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CATALOG

FAIR
AND
WIDE

BY LANFRANCO ACETI AND OMAR KHOLEIF

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is a co-publication of

NYUSteinhardt
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LEONARDO ELECTRONIC ALMANAC CATALOG, VOLUME 19 ISSUE 5

Far and Wide

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The Leonardo Electronic Almanac acknowledges the kind support for this issue of

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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 powerful tool that technology can be, so powerful that is able to obscure and sideline the message itself in the name of the medium.

"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.'"¹

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.

Paik remains perhaps one of the most revolutionary artists, for his practice was mediated, geared towards the masses and not necessarily or preeminently dominated by a desire of sitting within 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 choices in his career, both in terms of artistic medium and in terms of content, can be defined as visionary as well as risky to the point of bravery or idiocy, depending on the mindset of the critic.

That some of the artworks may be challenging for the viewer as well as the art critic is perhaps obvious – as obvious was Paik's willing-

ness to challenge the various media he used, the audience that followed him and the established aesthetic of his own artistic practice. 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.*²

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.

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 image through the use of laser energy projected onto scrim, cascading water, and smoke-filled sculptures. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Paik's work shows us that the cinema and video are fusing with electronic and digital media into new image technologies and forms of expression. The end of video

*and television as we know them signals a transformation of our visual culture.*³

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*⁴ 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 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.*⁵

This catalog became a tool to mirror and perhaps 'transmediate' the laser installation "made of a huge green laser that [...] conjoin[ed] FACT with Tate Liverpool. Travelling 800 metres as the crow flies, the beam of light [...] made] a symbolic connection between the two galleries during their joint exhibition of video artist, pioneer and composer Nam June Paik. Artist Peter Appleton, who was behind the laser which joined the Anglican and Metropolitan cathedrals in Liverpool during 2008 Capital of Culture, [was] commissioned by FACT to create the artwork, *Laser Link*, which references Nam June Paik's innovative laser works."⁶

The catalog is in itself a work that reflects the laser connections, the speed of contacts, the possibilities 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 McLuhan'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."⁷

Lanfranco Aceti

Editor in Chief, *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*
Director, Kasa Gallery



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 AND REFERENCES

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3. Nam June Paik/Nam June Paik Studios' official Web site, "John Hanhardt's essay," <http://www.paikstudios.com/essay.html> (accessed January 10, 2013).
4. *Laser Cone*, 2001/2010, Nam June Paik in collaboration with Norman Ballard, installation view at FACT. Photographer: Stephen King.
5. FACT, "Laser Cone," FACT, <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/nam-june-paik/laser-cone/> (accessed January 10, 2013).
6. FACT, "Laser Link," FACT, <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/nam-june-paik/laser-link/> (accessed January 20, 2013).
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 Elliott (Edinburgh: Chambers, 2005), 180.

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. Drawing from Bruno Latour, Norman M. Klein and Jay David Bolter, among many others – our think tank and, as such, this reader, sought to study how the visual field has proliferated across disciplines through the possibilities that are facilitated by technology. At the same time, we were keen to examine how artists now possess a unique form of agency – one that is simultaneously singular and col-

lective, enabled by the cross-embedded nature of the current technological field. ¶

These positions are explored throughout the reader and our programme and in this special edition of the Leonardo Electronic Almanac. Here, the artist who goes by the constructed meme of the "Famous New Media Artist Jeremy Bailey," tracks Rosalind Krauss's influence and transposes her theoretical approach towards video art to the computer, examining the isolated act of telepresent augmented reality performance. Roy Ascott gives a nod to his long-standing interest in studying the relationship between cybernetics and consciousness. Eminent film and media curator, John G. Hanhardt honors us with a first-hand historical framework, which opens the collection of transcripts, before further points of departure are developed.

