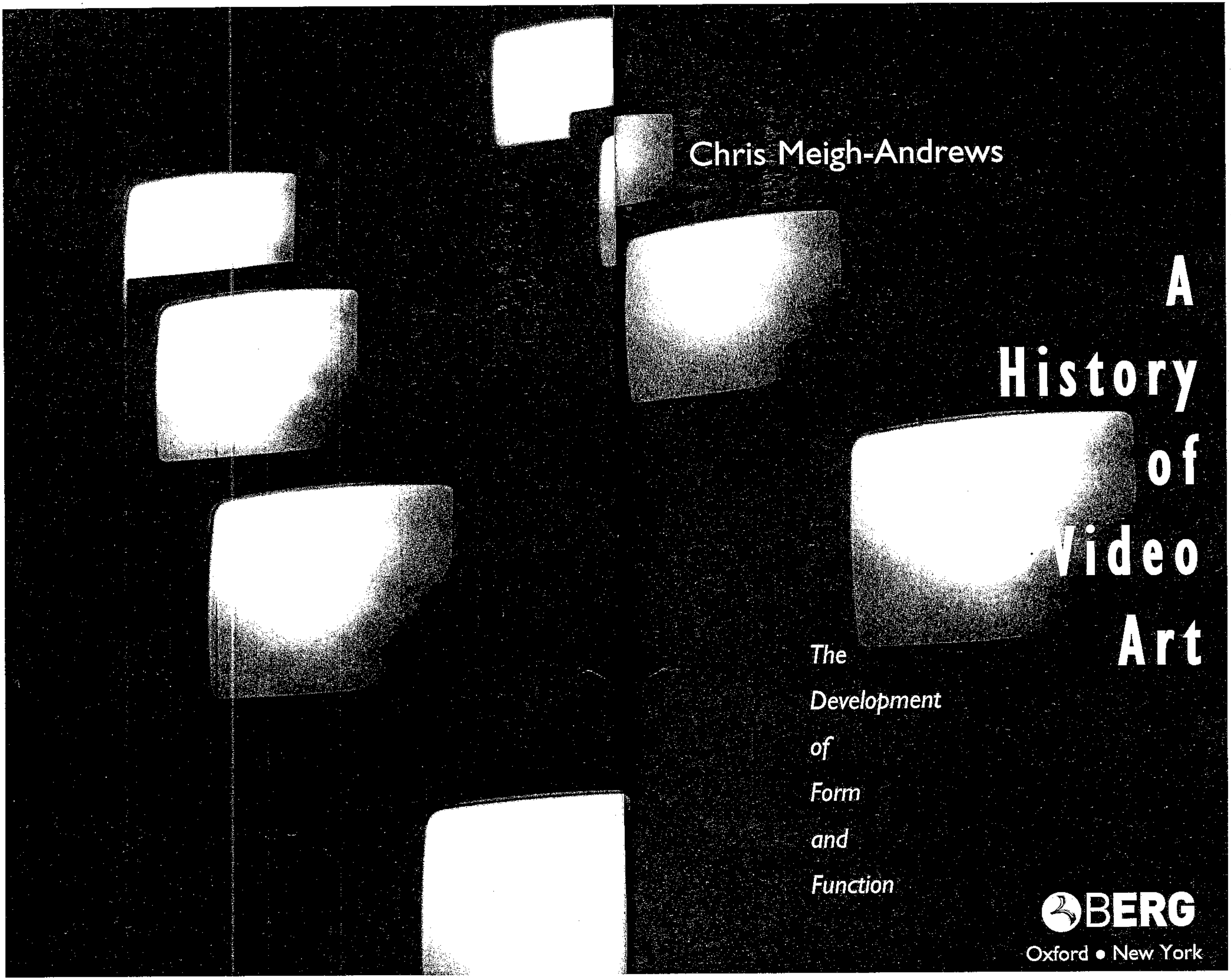

Chris Meigh-Andrews

A History of Video Art

The Development of Form and Function

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> In a medium heavily dependent on technology, these changes ultimately become aesthetic changes. Artists can only express something visually according to the limits of a given medium's technology. With every new technique or effect, such as slow motion or frame-accurate editing, attempts have been made to use these effects for specific aesthetic results. The aesthetic changes in video, irrevocably tied to changes in its technology, consequently evolved at an equally accelerated pace. For instance, within a short period of time, digital imaging and frame accurate rapid editing have replaced real time as the most prevalent aesthetic styles. Whereas in 1975 it was still standard fare to produce a tape in real time, by 1982 it had become (when rarely used) a formal statement. (Sturken 1990, p. 103)

This approach to an understanding of the evolution of video art via the development of technology is potentially contentious. Indeed, the very notion of a history of video art is itself problematic. Artists' video is a comparatively new activity – the first video works to be clearly identified and labelled as 'art' were produced in the late 1960s, and artists and curators anxious to identify the new cultural form have tried to define a canon with little success. The art form itself seems paradoxically to defy the activity of classification whilst simultaneously requiring it.

