This catalog is a LEA production with FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology). It follows the first major retrospective on Nam June Paik in the UK with an exhibition and conference organized by Tate Liverpool and FACT. The exhibition Nam June Paik, December 17, 2010 to March 13, 2011, was curated by Sook-Kyung Lee and Susanne Rennert.

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THE GLOBAL PLAY OF NAM JUNE PAIK
THE ARTIST THAT EMBRACED AND TRANSFORMED MARSHALL MCLUHAN’S DREAMS INTO REALITY

What else can be said of Nam June Paik and his artistic practice that perhaps has not been said before? My guess is not very much... and while I write my first lines to this introduction I realize that it is already sounding like a classic Latin ‘invocatio,’ or request to assistance from the divinity, used by writers when having to tread complex waters.

Nam June Paik and Marshall McLuhan are two of the numerous artists and authors who inspired my formative years. If one cannot deny Paik’s love of play and satire imbued in popular culture and used to disguise a real intellectual and conceptual approach to the artwork, neither can easily be discounted McLuhan’s strong advocacy of the establishment. He also challenged the perception of what art ‘should be’ and at the same time undermined elitisms through the use, at his time, of what were considered ‘non-artistic-media.’ Some of the artworks may be challenging for the viewer as well and television as we know them signals a transformation of our image technologies and forms of expression. The end of video

Taking risks, particularly taking risks with one’s own artistic practice, may also mean to risk a downward spiral; and Paik did not seem to shy away from artworks’ challenging productions and made use of varied and combined media, therefore re-defining the field of art and placing himself at the center of it.

The word laser is actually an acronym; it stands for Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation. Nam June Paik undertook a residency with Bell labs, who were the inventors of the laser. It was here that he created his 1966 piece Digital Experiment at Bell Labs, exploring the stark contrast between digital and analogue and his fascination with technology in its material form. His work with Bell set the precedent for artists and musicians to start using technology creatively in a new way.

When Mike Stubbs and Omar Kholeif approached me to create this book, the challenge was to create a structure for the material but also to keep the openness that characterizes so many of Paik’s artworks and so many of the approaches that he has inspired.

I found the best framework in one of Paik’s artworks that was presented for the first time in the United Kingdom, at FACT, in Liverpool, thanks to the efforts of both Stubbs and Kholeif.

My fascination with the Laser Cone’s re-fabrication in Liverpool was immediate and I wanted to reflect in the publication, albeit symbolically, the multiple possibilities and connections that underpinned the Laser Cone’s re-fabrication and its medium, as well as Paik’s and McLuhan’s visions of the world to come, made of light, optics and lasers.

The construction of this hybrid book, I hope, would have pleased Paik for it is a strange construction, collage and recollection, of memories, events, places and artworks. In this volume collide present events, past memories, a conference and an exhibition, all in the name of Nam June Paik, the artist who envisaged the popular future of the world of media.

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.’

The end of video and television as we know them signals a transformation of our visual culture.

Therefore, it seems limited to define Paik as ‘the father of video art’ when his approaches were to resonate in a multiplicity of fields and areas.

For it is a strange construction, collage and recollection, of memories, events, places and artworks. In this volume collide present events, past memories, a conference and an exhibition, all in the name of Nam June Paik, the artist who envisaged the popular future of the world of media.

Paik’s latest creative deployment of new media is through laser technology. He has called his most recent installation a “post-video project,” which continues the articulation of the kinetic moment at Bell Labs, exploring the stark contrast between digital and analogue and his fascination with technology in its material form. His work with Bell set the precedent for artists and musicians to start using technology creatively in a new way.

Taking risks, particularly taking risks with one’s own artistic practice, may also mean to risk a downward spiral, and Paik did not seem to shy away from artworks’ challenging productions and made use of varied and combined media, therefore re-defining the field of art and placing himself at the center of it.

In the following decades, Paik was to transform virtually all aspects of video through his innovative sculptures, installations, single-channel videotapes, productions for television, and performances. As a teacher, writer, lecturer, and advisor to foundations, he continually informed and transformed 20th century contemporary art.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

This catalog became a tool to mirror and perhaps ‘transmediate’ the laser installation ‘made of a huge green laser that [...], corpse[ed] FACT with Tate Liverpool. Travelling 800 metres as the crow flies, the beam of light [..., made] a symbolic connection between the two media of McCluhan’s “global village” and the multiplicities of media that Paik invited us to use to create what I would like to define as the contemporary “bastard art”.

