



ETSU DEPARTMENT OF ART & DESIGN

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4D Design

# Introduction to Video Art

- **Video art** is an art form which relies on using video technology as a visual and audio medium. Video art emerged during the late 1960s as new consumer video technology such as video tape recorders became available outside corporate broadcasting. Video art can take many forms: recordings that are broadcast; installations viewed in galleries or museums; works streamed online, distributed as video tapes, or DVDs; and performances which may incorporate one or more television sets, video monitors, and projections, displaying live or recorded images and sounds.
- Video art is named for the original analog video tape, which was the most commonly used recording technology in much of the form history into the 1990s. With the advent of digital recording equipment, many artists began to explore digital technology as a new way of expression.
- One of the key differences between video art and theatrical cinema is that video art does not necessarily rely on many of the conventions that define theatrical cinema. Video art may not employ the use of actors, may contain no dialogue, may have no discernible narrative or plot, and may not adhere to any of the other conventions that generally define motion pictures as entertainment. This distinction also distinguishes video art from cinema's subcategories such as avant garde cinema, short films, or experimental film<sup>1</sup>.



Nam June Paik  
*TV Buddha*  
1974



This renowned artwork by Paik depicts a sculpture of a Buddha from the 18th century posed with a symbolic hand gesture called mudra which is for tranquil meditation. A video camera is placed in front of the Buddha, recording the statue while playing this projected image on a white TV screen that looks futuristic. This work induces the feeling that the Buddha is doomed to be forever caught in the closed-circuit loop that is the infinite play of his reflection on the TV screen.

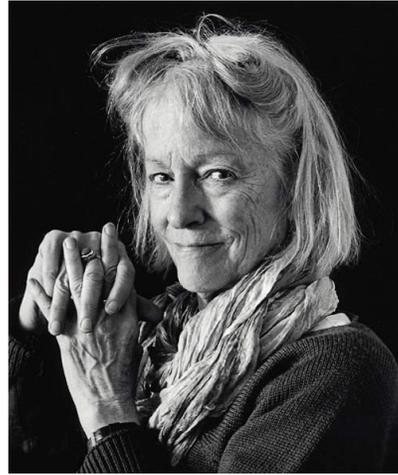


Nam June Paik, *Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii*, 1995, fifty-one channel video installation (including one closed-circuit television feed), custom electronics, neon lighting, steel and wood; color, sound, Smithsonian American Art Museum





Joan Jonas  
[Vertical Role](#)  
1972



**Joan Jonas** is an American visual artist and a pioneer of video and performance art, and one of the most important artists to emerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Jonas' projects and experiments were influential in the creation of video performance art as a medium. In 1970, Jonas went on a long trip to Japan — where she bought her first video camera and saw Noh and Kabuki theater — with the sculptor Richard Serra. Her video performances between 1972 and 1976 pared the cast down to one actor, the artist herself.





# Francis Alÿs

## [Paradise is Praxis 1](#)

1997



**Francis Alÿs** is a Belgian-born, Mexico-based artist. His work emerges in the interdisciplinary space of art, architecture, and social practice. In 1986, Alÿs left behind his profession as an architect and relocated to Mexico City.

He has created a diverse body of artwork and performance art that explores urban tensions and geopolitics. Employing a broad range of media, from painting to performance, his works examine the tension between politics and poetics, individual action and impotence. Alÿs commonly enacts *paseos*—walks that resist the subjection of common space.<sup>[1]</sup> Cyclical repetition and mechanics of progression and regression also inform the character of Alÿs' actions and mythology—Alÿs contrasts geological and technological time through land-based and social practice that examine individual memory and collective mythology. Alÿs frequently engages rumor as a central tool in his practice, disseminating ephemeral, practice-based works through word-of-mouth and storytelling.



Interview with [Francis Alÿs](#)



Pipilotti Rist  
*Ever is All Over*  
1997



From her early music-video-style works to her later immersive projection environments, Rist's unique artistic vocabulary is rooted in popular culture, technology, and historical feminist video art. *Ever Is Over All* is one of Rist's first large-scale installations, giving spatial dimension to her lush visual language, which often combines imagery suggestive of female sexuality with enhanced images of nature and the everyday to create hypersaturated worlds that are part reality, part fantasy. Shot in a single take using consumer-grade video cameras, the work emphasizes the painterly qualities of standard-definition video, in which the pixels or "color noise" that compose the image are visible.



You can see the influence of video art in various forms of popular culture. For instance, in the Beyoncé's video album *Lemonade*, she echoes the work of both Pipilotti Rist *Ever is All Over* and Bill Viola's *The Deluge*, a video highlighted in the next slide.



Bill Viola

*The Deluge – Going  
Forth By Day*

2002



Bill Viola is a pioneer in the use of the moving image. He employs video, film, and audio technology to reveal his interest in conceptual and perceptual issues, as well as to realize his desire to engage with the history of art. Having worked with video since the early 1970s, Viola says that he has “never lost faith in the image,” and he has embraced new mediums while maintaining classical aesthetic values. Viola’s imagery has an immediate, visceral impact, but his temporal stretching and slowing of sensory experience through the use of art and technology deepens his works as vehicles of spiritual meditation. Viola’s installations and artworks invoke both primal archetypes and a mystical spirituality.