Art works recorded onto videotape (or, more recently, disk) are by nature ephemeral – many early video formats are either no longer playable, or are obsolete – pioneering and historically significant videotapes are deteriorating rapidly and many are already lost or irretrievable. This is not only a problem limited to works on tape – once a video installation has been exhibited and disassembled, only the documentation remains to attest to the work's former existence.

This book contains chapters devoted to developments in experimental music and avant-garde film practice as these fields overlap with the development of video art, and since both also precede the development of video, offer important insights into the relationship and influences between developing technology and cultural form. It is also undeniable that artists often chose to work across and between conventional media and genre boundaries, many deliberately refusing to be categorized or typecast as filmmakers, photographers, sculptors, painters or composers – and especially not as video artists!

The impermanent and ephemeral nature of video was considered a virtue by many early practitioners, and artists who wished to avoid the influences and commercialism of the art market were attracted to its temporary and transient nature – working 'live' was in itself a political and artistic statement. But the impermanent nature of the video medium demands some kind of record, and it seems likely that written histories such as this one will eventually be all that remains. This of course means that many important works will inevitably be 'written out' of history, marginalized or ignored – especially those works that do not fit with current notions or definitions. The history of video art, unlike the history of painting and sculpture, cannot be rewritten with reference to 'seminal' or canonical works – especially once those works have disappeared. It is also obvious that videotapes not considered 'significant' are unlikely to be preserved, archived, or restored.

The development of video as a medium of communication has been, and remains, heavily dependent on technology, and the activity of artists' video is inevitably as dependent on the same technological advances. Parallel to this development is the question and issue of accessibility. In general, as video technology has advanced, relative production costs have decreased. The equipment itself has also become increasingly reliable, more compact, less costly and more readily available. It is also important to point out that the design and function of that equipment is not without its own 'bias', in the sense that electronic engineers are rarely themselves 'end-users'. This bias may well include (or certainly extends towards) the ideological, and in this sense we get the 'tools' that we are given, rather than the tools we might want, even supposing we knew what they might be. This book includes material on artist/engineers – innovators who sought to build technological tools to suit their own particular aesthetic and creative requirements.

Technological developments in the related fields of broadcast television, consumer electronics, computer hardware and software, video surveillance and emerging imaging technologies such as thermal imaging, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and so forth, have all had an influence on the developing aesthetics of video art. Changes in technology, reliability, miniaturization and advances in electronic imaging systems, synchronization and computer control devices have also influenced the potential for video installation and image display. Video projection is now commonplace, computer-controlled systems for multi-machine synchronization during playback, CD Rom and DVD players have made multi-screen and inter-active presentations and continuous replay reliable and practicable.

Clearly, this technology-dependent relationship is especially problematic in relation to any art-historical analysis, not least because of the confusions that arise from issues of 'modernism' and 'modernity' in fine art discourse. A discussion of video's inherent properties has been the predominant method of tracing the medium's history and this is revealing of a fundamental problem in any analysis of the relationship between Western cultural creativity and technology. Marita Sturken points out that early video artists explored the specific properties of video not only in order to distinguish it from other fine art media such as film, painting and sculpture, but because these properties also had much in common with other concerns of the period – especially those of conceptual art, minimal sculpture and performance.[1]

Video artist and writer Stuart Marshall (1949–93, UK) claimed there was nothing inevitable about the 'entanglement with late modernism' practice of British video art. The availability of portable video technology was coincidental with a period when radical strategies such as alternative exhibition spaces and hybrid practices had become a significant aspect of avant-garde activity. The influence of experimental and avant-garde cinema on video art practice is especially significant, and Marshall identified the role played by experimental film-makers as a model for video artists with respect to production funding, distribution and organizational issues. He also linked the development of video art in the UK to its association with the art school.[2]

As a direct consequence of this institutional dependency on funding from agencies such as the Arts Council of Great Britain and regional arts associations, and for access to equipment and facilities from art school media departments, video art in the UK was brought into direct competition with the more established media of painting and sculpture. Thus Marshall linked the development of a modernist video art practice to a strategy for survival:

> If, therefore, video were to develop a modernist practice it would stand on equal footing with other traditional art practices. At the same time, however, it would have the advantage of being recognized in its specificity as a result of the modernist concern with the foregrounding of the 'inherent' properties of the medium.[3]

David Hall (1937–, UK) was one of the first video artists in the UK to identify his practice with this approach. In his influential essay 'Towards an Autonomous Practice', Hall set out his position. Trained as a sculptor, he worked with photography and film before taking up video. He was not interested in work which used video, bu rather works which foregrounded video *as* the artwork, and in his writings he was most concerned to distinguish video art practice from television:

> Video as art seeks to explore perceptual thresholds, to expand and in part to decipher the conditioned expectations of those narrow conventions understood as television. In this context it is pertinent to recognize certain fundamental properties and characteristics which constitute the form. Notably those peculiar to the functions (and 'malfunctions') of the constituent hardware – camera, recorder and monitor – and the artist's accountability to them.[4]

Hall's position as the pre-eminent artist working in video in the UK during the mid-1970s was considerable, with an influence that was exerted not only because of his own rigorous and uncompromising video work, but also via his critical writing and his campaigning for the acceptance of video as a medium for art. Hall's own work sought to explore notions about the relationship of video technology to the institution of broadcast television, and he acknowledged the role of developing technology on video art in a short essay for the 1989 *Video Positive* festival catalogue:

> ... developing technology has undoubtedly influenced the nature of the product at all levels and wherever it is made. These developments have inevitably affected aesthetic criteria as well as making life easier. In the early days of basic black and white portapaks, extremely limited editing facilities and no special effects, the tendency was towards fairly minimal but nevertheless profound pioneering work. This was necessary and appropriate at a time when concerns were generated in part by reductive and 'cerebral' preoccupations. If it can be said that now, in this so-called post-modernist phase, an inclination has developed towards more visually complex, even baroque art work, then the timely expansion of technical possibilities in video allows for greater image manipulation. The dangers are that as the gap has gradually closed between the technology available to the artist and that used by, for instance, TV companies, temptations inevitably arise to indulge in what is often only slick and superficial electronic wizardry. The medium here indeed becomes the message. Conversely, the current availability of complex studio mixers, time-base correctors, multi-machine editing, 'paint boxes', and other dedicated computers, can provide (with due caution for their many seductions) a very sophisticated palette inconceivable twenty years ago.[5]

Although an approach to video through an examination of the medium's unique qualities was the dominant position of artists during the early period, the attraction of the establishment of these inherent properties as significant was not limited to practitioners – it was also especially attractive to those curators and historians who wished to validate the medium in a fine art context. For Marita Sturken this problematic relationship between technology and art is one of the principal causes for both the comparatively immature state of video theory and the troublesome relationship to an historical context.[6]

Broadcasters with an interest in innovative television took note of the video artists' examination of the medium, but only insofar as these activities could be seen to form an experimental 'advance guard' for new techniques to be plundered by the media. British TV producer John Wyver is critical of any treatment of video art as a separate category and argues for a history of convergence, based on a notion of the digital. He points out that the period when it was necessary to argue a special case for video art because of its lack of broadcast airtime, poor funding and gallery exposure has long passed:

> ...concentration on video as video cuts the forms of video creation off from the rest of an increasingly dynamic and richly varied moving image culture.[7]

But questions of context and definitions of video art often seem more of a problem for the critic than for the artist. Many artists who took up video in the early 1970s were attracted to the medium precisely because it did not have either a history or an identifiable critical discourse as an art medium. American writer David A. Ross saw this lack of a critical position as a 'pure delight':

> Video was the solution because it had no tradition. It was the precise opposite of painting. It had no formal burdens at all.[8]

Feminist artists were attracted to the medium for similar reasons. Shigeko Kubota, (1937–, Japan) Japanese/American video artist (and wife of video pioneer Nam June Paik) claimed in the mid-1970s 'Video is Vengeance of Vagina. Video is Victory of Vagina', championing video and claiming the new medium for women:

> I travel alone with my Portapak on my back, as Vietnamese women do with their babies
> I like video because it is heavy.
> Portapak and I traveled over Europe, Navajo land, and Japan without male accompany [*sic*].
> Portapak tears down my shoulder, backbone and waist.
> I feel like a Soviet woman, working on the Siberian Railway.[9]

These statements identified Kubota's claim for video as a medium empowering women and enabling them to achieve a place in Western art that many felt could not be made through the more traditional, male-dominated disciplines of painting and sculpture.[10]

While it is clearly the case that many feminist artists were initially attracted to vide because of its lack of a history, its immediacy and its less commodifiable nature, thes same attributes were also appealing to male artists with comparable counter-cultural subversive and radical agendas. By the mid-1970s video artists had developed a variety of strategies and approaches to video bound up with the particularities of a ne and developing medium. The short history of video art, which began in the earl 1960s with work by two artists working in Germany, has its early roots in a radica anti-art movement called 'Fluxus'.

