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“You MARTYR of July 20, 1964”: Paik and Beuys in a Media Duet

„Ti MUČENIK od 20. srpnja 1964.“: Paik i Beuys – duet medija

Sažetak

Rad istražuje odnos umjetničkog stvaralaštva, brojne suradnje te manje ili više izravna naslanjanja Nam June Paika i Josepha Beuysa. Istražuju se slične estetike, nadovezivanja u performansima, fluksusovski intonirane akcije i eventi koji proširuju umjetnički spektar po pitanju forme i sadržaja. Daje se pregled dodirnih točaka dvaju umjetnika počevši od Paikova umjetničkoga debija *Hommage à John Cage* iz 1959. u Düsseldorfu gdje je Beuys bio među uzvanicima otvorenja. Upravo će skladatelji u Cageovu krugu i sačinjavati kratkoročni eksplozivni umjetnički savez Fluxus zahvaljujući kojemu je počela suradnja Paika i Beuysa. S istom nakanom obnove umjetnosti dvojica umjetnika okušala su se i u praksama destrukcije kao opravdanoga oblika korekcije, primjerice Paik je uništio violinu u sklopu programa *Neo-Dada in der Musik*, a Beuys je sjekirom razbio klavir na jedinoj samostalnoj Paikovoj izložbi u Wuppertalu nazvanoj *Exposition of Music – Electronic Television*. Naglasak je stavljen i na trio koji su sačinjavali Paik, Beuys i Charlotte Moorman, čelistica koja s Paikom počinje surađivati nakon njegova preseljenja u New York 1964. U tom gradu Moorman i Paik bit će uhićeni 1967., a snažni iskazi solidarnosti dolazit će od Beuysa iz Europe. Čak i kad nije bilo izravnih suradnji između dvojice umjetnika, postojale su dodirne točke i citati, poput spominjanja Beuysova lika i djela u Paikovu videouratku *Guadalcanal Requiem*. Zajednički se nastup nastavlja tek 1977., i to na *Documenti VI*. Iako se Paik otkriva kao autor koji (u ovom i u drugim nastupima) više koristi televizijsko-tehnička dostignuća (a spomenuto je i da je tijekom njujorškoga života bio prvi obučeni umjetnik koji je raspolagao prijenosnom kamerom), zajednički performans u spomen na Georgea Maciunasa izveden 1978. u Düsseldorfu pod nazivom *Klavirski duet Joseph Beuys & Nam June Paik* zabilježen je videokamerom za razliku od prethodnih Fluxus događanja. Beuys je bio i jedan od izvođača u emisiji *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* koju je uživo pratilo pomoću satelitske televizije 10 milijuna ljudi. Iste, orvelovske godine 1984. Paik i Beuys izvode zajednički koncert *Coyote III* u Tokiju, dok Beuys pokazuje manji skepticizam prema mediju videa, a Paik omogućuje snimanje koncerta kamerama u boji u isključivo umjetničke, a ne financijske svrhe. Sljedeće godine Beuys iz zdravstvenih nastupa na daljinu na koncertu s Henningom Christiansenom i Paikom kao doprinosu Bijenalu mira. U radu se završno ističe da je nakon Beuysove smrti 1986. Paik umjetnika i prijatelja „i dalje prenosio kroz svoju umjetnost, pogotovo putem instalacija s više monitora“.

Nam June Paik and Joseph Beuys cooperated with each other in memorable projects. They came from different cultural backgrounds, had different ideas about artistic media, and worked on fundamentally different life projects. And yet it was precisely this very polarity that exerted a magnet-like force. What Beuys was striving for with the expanded concept of art and social sculpture, Paik realized in his own way with the invention of media art and its global appeal. They moved jointly, more or less without consulting each other, in a common indeterminate artistic direction,⁴¹ understanding each other blindly, enjoying a close artistic friendship.⁴² The convergences in the lives and works of Beuys and Paik are pivotal points in recent art history.⁴³

The *Hommage à John Cage*, music for audio tapes and two pianos, was Paik's artistic debut on November 13, 1959, at Jean-Pierre Wilhelm's Galerie 22 in Düsseldorf. Joseph Beuys was among the guests at the opening and witnessed the premiere of the *Piano Solo Concert* (personal communication, December 1990), which lasted just six minutes and in which Paik repeatedly changed "subito from very quiet to aggressively loud sounds."⁴⁴ On three tape recorders, sound collages were switched on and off, such as a radio message from the then Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers. Paik sang and played his own compositions and raced around "screaming furiously in Korean" (Roder 2007: 38 n5). Surprising plot elements were woven into the sound score: an egg was thrown at the wall, piano strings were plucked with a knife, a bell, a metronome, noisy toys (a car and a small radio) were set in motion. Paik counted the beads of a rosary for 43 seconds, smashed a pane of glass, finally knocked over one of the pianos – a "very good sound" – and put the whole scene in darkness (personal communication, December 1990). Jean-Pierre Wilhelm defined this action music as "neo-dadaist": back then, "fluxus" as an artistic movement did not yet exist. Paik had indeed seized the opportunity and conceptualised his performance action

41 Joseph Beuys: "Indeterminism is, however, an essential trait in the matter [...] The actions of Happenings, Fluxus, etc. will naturally trigger new impulses that, as we want, will create better conditions in many areas. New goals will then arise again from the new consciousness that is then won. That is evolution," from an interview in the magazine *Kunst* with Joseph Beuys (Becker and Vostell, 1965, p. 326). The principle of "indeterminacy" already played a determining role for John Cage and subsequently for Nam June Paik. The way Beuys and Paik cooperated was also determined by this principle of openness.