Researchers Jamie Allen, Gabriella Galati, Tom Schofield, and Emile Deveraux used these frameworks retrospectively to extrapolate parallels, dissonances and points of return to the artist's work. Deveraux and Allen focus on specific pieces: Deveraux discusses Paik and Shuya Abe's *Raster Manipulation Unit a.k.a. 'The Wobulator'* (1970), while Allen surveys a series of tendencies in the artist's work, developed after he was invited to visit to the Nam June Paik Center in South Korea. Galati and Schofield stretch this framework to explore broader concerns. Schofield considers the use of data in contemporary artwork, while Galati explores the problematic association with 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* does not offer a holistic biography or historical overview of the artist's work or indeed its authority. Rather, it serves to extract open-ended questions about how

far and wide Nam June 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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1. See: N. M. Klein, "Cross-embedded Media," in *Vision, Memory and Media*, eds. A. Broegger and O. Kholeif (Liverpool and Chicago: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

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The Future Is Now / Nam June Paik Conference / FACT and TATE Liverpool

INTRODUCTIONS and JOHN G. HANHARDT KEYNOTE SPEECH

This text is a transcription of a speech from:

Nam June Paik Conference

The Future Is Now: Media Arts, Performance and Identity after Nam June Paik
presented by FACT and Tate Liverpool

Friday 18 February 2011

MIKE STUBBS: My name is Mike Stubbs and I am the chief executive of FACT. I am also a sort of dormant artist who was heavily influenced by the work of Nam June Paik in the late 1970s. I placed one of my video cassettes on the LVA's shelf in 79 Wardour Street next to the *Global Groove* tape that was sitting there, so this is of personal interest to me. We have got some great speakers here with us today. Our chair is Dr. Sarah Cook from the University of Sunderland, who has also been moderating the conversation we have been having on the CRUMB Curating New Media website and news list JISC over the last six weeks or so. I will be introducing her in a moment, but first I have a few people to thank. Most importantly I have to thank Mr. Yong So Hu from the Tate's Asia Acquisitions Committee, as it was his funding that made this conference today possible. FACT holds collaboration at its heart, evidenced by our long-standing collaboration program. Likewise, the Tate has a strong interest in innovation and we both share very strong educational programs. We can't talk about Nam June Paik without thinking about him as an artist who made collaboration a practice. Nam June Paik, from my understanding, was an artist who didn't really want to be an artist, and it is these kinds of artists that I am strongly attracted to: people who don't want to live up to that image of being an artist. We also know to some extent, as Jeremy Bailey demonstrated in contempo-

aneous fashion, that the spirit of today should be a bit of fun. This isn't an academic conference; this is a symposium to celebrate the work of Nam June Paik, and I hope that during the day we will learn a lot about him.

I was fortunate in September 2009 to go to the Nam June Paik conference, held at the Nam June Paik Center just outside Seoul, and I was just re-reading some of the proceedings from that conference. Paik's is an extremely eclectic, broad, and prolific practice and we are only going to skim the surface, today anyway. We do, however, have some real experts here who are going to share some of their knowledge. I am now going to turn it over to Sarah Cook, our chair for today, and thank you all for coming.

SARAH COOK: Thank you Mike. I am really glad to be here today to host this conference. As the chair, I am the person you should talk to if you have questions that are not being answered throughout the day, so I can ferry them across to our panelists and speakers.

As Mike said, I am based at the University of Sunderland so I do have a bit of an academic role, but I am also a practicing curator; so I'm really excited that we've got presentations and performances by artists throughout the day. It was great to have such a fun start to the day with Jeremy Bailey at 5 AM in Toronto. As Mike said, this day is experimental in the spirit of Paik; it is very much about interspersing some good scholarly research and some really interesting information from our speakers and mixing that up with these performances.

Although Marisa Olson can't be here we might get a chance to show some of her work on screen this afternoon, so she will be physically present on the screen in a different way to Jeremy Bailey. I think what's significant about the way that this exhibition is structured, and so therefore how this conference has come together, is the real sharing between Tate Liverpool and FACT. The conference is really brought together with the efforts of both of those organizations. Not only that, but the way the exhibition is spread across the two venues is really significant, with some of the more historical works at Tate Liverpool and then some of the more experimental work here, including new commissions that were made specifically for the FACT space. I think that it is great to be able to bring artists in to work in the spirit of Paik and to be able to include their work in this way.

