

FROM ANT FARM TO UBUWEB:  
DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS IN ARTISTS' VIDEO FROM THE  
1960S TO THE PRESENT

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: From Ant Farm to UbuWeb: Distribution and Access in Artists' Video from the 1960s to the Present

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This thesis examines the history of distribution platforms for artists' video. Artists' video is defined as time based art works that employ the medium of film, videotape, digital video, or any combination thereof. The thesis categorizes different points of access for artists' video from the 1960s to the present as well as how artists have distributed their work.

Three macro level platforms serve to classify the different sites of access between artists' video and a viewer – the first is television, the second is institution, and the third is the Internet. Over the past forty years, artists' video has transitioned from a marginal practice that existed outside of the institution to a medium that is now synonymous with the idea of a contemporary art museum. However, the Internet as a platform allows artists' video to exist outside of the museum, which is consistent with the earliest goals associated with this medium.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Preface.....	1
Toward a Taxonomy for Video Art Exhibition and Distribution .....	2
II. TELEVISION AS PLATFORM .....	17
III. ART INSTITUTION AS PLATFORM.....	29
IV. INTERNET AS PLATFORM .....	45
V. EAI: TYPOLOGIZING ELECTRONIC ARTS INTERMIX.....	57
A Case Study.....	57
Epilogue.....	61
APPENDICES	
A. IMAGES .....	62
B. A TYPOLOGY OF DISTRIBUTION PLATFORMS.....	82
C. SELECT CHRONOLOGY OF FILM AND VIDEO TECHNOLOGY .....	83
REFERENCES CITED.....	84



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Preface**

It is clear from the research I have conducted for this project that a definitive overview of video art is unlikely to be written and perhaps we should not even wish for one. This thesis is not an attempt at a comprehensive overview. Nor does it approach the history of video art through specific artworks or artists, as others have done. Instead, it is an attempt to begin to fill a gap that exists in the scholarship surrounding the history of distribution and exhibition of artists' video and its relationship to the constantly evolving landscape of moving images in our daily lives.

Every day I open my email to a litany of announcements about new projects, conferences, panels, exhibitions, publications, and online projects dedicated to the culture of moving images and the incorporation of the internet as a platform for access, discussion, distribution, and connection. Due to the constantly moving target of new technologies, some of the research presented here will inevitably be superceded by new developments. It is my hope that the information collected and presented here will offer students, scholars, and curators a way to think and discuss the ways in which we are classifying and exhibiting artists' video at the current moment and perhaps to begin to contextualize our experiences with artists' video within a more interdisciplinary framework. The questions posed in this thesis—does medium specificity exist anymore? How has video art exhibition and distribution changed in the era of the internet?— are open-ended questions, and ones that I hope will provoke future research in this evolving field.

## **Toward a Taxonomy for Video Art Exhibition and Distribution**

Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* is a landmark video artwork dating to 1975 and features the artist as a sort of generic television cooking show host (figure 1).<sup>1</sup> The feminist parody is six minutes in length and employs black and white videotape. With deadpan humor and a conceptual art aesthetic, Rosler presents an array of kitchen hand utensils to the camera in alphabetical order and cleverly demonstrates uses for each utensil that are either violent or unproductive. ("Chopper," "dish," "eggbeater," "fork," "grater," "hamburger press," "icepick," and so on.) The camera remains largely static and focused on Rosler's performance and the video serves as documentation of her actions (figure 2).

In 1975, when this artwork was originally created, in order to view it, one would have had to hope that an art institution nearby was exhibiting the work. But today this important work can easily be accessed on YouTube, GoogleVideo, UbuWeb, and other websites (although the accessibility may vary due to changing content restrictions and copyright laws). This raises a series of important questions: Do we still need museums? Is the physical site of exhibition still relevant? How do video works function outside of the institutional context of the visual arts?

These challenges to art institutions are part of video art's approximately forty-year legacy. The artform's origins are tied to activist video collectives in the 1960s as well as to avant-garde experimental film. The context of video's transition from mass

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<sup>1</sup> Electronic Arts Intermix Online Catalogue entry for Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen*: <http://www.eai.org/title.htm?id=1545> (accessed March 15, 2011).

communication medium to fine art medium falls within the larger framework of Minimalist and Conceptual art of the 1960s, as well as Institutional Critique.<sup>2</sup>

There is an extensive amount of scholarship on activist art in relationship to artists' video and to new media, just as there are many detailed accounts of the history(s) of artists' video.<sup>3</sup> The majority of these histories focus on establishing a canon of artists or important works, cataloging the different types of technology used over time, or charting major themes that emerged out of the time-based medium. Examples include Michael Rush's *Video Art* anthology (2003), *Feedback: The Video Data Bank Catalog of Video Art and Artist Interviews* edited by Kate Horsfield and Lucas Hilderbrand (2006), Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer's *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (1990), and Catherine Elwes' *Video Art, A Guided Tour* (2005).<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, there is a lack of

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<sup>2</sup> At the same time, it is important to note that the technological advances that made the medium available to artists to use as a tool for social and political critique arose out of U.S. Army surveillance during the Vietnam War in the early 1960s.

Catherine Elwes, *Video Art, A Guided Tour* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 3.

Central to the revolution of the internet are the intertwined histories of the computer and electronic data. Commercially available computers reached the market in 1951 with the UNIVAC (Universal Automatic Computer). In 1981, technology had advanced enough to decrease the size of microchips and bulk of computers and IBM released its personal computer, or PC. Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, co-founders of Apple, released the Macintosh in 1984. The 1980s and 1990s saw an increased accessibility for consumers (smaller computers and decreased costs) and today the majority of North American and European schools have computers hooked up to the internet.

<sup>3</sup> The history of the internet is usually linked to US Army scientist Vannevar Bush (1890-1974) as the grandfather of the internet, who invented the Memex, a model of an interactive library of data as a tool for research and education. This model was picked up by Theodor Nelson (b. 1937) and coined the term "hypertext" and 'hypermedia.' Named after the Department of Defense agency that sponsored its development, ARPANET was designed to be a communication system immune to nuclear attacks and was first implemented by four American universities (the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of California at Santa Barbara, the Stanford Research Institute and the University of Utah). The internet remained largely a governmental and research tool until 1989, when Briton Tim Berners-Lee (b. 1955) proposed a global hypertext project: the World Wide Web. In the next few years, the internet became a space for community and a communication platform for the public. Web browsers were introduced in the early 1990s - Netscape Navigator in 1994, followed later by open source browsers Mozilla and Microsoft's internet Explorer. The history of the internet is inextricable from the history of military and commercial innovation.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Rush, *Video Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003); Kate Horsfield, and Lucas Hilderbrand, *Feedback – The Video Data Bank Catalog of Artists' video and Artist Interviews* (Philadelphia: Temple

scholarship surrounding questions of access, distribution, production, and how a viewer's experience might change along with the viewing context. If artists' video has resulted in utopian-minded enthusiasm in part due to its potential for artistic control and dissemination without reliance on traditional art institutions, certainly factors of access and distribution warrant closer inspection.

Although many artists' video anthologies describe the 1970s as a period of intense creativity and production, there is little mention of how these videos were distributed or viewed.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that although artists working with the medium of video in the 1960s and 1970s were *producers*, they relied on the art institutions and television networks for the chance to *present* or *distribute* their work. Even in scholarship surrounding television video collectives, writers tend to neglect fundamental issues regarding how much airtime was granted, the type of audience these programs reached, and the mode of public access to the video collections themselves.

Although little attention has been paid to access, changes in technologies themselves have been amply documented in texts such as Yvonne Spielmann's *Video: The Reflexive Medium* (2008), and Chris Meigh-Andrews' *A History of Video Art: The Development of Form and Function* (2006).

Artists' video has undergone important shifts in new technologies and in artistic working methods approximately every ten years. The history can be roughly traced from

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University Press, 2006); Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, *Illuminating Video – An Essential Guide to Video Art* (San Francisco: Aperture/BAVC, 1990); Catherine Elwes *Video Art, A Guided Tour*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the anthologies by David Rush, Yvonne Spielmann, Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, and John B. Ravenal.

Portapak, to Betacam, to VHS, to 8-millimeter cameras, and finally to digital video.<sup>6</sup> As previously mentioned, artists' video works of the 1970s conventionally were played on single channel monitors in art institutions or were broadcast on public and cable access stations. In the 1980s and 1990s, in contrast, artists' video was projected onto walls and screens, ushering in the decade of the projected image.<sup>7</sup> In 1997 Sony Corporation introduced the first hand-held digital recorder in the United States, the DHR-1000, which would alter the medium permanently. As computer software companies continue to produce more editing tools, artists increasingly are able to retain complete control over their video work and do not depend on editors for the final product. Most artists now shoot with digital camera and transfer to DVD for projection, while others transfer between film and DVD for editing and projecting.<sup>8</sup> Since DVD projectors can be placed just about anywhere, artists' video projections are no longer confined to the gallery space, but have expanded to storefronts, street walls, and other surfaces. In addition, the internet has provided a new distribution and access platform for artists' video, and artists are able to use video in combination with film, computer art, graphics, animation, virtual reality, and other various digital applications.

This thesis seeks to classify the methods of artists' video distribution over the past forty years and to examine the eventual convergences between the different platforms. By "platform" I mean the point of access between a product and a user, or between the artwork and the audience—a platform for both distribution, access, and viewer

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix C for a chronological list of technological advancements relating to artists' video and production and exhibition.

<sup>7</sup> David Hopkins, *After Modern Art, 1945 – 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 240. Also see Martin Rieser and Andrea Zapp, eds. *New Screen Media – Cinema/Art/Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Rush, 167-172.

experience. For commercial video, for example, *Netflix* and *Hulu* are well-known distribution platforms--more specifically, they are examples of digital distribution internet platforms. Although I will acknowledge the seminal importance of the medium of film and the cinematic history tied to the emergence of artists' video, my thesis gives more space to concerns surrounding videotape and digital video because these mediums prove to be more problematic for art institutions in terms of classification and more subversive to the traditional notion of a unique art object.<sup>9</sup> Far more versatile and less expensive than their photo-chemical ancestors photography and film, video and digital video retain sound, movement, color, and text, even while they increase the ease of production and distribution. Videotapes are ephemeral, fragile, and sensitive to temperature as well as moisture and movement (while playing) and tape disintegration can occur in less than twenty years.<sup>10</sup> In the 1990s video tended to be stored in the form of digital laser discs, and turn of the twenty-first century saw the shift to storing video of media files on a computer's hard drive.<sup>11</sup> Video is the means by which commercial movies are distributed to the mass audiences along with countless other recorded documents. This blurring between mass culture, information technology, and art places artists' video outside of the traditional plastic arts. The fact that artists' video cannot easily fit into traditional notions of fine art and exhibition, together with the rapid speed

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<sup>9</sup> Although there have been numerous attempts to recapture and rewrite the history of artists' video by creating a distinct and separate history for video, much of the critical framework and scholarly discourse surrounding artists' video comes out of film theory.

<sup>10</sup> Masessah, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ironic quote by Mayer, "Stored in the form of digital laser discs, [video] is a medium that is virtually incorruptible information." 17. Mayer argues that video is distinct from film in that it does not share the formal qualities of photography, but then goes on to validate the non-acceptance of video into museum institutions by relating it to photography's original history of non-acceptance.

of technological advancement, might explain the numerous attempts to write and rewrite a history of artists' video.

Videotape (as one medium under the larger umbrella of artists' video) deserves special attention because it was the original medium associated with video as fine art, it exhibited close ties to early broadcast television, and it presented the most challenges in terms of preservation. The rapid technological advancements of the 1960s in terms of cameras, televisions, and videotape were related to the consumer demand and interest in capturing events in "real time." As media art historian Marita Sturken points out, "television is coded as the immediate—the live image transmitted to many locations at once. It has never been conceived, either culturally or industrially, as an archival medium."<sup>12</sup> Videotapes made in the early 1970s already appeared to be strange and elusive artifacts of the past only about fifteen years after their making—a perception that does not exist in works shot with 16mm film from the 1970s. In a mere twenty years, the technical and aesthetic changes in video evoked the equivalent of decades of development in such diverse media as photography and painting, thus provoking the perception that it must be quickly historicized. Preservation and conservation also are pressing concerns for institutions that wish to collect and exhibit video art. The need to quickly establish a history led to a biased and uniform approach; early video art histories failed to include communications theory or sociopolitical factors relevant to the development of the work. This may explain why little attention has been paid to the ways in which viewers access this type of work, how it is distributed, and how its distribution (with its ties to mass media and the entertainment industry) differs from other fine art

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<sup>12</sup> Sturken in Hall & Jo Fifer, 103.

mediums. As film theorist Maeve Connolly states, post-1997 moving image art works require new critical frameworks; I contend that this should be taken even further and that new critical frameworks must be established for the way in which viewers experience and access moving image artworks specifically via the internet.<sup>13</sup> Connolly notes that the status of artists' video in online collections, archives, and galleries are ambiguous and warrant further study.

Art institutions are characterized by the desire for the permanence and durability of their collections. The internet as platform for access to artists' video and to museum collections confounds this notion due to its ephemeral qualities. The internet is home to constantly changing software applications and new plug-ins which results in the continual obsolescence of software and websites built with them. For example, in order to stream a Netflix video online, a user must install Microsoft's Silverlight software. Microsoft has repeatedly updated and offered new versions of this software, and eventually Silverlight will most likely be replaced with new software altogether. In terms of access, this is important because if an online archive is built using for example, Silverlight applications to allow users to stream artists' video online, once Silverlight is obsolete (no longer compatible with Internet browsers), then the archive becomes unusable. Unlike the idea of a physical permanent site which houses artwork, the online archive is a moving target. This is both problematic and subversive to the institutions' standard mission as the final resting place for art works. The idea of the internet as platform then is intertwined with ideas of access to technology and decentralized site of production and consumption.

Videotape, digital video, and digital technology applied to film and videotape are

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<sup>13</sup> Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists' Cinema – Space, Site and Screen*. Chicago: Intellect, 2009.



able to be copied an infinite amount of times. Certainly the quality and/or aesthetics of artists' video change when transferred between, for example, film to digital video. However, a duplicate videotape or digital video mirrors the original, and therefore the copy holds the same status as the original. In other words, all copies are original. The collapse between the original and its multiple copies is, then, an inherent characteristic of artists' video. This squarely sets artists' video outside of the art market and proves problematic for institutions that wish to define artists' video as individual art objects. This is further problematized with the introduction of the internet as a platform. The place of production is decentralized, and the place of exhibition now becomes inherently multiple: through UbuWeb, YouTube, or Googlevideo, for example, Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) can be accessed (or "exhibited") all over the globe at overlapping times by different users, completely confounding the idea of an individual artwork.

Moreover, the computer, fundamental for experiencing artists' video on the internet, can be both a channel and a means of production and can take the form of a laptop, a cellular phone, or an office computer--each with its own screen, software, speed and capability--and the experience of the artwork can change accordingly. The Internet as a platform for artists' video, in comparison to television and the institution, it is relatively young and therefore not firmly established. The possibility for artists' video to exist in a dematerialized and decentralized space that can be accessed globally is exciting due to its potential to serve as a tool to subvert and/or challenge the art market and art institution. However, just as many people cannot afford to travel to physical museum sites, a majority of the world population does not have internet access. For example, although

77.4% of North America is connected through the internet, the internet penetration rate for Africa is only 10.9%.<sup>14</sup> Often referred to as the ‘global digital divide’, the reality is that there are great disparities in opportunity to access the internet between developed and developing countries. In addition, economic conditions vary drastically worldwide and as a result, so does computer ownership. The highest computer ownership is in North America, where on average there are 100 computers to every 49.74 – 89 people. This rate drops significantly in all other areas of the world, with the exception of western Europe, Japan, and Australia.<sup>15</sup> So although the technology exists, economic factors determine access, which significantly privileges North America and western Europe over the rest of the globe.

