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# nam june paik

Becoming  
Robot









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# nam june paik

Becoming  
Robot

EDITED BY MELISSA CHIU AND MICHELLE YUN

Asia Society Museum

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Yale University Press  
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Shuya Abe (technic)

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TELE-PET

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What comes next??  
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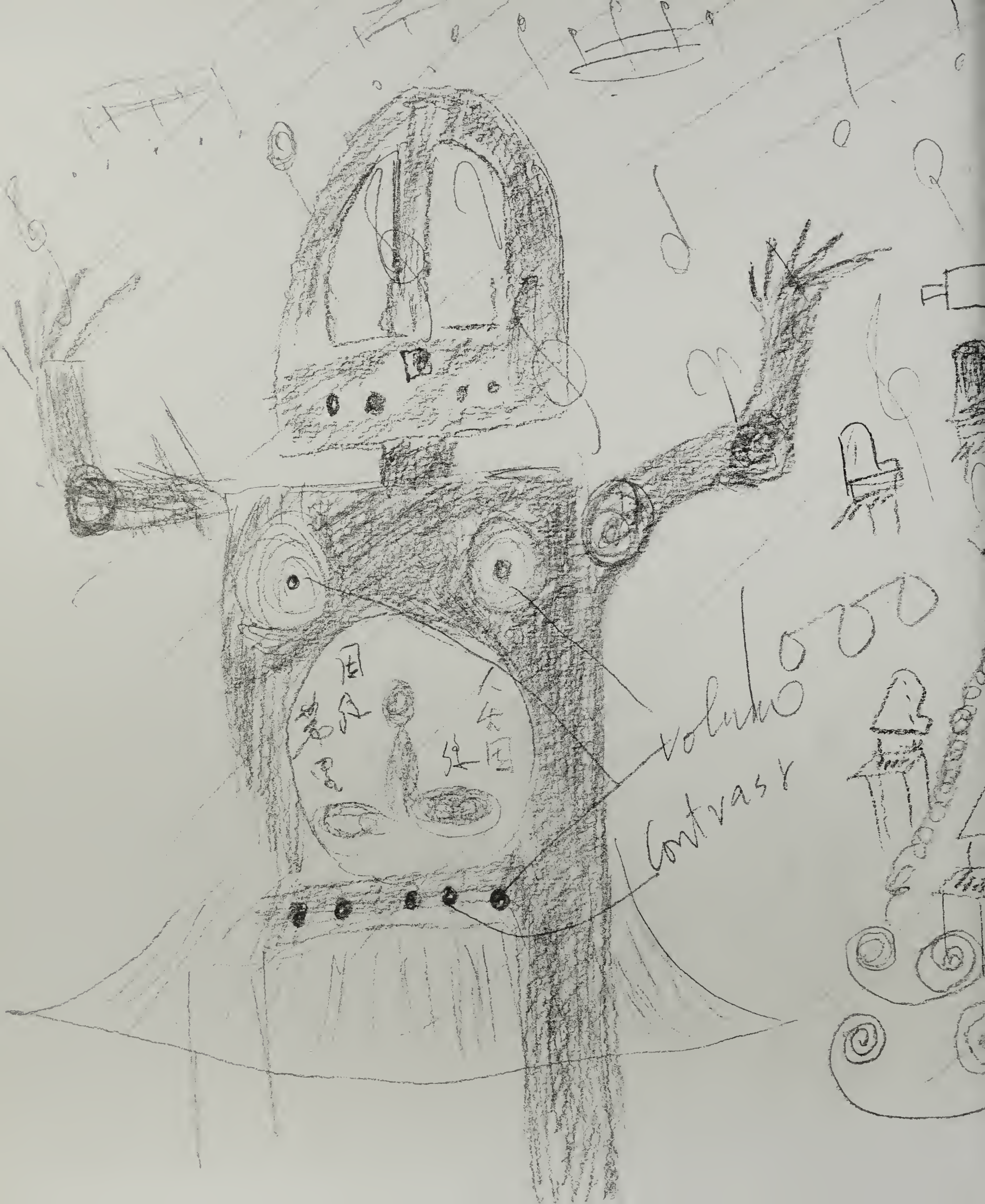
In 1970, play moonlight sonate on the moon.



## CONTENTS

<b>Director's Preface</b>	7
Melissa Chiu	
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	10
Melissa Chiu and Michelle Yun	
<b>Funders of the Exhibition</b>	12
<b>Lenders to the Exhibition</b>	13
<b>NAM JUNE PAIK: EVOLUTION, REVOLUTION, RESOLUTION</b>	15
Michelle Yun	
<b>OK, LET'S GO TO BLIMPIE'S: TALKING ABOUT NAM JUNE PAIK</b>	35
Melissa Chiu	
<b>NO EXIT: VIDEO AND THE READYMADE</b>	47
David Joselit	
<b>WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION</b>	57
<b>REMEMBERING NAM JUNE PAIK</b>	137
Kenzo Digital	138
John Godfrey	139
Christian Jankowski	140
Jon Kessler	141
John Maeda	142
Bill Viola	143
Yoko Ono	144
<b>NAM JUNE PAIK: IN HIS OWN WORDS</b>	147
<b>Nam June Paik: Fast-forward</b>	163
Michelle Yun	
<b>Selected Bibliography</b>	179
<b>Index</b>	181
<b>Contributors' Biographies</b>	187
<b>Photography Credits</b>	189

Opposite: Paik Robot/Tele-pet Flyer, 1964. Typescript (copy) with handwritten annotations in red and green ink. 11 x 8½ in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive (Box 19, F. 11); Gift of the Nam June Paik Estate (plate 2)



Volume 8  
Contrast



# Director's Preface

Melissa Chiu

Museum Director and Senior Vice President, Global Arts and Cultural Programs

Nearly a decade ago when we initiated Asia Society's contemporary art collection to complement our contemporary art exhibition program that began in the early 1990s, our starting point was video art. One of the first acquisitions was a Nam June Paik robot. It was clear even then that not only was Paik the father of video art, but also his legacy would live on through the multidisciplinary approach in his work—now the *modus operandi* for many younger artists—and his forward-thinking experimentation with technology. Paik's practice seemed less about the medium of video and more about an exploration of the potential of technology to create communities, and thus televisions, satellites, and ultimately the Internet were key to his work.

Until now, discussions of Nam June Paik's works have been largely limited to the story of the founding of video art in the 1960s. This exhibition, "Nam June Paik: Becoming Robot," is an attempt to expand our understanding of Paik's contribution to art of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The image on the cover of this book tells it all: wearing glasses with small televisions attached to them—nearly thirty years before the invention of Google Glass—and presiding over two globes, Paik reveals his futuristic worldview. The exhibition focuses on Paik's use of technology to explore issues about creativity and connecting people to art through universal platforms such as television, video, and satellite broadcast.

The genesis of the exhibition began prior to Michelle Yun's tenure as curator of modern and contemporary art at Asia Society, but she has done a wonderful job of breathing life into these many historical moments in Paik's life. It has been a pleasure to work with her on this exhibition and coedit the book together. We have endeavored to capture some of the radical spirit of Paik's art and his performances in this book by commissioning written remembrances from those who were his peers or worked with Paik in his studio or as collaborators. These mem-

Opposite: Untitled (Robot Drawings), 1987. Pencil on paper. 12 x 17¾ in. (30.5 x 45.1 cm). Nam June Paik Estate (detail, plate 33)

ories are presented alongside essays that establish an art-historical context for Paik's works. I would like to acknowledge the assistance and early enthusiasm of the Nam June Paik Estate, in particular the Estate's executor Ken Hakuta and curator Jon Huffman. Their support was invaluable in realizing this exhibition from its inception and we are deeply grateful to them. Paik's notations and sketches are another way to gain insights into his sources of inspiration, and we are grateful to the Nam June Paik Archive at the Smithsonian American Art Museum for granting us permission to reproduce them here.

In addition, thanks are also due to the public and private lenders to this exhibition, whose efforts were an important part of these loans and deserve our deep appreciation (see page 13). This exhibition would not have been possible without the support of major donors who are also listed on page 12 in this catalogue. In particular, we appreciate the continued generosity of the Julis family, as well as that of the many individual donors who have made this project possible, including the members of the Contemporary Art Council: Carol and David Appel, Christine and E. William Aylward, Max and Monique Burger, Gina Lin Chu, Stéphanie Maillery and Stéphan D. Crétier, Trinh D. Doan, Misook Doolittle, Anne B. Ehrenkranz, Stephanie T. Foster, Susan Hayden, Janine W. Hill, Joleen and Mitch Julis, Yung Hee Kim, Deddy Kusuma, Marie Christine Lippman, Helen Little, Harold Newman, Cynthia Hazen Polsky, and Denise Saul.

The commitment of Asia Society's staff is always deeply appreciated in the organization and presentation of our exhibitions. Thanks are due to Josette Sheeran, President, for her enthusiasm for the museum exhibitions and cultural programs. I want to recognize the leadership of Tom Nagorski, Executive Vice President, as well as the staff of the museum: Marion Kocot, Director of Museum



Operations, has managed the exhibition team; Michelle Yun, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, shaped the content of the exhibition and coedited this book; Clare McGowan, Senior Registrar and Collection Manager, with Jennifer Patrick Lima, Associate Registrar, oversaw the coordination and transport of the objects; as well as John Gatti, Installation Manager; Leise Hook, Museum Publication Coordinator, for her work on the book and interpretive materials; and Nick Pozek, Manager of Museum Digital Strategy. Also crucial to the project have been Donna Saunders, Executive Assistant; Nancy Blume, Head of Museum Education Programs; Laili Paksima, Manager of Global Museum Events and Special Initiatives; Rachel Cooper, Director of Global Performing Arts and Special Cultural Initiatives, along with La Frances Hui, Anne Kirkup, and Rachel Rosado; and interns Jeong Yeon Lee, Natalie Pearson, and Bahar Tabaei. Others at Asia Society who should be thanked for their support include Elaine Merguerian, Director of Marketing and Communications, and her team for public relations and marketing; Christine Davies, Managing Director of External Affairs, Shayne Doty, Kim Woodward, Linsey LaFrenier, and the External Affairs team for their fundraising efforts; Dan Washburn, Tahiat Mahboob, and the online team for their contributions to the website production.

Thanks are due as well to Clayton Vogel for the dynamic design of the exhibition; and we appreciate our continuing relationship with Yale University Press, distributors of the accompanying publication, which was beautifully designed by Miko McGinty and Rita Jules.

We hope you will enjoy this exhibition and catalogue.

# Acknowledgments

Melissa Chiu and Michelle Yun

In addition to the many individuals and institutions acknowledged in the Director's Preface who made this exhibition possible, we would like to express our gratitude to the following individuals for their generosity of time and expertise.

Special thanks are due to the individuals at the following organizations for facilitating loans to the exhibition: Nora Riccio, Collection Manager, Department of Contemporary Art, The Art Institute of Chicago; Alexis Johnson, Associate Director, Paula Cooper Gallery; Patrick Peternader, Collection Manager, Friedrich Christian Flick Collection; Nick Lesley, Distribution Manager, Electronic Arts Inter-mix; Dr. Sabine Maria Schmidt, Curator of 20th Century and Contemporary Art, Kunsthalle Bremen; Barbara Moore; Cora Rosevear, Associate Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art; Joe Takeba, Curator, Nagoya City Art Museum; Christine Hennessey, Chief, Research and Scholars Center, Smithsonian American Art Museum, and Lynn Putney, Associate Registrar, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

The exhibition catalogue greatly benefitted from the collaboration of Lorenzo Bianda; Ben Blackwell; Edith Decker-Phillips; Mary Lucier; Roman Mensing; Manfred Montwé; Mary O'Connor; Timm Rautert; Friedrich Rosenstiel; Richard Sorensen, Rights and Reproductions Coordinator, Smithsonian American Art Museum; and Alison Smith, Membership Director, VAGA.

We are also most appreciative to John Godfrey, John G. Hanhardt, Jon Huffman, Barbara London, Stephen Vitiello, Howard Weinberg, and Ken Hakuta for sharing their insightful recollections of working with Paik.

## **Note from the Editor**

Nam June Paik's writings have been quoted and reproduced in their original form throughout the publication to maintain the authenticity of the artist's voice.



## Funders of the Exhibition

Major support for “Nam June Paik: Becoming Robot” comes from the Terra Foundation for American Art.



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# Lenders to the Exhibition

Asia Society, New York

Art Institute of Chicago

Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

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John G. Hanhardt

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The Estate of Peter Moore and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

Nagoya City Art Museum

Nam June Paik Estate

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie

Peter Wenzel Collection





# Nam June Paik

## Evolution, Revolution, Resolution

Michelle Yun

In the era of the smartphone, wireless Internet connection, Google Glass, and twenty-four-hour instant access to international news and events—in an age where all one’s waking hours can be spent in cyberspace—it is hard to imagine a time when these now familiar conveniences seemed like the musings of a mad scientist or inventions from a science fiction fantasy. As early as the 1960s the artist Nam June Paik challenged his contemporaries to imagine a future where today’s innovations might exist. Through an examination of his many progressive ideas and daring artworks, it quickly becomes evident that many of his predictions have in fact come to pass. Paik’s utopian perspective is reflected in his early writings, a wildly creative artistic practice, and innovative working methods. He was determined to create a world where technology could provide the general public unrestricted, participatory access to art and culture. The artist’s philosophy toward technology—especially its relationship to the body—and his interest in the intersection of technology, fine art, and popular culture are reflected in his lifelong passion to push the boundaries of art-making, his desire to humanize technology, and his foresight into how technological innovations would become an integral aspect of our daily lives. Considered “the father of video art,” his groundbreaking use of video technology has created a far-reaching legacy that can be identified in the development of a universally recognized new media genre and the growing numbers in each subsequent generation of new media artists.

Fig. 1. Nam June Paik holding a Sony Portapak, 1974

Nam June Paik was born on July 20, 1932, in Seoul, Korea, the third son and youngest child of a prosperous business family. With the outbreak of the Korean War, the family moved to Hong Kong for a brief period in 1949 and ultimately settled in Tokyo in 1950, where Paik studied music, art history, and aesthetics at Tokyo University. The artist was interested primarily in western classical music, especially the work of Austrian modernist composer Arnold Shoenberg, who was the subject of Paik's graduate thesis. Upon graduating from Tokyo University in 1956 with a degree in aesthetics, the artist moved to Germany to continue his study of music with the composer Thrasybulos Georgiades at the University of Munich, which was followed by two years at the Academy of Music in Freiburg studying under Wolfgang Fortner. It was during this formative period in Germany that the artist became acquainted with Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Wolf Vostell, and others who encouraged his forays into avant-garde art and music. Between the late 1950s and the early 1960s, Paik focused on live, music-based performances, but he also began experimenting in the visual arts.

From the beginning, Paik intended his art objects to be interactive. Many artworks included electronic components, such as *Random Access* (1963/2000), in which the viewer's participation completed the work (fig. 2). For this installation, strips of audiotape were fixed to a wall and viewers were invited to "play" the tape by moving the head of a magnetic tape player across the strips. In this way, the audience became an active collaborator through physical interaction with the artwork. These types of experimental projects were manifest in Paik's first solo exhibition "Exposition of Music—Electronic Television," organized by the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, March 11–20, 1963 (fig. 14). The exhibition was coordinated by the gallery's founder, Rolf Jährling, whose home served as the exhibition venue. As visitors passed through the rooms, they were confronted with familiar but ultimately transformed household objects such as alarm clocks, pianos, radios, and record players that the artist had altered and arranged throughout the living quarters as artworks. Visitors were invited to touch and manipulate them, further creating a disjunction between the viewer's association with the object's original purpose and its new identity in the hands of the artist. The most revelatory aspect of the exhibition was Paik's manipulation of television sets, initiating what would be a lifelong engagement with this medium. The previous year Paik had begun secretly experimenting with television monitors in his studio, and this exhibition marked an important shift for him from a music-based to an object-based fine art practice. The artist had modified thirteen secondhand television sets: some distorted live-television broadcast programming, while others displayed simple

Fig. 2. Paik's *Random Access* at "Exposition of Music—Electronic Television," 1963.  
Photo © Manfred Montwé





digital graphics instead of a transmission. By the 1960s live-television programming had entered its golden age, and television sets were widely accessible to private citizens. Visitors to the exhibition would have been sufficiently familiar with commercial television sets to understand how dramatically Paik had altered them.

Paik's modifications ranged from *Zen for TV* (1963), an object of meditation, in which a television turned on its side was programmed to broadcast a single vertical line, to *Participation TV* (1963), which enabled the viewer to create and control graphic patterns on a television screen by using a microphone and a foot-operated switch. Together the artworks suggest various possible attitudes toward television imagery. These interactive sculptures—created from nontraditional art materials, primarily domestic consumer electronics found in the home—signal the artist's interest in bridging the gap between art and life using the human body as a catalyst to activate his artworks. By inviting the audience to collaborate, Paik, like many of his fellow avant-garde contemporaries, was attempting to break down the stigma of elitism in fine art. Paik's interest in rejecting passive consumption anticipated twenty-first century discussions about social interaction through multimedia platforms.

George Maciunas, the leader of the New York Fluxus movement, was impressed by Paik's performances in Germany and invited him to join the group in New York.<sup>1</sup> Before his arrival in the United States, Paik decided to spend a year in Japan. In Tokyo he met Shuya Abe, an electronics engineer with a degree in experimental physics and electrical engineering. Abe would become one of Paik's key technical collaborators and co-inventor of the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer. During this period Abe assisted Paik with what would become *Robot K-456* (1964) (plate 1), Paik's first automated robot. *Robot K-456* was humorously named after Mozart's piano concerto No. 18 in B-flat major, K. 456.<sup>2</sup> Originally hermaphroditic—it featured both breasts and a penis<sup>3</sup>—*Robot K-456* was programmed to walk, talk,<sup>4</sup> and defecate beans via twenty radio channels and a remote control. Paik intended to shock viewers with the robot's ability to interact with humans. This life-sized assemblage was a triumphant declaration of the potential for artistic innovation through technological means; Paik was adamant that it was the artist's duty to reimagine technology in the service of art and culture. *Robot K-456* was featured in selected performance-based projects through the end of the 1960s, and in 1982 the robot returned to action on the occasion of the artist's first major museum exhibition, which was organized by John G. Hanhardt and mounted at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City. Paik choreographed a performance titled *First Accident of the Twenty-First Century*, in which the robot was the victim of a car accident. The sculpture was removed from the museum and directed via remote control to



Fig. 3. Charlotte Moorman performing *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* at the opening of Center for the Arts, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, on September 15, 1973. © Mary Lucier 1973

walk along Madison Avenue. As it attempted to cross 75th street, it was struck by a car driven by fellow artist William Anastasi, and fell to the ground. Paik declared that this act represented a “catastrophe of technology in the twentieth century.”<sup>5</sup> *Robot K-456*’s aborted journey is a reminder of technology’s limitations and the importance of prioritizing humanity over scientific innovations.

Paik arrived in New York in 1964, where he found a wider audience for his progressive, yet irreverent, attitude toward technology and his efforts to harness scientific innovation into the service of his artistic practice. He was immediately inspired by the city’s diverse population and its wide variety of high and low culture. The artist became an active member of the Fluxus group for a time and developed influential friendships with John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Yoko Ono,





and Jud Yalkut, among other artists, who became Paik's lifelong collaborators. He also began working with the musician Charlotte Moorman, who would become his primary collaborator until her untimely death from cancer in 1991 at the age of 57. His attempts to merge technology with the body were most evident in their projects together. A Julliard-trained cellist from Little Rock, Arkansas, Moorman was drawn to the avant-garde art scene in New York and quickly moved away from traditional performance. She founded the New York Avant-Garde Festival, a platform for progressive performance-art and music, which took place annually from 1963 to 1981. Paik first invited Moorman to collaborate with him for the artist's participation in the second festival in 1964. *Robot K-456* appeared, alongside Moorman on cello, in the premiere performance of Paik's *Robot Opera* at Judson Hall (plate 5). Moorman became Paik's muse and willing coconspirator with whom he produced a series of important performance-based works, alongside his own more object-based experimental sculptures and installations. In addition to *Robot Opera*, a string of seminal projects, including *Opera Sextronique* (1967), *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969) (fig. 3 and plate 16), and *TV Cello* (1971) (fig. 4), underscores Paik's interest in humanizing technology by using Moorman's body, often in various stages of undress, as a canvas onto which the artist prominently attached his electronic sculptures. *Opera Sextronique*, first performed for a closed audience at the Filmmakers' Cinematheque in New York, resulted in Moorman's arrest for indecency. During the first act, the cellist performed in Paik's *Light Bikini* (1966/1975) (plate 10). The bikini was outfitted with remote-controlled lights that flashed intermittently during Moorman's cello performance. Though titillating, *Light Bikini* served as the artist's first serious attempt to integrate the human body and machines into a seamless entity. Paik and Moorman's next major collaboration, *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*, was performed by Moorman as part of the seminal group exhibition "TV as a Creative Medium," held at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York in 1969. Moorman, the "living sculpture," wore two functioning television sets over her bare breasts as she played her cello. The television screens alternately featured live television programming, prerecorded video footage, or the audience, by means of a closed-circuit camera. Paik writes:

The real issue . . . is not to make another scientific toy, but how to *humanize* the technology and the electronic medium. . . . TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture (Charlotte Moorman) is also one sharp example to humanize electronics . . . and technology. By using TV as bra . . . we will demonstrate the human use of technology, and also stimulate viewers . . . to look for the new, imaginative and humanistic ways of using our technology.<sup>6</sup>

Fig. 4. *TV Cello*, 1971. Video tubes, TV chassis, plexiglass boxes, electronics, wiring, wood base, fan, stool, photograph. Dimensions variable. Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Formerly the collection of Otto Piene and Elizabeth Goldring, Massachusetts. Collection Walker Art Center, T.B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1992. 1992.6.1-10

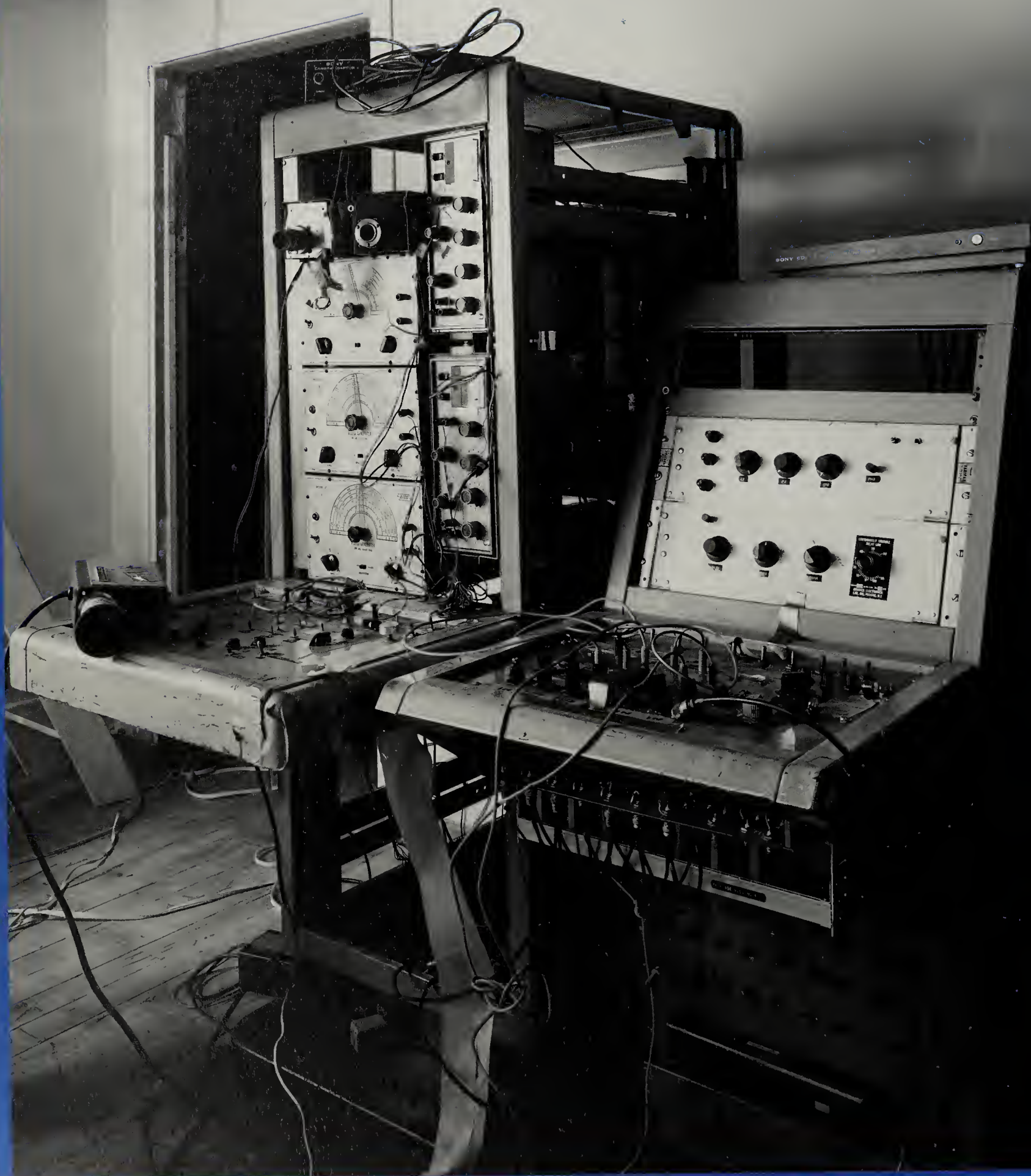
A string of related works including *TV Chair* (1968) (fig. 5 and plate 13), *TV Glasses* (1971) (fig. 18), *Chroma Key Glasses* (1971), and *TV Penis* (1972) (plates 19 and 20) all functioned as bodily appendages or props in performances meant to close the gap between technology and human experience. The series of glasses especially illustrates Paik's dream literally to see the world through the lens of technology, an uncanny precursor of today's Google Glass. Through these projects, the artist brought video technology to a human scale and consequently redefined a medium formally identified with mass entertainment as something accessible on an extremely intimate level. Paik's *TV Buddha* series, first executed in 1974, playfully expresses the relationship between technology and human spirituality that he tried to balance in his works. An antique figure of Buddha is placed in front of a closed-circuit television set so that in effect the statue is gazing upon itself—a live interaction between eastern philosophy and western technology, past and present. In other works from the series, like *Triangle: Video Buddha and Video Thinker* (1978/1991) (plate 23), the addition of a replica of Auguste Rodin's *Thinker* creates a triangular dynamic between western rational thought, eastern spirituality, and science.

In the early 1980s Paik returned to the idea of creating robots. By this time Americans had become more comfortable with technology as an integral part of their daily lives. Personal computers, camcorders, and video games were beginning to populate homes, and by 1983 the first mobile phones were commercially available. Popular television sitcoms such as *The Cosby Show* and *Family Ties* emphasized traditional family dynamics, while blockbuster movies like *The Terminator* raised the dire possibility that humanistic cyborgs could one day threaten humanity's existence. It was in this cultural atmosphere that Paik introduced *Family of Robot*, his series from 1986 that portrays a benign relationship between the family unit and technological advancements. It replicates the extended family hierarchy of Mother (plate 39), Father (plate 40), Baby (plate 41), Grandmother, Grandfather, Aunt, and Uncle, a structure intrinsic to Paik's traditional Korean upbringing (plate 35). The robots were fabricated using found household electronics such as vintage radios and television monitors. The female robots were created using monitors with rounded consoles, while their male counterparts were constructed from more angular models. The choice in materials not only distinguishes a familial connection among the robots, but also charts the evolution of technology across the generations. The relative human scale and handmade quality of these sculptures create an immediate physical connection with the viewer's own body. These robots are not given ambulatory functions like their skeletal predecessor *Robot K-456*; instead their monitors are animated through looped video

Fig. 5. Paik sitting in *TV Chair* (1968/1976) in "Nam June Paik Werke, 1946–1976: Music, Fluxus, Video," 1976. © Friedrich Rosenstiel, Cologne







imagery created by the artist, thereby representing the personality—and thus the individuality—of each robot. *Family of Robot* initiated Paik's ongoing series of robot sculptures through the 1990s, many of which were based on historical figures, such as Genghis Khan and *Li Tai Po* (plate 43), or his friends, including John Cage and Merce Cunningham.

Following his departure from Germany, Paik continued experimenting with television and video technology. By using magnets and degaussers, Paik was able to alter the polarity of the cathode-ray tube inside a television set and manipulate the imagery presented on the screen. *Magnet TV* (1965) (fig. 12) and similar works created during this period continue to give viewers the opportunity to become active participants, as opposed to passive recipients, of preprogrammed images on the screen. The artist was so committed to these experiments that in the winter of 1965 he wrote to the Chamber of Commerce Copyright Bureau in Washington, D.C., to seek copyright protection for them. Also in 1965, a year after his immigration to New York, Paik received a John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, with which he bought one of the first Sony Portapak video recorders (fig. 1) to enter the consumer market. This newly developed portable device allowed Paik to conduct video experiments using his own imagery. Two early exhibitions at Galeria Bonino in New York, in 1965 and 1968, established the artist as a video art pioneer and attracted the first critical notice of this emerging medium.

Paik was constantly thinking about the future of media and immersed himself in the scientific community to increase his technical knowledge. The artist became a prolific reader of scientific journals and electronic manuals. He was already well read in both eastern and western philosophy and literature because of his academic studies, and he became an early advocate of Marshall McLuhan's seminal book *Understanding Media*, published in 1964. Norbert Wiener's extensive writings on cybernetics also influenced the artist's interest in humanizing technology. An early essay from 1966 outlines the artist's intention to extend his energies beyond the parameters of the art world in order to transform the relationship between art and society through technology:

Instead of becoming just another successful artist . . . I want to devote the next year to academic and fundamental research, which could change art and the status of art in society radically for coming decades. . . . [C]omputer programming is the combination of diligence and creative imagination—due to its vast capacity. First class art work will be produced . . . when a talented artist becomes a professional programmer.<sup>7</sup>

Fig. 6. The Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer, created by Nam June Paik in collaboration with Shuya Abe (1969–72), in Paik's studio, 1982. The third of Paik's synthesizers, this model was made for WNET/THIRTEEN, New York. Photo by Peter Moore © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA, NY



Paik continued his experiments during a residency at Bell Labs in New York, which resulted in one of his earliest videos, *Digital Experiment at Bell Labs*, (c. 1966). This video documents the artist's manipulation of light and technical data to produce minimalist graphic imagery. Afterward, Paik reflected on his progress and mused on the long-lasting cultural effects of his experiments:

The main reason for the quick success of my electronic art was that I gave up very early the production of video-signals . . . in order to concentrate my efforts on the creation of unusual scanning patterns. . . . I am confident that the introduction of the computer to this already well proven area will bring immediate success. . . . TV Technique will be revolutionized, the scope of electronic music will be widened to the new horizon of electronic opera, painting and sculpture will be shaken up, intermedia art will be further strengthened, bookless literature, paperless poem will be born.<sup>8</sup>

Prescient statements like this not only provide insight into the artist's own practice but also present his often accurate predictions of future technological innovations, including, in this case, the creation of today's portable electronic tablet devices made for "bookless literature."

As Paik continued his video experiments, he wanted to develop a tool that would allow him to alter his own footage and help him push the medium further. In 1969 he and Shuya Abe finalized the design for the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer (fig. 6) during a Rockefeller Foundation-sponsored artist residency at the New Television Workshop, part of the Boston public broadcasting network WGBH. His intention was to provide artists with the means to create innovative works themselves without having to rely on technicians, as stated in a 1968 interview with Jud Yalkut:

I also envisage the day when collaboration of artist and engineer will progress into the unification of artist and engineer into one person. According to my past experience, the best results were achieved through accident and error. . . . Therefore, if I give an order to an engineer, and if I don't go through all the experiments myself (that is, the complicated process of trial and error), I will lose all these precious errors, I will only get what I want, and miss all the disappointment and surprises. I have found that the by-product is often more valuable than the first envisioned aim.<sup>9</sup>

The Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer's new production and postproduction capabilities could transform closed-circuit video broadcasts and prerecorded footage into video collages that ranged in appearance from realistic images to pure, abstract patterns. The synthesizer featured cameras that could feed live-action



images while simultaneously accessing computer-generated or film-generated imagery already recorded on videotape or film. These images could be layered, multiplied, or divided within each frame, thus allowing temporal and spatial shifts to proliferate over the course of the video. Operating the synthesizer required a physical dexterity that has been likened to playing an instrument and hearkens back to the artist's musical roots. Paik's achievements with the synthesizer helped to revolutionize the technological grammar of video. He writes, "As you see, the key point of today is how to strike the best balance in the interface of man/machine, or software/hardware. It has been a basic philosophy behind the design of video synthesizer, not the profitability in hardware marketing."<sup>10</sup> Further affirmation of Paik's invention was provided by David Loxton, then-director of the Television Laboratory (TV Lab) at the public broadcasting network WNET/THIRTEEN in New York:

Yesterday David Loxton was quite happy to tell me that my decision of 1972 to put money in computer was the right one. I was quite happy also to see my dream of creating an electronic canvas slowly slowly being realized. Some art critics still don't accept, but their children will grow up with video synthesizer everyhome . . . its effect is not the de-humanization of art but the humanization of technology, thus the very core of our concern of the survival.<sup>11</sup>

Many of the effects found in Paik's video projects, developed with the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer, would become crucial to the creation of music videos and the subsequent founding of MTV, the heir to Paik's vision for "electronic opera." The artist writes, "Enormous enrichment of background scenery of music programs or talk shows, combined with sharp reduction in the production cost, is especially effective for young generation's rock programs."<sup>12</sup>

The immediacy and immateriality of the video medium complemented Paik's performance aesthetic. The artist's desire for a direct and intimate connection with the audience spurred his interest in public broadcast television as a vehicle for disseminating his video projects. This delivery system allowed Paik to bring video art directly into the viewer's home, thus negating the need for museums or galleries. This dynamic provided an opportunity to democratize art and culture through the medium of television, furthering the artist's interest in "constructing a new society with the new tool of video."<sup>13</sup> Many of Paik's important early video works were produced in the 1970s while he was artist-in-residence at WNET's TV Lab, including *Global Groove*, in association with John Godfrey (1973); *A Tribute to John Cage* (1973); and *Merce by Merce by Paik* (1978). TV Lab was one of three

major centers for video experimentation in the United States during this time, along with the National Center for Experiments in Television, part of San Francisco's public broadcasting station KQED, and the aforementioned WGBH in Boston. Paik wanted to change the television broadcast medium from a one-way informational stream to a means for expression and cross-cultural communication, thereby personalizing the medium. As one of the founding artists of TV Lab, Paik explained the rationale for the project:

The TV Lab doesn't mean that we glorify TV. . . . It means we criticize it. Our job is the critique of pure TV. Like Kant. . . . The problem is not technology but how to humanize and reduce technology. My synthesizer has a very rich capacity for abstraction, but I built in an even larger capacity for nature. . . . Humanistic talk-back is important. People have been attacked by TV all their lives: now they can attack it back. I see the limits of abstract TV; we can go far technologically, but we need nature.<sup>14</sup>

Paik hoped to work against the monopoly on programming that broadcasters enjoyed by providing public forums, like TV Lab, that offered free access to information. With this mission in mind, it was crucial that the laboratory allow artists to push the limits of television as an art form. Paik famously predicted that one day "TV Guides will be as fat as the Manhattan telephone book."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, he called for the development of a media platform providing free exchange of information, an idea realized today with YouTube:

What we need now is a champion of free trade like J. F. Kennedy, who will form a video common market, modeled after the European Common Market in its spirit and procedure which would strip the hieratic monism of TV culture, and promote the free flow of video informations through inexpensive barter system, or convenient free market.<sup>16</sup>

Paik's experiments with satellite technology as a means to disseminate information around the world were first conceived in a 1974 letter to the Rockefeller Foundation and were initially realized in 1977 at documenta 6, when he collaborated on a live telecast with Joseph Beuys and Douglas Davis. His first major international satellite broadcast took place in 1984 with the production of *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* (plate 38). This live event combined spatial, contextual, and temporal elements from simultaneously broadcast programs in New York and Paris. The program was framed as a rebuttal to author George Orwell's dystopian view of the effect that technological advances would have on future society, best described in his novel *1984*. Paik wrote the following of the project:

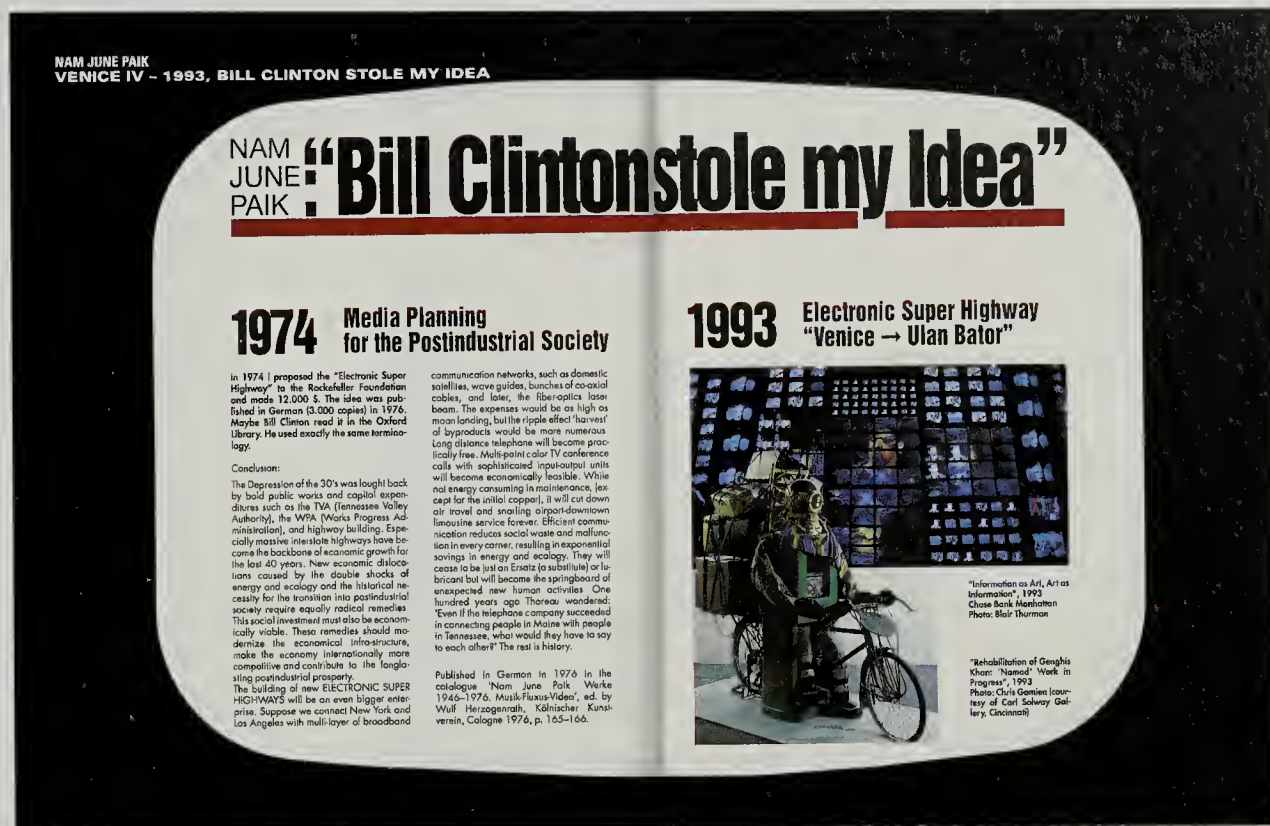


Fig. 7. "Nam June Paik: Bill Clinton stole my Idea," Venice Biennale, 1993

Our Orwellian celebration is not quite Orwellian. Whereas TV screen for him was an omnipotent means of suppression (needless to say, it is so subconsciously now, everywhere in the world), we would treat this tool neutrally and try to inject a better Vitamin into it.<sup>17</sup>

The program, a collaboration between WNET/THIRTEEN in New York and FR 3 in Paris, aired on Sunday, January 1, 1984, and was transmitted simultaneously to France, Germany, Korea, the Netherlands, and the United States. Notable artists—Laurie Anderson, Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Philip Glass, Peter Gabriel, Allen Ginsberg, and Robert Rauschenberg, among others—participated in the broadcast to create a dynamic and unprecedented program that transcended time zones and cultures.