FLUXUS, NAM JUNE PAIK AND WOLF VOSTELL

American writer and curator John Hanhardt argues that video art in the United State has been formed by two issues: its opposition to commercial television and the intertextual fine art practices of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Hanhardt also identifie the introduction of the Sony 'portapak' in 1967–68 as a key event, 'placing the tool of the medium in the hands of the artist', but also indicates that the pre-1965 activities of artists Nam June Paik (1932–2006, Korea/USA) and Wolf Vostell (1932–98 Germany) in appropriating the television apparatus and presenting the domestic T set as iconic, was crucial to the establishment of video art as discourse, and influential on subsequent generations of video artists.[11]

Both Paik and Vostell were connected to the Fluxus movement, a loosely define international group of artists interested in debunking the art establishment and othe cultural institutions. Drawing on earlier anti-art movements including Dadaism, th ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968, France), and highly influenced by th chance operations employed by the American composer John Cage (1912–92, USA) Fluxism flourished from the late 1950s into the early 1970s, and was influential o the development of conceptual art. Fluxist artists produced ironic and subversiv work that was deliberately difficult to assimilate, often organizing live events or 'happenings' critical of materialism and consumerism. (See Chapter 5 for further discussion of Fluxus and its relationship to experimental music.)

John Hanhardt argues that through the adoption of collage techniques Vostell an Paik overlapped media technologies and strategies, engaging in a blurring of categorie that established a dialogue between artists. The Paik–Vostell strategy of removing th domestic television from its usual setting and incorporating it into performances an installations subverted it as an institution and underlined its role in shaping opinio and producing cultural stereotypes. For Hanhardt, Paik and Vostell's activities 'broke frame', violating the social and cultural frame of reference.[12]

In *TV de-Collage* (1961) Wolf Vostell suggested distorting the TV image using random interference of television receivers installed in a Paris department store. Thu Vostell's 'de-Collage' techniques employed the use of public spaces and a reversal o the conventional collage technique by erasing, removing and tearing off elements of texts, images and information to reveal and create new combinations. Vostell described De-Collage TV as:

> TV Picture De-Formation
> with
> magnetic zones
> DO IT YOURSELF.

Hanhardt posits that all video art can be seen as collage because of the way in which the electronic processing, layering and mixing of images and sounds is an inherent aspect of video technology and in terms of the image display and viewing condition:

> Strategies of image processing and recombination evoke a new visual language from the multi-textual resources of international culture. The spectacular history of the expanded forms of video installation can be seen as an extension of the techniques of collage into the temporal and spatial dimensions provided by video monitors placed in an inter-textual dialogue with other materials.[13]

NAM JUNE PAIK AND THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN CAGE

Nam June Paik is considered by many to be the seminal figure in the emergence of video art. The range of his work with video covers most of the categories within the genre: installation, live performance, broadcast, as well as single- and multi-channel works. It is instructive to trace the development of his approach to working with the apparatus of television, drawing most significantly from the ideas and pioneering attitudes of John Cage.

Prior to working with the television set as a cultural object, Paik's activities were within the field of avant-garde music. After studying aesthetics, music and art history at the University of Tokyo, Paik went to Germany. Initially enrolling on a music history course in Munich, Paik soon switched to the study of musical composition under Wolfgang Fortner at the Academy of Music in Freiburg. During this period Paik's fascination with sound collage techniques and the use of audio recordings as a basis for musical composition emerged. On advice from Fortner, in 1959, Paik went to work in the electronic sound studio of WDR, the West German Radio station in Cologne. By this time, the WDR studio had become a major centre for contemporary music, producing and broadcasting works by new international composers such as Cornelius Cardew, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Gyorgy Ligeti (see Chapter 4). Whilst working there, Paik came into contact with a number of these composers, and became part of the German avant-garde music scene himself. Even more significantly, it was during this formative period that Paik encountered the ideas and music of John Cage.[14]

Initially, Paik was attracted to Cage because of his acknowledgement of a Zen influence through the teachings of D.T. Suzuki, but it was Cage's attitude to musical composition and his notions about the liberation of 'pure sound' from musical convention that helped to free Paik from his veneration of Western music traditions:

> I went to see the music [of Cage] with a very cynical mind, to see what Americans would do with oriental heritage. In the middle of the concert slowly, slowly I got turned on. At the end of the concert I was a completely different man.[15]

In relation to Cage's agenda for the liberation of sound, Paik's avowed intention was to go a stage further, with musical performances calculated to irritate and shock his audience. Describing one particular Paik performance of the time, composer and writer Michael Nyman quotes Fluxus artist Al Hansen:

> [Paik would] move through the intermission lobby of a theatre, cutting men's neckties off with scissors, slicing coats down the back with a razor blade and squirting shaving cream on top of their heads.[16]

In *Homage to John Cage* (1959), Paik even performed these anarchistic and provocative actions on Cage himself.[17] Cage describes this performance in his biography, *The Roaring Silence*. While in the Cologne apartment of Mary Bauermeister (music student and, later, second wife of Stockhausen), Paik approached Cage, who was also standing in the room:

> Nam June Paik suddenly approached me, cut off my tie and began to shred my clothes, as if to rip them off. (Paik then poured a bottle of shampoo over Cage's head.) Just behind him, there was an open window with a drop of perhaps six floors to the street, and everyone suddenly had the impression that he was going to throw himself out.

Instead Paik strode from the room, leaving all present frozen and speechless with terror. A few minutes later the telephone rang; it was Paik announcing that the performance of the *Homage to John Cage* was over.[18]

By 1959, Paik's compositions were built of a combination of audio tape collage and live action performance activities such as smashing eggs or glass, and, most significantly, overturning a piano. Paik considered the piano taboo and his symbolic destructive acts were a way of signifying a break with convention and a rebellion against the representatives of the musical status quo.[19] The piano, symbolic of traditional values in Western music, was the ideal technological object:

> Paik's musical education bore the imprint of a wholehearted admiration for European music. Therefore one can assume that he had a stronger awareness of

> the cultural significance of the piano than the European who, more often than not, is indifferent to his own traditions.[20]

EXPOSITION OF MUSIC-ELECTRONIC TELEVISION

Paik's first solo exhibition was at Rolf Jahrling's Galerie Parnass, in Wuppertal, Germany, during March 1963. For several months prior to this exhibition Paik had been secretly experimenting with television sets in an attic space rented separately from his main studio. Paik felt this secrecy necessary because he was wary of criticism and nervous that other artists would take up his ideas prematurely. Working occasionally with an electronic engineer, Paik modifed the circuitry of a number of television receivers – literally making 'prepared' televisions, perhaps drawing on the idea of Cage's prepared pianos. Paik explained how this came about in an interview with Douglas Davis, sketching out the background and describing some of the modifications he made:

> If you work every day in a radio station, as I did in Cologne, the same place where television people are working, if you work with all kinds of electronic equipment producing sound, its natural that you think that the same thing might apply to video. ... I still thought that television was a painter's job. Then one morning I woke up and said, why not make it my job, since nobody else is doing it? I rented a small studio outside Cologne so nobody would know, and bought ten TV sets. I hired an engineer and some of his friends and worked day and night. One afternoon, in the fall of 1962, shortly after the first Fluxus festival, I invited seven friends – they included Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles and Wolf Vostell – to my secret studio. They were very surprised at what I was doing. At that time I developed the horizontal modulation, that stretches the faces, and also vertical modulation, which I've never been able to reproduce on American television sets for some reason. I hadn't thought of the magnet at that time, but I was working with sync pulses that warped the picture with sound waves. I also made negative TV, a set in which the blacks and whites were reversed; the picture was without sync too, so that it just floated across the screen, always in motion. I made a set with a microphone so that when you talked, the TV line moved ... A number of the sets you could change by playing with the dials.[21]

For his exhibition at Galerie Parnass, Paik extended an idea previously explored for his 1961 exhibition 'Symphony for 20 Rooms'. In 'Exposition of Music-Electronic Television', Paik exhibited a range of musical and visual objects throughout the rooms and gardens of the gallery. Among the objects on display, which ranged from prepared pianos to modified record players and tape recorders (all of which demonstrated the influence of John Cage), were the modified television sets.[22]

Scattered across the floor in one room within the gallery, all the televisions were tuned to the same frequency. Although displaying the same broadcast, the TV pictures had been electronically modified in different ways – two were not working properly, presumably damaged in transit and the remaining ten were arranged into three groups.[23] The TV broadcast pictures were distorted to present abstract image forms, in some cases by introducing audio signals into the modified picture display either from a radio or microphone as described above.[24]

