

NAM JUNE PAIK

Entrance

Exit

Exposition of Music

Introduction

One Candle

Studio

TV Garden

Live Feed

Sistine Chapel

Please note that this installation contains flashing images.

John Cage and Merce Cunningham

Please note that this installation contains flashing images and graphic content.

Hommage à John Cage

Charlotte Moorman

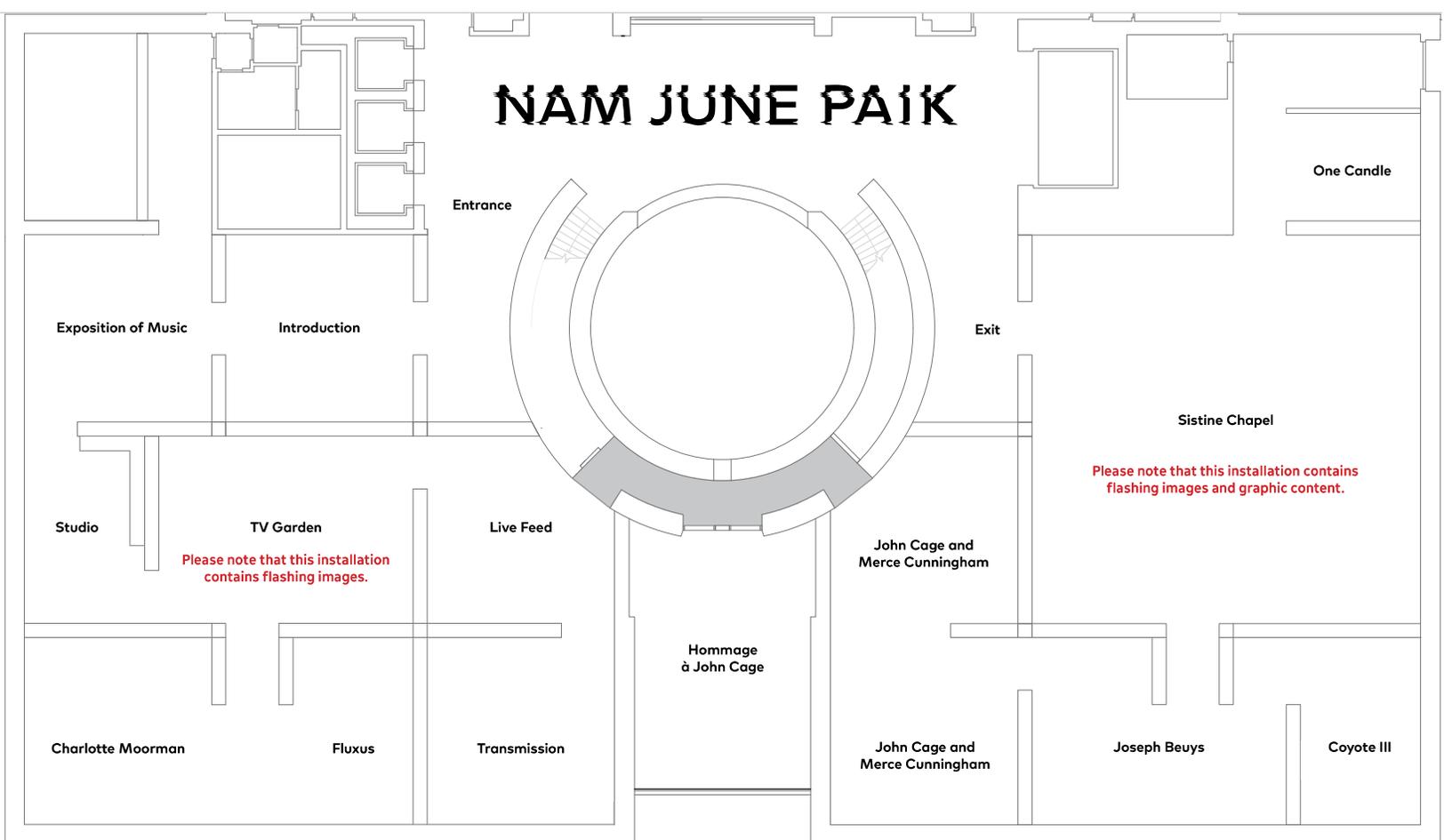
Fluxus

Transmission

John Cage and Merce Cunningham

Joseph Beuys

Coyote III



NAM JUNE PAIK

Nam June Paik (1932–2006), who was born in what is now South Korea, spent most of his life in Japan, Germany, and the United States. Drawing from both Eastern and Western philosophies and traditions, his art transcends national borders while celebrating cultural differences. This retrospective retraces Paik’s five-decade career as the first global and transnational artist to foresee the potential impacts of mass media and new technology on the visual arts.

In both his art and his life, Paik was playfully rebellious. Trained as a classical composer, he sought to expand the parameters of music and art, creating unconventional performances and actions that he termed “a-music” or “not not music.” An avid consumer of television, literature, philosophy, and news, he channeled and translated these sources in subversive and humorous ways. His radical artistic interventions and idiosyncratic aphorisms blend languages and defy genres. Paik wanted to occupy uncharted artistic territory—to create

works that were, in his words, “95% new.” A key participant in the avant-garde Fluxus movement of the 1960s, he envisioned and realized a multidisciplinary future through his musical objects and scores, a family of TV robots, groundbreaking video art, immersive installations, live broadcasts, and participatory works. A frequent collaborator, he worked internationally with artists across disciplines, including Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and Charlotte Moorman; their formative relationships are represented here through dedicated galleries.

Exhibiting more than two hundred works from across Paik’s career and drawing extensively from SFMOMA’s collection, this presentation comprises two chronological cycles of thematic galleries. It culminates in the restaging of Paik’s largest work, *Sistine Chapel* (1993), in which his experimental, innovative, and profound yet entertaining approach to art is on full display.

The exhibition is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Tate Modern, London, and curated by Rudolf Frieling, Curator of Media Arts, with Andrea Nitsche-Krupp, Assistant Curator of Media Arts, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Sook-Kyung Lee, Senior Curator, International Art, Tate.

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TERRA
FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN ART

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NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT for the **ARTS**
arts.gov

Additional support is provided by Eleanor and Francis Shen.

I have resigned the performance
of music. I expose the music.

—NAM JUNE PAIK, 1963

As bo-o-ring as possible:
like Proust, Palestrina, Zen. Gregorian chant, Missa, Parisian cafe,
life, sex and dog staring into the distance.

—NAM JUNE PAIK, 1959

Why is it music? Because it is not “not music.”

—NAM JUNE PAIK, 1962

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

—NAM JUNE PAIK, 1965

THEATRE FOR POOR MAN

Summon a taxi,
position yourself inside,
request a long ride,
OBSERVE THE METER.

—NAM JUNE PAIK, 1961

The first step for a ninja is learning how
to shorten distances by shrinking the earth. . . .
For the satellite, this is a piece of cake.

—NAM JUNE PAIK, 1984

Good John Cage is Bad John Cage.
Bad John Cage is Real John Cage.
Real John Cage is Good John Cage.
Good John Cage is Not a Good John Cage—da capo.

—NAM JUNE PAIK, 1993

Actually, I have no principles.
I go where the empty roads are.

—NAM JUNE PAIK, 1975

Excerpt from “DO IT YOURSELF”

Play in San Francisco

the left-hand part of the Fugue No.1 (C.Major)
of the “Wohltemperiertes 1” (J.S.Bach)

Play in Shanghai

the right hand-part of the Fugue No.1 (C.Major)
of the “Wohltemperiertes 1” J.S.Bach)

Commencing exactly at 12 noon 3rd of March
(Greenwich mean time) at Metronome tempo ♩ = 80

—it can be broadcasted at the
same time from both sides
of so called “pacific” ocean.—

—NAM JUNE PAIK, 1961/1962

Introduction

The first works in this exhibition introduce Paik via his earliest musical scores and his performances for camera from 1961, as well as his iconic *TV Buddha*. Made in 1974, it was the first in a series of works in which a sculpture of Buddha gazes into its own image, relayed through a closed-circuit television system. Paik's lifelong exploration of Zen Buddhism continued in his later works *Egg Grows* and *One Candle (also known as Candle TV)*. Both embody his characteristic minimalist humor, which was profoundly influenced by his extensive knowledge of Eastern and Western philosophies.

Sinfonie for 20 Rooms

1961/1974

English re-creation of original German score,
published in *Source: Music of the Avant Garde*, no. 11
(1974)

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library and Archives

Trained in classical composition, Paik began his artistic career with a radical expansion of the fundamentals of music. The score for this “symphony” features smells, visual elements, auditory components, and performance, describing various immersive experiences within different rooms. This early work establishes the terms of Paik’s mature practice: the boundaries between art, music, and life are made porous, as are the divisions between audience, artist, and performer. As he once described: “In my so said action music,/ the sounds, etc., moves, the audience is attacked by me./ In the “Symphony for 20 rooms”,/ the sounds, etc., moves, the audience moves also./ In my “Omnibus music No.1” (1961),/ the sounds sit down, the audience visits them./ In the Music Exposition,/ the sounds sit, the audience plays or attacks them.”

Button Happening

1965

Single-channel video, silent, 1:40 min.

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

This is Paik's earliest videotape, recorded on the day he acquired his first video camera. It documents a simple action in which he buttons and unbuttons his jacket, a gesture he initially performed as part of composer Karlheinz Stockhausen and painter Mary Bauermeister's collaboration *Originale* in 1961.

Symphony for 20 Rooms

1961

Facsimile of graphite-on-paper score

Kunsthalle Bremen, Germany

Influenced by composers Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage, who experimented with the spaces where their compositions were performed and with the role played by the audience, Paik sketched the ambitious *Symphony for 20 Rooms* in 1961. The musical notation connected a series of environments where a variety of sounds would be produced at the same time. This score, which requires the audience to wander freely between rooms, listening and participating by playing various instruments, was never realized but inspired plans for his first solo exhibition, *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television* (1963), and foreshadowed Paik's deep commitment to open formats and participatory experiences.

Hand and Face

1961

16mm film transferred to video, silent, 1:42 min.

Camera: Wolfgang Ramsbott

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

This brief silent film captures one of the gestures Paik performed as part of the cast of *Originale*, a 1961 theatrical collaboration by Karlheinz Stockhausen and Mary Bauermeister. This orchestrated “happening” paired Stockhausen’s dissonant music with loosely scripted actions. Paik, billed as an “action musician,” poured flour and water over his own head, threw beans at the audience, and executed slow-motion gestures.

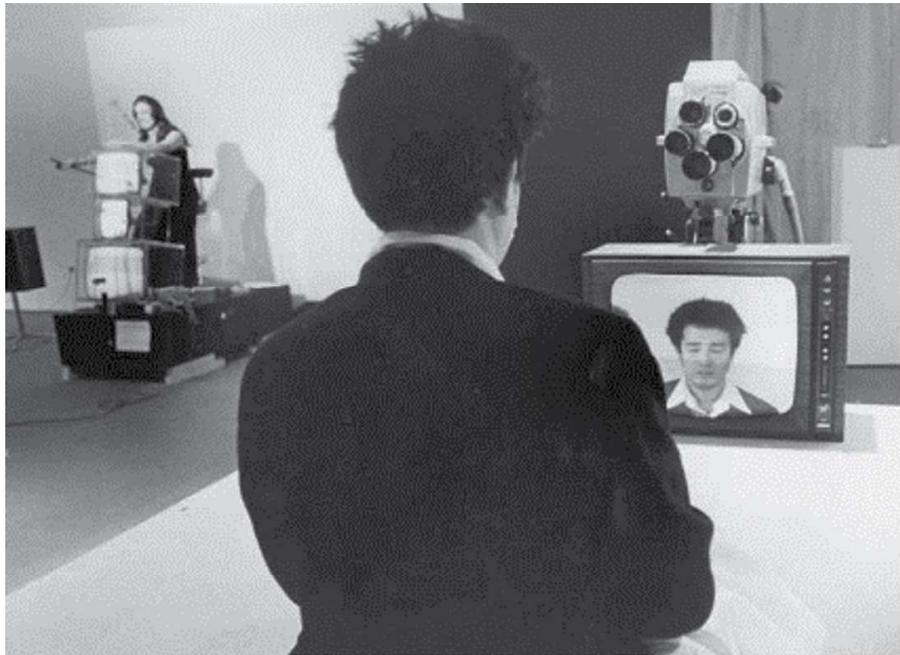
TV Buddha

1974

Eighteenth-century wooden sculpture, closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera, and television monitor

The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

One of Paik's most iconic works, *TV Buddha* expresses the contrasts and parallels between technology and spirituality in a simple and direct way. A CCTV camera films a Buddha statue, which Paik bought from an antique store. Its static, silent image appears live on a 1970s TV set. When Paik presented the work at the *Projekt '74* exhibition in Cologne he also made a version where he sat in the place of the sculpture, becoming a "living Buddha." Paik would return to this theme repeatedly in subsequent works.



