

Perspectives on Contemporary Art

An Introduction to Video Art

By Evie T. Joselow, Ph.D.

Video art has been a creative and exciting media since its appearance in the mid-1960s. The introduction of the Sony Portapak, first used by Nam June Paik in 1965, gave artists the means to explore the possibilities of capturing moving imagery outside the television studio with modifications of sound and light. The artistic potential to create ground-breaking video sculpture and installations that included performance and kinetic art were on exhibit in "The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age" at New York's Museum of Modern Art, 1968 and "TV as a Creative Medium," at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York City, 1969.

With each decade, new technology allowed the expansion of this unusual art form. The invention of the videocassette in the 1970s continued to expand the expressive possibilities. Frame editing produced glossy quality works that were ready for broadcast on television as well as in museums. The advent of computer-generated digital technology in the 1990s, from the 8-bit to the Internet, has now enabled artists to create totally tuned and sculptural environments without a camera.

Barbara London, a curator in the Department of Media at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, considers video art as diverse as painting. "It all depends on who is holding the camera, rather than the brush. It is all about the materiality of the electronic image," she says. "Today's video art is merging with everyday life and everyday people, focusing on content and experimentation instead of distraction."

A printed and on-line supplement to *The Wall Street Journal*, December 2, 2006

Copyright © 2006 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved
<http://online.wsj.com/ad/article-1-6-1.html>