Lanfranco Aceti
Editor in Chief, Leonardo Electronic Almanac
Director, Kasa Gallery

The catalog is in itself a work that reflects the laser connections, the speed of contacts, their potential of connecting a variety of media as easily as connecting people from all parts of the world. In this phantasmagoria of connections it almost seems possible to visualize the optic cables and WIFI that like threads join the people and the media of McCluhan’s “global village” and the multiplicities of media that Paik invited us to use to create what I would like to define as the contemporary “bastard art”.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

For me personally this book represents a moment of further transformation of LEA, not only as a journal publishing volumes as in the long tradition of the journal, but also as a producer of books and catalogs that cater for the larger community of artists that create bastard art or bastard science for that matter.

ENDNOTES


7. Art as a bastard is interpreted, in this passage, as something of uncertain origins that cannot be easily defined and neatly encapsulated in a definition or framework. “Art is often a bastard, the parents of which we do not know.” Nam June Paik as cited in Florence de Meredieu, Digital and Video Art, trans. Richard Fent (Edinburgh-Chambers, 2005), 175.

F A R A N D W I D E
The Future Is Now?  

Far and Wide: Nam June Paik is an edited collection that seeks to explore the legacy of the artist Nam June Paik in contemporary media culture. This particular project grew out of a collaboration between FACT, Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, and the Tate Liverpool, who in late 2010-2011 staged the largest retrospective the artist’s work in the UK. The first since his death, it also showcased the premiere of Paik's laser work in Europe. The project, staged across both sites, also included a rich public programme. Of these, two think tank events, The Future is Now: Media Arts, Performance and Identity after Nam June Paik and The Electronic Superhighway: Art after Nam June Paik, brought together a forum of leading artists, performers and thinkers in the cross-cultural field together to explore and dissect the significance of Paik within broader culture.

This programme was developed by a large group of collaborators. The discursive programme was produced by FACT in partnership with Caitlin Page, then Curator of Public Programmes at Tate. One of our primary research concerns was exploring how Paik's approach to creative practice fragmented existing ideological standpoints about the visual arts as a hermetically sealed, self-referential canon. Rather, it serves to extract open-ended questions about how the virtual museum being archived online.

It is worth mentioning at this stage that there were many who joined in contributing to this process, who did not partake formally in this reader or the public programme. Dara Birnbaum, Tony Conrad, Yoko Ono, Cory Arcangel, Laurie Anderson, Ken Hakuta, Marisa Olson, all served as sources of guidance, whether directly or indirectly through conversations, e-mails, and contacts.

Still, there remain many lingering questions that are not answered here, many of which were posed both by our research and organizational processes. The first and most straightforward question for Caitlin and I was: why is it so difficult to find female artists who would be willing to contribute or speak on the record about Paik's influence? It always seemed that there were many interested parties, but so very few who were eager to commit to our forum.

The second and perhaps more open-ended question is: what would Nam June Paik have made of the post-internet contemporary art scene? Would Paik have been an advocate of the free distribution of artwork through such platforms as UbuWeb and YouTube? Would he have been accepting of it, if it were ephemeral, or would he have fought for the protection of licensing? This question remains: could an artist charged with bringing so much openness to the visual arts, have been comfortable with the level of openness that has developed since his death? There is much that remains unanswered, and that, we can only speculate. Far and wide Paik’s influence may have travelled, and to consider what influence it has yet to wield.

Omar Kholeif  
Editor and Curator  
FACT, Foundation for Art and Creative Technology

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LOS ANGELES
MADRID
MELBOURNE
About two-thirds into Nam June Paik’s documentary film, *A Tribute to John Cage* (1973), we are given a setup in which Paik stages Cage’s famous silent piece, *4’33"* (1952), in several locations throughout Manhattan. The locations were determined by chance procedures derived from Cage’s application of the Chinese oracular I-Ching coin-tossing technique, and for the third movement Cage and Paik found themselves in Harlem on a busy street corner. With buses breezing by, horns honking, and passers-by glancing in curiosity, one would think the chance encounter to be the ideal setting of Cage’s most famous statement on environment, acoustics and listening. However, shortly after the introduction of the movement Cage became noticeably flustered, clutching his stopwatch and glancing nervously at a crowd of African-American teenagers casually observing the video camera. Paik seized the moment, grabbing the microphone and asking one of the group:

**PAIK:** “Do you like this street sound? Do you love this street sound? What do you like, this music more or this street sound more?”

