International Symposium Gift of Nam June Paik 14



2022. 7. 29, 11:00 - 17:00



Gift of Nam June Paik 14 Tunes of Comradeship: Paik and Mekas



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**Date** 11:00 – 17:00, July 29 (Fri), 2022

Venue Random Access Hall (1F), Nam June Paik Art Center

Contributors Vytautas Landsbergis, Lee Nara, Kim Eunhee, Inesa Brašiškė, Lee Hanbum, GRAYCODE, jiiiiin

> Curator Kim Yoonseo

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Hosted and Organized by Nam June Paik Art Center, Lithuanian Culture Institute, DEU Cinema & Transmedia Institute

### SCREENING

- 11:00-12:30 Jonas Mekas, *Reminiscences* of a Journey to Lithuania (1972, 82mins) Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, *Cinema Metaphysique No. 2, 3, 4* (1967-72, 8:39mins)
- 12:30-13:00 Break

### SYMPOSIUM

- 13:00-13:20 What It Means To Recollect Kim Seong Eun (director, Nam June Paik Art Center)
- 13:20-13:30 Remembering Paik and Mekas Vytautas Landsbergis (politician, musicologist) \*pre-recorded video
- 13:30-14:00 Jonas Mekas's Performing Citations Lee Nara (senior researcher, DEU Cinema & Transmedia Institute)
- 14:00-14:30 Between Scintillation in Accidental Moments and Interference-Impulse Kim Eunhee (curator)

### 14:30-14:40 Break 14:40-15:10 Moving Images, Moving Bodies Inesa Brašiškė (art historian. curator) 15:10-15:40 Spector, Contingency and Cinema: Nam June Paik's Zen for Film and Avant-garde Lee Hanbum (art critic) \*prerecorded video 15:40-16:20 **Roundtable** 16:20-16:30 Break

#### PERFORMANCE

- 16:30-17:00 e^ix, it's necessary (2019, ZKM | Hertz-Lab commission) poetic canon (2022, NJP Art Center commission) GRAYCODE, jiiiiin (electronic music composers, sound-media artists)
  - This event was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2020S1A5B8102066).
  - Simultaneous interpretation of Korean-English is provided.



### SCREENING

### 11:00-12:22 Jonas Mekas, Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania (1972, 82mins)

"The film consists of three parts. The first part is made up of footage I shot with my first Bolex, during my first years in America, mostly from 1950-1953. It shows me and my brother Adolfas. how we looked in those days; miscellaneous footage of immigrants in Brooklyn, picnicking, dancing, singing; the streets of Williamsburg. The second part was shot in August 1971, in Lithuania. Almost all of the footage comes from Semeniskiai. the village I was born in. You see the old house. my mother (born 1887), all the brothers, goofing, celebrating our homecoming. You don't really see how Lithuania is today: you see it only through the memories of a Displaced Person back home for the first time in twenty-five years. The third part begins with a parenthesis in Elmshorn, a suburb of Hamburg, where we spent a year in a forced labor camp during the war. After the parenthesis closes. we are in Vienna where I see some of my best friends - Peter Kubelka, Hermann Nitsch, Annette Michelson, Ken Jacobs, The film ends with the burning of the Vienna fruit market, August, 1971."

"Sound: For most of the film I speak of myself as a "displaced person," about my relationship to Home, Memory, Culture, Roots, Childhood. There are also a few Lithuanian songs sung by all the Mekas brothers." (Jonas Mekas)

### 12:22-12:30 Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut, Cinema Metaphysique No. 2, 3, 4 (1967-72, 8:39mins)

This work was an outcome of collaboration between Nam June Paik and filmmaker Jud Yalkut for "video-film" series. Cinema Metaphysique came in five parts, and Parts Two, Three and Four seem to be like one film. At that time, if you shot film to go on television, you had to keep within a safe area, because everything outside of that area would be cut off when you put it on video. Paik and Yalkut thought it would be fun to shoot a series of films so that if you put them on television they would disappear because they were not in the middle. Part Two has an image only on the left side of the screen, where Paik did a performance with his hand, gradually going down. Part Three has a slit on the bottom, where you can just see the eyes of Paik and Takehisa Kosugi, the Fluxus composer and violinist. They looked straight ahead or sideways, and squinted or closed their eyes, so that they almost looked at each other. Part Four is the only one that would actually appear on television because it would be split just in the middle. The split screen juxtaposes the faces of Paik and Kosugi, smoking a cigar and eating a slice of Levy's rye bread, and also a Native American man who showed up in the brand's popular advertisements featuring models of different ethnicities those days.