On the discussion list that Mike mentioned, we have been talking about that from the point of view of the curator. What is the distinction between producing a more museum-based historical exhibition and then working in the very living spirit of Paik? I am hoping that today's conference will address how Paik was not only influential to contemporary media artists but also in prefiguring the way that we interact with media today. I'm thinking particularly of the social side of media, prefiguring things like the blog, YouTube and video file sharing, those kinds of working methods; so let's hope that kind of thread also comes up. Please do not be afraid to ask questions that aren't so much about art, but also about what it is like to live in this world and to think about media in a more expanded way. I think that questioning was what Paik was really about in his work.



I would also like to reflect, as I look at Nam June Paik's career, on what a complex and charismatic figure he was. He sought out ideas and opinions and he always followed current events: whenever I would visit him in his study, he always had the television on and newspapers from everywhere.



So I am going to introduce John Hanhardt, who is our first speaker of the day. We are very glad he has joined us from New York. I have a nice little connection with John in that he set up the film and video collection at the Walker Art Center, and when I worked at the Center in Minneapolis a few years ago we had just, at that point, established a new media study collection. This idea of a study collection as being works that somehow aren't yet quite legitimate enough to be allowed in a permanent collection is a nice one. They are reference copies and things you go back to again and again, informing how you think about a permanent collection in a museum. I was really pleased to have that little connection because I think the film and video study collection there is really important. John has also done work for both the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Guggenheim; and right now he is the Senior Curator for Media Arts in the Paik Archives at the Smithsonian American Art museum. He also does some curating for Madison Square Park, which is a great space in New York City showcasing outdoor installations. I think that his combination of understanding historically important work, what needs to be seen in museums and galleries, and what is happening out on the street brings a fantastic range of curatorial experience to the discussion.

We are really lucky that we have John here today and I am going to ask him to come up and present now. Please keep your questions for after the talk.

JOHN HANHARDT: I just wanted to say, first of all, what a pleasure it is to be here. I was fortunate enough to be at the opening of the exhibition in December, and I also saw the Nam June Paik show during its run in Düsseldorf. It is very interesting to see all the different spaces and different representations of the work. These are all curatorial issues in terms of how to represent an artist and how to describe the range of his achievements. I would just like to express my appreciation to Sook-Kyung Lee here at Tate Liverpool and to Susanne Rennert at the Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf, the co-curators of

the exhibition. I'd also like to acknowledge the challenge they had to represent, as I said, this extraordinary artist.

I want to pick up on this issue of collaboration, both institutional and in the way that artists practice. My presentation is also going to stress the issue of process: how Nam June Paik created and worked through different materials and methods. As I said, this occasion to be here at FACT is, I think, a very important illustration of institutional differences and breakdowns. I think, too, that the representation of the videotapes here is very important, as they are core to Nam June's work. We know a great deal about his installations, sculptures, and other materials but these tapes are very important and need to be integrated into this picture, so I am delighted to see them here. To understand Nam June Paik, one really has to understand that he embraced a large and multi-faceted view of media. I want to suggest that all that he achieved and all that he accomplished in this range is an extraordinary example, a challenge and an inspiration to a new generation of artists in today's large, diverse, and complex media culture.

Let me give a brief outline of Nam June Paik's story and his early interest in music, which began at his birthplace in Korea. Paik is a truly global artist, from his birthplace, to his university studies in music theory in Japan, to his time working in New York. I think this trajectory through music is very important to his participation – which is very prominent – in the avant-garde music exhibitions and performative world of Fluxus, as well as in the happenings of the 1950s and 1960s in Germany, to his treatment of film in such works as *Zen for Film* (1964), to his incorporation of the television set and electronic moving image into his landmark exposition of music and television in 1963. He sought to literally overcome the institution of the television, and to transform the apparatus of the television set by using the technique of decollage to break the stream, or the flow, of television broadcast coming into the TV. Going inside the TV and tearing it apart was really an effort to remake the cathode ray tube as a new

means of thinking about television, and a new means of moving image making. Early on Paik saw the television not simply as a one-way channel of reception but explicitly as a means of open communication, which was central to the way he thought about his medium. His move to New York City in 1964 was an important step. There, over the next forty years, he pursued these goals, incorporating the latest developments in technology into his art practice, as well as fashioning his own means to further remake and bring new image making capacities to these technologies. That is very much the breadth of his accomplishments. We talk about technology, we talk about this media, and we talk about these materials, but he was never satisfied with what he could buy "off the shelves," so to speak. How he could anticipate and remake it himself, as well as adding onto and changing these technologies, is exemplified by the Paik-Abe video synthesizer. I would like to also reflect, as I look at Nam June Paik's career, on what a complex and, speaking about him personally, charismatic figure he was. He sought out ideas and opinions and he always followed current events: whenever I would visit him in his study, he always had the television on and newspapers from everywhere. He was always reading and writing, speculating about history, as well as science and technology. We found a large text in his archives that he had written about the history of China. He was a really inquisitive and radical transformer of thoughts and ideas. His collected writings are central in locating the process in which he worked out his thinking and his actual refashioning of the technology and making of art works.

