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## **The Smithsonian American Art Museum Acquires the Complete Estate Archive of Visionary Artist Nam June Paik**

The Smithsonian American Art Museum has acquired the complete archive of the artist Nam June Paik, one of the most influential artists of his generation who transformed television and video into artists' media. Paik's art and ideas embodied a radical new vision for an art form that was embraced around the world and changed global visual culture. With this acquisition, the museum becomes the institution of record for understanding this provocative artist's profound impact on the art world and for understanding the history of the moving image in 20th-century art.

"The Nam June Paik Archive is a landmark addition to the resources available to scholars and curators at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The museum now becomes the major center for Paik scholarship," said Elizabeth Broun, The Margaret and Terry Stent Director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. "The museum has made a strong commitment to Nam June Paik's work through acquisitions, which makes it the perfect home for his archive."

The Nam June Paik Archive consists of research material, documentation, correspondence, sculptural robots, and video and television technology. It provides unprecedented insight into Paik's creative process, his sources of inspiration and the communities of artists on three continents with whom he worked for more than five decades beginning in the 1950s. The collective archive includes thousands of individual items that will be cataloged during the next several years.

John G. Hanhardt, consulting senior curator for film and media arts at the museum since 2006, is leading the effort to organize the Nam June Paik Archive and establish a study center at the museum. He is the foremost expert in Paik's work, and was the organizing curator for two landmark exhibitions, the first in 1982 at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the second a retrospective presented as the first exhibition of the new millennium in 2000 at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

"The Paik Archive provides an extraordinary opportunity to give a fuller picture of this seminal artist, and it is essential to creating the yet unwritten global history of the moving image in 20th-century art," said Hanhardt. "I look forward to organizing the archive, which will be the basis for a catalogue raisonné of Paik's artwork, and to developing a series of exhibitions using artworks and documentary

materials from the archive that will present different aspects of Paik's creative process and tell the story of his groundbreaking ideas."

The archive includes early writings on art, history and technology, correspondence with key artists and collaborators such as Charlotte Moorman and Wolf Vostell, a complete collection of videotapes used in his work, production notes for videotape and television projects, sketches, notebooks, models and plans for video installations. Highlights include Paik's hand-drawn plans for the Paik-Abe video synthesizer and documentation of large-scale television projects, such as "Guadalcanal Requiem" (1977/1979), and installations, including the massive "The More the Better" (1988). The archive also includes a full range of technology that Paik worked with, including a variety of early models of televisions and video projectors, old radios, record players, cameras and musical instruments supplemented by technical manuals. Additional materials that provide insight into Paik's career are unpublished interviews, audiotapes, vintage photographs, documentation of early Fluxus performances from before and after Paik's move to New York City in 1964, flyers, announcements, posters, catalogs and works in progress. A variety of toys, games, folk sculptures, banners, wall hangings and the desk where he painted in his studio are also part of the archive.

The museum has several significant works by Paik on permanent public view, including two of his ambitious and massive video walls "Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii" (1995), "Megatron/Matrix" (1995) and an early work called "Zen for TV" (1963/1976).

The Nam June Paik Archive is a gift of the Paik Estate through executor Ken Hakuta, the artist's nephew and an emeritus member of the museum's advisory board of commissioners, with the agreement of Shigeko Kubota, the artist's widow. The estate invited selected museums to present proposals for how each would use the archive. The Smithsonian American Art Museum, with its record of preserving major artist archives including those of Joseph Cornell, Gene Davis, William H. Johnson and the definitive record of Christo and Jean-Claude's seminal project "Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, 1972-76, A Documentation Exhibition," was eager to add the significant Paik Archive to its holdings. Once the archive is fully cataloged, it will be made available to curators and scholars by appointment.

### **About the Artist**

Nam June Paik (1932-2006), internationally recognized as the "Father of Video Art," created a large body of work including video sculptures, installations, performances, videotapes and television productions. He had a global presence and influence, and his innovative art and visionary ideas continue to inspire a new generation of artists.

Born in 1932 in Seoul, Korea, to a wealthy industrial family, Paik and his family fled Korea in 1950 at the outset of the Korean War, first to Hong Kong, then to Japan. Paik graduated from the

University of Tokyo in 1956, and then traveled to Germany to pursue his interest in avant-garde music, composition and performance. There he met John Cage and George Maciunas and became a member of the neo-dada Fluxus movement. In 1963, Paik had his legendary one-artist exhibition at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, Germany, that featured his prepared television sets, which radically altered the look and content of television.

After immigrating to the United States in 1964, he settled in New York City where he expanded his engagement with video and television, and had exhibitions of his work at the New School, Galerie Bonino and the Howard Wise Gallery. In 1965, Paik was one of the first artists to use a portable video camcorder. In 1969, he worked with the Japanese engineer Shuya Abe to construct an early video-synthesizer that allowed Paik to combine and manipulate images from different sources. The Paik-Abe video synthesizer transformed electronic moving-image making. Paik invented a new artistic medium with television and video, creating an astonishing range of artworks, from his seminal videotape “Global Groove” (1973) that broke new ground, to his sculptures “TV Buddha” (1974), and “TV Cello” (1971); to installations such as “TV Garden” (1974), “Video Fish” (1975) and “Fin de Siecle II” (1989); videotapes “Living with the Living Theatre” (1989) and “Guadalcanal Requiem” (1977/1979); and global satellite television productions such as “Good Morning Mr. Orwell,” which broadcast from the Centre Pompidou in Paris and a WNET-TV studio in New York City Jan. 1, 1984.

Paik has been the subject of numerous exhibitions, including two major retrospectives, and has been featured in major international art exhibitions including Documenta, the Venice Biennale and the Whitney Biennial. The Nam June Paik Art Center opened in a suburb of Seoul, South Korea, in 2008.

### **About the Smithsonian American Art Museum**

The Smithsonian American Art Museum celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with approximately 41,500 artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries. Its National Historic Landmark building is located at Eighth and F streets N.W., above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Museum hours are 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Web site: [americanart.si.edu](http://americanart.si.edu).

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