Paik was a prolific writer and a lifelong dreamer. In a review of his archives it is worth noting how many of his seemingly fanciful ideas have come to fruition. How was this Korean American artist, with no formal scientific training, able to identify with such precision the many significant innovations that have come to define progress in the twenty-first century? Perhaps it was his perpetual outsider status as a Korean expatriate living first in Japan, then in Germany and New York City that allowed him to transcend societal conventions. The best known of Paik's predictions



was his recognition of the Internet's potential and his coinage of the term "electronic superhighway" in a 1974 report commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation:

The building of new ELECTRONIC SUPER HIGHWAYS will be an even bigger enterprise. Suppose we connect New York and Los Angeles with multi-layer of broadband communication networks. . . . Long distance telephone will become practically free. Multi-point color TV conference calls with sophisticated input-output units will become economically feasible. . . . it will cut down air travel and snarling airport-downtown limousine service forever. Efficient communication reduces social waste and malfunction in every corner, resulting in exponential savings in energy and ecology.<sup>18</sup>

When the term "information superhighway" was popularized in the 1990s, most notably by then-President Bill Clinton, to refer to the burgeoning Internet telecommunications network, Paik famously lamented, "Bill Clinton stole my idea" (fig. 7). Paik's other early references to the Internet also include predictions of the development of smartphones, online consumerism, Skype, and cable television, among other innovations:

TV is facing a Copernican conversation. . . . Now, more and more it can select or restrict viewers, PAY TV, picture phone, two-way interactive TV (shopping, library research, learning), turns TV into a mini two-way communication point-to-point communication, like telephone or correspondence letters. Cable TV, video disk, video cassette is turning TV into MESO TV information format. . . . This mini TV and meso TV merge with other variety of paperless information forms such as audio cassette, relex, data transmission, domestic satellite, private microwaves, and eventually, laser-fiber optics carriers represent a quasi-nuclear energy in information called "Broadband Communication Network". . . . People treat transportation and communication as two separate issues. But we have to ask first, why people travel. They travel to communicate something . . . either for pleasure or for profit. In case of just "driving" they are communicating with themselves via machine . . . like video-feedback. The frequency of travel will reduce, if the need to travel reduces. What we need is an ersatz-technology to air flight and driving the car. Picture phone, cable TV (two ways) and many kinds of complex broadband communication systems now being developed will take off the burden significantly from the congested air and surface transportation.<sup>19</sup>

These forecasts, along with others previously noted in this essay, illustrate the artist's attention to popular culture and his great belief that these technological innovations would become an integral part of our daily lives.

Nam June Paik died on January 29, 2006, in Miami Beach, Florida. His ongoing influence is evident through the work of subsequent generations of artists and across the programming of international museums, institutions, and art schools. Paik's lasting impact on the art world crosses geography and culture, and is exemplified in the work of Bill Viola (b. 1951), Jon Kessler (b. 1957), Mariko Mori (b. 1967), and Cao Fei (b. 1978), among many others. Bill Viola, a leader of the second generation of video artists after Paik, creates avant-garde video works that explore universal human experiences such as birth, death, and consciousness through his use of video, sound, and new technologies. Viola first met Paik as an art student at Syracuse University and later when he was an artist-in-residence at WNET's TV Lab from 1976 to 1983, and was significantly influenced by Paik's leadership at the station during that period. Jon Kessler's early wall-mounted and freestanding sculptures from the 1980s and 1990s incorporated references to popular culture through found objects, light, and sound. The duality of the elaborate, clearly visible mechanization of the works and the imagery being presented served as a humorous comment on cultural commodification, which references Paik's whimsical multimedia installations. More recent works document Kessler's kinetic sculptures in real time using surveillance cameras to create a dystopia that is riddled with post-9/11 societal preoccupations relating to privacy, war, and imagery overload resulting from our twenty-four-hour technology-driven media.

In 1971 Paik predicted, "People can create their own art and send it to their friends through video-telephone lines and elevate their mood by watching or attaching certain medical electronic gadgets and control their own brainwaves in order to achieve an instant Nirvana."<sup>20</sup> The artist Mariko Mori offers a realization of Paik's musings with *Wave UFO* (2003). This interactive multimedia installation offers participants an experience that Mori describes as a "Buddhist vision of Nirvana, a world in which man appears to have overcome all cultural barriers."<sup>21</sup> Combining computer graphics, brainwave technology, sound, and state-of-the-art architectural engineering, Mori creates an environment in which audience members can monitor and visually interpret their own brainwaves. Cao Fei is interested in utilizing new media to examine the convergence of cultures through the Internet. Her idea of utopia is her virtual metropolis *RMB City* (2007) (fig. 8), a locale found within the online world of Second Life. *RMB City*, accessible to the public via the Internet, blurs the relationship between physical existence and virtual reality by allowing individuals to interact with one another in a nonphysical space, a phenomenon that Paik had anticipated: "You don't have to leave your home to travel. You can go anywhere with virtual reality. You can communicate with a prostitute in Bangkok. In twenty or thirty years you can have electronic sex





Fig. 8. Cao Fei. *RMB CITY 6*, 2007. Digital c-print. 47 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 63 in. (120 x 160 cm). Edition of 10. Courtesy of the artist, Vitamin Creative Space, and Lombard Freid Gallery, NY



or tele-kiss.”<sup>22</sup> These artists, while vastly different in their approaches, share a fundamental affinity with Paik through their focus on exploring humanity through the lens of technology and science.

Nam June Paik was an alchemist who was able to transform utilitarian objects into dynamic multimedia art installations. He harnessed technology in service of his efforts to redefine fine art and to blur past distinctions between science, fine art, and popular culture using mediums previously associated with mass entertainment and scientific discovery. Paik’s body of work is vast, however an examination of his early experimental works and writings about technology reveals that his daring artistic practice made a significant contribution to the present state of avant-garde multimedia art and technology. Paik’s pioneering spirit continues to serve as an inspiration and guide as our society continues its race toward the future.

#### Notes

1. The artist first met George Maciunas in Europe in 1961 and participated in a number of Fluxus events in Germany prior to his move to New York. See John G. Hanhardt, *Nam June Paik* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1982), 11.
2. Eduardo Kac, “Foundation and Development of Robotic Art,” *Art Journal* 56, no. 3 (Autumn 1997), 61.
3. The sculpture was created with a flint and sandpaper penis in Japan, but these elements were removed when the work was shipped to New York. See Peter Moritz Pickshauss, *Nam June Paik* (Cologne: Verlag Buchhandlung Walther König, 2009), 21.
4. The robot played an audio recording of John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address. See Kac, “Foundation and Development of Robotic Art,” 61.
5. John G. Hanhardt, *The Worlds of Nam June Paik* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2000), 15.
6. Nam June Paik, “Afterlude to the Exposition of Experimental Television,” in *Fluxus* (New York), June 1964, p. 6. Reprinted in Hanhardt, *The Worlds of Nam June Paik*, 62.
7. Nam June Paik Papers, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Series 6, Subseries 6.2, Box 13, Folder 18.
8. Nam June Paik, untitled essay reproduced in *Flykingen Bulletin* (Stockholm, 1967). Reprinted in *Nam June Paik: Videä ‘n’ Videology 1959–1973*, ed. Judson Rosebush (Syracuse, N.Y.: Everson Museum of Art, 1974), n.p.
9. Interview by Jud Yalkut, “Art and Technology of Nam June Paik,” *Arts Magazine* (New York), April 1968, p. 51.
10. Nam June Paik Papers, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Series 2, Subseries 2.1, Box 2, Folder 21.
11. Ibid.
12. Nam June Paik, untitled essay reproduced in *TV as a Creative Medium* (New York: Howard Wise Gallery, 1969), n.p.
13. Interview by David Ross, “Nam June Paik: A Conversation with Nam June Paik,” in *Video Time—Video Space*. Reprinted (New York: Abrams, 1993), 57.
14. Nam June Paik, untitled essay reproduced in “TV’s Outer Limits: The WNET Laboratory,” *Image, The Membership Magazine of WNET/13* 10, no. 6, (March 1973), 20.
15. Opening line from Nam June Paik and John Godfrey’s *Global Groove* (1973), 23.30 minutes, color, sound.
16. Nam June Paik Papers, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Series 4, Box 8, Folder 14.
17. Nam June Paik Papers, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Series 4, Box 8, Folder 5.
18. Nam June Paik, “Media Planning for the Postindustrial Society,” first published in German in 1976 in *Nam June Paik: Werke 1946–1976. Musik-Fluxus-Video*, ed. Wulf Herzogenrath (Cologne: Kolnischer Kunstverein, 1976), 165. Reprinted in *Nam June Paik: eine DATA base* (Stuttgart: Edition Cantz, 1993), 110.
19. Nam June Paik Papers, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Series 6, Subseries 6.3, Box 15, Folder 8.
20. Nam June Paik, untitled essay reproduced in *Sonsbeek 71: Sonsbeek buiten de perken* (Arnhem: Sonsbeek Foundation, 1971), n.p.
21. *Mariko Mori: Wave UFO* (Bregenz: Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2004), n.p.
22. Nam June Paik, untitled essay in *The Electronic Superhighway: Travels with Nam June Paik* (Cincinnati: Carl Solway Gallery, 1995), 58.







# Ok, Let's Go to Blimpies Talking about Nam June Paik

Melissa Chiu

This conversation is designed to gain insights into Nam June Paik's process, ways of working, and attitude toward art and life. Here, Ken Hakuta, Nam June Paik's nephew; Jon Huffman, former studio manager for Paik; and Stephen Vitiello, former studio assistant to Paik, remember their fellow artist, friend, and uncle.

Fig. 9. Presentation of *Good Morning Mr. Orwell*, at the Kitchen Gallery, New York, on December 8, 1983. Photograph © 1983 by Lorenzo Bianda (Tegna, CH)



**CHIU:** Thanks for joining us today Ken, Jon, and Stephen. We wanted to bring together what we're thinking of as the brain trust of Nam June Paik, in an effort not just to mark his contribution to the current contemporary art scene, but also to recall some of his working processes. All three of you had different relationships with him. Jon and Stephen were with Nam June in his studio and you, Ken, as his nephew observed and even in some cases assisted his performances. So I thought we would begin today by talking about how you came to be in Nam June's orbit and what your relationship with him was. So let's just go around as a way of kicking it off.

**HUFFMAN:** In 1984 I moved to New York as a young artist trying to make art. To make money, we would do exhibition installations, work in galleries, art handling, work in museums. I was in SoHo all the time where I came across Nam June, and he asked me to do something for him.

**CHIU:** So how did you actually meet, then?

**HUFFMAN:** I think I was maybe just moving some art—I don't even recall the actual event. But somehow, he got hold of my phone number and he asked me to stretch some canvases, then the phone kept ringing more and more. Once Nam June liked you and knew you, he really latched on, and it became an incredible personal relationship.

**CHIU:** So you were initially working in his studio. And then . . .

**HUFFMAN:** And then he handed me the keys! But seriously, you know, anything you can think of, he would ask me to do for him. I was a project manager and flew all over the world doing exhibition design and setting up shows—anything you can think of. If he needed a cappuccino, I would go get him a cappuccino. Whatever you can imagine.

**CHIU:** What's the most difficult thing he ever asked you to do?

**HUFFMAN:** Well, it wasn't that anything was really difficult; it was that his idea of time was incredibly elastic.

**VITIELLO:** Such a nice way to put it.

**HUFFMAN:** Well, he didn't keep a normal human schedule. He would love to wake up late in the morning and then work at night. So a typical meeting with Nam June could take place at one o'clock in the morning. He really was a person beyond the boundaries of time and space. I remember working in the studio with him very late at night and we would start to get tired, and he would say, "Okay, well, let's go eat dinner." So we walked over to the only restaurant that was open around there—it was on Broadway—this place called Amsterdam. And it was hilarious to me, because Nam June and I walked in and the only other people eating in there were Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Nam June knew them very well. So it was high fives, we had our meal, and then went back to the studio to work.

**CHIU:** Was this the typical artist schedule?

**HUFFMAN:** I don't know. Nam June was also traveling around the world so much then that his rhythm and time base were completely askew.

**VITIELLO:** I worked at Electronic Arts Intermix, his distributor, starting in 1988. The first time I ever saw him, an intern came and told me that a homeless man was trying to steal videotapes, and I said, "Do you mean the man with the Issey Miyake scarf?" And he said, "Yeah, but look at his shoes." And I told him, "He's actually the great master of the medium, and if he says it's his tape, he can take it."

**CHIU:** How did you get to know him?

**VITIELLO:** I had done an internship at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1986 in the video department when I was in my final semester in college. In college, I was studying literature and film and playing in bands. A friend of mine introduced me to Barbara London<sup>1</sup> at MoMA and said, "Why don't you do an internship in video? It's an interesting art form where literature, film, and music converge." One of the things that Barbara had me do was translate an essay by Raymond Bellour about Bill Viola and Nam June that related their work to the history of cinema: if Bill Viola was Lumière, Nam

## If Bill Viola was Lumière, Nam June was Méliès and a kind of magician of the medium.

June was Méliès and a kind of magician of the medium. Electronic Arts Intermix represented 120 artists, but Nam June was certainly at the top of the list.

When I was working at Electronic Arts Intermix I tried to speak to Nam June a couple of times, but it was like he didn't understand me, I didn't understand him, and he would walk away. But in 1989 he came through the office one day and there was a video by Peter Callas, an Australian, and it was with my music. Nam June said, "What's this?" And I said, "Oh, it's Peter Callas from Australia, but it's my music." Suddenly he looked at me and said, "Okay, let's go to Blimpie's," and I just followed him. I suddenly could understand him and he could understand me. He told me to call Mr. Bad Brain and to invite him to make a concert with Nam June and Mr. Beuys at the American Museum of the Moving Image. It took me a while to understand; Joseph Beuys was dead, but he wanted me to contact the manager of the Bad Brains, a great early hardcore band—very unique in terms of the history of punk rock, because they were well trained, they were all African American, and they were from D.C., not New York. Anyway, I helped organize this concert. After that, as Jon described it, I was in the inner circle. I had a working relationship with Nam June for about twelve years, and that was the beginning.

Maybe a few days later, Nam June called me and said, "Oh, Mr. Vitiello, big Buddha's coming." And three people—probably Jon Huffman, John McEvers, and one other person—came into Electronic Arts Intermix with three big buddha statues and told me to take them to the beach and videotape them. I was a musician. I didn't have a camera! But I actually took these three sculptures—two buddhas and a Shiva—to Coney Island on the F train and put them in the water.

**CHIU:** You actually did it!

**VITIELLO:** Well, I think this is what happened with Nam June: he would hook people. You couldn't go to him and say, "I want to work for you," or, "my talent is this." For example, at one time he asked me to document a Fluxus performance series and I reminded him I wasn't a video artist. He responded, "Oh, it'll make you a better musician." I listened and I really respected him more than I can say. I thought, well, this seems exciting and terrifying, so I'll try it.

Over a period of about twelve years, things came to me: assignments, projects, sometimes collaborations, but very rarely true collaborations. From 1989 till 2000 or 2001, I was sort of connected to the team.

When you read his writings, which I have come to think are some of his greatest works, it's like reading poetry on three or four or five levels of thinking, you know? He really taught me a lot.

I think I met Nam June in 1989. I sat on the floor of the Volkswagen bug coming back from Astoria, and he explained to me that he was interested in bringing time and space together with the concert: connecting Beuys from the past through the present, and Bad Brains in the present, to a connection with the past. He wanted to cross the audiences between the art world and the music world, and keep Beuys alive to young people. It was like he kind of determined, okay, now I will give you this little lesson. And it was one of those times where he would only say a few words.

**HUFFMAN:** If you weren't clued in already, he didn't have time to explain it.

## He wanted to cross the audiences between the art world and the music world, and keep Beuys alive to young people.

**VITIELLO:** That's a perfect way [to put it]. I mean, I know you mentioned this elasticity of time. There are things that were slowed down, and then a lot—like his work and his editing—that were sped up. Even the writing, it's like you're compressing, editing ten different things into one paragraph.

**CHIU:** So how would you describe this shorthand language that you're talking about?

**HUFFMAN:** There was a huge curiosity about what certain things meant in his work, and somehow I was hip enough, and I understood where he was coming from. I would never ask him about meaning in the studio. Things were going at blistering light speed and I wasn't going to slow Nam June down by asking him, what do you mean by putting this combination [together]—I mean, I just enjoyed the ride.

**CHIU:** But you understood his instructions?

**HUFFMAN:** Absolutely. But there was never a time to ask, "What does this mean, Nam June? Why are you putting these combinations of things together?"

**CHIU:** Was there ever an element of randomness?

**HUFFMAN:** No, I think there wasn't that much randomness. He was very precise, but open to chance happening, very open. He knew how to set the stage for art-making, have a moment happen, and then grab and seize the moment.

**VITIELLO:** One thing I found, too, was that some things had flexibility and some things didn't. This sort of connected to Cage, too. Jon and I went to Brazil to set up an exhibition of a number of Nam June's works. I remember with *TV Garden*, for example, he said, "Well, anywhere from twenty to forty televisions, anywhere from this size to this size. This many plants. . . ." And when I said, "Oh, by the way, you said black pedestals,

but they're going to paint them white," he was really mad. So there was flexibility with certain things, but not with others. The score was for black pedestals and a certain number of monitors. Sometimes it was obvious to me, and sometimes it wasn't.

I remember one of those buddha shoots, with the buddha in the water—it may have been the first one—when I came back I saw the date and time stamp. It was the old days, when if you weren't careful, the date and time stamp appeared on the image. I was so embarrassed. I said, "Here are the tapes, but I feel terrible and I'm going to reshoot it." And then a couple weeks later, I get to Holly Solomon Gallery and, of course, the one with the time stamped on it is being shown. He probably threw away the other one that I went back to the beach to do! That was an accident where I thought, oh, no, what have I done? and either he liked it or he was just in a hurry and he thought, that'll do.

**HUFFMAN:** Yes, I mean, those specific things, you couldn't really guess.

**VITIELLO:** No.

**HUFFMAN:** In the first edit of *Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii*, the editor had left in the title, a black frame with the title, and Nam June absolutely did not want that. It must've cost \$30,000 to reedit and remake all the laser discs, but he insisted on doing that, so we had to do it.

**HAKUTA:** My perspective is very different from what Jon Huffman and Stephen Vitiello have been talking about, because I never worked as an assistant to Nam June. But I did help on many projects.

**CHIU:** At what point did you realize that your uncle was an artist?



**HAKUTA:** For the longest time, he was what people in my family called, you know, the crazy uncle. Everybody thought he was just crazy—in kind of an endearing way, but they seriously thought he was crazy. I think I was probably one of the [first] ones in the family to really understand who he was, what he was doing. It's probably because I hung around him starting in Tokyo, when I was a little boy, and in New York. It was such an education for me, just being around him and being exposed to all the things he was involved with.

Well, first of all, my history, everything about my life really crossed with Nam June's. We were in the same places all the time, because of wars—the Korean War—and then I went to the United States to study, and Nam June came to New York from Germany the same year in 1964. So we were in the same place, often. When he went to the University of Tokyo, he lived in my house in Japan. He lived with us for four years when I was maybe three, four, five. He was not my crazy uncle then. But he was kind of odd, probably. Even back then, he would tell my mother things like, “Buy Ken more books. More records.”

**CHIU:** He wanted you to have music in your life.

**HAKUTA:** Yes, and there was this incident I just remembered right now. My mother had just bought me these records. Maybe they were children's songs; they were not classical music. And if you remember the old records, they're quite brittle. They cracked, you know? And I remember they were very colorful. Some were red, I remember. We had just bought them, we hadn't even played them, and my mother was holding them in her lap. I jumped on her lap and I broke all the records, which is a very Nam June kind of thing, you see?

**CHIU:** That was your Nam June moment.

**HAKUTA:** Going forward to when I was fourteen, it's the same thing. I remember once I bought a magazine, an American magazine. This was in Japan. Then I found after I had bought it, that it was last month's issue. So my father, who is Nam June's brother, got upset at me, saying, “Why are you wasting money?” because it was probably fairly expensive, being an American magazine.

Nam June was with us then and he said, “No, no, don't criticize Ken for that. You know, it doesn't matter. It's just buying it, you see?” It was the same as breaking the records. Just buying them was kind of participating in that knowledge and that is enough. As Nam June used to tell me, if you just buy it and just look at the cover, that's fine, even if you don't even open a book.

**CHIU:** Was there anything in Nam June's upbringing or relationships with his parents or siblings that, in your view, gave an inkling of where he was headed, in terms of creativity and being an artist?

**HAKUTA:** Yeah. I think it was very fortunate for him to be the third son in the family.

**CHIU:** So no inherited pressure to . . .

**HAKUTA:** That's right. The eldest son had to run the family business, which is the biggest burden and gives you no choice in determining your own life. The second son sort of went into the family business, too, and by Nam June's time, it didn't matter what he did.

I think in Asian families that was especially true, and I think that Nam June benefited tremendously from that. I know that when he started to take piano lessons in Korea, his father was very much against it. You know, why would he do such a thing? It was not because of the money involved in piano lessons, but because why would he study piano? Apparently, his mother, my grandmother, gave him money to go pay the teacher, you know, as a secret from his father. In terms of some technological influences, I know that in our house, we were fortunate enough to be the first house in the area—or maybe in the country, even—to have things like photographs, televisions—everything. Apparently, my family was into buying the newest technologies and again, I think Nam June benefited from that. In terms of tinkering with machines and mechanics, I don't know how much of a tinkerer Nam June was at home, but my father, Nam June's oldest brother, was a great tinkerer, like an engineer. And being the third son, Nam June had the freedom of not having to hang around doing business and all that.

**CHIU:** You always tell that great story about your robots, Ken, as a child.

**HAKUTA:** I really began to understand more of what Nam June was doing and his process, as Jon and Stephen were talking about, when he came back to Tokyo to live with us again. I think that was before he went to New York. He came back from Germany in, I think, 1961, 1962, probably, and he stayed for about two years, going back and forth. And he made *Robot K-456*, which is in your exhibition.

**CHIU:** So you were a witness to the creation of that piece?

**HAKUTA:** I was sitting around watching him make it in my bedroom, which was Nam June's workshop during the day.

**CHIU:** With your toys?

**HAKUTA:** Yes, yes. He used a lot of toys. They were, you know, those Construx.<sup>2</sup> I think I was rough on my toys and I would break them. Nam June would salvage the motors. He used them to drive *this* robot in particular.

**CHIU:** *Robot K-456* is known as being one of the first robots he made. So what do you think was behind his thinking? Obviously, robots have always been in the public imagination as a futuristic idea. So what do you think was on his mind at this time?

**HAKUTA:** What I remember is he wanted to make it with human functions. You know, he wanted it to eat and he wanted it to defecate, he wanted it to have breasts. So he used my mother's bra, I remember that.

**HUFFMAN:** I mean, I think he's taken the piss out of the seriousness of being a robot.

**HAKUTA:** Yeah.

**HUFFMAN:** So it's a complete joke that it, you know, poops and does all these human things.

**CHIU:** Because why does it need to poop?

**HUFFMAN:** Yeah. Because it's extremely funny when the thing poops beans, you know?

And it was bisexual. I mean, I don't really think of Nam June as a technologist. His point of view was that artists should decide all. They should parse the world and decide where we're going, and they should decide what technologies we need, how we should use them. He wanted to redefine television [not as a] passive object, but [as] an object that we interact with. We control our destiny. He was a humanist; he wanted to humanize everything, and technology was just a way of getting more time in which we could make better artwork, better software, have better lives.

**CHIU:** Do you think humor was ever an important element of how he thought about making art?

**HUFFMAN:** He was an extremely humorous person. I mean, he had an incredible sense of humor.

**HAKUTA:** Yes. You know, I think his art is very sophisticated, very intellectual, and *very* funny. Like *TV Buddha*. You couldn't get more sophisticated than that, but it's *very* funny.

**HUFFMAN:** Yes. I think of the piano recording of him and Vassilakis Takis. It feels very serious, and suddenly you hear him burst out laughing, and contemporary music in the seventies . . .

**CHIU:** . . . was very serious.

**HUFFMAN:** I also think of his connection with Fluxus, which was so based on humor and jokes. He was always halfway laughing and halfway incredibly serious.

**HAKUTA:** I want to go back to *Robot K-456*, before I forget this point. Jon said it's not technology: it poops, it eats, and it's bisexual. Going back to that point, one day my father said to Nam June, "Why don't you let me help you? I will make a much better robot," because

## He didn't want a more perfect robot.

## He wanted to humanize everything, and technology was just a way of getting more time.

the one he made, it didn't even walk properly. It kind of limped along, you know? Nam June said, no, he liked it just like that. He didn't want a more perfect robot.

**CHIU:** Functionality, it seems to me, was never really part of his thinking, right?

**HUFFMAN:** [The robot] became a vehicle for performance and action.

**CHIU:** Let's spend a few moments talking about process, because it's always on people's minds when they look at Nam June's work. There seems to be a transparency of process with his work. He never tries to make his work appear slick or hide the cords and cables. How would he go about creating works?

**HUFFMAN:** Well, I think it hearkens back to the beginning, when he was trying to be a composer. It all starts there. He dealt with people in a collaborative way, more like a musician.

**CHIU:** So let's play that out. In music, you start with a score. Do you mean that literally? Or do you simply mean it's a lot of people working together?

**VITIELLO:** My experience of watching him edit video, for example, was very connected to the way he improvised with music. I think that in those early music performances, he had multiple tapes, he had certain actions that he knew might happen. From what I understand, they were slightly different with each performance. You played the different reel-to-reel audio tapes in different sequences and different combinations. You could call it a score, but it's not the same as a Cageian score with sets of rules and a specific timeline. I remember he was making a piece called *Mr. Paik's Computer Mentors*, for the Gwangju Biennale. He had three videos playing, by three different artists, and he was editing like a mad pianist, like an improvising pianist. And at the end, I said, "Should I fix that?" And he looked at me like I was stupid.

**HUFFMAN:** I can hear him say, "Fix it? I just fixed it."

**VITIELLO:** Exactly. He had done this ten-minute brilliant frenetic performance, and that was the edit of the video, and that was the video that was in the laser disc sent to Korea. And yes, in someone's mathematical mind or in an editor's mind, maybe an edit should have lasted longer, or maybe he could have cleaned up the beginning or end. But for Nam June, I think it was about performance—performance, as Jon said, coming out of music.

**HUFFMAN:** It was like he was making electronic music, which is sometimes scoreless.

**VITIELLO:** Precisely.

## He dealt with people in a collaborative way, more like a musician.

**HUFFMAN:** We're talking about a man who made the electron itself a vehicle of art-making, which is still to this day, a stunning idea.

**VITIELLO:** Yes, it is.

**HUFFMAN:** Manipulating electrons in the cathode ray tube and manipulating the insides of the television so the electrons create abstract patterning—I mean, this is very close to pure music, and he saw it this way. It's using the electron to create a blurring between the visual and sound. It's very similar in how you push it and pull it.

**CHIU:** My impression is that he was really one of only a few who were doing that.



## His work represents the history of the medium of video art as something distinct.

**HUFFMAN:** Yes, untraveled ground, he liked to say. I mean, he often talked about being a painter. Well, there are 40,000 painters. It's very trodden ground. He wanted to be at the head of the pack.

**VITIELLO:** And he said the same about music; especially after that exposure to Cage. He was trying to really make a dent in experimental music, and found very quickly that there were just too many people doing it, and doing it well. But once he started to work with televisions, the field was so wide open. You know, there always may be an argument that one person or another did something before Nam June did. But he took the thinking so much further than anybody, widened the field, and laid the largest groundwork. His importance to and the energy that he put into the field of video are undeniable. Video today is kind of an obsolete format. So we might just think in terms of creative art-making with technology. There are so many ways to broaden it, but video was a very important starting point. It's an important point in his history and other people's histories, but it now speaks to future mediums.

**CHIU:** Let's talk a bit about Nam June's real innovations and contributions, because you were talking about the television and electrons, and that process of image-making through television. It strikes me that we're at a point where there are so many elements of what Nam June was experimenting with in today's world, whether it is multi-genre, multimedia—and by that I mean sound, television, and video. He never really thought of himself as a painter or as a sculptor. What do you think has been his major contribution? Where do you think he'll be most remembered? Because we think—and partly, this show is about this—that he's always been considered as this experimental, slightly crazy tinkerer. We always talk about him as the

father of video art, and yet I think now, if you look at the younger generation of artists, they all think about creativity in quite a similar way to Nam June's approach. So what do you think? Stephen, you're obviously in a teaching mode, so let's start with you.

**VITIELLO:** In some ways, it remains to be seen. One thing that's probably always important to keep remembering is that Nam June really pushed forward early on, and then also was very much connected to community and other artists, and was someone who was always collaborating, someone who was always in the midst of artist communities, and yet also somehow rising. I do think his work represents the history of the medium of video art as something distinct, and also opens up the field of what artists can do through technology, through communication. His satellite broadcasts really spoke to what has now become so common through Internet collaboration. I mean, I make albums with people over the Internet; I make concerts with people, and I'm not unique in that at all. Nam June was speaking to so many possibilities—it's almost like science fiction—of things that could happen that are now realities.

**CHIU:** I read that he said one day the *TV Guide* would be as large as the telephone book.

**HUFFMAN:** He foresaw this do-it-yourself access to all the equipment, and artist-directed television and cable channels and all that stuff is coming to pass. You would walk into your living room [and the] walls would be electronic televisions, on which you would view the artist's choice for the evening, and have abstract patterns playing. He talked about all these sorts of things.

**HAKUTA:** Sure. It was like he predicted everything very early, which is quite amazing, you know? I remember one thing he always said is that everybody will have their own TV station.

**CHIU:** Well, that's YouTube. If you read his manifestos and writings, often—and this is something that one of my colleagues here in the museum pointed out—often he was struggling to communicate ideas for which we had no language yet. Whether it was the Internet, whether it was YouTube, or these ideas of being able to communicate with vast numbers of people, but communicate as an artist. We have this great image of Nam June with TVs over his glasses from 1983, which makes us think of Google Glass.

**HUFFMAN:** He foresaw the world beyond city-state orders, when there would be no need for countries anymore, and the flow and transparency of information would eliminate totalitarianism, these sorts of things. You know, [if] people watch enough MTV, they're not going to put up with a dictator.

**CHIU:** Yes, it's kind of utopian.

**HUFFMAN:** He had a lot of utopian ideas, which I find fantastic.

**VITIELLO:** I was thinking about Cage and Fluxus. I think first Cage, and then Fluxus, were an individual and a group of people who really inspired him, and then ultimately, frustrated him. He was inspired by the freedom that their work seemed to imply, of making sound or making art, making music. But ultimately, it wasn't enough. And you know, there was a part of Cage that he embraced, and then he kind of exploded past Cage, with that *Étude for Pianoforte*, in which he cut off Cage's tie because he felt like he was still too reserved and too controlled. When the Fluxus group picketed Charlotte Moorman's performance of Stockhausen's *Originale*, which was the first time Nam June performed with Charlotte, they said that it was—I forget the

phrase exactly—too bourgeois for Fluxus. He quit Fluxus for a period of time, because he just felt they were too limited. So I think there's this interesting tension—there were a lot of interesting tensions in Nam June's career. They opened up a new way of thinking, but then they never went far enough for him.

**HAKUTA:** Way back when only multinational corporations were global, how global was he in his thinking? It's kind of stunning actually. These movements like Fluxus probably constrained him, you know?

**HUFFMAN:** He would never refer to himself as a Fluxus artist.

**CHIU:** The thinking about Nam June was that he spent so much of his professional life here in New York City and was so much a part of the downtown art scene. Ken, you talk about him being a truly global artist at a time when that was not part of the M.O. of most people's thinking—yet he's never really been called an Asian artist. In some ways, I think what has gone underrecognized in his work is perhaps the fact that he was born somewhere else, spent time in Korea and Japan; and yet, most of his professional life was spent outside of his home country.

**VITIELLO:** You know, he would say, "I'm a poor man from a poor country."

**HAKUTA:** Which is a lie.

**VITIELLO:** Yeah. I know it. [they laugh]

**HAKUTA:** I have no idea. I don't know. But the reality is, he was a rich man from a *very* poor country, because Korea back then was probably as poor as Myanmar is today.

**He foresaw this do-it-yourself access to all the equipment.**

## He was . . . sometimes critiquing Asian culture.

**VITIELLO:** It's a tension that he was playing with, too. I think all these things [were about] connecting to Cage and Fluxus, but also moving past them. There was a connection to his Asian past, but also moving past it. I think it was something that he very consciously played with.

It's funny because on one hand, he was, I think, sometimes critiquing Asian culture. But then he makes a piece so poetic, like *TV Buddha*, which both borrows from and maybe critiques, but also deeply appreciates, something very deeply rooted in Zen culture. And he would talk about how avant-garde music of the times—for example, La Monte Young—was too slow and too boring; how video art, like the performance-based work of Acconci and Nauman, was too boring because it was too slow, and so he had to speed things up. And yet one of his most lasting works is probably this still life.

**HAKUTA:** It's interesting, Melissa. He's not identified as an Asian artist, as such, you know?

**HUFFMAN:** But I really enjoyed what I call his Asian-style drawings, which are very minimal, with Asian themes.

**VITIELLO:** I was just thinking, in terms of being an Asian artist, when I spoke to Ryuichi Sakamoto, he said as a young man growing up in Japan, he had only two Asian faces to look to, in terms of inspiration: one was Nam June Paik, and one was Yoko Ono.

