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**NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE PRESENTS ASIAN EXCLUSIVE SURVEY ON
PIONEERING VIDEO ARTIST NAM JUNE PAIK**

*Global exhibition showcasing a riot of vision, colour and sound by trailblazing artist
culminates in Singapore*



Singapore, 2 December 2021 – National Gallery Singapore stages a major survey of Nam June Paik (1932 – 2006) in a landmark exhibition of the artist who predicted the future of communication and the Internet. The international tour of *Nam June Paik: The Future Is Now*, concludes in Singapore, its only Asian stop, after it kicked off at London’s Tate Modern in 2019, then toured Amsterdam’s Stedelijk Museum and San Francisco’s Museum of Modern Art.

The exhibition celebrates Paik’s five decades of visionary and playful practice through more than 180 works across all media. Through the early adoption of audio and visual images in his works, he manipulated technology and experimented with the concept of media. In a groundbreaking move, TV monitors were evolved into radical audio-visual sculptures, which no artist had done before. By spotlighting his multidisciplinary and collaborative career which incorporated art, music, performance, and technology, in conversation with philosophies and traditions from Eastern and Western cultures, this retrospective reveals Paik’s prescience and enduring inspiration.

One of the first truly global artists, Paik was born in Seoul, and practiced in Japan, Germany, and the United States. Always innovative, Paik had played a leading role in bridging the gap

between art and technology by transforming video into an artist's medium and exploring the potential of media-based art as early as the 1950s, earning him the recognition as "pioneer of video art". He coined the term "electronic superhighway" in 1974, when he predicted the future of communication and the Internet, where mass media would play a vital part to transform the way people connect and communicate – the very future the world is living in, right now.



Nam June Paik, *TV Garden*, 1974-7, reconstructed 2002. Live plants, cathode-ray tube televisions, and video, colour, sound. Collection of Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf. Installation view at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, May 8 - October 3, 2021. Photo: Adam Jacobs Photography.

During the nascent stage of globalisation and connectivity, he collaborated with various avant-garde composers like John Cage and featured cultural icons such as David Bowie alongside Ryuichi Sakamoto; he also deliberately strayed out of genres to present art, music, performance, and technology in ground-breaking ways. Paik imagined a future where electronics and nature coexist in *TV Garden* (1974-1977/2002), an installation comprising numerous CRT TV sets placed amidst lush foliage. Another iconic work is *Sistine Chapel* (1993), which envelops the audience in mesmerising visuals and booming audio to capture the sublime visual experience at the Vatican's famous chapel. And before the world warmed up to robots, Paik created *John Cage Robot II* (1995), a memorable robot figure adorned with piano hammers and keys, that recalls Cage's radical work, *4'33"* comprising three movements of silence.

Dr Eugene Tan, Director of National Gallery Singapore, said, "Beyond illuminating Paik's artistic legacy that impacted visual culture and generations of artists today, *Nam June Paik: The Future Is Now* also compels visitors to reflect on their own relationship with technology, as well as its effects and repercussions on society. There are novel and multisensory

experiences for everyone to participate in – numerous chances for all to nurture a deeper interest in art and appreciate its fascinating intersections with technology, nature, philosophy, even science. Through this exhibition, we hope to continue inspiring a broad range of audiences with art’s numerous exciting possibilities – which Paik helped to unravel throughout his career.”

Nam June Paik: The Future Is Now is proudly supported by Lead Partner Singtel, Strategic Partners Cultural Matching Fund and Singapore Tourism Board.

Mr Yuen Kuan Moon, Singtel Group Chief Executive Officer, said, “We are delighted to support the Nam June Paik exhibition at the Singtel Special Exhibition Gallery. Paik shares our vision of a world empowered and connected through technology and we believe this will resonate deeply with today’s generation that stands to benefit from even more technological innovation to come. His artwork on our relationship with technology draws parallels to how Singtel is harnessing the power of technology to reimagine the way we work, live and play, improving the lives of all generations and leaving no one behind. We invite visitors to immerse themselves in Paik’s unique world and get into his playful and inventive spirit through the artist’s first major retrospective in Southeast Asia.”

The exhibition is also supported by Terra Foundation for American Art and the U.S. Embassy Singapore, and Exhibition Patrons Pierre & Bolor Lorinet.

