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

Lanfranco Aceti
The Global Play of Nam June Paik: The Artist That Embraced and Transformed Marshall McLuhan’s Dreams Into Reality

Omar Kholeif
The Future Is Now?

Emile Devereaux
To Whom It May Concern: Nam June Paik’s Wobbulator and Playful Identity

Tom Schofield
Data Materialism in Art Making

Gabriela Galati
The Electronic Representation of Information: New Relationships between the Virtual Archive and its (Possible) Referent

Jamie Allen
Traveling at the Speed of Paik: An artist-researcher visits the Nam June Paik Art Center

Jeremy Bailey
A Statement on Nam June Paik

Richard H. Brown
Zen for TV? Nam June Paik’s “Global Groove” and “A Tribute to John Cage” (1973)

Introductions and John G. Hanhardt Keynote Speech

John G. Hanhardt Q&A session chaired by Sarah Cook

Roy Ascott Keynote Speech

Ruth Catlow Speech

Anton Lukoszevieze performance

Roy Ascott in conversation with Mike Stubbs
Far and Wide

Introduction

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, nor can easily be discounted McLuhan’s strong advocacy of the establishment. He also challenged the perception of what art ‘should be’ and at the same time undermined elitisms through the use, at his time, of what were considered ‘non-artistic-media.’ Some of the artworks may be challenging for the viewer as well 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.

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.

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 technology. He undertook a residency with Bell labs, who were the inventors of the laser. It was here that he created his 1966 piece Digital Experience, which was immediate and I wanted to reflect in the publication, albeit symbolically, the multiple possibilities and connections that underpinned the Laser Cones’ 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.

My fascination with the Laser Cones’ re-fabrication in Liverpool was immediate and I wanted to reflect in the publication, albeit symbolically, the multiple possibilities and connections that underpinned the Laser Cones’ 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 Experience 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.

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.

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

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

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.

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 undertook a residency with Bell labs, who were the inventors of the laser. It was here that he created his 1966 piece Digital Experience, which was immediate and I wanted to reflect in the publication, albeit symbolically, the multiple possibilities and connections that underpinned the Laser Cones’ 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 Experience at Bell Labs, exploring the stark contrast between digital and analogue and his fascination with technology in its material form. His work with Bell set the precedent for artists and musicians to start using technology creatively in a new way.

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

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 Experience at Bell Labs, exploring the stark contrast between digital and analogue and his fascination with technology in its material form. His work with Bell set the precedent for artists and musicians to start using technology creatively in a new way.

When Mike Stubbs and Omar Kholeif approached me to create this book, the challenge was to create a structure for the material but also to keep the openness that characterizes so many of Paik’s artworks and so many of the approaches that he has inspired.
This catalog became a tool to mirror and perhaps ‘transmediate’ the laser installation “made of a huge green laser that [...] corpse(ed) FAC'T with Tate Liverpool. Travelling 800 metres as the crow flies, the beam of light [...] made” a symbolic connection between the two scenes of 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.

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.”

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

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

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

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), 183.
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 of the artist’s work in the UK. The first since his death, it also showcased the prominence 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 Superhighway: Art after Nam June Paik brought together a forum of leading artists, performers and thinkers in the cross-cultural field together to explore and dissect the significance of Paik within broader culture.

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

These positions are explored throughout the reader and our programme and in this special edition of the Leonardo Electronic Almanac. Here, the artist who goes by the constructed meme of the “Famous New Media Artist, Jeremy Baiky” 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 honours 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 Deveaux used these frameworks retrospectively to extrapolate parallels, dissonances and points of return to the artist’s work. Deveaux and Allen focus on specific pieces Deveaux discusses Paik and Shuya Abe’s Raster Manipulation Unit or the “WebWobulator” (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 virtual reality. 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

ABU DHABI
BARCELONA
To Whom It May Concern: Nam June Paik’s Wobbulator and Playful Identity

