

 **BEALL** CENTER  
FOR **ART+TECHNOLOGY**  
University of California, Irvine



## Press Packet

*For immediate release*

**EXHIBITION:** Media Alchemy of Nam June Paik  
Curated by David Familian

**DATES:** October 2 – December 5, 2009

**LOCATION:** The Beall Center for Art + Technology

**OPENING RECEPTION:** Thursday, October 1, 2009, 6:30 – 9:00 pm

**ADDRESS:**

University of California, Irvine  
Claire Trevor School of the Arts  
712 Arts Plaza  
Irvine, CA 92697-2775

**HOURS:**

Tuesday - Wednesday, 12 – 5 pm  
Thursday - Saturday, 12 – 8 pm

**GENERAL CONTACT:**

(949) 824-4339  
<http://beallcenter.uci.edu>

## BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Beall Center for Art + Technology at the University of California, Irvine brings innovative new-media exhibitions that use the latest experimental artistic and scientific digital, audio, and visual technology.

As part of an ongoing commitment to exhibiting various areas of experimental media arts, the Beall Center is proud to show a selection of work by world renowned and pioneering video artist, Nam June Paik (1932-2006).

## CURATOR STATEMENT

Paik's career started with his association with Fluxus, most notably his performances, in the early 60's. In 1964, Paik collaborated with classical cellist Charlotte Moorman to create *TV Cello*, where they stacked televisions on top of one another to form the shape of an actual cello. When Moorman drew her bow across the "cello," images of both her playing and images of other cellists playing appeared on the screens. This became the major aspect of Paik's personal work - the TV cabinet as a sculptural element and the screen's plastic qualities pushed to the limit. One of the ways he achieved this was by creating his own video synthesizer that enabled him to create the kind of generated images he wanted.

The title for this exhibition, Media Alchemy of Nam June Paik, refers to an essay titled *Video Alchemy* by Lucio Cabutiv. Paik truly was an alchemist combining various artistic forms and media technologies into groundbreaking bodies of work. Paik's transformations explore the sculptural and screen elements of the television. His works were more centered on the television and its image than just the image on the screen. He never wanted us to forget "the box." His sculptural/video approach would be one of the strong influences on future generations of artists creating video installations.

This exhibition will look at Paik's way of encountering the body. Many of Paik's most compelling works especially since the 90's were the body/robot works. Some of these works were portraits of specific individuals, like Joseph Beuys and John Cage (not part of the Beall exhibit), while others are more literary (like *Gulliver*) and some more methodical (like *Internet Dweller*). Whichever form his works take they tend to be larger than human size and exaggerated.

Most of the works in the Beall exhibit incorporate old TV cabinets, whereas *Gulliver* also uses Sony Watchman miniature televisions. By the time Paik was doing this work, these old-style TV cabinets were already out of date. The old TV cabinets make a very important conceptual statement of televisions' roots in radio. It is the (Marshall) McLuhan transformative moment in media from radio to TV that Paik keeps alive. *Internet Dweller* focuses on another thread of McLuhan - telecommunications - with each one of the series of 12 based on an Internet address of a friend of Paik's. This is another thread of technological progression from the mail to the telephone to the Internet.

The exhibition will be on view at the Beall Center for the Art + Technology from October 2 through December 5, 2009. The exhibit may be available for travel beginning January 2009. Please contact the Beall Center for additional information.

## **CURRENT LIST OF PAIK'S WORKS**

**Gulliver** (2001) 11 antique TV cabinets, one antique radio cabinet, 10 13-in. color TVs, one 19-in. color TV, three-channel original Paik video (with four DVD players included), 18 mixed-media Lilliputians with five-inch LCD TV heads. Surface of wood, glass, 23 x 170 x 146 inches

**Internet Dweller** (1994) Number five in a series of 12 Internet Dwellers. Two Panasonic 10-in. TV models # CTN-1050R, six KTV 5-in. TV model# SLA, three vintage TV cabinets, projector, lantern, glass insulators, neon, one laser disk player, one original Paik laser disk, 66 x 53 x 30 inches

**Neon TV** (1990) The end of Communism Serie von 8 Unikaten. Sony Watchman, antiker Holzfernseher, antenne, Koreanische, Schriftzeichen, auf Glas: "Man talks Heaven, chromosomes change, end of communism..." 57 x 62 x 23 cm

## **ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY**

Nam June Paik (July 20, 1932 - January 29, 2006) was a Korean-born American artist. He worked with a variety of media and is considered to be the first video artist. He is thought by some to have been the author of the phrase "Information Superhighway," which, according to his own account, he used in a Rockefeller Foundation paper in 1974.

Born in Seoul, Paik had four older brothers and a father who worked as a textile manufacturer. As he was growing up, he was trained as a classical pianist. In 1950, Paik and his family had to flee from their home in Korea during the Korean War. His family first fled to Hong Kong, but later moved to Japan, for reasons unknown. Six years after, he graduated from the University of Tokyo, where he wrote a thesis on the composer Arnold Schoenberg.

Paik then moved to Germany to study the history of music at Munich University. While studying there, Paik met the composers Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage and the conceptual artists Joseph Beuys and Wolf Vostell who inspired him to work in the field of electronic art.

Nam June Paik then began participating in the Neo-Dada art movement, known as Fluxus, which was inspired by the composer John Cage and his use of everyday sounds and noises in his music. Paik made his big debut at an exhibition known as Exposition of Music-Electronic Television, in which he scattered televisions everywhere and used magnets to alter or distort their images.

In 1964, Paik moved to New York and began working with classical cellist Charlotte Moorman to combine his video, music, and performance. In 1965, Sony introduced the Portapak, with which Paik could both move and record things, for it was the first portable video and audio recorder. From there, Paik became an international celebrity, known for his creative and entertaining works.

Paik was also known for making robots out of television sets. These were constructed using pieces of wire and metal, but later Paik used parts from radio and television sets. A retrospective of Paik's work was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in the spring of 1982. During the New Year's Day celebration in January 1, 1984, he aired "Good Morning, Mr. Orwell," a live link between WNET New York, Centre Pompidou Paris, and South Korea. With the participation of John Cage, Salvador Dalí, Laurie Anderson, Joseph Beuys, Merce Cunningham, Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky, George Plimpton, and other artists, Paik showed that George

Orwell's Big Brother hadn't arrived. In 1986, Paik created the work Bye Bye Kipling, a tape that mixed live events from Seoul, Tokyo, Japan and New York. Two years later, he further showed his love for his homeland with a piece called The More the Better, a giant tower made entirely of 1003 monitors for the Olympic Games being held at Seoul.

In 1996, Nam June Paik had a stroke, which left him partially paralyzed. A final retrospective of his work was held in 2000 at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, integrating the unique space of the museum into the exhibition itself. This coincided with a downtown gallery showing of video artworks by his wife, Shigeko Kubota, mainly dealing with his recovery from the stroke. Nam June Paik died January 29, 2006, in Miami, Florida, due to natural causes.

[Artist's biography from Wikipedia]

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, IMAGES, AND RESOURCES**

[HTTP://WWW.PAIKSTUDIOS.COM/](http://www.paikstudios.com/)

[HTTP://WWW.MUSEUM.TV/ARCHIVES/ETV/P/HTMLP/PAIKNAMJUN/PAIKNAMJUN.HTM](http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/P/HTMLP/PAIKNAMJUN/PAIKNAMJUN.HTM)

[HTTP://KICKERLIGHT.COM/PROJECT1/BIO.HTM](http://kickerlight.com/project1/bio.htm)

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