**CHIU:** Ken, I'm not going to let you leave before you talk a little bit about *TV Bra* and your involvement with that work, because I think it's such a great story.

**HAKUTA:** Oh, yeah. It shows an unusual, prudish side of Nam June. The year must have been, I don't know, late 1967? Charlotte Moorman was performing on 57th Street here in New York, and I often visited her with

Nam June. And Charlotte asked me if I could help her remove the TV bra and put it back on, when she took breaks. So I became her official bra helper, you know? This was quite exciting for me, because you have to remember, Charlotte was Miss Homecoming Queen at that time, from the University of Arkansas. Then when Nam June found out that was what Charlotte was having me do, right there on the floor at the gallery, he had a complete fit. He started yelling at Charlotte! It was quite amazing to me, you know.

**CHIU:** So what do you think drew Charlotte and Nam June together? Why do you think it worked?

**HAKUTA:** I think Nam June was very much struck by Charlotte's charismatic performance.

**VITIELLO:** And her sexuality.

**HUFFMAN:** [To] be willing to perform nude, to get arrested and—

**HAKUTA:** —with her Julliard education. I think Nam June—I'm just putting words in his mouth—recognized that Charlotte had something that he didn't have. He loved collaborating anyway, and she just was the best performer of Nam June's pieces. Charlotte was even on *The Merv Griffin Show*, here in New York City. And was she on Johnny Carson, also?

**VITIELLO:** Also.

**HAKUTA:** Nam June asked me to take a bomb up to *The Merv Griffin Show*, for Charlotte to play. So picture this: I was on Canal Street—because Nam June was living on Canal Street then—trying to get a cab. It was at the height of the Vietnam War and here's a young Asian guy with a big bomb, trying to get a cab. No wonder I couldn't get a cab. I took the subway. It was an incredible performance. Jerry Lewis was also the guest, and even before the show started, he went nuts.



He climbed up, with this ladder, over the audience, and it was great for Charlotte and for Nam June, because not only did Charlotte play the cello on the bomb, but she played Nam June's piece on Jerry Lewis's back. You know, he posed as the cello. Nam June and I were watching the whole performance backstage, and we were talking about their relationship. I think Nam June was absolutely in awe of Charlotte.

**HUFFMAN:** I mean, he had written pieces for performers before, and it just didn't work as well.

**CHIU:** So knowing all that you do about Nam June and his way of working and everything, what do you think are perhaps the most common misconceptions about him, his work, or assumptions that people have made, as he began to be included in the canon of the twentieth century?

**VITIELLO:** For me, I think that he was so prolific. He did do pieces that were incredible for spectators, but I think there was so much more to him. Performance was so important, drawing was important. [His] music, I think, is still very underrated, especially in terms of his early tape pieces, because they hadn't been heard until 2000—they were hidden since 1961—and the influence that they had on his creative making. But I think people probably typecast him, in terms of the certain things that they've seen in the larger spaces. And so if there's a misunderstanding, it's just not understanding his depth.

**HUFFMAN:** Even his paintings and drawings are largely unknown, and they're amazing.

**CHIU:** A hypothetical last question: if Nam June were with us today, what do you think he'd be really into, in terms of technology?

**VITIELLO:** I know he talked about lasers, and I think he was only probably just beginning to scratch the surface of what that was about.

**HUFFMAN:** The advancement in projectors. He loved using projection.

**HAKUTA:** You know what I think? I think Nam June would be very excited about what's going on in China.

**HUFFMAN:** Absolutely.

**CHIU:** What do you mean?

**HAKUTA:** Well, because Nam June was not just an artist; he thought about economics, politics, everything, you know. So he would have been excited about the impact of China on the world today . . .

**HUFFMAN:** I think he would've liked to have traveled to China.

**HAKUTA:** You know, and his art reflects geopolitics and all that.

**VITIELLO:** Yeah, he would know more about everything than we would.

**CHIU:** Yes. Well, that's a great end, actually! Thank you.

This discussion took place on Friday, February 7, 2014, at Asia Society, New York. Ken Hakuta is executor of the Nam June Paik Estate, Jon Huffman is curator of the Estate, and Stephen Vitiello is associate professor in the Kinetic Imaging Department at Virginia Commonwealth University.

#### Notes

1. Barbara London became assistant curator of video at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, in 1977. During her tenure of more than four decades at MoMA, she organized early video exhibitions and founded the museum's video collection.
2. Construx are a brand of plastic toys that allow children to build structures using basic beam-like pieces, connectors, and hinges.



# No Exit

## Video and the Readymade

David Joselit

In a 1975 interview, Nam June Paik declared, “Marcel Duchamp did everything except video. He made a large front door and a very small exit. That exit is video. It’s by it that you can exit Marcel Duchamp.”<sup>1</sup> If, as Paik suggests, video, whose system spans commercial television and video art,<sup>2</sup> offers an escape from the readymade’s dead end, it does so by restaging rather than annulling the famous “rendezvous” Duchamp orchestrated between industrial products and new discursive frameworks. Commercial television is a vast enterprise committed to recoding objects (commodities) by narrativizing them, either in advertising’s explicit sales pitches or through the promotion of consumer lifestyles that motivates all of television’s genres, fiction and nonfiction alike. One might say that television invented an efficient means of extracting profit from the sorts of recontextualization Duchamp performed in the readymade, and indeed it may have been such commercial ramifications that led him to shift his emphasis toward explicitly biomorphic and erotic encounters between things.<sup>3</sup>

Paik addressed television’s challenge to the readymade differently, by liberating commercial television’s instrumentalized discourse as unruly form—what he called “dancing patterns.” In a 1984 statement he offered a genealogy in which media art served not only as the “way out” from, but also as the legitimate heir to, the readymade:



After Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, there were not many ways to go. Jasper Johns was a genius. Everybody was making collages using readymade objects, but Johns painted a painting of a ready-made with his hand, injecting himself too. He made a slight variation. His Ballantine beer cans were cast and not actual Ballantine beer. He wasn't painting actual cans. That was one way at the time to escape from the impossible Duchamp cult of the ready-made. For me, I thought when I went to reality, I would use my brain and go deeper. I would study how it was made and I discovered it was made of electrons and protons. It made sense to me that I might as well use electrons and protons directly. Then I can have the reality of ready-mades, spiritual reality and scientific reality.<sup>4</sup>

According to this declaration, the aesthetic problem Paik set for himself was to engage with the tradition of the readymade without falling into academicism, or what he calls the "impossible Duchamp cult." He identifies two options for accomplishing this: Jasper Johns's technique of "painting" readymades, and his own practice of working with particles—electrons and protons—that are the invisible "trans-objective" constituents of all material things. Each of these approaches demonstrates that the significance of the readymade has nothing to do with the found object's pictorialism—with "making collages using ready-made objects." Paik understood that the radicality of Duchamp's invention lay not in incorporating mass-produced things in art, but rather in producing a paradoxical object locked in a perpetual oscillation between its status as a thing and its status as a sign. I wish to propose my own genealogy for the twentieth-century readymade derived from Paik's three phases: 1) *the readymade as object*, exemplified by Duchamp's fundamental demonstration of the difference between the thing-as-sign and the thing-as-matter; 2) *the readymade as action*, as present in Johns's exploration of the *syntactic* condition of objects within particular conditions or utterances; and 3) *the readymade as network*, demonstrated by Paik's collapse of information and matter altogether into readymades composed of information codes.<sup>5</sup>

1. Readymade as object. Duchamp's readymades scrambled the DNA of objects by endowing them with new inscriptions. As the artist writes in one of his notes for the *Large Glass*,

Specifications for "Readymades."

by planning for a moment to come (on such a day, such a date, such a minute), "to *inscribe* a readymade"—The readymade can later be looked for.—(with all kinds of delays)

*The important thing then is just this matter of timing, this snapshot effect, like a speech delivered on no matter what occasion but at such and such an hour. It is a kind of rendezvous.*<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 10. Marcel Duchamp. *In Advance of the Broken Arm*. 1945 (replica of the lost original of 1915). Wood and galvanized iron snow shovel. 48 x 18 x 4 in. (121.9 x 45.7 x 10.2 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Katherine S. Dreier to the Collection Société Anonyme



Fig. 11. Jasper Johns. *Device*, 1962. Oil on canvas with wood, yardsticks, fabric batting, nails, screws, and wing nuts. 40 x 30 x 2¾ in. (101.6 x 76.2 x 7 cm). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchase with funds provided by The Dexter M. Ferry, Jr. Trustee Corporation Fund, and by Edith Ferry Hooper, BMA 1976.1

It is the inscription—whether rendered as an actual text applied to the ready-made physically or projected onto it virtually as a title—that makes the urinal in Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917), for instance, not a urinal but a work of art. And this slippage between object and inscription establishes theoretically the future relationship both in art and television between commodities and information networks. Paik recognized that television, as the chiasmus of commodity and network, results from capitalizing on the destabilized relation between objects and their textual frames that Duchamp had already demonstrated aesthetically in the second decade of the twentieth century.

2. Readymade as action. If Duchamp unties the signifier from the signified, Johns explored a *syntactic* condition of objects in which the viewer experiences a sort of grammatical declension of things. In two paintings titled *Device* (1961–62), for instance, where rulers are attached to the edges of a painterly field and manipulated as compasses to imprint blurred semicircles on a ground of expressionist

Johns's innovation lay in orchestrating permutations of things on the unified plane of the canvas. He introduced the particularity of use—or action—into the abstract code of language. In pursuing their different functions or iterations in particular situations, things were given the capacity to interrupt codes. This, I think, is what Johns is getting at when around 1960 he wrote in a sketchbook,

Here again, a linguistic term helps to illuminate the painter's tactics: in this text he imagines a method of combining objects (and perceptions) in which "each [functions] as a single tense, all as one." The verb's temporal moods coexist, as in the *Device* paintings, where the ruler itself might be considered in the present tense, while the marks it has made on the canvas are in the past. Indeed, as Paik shrewdly observed, Johns "painted a painting of a ready-made with his hand," and in so doing introduced both action (the verb) and, in his choice of motifs, a kind of tense as well. His penchant for molds and stencils in works like *Target with Plaster Casts* (1955) or *Gray Alphabets* (1956) emphasizes the painterly mark's passage



through a readymade threshold: the contours of an organ pressed into a mold function as a “mark,” while stencils discipline brushstrokes in paintings composed of letters and numbers.

3. Readymade as network. Paik identified Johns’s “genius” with his strategy of “painting . . . a ready-made with his hand, injecting himself too,” and indeed it is through his “hand” that, for instance, the ruler meets the canvas, the cast meets the organ, or the stencil meets the stroke. In such works, the artist’s “hand” serves not as the guarantor of authentic emotion as it had for artists like Jackson Pollock, where gesture was in the service of unconscious drives, but rather as an organic agent of highly coded action. Whereas Johns’s trans-objectivity still requires the motility of a body, Paik seizes on a different register of objectivity. His practice of the readymade was to be composed of sub-objective—as opposed to subjective—units:

For me, I thought when I went to reality, I would use my brain and go deeper. I would study how it was made and I discovered it was made of electrons and protons. It made sense to me that I might as well use electrons and protons directly. Then I can have the reality of readymades, spiritual reality and scientific reality.

Paik manipulated readymade “electrons and protons directly” in what he called his “dancing pattern” whose anti-gravitational gyrations result from the liberation of a television receiver’s signal. The artist dates the dancing pattern to his 1968 exhibition “Electronic Art II” at the Galeria Bonino in New York:

I made it from internal modulation of three audio signals. I feed the audio signals into the set and they make variable patterns, particularly on color sets. I think my two technical breakthroughs were placing magnets on black-and-white sets and the dancing color pattern.<sup>10</sup>

By transmogrifying the commercial speech of broadcast television, Paik’s “technical breakthroughs” complete the elision of commodity and network that Duchamp had initiated with the readymade. In the dancing pattern, network *is* commodity (broadcast television): there is no difference in the “electrons and protons” that constitute the one and the other, so the shift between them lies entirely in their *rearrangement*. Paik’s “electronic painting” is thus both parasitic and systemic. Rather than functioning as a singular index of the artist’s gesture, his “mark” is manifested as the disruption of the receiver’s normal operation. Television images are composed of fields of interlaced scan-lines. The pictures to be broad-



cast are broken down into elements, or pixels, which are transmitted as electrical waves to a receiver, where they are reconstituted through the action of electron guns whose high-speed motion across and down the screen activates discrete phosphors. In amending the television receiver, Paik refigured television's ecology of image production: his "medium" became the patterns of scanning itself. As he declared in a 1967 essay, "The main reason for the quick success of my electronic art was . . . my efforts on the creation of unusual scanning patterns."<sup>11</sup>

Paik provocatively suggested that video was the answer to the readymade's exhaustion, but in fact his work carried the tradition forward by dissolving the distinction between commodity and inscription that had formed the conceptual ground against which Duchamp's first readymades could signify. Indeed, Paik's "dancing pattern" is literally groundless, composed, as the artist put it, of "non-gravity motion."<sup>12</sup> And yet Paik was also acutely aware of the embodied nature of informational codes. In some of his strangest proposals, Paik imagined eroticism as the means of collapsing such differences. In a 1965 letter to Billy Klüver, he wrote,

Someday more elaborate scanning system and something similar to matrix circuit and rectangle modulations system in color TV will enable us to send much more information at single carrier band, f.i. audio, video, pulse, temperature, moisture, pressure of your body combined. If combined with robot made of rubber, form expandable-shrinkable cathode-ray tube, and if it is "une petite robotine" . . .

please, tele-fuck!

with your lover in RIO<sup>13</sup>

Long before AIDS, Paik understood information as a sexually transmitted disease that could remake *both bodies and information*. As the artist declared in 1975, "What was most interesting was the intercourse [*les rapports*] between the body of Charlotte Moorman and the TV set. When two Americans like Moorman and TV make love together, you can't miss that."<sup>14</sup> Here, machines and humans make love, not war: the boundary between self and non-self is no longer marked by the skin, but distributed throughout the body as a hybrid surface of flesh and scanning.

In Paik's art, bodies and objects are absorbed into scan-lines only to be rewritten as pure abstract patterns.<sup>15</sup> Here, the genealogy that began with Duchamp's unlinking of signifier and signified and proceeded to Johns's syntactic declension

Fig. 12. *Magnet TV*, 1965. 17-inch black and white television set with magnet. 28 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 24 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (72.07 x 48.9 x 62.23 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from Dieter Rosenkranz, 86.60a b



of objects is rendered as a truly mutational form of the readymade in which code itself—in the guise of commercial television signals—is reinscribed. Pattern meets pattern in an art of interference. The exit from Duchamp's invention of the readymade, at least according to Paik, is to pervert the network—to allow the readymade to invade and remake products and persons alike. Such scrambling of objectivity and subjectivity, exemplified by Paik and Moorman's collaborations, indicates a further model for art practice that is related to but distinct from readymades: the avatar. As spectacular personalities, avatars are artifacts of a celebrity culture produced through successive cycles of media representation. Despite their derivation from actual persons (such as film stars, politicians, musicians, or criminals), in their capacity to circulate independent of the person to whom they are legally warranted, celebrities must be considered virtually autonomous quasifictional entities—a kind of human readymade.<sup>16</sup> Recently, artists have invented avatars for a range of purposes. Some, like those of Matthew Barney, function as the personification of drives populating flamboyant private worlds,<sup>17</sup> while others, like the Bernadette Corporation, establish an anonymous structure to facilitate a range of collective activities (including the production of a gallery, a novel, and videotapes). The Bernadette Corporation functions as a “blank identity” self-consciously analogous to the anarchistic bands of antiglobalization protestors that were the subject of its videotape *Get Rid of Yourself* (2003), and which may lend itself to a wide range of projects, such as the quasi-surrealist collaboration of its multi-authored novel, *Reena Spaulings* (2004), and various gallery and museum interventions. The virtue of introducing the avatar as a tool and a concept is its solution of a problem often associated with the readymade tradition: namely, its “passivity” or inefficacy as mere critique. As an objective subject (or subjective object) the avatar may revive claims to agency associated with the historical avant-gardes, but through means appropriate to a media culture. Of course Duchamp invented an avatar as well, Rose Sélavy, and she has had many artistic cognates throughout the twentieth century, including the inventions of Charlotte Moorman, Eleanor Antin, Adrian Piper, and Cindy Sherman, to name only a few. It is perhaps in such fictional characters operating within, and on, real social terrains that we may find our most attractive exit from the readymade.

## Notes

This essay first appeared in *October*, 119 (Winter, 2007), 37–45. © 2007 by October Magazine Ltd. and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Adapted from papers delivered at a conference at the Wexner Center for Arts, Ohio State University, Nov. 2005.

1. “Marcel Duchamp a tout fait sauf la video. Il a fait une grande porte d’entrée et une toute petite porte de sortie. Cette porte-là, c’est la video. C’est par elle que vous pouvez sortir de Marcel Duchamp.” Irmeline Leeber, “Entretien avec Nam June Paik,” *Chroniques de l’art vivant* 55 (February 1975), 33.

2. I attempt to establish such a continuum between commercial and fine art practices in my book *Feedback: Television Against Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007). This essay is drawn from the arguments put forward there.

3. This is the contention of Helen Molesworth’s exhibition “Part Object Part Sculpture,” to which this essay is a response. I discuss Duchamp’s shift from the readymade to more erotic procedures of molding in my essay for that catalogue: David Joselit, “Molds and Swarms,” in *Part Object Part Sculpture*, ed. Helen Molesworth (Columbus, Ohio: Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University Press; University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 156–65.

4. Nancy Miller, “An Interview with Nam June Paik,” in *The Color of Time: Video Sculpture by Nam June Paik* (Waltham, Mass.: Rose Art Museum, 1984), n.p.

5. These three registers certainly coexist to different degrees in all phases of the twentieth-century readymade. Like Paik, I have distinguished them sharply for polemical purposes.

6. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, eds., *Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 32.

7. Sketchbook entry, “Book B, c. 1967,” in *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, ed. Kirk Varnedoe (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 61.

8. For an excellent history of Duchamp’s successive “re-issues” of *Fountain*, see William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp, Fountain* (Houston: Houston Fine Arts Press, 1989). I discuss this aspect of the readymade in my essay

“Dada’s Diagrams,” in *The Dada Seminars*, ed. Leah Dickerman (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 221–39.

9. Varnedoe, ed., *Jasper Johns*, 49.

10. Douglas Davis, “Nam June Paik : The Cathode-Ray Canvas,” in *Art and the Future : A History / Prophecy of the Collaboration between Science, Technology, and Art* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 150.

11. Nam June Paik, “Experiments with Electronic Pictures,” *Fylkingen International Bulletin* 2 (1967), 38, 39.

12. David Ross, “A Conversation with Nam June Paik,” in *Nam June Paik: Video Time—Video Space*, ed. Toni Stooss and Thomas Kellein (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 58.

13. “Nam June Paik with Charlotte Moorman: Videology,” in *New Artist’s Video: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), 127.

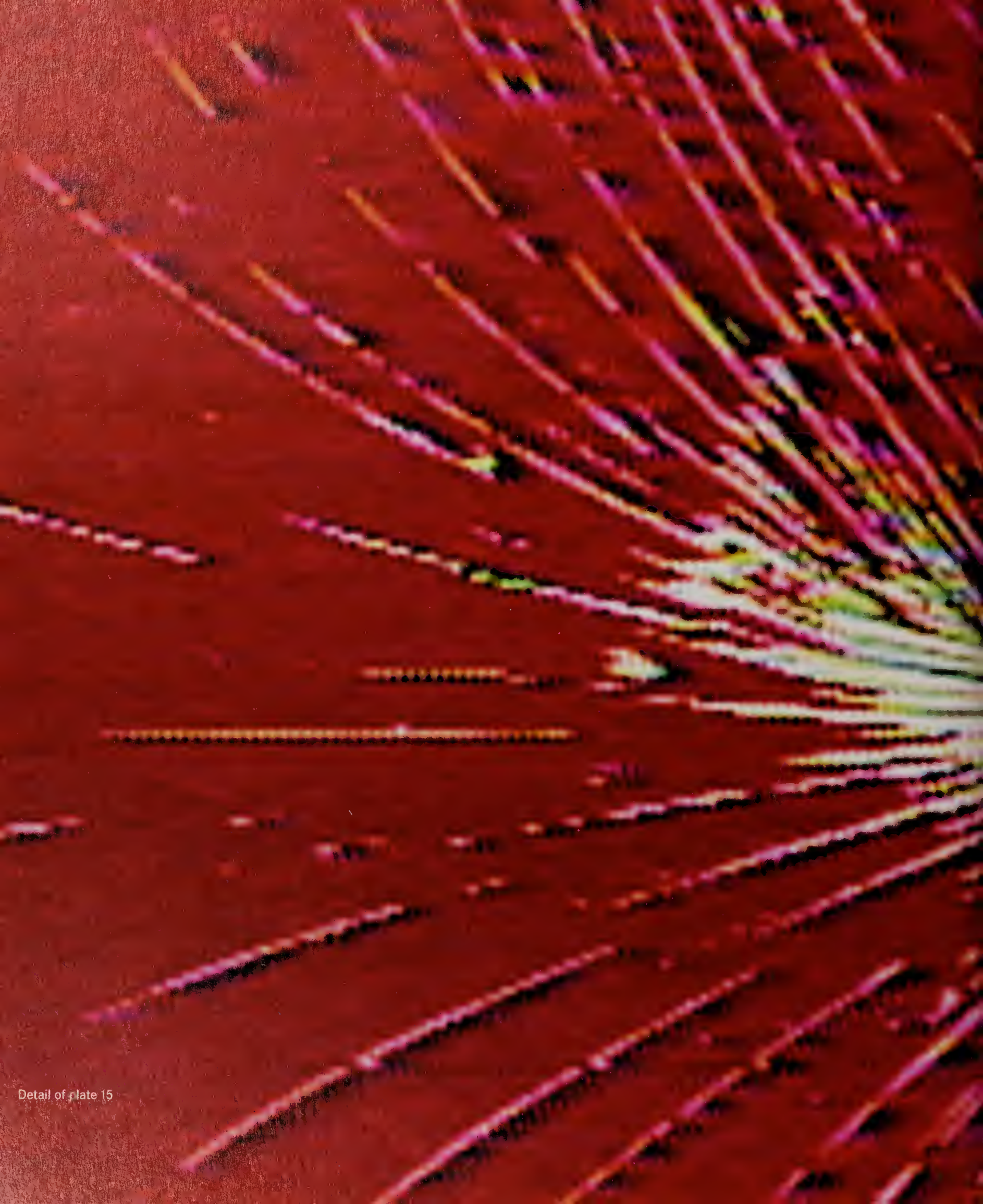
14. “Ce qui était surtout intéressant c’étaient les rapports entre le corps de Charlotte Moorman et l’appareillage TV. Lorsque deux Américains comme Moorman et la TV font l’amour ensemble, on ne peut pas rater ça.” Leeber, “Entretien avec Nam June Paik,” 33.

15. Katherine Hayles correlates the shift from the human to the posthuman in the mid-twentieth century with a shift in the nature of information from a presence to a pattern: “The contemporary pressure toward dematerialization, understood as an epistemic shift toward pattern/randomness and away from presence/absence, affects human and textual bodies on two levels at once, as a change in the body (material substrate) and as a change in the message (the codes of representation).” N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 29.

16. As commodified objects, such avatars are related to the readymade tradition but they should be categorized as “assisted readymades,” since they are usually produced as opposed to found.

17. See, for instance, Nancy Spector, “Only the Perverse Fantasy Can Still Save Us,” in *Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle*, ed. Nancy Spector (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2002), 3–91.





Detail of plate 15



# Works in the Exhibition

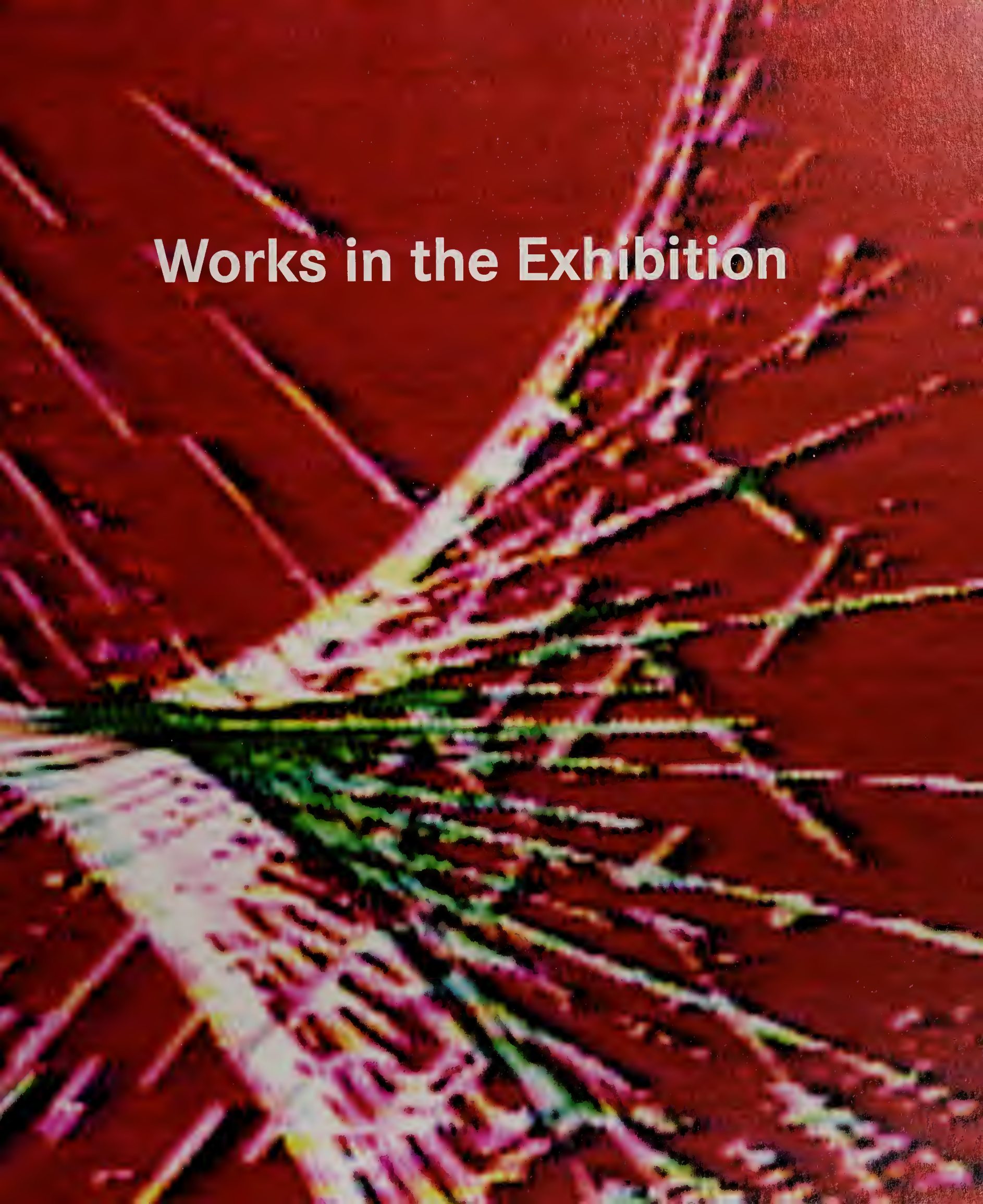
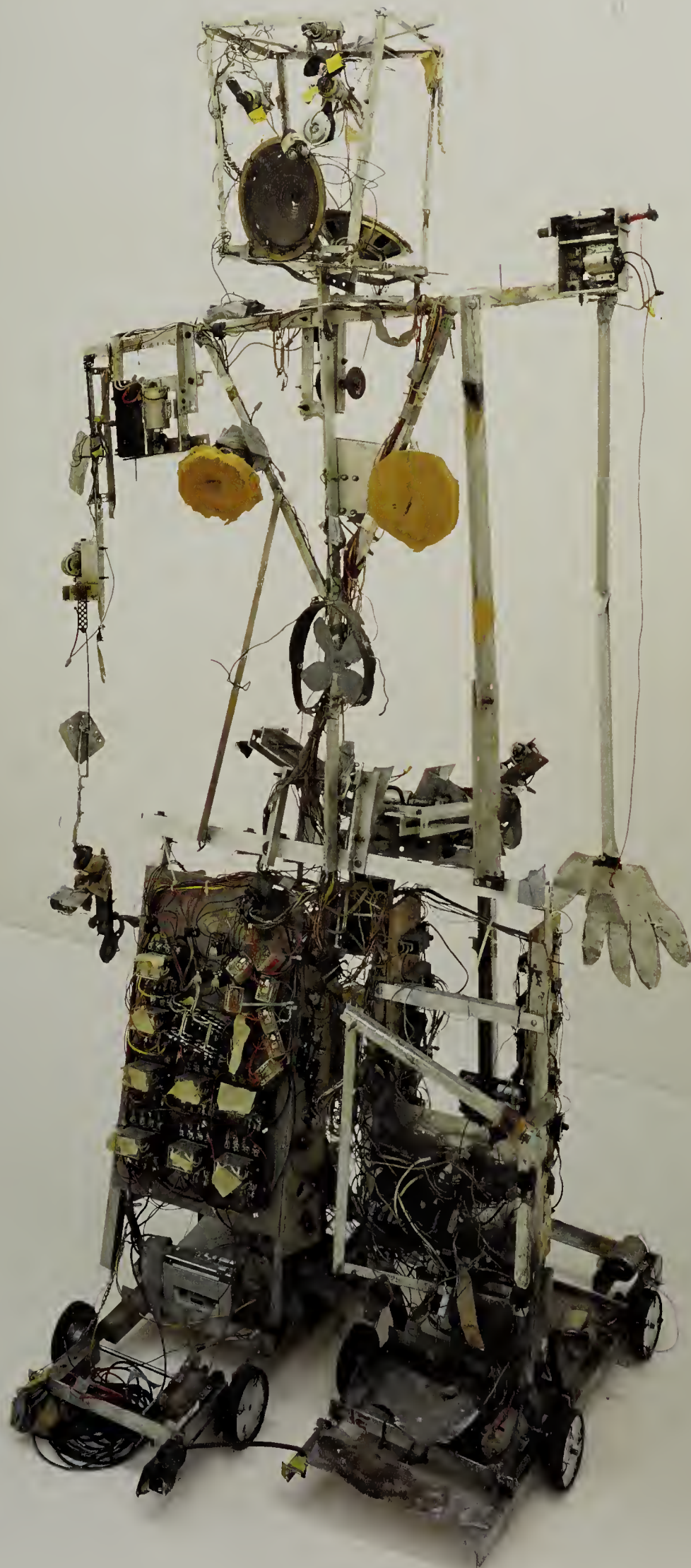






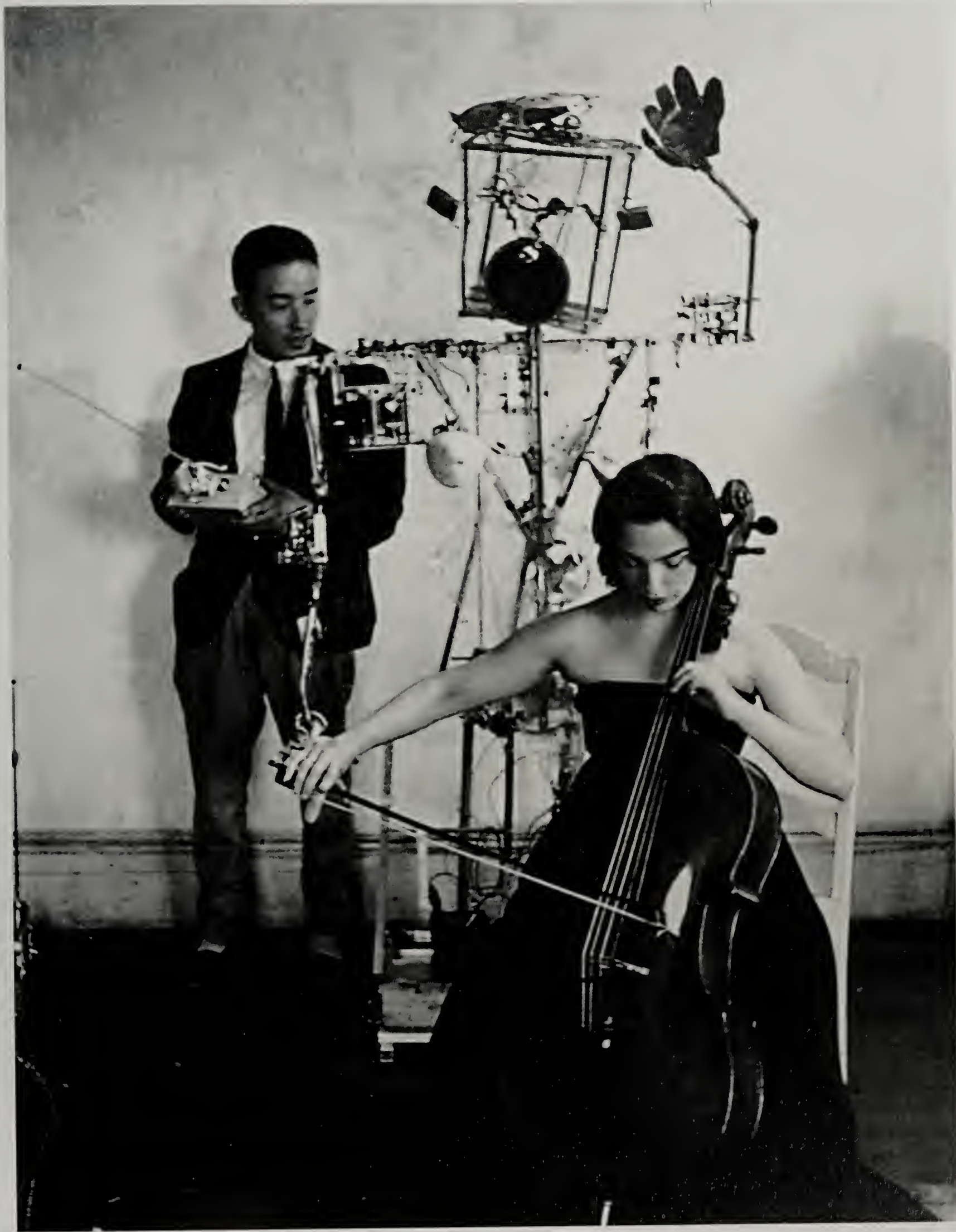
PLATE 1. *Robot K-456*, 1964. Twenty-channel radio-controlled robot, aluminum profiles, wire, wood, electrical divide, foam material, and control-turn out. 72 x 40 x 28 in. (183 x 103 x 72 cm). Friedrich Christian Flick Collection im Hamburger Bahnhof, PAKN1792.01





In 1970, play moonlight sonate on the moon.

60







# KILL POP-ART!! ROBOT-OPERA (N. J. PAIK)

DAVID BEHRMAN

WALKS on Washington Square & Madison Ave & Harlem.  
cello Charlotte Moorman.  
Karl-Erik Welin

technic: Shuya Abe.  
Kyuta Saito.  
Hideo Uchida.

and who were operated re-  
motely by Mr. Paik with two  
radio control minitron trans-  
mitters. The big one had a

A "Robot Opera" attrib-  
uted to Nam June Paik, intro-  
duced an attractive mechanical  
monster who shambled on stage  
with the gait of Frankenstein's  
creation. It was very definitely  
a female robot, whose ability to  
jiggle certain "muscles" was  
reminiscent of the late Carrie  
Fennell.

N.Y. Times. 31. Aug.

Taking note that honor of  
opening the Avant-Garde  
Festival is going to robot  
... robot speaks ...  
"Ask not what your coun-  
try can do for you, but what  
you can do for your country"  
... sounds like President  
Kennedy ... it is President

N.Y. Herald Tribune. 31. Aug.

Her co-star was a robot,  
who was not named on the pro-  
gram but who is known to have  
been graduated from the Eisen-  
tonhallschule in Guten-Baden un-  
der the nom-de-transistor of Lud-  
wig von Schlagkopf.

a duet with a  
mechanized robot equipped with twirl-  
ing foam-rubber breasts,

Time magazine. 18 Sept.

Village Voice. 3. Sept.

Nation. 28th Sept.