ABSTRACT

Following Nam June Paik’s lead, at times this scholarly analysis takes the form of a letter, intertwining personal voices with an investigation of media technologies. The practices of Nam June Paik are seen as a negotiation between the materiality of media and an articulation of identity. Reproductions of Paik’s letters inform written records about his early interactive video technologies such as the Wobbulator built in 1972, technologies that invite us to mix our voices with his. Paik’s playful approach to identity is reflected not only by his experimental warping and global transmission of familiar cultural forms such as dance, but also through his light-hearted comments reflecting his position as a nomadic artist. The techniques Paik left behind continue these light-hearted cultural negotiations, as demonstrated both by Emile Devereaux’s visual practices and e-mail correspondence surrounding work exhibited at the Fondo Nacional de las Artes in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

To Whom It May Concern: Nam June Paik’s Wobbulator and Playful Identity

Emile Devereaux

Digital Art & Culture, Lancaster Institute for Contemporary Art

“The path of evolution silently passes over the silent ones; they are outside of all discourse . . . Since they don’t write anymore, they cannot respond to possible inconsistencies in their personal file . . . As if swallowed by the earth, nobody knows them anymore . . . they are neither seen nor heard . . . [T]he honourable law does not spare anyone who has dishonourably excluded him-or herself, just as the laws of natural selection themselves know no exception.”

To whom it may concern: I am interested in the nether reaches touched by digital media networks. These most distant navigations of scale and time include intimate spaces, linking private thoughts with unknown destinations. Nam June Paik left us with new media words to reach these dimensions, wobbulating inventions with which we may inject ourselves into media channels in the first person, like a written letter. If the letter I write here mixes what is personal with what is philosophical and scholarly, it also follows Paik’s writing approach. Like the media technologies he left behind, Paik’s

Figure 1. A Wobbulator at the Experimental Television Center, Owego, New York. © Sherry M. Hocking, Experimental Television Center, 1973. Used with permission.
letters, too, have been republished, reaching many more eyes than originally anticipated, conveying his thoughts about his experimental video techniques. Paik's playful voice resonates equally through his electronic works and letters, part typewritten, part handwritten (a reminder of a post-structuralist emphasis on writing as both visual and material).

'Long-hand' implies that our very hands can stretch across distance. Even this written form, however personal it may seem, is highly structured. Hill's writing guide from 1875 instructs, "Your letter should be a representation of yourself, not of anybody else. The world is full of imitators . . . who pass on, leaving no reputation behind them." At the end of the 19th century, Hill's volume provided detailed writing instructions for every business and social occasion, interspersed with electrotyped image plates; exemplary models of cursive alphabets, scripts and symbols to repetitively and painstakingly copy in attempting to refine one's hand. Laboriously training one's handwriting to conform allowed for the communication of an authentic self. Hill's writing guide emphasizes the mastery of penmanship and the fluidity of expression while excluding entirely from its pages any mention of innovations in writing technologies. Within this Chicago-based publication there is no mention of the telegraph, patented by Samuel Morse some thirty-five years earlier. Perhaps more understandably, typewriters are also absent, as the first serial production of the typewriting machine in 1874 fell just after the manual's registration in the Library of Congress, its actual publication year coinciding with the first secretive submission of a typescript novel to a publisher, Mark Twain's 

Although forms of communication change through the introduction of new technologies, individuals continue to struggle and push at the frameworks in order to articulate their experiences. Nam June Paik's experimental approaches stretched understandings of a media infested world, at times dismantling the constitution of the very media used to convey his thoughts. If forms are solidified through struggle, then difficulties that Paik encountered in practices such as recording video after chopping holes in the stabilizing signal were more than absurd Dadaist gestures. Paik was leading the way towards increasingly more interactive media technologies and practices by destabilizing the structures of the television medium. What happens when other artists pick up Paik's inventions? What voices emerge when these approaches are applied within different historical, technological and geographical landscapes?

I would like to argue that bits of Paik's life are retained in all his works, just as identities often leak through forms of communication. Proper historical forms of longhand, for example, obviously conveyed gender (as the term "penmanship" implies). Hill's writing guide politely suggests that, "Ladies can, if they wish, terminate with the finer hand, while gentlemen will end with the bolder penmanship." With a much less gentle touch Friedrich Kittler asserts that the gendered articulations of writing, far from optional, were hotly contested, especially in the use of an inappropriately feminine script. In contrast, when the typewriter and other mechanical writing replaced handwriting the character of the writer was thought to be concealed. Since the typewriter machine made "everyone look the same," the new technologies radically transformed the social terrain of writing, allowing women access to an almost exclusively male writing process. If male pseudonyms at first granted women access to formal writing, assistance in operating the machines created a new source of employment for women, until the word 'typewriter' implied a convergence of "a profession, a machine, and a sex" and took on the meaning of "both typing machine and female typist."