Paik as *TV Buddha* in *Projekt '74*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, 1974. Cellist Charlotte Moorman is visible in the background with Paik's *TV Cello* (1971).

One Candle (also known as Candle TV)

2004

Cathode-ray tube television casing with permanent oil marker, acrylic paint, and lit candle

Estate of Nam June Paik

Paik made his first version of *One Candle* in 1975 and returned to the concept several times over his long career. Staring at a flickering candle flame—a light source, like the moon or a TV screen, also frequent motifs in Paik’s work—is a traditional meditation technique. The Zen Buddhism Paik studied teaches the value of meditating on “no-thing-ness” as a way of reaching a state of enlightenment and awareness of one’s body in the present.

Untitled (TV Buddha)

1978

Ink on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

Both the study of Zen Buddhism and the practice of drawing were important and recurring engagements for Paik throughout his artistic career. When the artist was asked whether he saw himself as a Zen Buddhist, he replied: “No, I am an artist. . . . I am not a follower of Zen, but I react to Zen in the same way as I react to [the music of] Johann Sebastian Bach.”

Egg Grows

1984–89

Video monitors, video camera, and egg

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Accessions
Committee Fund purchase: gift of Elaine McKeon,
Byron R. Meyer, Madeleine Haas Russell, and Mr. and
Mrs. Robert A. Swanson

Exposition of Music— Electronic Television

Paik's first solo exhibition, *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television*, at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, Germany, in 1963, initiated a monumental shift in art history. A student of classical music, Paik had moved from Japan to Germany, in 1956, to learn experimental composition. There he had met composers such as John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen, whose radical approaches to performance and the use of chance would significantly influence his work. Through *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television*, partially restaged here, Paik expanded definitions of art and music by responding to the space and involving the audience. Other artists like Alison Knowles, Joseph Beuys, and George Maciunas contributed to the exhibition.

The presentation occupied all three floors of the gallery, featuring immersive environments and interactive sculptures. There were musical instruments made or modified by the artist, including three “prepared” pianos, one of which is on view here. In the basement *Random Access* and *Random Access (Record Shishkebab)* allowed visitors to create compositions by playing random snippets of music on records and audiotapes. Paik's most innovative room was dedicated to a series of manipulated television sets premiering the artistic modification of electronic TV circuits: in *Foot Switch Experiment*, the image on screen could be altered in real time, while others such as *Zen for TV* or *Rembrandt Automatic (Rembrandt TV)* were displayed in various broken states. These interventions spearheaded a new genre now known as “media art.”

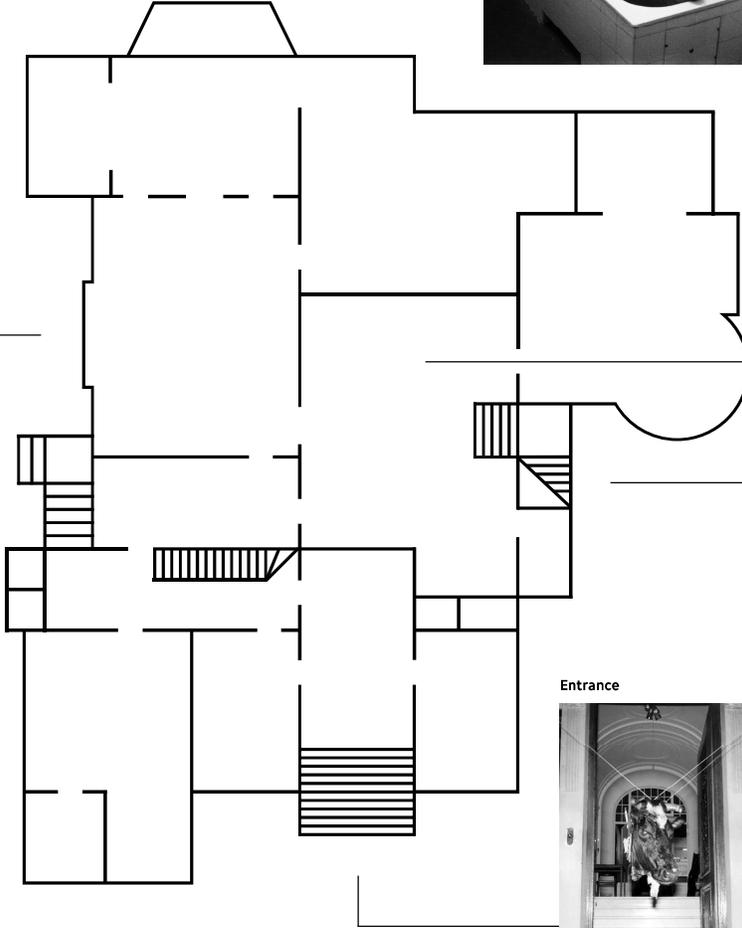
Back garden



Upper floor bathroom



Garden room



Hall



Staircase to the upper floor



Lavatory



Entrance



Basement



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Garden room

Top: Television room. Photo: Peter Brötzmann, © Peter Brötzmann.

Bottom: *Kuba TV* with Nam June Paik and Karl Otto Götz.

Photo: Manfred Leve, © Marc Leve, Estate of Manfred Leve

Back garden

Parachute in the garden. Photo: Peter Brötzmann, © Peter Brötzmann

Upper floor bathroom

Bathroom with mannequin in bathtub. Photo: Manfred Leve,

© Marc Leve, Estate of Manfred Leve

Hall

Hall with pianos. Photo: Manfred Leve, © Marc Leve, Estate of Manfred Leve

Staircase to the upper floor

Mementos of the 20th Century. Photo: Rolf Jährling, © Anneliese Jährling, Cologne, the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit, and ZADIK, Cologne

Entrance

Cow's head in the entrance. Photo: Rolf Jährling, © Anneliese Jährling, Cologne, the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit, and ZADIK, Cologne

Basement

Left to right: *Record Shishkebab*, *Random Access*, *Zen Chair*, and *Objets Sonores* in the basement. Photos: Manfred Leve, © Marc Leve, Estate of Manfred Leve

Lavatory

Prepared toilet. Photo: Manfred Leve, © Marc Leve, Estate of Manfred Leve

Exposition of Music—Electronic Television **Photo Documentation**

In a reference to Korean shamanism, Paik placed a severed cow's head in the doorway at the exhibition's entrance. However, the police ordered that it be removed soon after the opening. Elsewhere a mannequin head was hung above the toilet, and another smashed mannequin lounged in the upstairs bath. George Maciunas, the founder of the Fluxus movement, brought a parachute to use as a projection screen, and Paik weighed it down with a sewing machine in the garden (see map above). Additional photographs document the variability with which the artist exposed his "action music" and collaborative spirit.

ABOVE

Manfred Montwé, **“Exposition of Music—Electronic Television,” 1963,**
Nam June Paik Demonstrates “Listening to Music through the Mouth,” 1963,
printed 1982

Collection of Manfred Montwé

AT LEFT

Manfred Montwé, **“Exposition of Music—Electronic Television,” 1963, Nam June Paik Demonstrates “Zen for Walking,” 1963, printed 1982**

Collection of Manfred Montwé

Manfred Montwé, **“Exposition of
Music—Electronic Television,” 1963,
Visitor at “Record Shishkebab,” 1963**

Tate Library and Archive, Nimai Chatterji Collection

Manfred Leve, “**Exposition of Music—Electronic Television,**” **1963, Prepared Piano**, 1963, printed 2019

Collection of Marc Leve

Paik made most of the modifications to the pianos with the help of some collaborators while installing the exhibition. Some objects were not completely fixed but could be moved around from piano to piano, and new items were added over time. At the end of the exhibition most of these were removed from the pianos, but this photograph gives a sense of what *Prepared Piano*, on view nearby, looked like during the exhibition.

Manfred Montwé, **“Exposition of Music—Electronic Television,” 1963, Flags by Alison Knowles for Paik’s “Chronicle of a Beautiful Paintress,” 1963**

Tate Library and Archive, Nimai Chatterji Collection

Artist Alison Knowles gave Paik these flags as an interpretation of his score *Chronicle of a Beautiful Paintress* (1962). Dedicated to Knowles, this work’s instructions required staining the flags of selected nations with one’s own “monthly blood.” Paik added a framed edition of the German tabloid newspaper *Bild* reporting news of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, which resonated with the bloodying of the flags. Other magazines and objects were scattered on the staircase leading to the upper floor of the Galerie Parnass.

TOP

Manfred Leve, **“Exposition of Music—Electronic Television,” 1963, Hall with Pianos, 1963, printed 2019**

BOTTOM

Manfred Leve, **“Exposition of Music—Electronic Television,” 1963, Joseph Beuys Batters the Ibach Piano, 1963, printed 2019**

Collection of Marc Leve

Paik abolished the distinction between performer and audience. Every visitor was invited to operate any of the devices, including the prepared pianos pictured here. Paik described a spontaneous act of destruction carried out by Joseph Beuys: “I heard some clattering noise from the adjacent room. I went out to find a man smashing the Ibach Piano into pieces with an ax. I went closer to the scene to find it was the ever-serious and funny man, Beuys.” Conceived as an homage to Paik’s *One for Violin Solo* (1962), in which he destroyed a violin, the action was not captured, but the photographer later asked Beuys to reenact this pose.

Random Access (Schallplatten-Schaschlik)

[Random Access (Record Shishkebab)]

1963/1979

Record player with extended axis, records, and movable pickup arm

Arter, Istanbul

The basement featured interactive works based on audio-playing devices, including two *Record Shishkebabs*, part of Paik's multiple approaches to *Random Access*. These were record players mounted on old radios with their axes extended upward to hold a random selection of records. A rubber band attached to the first pole spun a second threaded with more records. Visitors could create an ever-changing mix of sounds using a movable arm connected to the device via an extension cord. The object here is the prototype for an unrealized multiple commissioned in 1979 by Galerie René Block in Berlin.

Random Access

1963, reconstructed 2000

Audiotape, open-reel audio deck, extended playback head, and speakers

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, purchased with funds contributed by the International Director's Council and Executive Committee Members: Ann Ames, Edythe Broad, Henry Buhl, Elaine Turner Cooper, Dimitris Daskalopoulos, Harry David, Gail May Engelberg, Ronnie Heyman, Dakis Joannou, Cindy Johnson, Barbara Lane, Linda Macklowe, Peter Norton, Willem Peppler, Denise Rich, Simonetta Seragnoli, David Teiger, Ginny Williams, and Elliot K. Wolk

Extended audiotape head from "Random Access"

1963

Magnetic audiotape head with extension and wooden box

Private collection

This exhibition copy re-creates the audiotape collage on the basement wall of the Galerie Parnass. Paik described it as "city map and abstract painting, sight and sound and action." Participants could "play" the work by running the player head over the magnetic tape on the wall. Each visitor produced a new composition through their unique mix of sounds. The original extended tape head from 1963, on the adjacent shelf, was once attached to a functioning reel-to-reel audiotape player. Traces of one of the original magnetic-tape collages still remain on the basement wall of the Wuppertal villa that housed the Galerie Parnass.

Trained performers will "play" this work in the gallery regularly to demonstrate its audio quality and variability. Ask staff nearby about the next activation.

Random Access (Audio Tape)

1963, reconstructed 1975

Chipboard with plastic foil, audiotape, and portable cassette player with extended magnetic tape head

Private collection

Visitors to the exhibition could interact with collages of magnetic audiotapes, some on paper scrolls, some directly on the wall. The tape head was still attached to the audiotape player but placed at the end of an extension cord so that it could be used to manually “read” the tape. The title *Random Access* refers to the concept of random access memory (RAM) in computing: in this work, visitor participation functioned as an analog and unstable mode for retrieving the data stored on the magnetic tape. Paik reconstructed the edition seen here in 1975 for the exhibition *Sehen um zu hören* at the Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf.

Foot Switch Experiment

1963, reconstructed 1995

Modified cathode-ray tube television and foot switch

Estate of Nam June Paik

German painter Karl Otto Götz, who envisioned a form of electronic abstraction, inspired Paik to experiment with TVs as a visual medium. While other artists had previously worked with TV sets as sculptural objects, Paik was the first to intervene creatively into the electronic circuits and live programs. In this work, the foot switch turns the cathode-ray tube off and on again while generating a fading square of light. The effect resembles the process of turning off an analog TV set. *Foot Switch Experiment* is one of a series of interactive manipulated TVs.