42 "We became friends" (personal communication, Nam June Paik in a telephone interview with the author, New York-Düsseldorf, December 1990).

43 Cf. Paik's own account (Paik 1988); see also Eugen Blume's "Eine eurasische Freundschaft – Nam June Paik und Joseph Beuys" (Blume 1999: 262).

44 "Mother the man with the shrine is here," November 1959, contemporary criticism without citation (Kölischer Kunstverein and Herzogenrath, 1976: 42f); as well as Anne Rodler: "II: Cage I Paik I Stockhausen: II A digression on the music scene in Cologne around 1960" (Rodler 2007: 37).

in the preceding historic Düsseldorf dada exhibition of 1958 (at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen from September 5 to October 19): “I composed watching Schwitters” (personal communication, December 1990). The soirée at Galerie 22, with its “visualised music” (Leve 2005: 10), made the name “Paik” a familiar name among insiders, it “made me famous in one night” (personal communication, December 1990).

“New Music was the Center of all arts Movements, and Germany was the Center of the New Music” (Paik, 1999)⁴⁵ – Paik’s shamanistic cry of 1959 was immediately echoed by Beuys, even at the last joint collaboration, the *Concert Joseph Beuys Coyote III Nam June Paik Piano Duet* on June 2, 1984, in Sogetsu Hall, Tokyo, for which there was pronounced feedback: now Beuys raised his voice in a shamanistic style: “The Shaman is still alive.”⁴⁶ Beuys painted the footprints of a wolf on a wall chart – as Paik described it – and began to chant in German: “Schweinebraten Schweinebraten...” (roast pork...) (Paik 1988: 73), reciting swaying Wagnerian word cascades (Wenzel and Beuys 1996; Conzen-Meairs 1992: 7). These ritual incantations culminated in howls of animals, “And then he imitated a wolf and coyote barking, crying and fighting for about an hour, sweating profusely” (Paik 1988: 73). A grand piano had been provided for Beuys’ performance, but Beuys did not use it, so Paik took over the classical European music part in the unarranged duet: “And then I pounded the piano key [...] I played ‘Moonlight Sonata’ and a few moon related songs from Korea and Japan...” (Paik 1988: 73). Beuys had taken over from Paik’s early action music to step out of himself, to create an imaginary pictorial space through voice and action. Action music expanded into action sculpture.

“I am not a social butterfly, I am a solid worker” (personal communication, December 1990) – at the age of 30, Paik changed his focus and turned away from event-oriented action music.⁴⁷ He conducted intensive research in the technical-artistic field, which led to sound objects, electronic objects, and electronic sound objects. The preparatory work for Paik’s first solo exhibition in Rolf Jährling’s Wuppertal gallery Parnass (March 11–20, 1963), which was mysterio-

45 Cf. Nam June Paik’s handwritten motto on the front cover of the exhibition catalogue (Herzogenrath and Schmidt, 1999).

46 “Shaman is very important for Beuys and Shaman is very important for Korea,” Paik said in 1987 in conversation with Peter Moritz Pickshaus (Pickshaus 2009: 98). In conversation with Caroline Tisdall, Beuys described shamanism as a kind of corrective, a “wealth of risk in a material world” (Tisdall 1979: 23). As early as the late 1950s/early 1960s, titles such as “Haus des Schamanen” (House of the Shaman), 1959, and “Schamane II (Sender, Auslöser)” (Shaman II (Transmitter, Trigger)), 1961, appeared in Beuys’ work.

47 On Paik’s artistic development in his early years in the Rhineland see: Susanne Rennert: “On Sunny Days Count the Waves of the Rhine. On Windy Days, Count the Waves of the Rhine.” Nam June Paik’s Early Years in the Rhineland (1958–1963)” (Rennert 2005: 9ff.).

usly sealed off from the outside world, required all his concentration. The fact that Paik got involved in three joint events in addition to his innovative research was because Fluxus founder George Maciunas, who came to Germany from New York in the autumn of 1961, now had become his experienced comrade-in-arms and source of inspiration. This inspired them to organize three joint art events: *Kleines Sommerfest. Après John Cage* – “the first Fluxus Manifestation in the world” (Paik 1988: 11) – on June 9, 1962, at the Galerie Parnass (without Beuys), *NEO-DADA in Music* on June 16, 1962, at the Düsseldorfer Kammerspiele (with Beuys in the audience), and finally *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus*, on February 2 and 3, 1963, in the auditorium of the Düsseldorf Art Academy at the invitation of and with Joseph Beuys. Paik’s neo-dadaist solo evenings expanded into an intermedial collective movement through the impetus of Maciunas: “His Marxist background [...] helped him [Maciunas] to conceive the Fluxus as a truly international movement” (Paik 1988: 49). Only with a broad definition can the activities of Paik and Beuys be attributed to Fluxus in the narrower sense,⁴⁸ but in fact it was precisely under this sign, and thanks to this art movement, that their cooperation began. Beuys was to refer to the term even later – in a redefinition of content. Since the Darmstadt Action of 1967, as an “intensification of Fluxus” (Schneede 1994: 171), the *Fluxus Zone West* led to the integral Beuys term “main current” (“Hauptstrom”).⁴⁹

“On that evening I presented the world premiere of my ‘One for Violin.’ I held up the violin vertically like a sword for a while until the audience became quiet and then smashed it on the table in front of me” (Paik 1988: 11ff.). By destroying the violin as part of the programme of *Neo-Dada in Music*, Paik not only created a sound, an image, but he also set an example. The fact that the gesture seemed so meaningful was due to its sudden execution resembling a sword stroke: Paik appeared like a Japanese warrior, i.e., like a samurai,⁵⁰ and Beuys, who spontaneously supported Paik against the rising discontent in the audience, understood this as a connecting gesture between Eastern and Western

48 “Fluxus was never a regulated group with a programme and manifesto, but an extremely explosive association of artists at short notice, far predominantly composers in the Cage environment, who came together for concerts through the obsessive organisational work of George Maciunas and at times formed close interactions, which were, however, hardly formalised further or reflected on theoretically” (Meinhardt 1987: 26).