I am working on an exhibition 'Nam June Paik: Global Visionary' at the Smithsonian American Art Museum that will connect his ideas to his creative process and to his artworks themselves. These ideas and processes will be very much at the center of that exhibition. Thinking a bit about his writing in 1970, in an essay entitled *Global Groove in the Common Market*, he speaks to a practice and sets as its goal an open and free flow of information through media. Three years later he produced *Global Groove*, which began with the statement: "Imagine a future where the TV guide will be as thick as the Manhat-

tan telephone directory." His print from the same year, which is on view in the gallery, asks: "How soon TV-chair will be available in most museums? How soon artists will have their own TV channels? How soon wall-to-wall TV for video art will be installed in most homes?" So right in the early 1970s his vision was complex, complete in terms of advancing this medium which he understood as central to the transformation of late 20th century art. I just want to make a short correction to the performance this morning, when Jeremy talked about Nam June having a Sony Portapak in the 1970s: it was actually in the mid-1960s. The advance of these technologies was beginning very early and proliferated throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Anyone here who met or worked with Nam June Paik experienced an inquisitive mind, and I will return to this inquisitive and demanding intelligence. I think it is important to note that he was really an activist. He was supporting innovation and lent support to other artists, working to create opportunities for this emerging art practice. He was also involved with the establishment of TV labs and public television stations in the United States. These were sites for experimentation and access to the television studio in the early 1970s, as well as for artist residences. He was very active in supporting the development of public access for cable television in the United States, giving anyone access to a channel on television, and of course the alternative space movement for video production and exhibition. He was deeply involved in those initiatives and helped shape the national, local, and foundation funding for the arts. As an activist he was working to support a community of artists. It was not just about Nam June Paik, it was about the whole group; about how he could enable, how he could intervene, and how he could support them. As I said, he had a really fine sense of video's future: he told me many years ago about the future of video installation. We were talking about it in the early 1970s in the Whitney, and he said: "John, we will win!" He really understood that this form, this moving image, would be at the center of art making.

Nam June Paik was also a utopian thinker. Interestingly, I found a German copy of Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope (Das Prinzip Hoffnung)* among his papers in the archives. He was acquisitively reading a variety of discourses, philosophies, as well as a lot of trade journals about new media, television, and technology. As much as he was a utopian thinker, he was a decidedly pragmatic one, realistic in his approach and working methods. He imagined big, I mean on an enormous scale, and brought in key people to realize his projects. How else could he have accomplished so much? He created a new kind of storytelling that I think is really important to look at: new ways of shaping narrative in his video essays and forms of expression with the variety of shapes that his sculptures and installations took. After a brief sampling, I'm just going to go through some of the things that are in the show. His videotapes *Alan's Complaint* and *Living with the Living Theater*, I think, are the core video essays. They really need to be looked at in terms of the way he mixed images and texts and the way he explored dialogue and performance, as well as of the treatment of history, identity, art history, and politics. They are an extraordinary resource for looking at his ideas and thinking. Of course there are also the global telecasts *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* and *Rap Around the World*, which he produced by linking, through live satellite transmission, multiple sites around the world to create events that were produced for the television viewer. Live transmission, and live performance were mixed, and all the chance of things that would happen and not happen was part of the live presence for the home viewer. His installations range from small works like *Video Flag* to the large-scale *Fin de Siècle Tour*, in which he had hundreds

of monitors on a wall mixing multiple channels of video with new computer-assisted techniques to remake the surface of the moving image. We can see some of this illustrated documentary work on the first floor of the exhibition.