Please press the foot switch once to activate the work, or ask staff nearby for assistance.

Zen for TV

1963, reconstructed 1990

Manipulated cathode-ray tube television

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

Through his interest in chance and random operations, Paik understood that one could not “fix” electronic images into static artworks but had to embrace their unstable nature. When a TV set damaged during transport ended up displaying the broadcast condensed into a single horizontal line, Paik simply turned it on its side and titled it *Zen for TV*. He returned to the work throughout his career via a series of reconstructions in which he deliberately engineered the line glitch.

Rembrandt Automatic (Rembrandt TV)

1963, reconstructed 1976

Cathode-ray tube television

Collection of Wulf Herzogenrath, Berlin

Two TV sets among those delivered to *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television* were damaged during transport, but Paik found ways to incorporate them into his exhibition as found objects. He appreciated the generative possibilities of failure, stating, “I make mistake after mistake, and it comes out positive. That is the story of my whole life.” This non-functioning TV set bears the logo of the “Rembrandt” brand on its back. Paik decided to place it facedown, making the brand name, which alludes to seventeenth-century Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn, easily visible.

Manon-Liu Winter and Michael Krupica

For Nam June Paik's Piano

2008

Single-channel video, with sound, 7:52 min.

Composition and piano: Manon-Liu Winter

Video: Michael Krupica

Courtesy Manon-Liu Winter

Here musician Manon-Liu Winter plays her own composition for Paik's *Klavier Intégral* (1958–63), which is now too fragile to travel. According to Paik's collaborator Tomas Schmit, *Klavier Intégral* featured “a doll's head, a hand siren, a cow horn, a bunch of feathers, barbed wire, spoons, a little tower of pfennig coins stuck together, all sorts of toys, photos, a bra, an accordion, a tin with an aphrodisiac, a record player arm . . . sirens, heaters, ventilators, tape recorders” and other devices that could be activated by playing certain keys. One key switched off the lighting in the room while another switched it back on.

Prepared Piano

1962–63

Piano with leather wallet, metal cylinders, toy parts, string, wire, coins, paper, nails, and metal handle

Arter, Istanbul

Paik was indebted to John Cage's notions of indeterminacy and chance in experimental music. Cage had already performed with "prepared pianos," which were modified by placing objects—nuts and bolts, pegs, and other simple hardware—inside the instruments. Paik went much further as he challenged the audience to play pianos cluttered with all sorts of objects, including barbed wire, during the exhibition. The piano seen here had its keys glued down permanently; another was completely blocked from producing sound by a wooden plank placed under the keys.

Posters for “Exposition of Music—Electronic Television”

1963

Screenprints on newspaper

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany (top and bottom); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family (center)

Galerie Parnass, in Wuppertal, Germany, was run by architect Rolf Jährling and his wife, Anneliese. An important exhibition space since the 1950s, it was the scene of the first public Fluxus event in June 1962, the *Kleines Sommerfest: Après John Cage* (Small Summer Party: After John Cage), in which Paik also took part. This series of unique posters, printed on Korean newspaper pages, shows that Paik added “Electronic Television” to the exhibition’s original title *Exposition of Music*. He had been secretly experimenting with TV sets not knowing if he could finish them in time for the exhibition.

Poster for “Exposition of Music—Electronic Television”

1963

Lithograph on newspaper

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

The phrases in the center of this poster, printed on a Korean daily paper, refer to ideas Paik was developing while working on the exhibition, such as “Synchronization as a Principle of Acausal Connections.” Many of the propositions may have pointed to artworks or areas of the exhibition, as is the case with “Prepared W. C.,” “objets sonores,” and “Instruments for Zen-Exercise.” Paik also wrote “A Study of German Idiotology” next to a published review of *Exposition of Music* that he hung on the glass wall at the entrance to the gallery leading to the main hall.

Untitled

ca. 1964/1965

Lithograph

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

**Program for “Second Annual New York
Avant Garde Festival”**

1964

Lithography

Archiv Bauermeister

Peter Moore

**“Originale” Rehearsal and P.R. Setup for
Second Annual New York Avant Garde
Festival**

1964

Gelatin silver print

Estate of Peter Moore, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery,
New York

Peter Moore

Excerpt from **Stockhausen's "Originale": Doubletakes**
1964/1994

16mm film transferred to video, with sound,
3:12 min.

Estate of Peter Moore, courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Moore's film documents the U.S. premiere of *Originale* at Judson Hall during the Second Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, organized by cellist Charlotte Moorman. This first encounter between Paik and Moorman, as performers in the New York iteration, would lead to decades of friendship and collaboration. Directed by artist Allan Kaprow, and featuring, among others, poet Allen Ginsberg and Fluxus artists Dick Higgins and Jackson Mac Low, the performance caused a rift within Fluxus, as the group's founder George Maciunas had deemed Stockhausen a "characteristic European-North American ruling-class Artist" and organized picketing of the event. The performance was a sensation, with the *New York Times* review concluding, "Life will never be the same."

Peter Fischer, **Paik and Stockhausen, "Originale,"**
Cologne, 1961, 1961

Archiv Bauermeister

In Cologne, where he lived from 1958 to 1963, Paik participated in painter Mary Bauermeister's influential avant-garde salons. In 1961 Paik and others performed at Theater am Dom in *Originale*, a musical theater happening conceived by Karlheinz Stockhausen in collaboration with Bauermeister, his then partner, and directed by Carlheinz Caspari. Eighteen loosely scripted scenes were performed in random sequence to Stockhausen's composition *Kontakte*. Paik, as the "Action Composer," premiered *Simple, Zen for Head*, and *Étude Platonique No. 3*, among others. Stockhausen recounted, "Paik came onto the stage in silence and shocked most of the audience by his actions as quick as lightning." He threw beans against the ceiling and submerged himself in a bath only to jump out, sopping wet, and play a sentimental salon composition on the piano.

Peter Fürst, **Paik Performing,**
“Originale,” Cologne, 1961, 1961

Archiv Bauermeister

Peter Fürst, **Paik Performing His Tie
Painting, "Originale,"** Cologne, 1961,
1961

Archiv Bauermeister

Peter Fischer, **Paik with Shaving Cream,**
“Originale,” Cologne, 1961, 1961

Archiv Bauermeister

Peter Fischer, **Paik Shampooing**
Director Carlheinz Caspari, "Originale,"
Cologne, 1961, 1961

Archiv Bauermeister

Peter Fischer, **Paik with Flour,**
“Originale,” Cologne, 1961, 1961

Archiv Bauermeister

Peter Fürst, **Closing Scene with Nam
June Paik at Right, "Originale," Cologne,
1961, 1961**

Archiv Bauermeister

Studio

Experimentation in music, technology, and broadcasting had been interconnected for Paik since his early days in Germany. In 1958 he worked in the Studio for Electronic Music of West German Broadcasting (WDR) in Cologne, which supported many of his future friends and collaborators, such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage. By 1962 he had begun to experiment with the electronic realm of television and communication technologies. His early research involved turning TV's cathode-ray tube onto itself via the distorting effects of magnets and the live, immediate feedback of closed-circuit video cameras, as seen here in the iconic *Magnet TV* and *TV Chair*. Paik once said of his early explorations, “‘Electronics’ has been the catch-phrase since 1950, in science and society, in music and stock-market . . . why not in art?”

Later, his “studios” were at Bell Labs in New Jersey, an advanced research center for communication technologies and computing, where he wanted to develop what he called “a TOTAL ELECTRONIC OPERA,” and the Boston public television station WGBH-TV, where he created an analog video synthesizer in collaboration with engineer Shuya Abe, who he had previously worked with in Japan. Countering the manipulative one-way communications of mass media, Paik succeeded in opening its closed circuits, becoming the pioneer of experimental video and television.

Storyboard with Birds

1978

Pastel on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Untitled

1975

Oil on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Videotape

1978

Ink and graphite on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Scan Lines

1982

Pastel on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Peter Moore

**Nam June Paik in His Studio, Canal
Street, New York**

1965

Gelatin silver print

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

New Cinema Festival I

1965

Electrostatic print

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

**World First Video-Tape Monthly
Magazine**

1967

Electrostatic print

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

**Electronic Video Recorder, Cafe au Go Go, October 4
and 11, 1965**

1965

Electrostatic print

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

According to anecdotal evidence, Paik purchased the first commercially available video recorder, a Sony Portapak, on October 4, 1965, and immediately used it to record the arrival of Pope Paul VI at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral. Later that night, Paik showed the resulting video at Cafe au Go Go. Portable video cameras opened up new possibilities for Paik to make his own "video tapes." His first extant videotape, *Button Happening* (ca. 1965), is on view at the beginning of this exhibition.

**Electronic schematic drawing for
“Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer”**

1969

Graphite, colored pencil, and ink
on paper

Estate of Nam June Paik

A Drawing Notebook, 1996

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Paper TV Show, 1974

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

This sketchbook features a storyboard that opens with a picture of Paik and artist Shigeo Kubota, his wife. The following pages include a kissing scene labeled “soap opera,” a logic equation with “kiss/kill,” and a final scene in which a shooting takes place, shown here.

Address book, blank storyboard sheet,
and Sony film reel box labeled “Video
Study No. 3” from Paik’s studios

Estate of Nam June Paik

The First “Snapshots” of Mars, from
Edition Et, no. 2, 1966. Published by
Ch. Grützmacher and R. Kowallek,
Berlin

Tate Library and Archive, Periodicals Special Collections

Digital Experiment at Bell Labs

1966–67

35mm film transferred to video, silent, 4:41 min.

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

In 1966 Paik approached Bell Labs in New Jersey to develop “a TOTAL ELECTRONIC OPERA,” using “generators and video tape recorders as the performing characters and instruments, and TV as the distribution media.” Made after Paik learned the programming language FORTRAN, this early computer-generated film is one of the few artworks resulting from his experiments at Bell Labs. The simple animation features a white dot ambling across a black background, followed by a string of jumbled characters. The computer Paik used “printed” by creating impressions on microfilm: each screen frame captured on the 35mm film became a frame of this animation, a method Paik ultimately found too slow for his radical creative process.

Video Distribution Flow Chart, 1974–82

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Script from “Edited for Television,”
1975

Estate of Nam June Paik

Allan Kaprow, **“Nam June Paik,”** in **Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer: Electronic Art II**, 1968. Published in conjunction with the show at Galeria Bonino, New York, April 17–May 11, 1968

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

This exhibition catalogue, published in conjunction with Paik’s second show at Galeria Bonino, includes an essay on Paik written by artist Allan Kaprow, an early pioneer of “happenings.” The exhibition itself featured a number of collaborations with artists including Ay-O, Mary Bauermeister, Christo, Ray Johnson, and Otto Piene.

John Cage, **“Nam June Paik: A Diary,”**
in **Nam June Paik: Electronic Art**, 1965.
Published in conjunction with the show
at Galeria Bonino, New York, November
23–December 11, 1965

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

**Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer with
Charlotte Moorman: Electronic Art III,**
1971. Published in conjunction with the
show at Galeria Bonino, New York,
November 23–December 11, 1971

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

Nam June Paik in collaboration with David Atwood, Fred Barzyk, and Olivia Tappan

9/23/69 Experiment with David Atwood

1969

Single-channel video, with sound, 78:51 min.

Produced by the Artists' Television Workshop at WGBH-TV, Boston

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Nam June Paik

Electronic Opera #1, segment from **The Medium is the Medium**

1969

Single-channel video, with sound, 4:45 min.

Produced by WGBH-TV, Boston
Executive Producer: David Oppenheim
Producers: Ann Gresser, Pat Marx
Director: Fred Barzyk

Courtesy WGBH-TV, Boston

Paik produced these videos when he was an artist-in-residence at WGBH-TV. *9/23/69 Experiment with David Atwood* was a spontaneously produced and broadcasted video collage of pure electronic abstractions, live TV programming, and prerecorded material, created in collaboration with engineers, musicians, and artists at WGBH-TV. This early experiment inspired the *Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer*, on view at left. *Electronic Opera #1*, Paik's first work for broadcast, was his contribution to *The Medium is the Medium*, an "artists' transmission" featuring original works by Paik and five others. Here, in a form of what he called "Participation TV," Paik instructs audience members to open or close their eyes while displaying his creative use of experimental video effects. Paik incorporated excerpts of this video into *Global Groove* (1973), exhibited in the following gallery as part of *TV Garden* (1974).

