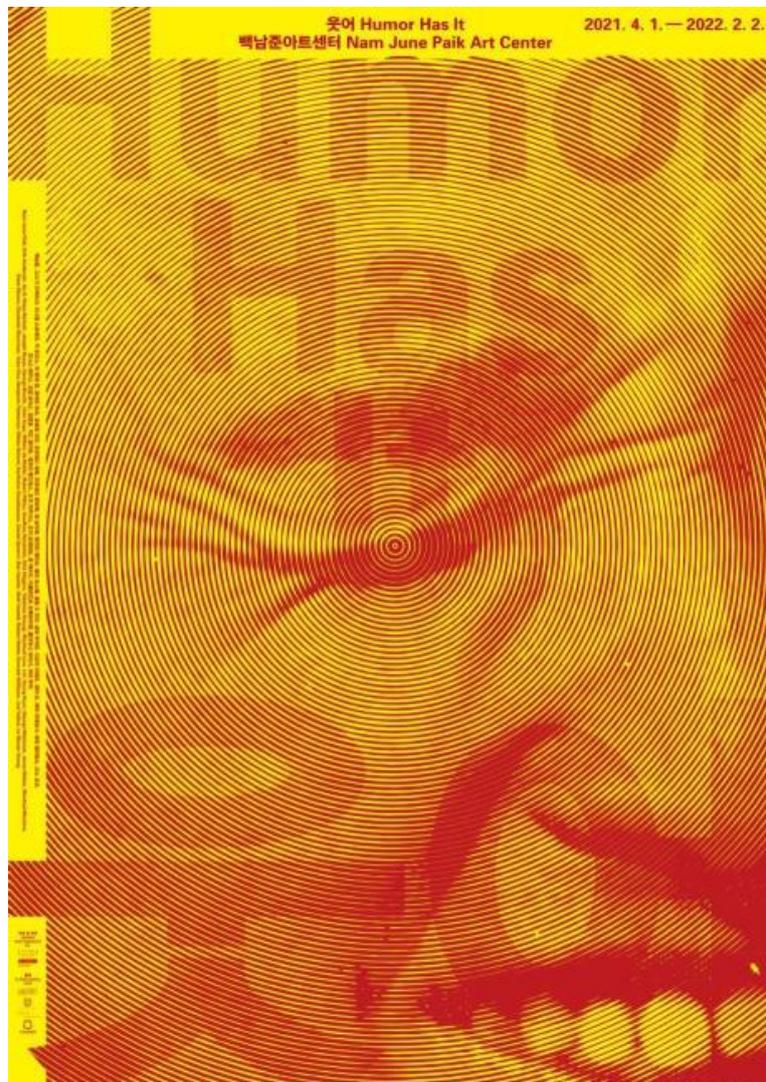


Press Release

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| Title | Nam June Paik Art Center <i>Humor Has It</i> | |
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| Press Release | See attached files or Download from link in email | |
| Release Date | April 1, 2021 | 19 pages |

Nam June Paik Art Center

Humor Has It



■ Overview

- Title: *Humor Has It*
- Period: April 1, 2021 – February 2, 2022
- Venue: Nam June Paik Art Center, Gallery 1
- Curator: Park Sang Ae (Head, Curatorial Department, Nam June Paik Art Center)
- Co-Curator : Park Hyejin (Independent Curator)
- Artists: Nam June Paik, Erik Andersch, Ay-O, Klaus Barisch, Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, John Cage, Willem de Ridder, Robert Filliou, Geoffrey Hendricks, Dick Higgins, Takehisa Kosugi, Manfred Leve, George Maciunas, Jonas Mekas, Manfred Montwé, Peter Moore, Charlotte Moorman, Yoko Ono, Benjamin Patterson, Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Daniel Spoerri, Ben Vautier, Wolf Vostell, Robert Watts, Emmett Williams, Jud Yalkut, La Monte Young
- Hosted and Organized by Nam June Paik Art Center, Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation
- In Partnership with Lithuanian Culture Institute, Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania, Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center of Lithuania, and City of Vilnius
- Supported by Sandoll Cloud

■ Introduction

Nam June Paik Art Center presents *Humor Has It* from April 1, 2021 to February 2, 2022. This exhibition, which shows a large collection of Fluxus art in collaboration with Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center of Lithuania, City of Vilnius, Lithuanian Culture Institute, and the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania, is intended to view Nam June Paik and Fluxus artists from a perspective of humor. This exhibition features about 200 Fluxus artworks and archival collections of around 30 artists from home and abroad, and will be partially changed in September to show more works and materials.

