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# Infrastructure, Production, and Archive: American and Japanese Video Art Production of 1960s and 1970s

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**Infrastructure, Production, and Archive: American and  
Japanese Video Art Production of 1960s and 1970s**

**By**

**Ann A. Adachi**

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts,  
The Graduate Center, City University of New York

2014

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## **Abstract**

# **Infrastructure, Production, and Archive: American and Japanese Video Art Production of 1960s and 1970s**

**Ann A. Adachi**

Advisors: Professor Amy Herzog and Professor Matthew Gold

Focusing a study on the infrastructure of artistic production and maintenance opens a space in which to examine the relationship between artistic inspiration and knowledge making, the occurrences and the writing of its history. In the case of the comparative study of the emergence of Japanese and American video art, common artistic technique employed may indicate motivations derived from the technical possibility of the video medium, while the study of infrastructure demonstrates how large-scale funding, formation of archives, the establishment of systems of distribution and channels of education affect the emergence and development of video art as a genre. This thesis analyzes the synchronous and productive rise of video art in the U.S. and Japan from mid-1960s through mid-1970s, while problematizing the systems of knowledge formation and cultural maintenance that produced a different reception of the histories.

In reviewing the structure of cultural maintenance today, the digital field inspires an exploration of new avenues for models of infrastructure that is alternative to traditional institutional frameworks. The digital platform as a pedagogical tool, research resource, and discussion forum allows cross-linguistic understanding, networked scholarship, and open accessibility, suggesting an ideal method for knowledge making. Moreover, this thesis suggests

the digital platform as a potential catalyst for a collaborative administration of archive and preservation of Japanese experimental film and video, proposing an alternative method of knowledge formation and cultural maintenance moving forward.

# Infrastructure, Production, and Archive: American and Japanese Video Art Production of 1960s and 1970s

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*Note: Japanese words are romanized according to the modified Hepburn system. Macrons are not used. Names of Japanese persons are given in the Japanese order, surname first.*

## INTRODUCTION

The infrastructure around art production and preservation plays a significant role in the development of art history. Programs that support artists' creation foster experimentation and ingenuity, while exhibition, education, and preservation initiatives help form discourse around the work. Focusing a study on the infrastructure of artistic production and maintenance opens a space in which to examine the relationship between artistic inspiration and knowledge making, the occurrences and the writing of its history. In the case of the comparative study of the emergence of Japanese and American video art, common artistic technique employed may indicate motivations derived from the technical possibility of the video medium, while the study of infrastructure demonstrates how large-scale funding, the formation of archive, the system of distribution, and the channels of education affect the emergence and development of video art as a genre. This thesis analyzes the synchronous and productive rise of video art in the U.S. and Japan from mid-1960s through mid-1970s, while problematizing the systems of knowledge formation and cultural maintenance that produced a different reception of the histories.

In reviewing the structure of cultural maintenance today, the digital field inspires an exploration of new avenues for models of infrastructure that is alternative to traditional institutional frameworks. A digital platform holds potential to mobilize individual projects and inspire a networked dialogue, circumventing a reliance on established institutions and large funding. The digital platform as a pedagogical tool, research resource, and discussion forum allows cross-linguistic understanding, networked scholarship, and open accessibility, suggesting an ideal method for knowledge making. Moreover, not only is the digital platform suggested as an agent of paradigm shift for the way discourse is developed, it is also examined as a potential



catalyst for a collaborative administration of archive and preservation of Japanese experimental film and video.

A historical study of infrastructure is complicated when comparing twentieth century art made in the U.S. and Japan—the issues of originality and influence are observed under the geopolitical power dynamic. The resemblance of Western artistic style in non-Western art calls for an identification of genuine creativity that manifests from its local context. In reviewing specific cases, awareness is called for to keep in mind the dominant narratives that affect the interpretation of the local context. We are reminded, as Homi Bhabha warns that, “the similitude of the symbol as it plays across cultural sites must not obscure the fact that repetition of the sign is, in each specific social practice, both different and differential...the transfer of meaning can never be total between systems of meaning, or within them.”<sup>1</sup> The process of identifying the particular involves considering the context of the local, and meditating on the temporal lag that describes the subsequent as *belated*. Art historian Reiko Tomii suggests the methodical value of “international contemporaneity” within which comparison of multiple viewpoints can operate in the common space of “now” and offers a suspension of “the omniscient single perspective (which is more often than not Eurocentric).”<sup>2</sup> Video, which emerged on the consumer market simultaneously in Japan and in the U.S. in 1965 is able to demonstrate an equal starting line for experimentation.