In an attempt to classify the history of distribution and exhibition, I have created a taxonomy based on three general distribution and access platforms for artists’ video: television, art institutions, and the internet. The thesis is organized around these categories, with one chapter devoted to each platform. My final chapter is an extended case study of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI)--a non-profit organization, founded in 1971 that serves a resource for artists’ video and new media art.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, I will use Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) as a case study throughout each chapter to illustrate how my typologies can be applied and to what end.

Ultimately, EAI will emerge as a hybrid category, one that underscores the flexibility required of a viable typology of video art distribution and access. EAI’s core

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<sup>14</sup> World Internet Penetration Rates by Geographic Region 2010 as accessed from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>; accessed 5/20/11.

<sup>15</sup> Source for this data is United Nations Global Development Goal Indications as referenced in Wikipedia entry. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Global\\_Digital\\_Divide1.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Global_Digital_Divide1.png); accessed 5/20/11.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.eai.org/index.htm>.

program is the distribution and preservation of a major collection of artists' video. They are not an institution in the same way that an art museum or gallery is, but they do function as a physical archive. Unlike art institutions and private collectors, their mission to collect is concerned with the artists and the medium itself and therefore is not pushed by the trends of the art market. EAI has played an extremely important role in the formation of artists' video for over forty years and continues to be a model for ways of distributing artists' video today.

The thesis investigates ideas of distribution and access for artists' video, but these terms are not easily defined and their definitions change with each platform. For all three platforms, I am not referring to distribution of artists' video via in terms of the commercial and economic aspect, but rather the idea that all three platforms allow for artists' video to be accessed and experienced by the viewer. There are varying degrees of concern for access across platforms. Television and internet are platforms for which the idea of access becomes most important. Interestingly, EAI is a provocative case study because they also champion ideas of access, but are also (and have always been) extremely invested in the economic side of distribution of artists' video. In other words, their role is to not only function as an archive, but to actively promote and sell artists' video works.

Chapter One will examine the beginnings of artists' video and its close relationship to television--both television broadcasting as a distribution channel, and television monitors as physical objects through which a spectator may view the artwork. Television is historically associated with the beginnings of artists' video in the 1960's and 1970's and was the original platform for many pioneering video collectives. Artist-

run collectives, such as Paper Tiger Television, would broadcast out of both public access and cable stations directly into people's living rooms via their television sets. Paper Tiger is a non-profit, open, artist video-collective founded in 1981. Their main goal is to create alternative media coverage and, indeed, they continue to broadcast via public access television today. One can purchase or rent a DVD or VHS version of their videos via their website, and recently they partnered with an independent video rental service based in Germany to allow users to stream their videos online for a small fee.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Paper Tiger TV posts new videos on their website every week (a video blog) that one can watch via an embedded Vimeo player (fig.2).<sup>18</sup> Thus, their group is an example of one that has more recently embraced the internet as a platform to distribute and exhibit their work, while still maintaining television as a means of distribution.

A more contemporary example of a project that employs television as a platform is *Souvenirs From Earth*--a cable television station currently broadcasting out of France and Germany that is dedicated to non-stop screening of artists' video (fig. 3). Very different from video collectives and groups like Paper Tiger, *Souvenirs* was conceived of within the walls of a traditional art institution, and has ties to advertising, fashion, and design. Thus, *Souvenirs*, although championing ideas of access on their promotional website, does not engage in the type of activism of the early television video collectives, who were primarily concerned with challenging commercial television.

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<sup>17</sup> Link to Paper Tiger Television's ordering page: <http://papertiger.org/order> (accessed May 15, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Vimeo is a website which calls itself a creative online community and serves as a platform onto which users can upload the videos they make in order to share them with an online global community. Vimeo allows sites such as Paper Tiger Television to embed a Vimeo player onto their own website. In other words, Paper Tiger created their own channel on Vimeo, but then linked the channel right onto their website. Vimeo's homepage: <http://www.vimeo.com/>; Paper Tiger on Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/23736674>; Paper Tiger's own page with embedded Vimeo player: <http://blog.papertiger.org/> (accessed May 15, 2011).

Chapter Two will examine artists' video as it has been exhibited, collected, and distributed through the institutional context of the visual arts. This chapter will focus primarily on the art museum and its relationship to artists' video, but the art institution platform could also include art galleries and other organizations such as festivals.

While the majority of early video activity took place outside of established museums, the institutionalization of the medium took hold quickly. Several funding institutions, such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) began contributing out large amounts of money to artists and media organizations in the early 1970s.<sup>19</sup> In addition, most of the major museums in the country—the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA); the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia; the Everson Museum in Syracuse, New York; the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Long Beach Museum of Art, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art—had all had major exhibitions of video or exhibitions that included a significant amount of video by 1976. Of those museums, four had established video departments or programs by that time—MoMA, the Whitney, the Everson, and Long Beach. As technology has changed, so have exhibition methods—boxy television monitors in art galleries have been replaced by large-scale projections of screen-reliant art installations (fig. 4).<sup>20</sup> More recently, museums have utilized flat screens and high definition monitors to display digital video works. Screen-reliant installations, and even

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<sup>19</sup> Marita Sturken. "Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form: Great Expectations and the Making of a History." In *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Artists' video*, edited by Sally Jo Fifer and Doug Hall, 91 – 111 (New York: Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990), 111.

<sup>20</sup> Kate Mondloch's uses the term 'screen-reliant art installations' rather than video installations in her book *Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xiii.

monitors placed in the gallery, often create an architectural space that the viewer experiences physically and in which they are often encouraged to participate in some way (fig. 5). It is important to note that this differs greatly from both television and internet as platforms. Art institutions conventionally require that the viewer physically be present inside the institution in order to view the work. As we shall see in what follows, this is important with regard the way it limits access to viewers who physically enter the institution and in terms of the experience a viewer has with the work.

The third chapter will examine the internet as distribution platform. UbuWeb is an example of an organization that uses the internet as a platform (fig. 6). The site is an independent on-line repository for film, video, literature, poetry, and more, which offers its audience access to a large amount of work through a searchable database.<sup>21</sup>

Like Internet Art and New Media art (artwork that employs the internet as both medium and platform), the majority of fully functioning artists' video works that engage the internet as platform are not concerned with financial or social prestige, and have little to do with the global art businesses in culture capitals such as London, New York, or Cologne.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, artists' video accessed on YouTube confuses the line between fine art and the everyday, between the artist genius individual and the masses that now star in their own YouTube videos via the equipment available to the public. In addition, there is a tradition of placing new uses of consumer electronics (the hand held video camera to the laptop) or practices associated with mass media in one category, and art into another

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<sup>21</sup> UbuWeb url: <http://www.ubuweb.com/> (accessed May 15, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Rachel Greene, *InternetInternet Art*, (New York: Thames & Hudson),8.

Due to the increased potential for access to artists' video and its current ambiguous status, the internet platform is the most important of the three to examine and analyze. An understanding of the way the internet serves as platform for artists' video and the varying levels of access that currently exist reveals important connections between questions of distribution and access surrounding early video collectives and artists' video works currently accessed on the internet. Artists' video has come full circle, to some degree, in terms of subversion of the art market and institution.

The fourth and final chapter takes a more in-depth look at one case study – Electronic Arts Intermix. EAI does not fit neatly into any one platform, it is very important in for its role in relation to access and concern with conversation (fig. 7).

Finally, my thesis concludes with an epilogue detailing future plans for the groundwork I have laid out in the thesis, as well as several Appendices. Appendix I, *The Distribution and Access to Artists' Videos by Platform*, is a spreadsheet that organizes the video collectives, works, and online archives discussed in this thesis according to my typology. It is my hope that this will eventually serve as an online open-source tool for both organization and classification of platforms for artists' video.

I use EAI as a case study throughout each platform in order to illustrate how my typology can be applied and to what end. It becomes clear that this project is a paradox in that although categories for how we access artists' video is necessary, the medium tends to defy classification altogether, particularly with the introduction of the internet. Provocative questions about the materiality of artists' video, medium specificity, and the degree to which artist intent is relevant in a discussion of access are raised throughout

this project. The investigation of these questions inevitably leads to further questions and reveals the very impossibility of neatly categorizing distribution and access.



CHAPTER II:  
TELEVISION AS PLATFORM

Television has been attacking us all our lives, now we can attack it back.  
Nam June Paik (1965)

**Artists' Video: Beginnings**

In 1965, Sony released the first hand-held camera and portable videotape recorder onto the market.<sup>23</sup> The Portapak was easy to use, mobile, and affordable compared to the equipment used by the film industry at the time, and artists seized the chance to begin producing their own videos (fig. 8). Art galleries and institutions quickly embraced the new medium and by 1968 exhibitions of artists' video had already taken place in the United States and abroad.<sup>24</sup> American video artist Hermine Freed's 1976 statement regarding Portapaks concisely sums up the mood surrounding the new technology. She observed that "the Portapak would seem to have been invented specifically for use by artists...just when it became politically embarrassing to make objects, but ludicrous to make nothing...just when it became clear that TV communicates more information to more people than large walls do; just when we understood that in order to define space it is necessary to encompass time...just then the Portapak became available."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Yvonne Spielmann, *Video – The Reflexive Medium*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008), 2.

<sup>24</sup> Exhibitions of artists' video leading up to 1968 include New York Annual Avant-Garde Festival in 1963; Wolf Vostell's 1965 exhibition '*Phänomene, Verwischungen, Parituren*' and *TV Dé-Collage* in Germany; Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT) exhibited at the World Expo in Osaka, Japan in 1966; *American Sculpture of the Sixties* at the Los Angeles County Museum which included video installation by Bruce Nauman in 1967; *Light/Motion/Space* at the Walker Art Center in 1967; William Louis Sorenson's video installation *Any Magnetic or Magneto-Optical Recording System That...* in Denmark; *The Machine Age as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1968; *Intermedia '68* in 1968 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. For details, see the extensive chronology in the back of Michael Rush's *Video Art*, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Rush, *Video Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 13.

Freed's comments reveal several things. First, although the general public first viewed artists' video on television monitors in art institutions, she highlights the importance of public and cable television as early distribution and exhibition platforms for artists' video. Second, her comments remind the reader of the eventual return to "large walls" as art institutions and artists made the shift away from television broadcast and television monitors toward museum based large-scale screen-reliant installation. Third, her statement reveals the early enthusiasm for both the new technology and the opportunity to reach an unprecedentedly large audience. Lastly, the idea that in the 1960s and 1970s it was "politically embarrassing to make objects, but ludicrous to make nothing," communicates a responsibility on the part of the artist to challenge traditional art institutions and to tackle social and political issues through their art. Artists' video appeared to offer the chance for artists to do all of these things.<sup>26</sup> The new medium's ability to capture live footage and to reach many people at once was especially promising for early video collectives who chose to create works for television. For example, Videofreex, one of the first video collectives, produced a live and taped television presentation for CBS in 1969 entitled "The Now Show" for which they traveled across the U.S. interviewing figures of the counterculture scene. The opportunity to access audiences inside their own homes and distribute live footage (or the illusion thereof) offered a means to communicate alternative forms of information and held the exciting

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<sup>26</sup> International anti-war protests and youth movements were increasingly visible on home televisions, and political influence was increasingly transmitted through media-generated icons that were designed to manufacture consent. For more information on historical context, see pages 7 – 15. Also see David Joselit, *Feedback – Television Against Democracy* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007) and Yvonne Spielmann, *Video – The Reflexive Medium* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008).

potential for real change.<sup>27</sup> Many of the television and artist collectives working with video of the 1960s and 1970s blurred the lines between artists' video and alternative media coverage, employing combinations of theater, music, dance, and visual arts, and may also be described as activist art.<sup>28</sup>

Artists working with the medium of video no longer had to wait for chemical processing to view a recorded image, as they had with film, and they could play back their work instantaneously. Television had the ability to deliver this instantaneous feedback directly into people's living rooms. The theorist who most fully understood both the potential benefits and risks of this new technology was Marshall McLuhan.<sup>29</sup> Just as Paul Virilio sounded the cyberspace alarm in the 1990s, McLuhan voiced concerns about the encroaching power of the new medium of television in the 1960s.<sup>30</sup> By 1953 sixty-six percent of American households had television sets, and by 1960 this statistic increased to ninety percent. There was a growing acknowledgement of the way in which images construct meaning and there was an awareness among media scholars such as McLuhan that this power was being wielded by the government, particularly in the U.S. As Hannah Arendt acknowledged in her 1971 response to the "Pentagon Papers," what mattered to the Johnson administration was not the actual victory in Vietnam, but

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<sup>27</sup> Even though television was inherently wrapped up in the public's mind as live, instantaneous, and therefore the incorruptible truth, footage was often taped live and then broadcast later, or manipulated and edited. See Anna McCarthy, *The Citizen Machine: Governing by Television in 1950s America*, (New York: The New Press, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Examples include Fluxus, Rainedance Corporation, Videofreex, Global Village, Top Value Television (TDTV).

<sup>29</sup> See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

<sup>30</sup> Paul Virilio, "Speed and Information: Cyberspace Alarm!" in *Reading Digital Culture*, ed. David Trend (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing), 23-27.

the “image” of victory.<sup>31</sup> Television’s privatization of public speech and its strict control over access to broadcasting appeared as antithetical to the goals of the art activists such as Raindance, and many other artists associated with Conceptual Art and Institutional Critique. As a way to challenge the growing commercial institution of television, McLuhan encouraged viewers (and artists) to create their own videos, thereby positioning themselves as co-producers of the communication product. McLuhan’s ideas were a significant influence on artists working with video such as Nam June Paik and activist video collectives such as Ant Farm.

### **Video Collectives: Utilizing Television as a Platform For Activism and Alternative Media**

Cable’s twenty-first century state of commercialization makes it difficult to imagine how it could have existed in any other way. However, in 1972 just before the video television collective Raindance Corporation was formed, Ralph Lee Smith published “The Wired Nation,” an influential article on the future of cable access television in which he heralded the new broadcast technology as a kind of a revolution, signaling the importance of the television movement for early artists’ video.<sup>32</sup> Cable television was introduced in the late 1940s as a service to people living in remote areas of the United States who were unable to have a normal signal reception (fig. 10).<sup>33</sup> In order to garner FCC support in the face of network opposition, cable operators professed a commitment

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<sup>31</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Lying in Politics: Reflections on the Pentagon Papers,” in *Crises of the Republic* (San Diego, Harcourt Brace, 1972), quoted in Joselit, xi.

<sup>32</sup> Ralph Lee Smith, *The Wired Nation, Cable TV -The Electronic Communications Highway* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

<sup>33</sup> Rush, 20.

to community programming from 1968 and 1972.<sup>34</sup> Cable companies were required to make video equipment and taping facilities available to the community so that people could make their own tapes for broadcast on local cable channels (fig. 11). Though this opportunity was never fully exploited by the public, artist groups such as Global Village, Videofreex, People's Video Theater, Raindance Corporation, and Ant Farm, seized upon this openness to alternative programming.

### **Raindance Corporation**

An early and significant example of artists seizing the opportunity to use television as a platform for artists' video is that of the Raindance Corporation. In 1969, Michael Shamberg, then a writer for *Time* magazine, reviewed the first video exhibition to take place in the U.S., "TV as a Creative Medium," at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York (fig. 12). He saw in artists' video the potential for artists to disrupt the centralized power base of television. A work that was of particular interest to Shamberg was Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider's *Wipe Cycle* (1969), which consisted of a bank of nine monitors and a closed-circuit video camera that recorded live images of viewers as they approached the work (fig. 13). Four of the monitors played pre-taped material, while the other five played live and delayed images of spectators as they approached the work. Viewers had the chance to watch themselves on live television while simultaneously viewing images from other television shows. Gillette's work illustrates the transitional and formative nature of the impact of video and television in the hands of artists.

Inspired by *Wipe Cycle* and the potential of new video technologies, Shamberg decided to join with Gillette and Schneider to form the Raindance Corporation, a video

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<sup>34</sup> Joselit, 91.

collective intended to function as an alternative think tank. Although *Wipe Cycle* and other closed-circuit video installations were intended to introduce circuits of video feedback within the controlled environment of the gallery, they also served as a blueprint for guerilla television's response to the centralization of commercial television through the production of politically engaged documentaries on cable.<sup>35</sup> Shamberg and his group recognized the opportunity in artists' video as a medium and television as a distribution platform to reach wide audiences and to control the distribution of their works without relying on art institutions.

