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CATALOG

FAR AND WIDE

BY LANFRANCO ACETI AND OMAR KHOLEIF

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LEONARDO ELECTRONIC ALMANAC CATALOG, VOLUME 19 ISSUE 5

Far and Wide

VOLUME AUTHORS
LANFRANCO ACETI AND OMAR KHOLEIF

EDITORS
ÖZDEN ŞAHİN AND CATHERINE M. WEIR

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

LEA acknowledges and is grateful for the gracious support provided to this publication by the Estate of Nam June Paik. In particular special thanks go to Ken Hakuta, Executor, Nam June Paik Estate.

Also, special thanks go to Mike Stubbs (Director/CEO of FACT) for his support.

Contents

THE GLOBAL PLAY OF NAM JUNE PAIK

THE ARTIST THAT EMBRACED AND TRANSFORMED MARSHALL MCLUHAN'S DREAMS INTO REALITY

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

Nam June Paik and Marshall McLuhan are two of the numerous artists and authors who inspired my formative years. If one cannot deny Paik's love of play and satire imbued in popular culture and used to disguise a real intellectual and conceptual approach to the artwork, neither can easily be discounted McLuhan's strong advocacy of the powerful tool that technology can be, so powerful that is able to obscure and sideline the message itself in the name of the medium.

"Marshall McLuhan's famous phrase 'Media is message' was formulated by Norbert Wiener in 1948 as 'The signal, where the message is sent, plays equally important role as the signal, where message is not sent.'" [1]

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

Paik remains perhaps one of the most revolutionary artists, for his practice was mediated, geared towards the masses and not necessarily or preeminently dominated by a desire of sitting within the establishment. He also challenged the perception of what art 'should be' and at the same time undermined elitisms through the use, at his time, of what were considered 'non-artistic-media.' Some of the choices in his career, both in terms of artistic medium and in terms of content, can be defined as visionary as well as risky to the point of bravery or idiocy, depending on the mindset of the critic.

That some of the artworks may be challenging for the viewer as well as the art critic is perhaps obvious – as obvious was Paik's willingness to challenge the various media he used, the audience that followed him and the established aesthetic of his own artistic practice. Taking risks, particularly taking risks with one's own artistic practice, may also mean to risk a downward spiral; and Paik did not seem to shy away from artworks' challenging productions and made use of varied and combined media, therefore re-defining the field of art and placing himself at the center of it.

> *In the following decades, Paik was to transform virtually all aspects of video through his innovative sculptures, installations, single-channel videotapes, productions for television, and performances. As a teacher, writer, lecturer, and advisor to foundations, he continually informed and transformed 20th century contemporary art.* [2]

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

> *Paik's latest creative deployment of new media is through laser technology. He has called his most recent installation a "post-video project," which continues the articulation of the kinetic image through the use of laser energy projected onto scrims, cascading water, and smoke-filled sculptures. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Paik's work shows us that the cinema and video are fusing with electronic and digital media into new image technologies and forms of expression. The end of video and television as we know them signals a transformation of our visual culture.* [3]

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

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

My fascination with the *Laser Cone's re-fabrication* [4] in Liverpool was immediate and I wanted to reflect in the publication, albeit symbolically, the multiple possibilities and connections that underpinned the Laser Cone's re-fabrication and its medium, as well as Paik's and McLuhan's visions of the world to come, made of light, optics and lasers.

> *The word laser is actually an acronym; it stands for Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation. Nam June Paik undertook a residency with Bell labs, who were the inventors of the laser. It was here that he created his 1966 piece Digital Experiment at Bell Labs, exploring the stark contrast between digital and analogue and his fascination with technology in its material form. His work with Bell set the precedent for artists and musicians to start using technology creatively in a new way.* [5]

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

The catalog is in itself a work that reflects the laser connections, the speed of contacts, the possibilities of connecting a variety of media as easily as connecting people from all parts of the world. In this phantasmagoria of connections it almost seems possible to visualize the optic cables and WiFi that like threads join the people and the media of McLuhan's "global village" and the multiplicities of media that Paik invited us to use to create what I would like to define as the contemporary "bastard art."[7]

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

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

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

ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. John G. Hanhardt "Nam June Paik, TV Garden, 1974," in *Permanence Through Change: The Variable media Approach*, eds. Alain Depocas, Jon Ippolito, and Caitlin Jones, 72 (New York and Montreal: Guggenheim Museum Publications and The Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, 2003).
3. Nam June Paik/Nam June Paik Studios' official Web site, "John Hanhardt's essay," http://www.paikstudios.com/essay.html (accessed January 10, 2013).
4. *Laser Cone*, 2001/2010, Nam June Paik in collaboration with Norman Ballard,
installation view at FACT. Photographer: Stephen King.
5. FACT, "Laser Cone," FACT, http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/nam-june-paik/laser-cone/ (accessed January 10, 2013).
6. FACT, "Laser Link," FACT, http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/nam-june-paik/laser-link/ (accessed January 20, 2013).
7. Art as a bastard is interpreted, in this passage, as something of uncertain origins that cannot be easily defined and neatly encapsulated in a definition or framework. "Art is often a bastard, the parents of which we do not know." Nam June Paik as cited in Florence de Meredieu, *Digital and Video Art*, trans. Richard Elliott (Edinburgh: Chambers, 2005), 180.