49 Cf. inter alia Stüttgen (1988: 155ff.) and Meinhardt (1987: 34).

50 The outward sign of one’s elevated social position was the pair of swords, *Daishō*, which were reserved exclusively for samurai to wear.

spirituality, transformed into a symbol of his own: “The samurai sword is a blood sausage.”⁵¹

Nine months after the “sword stroke,” Beuys himself acted by smashing one of the four pianos on display in Paik’s epochal Wuppertal exhibition, *Exposition of Music – Electronic Television*.⁵² He took the instrument that was the only one Paik had not prepared for the exhibition. This unrequested “act of gratuity” with an axe⁵³ was indirectly commented on by Beuys, who emphasized destruction as a justified intervention of correction in his academy lessons. The destructive is necessary “so that a confusing situation can take on a new development at all” (Schneede 1994: 52). In this sense, the *Piano Action*, which was later included in the catalogue of actions (Schneede 1994: 36), is supposed to be understood as the practical realization of a critical concept, which is supposed to help art to renew itself.

The question remains as to the special relationship of the action to Paik, because with his exhibition, Paik himself demonstrated at the time that he was turning away from traditional media, without the need for any external impetus. With the thirteen manipulated television sets, *Exposition of Music – Electronic Television*, was the initiation exhibition for media art, the “nucleus for various forms of participation TV” (Decker 1998: 39). At that time, Paik also made the following dictum: “The piano is a taboo, it must be destroyed” (*Magnum* 1963: 63). Thus, Beuys’ action was not directed against Paik’s exhibition – he deliberately manipulated the only unprepared piano – but he rather joined Paik’s media criticism as a reinforcing action, although the critical examination of his own previous actions – especially in the case of the preceding *Siberian Symphony 1st Movement* – was included. Beuys also set an example for his own work development, which was to become particularly visible in 1966 in the action *Infiltration Homogenous for Concert Grand Piano, the Greatest Composer of the Present is the Contergan Child*, again in the context of a Paik concert. Here, one artistic step followed on from the previous one in indeterminate cooperation.

51 Quote from Appendix 2 from an autobiographical curriculum vitae by Joseph Beuys for the catalogue *Blockade 69*, illustrated (Blockade 2009: 33). The entire handwritten text reads: “Beuys 1963/ OSTENDE/ on the beach or in the dunes/ a cube-shaped house/ in it/ ‘The samurai sword is a blood sausage’/ plinth.” The “cube-shaped house” probably refers to one of the bunkers of the Atlantic Wall from the World War.

52 This first solo exhibition of Paik’s was reconstructed in 2009 at the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Vienna, cf. (Neuburger 2009: 9).

53 Both Paik (Paik, 1988, p. 23) and Manfred Montwé, “Erinnerungen an die Exposition of Music,” (Neuburger 2009: 91), speak of an “axe,” or a “splitting axe,” sharp on one side, blunt on the other. According to Montwé, the photos in which Beuys handles sticks were “recreated at the request of photographers.”

In Beuys' first ever public action at *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* (February 2 and 3, 1963), the intact instrument of the grand piano had certainly still played a significant role. After Beuys had hung a dead hare on a black school blackboard in the intermedial action *Siberian Symphony 1st Movement*, he played two pieces by Satie on the grand piano, then wrote a text about energy correlation on the board, wiped it off again, piled up small heaps of clay on the lid of the grand piano, stretched a cable from there to the hare, and finally dissected the hare's heart out of its body.⁵⁴ In contrast to other Fluxus pieces, in which the concept of work and author were collectively mixed, here in Beuys' action individual elements of action were mystically–mythically encoded on the meta–level, forming an enigmatic image, opening up an imaginary image space, creating a pictorial metaphorical language with the action. In the *Composition for 2 Musicians* – with a child's toy of two percussionists, again performed on the intact grand piano – on the second evening, Beuys still provided a link to the explicitly meaningless, collectively executed sequences of actions of his Fluxus colleagues, although in this case he also provided an artistic quotation aimed at Paik: as mentioned, Paik had also innovatively used toys in his first performance at Gallery 22.

In 1963, Paik returned to Tokyo and, together with the electronics expert Shuya Abe, and developed *Robot K-456*, a kinetic sculpture that could walk, talk and even defecate, but which could still be understood as a piece of music ("K" stands for the Köchel catalogue).⁵⁵ Paik had been living in New York since 1964, where he had his first collaboration with the cellist Charlotte Moorman at the Second Annual New York Avant–Garde Festival in the summer, and she became an "art figure" (Herzogenrath 1983: 58) who interpreted countless pieces and videotapes. Besides, the first programme also included a "trio": *Robot Opera* with Paik, Moorman, and the remote-controlled robot K-456, which was also reproduced on the invitation card that Paik used to contact Beuys again: Paik had his first American solo exhibition at the New York School for Social Research on January 8, 1965, with *Electronic TV, Color TV Experiments, 3 Robots, 2 Zen Boxes & 1 Zen Can*. Paik added the following handwritten note to the back of the invitation, which contained technical information about individual electronic experiments: "Dear Professor and for me not only Professor Beuys / Cordial New Year's greetings / 1 Feb. is Chinese New Year / John Cage told me about his meeting with you / We will see each other sooner or later / Your Paik / You MARTYR of July 20, 1964."⁵⁶

54 A reconstruction of the event is given in the essay by Antje von Graevenitz: "Sprache ergreift Materie – Das Festum Fluxorum Fluxus in Düsseldorf 1963" (von Graevenitz 2007: 67ff.).