The dynamism with which the nascent video technology roused new artistic techniques among artists in the two countries is a vital subject of comparative study, considering its

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<sup>1</sup> Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> For further study on the subject of international contemporaneity in particular to Japanese art, see: Tomii, Reiko. “‘International Contemporaneity’ in the 1960s: Discursing on Art in Japan and Beyond,” *Japan Review* No. 21 (2009): 123-147.

reflexive ability of feedback within the context of the antiestablishment movement, its proximity to broadcast technology and mainstream media, and its role in the development of art and technology. The different timelines in which television broadcast began, and the rate of television ownership in each country, serve as a background for assessing the different reception of, and reaction to mass communication. Chapter One presents examples of the variety of artistic practices that came out of the emergence of video in the two countries while incorporating a study of institutions that enabled the production of work. Rather than comparatively analyzing *when* those works were made and construct a timeline of the possible instances of crosspollination, attention is given to the social and cultural contexts as well as *how* media art was produced, then maintained. Video's inherent connection to the television broadcast technology, as well as its characteristics of immediacy and feedback opened ways of provoking questions about mass media, exploring new communication strategies, and creating interactive art. The points of comparisons are placed on the technological medium specificity of video from which common inspirations were derived—mainly its dialogue with the broadcast technology; video's portability, relative inexpensive cost, and ease of operation; and its immediacy and ability to conduct closed-circuit presentation. For this reason, a large section of video art has been left out that concerns performative self-reflexive inquiries such as those pursued by Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, Joan Jonas, Peter Campus, James Byrne, Yamamoto Keigo, Wada Morihiro, Idemitsu Mako, among many others. The comparative study in this thesis is limited to Japanese and American examples, in order to focus on parallel starting points and examine the details of those instances. Mainly, the cities of New York and Tokyo have been selected as points of focus from which comparative analyses are drawn. Chapter One presents the similarity of technical strategies used and the different nuances that those techniques signified in each

historical and cultural context, while at the same time, locating how these artistic inspirations were fostered and produced.

Despite the relatively equal social and economic ground within which Japanese and American artists began contemporaneous explorations of the new video technology, the differences in the support systems for creation of art, knowledge production, dissemination, and preservation, has produced a different situation of administration of culture between the two countries. Chapter Two dives into the details of *how* works were produced, distributed, archived, and preserved for use of exhibition and art historical study. Differences of institutional structures produced, in the U.S., a curriculum of video art history within the academic art history discipline, inclusion of this history within museums, and archive institutions that preserve and maintain this legacy; whereas in Japan, the history of video art, and to a degree experimental film in general, has been left out of institutional curriculum. As video artist Alfred Birnbaum points out, the initial productivity of the first generation of video artists of late-1960s and early-1970s did not sustain in Japan, due to the lack of institutional support within the country, and instead inconsistent, individualized mode of production ensued, at times turning to a commercial or industrial direction.<sup>3</sup> Such analysis may help understand the sense of dispersed practices and lack of unity, even contributing to the difficulty of locating and labeling a “movement” of Japanese video art. Details of funding, preservation initiatives, and histories of organizations are studied in order to trace the formation of entities that maintain archives of moving image works for use by research and exhibition purposes today. Because archiving and preservation initiatives of the organizations examined include film and video, this chapter discusses experimental film, in addition to video works.

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<sup>3</sup> Birnbaum, Alfred. “Japan video,” *Mediamatic Magazine*. Vol. 3, No.1, 1988.  
<http://www.mediamatic.net/255224/en/japan-video>. May 2014.

