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# *How to Awaken a Sleeping Boy?: Expanded Education for the Paperless Society*

## Colophon

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# ***How to Awaken a Sleeping Boy?: Expanded Education for the Paperless Society***

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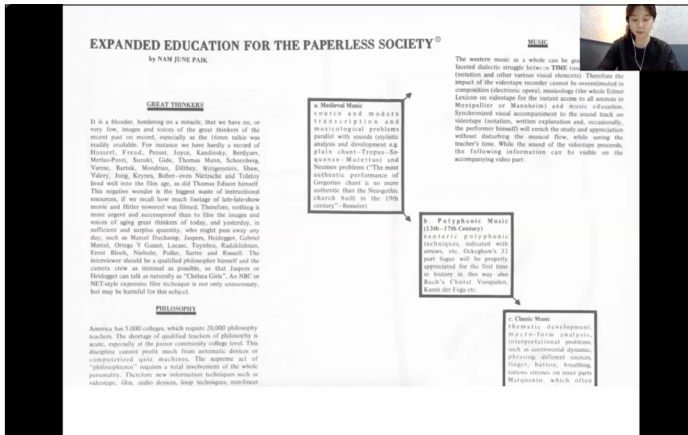
Hyun Seewon

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## Issue of Paper

The title of Nam June Paik's text from 1968 contains the phrase "paperless society." The 'paperlessness' accelerates the movement, storage, and use of material information. Although 'paperlessness' has various effects, the reflection on paper is still necessary for the existence of an "artist who manipulates the mind." Based on "Expanded Education for the Paperless Society" written by Paik in February 1968, as a result of research sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, we will explore the core agenda of an 'information center' that Paik envisioned. It will be summarized as Paik's philosophical agenda, the issue of time, the relationship between change and permanence surrounding records, and the issue of sovereignty (right to education) of information users as collaborators.

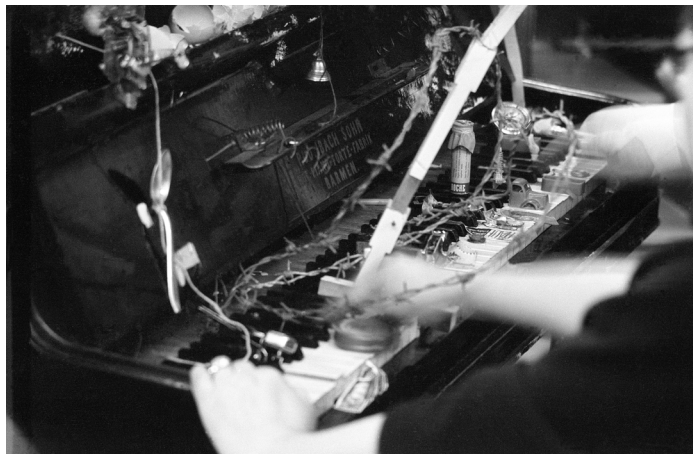
This paper is an attempt to over-read and interpret the text of Paik and owes to Paik's writings and the planning of Curator Lee Soo Young. Here, I want to estimate the polyphonic characteristics of the educational and sensory system of Paik's Video Study at Nam June Paik Art Center. The title of this paper, "How to Awaken a Sleeping Boy," is a slightly modified version of the sentence written by Paik. In the latter part of the text, Paik writes, "How to prevent a slum kid, who would knock down even a teacher, from breaking an expensive teaching console?" and "How to awaken a sleeping girl?" I tried slightly twisting such a perspective by turning a girl into a boy. This is just an attempt to add a little "change" as a researcher as it has been 50 years since Paik's text was published.