55 Cf. the letter from N.J. Paik to John Cage from 1967 (Paik 1997: 25). Paik called his "Robot" "music for the street" in an interview with Douglas Davis (Davis 1975: 186).

56 Stiftung Museum Schloss Moyland. Joseph Beuys Archiv, HG 75 1/02.

Beuys had become the "martyr" of July 20, 1964, as is well known, at the Fluxus evening Festival of New Art (Festival der Neue Kunst),⁵⁷ organized by Tomas Schmitt and Valdis Abolins at the Technical University in Aachen. Although the coincidence of the evening with the anniversary of the failed assassination attempt on Hitler was initially coincidental, the situation then became highly politicized: the physical attacks on Beuys by a student who beat him up – the motives for this attack from the heated auditorium seem to have been diffuse – made Beuys suddenly known to the public; from then on he appeared as a politically committed artist. "Being attacked by conservative circles," Beuys wrote, quite rightly, in a handwritten "curriculum vitae" at the time.⁵⁸ At the Aachen Fluxus evening, Beuys again performed a piano maltreatment in his action *Kukei, akopee-Nein!, Braunkreuz, Fettecken, Modellfettecken* (Schneede 1994: 42ff.), among other things: "I filled a piano with geometric bodies, sweets, dry oak leaves, marjoram, a picture postcard of Aachen Cathedral and washing powder. Very loosely, so that it was still playable, but the sound was affected by the filling" (Becker and Vostell 1965: 327). The synchronised actions of the participating artists⁵⁹ were stopped after about a third of the event because of the rising tumult, the artistic performances of this evening became an early testimony of political refusal in the Federal Republic of Germany (cf. Hoffmann 1995),⁶⁰ which Paik noted with satisfaction and approval. He was involved in the event in that he had provided the poster motif.⁶¹ Paik had close personal links with the date of July 20: this was his birthday, which he noted in his curriculum vitae for the *Happening* book by Becker and Vostell, as follows: "1932, on 7/20, the day of the uprising against Hitler, I... was born in Seoul, Korea." He added in explanation: "If the German people had been more against Hitler, the precious blood shed fighting Stalin would not have been necessary."⁶² The cooperation between Beuys and Paik, which was to continue across the now-dividing Atlantic, thus also took on a political dimension: from then on, the avant-garde

57 The exact title of the festival was: *ACTIONS / AGIT PROP/ DE-COLLAGE/ HAPPENING/ EVENTS/ ANTIART/ LAUTRISME/ ART TOTAL/ REFLUXUS – Festival of New Art*.

58 The handwritten curriculum vitae from the early 1960s is reproduced in (Weise et al. 1987: 152).

59 Eric Andersen, Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock, Stanley Brown, Henning Christiansen, Robert Filliou, Ludwig Gosewitz, Arthur K pcke, Tomas Schmit, Ben Vautier, Wolf Vostell, and Emmett Williams were announced.

60 Incidentally, Hoffmann does not discuss the Aachen Festival of New Art here.

61 The title of the collage was: "I admire monkey. Ich ehre Affe" (cf. Rennert 2006: 18f.).

62 Cf. the biography provided by Paik in (Becker and Vostell, 1965: 444f.). There it says: "At home, according to old Korean custom, I celebrated my birthday on 17 June according to the Luna. calendar, and at school and in my passport, 20 July is the official date of birth. I prefer this date because if the German people had been more against Hitler, the costly blood against Stalin would not have been necessary. Therefore, both days should be designated as national holidays, and not ONLY June 17 as today."

had to deal with more and more attacks; Beuys was summoned before the public prosecutor's office because of the Aachen incidents. In New York, the police and the court were to take massive action against Paik and Moorman in 1967.

"I can play in Duesseldorf on a day between 28–30 May, preferably on the 28th / [...] / I propose a trio–evening Beuys–Charlotte–Paik (with remote controlled robot that has 30 channels), it will be educative for students" – in the spring of 1965 Nam June Paik offered a new joint event in the academy's auditorium in a letter to the Düsseldorf Art Academy and personally to Joseph Beuys.⁶³ However, the "trio" that he had offered did not happen – presumably people in Düsseldorf feared that there would be more turmoil like that in Aachen. Nevertheless, there was an artistic encounter on Paik and Moorman's first European tour at the time, namely in the context of the happening *24 Hours*, with which Rolf Jährling ended his gallery work in Wuppertal on June 5, 1965. Paik had brought two innovations from New York: the sexualization of music in the performance of cellist Charlotte Moorman, and the first art robot as a messenger of the impending mechanization of visual art (the art robot then even got to walk a few steps on the street, to the visibly skeptical amusement of Beuys).⁶⁴ Paik and Moorman were struggling with fatigue (Paik 1988: 33) at the happening that began at midnight: they limited themselves to relatively few musical performances on the piano and with the cello, especially Saint-Saëns tones. The participants⁶⁵ of the event performed in separate rooms, so this last major Fluxus event in Europe included the addition of simultaneous performances with long pauses. Beuys alone achieved the 24-hour goal; his performance, which revolutionized action art with numerous new elements: "und in uns... unter uns... landunter" (Schneede 1994: 84ff.), was "moving in more than one sense of the word: Beuys had drawn a magic circle around himself by using numerous enigmatic objects such as a rabbit baking tin and a 'community spade'" (Klophaus 1987: 100). He narrowed his radius of action, with changing tempos and repetitions, to the small imaginary raft of an orange box covered with white oilcloth, under which a Christmas rose was supposedly hidden.⁶⁶ At the end of the event, Beuys, as Paik relates, once again explicitly referred to Maciunas: "Joseph Beuys gave a moving speech in honor of George Maciunas. He should have been here..." (Paik 1988: 49).