Humor is a useful strategy in stating one's stance. Jokes that trigger laughter allow us to express subversive thoughts metaphorically. Also humor presents the possibilities to dismantle canons and conventions openly. Humor in gestures of objection, mockery, irony, liberation, or destruction can be an effective means in cracking the social status quo. *Humor Has It* looks into Fluxus artists and Paik who challenged the traditional values of society and institutional art from an angle of humor.

Fluxus, a loose but revolutionary art network, was born in the late 1950s in Europe and USA. Many artists united and disunited freely to challenge the boundaries of high art in order to present a new form of art that everybody could enjoy. In a rapidly changing society of the 1960s, Fluxus also made critical attempts on social problems through its radical movements. At the center of Fluxus that dealt with issues of art and society in a witty and humorous manner was Paik. His sensational and provocative performances

before his video art are considered representative works of Fluxus. Paik used his body as a medium, composed sound in a new way, engaged actively with audiences, and posed questions like Zen riddles.

Visitors to *Humor Has It* can see the activities of Fluxus artists through photographs and videos. There are works in homage, including *Hommage à Jean-Pierre Wilhelm* (1978), *Hommage à John Cage: Music for Tapes and Piano* (1958–1962), and *South No. 2 (to Nam June Paik)* (1964), as well as archival collections such as *Fluxus — Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik* (1962), *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* (1963), *Originale* (1961), *Flux Sonata* (1975), and *Annual Avant-Garde Festival of New York* (1963–1980). In addition, you can try out firsthand the Fluxkits and event scores produced by artists led by George Maciunas from Lithuania, one of the central figures in Fluxus. With items in the form of newspaper, publications, and products, you will be able to see a new distribution network of art that Fluxus proposed, too. There are also Paik's works that brought everydayness to art, such as *First Portable TV* (1975), *Cooking Pot (with Korean Recipe)* (1985), *Colored Chair, Black & White Chair* (1984), and *Homecoming* (1992).

In this exhibition you will meet Paik through Fluxus, breaking boundaries, getting together freely, challenging social taboo, staging sociopolitical intervention, and counterattacking high art. These characteristics are what run through Paik's art. Constantly raising questions to existing frameworks, Paik continued to challenge and experiment on new things, and presented thoughtful and revolutionary ideas in a humorous manner. Paik's ways of witty and humorous counterattack against institutions, rules, and norms, may be useful in dealing with contemporary issues we are facing in our lives today. For, however hard, how difficult the situation is, humor could help in some ways make room for change.

■ Sections

The exhibition is comprised of 9 stories, and Fluxus Theater and Shop. Part of the installation will change later this year.

First half of the exhibition period: April 1 – August 29, 2021

Second half of the exhibition period: September 4, 2021 – February 2, 2022

1. Dear Jean-Pierre

“Walking, running, looking at passersby, pondering, and smiling.”

After Jean-Pierre Wilhelm passed away, Nam June Paik memorialized him, who established Galerie 22 and was an active sponsor of Fluxus, in the way of performing the most common everyday behaviors. Without Jean-Pierre, Paik recollected, Fluxus would not have existed, and he also made three turning points in Paik's artistic career. Thankful to Jean-Pierre, a benefactor of Fluxus that raised questions on artistic media and strived to erase the boundary between art and life, Paik paid tribute to him in a quintessential Fluxus way, with the very Fluxus motions.