There are also his public art works like *The More the Better*, constructed out of more than a thousand televisions creating an enormous sculpture in the National Museum of Korea. His multiple re-fashioning of televisions into sculptures can also be seen in the *Family of Robots*, *Buddha TV*, the *Close Circuit* works, *Candle Projection*, *TV Chair*, and the interactive piece *Random Access*. There has been a lot of talk on the blog about *Random Access* and the examples that are on view in the galleries, but there is also one in the Guggenheim collection in which he would place the strips of audio tape directly on the wall. There would be these strips of audio tape and, in order to release the sound, you would rub the head of the broken audio player directly on to the tape. Both your interaction with the technology, and the idea of breaking the technology, are fundamental to what we see with *Magnet TV*. This work is an innovative reconstruction of the apparatus, but also a deconstruction of the meaning of these instruments and the instrumentality of these media and technologies. He also brought an array of rhetorical forms, from metaphor to irony, to inform his transformation of the medium. He had the goal of humanizing technology as well as expressing both television and video's explosive growth, and the centerpiece of this idea is *TV Garden*, on view in the galleries.

Looking back over his work we can see how he reuses images, pieces of music and favorite shots and transforms them in an ongoing practice. This is central to his methodology, to his working. He had favorite pieces of music that he would remix and replay, favorite film sequences from other artists that he would bring into his mix, working with them and transforming them, creating all kinds of continuities and differences through his work. I think the way he worked with these pieces is important evidence of the way that Nam June would constantly look for ways to refashion his body of work.

Now, Nam June would look for ways to express his appreciation and loyalty to friends. This was another point I wanted to make, the importance and the value he attached to collaborators: for example, to Shuya Abe, with whom he developed the Paik-Abe video synthesizer; to fellow artists including John Cage, Joseph Beuys, Merce Cunningham, and Allen Ginsberg, and to his unique creative partnership with the celebrated avant-garde cellist Charlotte Moorman. This is central to his work, along with his professional and personal collaboration with his wife, the video artist Shigeo Kubota. All these factors I think are important, and I want to reflect on them now.

If we look at Nam June Paik's working method in relationship to today's changing and expanding media technology, we see that the practice of people linking in multiple ways to develop and create projects was also central to his working method. I think this idea of community, of communities from around the world that share ideas as well as differences and realize diverse projects, is something that we see today in social media. It was expressed early on in Nam June Paik's art and his ideas. Once again, his writings are an extraordinary resource for insights into understanding this broad range of concepts. They are an insight into his understanding of the importance of media to institutions, his ways of teaching and theories of communicating, his coining the term "electronic superhighway" in a paper for the Rockefeller Foundation in 1974, his exploration of cybernetics as a body of theory, working with and developing com-

puter technology in Bell Labs in the 1960s. He foresaw all of these technologies ultimately as a means to make and to receive language, music, and the moving image.

I have especially enjoyed, and I want to thank Sarah for this, the new media curatorial blog around this exhibition and the observation that this is really the first retrospective since Nam June died. What is different here without the artist? This is a question that I have been asked and it is a question that is interesting to think about, because I have had the privilege to work with him on a number of exhibitions and commissions. So part of what I want to address now is his absence, but also his relationship to museums and to alternative spaces. This was another recurring discussion on the blog about Tate Liverpool and FACT, two different physical and institutional spaces. Now to help me discuss this further, I want to show and address some of Nam June's work. Two pieces: one from early in his career and one from towards the end.

I will begin with a piece from 1970: it is an extraordinary videotape called *Video Commune – Beatles Beginning to End*. I do not think it is included in the exhibition, which is unfortunate as it very much captures Nam June Paik's working methods. It was created in Boston at the WGBH public television station, before being telecast for four hours as a transmission at a local affiliate of WGBH. What I'm going to show you is from an eight-minute piece that was made by Jud Yalkut, a collaborator and filmmaker who worked with Nam June Paik on a few minutes for this piece. What we are going to see is a TV studio that becomes, in Nam June's hands, a laboratory, a performance space, and a screening room. It is a site where the Paik-Abe video synthesizers and audio synthesizers are used as tools to remix and remake all that was going on in television, into a creative process, into a live event that implicitly captured the viewer as well as participants coming into the studio. What I will show is silent, it is not a documentary but an interpretative representation by Jud. Of course music would have been central to this performance: as its

title says, it would have played the Beatles' music throughout, because Nam June Paik really loved popular music. He was always playing with different bands and different groups, bringing different performers into his pieces. He really considered rock 'n' roll and popular culture as immensely important and bearing a real opportunity.