**PASSERBY:** “The music you know, I dig the music more because, you understand, the music is what’s happening. And uh all this here, uh… all this here… all the buses and airplanes and stuff, you know… and fire engines – they don’t have to make all that noise at night, you try to sleep – they don’t have to make all that noise… you know?”

Paik then handed the microphone back to Cage, who grinned precipitously as the final seconds of the clocked ticked off, turning to the camera with an impending stare the moment the movement passed. (Fig. 1)
The video project was a part of the expanding ‘Guerilla Television’ network of alternative new media spaces that emerged from the influx of public support for independent cable television programming in the early 1970s.

The segment marks one of many uncomfortable encounters between Cage and Paik, and in many ways summarized the tenuous relationship between the two artists. A Tribute to John Cage was commissioned in 1971 by WGBH Channel 2 in Boston to commemorate Cage’s 60th birthday, but, as the street scene in Harlem revealed, Paik’s homage was far from altruistic. Cage is seen less as a commanding figure of the American neo-avant-garde than as the solitary sage witnessing the transformation of his aesthetic by a new generation of artists and composers. Paik had witnessed Cage’s rise from ‘gadfly to guru’ in the New York Downtown music scene during the 1960s, and his documentary perspective highlights the divide between the New York School and the first wave of ‘post-Cage’ artists from ‘gadfly to guru’ in the New York Downtown music scene during the 1960s, and his documentary perspective highlights the divide between Cage and Paik, and in many ways summarized the tenuous relationship between the two artists.

A Tribute to John Cage functions simultaneously as a documentary homage and as a statement on Paik’s conception of television as ‘flow.’ Williams first described the term as a shift from the concept of sequential organization in television programming to that of sequence as flow. While television networks adhered to specifically timed and programmed events, they gradually adopted a commercially viable model of continuity, where an endless stream of programming supplied viewers with various forms of entertainment until the late hour. Fundamental to this shift, according to Williams, was the dissolution of the interval; the isolation of discreet events in succession. Commercial programming – and commercials in particular – necessitated a seamless transition between content and advertising. Commercial breaks, trailers for future programmes and overlap at time intervals between various forms of content (news, sports, drama etc.) brought about a continuous stream of stimuli with no discernible end until the late hour send-off (sometimes heralded in America with patriotic themes of military prowess such as the familiar ‘Blue Angels’ closing monologue quoted to America the Beautiful).

As a general experience, ‘flow’ or ‘tuning in’ became the cultural norm for television programming, a semi-aesthetic experience of passive participation. Consumers became accustomed to the inevitability of daily content delivery and the ease of mental engagement with the domesticated temporal sound-image experience. Paik’s work with television was in dialogue with the various social and cultural effects of television flow. Paik considered the televisuality phenomenon a plastic medium available for manipulation, noting that, ‘the nature of environment is much more on TV than on film or painting. In fact, TV (its random movement of tiny electrons) is the environment of today.’ At the same time, he was clearly aware of the effect of flow and content interval in single-channel video works such as A Tribute to John Cage. Thus, the genre of television documentary is imbued with additional layers that critique the interiority of aesthetic experience and the illusion of representations of reality that documentary footage espouses. Television, and the aura of documentary, was fueled by the liveness of the medium and its ability to parallel his most famous work of single-channel video art, Global Groove, from the same year. In both works, Paik subverted the traditional codes of commercial documentary television with sharp cuts between interview segments and live in-studio performances loosely connected through the narrative voice-over of the host. Commercial breaks of Japanese and Korean advertisements are crudely intercut between segments, creating a spiraling maze of content that comes crashing to a halt in the final scenes. In addition, by foregrounding the video apparatus in the documentary, Paik intervened within the technology itself, tearing apart the veiled suture of documentary realism and, in the process, destroying the mediation boundary of video itself.