The lack of Japanese federal and private funding revealed in Chapter Two suggests one of the reasons for the absence of an archival institution for experimental moving image works within the country. Chapter Three suggests an alternative model of information distribution of Japanese experimental film and video, by way of building an online database. Theoretical discussion of the digital archive offers an understanding of the difference between the digital and the physical, clearly separating the functions of the two entities. Instead of establishing a physical central depository of experimental works, which may be cost prohibitive, digital archive is explored as a potential alternative to accessing the works and information about them, made possible by linking individuals and independent institutions that hold collections of selected works in order to create a “Master Catalog.” Online platform can also offer an interface for scholarly exchange, bringing international researchers, artists, and the public to discuss the Japanese experimental works in the context of their own practices. Such mode of working collaboratively perhaps suggests a new model of infrastructure formed by a consortium of individuals and institutions, as well as the online users who value and contribute to the making of its discourse. Access to information online suggests alternatives to the traditional institutionalization of material, and allows wide range of people—both in terms of geographical distance and social categories—to use the material, encouraging cross-cultural discussion and understanding. By cultivating cultural value, the caretakers of the physical film or tape may find support in the preservation efforts.

While creating an online archive is not comparable to building a physical, central archive, the production of knowledge that may result from better access to referential information (a catalog, description of works, primary and secondary texts, clips of works, etc.), is a potential start to forming a system of maintaining culture. New scholarship, exhibition, and community

that may develop out of the online platform could support causes of preservation and archiving.

The third chapter presents practical suggestion for such project, and includes a detailed outline of the research criteria, its goals, types of artwork to be researched, and an overview of example projects.

Differences of cultural infrastructure are found by comparing simultaneous artistic practices, which serve as parallel points of measurement. The process of comparing, and the identification of the overlaps and differences opens up an understanding of the development of historical formation, upon which today's circumstances exist. The understanding of historical formation then informs possible new strategies for telling and preserving histories, one that provides an alternative approach to traditional scholarship and the maintenance of culture, and is applicable to today's digital culture. Such investigation will hopefully contribute to reviewing the today's role of cultural administration and thinking innovatively about methods of knowledge production and cultural maintenance.

## CHAPTER 1 / TYPES OF EARLY VIDEO EXPERIMENTATION

### Social and Cultural Context

The rise of video art in Japan and the U.S. occurred within the context of anti-establishment sentiment and the emergence of new technology in the arts in the 1960s. In the U.S., conflicts in civil rights movement, feminism, anti-war, and environmental protests spread through the country, while in Japan, political protests such as the one against the US-Japan Security Treaty (Anpo), set the tone for the student protest movement and other regional protests. The rapid economic growth in Japan in the 1960s brought renewed energy to promoting a new, modernized national identity as the country prepared for the 1964 World Olympics, then for the 1970 Osaka World Exposition (Expo '70) where national and private entities actively commissioned works that integrated art and technology for large-scale presentations.<sup>4</sup>

With the distribution of the video technology in the general commercial market, activists in the U.S. sought opportunities through video to replace the direction of communication which had been from TV to viewer, to viewer to viewer. The emergence of Conceptual Art ran in tandem to the general anti-establishment sentiment in politics and society, as well as a direction toward decentralizing the art market and the modernist art history discourse in the U.S., as artists questioned the role of the mainstream and commercial nature of art, challenging the idea of the viewer as a passive consumer.<sup>5</sup> Television, a technology for mass communication, was seen by

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<sup>4</sup> Art historian Rika Iezumi Hiro suggests the differences in the moving image movement between artists in the Kansai region and Tokyo can be characterized around the efforts toward Expo '70. In Tokyo, artists who participated in Expo '70 received generous funding to produce large-scale productions that aimed to communicate with a large audience, as opposed to the fine artists in Kansai region who practiced conceptual experiments using photography and film. Hiro, Rika Iezumi. "Between Absence and Presence: Exploring Video Earth's What is Photography?," *Invisible Culture*, Issue No. 15 (Fall, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Wollen, Peter. "Global Conceptualism and Northern American Conceptual Art," *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s to 1980s*. Ed. Philomena Mariani, New York: The Queens Museum of Art, 1999. 73-85.

certain activists in the U.S. as a tool for those with power to disseminate ideologies to the masses.

