

Kevin Concannon, "Nam June Paik," *Art New England*, October 1984, p. 16.

Rose Art Museum/Brandeis University/
Waltham
Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston
Nam June Paik

In celebration of the long-standing association between pioneering video artist Nam June Paik and the Rose Art Museum, the museum is currently presenting *The Color of Time*, a miniretrospective of the Korean-born composer-artist's visual work. Featuring three new works, the exhibition offers a selection of "object-works," mostly modified television receivers (one replaces the picture tube with a stocked fish tank), installations of electronically altered television monitors, and the American premiere of *TV Egg Grows*, in which a camera image of an egg is fed into a line of monitors which enlarge the image progressively from screen to screen, finally turning it on its side on two double-stacked vertical TV sets.

As with the electronically altered monitor installations, this new piece deals with the issue of time in a manner which is uncommon to the medium. The "growth" of the egg is accomplished by adjusting the frame size of consecutive monitors, all of which display static images. This approach, at odds with the very nature of television (either live or videotape), at once provokes an understanding of video as a phenomenon inextricably linked to time (real or otherwise) yet apes the conventions of serial painting and its "frustrated" attempts to work within this dimension. Likewise, the monitor installations (which use no externally fed images) operate serially and statically. *Moon Is Oldest TV* is a series of twelve sets, each of which represents, via internal manipulation of the cathode ray tube, the moon at continuous phases of its cycle from crescent to full. Most telling of these, perhaps, is *TV Clock*, a series of monitors with static colored lines which rotate full cycle around the room.

At the packed opening of the exhibition, Charlotte Moorman recreated her historic performances of *TV Bra* and *TV Cello*; both objects are on display during the exhibition, and do quite well without Ms. Moorman, who seemed most interested in being photographed. (Then again, her vanity makes her the ideal performer for this piece, which multiplies electronically her distinctly eerie presence.)



Nam June Paik - *BSO and Beyond*

As for *BSO and Beyond*, the installation work commissioned for the ICA, *awesome* comes closest to a succinct description. Five video channels, playing over 180 television monitors arranged formally within the galleries to accent the architectural space of the building, constitute a dazzling spectacle of dancing images. The tapes range from their starting point of a Boston Symphony Orchestra concert (distorted and parodied at times) to *Tums* advertisements, Merce Cunningham performances, and a Thompson Twins concert. On one wall the already jumping, popping, and flashing images are further animated by the diagonal arrangement up the wall of the monitors, which appear to be feeding into the next wall, as if on some sort of cosmic conveyor belt. *BSO and Beyond* is nothing short of a video sculpture masterpiece.

For fans of video art, or even those who may still believe that *video-art* is just another oxymoron, these shows are a must-see.

Paik will also discuss his work at an ICA screening on October 12. WGBH, a long-time collaborator with Paik, will be showing his single-channel tapes throughout the month.

Kevin Concannon