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The Future Is Now?

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

This programme was developed by a large group of collaborators. The discursive programme was produced by FACT in partnership with Caitlin Page, then Curator of Public Programmes at Tate. One of our primary research concerns was exploring how Paik's approach to creative practice fragmented existing ideological standpoints about the visual arts as a hermetically sealed, self-referential canon. Drawing from Bruno Latour, Norman M. Klein and Jay David Bolter, among many others – our think tank and, as such, this reader, sought to study how the visual field has proliferated across disciplines through the possibilities that are facilitated by technology. At the same time, we were keen to examine how artists now posses a unique form of agency – one that is simultaneously singular and collective, enabled by the cross-embedded nature of the current technological field. [1]

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

Researchers Jamie Allen, Gabriella Galati, Tom Schofield, and Emile Deveraux used these frameworks retrospectively to extrapolate parallels, dissonances and points of return to the artist's work. Deveraux and Allen focus on specific pieces: Deveraux discusses Paik and Shuya Abe's *Raster Manipulation Unit a.k.a. 'The Wobbulator'* (1970), while Allen surveys a series of tendencies in the artist's work, developed after he was invited to visit to the Nam June Paik Center in South Korea. Galati and Schofield stretch this framework to explore broader concerns. Schofield considers the use of data in contemporary artwork, while Galati explores the problematic association with the virtual museum being archived online.

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

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

The second and perhaps more open-ended question is: what would Nam June Paik have made of the post-internet contemporary art scene? Would Paik have been an advocate of the free distribution of artwork through such platforms as UbuWeb and YouTube? Would he have been accepting of it, if it were ephemeral, or would he have fought for the protection of licensing? This question remains: could an artist charged with bringing so much openness to the visual arts, have been comfortable with the level of openness that has developed since his death? There is much that remains unanswered, and that, we can only speculate. *Far and Wide* does not offer a holistic biography or historical overview of the artist's work or indeed its authority. Rather, it serves to extract open-ended questions about how far and wide Nam June Paik's influence may have travelled, and to consider what influence it has yet to wield.

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

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

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ZEN FOR TV?

NAM JUNE PAIK'S "GLOBAL GROOVE" AND "A TRIBUTE TO JOHN CAGE" (1973)

ABSTRACT

This essay examines Nam June Paik's 1973 documentary,* A Tribute to John Cage*, in the context of identity politics and technological discourse surrounding video technology. *In Paik's tribute, Cage is seen less as a commanding figure of the American neo-avant-garde than as the solitary sage witnessing the transformation of his aesthetic by a new generation of artists and composers. Paik had witnessed Cage's rise from 'gadfly to guru' in the New York Downtown music scene during the 1960s, and his documentary perspective exemplifies the multifarious interpretations of Cage's aesthetic of chance, indeterminacy, and Zen Buddhism. In conjunction with his single-channel video work, Global Groove, Paik's approach to video subverted the traditional codes of commercial documentary television through fast-paced segments, commenting on the concept of televisual 'flow' and highlighting the mechanical apparatus of television technology.*

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by

Richard H. Brown

University of Southern California

Figure 1. *A Tribute to John Cage*, Nam June Paik, 1973. John Cage staging a performance of *4'33"*, 1952, on the Streets of Harlem. © Estate of Nam June Paik. Used with permission.

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

> PAIK: "Do you like this street sound? Do you love this street sound? What do you like, this music more or this street sound more?"

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

Paik then handed the microphone back to Cage, who grinned precipitously as the final seconds of the clocked ticked off, turning to the camera with an impending stare the moment the movement passed. (Fig. 1)

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The video project was a part of the expanding 'Guerilla Television' network of alternative new media spaces that emerged from the influx of public support for independent cable television programming in the early 1970s.

The segment marks one of many uncomfortable encounters between Cage and Paik, and in many ways summarized the tenuous relationship between the two artists. *A Tribute to John Cage* was commissioned in 1971 by WGBH Channel 2 in Boston to commemorate Cage's 60th birthday, but, as the street scene in Harlem revealed, Paik's homage was far from altruistic. Cage is seen less as a commanding figure of the American neo-avant-garde than as the solitary sage witnessing the transformation of his aesthetic by a new generation of artists and composers. Paik had witnessed Cage's rise from 'gadfly to guru' in the New York Downtown music scene during the 1960s, and his documentary perspective highlights the divide between the New York School and the first wave of 'post-Cage' artists in America. The video project was a part of the expanding 'Guerilla Television' network of alternative new media spaces that emerged from the influx of public support for independent cable television programming in the early 1970s. Featuring an amalgam of performances, interviews and lectures, Paik's video assemblage closely paralleled his most famous work of single-channel video art, *Global Groove*, from the same year. In both works, Paik subverted the traditional codes of commercial documentary television with sharp cuts between interview segments and live in-studio performances loosely connected through the narrative voice-over of the host. Commercial breaks of Japanese and Korean advertisements are crudely intercut between segments, creating a spiraling maze of content that comes crashing to a halt in the final scenes. In addition, by foregrounding the video apparatus in the documentary, Paik intervened within the technology itself, tearing apart the veiled suture of documentary realism and, in the process, destroying the mediation boundary of video itself.