Screen capture of  
NJP Art Center  
symposium lecture  
(2021.11.17-27)

Nam June Paik, who made it clear in his first solo exhibition *Exposition of Music – Electronic Television* (1963) that the exhibition was about “the issue of time,” dealt with time as a subject of ‘shortening’ and ‘breakthrough’ in the text from 1968. For example, the artist wrote, with the establishment of an information center as an active archive, “the average time lapse of ten to thirty years now existing between the completion of a piece and the publication of its score or record could be shortened to only two or three days.” Paik advocates for the experience service of knowledge that transcends constraints of time, and calls for the change of humankind as a whole, metaphorically mentioned as ‘live teachers and students,’ input/output units surrounding the storage and transmission of new information and the establishment of an institution. His text is important in that it argues for an ‘illustration’ on the history of human knowledge, the real-time transmission of information, and a catalog of educational materials while reinforcing the sovereignty of the student community introduced by technological changes.





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*Klavier Intégral,  
Exposition of Music –  
Electronic Television  
(1963), Photo: Manfred  
Montwé*

What is interesting is the fact that his proposal written in 1968 has been transmitted to future generations through a material called paper. Paik, who has become a ‘live teacher’ defined as “a combination of knowledge and output unit” in the text, presents a supertemporal encounter between community and individuals and connection between humans and data through images, auditory features, and a list that can be endlessly supplemented. Paik’s text advocates a change in the form of education, but goes beyond the dichotomous distinctions between life and death, a testimony of the present and description of the past, and the East and the West. In the end, “Expanded Education for the Paperless Society” calls for an ontological reflection on the scope of time, space, people, and the world that will be encountered due to the format and system of new educational information.

### Issue of ‘Shortening of Time’ and ‘Art Archives’

The Rockefeller Foundation supported research on television and film from 1965, and Paik was among the list of people who conducted such research. Paik worked as a researcher at Bell Labs in

the United States from 1966 to 1967. In 1967, he researched at Stony Brook University for three months, sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. The study, based on empirical data, was concluded with Paik's vision, imagination, and suggestion. The resulting text was typed and printed on paper, and the title of the article was "Expanded Education for the Paperless Society." Why 'Paper,' and Why 'Paperless'? I will try to follow the 'highway' of thoughts created by Paik based on three perspectives within his text. The expression "highway" also appears in another research paper by Paik, sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1974.

Paik's critical agenda in the text is the 'shortening of time.' He talks about the time several times in this text. For example, the second paragraph, which proposes the 'establishment of an information center to store electronic music,' reads as follows: "The average time lapse of ten to thirty years now existing between the completion of a piece and the publication of its score or record could be shortened to only two or three days." He makes a pioneering suggestion of the establishment of an information center because it can reduce time.

Paik's special attachment to time was also expressed in his first solo exhibition, *Exposition of Music – Electronic Television*, which was held for two hours in the evening for a week from March 10, 1963.<sup>1</sup> In a letter to the director of Parnas Gallery, he made it clear that the exhibition was going to be about 'the issue of time.'<sup>2</sup> In his writings in 1967 and 1968, Paik deals with time as an issue of 'shortening' that goes beyond the issues of variability, audience, and operation of the exhibition. The effect of time reduction surpasses the effectiveness of simply shortening or saving time, and relates to the 'present' in multiple dimensions. The shortening of time and the shortened time record the present. It expands the methods of meeting the present that has become the past again in the future



through records. Using numerous results derived from the past, future generations can freely juxtapose, arrange, and re-edit them. The past, whether alive or dead, can become a ‘fragment’ to be reprocessed.

As a person who enjoys music, Paik has a certain memory. In this experience, the shortening or flow of time is subdivided into the music sheet on paper, music played in a store, and sound captured on NHK radio. He left the evidence as a crucial memory of the time, when he was 59 years old. In 1947, at the age of 15, he persuaded the owner of a record shop in Seoul for over two years to listen to a record. It took Paik, who only had the music sheet on paper, two years of waiting to hear the actual sound. He wrote:

**“In 1947, the only Schönberg’s work I had was the music sheet for *Sonata No. 31* for piano. Just as Richard Leakey described something resembling Lucy’s bones as the starting point of human origins, I imagined the whole world, my ‘teacher,’ based on a single song. I persuaded the owner of a record shop called ‘Swan’ in Seoul for over two years and was able to listen to Schönberg’s album *Transfigured Night, Op. 6*, which was the only album of Schönberg introduced in Korea at the time. But I noticed right away that it was only a Wagnerian pun.”<sup>3</sup>**

There is a time-lapse between when he was convincing the owner of the record shop ‘Swan’ for two years and when he ‘noticed right away.’ Waiting to listen to the music, experiencing the music, and awakening all require time. Paik’s text from 1968 stems from his love for music, professional research, and specific experiences. The issue of shortening of time was a subject of technology and specific media, and a subject of research and practice for Paik.