Journey the multisensory world of Nam June Paik: Exhibition highlights

Organised across 11 thematic sections, *Nam June Paik: The Future Is Now* offers an in-depth understanding of his reputation as an artistic forerunner.

The show also documents his creative collaborations with leading artists and art movements. For instance, visitors can learn more about Paik’s pivotal role in Fluxus, an international collective of radically experimental artists founded in the early 1960s, through a dedicated section. Paik’s experimental collaborations with key avant-garde artists Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Charlotte Moorman and Merce Cunningham also span multiple sections of the exhibition, giving a glimpse into the deep friendships and professional partnerships Paik made throughout his prolific career.



Nam June Paik, *TV Buddha*, 1974. Closed-circuit video installation with wooden sculpture, monitor and video camera, video, single channel, 4:3 format, live feed. Collection of Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. Installation view at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Courtesy of the Estate of Nam June Paik; © Estate of Nam June Paik. Photo: Adam Jacobs Photography

Electronic works such as *Random Access* (1963), an interactive artwork that lets visitors “play” by running the player head over the magnetic tape on the wall, enabling them to produce a mix of sounds that are unique with each composition; and *Three Camera Participation* (1969), an installation built with TVs and CCTV cameras transmitting overlapping coloured silhouettes of visitors interacting with it will further delight with the variety of Paik’s wide-ranging oeuvre. The Singapore-exclusive section “Paik on Asia”, on the other hand, surfaces Paik’s connection to East Asian philosophy, and features thought-provoking works such as *TV Buddha* (1974) – an 18th century wooden Buddha that appears to watch itself on a TV set, expressing the contrasts and parallels between technology and spirituality.



Nam June Paik, *Sistine Chapel*, 1993, reconstructed 2021. Video projectors, metal, wood, custom video switchers and four video channels, colour, sound. Collection of Ulsan Art Museum. Installation view at San Francisco of Modern Art. Courtesy of the Estate of Nam June Paik © Estate of Nam June Paik. Photo: Andria Lo.

Beyond the Singtel Special Exhibition Gallery, several of Paik's signature works will be found at the revamped Basement Concourse Level. Part of the Gallery's efforts to provide a more welcoming experience, the new Basement Concourse Level offers free and easy art experiences for all to enjoy and premieres with two of Paik's well-loved installations, *TV Garden* and *Sistine Chapel*.

Complementing the exhibition is a range of interdisciplinary programmes throughout its duration, including lectures, roundtables, reading groups, and video glitching workshops led by artist Lim Shengen that provide deeper insights into the exhibition, its broader context, and emerging modes of artmaking using technology.

The breakthrough show inspires thought with its impressive breadth and depth achieved through the collaborative efforts of all four museums, each one slightly adjusting their respective exhibitions with unique inputs. The Gallery, driven to deliver novel art experiences with a Southeast Asian perspective to its regional audiences, tailors the Singapore exhibition to have a sharper focus on Paik's background in Asia and feature additional loans from the artist's estate.

***Nam June Paik: The Future is Now* will run from 10 December 2021 to 27 March 2022 at the Singtel Special Exhibition Gallery and the Basement Concourse Level (The Spine Hall and Ngee Ann Kongsi Concourse Gallery, B1). More information can be found in the following annex:**

Annex A – Exhibition sections and artwork highlights

Media assets are accessible via this [link](#). For social media, kindly use #FutureIsNowSG and tag @nationalgallerysingapore. For more details about the exhibition, please visit: www.namjunepaik.sg.

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About National Gallery Singapore

National Gallery Singapore is a leading visual arts institution which oversees the world's largest public collection of Singapore and Southeast Asian modern art. Situated at the birthplace of modern Singapore, in the heart of the Civic District, the Gallery is housed in two national monuments - City Hall and former Supreme Court - that have been beautifully restored and transformed into this exciting 64,000 square metre venue. Reflecting Singapore's unique heritage and geographical location, the Gallery aims to be a progressive museum that creates dialogues between the art of Singapore, Southeast Asia and the world to foster and inspire a creative and inclusive society. This is reflected in our collaborative research, education, long-term and special exhibitions, and innovative programming. The Gallery also works with international museums such as Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Orsay, Tate Britain, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (MOMAT) and National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA), to jointly present Southeast Asian art in the global context, positioning Singapore as a key node in the global visual arts scene.