As Raymond Williams notes in his pioneering analysis of television programming in the 1960s and 1970s, commercial television had adopted a set of carefully calculated conventions that privatized the aesthetic experience within the domestic setting. [1] Drama, sports,

Figure 2. *A Tribute to John Cage*, Nam June Paik, 1973. Nam June Paik and K-456, (left and middle). Facial distortions from *Video Commune (Beatles from Beginning to End): – An Experiment for Television*, Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, 1965-1971, color, silent, (right). © Estate of Nam June Paik. Used with permission.

news and variety shows fell into familiar programming patterns that structured a routine of daily existence centered on the illusion of community that television projected onto the individual psyche. Documentary television in particular developed during the period as the primary outlet for a collective construction of the past. With the recent explosion of "Docuwood" in America, this particular genre has had one of the most penetrating longitudinal social effects on the construction of individual and historical identity. [2] *A Tribute to John Cage* functions simultaneously as a documentary homage and as a statement on Paik's conception of television as 'flow.' Williams first described the term as a shift from the concept of sequential organization in television programming to that of sequence as flow. While television networks adhered to specifically timed and programmed events, they gradually adopted a commercially viable model of continuity, where an endless stream of programming supplied viewers with various forms of entertainment until the late hour. Fundamental to this shift, according to Williams, was the dissolution of the 'interval,' the isolation of discreet events in succession. Commercial programming – and commercials in particular – necessitated a seamless transition between content and advertising. Commercial breaks, trailers for future programmes and overlap at time intervals between various forms of content (news, sports, drama etc.) brought about a continuous series of stimuli with no discernible end until the late hour send-off (oftentimes heralded in America with patriotic themes of military prowess such as the familiar 'Blue Angels' closing montage cued to *America the Beautiful*). [3]

As a general experience, 'flow,' or 'tuning in' became the cultural norm for television programming, a semi-aesthetic experience of passive participation. Consumers became accustomed to the inevitability of daily content delivery and the ease of mental engagement with the domesticated temporal sound-image experience. Paik's work with television was in dialogue with the various social and cultural effects of television flow. Paik considered the televisual phenomenon a plastic medium available for manipulation, noting that, "the nature of environment is much more on TV than on film or painting. In fact, TV (its random movement of tiny electrons) is the environment of today." [4] At the same time, he was clearly aware of the effect of flow and content interval in single-channel video works such as *A Tribute to John Cage*. [5] Thus the genre of television documentary is imbued with additional layers that critique the interiority of aesthetic experience and the illusion of representations of reality that documentary footage espouses. Television, and the aura of documentary, was fueled by the liveness of the medium and its ability to

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Figure 3. *A Tribute to John Cage*, Nam June Paik, 1973. Alvin Lucier interviewed by Russell Conner, (left). John Cage performing David Rosenboom's *Brainwave Feedback*, 1971, (right). © Estate of Nam June Paik. Used with permission.

provide a feeling of the 'present tense,' and Paik likened this sense of immediacy to Cage's enigmatic conception of 'nature in her manner of operation' in his writings. [6] Paik's tribute continuously engages the dichotomy between realism and suture, rupturing the language of documentary and opening up realms of identity critique inherent in Paik's larger oeuvre.

A Korean expatriate, a classically trained composer, and a member of the 'silent generation' (those born between the 'greatest generation' of World War II veterans and the postwar 'boomer' generation), Paik's perspective was one of a perpetual outsider. Paik completed his undergraduate studies at Tokyo University with a thesis on Arnold Schoenberg, and then ventured to Germany to join the politically motivated Darmstadt summer courses. [7] Witnessing Cage's infamous polemic lectures at Darmstadt in 1958, including *Composition as Process*, Paik began to catapult an ideological torpedo into the highly politicized debate between serialism and indeterminacy that emerged from the summer courses. [8] In 1959 he performed *Hommage à John Cage: Musik für Tonbänder und Klavier* (*Hommage à John Cage: Music for Audiotape and Piano*) in Cologne, his first of many responses to Cage's transcendental artistic programme. Paik hurled eggs, rosaries and other objects at the audience, cueing tape recordings of spliced piano noises, screaming, classical music and sound effects. Pounding the final sounds out of a dilapidated piano and tossing it over, Paik then marched into the audience toward Cage with a pair of scissors and cut his tie in half. Cage's response to the first homage, a mixture of reserved humor and marked awkwardness, would characterize the dialogue between the two artists for the majority of their careers. [9] In a political environment dominated by western reconstruction efforts of soft economics and acculturation, Paik's critique of Cage's Zen Buddhist philosophy was from the outset laden with its own sense of "cultural terrorism," as Fluxus artist Allan Kaprow famously put it, with a series of nonviolent but dramatic and shocking gestures laden with a sense of irony, humour and disturbing emotional depth. [10]