2. Performing Against Conventions

Fluxus artists attempted a new form of art that was nothing like the artworks that were hung on white-walled galleries or museums. Among those attempts were ventures of artists creating sound in a new way to eliminate the boundary between music and visual art. They combined art with musical activities involved in composing a musical score, making its various interpretations, and performing the piece. They wrote scores for instruments and human bodies, and gave the pieces multiple interpretations to perform. They played traditional instruments, such as the piano and the violin, in a completely new way, and composed music with everyday objects and sounds. Nam June Paik was no different in making bold and humorous compositions and performances that were a counterattack to the boundaries between music and art, and between art and life.

3. Fluxus Legends: John Cage

John Cage inspired and influenced many Fluxus artists significantly like the greatest teacher. His distinctive ways of composition that broke away from classical music and had a huge impact on the formation of experimental music, advocating indeterminacy, improvisation, chance, and reflection of everyday life, were in line with the Fluxus challenge to the canonical and conventional order of art. Of the students who took his classes at The New School in New York during the late 1950s were those who became active members of the Fluxus community, and Nam June Paik was also greatly influenced by Cage's music, as he once mentioned that his life could be divided into B.C., "Before Cage" and A.D., "After [Cage's] Death."

4-1. Fluxus Legends: George Maciunas

George Maciunas is often called a founder of Fluxus. He was the first artist to name the experimental avant-garde movements centering around John Cage in New York, "Fluxus." In 1962 he organized *Fluxus — Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik* at Museum Wiesbaden, Germany. He drew up *Fluxus Manifesto* in 1963 to promote the experimental works of the artists as Fluxus activities. There were no restrictions to genre or material in Fluxus activities. Fluxus artists worked freely in their own ways, so their works were diverse and their links were rather loose. Nonetheless, Maciunas organized many festivals which could continuously bring the artists under the umbrella of Fluxus.

* On view from April 1 to August 29, 2021

4-2. Fluxus Legends: Joseph Beuys

Joseph Beuys was one of the leading Fluxus artists in Germany in the early 1960s along with Nam June Paik and George Maciunas. Spearheading avant-garde activities of Fluxus, Beuys initiated *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus: Musik und Antimusik, Das Instrumentale Theater*, one of the most well-known Fluxus festivals. Paik met Beuys at an exhibition in Düsseldorf 1961, and the two were great inspirations to each other

as artistic companions until Beuys passed away in 1986: Beuys had carried out an unexpected performance at Paik's first solo show in 1963, and Paik created *Beuys Vox* (1988), a memorial piece that traced their close relationship.

* On view from September 4, 2021 to February 2, 2022

5. Provocative Networking

Fluxus was a community of artists who perceived the world as one, beyond national boundaries, paid attention to the common interest of mankind, and acted in a flexible manner. Artists from the East and the West collaborated freely through Fluxus, and Nam June Paik, one of the leading Fluxus artists, was active to and fro Europe and the US until the end of the 1970s. As Fluxus put emphasis on art as a process and on the contribution of participants rather than resulting objects as works of art, its focal point was the form of experimental performances. In a Fluxus performance, the spatial boundary between the performer and audience disappeared, and sharp questions were raised on democracy and the political system, on art and life. Audiences who took part in the performances that were humorous yet provocative at the same time were left to think about these questions after laughing at sensational, out-of-the-box presentations.

6. What Happens to be Art

Fluxus works took various forms of game, instruction, kit, mail, newspaper, book, and design. What was most often employed is the form of instructions, or scores. It could be enigmatic stories, simple instructions to follow with your body, rules of a game, or a kind of logic. Text written on small cards can be interpreted and executed in diverse ways according to the reader. There is also a form called "Fluxkit." The kit was made up of diverse elements that stimulated various senses, ranging from small objects to implicative texts, and therefore, can also be called a "small Fluxus museum." Scores and Fluxkits are not finished results that take up only one form, but artworks that can flow in different directions through different interventions and interpretations, opening up infinite possibilities. This poses fundamental questions on the authenticity of the artist and the originality of the artwork.