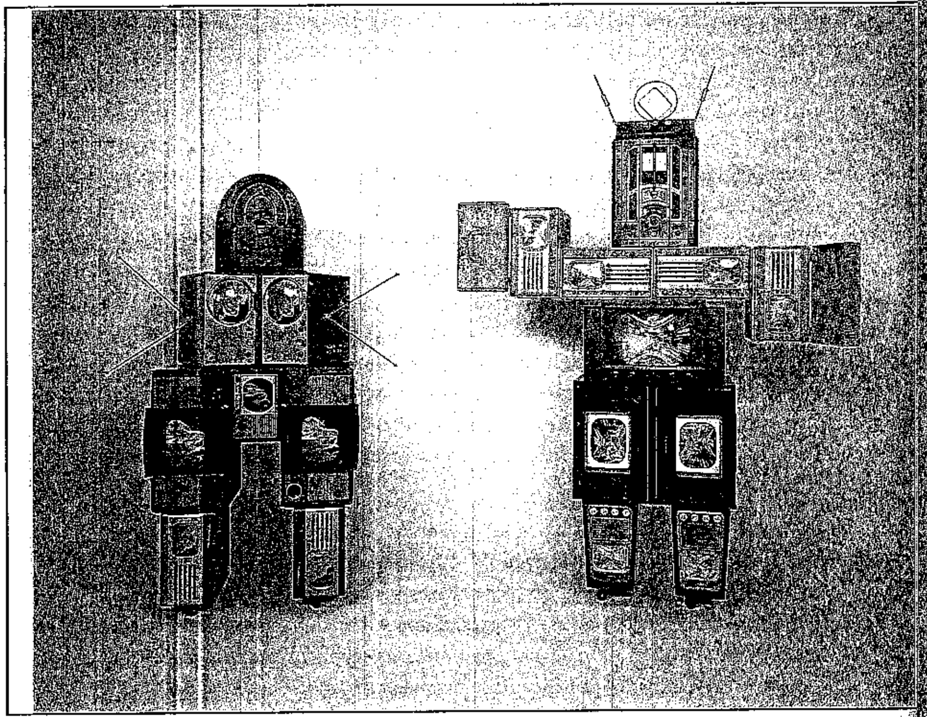
Paik's notion of 'random access', drawn from computer terminology, was important to the overall concept of the exhibition, and to his appropriation of television sets in this context. Themes of randomness and arbitrariness were important at this time to avant-garde composers such as Cage and Stockhausen, and to the Fluxus group of which Paik was a founder member and a major force. In his exhibition at Galerie Parnass, Paik was concerned to create participatory works with images and effects produced directly through the engagement and actions of the audience. His use of the television sets in this context was intended to reverse the usually passive mode of the viewer–television relationship:

> Paik was exploring the technical possibilities of the medium with the goal of cancelling out its one-directional character and creating further possibilities of intervention. He provoked the creation of a new aesthetic of the distorted picture by transforming the normal process of recorded images, the aim of which was to be distortion free. As with most of his other exhibits involving various media, he tried to involve televisions in his concept of audience participation.[25]

Paik's prepared televisions had clearly drawn inspiration from Cage's prepared pianos, but Cage's 1951 composition *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*, which coincidentally used twelve 'live' radios, was also a direct influence.

Imaginary Landscape No. 4, a four-minute piece for twelve radios, featured two players at each – one to control the tuning, the other to adjust the tone and volume. Cage's intention had been to further liberate the compositional process from aspects of personal taste after a challenge from Henry Cowell who claimed that *Music of Changes* was not free of personal preferences.[26] In 1949, Cage had written: 'a piece for radios as instruments would give up the matter of method to accident'.[27]

Although the influence of Cage is clear, Paik's appropriation of the domestic television set as cultural icon could be seen to extend Cage's use of the radio in works such as *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* because of the participatory aspects outlined above.[28] Whilst the potential of musical experiences beyond the concert hall were important to Cage, in *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* the audience experience is still predominately passive. Paik extended this participatory aspect through his appropriation of the television set: '[building] on the active personal experience of the non-initiated'.[29]



1.1: Nam June Paik, *Family of Robot: Grandmother and Grandfather*, 1986. Courtesy of the artist and Carl Solway Gallery, Cincinnati, OH. Photo by Carl Kowal

Nam June Paik's 'Exposition of Music-Electronic Television' is an important event in any history of the genre and is widely acknowledged as the first exhibition to present television as a medium for art. Paik's work is significant in that it engaged directly with the available (and accessible) technology, challenging the established 'one-way' process of broadcast television via a series of individual technical manipulations. Drawing on influences from experimental sound collage and electronic music, and directly from the example of John Cage, Paik's prepared TV sets paved the way for a new electronically-based art form, simultaneously critiquing and subverting existing communication technology. (For further discussion of the work of John Cage, see Chapter 5.)