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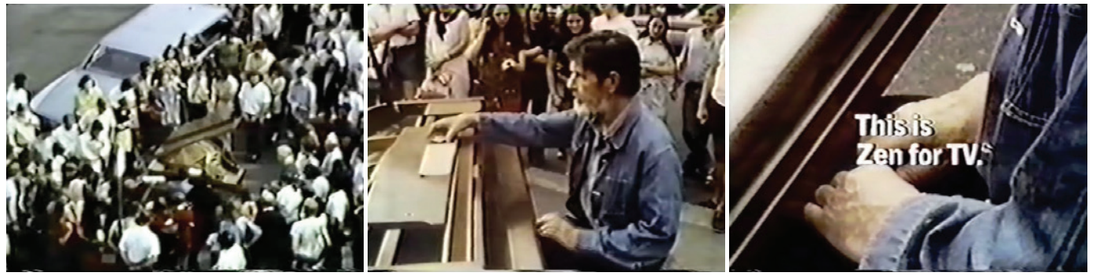

Figure 4. *A Tribute to John Cage*, Nam June Paik, 1973. John Cage performing *4'33"* at Harvard Square. © Estate of Nam June Paik. Used with permission.

However, Paik's notorious collaborations with cellist Charlotte Moorman in the 1960s marked the divide between Cage's aesthetic and the activist body politics of conceptual and performance art. Like Paik's collaboration and interaction with Fluxus artists Yoko Ono, and later with his wife Shigeko Kubota, female sexuality was foregrounded to a provocative and visceral extreme, a mandate dictated by Paik to "bring sex into music" in ways never before thought possible. [11] This was perhaps the most contentious ground between Paik and Cage, pitting a difficult aesthetic dividing line between the rigid modernism of the New York School and 1960s artists and intellectuals. Cage's reactions were generally reserved, yet his writings on Paik evoke a subtle degree of disdain for the sexual obtrusiveness of Paik's performance art. [12] Paik's various video homages and experiments in the late 1960s exemplified and problematized these tensions. Among the first to purchase the Sony portable ½ inch video recorder in 1965, due largely in part to several letters of support from Cage, Paik championed the alternative video movement; and, through a series of grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, was able to secure institutional support within public television studios such as WGBH in Boston and WNET in New York. [13] Concurrently, 1960s political activism sparked a cottage industry of video news reporting collectives, fueled by the work of producers such as Michael Shamburg and the Raindance corporation. [14]

Paik developed close relationships with institutional foundations, mainly through the assistance of Howard Klein, who, as director of the Rockefeller Foundation's arts programme, lent particular support for Paik's work in lieu of the politically motivated video collectives; creating a divide not unlike Paik's earlier break with Fluxus founder George Maciunas. [15] With support for his projects, Paik worked with several artists and technicians, most notably Shuya Abe, Jud Yalkut and Russell Conner at WGBH, and David Loxton at WNET. Shuya Abe's video synthesizer provided the means for intricate video editing and synthesis; and the first incarnation of Paik's large-scale single-channel video art, *Global Groove*, in collaboration with Conner, instigated a series of works at the two studios. *Global Groove* contains many of the core single-channel video strategies Paik employed during the period. Over the course of thirty minutes, Paik hurries through approximately 22 sequences of dancing, interviews and musical performances intercut with Japanese commercials. Video distortions occur in certain segments, combining electronic cross fading, solarization, blue-box overlapping (also known as Chromakey or blue-wall), negative picture effects, electronic feedback and picture distortions. [16] Paik clearly evoked the notion of televisual flow through the use of rapid pacing and sharp intercuts. Segments last no longer than two to three minutes, and alternate between live on-screen dance numbers and documentary footage of Japanese,

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Figure 5. *A Tribute to John Cage*, Nam June Paik, 1973. John Cage performing *4'33"*, (left, middle); and on the right cut to Japanese Television Commercial. © Estate of Nam June Paik. Used with permission.

Korean and Native American folk music. In this sense, the televisual flow represents not only Williams's notion of a single network's effort to capture a viewer through the seamless integration of content, it gives the effect of a more complex television experience of multi-channel 'surfing' through the variety of content available at any time on any given network.

Paik explicitly highlights this point in the opening sequence when narrator Russell Conner explains: "This is a glimpse of a video landscape of tomorrow, when you will be able to switch to any TV station on earth and *TV Guide* will be as fat as the Manhattan telephone book." Images of *TV Guide* are overlaid one atop the other, cuing the endless stream of 'content' for the thirty-minute segment. Rock 'n' roll music provides the overall tempo and pacing of the work, beginning with an extended segment of go-go dancers accompanied by Mitch Ryder and The Detroit Wheels. [17] The dimensional space of the dancers is in constant variation as Paik explores different uses of color distortions and solarization. This strategy continues in subsequent sections, when poet Allen Ginsberg meditates to a regular chiming of tablas for approximately one minute, only to be cut short by another dance segment. Two interview sections soften the pace, the first with Charlotte Moorman and the second with John Cage. Cage's section, later reused in *A Tribute to John Cage*, consists of a recounting of his enigmatic anecdote regarding the experience of sitting within an anechoic chamber. In this type of room, which minimizes soundwave reverberations for commercial testing purposes, an individual can still hear their own blood circulation (and oftentimes in older adults, ringing from mild tinnitus), and Cage's experience of hearing his own body within the space sparked the idea central to his aesthetic that "there is no such thing as silence." [18] The breakneck pace continues with intercuts of a Japanese Pepsi-Cola commercial of children singing an advertising slogan at the beach. In one sequence, a Navajo woman performs amidst one-second bursts of the earlier Mitch Ryder section, only to cut away to a nude vaudeville dancer accompanied by the Andrews Sisters. Traffic noises, country music, excerpts from Stockhausen's *Kontakte* (1958–60), Beethoven, and more rock 'n' roll bursts continue in the final section until the primary go-go dancer falls to the floor in exhaustion, cueing the credit scene overlaid with footage of an African dance troupe. Many of these video segments and editing strategies were transplanted to Paik's extensive and direct homage to Cage the following year.