63 Stiftung Museum Schloss Moyland. Joseph Beuys Archiv HG 75 4 / 02.

64 Cf. the photo sequence by Ute Klophaus: "Nam June Paik Presents the Remote-controlled Robot KT 678 During the 24-hour Happening in Front of the Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal" (Rennert 2005: 41).

65 Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock, Charlotte Moorman, Nam June Paik, Eckart Rahn, Tomas Schmit, and Wolf Vostell. Ute Klophaus was also subsequently admitted to this circle.

66 Johannes Stüttgen in a letter to Uwe M. Schneede (Schneede, 1994: 85).

The “trio” proposed by Paik for an event at the Düsseldorf Academy was realized – now at the invitation of the ASTA chairman Jörg Immendorff – with a one-year delay, namely as an (unannounced) trio of Paik and Moorman with Beuys on July 28, 1966. Paik and Moorman gave a guest performance in the Aula on another European tour (destination: the Venice Biennale) with a multimedia concert whose title⁶⁷ is unknown today. More reason for the title of a renewed – uncoordinated – intervention by Beuys to be inscribed in art history: *Infiltration Homogenous for Concert Grand Piano, the Greatest Composer of the Present is the Contergan Child* (Schneede, 1994: 112ff.). In his concert performances with Moorman, Paik experimentally combined music, image, and time elements. Soon video elements were also to be included, for the first time in 1969, with *Video Bra* (Decker 1988: 121). However, these electronic extensions of the medium spectrum were not a matter of debate at the Düsseldorf concert; the concert sequence was in line with the advanced Fluxus tradition. In the piece *26'1.1949 for a String Player* by John Cage, for example, Moorman stroked the cello bow over Paik's naked torso, and the audience could hear only a soft string noise. Again, as in 1963 in Wuppertal, Beuys explicitly chose Paik's appearance to make an intervention that expanded the art spectrum in both form and content. In the renewed intervention, about halfway through the concert, noise was no longer used; on the contrary, music and sounds were silenced. The academy grand piano,⁶⁸ now completely sewn into a felt coat, was pushed out of the corridor into the auditorium like a large carcass, the quacking of a toy duck evoking the outrageousness of the interruptive situation like a last excited Fluxus quotation. Music was limited here to the “inner tone.”⁶⁹ Only the silent passage of time remained as a “homogeneous continuum.” The question “WILL MUSIC OF THE PAST HELP HIM?” was posed critically with regard to the suffering of the Contergan child [a child born with thalidomide-induced deformities], the suffering human being became a metaphor for “the greatest composer” (and thus implicitly presumably also: the greatest artist) of the present.⁷⁰ Two red crosses pinned to felt underlined the atmosphere of a military

67 At the Galerie Block in Berlin and the Galerie Aachen, the Paik/Moorman programme, which was more extensive there, ran under the title *As Boring as Possible*.

68 At the action evening *Freshness*, two days later on July 30, 1966, in Chris Reinecke's and Jörg Immendorff's flat in Bankstraße, Düsseldorf (participants included Beuys, Block, Kohlhöfer, Moorman, Paik, Pfisterer, Ruthenbeck, F.E. Walther, J.-P. Wilhelm), Beuys presented the empty felt cover of the grand piano, Paik and Moorman the Yoko Ono piece with the sleeping bag.

69 “That was the meaning, that another tone was produced, an inner tone.” Joseph Beuys in: “Am Klavier Joseph Beuys., Auskünfte anlässlich zweier Konzerte mit Nam June Paik...” (Beuys 1985: 73, queried and recorded by Georg Jappe).

70 The title also indirectly picks up on an old question of Romantic art theory, which, following a quotation from Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, postulated that Raphael would have become a great painter even if he had been born without arms.

hospital, a connection to the artist's own life, to the plane shot down in the Crimea during the World War, the healing power of the warming felt provided by the Tartars, which may have also been present. But the action title – with the naming of the pharmaceutical scandal – was specifically directed at deformations in contemporary society. The inscription on the board: “The suffering/ The warmth/ The sound/ The plasticity,” proclaimed the transformation from tonality to plasticity, i.e., in the Beuysian understanding of “social sculpture.” At Charlotte Moorman's request, Beuys subsequently gave the musician the version of the cello wrapped in felt: *Infiltration – Homogenous for Cello*. Since then, the performance on the silent instrument has repeatedly been on her programme as *Cello Sonata – Joseph Beuys*, for the first time on September 9, 1966, in New York's Central Park on the occasion of the 4th Annual New York Avantgarde Festival (cf. Kramer, 1993/94: 72ff.). Paik's *TV Cello* with three picture tubes, conceived for Moonman, became the electronic counterpart to the *Felt Cello* in 1971 (Decker 1988: 125).⁷¹

“As collage technic replaced oil-paint, the cathode ray tube will replace the canvas”: Paik's leaflet manifesto from October 1965, *Electronic Video Recorder* (Decker 1988: 145),⁷² appeared for the first public presentation of video images in the New York music club Cafe Au Go Go, 152 Bleecker Street, and again for the following November's *Electronic Art* exhibition in the New York Galeria Bonino. In New York, there was a “spirit of optimism” (Decker 1992: 145): the old artistic forms of representation seemed obsolete, replaced by “new media,” a technical art with a new imaginative power of pictures. Paik was the first visual artist to acquire a portable video camera at that time. That same evening, he presented his first videotape at Go Go (with current material from television, namely footage of Pope Paul VI's visit to New York) (Hanhardt 1982: 27). The score of moving images took the place of the score of sounds, whereby the humanization of the new technology through art was programmatic. The paths of Beuys and Paik, whom Fluxus had brought together, now temporarily diverged. Beuys was skeptical, even dismissive of electronic technology, Paik saw the new possibilities of the picture tube for global creative exchange.