As Raymond Williams notes in his pioneering analysis of television programming in the 1960s and 1970s, commercial television had adopted a set of carefully calculated conventions that privatized the aesthetic experience within the domestic setting. Drama, sports, news and variety shows fell into familiar programming patterns that structured a routine of daily existence centered on the illusion of community that television projected onto the individual psyche. Documentary television in particular developed during the period as the primary outlet for a collective construction of the past. With the recent explosion of “Docuwood” in America, this particular genre has had one of the most penetrating longitudinal social effects on the construction of individual and historical identity. A Tribute to John Cage functions simultaneously as a documentary homage and as a statement on Paik’s conception of television as ‘flow.’ Williams first described the term as a shift from the concept of sequential organization in television programming to that of sequence as flow. While television networks adhered to specifically timed and programmed events, they gradually adopted a commercially viable model of continuity, where an endless stream of programming supplied viewers with various forms of entertainment until the late hour. Fundamental to this shift, according to Williams, was the dissolution of the interval; the isolation of discreet events in succession. Commercial programming – and commercials in particular – necessitated a seamless transition between content and advertising. Commercial breaks, trailers for future programmes and overlap at time intervals between various forms of content (news, sports, drama etc.) brought about a continuous stream of stimuli with no discernible end until the late hour send-off (sometimes heralded in America with patriotic themes of military prowess such as the familiar ‘Blue Angels’ closing monologue quoted to America the Beautiful).
provide a feeling of the ‘present tense,’ and Paik’s nimble sense of immediacy to Cage’s etymological conception of ‘nature in her manner of operation’ in his writings. Paik’s tribute continuously engages the dichotomy between realism and suture, rupturing the language of documentary and opening up realms of identity critique inherent in Paik’s larger oeuvre.

A Korean expatriate, a classically trained composer, and a member of the ‘silent generation’ (those born between the ‘greatest generation’ of World War II veterans and the postwar ‘boomer’ generation), Paik’s perspective was one of a perpetual outsider. Paik completed his undergraduate studies at Tokyo University with a thesis on Arnold Schoenberg, and then ventured to Germany to join the politically motivated Darmstadt summer courses. Witnessing Cage’s influential polemics lectures at Darmstadt, Paik began to catapult an ideological torpedo into the highly politicized debate between serialism and indeterminacy that emerged from the summer courses. In 1959 he performed Hommage to John Cage: Musik für Töpferei und Klopper (Hommage à John Cage: Music for Audiotope and Piano) in Cologne, his first of many responses to Cage’s transcendentalist artistic programme. Paik hurled eggs, rosaries and other objects at the audience, cueing tape recordings of spliced piano noises, screaming, classical music and sound effects. Pounding the final sounds out of a dilapidated piano and tossing it over, Paik then marched into the audience toward Cage with a pair of scissors and cut his tie in half. Cage’s response to the first homage, a mixture of restrained humor and mutual awkwardness, would characterize the dialogue between the two artists for the majority of their careers. In a political environment dominated by western reconstruction efforts of soft economics and acculturation, Paik’s critique of Cage’s Zen Buddhist philosophy was from the outset laden with its own sense of “cultural terrorism” as Fluxus artist Allan Kaprow famously put it, with a series of nonviolent but dramatic and shocking gestures laden with a sense of irony, humour and disturbing emotional depth.

However, Paik’s notorious collaborations with cellist Charlotte Moor in the 1960s marked the divide between Cage’s aesthetic and the activist body politics of conceptual and performance art. Like Paik’s collaboration and interaction with Fluxus artists Yoko Ono, and later with his wife Shigeko Kubota, female sexuality was foregrounded to a provocative and visceral extreme; a mandate dictated by Paik to “bring sex into music” in ways never before thought possible. This was perhaps the most contentious ground between Paik and Cage, pitting a difficult aesthetic dividing line between the rigid modernism of the New York School and 1960s artists and intellectuals. Cage’s reactions were generally reserved, yet his writings on Paik evoke a subtle degree of disdain for the sexual obtrusiveness of Paik’s performance art.