Friends of the creator, Nam June  
Paik, a life-blood member of the  
avant-garde festival as manipulator,  
composer, performer and presence,  
would ask how "she" was, "Is she  
well again?" one said in reference to  
a breakdown the night before during  
which Mr. Paik had bemoaned, "She's  
all right at home . . ." and friends  
had suggested stage fright as the  
reason for her balking in public. Mr.

photo Peter Moore

PLATE 4A AND B. Kill Pop Art!! Robot-Opera Program, 1964. Folded leaflet;  
printed paper. 8½ x 11 in. (21.6 x 27.9 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum,  
Nam June Paik Archive (Box 19, F. 11); Gift of the Nam June Paik Estate



# ROBOT

# OPERA

OPERA WITH ARIA	IS	BANAL
OPERA WITHOUT ARIA	IS	BORING
KARAJAN	IS	TOO BUSY
CALLAS	IS	TOO NOISY
WAGNER	IS	TOO LONG
MONEY	IS	TOO SHORT
MET-OPERA	IS	TOO DIRTY
SOAP-OPERA	IS	TOO CHEAP
POLLOCK	IS	TOO SAD
POP-ART	IS	TOO POP'S
ZEN	IS	TOO MUCH
PAIK	IS	TOO FAKE
DRUG	IS	TOO BORING
SEX	IS	TOO BANAL
00000000	IS	TOO XXXXXX
XXXXXXXX	IS	TOO 000000

Gluck contra Piccini  
Wagner contra Puccini  
Robot-opera contra Soap-opera

Awake! C'est deja midi!!!

Meet the people, who do not know the name PabloPicasso

Robot-Opera ..... every streets & squares in New York.

time .....indeterminate  
date.....indeterminate  
place.....indeterminate  
audience.....INDETERMINATE.

If you meet,  
pease, don't watch it more than 3 minutes?!

sorry





New School presents

# NAM JUNE PAIK

1965

$\frac{cybernetics (Art) + (Music) dt}{1 \infty}$

n=1961

I Electronic TV + Color TV Experiments

II 3 Robots

III Pop Sonata

IV 2 Zen Boxes + 1 Zen Can

CHARLOTTE MOORMAN, cellarina

Performers:

Frank Wigglesworth  
Malcolm Goldstein

Carol Berge  
Philip Carner  
Loveko A\*J\*  
David Behrman  
George Pappanikolaou  
Chieko Shiomi  
Dick Higgins  
Peter Moore

Technicians:

Shoya Abe, chief  
Hideo Uchido  
Kiyota Soito

NEW SCHOOL  
8 JANUARY 1965

PLATE 5. *Robot K-456* (1964) in *Robot Opera* (1964), performed in front of Judson Hall as part of the 2nd Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, New York, August 31, 1964. Gelatin silver print. 10 x 8 in. (25.4 x 20.3 cm). The Estate of Peter Moore and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Photo by Peter Moore  
© Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA, NY

PLATE 6A. *New School Presents Nam June Paik, 1965*. Folded leaflet; printed paper. 16 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 7 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (41.6 x 19.7 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive (Box 19, F. 13); Gift of the Nam June Paik Estate



## ELECTRONIC TV & COLOR TV EXPERIMENT by NAM JUNE PAIK

In my two previous essays on this subject (Decollage No. 4 and Fluxus Newspaper No. 3), I treated the aesthetical aspects of the electronic TV experiments and its relation to electronic music. This essay will be mainly a technical report.

### I COLOR TV EXPERIMENT

- A Three taperecorders are added to the convergence-circuit, so that convergence-circuit is modulated over the waves from the taperecorders...Any black & white image gets random picture. (Point A.B.C. at circuit diagram)
- B Three TV cameras are fed to each Kathode of red, green, blue electro-guns of the color picture tube, so that one shadow mask picture tube shows three different images of three colors at one time. The brightness of the three images is controlled by the amplitude of three taperecorders at the reversed phase. (Point E.F.G.)

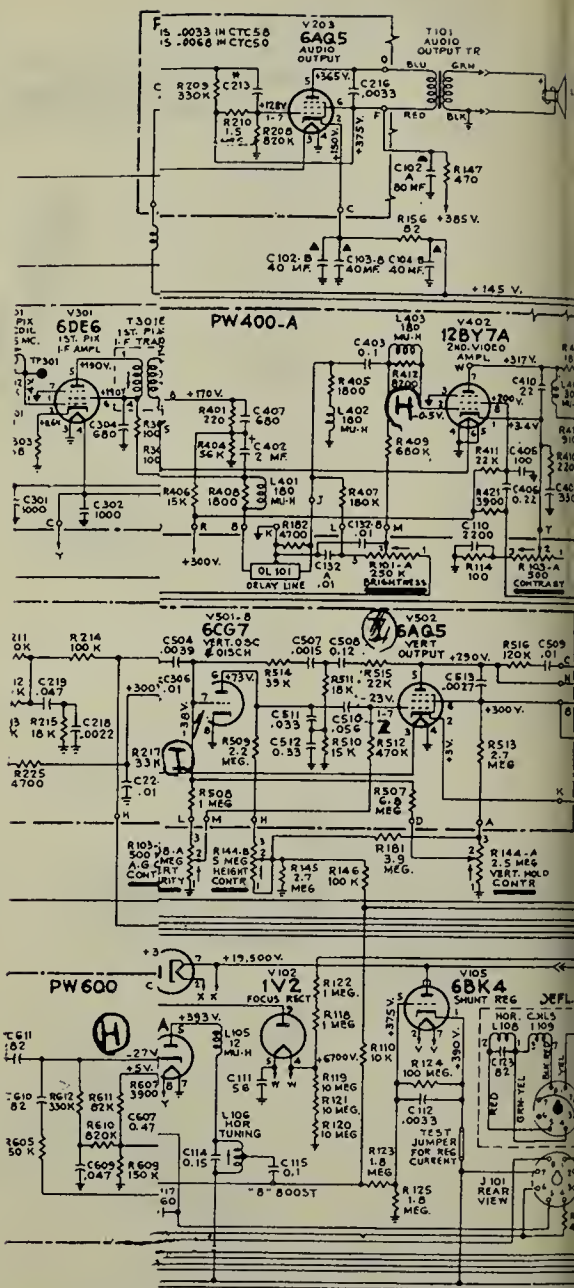
### II BLACK & WHITE TV EXPERIMENTS

- A The picture is changeable in three ways with hand switches. Upside-Down; Right-Left; Positive-Negative.
- B The screen can become larger and smaller in vertical and horizontal dimensions separately according to the amplitude of the tape-recorder.
- C Horizontal & vertical deflection of normal TV is changed into the spiral-deflection. Any normal square image is varied into a fan-form. (Special Yoke-oscillator-amplifier is made for it.)
- D A TV screen (negative) in match-box size.
- E TV picture is "disturbed" by strong demagnetizer, whose place and rhythm give rich variety.

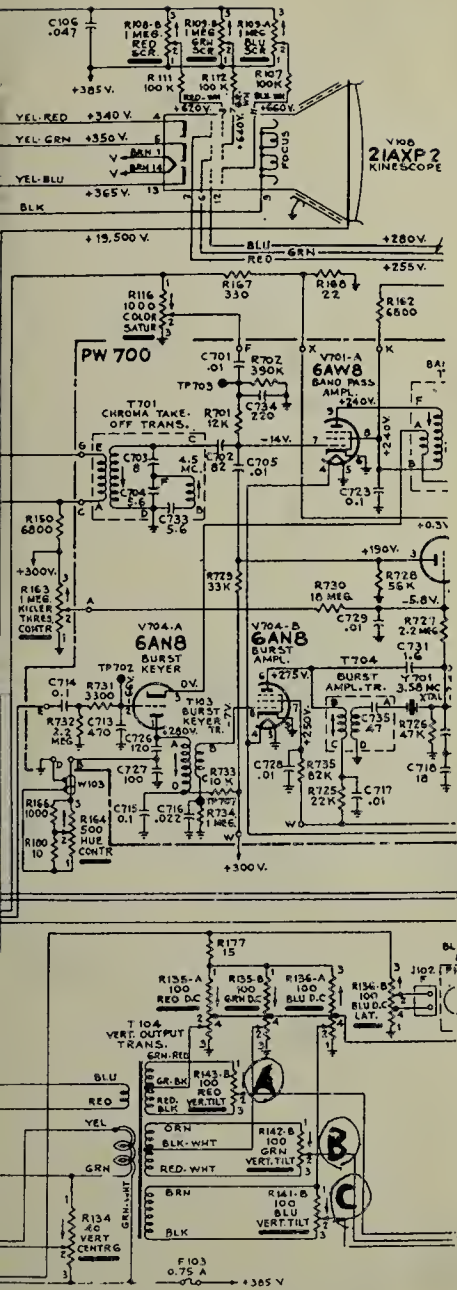
These experiments were made in Tokyo in 1963-64 with technical help of Mr. SHUYA ABE & Mr. HIDEO UCHIDA, whose ability and creativity I cannot emphasize too much. My cooperation with these top engineers broadened and changed my Lebensanschauung.

### III The following is a recapitulation of my first show in Galerie Parnass in March, 1963, Wuppertal, Germany.

- A A relay is intercepted at the grid of Video-output tube so that picture is visible only when the relay is connected. (Point H on circuit) It is controlled by the amplitude of the radio or tape-recorder.
- B A relay is intercepted at the A/C 110 volt input and fed by a 25 watt amplifier without rectifier. Unsymmetrical sparks are seen on screen.
- C 10 meg ohm resistor is intercepted at the grid of the vertical output tube and then the waves from the generator are fed here, so that both waves interfere and modulate with each other. (Point I)
- D The waves from the taperecorder are fed to the horizontal output tube's grid, so that horizontal lines are warped according to the taperecorder's frequency and amplitude. (Point J)
- E The vertical output tube is cut out; you see only one straight line.



Professor K. O. Goetz of the Kunstakademie published since 1950 on the idea of feeding a TV tube with a computer. This idea has not yet got a computer and our largest computer points in each one 50th second. Although different, I want to pay due respect. A Gallery, N. Y. C., 1963 shows rich possibilities of hetero-TV elements. ("Shoot the TV," "TV blur" etc.) Knud Wiggen is--hopeful of a TV studio in Stockholm. I hope for final



esseldorf, Germany nas  
Kathode of the TV picture  
lized, because he could not  
too slow to send 4 million  
dea and my method is completely  
decollage of W. Vostell (Smolin  
es of combinations of TV and  
TV," "TV behind canvass,"  
ng to establish an electronic  
p from foundations for us all.

Thanks for technical facilities offered by FAMOUS TV CORP, 525 Amsterdam Ave & BILL MILLER

**THE NEW YORK TIMES**  
"Some said that the great moment came when the guy stood on a chair, squirmed.... The beauty and originality of it! The imagination, yet simplicity! It caught you in the throat. It got you here." (Harold C. Schonberg N. Y. C.)  
**NEWSWEEK**  
"The young Korean musician Nam June Paik doused himself with shaving soap and took a tub bath fully dressed."  
(Bear N. Y. C.)  
**N. Y. WORLD-TELEGRAM**  
"...drank from his shoes, then ran off dripping to play a piano elsewhere in the room. Everybody liked it." (F. Pril N. Y. C.)  
**THE VILLAGE VOICE**  
"How much can it cost to change your mind? Paik changed his mind when his arms and violin were extended to the floor." "At the moment he stepped aside, spoke briefly, possibly in a white fury, and if so smashed the violin out of a present need than fulfillment of a planned action. Pure Fluxus." (J. Johnston N. Y. C.)

**THE N. Y. HERALD TRIBUNE**  
"Strange shuffling noise... Robot appears from left slowly... a good six feet tall easily... kind of scrawny build... his feet have wheels on them, like big roller skates... robot can't seem to make up mind whether to come on..." (William Bender N. Y. C.)  
**THE NATION**  
"...aims to play Moonlight Sonata on the moon in 1970." (F. Bowers N. Y. C.)  
**DECOLLAGES**  
"He pierced the universe with music... now we know that the dragging of empty cans over asphalt is more valuable than the Ninth Symphony." (Jean-Pierre Wilhelm Germany)  
**DER SPIEGEL**  
"...stripped down to his shorts, stared his face with tomato ketchup, threw fresh eggs into the audience, and dissected a mannequin."  
(Hamburg, Germany)  
**ANTHROLOGY**  
"Good old no-count terror. I got pretty nervous too and so would you, what with not knowing if Paik, me, a friend, an enemy, or a piano, is eventually if not now going out that 3 story window into the Rhine." (Earle Brown N. Y. C.)  
**POST FACE**  
"Once he (Paik) wrote to me that he was old-fashioned inasmuch as he felt like Schiller and Delacroix, that his ideal was the same, that he liked Beethoven more than anybody else."  
(Dick Higgins N. Y. C.)  
**MAGNUM**  
"Historically latest sensation... Dadaism and expressionism is combined into the unknown..."  
(H. K. Metzger Cologne, Germany)  
**KÖLLNER-STADT ANZEIGER**  
"An ox-head, dripping with blood, hung at the entrance to Parnass. The Korean art-shaman sacrificed various artistic discipline together in a home-made altar of visual-acoustic totality."  
(S. Bonk Cologne, Germany)  
**VISION**  
"robot se le enciende una luz en la nariz, se inclina y camina alrededor cantando..."  
(Sasys Gostautas South America)

**THE YOMIURI**  
"Direct action... musicalized destruction... attacking the enemy... music of nihilism..."  
(Kuniharu Akiyama Tokyo, Japan)  
**MELUS**  
"Paik's concert fell like a bomb in Copenhagen."  
(Maagaard Germany)  
**FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE**  
"Infant terrible of this circle... the most shocking things occur over a period of six minutes... collage, montage..." (Ernst Thomas Germany)  
**PARDON**  
"...he said... 'my fifth wife is the third wife of the fourth husband of my third wife'..." (Germany)  
**OSLO PAPER**  
"Stupid and talentless" (Norway)  
**EXPRESSEN**  
"Jag Aer, tungvikmaestare i musik" Bengt af Klintberg Sweden)  
**DUTCH WEEKLY**  
"Alle televisies waren op dezelfde uitzending afgesteld, maar het effect van elk beeld was totaal verschillend." (M. d. Ridder Holland)



# NAM JUNE PAIK ELECTRONIC VIDEO RECORDER

Cafe Au Go Go • 152 Bleecker • October 4 & 11 1965 • World Theater • 9PM

(a trial preview to main November show at Gallery Bonino)

Through the grant of J D R 3rd fund (1965 spring term), 5 years old dream of me  
the combination of Electronic Television & Video Tape Recorder

is realized. It was the long long way, since I got this idea in Cologne Radio Station  
in 1961, when its price was as high as a half million dollars. I look back with a bitter  
grin of having paid 25 dollars for a fraud instruction "Build the Video Recorder Yourself"  
and of the desperate struggle to make it with Shuya Abe last year in Japan. In my  
video-taped electro vision, not only you see your picture instantaneously and find out  
what kind of bad habits you have, but see yourself deformed in 12 ways, which only  
electronic ways can do.

\*It is the historical necessity, if there is a historical necessity in history,  
that a new decade of electronic television should follow to the past decade  
of electronic music

\*\*Variability & Indeterminism is underdeveloped in optical art as parameter  
Sex is underdeveloped in music.

\*\*\*As collage technic replaced oil-paint, the cathode ray tube will replace  
the canvass.

\*\*\*\*Someday artists will work with capacitors, resistors & semi-conductors as  
they work today with brushes, violins & junk.

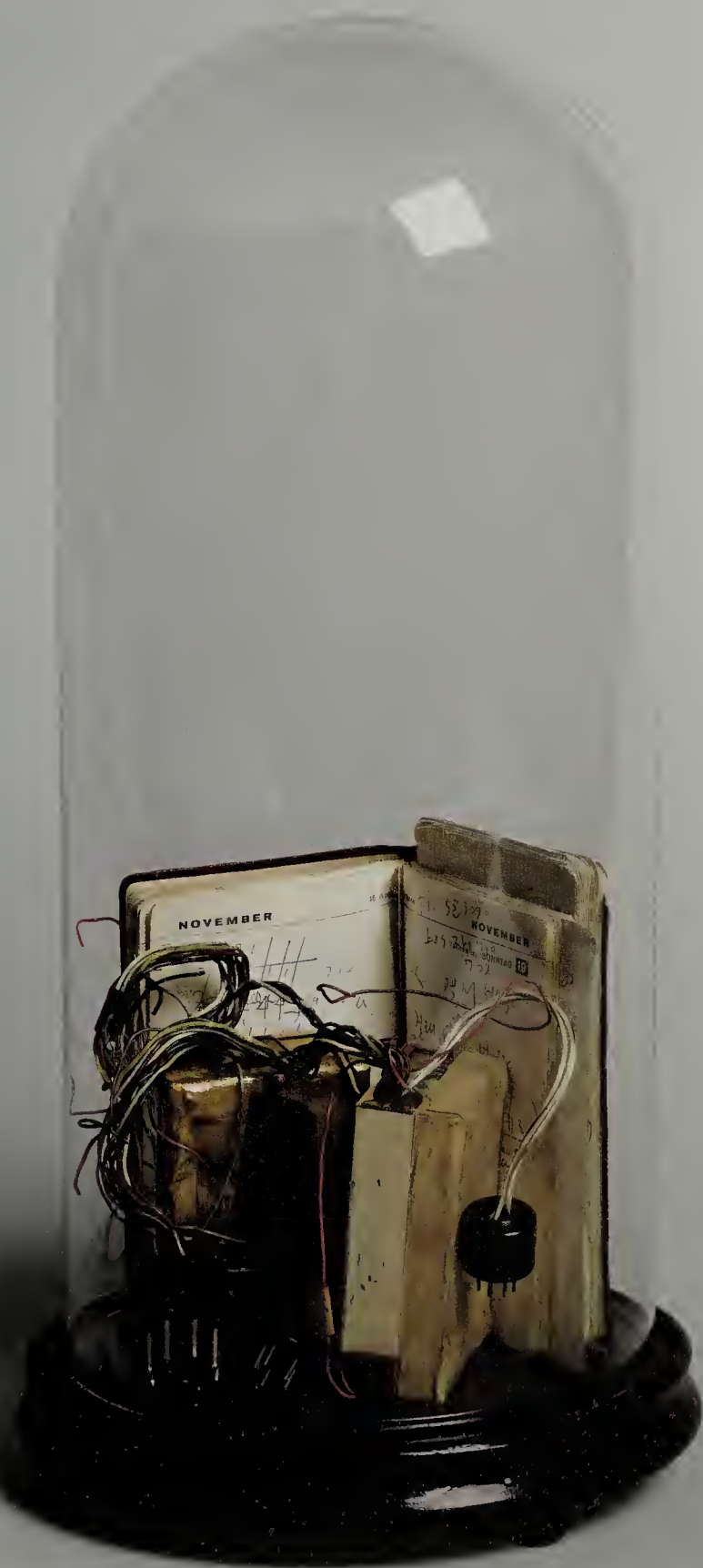
Laser idea No 3

Because of VVHF of LASER, we will have enough radio stations to afford  
Mozart-only stations, Cage-only stations, Bogart-only TV stations, Under-  
ground Movie-only TV stations etc. etc. etc.

PLATE 7. **Electronic Video Recorder Flyer, 1965.** Paper. 11 x 8½ in.  
(27.9 x 21.6 cm). Nam June Paik Estate

PLATE 8. **Robot Brain, 1965.** 2 metal boxes (computers), cables,  
connectors, notebook from 1961, on wooden base under glass dome.  
H. 13¾ in. (35 cm). Friedrich Christian Flick Collection im Hamburger  
Bahnhof, PAIKN 1742





## by Nam June Paik

R Cybernated art is very important, but art for cybernated life is more important, and the latter need not be cybernated.

(Maybe George Brecht's simplissimo is the most adequate.)



But if Pasteur and Robespierre are right that we can resist poison only through certain built-in poison, then some specific frustrations, caused by cybernated life, require accordingly cybernated shock and catharsis. My everyday work with video tape and the cathode-ray tube convinces me of this.

★ Cybernetics, the science of pure relations, or relationship itself, has its origin in karma. Marshall McLuhan's famous phrase "Media is message" was formulated by Norbert Wiener in 1948 as "The signal, where the message is sent, plays equally important role as the signal, where message is not sent."



As the Happening is the fusion of various arts, so cybernetics is the exploitation of boundary regions between and across various existing sciences.



Newton's physics is the mechanics of power and the unconciliatory two-party system, in which the strong win over the weak. But in the 1920's a German genius put a tiny third-party (grid) between these two mighty poles (cathode and anode) in a vacuum tube, thus enabling the weak to win over the strong for the first time in human history. It might be a Buddhistic 'third way,' but anyway this German invention led to cybernetics, which came to the world in the last war to shoot down German planes from the English sky.



The Buddhists also say

Karma is samsara

Relationship is metempsychosis

## We are in open circuits

### MANIFESTOS

by Arto  
by Philip Corner  
by W. E. B. Dubois Clubs  
by Oyvind Fahlström  
by Robert Filliou  
by John Giorno  
by Al Hansen  
by Dick Higgins  
by Allen Kaprow  
by Alison Knowles  
by Nam June Paik  
by Dieter Riel  
by Jerome Kahanberg  
by Wolf Vostell  
by Robert Watts  
by Emmett Williams



1966  
A Great Bear Pamphlet  
New York

PLATE 9. *Manifestos, A Great Bear Pamphlet*, 1966. Ink on paper.  
5¾ x 8¾ in. (14.6 x 22.2 cm).  
Peter Wenzel Collection

## Utopian Laser TV Station

McLuhan is surely great, but his biggest inconsistency is that he still writes books. He became well-known mainly through books, he doesn't care about the situation, and is excluded from the media for which he evangelizes.

Very very very high-frequency oscillation of laser will enable us to afford thousands of large and small TV stations. This will free us from the monopoly of a few commercial TV channels. I am video-taping the following TV programs to be telecast March 1, 1996 A.D.

- 7 a.m. Chess lesson by Marcel Duchamp.
- 8 a.m. Meet the Press. Guest: John Cage.
- 9 a.m. Morning gymnastics: Merce Cunningham, Carolyn Brown.
- 10 a.m. Something Else University: collection of unnecessary and unimportant knowledge (Indian incense, Chinese cockroaches, etc.), by David Tudor.
- 11 a.m. The more meaningful boredom. Jackson Mac Low's 1961 film in which a standing camera focuses on a tree for many hours.
- 12 a.m. Noon news by Charlotte Moorman. The 1996 Nobel prizes: peace, John Cage; chemistry, inventor of the paper plate; physics, Charles de Gaulle; medicine prize, inventor of the painless abortion pill; literature, Dick Higgins or Tomas Schmit.
- 1 p.m. Commercials from the Fluxus Department Store. Alison Brand Atom Shoes for the carless society (this shoe is equipped with small wheels, fed by tiny atomic engines, and can travel from Harlem to Wall Street

in 15 minutes, eliminating parking problems).

- 2 p.m. How to use my "stereo eyes" and Buddha head, by Emmett Williams.
- 3 p.m. Guided tour of Kurdistan, Turkistan and Kazakstan, by Dick Higgins.
- 4 p.m. Confessions of a topless cellist, by Charlotte Moorman.
- 5 p.m. Cantata: "Image Sacrée de Mary Bauermeister," by Nam June Paik.
- 6 p.m. Stock market report: "How to lose your money quickly," by George Maciunas.
- 7 p.m. Avant-garde cooking recipes for endless sex, temporary death, controllable dreams, endless unsex, endless youth, by Alison Knowles.
- 8 p.m. Symposium on modern Platonism: George Brecht, Robert Filliou, Al Hansen, Joe Jones and Ray Johnson.
- 10 p.m. Baby care, by Diter Rot.
- 11 p.m. Ars Nova Quartet: Philip Corner, Malcolm Goldstein, Alvin Lucier and James Tenney.
- 12 p.m. Midnight editorial: Art and Politics, by Wolf Vostell, followed by movies of the 60's (Stan Brakhage, Robert Breer, Adolfas Mekas, Stan Vanderbeek).
- 1 a.m. Suggestion for tonight: "Bed Techniques of the Ancients," readings in Greek by Christian Wolff.
- 2 a.m. Goodnight poem: rude chants by Carol Bergé.
- 3 a.m. Dream music, by LaMonte Young, and Mahjong tournament between Ay-o, Takehisa Kosugi, Toshi Ichihyanagi and Yoko Ono.
- 6 a.m. Alcohol contest: all-star cast.



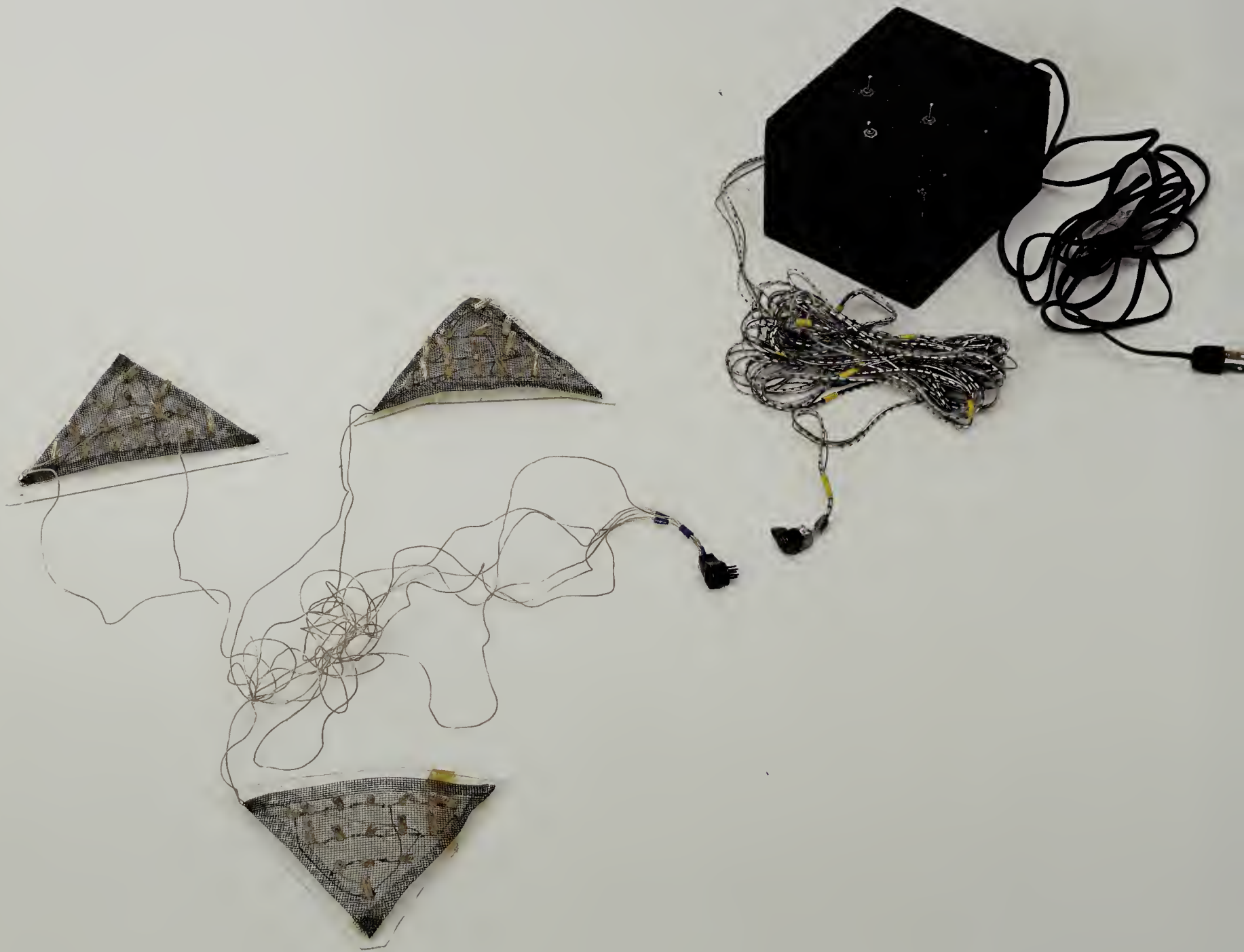


PLATE 10. *Light Bikini for Opera Sextronique*, 1966/1975. Plastic netting with light bulbs on plexiglass, cable, control box with toggle switches. Triangles each  $5\frac{5}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{16}$  in. (14.5 x 19 x 3 cm), box  $4\frac{1}{3} \times 6\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{8}$  in. (11 x 16 x 13 cm). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, 2008 Gift of the Friedrich Christian Flick Collection, Inv. NG FCFC 59/08



PLATE 11. *Jud Yalkut. Opera Sextronique*, 1967. 16 mm film on video, color, black and white, silent. 5:10 minutes. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York



01:23



03:54



04:09

World first.

# VIDEO-TAPE MONTHLY MAGAZINE

by NAM JUNE PAIK

SOMEDAY LONDON TIMES  
will become "VIDEO-TAPE".

YOU CAN HAVE

"INTIMATE TV SHOW FOR ADULT ONLY."

3-D THESIS<sup>OR</sup> — as difficult as —

KANT + WITTGENSTEIN + NURBUT WENGER

loga ( )

1967 January issue : Bookless literature.  
February issue : Paperless poem.  
March issue : potless poet. (Eddie Schlossberg)  
April issue : Topless Cellist. (Charlotte Moorman)  
May issue : Backboneless composer (Nam June Paik)  
June issue : Ego-less artist (Tomas Shmit)  
July issue : Moneyless society (all star cast)  
August issue : Chez Vous, madame (edition privee).

,,,continued,,,,,,

each issue 100 dollar

order to:





PLATE 13. *TV Chair*, 1968. Closed-circuit video installation with television and chair; black and white; silent. 33 x 17 x 15 in. (83.8 x 43.2 x 38.1 cm). Nam June Paik Estate

PLATE 14. *Three Camera Participation/Participation TV*, 1969/2001.

Installation with three cameras, video projector, and monitor. Dimensions variable. Kunsthalle Bremen - Der Kunstverein in Bremen, Inv-No. 827-2013/6







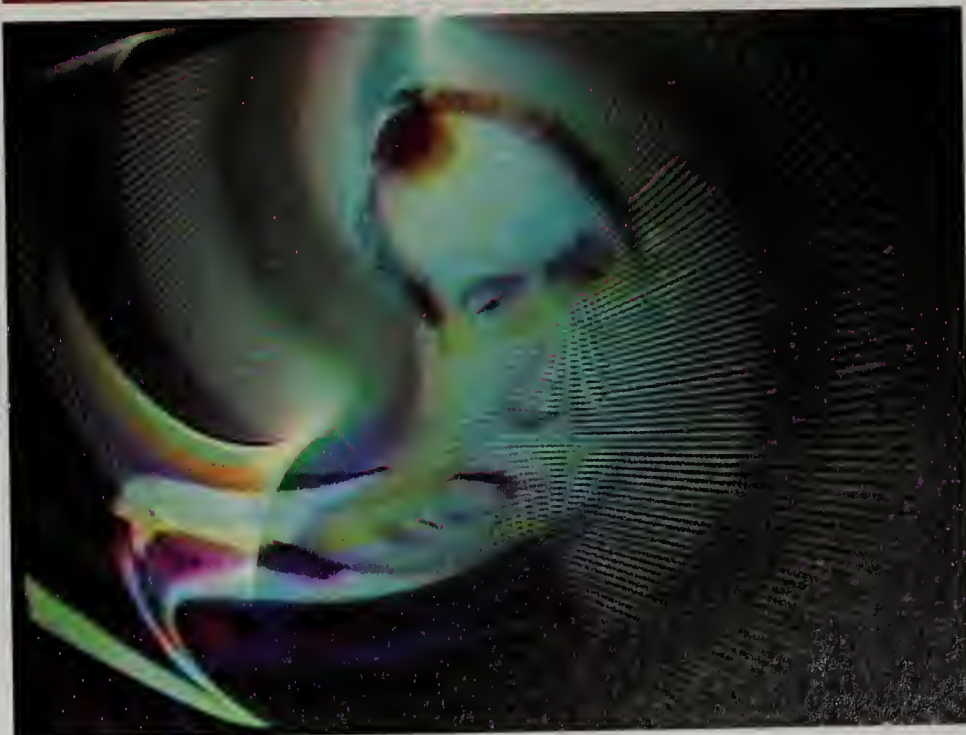




00:47



00:54



01:32

PLATE 15. *Electronic Opera #1*, 1969. Video, color, sound.  
4:45 minutes. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI),  
New York



PLATE 16. **Paik with Charlotte Moorman wearing *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*, 1969.** Gelatin silver print, 14 x 11 in. (35.6 x 27.9 cm). The Estate of Peter Moore and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Photo by Peter Moore © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA, NY





01:13



04:24



06:03

PLATE 17. Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut. *TV Cello Premiere*, 1971. Video, color, silent. 7:25 minutes.  
 Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

03:44



06:27



24:30



PLATE 18. Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman.  
*Rare Performance Documents 1961–1994 Volume 1:  
 Paik-Moorman Collaborations, 1965–1973; compiled  
 in 2000. Video, black and white, color, sound. 25:08  
 minutes. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York*











PLATE 19. Photograph documentation of *TV Penis* with Stuart Craig Wood, The Kitchen, Mercer Arts Center, New York, 1972. Gelatin silver print. 10 x 8 in. (25.4 x 20.3 cm). The Estate of Peter Moore and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Photo by Peter Moore © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA, NY

PLATE 20. Photograph documentation of *TV Penis* with Stuart Craig Wood, The Kitchen, Mercer Arts Center, New York, 1972. Gelatin silver print. 8 x 10 in. (20.3 x 25.4 cm). The Estate of Peter Moore and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Photo by Peter Moore © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA, NY



(1944)

## Do you know...?

How soon television will be in most homes?  
How many small packages are lost annually?  
The cruising range of small postwar planes?

# 18



Q. How soon after the war will television be available for the average home?

☐ 6 months    ☐ 1 year    ☐ 2 years

A. Experts estimate that television will be ready in about six months after civilian production resumes. And one of the important production techniques that will help speed delivery of

### DO YOU KNOW...?

How soon TV-chair will be available in most museums ?

How soon artist will have their own TV channels ?

How soon wall to wall TV for video-art will be installed  
in most homes ?

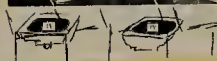
A new design for TV-chair

(dedicated to the great  
communication-artist Ray  
Johnson)

(1944)

### Do you know...?

How many televisions will be in most homes?  
How many small packages are lost annually?  
The striking range of small package prices?



A. How many televisions will be available in most homes?  
B. How many small packages are lost annually?  
C. How many small packages are lost annually?  
D. How many small packages are lost annually?

DO YOU KNOW...?

How soon TV-chairs will be available in most homes?

How soon artist will have their own TV channels?

How soon will the well TV for video-art will be installed in most homes?