Paik described the accidental moment he encountered Schönberg's music on NHK radio as follows.

**“One boring afternoon in 1951, I was listening to NHK radio in Kamakura (Japan). A soprano singer with a sensual voice was wailing with great dissonance. I murmured that it had to be Schönberg's song. It was *Pierrot in the Moonlight*. Even now, I feel as if I can ‘see’ the radio box made of brown plastic right before my eyes.”<sup>4</sup>**

What Paik remembers is not only *Pierrot in the Moonlight*, but also the physical and technological medium – the radio box. The fact that he intercepted a moment in the music that was being transmitted on the radio was due to the accidentality that Paik had always emphasized, which happened in a scattered reality. Instead of waiting for such a chance, he came up with a way for a voluntary choice. That was why he insisted on the establishment of an information center that had a collection of albums.

There is one important thing to note regarding time. The issue of time reduction, which was the starting point and agenda for Paik's discussion, is linked to the issue of art performance and record. In the text from 1968, Paik states that he was “opposed to the video recording of action music.” Indeed, Paik was against the real-time recording of his musical performances. He wrote, “Videotape will be a convenient way to supplement the brief instructions of composers.” However, as Michael Nyman notes in “Nam June Paik, Composer,” “Karlheinz Stockhausen and György Ligeti suggested that Paik's performance be filmed to be used by other actors, but Paik refused this proposal for ‘philosophical reasons.’”<sup>5</sup>

In relation to the recording of art, Paik took a great interest not only in the performers of art (actors, executioners),

but also in the main agents of shooting. During his first solo exhibition in 1963, Paik's attitude toward the photographic record of *Exposition of Music* was closer to acknowledging the sovereignty of photographers and the main agents of photographing. The photoshoot of Paik's first solo exhibition was the result of the artistic practice he planned himself. He invited two young photographers who were well aware of Fluxus art practice at the time to take pictures of his works, the artist himself, the space, and the audience. Paik actively discussed with them the direction of the photoshoot while making the most of each photographer's characteristics.

The four photographers who actively intervened as the main agents of the creation of meanings and Paik as a coordinator of the meanings documented *Exposition of Music*, thereby leaving a perspective that makes the exhibition present. According to the photographers who shot the exhibition, Paik showed 'composed, flexible and playful' attitude.<sup>6</sup> This means that Paik recognized the exhibited scenes as the 'changing present' rather than a fixed state of his works, and believed that the present could be interpreted from various perspectives.

In the record on the photoshoot process of Manfred Montwé, a representative figure who has left numerous exhibition photos, Montwé talks about the unstable and shaky moments when he was capturing (fixing) the monitor screen. The shortening of time is directly related to the 'attitude that prioritizes the audience's freedom over the authority of the artwork' as Ed Kiender commented on Paik's first exhibition.

Ed Kiender, an artist who was interacting with Paik, viewed that the audience's freedom was prioritized over the authority of the works in the exhibition. He highly praised "the creation of an open exhibition where visitors can freely touch and participate in the works, instead of asserting the authority of the

works while holding on to the aura of an artist as the ‘main hero’ of the exhibition.” The audience in the exhibition hall moved around artworks, touching and practicing them.<sup>7</sup>

## **Archive as a Means to Overcome the Issue of Time**

What should be made and how, with the shortened time then? Paik argues for the creation of an archive. Citing John Cage, he even suggested the creation of an ‘avant-garde think tank.’ This pioneering suggestion appeared in the text from 1968, also aligns with the issue of archives that are prevalent today, centers of all sorts, an open-source culture enhanced by the coronavirus, and the commons.