A Tribute to John Cage begins with Paik's robotic amalgam, K-456, clumsily moving down a side street in New York City. Narrator Russell Conner explains the relationship between Cage and Paik, noting that "a close, sometimes violent relationship developed," whereupon they discovered a "deep mutual concern that modern society may turn mankind into a parade of mindless robots." Paik's robot, K-456 – which originally played John F. Kennedy's inaugural address on a monitor and could defecate beans on command – was emblematic of Paik's technological experiments from the 1960s. Its wanderings evoke a parallel between Paik's remote-controlled robot and the cultural image of Cage, described by Carolyn Jones as a "Frankenstein of modernism," both in his outward appearance and in the oddity of his difficult aesthetic in the larger cultural eye. [19] Paik's attempt to equate their communal sense of 'outsiderness' is further punctuated by the accompanying music from Cage's *Aria with Fontana Mix* (1958), sung by Cathy Berberian, which included a number of guttural cries and non-syntactical turns of virtuoso signing. The atmosphere of confusion and disarray is then transferred to excerpts from a nearby video commune, where "two passers-by dropped in and did their thing." Accompanied by two Beatles tunes, – first the memorable cover of the Burt Bacharach song *Baby It's You* (1963), followed by *I Call Your Name* (1963) – this montage of playful experimentation with video distortions of the face functions as an introductory credit interlude. (Fig. 2)

The Beatles reference highlights the connection between both Cage and Paik with John Lennon, the second husband of Fluxus artist Yoko Ono, who during the same period lived adjacent to the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio near Abingdon Square in the West Village, as well as the series of video manipulations done by Paik and Jud Yalkut at the Video Commune in 1967. Entitled *Beatles Electroniques*, these works distorted video from live performances by the band, commenting on the purely mediated cultural space that popular music seemed to imbue. The next scene cuts to an interview by Conner with Brandies professor and composer Alvin Lucier, who functions throughout the documentary as both expert witness and cultural historian. Interjected within the interview are shots of Cage performing David Rosenboom's 1971 experimental composi-

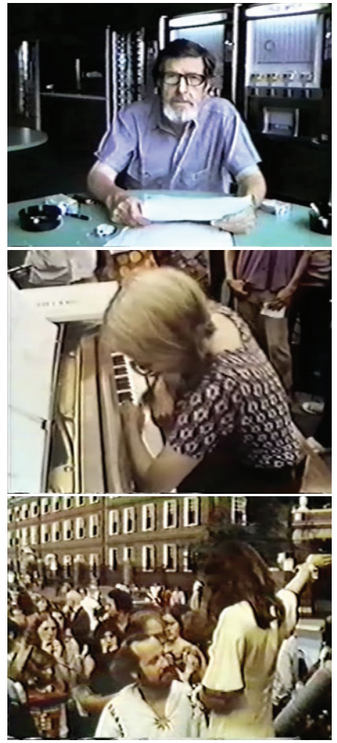

Figure 6. *A Tribute to John Cage*, Nam June Paik, 1973. John Cage performing from *Indeterminacy*, 1959, (left); and on the middle and right Marianne Amacher performing *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957-1958) during a staged *Musicircus*. © Estate of Nam June Paik. Used with permission.

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A live performance of Cage's silent piece in Harvard Square, Boston, shifts from interview-authority perspective to live spectacle.

tion, *Brainwave Feedback*, in which low-frequency alpha brainwaves detected by EEG electrodes attached to Cage's head are amplified through loudspeakers, thus effectively 'tuning in' to the mind of the artist. Lucier vehemently defends the modernist genealogy of Cage's aesthetic against the contemporary social movements, using the case of Woodstock as evidence. Cage's premiere of *4'33"* at the Maverick Auditorium in Woodstock, NY, in 1952 is contrasted with the 1969 festival in Bethel, NY, to which Lucier decries, "we really should regard the Maverick performance as the first authentic Woodstock, and that the Woodstock that just occurred, with the 500,000 human beings sitting in the mud under the hot sun really isn't as important as that historical piano performance." (Figure 3)

However, Paik's choice of Lucier as the interview subject is imbued with an additional air of irony. Throughout the interview, Lucier's stuttering speech disorder, made famous by his composition *I Am Sitting In A Room* (1969), interferes with the most important phrases delineating the two events, such as the words 'Maverick', and 'Woodstock', obscuring the geographic specificity of these two historical milestones and thus blurring Lucier's proposed hierarchy. Immediately following Lucier's interview is the first 'commercial break,' the fast-paced montage advertisement for the 1970 Michael Wadleigh documentary of the Woodstock festival, thus juxtaposing the established institutional hegemony of Cage's artistic platform with the cultural revolution inspired by 1960s identity politics. Meanwhile, Paik's curious 'looking in perspective' permeates the documentary sphere with an aura of humour and naiveté, offering soft criticisms of avant-garde academicism and of the commercial appropriation of 60s-era political revolution. The next segment, a live performance of Cage's silent piece in Harvard Square, Boston, shifts from interview-authority perspective to live spectacle. The narration takes the tone of a fast-paced sportscaster, as Conner rapidly chimes:

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Figure 7. *A Tribute to John Cage*, Nam June Paik, 1973. John Cage performing from *Song Books*, 1970, juxtaposed with a passerby at Harvard Square. © Estate of Nam June Paik. Used with permission.