Electronic Opera #1 is also accessible at sfmoma.org/paik.

Shuya Abe and Nam June Paik

Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer

1969–72

Metal cabinet, electronic components, plastic dials, wires, and acrylic

Estate of Nam June Paik

At WGBH-TV in Boston, Paik worked with electrical engineer and frequent collaborator Shuya Abe to develop a “video synthesizer” that combined all the stages of shooting and editing video images. The device allowed Paik to translate a variety of video sources into countless patterns, colors, superimpositions, and configurations and to control them using a mixing board. With the ability to edit images in real time, the video synthesizer could be used during live TV broadcasts. It was adopted by several TV studios and helped the artist create his signature style of fast-paced, multilayered video editing. In Paik’s words: “[I want] to shape the TV screen canvas/ as precisely as Leonardo/ as freely as Picasso/ as colorfully as Renoir/ as profoundly as Mondrian/ as violently as Pollock/ and as lyrically as Jasper Johns.”



Left to right: Fred Barzyk, Abe, and Paik with *Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer* at WGBH-TV, Boston, ca. 1969. Photo: Conrad White, courtesy the Estate of Nam June Paik

Do You Know ...?

1973

Screenprint

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

TV Chair

1968

Closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera,
chair, acrylic, and cathode-ray tube television



New to the
Collection

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for
Major Accessions

Paik predicted that video technologies would become so integrated into our daily lives that they would blend in with our living environments, taking the form of video furniture and video walls, as seen in the adjacent collage, *Do You Know . . . ?*. *TV Chair* plays with this notion by proposing an absurd piece of video furniture. A CCTV camera points down at a chair with a TV under its transparent seat that displays the live video feed.

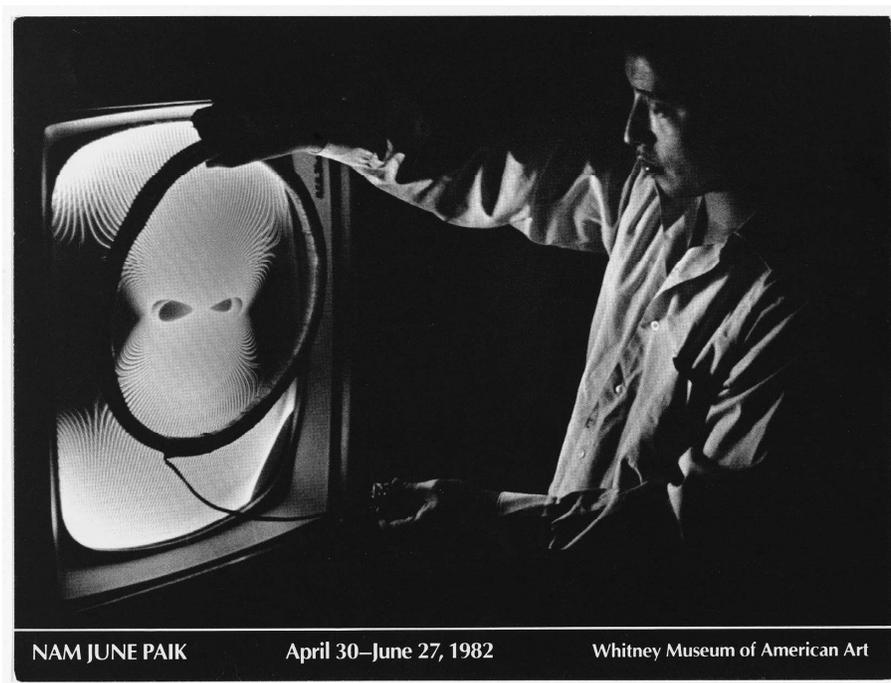
Life Ring 66

1966

Copper wire, electrical tape, masking tape, and string

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

Analog TVs use a technology known as a cathode-ray tube, which works by directing beams of electrons onto the screen. These beams are modulated by coils placed around the neck of the tube that generate magnetic fields in response to electrical signals. While on a trip to Japan in 1963–64, Paik learned that he could use strong magnets to interfere with this electromagnetic system. *Life Ring 66* is a handheld magnetic coil with which Paik altered TV images in a performative manner.



Flier for Paik's retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, April 30–June 27, 1982, featuring the artist demonstrating the use of *Life Ring 66*.

Magnet TV

1965

Modified cathode-ray tube television and magnet

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, purchased with funds from Dieter Rosenkranz

By 1963 Paik had experimented with techniques for disrupting TV images, but he only began to employ magnets to this effect after *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television*. Using magnets did not require technical skills or contact with internal components. Paik made interactive versions of *Magnet TV* in which members of the public could move the magnet over the set as well as versions, such as this one, meant to be viewed as static abstract pictures.

To preserve the cathode-ray tube television, conservators move the magnet once a week, preventing the image from being permanently burned into the screen. You may occasionally observe SFMOMA staff maintaining the work while it is on view.

TV Garden

Deeply influenced by the Buddhist belief that all things are interdependent, Paik created *TV Garden* as a futuristic landscape where technology would become an integral part of the natural world. Placing TV sets alongside live plants, Paik envisioned an environment in which technology coexists with nature.

The forty-nine TV sets in this version of *TV Garden* display Paik's groundbreaking music video *Global Groove*, a colorful, dense mix of avant-garde, pop, and commercial imagery and audio that connects cultures from around the world by combining traditional and contemporary sources. From Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* and chants by the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg to a Nigerian dance performance and Japanese TV ads, Paik's selection captures the disparate and sometimes overwhelming content of mass media but is less predictable.

TV Garden

1974–77/2002

Live plants, cathode-ray tube televisions, and video
(with sound)

Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

ON THE MONITORS

Nam June Paik in collaboration with John Godfrey

Global Groove

1973

Single-channel video, with sound, 28:30 min.

Produced by the TV Lab at WNET/Thirteen, New York

Director: Merrily Mossman

Narrator: Russell Connor

Film footage: Robert Breer, Jud Yalkut

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Charlotte Moorman

Paik and cellist Charlotte Moorman worked together for almost thirty years. They shared an interest in avant-garde music and energetic live performances as well as an irreverent, defiant attitude that led to inspired collaborations. Moorman once stated, “With all my formal training at Juilliard, I feel I know the rules. That’s something that is very important if you are going to break them.” Both classically trained artists believed that sexuality was unjustly excluded from classical music, even in the twentieth century. Paik had previously played with forms of undress in his early actions, and many of their collaborative performances involved Moorman playing the cello in degrees of undress as well, which led to one official arrest for indecent exposure in New York, in 1967. Paik responded by building a series of television sculptures, including *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*, *TV Cello*, and *TV Eyeglasses*, that Moorman could use as costumes and props. Ever the problem solver, he once stated, in typical Paik fashion: “Don’t ask what Cello can do for me. But ask, what I can do for cello.” Paik saw these collaborations as another opportunity to develop his concept of “not not music” or “action music” and to show the beneficial coexistence of humans and technology. Moorman’s life was cut short by cancer in 1991, but her influence as a friend and collaborator played a lasting role in Paik’s work.

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik

Rare Performance Documents 1961–1994, Volume 1: Paik-Moorman Collaborations (Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman: Rarities and Outtakes)

1965–73, compiled in 2000

Single-channel video, with sound, 25:08 min.

Producer: Stephen Vitiello

Editor: Seth Price

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

This compilation features documentation of the following performances:

Performance Documentation, Aachen, Germany, 1965,
4:14 min.

Charlotte Moorman at The Howard Wise Gallery,
ca. 1969, 1:43 min.

TV Bed, The Everson Museum of Art, 1972, 1:10 min.

TV Cello Performance, 1973, 1:42 min.

Waiting for Commercial (Performance), ca. 1972,
8:20 min.

New Television Workshop Performance, 1971, 7:25 min.

**Poster for “Charlotte Moorman Concert,
Philadelphia College of Art”**

1965

Lithograph

Designer: Jim McWilliams

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

This concert was the premiere of Paik’s cello composition *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns*, in which Moorman dipped herself into oil barrels filled with water. It became a staple of the pair’s touring program. Their performance in Paris during the duo’s first European tour in 1965 was a turning point for both artists. According to Paik, Moorman had forgotten her concert dress at the hotel. He recalled: “There was a huge roll of clear plastic drop cloth which Ben Vautier brought here as a prop for the next evening.” Moorman embraced the plastic sheeting as a replacement costume. Nudity became a frequent element of her future performances with and without Paik.

Poster for “Nam June Paik & Charlotte Moorman”

1968

Lithograph

Designer: Bill Sontag

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

The breasts superimposed over the cello in this poster are a provocative reference to the arrest of Moorman and Paik on the grounds of “partial nudity” during the performance of *Opera Sextronique* in New York the previous year. Paik was shaken by the event and resolved to create a series of props for Moorman to wear in order to avoid similar incidents happening again. Paik’s props for Moorman were nominally a way of “covering up” while nevertheless maintaining other subversive and confrontational aspects of their ongoing collaboration.

**Poster for “The Avant-Garde in
Philadelphia”**

1966

Lithograph

Designer: Jim McWilliams

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

Poster for “Global Groove”

1974

Lithograph with crayon

Designer: Jim McWilliams

Photographer: Peter Moore

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

**Poster for “Nam June Paik—Paik-Abe
Video Synthesizer with Charlotte
Moorman”**

1972

Lithograph

Designer: Mastropaul Design

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

**Poster for “Nam June Paik—Charlotte Moorman,
1964–74”**

1976

Lithograph

Photographer: Peter Moore

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

This poster features a photograph of Moorman and Paik performing the *Human Cello* variation of John Cage’s composition *26 '1.1499" for a String Player*. It was taken on October 4, 1965, during one of Paik’s *Electronic Video Recorder* evenings at Cafe au Go Go in New York.

TV Cello

1971

Cathode-ray tubes, acrylic boxes, television casings, electronics, wiring, wood base, fan, and stool

The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1992, formerly in the collection of Otto Piene and Elizabeth Goldring, Massachusetts

Moorman and Paik used *TV Cello* in many performances over the years, one of which can be seen in the nearby video documentation of their collaborations. Paik took the tubes out of three TV sets and stacked them inside three transparent boxes so they could be used as a playable cello. The electronics remain in the casings and allow the screens to function, displaying live TV broadcasts or tapes that could be modified in real time during performances. Pickups on the cello converted the strings' vibrations into optical signals that distorted the images on the TV screens.

Please note that in order to preserve their fragile screens, the TVs in this artwork are only on Thursday through Sunday.

Poster for “24 Stunden” (24 Hours)

1965

Lithograph

Designer: Wolf Vostell

Tate and National Galleries of Scotland, acquired jointly
through The d’Offay Donation with assistance from
the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Art Fund

Bodo Niederprüm, **Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik in “24 Hours,”** 1965

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

For her contribution to the collaborative durational performance event *24 Hours* in Wuppertal, Germany, Moorman presented cello performances from her repertoire of avant-garde compositions, including some with and by Paik. In this photograph she is seen wearing her transparent plastic costume for *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns*. For that performance, Moorman occasionally sat on a kneeling man with the endpin of her cello in the mouth of another man lying face up in front of her. Far from being a passive object of contemplation and titillation in her topless and semi-nude performances, Moorman was not afraid to subvert gender roles and knowingly play with audience expectations.

Dorine van der Klei, **Nam June Paik in
"24 Hours,"** 1965

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

Dorine van der Klei, **Nam June Paik in
"24 Hours,"** 1965

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Heinrich Riebesehl

“Robot K-456” in “24 Hours”

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik in “24 Hours”

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik (at the Piano) in “24 Hours”

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik in “24 Hours”

1965

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

On June 5, 1965, Rolf Jährling turned his Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, Germany, into a stage for “happenings” that began at midnight and continued for a full twenty-four hours. Performers included Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock, Jährling, Ute Klophaus, Moorman, Paik, Eckart Rahn, Tomas Schmit, and Wolf Vostell. The performance coincided with the twenty-first anniversary of D-Day, which Moorman and Vostell acknowledged. Moorman wept during her performance of Giuseppe Chiari’s *Per Arco*, which included recordings of wartime sounds such as explosions and artillery fire. For his contribution to the event, Paik brought his remote-controlled *Robot K-456*, piloting it around the villa’s ground floor as an additional performer: a “non-human action artist.”

Catalogue and artist's book for "24 Stunden" (24 Hours), 1965

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library and Archives

The plastic bag with flour, included in a compartment "hidden" among the pages of the book, was a multiple by contributing artist Wolf Vostell. It came with the instructions: "occupy yourself with flour for twenty-four hours." Documentation of the happening is included in the form of photographs by Ute Klophaus.