Two events held in Scandinavia in quick succession made the different points of view clear, again without any agreement. Paik and Beuys delivered their statements on the medium of “video,” here one after the other. In September 1966, Paik took part in the symposium *Art and Technology* at Fylkingen's *Ny musik & intermediakonst*, and delivered as his contribution the work set up in

71 The “TV Cello” was first presented at the exhibition *Electronic Art III* in 1971 at the Galeria Bonino, New York.

72 See also the German translation of the manifesto in: *Nam June Paik. Transcripts of a Cultural Nomad. Aphorismen – Briefe – Texte* (Decker 1992: 116): “Just as the collage technique replaced oil paint, the cathode ray tube will replace the canvas.”

the Stockholm Museum of Technology, *TV Cross*, his first video installation ever. Twelve televisions were piled up vertically in the shape of a Latin cross. They were showing abstract electronic images manipulated in various ways. The Copenhagen action by Joseph Beuys, *Filz TV*, took place on October 14, 1966, at Galleri 101, Copenhagen, Store Kongensgade.⁷³ The action referred unmistakably to Paik's new research. Even the outer appearance – dark suit, white shirt, tie – was reminiscent: Beuys also appeared in this “neutral” garb at the axe action in Wuppertal in 1963 (Schneede 1994: 118). The blood sausage now used in the Copenhagen action, cut into pieces, was a metaphor for the warlike Japanese samurai sword – and as an “energy sculpture” – in contrast, feedback to Paik's heavy-handed destruction of the violin in *Solo for One*. This time, the sword was not directed against the bourgeois concept of music, but – according to Beuys in an interview years later – it “cuts through,” “detaches everything that runs so conventionally through the media,” i.e., it was radical media criticism (Herzogenrath and Beuys 1982: 95f.). The screen was covered by a felt pane, one could only vaguely hear the sound that was switched on. The gaze was directed inwards, towards inner images. Beuys even hit himself in the face with boxing gloves during the action. These were metaphors of bleakness, emptiness, violence: “a zero situation” (Herzogenrath and Beuys 1982: 96) that was diagnosed here. The felt pad was also tapped with the blood sausage as though it were a stethoscope. A creative approach to the medium, as signaled by Howard Wise's 1969 exhibition *TV as a Creative Medium* in New York,⁷⁴ seemed impossible in Beuys' diagnosis. Yet there could have been starting points worth considering on the social–political level, and it was Beuys' students who later made important contributions to media art.

“Charlotte Moorman and I arrested on the Feb. 9th in Cinematheque at the middle of concert. ESPECIALLY CHARLOTTE MOORMAN was brutally mishandled by police”: numerous artists, including Beuys, received this call for help from Paik in February 1967 (cf. the illustration in Herzogenrath and Schmidt 1999: 196).⁷⁵ Charlotte Moorman had appeared bare-breasted in Paik's *Opera Sextronique* – on the European tour that didn't cause any problems, yet in New York it provoked a scandal. Paik wrote of a “most serious crisis,” of the

73 In 1970, *Felt TV* was repeated for Gerry Schum's television exhibition *Identifications*.

74 Paik involved with the first presentation of *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*.

75 Paik's personal letter to Beuys is in Stiftung Museum Schloss Moyland. Joseph Beuys Archive HG 75 6/01.

threat of imprisonment for Charlotte Moorman, he asked for a solidarity campaign⁷⁶ with letters to New York Mayor Lindsay. A documentary was envisaged: “We will publish many of letters in our book, but if you don’t want publication, we will regard your wish.” To Beuys, Paik added in handwriting: “Charlotte is threatened for ½ – 1 year in jail. please, write to MAYOR John V. LINDSAY of New York. please, have your students write many, many letters to Lindsay. He will think twice if more than 100 letters come from Europe!” Indeed, numerous expressions of solidarity came, including from Beuys, who wrote to Lindsay, among others, “What do you think will happen if, in addition to arresting Miss Moorman in the middle of one of her concerts and brutal mistreatment by American police, you also punish her with imprisonment? As the number of fanatical opponents of America over the Vietnam War grows day by day, the punishment of Miss Moorman will be a spark that causes a greater conflagration than you might think. Any possible damage to young American art or its demise as a result will perhaps be linked to the case of Ch. Moorman and such possible sparks will be attached to the names of those who did not make the right decision.”⁷⁷ Beuys was not convinced – despite his own previous Aachen experience – of the intended publicity campaign through a book publication.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, with Aachen, now in New York, the phase of the politicization of art had begun. A few weeks later, on June 22, 1967, Beuys founded the German Student Party with numerous students from his class. Charlotte Moorman was given a suspended sentence for “lewd behavior” in New York on May 9, 1967 (personal communication with Joan Rothfuss). Incidentally, a later performance of the *Opera Sextronique* on October 7, 1968, in the Düsseldorf action space Lidlraum went off without a hitch: the art happenings had been followed by