Paik’s various video homages and experiments in the late 1960s exemplified and problematized these tenions. Among the first to purchase the Sony portable ½ inch video recorder in 1965, due largely in part to several letters of support from Cage, Paik championed the alternative video medium; and through a series of grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, was able to secure institutional support within public television studios. Among the first to purchase the Sony portable ½ inch video recorder in 1965, due largely in part to several letters of support from Cage, Paik championed the alternative video medium; and through a series of grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, was able to secure institutional support within public television studios. Together with several artists and technicians, most notably Shuya Abe, Ad Yullat and Russell Conner at WGBH in Boston and WNET in New York, Paik developed close relationships with institutional foundations, mainly through the assistance of Howard Klein, who, as director of the Rockefeller Foundation’s arts programme, lent particular support for Paik’s work in lieu of the politically motivated video collectives; creating a divide not unlike Paik’s earlier break with Fluxus founder George Maciunas. With support for his projects, Paik worked with many artists and technicians, most notably Shuya Abe, Ad Yullat and Russell Conner at WGBH, and David Loston at WNET. Shuya Abe’s video synthesizer provided the means for intricate video editing and synthesis; and the first incarnation of Paik’s large-scale single-channel video art, Global Groove, in collaboration with Conner, instigated a series of works at the two studios. Global Groove contains many of the core single-channel video strategies Paik employed during the period. Over the course of thirty minutes, Paik hurries through approximately 22 sequences of dancing, interviews and musical performances intercut with Japanese commercials. Video distortions occur in certain segments, combining electronic cross fading, solarization, blue-box overlapping (also known as Chromakey or blue-wall), negative picture effects, electronic feedback and picture distortions. Paik clearly evoked the notion of televised flux through the use of rapid pacing and sharp intercuts. Segments last no longer than two to three minutes, and alternate between live on-screen dance numbers and documentary footage of Japanese...
Korean and Native American folk music. In this sense, the televisual flow represents not only Williams’s notion of a single network’s eff-
tort to capture a viewer through the seamless integration of content, it
gives the effect of a more complex television experience of multi-
channel ‘surfing’ through the variety of content available at any time
on any given network.

Paik explicitly highlights this point in the opening sequence when
narrator Russell Conner explains: “This is a glimpse of a video land-
scapes of tomorrow, when you will be able to switch to any TV sta-
tion on earth and TV Guide will be as flat as the Manhattan telephone
book.” Images of TV Guide are overlaid one atop the other, cuing the
endless stream of ‘content’ for the thirty-minute segment. Rock ‘n’
roll music provides the overall tempo and pacing of the work, begin-
ning with an extended segment of go-go dancers accompanied by
Mitch Ryder and The Detroit Wheels. (1958), Beethoven, and more rock ‘n’
roll bursts continue in the

The breakneck pace continues with intercuts of a Japanese
Pepsi-Cola commercial of children singing an advertising slogan at
the beach. In one sequence, a Naiujo woman performs amidst one-
second bursts of the earlier Mitch Ryder section, only to cut away
to a nude vaudeville dancer accompanied by the Andrews Sisters.

The Beatles reference highlights the connection between both Cage
and Paik with John Lennon, the second husband of Fluxus artist
Yoko Ono, who during the same period lived adjacent to the Merce
Dance Studio near Abingdon Square in the West Vil-

gage, as well as the series of video manipulations done by Paik
and Jud Yalkut at the Video Commune in 1967. Entitled Belettes Elec-
troniques, these works distorted video from live performances by the
band, commenting on the purity mediated cultural space that
popular music seemed to imbue. The next scene cuts to an inter-
view by Conner with Brandies professor and composer Alvin Lucier,
who functions throughout the documentary as both expert witness
and cultural historian. Interjected within the interview are shots of
Cage performing David Rosenboom’s 1971 experimental composi-

that “a close, sometimes violent relationship developed,” whenupon
they discovered a “deeper mutual concern that modern society may
turn mankind into a parade of mindless robots.” Paik’s robot, K-456—
which originally played John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address on a
monitor and could defecate beans on command—was emblematic
of Paik’s technological experiments from the 1950s. Its wanderings
 evoke a parallel between Paik’s remote-controlled robot and the cul-
tural image of Cage, described by Carolyn Jones as a “Frankenstein
of modernism,” both in his outward appearance and in the oddity
of his difficult aesthetic in the larger cultural eye. Paik’s attempt
to equate their communal sense of ‘outsiderness’ is further punctu-
ated by the accompanying music from Cage’s Aria with Fontana Mix
(1958), sung by Catty Berberian, which included a number of gut-
tural cries and non-syntactical turns of virtuoso signing. The atmo-
sphere of confusion and disarray is then transferred to excerpts from
a nearby video commune, where “two passers-by dropped in and did
their thing.” Accompanied by two Beatles tunes, – first the memora-
ble cover of the Burt Bacharach song Baby It’s You (1963), followed by Call Your Name (1963) – this montage of playful experimenta-
tion with video distortions of the face functions as an introductory
credit interlude. (Fig. 2)

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A Tribute to John Cage, Nam June Paik, 1973. John Cage performing a ‘33’, (left, middle) and on the right cut to Japanese Television Commercial ©
Estate of Nam June Paik, Used with permission.