A new design for TV-chairs

(dedicated to the great  
communication-artist Ray  
Johnson)

PLATE 22. *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*, 1975. Cello, 2 television sets, microphone, amplifiers, deflection coils, "fussbedienungsgerate," cables. Dimensions variable. Friedrich Christian Flick Collection im Hamburger Bahnhof, PAIKN 1734.01





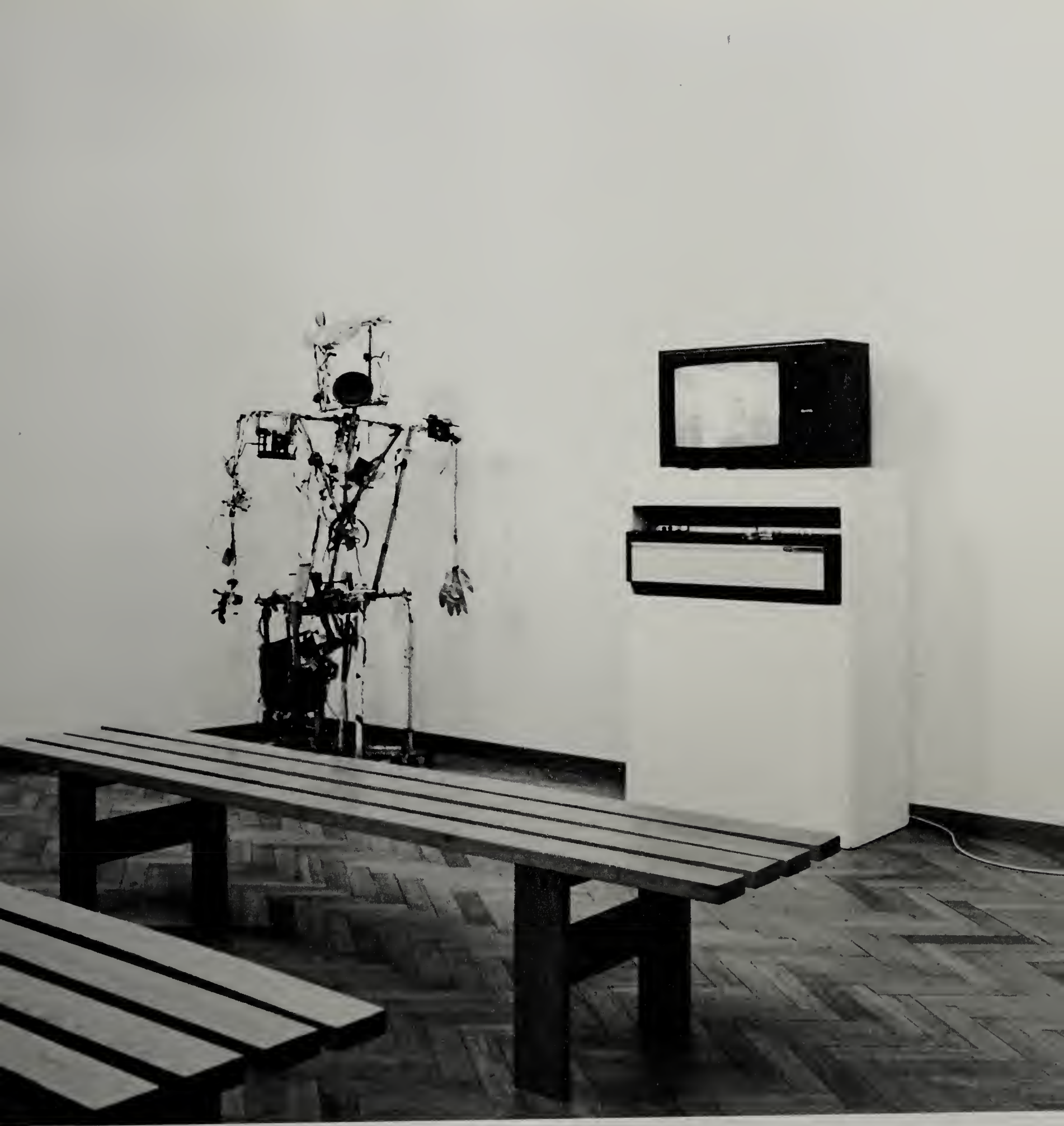
PLATE 23. *Triangle: Video Buddha and Video Thinker, 1978/1991*. Installation: four monitors, two cameras, two tripods, and two sculptures. Dimensions variable. Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany, Inv. FNG 63/93







PLATE 24. **Untitled (Installation view of Nam June Paik exhibition at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1977), 1977.** Gelatin silver print. 8 x 10 in. (20.3 x 25.4 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive (Box 16, F. 19); Gift of the Nam June Paik Estate





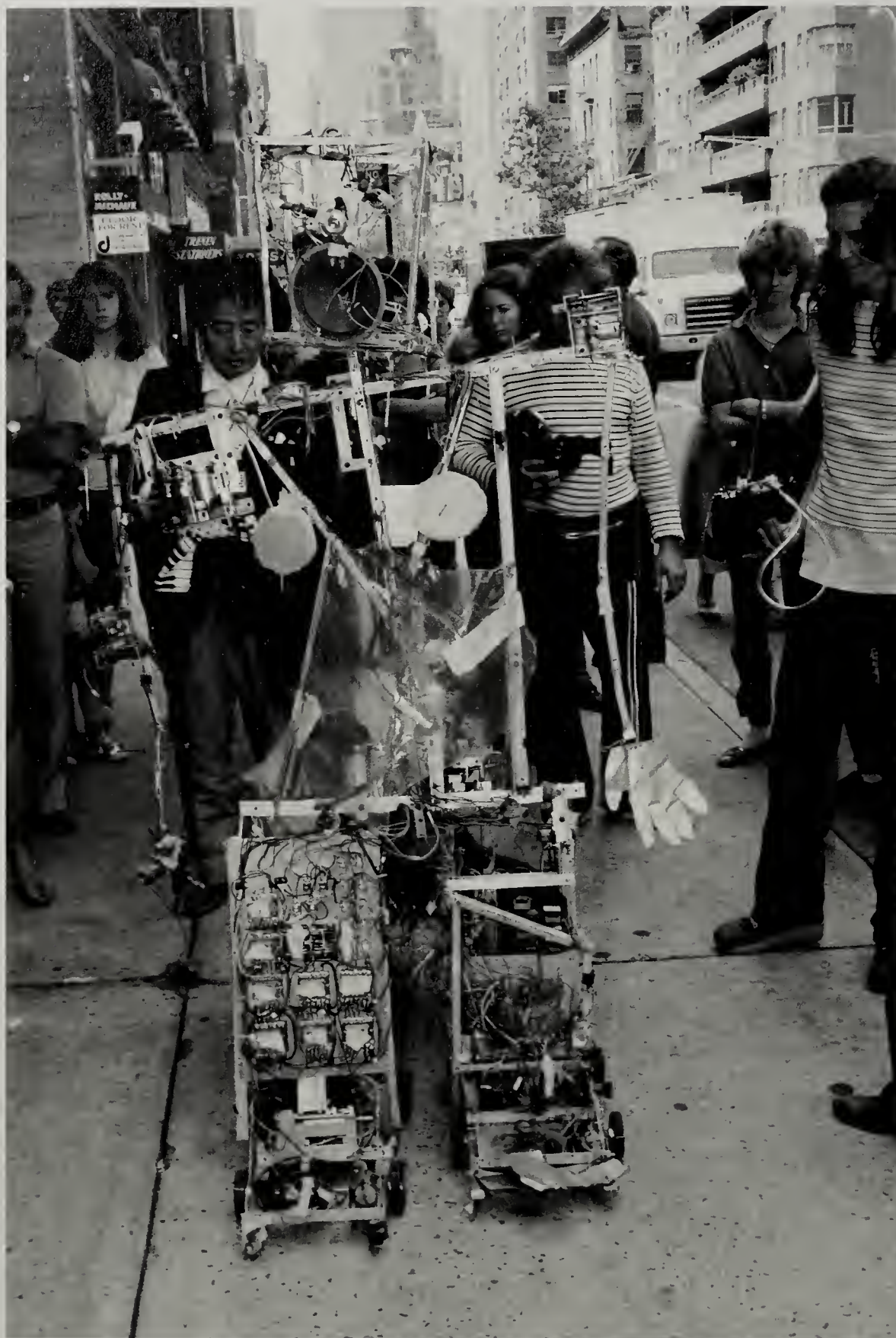


PLATE 25. A performance with *Robot K-456* on Madison Avenue in New York on June 18, 1982 from the *First Accident of the Twenty-first Century*, photograph by George Hirose, 1982. Gelatin silver print. 10 x 8 in. (25.4 x 20.3 cm). Collection of John G. Hanhardt

PLATE 26. A performance with *Robot K-456* on Madison Avenue in New York on June 18, 1982 from the *First Accident of the Twenty-first Century*, photograph by George Hirose, 1982. Gelatin silver print. 7 x 5 in. (17.8 x 12.7 cm). Collection of John G. Hanhardt







11:10



11:31



12:01



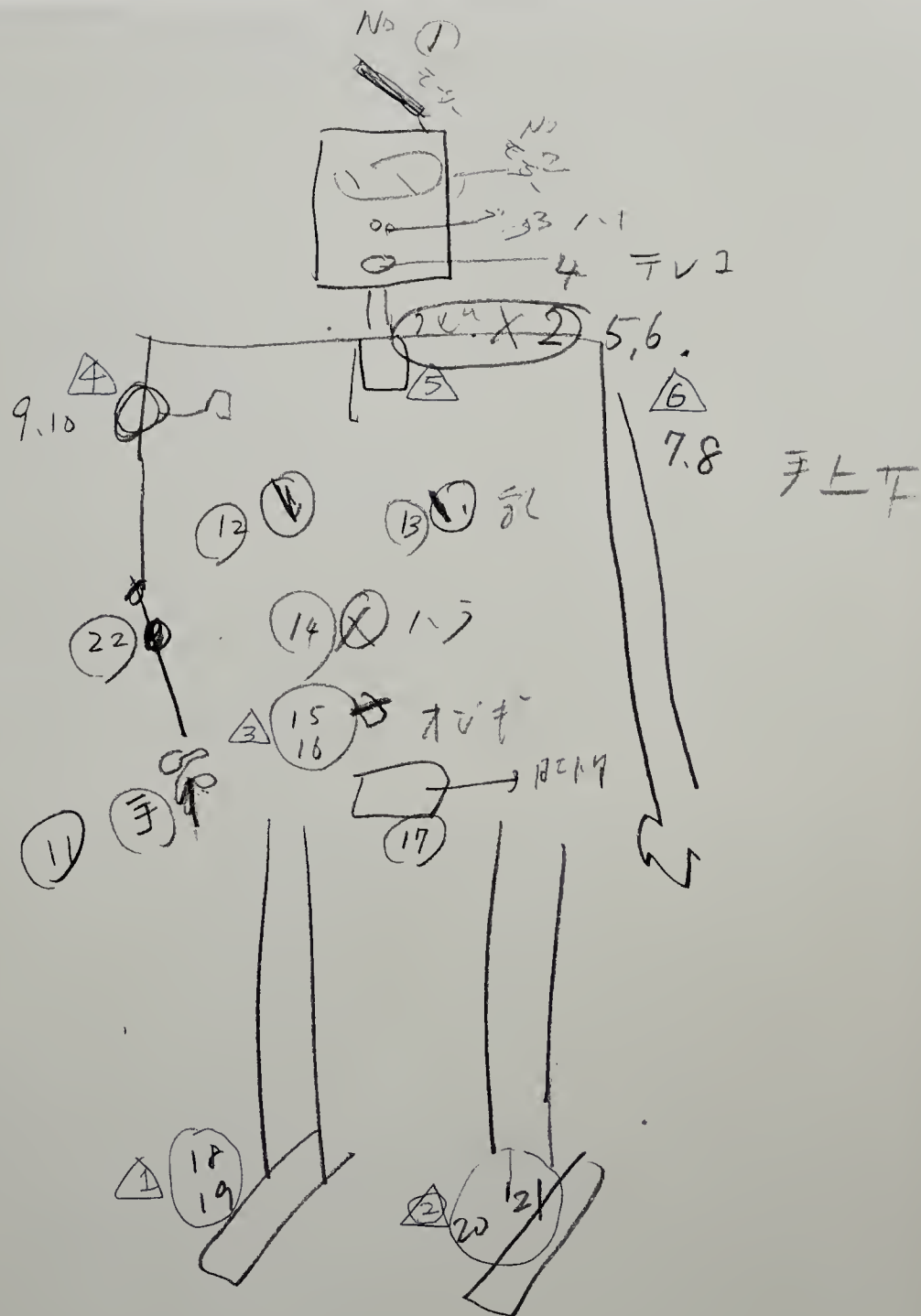


PLATE 27. Nam June Paik with Betsy Connors and Paul Garrin.  
*Living with the Living Theater*, 1989. Video, color, sound.  
 28:30 minutes. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

PLATE 28. Drawing for repair of *Robot K-456*, 1982.  
 Pencil and ink on paper. 12 x 9 in. (30.5 x 22.9 cm).  
 Collection of John G. Hanhardt



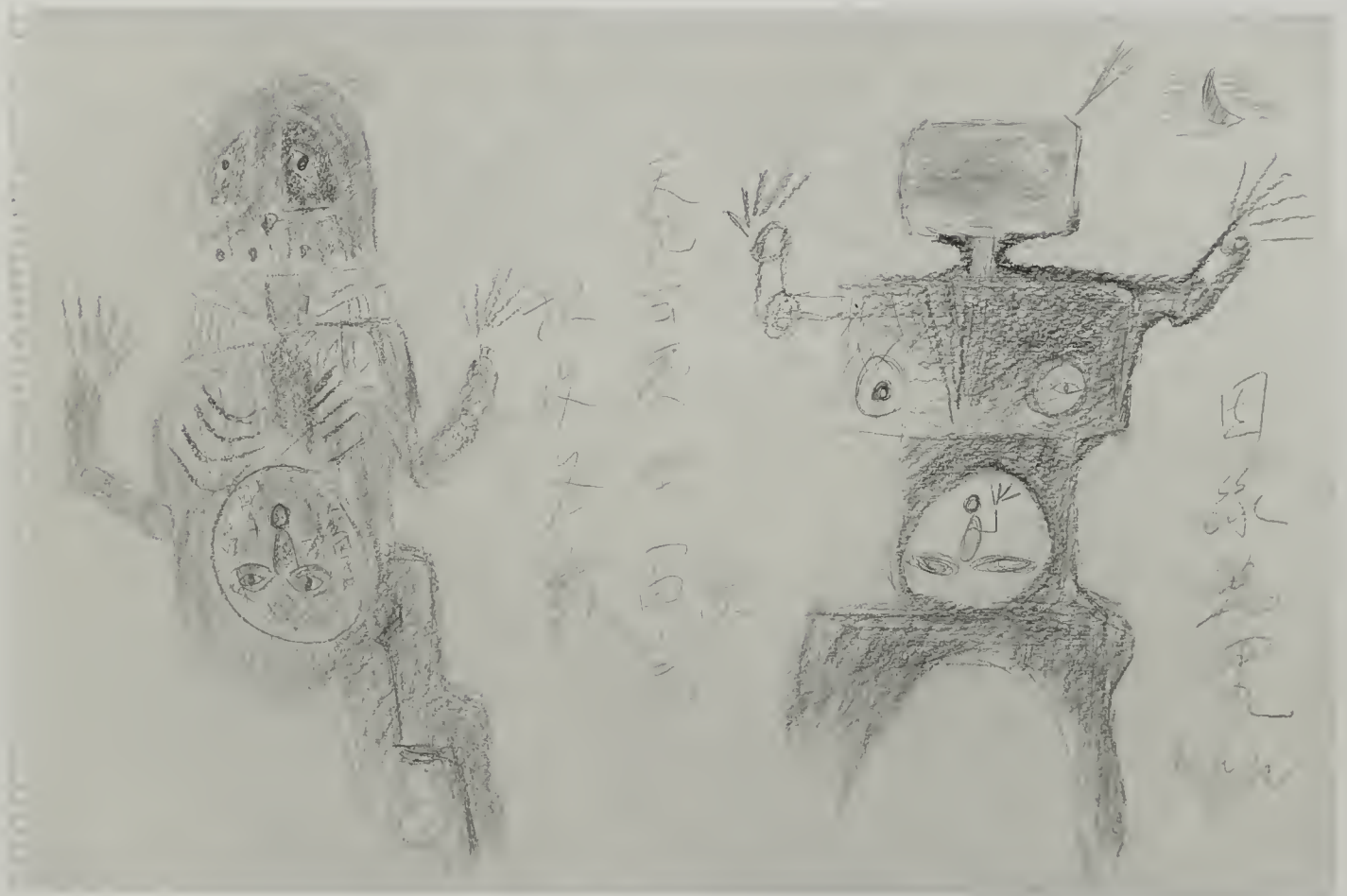


PLATE 29. **Untitled (Robot Drawings), 1987.** Pencil on paper.  
12 x 17¾ in. (30.5 x 45.1 cm). Nam June Paik Estate

PLATE 30. **Untitled (Robot Drawings), 1987.** Pencil on paper.  
12 x 17¾ in. (30.5 x 45.1 cm). Nam June Paik Estate

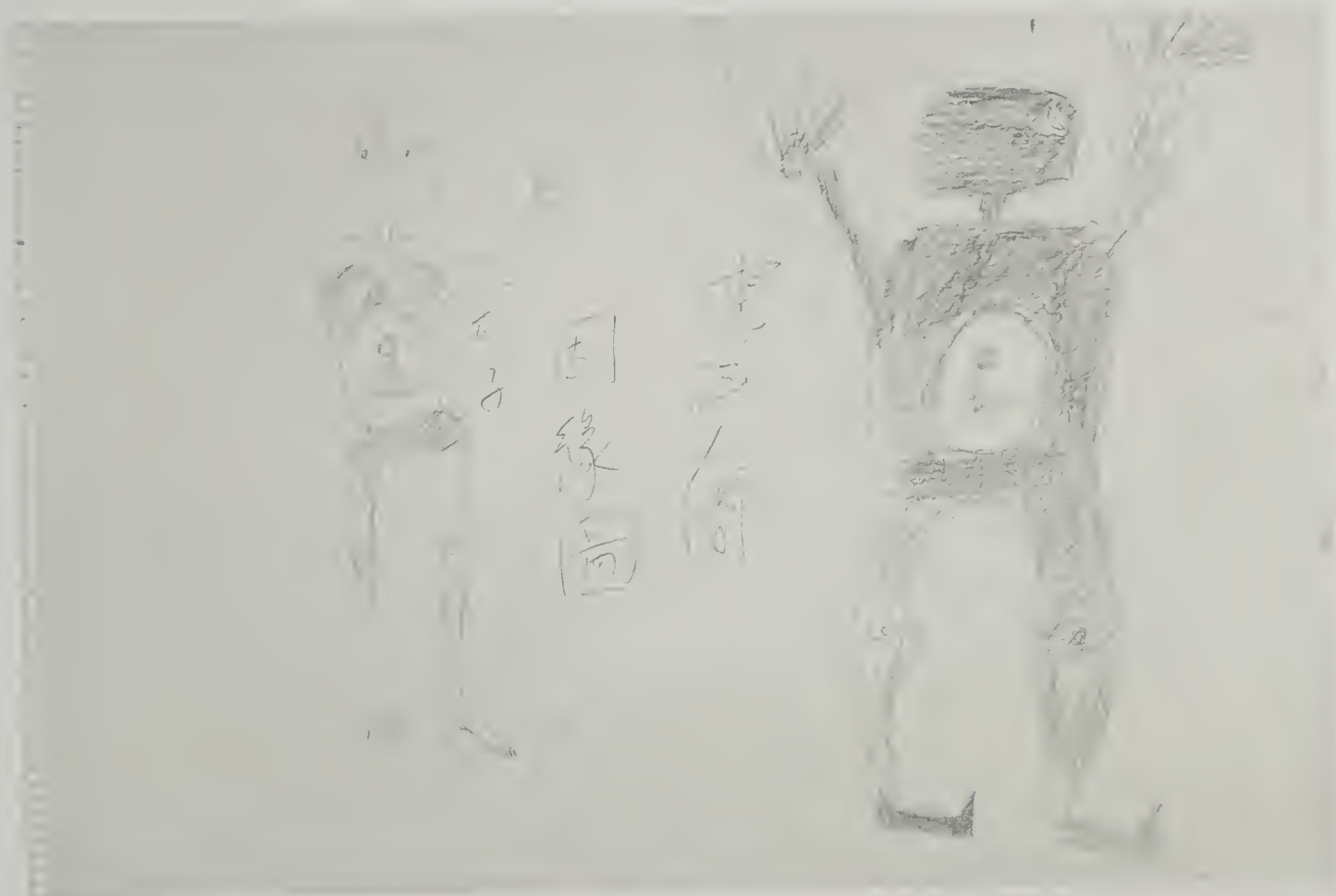


PLATE 31. **Untitled (Robot Drawings), 1987.** Pencil on paper.  
12 x 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (30.5 x 45.1 cm). Nam June Paik Estate

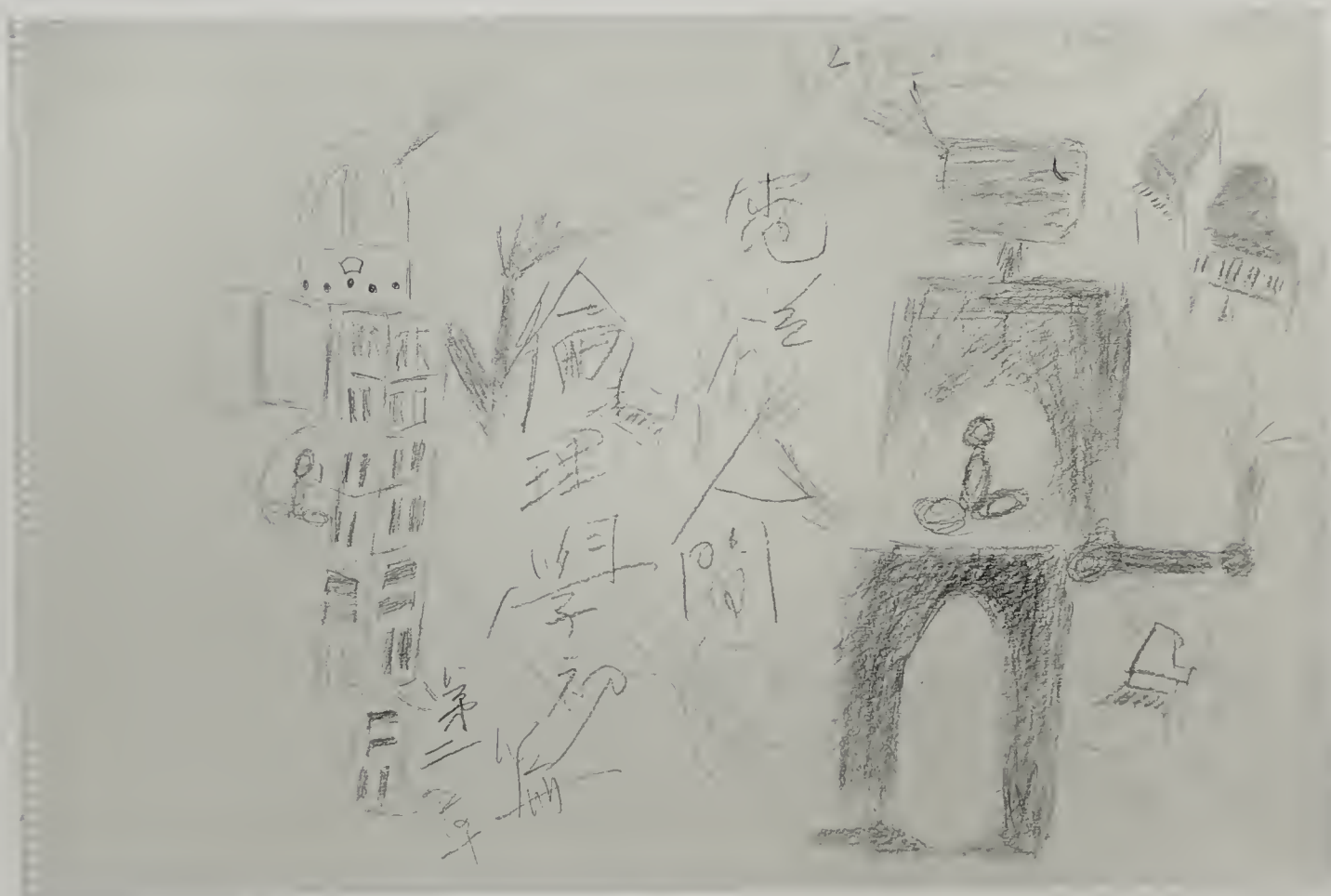


PLATE 32. **Untitled (Robot Drawings), 1987.** Pencil on paper.  
12 x 17<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (30.5 x 45.1 cm). Nam June Paik Estate



PLATE 33. **Untitled (Robot Drawings)**, 1987. Pencil on paper.  
12 x 17¼ in. (30.5 x 45.1 cm). Nam June Paik Estate



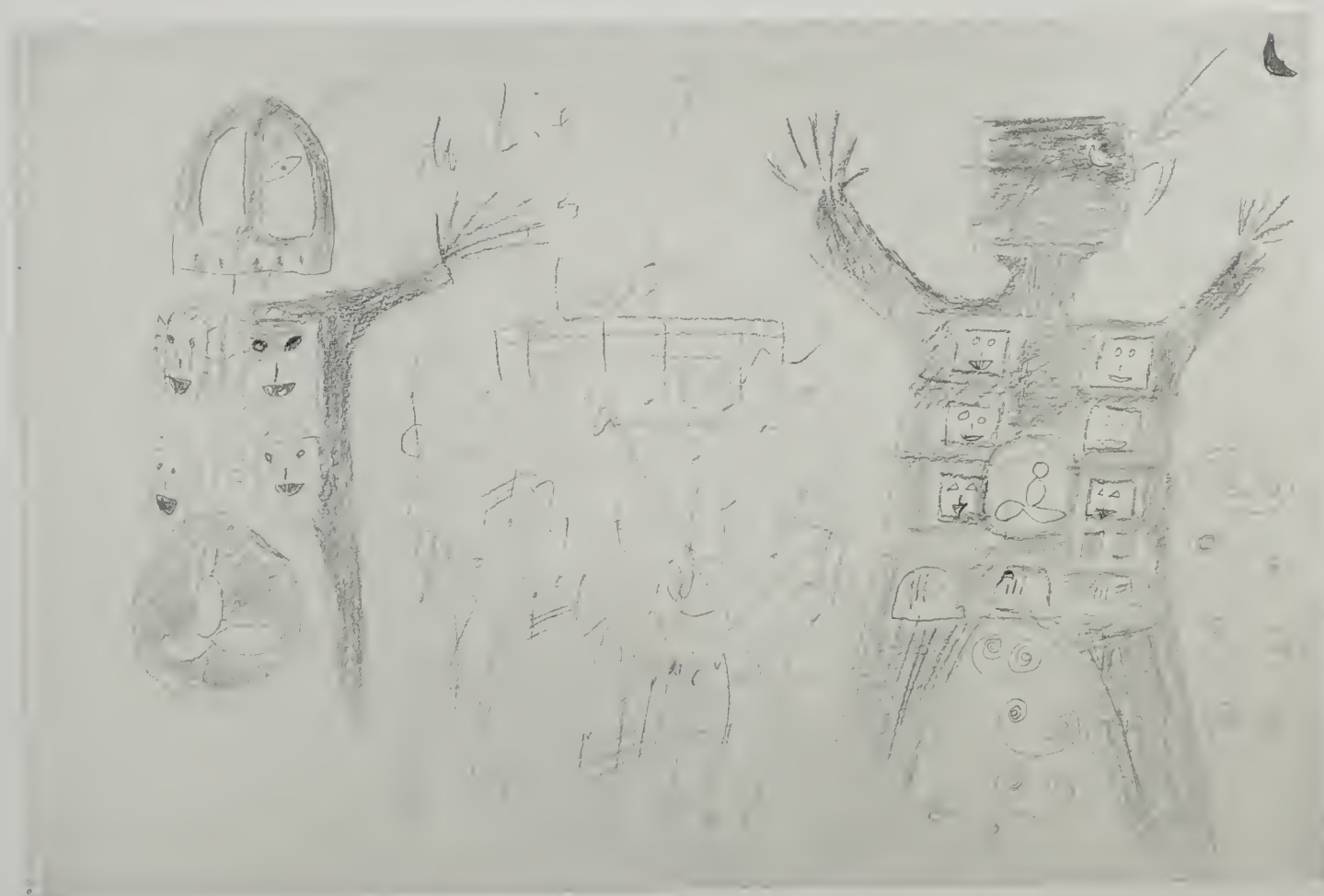


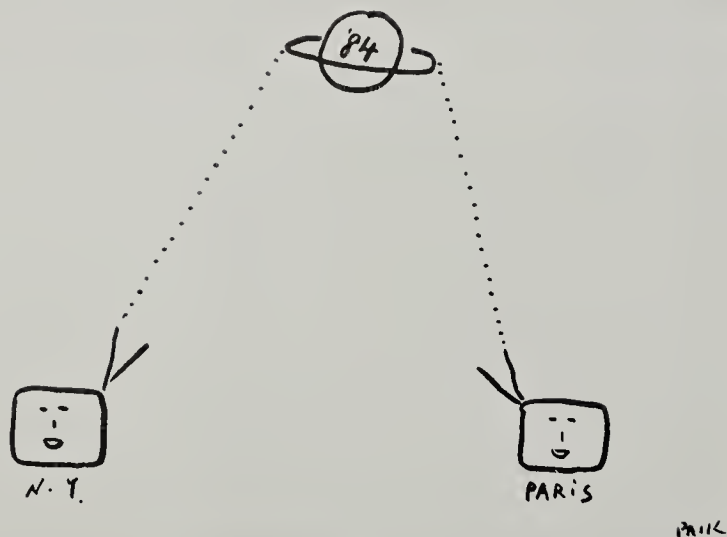
PLATE 34. **Untitled (Robot Drawings)**, 1987. Pencil on paper.  
12 x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (30.5 x 45.1 cm). Nam June Paik Estate

PLATE 35. *Family Photo Declassified*, from the V-IDEA series, 1984. Etching on paper.  
Plate: 11¾ x 14⅞ in. (29.8 x 37.8 cm); sheet: 18⅝ x 21¾ in. (47.3 x 55.2 cm). Smithsonian  
American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive; Gift of the Nam June Paik Estate



1914년 4월 10일





Nam June Paik's

# GOOD MORNING, MR. ORWELL\*

Live from New York (WNET)  
and Paris (FR3 French National Television  
and the Pompidou Center)

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 1984**  
Noon-1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

To celebrate the arrival, finally but suddenly,  
of 1984...

Featuring: Laurie Anderson, Jean-Louis Barrault,  
Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Merce Cunningham,  
Peter Gabriel, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Rauschenberg,  
Niki de Saint-Phalie, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Jean Tinguely  
and others to be announced.

♦Thank goodness you were only half right!

For information, contact:  
Carol Brandenburg, Executive Producer  
The TV Lab at WNET/THIRTEEN  
356 West 58th Street  
New York, NY 10019 (212) 560-3193

• A New Year's gift to all PBS stations from WNET.

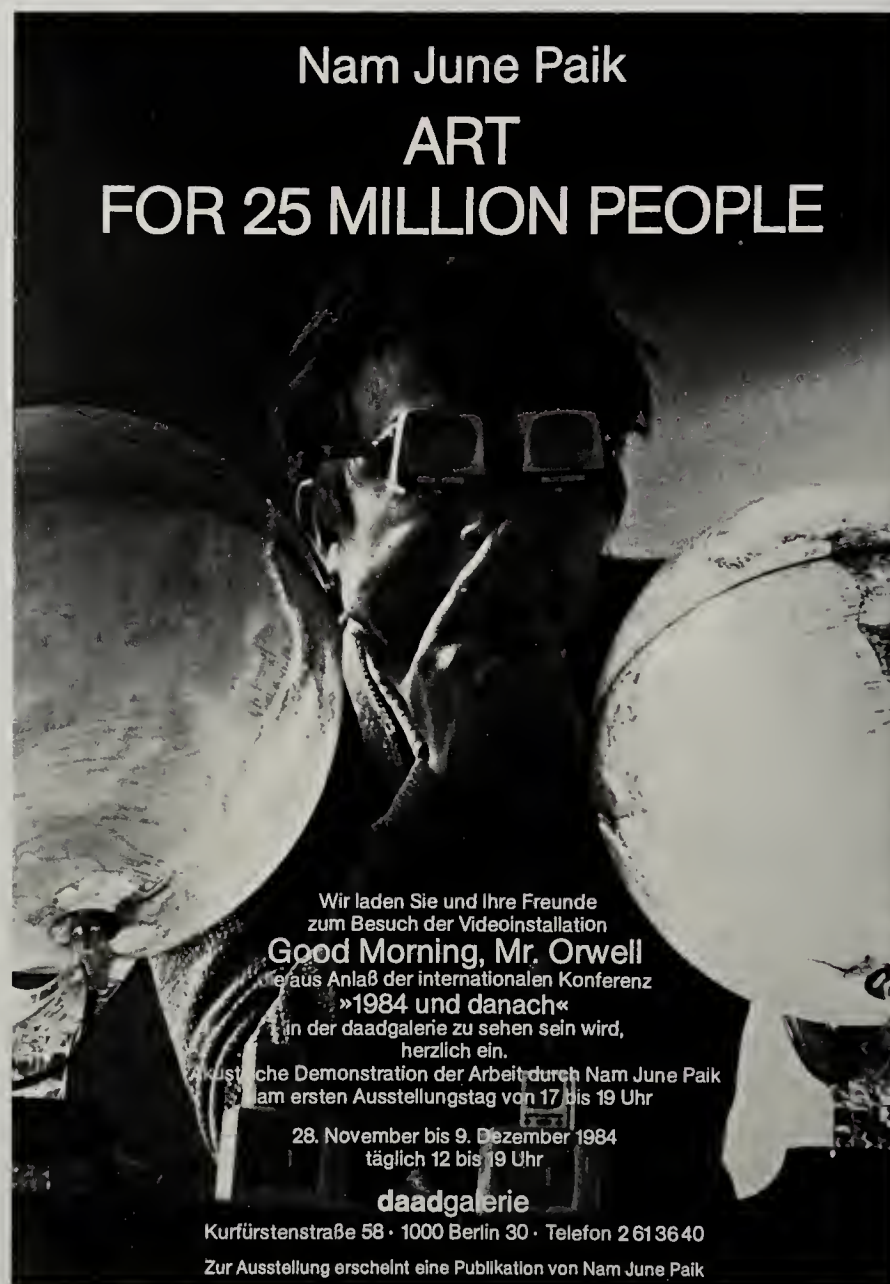


PLATE 36. **Nam June Paik's *Good Morning Mr. Orwell*, 1984.** Postcard. 4¼ x 6¼ in. (10.8 x 15.9 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive (Box 18, F. 2); Gift of the Nam June Paik Estate

PLATE 37. **Invitation, Daadgalerie, Berlin, 1984.** Postcard. 8¼ x 5½ in. (21 x 15 cm). Peter Wenzel Collection

PLATE 38. ***Good Morning Mr. Orwell*, 1984.** Video, color, sound. 38 minutes. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York



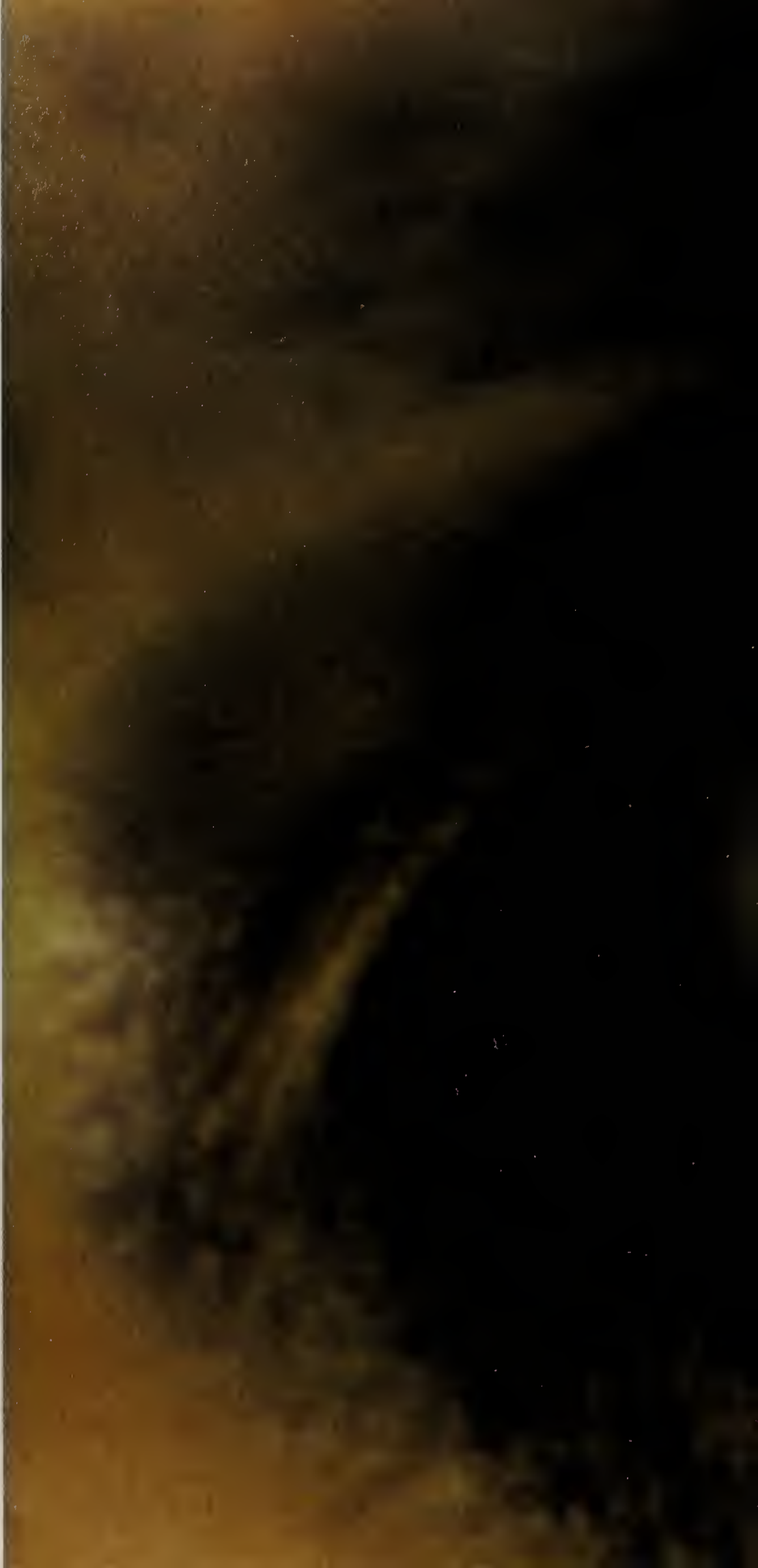
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15:11