Peter Moore, **Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman with Robots**, 1964

Tate Library and Archive, Nimai Chatterji Collection

Paik arrived in New York in June 1964 and began looking for a musical collaborator. Moorman, who had started organizing the Annual New York Avant Garde Festival the previous year, cast him in a staging of Karlheinz Stockhausen and Mary Bauermeister's *Originale* that she was organizing as part of the Second Annual Festival. This was the start of their long-lasting partnership. A few days after this photograph was taken, *Robot K-456* debuted as part of the festival in Paik's *Robot Opera*. *Robot K-456* played a recording of President John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural address and defecated white beans in the streets of New York. Film documentation of Paik performing with *Robot K-456* is on view in the adjacent gallery.

Robot Opera, 1965

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Robot Opera [recto and verso], 1964.

Photographer: Peter Moore

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of
the Hakuta family (top); Tate Library and Archive,
Nimai Chatterji Collection (bottom)

New School Presents Nam June Paik
[recto and verso], 1965. Photographer:
Peter Moore

Tate Library and Archive, David Mayor Collection

Poster for “Opera Sextronique,” 1967. Designer: Jim McWilliams; photographer: Peter Moore

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

In 1964 Paik wrote: “SEX is very underdeveloped in music, as opposed to literature and optical art.” *Opera Sextronique* was his and Moorman’s solution to remedy this oversight. In this cello composition in four parts, Moorman was to perform first while wearing an electric bikini that Paik had made for her, then topless with a full-length skirt, next bottomless in a football jersey, and, finally, fully nude playing a fake bomb turned into a cello. Even though the concert was by invitation only, police stormed the stage during the performance and Moorman was arrested for indecent exposure.

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik

Guadalcanal Requiem

1977, reedited 1979

Single-channel video, with sound, 28:33 min.

Produced by the TV Lab at WNET/Thirteen, New York

Guest: Bob Edwards

Cinematographer: Steve Mason

Narrator: Russell Connor

Location Director: Frank Pileggi

Sound Effects: Laurie Spiegel

Camera: Peter Hardy, Graham Hellett, Richard Maude, Michael Pursche,
Bill Viola

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Guadalcanal Requiem revisits the memories and historical traces of the 1942–43 Battle of Guadalcanal, the Allied Forces' first major offensive against Japan in the Pacific Theater of World War II. Archival footage of the war and recollections from participants of the battle are juxtaposed with footage of local inhabitants and performances by Paik and Moorman. These include Paik's *Peace Sonata (New Piece for Charlotte)* from 1966, in which Moorman crawls along a beach wearing a soldier's uniform with her cello strapped to her back while Paik walks toward her dragging a violin.

Please be advised that this video contains images of dead bodies.

**Leaflet announcing TV broadcasts
of “Guadalcanal Requiem,” 1979.**

Designer: Jim McWilliams; photogra-
pher: Frank Pileggi

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

Attributed to Frank Pileggi, **Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik Perform Joseph Beuys' "Infiltration-homogen für Cello," Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, April 21, 1976, 1976**

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

In 1966 artist Joseph Beuys created his work *Infiltration-homogen für Cello* (Homogeneous Infiltration for Cello), in which the instrument was covered in felt with the addition of a red cross, in honor of Moorman. Moorman and Paik reconstructed a version of this work during their trip to the Solomon Islands in 1976 in order to use it as part of the filming of *Guadalcanal Requiem*, on view at left.

Charlotte Moorman, **Poster for “Festival of the Avant Garde ’64 (2nd Annual New York Avant Garde Festival),”** 1964

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

Moorman was a driving force in the New York avant-garde scene of the 1960s and 1970s and organized the Annual New York Avant Garde Festival between 1963 and 1980. She showcased local talents and brought international artists, experimental musicians, and theater practitioners to New York for her festival, often to perform for the first time in the U.S.

Peter Moore, **Publicity Photograph for the “3rd Annual New York Avant Garde Festival,”** 1965

Estate of Peter Moore, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

Front row, left to right: Paik, Moorman, Philip Corner, James Tenney. Back row, left to right: Takehisa Kosugi, Gary Harris, Dick Higgins, Judith Kuemmerle, Kenneth King, Meredith Monk, Al Kurchin, Phoebe Neville.

Peter Moore, **Publicity Photograph for the “9th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival,”** 1972

Estate of Peter Moore, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

Paik is seen holding a portable video camera, bottom row, second from the right.

Program poster for “Jail to Jungle: Charlotte Moorman & Nam June Paik,” 1977. Designer: Jim McWilliams

Tate Library and Archive, Barbara Reise Collection

This event, held at the prestigious Carnegie Hall, New York, looked back at Paik and Moorman’s collaborations over the years. It included a re-creation of their “scandalous” performance *Opera Sextronique*, a restaging of Moorman’s trial for indecent exposure, and a screening of their recent video collaboration *Guadalcanal Requiem*.

**Peter Moore, Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik
Performing John Cage's "26'1.1499" for a String
Player" ("Human Cello"), Channel 13 TV studio,
May 27, 1971, 1971**

Estate of Peter Moore, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

Despite his enduring friendship with Paik and Moorman, Cage was reportedly unhappy with their interpretations of his composition, claiming that it shifted the attention from the music to the performers in a way that was too distracting and that it “favored actions rather than sound events in time.” Nevertheless, Paik and Moorman’s performance became the best-known version of the piece. It sometimes included a section where Paik became a “human cello,” in a pose that was obviously meant to evoke sensual intimacy but was played by the duo with the utmost seriousness, as seen in the video documentation on the opposite wall.

**Peter Moore, Charlotte Moorman
with Nam June Paik, playing his “Train
Cello—Music Is Mass Transit,” 10th
Annual New York Avant Garde Festival,
1973**

Estate of Peter Moore, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery,
New York

Music Is a Mass Transit, 1973

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library and
Archives

Leaflet for “Mixed Media Opera”
[recto and verso], 1968. Designer:
Jim McWilliams

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

Oil Drums, Hommage à Charlotte Moorman

1964/1991

Cathode-ray tube televisions, metal barrels, wood, modulator, and two-channel video (with sound)

Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg, Germany

The two metal barrels seen here were used during performances of *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns*, a score by Paik that Moorman performed by playing the opening measures of Camille Saint-Saëns's famous composition *The Swan* (1886) on a cello. She then suddenly stopped, climbed a ladder, and submerged herself in the top drum, which was filled with water. After the dip, Moorman climbed back down and finished playing the sentimental tune while dripping wet. Paik made this sculpture as a memorial to Moorman following her untimely death, in 1991.

Untitled

1969–74

Japanese scroll, ink, and gelatin silver print

Photographer: Peter Moore

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

Paik collected antique Japanese scrolls and occasionally incorporated them into his works. Here he simply added a photograph of Moorman wearing *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* taken by photographer Peter Moore, a close friend of Moorman's who documented many of New York's avant-garde events. The scroll itself features a painting of a woman playing the koto, a traditional Japanese stringed instrument. The juxtaposition connects two musicians across time, space, and media. Paik also inscribed the scroll with handwritten dedications and poetic instructions.

TV Eyeglasses, 1971

Miniature cathode-ray tubes, sunglasses, adhesive tape, miniature cathode-ray tube television casings and electronics, power adapters, and cables

Estate of Nam June Paik

These modified goggles were designed for Moorman to wear while playing *TV Cello*. They debuted during a performance of *Concerto for TV Cello and Videotape* at the Galeria Bonino in New York during the 1971 exhibition *Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer with Charlotte Moorman: Electronic Art III*. They usually displayed the same images as the *TV Cello*.

TV Bra for Living Sculpture, 1969

Cathode-ray tubes, acrylic, miniature cathode-ray tube television casings and electronics, vinyl straps, safety pins, rheostat, foot switches, adhesive tape, and cables

Estate of Nam June Paik

Paik said in 1969: “The real issue implied in Art and Technology is not to make another scientific toy, but how to humanize the technology. . . . By using TV as bra, . . . the most intimate belonging of human being, we will . . . stimulate [the viewer’s] phantasy to look for the new, imaginative and humanistic ways of using our technology.” Moorman usually wore *TV Bra* while playing a traditional cello, as seen in the nearby video documentation of the pair’s performances, while the monitors displayed live TV, recorded tapes, or the video feed from a closed-circuit camera. In some versions, audio signals from a microphone were converted to video to create wavelike visual distortions.

**Postcard announcing performances of
“TV Bra for Living Sculpture,” 1975**

Tate Library and Archive, David Mayor Collection

Fluxus

Formed in the early 1960s, Fluxus was a collective of radically experimental artists, composers, and performers from around the world. As an early member of this avant-garde group and a frequent traveler between Europe, the U.S., and Japan, Paik played an important role in bridging Fluxus artists and events. The rebellious spirit of Fluxus suited the boundary-crossing character of Paik's work. Any situation or gesture, no matter how mundane, could turn into an event, object, or publication. Paik's Fluxus gestures took the form of actions and written manifestos as well as sculptural works, represented here by simple machines and playful arrangements of found objects and through video and photo documentation of the artist's first mechanical performance partner, *Robot K-456*. In their now infamous festivals, Paik and other Fluxus artists also used scores and written instructions to generate at times anarchic live performances, dramatically expanding the notion of what art could be.

TV documentation of “Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik”

1962

Single-channel video, with sound, 5:45 min.

Museum Wiesbaden, Germany, courtesy Hessischer Rundfunk

Documentary footage of Paik and “Robot K-456”

1964–82

Single-channel video, with sound, 3:57 min.

Estate of Nam June Paik

In 1964 engineer Shuya Abe helped Paik construct *Robot K-456*, an intentionally shoddy radio-controlled “mechanical performer” that could walk, raise its arms, play recorded sounds, and even urinate. “I thought it should meet people in the street and give them a split-second surprise,” Paik explained. Among its many appearances around the world, *Robot K-456* performed with Paik and cellist Charlotte Moorman at Judson Hall and on the streets of New York in 1964, playing President John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address and defecating white beans. During Paik’s 1982 retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, *Robot K-456* was in a staged car accident on Madison Avenue, documented here along with *Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik*.

Poster for “Festum Fluxorum Fluxus”

1963, printed 2002

Digital print

Designer: George Maciunas

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

In February 1963, together with Joseph Beuys and George Maciunas, Paik organized the legendary *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. The two-day festival was described on the poster as a program of “music and anti-music” as well as “instrumental theater.” Here Maciunas distributed his Fluxus manifesto: “Purge the world of bourgeois sickness, ‘intellectual’, professional and commercialized culture . . . PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART. Promote living art, anti-art, promote NON ART REALITY to be fully grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.”

Manfred Leve, **Festum Fluxorum Fluxus, Staatliche Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf, February 3, 1963, Nam June Paik's "Fluxus Champion Contest,"** 1963, printed 2019

Collection of Marc Leve

The instructions for Paik's *Fluxus Champion Contest* read: "Performers gather around a large tub or bucket on stage. All piss into the bucket. As each pisses, he sings his national anthem. When any contestant stops pissing, he stops singing. The last performer left singing is the champion." The winner of this contest was Frank Trowbridge, singing the U.S. national anthem, with a performance lasting 59.7 seconds.

Manfred Leve, **Festum Fluxorum**
Fluxus, Staatliche Kunstakademie,
Düsseldorf, February 3, 1963, Nam
June Paik during Benjamin Patterson's
"PAPER PIECE" (1960), 1963, printed 2019

Collection of Marc Leve

Hartmut Rekort, **Nam June Paik Performing “Simple,”**
Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik,
Wiesbaden, 1962

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

As one of his “action music” works during Karlheinz Stockhausen and Mary Bauermeister’s *Originale*, directed by Carlheinz Caspari, in 1961 at Theater am Dom in Cologne, *Simple* featured Paik pouring flour and water over his own head as Stockhausen’s musical composition *Kontakte* was played.

Hartmut Rekort, **Performance of Philip Corner's
"Piano Activities" at the "Fluxus Internationale
Festspiele Neuester Musik," Wiesbaden, 1962**

Tate Library and Archive, David Mayor Collection

Philip Corner's *Piano Activities* was a "piece for many pianists," inviting performers to explore and produce sounds with various parts of a piano. In a very free interpretation of Corner's score, George Maciunas and other Fluxus artists, including Paik, attacked a grand piano over several days until it was completely destroyed. They then auctioned off the debris to the audience. The performers pictured here are, from left to right: Emmett Williams, Wolf Vostell, Nam June Paik, Dick Higgins, Benjamin Patterson, and George Maciunas.