Paik proposed recording of musical performances in his text. But that didn’t necessarily refer to the performances themselves. Namely, Paik was greatly regretful that “voices or images” of many philosophers and great men and women of the East and the West had not been left. Voices and images were important for him. Paik argued that auditory voices and moving images should have been recorded and that they should be produced and stored to be provided as a ‘service’ even from now.

The key here is that Paik was not specifically trying to apply the effect of time reduction to artistic performances, especially to the documentation of artistic records such as videotaping of music. He wanted to make the shortening of time into a system as a social infrastructure. The archive presented by Paik as a means to overcome the issue of time goes beyond the realm of art, coinciding with a series of social trends that reinforced the importance of information and required a new social order amid the Cold War. The archive that Paik proposed in his text is compared to the CIA in terms of its “activity.” On the other hand,

it is talked about as social infrastructure such as a highway. Paik's prediction was developed into a plan in another article written in 1974 sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. The detailed proposal of the 1974 report was a network, and it was also linked to the state and policy.

**“Nam June Paik first used the term ‘electronic superhighway’ in a report titled “Media Planning for the Post-Industrial Society—The 21st Century is now only 26 years away” commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation’s Art Program in 1974. In this report, Nam June Paik envisioned a ‘broadband communication network’ created through the expansion and integration of existing technologies such as video call, fax, and interactive television. In the report, he stated that the network will enable all functions and services, including “shopping, bibliography, survey, health care, biocommunication and data transfer from office to office.”<sup>8</sup>**

Here, the intention was to insert a simultaneous, multiple, and one-time thing that would occur before the eyes or at a distant place into a “permanent network” (Robert Filliou) for transmission.

It can be compared with the ‘permanent network’ by the writer Robert Filliou, who was a member of Fluxus, and the bookstore, The Smiling Cedilla, which Fluxus writer and former chemist George Brecht and Robert Filliou operated in Nice, France for just over three years. The two artists described this bookstore as an “abstract library” and a “dynamic network of international information.”<sup>9</sup> While The Smiling Cedilla was maintained as a concrete place for three years, what Paik is discussing in his 1968 text is a system and a new order that can be applied anywhere rather

than a specific physical place. On the other hand, Paik's proposal is a continuous and concrete state, a simple one that can be executed and applied immediately. Just as he writes that it requires 'only one copy machine and one librarian' in the text. In addition, it is a practical manual, such as to show students' faces in real-time in the university library.

Let's go back to the tenth paragraph of 'Paperless Society' in 1968. You can see Paik's argument for the establishment of an archive.

**"If rough comparisons are allowed in the age of information, university libraries are as active as the CIA."**

**"Therefore, in addition to the films of Jaspers and Heidegger mentioned above, I propose an archive as follows."**

What does the archive that Paik talks about contain? Also, where did Paik get the hint for the archive? He did not mention specific arts and writers within the art system or contemporary arts currently being performed as the object of archiving, and this is significant.

In the text from 1968, the paragraph that refers to Chinese poetry of the past is linked with the classic theme of 'the history of reproduction'—Artists like Constable or Courbet tried to capture clouds or waves. Therefore, it is necessary to mention the reality and records, as well as how the records surpass our lives. It is a matter of representation as a way of describing and accumulating what is before our eyes.

**[sic] A famous art work with various comments by many classical art historians, such as Vassari Stendal, Goethe, Winkelman, Ruskin, Pater, Woelflin, Dvorzak, Worringer,**

Berenson, Weidle, Sedlmayr. Some literary works which are concretely related to certain places or scenery can be recorded on videotape. In that way students can experience a literary stroll with the guide of genial description, learning a foreign language, e.g. Goethe's *Italianische Reise*, Gide's *Congo*, Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, Sartre's Bourge as a model city of *Nausee*, and Proust's *French Scenes*, Bashe's *Okuno Hosomichi* etc.<sup>10</sup>

“For instance, in the case of, say Chartres, or the Stony Garden of Kyoto, the gradually but constantly changing hues of colored windows or stone according to the time of day and the weather on slides might give more information about the artistic content than a hasty trip with a noisy guide.”<sup>11</sup>

A stony garden in Kyoto or video recording of literary works depicting a landscape as suggested by Paik refers to a file ‘conversion’ between art media. Here, a discussion of contemporary painting by David Joselit, who wrote “Marking, Scoring, Storing, and Speculating (On time),” can be used as a reference. He explains the relationship between painting and time, unlike visual media that explicitly stores images, such as photography and videos. He linked painting with the act of marking, and wrote that it had to do with the spectator’s ‘distraction’ and act of ‘accumulation.’