Identity is conveyed through the form of the typewritten letter, therefore, with an inverted gender; the authoritative voice of the assumed masculine writer filtered through a feminized machine.

Figure 2. The Ninth Penmanship lesson from Hill's Manual of Business and Social Forms, 1875, repeats the phrase, "Commodations generally animate men." Electrotyping by Shniedewend, Lee, & Co., Chicago. Used with permission via the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.
Of course, media records the social hierarchies and misunderstandings of any particular historical moment. For example, Fred Stern’s documentary film interviews Paik’s collaborator Charlotte Moorman in 1980, revealing some of the reactions Paik initially encountered upon arriving in New York in 1964. Mixed with the obvious admiration and respect that Moorman holds for Paik are frank, humorous, and somewhat painful articulations of her first attempts to understand Paik’s proposals and professional positioning as a well-connected male Asian artist in the 1960s: “What? . . . I can’t believe that I’m sitting here talking to this oriental man about these things.”

It could be argued that through their collaborations and Paik’s technological experiments, cultural understandings developed in conversation around the work. Besides recording changing social circumstances, technologically-mediated communication itself always seems to threaten conventional expectations of gender, culture and space. Nam June Paik consciously confronted all three—pushing forward and combining a variety of practices, including explorations in performance, sculpture, installation and television signals. If by appropriating the global reach of television networks into his practice, Paik’s work touched a wider audience than earlier artists, I’d also like to suggest this is due to the fact that his personal voice was woven into the very materialities of his practice; intimacy is conveyed despite the work’s technological basis. The retention of Paik’s touch is a part of his ongoing influence, part of the draw that he continues to exert on the development of new artistic approaches and technologies.

To whom it may concern: Inappropriately, I feel I could almost write a letter to Nam June Paik, as if somehow I grew up with him and knew him casually and distantly. I would explain my familiarity by including in my letter years of postgraduate study at the University of California, San Diego, walking past one of Paik’s video walls almost daily, my mind nervously preoccupied with a conversation to take place in my advisor’s office overlooking Paik’s TV Buddha. If in attempting to grasp Paik’s work the letter format frames my words in a compatibly mobile container, the personal voice in my letter also runs the risk of sounding sentimental, casual or lacking in authority. Paik’s work...
Paik’s work, like that of a letter posted in the mail, establishes an improvisational framework for conversational exchange.

At this moment in technological history, in which social media sites such as YouTube encourage the dissemination of autobiographical voices, the private, intimate, also inevitably finds its way across disciplinary boundaries and other frameworks that have attempted to limit or discredit this vulnerable voice. Paik’s play with identity defies systems that articulate cultural differences by pinning them down, solidifying identifying markers. Rather, like culture-jammers of the 1990s, he reworks familiar referents to distort and disrupt. In other words, for Paik the materiality of technology mixes with identity to break apart systems of categorization.

An examination of the basic material properties of Paik’s form of correspondence then, is the first step towards understanding how his work connects with viewers. How might the materialities of Paik’s television object, the same body as the set in the nostalgic family relation, or as a suggestible memory. In addition, Paik’s long-term exploration of the materiality of the signal (not only the television object) extends this personal connection into practice and the future. Artists continue to rework Paik’s gestures and thoughts like a television medium, once transformed into a signal and transmitted, they are subject to recording, potentially endless re-run, edit and re-combinations. Paik’s work, like that of a letter posted in the mail, establishes an improvisational framework for conversational exchange. Paik’s real time experiments with television signals such as Participaton TV (1959-66) invited viewers to alter the television signal through a microphone, demonstrating the malleable and conversational capabilities of television, even if that conversation did not extend back into mainstream network television transmission.