> Welcome to Harvard Square, where Mr Cage will recreate his famous performance at Woodstock in 1952...The name of the game tonight is how to enjoy boredom, a privilege usually reserved only for aristocrats. Let's chant 'Ohm' together, or turn on a vacuum cleaner and enjoy the buzz. This is what the Chinese oracle I-Ching told us to do tonight. Here's Johnny, and the hit parade of the year 2001!

Here we are introduced to a distinct cultural image of Cage perpetuated until the end of his life. Abandoning his familiar coat and tie dandy wardrobe, Cage appears with a thick beard and long hair, wearing blue jeans: the solitary sage of American modernism. In contrast to the Frankenstein image of Cage in the 1950s, this casual and approachable Cage was the product of a cultural fascination with the poetics of indeterminacy, an image projected onto the national consciousness through the widespread dissemination of Cage's influential 1961 publication *Silence*. (Figure 4) The scene on Harvard Square is both spectacle and homage: Passersby pause with looks of confusion, while devotees encircle the piano in celebration. A series of inter-titles form a second level of commentary. In the first slides, Paik inserts Fluxus event scores, short and humourous instructions for the performance of conceptual pieces, such as "Open the window and count the stars," or "If rainy, count the raindrops on the puddle," and the tone gradually shifts, with quotes from Henry David Thoreau and others, culminating in Paik's characteristically understated gesture of wit: "This is. Zen for TV enjoy boredom," followed by two of his more familiar aphoristic Fluxus instructions, "See your eyes with your eyes," and "See your left eye with your right eye." (Fig. 5) By dislocating grammatical emphasis and instigating a humorous sense of conceptual play, Paik's critical thesis summarizes the inherent reflexivity of the television apparatus and its relationship to cultural assimilation of avant-garde idealism. This point is foregrounded by a sudden commercial break following the performance, in which Paik inserts a Pepsi commercial from Japan featuring a musical montage celebrating the joys of American consumer culture.

In the next series of scenes, Paik presents several performances of Cage and Cage-inspired works, each intercut with narration by Cage

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from his infamous series of lectures entitled *Indeterminacy*. First published as a collection of colorful vignettes interspersed within the individual essays in Cage's 1961 publication of collected essays, *Silence*, the series, which consisted of anecdotes narrating his compositional and personal career, was performed and recorded by Cage in 1959, whereby each anecdote – regardless of the length – was to be read evenly over the course of one minute. In the documentary, Cage is shown reading the anecdotes from a paper prompt, and the framing of this space reflects Williams's definition of the anonymous authoritative news anchorman, where the personable host diligently reads off the uncontested written script in a studied informality. [20] (Fig. 6) Cage's anecdotes were fundamental to establishing a specific persona that was quickly absorbed into the social construction of postwar avant-garde art, and Paik utilizes this authoritative reporting style to frame the following scenes. Beginning with a performance by Maryanne Amacher of Cage's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1957-8), a parade of artists join in at Harvard Square for a 'Musicircus,' as Cage later would describe such performances, where any number of Cage works were performed simultaneously in the same space. Within the scene, Paik frames Cage against the 1960s generation of artists and performers, including a carefully calculated fade between a passerby with Cage performing from his *Song Books* (1970). (Fig. 7)

The scene is again interrupted with another fragment from Japanese television, this time of a young boy singing a modern Cambodian-pop inspired ode to his playtoy, another reference to Paik as an outside and innocent observer. Following the break is the longest continuous section of the work, a rehearsal performance by Charlotte Moorman of Paik's *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saens* (1973). (Fig. 8) For the piece, Moorman performs Paik's arrangement of the piece while wearing a version of her *TV Bra*, a pair of chromium-plated discs taped to her breasts that project a mirror image of the camera, instilling a sexually imbued circularity to the mechanical probing of the cathode-ray tube. A female French voice interrupts the chaos to instruct us to "flip this TV set to a blank channel and count the dots," followed by a quick cut to a 1971 performance of

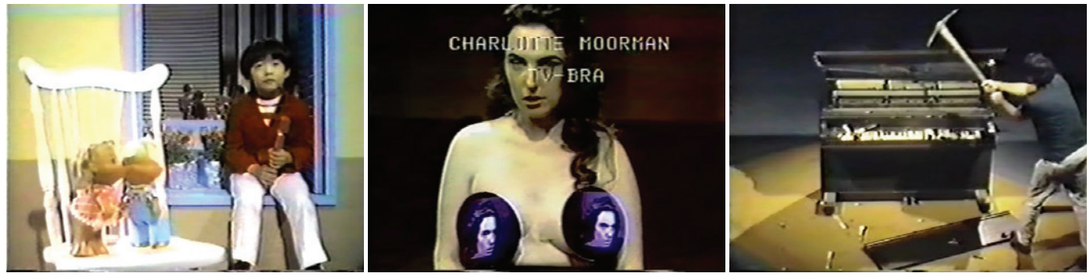

Figure 8. *A Tribute to John Cage*, Nam June Paik, 1973. Japanese television commercial, (left); Charlotte Moorman performing *TV-Bra*, 1969, (right). © Estate of Nam June Paik. Used with permission.