25:11



DETAIL OF PLATE 38





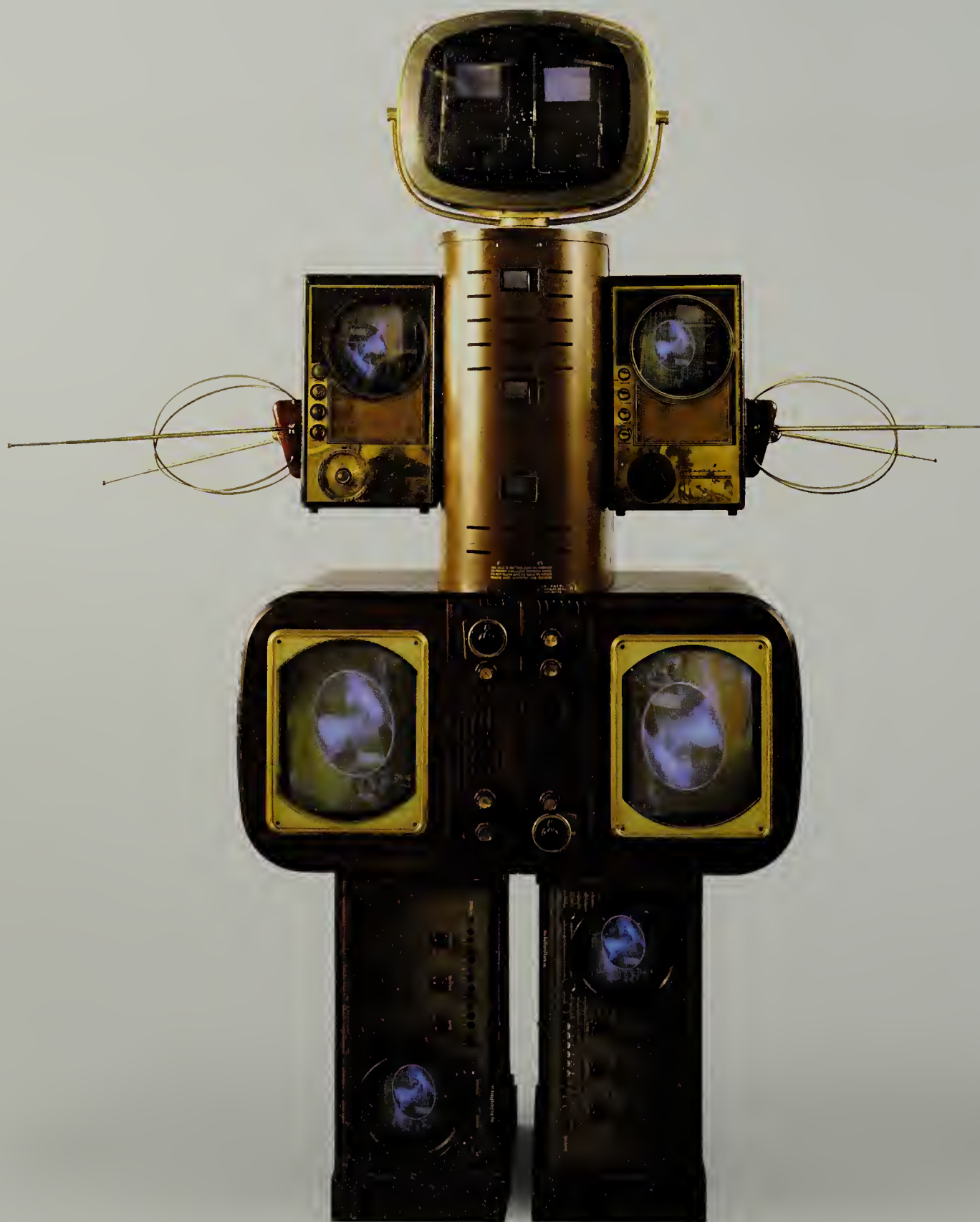


PLATE 39. *Family of Robot: Mother*, 1986. Single-channel video sculpture with vintage television and radio casings and monitors; tuner; liquid crystal display; color; silent. 78 x 61½ x 20¾ in. (203 x 156 x 53 cm). Nagoya City Art Museum

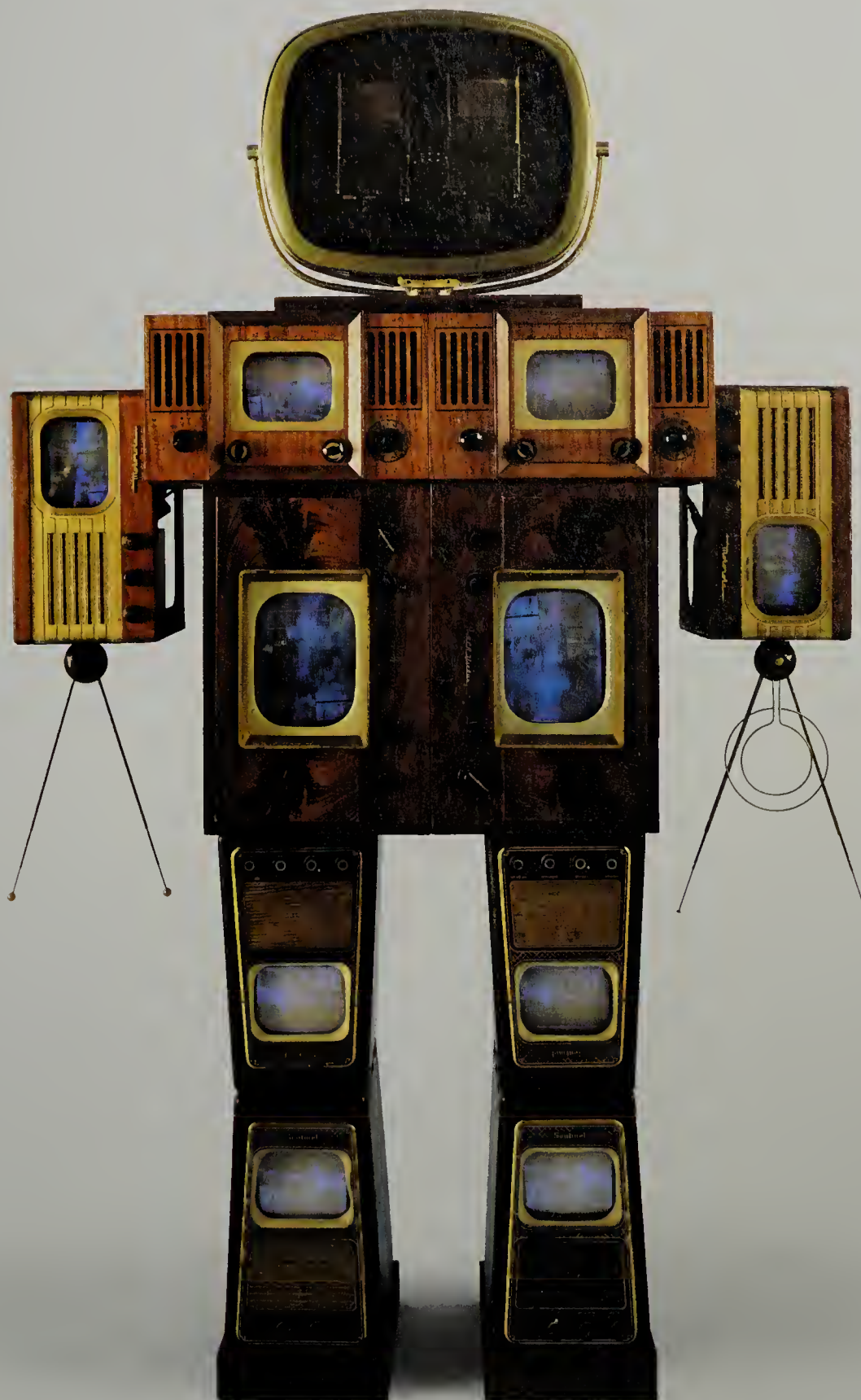
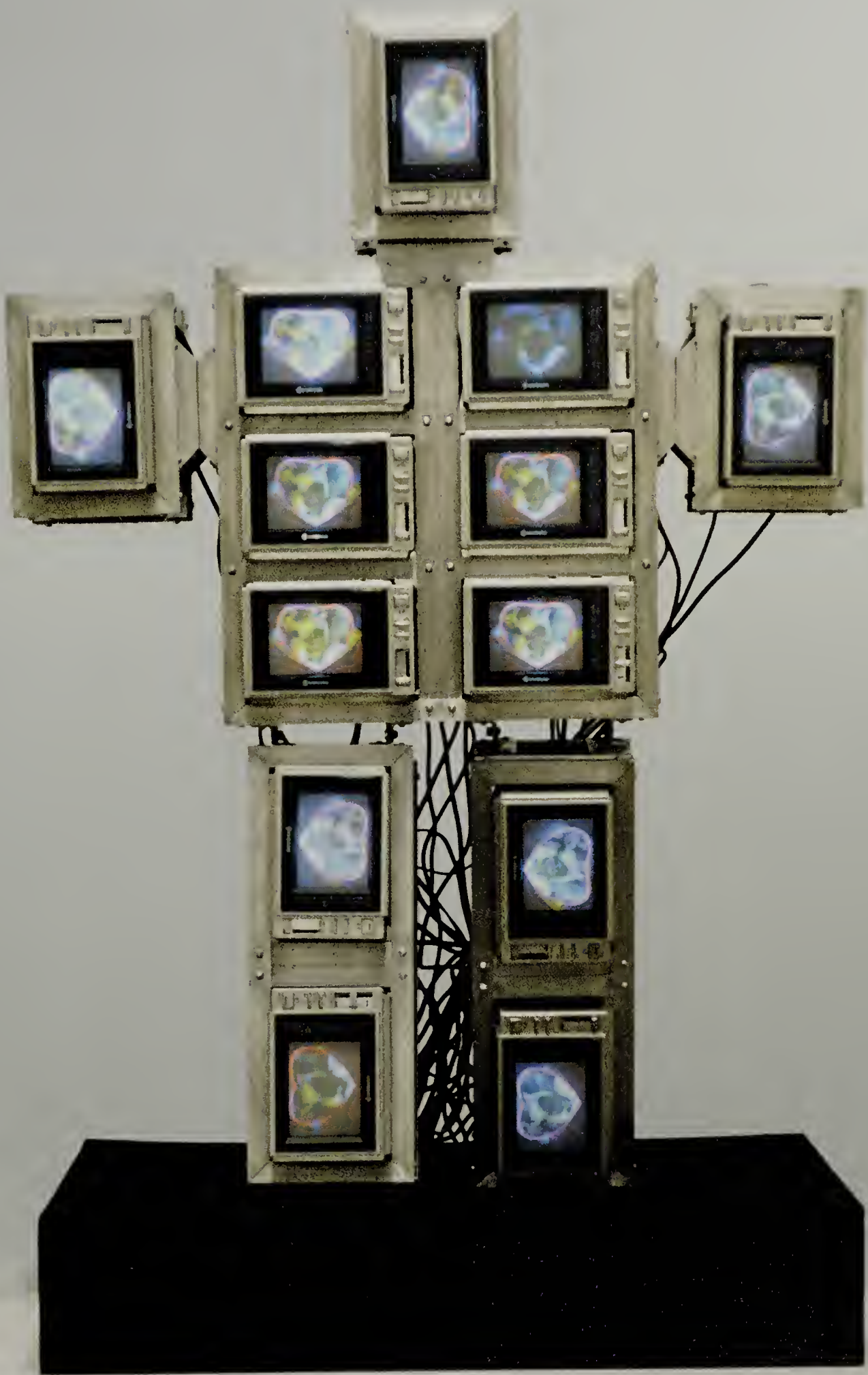


PLATE 40. *Family of Robot: Father*, 1986. Single-channel video sculpture with vintage television and radio casings and monitors; tuner; liquid crystal display; color; silent. 89 x 54 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (226 x 139 x 52 cm). Nagoya City Art Museum



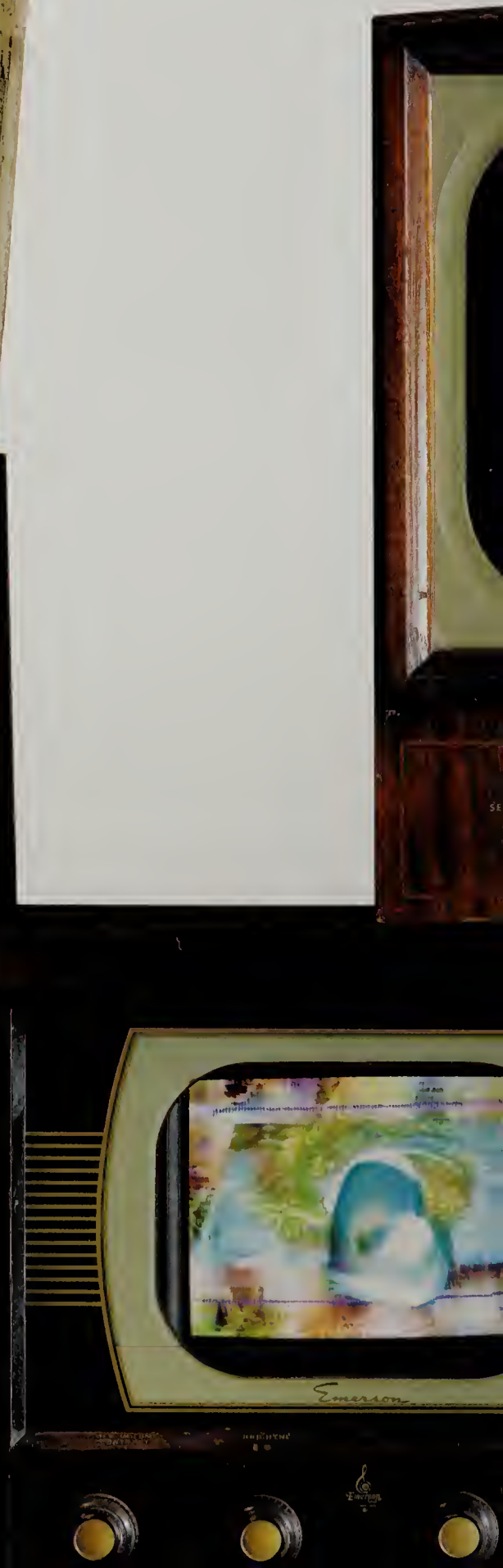
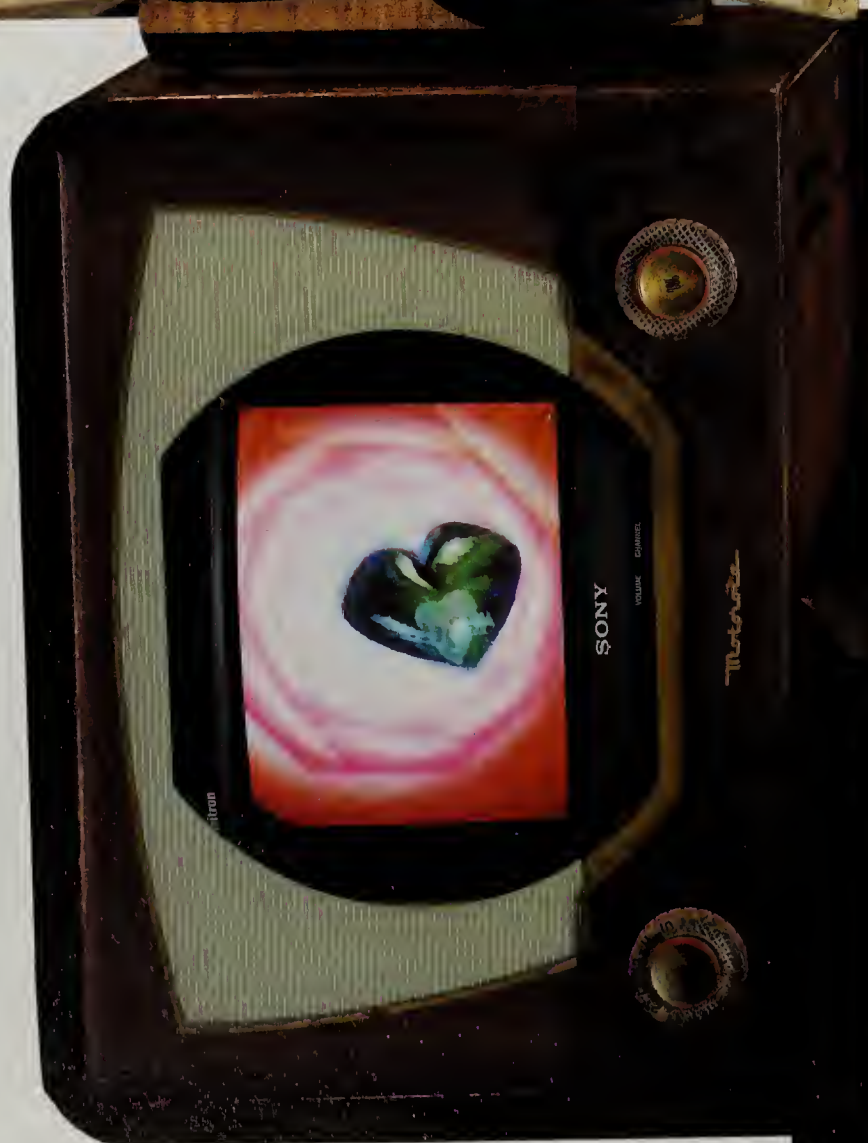
PLATE 41. *Family of Robot: Baby*, 1986. Single-channel video sculpture: thirteen television monitors and aluminum armature; color, silent. Number nine of nine unique sculptures in series. 52½ x 37⅞ x 8 in. (133.3 x 96.2 x 20.32 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago; Gift of Society for Contemporary Art, 1992.283













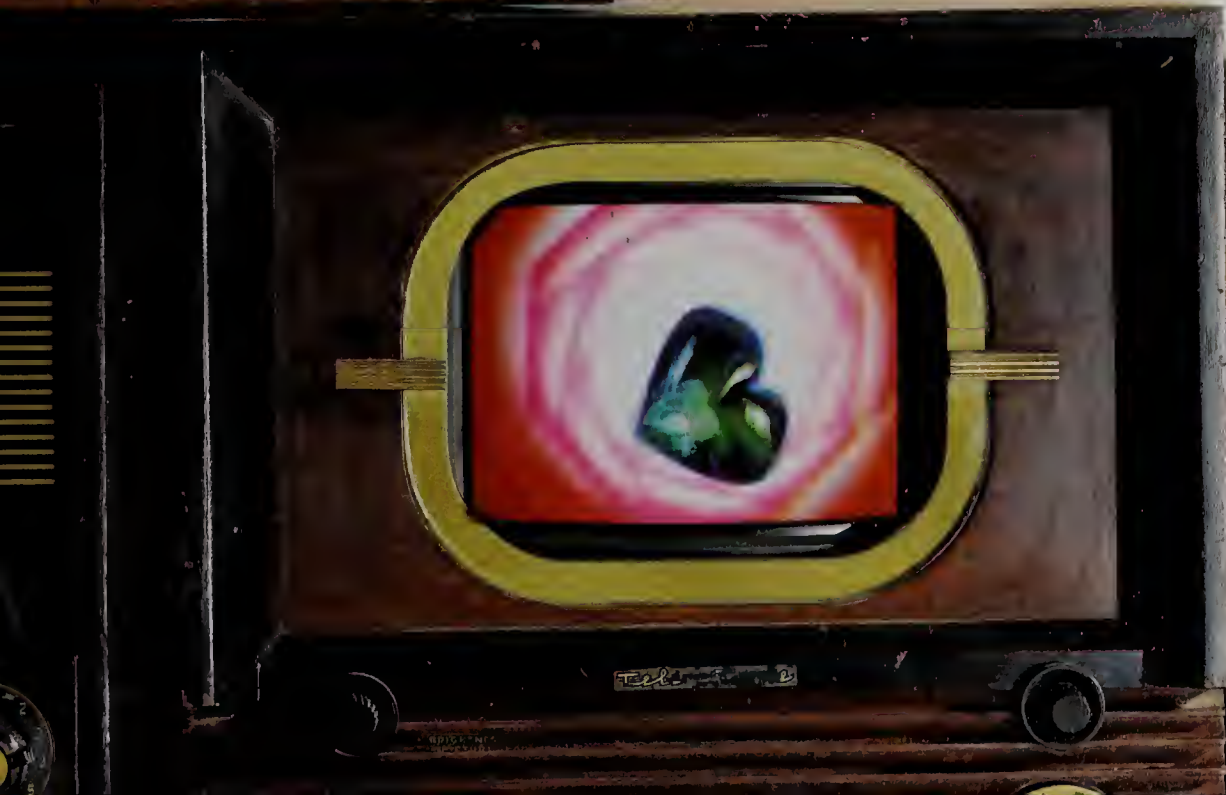








PLATE 44. (From left to right) "Mechanical Walking Robot-7" with original box. Metal, printed cardboard. Robot:  $3\frac{3}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{8} \times 1\frac{3}{4}$  in. (9.8 x 7.9 x 4.4 cm), box:  $4 \times 2\frac{7}{8} \times 2$  in. (10.2 x 7.3 x 5.1 cm); Battery-powered toy robot. Plastic and metal.  $16 \times 10 \times 6\frac{3}{4}$  in. (40.6 x 25.4 x 17.1 cm); Television coin bank. Plastic and printed paper.  $2\frac{5}{8} \times 4 \times 2\frac{1}{2}$  in. (6.7 x 10.2 x 6.4 cm); Toy robot/dinosaur. Plastic, metal, and printed paper with additions in paint.  $10\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$  in. (26 x 19.1 x 10.8 cm); Robot antennae. Plastic and metal, with rubber-coated cords. Each:  $24\frac{7}{8} \times 3\frac{1}{2} \times 3$  in. (63.2 x 8.9 x 7.6 cm); Wooden "Intelligence Robot" in package. Painted wood, plastic wrap, adhesive price tag.  $7\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$  in. (20 x 12.1 x 3.8 cm). All objects from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive; Gift of the Nam June Paik Estate









PLATE 45. *Room for Charlotte Moorman, 1993*. Room installation, includes 12 articles of clothing, 7 photographs, and 1 poster (photographs and poster listed as A-H). Dimensions variable. Nam June Paik Estate

PLATE 45A. Poster, "Miss Charlott Mooman 1952," 1952. Self-made poster. 33 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 23 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (85.7 x 60 cm). Photographer unknown. Nam June Paik Estate





PLATE 45B. Charlotte Moorman and Paik performing Kosugi's *Chamber Music*, Asolo, Italy, 1974. Black-and-white photograph from the Edition Pari and Dispari. 19 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 25 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (49.8 x 64.8 cm). Nam June Paik Estate

PLATE 45C. Charlotte Moorman performing Kosugi's *Chamber Music*, Asolo, Italy, 1974. Color photograph from the Edition Pari and Dispari. 19 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (49.8 x 59.7 cm). Nam June Paik Estate





PLATE 45D. Charlotte Moorman and Jim McWilliams, *Crotch Music*, The Kitchen, New York, 1975. Color photograph from the Edition Pari and Dispari. 19 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  in (49.8 x 59.7 cm). Nam June Paik Estate



PLATE 45E. Charlotte Moorman performing Paik's *Opera Sextronique*, 1967. Color photograph from the Edition Pari and Dispari. 19 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (49.8 x 59.7 cm). Nam June Paik Estate





PLATE 45F. **Charlotte Moorman performing Paik's *Sonata for Adults Only*, 1966.** Black-and-white photograph from the Edition Pari and Dispari. 19 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 25 in. (49.8 x 63.5 cm). Nam June Paik Estate. Photograph by Peter Moore © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA

PLATE 45G. **Distortion of Charlotte Moorman's face with the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer at the Galeria Bonino, New York, 1971.** Color photograph from the Edition Pari and Dispari. 19 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (49.8 x 59.7 cm). Nam June Paik Estate

PLATE 45H. **Charlotte Moorman in Paik's *Video tape Art* performing Cage's *26' 1. 1499" for a String Player* on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* on NBC TV, during the Fifth Annual Avant Garde Festival of New York.** Black-and-white photograph from the Edition Pari and Dispari. 19 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 25 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (49.9 x 64.8 cm). Nam June Paik Estate

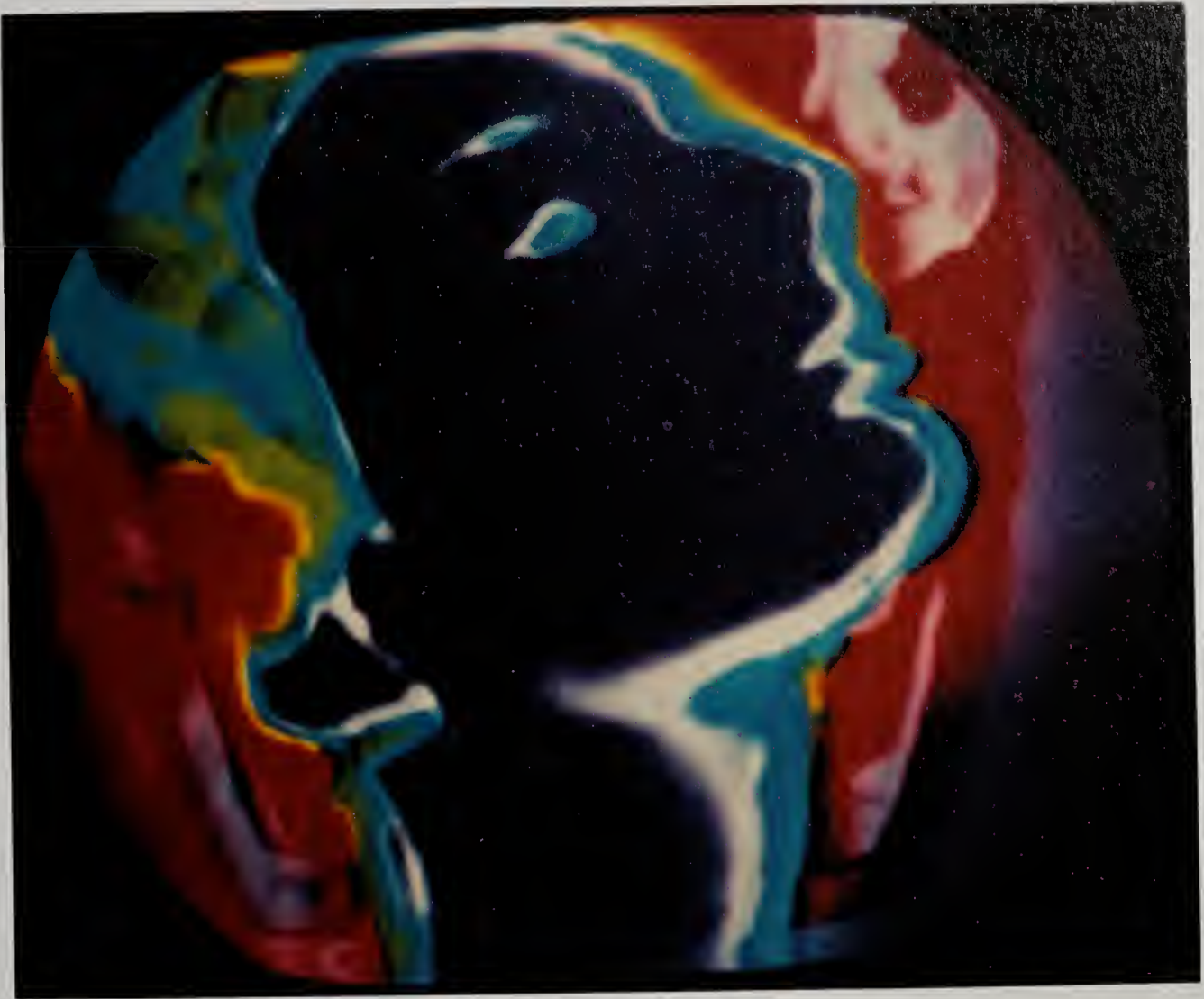


PLATE 46. *Reclining Buddha*, 1994/2002. Two-channel video installation with two 9-inch color monitors, reclining stone Buddha. 16½ x 20½ x 12 in. (41.9 x 52.1 x 30.5 cm). Nam June Paik Estate





Trinitron



SONY



KV-9PT50

Trinitron



SONY



KV-9PT50

00:02



11:39



14:51



PLATE 47. Nam June Paik and Howard Weinberg.  
*"Topless Cellist" Charlotte Moorman, 1995.* Video,  
 color, sound. 29 minutes. Courtesy Electronic Arts  
 Intermix (EAI), New York








PLATE 48. **Untitled (Robot Drawings), 1999–2000.** Mixed media on paper.  
22½ x 30 in. (57.2 x 76.2 cm). Nam June Paik Estate

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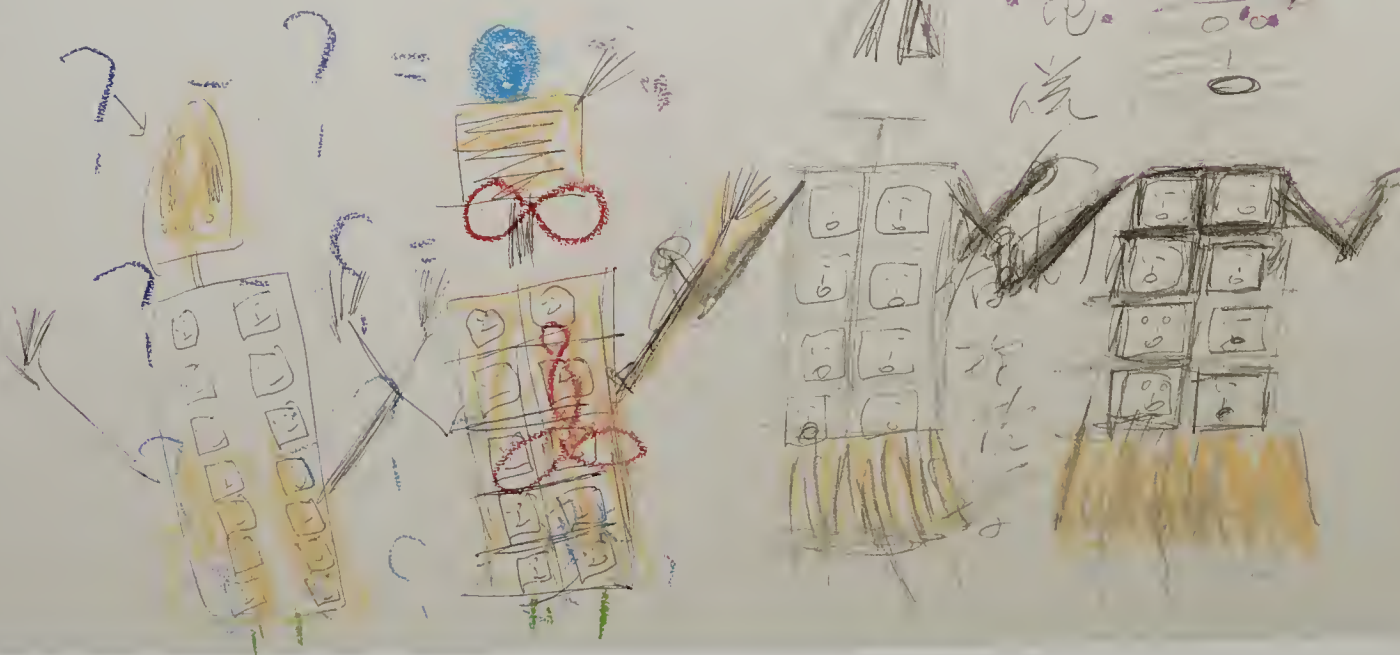


PLATE 49. *Ambassador Television, 2005*. Permanent oil marker  
and acrylic paint on vintage Ambassador portable television.  
16½ x 20 x 10½ in. (41.9 x 50.8 x 26.7 cm). Nam June Paik Estate







PLATE 50. *Transistor Television*, 2005. Permanent oil marker and acrylic paint on vintage transistor television. 12½ x 9½ x 16 in. (31.8 x 24.1 x 40.6 cm). Nam June Paik Estate





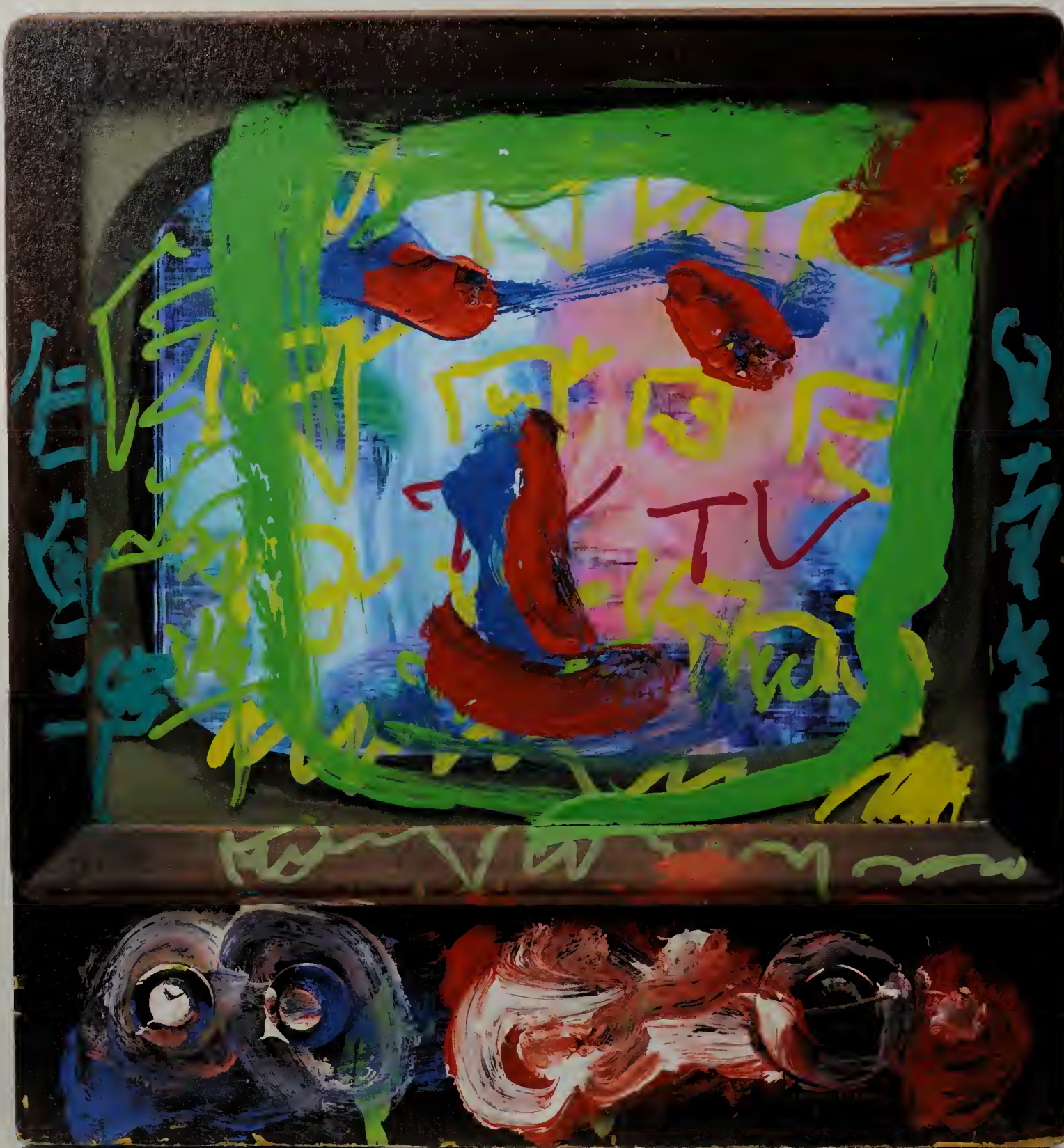


PLATE 51. **Untitled, 2005.** Single-channel video installation, permanent oil marker and acrylic paint on antique television cabinet with 13-inch color television. 19½ x 16 x 20⅞ in. (49.5 x 40.6 x 53 cm). Nam June Paik Estate





PLATE 52. **Untitled**, 2005. Single-channel video installation, permanent oil marker and acrylic paint on antique television cabinet with 17-inch LCD monitor. 19 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 21 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (50.2 x 46.4 x 54 cm). Nam June Paik Estate







## Remembering Nam June Paik

Upon Nam June Paik's arrival in New York City in 1964, he quickly developed collaborative relationships with a circle of now iconic American artists—John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Yoko Ono, and Bill Viola, among others. Paik's groundbreaking use of video technology has created a far-reaching legacy that can be identified in the development and recognition of a new media genre within the programming of international museums, institutions, and art schools, as well as the growing support for subsequent generations of new media artists. Kenzo Digital, John Godfrey, Christian Jankowski, Jon Kessler, John Maeda, Bill Viola, and Yoko Ono offer their reflections on the artist and his influence on contemporary visual culture in the United States and internationally.

