

"WE ARE IN OPEN CIRCUITS" - NAM JUNE PAIK

By Jud Yalkut

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"Many mystics are interested to spring out from ONE-ROW-TIME, ONE-WAY-TIME, in order to grasp Eternity.

aa) To stop at the consummated or sterile Zero-point is a classical method to grasp the eternity.

bb) To perceive SIMULTANEOUSLY the parallel flows of many independent movements is another classical way for it

.... IF WELL TRAINED,,,,,, he needs neither 13 TVs, nor TV, nor electronics, nor music, nor art, .. the happiest suicide of art the most difficult anti-art, that existed.... " - NAM JUNE PAIK.

Eating grapes and talking to Paik in his New York Studio, I asked him about his work with computers and computer-generated images at Bell Laboratories. "Oh, my work with computers grapes are better than computers. The computer has never had an irresistible attraction for me, but grapes do."

"Cybernated art is very important, but art for cybernated life is more important, and the latter need not be cybernated." - NAM JUNE PAIK.

"For the MACHINE show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1968-9, I first made all my color TV playable by the viewer; now I can do much better using the computer.

"One promising way: feeding computer-generated signals directly into the various inputs of the cathode ray. This is a good symbolization of the human body which has seven inputs from ears and mouth to genitals. The cathode ray has eight inputs and is comparable thus to the human body. Computer generation is best for abstract patterns and the input signals can be directly computer generated or generated by the philosophical programs obtained through the use of a computer. When pictures are sent by wire from place to place, this process is reproductive but never changeable, giving the same picture at the other end. If we can translate the picture through computers into mathematical equations, the results can then be changeable. Once you make an equation, it is very easy to manipulate,"

I asked Paik about his experiences in Japan:

"I was in Tokyo from July 1950 to October 1956, and then in 1964 again. I met two great Japanese engineers there. Stockhausen has worked in Japan and said the best engineering staff he has ever had was with the NHK radio. The two engineers I met were Shuya Abe (NOTE: Abe and Paik later developed the Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer together.) and Hideo Uchida. They changed my weltanschauung. They understood that science contains more beauty than logic. Hideo discovered the transistor much earlier than the Americans, but no one believed him when he said that certain crystals can amplify signals. He is now researching the electronic basis of telepathy.

"For example, when an elevated train passes under high-voltage wires, the people in the train change their subjects of conversation or the pitch of their voices unconsciously, and it is possible for people to pick up or tune in on the resonances of each other's brain waves. He believes that every radio has electronic resonance factors. (The coil has a factor which responds to some frequencies more violently than others.)

"We are not yet aware that telepathy is conveyed through the resonance factors of the mind or the environment of the surrounding house.

"Medical electronic research using computer analysis of human brain waves is rapidly advancing. Professor Kasamatsu of Tokyo University and others have been charting the alpha waves of Zen monks to observe the physiological-electrical changes when Satori is reached or not, and also experimented with LSD and other psychedelics likewise. (NOTE: See "An Electroencephalographic Study on the Zen Meditation (Zazen)" by Akira Kasamatsu and Tomio Hirai, in "Altered States of Consciousness", edited by Charles T. Tart, 1969, Wiley, New York.) The effect of the alpha wave on a graph is unmistakable. I found myself, I receive certain frequencies very low which I can receive normally when I perform my ONE FOR VIOLIN solo. I do not crash the violin until I can perceive certain frequencies of the surroundings that I cannot perceive normally."

"But how can one arrive at variability without losing intensity. Unifying variability and intensity has been one of the most important problems. Is intensity (tension, high voltage) essential to life? Perhaps one has to substitute this physical dimension rather by a spiritual or ideological dimension, i.f. ambiguity, depth, etc., if there is such a dimension.

Everyone can experience this consciousness through love for a while. The Zen priest also aims at a kind of calmness or calm ecstasy, but an external extended one, without crescendo, climax, catharsis- the causes of delusion, illusion, error and deception and self-deception. Therefore they say that love is as bad as hatred.

They train themselves to diminish, level and balance the amplitudes and frequencies of their love, hatred and life.- Zen requires hard training ... Who is trained, can better endure the tediousness. I admire the 'Music of Changes' most of all because it is Cage's most tedious composition." - NAM JUNE PAIK.

Paik and I discussed the recent activity in Art and Technology, and Paik commented: "One of the grave dangers of Art and Technology is the high cost of production which will have a minus effect on the artist's freedom. Allen Ginsberg needs only rice and

'pot' and can say anything. Norman Mailer speaks to a vast middle class, but the Art Market has been dominated by the very rich.

"Visual art is getting more and more like performing art. All art using sophisticated engineering techniques tend to be not permanent, breaks down, etc. In economics, the 'inflation hedge' of buying real estate and art works to keep property values in the face of currency devaluation each year is common. Technological art breaks down the notion of the permanency of art, and is the last great blow to gallery art which has already been shaken up by happenings and intermedia.

"Another point is that if the artist needs industrial help for artistic production, he loses his most supreme function as the last social critic of the social defense industrial complex. Some compromise will be necessary if his is receiving money from industrial complexes.

"The more art depends on industry, the more the artist loses his function as social critic. This has to be true. Hollywood has already long ago lost complete freedom with its movie industrialization. Going with the tide and romantic resistance neither work; we have to find a third way. Perhaps smoking 'pot' is art and engineering: art and chemistry."

"The Buddhists also say

'Karma is samsara

Relationship is metempsychosis'."