We see in *Video Commune* how Nam June Paik took an opportunity, how he inspired the station's producer Fred Barzyk and his colleagues at the public television station to move beyond their previous limits of what they had done. He said: "We are changing this space."

Here we see in 1970, how Nam June Paik really wanted to transform the studio into an open circuit, celebrating process and openness to innovation. Here we see some of the elements of the video processing that he was creating: a particular kind of fluid mix that was available through the video processor. Here we capture some of the things that were happening in the studio: Nam June Paik working with different producers, his collaborators – again, process, I can't stress this enough. I think it is very important today, in our efforts to remake technologies and communication, that we look at the centers of communication as spaces to break down and remake. We see here different people performing in the studio, always being remixed with the abstractions coming through the video processor, so clearly it is not linear. [John is showing the video on the screen.] Here are some of the familiar techniques that we know from the earlier experiments. Here is a wonderful sequence where there is a performance, which is recorded and then transformed into a video piece. This tape gives us an insight into his working method in 1970s. Again, we see this kind of collaborative, performative, and filmic use of the shadow followed by recording, processing, and developing.

Jud does a really fine job, and that is why Nam June Paik loved working with him as a filmmaker. He knew how to film in the studio, how to film off the screen, and he understood the process of work-



Nam June Paik had total understanding of the nature of the fluid movement within the electronic image. There was also the interactive component that we see with Magnet TV, which was a part of the transmission.



ing with electronic images through performance and through the electronic processor. Here, we see a nice array of the screens in the studio, the multiple channels they were mixing, and the people who would come in. Again, this is a really fine example of late 1960s image processing – that we also see in experiments with David Atwood on one of the tapes in the show – which is a very different process to working with film. Nam June Paik had total understanding of the nature of the fluid movement within the electronic image. Of course, there was also the interactive component that we see with *Magnet TV*, which was a part of the transmission and a beautiful example of what he could create in the cathode ray tube as he further distorted and remixed what the image processor was creating.

My next example, with which I want to conclude, is a work from another space. This is 30 years later at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, in the rotunda's center piece that the architect Frank Lloyd Wright created for the museum. In 2000 Nam June had a retrospective entitled *The Worlds of Nam June Paik*, a title which I'd hoped would capture his scope, scale, and multiple discourses.

Nam June Paik had suffered a stroke in 1996, and he was physically less mobile, but he poured his ideas into this container to create a piece that he entitled *Modulation in Sync*, a commission that transformed the rotunda into what he called a "post-video space." He talked about this as he was making his sketches and determining his plans. This is a seven-story waterfall that lands in what had been a covered pool in the museum. There, a laser is being projected: you can only see the laser when it goes through a material or strikes a surface, so you see that energy, that power as it goes up. Here is a bed of multiple channels of his videotapes. You can also see how different installations were placed in the bays around the space. As I say, he called this a post-video space but it was also a return to laser, which he had written about in the early 1970s as a means of transmission, such was the power and the capacity that he saw for laser. He also collaborated with other artists, working again with Horst Baumann, a German laser artist who he worked with in the 1970s and 1980s. It was with Baumann that he created the laser installation that was part of his Whitney retrospective in 1982. In that case, just as an aside here, Horst Baumann had a system where he could

project, by laser, Nam June Paik's video moving images. But Nam June Paik said, "I want to take this further," and he had that laser go through a crystal; thus dispersing the energy of the laser and the moving images throughout the space. One of the powers of laser is that wherever it is struck there is no distortion, so essentially he was able to get rid of the television by creating this entire surface of video moving images.

