

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

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NO. 65
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VIDEO ART ON VIEW AT THE MODERN

PROJECTS: NAM JUNE PAIK, the latest in The Museum of Modern Art's continuing PROJECTS series exploring recent developments in contemporary art, is on view in the first-floor Projects Galleries through October 9, 1977. Selected by Barbara London, Curatorial Assistant in charge of Video, the exhibition features a selection of the Korean-born artist's works from 1963-1977. Included in the program is the premiere of a new videotape, Merce and Marcel, a tribute to dancer/choreographer Merce Cunningham.

One of the innovators of video art, Nam June Paik began his artistic activities in connection with the German Fluxus artists who, in the late 1950's, were combining elements of music, dance, theatre, poetry, painting and sculpture in their Performance events. Originally trained as a musician, Paik began his involvement with video in the early 1960's, a time when there was enthusiastic support for technological exploration in the arts. He started with a series of old television sets and began experimenting with their mechanisms, rewiring them to distort the black and white imagery. Two re-creations shown in the present exhibition, Zen for TV and TV with Magnet, were originally made during this period.

Merce and Marcel, a recently completed work done in collaboration with Shigeo Kubota, is being shown at The Museum of Modern Art for the first time. Merce and Marcel is a tribute to Paik's longtime friend Merce Cunningham, with whom he shares a deep fascination with the role of chance and time in the shaping of a work of art. It is a video collage containing carefully selected elements, combined and rearranged, of Paik's taped sequences, as well as those of artists Bill Gwin, Nancy Graves, and Steina and Woody Vasulka. In this work, Paik compares formal dance with popular dance and with natural or nondance movements, a concern central to Cunningham's work. In addition, taking a 1964

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taped interview with Marcel Duchamp made by Russell Connor, Paik contrast it with a reenactment of that interview, but this time with Merce Cunningham. Barbara London observes that by "blending the provocative sequences together in his fluid, sensual style, Paik has produced a sensitive, loving portrait of these 20th century innovators who challenged tradition, aesthetics, and taste."

Also on view in PROJECTS is Paik's TV Buddha (1974), a closed-circuit video work consisting of camera, an 18th-century Buddha sculpture, and a television set in which the Buddha contemplates his televised image. It is as if the Buddha's existence were verified on TV, in the same way that, for millions of viewers, individually experienced events are checked against the global standards of broadcast TV.

Barbara London notes that "himself a catalyst, Nam June Paik is always opening up new lines of communication and incorporating new elements into his own art. Fascinated by the pervasive influence of technology upon contemporary life, Paik continues to look at how the most influential mass medium of the 20th century nurtures universal similarities among popular cultures. His never-ending curiosity, delight in the unexpected, and compelling enthusiasm for video have made him an integral member of the experimental television world."

PROJECTS has been made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a federal agency. The Museum gratefully acknowledges the support of its exhibition program through public funding from the New York State Council on the Arts. The Museum's ongoing video program is also made possible by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.

September 1977

Additional information available from Bill Grant, Assistant, or Linda Gordon, Associate Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Tel: (212) 956-7296; 2648.