Sound: Takehisa Kosugi, *Mono Dharma No. 8, The Way of the Eiheiji*.

Cinéma Metaphysique: No. 2, 3 and 4, 1967-72





### SYMPOSIUM

### 13:00-13:20 What It Means To Recollect Kim Seong Eun (director, Nam June Paik Art Center)

The symposium of Gift of Nam June Paik 14 leads me to think about marking an anniversary of a great artist. How about even commemorating the two artists who were comrades and companions at the culmination of artistic experiments in the mid-20th century? This brings me to the interview with Jonas Mekas conducted by Nam June Paik Art Center in 2008. As part of scholarly programs, NJP Art Center has carried out and published interviews with those who engaged with Paik in one way or another. such as artists, curators, technicians, friends and collectors. It is an oral history project shedding new light on Paik's art and life through spoken tales, not written materials. Among the interviews is the one with Mekas taking place for an hour at Mekas's home in Brooklyn. New York on 10 December 2008, which gives a glimpse of the art scenes they cultivated together in the 1960s and 70s.

In the interview, Mekas remembered that Paik's Zen for Film, the first work of Fluxfilm Anthology, ran for twenty minutes in Mekas's Cinematheque in 1964, and the duration was Paik's idea to have "enough to go, to test audience's patience." The Cinematheque was a meeting place where artists, musicians and filmmakers were hanging around. As Mekas recalled it, Paik knew many avant-garde filmmakers, and especially he respected Stan Brakhage who also liked Paik very much, his TV work that distorted imagery, praising it as "the right use of television." Those who considered themselves underground filmmakers did not really care about video art, though. They were not opposed to it, but most of them just thought it was not serious. Paik thus did independently of anything that was done in the American avant-garde filmmakers.

From 1973. Paik performed the Fluxus Sonata series in Mekas's Anthology Film Archives, and in the NJP Art Center's collection is a photograph of Fluxus Sonata No. 4 in 1975. In the performance. Paik in front of several turntables put an LP on one of them and listened carefully; and then he moved to another turntable to activate another LP With the two vinyl records rotating simultaneously, he oscillated between the phonographs, interrupting and spinning them with his hands. This performance is much like today's DJing. The performance's video documentation gives this information, but sometimes a photograph that contains only one moment could generate a more interesting story than a video recorded in every detail. The interview with Mekas was also similar to taking out a still image of Paik, which Meaks kept in the midst of the somewhat faded memory, rather than vividly recollecting the time they spent together. Fragments of the recollections left by Mekas will gain new clues from what is presented in this symposium.

13:20-13:30 Remembering Paik and Mekas Vytautas Landsbergis (politician, musicologist) \*pre-recorded video

"Paik there presented the amusing view that Landsbergis, the world's only Fluxus president,

used the Fluxus method, perhaps the culture, to destroy the kremlin's boring communism and the soviet union itself."

13:30-14:00 Jonas Mekas's Performing Citations Lee Nara (senior researcher, DEU Cinema & Transmedia Institute)

Diary film is, above all, a cinematic form that reflects the avant-garde attitude that tried to discard the distinction between life and art. In the case of a literary journal, there is a time gap between events and records, and the act of recording passes through the authorial subjectivity. In contrast, the record of the event in the diary in the form of the video is simultaneous with the experience. Jonas Mekas's film exemplifies this concurrency of experience and record and asserts itself as an immediate response to life. For this reason, Mekas's Bolex 16mm camera and shooting and editing method became an absolute symbol of the art of presentness and the art as a form of life. On the other hand, there is an attempt to define Mekas's film as a "diary film," a reorganized and structuralized "film diary" which is a personal and regular video record. This attempt focuses more on Mekas's work of editing extensive footage years to decades later, than on his Bolex camera editing which is done simultaneously with filming. In the former case, the editing process is considered as a process of reflective writing about events.