7. Breaking Everydayness

Fluxus challenged the notion of high art that could only be enjoyed by a specific group of people. Fluxus saw everyday life and art as one and pursued their integration. It also put emphasis on the process rather than the product, and therefore went against institutionalized forms of art that took solely the end result. Fluxus worked together with audiences in street performances or cooking performances, and presented newspapers, magazines, books, and mails as a work of art. Fluxus artists combined aesthetical design with text that contained provocative messages to create a discrepancy between the content and the form. They also used personal events or family stories as the subject for their work. All this was the Fluxus way to question the nature of art being closed off.

8. Fluxus Legends: Charlotte Moorman

Charlotte Moorman, the artistic companion of Nam June Paik, was called “Jeanne d’Arc of New Music” as her extraordinary performances caused big sensations. Moorman, a classical cellist, was more drawn to experimental music in the 1960s, and worked together with Fluxus artists, such as Yoko Ono and Joseph Beuys as well as Paik. She became known for her performances that moved away from the standardized form of classical music. From 1963, she organized the Annual Avant-Garde Festival of New York and presented experimental music, happenings, and etc, which also included a number of Fluxus performances. It was when she was preparing to stage Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Originale* in the 2nd Annual Avant-Garde Festival of New York in 1964 that Moorman met Paik for the first time. From then on, Paik and Moorman shook the art circle with their radical work that encompassed a wide range of fields, from sculpture, music, performance to machine.

9. Dear Nam June

9-1. Takehisa Kosugi

Takehisa Kosugi’s *South No.2 (to Nam June Paik)* (1964) is a tribute to Nam June Paik, taking the English translation of Paik’s name “Nam(南),” which means south. It is a performance of an extremely slowed-down pronunciation of the word “south” once for 15 minutes. Kosugi’s performances are characterized by the act of excessively stretching a daily word or action for long so as to erase its original purpose and search for the possibility of offering it a new artistic meaning. Kosugi performed this piece in the opening ceremony of the exhibition co-organized by Nam June Paik Art Center and Talbot Rice Gallery of the University of Edinburgh for the 2013 Edinburgh International Festival.

* On view from April 1 to August 29, 2021

9-2. Benjamin Patterson, George Maciunas

At Nam June Paik Art Center in 2010, Benjamin Patterson performed *12 Piano Compositions for Nam June Paik* (1962), which was George Maciunas’s tribute to Nam June Paik. Maciunas’s score to highlight Paik as a Fluxus artist, who studied music and played the piano often, instructs a performer on the stage to tune the piano, to pull its chords, to manipulate the piano, to do its drawing, and to clean and clear the piano. In the performance Patterson reinterpreted the score in his own way, and moved, tuned, played, manipulated, drew the piano together with children wearing traditional Korean costume.

* On view from September 4, 2021 to February 2, 2022

10. Fluxus Theater

10-1. Zen for Film

With the sound of a running film projector, traces of light, dust, and scratches are projected onto the empty screen. Nam June Paik’s *Zen for Film* (1965) visualizes the materiality of film, and its visually vacant screen with auditory white noise presents a

new spatial experience. Paik also created a Fluxkit with a piece of film and a nail to produce a Fluxus multiple of this installation work.

* On view from April 1 to August 29, 2021

10-2. Fluxus Films

Fluxus artists examined and explored the materiality of film itself, or used film as a recording medium of performances, or produced works in the form of experimental films with sound. George Maciunas produced *Fluxfilm Anthology*, a compilation of filmic works made by Fluxus artists. Black and white short films by Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, George Brecht, Ben Vautier, Yoko Ono, Wolf Vostell, and others will be shown.

* On view from September 4, 2021 to February 2, 2022

11. Fluxus Shop

As for a problem of the art circle in the 1960s and 1970s, Nam June Paik pointed out that artists were excluded from the centralized art market. He said that George Maciunas was clever in that sense since he pioneered a new way of art distribution. Maciunas attempted to sell Fluxkits, scores, newspapers, and “multiples,” copies or editions of works, although his effort to generate the Fluxus distribution was not a great success. Still the fact that Fluxus criticized the exclusive commercial art market, and intended to establish a new distribution system, was meaningful enough in that it resulted in the beginning of the transaction of multiples.