A Tribute to John Cage, Nam June Paik, 1973. John Cage performing a ‘33’, (left, middle) and on the right cut to Japanese Television Commercial ©
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A Tribute to John Cage, Nam June Paik, 1973. John Cage performing a ‘33’, (left, middle) and on the right cut to Japanese Television Commercial ©
Estate of Nam June Paik, Used with permission.

Figure 5. Cage’s section, later reused in
by another dance segment. Two interview sections soften the pace,
chiming of tablas for approximately one minute, only to be cut short
A live performance of Cage's silent piece in Harvard Square, Boston, shifts from interview-authority perspective to live spectacle.

However, Paik’s choice of Lucier as the interview subject is imbued with an additional air of irony. Throughout the interview, Lucier’s stuttering speech disorder, made famous by his composition I Am Sitting In A Room (1965), interferes with the most important phrases delineating the two events, such as the words ‘Maverick,’ and ‘Woodstock,’ obscuring the geographic specificity of these two historical milestones and thus blurring Lucier’s proposed hierarchy. Immediately following Lucier’s interview is the first ‘commercial break,’ the fast-paced montage advertisement for the 1970 Michael Wadleigh documentary of the Woodstock festival, thus juxtaposing the esoteric with an additional air of irony. Throughout the interview, Lucier’s stuttering speech disorder, made famous by his composition I Am Sitting In A Room (1965), interferes with the most important phrases delineating the two events, such as the words ‘Maverick,’ and ‘Woodstock,’ obscuring the geographic specificity of these two historical milestones and thus blurring Lucier’s proposed hierarchy. Immediately following Lucier’s interview is the first ‘commercial break,’ the fast-paced montage advertisement for the 1970 Michael Wadleigh documentary of the Woodstock festival, thus juxtaposing the esoteric with the commercial appropriation of avant-garde academicism and of the commercial appropriation of 60s-era political revolution. The next segment, a live performance of conceptual pieces, such as “Open the window and count the stars,” or “If rainy, count the raindrops on the puddle,” is both spectacle and homage. Passersby pause with looks of confusion, while devotees encircle the piano in celebration. A series of inter-titles form a second level of commentary. In the first slides, Paik inserts Fluxus event scores, short and humorous instructions for the performance of conceptual pieces, such as “Open the window and count the stars,” or “If rainy, count the raindrops on the puddle,” and others, culminating in Paik’s characteristically understated gesture: “This is. Zen for TV enjoy boredom,” followed by two of his more familiar aphoristic Fluxus instructions, “See your eyes with your right eye,” and “See your left eye with your right eye.” (Fig. 5) By inserting Fluxus event scores, short and humorous instructions for the performance of conceptual pieces, such as “Open the window and count the stars,” or “If rainy, count the raindrops on the puddle,” and others, culminating in Paik’s characteristically understated gesture: “This is. Zen for TV enjoy boredom,” followed by two of his more familiar aphoristic Fluxus instructions, “See your eyes with your right eye,” and “See your left eye with your right eye.” (Fig. 5) By dislocating grammatical emphasis and instigating a humorous sense of wit: “This is. Zen for TV enjoy boredom,” followed by two of his more familiar aphoristic Fluxus instructions, “See your eyes with your right eye,” and “See your left eye with your right eye.” (Fig. 5) By dislocating grammatical emphasis and instigating a humorous sense of wit: “This is. Zen for TV enjoy boredom,” followed by two of his more familiar aphoristic Fluxus instructions, “See your eyes with your right eye,” and “See your left eye with your right eye.” (Fig. 5) By dislocating grammatical emphasis and instigating a humorous sense of wit: “This is. Zen for TV enjoy boredom,” followed by two of his more familiar aphoristic Fluxus instructions, “See your eyes with your right eye,” and “See your left eye with your right eye.” (Fig. 5)
The scene is again interrupted with another fragment from Japanese television, this time of a young boy singing a modern Cambodian-pop inspired ode to his playtoy, another reference to Paik as an outside and innocent observer. Following the break is the longest continuous section of the work, a rehearsal performance by Charlotte Moorman of Paik’s arrangements of piece while wearing a version of her TV-Bra, a pair of chromium-plated discs taped to her breasts that project a mirror image of the camera, instilling a sexually imbued circularity to the mechanical probing of the cathode-ray tube. A female French voice interrupts the chaos to instruct us to “flip this TV set to a blank channel and count the dots,” followed by a quick cut to a 1971 performance of Violence Sonatas by fellow film and video artist Stan VanDerBeek, in which he systematically destroys an upright piano and drum set. Playful off-screen chatter and laughing is mixed in amidst the destruction, and the scene suddenly cuts to an extended montage of the face of Jud Yalkut, distorted by synthesis effects from the Paik-Abe video synthesizer. Set to an electronic score of baroque music similar to the popular recordings by transgender artist Wendy Carlos, the scene wanders until Yalkut finally declares, “I don’t know, I am getting awfully bored,” to which Paik responds, “Ah, thank God it’s the last run through.” Dissolving the last semblance of documentary realism, Yalkut asks Paik, “Well, what do we do now?” to which he responds, “well, let’s start it from the beginning.” (Fig. 9)