The activities of Raindance consisted of video making and publishing, and they set out to redress the imbalance of power between video producers and consumers by creating their own video works. In addition to video, the group published the journal *Radical Software* between the years 1970 to 1974, which served as the theoretical voice of the video movement at that time (fig 14). *Radical Software* encouraged its readers to experiment and create videos and to produce locally originated programming to be broadcast on public access television. It offered instructions and DIY information to its readers in the form of figurative illustrations, technical charts, and text.<sup>36</sup>

Another significant Raindance publication was Michael Shamberg's 1971 book *Guerilla Television*, which served as a go-to resource and manual for independent video makers. In the publication, Shamberg links television to national identity with the term "Media-America" (fig. 15 - 16). Recognizing the union of corporate oligarchies and democratic procedures, the term "Media-America" calls attention to a form of dominance

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<sup>35</sup> Rush, 19.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Shamberg and Raindance Corporation, *Guerilla Television* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 23-31.

constituted through the massive accumulation and concentration of information in private hands. Through publications like *Guerrilla Television*, Raindance sought to assault this dominance by transforming passive video consumers into active video producers and by establishing alternative community-oriented networks through cable access television (fig. 17).

### **TVTV (Top Value Television)**

After Raindance dissolved, Shamberg became involved with the collective Top Value Television (TVTV), a group that directed its efforts toward a broader audience available through cable television.<sup>37</sup> TVTV was an open-ended video collective that produced a variety of programs throughout the seventies. It was initiated to produce alternative coverage of the 1972 Democratic and Republican conventions in Miami (fig. 18-19). TVTV members gained greater access to the convention floor with their Portapak cameras than network television crews could manage with their heavy broadcast television equipment. Further evidence of the influence of artists' video such as *Wipe Cycle* on Shamberg can be seen in TVTV's policy of revealing their own interviewers to the audience, calling into question the supposed neutrality of the questioner and the questioned.<sup>38</sup>

Due to lack of funding, TVTV moved towards fictional programming in the late 1970s and began to pitch projects to networks. Their new programs continued to satirize "Media America" but in the context of entertainment. Shamberg apparently saw more

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<sup>37</sup> Grant H. Kester, ed. *Art, Activism, and Oppositionality, Essays from Afterimage* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 243.

<sup>38</sup> Joselit, 99.

potential in disseminating a message through entertainment than through documentary, eventually becoming a commercial Hollywood film producer.<sup>39</sup>

### **Paper Tiger Television**

In contrast to Michael Shamberg's shift from utopian-minded guerilla television to commercial film, we can look to Paper Tiger Television as a group that has embraced advancements in technology and media as a way to continue their non-profit video collective (fig. 21). Founded in 1981 with similar goals to Raindance and TVTV, Paper Tiger TV seeks to provide alternative news and media by combining art, academics, politics, and performance.<sup>40</sup> In addition to combining artistic media, they have utilized a hybrid model of new media to distribute their work: they continue to broadcast their video through television, but, in addition, they use now the internet as both propaganda for their cause and a distribution platform for their work, as seen, for example, in their blog (fig. 22).<sup>41</sup> New media technologies have enabled this group to access new audiences and to increase their group in size and geographic diversity; originally a small New York collective, Paper Tiger Television has grown over the years to become an international collective.

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<sup>39</sup> Art historian David Joselit argues that instead of viewing this as a moral failure, we might view this as an attempt to address an even broader public, even though the message is quite diluted. Shamberg perhaps knowingly sacrificed political poignancy for access to a broader platform.<sup>39</sup> Joselit's overly sympathetic treatment of Shamberg's decision to move away from documentary and artists' video is perhaps best understood as hesitation to dismiss such a significant figure in early guerilla television.

<sup>40</sup> DeeDee Halleck, *Hand-Held Visions – The Impossibilities of Community Media* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> Paper Tiger Blog <http://blog.papertiger.org/>, Paper Tiger Television <http://papertiger.org/> (accessed June 8, 2010).



As an important platform for artists' video in the 1960s and 1970s, television, both public access and cable, allowed artists more access to production equipment and control of the distribution of their work. In his book *Feedback*, art historian David Joselit traces the efforts of artists and activists to produce "utopian pathways across the locked-down terrain of television."<sup>42</sup> He asserts that although much of 20<sup>th</sup> century art and activism history has been preoccupied with a naïve utopian notion of the potential for widespread revolution or upheaval, guerilla television offered a relatively practical model for artists, enabling them to work within the existing system in order to (temporarily) subvert it.

Joselit's broader argument is that one can look to Raindance and the early work of TVTV as examples of a kind of media activism that successfully avoided the "avant-garde's fantasy of negation, its all-or-nothing (utopian) prescriptions for revolution or subversion."<sup>43</sup> He argues that artists and activists began to understand that within a neo-liberal economic structure, it is impossible to appropriate power without understanding its structure, and this understanding requires access. In this light, early guerilla television can be seen as precursors to the kind of contemporary tactical media art examined by critics such as Rita Raley.<sup>44</sup> Tactical media is a category that encompasses divergent forms of critical intervention, dissent, and resistance and is generally taken to refer to a variety of ephemeral art and new media practices such as hacktivism, collaborative software, denial-of-service attacks, and digital hijacks. The link between the work of early video collectives and internet-based tactical media artwork lies in the parallel model of working within the existing system with the goal of temporarily disrupting it.

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<sup>42</sup> David Joselit, *Feedback - Television Against Democracy* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 41.

<sup>43</sup> Joselit, 98.

<sup>44</sup> Rita Raley, *Tactical Media*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

## **Video Collectives Versus Individual Video Artists**

The role of video collectives in shaping the history of artists' video cannot be emphasized enough. However, not all artists engaged with video worked with a communal group or had interest in changing television (as an institution itself) or directly affecting social change. According to Sturken, artists such as Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, Dan Graham, and Peter Campus were interested more in changing the standard artist-viewer relationship and the rigid criteria of the commercial art world.<sup>45</sup> In other words, these artists were primarily focused on the institutions of art, rather than commercial media. Sturken's separation of collectives versus individuals is in line with the majority of scholarship surrounding the history of artists' video. While accurate, this account is ultimately problematic because of the hierarchy it establishes. The individual artists that worked within the context of the art institution are written into the histories of artists' video as addressing critical and theoretical concerns that are part of the larger narrative of twentieth century art, while video collectives are more easily dismissed as amateur videographers that produced work more on par with the very commercial media they were challenging.

For example, Vito Acconci is an artist who is important in the history of artists' video because he fall into a larger group of individual artists who were concerned with performance and viewer interaction with video technology. However, Paper Tiger Television, Ant Farm, Videofreex, and almost all the early video collectives, were in fact concerned with aspects of performance and viewer interaction. The difference between

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<sup>45</sup> Sturken 116.

the two is the platform they chose: Acconci chose the museum and Paper Tiger chose television. It is not surprising then that the collectives were undervalued in the early critical discourse surrounding artists' video since they did not conform to the traditional model of fine art as an object collected, preserved, and displayed by art institutions.

This notion of separation between video collectives and individual video artists was further solidified as institutions fully embraced video art in the 1980s and 1990s, and pushed the shift away from television as a platform to placing themselves as the primary distributors, collectors, preservers, and exhibitors of artists' video.

### **Electronic Arts Intermix**

Although Electronic Arts Intermix had a crucial pioneering role in the early days of artists' video, the group's history, mission, and services are quite different from those of the pioneering video art collectives. Most scholarly texts tend to lump EAI into the 1970s activist and collective groups, which is both inaccurate and ineffective. My typology, instead, allows Electronic Arts Intermix to exist separately from video collectives by making classifications based on distribution platform.

While the video collectives were broadcasting their video via television in the 1970s, EAI served as an umbrella or sponsor for an eclectic range of innovative projects relating to the intersection of video and contemporary art. Among these projects were festivals such as the Annual Avant-Garde Festivals, organized by Charlotte Moorman; the first Women's Video Festival, held at the Kitchen in 1972; and the Computer Arts Festivals of 1973-75.

However, one of EAI's main missions was to support artists working with the medium of video, and, in 1972, they opened their Editing/Post Production Facility in response to a need for a creative workspace and equipment access for artists. This facility was one of the first nonprofit services of its kind in the U.S., and enabled artists to create work that they later distributed via television and also exhibited within the space of the art institution.

## CHAPTER III:

### ART INSTITUTION AS PLATFORM

“...it is a paradox—that institutions are the primary historical interpreters of a medium that initially developed outside of and in opposition to the established art world.”<sup>46</sup>  
Marita Sturken (1990)

In the 1960s and 1970s, the relationships between artists and museums were sometimes tense, if not outright confrontational. Museums, such as MoMA, became a target and a stage for political agitations of artists who voiced their dissent against the Vietnam War, racism, sexism, and other social issues. The 1960s and 1970s were a period in which artists directed criticism at institutional conventions and practices of art museums in order to challenge the idea that the museum is a neutral, apolitical, and autonomous space. Artists began to use the exhibition space to question and examine the ideological frameworks within which aesthetic meaning and value are generated and maintained (in a seeming paradox, museums eventually began to welcome this type of critique).

Concomitantly, artists’ video challenged many traditional aspects of art institutions. First, logistically, museums were not set up to accommodate art works that required electrical support. Second, the museum-going experience had traditionally involved quiet if not mute contemplation of static art pieces. Artists’ video introduced movement, often sound, and a temporal aspect: video as a medium captures and documents time, as well as often incorporates real time through live feeds.<sup>47</sup> Third, early artists’ video was associated with video collectives and therefore with television and

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<sup>46</sup> Sturken, 104.

<sup>47</sup> For example, Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider’s *Wipe Cycle* (1968-1969) was a video installation with real-time, delay-time, and prerecorded video.

mass media; the blurring between art and popular and commercial culture did not comfortably fit into traditional art classifications. Lastly, the idea of the individual art object was challenged by the fact that a video work was re-recordable and thus multiple, which disrupted conventional institutional models for collecting.

## **Television Monitors: Out of the Living Room and Into the Gallery Space**

### **I. Single-channel monitors: video-art as television**

Initially questions regarding how viewers should interpret video— is video art television? sculpture? furniture?—were of concern to curators. This was partially due to the museums' original presentation of artists' video through single-channel (closed-circuit) television monitors in the regular space of the gallery.<sup>48</sup> Single-channel video bore close resemblance to television and, by extension, to domestic spaces. In addition, logistical issues furthered blurred the status of artists' video in the galleries. For example, due to the unforeseen need for electrical outlets, monitors were often placed in awkward positions--behind stairs, or near toilets, and often with exposed electrical cables--which occasionally resulted in viewers overlooking the artwork or not recognizing it as such.<sup>49</sup> Unintentionally, then, curators were creating situations in which viewers might be unsure how to approach or understand a video artwork since the line between broadcast commercial television and fine art was blurred. Normally, a viewer is assured that the objects displayed within the walls of galleries are considered fine art by the art institution displaying them, and the viewer seeks to understand them within this framework. The

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<sup>48</sup> The use of television monitors in the galleries was not a choice – it was the technology that existed at that time. See Appendix C for a timeline of technological developments related to artists' video.

<sup>49</sup> Cyrus Manasseh, *The Problematic of Video Art in the Museum 1968-1990* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2009),93.

irregular placement of monitors inadvertently called attention to the way in which institutions inform the public of the difference between fine art and everyday objects.<sup>50</sup>

Examples of works seen as individual videos on single-channel monitors include Bruce Nauman's *Bouncing in the Corner No. 1* (1968) and Vito Acconci's *Undertone* (1973). Both of these works involve the artist using the medium of video to document a performance piece. Another example is Nam June Paik's *Global Groove* (fig. 25). In the 1970s, the art museum spectator likely would have experienced these works in a manner similar to watching television in their living room—the major difference, of course, would be that they would have stood within the wall of the museum or gallery space, surrounded by other works of art. The other major difference is one of audience control: spectators could not control the volume, switch the channel, or turn the video work on or off.

## **II. Television Monitors as sculpture and/or installation**

The early boxy television monitor became a popular medium for sculpture and/or installation in combination with recorded video around Nam June Paik was a major pioneer in this area and continued to create television installations throughout his entire career. For example, his *Magnet TV* (1965) explored the aesthetic possibilities of

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<sup>50</sup> For example, the Tate's first video art exhibition in 1976 took place in their basement due to technical and logistical issues. Manasseh, 105. Other galleries ended up replicating a domestic living room situation, in which a comfortable chair or couch would be placed in the gallery space in front of the monitor. This tended to invoke associations with television and mass media, however, which was problematic for museums eager to imbue these new video works with a fine art status.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Michael Fried's seminal essay "Art and Objecthood" helped define the way that Minimalist art was projecting its objecthood and demanded an interaction with the viewer's body, rather than just their visual gaze. Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood' in *Art in Theory 1900-2000*, edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 835-845.

television circuits and challenged the viewer's perceived notion of the television screen as an illusionistic window. He created many pieces that employed single-channel and multiple-channel television monitors as part of larger sculpture installations, such as *TV Buddha* (1974), *Moon is the Oldest TV* (1965), *TV Garden* (1974), *TV Bed* (1972), *Connection Arch* (1986), *V-ynamid* (1989), and *Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S.* (1995), just to name a few (fig. 26 – 31). These types of works fall more easily within the traditional framework of the unique art object and thus are less subversive in terms of access and the potential for a work to exist outside the space of the art institution. Nam June Paik utilizes monitors and video footage as part of his sculptural pieces, which are individual art objects with specific installation requirements. Although these pieces mentioned above are interesting in their blurring of the lines between installation, sculpture, and artists' video, they cannot be copied in the way that non-sculptural artists' video can be. The only platform these works can be distributed and exhibited through is the art institution.

### **III. Multiple channels and multiple monitors – installation spaces and spectator engagement**

Due to the technical ability to instantaneously record and playback footage, a majority of video artists creating video within the art institution created multiple channels with multiple monitors that would engage spectator directly. Following in the steps of Minimalism, and beginning with Gillette and Schneider's *Wipe Cycle* (1968-1969), video artists became interested in creating an experience in which the viewer encountered art in a way that emphasized notions of architectural or physical space, or placed the spectator in the position such that their own physical presence gave meaning or significance to the



piece (fig 32).<sup>52</sup> In his book *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, John G. Hanhardt explains, “The strategy of turning the video camera onto a space and thus causing the viewer to perceive that space differently was part of a complex phenomenological inquiry into the ontology of materials and one’s own presence when viewing, experiencing, the aesthetic text.”<sup>53</sup> In this regard, the museum became a space in which video works created spectator-based performances and the documentation of such.

For example, Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider’s *Wipe Cycle* (1969) features nine video monitors, four of which display pre-recorded material and five of which play live and delayed images of viewers as they enter the gallery. Gillette and Schneider were pioneers in this area and the artists have continued to use video to experiment with recorded and live footage in their works since. Bruce Nauman’s *Live Taped Video Corridor* (1970) is a closed-circuit installation in which two monitors are stacked above one another at the end of a corridor (fig. 33). The lower monitor features videotape footage of the corridor, and the upper monitor shows a closed-circuit tape recording of a camera at the entrance to the corridor. On entering the corridor and approaching the monitors, the spectator appears on the screen, but the closer they get to the monitor, the further they are from the camera, with the result that your image on the monitor becomes increasingly smaller. A slightly later example is Dieter Froese’s *Not a Model for Big Brother’s Spy-Cycle* (1987) which is a combination of closed-circuit television with a two-channel pre-taped video. Visitors to the New York gallery in which it was originally shown were taped and shown on monitors as they watched other (pre-taped) visitors on

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<sup>52</sup> Artists such as Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman, and Michael Snow, in particular, were pioneers in the investigation of video as a tool to create viewer participation/interaction through live feedback.