In 2020, the Gallery was the only museum in Southeast Asia that received a ranking in The Art Newspaper's annual global survey of attendance at art museums, taking 20th place. It was the first museum in Asia to receive the Children in Museums Award by the European Museum Academy and Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums in 2018. The Gallery also won the awards for "Best Theme Attraction" at TTG Travel Awards 2017, "Best Attraction Experience", "Breakthrough Contribution to Tourism" and "Best Customer Service (Attractions)" at the prestigious Singapore Tourism Awards in 2016 for its role in adding to the vibrancy of Singapore's tourism landscape.

Annex A: Exhibition sections and highlights

Section 1 – Introducing Paik

The exhibition begins with objects from Paik's life and studio, as well as artworks that point to key themes such as Buddhism and methods within his practice. From these early works, we can observe the roots of his interests in the usefulness of play, the reframing of performance, the possibilities of transcending cultural differences, and the future of technologies.

Section 2 – Exposition of Music – Electronic Television

Paik's first solo exhibition, *Exposition of Music-Electronic Television*, was held at Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, West Germany, in March 1963. Critically, it also marked Paik's first foray into the electronic medium. The section explores progressive approaches to performance and improvisation by Paik and avant-garde composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage, and their introduction of elements of chance into the process of composition, which had a huge influence on Paik's work.

Section 3 – Symphonies & Festivals

Paik's interrogations spanned every form of music from classical to the latest avant-garde developments. This section features how he scrutinised every aspect of the process, be it composition, production, or the engagement of spectators.

Section 4 – Experiments: Robots

Paik wanted to make technology appear closer to humanity, rather than the product of complex and hidden scientific processes. Most of such innovations were first developed for military purposes. With the help of electronic engineer Shuya Abe, Paik created *Robot K-456*, envisioning a kind of technology that was approachable and less intimidating, and could be reclaimed for peace. Paik often made robots out of working TVs, using their screens to present portraits of friends and historical figures.

Section 5 – Experiments: The Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer

Paik's visionary projects often required access to expensive technology. He would contact companies with high-tech laboratories, asking them to collaborate on "electronic art experiments." In 1969, as artist-in-residence at the Boston TV station WGBH-TV, Paik built an analogue "video synthesizer" in collaboration with Shuya Abe. Paik had been testing various techniques for manipulating images in real time. The synthesizer could apply effects such as distorting, colourising and superimposing to video images, using several sources.

Section 6 – Experiments: Closed Circuits & Waves

Paik first began to experiment with TV sets and other audio-visual equipment in the early 1960s. He distorted the images on screen with magnets, and later created live video feedback systems using CCTV cameras. He recognised early the power of TV and video technologies to reach a vast audience and to be more democratic tools for cultural output. He also realised that equipment for recording and broadcasting images would eventually become widely available, turning every consumer into a potential producer.

Section 7 – Fluxus

Formed in the early 1960s, Fluxus was an international collective of radically experimental artists. Its founder, New York-based artist George Maciunas, took notice of Paik's performances and immediately recruited him as a member. Paik built a wide network through his frequent travels between Europe, the USA and Japan, and played an important role in drawing together artists, composers and performers from across the world. The ideas of Fluxus suited the undefined, playful and boundary-crossing character of Paik's work.

Section 8 – Collaborations: Charlotte Moorman

Paik's collaboration with cellist Charlotte Moorman was among his most enduring. They worked together for almost 30 years, sharing a common interest in avant-garde music and staging energetic live performances. Both artists believed that sexuality was unjustly excluded from classical music, and many of their performances involved Moorman playing the cello in various stages of undress.

Section 9 – Transmissions


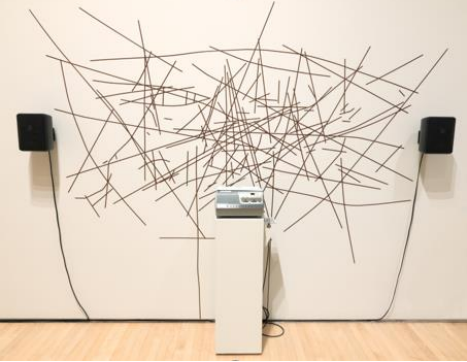
Paik saw telecommunication technologies and satellite transmission as the perfect tool to distribute art and enable live collaborations across geographical boundaries. The section features some of the earliest examples of video art that Paik made for broadcast TV.