The intimacy that Paik preserves by working the television medium also extends into his form of writing. Largely preserved as letters, the majority of his thoughts about his early video experiments are conveyed in the catalog V'ideology 1959-1973. Perhaps his letters arrived at the appropriate address before eventually joining archival collections or contributing to books and art catalogs through reproduction. Once overhearding its pre-determined location and language, the same message, however, a letter never knows into what other hands or technologies it might fall. Jacques Derrida’s analysis of Lacan extends the framework of the symbolic and destabilizes spatial locations through demonstrating the postal principle: how the correspondence of a letter may always travel across space. Jacques Derrida’s analysis of Lacan extends the framework of the symbolic and destabilizes spatial locations through demonstrating the postal principle: how the correspondence of a letter may always travel across space.

From sculptural works such as TV Buddha (1973) that link televisual transmission and the future. Artists continue to rework Paik’s gestures and thoughts like a television medium, once transformed into a signal and transmitted, they are subject to recording, potentially endless re-run, edit and re-combinations. Paik’s work, like that of a letter posted in the mail, establishes an improvisational framework for conversational exchange. Paik’s real time experiments with television signals such as Participaton TV (1959-66) invited viewers to alter the television signal through a microphone, demonstrating the malleable and conversational capabilities of television, even if that conversation did not extend back into mainstream network television transmission.

The intimacy that Paik preserves by working the television medium also extends into his form of writing. Largely preserved as letters, the majority of his thoughts about his early video experiments are conveyed in the catalog V’ideology 1959-1973. Perhaps his letters arrived at the appropriate address before eventually joining archival collections or contributing to books and art catalogs through reproduction. Once overhearding its pre-determined location and language, the same message, however, a letter never knows into what other hands or technologies it might fall. Jacques Derrida’s analysis of Lacan extends the framework of the symbolic and destabilizes spatial locations through demonstrating the postal principle: how the correspondence of a letter may always travel across space. Jacques Derrida’s analysis of Lacan extends the framework of the symbolic and destabilizes spatial locations through demonstrating the postal principle: how the correspondence of a letter may always travel across space.

From sculptural works such as TV Buddha (1973) that link televisual transmission and the future. Artists continue to rework Paik’s gestures and thoughts like a television medium, once transformed into a signal and transmitted, they are subject to recording, potentially endless re-run, edit and re-combinations. Paik’s work, like that of a letter posted in the mail, establishes an improvisational framework for conversational exchange. Paik’s real time experiments with television signals such as Participaton TV (1959-66) invited viewers to alter the television signal through a microphone, demonstrating the malleable and conversational capabilities of television, even if that conversation did not extend back into mainstream network television transmission.

The intimacy that Paik preserves by working the television medium also extends into his form of writing. Largely preserved as letters, the majority of his thoughts about his early video experiments are conveyed in the catalog V’ideology 1959-1973. Perhaps his letters arrived at the appropriate address before eventually joining archival collections or contributing to books and art catalogs through reproduction. Once overhearding its pre-determined location and language, the same message, however, a letter never knows into what other hands or technologies it might fall. Jacques Derrida’s analysis of Lacan extends the framework of the symbolic and destabilizes spatial locations through demonstrating the postal principle: how the correspondence of a letter may always travel across space. Jacques Derrida’s analysis of Lacan extends the framework of the symbolic and destabilizes spatial locations through demonstrating the postal principle: how the correspondence of a letter may always travel across space.

From sculptural works such as TV Buddha (1973) that link televisual transmission and the future. Artists continue to rework Paik’s gestures and thoughts like a television medium, once transformed into a signal and transmitted, they are subject to recording, potentially endless re-run, edit and re-combinations. Paik’s work, like that of a letter posted in the mail, establishes an improvisational framework for conversational exchange. Paik’s real time experiments with television signals such as Participaton TV (1959-66) invited viewers to alter the television signal through a microphone, demonstrating the malleable and conversational capabilities of television, even if that conversation did not extend back into mainstream network television transmission.