**This dynamic—of massive ACCUMULATION amid endemic DISTRACTION—suggests why painting has acquired new forms and new relevance today. For, as Jonathan Crary has influentially argued, the great pioneers of modern painting like Paul Cézanne had already linked the**

marking of time with distracting spectatorship; indeed, in Cézanne's art the accumulation of marks is dialectically linked to distraction.<sup>12</sup>

## Students as Sovereigns

Paik's text is also important because it argues for an 'illustration' on the history of human knowledge, the live transmission and a catalog of educational materials, while reinforcing the sovereignty of the student community that arose from technological changes. Paik thought about 'education' as a social infrastructure. In the late 1960s, globally, education was nothing more than a property right limited to a few. Entering a university meant entering the academic system. Entering a university thereby entering the curriculum and information network of the university was more than just being able to use the library and cafeteria. Rather, it was about becoming a 'member' of the university community with a sense of belonging.

In the mid-section of his text from 1968, Paik suggests the following events to draw students' attention in the era of electronization in the 1960s. Paik discusses the limitations of music education in elementary schools and large-scale lectures using microphones. The change that Paik pays attention to is the data transition of a 'live teacher.' He wrote that the live teacher played a role of a de-facto real body in developing bibliographic culture through paper, which was copied and mass-produced.

**"The live teacher is a combination of scholar (that is: data storage and data processing unit) and personality (that is: a highly versatile input-output unit)"**

**"70% of the computer business and profit was made in**



**the hardware section, (···) in the past decade. But in the coming decade, this proportion will be reversed, and 70% of the profit will be made in the so-called peripheral unit (input-output unit), (···)”**

It is not clear whether Paik wanted to change were students or teachers through recording of performances and knowledge archives. He always valued “learning,” that is, awakening. He once discussed the significance of looking at objects from a distance, saying, “let’s look at everything as if we were watching a baseball game.” Paik, who described the suffering experienced on a train while evacuating during the Korean War in 1950 as ‘it is a great awakening. Let us look at everything as if we were watching a baseball game,’ valued ‘learning,’ and that was his way of seeing the world.

The education that Paik suggests is not just about the various methods of learning made possible thanks to the online system. First, he calls for a new establishment of the sovereignty and subjectivity of students and teachers. In the text, he states, “An artist is a manipulator of the mind.” It could be a benign interpretation that both students and teachers should become artists, or it may be the other way around. Second, he calls for a change in the curriculum. If he had discussed ‘format’ previously, the issue of ‘content’ appears in the last part as there is an imbalance between the East and West.

Paik reveals his identity at the end of the text. The author, who was writing about the transformation of music education sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, discusses his journey from Hong Kong to several countries as a person from a small and weak state. He talks about the disparity between Eastern and Western knowledge, stating that Reischauer (Edwin Oldfather Reischauer)<sup>13</sup> advocated for curriculum reform. For instance, if a

museum of dinosaurs is to be built, an American museum would deal with the entire history of dinosaurs, while a Korean museum would only cover dinosaurs on the Korean Peninsula. Information today is still English-centric. The amount of physical information generated when searching for the same world is still significantly different. Data governs the way people think.

Paik noted that new information-processing techniques, high-speed recording devices, and videotapes, etc., for the total conveyance of great philosophers' messages will be necessary "for the preparation of a post-McLuhan, non-linear, possibly more iconographic and totally involved 22nd century philosophy." This argument is half-right, half-wrong. More than anything, the descendants of Paik are too segmented to examine the 'great philosophers' messages,' and they live a life that is much more synchronized with the online environment. They spend their time in accordance with the information generated in their lives, the digital speed, and the daily updates of applications. These days, everyone has become an 'amateur philosopher' or a 'secular performer' as much as the great ancient philosopher in the sense that they make a real-time exchange of information from the past. The real reality (life), full of impurities and artifacts, has exceeded 'philosophy' and encountered a new world faster.