In this presentation, I would like to approach the editing, narration, and intertitle work of Mekas

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in the light of the citation as intimate relation, and performing citations, rather than as the process of displaying an artist's reflexivity or selfexpressiveness. Is not the performing citation that constructs what Jonas Mekas advocated, that is, the "art which we do for each other, as friends" (in Jonas Mekas, "Anti-100 Years of Cinema Manifesto")?

### 14:00-14:30 Between Scintillation in Accidental Moments and Interference–Impulse Kim Eunhee (curator)

In his lecture titled "Bandom Access Information" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1980. Nam June Paik mentioned the "archaeology of now." The term, by which he meant the investigation into the past to understand the present, is in line with the work of Jonas Mekas in some respects. In his interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist(2015), Mekas said that even what we call 'memory' and 'thoughts' were also real, that is, 'physically' real, and they were his working material. Similarly, in his Out-Takes from the Life of Happy Man(2012), he emphasized that images were real and his film was a collection of just images with no purpose. Instead of using images, or the object that he faced and concentrated on in every moment of life, as the element to compose a work of art, he dealt with them as life or energy itself. The methodology he developed caught the process in which energy passed away at the moment when it appeared like a flash and then disappeared. The form of a personal

diary or sketch and the method of single-frame creates poetic condensation of images, beyond the dimension of duration or simultaneity, which arouses the intuitive insight for or emotional resonance with the essence of reality. The idea of material-like memory or reality as material as Mekas perceived is similar to the direction of the poetic movement in which the subject and the world acquire simultaneity through the medium of the camera.

In that the 'archaeology of the present' Paik mentioned in "Bandom Access Information" destroys the conventional rules of time and inquires into the origin of the temporal phenomenon, it is identical to Mekas's perspective. However, if Mekas provided a new kind of experience by drastically reducing the number of frames and reproducing the movement of fleeting images. Paik represents the images of shattered space like Kurt Gödel's "Rotating Universe." Paik's video installations could be regarded as an expression of the colossal ambition to offer a metaphor for the 'geometry of the universe' that combines space and time. This gigantic metaphor is to form a kind of field. The audience looks into the space under the influence of the magnetic field created by magnets. The observers do not know whether they see the inside or the outside but can guess that this field is formed according to the principle that 'electric' and 'magnetic' fields are mutually induced. The field where they find interference patterns occurring when two waves meet suggests a four-dimensional continuum. As Einstein said, "the four-dimensional continuum is now no longer resolvable objectively into sections, all of which contain simultaneous events.".

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In Paik's video art, images are like fish swimming in the pond of TV monitors. Here, images appear as the coordinates which are the metaphor for the world of uncertainty and variability; the artist does not extend what he found as the attributes of images to any form of structure. The "dancing pattern," or the movement of images that apparently look like assemblage works, in Paik's video works that are composed of electrons and protons, could be the arrangement of hosts infected with the 'virus aesthetics' which disturbs the figure/ground relation, as David Joselit suggested, or the surgical procedure to graft onto the media the practice which is distinguished from the traditional semantic system of works of art that had been forced in art history.

### 14:40-15:10 Moving Images, Moving Bodies Inesa Brašiškė (art historian, curator)

Jonas Mekas, Nam June Paik, and Shigeko Kubota met in New York where they became friends and collaborators crossing paths on regular basis: Paik's and Kubota's family befriended Mekases, the latter appeared in Paik's performances, while Kubota served as a video curator at the Anthology Film Archives from 1974 till 1982. What is more, each in their own manner and through different means, they developed a unique filmic language interrogating the conditions of the contemporary world. The world Mekas, Paik and Kubota inhabited was profoundly marked by the experiences of itinerancy. Mekas fled Lithuania through Germany finally reaching the US in 1949,