76 Letters of solidarity came from, among others: William Wilson, assistant professor at Queens College and Nam June Paik’s friend and landlord, Alvin Lucier, Brandeis University, Robert Watts, Douglass College, Christian Wolff, assistant professor at Harvard University, Dongkuk Ahn, art teacher at Cooper Union, Stan Vanderbeek, Allan Kaprow, professor at State University at Stony Brook, Claes Oldenburg, Howard Wise, Jean Jacques Lebel, Jean Pierre Wilhelm, Milton S Fox (publisher of Abrams), Jim McWilliams, Jonas Mekas, James Tenney, professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, Douglas Davis, writer, Robert Dunham, Philip Corner, Ludwig Gosewitz, René Block, John Davidsen, Per Kirkeby, Peter Louis-Jensen, Bazon Brock, Ay-O, Barbara Kwak, psychologist, Geoff and Bici Hendricks, Dan Minami, Japanese art critic, Paul Sharits, art teacher at St Cloud State College, Jean Toche, Gert Schiff, assistant professor at New York University, Bengt af Klintberg on behalf of a group of Swedish artists, composers, and journalists (personal communication from Joan Rothfuss to the author).

77 Letter from Joseph Beuys to Mayor John Lindsay, Düsseldorf, April 28, 1967, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Archiv Sohm.

78 Beuys remarked – otherwise in solidarity – in a personal letter to Paik dated 5 April 1967: “You don’t understand the idea of making a book out of this shit,” Stuttgart State Gallery, Sohm Archive.

political happenings in the meantime, new forms of action were on the agenda here as well as there.

“The Paik–Abe video synthesizer [...] allows for 1001 ways of spontaneous television making” (Decker 1992: 131). The synthesizer, on which several video tapes can be played as if on a piano, was completed in 1970. With it, a vision of the future became apparent: one’s very own creatively altered and designed television programme. And it also represented a bridge to the past: Paik was now able to link up again with the scores of action music in the synthesis of the media with “visual music” (Decker 1992: 186ff.). Thus, in 1973, on the composer’s 60th birthday, he produced the 60-minute piece *A Tribute to John Cage* – like an echo of *Hommage à John Cage* from 1959. Beuys did not initially appear in this Paikian kaleidoscope of images; there was only a short video interview by Shigeko Kubota, made in 1972 during a joint visit to the Drakeplatz flat. There had been no artistic collaborations for a decade, but there were still points of contact and references. In René Block’s New York gallery, Beuys and Paik appeared in quick succession addressing rituals and myths: Beuys in May 1974 with the Coyote project *I Like America and America Likes Me*, Paik in February 1975 with, among other things, the *TV Buddha* from 1974. Immediately, Beuys’ life and work were then evoked in Paik’s video tape *Guadalcanal Requiem*. Paik, Moorman and Frank Pileggi (as producer) travelled in 1976 – a stopover during a trip to Australia – to this main island of the Solomon Islands, which had been the scene of the fiercest battles between the Japanese and the Americans during the Second World War. Even today, the island is littered with relics of the war. Paik was inspired by the traces of global disaster to make his most pointed political statement. In his video collage, he mixed old documentary footage, interviews with veterans, and actions by Charlotte Moorman and himself:⁷⁹ Moorman crawls across the beach with a cello on her back in G. I. uniform in *Peace Sonata*, and Paik drags a violin behind her across the former battlefield in *Violin with String*.⁸⁰ Weapons are eliminated by musical instruments. In the wreckage of a crashed bomber, Moorman then plays the *Sonata – Joseph Beuys* on a felt cello. The crash of Joseph Beuys in 1943 in the Crimea, where he was only rescued with great difficulty from the wreckage of a JU 87 by Tartars – originally a Mongolian tribe⁸¹ – is to a certain extent the myth of origin, the “wound” of Beuys’ work that grew out of it, the “Eurasia” work complex, for example, builds on it, but it is also the spiritual basis for the artist friendship:

79 The first version of *Guadalcanal Requiem* (45 minutes) was first broadcast in February 1977, the second version (29 minutes) was made in 1979. For a detailed description of the video tape, see (Decker 1992: 162 ff.).

80 Paik has artistically “recycled” the action with the violin pulled on a string again and again since 1961.

81 Cf. the statements by Joseph Beuys in (Tisdall 1979: 17).

“Actually we met in 1943, when Beuys had crashed in the war” (Pickshaus 2009: 98). That an age of global communication would have to follow global destruction was essential for both Beuys and Paik, and the *Guadalcanal Requiem* is a striking interface for this.

The following joint appearance at documenta VI, 1977, showed that the differences regarding the media question had not changed. Beuys relied on the “permanent discussion” on site. The Bureau for Direct Democracy at documenta 5 was now followed by the 100-day working collective of the Free International University. Paik made use of the latest communication technology. Side by side, both set up their large spatial installations: Beuys the *Honey Pump at the Workplace*, Paik the *TV Garden/Video Jungle*. On June 24, 1977, Hessischer Rundfunk and WDR (and twelve affiliated international TV stations) broadcast a live satellite transmission of the exhibition opening. Paik (with Charlotte Moorman) reviewed a *Nine Minutes Live* performance,⁸² Beuys confined himself to a speech without all the technical refinements of television and presented his concept of social sculpture, of a comprehensive spiritual life in self-administration. In a subsequent television discussion, he critically stated: “I don’t believe that this medium (video) is more than just a medium for information” (Loers and Witzmann 1993: 149).