'Paik's Video Study' is like "looking into Nam June Paik's mind," as Curator Lee Soo Young revealed in the preface of the symposium for the "Video Digital Commons." What kind of future will Paik's archive in the Video Study envision after deciphering Paik's mind? The lists to be shared through the 'Digital Study' will have a 'dual identity' as the original source of Paik's works and materials that spark new learning. Those who search for information and update themselves in a digital environment always have a dual identity as 'a student and teacher.' Paradoxically, what is more

needed in this situation is a 'school' as a data box that handles both senses and information at the same time. Digital disclosure of the numerous materials Paik had in his mind can offer both a 'motivation' and 'stimulus' to the next generation of visitors. As the refreshing friction that arises as the word 'video' is combined with 'study' where books are stored, 'video study' seems to indicate that a school, which is still a physical place, needs to be transformed. Just as we wait for the 'bell to announce a break' to break the boring class time, we always need new apparatus for 'reminding' and 'awakening.'

- 1 Recent research on Nam June Paik's time includes Hee-young Kim, "Nam June Paik's Electronic TV: Resistance against Controlled Time," *Journal of Contemporary Art Studies* 23, 2019, Heon-yi Jeong, "Nam June Paik's Zen time," *Korean Bulletin of Art History*, 2007, etc.
- 2 Nam June Paik, "A Letter to Rolf Jährling, Wuppertal, December 22, 1962," Translated by Wang-jun Lim et al., *Nam June Paik: From Horse to Christo*, edited by Edith Decker and Irmelin Revere, NJP Art Center, 2010.
- 3 Nam June Paik, "Pensee at 59," *Nam June Paik · Video Time · Video Space*, NJP Art Center Total Media Research Institute, *The Return of Nam June Paik* (Yongin: Nam June Paik Art Center, 2010), as cited in p. 365.
- 4 *ibid.*
- 5 Michael Nyman, "Nam June Paik, Composer," *Nam June Paik* (Edited by John Hanhart), 1982, p. 79-89; NJP Art Center Total Media Research Institute, *The Return of Nam June Paik* (Yongin: Nam June Paik Art Center, 2010), as cited in p. 211.
- 6 Peter Brötzmann, "Interview I," *Nam June Paik Art Center Interviews: Peter Brötzmann, Takehisa Kosugi* (Yongin: Nam June Paik Art Center, 2014), pp. 18-19.
- 7 Hyun Seewon, "The Status of Photographic Records Surrounding Nam June Paik's 'Exposition of Music-Electronic Television,'" *Journal of Korean Modern & Contemporary Art History* 41, 2021, pp. 185-216.
- 8 Maeve Connolly, "Electronic Superhighway: Nam June Paik and the Infrastructure of Circulation," *NJP Reader #6 Reanimating Nam June Paik* (Yongin: Nam June Paik Art Center, 2016), p. 131.
- 9 Hyun Seewon, "Fluxkit as the Readymade or the Fluxus Edition," *Journal of History of Modern Art* 55, 2021, pp. 165-188.
- 10 Nam June Paik, "Expend Education for the Paperless Society," 1968.
- 11 *ibid.*, 1968.
- 12 David Joselit, "Marking, Scoring, Storing, and Speculating (On Time)," *Embracing the Parallel Lands* (Seoul: Hyunsil Book, 2019).
- 13 Reischauer is Professor of Japanese History and East Asian Studies at Harvard University who laid the foundation for the Korean Studies at Harvard. For details, please refer to Se-jin Chang, "E. Reischauer, East Asia and the Technology of 'Power/Knowledge'-Area Studies in Postwar America and the Disposition of Korean Studies," *Sanghur Hakbo: The Journal of Korean Modern Literature* 36, 2012, pp. 87-140.