In a critique of what she termed the 'sanctification' of Nam June Paik as the father of video art, the American video artist and writer Martha Rosler suggests that his Fluxus strategy of the importation of the television set into the art world anaesthetized its domestic function simply producing an 'anti-art art'. Rosler is critical of Paik's position as a mythical figure, claiming that his activities did not advance the cause of a radical video art, but simply reinforced the dominant social discourse of the day:

> He neither analyzed TV messages or effects, nor provided a counter discourse based on rational exchange, nor made its technology available to others. He gave us an upscale symphony of the most pervasive cultural entity of everyday life, without giving us any conceptual or other means of coming to grips with it in anything other than a symbolically displaced form.[30]

American video artist Woody Vasulka identified Paik's ambition for video art as one dedicated to elevating the genre to be of equal status to painting or sculpture, and it became a crusade that was increasingly tied in to his own ambitions as an artist.

> Paik's pictorial world was the world of known symbols – not primary symbols, but secondary. For example, he would always take famous people if he could – the more famous, the more desirable. He was the shadow of everybody: McLuhan or Cage, or Nixon. You actually could see the effort of taking the established codes, putting them on television, destroying or altering them by the prescription of, let's say, Fluxus. So there was this anti-bourgeois effort ... Paik was caught in the middle of this transition because as he says openly: as music became electronic, and then 'art' and eventually 'high art' – in the same way television – the electronic image, will eventually become material for high art. This

> was his struggle – to achieve high art at any price. This meant that he would violate any of the rules – the rejection of the popular, of the bourgeois, of the successful. But I think he had no strategy for this. As a man coming from the Orient, success is a condition for the definition of your significance. He fought it at times, but eventually settled to this notion that if he was not famous, or at least a famous Korean or Asian, then he had failed. So he carried this huge baggage of playing this specific role – and he became the first internationalist.[31]

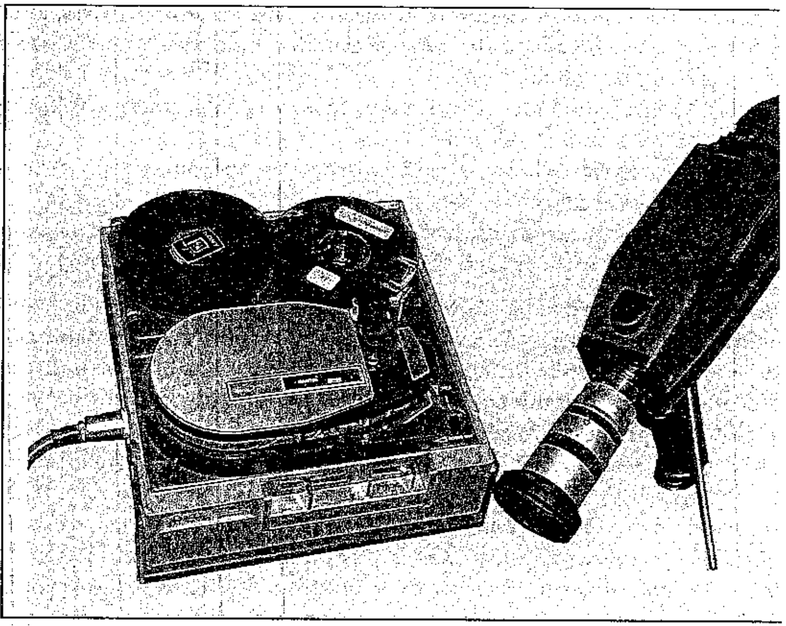
Paik is not only significant because of his position as one of the first artists to seriously address crucial issues about the relationship between television and video, but also for his pioneering explorations of the potential of video as an art form via a wide range of approaches which include installation, broadcasting, live events and gallery screenings, as well as his championing of the cause for the funding of video art in the United States. He was also instrumental in the setting up of artists' access to advanced production facilities such as the television workshop at WNET in New York. The development of his video synthesizer with electronic engineer Shuya Abe in 1969 is also a considerable achievement (see Chapter 7), as was his well-documented early use of the Sony Portapak.