**Leaflet for the “Fluxus Internationale
Festspiele Neuester Musik,”** 1962,
reprinted 1992. Designer: George
Maciunas

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

Manfred Leve, **Neo-Dada in der Musik, Kammerspiele, Düsseldorf, 16 June 1962, Nam June Paik Performing “Sonata quasi una fantasia,”** 1962, printed 2019

Collection of Marc Leve

In *Sonata quasi una fantasia*, Paik played Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata* on a piano while getting undressed, until he was left in bathing briefs. He then cut holes in the briefs with scissors, smeared himself with tomato puree, leaned on the keyboard, loosened a piano key with a screwdriver, and activated a siren. Also on stage was a blackboard inscribed with George Brecht’s *WORD EVENT*, a score consisting simply of the word “EXIT.”

Neo-Dada in der Musik, 1962

Tate Library and Archive, David Mayor Collection

Neo-Dada in der Musik, held at the Kammerspiele Düsseldorf on June 16, 1962, was the second official Fluxus event, taking place only a few days after the *Kleines Sommerfest: Après John Cage*, which had taken place at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, Germany. Paik performed several of his key early actions there, including *One for Violin Solo*, in which he held a violin in midair and then destroyed it by smashing it violently against the table, and the piano piece *Sonata quasi una fantasia*, seen in a photograph nearby.

Yellow Peril! c'est moi, 1964

Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Archiv Sohm, Germany

Paik included this note in a letter to Fluxus founder George Maciunas. Ever the nomad—Paik spent 1964 traveling between Germany, Japan, and the U.S.—the artist embraced his outsider status and rejected any kind of authoritarian nationalism. In this message he combines the racist anti-Asian phrase “yellow peril” with a reference to French emperor Louis XIV’s despotic declaration “L’etat c’est moi” (“I am the State”), thereby subverting the message and calling out hypocritical fear mongering and stereotyping.

V TRE no. 1 (ccV TRE)

January 1964, reprinted ca. 1970

V TRE no. 4 (fLexus cc fiVe ThReE)

June 1964, reprinted ca. 1970

Lithography

Editors: George Brecht and Fluxus Editorial Council

Tate Library and Archive, David Mayor Collection

George Brecht and George Maciunas launched the newspaper *V TRE* to showcase the work of Fluxus members. The January 1964 issue includes a reproduction of “Today’s Face: Nam June Paik,” previously published in the newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun*. The profile included references to his Korean nationality, his “action music” performances, and *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television*, along with quotes on John Cage. The front page of the June 1964 issue features a key text by Paik, demonstrating the continuity he saw between *Exposition of Music* and his Fluxus activities. The neo-Dada, interdisciplinary, and participatory spirit of that pivotal exhibition encapsulated the traits that had led Maciunas to invite Paik to become a core member of Fluxus.

Hans de Boer, **Alison Knowles in Nam June Paik's
"Serenade for Alison,"** 1962, printed later

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

The score for *Serenade for Alison*, displayed in this case, was published in Wolf Vostell's magazine *Décollage*. Knowles performed Paik's composition at *Parallel Performances of New Music*, a follow-up to the *Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik*, organized by Vostell at the Galerie Monet in Amsterdam on October 5, 1962. In her rendition Knowles added clothespins, sleigh bells, and transistor radios tuned to the local news station to the Korean bathrobe Paik had given her. Standing on a table, she gradually removed pairs of underwear and tuned her radios, stepping down "when the ritual no longer amused" her, and then led the audience, including Paik, out of the gallery for a city walk.

Alison Knowles, **Composition for Paik**,
1964. Reproduced in **By Alison Knowles**
(New York: Something Else Press, 1965)

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library and
Archives

**Serenade for Alison and Young
Penis Symphony, 1962.** Reproduced
in **Décollage** no. 3 (December 1962).
Editor: Wolf Vostell

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library and
Archives

Manfred Leve, **Festum Fluxorum Fluxus, Staatliche Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf, February 3, 1963, Nam June Paik's "Young Penis Symphony,"** 1963, printed 2019

Collection of Marc Leve

As part of *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus*, artist and musician Benjamin Patterson presented *PAPER PIECE*, a lively action in which sheets of paper of various dimensions are torn apart and thrown around the stage. At the start of the event Paik staged an interpretation of his score *Young Penis Symphony*, with participants sticking their fingers, rather than their genitals, through the large sheet of paper. The holes made by the fingers then turned into larger tears as Patterson's *PAPER PIECE* started in earnest.

Half-Time, 1962. Reproduced in
Décollage no. 4 (January 1964).
Editor: Wolf Vostell

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library and
Archives

Moving Theater No. 2, 1963

Tate Library and Archive, Nimai Chatterji Collection

Postmusic [recto and verso], 1963

Estate of Nam June Paik

Paik produced *Postmusic* as part of a mail-art project titled *The Monthly Review of the University for Avant-Garde Hinduism*. In this text, subtitled “an essay for the new ontology of music,” Paik summarized his thoughts on music at large and in relation to his practice as a visual artist. Toward the end of the text, he mentions “New American style boring music,” presumably referring to the compositions of La Monte Young and Morton Feldman, later known as minimal music. Paik considered boredom a key concept in Zen philosophy and boringness a positive quality in art.

N.J. PAIK: FLUXUS Island in Décollage OCEAN

1963

Offset lithograph

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, purchase, with funds from the Robert and Marilyn Wilson Foundation

Made as part of a series of publications published by artist Wolf Vostell titled *Décollage*, this “map” visualizes Fluxus as an archipelago. Within it, Paik laid out key concepts, spaces, people, and events—real and imaginary—connected to the birth of the movement.

**Poster for “ACTIONS/AGIT POP/DÉ-COLL/AGE/
HAPPENINGS/EVENTS/ANTI ART/L'AUTRISME/
ART TOTAL/RE[FLUXUS]”**

1964

Lithograph and screenprint

Designer: Wolf Vostell

Tate and National Galleries of Scotland, acquired jointly through The d'Offay Donation with assistance from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Art Fund

Paik contributed his collage *I Admire MONKEY* to this poster designed by Vostell for an action planned for his birthday, July 20, in 1964 in Aachen, Germany. Paik was in Japan at the time and could not take part in the event, which was famously interrupted when an audience member punched Joseph Beuys, who had provocatively proposed raising the recently built Berlin Wall by a few centimeters. July 20 also happened to be the twentieth anniversary of the failed coup against Hitler. Paik's poster design addresses authoritarian violence by juxtaposing excerpts from a report on torture methods used in the Algerian war with illustrations from Japanese publications showing people being tortured by samurai.

Poster for “Intermedia Arts Festival”

1969

Lithograph

Designer: Sugihura

Tate Library and Archive, David Mayor Collection

ADJACENT WALL, LEFT TO RIGHT

Untitled

1974/1982–83

Television casing, framed canvas, wooden panel, cloth, pastel, oil, and television antennae

Flux Fleet

1974

Metal irons and enamel oil paint

Ohne Titel (Krawattenzeichnung II)

(Untitled [Tie Drawing II])

1961

Ink on paper

Tate, presented by the Hakuta family (Tate Americas Foundation) (left and center); Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany (right)

During his “action music” scenes in Karlheinz Stockhausen and Mary Bauermeister’s *Originale* (1961), Paik dipped his tie into ink to use it as a “brush.” In *Zen for Head*, he dipped his head into ink to draw a line on a long paper scroll. The performance was Paik’s interpretation of a score by La Monte Young, *Composition 1960 #10 to Bob Morris*, which consisted of a single statement: “Draw a line and follow it.” Paik would repeat these performances during the 1962 *Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik* in Wiesbaden, Germany. The act of a single gestural “brushstroke” connected Paik’s radical actions to traditional Asian calligraphy and Zen meditation techniques.

Fluxus Preview Review (Fluxroll) [recto
and verso]

1963

Lithographs

Editor and designer: George Maciunas

Tate Library and Archive, Nimai Chatterji Collection
(left); Tate library and Archive, David Mayor Collection
(right)

Can Car, 1963

Metal cans, wheels, and electric motor

Tate, presented by the Hakuta family (Tate Americas Foundation)

Wood Car, 1963

Wood, motors, and audiotape

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

Made in Germany during Paik's early years as an artist, *Can Car* and *Wood Car* were constructed using found materials: two rusty oil cans, wood scraps, audiotape, and sets of wheels repurposed from a toy. Influenced by Marcel Duchamp, Fluxus artists turned everyday found objects, or "readymades" to use Duchamp's term, into artworks by exhibiting them in unexpected contexts, unmodified or with minimal changes. Paik was known to use his young nephew's toys to make little sculptures such as these two. Both cars could roll around thanks to small functioning electric motors.

Live Feed

In 1971 Paik observed, “My obsession with TV for the past 10 years has been . . . a steady progression towards more differentiated participation by viewers.” The works in this gallery represent three different approaches Paik pursued toward a more transparent, responsive, and human-centered use of technology. As equipment for recording and broadcasting images became more widely available, Paik recognized that every consumer could be a potential producer and go live, making video technologies democratic tools for cultural output. In *Three Camera Participation* the lens points directly at visitors, encouraging them to be both the creators and subjects of the electronic images in real time. *TV Crown* and *Video Commune* both sought to combine electronic abstraction and live manipulation through either audio feedback or an open invitation to the audience to supply an accompanying soundtrack for Paik’s visuals.

Three Camera Participation/Participation TV

1969–2001

Closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, tripods, custom-made video-booster amplifier, video projector, and cathode-ray tube television

Kunsthalle Bremen, Germany

In this participatory work, Paik invites you to enter the live feed and create images with your presence. Each of the three CCTV cameras is connected to one of the primary colors of a video signal: red, blue, and green. Their video signals are transmitted separately, splitting the live camera feed into overlapping colored silhouettes. The resulting images are simultaneously visible on the monitor and projected on the wall with a slight time delay that creates a dynamic disorienting effect. Before *Three Camera Participation*, Paik had made a few works called *Participation TV* in which the image was distorted or modulated in real time by audio signals picked up by a microphone.

TV Crown

1965/1999

Manipulated television, audio generators, audio amplifier, and capacitor/battery

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

TV Crown consists of a modified TV hooked up to two audio generators and an amplifier. Paik rewired the monitor so that the display is not coming from a broadcast or video signal, but from the real-time translation of audio waves into visual lines and patterns. The work was originally conceived as interactive: adjusting the audio generators changes the shape of the image and adjusting the amplitude changes its cadence and pace.

For conservation reasons, the dials are now behind Plexiglas, but over the course of the exhibition trained members of SFMOMA's team will regularly change the coordinates, rotating through the four patterns favored by Paik.

Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut



Video Commune (Beatles Beginning to End)

1970, reedited 1992

16mm film transferred to video, with separate audio channel with recordings by the Beatles, 8:36 min.

Produced by WGBH-TV, Boston

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

The live TV broadcast of *Video Commune* on August 1, 1970, was the public debut of the *Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer*. Originally a four-hour live program, it was an improvised montage of distorted TV imagery accompanied by songs from the Beatles' back catalogue. Paik invited random passersby into the studio and let them remix video images as they aired. The work's current form is documentation of the program, made by filming a TV screen on 16mm film. In keeping with the spirit of the original participatory live broadcast, the artists invited viewers to choose their own soundtracks by the Beatles to accompany this silent version.

This presentation uses a playlist of songs by the Beatles selected by the SFMOMA exhibition team. All tracks were released between 1968 and 1970, when Paik was working on the synthesizer and broadcast. *Video Commune* is also accessible at sfmoma.org/paik, where you can watch from home with the Beatles soundtrack of your choice, as Paik and Yalkut originally intended.

Transmission

Paik wanted to use telecommunication technologies to distribute art and enable live long-distance collaborations. As early as 1968 he envisioned this profound shift in connectivity: “the revolution in 1960 means electronification . . . mind to mind . . . planet to planet.” Pushing the scope and participatory potential of his art, and anticipating major technological developments along the way, was a career-long occupation. By 1974 Paik had coined the phrase “Electronic Superhighway” to refer to a decentralized, worldwide system for exchanging information.

Paik saw satellite transmissions as the perfect tool to bring his art across geographical boundaries. With Charlotte Moorman, he had already participated in the very first live satellite transmission of an art event at the opening of *Documenta 6*, in Kassel, Germany, in 1977, when *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* aired on January 1, 1984. The show connected live events in New York and Paris and was also broadcast in Korea, the Netherlands, and West Germany. Two years later *Bye Bye Kipling* linked New York, Seoul, and Tokyo during the Asian Games, bridging the gap between high and popular culture and genres while reaching a mass audience for Paik’s experimental art.

