

L
CATALOG

FAIR
AND
WIDE

BY LANFRANCO ACETI AND OMAR KHOLEIF

This issue of LEA
is a co-publication of

NYUSteinhardt
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development



LEONARDO
THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE
ARTS, SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

Sabancı
Universitesi

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

LEA is a publication of Leonardo/ISAST.

Copyright 2013 ISAST

Leonardo Electronic Almanac

Volume 19 Issue 5

December 15, 2013

ISSN 1071-4391

ISBN 978-1-906897-21-5

The ISBN is provided by Goldsmiths, University of London.

LEA PUBLISHING & SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Volume Authors

Lanfranco Aceti and Omar Kholeif

Editors

Özden Şahin, Catherine M. Weir

Art Director

Deniz Cem Önduygu

Editorial Board

Peter J. Bentley, Ezequiel Di Paolo, Ernest Edmonds, Felice Frankel, Gabriella Giannachi, Gary Hall, Craig Harris, Sibel Irzik, Marina Jirotko, Beau Lotto, Roger Malina, Terrence Masson, Jon McCormack, Mark Nash, Sally Jane Norman, Christiane Paul, Simon Penny, Jane Prophet, Jeffrey Shaw, William Uricchio

Editorial Address

Leonardo Electronic Almanac

Sabancı University, Orhanli - Tuzla, 34956

Istanbul, Turkey

Email

info@lealmanac.org

Web

www.lealmanac.org

www.twitter.com/LEA_twitts

www.flickr.com/photos/lea_gallery

www.facebook.com/pages/Leonardo-Electronic-Almanac/209156896252

Copyright © 2013

Leonardo, the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology

Leonardo Electronic Almanac is published by:

Leonardo/ISAST

211 Sutter Street, suite 501

San Francisco, CA 94108

USA

Leonardo Electronic Almanac (LEA) is a project of Leonardo/The International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology. For more information about Leonardo/ISAST's publications and programs, see <http://www.leonardo.info> or contact isast@leonardo.info.

Leonardo Electronic Almanac is produced by Passero Productions.

Reposting of this journal is prohibited without permission of Leonardo/ISAST, except for the posting of news and events listings which have been independently received.

The individual articles included in the issue are © 2013 ISAST.

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

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

Sabancı
Universitesi



Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



NYUSteinhardt
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

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 **06** *The Global Play of Nam June Paik: The Artist That Embraced and Transformed Marshall McLuhan's Dreams Into Reality*
- Omar Kholeif **10** *The Future Is Now?*
- Emile Devereaux **22** *To Whom It May Concern: Nam June Paik's Wobulator and Playful Identity*
- Tom Schofield **46** *Data Materialism in Art Making*
- Gabriela Galati **54** *The Electronic Representation of Information: New Relationships between the Virtual Archive and its (Possible) Referent*
- Jamie Allen **70** *Traveling at the Speed of Paik: An artist-researcher visits the Nam June Paik Art Center*
- Jeremy Bailey **90** *A Statement on Nam June Paik*
- Richard H. Brown **104** *Zen for TV? Nam June Paik's "Global Groove" and "A Tribute to John Cage" (1973)*
- 130** *Introductions and John G. Hanhardt Keynote Speech*
- 150** *John G. Hanhardt Q&A session chaired by Sarah Cook*
- 166** *Roy Ascott Keynote Speech*
- 184** *Ruth Catlow Speech*
- 190** *Anton Lukoszevieze performance*
- 200** *Roy Ascott in conversation with Mike Stubbs*

THE GLOBAL PLAY OF NAM JUNE PAIK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paik's latest creative deployment of new media is through laser technology. He has called his most recent installation a "post-video project," which continues the articulation of the kinetic image through the use of laser energy projected onto scrim, cascading water, and smoke-filled sculptures. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Paik's work shows us that the cinema and video are fusing with electronic and digital media into new image technologies and forms of expression. The end of video

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

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

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

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

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

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

The catalog is in itself a work that reflects the laser connections, the speed of contacts, the possibilities of connecting a variety of media as easily as connecting people from all parts of the world. In this phantasmagoria of connections it almost seems possible to visualize

the optic cables and WiFi that like threads join the people and the media of McLuhan's "global village" and the multiplicities of media that Paik invited us to use to create what I would like to define as the contemporary "bastard art."⁷

Lanfranco Aceti

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



A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

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

ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Nam June Paik, "Cybernated Art," in *The New Media Reader*, eds. Noah Waldrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort, 229 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003).
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.

The Future Is Now?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

far and wide Nam June Paik's influence may have travelled, and to consider what influence it has yet to wield.

Omar Kholeif

Editor and Curator

FACT, Foundation for Art and Creative Technology

-
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).

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

ANTON LUKOSZEVIEZE PERFORMANCE

This text is a transcription of a speech from:

Nam June Paik Conference

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

Friday 18 February 2011

I'm rather dumbstruck after hearing John talk, he was a fascinating and knowledgeable speaker whom it was incredibly interesting to listen to. My practice involves, firstly, musical performance and composition; but I also make films, videos and scores that function as visual works. I have a particular interest in the Fluxus performances of the 1960s, and I myself sometimes perform to these pieces. I was going to perform one for violin solo today, but sadly health and safety restrictions have prevented me from doing so. That may in fact be a good thing, it is quite dangerous.

AUDIENCE: To play the violin is dangerous?

No, but this performance involved smashing the violin.

AUDIENCE: Oh right.

Yes, that old chestnut. But, actually, the lady's question about rhythm interested me, because rhythm is about movement; the movement of sounds and images. I think we often consider rhythm as a fast thing, but of course it can also be a very slow thing. It changes when it is slowed and then we have the minutea of movement, which can be fascinating as well. The video I'm going to show is a realization, by

myself, of a card from a collection of events put together by George Brecht in the 1960s. I'm interested in the musical outcome of Fluxus performances as opposed to their gags and pranks, although they are very much a part of the experience. George Maciunas himself said that really it was just messing about, although I think that was a bit tongue in cheek.

More specifically, I'm very interested in the sound outcome and the almost ritualistic aspect of Fluxus performances. It is interesting to note that several Fluxus performers were originally composers. Nam June Paik was a composer, he studied composition and was an assistant of Stockhausen. Actually, I'm not sure that's correct, he may have been a student as opposed to an assistant. Either way, they were friends and colleagues. I think Stockhausen liked to have people working for him, because other people, Cornelius Cardew for one, worked as assistants to Stockhausen. In addition to Paik, we have Dick Higgins who studied electronic music under John Cage at the New School in New York. So, returning to the video, this is a realization of a card called *Empty Vessel* by George Brecht lasting twelve minutes.

The next thing: I'm going to perform now. I saw a box, an object made by Paik, which is essentially a wooden packing crate with strings on it and a sonating tin can attached to the side; I think it is called *Primitive Music*. It got me thinking about the vast sonic potential of this primitive object, and I wanted to make something in response. At the same time, I was also thinking about pixels of sounds and mixing in his tape work.

I also have my primitive box. I am half Lithuanian and this instrument here is a kanklės. It has five strings and is usually used to play indigenous folk music in Lithuania. It is supposed to be plucked, but I don't just pluck it, instead I use it for improvisation and for the creation of other types of music.

This performance then, is a response to the Paik object and it lasts for ten minutes and twenty seconds. ■



**Operational &
Curatorial Research** in
Contemporary Art, Design,
Science & Technology