by Greg Scott (1951-2021).

“When we know the relative value of *things* we can do anything with them. We can build with them without destroying them. Under such conditions they are enhanced by coming into contact with each other. The study of art is the study of the relative value of things. The factors of a work of art cannot be used constructively until their relative values are known. Unstable governments, like unstable works of art, are such as they are because values have not been appreciated.”

Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 1960

Closing Thoughts

As the paper draws to a close, I once again urge living artists to think about and consider archiving their own work while they are living. Draw up a will or a written plan for how you want your personal materials and art to be handled and by whom when you are gone. Much like artmaking, the process of archiving and preservation is a lifelong commitment. A process that often takes on a multi-generational collective approach. The preservation work that was completed throughout 2019-2021 has extended the lifespan of the Bellows/Griess/Wesselmann home movie collection. Still, this work could not have been completed or could have been much more difficult without family members’ efforts before me, like Vernon F. Bellows. The digitization and migration of VHS and MiniDV tapes most certainly would not have been completed without Jim Griess’ efforts. Often home movie collections do not receive this kind of support because archiving and preservation are expensive and time-consuming. The process also requires specialized equipment and knowledge.

Undoubtedly, the work outlined here will need to be completed, updated, or revised. As stated earlier, this is a working document, and not all the work that needs to be done will be completed in my lifetime. However, there are at least three things that should be re-emphasized from Part 4. The Bellows 8 mm and Super 8 films need to be located, assessed, and hopefully digitally scanned at 1080p or ideally 2K+ if the cost is not too high. A digital preservation

standard such as the one developed by NDSA (National Digital Stewardship Alliance) will need to be implemented to ensure these home movie digital files are understood and remain viewable for the long term. Digital preservation practices, regular and semi-regular maintenance regarding storage, fixity, and checksums will need to remain in place for the duration of this collection's life. All of this is to say that additional family members will need to be interested in this stewardship and be given tasks to reflect the needs and desires of maintaining these family memories.

Beyond my family, this project's goal is to provide information and resources to individuals and collectives looking for DIY archiving help. In addition to the background information and the processes for this particular collection, Appendix II. offers a compiled list of resources for artists and archivists in the hopes that others will begin or continue efforts to preserve personal and collective archives. The resources listed here are by no means exhaustive, but many organizations and institutions listed here do great work to ensure that at-risk or unfunded archives can be maintained while ensuring a given collection's longevity. I will close with a statement that I made in a 2019 essay titled *Empathy Surveillance As A Way To Begin To Regain Access To Yourself*, which I wrote as part of a requirement for entrance into the Moving Image Archiving & Preservation program:

I believe in a world rooted in the practice of archiving. To record and review creative self-expression, something that can be an extremely empowering and humbling experience. To be witnessed and be a witness with empathy. To share our personal stories with each other without the threat of violence or imprisonment. Each shared archive has the ability to become a resource and generate conversations that have the potential to aid in reckoning with past and present injustices of the world.

Appendix

I. Documents Related to Kent Bellows

- Kent Bellows Libraries - Compiled by family and staff of the Kent Bellows Studio
- Managing The Family Home Movie Archive - Interview with Robin Griess, 2019
- MERMAID_NY (Kent Bellows Art Content) working 2020-11-04
- MERMAID_NY Inventory 2020-11-15
- MERMAID_NY Technical Metadata File Samples

II. Resources for Artists and Archivists

- Joan Mitchell Foundation Professional Development & Resources for Artists
joanmitchellfoundation.org/professional-development
- Kent Bellows Mentoring Program at Joslyn
joslyn.org/education/kent-bellows-mentoring-program
- NFPF Grants
filmpreservation.org/nfpf-grants
- SAADA (South Asian American Digital Archive) Family Album – Getting Started: Preservation Guide for your Personal Archive
saada.org/familyalbum/resources
- Smithsonian Institution Archives – How to Do Oral History Guide
siarchives.si.edu/history/how-do-oral-history
- Starting an Artist Interview Program: Hard-Earned Lessons on Best Practices by Tim Lillis and Erica Gangsei
sfmoma.org/read/starting-artist-interview-program
- Volunteer Lawyers for The Arts - New York
vlany.org
- Witness – Activists’ Guide to Archiving Video
archiving.witness.org/archive-guide
- XFR Collective
<http://xfrcollective.wordpress.com/resources>

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