<sup>53</sup> John G. Hanhardt, ed., *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, (New York: Visual Studies Workshop and Press, 1986), 20, as quoted in Manasseh, 26.

monitors being interviewed about their political activities. These examples are important for two main reasons. One, they show how the medium of video and the ability to record and playback live footage is of interest to artists in the way that it disrupts the traditional viewer-art object experience by introducing the aspect of real time. This, although a challenge to traditional art institution viewing experiences, at the time they were created, could only exist within the art institution itself. As we will see in the next chapter, this engagement with live interaction on the part of the viewer can now exist outside of the art institution via the internet as a platform.

### **Projectors: Large Walls and Immersive Screen Reliant Environments**

From the mid 1980s onwards, the boxy monitors that occupied awkward spaces near electrical outlets gave way to a projection display system, which helped to eliminate associations with the domestic living room television set due to associations with the codes and conventions of traditional cinema.<sup>54</sup> Following the Centre Pompidou's lead, whose design incorporated electronic technology and greater flexibility for display, museums became sites for cultural entertainment and information with an emphasis on the exhibition of artists' video, which in a curious turn, now proclaimed a museum's status as contemporary and international. Artists' video transitioned to large-scale, often complex installations that are heavily reliant upon sophisticated technical equipment and demand large space (fig. 34). The earliest appearances of video projection occurred in the

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<sup>54</sup> The 1990s saw a "cinematic turn" in artists' video. Not only were artists' employing film, rather than videotape as their medium, but references to, and appropriations of Hollywood cinema and the language of cinema was common content.

1970s with the installation work of Peter Campus and Dara Birnbaum.<sup>55</sup> By the mid-nineties video projection was the staple of the international contemporary art scene.<sup>56</sup>

Museums such as the Pompidou also led the way for a more flexible environment for artists to develop site-specific video installation pieces. As museum's embraced and created separate space to exhibit artists' video, the works created increased in size often to incorporate and encourage immersive interactivity on the part of the viewer. As the art institution transformed the viewing environment for artists' video, artists began to utilize these separate spaces and created increasingly large installation works which would project onto increasingly larger screens.<sup>57</sup>

Projection of video in art institutions is not seen merely an exhibition style, but an independent medium originally conceived by the artist for projected presentation.<sup>58</sup> In other words, an artist might conceive of a video artwork that they specifically intend to be displayed as projected onto a wall – the projection is an aspect of the artwork, rather than just a method chosen by a curator or museum exhibition preparatory. Art historian Kate Mondloch uses the term “screen-reliant” installation<sup>59</sup> and notes that, “installation artworks are participatory sculptural environments in which the viewer’s spatial and temporal experience with the exhibition space and the various objects within it forms part

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<sup>55</sup> Mayer, 28.

<sup>56</sup> Mayer argues that characteristics of projected video installation distinguish it from monitor-based video art and link it more closely to painting and sculpture, although his characteristics (two-dimensionality of projection and aspects of time created by installations) do not present a strong case.

<sup>57</sup> The idea of projection, or the use of projectors to dramatically increase size, was not new. Television monitors have increased in size over the years, and high-definition televisions now exist in many American homes.

<sup>58</sup> Mondloch, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Mondloch, xiii.

of the work itself.”<sup>60</sup> Screen-reliant installations create an architectural space in which the viewer physically experiences in a way that is different than sitting in front of a monitor (whether it be a single-channel monitor or a high-definition flat screen monitor, a technology museums begin to employ in the late 2000’s). As Mondloch notes, “Installations made with media screens are especially evocative in that as environmental, experiential sculptures, they stage temporal and spatialized encounters between viewing subjects and technological objects, between bodies and screens.”<sup>61</sup>

Her discussion regarding the way in which screen-reliant works create a physical environment also brings to mind the important choice of art institutions to architecturally create separate spaces for exhibiting artists’ video. Artists’ video, when placed among the rest of the artwork housed in the traditional art museum, created a rupture of sorts to the traditional viewing environment.<sup>62</sup> Video works have moving images and sound that echo through the normally quiet galleries, and the regular lighting in the galleries can produce a glare off of the monitor screens. The institutional solution has been to display the works

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<sup>60</sup> Mondloch, 2 and xiii.

<sup>61</sup> Mondloch, xiii.

<sup>62</sup> This is not an anachronistic issue – museums today are still debating how to incorporate artists’ video into their exhibitions. There are a large number of books devoted to the topic: Cyrus Manasseh, *The Problematic of Video Art in the Museum 1968-1990* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press) 2009; Ross Parry, ed. *Museums in a Digital Age* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010); Joachim Jager, Gabriele Knapstein, Anette Husch, eds. *Film Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection: Films, Videos and Installations from 1963 to 2005* (Berlin, Germany: Hatje Cantz. In addition, in my recent experience with the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, Oregon, I was involved in several discussions regarding how to incorporate artists’ video into the same exhibition as the static mediums of painting, photography, and sculpture. The standards of museum exhibition have resulted in separating (originally) the medium of artists’ video from other art works. Giving one piece it’s own room for viewers to experience the light, sound, images, etc. in a vacuum (or at least an attempt at one). When an exhibition tries to incorporate artists’ video into the larger narrative of the exhibition, they run into logistical issues.

in an isolated room or environment in which the work exists separately from others and is experienced by the viewer in a more intimate way.<sup>63</sup>

The establishment of specifically designed environments to showcase video works explicitly recognized different tiers of perception via the positioning of the body in space (as viewer) and the viewer's relationship to the object (or installation).<sup>64</sup> This recognition of the different viewing experience for artists' video versus static art objects led to modifications of architectural conventions within the gallery space, which included the installation of rooms, corridors, or large rectangular boxes. (The by-now familiar transition from the so-called "white cube" to "black box.")<sup>65</sup> Video allows for artists to play with space and time, engage with the viewer, and can disturb and interrogate the actual physical space of the gallery. Through the "museumization" of video installation art, the concept and practice of viewing environments, which depend upon an interaction of art and technology, were incorporated into museum structures.<sup>66</sup>

Museums have used the space of the modern museum itself, traditionally intended to be separate from the outside world, to help viewers understand artists' video as fine

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<sup>63</sup> Part of the larger query of how video art fits into institutions is part of the history of the modern museum institution dating back to the early *Wunderkammern* and the idea of creating a microcosm of the world in one room. In addition, arbitrary classifications and categorizations were established and solidified at an early time period. See: Oliver Impey, and Arthur MacGregor. *The Origins of Museums, The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

<sup>64</sup> John Elsner, and Roger Cardinal, *The Cultures of Collecting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); and R.J.W. Evans, and Alexander Marr, *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*. (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>65</sup> Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: Ideology of the Gallery Space, Expanded Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>66</sup> Sturken uses the term "museumization." Sturken, 105.

<sup>67</sup> See Carol Duncan, "The Art Museum as Ritual" in Donald Preziosi, *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

art, and worthy of institutional attention.<sup>67</sup> In theory, a visitor to a museum leaves behind the everyday and enters a cultural sanctuary of sorts in which they can engage in silent contemplation of artworks .<sup>68</sup> The visitor is yet further removed from the outside world when they enter the separate, isolated, black box space created to display artists' video. The black box space is more intimate and sanctified than the rest of the museum galleries and therefore the moving images and sound that comprise the work (whether projected, or part of video-installation or on a screen) becomes legitimized and is understandable as art rather than related to popular culture. The work is legitimized by the space in-between and surrounding the viewer and the work. It is apart from but also contained within the art institution and collection.

Interestingly, although the onslaught of moving images continues to increase in our daily lives, the art institution creates isolated, even calm and quiet spaces, in which to experience moving images.<sup>69</sup> Through the artists' intent to some degree, and through the institution's control, an immersive space is constructed in which the spectator is offered a space for critical thought and contemplation not normally afforded in every day life. These spaces were not possible through television as a platform for artists' video and secures the museum's place as the primary keeper and interpreter of this artistic medium. However, how the art institution relationship to artists' video change when the artwork is exhibited outside of the walls of the art institution? For example, when a video work is projected onto the exterior walls of a building, and the controlled 'black box' environment no longer exists, what is the difference between artists' video (as a

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<sup>68</sup> Duncan, 424-434.

<sup>69</sup> Chris Darke describes the onslaught of moving images in our daily lives as a contemporary "image storm." Chris Darke, *Light Readings: Film Criticism and Screen Arts* (London: Wallflower Press, 2001).

recognized fine art object) versus any other moving image a viewer experiences in public (a video advertisement projected onto a billboard for example)? In other words, when the art institution is no longer the platform for exhibition and distribution, who determines what is art and what is not?

### **Outside the Confines of the White Cube**

Mary Lucier's 1997 site-specific video installation, *House by the Water*, was installed by the artist in Charleston, South Carolina (fig. 38). Lucier constructed a house on stilts, and projected video onto all four sides of the square structure using multiple projectors. Although this piece technically appears outside of the art institution, it was housed within a brick warehouse space and was created to be a part of the Spoleto Festival U.S.A.'s exhibition "Human/Nature: Art and Landscape in Charleston and the Low Country."<sup>70</sup> There are distinct differences to viewing artists' video as projected onto a space other than the walls or screens of the museum. Lucier notes, "When you stand directly in front of [*House by the Water*] there is a moment when the siding seems to disappear. There are moments when you feel as if you are looking at the outside of a house. Then there are other moments when you feel as if you are looking through the house. That is intentional, to keep the wall shifting back and forth between being a screen and actually being a surface."<sup>71</sup>

Lucier's piece illustrates a trend within the larger trend of international art fairs and festivals, at which artists' video holds a prominent and privileged place. The works

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Mary Lucier, <http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag98/lucier/sm-lucir.shtml>, (accessed March 12, 2011).

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Mary Lucier, <http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag98/lucier/sm-lucir.shtml>, (accessed March 12, 2011).

created for these art festivals can be site-specific and can allow for artists' video to extend itself beyond the controlled black box environment of the museum gallery. However, the nature of the global art fair has become commercial to some degree and therefore artists' video is folded into the institutional relationships with the art market, which results in a loss of critical edge or subversive potential in terms of access and distribution.

More recent developments have seen an increase of large-scale digital video projections outside of traditional institutional art fairs and biennials. These festivals often blur the line between popular culture, music, fashion, and art and successfully challenge the dominant place of the art institution as exhibiter of artists' video.

One interesting project that successfully explores alternative processes of circulation and distribution outside is e-flux video rental (EVR). Anton Vidolke and Julieta Aranda created a free video rental store, a public screening room, and a film and video archive with the goal of challenging the dominant modes of distribution in the art market, particularly with regard to artists' video. The EVR collection, selected in collaboration with a group of international curators, consists of more than 850 artists' videos and is available to the public for home viewing free of charge. Although originally based out of a storefront in New York, the collection has traveled internationally. The collaborative aspect of the project is emphasized, and each time EVR opens in a new city, local artists, curators, and writers are encouraged to choose artists' works to add to the collection, and to organize screenings and discussions.

Interestingly, this is similar to the way in which one views a film in a movie theater. The separate space, darkened lighting, specified seating, and controlled start and



stop times experienced in a commercial movie theater are very similar to the viewing conditions created within an art institution, albeit on a smaller scale. Since a viewer is placed in a viewing experience parallel to that of a movie theater, the same behavioral codes of silence and suspension of disbelief for the duration of films are generally followed within an art institution. The major difference between the two being the average duration of artists' video displayed in an institution and a feature length film – a visitor to an art museum may spend several minutes watching a video, whereas they will sit through several hours in a theater to watch a film. Video art historians have made attempts to both link and separate artist' video from commercial film and avant-garde film. The most common difference in the lack of narrative in artists' video, which would account for shorter length of video works as well as shorter viewer attention span. However, the 1990s took a cinematic turn in artists' video and artists such as Matthew Barney began producing feature-length experimental films. Barney's *Cremaster Cycle* series (1994 – 2002), for example, were screened in both art institutions and art film venues, which blurred the line further between cinema and artists' video. Another artist who has recently produced a feature length film is Shirin Neshat: *Women Without Men* (2009). Her film has been exhibited in the context of art festivals but was also shown at Sundance in 2010. With regard to the typology laid out in this thesis, it does not matter that there is increased blurring between cinema and artists' video, but does matter through which platform these works are being shown and to what degree of access is granted the viewing audience. The general public is accustomed to streaming commercial television shows and film via Hulu and Netflix on demand. Neshat's film is currently

available for DVD purchase and is also available to stream online (one time) for a small fee, and is even available to be downloaded for a slightly larger fee.<sup>72</sup>

Again, scholarship has sought to understand video art through examining how artists' worked within the institution to challenge notions of the traditional spectator/object viewing relationship by grouping artists and video artworks chronologically or thematically. For example, many video art anthologies have a chapter on "video and the body" and "video and time." However, these classifications do not address the transition from the 1960s to the current of the different ways in which viewing video has shifted. Originally, museums displayed artists' video on boxy television monitors and the placement of these monitors was often dependent upon preexisting electrical outlets. Over time, separate, isolated spaces were created for viewing artists' video. In the 1990s, there was a shift towards large-scale projection and screen-reliant installations. Large-scale projection continues to be the dominant model for artists' video within art institutions but in the last ten years museums have begun to incorporate high definition flat screen monitors as display devices for artists video. By isolating the art institution as a platform, it allows us to address these changes in exhibition and display methods as sub-categories within the larger platform. It is important to note that this differs greatly from both television and internet as platforms. Art institutions conventionally require that the viewer physically be present inside the art institution in order to view the work. I argue that this is important with regard the way it limits access to viewers who must physically enter the museum and in terms of the experience a viewer has with the work.

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<sup>72</sup> Shirin Neshat's *Women Without Men* (2009) website: <http://www.womenwithoutmenfilm.com/> (accessed 5/20/11); DVD copy costs \$29.95, On Demand (one time online streaming) costs \$3.99, and to download a copy costs \$11.99.

The idea of circulation and access is taken further with the incorporation of online accessible archives and collections, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **Electronic Arts Intermix**

Upon initial inspection, it appeared that EAI might fall under the larger umbrella of art institution as platform. EAI is a structured organization that was founded by Howard Wise, an art dealer and owner of the Howard Wise Gallery in New York. Thus, EAI is could be classified as an art institution. Similarly to art institutions, EAI has its own collection, which they have been building for forty years – currently their collection contains over 3,500 artists’ video works. As with the stated mission of art institutions, EAI seeks to collect and preserve their collection. However, it does not and has never functioned as a public art museum their platform for distribution platform is not a physical site. Their Artists’ Media Distribution Service allows for the international distribution of their collection. Museums go through EAI to obtain artists’ video works and then exhibit the works within their institutional spaces. In terms of access, their model differs from the art institution, because their entire collection can be made available for institutional screenings and exhibitions, or for individual educational purposes. In addition, their collection consists of film, videotapes, DVDs, and digital files, but unlike art institutions, they are not engaged with screen-reliant installations. They are not an institution in the same way that an art museum or gallery is, but they do function as a physical archive. Unlike art institutions and private collectors, their mission to collect is concerned with the artists and the medium itself and therefore is not pushed by the trends of the art market.

EAI's classification is further problematized by the fact that although they are not a public art museum, in order for an individual to currently access the works in their collection, one must either rent, purchase, or travel to their offices in New York and obtain an appointment to view works in their private screening room. This suggests the same restriction to access as found within the institution as platform and that EAI perceives that the copies of artists' video in their collection are art objects and they are the guardians responsible for care-taking and preserving for the future.

## CHAPTER IV: INTERNET AS PLATFORM

The internet at present can be conceptualized as a contemporary public space that is shared by a staggering number of people.<sup>73</sup> The internet as a platform is significantly changing the way in which we access artists' video. It is important to separate out artists' video that utilized the internet as its platform, as opposed to separating artists' video by time period or theme, and this typology allows us to do so. Due to the increased potential for access to artists' video and the internet's current undefined status within the art world, this platform is the most important of the three to examine. An understanding of the way the internet serves as platform for artists' video and the varying levels of access that currently exist reveals important connections between questions of distribution and access surrounding early video collectives and artists' video works currently accessed on the internet. Artists' video has come full circle, to some degree, in terms of subversion of the art market and art institution.