The intimacy that Paik preserves by working the television medium also extends into his form of writing. Largely preserved as letters, the majority of his thoughts about his early video experiments are conveyed in the catalog V’ideology 1959-1973. Perhaps his letters arrived at the appropriate address before eventually joining archival collections or contributing to books and art catalogs through reproduction. Once overhearding its pre-determined location and language, the same message, however, a letter never knows into what other hands or technologies it might fall. Jacques Derrida’s analysis of Lacan extends the framework of the symbolic and destabilizes spatial locations through demonstrating the postal principle: how the correspondence of a letter may always travel across space. Jacques Derrida’s analysis of Lacan extends the framework of the symbolic and destabilizes spatial locations through demonstrating the postal principle: how the correspondence of a letter may always travel across space.
In 1972, a raster scan manipulation device was constructed for the Artist in Residence programme at the Experimental Television Center in Binghamton, New York. Also known as the “Wobbulator” the apparatus operated alongside the Paik/Abe Video Synthesizer, leaving its mark most noticeably upon “Paik’s early TV experiments, such as Dancing Patterns.” The Paik/Abe Video Synthesizer primarily colorized imagery while the Wobbulator created the motion effects by magnetically scanning a “monitor modulated by audio signals.” Additional cameras allowed for generating video feedback and fine adjustments to the input signals through knobs, shaping the wavy patterns into the types of abstractions that, like the device’s name, distantly recognizable imagery into ever increasing waves of lines.

During my residency at the Experimental Television Center in 2008, I made use of Paik’s Wobbulator (without the synthesizer) to add distortion to video imagery input into the feedback loop; the monochromatic image quickly reduced itself into a radiating wave. Operating instinctively, I digitally composited the Wobbulator’s distinctive patterns within a 3D animated world made up of a simple fuzzy revolving planet in the shape of a human heart. Unaware of Paik’s earlier use of the Wobbulator to create Dancing Patterns, I further merged this technologically mediated footage with clips of dancers extracted from archival films. Archival dancers emerge from the caverns of this strange heart planet (inside or outside the body?) in a flash of the Wobbulator’s rays. As often occurs in the re-appropriation of archival imagery, the dancers in the final piece, Bajo la Piel (Under the Skin) felt familiar, as if they had been seen before, perhaps from a memory of childhood. Like the letter that connects the inside of the home and heart with the outside world – linking memories, heart and hearth – the motivation behind this work was to reach across boundaries.

As a large-scale, site-specific projection in Argentina, the video seemed to speak to viewers in a similarly intuitive register. The archival footage of dancers formed a common cultural bar-knot, drawing upon popular dance forms and styles. Loie Fuller’s flowing angelic fabric wings and much appropriated dance style have had over a hundred years of exposure around the globe, and although
the comedian Eddie Cantor may not be as recognizable, he appears to be so – his classic vaudeville style and suit, bowler hat and tap dance, hold him hovering at the edge of memory, a familiar figure who’s nearly forgotten. Although I feared that my production choices evoked feelings of sentimentality, I would take any measure to connect with audiences in this case. The curator had published my private e-mail correspondences in order to represent me at the outer edges of feminism, announcing me as a man born female, and in so doing shaping my identity differently than I would myself. Not wanting to market an identity better placed in a freak show, and at the risk of social isolation, I strategically sought common ground, embracing historical imagery from popular culture to draw viewers closer to my work.

More accurately, my trust and respect for the curator Graciela Oveje- ro sought. The negotiation of voices occurring through this e-mail correspondence between Argentina and New York, direct address and exposure in confrontation with poetic speech, was eventually resolved through publication of what was originally intended as a private exchange.