Section 10 – Collaborations: Joseph Beuys, John Cage, and Merce Cunningham

Paik employed collaboration as a method of artmaking throughout his artistic career. This led to his many deep friendships and lasting working relationships with figures now regarded as artistic forerunners in contemporary art history such as Charlotte Moorman, Joseph Beuys, John Cage, and Merce Cunningham.

Section 11 – Paik on Asia

Paik's relationship with Asia is evident in his personal heritage, his artworks, and his written thoughts. His desire to challenge familiar and perceived dichotomies surfaced throughout his artistic career, as he looked for similarities and questioned differences in topics ranging from the relationship of humanity with nature, the scientific and the spiritual, or between Eastern and Western cultures. The exhibition closes with selected works and archival materials that shine a light on Paik's interactions and critical examinations that drew on his East Asian roots.

Artwork Highlights	Description
 <p data-bbox="240 674 740 768">Nam June Paik, <i>One Candle</i> (also known as Candle TV), 2004, Cathode ray tube television casing with additions in permanent oil marker, acrylic paint and live candle. Lent by the Estate of Nam June Paik</p>	<p data-bbox="764 279 1117 342"><i>One Candle</i> (2004) (also known as Candle TV)</p> <p data-bbox="764 380 1422 611">Buddhism teaches the value of meditating on 'nothing-ness' as a way of reaching a state of enlightenment. Staring at a flickering candle flame – a light source like the moon and the TV screen – is a traditional meditation technique, and Paik uses a shared cultural trope that speaks to people beyond geographic boundaries.</p>
 <p data-bbox="240 1205 740 1520">Nam June Paik, <i>Random Access</i>, 1963, reconstructed 2000. Strips of audiotape, open reel audio deck, extended playback head and speakers. Collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Purchased with funds contributed by the International Director's Council and Executive Committee Members: Ann Ames, Edythe Broad, Henry Buhl, Elaine Turner Cooper, Dimitris Daskalopoulos, Harry David, Gail May Engelberg, Ronnie Heyman, Dakis Joannou, Cindy Johnson, Barbara Lane, Linda Macklowe, Peter Norton, Willem Peppler, Denise Rich, Simonetta Seragnoli, David Teiger, Ginny Williams, and Elliot K. Wolk, 2001</p>	<p data-bbox="764 810 1422 842"><i>Random Access</i> [2000 version] (1963/2000)</p> <p data-bbox="764 873 1422 1136">This interactive exhibition copy recreates the audiotape collage on the wall of the basement of Galerie Parnass. Participants can 'play' the work by running the player head over the magnetic tape on the wall. The sounds picked up by the head may be distorted or difficult to hear. There is no 'right way' of playing <i>Random Access</i>: each mix of sounds produced is a new and unique composition.</p>



Charlotte Moorman performing Nam June Paik's TV bra for living sculpture at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1976 as part of Kaldor Public Art Project 'Moorman + Paik'. National Art Archive | Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Charlotte Moorman performing Nam June Paik's TV Bra for Living Sculpture at the Art Gallery of New South Wales

Paik and Moorman introduced technology into the world of music through TV Cello. In Paik's video *Global Groove*, Moorman stated that *TV Cello* was "the first advance in the cello since 1600." As Moorman played the instrument, the television screens show three different displays – a live broadcast of the performance, a video montage of other cellists, and a live feed of a television channel.



Nam June Paik. *John Cage Robot II*, 1995, vintage wood television cabinets, color television Receivers, DVD players, multi-channel video, piano keys, piano hammers, piano wire, acrylic paint, basket, books, wood mushrooms, and chessmen. 274.3 x 203.2 x 78.7 cm. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, 2011.17. Photo: Edward C. Robison III.

John Cage Robot II (1995)

Paik's John Cage Robot II drew inspiration from Cage's 4'33", a revolutionary composition comprising three movements of silence. Adorned with piano hammers and keys, the robot figure represents a musician seated away from the piano, leaving the audience in a deafening silence. Paik's sculpture reflects Cage's belief that silence have the same potential as the melody in a piece of music.



Nam June Paik and John Godfrey. *Global Groove*, 1973. Video, colour, sound. 28 min, 30 sec. Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

Global Groove (1973)

A key work in Paik's career and the history of video as an art form, *Global Groove* subverted the language of television and expressed Paik's outlook on global communications in a world shaped by mass media. It is typical of Paik's editing style: a hectic collage of sounds and images featuring several video sources overlapped and distorted by a tool called 'video synthesizer'.