■ Works

1. Manfred Leve, *Hommage à Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, Dusseldorf (1978)*



Manfred Leve, *Hommage à Jean-Pierre Wilhelm*, Dusseldorf (1978)
Nam June Paik (artist and performer)
black & white photograph, 20.3×25.4cm
© Manfred Leve

“Walking, running, looking at passersby, pondering, and smiling.”

Nam June Paik asked Manfred Leve to take photographs of those seemingly meaningless actions. The venue was where Galerie 22 used to be, the gallery where Paik’s *Hommage à John Cage* (1959) was first shown. At that time, the twenty-five-year-old Paik was unsuccessfully striving to premiere his first composition at the International Summer Course for New Music in Darmstadt. It was Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, the owner of Galerie 22, who offered a hand to this disappointed young artist. Since then, Wilhelm became a powerful patron of Fluxus artists including Paik.

2. Peter Moore, *Fluxus Sonata No. 4*, Anthology Film Archives, New York (1975)



Peter Moore, *Fluxus Sonata No. 4*, Anthology Film Archives, New York (1975)
Nam June Paik (artist and performer)
black & white photograph on baryta paper, 40×59.5cm
© Estate of Peter Moore / VAGA, New York

During the construction of the new Anthology Film Archives site on 80 Wooster Street, New York, in 1973, Nam June Paik performed a series of the *Fluxus Sonata* in the venue, beginning with *Fluxus Sonata No. 1*. The photograph shows a performance of *Fluxus Sonata No. 4* in 1975. In front of several turntables, Paik put an LP on one of them and listened carefully with his arms crossed; and then he moved to another turntable to activate another LP. With the two vinyl records rotating simultaneously, he oscillated between the phonographs, interrupting and spinning them with his hands. Physically intervening in the operation of record players, this performance is much like today's DJing.

3. Klaus Barisch, *Étude for Pianoforte*, Atelier Mary Bauermeister, Cologne (1960)



Klaus Barisch, *Étude for Pianoforte*, Atelier Mary Bauermeister, Cologne (1960)
Nam June Paik, John Cage, David Tudor
black & white photograph, 28.3×29cm

Nam June Paik was greatly influenced by John Cage's music, as he once mentioned that his life could be divided into B.C., "Before Cage" and A.D., "After [Cage's] Death." Paik performed *Étude for Pianoforte* with Cage at Mary Bauermeister's atelier in Cologne. Paik started by playing Chopin's piece, and stopped soon after to cut off Cage's necktie. Afterwards Paik poured shampoo onto Cage's and David Tudor's hair. In this rather radical performance, Cage's perspective on music was leavened with a twist of Paik's humor.

4. Nam June Paik, Joseph Beuys, *In Memoriam George Maciunas* (1982)



Nam June Paik, Joseph Beuys, *In Memoriam George Maciunas* (1982)
1 wooden box, Urklavier, felt wedge, 2 vinyl records, 41×62×13.6cm

When George Maciunas, one of the leading figures of Fluxus, passed away, Joseph Beuys and Nam June Paik staged a memorial concert in Dusseldorf. *In Memoriam George Maciunas* created in recollection of their performance consists of Paik's *Urklavier*, a miniature piano made out of tree twigs, Beuys's felt wedge, along with an LP of their duet. The record jacket used the photograph of Maciunas wearing a gorilla mask, and *Urklavier* is a continuation of Paik's *Urmusik*, a Fluxus object which is a wooden crate with a can attached and assorted strings suspended to produce a sound. *In Memoriam George Maciunas* is, therefore, an emblematic union of Paik, Beuys, Maciunas, and Fluxus.