The collapse between the original and its multiple copies is an inherent characteristic of artists' video. Videotape, digital video, and digital technology applied to film and videotape are able to be copied an infinite amount of times. Certainly the quality and/or aesthetics of artists' video change when transferred between, for example, film to digital video. However, a duplicate videotape or digital video mirrors the original, and therefore the copy holds the same status as the original. In other words, all copies are

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<sup>73</sup> For both organizations and individuals, it has become crucial to have a presence within this space – every business needs a website and this includes art museums. Museums utilize the internet as a platform to promote exhibitions, events, and their organization through their website. In addition, social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, have become standard tools of communication between the institution and the public. At the individual level, artists must maintain a presence on the internet in order to promote and sell their persona and art work.

originals. This squarely sets artists' video outside of the art market and proves problematic for art institutions that wish to define artists' video as individual art objects. This is further complicated with the introduction of the internet as a platform. The place of production is decentralized, and the place of exhibition now becomes inherently multiple: through UbuWeb, YouTube, or Googlevideo, for example, Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) can be accessed (or "exhibited") all over the globe at overlapping times by different users, completely confounding the idea of an individual artwork. The notion that artists' video could exist outside of the art institution was one that was there from its inception and intertwined with the medium's critical edge. We can look to groups such as Paper Tiger and more recently EAI, who utilize the Internet as a tool to carry on this subversive legacy of artists' video.

In terms of distribution and exhibition, artists have previously relied on film festivals, avant-garde film screenings, artist run-co-operatives, and art school curricula as channels of distribution as alternatives to the art institution.<sup>74</sup> Since broadband became a domestic reality, the proliferation of moving image online, including a substantial amount of archival material, has swelled to a bewildering dimension. For archives, co-ops, and artists themselves, the question is whether a vast new audience for their work comes at an unacceptable cost to the integrity of the works themselves, due to the reduced quality of compressed digitized versions and the concept of making one's work completely free of charge.

Artists' video engaged with the internet as platform brings together activism, archival functions, and advertisement under one umbrella, circumventing boundaries that

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<sup>74</sup> Ina Rae Hark, *Exhibition, The Film Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 112-114. There has been a great deal of scholarship and research regarding the history of exhibition, distribution, and reception of commercial and to some degree, avant-garde film, which can be applied to artists' video.

seem entrenched in the world of galleries and museums. For the art institution, the internet's ability to reach a broader audience is obvious, and some contemporary art centers are working with theoretical ideas of immateriality in terms of exhibition and the traditional materials associated with it.<sup>75</sup>

The internet as platform for artists' video can be organized as follows: a platform for artists who specifically create work to be experienced and distributed via the internet (this is the case with much internet and New Media art and less so the case for artists' video, but the lines between the two are blurred); a platform used by art institutions as promotion for their museum and as an access to online databases of their permanent collections; Lastly, a platform for organizations that seek to function as online archives to house and give access to digitized versions of artists' video works.

### **Interactivity and Collaboration Via the Internet**

Artists who utilize the internet as a platform for their video works are in part working in the tradition of collaboration and interactivity that has been part of video art since the medium's beginnings. Early video collectives such as Paper Tiger Television set the foundational framework for collaboration and viewer participation in artists' video. Groups such as E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology) prefigured internet modes of collaborative production<sup>76</sup> - E.A.T. had an interest in the intersections of art and scientific engineering through funding by Bell Labs, artists were able to work with

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<sup>75</sup> The New Museum in New York is one example. Their exhibition *Free* (10/20/10 – 1/23/11) explored how the internet has changed the access and flow of information and ideas of a virtual public space.

<sup>76</sup> E.A.T. also prefigures the MIT Media Lab.

programmers, designers, or other specialists.<sup>77</sup>

In addition, the legacy of individual artists such as Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham carries forward into internet based artworks in terms of interaction with the viewer and live video footage. For example, Ryan Trecartin and David Karp's project *riverthe.net* is a website which allows users to anonymously upload ten-second video clips which can be navigated by three tags.<sup>78</sup> The concept is to create a browsing experience that mimics the jump from user to user (found, for example in ChatRoulette), opening up the clips to anything at all, not just those captured on a webcam. Since the user can only assign three tags to each video, this creates a sort of narrative. The result is a large collectively authored artists' video. In addition to the actual website, there was an installation at the New Museum in 2010 as part of the exhibition "Free" which allowed viewers to watch the live streaming footage within the context of the museum. This use of live streaming footage raises interesting concepts of time, of linking people in remote locations in some way and suggests movement throughout the globe, regardless of physical distances or geographic location but is determined rather by the speed of the connections for data transmission. These encounters make the "other place" visible rather than the sharing of the same space physically. The possibility of remote intervention in physical spaces accentuates the possibility of transforming the participants' perceptions of their relationship to the medium.

Artists' such as Trecartin and Karp are utilizing the internet as a platform to raise provocative questions about viewer engagement and the internet as a public, collaborative space, but their aim is less about pushing possibilities for access. Their project is still tied

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<sup>77</sup> Joline Blais and Jon Ippolito, *At the Edge of Art*, (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2006), 133.

<sup>78</sup> <http://riverofthe.net/> (accessed May 15, 2011).



to the art institution: the inclusion of their project within an exhibition acts as an institutional stamp of approval on what might otherwise be indistinguishable from other collaborative YouTube videos. Although *riverthe.net* is tied to the exhibition “Free” and was shown within the walls of the art institution, the work itself exists in the virtual world, and thus there is no tangible art object at all to own, sell, or preserve.<sup>79</sup> Regardless of this provocative aspect to the work, which challenges traditional notions of fine art, it is important to acknowledge that currently artists such as Trecartin and Karp are using the internet as a tool and as a medium, but they are still conceiving of the art institution as their main platform. However, groups such as Rhizome, actively promote the idea of internet as the main platform.

### **Rhizome**

Rhizome, founded in 1996, is an important example of an organization that is interested in participatory collaboration and uses the internet as platform.<sup>80</sup> Although not exclusively dedicated to artists’ video, Rhizome’s “ArtBase”, or online archive, founded in 1999, contains over 2500 works that include video and film. Unlike institutional online collections, ArtBase is continually growing and a curatorial staff reviews submissions monthly. A user can browse the archives and view descriptions and static images representing video works. However, there are often links to external websites (artists’ personal websites for example) that allow a spectator to actually view the artist’s video in its entirety.

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<sup>79</sup> Paul Conway, “Rationale for Digitization and Preservation” in Ross Parry, *Museums in a Digital Age*, (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 365-378.

<sup>80</sup> Rhizome’s homepage: <http://rhizome.org/>; Rhizome’s ArtBase: <http://rhizome.org/artbase/featured/> (accessed May 12, 2011).

Interestingly, Rhizome is still connected to the art institution due to the fact that their offices are housed within the New Museum in New York, and this affiliation lends some institutional validity to their organization. Rhizome is a model for how artists might use the internet as a platform going forward, but illustrates the current perceived need for some sort of institutional stamp of approval for internet-based access. As artists and organizations like Rhizome negotiate how best to utilize the internet as platform for artists' video, institutions have been utilizing the internet as a tool to offer increased access to their collections while attempting to maintain the physical site of the museum as the main platform.

### **Art Institutions Go Digital**

Over the past twenty years, museums have used the internet and digital technologies not only as a way to create an online community or as advertisement, but have also changed the way in which they store information about their permanent (and temporary) collections. As collections have become digitized for internal purposes, both in terms of storing all information on computer hard drives and in terms of creating digital images of the pieces in the collection, ideas surrounding access to collections have changed.<sup>81</sup> Many museums, such as MoMA, The Guggenheim, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, SFMOMA, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Centre Pompidou, the Louvre, have all made their permanent collections available online to the general public. The amount of work one can access online varies – the de Young Museum in San Francisco, for example, offers access

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<sup>81</sup> Andrew McClellan, "A Brief History of the Art Museum Public" in Andrew McClellan, ed. *Art and its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium* (Malden: Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishing: 2003), 1-50.

to their entire collection online. Anyone with an internet connection can browse and look at digitized photographs of the works in their collection accompanied by brief tombstone information and often with links to artist biographies or label information from previous exhibitions. Other museums, such as the Guggenheim, offer only a limited selection, or sampling, of the items in their permanent collection. In terms of access, the transition to online searchable catalog databases is exciting, particularly for educational and research purposes. Although the online collections are obviously not meant to replace the experience of seeing a work in person, it is possible to view, study, and gain information about artworks that one might not normally be able to travel to in person. However, in terms of artists' video, the access is restricted to a lesser degree. For example, an entry for Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* appears right away after a quick title search in MoMA's online collection.<sup>82</sup> The link to the work is formatted in the same fashion as all other non-video works – a digitized image of the work on the left and informational text on the right. However, the image that represents this work is merely a screen shot from video. The video itself is not embedded, nor is there a link to the actual work. This is the case with all major museum online collections – they stop short of actually using the internet as platform for access to artists' video and use it more as a way to organize information and as an educational reference to the work. One might argue that this is no different than the small digitized images of sculpture work – the image is just a reference and not a way to experience the work. However, the temporal and aural aspects of artists' video are two defining and extremely important characteristics of the work, and these characteristics cannot even be hinted at from a static clip.

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<sup>82</sup> Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) as listed in MoMA's online collection. [http://www.moma.org/collection/browse\\_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A6832&page\\_number=1&template\\_id=1&sort\\_order=1](http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A6832&page_number=1&template_id=1&sort_order=1).

Interestingly, the exhibition “Free”, which explored how the internet has changed our notions of public space and access, was accompanied by an online open-access exhibition catalog. Similarly to many institutional online collections, important information such as descriptions of artworks, artists’ biographies, and commentary are included. However, artists’ video works are still represented as static video stills, rather than embedded moving images.<sup>83</sup>

As more internet-based artists’ video is created, the function of museum as collector/owner and exhibiter diminishes and the function of curator as one who ties ideas together in one space to inform the public in some way.<sup>84</sup> Museums might need to reinvent themselves as vehicles for communication rather than mausoleums of historical culture.<sup>85</sup>

### **The Online Archive**

Returning to the example of Martha Rosler’s *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, it bears repeating that today one can easily access this artwork on YouTube, Googlevideo, or UbuWeb. The experience of viewing a work on these online archival sites is different from art institutions in the following ways: the quality of works is often lacking both in audio and in visual quality; longer pieces often are divided into sections, which requires the viewer move from part one to part two with interruption in-between, although not more than a few seconds; there is greater variability between sites as to information

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<sup>83</sup> Link to the New Museum’s online exhibition catalog for *Free*: <http://www.newmuseum.org/free/>.

<sup>84</sup> Manuel Castells, “Museums in the Information Era: cultural connectors of time and space” in Ross Parry, ed. *Museums in a Digital Age* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 427-434.

<sup>85</sup> Manuel Castells argues for museums as cultural connectors and urges the museum world to embrace new technologies and let old models go.

regarding authenticity; and there is a communal aspect that involves commentary from users of the sites and information regarding how many times a certain uploaded work has been accessed. (For example, Rosler's work has been viewed 86,678 times on YouTube.)<sup>86</sup>

The internet as platform and the computer that goes along with it provide a degree of autonomy on the part of the audience/user.<sup>87</sup> The computer, like the television, is an electronic device, which the user must turn on. Once booted up, the user must open an internet browser in order to access artists' video. Then the user has control over which works to see, for how long, and so forth. There is essentially no control over how the viewer will see the work regardless of artist or institutional intentions. They may only watch a few seconds of a piece and move onto another, but this is not so different from the way in which visitors to a museum often experience artwork in general, whether static or time-based. Like a living room television set, the spectator may choose to turn off the sound, or have the sound at varying degrees, and there is no control (as there is with the art institution) as to background noise or any other environmental factors. The space that exists between a computer screen and a spectator is perhaps especially far removed from the architectural space created by screen-reliant installations in art institutions.

Though the archive remains, inevitably, an incomplete and incoherent collection of fragments, the unprecedented level of availability has reconfigured these fragments.<sup>88</sup>

The benefit to any organization or distributor is that online archival content both reduces

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<sup>86</sup> Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zSA9Rm2PZA> (accessed May 12, 2011).

<sup>87</sup> Areti Galani and Matthew Chalmers, "Empowering the Remote Visitor: supporting social museum experiences among local and remote visitors," in Parry, ed. *Museums in a Digital Age*, 159-169.

<sup>88</sup> Charles Merewether, ed., *The Archive*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006).

the costs of networked distribution of the archival material and attracts a larger audience than might otherwise be drawn through the organizations' own websites.<sup>89</sup>

## **UbuWeb**

Concrete poet Kenneth Goldsmith began UbuWeb in 1996 as a repository for “lost” avant-garde poetic and sound works.<sup>90</sup> Film and video proved problematic in UbuWeb’s early years - the first film section disappeared after pressure from rights-holders and artists, then reappeared as UbuWeb took more collaborate approaches with some distributors. Re:Voir, for example, works with UbuWeb to make clips available.<sup>91</sup> Traditional distributors of artists’ video argue that experiencing the work in its compressed low quality format is not legitimate. Viewing their works in their original format (16mm for example) was how they were intended to be viewed. In addition, viewing the works via a traditional distributor ensures financial support to the artists themselves through a direct share of rental profits: an already fragile business model that stands to suffer from making artists’ video freely available online. As Dominic Angermae, director of the long-standing Bay Area film co-op Canyon Cinema states: “the threat of Ubu and YouTube to Canyon becomes when teachers of cinema ask their students to view the films being taught in the classroom on these sites. It becomes a disservice to both the artist and the experimental film distributors both economically and

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<sup>89</sup> Danny Birchall, “The Avant-Garde Archive Online,” *Film Quarterly*, Fall 2009, 12.

<sup>90</sup> UbuWeb: <http://www.ubuweb.com/> (accessed May 12, 2011).

<sup>91</sup> Birchall, 13.

aesthetically.”<sup>92</sup> Although Angermae’s point with regard to the artists’ right to make a living is valid, how does this apply to deceased artists’ works? It seems that his argument is inconsistent. He is promoting ideas of access via the internet, but still attempting to control access and thus maintain his business.

There is potential to “curate” one’s own video collection through YouTube and UbuWeb, which encourage re-embedding of videos into one’s personal website.<sup>93</sup> Professional art curator Joao Ribas’s *Expanded Cinema* blog emphasizes the potential for viewers to have control over not just what they can view, but to take this a step further in organizing and grouping works in the way the viewer sees fit. This same online curatorial potential is available through certain art institutional online collections as well (MoMA, for example).

Birchall argues that this combination of diffuse presentation and personal curation is the future of the avant-garde archive. As well as being decentralized, the online archive will inevitably remain incomplete. However, artists who are unwilling to see their work digitized or presented through aggregators like UbuWeb may find themselves written out of future canons. “Those filmmakers who decide not to proceed in this way will risk the fate of not having the work viewed and possibly ignored by history,” according to Angerame.<sup>94</sup>

Digital distribution and archiving are likely to be standard for funded artists. Artists whose work does not fit this model, or those who work without funding, may find it

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<sup>92</sup> Birchall, 14.

<sup>93</sup> [http://upload.youtube.com/my\\_videos\\_upload](http://upload.youtube.com/my_videos_upload); accessed 5/15/11  
<http://www.ubu.com/>; accessed 5/15/11

<sup>94</sup> Birchall, 14.

harder to secure their works. The online archive remains different than the exhibition of these works to some degree. The conditions of reception remain important. The online archive may come to look something more like an art library: a resource for reference rather than the works themselves.<sup>95</sup> Through platforms such as UbuWeb, the public understanding of artists' video may change - viewers may find that more autonomy of selection and the aspect of self-discovery may help to better facilitate more understanding and interest of artists' video among viewers.