Long before I really knew who Nam June Paik was, I remember my father and family friends persistently referring to him as an impossibly gifted visionary. As a kid who was obsessed with daydreaming and possessed by the ambition to become an artist in his own right, it chafed me whenever adults would dismiss my creative efforts by telling me how “cute” it was that I wanted to imitate my (heretofore abstract) great uncle.

I first met Nam June when I was around four years old and began spending more time in his studios in the years that followed. He had a number of spaces throughout SoHo, and each was its own surreal experiment in obscuring the boundary between order and chaos. One of them might be filled to the ceiling with gutted TV frames and the dusty bones of radio sets that had been pried open for their electronic innards. The floor of another studio would be scattered with buddha statuettes of varying sizes and video cameras of every make and brand. Then, of course, there was the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer, a hulking ziggurat of monitors, patchbays, and other devices that, if manipulated properly, surely had to reveal a portal into *Tron* (my favorite movie at the time). The looming presence of that interface haunts me to this day; in fact, every one of my studios throughout the years has contained a feeble simulacrum of this indescribable system.

The nebulous understanding I had of who my great uncle was would finally and suddenly crystallize when I attended a group show that he participated in at the Whitney Museum in 1989. I was still a child then, but I recall as though it was yesterday the onslaught of sensory input that bombarded everyone as the elevator opened. The universe Nam June had built in this space was a torqued, immersive hyper-reality that obliterated the parameters of what I thought art was and could be. Arrays of countless monitors blasting furious signals and shattered geometries exploded from the gallery walls. These individual bursts would then collide, forming uncanny objects and patterns on an even grander scale.

Nam June’s installations completely recontextualized that early memory of adults patronizing me for emulating his path. From that moment, he became one of the most enduring inspirations in my life.

I began to run my early ideas by Nam June and adopted his disregard for boundaries between mediums, tools, and technologies. For hours on end, I would watch as he bent TVs, magnets, and circuit boards to his will, plying them as dexterously as a painter might work with a brush and canvas. Ever a student of synthesizing audio and visuals, I paid the closest attention to his collaborations with John Cage. From these endeavors, I learned that the richest creative territory was to be found where most of us sense irreconcilable dissonance, the interim spaces between mediums we traditionally segregate. My great uncle always sought the ligaments between disciplines like filmmaking, philosophy, mathematics, and electrical engineering. Indeed, the connections were there, and within these fields were unexplored dimensions of stories—brave new ways of looking at narrative that could advance the very (unlikely) inspirations they drew from.

As I progressed from one creative discipline to the next—drawing, graffiti, DJing, early Photoshop, and then prototypical virtual reality at Carnegie Mellon and film—my conversations with Nam June threaded this growth and demonstrated to me how all of these languages were connected. I continue to explore this interactivity through my own work as an artist. Nam June’s influence on the current generation of creators and society at large is unmistakable; no other artist has so accurately forecasted how technology and human interaction converge, and done so with such wit and humor. I miss my great uncle dearly, and wish we had more time together. Today, as technical innovation and creative expression advance in unprecedented synchronization, I hope this exhibition serves as a reminder of the timeless philosophical framework that my visionary great uncle established through his work.

# John Godfrey

## I Worked with Nam June Paik

In 1969 I was hired for my technical ability by the public television station WNET/THIRTEEN to improve the tape quality of their programs. Little did I know that I would be at the forefront of the video revolution that would take place over the next ten or more years.

The next year, artist Jackie Cassen received a grant to experiment with video at the station. She brought in this rather short South Korean man whom I came to know very well: Nam June Paik. South Koreans know to call him “Paik,” but we kept calling him “Nam June”—just as some bosses might yell out “Godfrey, go get the tape.” Paik came into the studio, a scarf tied around his waist. He then asked a woman dressed in fatigues to strap her cello to her back and crawl across the floor.

This was my introduction to Paik.

In 1972, the New York State Council on the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation gave WNET funding to create an experimental TV division. David Loxton, who was brought in from the Great Performances series, was appointed director, and I was assigned to run the newly founded experimental Television Laboratory (TV Lab). We were given an old black-and-white studio in the Carnegie International Building across from the United Nations (how appropriate!). Many artists came through the Lab, but none as varied or as out-of-the-box creative as Paik. Many have said that Paik was the original video recycler, and it was true. Many of the videos that we worked on were new, varied, and “bespeckled” variations of his past works. For example, when we created the dance sequence in *Global Groove*, he just let me cut and change the switcher<sup>1</sup> to edit the footage in time with the music soundtrack.

When we edited a video work, we would lay down the first pass of what had been recorded for that particular piece and then Paik would choose another video—either of something we had recorded for this purpose, or something done in the past—and he would tell me to cut in and out of the footage, live, based on my gut feelings. The editing was not done by selecting a shot and then cutting it in for five frames, but instead, the other video ran, and I cut in and out as the music played. This method was often used to create the

video shorts in *Suite 212*. These were five-minute pieces that were created as time fillers for shows on WNET that ran short of their time allotment.

One incident caused the TV Lab to lose funding. Paik had shot a tank of carp for his *Fish Flies on Sky* installation, in which TV monitors mounted to the ceiling loop the fish videos. After we had finished filming, the stage crew began to empty the six-foot-by-six-foot tank of most of its water and most of the fish. Before the crew finished the job, a group of Ford Foundation funders, who were being given a walkthrough of TV Lab, arrived at the studio and saw a few dead fish floating in the six inches of water left in the tank. One of the funders, an anti-vivisectionist, thought what had been done with the fish in the tank was horrendous—hence, no funding from the Ford Foundation.

Paik was the leader in inventing the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer with Shuya Abe, which colorized and distorted the video picture. Paik was able to develop the synthesizer by observing what had been done in the early days of color TV when you had to degauss a color television monitor depending on where it was installed in a room according to the North and South Pole axes of the earth.<sup>2</sup> (Yes, we actually had to do that!) Paik took a degaussing coil and used it in some of his early projects. This, in a much more sophisticated form, became the DVE, or Digital Video Effect, which is used for distorting images that we see every day on our TVs.

It’s a shame we don’t have Paik around anymore to create new and wondrous visuals. All we have are rappers and MTV folk to copy what we did.

1. The switcher is a device that allows multiple sources to be selected and/or mixed in various ways to form a composite picture that is either aired or taped. One source would have been the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer.

2. Strong external fields, like the earth’s magnetic field, can cause discoloration in color television sets. An internal or handheld degaussing coil creates a small magnetic field within the television set, which corrects this discoloration, but also causes a distortion of the picture.



# Christian Jankowski

## Down with Genghis Khan!

There is a dangerous tendency to mythologize influential artists and their work as if they were being embalmed, and museums were mausoleums. I have admired Nam June Paik's work ever since I was a student, and remember my first encounter dearly. I had just started art school and got my first professional job in the art world through a friend, as the assistant's assistant in the Galerie Weisser Raum in Hamburg. I was on the lowest rung of the ladder, unpacking scores of monitors and carrying them over to be hoisted up onto one of Paik's huge, iconic video walls and a video chandelier. For the first time, I stepped behind the curtain of the gallery and not only saw but took part in the technical maneuvers.

Nam June Paik was a pioneer in the field of television technology, which he investigated almost scientifically and with immense imagination, as in *Magnet TV* (1965), in which a magnet drawn across a television screen affects the image on the television in different ways. But what really got me going was his notion that the recipient also has the power to be the producer. His early collaborations with artists Laurie Anderson, Joseph Beuys, Merce Cunningham, and Charlotte Moorman, among others, were typical of the Fluxus movement, and in the mid-1990s, when I was starting out as an artist, this type of collective and process-oriented work was revived in the form of Relational Aesthetics, which was, at times, too academic for my taste.<sup>1</sup> To put it simply, the essence of Paik's art was to explore creative avenues with others, and in so doing, change the artistic material as well as the conditions and routines of the system. It was precisely this approach that most inspired me. One of my personal favorites is Paik's nonartist "collaboration" with an unwitting Bill Clinton in June 1998 when the former dropped his trousers while shaking hands with the American president. In most of my projects I work closely with collaborators who are not from the art world, whether they be cinemagoers, politicians, financial advisors, or Silicon Valley entrepreneurs.

Where Paik's work and my own diverge technologically, his vision for interactive, two-way television—which he explored as early as the 1960s and developed in the early 1970s—lives on in the debates it ignited. Television, like other time-based media, is a perfect tool to set up performative activity: not only does it speak a vocabulary that everybody is equipped to read, but I've found that convincing people to take part in, or to let me work in mass media requires a lot of dialogue. Hovering over all of Paik's work is his

laidback but firm rejection of excessive artistic perfection and control: "When too perfect, *lieber Gott böse*" ("God is not amused"),<sup>2</sup> he once wrote. For me too, taking some of the decision-making out of the realm of the artist, involving other players, and above all leaving things to chance are all ways of lessening the risk of God not being amused.

For *Cleaning up the Studio* (2010), I proposed that Paik's studio<sup>3</sup> be serviced by a professional cleaning company. The idea was to transform it for the duration of my exhibition, then return it to its original state of disorder. Although the conditions of the studio were fully documented by archivists to enable the process of returning it to its original state, debate was raging in the offices overhead. There I was with the Beautiful Cleaning Company waiting until the very last moment to get started. The museum director, without having met Paik personally, said that he appeared to him in a dream as Ghengis Khan, a conqueror of the art world, whose memory must remain untouchable. If anything could underline the challenges involved in showing and interpreting Fluxus for future generations, it was his incongruous comparison with Genghis Khan.

I condensed the five hours of cleaning into a ten-minute video, which was exhibited with a series of before-and-after photographic diptychs alongside the new installation. Cleaning is a profound way of paying respect in many religions and cultures, a timeworn ritual. This was the feeling at the heart of my project: it seemed to me that the only way to honor Paik's spirit was by orchestrating some disruption. Whereas cleaners are usually invisible in an institution, and the lowest in the pecking order—down there with the art student helping the assistants—I asked them to step into view as the main protagonists. Under the cleaners' hands, a memory was revitalized and through this endeavor I tried to dust off Paik's mausoleum.

1. A term coined by art historian Nicolas Bourriaud in his 1998 publication of the same name, in which he argued that social experiences coordinated by an artist can also be categorized as art.

2. Printed in Nam June Paik's *homage: announcement in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 3, 2006. Reprinted in *Nam June Paik: There is no rewind button for life, Homage to Name June Paik*, Kunsthalle Bremen, March 25, 2006, edited by Wulf Herzogenrath and Andreas Kreul, 2.

3. The studio was originally located on Broome Street in New York. Shortly before his death Paik donated the contents of his studio to an art center in Korea, where it was reconstructed in all its chaotic glory.

# Jon Kessler

## The Merry Prankster

In 1977 I had taken a leave of absence from art school and was hitchhiking across Europe. I found myself in Kassel that summer, hanging out with Joseph Beuys, who was giving boat rides down the Rhine and was using documenta 6 as a base for his Free University. Although Beuys's tentacular installation *Honey Pump at the Workplace* dominated the Fridericianum, the work that really blew me away was Paik's *TV Garden*, an installation from 1974. I found *TV Garden*'s interplay of natural and artificial materials thrilling in a sensory, physical way. The ecstatic electronic light that gave the plants sustenance was dystopian and unsettling, while also sublimely spiritual. I got lost in it. This happened again when I saw *Video Fish* (1975) several months later at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

I came of age as an artist at a time when the pioneers of video art were readily accessible and could often be found drinking at Fanelli's.<sup>1</sup> Douglas Davis was my teacher at Purchase; I befriended Shigeko Kubota during her show at White Columns and subsequently hung out with her and Nam June at their loft on Mercer Street. Their space, filled to the brim with electronic parts, felt like an extension of the industrial surplus shops that lined nearby Canal Street at that time.

Seismic paradigm shifts in the history of art rarely happen; Malevich did it in painting, Brancusi in sculpture, Stockhausen in music, and Paik in video. Artists are scavengers and often find inspiration in objects most people ignore, or they wait for new technologies to become available for consumer use. It's nice to be first in line when that happens. Paik often was. He pioneered the artistic use of the Sony Portapak, lasers, projected video, flat screens, video feedback, and computerized tiling of multiple screens to create a single image. Along with Shuya Abe, he built the first video synthesizer that manipulated live video signal for broadcast television, giving it the fluidity and expression of painting. Most important to me was his use of the medium to critique itself. Paik laid the groundwork for artists like me who play with the apparatus and mechanisms of the medium, turn it in on itself, and come through the rabbit hole still believing that it's possible to make engaging, playful, and serious work.

I'm also in awe of Paik's relentlessly experimental practice. For me, experimentation was rooted in drug use, playing in jam bands,

and reenacting 1960s counterculture models. Paik's experimentation was rooted in his rebellion against traditional music composition, his connection to Cage and Fluxus, and his devilish embrace of the uncontrollable. His Fluxus strategy of eliminating boundaries between the artwork and the viewer was already evident in *Étude for Pianoforte*, a 1960 musical performance during which he attacked John Cage and David Tudor by squirting them with shaving cream and cutting Cage's tie.

His Fluxus pranksterism was also evident in his appearance on Tom Snyder's *Tomorrow* show, broadcast live from Paik's Mercer Street loft in 1975. Paik succeeded in turning the tables on Snyder by becoming the interviewer while reading an anti-Vietnam War text and sitting on *TV Chair* (1968), a sculpture that was playing previously recorded footage of Snyder. Paik was literally sitting on Snyder's face.

Later in Paik's life, there was the state dinner to which he was invited where, in line to greet Bill Clinton, Paik insisted on getting out of his wheelchair to shake the president's hand. Right at the moment of contact, Paik's pants fell down and revealed that he was not wearing underwear. Now that's institutional critique!

I heard that Paik once said the culture that can survive in the future is the culture that you can carry around in your head. I adore that concept since it emphasizes ideas instead of the junk we make. But predicting the future can be a tricky business. Another famous Paik quote, that "in the future TV Guides will be as fat as the Manhattan telephone book,"<sup>2</sup> was, of course, prophetic in foreseeing the sheer volume of content available on television, not to mention the abundance of user-generated programming on websites like YouTube and Vine. I imagine that Paik would have loved seeing the passive role of the viewer break down as it has in the traditional media delivery systems of music, books, and television. But the real question for future generations reflecting on Paik's prophetic statement will be "What's a phone book? And what's TV Guide?"

1. Fanelli's Café is a popular local bar on the southwest corner of Prince Street and Mercer Street in New York City.

2. Opening line from Nam June Paik and John Godfrey's *Global Groove* (1973), 23.30 minutes, color, sound.



# John Maeda

## A Great American Artist

Nam June Paik is an important reference for most Asian artists like myself because he is not known for being an Asian artist; he is just known as “an American artist,” which says something about America and also the impact of his work.

In contrast, it’s not uncommon in the international art scene today to hear that famous artist x is “from China” or “from Korea”—as if saying where one came from in Asia can easily explain how one came to be, or the very nature of one’s art. What’s unique about Nam June Paik is that I’ve never had anyone tell me that he was “from Korea.” Instead, people simply refer to him as someone who revolutionized art and technology. And that would be the end of it—I wouldn’t ever hear an explanation as to why his name was unusually difficult to spell or pronounce.

I came to know Nam June Paik’s work from my own background as an MIT-trained engineer who crossed over into the world of art academia in the early 1990s. While trying to understand how computation and the visual domain might intermix and create something new, I always ended up looking to Nam June Paik’s works to get a sense of how he processed the world as a series of signals, imagery, and networks. My favorite piece is *Random Access* (1963/2000), in which he pasted a magnetic audiotape on a wall so that you could move a playback-head over the audiotape by hand to hear the recorded sounds. It is an example, to me, of Nam June Paik’s ability to take what was given to him—in this case a spool of audiotape that was designed to move in one direction through a tape player—and to free it into a three-dimensional space where it could be reborn as an entirely different medium and experience.

Nam June Paik foresaw a world where we would all be bathed by the light of the television screen. When people say, “I don’t

have a TV anymore,” as their mobile phone screens shine in their faces—that screen, of course, being essentially a TV screen—I know that his vision has come true. What we do with all these screens, and what happens when they are interconnected essentially as one giant screen and surface—alluded to by the artist’s landmark installation *Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii* (1995)—is a question that we haven’t yet begun to answer. On top of that, the phenomenon of each screen becoming a constant input device in addition to providing constant output—literally watching your every move—raises new questions for the artists of this century. We are lucky Nam June Paik’s treasure trove of experiments that ask the great questions of the screen, the camera, the signal, our active participation, and our passive participation facilitate our responsibility to understand this new medium of display screens and new input paradigms, which has been presented to the contemporary artist.

The timeliness of Nam June Paik’s explorations marks him as an artist who was not only present at the right time and the right place, but who was the right person. The fact that his work has achieved timelessness through his archives, which sit proudly in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, speaks to America as the perfect country in which his unique contributions spanning art and technology could take root. Nam June Paik’s career as an artist should be considered an act of American patriotism and the highest form of creative leadership, an accomplishment that few artists can hope to achieve in their lifetimes and careers, but which we can all aspire toward, thanks to the work of this great American artist.



# Bill Viola

## Nam June Paik: High Art and Low Art

"My experimental TV is not always interesting but not always uninteresting like nature, which is beautiful, not because it changes beautifully, but simply because it changes."

"Someday artists will work with capacitors, resistors & semi-conductors as they work today with brushes, violins & junk."

"My brother will pay my rent and electricity (100 \$), and for the food and electronic expense (200 \$). . . . Of course, I am trying my best with Charlotte for the paying concert jobs. . . . Anyway, I am determined to stay at least 6 more months, to give one more push to my electronic art, before it is monopolized by uptown gallery."

—Nam June Paik<sup>1</sup>

In 1972 Nam June Paik created a five-day show/performance/event at the Everson Museum of Art, which I saw in my junior year at Syracuse University. Billed as the "Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer with Charlotte Moorman," he and Charlotte "performed" *Concerto for TV Cello* and *TV Bed*, both from 1972. This was my first encounter with Nam June Paik and his work, and I was left stunned and speechless, not knowing what to think or say. All I knew was that this was the future, and I was going to be working with video for the rest of my life.

For *TV Bed*, eight large video monitors were set up in the form of a bed with Charlotte Moorman lying on them playing her cello. There were cables everywhere and the room was buzzing with excitement, electrically and artistically. A small Korean gentleman, Nam June Paik, was moving quickly around the room making sure that the electrical cables were functioning properly and the electrical switches were doing their job. Occasionally a loud buzzing noise would occur, sometimes accompanied by sparks and crackling noises. I was seeing colors and smelling smoke. How could someone take relatively ordinary objects, a cello and a bed, and transform them into a radical statement on the way we perceive the world?

Soon after this revelation, I was hired by the Everson Museum of Art as a video technician and preparator by the video curator David Ross, the first in the field. Paik returned to Syracuse to create a new installation. Together, with his computer assistant Bob Diamond, we worked on Nam June's first large-scale installation, *TV Garden* (1974). It was made up of thirty monitors lying face up on the floor furiously playing the densely edited *Global Groove* (1973), visible through the foliage of a large number of tropical plants. This setup was stretching our technical abilities to their limits. Among the chaos that this combination of vegetation and technology was creating, Nam June remained calm and precise in his direction. He communicated his vision clearly and never displayed ego. We finally completed the installation in the middle of the night. At that moment I noticed the moon shining down from a momentary

parting of rain clouds through the skylight above. I pointed the moon out to Nam June and without missing a beat he said, "Ah, that is high art, but this," he pointed to his *TV Garden* below, "this is low art." I was privileged to be in the same room as Nam June Paik, to watch him work, to hear his comments, his silences, and his decisions as he sculpted and modified his ideas toward the desired goal. I am grateful for his generosity and for taking the time to teach and encourage young students such as myself.

In 1976 Nam June sent me to Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands on two separate occasions to record footage of what was left of one of the most devastating battles of World War II. I was honored to have been part of one of his most moving works, *Guadalcanal Requiem* (1977). Nam June once described it to me as the definitive battle between East and West, brought upon by cultural miscommunication.

Nam June's influence on me was profound. He and his work continue to be part of my thoughts and creative process to this day. His book *Nam June Paik: Videa 'n' Videology 1959–1973*, published by the Everson Museum of Art, is still one of the most important books that I own. It includes his "Aesthetics of Boredom," a loosely fashioned list of the most inspired forms of literary and artistic expression in not only the Asian tradition but the European and American traditions as well. His list of Asian influences includes "Indian cosmology-passive philosophy of China-space in Sung painting. Static court music in Japan and Korea. (*Gagaku-shijo*)—the progression from boring art to ritual art (Noh) and to ritual itself (tea). . . ." The "European tradition (Ennui)" includes "Baudelaire-Chekov-Proust" and the American tradition includes "Gertrude Stein-Hemingway-Cage."<sup>2</sup> He was saying to me, look at everything valuable and useful in the world, and use it. I hope that I am continuing his philosophy.

He showed me how to be more open and aware of my surroundings, how to sit quietly in silence and accept it, and that even though the world around us seems random, and even chaotic at times, one can always find connecting points wherever we are, whether positive or negative. And finally, he taught me that video, like life, is fluid, and it moves like a river that is always trying to reach the sea.

I owe so much to this extraordinary man who changed my life.

Thank you, Nam June Paik.

1. The quotations are from Nam June Paik, *Videa 'n' Videology 1959–1973*, ed. Judson Rosebush (Syracuse, N.Y.: Everson Museum of Art, 1974).

2. Ibid.

Nam June will always be Alive!

Love,

Yoko

Feb. 1st

2014

南澤は永久に生きている

オ・ヨ一コ

二月一日

2014





## Nam June Paik: In His Own Words

Nam June Paik was a prolific writer and correspondent who used this medium to explore his ideas on science and technology, many of which were later realized within his diverse body of artworks. This collection of writings—spanning the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s—has been extracted from letters, reports for the Rockefeller Foundation (with which the artist had a longstanding relationship), and personal notes, including studies for *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* (1984). They exemplify the artist's prescient musings on technological innovation, especially in relation to its impact on fine art and popular culture. The artist made uncanny predictions within these passages about future innovations, including the development of the Internet, electronic books, and the genre of new media art.

These excerpts were sourced from the newly established Nam June Paik Archive, housed within the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Opposite: Untitled (Paik at Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany, 1976), photograph by Friedrich Rosentiel, 1976. Gelatin silver print. 8 x 10 in. (20.3 x 25.4 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive (Box 16, F. 14); Gift of the Nam June Paik Estate

There is a mythe, that TV is an "instant" medium, where as metal sculpture is a "permanent" medium. The ironical fact is that many or ~~even most~~ of huge metal sculpture is <sup>being</sup> ~~to be~~ destroyed <sup>due to</sup> ~~because of~~ lack of storage space, and fragile electronic information has been kept for the eternity. Eg the <sup>due to loss of storage and retrieval</sup> 1920's is gone forever but the 1930's is alive everyday in the late-late show TV screen. This phenomenon is bound to continue for a few more decade, and one day the demarcation line between the 20's and the 30's will be as distinct as B.C. and A.D.

Feedback is not only the favorite technique of video artist but it expresses the essence of ART in generic term. The cult of eternity, long levity, ~~maximax~~ preservation of cultural heritage have been a primary function of art and museums from the time of Pharoach's Pyramid to the age of Polaroid and Port-a-Pak via patrons of <sup>as school</sup> ~~great Netherlands's~~ portraitist, because we are all fragile and mortal.



The reason, why camera industry (100 years old) became 1000 times bigger than art market (5000 years old) is that camera made everybody an artist. Mr. Johns will rather make a bad picture himself than going to museum to see a Leonardo. The same thing also applies to the drug problem. Pot is a short cut reaction of people to regain the sense of participation, which was lost in the organized society and net-work TV programs. Therefore the rational solution doesnot lie in the no-knock law, but in the recovery of <sup>e</sup> heightened participation... and here video synthesizer's role cannot be over-estimated, since it pierce the core of today's social problem (drug) and economical problem (sluggish consumer spending). Home-model video synthesizer in the post industrial society in the 1980's can become as big as today's camera industry, and network TV might shrink to today's museum size.

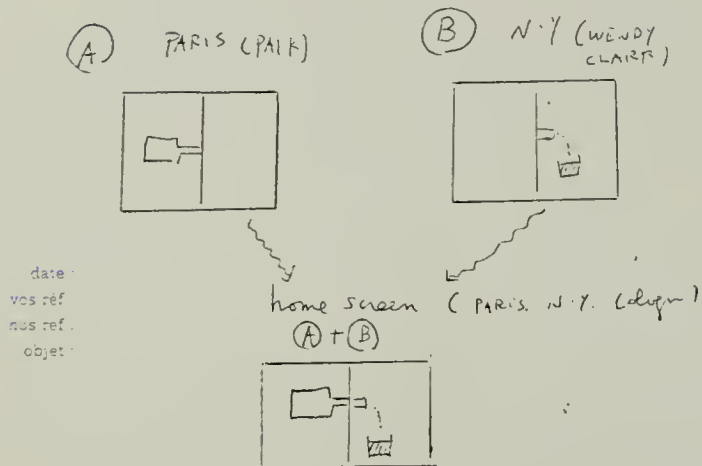
Letter to Messrs Lloyd and Klein ("It was a heavy earthquake . . ."), Dated February 10, 1971. Typescript (copy) with handwritten notes in ink. Two single-sided pages, each: 10¾ x 8½ in. (27.3 x 21.6 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive (Box 2, Folder 18); Gift of the Nam June Paik Estate

However the rapidly advancing computer technology made the introduction of digital computer into the video art quite plausible and economically viable. ✓ Beauty per Dollar ratio will be much more favorable than traditional color video production. This is not the automation in traditional sense, which is aimed to cut persons in doing the same job. Our goal is the ~~adverse~~ <sup>benefit</sup> of it. Since computer-video will open up a vast terrain of new beauty and new demand in market for the untapped beauty in the wide open channels in CATV and video cassettes, which is experiencing the lack of materials in order to fulfill new technically open field, The success of digital computer-video will create ~~much~~ many new jobs for artists, engineers and marketing businessmen. This will certainly create a new chain reaction for more diverse computer-video synthesizer, and as in the case of video synthesizers, more competition will create simply more good will and more beauty, because <sup>the</sup> possibility in this terrain is wide wide open like in the case of Wilde West. Even though we might stagnate



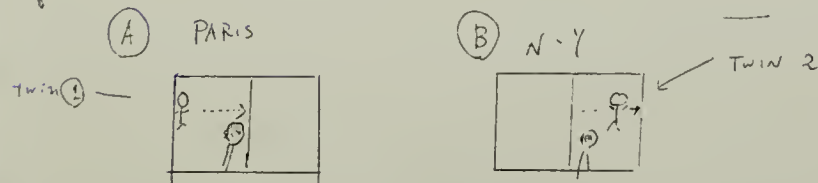


(1) ① beer bottle neck (by study-handy clark)

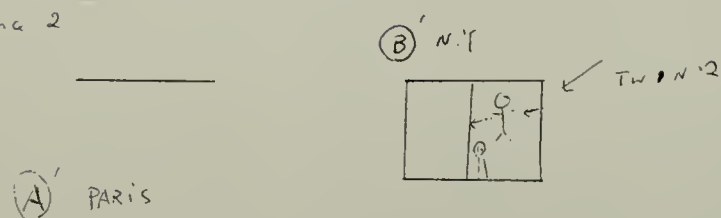


(2) Twin piece by Richard Kriesche

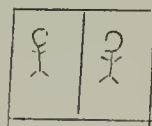
Sequence 1



Sequence 2

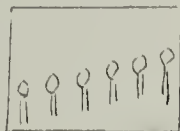


Sequence 3      2x Twins together alone



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③ Trans-atlantic cable feedback and hand clapping  
feedbacks (Kit yellowy and sherry Reborn 1)

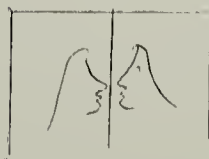


④ instantaneous hand clapping feedbacks

date.  
vos réf.  
nos réf.  
objet

⑤ sky-touch <sup>originally</sup> by Douglas Davis

PARIS 197



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75131 Paris Cedex 04 Téléphone 277 12 31 Telex 31242 GP 21276

NJP to HK

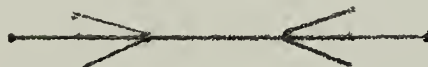
- 3 -

November 7, 1973

re: Video Memo #1

However, Video is

point to point communication like telephone.



The Core of video revolution is nothing but this Copernican change.

to convert TV

from one way, point to space communication

to

two ways, point to point communications.

As in every revolution, process will be slow and there will be many set-backs... and maybe some completely unexpected technical break-throughs might make this second generation of TV unnecessary. However, in today's technology and society, everything seems to point out the necessity of this point to point, two ways, broadband communication system.



## Conclusion

Depression in the 30's was fought back and eventually won by bold capital expenditure in public work such as ~~TVAXAX~~ building of T V A or rockefeller center or Highway... especially Highway became the backbone of ~~growthxxxxxx~~ economical growth and prosperity, which continued for 40 years since then. New economic uncertainty resulting from double problems in ~~cheap~~ <sup>expensive</sup> energy and ~~clean~~ <sup>dirty</sup> environment must

must also be met by audacious and imaginative investment, which would revitalize and modernize economical infra-structure, and will become the backbone of ~~coming~~ post industrial economy, ~~even high~~ <sup>lines</sup> ~~science~~ <sup>on</sup> ~~information, knowledge and communication~~

<sup>E</sup> Building of electronic highway would be surely one of them.

Suppose, we connect N.Y. and L.A. with multiple layer of communication networks, such as domestic communication satellite, a bundle of co-ax cable and later with multiple fiber optical transmission lines for laser beam. Expenses will be in the magnitude of moon landing but its fall out will be far greater than the moon landing. Color picture phone calls, connecting multiple points for conference calls with videotape, or graphic outputs/inputs will become economically feasible, which will in return reduce the expansion of air traffic, necessity for new airport and snarling airport-downtown traffics. Better communication reduces social waste and mal-function <sup>of a threatened competition</sup> ~~every~~ here and there and again result in the saving of energy. Eventually <sup>US</sup> ~~along~~ better and cheaper ~~information~~ communication system will not sopt at by being a "substitute" of something existing, but will become a springboard of unexpected new <sup>business</sup> economical activities. 100 years ago Thoreau wondered that telephone company was trying to connect Main and

and Tenney, but what men in Main and Tenney had to say each other .  
History showed that telephone created <sup>may may</sup> ~~some~~ thing to say each other.  
This example will be magnified in manyfold in <sup>the day of</sup> ~~by Science Fiction~~  
<sup>a broadband electric highway</sup> like blue print...and most probably will become the backbone of a  
economic activities in the o coming century, as Interstate Highway  
was in the past 40 years.

*blue print*

However before indulging into this Utopian script  
what can we and should we do for the communication area immediately ?  
HOW ? with the limited resource of the Rockefeller Foundation. *??*  
We should create a PROTO-TYPE of a futuristic communication model  
choosing one professional group, and experiment with them how  
multitude of this broadband technology works among various sections  
of this professional group in various geographical area. <sup>*this prototype, experiment will be applicable to other subjects*</sup> I would choose  
artists not only because I am an artist, but because of following

- 1) In the recent history artist's instinct has functioned as an early warning system or antenna of many forth-coming changes, although ~~artistic~~ ~~means~~ of computer forecasting opportunities.
- 2) artists are by definition specialist in communication, media-transformation and has thousand years of experience in handling meta-verbal audio visual language.
- 3) Artists have shown keen interest in video-communication since the beginning and has demonstrated considerable achievement. *with little money*
- 4) Although creativity is required in any profession, in the ~~top~~ ~~level~~ ~~talents~~, more creative people are found in ~~art~~ ~~society~~ *artists, as a group. is more creative than, say, insurance men* in the broader level. *find salesmen, also, in the group*
- 5) in cost factor artist are most under-paid genre of people and they

*have little*

*artists are poor in money*

18

don't require generally high union wages overtime pay scale etc, therefore more cost efficient in long ranged experiment like this.

5) My forgoing analysis, and position excerpt of Kenneth Galbraith

shows expected over-average growth in art-related market.

*in social status which is*  
 6) artist generally don't work on union scale, *over* ~~at 1/3 double time~~ (overtime double-time) *any experiment need timeless time.*



(1)

## Video and Dream Analysis DAY dream

while doing the tedious work of video editing, I found certain similarity of video editing and Freud's dream analysis.

I am not much of a Freud reader and I have no time to check the sources now, but my feeling is like followings:

In dream, the time axis expand or shrink, so is the video editing. actually the high art of video editing exists in this expansion and compression, which, by the way Beethoven used also in his sonata forms.

In the dreams, time sequences appear not in the natural order.

eg : you get caught by the police first and then commit a criminal act. This time-shift, (eg : watching 7 o'clock news after the 9 o'clock drama,) is why so many VTR got sold so quickly. Untill now, only God was able to do this. [teacher is also a time-shift machine, who can tell 20 years old guy, how you would feel, when you are 50.

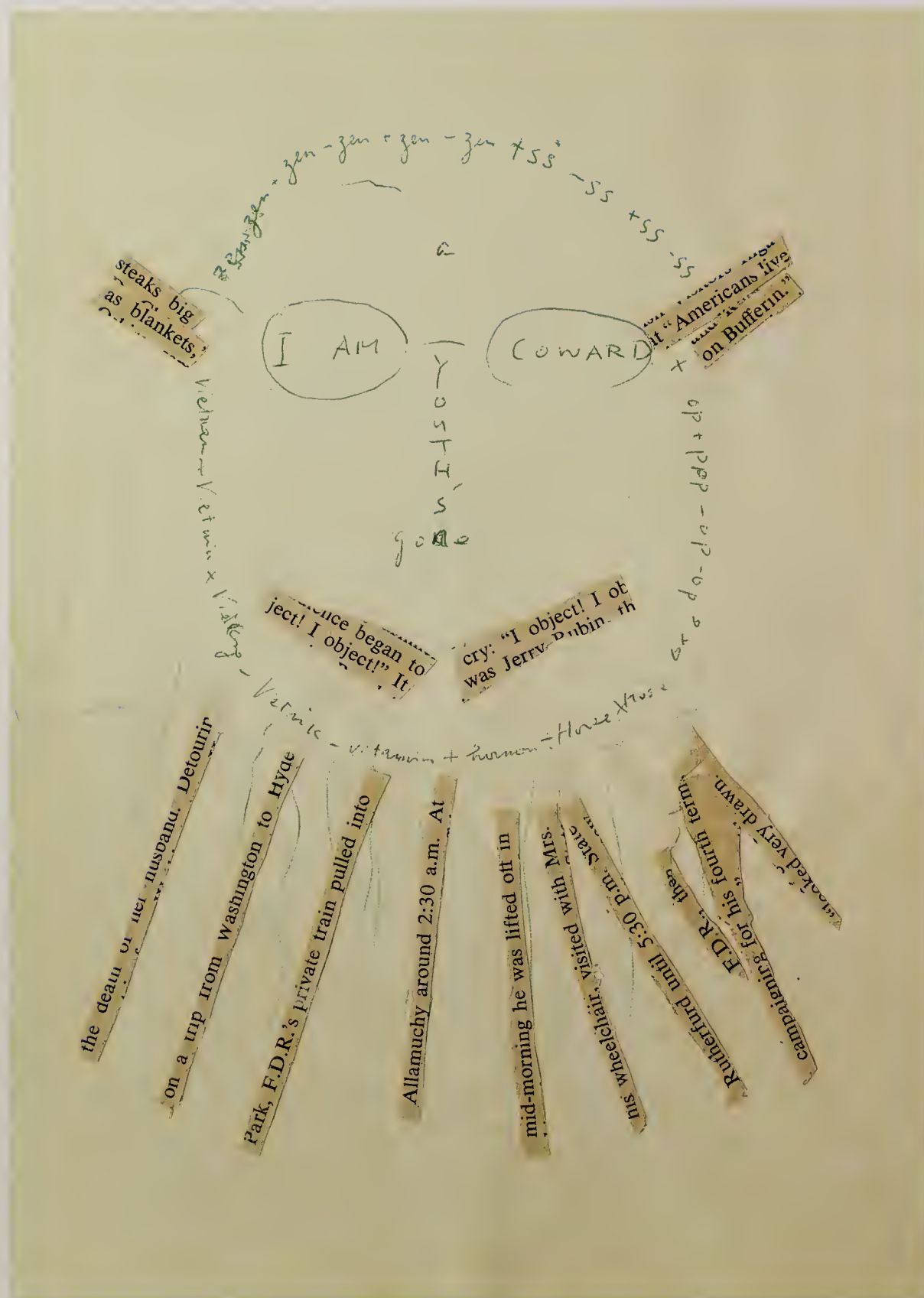
but youth never listens. it is why history progresses, or rather HOW history changes.] however, if we could live like a VTR, so that we are first 50 years old and later becomes 20 years old, then many things will happen, and many thing will not happen.

In any case both in the dream and in the video editing, the sequences ABCD can be changed into ADCB or BADC or CDAB at will.

