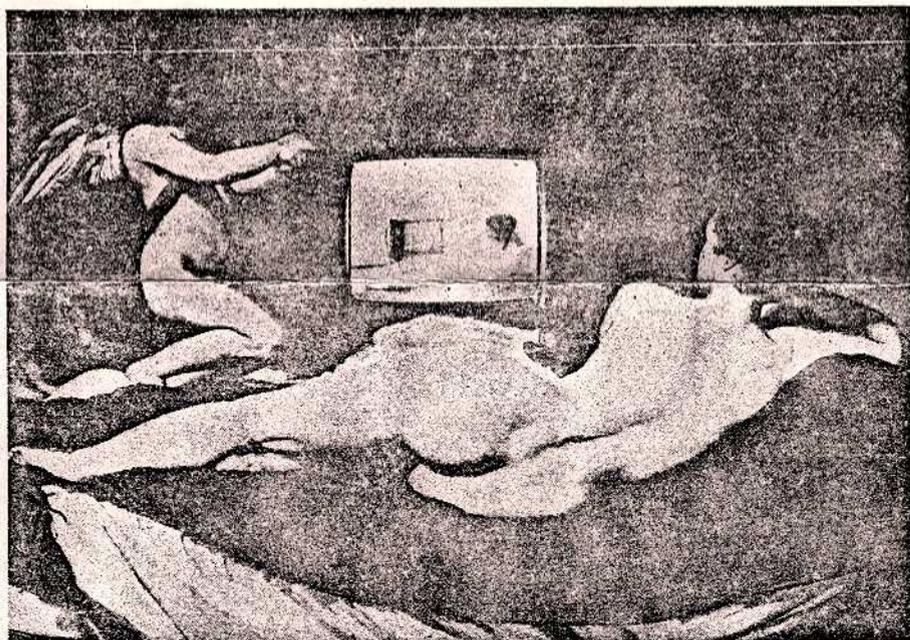


# Golden Age Of Video Art

In the future, television will be a gallery in your living room for video art. For now, here are galleries, TV stations, and museums showing pioneer work.



"Venus & Her Mirror" by Juan Downey is a witty painting cum video installation.

"Video is the window of yesterday.  
Video is the window of tomorrow . . ."

Shigeo Kubota, 1976

BY PAT WADSLEY AND JILL KIRSCHENBAUM You are watching television. The screen is a mass of pulsating color. Within the color, a female nude stands at the top of a staircase. She begins to walk down. The colors attack her, vibrate around her. She descends again and again. She is a living painting, part of a reverential video piece by Shigeo Kubota, which honors the work of French Cubist Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase*.

Television? Opiate of the masses? Bubble gum for the eyes? It might seem the least likely candidate for an art medium. But with the growing number of artists who have moved into video art, the ongoing support of the medium by major galleries and museums across the country, and newly affordable, consumer-oriented video technology, the public as well as the most conservative art critics

are being persuaded to look at television art in a new way.

In the '80s, television will be a gallery in your living room.

In 1969, Howard Wise, then the owner of the Wise Gallery, held one of the earliest video art exhibitions, called "TV as a Creative Medium." Some of the artists represented were Nam June Paik, Eric Siegel, Frank Gillette, and Ira Schneider. The possibilities of video art so impressed Howard Wise that he closed his gallery and opened Electronic Arts Intermix, a nonprofit organization that provides post-production facilities and distribution, sale, and rental of finished works. At the same time, other video enclaves such as the Kitchen and Global Village were forming to accommodate the growing interest in the new medium.

Videotape, which records images electronically rather than photographically, had been used in commercial television studios for years. But in 1968, the

invention of the Sony Portapak, a hand-21 held video camera retailing for approximately \$2,000—1/20 the price of the studio equipment—took video production out of the studios and revolutionized the use of video in the art world.

The first artist to own a Portapak was supposedly Nam June Paik, called the Grand Dada of video art. In the mid-'60s, the Korean-born composer experimented with television, using it to depict what he saw as man's difficulty in dealing with a technological world. In the videotape entitled "TV Bra for Living Sculpture," Paik's contribution to Howard Wise's '69 exhibit, avant-garde cellist Charlotte Moorman was seen wearing a bra constructed from two small television sets. The sounds she made on her cello changed and manipulated the images on her TV bra.

According to Paik, "The real issue implied is not to make another scientific toy, but how to *humanize* the technology and the electronic medium, which is progressing rapidly—too rapidly."

Paik was not only involved in humanizing technology, but in advancing it. In the late '60s, he invented a video synthesizer with Shuya Abe that allowed the artist to manipulate and distort the images on the screen.

In 1969, when there were few permanent facilities specifically designed for viewing video works, Paik, along with two other artists, Woody and Steina Vasulka, founded the Kitchen, which is today one of the foremost centers for experimental video, music, and dance. The integration of these art forms has also been the story behind the growth of video. Most of the artists who turned to video saw it as a way to solve the time and space restrictions of the sole use of other media.

Shigeo Kubota employs a subtle integration and treatment of the video monitor within sculptural forms. In the installation "Duchampiana," which Kubota taped in 1972, a tower of monitors showing the grave of the French artist is reflected in a mirrored path.

Painter/photographer William Wegman incorporates into his video pieces the same humor found in his other works. One tape of Wegman finds him and his pet weimaraner sitting at a table while Wegman corrects the dog's spelling mistakes.

Peter Campus comes to video from a background of film and psychology. One of his videotapes is entitled "Three Transitions." In one segment of this work, Campus, through special effects, appears to be tearing himself apart as if he were ripping up a piece of paper. In another, he sets fire to his moving, mirrored image.

Painter-art critic Douglas Davis was invited by QUBE, the pioneering two-way talk-back TV system in Columbus, Ohio, to do a live video performance of