### **Electronic Arts Intermix**

One of richest aspects of EAI's program is their online catalogue. It is a comprehensive web resource available and free to the public. In this respect, EAI seems to fit into the internet platform category. But, as mentioned, in order to currently view their artists' video works, one must either rent or purchase the work, or travel to EAI's offices in New York to view the work. However, EAI has launched a major initiative to digitize all of the media artworks in their collection and access to their work is currently in transition. The initial phase allowed EAI to begin the process of creating and storing uncompressed digital files of the media works in the collection. Long term goals of the project claim to allow for broader and more efficient access to the EAI collection. In the autumn of 2009, EAI launched the newest access phase of the Digitization Initiative: the EAI Online Viewing Room. This service allows for what they are calling secure and private online viewing of works in the EAI collection for preview and research purposes by art and educational institutions. Thus, EAI has combined the art institution and

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<sup>95</sup> Annette A. Ward, Margaret E. Graham, K. Jonathan Riley, and Nic Sheen, "Enhancing a Historical Digital Art Collection: Evaluation of Content-Based Image Retrieval on Collage," in *Digital Art History*. (Portland, Oregon: intellect: 2003), 101-112.



internet platforms. EAI appears struggling with how to define the very problem that faces museums – the fear that online streaming access reduces the individuality of the artists’ video, detracts from its cultural and financial value, and does a disservice to the artists. However, these concerns are irrelevant. The technology exists and the most provocative aspects of the medium have always been in its capability to exist as multiple, decentralized, and outside of the art institution. It appears as though EAI is accepting this, but still attempting to assert some measure of control. Their hybrid platform model suggests that unlike UbuWeb, whose main goal is access, with little regard for maintenance of original visual or audio quality, or control of their archive, EAI continues to view the Internet as a tool to support their mission, rather than a platform that directly connects a user and an artworks.

## CHAPTER V:

### TYPOLOGIZING ELECTRONIC ARTS INTERMIX: A CASE STUDY

EAI has previously been neglected in artists' video histories and critical discourse surrounding the effect of changing technologies on the distribution and exhibition of artists' video due to the organization's defiance of easy classification. Although often enfolded into the scholarship surrounding 1970s video collectives, they were not, and are not, directly involved with alternative media nor did/do they utilize television as a their platform. This sets them apart from a group like Paper Tiger Television, despite the fact that both groups are non-profit organizations involved in a wide variety of activities which support artists and the arts community, and are autonomous in terms of distribution processes. Examining these groups based on distribution and access platforms allows us to more clearly and effectively examine them.

In many ways exemplifying the subversive nature of artist's video itself, EAI defies neat classification. In terms of my typology, EAI utilizes both the art institution and the Internet as primary platforms. Even assigning this classification is problematic, however, because although EAI takes on many characteristics of an art institution, such as collection, preservation, cataloging, and educational functions, it is completely different in the fact that its physical location is not a public exhibition site. Researchers, students, or museums personnel may gain permission quite easily to access the entire collection in person through EAI's viewing room, but it is not open-access in the way that UbuWeb is, for example. EAI's viewing room then can be compared to a special collections library, where one can access archives and materials, but under some sort of supervision.

Currently, EAI utilizes the internet as a platform to communicate valuable information about their artists and collection to the public. The internet platform provides an archival function as well, as EAI marches towards total digitization of its collection. When I began my research on this project in early 2010, EAI had not publicly announced its plans to move towards online access for its artists' video, but began promoting their plans to move forward with such an initiative in late 2010.

EAI is clearly moving forward with the Internet as their platform due to the access that it can facilitate. Not only are they looking to allow direct access to artists' video, they are continuing to think about ways to utilize the internet as a platform for providing information about the work in their collection. In addition to the catalog, a user can access their digital living archive, "A Kinetic History: The EAI Archives Online" as well as an online High-Definition Guide.<sup>96</sup> These resources span both archival and educational purposes. This combined with the future online access to artists' video begins to take the shape of a virtual museum – a museum that has no public physical site, for which the internet would serve as the platform for all functions of the museum. Without EAI and other online archives such as UbuWeb, most people would never have the opportunity to access the work that is contained there. Furthermore, without digitization, videotape and film works would eventually deteriorate and be lost forever, along with the

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<sup>96</sup> EAI's Online Resource Guide for Exhibiting, Collecting & Preserving Media Art is a comprehensive resource that addresses key issues on current practices and critical dialogue relating to exhibiting, collecting and preserving single-channel video, computer-based art and media installation. The guide features a range of essential information, including best practices; basic questions; agreements and reports; equipment and technical guidelines; interviews with artists, curators, educators, collectors, conservators, archivists, technicians and other specialists; case studies of significant projects and organizations; hard-to-find and out-of-print articles, conference papers and essays; a glossary, a guide to media formats, and related resources. The High-Definition Guide addendum to EAI's Online Resource Guide explains HD technology and its implications for curators, conservators, registrars, art historians and educators. The goal is not to mandate best practices, but to offer the foundation of a consistent vocabulary. Even more, the aim is to initiate dialogue across the field about the challenges and possibilities in this new chapter in the history of the moving image.

antiquated technology originally used to view it. The idea of collecting, preserving, and providing free, open source access and encouraging open collaboration is what is most important. It will continue to require art institutions and artists rethink their practice and find ways to embrace the internet as a platform rather than concern themselves with ways to restrict it.

EAI positions itself in a provocative position – it is a hybrid model that is linked to the early history of television video collectives, and which currently employs elements of the art institution and internet platforms. Their model seems to serve as a solution to the concerns surrounding loss of quality and authenticity on sites such as YouTube, Google Video, and even UbuWeb. Perhaps in forty years, with advances in technologies (3D viewing, or even virtual reality), EAI will be able to offer the viewer a spatial and physical experience similar to that of the large-scale screen reliant art currently dominating contemporary art museums. Perhaps EAI will pave the way for the elimination of art institutions as platforms for artists' video altogether.

Without EAI, UbuWeb, and other digital artists' video archives, most people would never have the opportunity to access the work that is contained there. Furthermore, without digitization, videotape and film works would eventually deteriorate and be lost forever, along with the antiquated technology originally used to view it. The idea of collecting, preserving, and providing free, open source access and encouraging open collaboration is what is most important. It will continue to require art institutions and artists rethink their practice and find ways to embrace the internet as a platform rather than concern themselves with ways to restrict it.

## **Epilogue**

As I move forward with the research I have conducted here I intend to use the typology I have constructed as a framework for future examination of distribution and access of artists' video. In particular, I intend to further my investigation of the internet as a platform and the questions of materiality and medium specificity that it raises. I also intend to flush out the differences between distribution, access, and their relationship to control. I envision that the spreadsheet I have created that breaks down examples of artists' video into my platforms as a continually growing list. I aim to eventually transform the spreadsheet into an online resource, perhaps that can become a collaborative site in which users can update and modify as they see fit. In addition, I envision curating an exhibition that would utilize all three platforms in some manner so that we can further investigate the way our viewing experiences are changed as the platforms change.

## APPENDIX A

### IMAGES



Fig. 1. Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, 1975, video still, (black and white, sound), 6:09 min.



Fig. 2. Paper Tiger Television Vlog, <http://blog.papertiger.org/>, accessed 1-23-11.

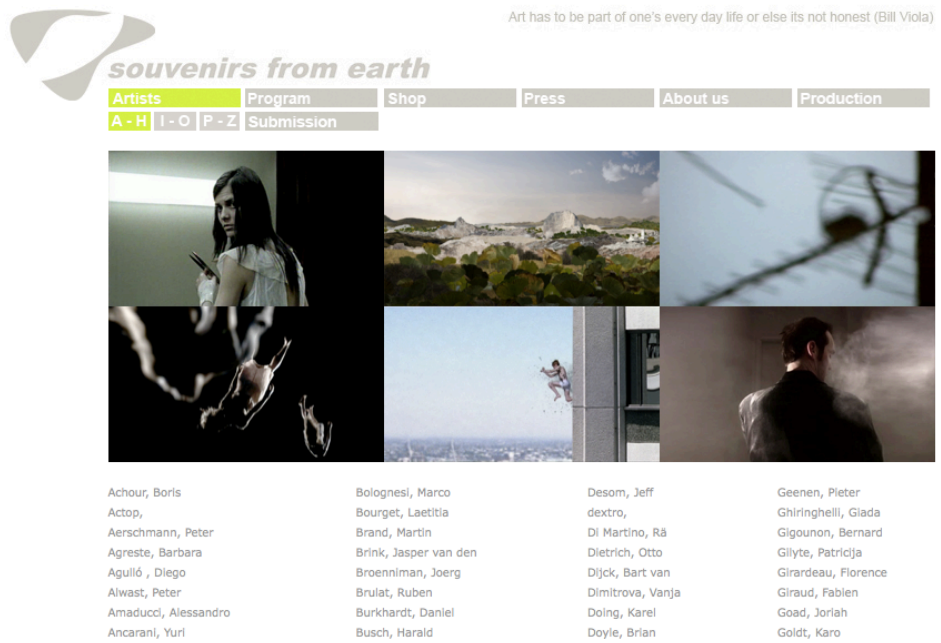


Fig. 3. Souvenirs From Earth, <http://www.souvenirsfromearth.tv/>, accessed 1-23-11.

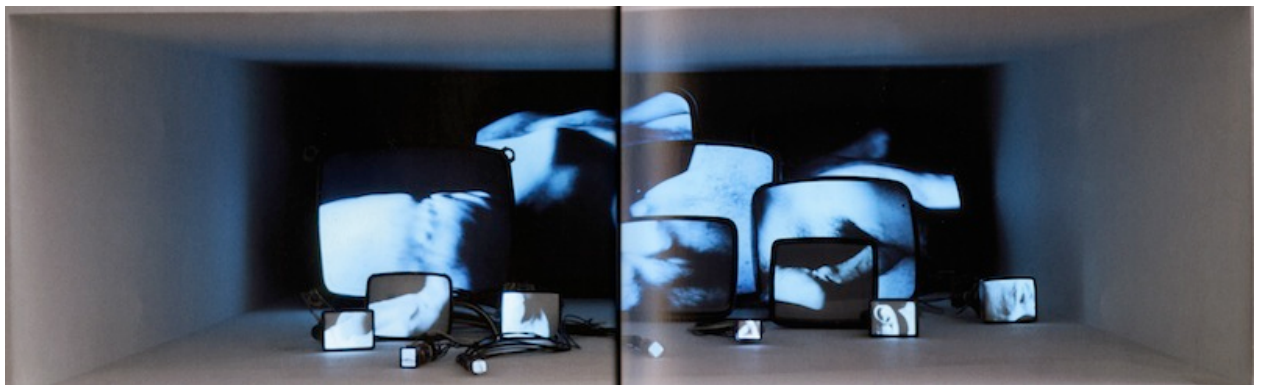


Fig. 4. Anthony McCall, *Between You and I*, 2006, Installation at Peer/The Round Chapel, London, 2006.



Fig. 5. Mary Lucier, Last Rites (Positano), 1995



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**Listening to Films, a New UbuWeb Podcast** A selection of ten films from the UbuWeb archive that are actually worth listening to (as well as seeing). Included here are excerpts from the following films: Vito Acconci's *Theme Song* (1973); René Clair's *Entracte* (1924) with a soundtrack by Erik Satie; Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn's *Can't Swallow It, Can't Spit It Out* (2006); Jordan Wolfson's *Con Leche* (2009); *People Like Us's* *Story Without End* (2005); Hermann Nitsch's *6 Tage Spiel - Das Orgeln Mysterien Theater, Day 3: Day of Dionysus* (1998); Sun Ra *A Joyful Noise* (1980); Richard Serra's *Boomerang* (1974); David Van Tieghem's *Ear to the Ground* (1979); Karl Holmqvist's *I'm With You in Rockland* (2005). Download the MP3 podcast directly [here](#). You can subscribe to our podcast here. UbuWeb's podcasts are produced by The Poetry Foundation.

**UbuWeb Top Ten for January 2011**  
Selected by **Paula Scher**

**New Additions:**

- ▶ Ornette Coleman *Interviewed* by Jacques Derrida (2007). [PDF]
- ▶ Takashi Murakami *Superflat Monogram* (for Louis Vuitton) (2003); *Inochi* (2004)
- ▶ Mircea Cantor *Deeparture* (2005)
- ▶ Peter Greenaway *Writing on Water* (205)
- ▶ Christopher Maclaine *The End* (1970)

**UbuWeb Top Ten December 2010**  
Selected by Warren Ellis

1. Ketjak: The Ramayana Monkey Chant
2. Orson Welles - The One Man Band (1955)
3. Sun Ra: The Berkeley Lectures, 1971
4. Tuvan Throat Singing
5. John Berger: *Ways Of Seeing*
6. Samuel Beckett: *Film*
7. Charlemagne Palestine - *Four Manifestations on Six Elements* (1974)
8. Della Derbyshire: *Dreams*

Fig. 6. UbuWeb screenshot, <http://www.ubuweb.com/>, accessed 1-23-11



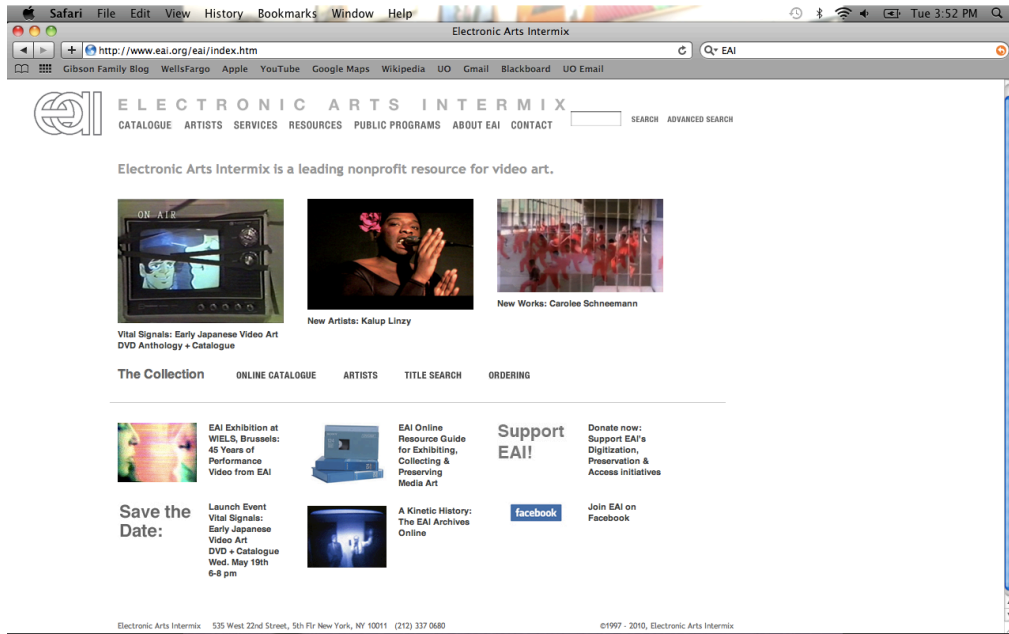


Fig. 7. Electronic Arts Intermix screenshot, <http://www.eai.org/index.htm>, accessed 5-11-11

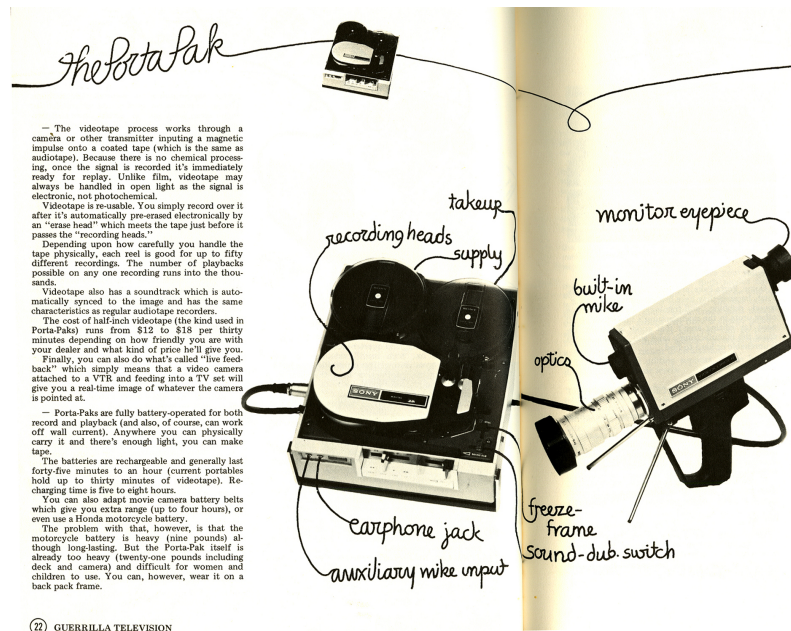


Fig. 8. Michael Shamberg and Raindance Corporation, "The Portapak" in Guerrilla Television, 1971



Fig. 9. Michael Shamberg and Raindance Corporation, Image from Guerrilla Television, 1971.