~~ixhaxaxixn:~~

above characters are of form but also in the content, dream and video can be quite analogous.

✓  
psychologists say that the dream is by its own nature quite  
egoistic. we never dream an altruistic dream... idealistic, do-good  
ism dream. Dream is always selfish. it is the expression of hidden or  
frustrated desire. ( of course, these nightmare happens in the  
form of TRANSposition )  
now we ~~don't~~ know , why video art does not sell in the market  
place.... ~~we~~ basically video artists are idealists<sup>is</sup>. we want to  
correct the situation that in the American TV, most shows are of  
sex and violence<sup>s</sup> stuff. however most of our dreams are of the  
Same nature... sex/violence/<sup>and the</sup> anxiety related to both. that is the  
form of our desire.



Undated. Handwritten script in ink with adhered magazine clippings, on graph paper in staple-bound notebook. 8¼ x 6¼ in. (21 x 15.9 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive (Box 16, Folder 1); Gift of the Nam June Paik Estate







# Nam June Paik

## Fast-forward

Michelle Yun

Nam June Paik is born on July 20, 1932, in Seoul, Korea. He is the third son and youngest child of a prosperous business family.

**1932**

The term “cathode ray tube” is trademarked by RCA, though the product first became available as early as 1922.

**1934**

The first commercially produced electronic television sets containing cathode ray tubes are manufactured by Telefunken in Germany.

**1939**

Television is introduced to the American public by RCA at the World's Fair in New York.



## 1948

Cable television first becomes available in the United States.

Norbert Weiner, an American mathematician and philosopher, publishes *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, a seminal book that provides a theoretical foundation for the study of cybernetics and analog computing.

The Paik family moves to Hong Kong to escape the Korean War.

## 1949

The first commercially available closed-circuit television (CCTV) system is released by Vericon, an American government contractor. CCTV was first used in 1942 by Siemens AG to observe the takeoff of V2 rockets in Nazi Germany. This and other early CCTV systems are not yet able to record and store information.

The Paik family moves to Tokyo, where Paik enrolls at Tokyo University to study music, art history, and aesthetics.

## 1950

The Korean War, between the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), officially commences on June 25 and continues until an armistice agreement is signed on July 27, 1953.

1953

Color television sets are introduced to the United States. Due to high prices and the scarcity of television programs produced in color, the sets will not become popular in American homes until the mid-1960s.

1954

The first American national color broadcast airs on January 1 with the Tournament of Roses Parade.

1956

Paik graduates from Tokyo University in 1956 with a degree in aesthetics. The artist moves to Germany to continue his study of music with the composer Thrasybulos Georgiades at the University of Munich.

The first commercially successful videotape recorder is produced by the American electronics company Ampex. The product's prohibitive retail price of \$50,000 limits its customer base to large television networks.

Paik meets John Cage in Darmstadt, Germany. Cage would become a significant, lifelong influence and friend to the artist and a frequent collaborator.

## 1958

The first working integrated circuit—now known as a microchip—is introduced on September 12 by Jack Kilby of Texas Instruments. Robert Noyce, cofounder of the Fairchild Semiconductor Corporation (and Intel in 1968), concurrently develops a similar device out of silicon. These developments herald new possibilities in computer technology and lead to the eventual invention of the microprocessor.

## 1962

*The Jetsons* (fig. 13), an animated sitcom, airs on September 23. It depicts a futuristic utopia in the year 2062 filled with robots, flying saucers, and whimsical technological inventions that improve everyday life.



Fig. 13. The Jetson family wave as they fly past buildings in space in their spaceship in a still from the animated television series, *The Jetsons*, ca. 1962. (Photo by Warner Bros./Courtesy of Getty Images)



Fig. 14. Installation view of “Exposition of Music—Electronic Television,” March 11–20, 1963. Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, Germany

Paik’s first solo exhibition “Exposition of Music—Electronic Television” is organized by the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, Germany. The exhibition features the artist’s first television experiments and marks his growing interest in using technology in his art practice (fig. 14).

## 1963

The first home videotape recorder (VTR), called the Telcan, is produced by the Nottingham Electronic Valve Company and can be purchased in the United Kingdom for £60. The device uses a quarter-inch tape on a reel-to-reel system and can record up to twenty minutes of low-quality black-and-white television programming at a time. Philips and Sony also release commercial versions of the VTR at this time.



Paik leaves Germany for Japan. His first robot, *Robot K-456*, is created in Tokyo with the assistance of Shuya Abe, an electronics engineer with a degree in physics and electrical engineering. The robot can walk, talk, and defecate. Later that year the artist moves to New York City and meets the cellist Charlotte Moorman shortly after his arrival. Moorman becomes Paik's primary collaborator.

## 1964



Fig. 15. Programma 101 Electronic Desktop Computer, 1965. Manufacturer: Ing C. Olivetti & C., S.p.A., Ivrea, Italy. Die-cast aluminum casing. 7½ x 18¾ x 24 in. (19 x 48 x 61 cm). Gift of the manufacturer. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, U.S.A. Bellini, Mario (b. 1935)  
© Copyright

The first commercial electronic desktop computer, the Programma 101, is launched by the Italian company Olivetti at the New York World's Fair. It is the size of a typewriter, weighs 78 pounds, and can store approximately 240 bytes of information. It is widely considered the first personal computer (fig. 15).

The Video Home System (VHS), a consumer-grade analog videotape cassette that can record and store information, is developed by the Victor Company of Japan (JVC). This format would dominate the home video market until the advent of DVD disks in 2000.

Paik is granted a John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and uses the funds to purchase his first Sony videotape recorder, which enables him to record his own video footage (fig. 16).

## 1965

The Sony Corporation releases the first home video-tape recorder (VTR) model CV-2000 in August for \$695. It uses a half-inch-wide videotape on a reel-to-reel format. CV stands for “consumer video” and the device is also known as a Portapak because the machine is one-tenth the weight and cost of other analog video recorders on the market. A separate video camera, microphone, and tripod are also available as a “Video Camera Ensemble” known as the VCK-2000, which allows individuals to record, save, and play back original video footage.



Fig. 16. Paik carrying a Sony Portapak, 1974

In an essay later reproduced in the *Flykten Bulletin* (Stockholm, 1967), Paik describes his idea for a “video telephone” through which “confidential pictures can be scanned with very complicated secret ‘coded’ frequencies and sent to the receiver. This will be useful (e.g., a Ford car designer showing his new car model to an executive . . . via video telephone in complete confidence).”

## 1966

The television show *Lost in Space* airs for the first time on September 15. It follows the adventures of a family chosen to colonize space in the year 1997, accompanied by an evil scientist and a robot. The robot has human characteristics such as the ability to laugh and feel sadness, as well as skills like singing and playing guitar.

On February 9, Charlotte Moorman is arrested at the Filmmakers' Cinematheque in New York and charged with indecency for performing Paik's *Opera Sextronique* nude.

1967

In his report "Expanded Education for the Paper-less Society," written during a residency at Stony Brook University, Paik predicts the use of computer and video technology to promote remote learning in place of traditional textbooks and educational tools. He also imagines a version of Facebook, writing, "In addition to the Year Book, the student body can make a short self introductory speech or act on videotape, which would run on TV in student restaurant or main corridor incessantly. The graduation book can be an electronic video disc . . . which makes a big public university as intimate as a New England prep school."

1968

Paik and Shuya Abe debut the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer during a residency at the public broadcasting station WGBH in Boston. The synthesizer is able to transform closed-circuit video broadcasts and prerecorded footage into video collages that range in appearance from realistic images to abstract patterns through new production and postproduction capabilities (fig. 17).

1969

An early iteration of the Internet called the ARPANET allows multiple separate networks to be joined together into a larger network. The first exchange using what would become the ARPANET occurs on October 29 between the Network Measurement Center at UCLA's School of Engineering and Applied Science and the NLS system at SRI International in Menlo Park, California. Fifteen sites would be connected through the ARPANET by the end of 1971.



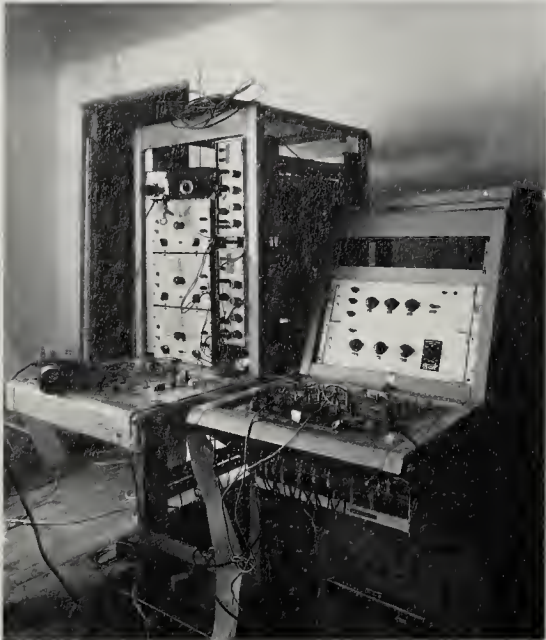


Fig. 17. The Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer, created by Nam June Paik in collaboration with Shuya Abe (1969–72), in Paik's studio, 1982. The third of Paik's synthesizers, this model was made for WNET/THIRTEEN, New York. Photo by Peter Moore © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA, NY



Fig. 18. *TV Glasses*, 1971. Sunglasses, 2 miniature monitors.

Paik creates *TV Glasses*, composed of a pair of eyeglasses outfitted with small TV monitors that broadcast video imagery (fig. 18). Forty-two years later, Google Glass, the first commercially viable optical head-mounted display, is debuted in 2013 and made available to the public in 2014.

1971

1972

Videocassette recorders (VCRs) are made available to the consumer market.

*Global Groove*, a video created by Paik in collaboration with John Godfrey, is a pastiche of found and original footage that explores the impact of new media on global communication. The video features effects created with the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer and is considered a groundbreaking work within the history of video art.

## 1973

A prototype of the first portable cellular phone is introduced by Motorola.

IBM develops a portable computer prototype called SCAMP (Special Computer, APL Machine Portable). In 1983 *PC World* designates it as “the world’s first personal computer.” Another seminal product created this year is the Xerox Alto. This user-friendly personal computer features a mouse and easy-to-use graphic software that would serve as the basis for Apple Computer’s Macintosh operating system (fig. 19).



Fig. 19. Children with an Alto computer, ca. 1970.  
Courtesy of the PARC Library

In a report commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation, Nam June Paik coins the phrase “electronic superhighway,” referring to a broadband communication network similar in function to what is now widely known as the Internet.

## 1974

NASA launches the first experimental Direct Broadcast satellite, named ATS-6, on May 30. The satellite is used for educational experiments and creates the possibility for direct broadcast television.

Paik collaborates on his first satellite telecast with the artists Joseph Beuys and Douglas Davis as part of documenta 6.

Paik marries Shigeko Kubota, a curator at the Anthology Film Archives. Kubota would later become a multimedia artist in her own right.

1977

Apple is incorporated by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak on January 4.

*Star Wars*, an epic science fiction saga about galactic civil war, premieres on May 25. The movie features droids, robotic machines that possess artificial intelligence. *Star Wars* becomes the third highest-grossing film of all time worldwide.

1978

The LaserDisc is made available to the public on December 15.

1979

The Sony Walkman first becomes available to the public in Japan on July 1. The device is marketed as the world’s first low-cost portable stereo. It plays cassette tapes and features two headphone jacks so that two people could listen to the same music at the same time.



## 1980

MTV, originally called Music Television, debuts on August 1. The cable station specializes in playing music videos selected by video jockeys, or VJs. The first music video shown on the station is for the song “Video Killed the Radio Star” by the Buggles.

## 1981

IBM releases its first personal computer (PC) on August 12. By the end of 1982, the PC has become so popular that one is sold every minute of the business day.

The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City mounts Paik’s first major solo museum exhibition, organized by John G. Hanhardt.

## 1982

The first compact disc (CD) is manufactured by the Philips Company in Germany on August 17. Sony begins selling its first audio CD players on October 1.

The term *Internet* is first used to define how a network connects through Transmission Control Protocol and Internet Protocol (TCP/IP).

Paik’s live program *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* is broadcast simultaneously from New York and Paris and transmitted to France, Germany, Korea, the Netherlands, and the United States on New Year’s Day. The event marks Paik’s first international satellite installation and is viewed by over 25 million people worldwide.

1984

On January 24, Steve Jobs introduces the Macintosh 128K, the first mass-marketed personal computer featuring a graphical user interface and a mouse.

Paik creates the series *Family of Robot*.

1986

1989

The WorldWideWeb is first introduced as a free and accessible information platform by the British computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee in a proposal written on March 12 for the CERN physics laboratory. By 1990 Berners-Lee establishes the three fundamental technologies HTML, URI, and HTTP that remain the basis for navigation on the Web today.

Paik wins first prize for Best Pavilion at the Venice Biennale with his work *Artist as Nomad* in the German Pavilion.

1993

Paik becomes disabled after suffering a stroke.

1996

Intel introduces its Pentium computer chip. For the first time an entire computer central processing unit (CPU) can be fit onto one single chip, allowing a computer to process instructions faster. Previously, CPU components were spread over several chips.

Paik is invited to a State Dinner at the White House. His pants drop in the receiving line while he is shaking hands with President Bill Clinton. This act is captured by the world press and lauded as the ultimate Fluxus event.

1998

Google is incorporated on September 4. The search engine was conceived in January 1996 as a research project by Larry Page and Sergey Brin when they were Ph.D. students at Stanford University. Google is the first search engine (fig. 20) to use PageRank, an algorithm that can determine a website's relevance by the number of pages, and the importance of those pages, that link back to the original site.

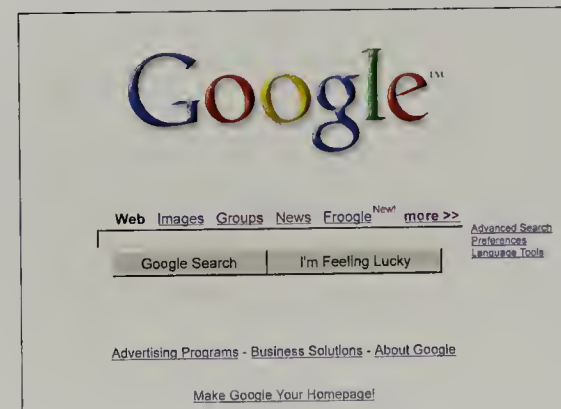


Fig. 20. The homepage from the Internet search giant Google, 2004. AFP/Getty Images



“The Worlds of Nam June Paik,” a major retrospective exhibition organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, opens in February and travels to Bilbao, Spain, and Seoul, South Korea.

## 2000

The term *WiFi* is coined by the brand-consulting firm Interbrand Corporation.

## 2001

iTunes, a music management application, is launched by Apple, Inc. on January 9. Later that year on October 12, Apple introduces a portable media player called the iPod.

## 2003

Skype is launched in August. This new application allows users to communicate remotely by voice and video means, free of charge, with other Skype users. Paik referenced a Skype-like device in a 1968 interview postulating, “[T]he picture telephone will undoubtedly soar the sales and spur the designs of gorgeous negligees. When you get a telephone call at night you want to be seen in your best pajamas . . . a businessman goes to a convention in the Midwest and wants to say goodnight with a picturephone call to his beloved wife in New York. . . . They talk to each other, a bit of escalation, and kiss through the picture . . . a daring wife might talk to her husband topless. . . .”

Myspace, a social networking service, is launched in August. By April 2004 it has one million users. The company is acquired by News Corporation in July 2005 for \$580 million dollars.

The Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin organizes the exhibition “Nam June Paik: Global Groove.” The exhibition brings Paik’s work back to Germany and celebrates the artist’s pioneering video innovations from the 1960s and 1970s.

## 2004

Facebook, an online social networking platform, is founded on February 4 by Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes. The number of active users on the website would surpass one billion by October 2012.

## 2005

A video-sharing website called YouTube is created by three former PayPal employees, Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim. Users can upload, view, and share user-generated video content, including video blogging, short original videos, and educational videos.

Nam June Paik dies on January 29, 2006, in Miami Beach, Florida.

## 2006





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# Index

Note: Illustrations are indicated by page numbers in *italics*. All works and publications listed individually are by Nam June Paik unless otherwise indicated.

## A

Abe, Shuya, 18, 139, 167  
*see also* Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer  
*Ambassador Television* (2005), plate 49, 131  
 American Museum of the Moving Image, New York, 37  
 Anastasi, William, 19  
 Anderson, Laurie, 29, 140  
*Artist as Nomad* (1993), 175

## B

Bad Brains, 37  
 Barney, Matthew, 54  
 Bell Labs, New York  
*Digital Experiment at Bell Labs* (Paik) (c. 1966), 26  
 Paik residency at, 26  
 Bellour, Raymond, 36  
 Bernadette Corporation, 54  
 Beuys, Joseph, 16, 28, 37, 140–41  
 documenta 6, live satellite telecast (with Paik, Davis), 28, 172  
*Honey Pump at the Workplace* (1977), 141  
 Bourriaud, Nicolas, 140 n. 1

## C

Cage, John, 16, 19, 25, 38, 41, 48, 143  
 collaborations with Paik, 29, 43–44, 138, 141, 166  
*A Tribute to John Cage* (Paik) (1973), 27  
*26' 1. 1499" for a String Player*, Charlotte Moorman performing, on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, plate 45H, 123  
 Callas, Peter, 37  
 Cao Fei, 31  
*RMB CITY 6* (2007), fig. 8, 31–33, 32  
 Carson, Johnny  
*The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, plate 45H, 44, 123, 168  
 Cassen, Jackie, 139  
*Chroma Key Glasses* (1971), 22  
 Clinton, Bill, president, 30  
 meeting Paik, 140–41, 175  
 computers, personal, 22, 167–75  
 Programma 101 computer, fig. 15, 167, 167  
 Xerox Alto, fig. 19, 171, 171  
*Concerto for TV Cello* (1972), 143  
 Connors, Betsy  
*Living with the Living Theater* (with Paik, Paul Garrin) (1998), plate 27, 96  
 Cunningham, Merce, 19, 25, 140  
*Merce by Merce by Paik* (Paik) (1978), 27

## D

Davis, Douglas, 141  
 documenta 6, live satellite telecast (with Paik, Beuys), 28, 172  
 Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin  
 “Nam June Paik: Global Groove,” 2004, 177  
 Diamond, Bob, 143  
*Digital Experiment at Bell Labs* (c. 1966), 26  
 Digital, Kenzo, 138  
 documenta 6, Kassel, 1977, 141  
 live satellite telecast (Paik, Beuys, Davis), 28, 172  
 Duchamp, Marcel  
*Fountain* (1917), 49–50  
*In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1945), fig. 10, 49  
*Large Glass*, notes for, 48  
 and the readymade, 47–54  
 Rose Sélavy, 54

## E

*Electronic Opera #1* (1969), plate 15, 78–79  
*Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii* (1995), 38, 142  
 Electronic Video Recorder Flyers (1965), plate 7, 68  
*Étude for Pianoforte* (1960), 43, 141  
 Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York  
 “Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer with Charlotte Moorman,” 1972, 143



## F

*Family of Robot* series (1986), 22, 25, 174  
*Family of Robot: Baby* (1986), plate 41, 22, 111  
*Family of Robot: Father* (1986), plate 40, 22, 109  
*Family of Robot: Mother* (1986), plate 39, 22, 108  
*Family Photo Declassified*, from the V-IDEA series (1984), plate 35, 22, 103  
 Filmmakers' Cinematheque, New York  
*Opera Sextronique* (Paik), 21, 169  
*First Accident of the Twenty-First Century* (1982), 18–19  
 A performance with *Robot K-456* on Madison Avenue (photograph by George Hirose) (1982), plates 25 and 26, 94–95  
*Fish Flies on Sky* (1975), 139  
 Fluxus, 18–19, 40, 43–44, 140–41, 175  
 Ford Foundation, 139  
 Fortner, Wolfgang, 16

## G

Gabriel, Peter, 29  
 Galeria Bonino, New York  
 Distortion of Charlotte Moorman's face with the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer at the Galeria Bonino, New York, 1971, plate 45G, 123  
 "Electronic Art II," 1968, 51  
 Paik exhibitions, 1965 and 1968, 25  
 Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal  
 "Exposition of Music—Electronic Television," 1963, fig. 14, 16, 166, 166  
 Galerie Weisser Raum, Hamburg, 140

Garrin, Paul

*Living with the Living Theater* (with Paik, Betsy Connors) (1998), plate 27, 96  
 Genghis Khan, 25, 140  
 Georgiades, Thrasybulos, 16, 165  
 Ginsberg, Allen, 29  
 Glass, Philip, 29  
*Global Groove* (with John Godfrey) (1973), 27, 139, 143, 171, 177  
 Godfrey, John, 139  
*Global Groove* (with Paik) (1973), 27, 139, 143, 171, 177  
*Good Morning Mr. Orwell* (Paik) (1984), fig. 9, plate 38, 28–29, 34–35, 105–7, 147, 152, 153, 174  
 Invitation, Daadgalerie, Berlin (1984), plate 37, 104  
 Nam June Paik's *Good Morning Mr. Orwell*, postcard (1984), plate 36, 104  
 Google Glass, 15, 22, 43, 170  
 Griffin, Merv  
 Paik and Moorman on *The Merv Griffin Show*, 44–45  
*Guadalcanal Requiem* (1977), 143  
 Gwangju Biennale  
*Mr. Paik's Computer Mentors*, 41

## H

Hakuta, Ken, 35–45  
 Hanhardt, John G., 18, 173  
 Hirose, George  
 A performance with *Robot K-456* on Madison Avenue (Paik) (1982), plates 25 and 26, 94–95  
 Holly Solomon Gallery, New York, 38  
 Howard Wise Gallery, New York  
 "TV as a Creative Medium," 1976, 21  
 Huffman, Jon, 35–45

## I

Internet, the, 15, 30, 43, 169, 171, 173–77

## J

Jährling, Rolf, 16  
 Jankowski, Christian, 140  
*Cleaning up the Studio* (2010), 140  
 Jobs, Steve, 172, 174  
 Johns, Jasper, 48–51, 149  
*Device* (1962), fig. 11, 49–50, 49  
*Gray Alphabets* (1956), 50  
*Target with Plaster Casts* (1955), 50

## K

Kennedy, John F., president, 28, 33 n. 4  
 Kessler, Jon, 31, 141  
 Kilby, Jack, 166  
 Klüver, Billy, 53  
 Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne  
 Untitled (Paik at Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1976) (Friedrich Rosenstiel) (1976), 146  
 Kubota, Shigeko, 141, 172

## L

Lewis, Jerry, 44–45  
*Light Bikini* (1966/1975), plate 10, 21, 72  
*Li Tai Po*, plate 43, 25, 113–15  
*Living with the Living Theater* (with Betsy Connors, Paul Garrin) (1998), plate 27, 96  
 London, Barbara, 36, 45 n. 1  
 Loxton, David, 27, 139

## M

Maciunas, George, 18, 33 n. 1  
 Maeda, John, 142  
*Magnet TV* (1965), fig. 12, 25, 52, 140

- McLuhan, Marshall, 25  
*Understanding Media*, 25
- McWilliams, Jim  
*Crotch Music* (with Charlotte Moorman) (1975), plate 45D, 121  
*Merce by Merce by Paik* (1978), 27
- Moorman, Charlotte, 19, 21, 44–45, 53–54, 140, 167–69  
*Chamber Music* (Kosugi), performance of, 1974, plates 45B and 45C, 120  
*Crotch Music* (with Jim McWilliams) (1975), plate 45D, 121  
 Distortion of Charlotte Moorman's face with the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer, plate 45G, 123  
*Light Bikini* (1966/1975), performance in, plate 10, 21, 72  
 on *The Merv Griffin Show* with Paik, playing cello on a bomb, 44–45  
*Opera Sextronique* (Paik) (1967), plate 45E, performance in, 21, 121  
 arrested for performing, 21, 44, 169  
*Opera Sextronique* (Jud Yalkut) (1967), plate 11, 73  
*Originale* (Stockhausen), performance of, 43  
 “Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer with Charlotte Moorman,” Everson Museum of Art, 1972, 143  
 Poster, “Miss Charlott Mooman 1952,” plate 45A, 119  
*Rare Performance Documents 1961–1994 Volume 1: Paik-Moorman Collaborations* (with Paik) 1965–1973; compiled 2000), plate 18, 82–83  
 with *Robot K-456* (Paik) (1964) in Paik's studio, plate 3, 61
- Robot Opera* (Paik) (1964), performance in, 21  
*Room for Charlotte Moorman* (Paik) (1993), plate 45, 118  
*Sonata for Adults only* (Paik) (1966), performance of, plate 45F, 122  
 “Topless Cellist” Charlotte Moorman (Paik and Howard Weinberg) (1995), plate 47, 126–27  
*TV Bed* (Paik) (1972), performance of, 143  
*TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (Paik) (1969/1973), performance in, fig. 3, plate 16, 19, 21, 44, 80  
*TV Cello* (Paik) (1971), performance in, plate 17, 21, 81  
*Concerto for TV Cello* (Paik) (1972), performance of, 143  
 in *Video tape Art* (Paik), performing 26' 1. 1499" for a String Player (John Cage), on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, plate 45H, 123
- Mori, Mariko, 31  
*Wave UFO* (2003), 31  
*Mr. Paik's Computer Mentors*, 41  
 MTV, 27, 43, 139, 173  
 Museum of Modern Art, New York, 36, 45 n. 1  
 music videos, 27, 173
- N**  
 Nam June Paik Archive, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C., 142, 147  
 National Center for Experiments in Television, KQED, San Francisco, 28  
 New School Presents Nam June Paik (1965), plates 6A and 6B, 65–67
- New Television Workshop, WGBH, Boston, 28  
 Paik's artist residency, 26, 169  
 New York Avant-Garde Festival, 21  
 New York State Council on the Arts, 139  
 Noyce, Robert, 166
- O**  
 Ono, Yoko, 19, 44, 144–45  
*Opera Sextronique* (1967), 21, 44, 169  
 Charlotte Moorman performing (1967), plate 45E, 121  
*Light Bikini for Opera Sextronique* (1966/1975), plate 10, 72  
*Opera Sextronique* (Jud Yalkut) (1967), plate 11, 73  
 Orwell, George  
 1984, 28  
 see also *Good Morning Mr. Orwell*
- P**  
 Paik, Nam June  
 on collaboration of artist and engineer, 26  
 copyrighting work, 25  
 on cultural effects of his experiments, 26  
 death of, 31, 177  
 drawing and painting, 44–45  
 early life of, 16, 39, 163–64  
 on the “electronic superhighway,” 30  
 on the future of TV, 26–28, 30  
 in Germany, 16, 18, 25, 29, 33 n. 1, 39–40, 165–67  
 on humanizing technology, 21, 25, 27  
 humor of, 18, 31, 40, 138  
 in Japan, 16, 18, 39, 164–65, 167  
 in Korea, 16, 39, 43, 163

- and music, 16, 26–27, 36–45, 139, 141, 164–66
- in New York, 19, 36–39, 43–44, 138, 140–41, 167
- predictions of future and technology, 26–31, 42–43, 141–43, 147, 168–69, 176
- on the readymade and video art, 47–48
- working processes of, 36–38, 40–42, 139, 143
- see also works and exhibitions listed individually*
- Paik, Nam June, original documents, 148–60
- Paik, Nam June, publications
- “Expanded Education for the Paper-less Society” (1968), 169
- Manifestos*, A Great Bear Pamphlet, plate 9, 70–71
- Nam June Paik: Videa ‘n’ Videology* 1959–1973, 143
- Rare Performance Documents* 1961–1994 *Volume 1: Paik-Moorman Collaborations* (with Moorman) (1965–1973; compiled 2000), plate 18, 82–83
- untitled, *Flykingen Bulletin* (1967), 168
- Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer (Paik and Shuya Abe) (1969–72), figs. 6 and 17, 18, 24, 26–27, 138–39, 141, 169, 170, 171
- Distortion of Charlotte Moorman’s face with the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer, plate 45G, 123
- “Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer with Charlotte Moorman,” Everson Museum of Art, 1972, 143
- Paik Robot/Tele-pet Flyer (1964), plate 2, 60
- Participation TV* (1963), 18
- Pollock, Jackson, 51
- R**
- Random Access* (1963/2000), fig. 2, 16, 17, 142
- Rauschenberg, Robert, 29
- readymade, the, 47–55
- Reclining Buddha* (1994–2002), plate 46, 125
- Relational Aesthetics, 140
- Robot Brain* (1965), plate 8, 69
- Robot K-456* (1964), plate 1, 18–22, 33 nn. 3 and 4, 40–41, 58–59, 167
- in *First Accident of the Twenty-First Century* (1982), plates 25 and 26, 18–19, 94–95
- Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik with *Robot K-456* in Paik’s Lispenard Street studio (1964), plate 3, 61
- Drawing for repair of *Robot K-456* (1982), plate 28, 97
- Robot K-456* in *Robot Opera* (1964), plate 5, 21, 64
- Robot Opera* (1964), 21
- Kill Pop Art!! *Robot-Opera* Program (1964), plates 4A and 4B, 62–63
- Robot K-456* (1964) in *Robot Opera*, performed in front of Judson Hall, plate 5, 21, 64
- robots
- in movies and TV, fig. 13, 166, 166, 168, 172
- Paik’s interest in, 18–25, 40–41, 53
- toy robots from Nam June Paik Archive, plate 44, 117
- see also individual robot works by Paik*
- Rockefeller Foundation, 26, 139, 171
- John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund grant, 25, 168
- Rodin, Auguste
- Thinker*, 22
- Room for Charlotte Moorman* (Paik) (1993), plate 45, 118
- Rosenstiel, Friedrich
- Untitled (Paik at Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1976), 146
- Ross, David, 143
- S**
- Sakamoto, Ryuichi, 44
- Shoenberg, Arnold, 16
- Snyder, Tom
- Tomorrow*, 141
- Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
- “The Worlds of Nam June Paik,” 2000, 176
- Sony Portapak, 25, 141, 168
- Paik carrying a Portapak, 1974, figs. 1 and 16, 14, 168
- Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
- Untitled (Installation view of Nam June Paik exhibition, 1977), plate 24, 92–93
- Stockhausen, Karlheinz, 141
- Originale*, 43
- Suite 212* (1975/1977), 139
- SUNY, Stony Brook, New York
- Paik residency at, 169
- T**
- Takis (Panayiotis Vassilakis), 40
- television
- history of, 163–65
- Paik work with, 16–18, 25, 42, 51–53, 140



programming, 18, 28  
 and the readymade, 47–49, 51–53  
 and satellite technology, 28, 42, 171  
 TV sets, 16–18  
 and video art, 27–28, 42  
*see also individual works with TV sets by Paik*  
 Television Laboratory (TV Lab), WNET/  
 THIRTEEN, New York, 27–28, 139  
 Paik on, 28  
 Paik's residency in, 27, 29, 31, 139  
*Three Camera Participation/Participation TV* (1969/2001), plate 14, 77  
 Tokyo University, 16, 164–65  
*"Topless Cellist" Charlotte Moorman*  
 (with Howard Weinberg) (1995),  
 plate 47, 126–27  
*Transistor Television* (2005), plate 50,  
 132–33  
*Triangle: Video Buddha and Video Thinker*,  
 1978 (1991), plate 23, 22, 91  
*A Tribute to John Cage* (1973), 27  
 Tudor, David, 141  
*TV Bed* (1972), 143  
*TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1975),  
 plate 22, 21, 44, 89  
 Charlotte Moorman performing in  
 (1973), fig. 3, 19  
 Paik with Charlotte Moorman wearing  
*TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969),  
 plate 16, 80  
*TV Buddha* series, 22, 40, 44  
*TV Cello* (1971), fig. 4, 20, 21  
*Concerto for TV Cello* (1972), 143  
*TV Cello Premiere* (with Jud Yalkut)  
 (1971), plate 17, 81  
*TV Chair* (1968), plate 13, 22, 75, 141

Paik sitting in *TV Chair* (1968/1976),  
 fig. 5, 23  
*TV Garden* (1974), 38, 141, 143  
*TV Glasses* (1971), fig. 18, 22, 170, 170  
*TV Penis* (with Stuart Craig Wood)  
 (1972), 22  
 Photograph documentation of *TV Penis*  
 with Stuart Craig Wood (1972),  
 plates 19 and 20, 84–85

## U

University of Munich, 16, 165  
 Untitled (do you know . . . ) (1973),  
 plate 21, 86–87  
 Untitled (Robot Drawings) (1987), plates  
 29–34, 98–101  
 Untitled (Robot Drawings) (1999–2000),  
 plate 48, 129  
 Untitled (robot sketch on New York City  
 postcard) (undated), plate 42, 112  
 Untitled (2005), plate 51, 134  
 Untitled (2005), plate 52, 135

## V

Venice Biennale, 1993  
*Artist as Nomad*, German Pavilion, 175  
 "Nam June Paik: Bill Clinton stole my  
 Idea," fig. 7, 29, 30  
 video art, 27, 31, 47, 141  
 and Marcel Duchamp, 47  
 Paik as father of, 15, 25–27, 42, 44, 171  
 and the readymade, 51–53  
 and satellite broadcasts, 28, 42, 174  
*see also individual works of video art by Paik*  
*Video Fish* (1975), 141

*Video tape Art* (Paik), Charlotte Moorman  
 performing *26' 1. 1499" for a String  
 Player* (John Cage), on *The Tonight  
 Show Starring Johnny Carson*,  
 plate 45H, 123  
 Viola, Bill, 31, 36, 143  
 Vitiello, Stephen, 35–45  
 Vostell, Wolf, 16

## W

Weinberg, Howard  
*"Topless Cellist" Charlotte Moorman*  
 (with Paik) (1995), plate 47, 126–27  
 Weiner, Norbert, 25, 164  
 Whitney Museum of American Art,  
 New York  
*First Accident of the Twenty-First  
 Century* (1982), plates 25 and 26,  
 18–19, 94–95  
 group exhibition with Paik, 1989, 138  
 "Nam June Paik," 1982, 18, 173  
 Wood, Stuart Craig  
*TV Penis* (with Paik) (1972), plates 19  
 and 20, 22, 84–85  
 Wozniak, Steve, 172

## Y

Yalkut, Jud, 21, 26  
*Opera Sextronique* (1967), plate 11, 73  
*TV Cello Premiere* (with Paik) (1971),  
 plate 17, 81  
 Young, La Monte, 44  
 YouTube, 28, 43, 141, 177

## Z

*Zen for TV* (1963), 18



# Contributors' Biographies

**Melissa Chiu** is museum director and senior vice president of Global Arts and Cultural Programs at Asia Society in New York. Previously, she was founding director of the Asia-Australia Arts Centre in Sydney, Australia.

**Michelle Yun** is curator of modern and contemporary art at Asia Society in New York.

**David Joselit** is an art historian, art critic, and editor focused on modern and contemporary art. He is currently a distinguished professor at the Graduate Center of City University of New York.

**Kenzo Digital** is a director, freelance creative director, and artist based in New York City. His work is dedicated to synthesizing new narrative forms by unifying traditional storytelling with groundbreaking technology.

**John Godfrey** is an Emmy Award-winning video editor and engineer. He was the engineering supervisor and editor for the Experimental TV Laboratory at WNET/THIRTEEN.

**Ken Hakuta**, an inventor, television personality, and internet investor, is the nephew of Nam June Paik and executor of the artist's estate.

**Jon Huffman** is an artist and the present curator of the Nam June Paik Estate. He was Paik's project manager for two decades.

**Christian Jankowski** is an artist known for his collaborative performance pieces. He works in a wide range of different mediums and is based in Berlin.

**Jon Kessler** is a mixed media sculptor best known for his mechanical video sculptures. He has exhibited his work widely in Europe, Japan, and the United States.

**John Maeda** is an artist, graphic designer, computer scientist, and educator, who was the president of the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) from 2008 to 2013. He is currently a design partner at Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, and Chair of the eBay Design Advisory board.

**Yoko Ono** is an artist, musician, and activist for peace. The Guggenheim Bilbao held her retrospective "Yoko Ono. Half-A Wind Show—A Retrospective" in 2014.

**Stephen Vitiello** is a sound and visual artist. He is currently professor of Kinetic Imaging at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond.

**Bill Viola** is an artist and has been instrumental in the establishment of video as a vital form of contemporary art. Viola lives and works in Long Beach, California.





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Production Coordinator: Leise Hook  
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**This new, fully illustrated catalogue on the celebrated progenitor of video art, Nam June Paik (1932–2006), brings together scholars, artists, and Paik's own collaborators to illuminate the work of this innovative artist. Editors Melissa Chiu and Michelle Yun provide insight into Paik's radical and witty experiments with technology, especially in relation to the body, and shed light on the collaborative process and Paik's enduring influence on artistic practice today. Never-before-published primary sources highlight Paik's prescient attitude toward the integration of increasingly indispensable technologies into modern life.**

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