Seoul born Paik first travelled to Japan then Germany reaching New York in 1964, the same vear Kubota came to the US from Japan. Once settled in New York, their artistic lifestyle continued to embrace mobility as they moved from one place to another, visiting multiple places for work and leisure, often capturing their trips on camera. Employing handheld cameras (Bolex in Mekas's case. Sonv Portapak in Kubota's and Paik's) and dedicated to diaristic mode they created travelogues recording places and mediating their own (moving) bodies in the times of the increasingly transnationally connected world. In my paper, I will address the subject of itinerancy as reflected in the work of these three nomadic artists marked by personal experience of moving through space and ask how communication and transportation technologies, locations and speed partake in the articulations of subjectivity in their moving image works.

### 15:10-15:40 Spector, Contingency and Cinema: Nam June Paik's Zen for Film and Avant-garde Lee Hanbum (art critic) \*prerecorded video

Nam Jun Paik's Zen for Film consists of the screening of a blank film. It has no image and only shows what constitutes the cinema. This piece, which can be regarded as the most representative example of what influential film critic Gilberto Perez called the 'material ghost,' was used by Paik as an object of experimentation all through the period of the 1960s. In other words, we can

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suggest that Zen for Film was not fixed as a work of art but considered an instrument to experiment to explore the meaning and true essence of the cinematic or, more broadly, art in general. Here, the term 'experiment' refers to a sequential and procedural demonstration process.

Then, this addresses several critical questions: what did this work experiment with? That is, what new aesthetic category did it start with? What made it possible? Or, in what kind of dynamics of the time was it produced and transformed? We could approach these questions through exploration from the historical perspective-by examining it in the relationship with other artistic practices of his time which Paik engaged in (or was apparently unrelated in remote places), and in the historical particularity. When the historical description of this became clear then we could ask the social meaning about it again. The most significant purpose of this presentation is to find out the historical meaning of a work of art more clearly by reinterpreting it through the theory of the avant-garde.



### PERFORMANCE

16:30-17:00 GRAYCODE, jiiiiin (electronic music composers, sound-media artists)

e^ix, it's necessary (2019) ZKM | Hertz-Lab commission

"We are drowning in information while starving for wisdom" (E. O. Wilson)

Today's world consists of much information and vast amounts of data. Although technological development provides convenience in life, at the same time, we are living in such a rapid change that we cannot even recognize how that convenience is given to us. Information versus wisdom: noise versus signals. Standing between them, we ask: Can we find wisdom in our life? In e^ix, it's necessary, we try to understand our senses, recognize the noise surrounding us, and search for signals in it. e^ix refers to a point placed in an arbitrary cycle borrowed from the Euler formula. A clear perception of e^ix. an arbitrary point, implies an attitude of distinguishing noise from the signal, which would be the only way to distinguish information and wisdom.

### poetic canon (2022)

"(Video synthesizer is) a device that would enable us to shape the TV canvas as precisely as Leonardo as freely as Picasso as colorfully as Renoir as profoundly as Mondrian as violently as Pollack and as lyrically as Jasper Johns." (Nam June Paik)

In the manifesto for *Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer*, we saw Nam June Paik's world which causes cracks in the strong canon. It would be Paik's attitude of turning his artwork using contemporary technology into the classics of the next generation. *Poetic Canon* applies Al-based text-voice conversion technology and produces threedimensional spatial sound beyond the space between two ears that appreciate the stereo sound. Now, we look at Paik in those days, who made fractures in the world, breaking away from the classics. In our time, Paik is another canon, and we call him 'Poetic Canon.'

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#### Vytautas Landsbergis, as

first Head of State of the reestablished independent Lithuania, Chairman of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, winner of the Freedom Prize, and a member of Fulxus movement. He proved to be an active and creative

person and a leader politically committed to the aspirations of the Lithuanian nation and consolidation of freedom and democratic values. Landsbergis is a politician and art, music and culture historian, who published over 100 books and a number of articles on the creative work of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis in the early years of the career and on Lithuanian and international politics in subsequent years. He edited and published all piano compositions by Čiurlionis. As a publicist and public figure, he long served as a member of the Board and Secretariat of the Lithuanian Composers' Union, Chairman of the Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis Society, and Honorary Chairman of the Lithuanian Chess Federation. He also authored poetry books, memoirs and a collection of prose.