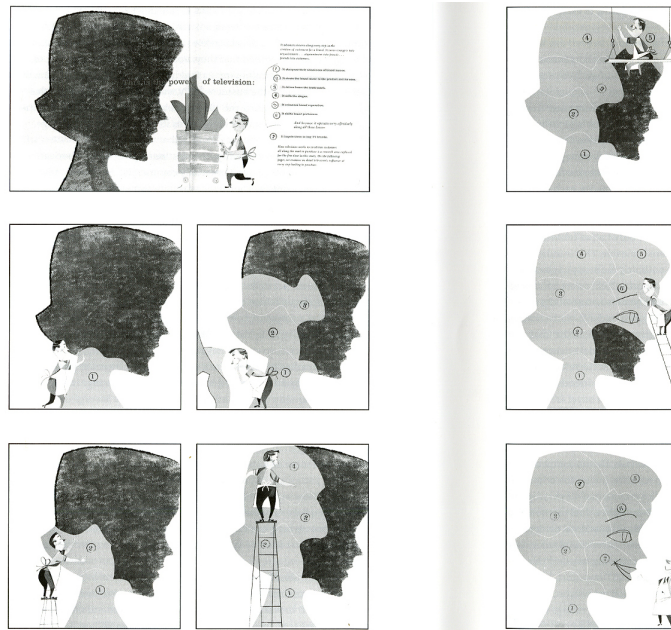


Fig. 10. Illustration from “How Television Changes Strangers into Customers,” an NBC study, 1955.

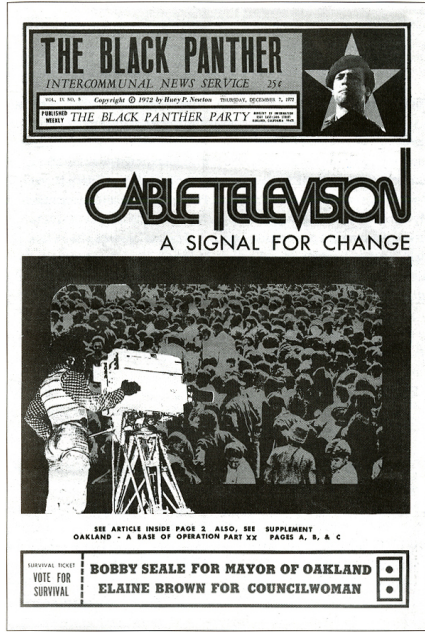


Fig. 11. “Cable Television: A Signal for Change,” cover image of The Black Panther, 1972.

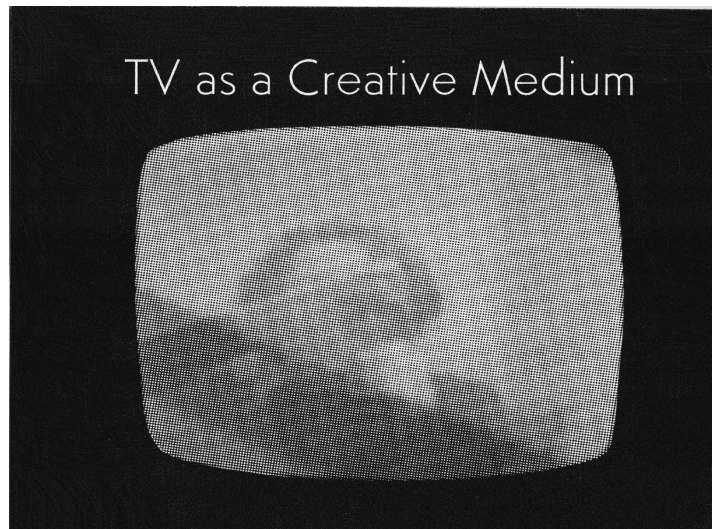


Fig. 12. Exhibition Brochure for TV as a Creative Medium exhibition, 1969, Howard Wise Gallery, NY.



Fig. 13. Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider, Wipe Cycle, 1968-1969, detail of video installation.

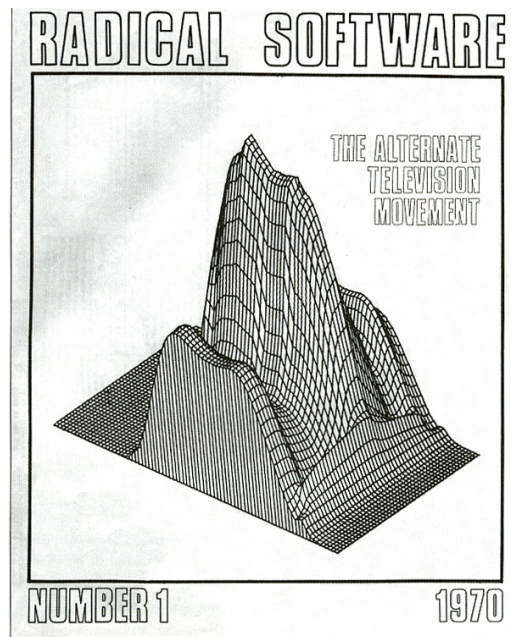


Fig. 14. Radical Software, number 1, front cover, 1970.

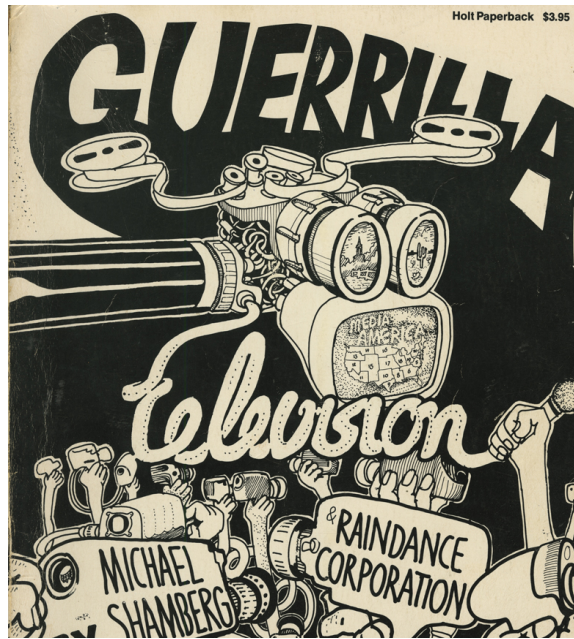


Fig. 15. Michael Shambert and Raindance Corporation, Front cover of Guerrilla Television, 1971.

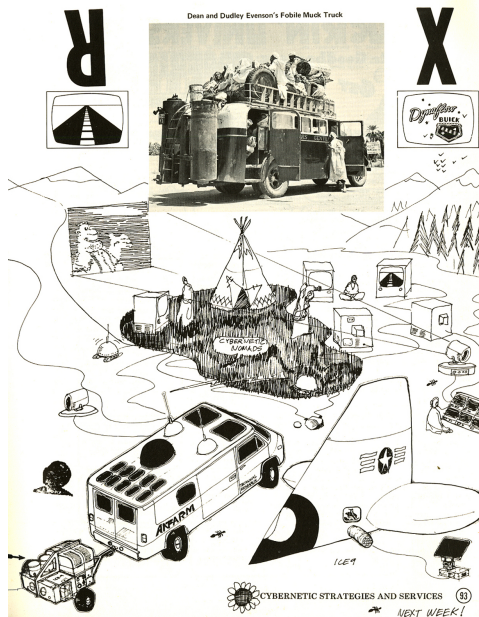


Fig. 16. Michael Shambert and Raindance Corporation, "Cybernetic Strategies and Services" in Guerrilla Television, 1971.

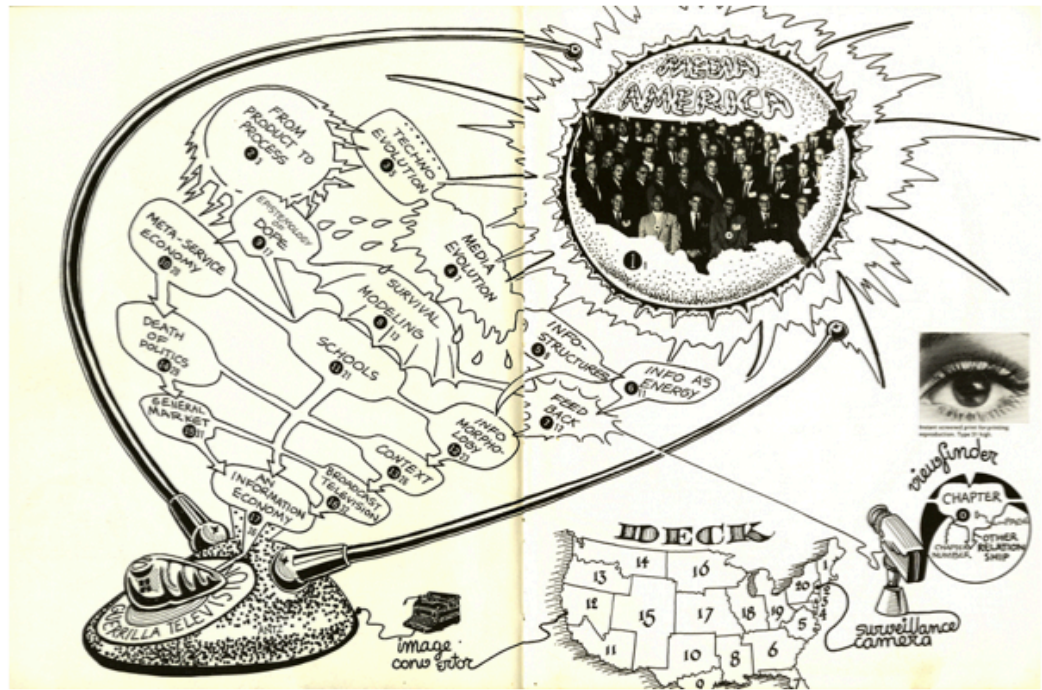


Fig. 17. Michael Shamberg and Raindance Corporation, Table of Contents, Guerrilla Television, 1971.



Fig. 18. TVTV, Four More Years, 1972, video still.



Fig. 19. TVTV, Four More Years, 1972, video still.



Fig. 20. Photograph of the Raindance Corporation video database in Guerrilla Television, 1971.



Fig. 21. Flo Kennedy reads the U.S. press on South Africa at the Whitney Museum's live Paper Tiger Show, 1985.

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Fig. 22 Paper Tiger Television Vlog, <http://blog.papertiger.org/>, accessed 10-15-2010.





Fig. 23. TVTV, Four More Years, 1972, installation view.

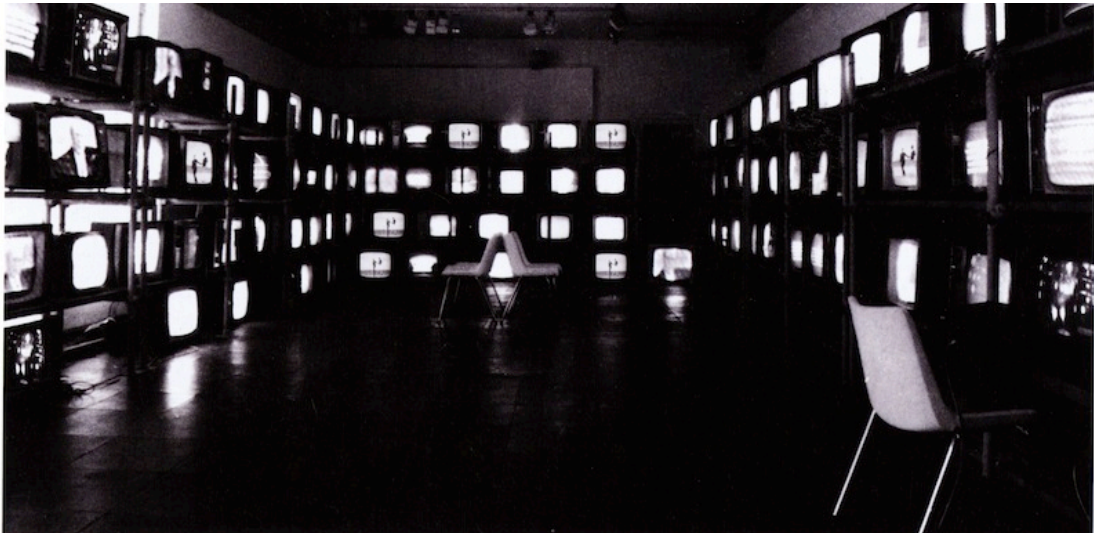


Fig. 24. *101 TV Sets*, installation 1972-1975  
First shown as 60 TV Sets at the exhibition *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain*, Gallery House, London 1972, and as 101 TV Sets at *The Video Show*, Serpentine Gallery, London 1975 (both made in collaboration with Tony Sinden).

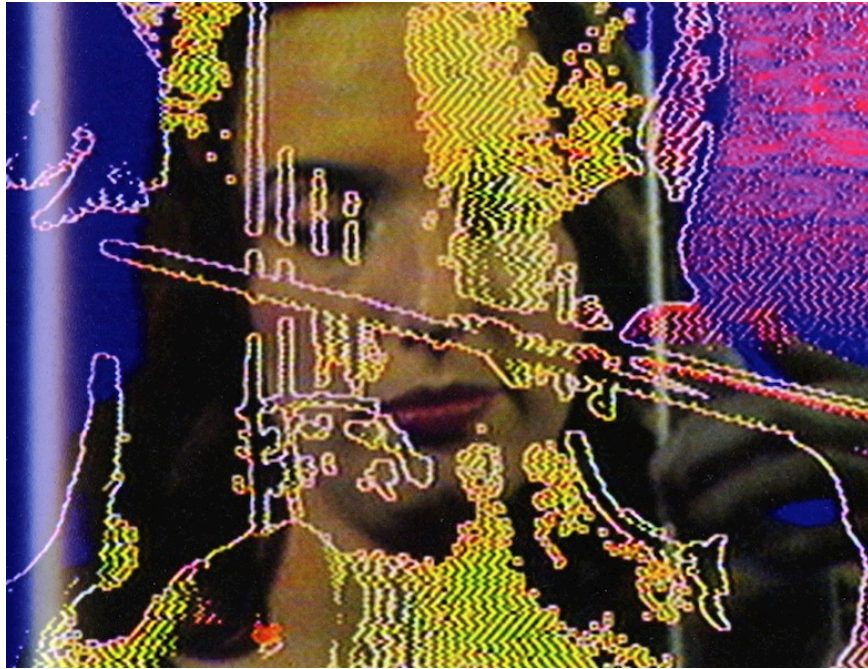


Fig. 25. Nam June Paik in collaboration with John J. Godfrey, *Global Grove*, 1973. Single-channel videotape, 28 minutes 30 seconds, color, sound. Director: Merrily Mossman. Narrator: Russell Connor. Film Footage: Jud Yalkut and Robert Breer. Produced by the TV Lab at WNET/Thirteen, New York.



Fig. 26. Nam June Paik, *TV Buddha*, 1974. Closed-circuit video installation with bronze sculpture, monitor, and video camera; black-and-white, silent; dimensions vary with installation.