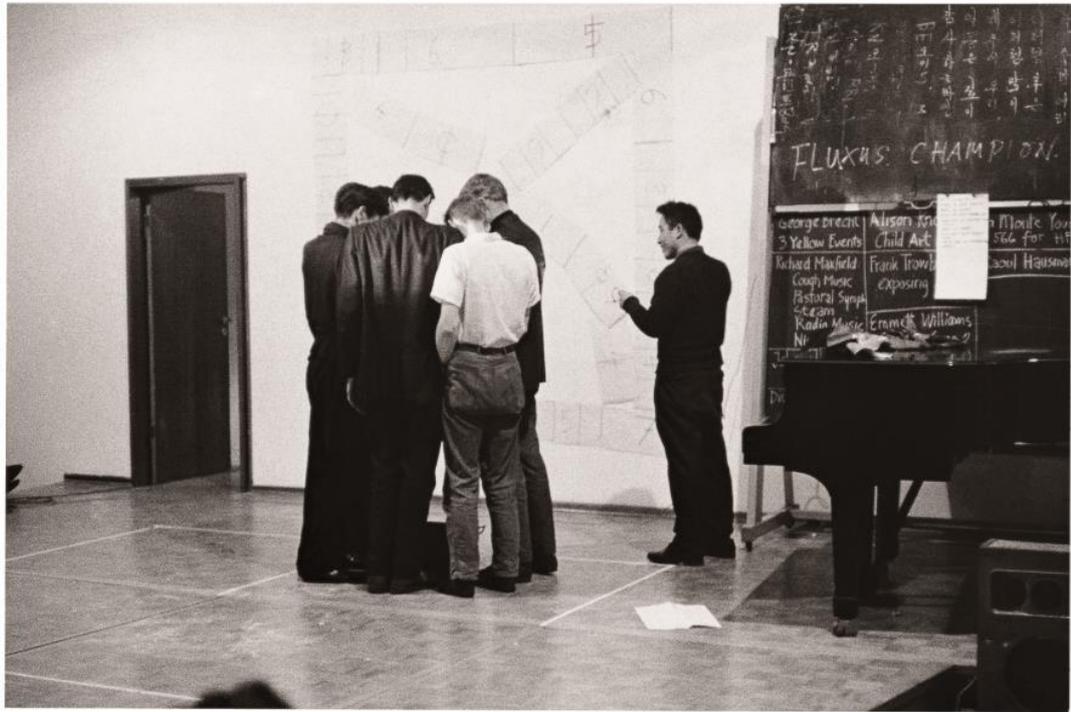
5. Nam June Paik, *Beuys Vox* (1988)



Nam June Paik, *Beuys Vox* (1988)
mixed media, dimensions variable

Beuys Vox was produced by Nam June Paik to honor Joseph Beuys after his death, and the work reflects the in-depth relationship between the two artists. Apparent from the title, “Beuys’ voice,” this work is composed of various works by Beuys. Highlights of *Beuys Vox* include: a photograph that captured both artists at the Zero group exhibition in 1961 when the two did not know each other very well; a memo with “Josef” written in Paik’s book (1962); photographs of the *24 Hours* performance in 1965, which both artists participated; and photographs and LP Records of their joint performance, *In Memorium George Maciunas* (1978).

6. Manfred Leve, *Fluxus Champion Contest, Festum Fluxorum Fluxus: Musik und Antimusik, Das Instrumentale Theater*, Staatliche Kunstakademie, Dusseldorf (1963)



Manfred Leve, *Fluxus Champion Contest, Festum Fluxorum Fluxus: Musik und Antimusik, Das Instrumentale Theater*, Staatliche Kunstakademie, Dusseldorf (1963)
Nam June Paik (artist and performer), Frank Trowbridge (performer)
black & white photograph, 20.3×25.4cm
© Manfred Leve

Male artists of different nationalities surround a bucket, competing who can piss for the longest time into it, while Nam June Paik stands by with a stopwatch. The “longest-pissing-time record holder” is honored with his national anthem. The contest depicted in the photograph was won by Frank Trowbridge at 59.7 seconds, so Paik honored him with the US national anthem. Together with Paik’s *Chronicle of a Beautiful Paintress* that instructs a woman to stain a flag of a selected nation with her own monthly blood, this work is regarded as challenging the taboo linking body fluid to the national authority. Paik pointed out that this sort of his performances were also intended to concentrate on physical sound. His experimental television, too, according to Paik, was “not the expression of my personality, but merely a physical music.”