Lee Nara researches into contemporary aesthetics of film, moving images, and anthropological images, and authored academic articles, books and critical essays on contemporary works. She is an author of *European Film Movements*, a co-author of Alexander Sokurov, Harun Farocki,

The Sense of the Landscape, and a translator of Out of the Dark (Georges Didi-Huberman) and of The Man Who Walked in Color (Georges Didi-Huberman). Currently, she is a Senior Researcher at Cinema & Transmedia Institute, Dong-Eui University.





Kim Eunhee is a curator and fillmmaker. She joined the curatorial team at National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea in 2014 and organized the MMCA Film and Video programs. Her curatorial projects include artist films and exhibitions such as Philippe Garrel (2015), Jonas

Mekas (2017) and Harun Farocki (2018) solo exhibitions and retrospectives. *Principle of Uncertainty* (2017), *Dear Cinema* series (2018-2019) showing the films of contemporary artists, and biennial program *Asian Film and Video Art Forum* from 2015. She is currently working on her filmmaking and curatorial projects independently.



Inesa Brašiškė is an art historian and curator based in Vilnius, Lithuania. She graduated from Contemporary Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies (MODA) at Columbia University. Her research University. Her research interests span postwar European and American art and avant-garde film.

She recently coedited Jonas Mekas: The Camera Was Always Running, published by Yale University Press (2022), and co-curated the exhibition Jonas Mekas and the New York Avant-Garde (National Gallery of Art in Vilnius, 2021). Currently she is completing extensive research on André Cadere (Romanian, 1934-1978), coediting a book of essays on Cadere's work, and preparing the first monograph on the artist. Brašišké has taught at the Vilnius Academy of Arts; organized symposiums, including "The Post-Socialist Object: Contemporary Art in China and Eastern Europe" (Columbia University, 2017) and "Jonas Mekas Expanded" (National Gallery of Art, Vilnius, February 2022); and initiated the continuous lecture series "Thinking Contemporary Art" (www.thinkingcontemporaryar.It). She regularly contributes to academic publications, catalogues, and journals,



and presents her research in international conferences and symposia. In her role as curator, she has organized exhibitions and film programs based on the work of Babette Mangolte, Sharon Lockhart, and others.



Lee Hanburn is an art critic who runs a publishing house called Rasunpress. His concept engineering intends to represent the artistic practice of producing alternative knowledge in various forms such as writing, publication, and exhibition. Currently, he is working on Tales on Nameless Places

(2021), an acoustic archaeological project on syntheses occurring in liminal spaces. Among the projects he curated are ACC Creative and Productive Discourse Program-Reading (Asia Culture Center, 2021), Book Cabinet Reactivation Project (6th Anyang Public Art Project, 2019), Sonic Fiction (2019, cocurated), Creating Stories: Learning Tools for New Knowledge and the Museum (Buk-Seoul Museum of Art, 2019, cocurated), Tools for Fiction: Active Archive for Artist's Publishing (Insa Art Space, 2018), BlaBlaBlin (2017-2018), Riding at Dawn (Willing N Dealing, 2014, co-curated).



As electroacoustic music composers, Jung Jinhee (aka, jiiiiin) and Cho Taebok (aka, GRAYCODE) have been collaborating in the field of sound and new media. These two artists deal with various media in the form of sound, video, installation, and sculpture through their individual work,

and also have been working as a collective, 'GRAYCODE, jiiilin', As GRAYCODE, jiiilin, their piece +3×10'8m/s, beyond the light velocity (2017-2018) was presented with the 'Giga-Hertz Award' from ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany (2018). Nam June Paik Art Center 10 Paiknamjune-ro Giheung-gu Yongin-si Gyeonggi-do 17068 Korea

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