Two of Paik's most ambitious and inventive satellite broadcasts, **Good Morning Mr. Orwell** and **Bye Bye Kipling**, are projected here back to back.

The program begins at 10:30 a.m., 11:45 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 2:15 p.m., and 3:30 p.m. daily.

On Thursday evenings these works also screen at 4:45 p.m., 6:00 p.m., and 7:15 p.m.

Bye Bye Kipling

1986

Single-channel video, with sound, 30:32 min.

Produced by WNET/Thirteen, New York, the Korean Broadcasting System, and Asahi National Broadcasting Ltd., Japan

Producer: Carol Brandenburg

Editor of single-channel version: Skip Blumberg

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Bye Bye Kipling linked New York, Seoul, and Tokyo during the Asian Games. The title refers to a famous passage from a Rudyard Kipling poem: “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” Paik proved Kipling wrong by bringing together musician Lou Reed and Kabuki theater, artist Keith Haring and fashion designer Issey Miyake, composer Philip Glass and a marathon in Seoul. As with *Good Morning Mr. Orwell*, Paik coordinated the event and designed the graphics that appear between the video segments.

Good Morning Mr. Orwell

1984

Single-channel video, with sound, 37:54 min.

Produced by WNET/Thirteen, New York; FR3, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and WDR Westdeutscher Rundfunk

Producer: Carol Brandenburg

Partial Post-Production: Paul Garrin, Nam June Paik

Post-Production: Broadway Video, Post Perfect

Editor of single-channel version: Skip Blumberg

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Good Morning Mr. Orwell is an edited version of Paik's first international satellite transmission, which was broadcast on New Year's Day 1984. It was his rebuttal to George Orwell's novel *1984*, a vision of a dystopian future in which telecommunications are deployed as instruments of mass surveillance and oppression. Paik visually brought together events happening simultaneously in the U.S. and Europe, overlapping them in the same frame. The event featured an intentionally jarring mix of "high art" and popular entertainment, live and recorded footage, as well as a computer animation accompanying a composition by Philip Glass. Many of Paik's friends and colleagues are featured, including Laurie Anderson, Merce Cunningham, Peter Gabriel, and Allen Ginsberg.

John Cage and Merce Cunningham

Paik met experimental composer John Cage in 1958 in Darmstadt, Germany. This encounter had such significance for his work that he began to describe the year 1957 as “1 BC (Before Cage).” Paik embraced Cage’s concept of indeterminacy and shared his interest in Zen Buddhism, and the two artists became lifelong friends united by their radical humanist artistic practices and study of Eastern philosophies. In response to Cage’s influential composition *4'33"* (1952), Paik began to incorporate chance and silence into his work, embodied here in *Zen for Film*.

Choreographer and dancer Merce Cunningham would also become a longtime friend and collaborator. A self-described “groupie” since the early 1960s, Paik first worked with Cunningham in 1965 on a multimedia TV performance to which Cage contributed the music. The three artists would lend their respective artistic visions to collaborative projects throughout their careers. Paik would later honor his two friends, who were also partners in life, by including them in his ongoing series *Family of Robot*, dedicated to family members as well as to important historical figures and colleagues.

**Audiotapes used for “Hommage à John Cage,
Music for Audiotapes and Piano”**

1959

Audiotapes, wooden box, and lithograph

Private collection

These are some of the original tapes Paik used in his performances of *Hommage à John Cage*.

Paik had moved from Munich to Cologne in 1958 to work at the Studio for Electronic Music of West German Broadcasting (WDR). That same year Paik attended Cage’s lectures at the Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music. He performed *Hommage à John Cage* for the first time at Jean-Pierre Wilhelm’s Gallery 22 in Düsseldorf in November 1959 and again at Mary Bauermeister’s studio salon in Cologne in 1960. This was Paik’s first venture outside the boundaries of conventional composition and music performance.

ON TERRACE

Audio from “Hommage à John Cage, Music for Audiotapes and Piano” (1958–59), 4:13 min.

Estate of Nam June Paik

Employing pre-recorded sounds, Paik’s *Hommage à John Cage* is an early example of sampled music. Besides incorporating audiotapes, Paik used a variety of objects in his original performance: a reviewer listed “two pianos (one of which had no keys), tape recorders, tin cans with stones, a toy car, a plastic train, an egg, a pane of glass, a bottle holding the stump of a candle, and a music box.” The fact that this presentation blends Paik’s composition with ambient noise from Third Street below is a fitting tribute to Cage’s incorporation of chance audio events into his music.

Zen for Film

1964

Blank 16mm film leader, silent

A circular logo with a thin black border. Inside the circle, the text "New to the Collection" is written in a clean, sans-serif font, centered and stacked in two lines.

New to the
Collection

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

In *Zen for Film*, a blank 16mm film leader runs through the projector. Later adapted to a continuous loop for gallery display, the work was first performed in a cinema. Presenting the blank film the same way as a traditional film, Paik encouraged the viewer to become aware of the physical aspects of the projection and viewing experience: dust and scratches on the film itself, the projector, the screen, oneself and other audience members. When it was shown in 1965 as part of the *New Cinema Festival I* in New York, Paik stood in front of the projection, casting and watching his own shadow.

Zen for Film

1965

Blank 8mm film strip, plastic box, and lithograph

Tate Library and Archive, Nimai Chatterji Collection

Zen for Film was included in the Fluxus short film compilation *Fluxfilm Anthology* as a 16mm film and in the home movie format of 8mm in *Fluxkit*, a portable case assembled by George Maciunas containing multiples by several Fluxus artists and copies of the *V TRE* newspaper. Maciunas often used plastic boxes as containers for individual works and scores within his “kits” and usually designed their labels. Paik’s adaptation consists of a box with a strip of blank film, allowing owners to set up their own projections of a short version of his film.

Cage Waves

1996

Graphite on paper

Tate, presented by the Hakuta family (Tate Americas Foundation)

This drawing suggests a series of sound waves accompanied by a smiling face, signaling Paik's affection for Cage, his lifelong friend and mentor who had died four years earlier, in 1992. Paik showed a great interest in waves, describing them as "one of the most widespread phenomena in the physical, biological, human world."

TV Silence

2002

Permanent oil marker on framed
photograph of John Cage by Nancy
Crampton

Estate of Nam June Paik

LEFT TO RIGHT

Klaus Barisch

Nam June Paik and John Cage during “Étude for Piano Forte,” Atelier Mary Bauermeister, 6 October 1960

Nam June Paik and John Cage during “Étude for Piano Forte,” Atelier Mary Bauermeister, 6 October 1960

John Cage during Nam June Paik’s “Étude for Piano Forte,” Atelier Mary Bauermeister, 6 October 1960

John Cage during Nam June Paik’s “Étude for Piano Forte,” Atelier Mary Bauermeister, 6 October 1960

Nam June Paik, John Cage and David Tudor after “Étude for Piano Forte,” Atelier Mary Bauermeister, 6 October 1960

1960, printed 2019

Courtesy Klaus Barisch

In 1960 Paik performed his notorious *Étude for Piano Forte* at Mary Bauermeister’s studio salon in Cologne. After playing classical music by Chopin, he hit the piano then walked up to the audience, which included Cage as well as composers David Tudor and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Paik cut Cage’s tie in half, shredded his own clothes with scissors, and poured shampoo over Cage’s and Tudor’s heads before exiting the studio, leaving the audience to wait for his return. Eventually he phoned the host to let them know that the piece was over. Cage later commented: “I am determined to think twice before attending another performance by Nam June Paik.”

A Tribute to John Cage

1973, reedited 1976

Single-channel video, with sound, 29:17 min.

Produced by the New Television Workshop and the TV Lab at WNET/
Thirteen, New York

Host: Russell Connor

Guest: Alvin Lucier

Performers: Marianne Amacher, David Behrman, John Cage, Charlotte
Moorman, Pula, Richard Teitelbaum, David Tudor

Featuring excerpts of work by Cathy Berberian, Jackie Cassen, Francis Lee,
David Rosenboom, Alfons Schilling, Stan VanDerBeek, and Jud Yalkut

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Camille W. and William S. Broadbent
Fund purchase

In this multifaceted portrait, Paik creates a collage of Cage's performances, anecdotes shared by figures such as composer Alvin Lucier, and interviews with friends and colleagues, along with examples of his own participatory music and TV works that parallel the composer's strategies and concerns. The methodology and philosophies that inform Cage's radical musical aesthetic—chance, randomness, the democratization of sounds—are demonstrated here through clips in which he throws the *I Ching* to determine performance sites and performs *4'33"* (1952), a composition in which a pianist remains silent while ceremoniously performing three movements without touching the piano. The video includes footage of *Robot K-456* walking around New York and Paik's early performances with cellist Charlotte Moorman.

John Cage Robot II

1995

Wooden television cabinets, cathode-ray tube televisions, piano hammers, piano keys, piano wire, books, CDs, necktie, basket, wooden mushrooms, chess pieces, and multichannel video (silent)

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas

Paik began his series *Family of Robot* in the early 1980s and expanded it in the 1990s with robot tributes to his friends, collaborators, and historical figures. In *John Cage Robot II*, the figure is decorated with piano hammers and keys and carries a basket filled with books, CDs, wooden mushrooms, and chess pieces: a loving portrait of Cage's passions. The books speak to the artists' shared interest in Zen, while the CDs are Cage's *16 Dances* and *In a Landscape*. A cut tie around the robot's neck recalls Paik's 1960 performance of *Étude for Piano Forte*, in which Cage was an unexpected participant, as seen in photographs nearby.

Untitled (John Cage)

1996

Graphite, pastel, and playing cards on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

In 1978 Paik created a multiple of a deck of playing cards dedicated to his friend and mentor Cage, with stills from his video *A Tribute to John Cage*, on view nearby, printed on their back. Playing cards evoke Cage's use of random variables to compose his music. The cards form the eyes and mouth of this portrait, which is completed with a hand-drawn nose. The Chinese characters are transcriptions of Eastern philosophical writings and the Chinese saying "laughter brings many blessings."

Untitled (John Cage)

1996

Graphite, pastel, and playing cards
on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Merce/Digital

1988

Television and radio cabinets, monitors, and single-channel video (silent)

Collection of Roselyne Chroman Swig, San Francisco

Both Paik and Cunningham embraced risk and chance in their work and shared a devotion to collaboration across genres. Their common interest in time—movement in time, experiential time, and visualization of time—is explored in the nearby collaborative video *Merce by Merce by Paik*. Here Paik depicts Cunningham in robot form, reflecting distinctive aspects of his work. The dynamic arrangement of radio cabinets retrofitted with cathode-ray tube monitors evokes the integral relationship between music and dance, embodying the artist's revolutionary exploration of movement. As in their work together on Paik's satellite broadcasts in the early 1980s, *Merce/Digital* utilizes technology to center personal connection (here the friendship between Paik and Cunningham) and humanize the medium of video.

Charles Atlas, Merce Cunningham, and Nam June Paik



Merce by Merce by Paik: Part One: Blue Studio: Five Segments

1975–76

Single-channel video, with sound, 15:38 min.

Shigeko Kubota and Nam June Paik

Merce by Merce by Paik: Part Two: Merce and Marcel

1978

Single-channel video, with sound, 13:05 min.

Produced by the TV Lab at WNET/Thirteen, New York

Host: Russell Connor

Camera: Bob Harris

Music: John Cage, David Held, Earl Howard

Featuring excerpts of work by Russell Connor, Jean Marie Drot, Nancy Graves, Bill Gwin, Erik Martin, and Woody and Steina Vasulka

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

Merce by Merce by Paik is a two-part tribute to Cunningham. *Part One* features choreography devised by Cunningham specifically for the video camera and manipulated by artist Charles Atlas, who was then filmmaker-in-residence with the Cunningham Dance Company. The dance is accompanied by a fragmented audio collage that includes the voices of Cage and artist Jasper Johns. In *Part Two*, Paik and artist Shigeko Kubota, who was also his partner in life, pay tribute to Marcel Duchamp alongside Cunningham. Creating what Paik referred to as a “dance of time,” they intercut an interview with Cunningham by Russell Connor with an earlier conversation between Connor and Duchamp.

Untitled

1982

Gelatin silver print from manipulated
video with permanent oil marker

Estate of Nam June Paik

Joseph Beuys



Beuys and Paik meeting at Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf, on the occasion of the Zero group exhibition, 1961. Photo: Manfred Tischler, courtesy the Estate of Nam June Paik

After meeting at the Zero group exhibition in Düsseldorf in 1961, Paik and German artist Joseph Beuys developed a lifelong artistic and personal friendship. Their avant-garde musical collaborations, which began with the *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* in 1963, continued until Beuys's death, in 1986.