7. George Brecht, *Name Kit* (1965)



George Brecht, *Name Kit* (1965)
1 plastic box, 5 small dices, 2 rubber stamps, instruction card, 9.3×12×2.6cm

Following the idea of the “Fluxkit” that George Maciunas conceived in 1964, Fluxus artists produced multiple editions of kits encompassing a selection of miscellaneous objects and paper as graphic scores for the user to read or manipulate, as with interactive games. The kits were packed together in a small attaché case for sale, which was first advertised in the fourth Fluxus newspaper, *FLuxus cc fiVe ThReE* that also contained Nam June Paik’s essay, *Afterlude to the Exposition of Experimental Television* (1964). This Fluxkit is one of George Brecht’s Games and Puzzles entitled *Name Kit*. Inside are five small dices in different forms, two rubber stamps, and a piece of paper with the instruction, “spell your name.”

8. Nam June Paik, *First Portable TV* (1973)



Nam June Paik, *First Portable TV* (1973)
wooden bakeware, ink, 7.5×32×2cm

Erik Andersch, a Fluxus collector and a close friend of Paik, acquired and recorded his works while Paik stayed in Germany working as a professor in Dusseldorf. *First Portable TV* is one of the main works that Nam June Paik Art Center purchased from Andersch in 2009. For this work, Paik used a baking frame commonly used in German households, with its metal part painted in black while leaving the shape of a monitor unpainted at the center. The bakeware has an iron plate having vertical bars densely furrowed, which look like scanning lines, and the sides of the wooden board are shaped as handles. Paik linked this to his anticipation of the future television to carry around easily anywhere. With its title *First Portable TV*, this work reveals Paik's vision on the media and is full of his Fluxus sense of humor.

9. Klaus Barisch, *26'1.1499" for a String Player, soiree Paik-Moorman, WDR Funkhaus, Cologne (1980)*

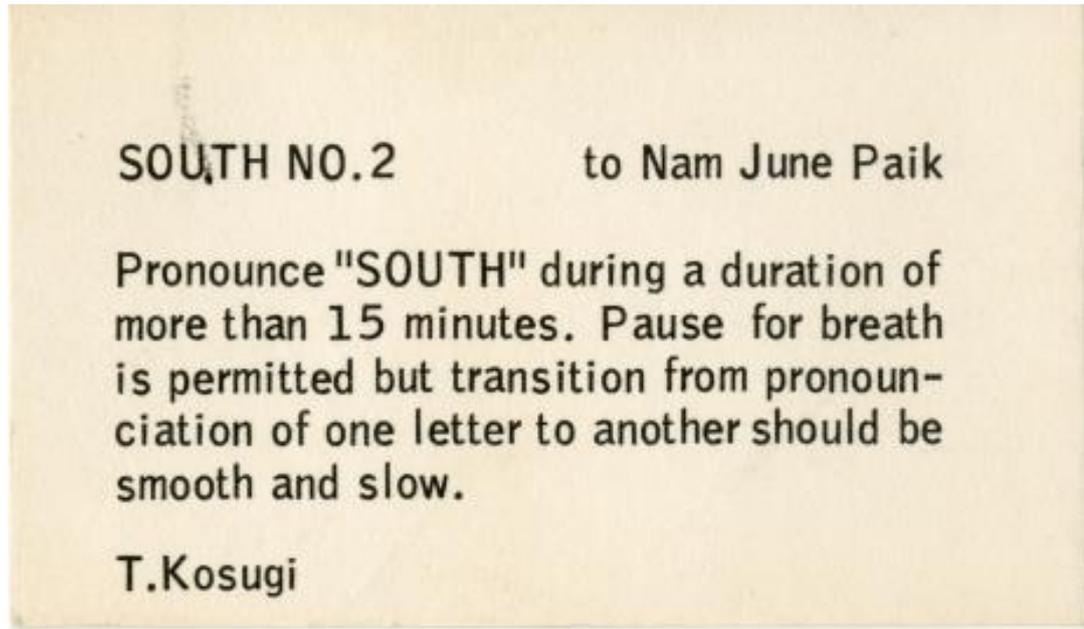


Klaus Barisch, *26'1.1499" for a String Player, soiree Paik-Moorman, WDR Funkhaus, Cologne (1980)*

John Cage (artist); Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman (performer)
black & white photograph, 21×29.7cm

Klaus Barisch took several pictures of Paik's artistic career. The current picture shows a scene from a performance with Charlotte Moorman held at WDR Funkhaus, Cologne, in September 1980. Paik and Moorman performed *26' 1.1499" for a String Player* (1953) composed by John Cage. Cage's score is about playing a string instrument as well as non-musical objects. Moorman played Cage's piece by holding Paik's body as her cello and also produced a variety of sound, using a pistol, a bomb, balloons, mushroom, a telephone, and so on.

