Foreword

Colophon

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NAM JUNE PAIK ART CENTER
백남준아트센터

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> I decided to title all my computer pieces in French, to protest the lack of common sense in the computer. Verlaine wrote: "It rains in my heart, as it rains in the city." I say: "It rains in my computer, as it rains in my heart"="Il pleut dans mon computer" will be my first piece. It is the mix of real rain and simulated rain in the computer. My second piece will be called "La computer sentimentale," and the third piece, "Aimez-vous FORTRAN-programming."[1]

1
Jud Yalkut, "Art and Technology of Nam June Paik," *Arts Magazine*, 1968.

The phrases which Nam June Paik said he would use as the titles of his works using computers came from the poems or novels by great French writers. His appropriation of literary words represents his idea of human artists' role when digital technology meets art. Paik thought that the most prominent strength of the computer is "randomness" and "repetition," in other words, total indeterminism and total determinism. These are the two significant axes in the arts, and he believed that the success of using the computer in the arts would depend on how effectively one could command randomness and repetition. For the arts are ultimately a matter of human intervention, no matter how easy it is to demonstrate them in mathematics. Paik was an artist who used coding languages as early as in 1966. Today, the computer learns almost all human sensations through coding in a predatory way and that humans and machines share senses as if they constitute the same body. This makes us wonder how Paik's thoughts and works on computing would have developed.

Open Codes, which looks into the world built and run by digital codes, was intended to make us newly sense not only the relationship between technology and the arts but also how these technologies have become the neurons and metabolism of our life, through the works of contemporary artists. The exhibition was first organized by the ZKM | Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, and then held in collaborations with new local artists and under new local themes in many institutions around the world. The artists invited by the ZKM reconsider the data as the basis in dealing with the relationship between the computer and art in light of production, consumption, and labor and thereby, provide a historical reflection upon the present phenomenon of the code. The Korean artists invited by Nam June Paik Art Center (NJP Art Center) focus on the act of coding and twist the operation of big data, algorithms, and artificial intelligence to expose the inside of the code. I would like to offer my deep appreciation to the artists Insook Bae, Bleeptrack, BNAG, SeungBum Kim, Bernd Lintermann, Martin Nadal & César Escudero Andaluz, MeeNa Park, Sebastian Schmieg & Silvio Lorusso, Seoul Express, Cornelia Sollfrank, Unmake Lab, Peter Weibel & Christian Lölkes.

One of the participating artists and curators, Peter Weibel, says that the museum

could become a thinking space and assembly through this exhibition. This is in sympathy with NJP Art Center's long quest: "Can the museum be the commons?" To sound out whether or not the commons can spread like a network through *Open Codes*, NJP Art Center chose "Networked Commons" as the exhibition's subtitle. In the exhibition space, visitors can play ping-pong, play cards, reproduce popular songs with their steps, or try coding without knowing computer languages. They can also read and discuss books, or watch videos using the QR code while lounging on the sofa. We hope that the visitors connected to this open exhibition and field of self-directed learning will become another node to be connected to a network when they go out of the museum.

Open Codes. Networked Commons is the result of various collaborations. I highly appreciate the director of the ZKM Peter Weibel and head of curatorial department Philipp Ziegler who planned out together this collaborative exhibition, and the two curators Lívia Nolasco-Rózsás and Christian Lölkes who visited Korea to install works, despite the 14 days of self-quarantine. I am also grateful to Melanie Bono, director of cultural programs East Asia, Goethe-Institut Korea, and all the other staff involved who consistently helped NJP Art Center, for supporting the German curators' visit to Korea and the exhibition's opening event. As the ZKM curators did, two of NJP Art Center's curators came together for the exhibition. As an organizational change occurred in the middle, curator Kim Yoonseo came to assume all the responsibilities alone. Organizing an exhibition in collaboration with foreign institutions requires as much amount of communication and coordination as it is pleasing. I am so proud that Kim performed all these duties so admirably despite the significant change. I would also thank Jung Yunhoe, though we could not end up working together on this project, and assistant Do Haerin who swept here and there across the exhibition space, helping and supporting the curators. I am obliged to the artist and researcher Seungbum Kim who summed up the Korean *Genealogy of Digital Code* and machine critic Oh Youngjin who cast new questions through his article that read the bits and bytes of the exhibition. And my final thanks go to rooming, Vitra, XIOM, and Wooran Foundation which provided furniture and equipment to make the exhibition comfortable and the eleven publishing companies which willingly presented the related books.

It does not seem that what Paik meant by the "common sense" is at issue only regarding the relationship with machines. We know that the common sense is not given by itself when one wants to be connected to someone and become "each other." It requires the effort to learn and tune oneself to each other's code to do something together as if cracking the code that Paik hid in his *Key to the Highway (Rosetta Stone)*.