Nam June Paik, *Egg Grows*, 1984-1989, eight video monitors, video camera, and egg. 91.44 x 274.32 x 548.64 cm. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Accessions Committee Fund: gift of Elaine McKeon, Byron R. Meyer, Madeleine Haas Russell, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Swanson; © Estate of Nam June Paik; photo: Katherine Du Tiel.

***Egg Grows* (1984–1989)**

Egg Grows studies the concept of the real and the represented as expressed through a live feed. A surveillance camera picks up the scene of the real egg before it transmits the image to eight monitors increasing in size, demonstrating the video camera's ability to replicate its subject and leading viewers to reflect technology's influence on the human experience.



Nam June Paik, *TV Buddha*, 1974. Closed-circuit video installation with wooden sculpture, monitor and video camera, video, single channel, 4:3 format, live feed. Collection of Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. Installation view at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Courtesy of the Estate of Nam June Paik; © Estate of Nam June Paik. Photo: Adam Jacobs Photography

***TV Buddha* (1974)**

One of Paik's most iconic works, *TV Buddha* expresses the contrasts and parallels between East and West, and between technology and spirituality in a very simple and direct way. A CCTV camera films a Buddha statue, which Paik bought from an antique store. Its static, silent image appears live on a round TV set, inspired by popular sci-fi imagery. Here, Buddha is both the viewer and the viewed image, mirroring our own experience as mass media consumers.



Nam June Paik, *Sistine Chapel*, 1993, reconstructed 2021. Video projectors, metal, wood, custom video switchers and four video channels, colour, sound. Collection of Ulsan Art Museum. Installation view at San Francisco of Modern Art. Courtesy of the Estate of Nam June Paik © Estate of Nam June Paik. Photo: Andria Lo.

***Sistine Chapel* (1993/2021)**

The centrepiece of Paik's Venice Biennale exhibition, *Sistine Chapel* consists of fast-paced and overlapping images that completely cover the gallery walls and ceilings. With its electronic visuals and booming audio, interspersed with periods of silence, this sprawling installation compares, and brings into contemporary critique, the sublime visual experience similarly found in the Vatican.



Nam June Paik, *TV Garden*, 1974-7, reconstructed 2002. Live plants, cathode-ray tube televisions, and video, colour, sound. Collection of Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf. Installation view at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, May 8 - October 3, 2021. Photo: Adam Jacobs Photography.

***TV Garden* (1974-1977)**

Paik imagined a future landscape where technology is an integral part of the natural world. Placing TV sets alongside live plants, he creates an environment in which the seemingly distinct realms of electronics and nature coexist.

His approach follows a Buddhist philosophy that everything is interdependent. It also suggests that technology is not in conflict with nature but an extension of the human realm.



Nam June Paik, *Zen for TV*, 1963, reconstructed 1990. Manipulated cathode-ray tube television. Gift of the Hakuta family, Collection of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Gift of the Hakuta family © Estate of Nam June Paik, photo: Katherine Du Tiel

***Zen for TV* (1963/1990)**

Early electronics were fragile and often malfunctioned. This worked well with Paik's interest in chance and random operations: he understood that one could not "fix" electronic images into static artworks but had to work with their unstable nature and their glitches. When a TV set, damaged during transport, ended up displaying only a horizontal line, Paik simply turned it on its side and retitled it *Zen for TV*. He returned to this work throughout his career via a series of reconstructions in which he deliberately engineered the line glitch.



Nam June Paik, *Wrap Around The World*, 1988, video, single channel, 4:3 format, colour, sound, 43 min 33 sec, Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

***Wrap Around The World* (1988)**

Paik's final satellite broadcast *Wrap Around The World* connected Korea (shortly before the opening of the Olympic Games in Seoul), the United States, Brazil, Austria, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Italy, China, the UK and even the USSR. As the Eastern Bloc was on the brink of radical political change, Paik breached the Iron Curtain with images of David Bowie chatting in Japanese with musician Ryuichi Sakamoto, Brazilian carnival dancers and Paik himself performing in traditional Korean clothes. There are also appearances by dancer Merce Cunningham, a game of elephant soccer in Thailand, and a car race in Ireland.