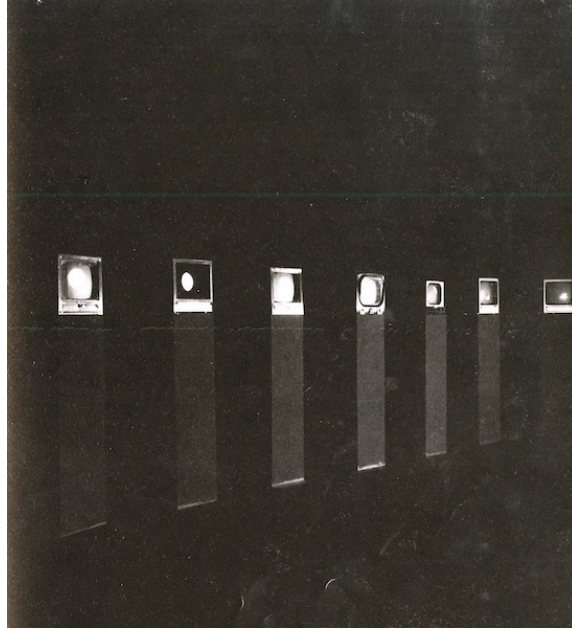


Fig. 27. Nam June Paik, *Moon is the Oldest TV*, 1965 (1967 version). Twelve manipulated color televisions; silent; dimensions vary with installation.



Fig. 28. Nam June Paik, *TV Garden*, 1974 (1982 version). Single-channel video installation with live plants and monitors; color, sound, dimensions variable.



Fig. 29. Nam June Paik, *Photosynthesis II*, 1993. Two-channel video sculpture with vintage television cabinets, eighteen monitors, and aluminum base; color, silent.



Fig. 30. Nam June Paik, *Magnet TV*, 1965. Television and magnet; black-and-white, silent; dimensions vary with installation.

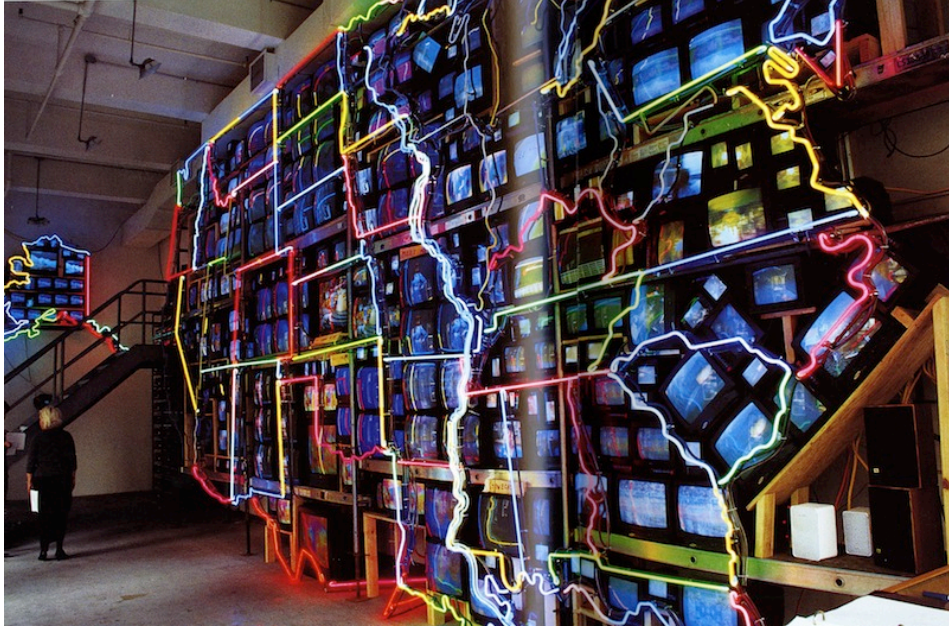


Fig. 31. Nam June Paik, *Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S.*, 1995. Forty-seven-channel closed-circuit video installation with 313 monitors, neon, and steel structure; color, sound.



Fig. 32. Robert Morris, Installation view of exhibition at Green Gallery, New York, December 1964-January 1965.



Fig. 33. Bruce Nauman, Live Taped Video Corridor, 1970.

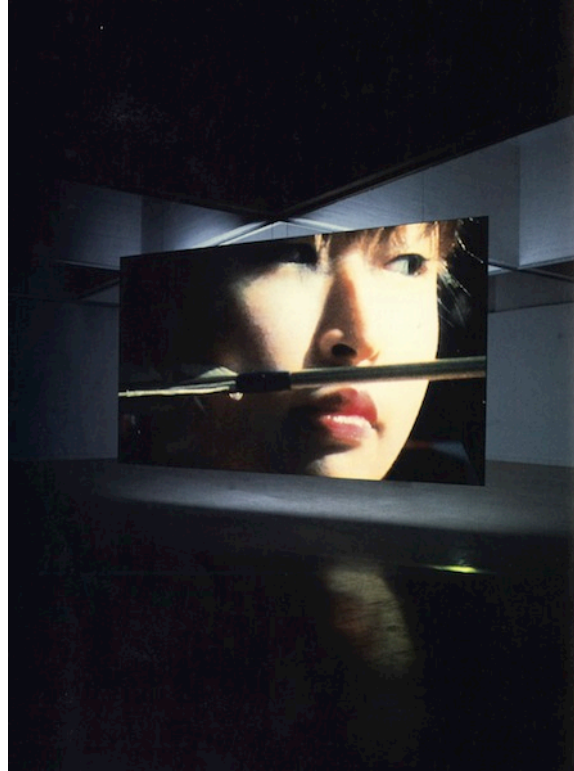


Fig. 34. Fiona Tan, Saint Sebastian, 2001, Two-Screen video installation, Villa Arson, Nice.

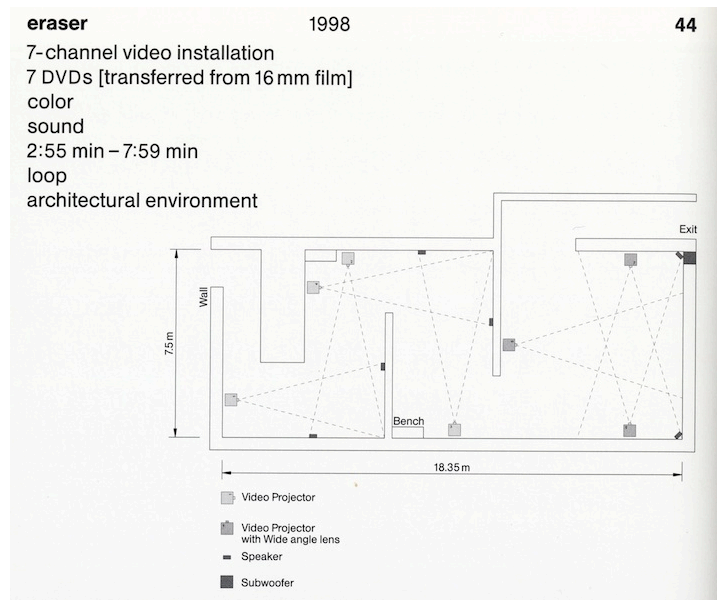


Fig. 35. Doug Aitken, Phantasmagoria, 1998, 7-channel video installation, plan diagram.

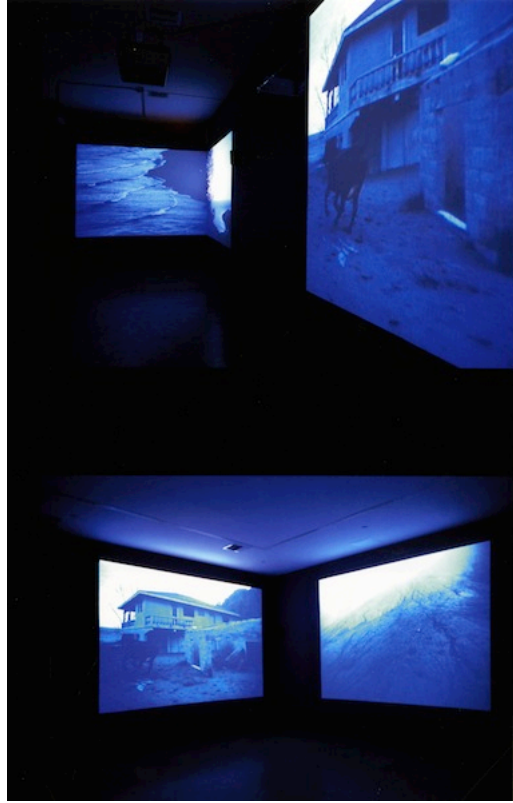


Fig. 36. Doug Aitken, *Phantasmagoria*, 1998, 7-channel video installation, installation view

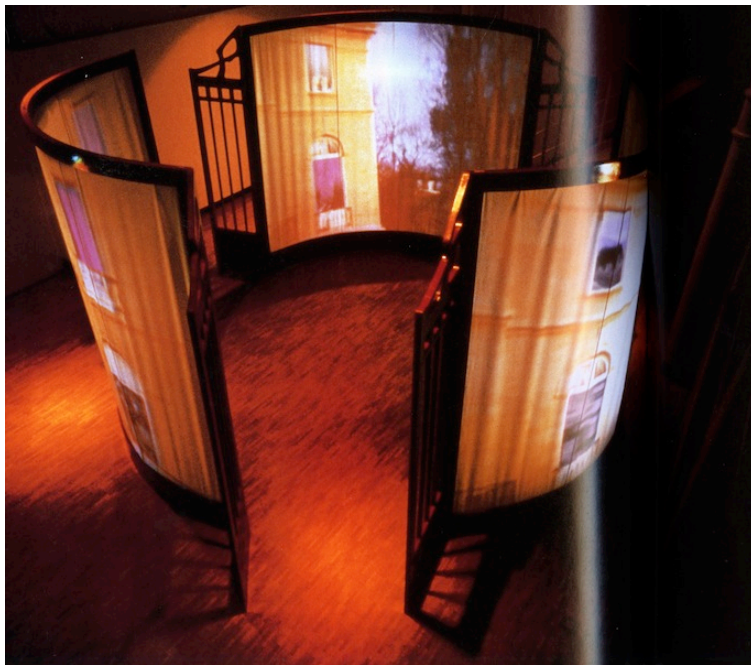


Fig. 37. Judith Barry, *The Work of the Forest*, 1992, Three-screen panorama, three projectors, video installation with sound.



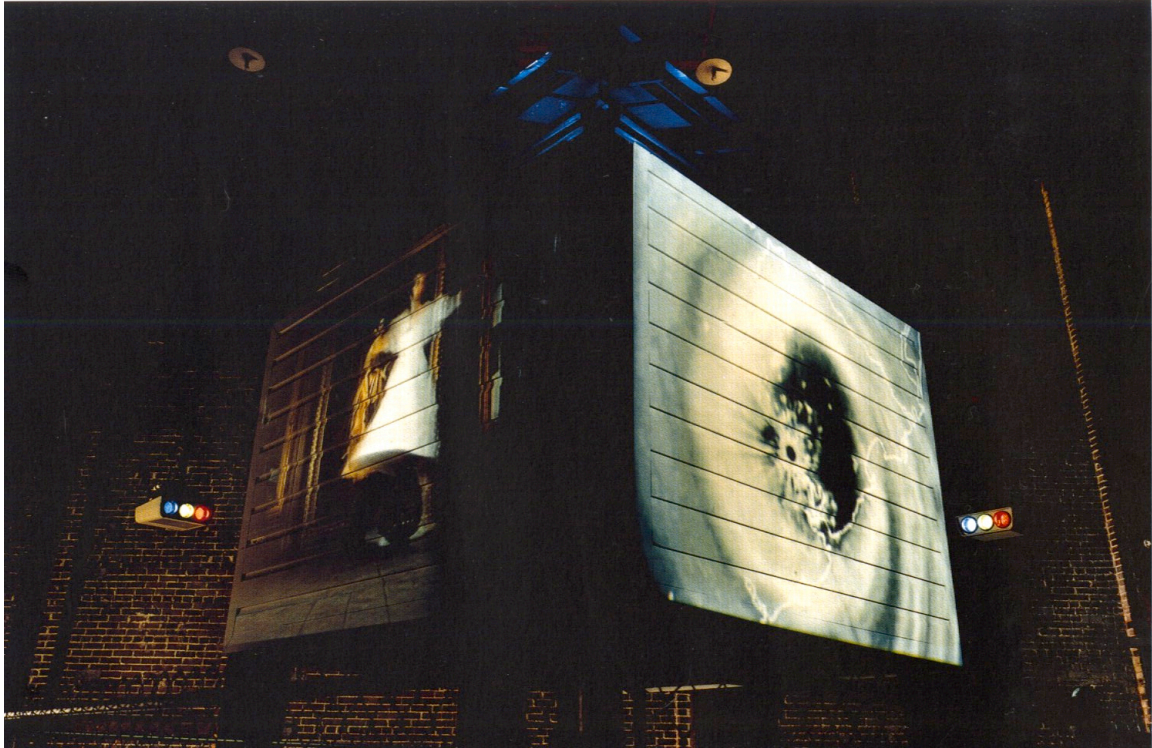


Fig. 38. Mary Lucier, *House by the Water*, 1997, Charleston, South Carolina.

## APPENDIX B

### A TYPOLOGY OF DISTRIBUTION PLATFORMS FOR ARTISTS' VIDEO

Platform:	Television	Institution	Internet	Hybrid
		Majority of indiv'l artists	Youtube	Electronic Arts Intermix
		E-flux video rental	<a href="http://www.animateprojects.org">www.animateprojects.org</a>	Paper Tiger Television (with the incorporation of their Vlog [n/d])
	Videofreex	Hbox (but travels)	Paper Tiger Television blog <a href="http://artsonfilm.wmin.ac.uk">artsonfilm.wmin.ac.uk</a>	
	Ant Farm		<a href="http://www.canyoncinema.com">www.canyoncinema.com</a>	
	Raindance Corporation		expandedcinemablogspot.com	
	TVTV		Vtape	
	Paper Tiger Television		<a href="http://www.mellart.com">www.mellart.com</a>	
	Nam June Paik (early work)		Video Data Bank	
	Souvenirs From Earth		UbuWeb	
			Google Art Project	
			<a href="http://www.tank.tv">www.tank.tv</a>	
			<a href="http://www.twitter.com/ubuweb">www.twitter.com/ubuweb</a>	
			Rhizome	
			The Teaching and Learning Cinema	
			The Future Histories of the Moving Image Research Network	
			the British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection	
			Rewind	
			Light Cone	
			RE:VOIR	
			LUX	
			V22	
			<a href="http://www.youtube.com/bffilms">www.youtube.com/bffilms</a>	
			<a href="http://www.youtube.com/nfb">www.youtube.com/nfb</a>	
			google video	

## APPENDIX C

### SELECT CHRONOLOGY OF FILM AND VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

- 1888 Development of the *Kinetograph* by Thomas Alva Edison and William Laurie Dickson
- 1889 Market launch of *celluloid roll film* [35 mm] by the Eastman Company
- 1895 Film screenings using the *Bioscope* projector by the Skladanowsky Brothers in Berlin
- 1923 Market launch of *16 mm film* by Eastman Kodak
- 1932 Market launch of *double 8 film* by Kodak
- 1935-40 Development of magnetic tape as a storage medium by AEG and IG Farben [BASF]
- 1950 Public presentation of the *three-tube projector* by RCA
- 1953 Introduction of the *Cinemascope* process by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox
- 1956 Development of the *video recorder VRX-1000* by the firm Ampex
- 1965 Market launch of *Super-8 Film* and *Single-8 Film*  
Market launch of the *Porta Pak* video camera and Sony CV-2400
- 1970 Presentation of *video cassette recording [VCR]* by Phillips
- 1971 Market launch of *U-Matic* ¾ inch video system by Sony
- 1976 Introduction of the *video home system [VHS]* by JVC
- 1978 Market launch of the *videodisc* by Phillips
- 1980 Presentation of a prototype *camcorder* [a video camera with a built-in video recorder] by Sony
- 1982 Market launch of the *compact disc [CD]*
- 1983 Market launch of the video format *Betacam* by Sony
- 1990 Market launch of the liquid crystal projector *LCD* [large screen beamer]
- 1994 Introduction of the *Digital Betacam* video format
- 1996 Introduction of the digital recording format *DV* [Digital Video] and *DVCAM* [digital video] by Sony
- 2000 Introduction of the *DLP* [digital light processor] projector
- 2003 Introduction of *high definition video* [HDV] as a new home video format in the United States and Japan
- 2005 Introduction of the *HDV* in Europe
- 2009 Transition to exclusively digital broadcasting of television programming

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