Deeply affected by their shared experience of countries divided by the Cold War, Korea and Germany respectively, both artists made reflecting on Eurasia—an idea uniting Europe and Asia and stereotypical dichotomies associated with each continent, such as the scientific and the spiritual—central to their practices. Paik and Beuys were equally drawn to humanist and radical performances based on the traditions and symbols of various shamanistic rituals, represented in this gallery through their collaborative projects *In Memoriam George Maciunas* and *Coyote III*. They are presented in dialogue with works by Paik that directly address his ancestral origins, including the sculptures *Chongro Cross* and *Camel Saddle*.

Joseph Beuys, John Cage, and Nam June Paik

“Good Morning Mr. Orwell” Benefit Print

1983

Screenprint

Estate of Nam June Paik

This is one of a series of benefit prints that Beuys, Cage, Merce Cunningham, Allen Ginsberg, and Paik, all performers in *Good Morning Mr. Orwell*, an edited version of which is on view in a previous gallery, made to support Paik’s satellite broadcast.

Shaman Memory

1988

Lithograph

Estate of Nam June Paik

Beuys and Paik shared an interest in shamanistic rituals. In this work Paik explains his use of a cow's head at the entrance to *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television* (1963): "At my home in Seoul every autumn the shaman with the cow head upon her head danced in a trance during the ritual performance for the tutelary god. The 78 rpm record is the one used by my mother, and the writing 'Performance for Tutelary God' on it was mine during my college days, written so that my mother, who suffered from cataracts, could read it."

Joseph Beuys and Nam June Paik,

Piano Duet, 1981

Screenprints on playing cards in linen-covered box with screenprint mounted on lid

Estate of Nam June Paik

Camel Saddle

1995–2005

Wooden camel saddle, paint, plastic skull, cathode-ray tube monitors, and single-channel video (silent)



New to the
Collection

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

Paik acquired this camel saddle from an antique store in New York along with other objects related to what he considered a Silk Road theme. The Silk Road represented for Paik a proto “electronic superhighway”—the artist’s visionary prediction of the internet. Both Paik and Beuys were interested in communication and exchange between Europe and Asia. Here two monitors play a silent clip of another friend, Allen Ginsberg, chanting and playing cymbals, also included in *Global Groove* (1973) and *TV Garden* (1974). This late work, incorporating a plastic skull in reference to his mortality, affirms Paik’s deeply felt connection to the Eurasian Steppe as a Korean-born nomad with Mongolian ancestors.

Chongro Cross

1991

Cathode-ray tube monitors, light boxes, gelatin silver transparencies, wood, concrete hat, wheat carrier, pipes, dishes, and two-channel video (silent)

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions

This work is both an homage to Beuys, who had died in 1986, and a reflection on Paik's family history and cultural origins. In the corners of the wall-mounted grid are photographs of one-year-old Paik with his father and of Paik's grandfather. Video monitors alternate footage of his family's textile factory in the Chongro district of Seoul, filmed in 1929, and documentation of a 1990 performance in the same city, where Paik, dressed as a Korean shaman, performed a ritual for the late Beuys, represented here by a concrete cast of his characteristic hat. On the ground are traditional Korean objects found at shrines commemorating ancestors.

Untitled

1985

Pastel and collage on paper

Estate of Nam June Paik

Map A.

1988

Lithograph

Estate of Nam June Paik

Paik made several maps related to Beuys's personal transformation legend, which held that, following a plane crash in Crimea in 1944, when he was piloting a German bomber, he was rescued by a group of nomadic Tartars who coated him in animal fat and wrapped him in felt. As a Korean, Paik identified with the Tartars in that story. This eighteenth-century map of the territory where Europe and Asia converge, featuring a photo by Manfred Leve of Beuys at the 1963 *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus*, shows, in Paik's words, "the meeting between the Tartar Chinese . . . and Beuys. The burned hat is indicative of an airplane crash and weeds growing on the dead body."

Joseph Beuys and Nam June Paik

In Memoriam George Maciunas: Piano Duet Joseph Beuys & Nam June Paik

1978, reedited 1995

Single-channel video, with sound, 74 min.

Documentation of the Fluxus soirée at the Staatliche Kunstakademie
Düsseldorf on July 7, 1978, organized by Galerie René Block, Berlin
Produced by Gunther Gude

Courtesy the Joseph Beuys Estate, Edition René Block, and Gunther Gude

Beuys, Paik, and Maciunas remained good friends until the latter's untimely death, on May 9, 1978. Beuys and Paik played a "piano duet" in his memory at the site of the 1963 *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus*, a festival of "music and anti-music" that Beuys had organized at Maciunas's request. The duo improvised for seventy-four minutes, Beuys playing the same piano he had used in his Fluxus action in 1963. The concert's duration was a reference to Maciunas's age at the time of his death—forty-seven—inverted.

Joseph Beuys and Nam June Paik

In Memoriam George Maciunas

1984–86

Portfolio of felt, wood, phonograph records, and
screenprint in wooden box

Estate of Nam June Paik

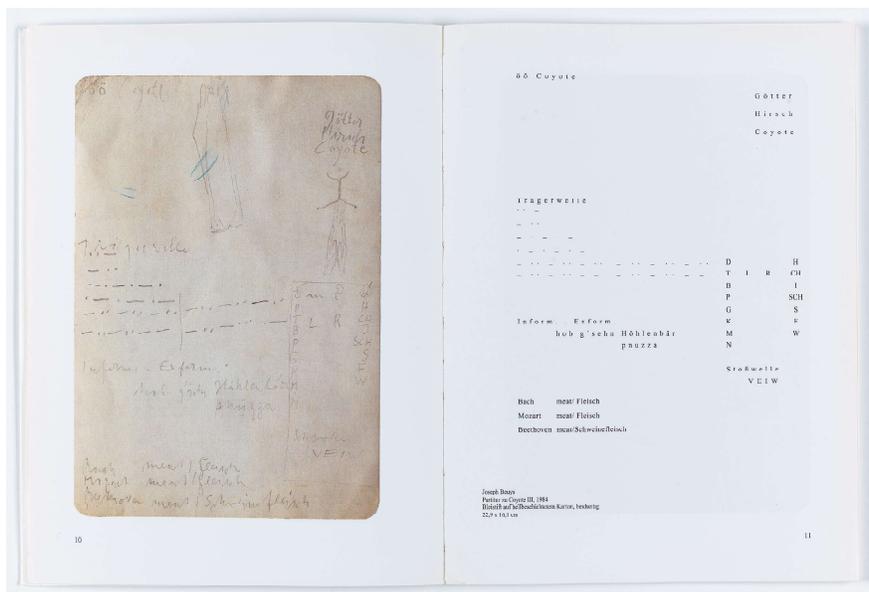
This multiple, made as a follow-up to Paik and Beuys's joint 1978 performance, is a tribute to the founder of Fluxus. It contains a record of their 1978 "piano duet" and two works symbolizing their early connections to the Fluxus movement. Beuys's work is *Felt Wedge*, the combination of a shape and a material often used in his works from the 1960s. Paik contributed his *Primeval Piano (Urklavier)*, a rudimentary xylophone made of unrefined sticks that harks back to his much earlier "sonic objects."

**Poster for “Piano Duet Joseph Beuys &
Nam June Paik: In Memoriam George
Maciunas”**

1978

Lithograph

Tate and National Galleries of Scotland, acquired jointly
through The d’Offay Donation with assistance from
the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Art Fund



Joseph Beuys, *Score for "Coyote III,"* 1984. Reproduced in *Joseph Beuys: Coyote III, Konzert 1984 mit Nam June Paik, Pianovariation 1984, Seibu Museum of Art, Tokyo, Sôgetsu Hall* (Berlin: Joseph Beuys Medien-Archiv, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart; Göttingen: Steidl, 2008). San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Library and Archives

Joseph Beuys and Nam June Paik

Coyote III

1984

Single-channel video, with sound, 62:10 min.

Courtesy the Joseph Beuys Estate and ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe

Paik and Beuys's second collaborative concert, a variation on their 1978 performance *In Memoriam George Maciunas*, was held at the Seibu Museum in Tokyo. Though the set-up featured two grand pianos, only Paik sat down as planned and played Chopin and Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*, as well as moon-related songs from Korea and Japan. Beuys performed spontaneously, adhering only to a few scribbled notes as a score, including sketches, German phrases, and nonsensical words such as "öö," which he referred to as "language without any meaning." During the performance he vocalized the names of German classical composers combined with the words *Fleisch* (meat) or *Schweinefleisch* (pork) and at times howled like a coyote. Beuys conceived of this concert as a conclusion to his previous Coyote works, *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974) and *Coyote II* (1979), which addressed the coexistence of humankind and animals.

This video begins approximately on the hour.

Sistine Chapel

In 1993 Paik and German artist Hans Haacke jointly represented Germany at the Venice Biennale and won the Golden Lion award for the German Pavilion that year. Considering both artists had lived in the United States since the mid-1960s, the selection emphasized an international perspective in post-reunification Germany.

Reflecting his interest in the historical and philosophical links between Europe and Asia, Paik exhibited a series of works inspired by Marco Polo's thirteenth-century journey from Venice to Mongolia and beyond, with the large immersive video installation *Sistine Chapel* as the centerpiece. Restaged here for the first time, this work consists of fast-paced and overlapping images that completely cover the gallery walls and ceiling—one of the most underappreciated parts of architecture, according to Paik. With its electronic visuals and booming audio—interspersed with periods of silence—the installation stands in stark contrast to the experience of its namesake in the Vatican. Using forty projectors, which switch at random between four different videos, *Sistine Chapel* is an audiovisual collage of footage from Paik's past videos, which feature many of his friends and collaborators. It was Paik's way of remixing and summarizing his entire artistic career. For Paik, Venice, the historic embodiment of the excessive riches of centuries of global commerce, provided the ideal stage for this updated take on the circulation of images and immaterial goods in contemporary society.

Sistine Chapel

1993/2019

Video projectors, metal, wood, custom video switcher, and four-channel video (with sound)

Estate of Nam June Paik

One Candle (Candle Projection)

1989

Closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera, tripod, lit candle on custom stand, video projectors, and modified cathode-ray tube projectors

Estate of Nam June Paik

In this work a CCTV camera points at a single flickering flame, projecting and multiplying it. As in *One Candle (also known as Candle TV)*, on view at the beginning of this exhibition, Paik equates the electronic image with a light source to reflect on the precarity of existence. Separating the light into the basic video color spectrum of red, green, and blue, Paik reveals the illusory nature of electronic images. With air flow affecting its flame in real time, the live candle is a tribute to both the Buddhist belief that all things are in a continual process of change and the Catholic custom of lighting a candle as a devotional offering.

July 20

1985

Offset lithograph on cardboard

Peter Wenzel Collection, Witten, Germany

In this print Paik conjures the historical significance of the date of his birth, July 20. It juxtaposes a childhood photograph of Paik with his father and a picture of former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who shared his birthday. Paik also included an image of the German army officer Claus von Stauffenberg, who attempted to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944, and a photo of the moon landing, which happened on the same date in 1969. Four pseudo-mathematical equations, a recurring motif in Paik's works, appear under dates in the distant past and the far future, suggesting a logical continuity between these events.

Hands

2004

Ink on canvas

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Self-Portrait

2005

Cathode-ray tube television casing with liquid crystal display monitor, permanent oil marker, and single-channel video (silent)

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions

The video sculpture *Self-Portrait* is one of Paik's very last works. Footage of the artist's many TV appearances flash in rapid succession, depicting a career both behind and in front of the screen, reviewed with his typical wit and humor. Paik continued to paint and draw throughout his career, often over existing materials like newspapers and found objects. Many of his late works are characterized by colorful painted additions, with characters, faces, and TVs as common motifs. Here, on one side of the cabinet, Paik signed his name to the work in English, Korean, and Chinese.

Untitled (Dream)

2000

Graphite and ink on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Rain

2000

Pastel on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

It rains in my TV as it rains in my heart

1974

Watercolor on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the Hakuta family

Here Paik borrows and subverts the opening sentence of writer Paul Verlaine's best-known poem, from 1874: "It rains in my heart/ As it rains on the town" ("Il pleure dans mon coeur/ Comme il pleut sur la ville").

Untitled (TV Ghosting)

2005

Permanent oil marker on canvas

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family

Untitled (TV Ghosting)

2005

Permanent oil marker on canvas

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of the
Hakuta family