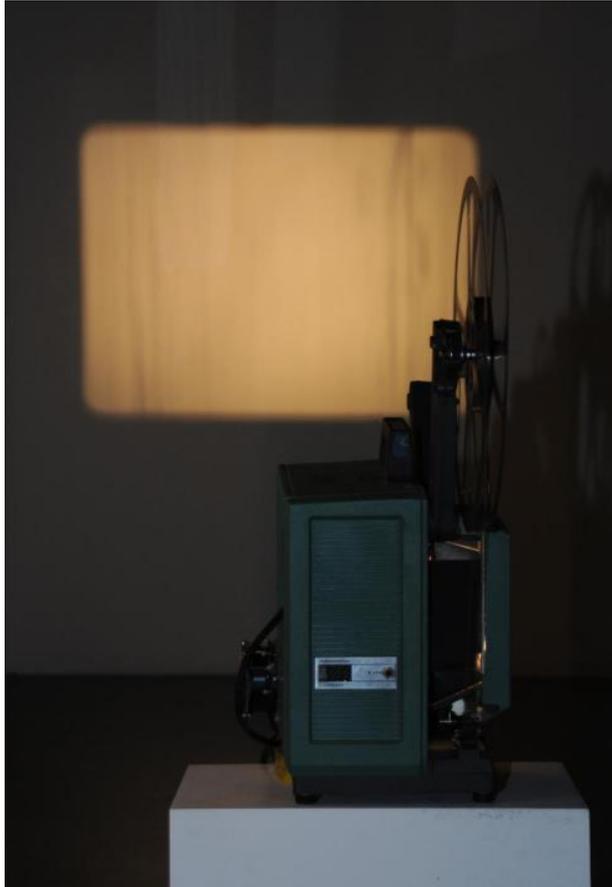
1. Takehisa Kosugi, *South No. 2 (to Nam June Paik)* (1964)



Takehisa Kosugi, *South No. 2 (to Nam June Paik)* (1964)
print on paper, 4.8×7.9cm
Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center

Takehisa Kosugi's *South No.2 (to Nam June Paik)* (1964) is a tribute to Nam June Paik, taking the English translation of Paik's name "Nam(南)," which means south. It is a performance of an extremely slowed-down pronunciation of the word "south" once for 15 minutes. Kosugi's performances are characterized by the act of excessively stretching a daily word or action for long so as to erase its original purpose and search for the possibility of offering it a new artistic meaning. Kosugi performed this piece in the opening ceremony of the exhibition co-organized by Nam June Paik Art Center and Talbot Rice Gallery of the University of Edinburgh for the 2013 Edinburgh International Festival.

2. Nam June Paik, *Zen for Film* (1965)



Nam June Paik, *Zen for Film* (1965)
film projector, blank film

With the sound of a running film projector, traces of light, dust, and scratches are projected onto the empty screen. Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film* (1965) visualizes the materiality of film, and its visually vacant screen with auditory white noise presents a new spatial experience. This work can be categorized into the group of Paik's Zen series, such as *Zen for TV*, *Zen for Walking*, and *Zen for Head*. *Zen for Film* was premiered at a Fluxus festival organized by George Maciunas in 1964, and shown again at New Cinema Festival I directed by Jonas Mekas in 1965, where Paik carried out a performance in front of a running projector. Paik also created a Fluxkit with a piece of film and a nail to produce a Fluxus multiple of this installation work.

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Opening Hours: 10am-6pm
Last entry one hour before closing
Closed on Mondays
Free Admission

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