In this work, made in collaboration with Norman Ballard, he was fashioning a new presence for this invisible laser beam. As we see with the waterfall, he also projected from the floor up, moving patterns of lasers that he very much saw as evoking, or echoing, his earlier experiments with image processing. Here is the display of projections on the sides of this rotunda. Again, here is a piece from his television works. Then, this is the view looking down from above, down at the monitors. With these images you can see how the whole space looked. The idea was that the array of monitors, the projections, the sounds and music filling the space, the water rushing down, would work to create an ambient environment; an entire space that connected the spectator to his sculptures and installations in the bays as they walked up and down through the exhibition. But he is also imagining something beyond: he was looking at his own life and at the range of the working methods of all the ways he had worked. There was a kind of spatial dialectics: a fusion or modulation of the various elements that were synthesized into a new media environment, a post-video space. As Nam June Paik looked back, he mapped the future and speculated about new media possibilities that embraced and transcended the museum space. The WGBH studio and the Guggenheim Museum were two points in time in the story of an extraordinary career. Both spaces were transformed through process and a dynamic re-imagining of what is possible. I know that Nam June would have viewed Tate Liverpool as a space of opportunity to represent his work in new ways and he would have seen FACT as a space to create new projects. He would have worked hard to bring sources of support to the entire initiative. He would have explored

ways to connect both sites. I remember how he created new work in all of his retrospectives. In each of the exhibitions there was new work, and he saw them as an opportunity to bring that new work into the body of his career. Charlotte Moorman performed regularly in the gallery at the Whitney Museum in 1982. Every week she would use my office as a dressing room before going downstairs and performing the *TV Cello*. So, it was not just the cello on display, the work was activated by her in performances for the public.

Another time, Nam June Paik took his robot K456 out of the Whitney, had it walk up the sidewalk on Madison Avenue and then across the avenue where it was hit by a car in a staged event. He told the reporter – of course it was a great media event that he created – that the work was a comment on the catastrophe of technology in the 20th century and how we are practicing how to cope with it. He would see the retrospectives and the exhibitions as an active site to bring in new work and ways to re-perform and re-think his pieces. You can imagine the horror of the registrar at the Whitney when I said, "Well he just wants to take the robot out, take it up the street and get it clobbered by a car." But the collector was delighted and gave permission, saying it would be a new wrinkle in the work.

As we look over the last millennium and its inventions, I think we have to connect all these moving-image media technologies, from the invention of the cinema at the end of the 19th century, to the development of television and video in the mid-20th, to the Internet and to interactive platforms from video games to new digital media. We

see the moving image as having a fundamental impact on all of the arts – literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, you name it, have all been fundamentally changed through these media. This is in addition to the moving image becoming an art form in itself. Artists gave us new ways to see ourselves and the world around us, and that, I think, is fundamental to this great history. I am convinced that the history of 20th-century art will be rewritten through the moving image and, as we become a media culture, the online access to the virtual archives of the moving images in history will only expand and deepen our understanding of diverse media practices.

Now in conclusion: Nam June Paik imagined a future of flat screens, video projection, moldable cameras and sound systems, instant access, multiple options, and flexible digital media. He was an active part of a community of artists in a large international movement. We can be inspired by Nam June Paik's example and also by recognizing that he is part of a history that is large, complex and diverse: what I like to call a thick history of many artists, movements and initiatives. I really want to stress this because there is a tendency to reduce this history by focusing solely on Nam June Paik. I'm not talking about an artist in isolation; I want to stress that idea of collaboration and process and how he enabled support for other artists. Artists across the 1960s and 1970s were engaging in an array of social and political issues – civil rights, feminism, gay and lesbian rights, protesting the U.S. involvement in Vietnam – and they were not in isolation. If you go back to the original distribution list of videotapes, what you will see is image-processing tapes mixed with protest tapes, documen-

tary tapes and narrative work. They weren't isolated conceptually. It was all part of a variety of works that one had access to and were being promoted by alternative spaces and collectives through various ways of working with video, imagining a new television and a new art practice. Today I think is again a time of enormous change both here and around the world: where the social networks and mobile forms of distribution and reception can, as an earlier generation sought to do through a changing media practice, be activated and fashioned to transform and remake the structures and the hierarchies of both the market place and the art world. It is a huge challenge, but it is an important one. I think that part of the issue, which I hope we will be discussing today, is that the example of Paik isn't about remaking that history. Rather, it is about being inspired by it to create new modalities, new initiatives, new practices that respond to the issues of today, with new forms and strategies of support for artists, and, most importantly, for their representation in new kinds of museums, perhaps the post-museum environment. Thank you very much! ■



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