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Violence Sonata by fellow film and video artist Stan VanDerBeek, in which he systematically destroys an upright piano with a pickaxe. Playful off-screen chatter and laughing is mixed in amidst the destruction, and the scene suddenly cuts to an extended montage of the face of Jud Yalkut, distorted by synthesis effects from the Paik-Abe video synthesizer. Set to an electronic score of baroque music similar to the popular recordings by transgender artist Wendy Carlos, the scene wanders until Yalkut finally declares, "I don't know, I am getting awfully bored," to which Paik responds, "Ah, thank God it's the last run through." Dissolving the last semblance of documentary realism, Yalkut asks Paik, "Well, what do we do now," to which he responds, "well, let's start it from the beginning." (Fig. 9)

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

The scene is again interrupted with another fragment from Japanese television, this time of a young boy singing a modern Cambodian-pop inspired ode to his playtoy, another reference to Paik as an outside and innocent observer.

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Figure 9. *A Tribute to John Cage*, Nam June Paik, 1973. *Video Commune (Beatles from Beginning to End): – An Experiment for Television*, Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, 1965-1971, color, silent. © Estate of Nam June Paik. Used with permission.

tion and identity in Cage's artistic dictum. Paik's bodily intervention into the cultural politics of Cage's artistic programme perpetually confronts the awkward by putting Cage in a series of compromising situations, and with each provocation comes a spirit of mischievous retreat into the realm of the outsider. In the end credits, Paik inserts a nostalgic scene of a 1930s burlesque dancer projected upside down and in reverse, accompanied by the popular Yiddish song by Jacob Jacobs *Bei Mir Bistu Shein* [*To Me You're Beautiful*] (1932). Thus Paik concludes with a veiling rather than unveiling, of the inherent politics of culture, memory and identity, firmly encapsulating the question of Cage with a circularity not unlike the feedback loops in his video installations.

After *A Tribute to John Cage*, Paik shifted toward multimedia art installation projects, and the footage taken from this and other films became part of an overall landscape of technological critique. In the 1974 installation *TV Garden*, scenes from the film are played on televisions dispersed amid foliage in an art gallery, a literal recycling of cultural by-products in a biomechanical universe. Ironically, by the 1980s many of Paik's innovative ideas found a commercial outlet in the nascent music video industry, and as public support for independent film and video production faded, the meteoric rise of consumer electronics from Japan and Korea elevated Paik's status as the new 'guru' of electronic communications technology in the consumer art industry. The success of guerilla video groups gave rise to the new genre of cable documentary and news programming. Producer Michael Shamburg, who pioneered the independent video reporting

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Figure 10. *A Tribute to John Cage*, Nam June Paik, 1973. End credits. © Estate of Nam June Paik. Used with permission.

movement, eventually moved toward Hollywood production with such works as *A Fish Called Wanda* (1988) and *Pulp Fiction* (1994), while smaller collectives such as Videofreex moved to private rural communes and formulated an increasingly isolationist stance in the public dialogue over video art. [21] With the rise and subsequent decline of video art in America, Paik's initial critique of Cage functioned as a fitting metaphor for the cultural constraints of such a tradition. Bordering on the commercial and the performative, the stability of any such venture was predicated by institutional support, which, by its very nature, forced the marginalization of aesthetic concerns in the wake of spectacle, an element which Paik opportunistically celebrated in his own artistic programme. ■

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BIOGRAPHY

Richard H. Brown holds PhD in Historical Musicology at the University of Southern California. His dissertation, "Sound-on-Film: John Cage and Avant-Garde Cinema," examines John Cage's work in film, both as a composer and collaborator, his influence on underground, expanded, and structural cinema, and the documentary film history of Cagean aesthetics and performance practice. Richard has presented papers for the annual meetings of the American Musicological Society, the Society for Music Theory, and the International Musicological Society, and has published articles in the *Journal of the Society for American Music* and *Contemporary Music Review*.