This experience represented simply another of the many moments in my life to be shaped from the hands of an individual and distorted, almost like Paik’s wobbling image of the tap dancer in Global Groove. These manipulations may be performed by others, corporations or taken on ourselves, if the dissemination of tap dance can first be traced to the transportation of slaves from the West Indies in the 1800s, its subsequent adoption and alignment with vaudeville link it properly or improperly within the histories of several nations and cultures around the globe. Cultural forms are recognizable and therefore identifiable based on what has been seen before. They are rendered visible based on one’s own experiences, whether the exposure is articulated by living persons or media screens. Nam June Paik certainly seemed to understand these inescapable manipulations, and his unavoidable game of identity and in so doing, demonstrated even this sample letter written for official purposes does not alter Paik’s light-hearted tone; it still implies an ambiguous destination, a nameless reader, and points to the arbitrary legal requirement that seeks to assign an identifiable date as a marker for the start of a friendship. Trying identity playfully, however, is dangerous, particularly when local legislation places individuals within intolerable, exploitable, or otherwise unprotected categories and when distances are obliter- ated through the continuousness of the digital. Paik admirably played his unavoidable game of identity and in so doing, demonstrated methods for confusing the media’s identifying systems and introduc- ing distortion. Even my work有价值 to create theSkin), which draws upon Paik’says in order to gather stra- tegies, sets up systems of recognition based on desire (as a joyful gesture and act of rebellion against establishing fixed categories). Underemphasized Can-can girls in the centre of the frame; upon looking more closely (or perhaps remaining unnoticed) are WWII soldiers in drag. The types of distortions and weav- ing together of cultural codes that media allows do not undermine our connections with our hearts or homes but rather help us to inven- tively craft the world as we see it, rather than accept definitions that are handed to us. The revolutionary invention of the typewriter adjusted women’s access to education, employment and the act of writing itself, adding levels of inclusion to official histories and histories of discourse. Let’s follow the typewriter’s lead and use technologically-mediated means to shift cultural or sub-cultural markers in dis- course. Only as long as women remained excluded from discursive technologies could they exist as the other of words and printed mat- erials. Now, however, this is no longer the case. Paik’s light-hearted tone; it still implies an ambiguous destination, a nameless reader, and points to the arbitrary legal requirement that seeks to assign an identifiable date as a marker for the start of a friendship. Treaty identity playfully, however, is dangerous, particularly when local legislation places individuals within intolerable, exploitable, or otherwise unprotected categories and when distances are obliterate- ted through the continuousness of the digital. Paik admirably played his unavoidable game of identity and in so doing, demonstrated methods for confusing the media’s identifying systems and introduc- ing distortion. Even my work does it play (Under the Skin), which draws upon Paik’says in order to gather stra- tegies, sets up systems of recognition based on desire (as a joyful gesture and act of rebellion against establishing fixed categories). Underemphasized Can-can girls in the centre of the frame; upon looking more closely (or perhaps remaining unnoticed) are WWII soldiers in drag. The types of distortions and weav- ing together of cultural codes that media allows do not undermine our connections with our hearts or homes but rather help us to inven- tively craft the world as we see it, rather than accept definitions that are handed to us. The revolutionary invention of the typewriter adjusted women’s access to education, employment and the act of writing itself, adding levels of inclusion to official histories and histories of discourse. Let’s follow the typewriter’s lead and use technologically-mediated means to shift cultural or sub-cultural markers in dis- course. Only as long as women remained excluded from discursive technologies could they exist as the other of words and printed mat- erials. Now, however, this is no longer the case. Paik’s light-hearted tone; it still implies an ambiguous destination, a nameless reader, and points to the arbitrary legal requirement that seeks to assign an identifiable date as a marker for the start of a friendship. Treaty identity playfully, however, is dangerous, particularly when local legislation places individuals within intolerable, exploitable, or otherwise unprotected categories and when distances are obliterate- ted through the continuousness of the digital. Paik admirably played his unavoidable game of identity and in so doing, demonstrated methods for confusing the media’s identifying systems and introduc- ing distortion. Even my work does it play (Under the Skin), which draws upon Paik’says in order to gather stra- tegies, sets up systems of recognition based on desire (as a joyful gesture and act of rebellion against establishing fixed categories). Underemphasized Can-can girls in the centre of the frame; upon looking more closely (or perhaps remaining unnoticed) are WWII soldiers in drag. The types of distortions and weav- ing together of cultural codes that media allows do not undermine our connections with our hearts or homes but rather help us to inven- tively craft the world as we see it, rather than accept definitions that are handed to us. The revolutionary invention of the typewriter adjusted women’s access to education, employment and the act of writing itself, adding levels of inclusion to official histories and histories of discourse. Let’s follow the typewriter’s lead and use technologically-mediated means to shift cultural or sub-cultural markers in dis-
tions touches others: “[a]s Derrida has taught us, there are many futures and even more returns.”

To identify is not the point – let’s follow Paik’s lead and participate in systems of playful exchange.

REFERENCES AND NOTES


6. Kittler, 182. Kittler’s footnote credits Cindy Croll as the source of this example, her 1980’s feminist historical analyses of the male domination of technology likely provides the fuel behind Kittler’s words. For example see Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and Technical Know-How (Boston, MA: North Eastern University Press, 1985).

7. Ibid., 185.

8. Ibid., 185.

9. Ibid.