PAIK AND THE DEBUT OF THE SONY PORTAPAK

Mythology surrounding the origins of video art presents the apocryphal story of Nam June Paik's purchase of the first commercially available ½-inch portable video recorder in the USA – a Sony 'Portapak'. The story goes that Paik used his newly purchased machine to record images of a parade staged in honour of the Pope's visit to New York City which he encountered whilst sitting in traffic; he presented the result that very evening, 4 October 1965, at the Cafe a Go-Go at 152 Bleeker Street in Greenwich Village.[32]

This screening event, combined with Paik's 1963 exhibition at Galeri Parnass, has cemented Paik's reputation as the 'founding father' of video art. A number of artists and historians have challenged Paik's claim, citing that the Sony 'Portapak' did not become commercially available until 1968, and the facts surrounding the technical details are unclear and in dispute. What is clear is that whatever specific equipment he used to make the recording, Paik showed his first videotape in New York in October 1965. In a statement produced for the screenings (4 and 11 October 1965) presented as a preview to his November exhibition at Gallery Bonnino, Paik penned a brief manifesto of predictions for the new video medium:

> In my videotaped electric vision, not only you see your picture instantaneously and find out what kind of bad habits you have, but see yourself deformed in 12 ways, which only electronic ways can do.



1.2: Sony AV 3400 'Portapak', 1968. Courtesy of Richard Diehl, http://www.labguysworld.com

> *It is the historical necessity, if there is a historical necessity in history, that a new decade of electronic television should follow the past decade of electronic music.
> **Variability & Indeterminism is underdeveloped in optical art as parameter Sex is underdeveloped in music.
> ***As collage technic *sic* replaced oil paint, the cathode ray tube will replace the canvas.
> ****Someday artists will work with capacitors, resistors & semi-conductors as they work today with brushes, violins & junk.[33]

For many critics and video art historians, these early events, together with the availability of a low cost portable video recorder, were critical utopian moments in the development of the new art form. Within a few years of its introduction, the portable video recorder had considerable impact, empowering artists, politically active individuals and groups to fight back against the corporate monopoly of the 'one way' broadcast television system.

Nam June Paik's frequently quoted slogan, 'TV has been attacking us all our lives – now we can attack it back', has an important place in all this. Artists found the Portapak's accessibility, its instantaneity, the 'available light' capabilities of the camera, and the grainy, low-resolution grittiness of the monochrome image it produced very appealing. But there were a number of other significant factors besides the introduction of cheap portable video recording equipment and the state of broadcast TV to the genesis of video art in Europe, the UK, Canada and the USA.

2. CROSSING BOUNDARIES

INTERNATIONAL TENDENCIES AND INFLUENCES IN EARLY ARTISTS' VIDEO

GERRY SCHUM'S TV GALLERY AND *LAND ART*

The earliest examples of so-called 'television art' were produced in Germany by Gerry Schum's pioneering Fernsehgalerie (Television Gallery) in a specially commissioned TV programme entitled *Land Art* broadcast nationally from Berlin on 15 April 1969 at 10.40 p.m. *Land Art* comprised eight specially commissioned works by international conceptual artists including Richard Long, Jan Dibbets and Robert Smithson. This innovative first broadcast was followed on 18 November in the same year when Schum's TV Gallery transmitted Keith Arnatt's *TV Project – Self Burial*, as a 'television intervention' on WDR II (Westdeutscher Rundfunk) Cologne.

Gerry Schum (1938–73, Germany) studied film making at the Deutsche Film-und Fernhakademie in Berlin 1966–67. Whilst in the second year of his studies he was commissioned to make a five-minute report of *Schaustucke Ereignissei Feur, Luft, Wasser und Erde aus Kunstof*, a Fluxus happening staged by artist Bernhard Hoke at the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts (Akademie der Kunste). Schum's intention with his film of this event, subsequently broadcast on SFB – Sender Freies Berlin, (Broadcaster of Free Berlin) 30 March 1967, was not merely documentation, but the creation of a televisual equivalent to parallel this complex art event.[1] This approach to Hoke's event was characteristic of Schum's film work with artists on subsequent broadcast projects such as a feature on the 6th San Marino Art Biennale and *Konsumkunst-Kunstkonsum (Consumption Art – Art Consumption)* both made for WDR, Cologne.[2]

In partnership with Bernhard Hoke and his first wife Hannah Weitemeier, Schum developed a collaborative approach in which the interaction between the subject of the broadcast and the film making process was a crucial element in the final product. This approach was very much in line with the prevailing attitude of the most progressive contemporary artists of the period – the very work that Schum and his collaborators were presenting. New industrial processes and techniques were being adopted by contemporary artists in a desire to challenge conventional notions about art which were bound up with issues of authorship and originality. New ideas about the making and experiencing of art which were current at the time included the making and selling of low-cost art multiples, Fluxus and multi-disciplinary events, process art,