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ENDNOTES

1. Williams' categories, which form the basis of contemporary television theory, are outlined in detail in his seminal text: Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Routledge, 1974), 38-76.
2. See for example, Steve F. Anderson, *Technologies of History: Visual Media and the Eccentricity of the Past*, (Hanover, N.H.: Dartmouth College Press, 2011).
3. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form,* 86-91.
4. Nam June Paik, *Electronic Art III: Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer with Charlotte Moorman*, exh. brochure (New York:Galeria Bonino, 1971), 1.
5. Following the lead of video art scholars, I use here the term *single channel* to identify works of video art consisting of a single monitor image, as opposed to *multichannel* installations of a single or independent video feeds on individual monitors.
6. See, for example, Bruce Kurtz, "The Present Tense," in *Video Art: An Anthology,* eds. Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot, 234-5 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976). Cage's enigmatic phrase was adopted loosely from art historian and philosopher Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's 1934 publication *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). For more on Cage's reuse of South Asian mystic philosophy, see: David W. Patterson, "Cage and Asia: History and Sources," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage*, ed. David Nichols, 41-59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and Edward James Crooks, "John Cage's Entanglement with the Ideas of Coomaraswamy," (PhD Dissertation, University of York, 2011).
7. Few studies exist on the relationship between Cage and Paik. While mostly biographical, Íñigo Sarriugarte Gómez does outline some basic connections between the two artists and Zen philosophy, Íñigo Sarriugarte Gómez, "John Cage Y Su Influencia En La Obra Del Video Artista Nam June Paik," *Annuario Musical* 64 (December, 2009): 237-58. See also, Dieter Daniels, "John Cage and Nam June Paik: 'Change your mind or change your receiver (your receiver is your mind)'," in *Nam June Paik*, eds. Sook-Kyung Lee and Susanne Rennert, 107-126 (Tate Liverpool, 2011).
8. For more on the political undertones of the Darmstadt summer courses, see**:** Amy C Beal*, New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany From the Zero Hour to Reunification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). As Beal notes, Paik was in attendance during Cage's inaugural address to the European avant-garde. For more on Cage's lectures, see: Christopher Shultis, "Cage and Europe," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage*, ed. David Nicholls, 20-40 (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
9. As Dieter Daniels notes, there is some confusion regarding the oral history of this infamous encounter and another work by Paik from the same period, *Etude for Piano* (1960), which utilized nearly identical elements in performance, including the tie cut. Dieter Daniels, "John Cage and Nam June Paik: 'Change your mind or change your receiver (your receiver is your mind)," f. 35.
10. Allan Kaprow, "Nam June Paik," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video* Space, eds. Toni Stoos and Thomas Klein, 114 (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1993).
11. For more on Paik's collaborative projects with female artists, see: Joan Rothfuss, "The Ballad of Name June and Charlotte: A Revisionist History," in *Nam June Paik*, eds. Sook-Kyung Lee and Susanne Rennert, 145-168 (Liverpool: Tate Gallery, 2010). Regarding the dialogue between Cage and Charlotte Moorman's interpretations of his indeterminate works, see Benjamin Piekut's detailed critique in his recent study of experimentalism in the 1960s: Benjamin Piekut, "Murder by Cello: Charlotte Moorman Meets John Cage," in *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 140-176.
12. Cage's reserved criticisms generally defended the modernist absolutism of his "sound-as-sounds" thesis, which removed sexual and identity politics from his artistic program and severed many ties with the first generation of "Post-Cage" artists. For example, writing in 1982, after reviewing several of Paik's more obtrusive performances and collaborations with Moorman, Cage noted that "Paik's involvement with sex, introducing it into music, does not conduce toward sounds being sounds. It only confuses matters." John Cage, "More on Paik," [1982] repr. in *John Cage: Writer*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Limelight, 1993), 156. For more on identity politics and Cage's artistic platform, see: Jonathan Katz, "John Cage's Queer Silence; or, How to Avoid Making Matters Worse," in *Writing Through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*, ed. David W. Bernstein and Christopher Hatch, 41-61 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
13. For details on Cage's support of Paik's early career, see: Dieter Daniels, "John Cage and Nam June Paik 'Change your mind or change your receiver (your receiver is your mind)," f. 3.
14. Shamburg's highly-influential 1971 publication *Guerilla Television* led to the collective Top Value Television, or TVTV, along with the Woodstock-inspired collective Videofreex, who managed to garner support from CBS to launch a pilot episode of counterculture reportage entitled "The Real World," which met with disaster once reviewed by executives. Michael Shamburg, *Guerilla Television,* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971). For a comprehensive history of the Guerilla Television movement, see Deirdre Boyle, *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
15. The relationship between Paik and Maciunas is outlined in detail in: Owen D. Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 43-44, 90-92.
16. For a complete shot analysis of *Global Groove*, see Anja Osswald 2004, "Global Groove Shot Analysis," in *Nam June Paik: Global Groove 2004,* (New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation), 36-41. "Blue-Box" overlapping, later replaced by the more familiar "greenscreen" technique, enabled image layering by replacing, or "keying out" the preselected color with the secondary image.
17. Paik's nephew and executor of the Paik estate Ken Hakuta recalled that he suggested these musical choices, and that Paik had never heard many of the songs before. Laura Davis, "Ken Hakuta on his eccentric uncle, the video art pioneer Nam June Paik, ahead of an exhibition at FACT at Tate Liverpool," *Liverpool Daily Post*, 10 Nov. 2010.
18. For more on the relationship to Cage's experience in the anechoic chamber and his "silent piece," *4'33"*, see: Kyle Gann, *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33"* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).
19. Caroline A Jones, "Finishing School: John Cage and the Abstract Expressionist Ego," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (Summer, 1993): 628-665.
20. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, 42.
21. Deirdre Boyle, *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited*, 190-208.

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