

**New York Center for Media Arts (NYCMA)
and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) present**

Interactions

The first in a series of exhibitions featuring works from the EAI Collection.

October 4 - November 3, 2002

New York Center for Media Arts (NYCMA) and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) present *Interactions*, the first in a series of exhibitions featuring works from the EAI collection. This exhibition, which pairs artists in three programs that span 1969 to 2001, explores artists' direct interactions with electronic technologies or within constructed technological environments.

In *Program I*, Peggy Ahwesh and Kristin Lucas articulate visions of the virtual self, reconstructing the artificial environments of video and computer games to investigate identity and the alienation of the individual in a media-saturated world. The works in *Program II*, by Nam June Paik and Steina, are performative exercises that celebrate the direct interaction of gesture, electronic technology, and music. In *Program III*, works by John Cage and Bruce Nauman explore improvisation and process through what Cage terms "meaningless activity that is nonetheless communicative, like light itself."

Asserting their presence within the technical or cultural refractions of electronic landscapes, the artists either perform directly on-camera, or are represented by surrogates or gestural traces within electronically constructed, often abstracted worlds. Throughout, the works investigate the artists' relationships to a process of intervention and interaction that propels or challenges an electronic "reality."

Program I

Peggy Ahwesh

***She Puppet*, 2001, 15 min, color**

Re-working footage collected from months of playing *Tomb Raider*, Ahwesh transforms the video game into a reflection on identity and mortality. Trading the rules of gaming for art making, she brings *Tomb Raider's* cinematic aesthetics to the foreground, and shirks the pre-programmed "mission" of its heroine, Lara Croft. Ahwesh acknowledges the intimate relationship between this fictional character and her player. Moving beyond an implicit feminist critique of the problematic female identity, she enlarges the dilemma of Croft's entrapment to that of the individual in an increasingly artificial world.

Kristin Lucas

***Watch Out For Invisible Ghosts*, 1996, 5:15 min, color**

This mock virtual environment is a playground for the imagination. Equipped with helmet, goggles, and a basic understanding of early video game strategies, the artist morphs into an adventureland training camp where she meets with media icons on common ground. She fearlessly changes her intensity and velocity in unison with, and at times under the command of, rival action-heroes and network sponsors. The title implies that there are bugs in the program, undetected viruses in the system. This video performance parallels the heightened sense of anxiety synonymous with computer games, amplifying a "fear of contamination" to a level that borders on insanity.

Action, 1997-98, 5 min, color

Writes Lucas: "This video carries the tension of an audition or screen test. I am called onstage for a test drive around a virtual race course, a metaphor for the information superhighway. My intention for this video is to investigate the term 'action' as it applies to the contemporary lifestyle.

Program II

Nam June Paik

9/23/69: Experiment with David Atwood, 1969, 80 min, color
In collaboration with David Atwood, Fred Barzyk, and Olivia Tappan

This early masterwork of electronic experimentation was created by Paik while he was Artist-in-Residence at WGBH in Boston. The title refers to the day it was made -- September 23, 1969. Using the Paik/Abe Synthesizer, Paik creates a stunning visual collage that fuses spontaneous, free-form experimentation with virtuosity and control. Paik manipulates and merges pure electronic abstractions, footage captured "live" from television, prerecorded material, and images recorded in the studio. Exploring the interactivity of video and audio synthesizers, Paik processes these images with live and prerecorded sounds. *9/23/69* allows the viewer to observe Paik in the process of inventing his unique visual vocabulary. This work reveals insights into the development of Paik's electronic imagery, and, as the title suggests, captures the immediacy of the place and the moment.

Steina

Violin Power, 1970-78, 10:04 min, b&w

Steina terms this work "a demo tape on how to play video on the violin." Her background as a violinist and her evolution from musician to visual artist is referenced through an analogy of video camera to musical instrument. Steina is first seen in footage from the early 1970s, playing the violin and singing to The Beatles *Let It Be*. As succeeding segments trace a chronological progression, Steina layers imagery and time. The violin itself ultimately becomes an image-generating tool, as Steina's violin bow creates abstract visual transpositions of sound and vibrations. An unconventional self-portrait, *Violin Power* is also a study of the relationship of music, electronic image, and the artist's gesture.

Program III

John Cage

***One 11 and 103*, 1992, 94 min, b&w**

Abstractions of light travel across and into the sounds and space created by artist and composer John Cage. Writes Cage: "*One 11* is a film without subject. There is light but no persons, no things, no ideas about repetition and variation. It is meaningless activity which is nonetheless communicative, like light itself, escaping our attention as communication because it has no content to restrict its transforming and informing power. *103* is an orchestral work. It is divided into seventeen parts. The lengths of the seventeen parts are the same for all the strings and the percussion. The woodwinds and the brass follow another plan. The shots of the cameraman still another. Following chance operations, the number of wind instruments changes for each of the seventeen parts."

Bruce Nauman

***Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube*, 1969, 62 min, b&w**

This videotape records the activities Nauman performed four years earlier in 1965. Both in this performance and in this work he strikes and holds a variety of poses on the floor in relation to a glowing fluorescent light fixture.

Electronic Arts Intermix

Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) is a nonprofit media arts organization that is one of the world's leading resources for video and interactive media by artists. EAI distributes over 3,000 titles by 185 artists to educational, cultural, arts, and television audiences. EAI's international collection of video and interactive media ranges from pioneering works of the 1960s to new works by emerging artists.

www.eai.org

EAI's Online Catalogue (www.eai.org) is a comprehensive resource guide to the artists and works in the collection. The Online Catalogue is a searchable database of the EAI collection, featuring artists' biographies, descriptions of works, special programs and features, and direct online ordering.

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