With this final dissolving of suture, Paik begins a descending arc of scenes that recapitulate the opening half, first with another intercut view segment with Lucier, to which he openly addresses his stutter as a form of experimental poetry, intercut again with an extended dance interlude of Japanese women in a Broadway-style review and several additional excerpts from Indeterminacy, followed by shots of Merce Cunningham and David Tudor performing Cage’s multiscreen video synthesizer collaboration, Variations V (1965). Completing the palindromic arc of the work, Paik returns to the Cathy Berberian performance of Aria with Fontana Mix (1958), the time set to a four-screen rapid montage of short-spliced Fluxus performances, a reference to two experimental film traditions, the extended multi-screen film works of Andy Warhol such as Chelsea Girls (1966), and the short-cut documentary camera technique of underground film impresario Jonas Mekas. (Fig. 10) Following a burst of applause, the final scene consists of the second performance by Cage of 4’33” on the streets of Manhattan. As he explains to the camera, the locations of the performance were determined through chance operations according to a grid of the city, in which each street intersection is assigned a numeric value. Much like the first performance in the documentary, Paik presents a number of questions regarding recep-

from his infamous series of lectures entitled Indeterminacy. First published as a collection of colorful vignettes interspersed within the individual essays in Cage's 1961 publication of collected essays, Silence, the series, which consisted of anecdotes narrating his com-
article

far and wide

movement, eventually moved toward Hollywood production with such works as A Fish Called Wanda (1988) and Pulp Fiction (1994), while smaller collectives such as VideoFreex moved to private rural communes and formulated an increasingly isolationist stance in the public dialogue over video art. With the rise and subsequent decline of video art in America, Paik's initial critique of Cage functioned as a fitting metaphor for the cultural constraints of such a tradition. Bordering on the commercial and the performative, the stability of any such venture was predicated by institutional support, which, by its very nature, forced the marginalization of aesthetic concerns in the wake of spectacle, an element which Paik opportunistically celebrated in his own artistic programme.

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biography

ENDNOTES

1. Williams’ categories, which form the basis of contemporary television theory, are outlined in detail in his seminal text: Raymond Williams, Televis- tion: Technology and Cultural Form (New York: Routledge, 1974), 34-56.
5. Following the trail of video art scholars, I use here the term single channel to identify works of video art consisting of a single monitor image, as op- posed to multi-channel installations of a single or independent video feeds on individual monitors.
8. For more on Paik’s collaborative projects with female artists, see: Joanna Rothkopf, The Ballad of Name June and Charlotte: A Revisionist History, (PhD Disserta- tion, University of York, 2011).
9. For details on Cage’s support of Paik’s early career, see: Dieter Daniels, “John Cage and Nam June Paik ‘Change your mind or change your receiver (your receiver is your mind),’” in Nam June Paik, ed. Sook-Kyung Lee and Susanne Remert, 107-126 (Taylor Liverpool, 2011).
11. Paik’s nephew and executor of the Paik estate Ken Hakuta recalled that he suggested these musical choices, and that Paik had never heard many of the songs before. Laura Davis, “Ken Hakuta on his eccentric uncle; the video art pioneer Nam June Paik,” ahead of an exhibition of Paik at Tate Liverpool. Liverpool Daily Post, 10 Nov. 2010.
12. For more on the relationship to Cage’s experience in the anarchic chapter and his “silent piece,” “f. 35,” see: Kyle Gann, On Such Things as Silence: John Cage’s 4’33” and his “silent piece,” “(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).
14. Raymond Williams, Television: Technology and Culture, 44.
16. For more on the relationship between Cage and Paik, see Deirdre Boyle, Subject to Change: Guernica Television Revisited, 1960-1980.