The *Piano Duet Joseph Beuys & Nam June Paik* on July 7, 1978 in the auditorium of the Düsseldorf Art Academy (Schneede 1994: 360), took place “In memoriam George Maciunas,” who died in Boston on May 9, 1978, at the age of 47.⁸³ Paik, who had been a visiting professor (Rennert and von Wiese 1996) since that summer semester, thus symbolically brought Beuys back to the academy, which had practically banned him from the premises since his termination without notice in 1972.⁸⁴ The concert, announced as a Fluxus Soirée, made direct reference to the *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus* of 1963 at the same venue, which Paik and Maciunas had once organized together; even one of the two grand pianos facing each other was authentic.⁸⁵ The concert became a life score – again only roughly agreed upon between the two actors – an alarm clock set to 74 minutes played, inverting the numbers to the lifespan of the Fluxus founder. The performance was largely limited to the musical sequence as a counterpart to the time continuum: “I only played, Paik added a few small action interludes”

82 Moderated by Peter Iden, the artists involved here were Joseph Beuys, Charlotte Moorman, Nam June Paik, and the theoreticians Douglas Davis and Wulf Herzogenrath.

83 The evening was a fundraising event.

84 At the beginning of April, the Federal Labour Court had overturned the summary dismissal, but the temporary dismissal continued to apply; only in the out-of-court settlement of November 1978 was Beuys again granted the use of a studio in the Academy.

85 According to Eva Beuys, Beuys had the same grand piano model ordered for Paik at the time.

(Beuys 1985: 73). The latter, for example, played at times with a burning candle on the keys – another symbol of transience. Nevertheless, the evening organized by René Block was not just a reminiscence: after the longer interval, it linked up with the preceding collaborations and thus opened new perspectives. And it brought a new artistic medium into play: in contrast to the earlier Fluxus events, the concert was recorded by a video camera, albeit in black-and-white technology that was already outdated at the time and thus not very suitable for further processing in the synthesizer and for global distribution: “A mistake” (personal communication, December 1990).

“Just in time for January 1 of the Orwellian year 1984, Paik wants to show that satellite television can also serve positive purposes, such as the mixing of e- and u-culture and their exchange between the continents”⁸⁶ (DD, n.d.). With his live broadcast *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell*, co-hosted by WNET 13 TV in New York and the Centre Pompidou in Paris – with broadcasters in Germany, Korea and the Netherlands tuned in – Paik reached over 10 million people, including later repeats worldwide over 25 million.⁸⁷ Artists as diverse as Laurie Anderson, Joseph Beuys, Philip Glass, Yves Montand, Ben Vautier, and the band Urban Sax took part in the programme in a “frenetically mixed extravaganza” (Hanhardt 2000: 230; cf. Decker 1988: 172). Joseph Beuys showed a sketchy contribution: *The Orwell Leg – Trousers for the 20th Century*, his daughter Jessyka was wearing jeans with a hole on the right knee, slowly turning on the left axis, Beuys spoke the text: “Everybody in the world should make these trousers to themselves to struggle against world-wide materialism and repression especially on the youth...” Beuys, who to everyone’s surprise also released his own song “Sonne statt Reagan” (“Sun instead of Reagan”)⁸⁸ that year, now also used popular forms of media expression in certain situations – thus reducing his skepticism. His great media presence encouraged a broader interest in the artistic content as well. The concert *Coyote III* described at the beginning, performed together with Paik on June 2, 1984, in the Sogetsu Hall in Tokyo, also took place – without artistic compromises – in front of a sold-out audience. Paik had the duet recorded in full length by four hi-fi colour TV cameras to enable later TV broadcasts and museum

86 (“Pünktlich zum 1. Januar des Orwell-Jahrs 1984 will Paik zeigen, dass Satelliten-Fernsehen auch positiven Zwecken dienen kann, so der Mischung von E- und U-Kultur und ihrem Austausch zwischen den Kontinenten” (DD, n.d.).

87 Cf. Paik (1984). “When asked what he would say to Peter at the gates of heaven, he (Paik) answers without hesitation that this live show is ‘my direct contribution to the survival of humanity, and he will let me in’” (Davis 1975). On April 12, 1984, Paik showed many of his major works on the 1st programme of German television in the programme Paik bei Bio.

88 Electrola 1982. Beuys appeared in public for the first time on the ARD music programme Bananas on July 3, 1982, with this song with the refrain: “Sun Instead of Reagan, Live Without Armaments!” (www.youtube.com).

and gallery installations and assured: "Again my aim is not financial but purely artistic."⁸⁹ The footage from Tokyo became the basis for Paik's contribution to documenta 8, 1987, *Beuys Voice*.

Beuys' participation in the concert with Henning Christiansen and Nam June Paik, as a contribution to the Biennale of Peace initiated by Robert Filliou, was limited to his voice. Beuys, Paik, and Henning Christiansen were to play on three grand pianos in the entrance stairwell of the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Hamburg on November 29, 1985 (Schneede 1994: 376f.). Beuys was unable to attend because of illness, but he gave instructions and made announcements by telephone, which were carried out by Wolfgang Feelisch; the oxygen release from a large oxygen bottle with a tube was especially impressive. A text that Beuys passed on, written on a board, was about "a new beginning" (Christiansen qtd. in Schneede 1994: 376), as Christiansen saw it. Beuys died on January 23, 1986. Paik carried on the image of Beuys in his art, especially in his subsequent multi-monitor installations. In the large work *Beuys Voice* in Kassel in 1987, video images of a burning Beuys hat were used alongside recordings of *Coyote III*,⁹⁰ a farewell ritual.

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90 In 1986, Paik burned two Beuys hats on the edge of the fountain in Düsseldorf's Ehrenhof; he recorded the action through video recordings by his two students Michael Bielicky and Ricardo Peredo Wende.

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