As examined in later sections, the pointed critical stance taken by activists towards mass communication was not a subject of great concern for people in Japan. The popularization of television was late in Japan compared to the U.S., which started broadcast in 1953, twelve years later than the U.S. (fig.1). The number of people owning television was significantly lower in Japan throughout the 1950s and still in the early 1960s. In the U.S., broadcast networks served a significant role in artists' early experiments, many of who are now considered important pioneers of video art in the country.

	1953	1958	1960	1963
US	169	284	310	332
Japan	0.1	17	64	140

Figure 1.

Number of TV per 1,000 people (TV Broadcast start year: US-1941; Japan-1953).

William A Bresun 'Impact of TV' in Michael Goldberg, 'Appeal of Communication,' *Kikan Film* No.11, April 1974.

## **Electronic Visual Experimentation**

Broadcast television stations in the U.S. provided laboratories to those pioneering video artists who experimented with the distortion and abstraction of the visual language. While the role of American broadcast stations is large in cultivating experimentation of electronic visual language, Japan did not have similar laboratories that encouraged artists to explore the artistic use of video. Instead, one-off commissions such as those around EXPO '70 and work for film production and PR films gave opportunities for artists to incorporate technology into their art. In both countries, similar visual culture emerged out of the cultural landscape of 1960s, which fused

technology and counterculture against the dominant system of communication and consumption, as well as exploration of perception.

WGBH, Boston's public broadcasting station, was a key institution in distributing information about, and supporting the production of experimental video art. As early as 1968, WGBH was committed to supporting the development of video art through its residency programs such as the 'Rockefeller Artists-in-Television' project, where Nam June Paik made the famous Paik/Abe synthesizer with Abe Shuya in 1969.<sup>6</sup> The work of pioneering video artists exploring new electronic moving image was documented by WGBH's television program *The Medium Is the Medium* (1969). The program included introductions to the work of six artists—Aldo Tambellini, Thomas Tadlock, Allan Kaprow, James Seawright, Otto Piene, and Nam June Paik—who were invited to work with television technicians to conduct experiments and create works. One of the works presented in *The Medium Is the Medium*, Thomas Tadlock's *Archetron* takes images from three live television broadcasts to generate fluctuating, kaleidoscopic images. In *Electronic Opera #1* (1969), Nam June Paik used magnet to manipulate images in the mass media, such as the television found footage of Richard Nixon, which he combined with a video of naked dancers.<sup>7</sup>

The abstraction of visual language through the manipulation of video technology and television footage is, for art historian David Joselit, a common thread for both video artists and the American hippies whose psychedelic visual culture swept around the world. Joselit writes:

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<sup>6</sup> Paik/Abe synthesizer was built by Nam June Paik and Abe Shuya during their residency at WGBH in 1969. It is the first synthesizer designed to distort video signal.

<sup>7</sup> Allan Kaprow's *Hello* was not an experimentation of visual field but rather, a test of viewer-to-viewer communication through the interactive video happening in which five television cameras and twenty-seven monitors connected four remote locations over a closed-circuit television network.



The link between abolishing a capitalist mode of exchange and freeing human nature is associated with the transformation of consciousness...the visual experience of acid, as represented by both early trippers and the inventors of a full-blown sixties psychedelic visuality, is characterized by the dissolution of objects into waves or pulsations.<sup>8</sup>

A similar procedure of technological abstraction of objects associated with counter culture, psychedelic drug use, and anti-establishment, was also present in Japan. There, it was termed underground culture, or *angura*. Japanese *angura* originally referred to the anti-commercial films of the New American Cinema, known as Underground Cinema, which explored then taboo subjects of the time including sex, homosexuality, violence, and drugs. In his 1967 essay, *A Tectonic Shift in Art: From The EXPO to the Hippie Movement*, musician and artist Tone Yasunao drew connections between the heightening of technocratic and intermedia practice demonstrated in the EXPO '70 and the visual sensibility of the hippie movement. Tone, through his interviews with Japanese artists of wide-range of background,<sup>9</sup> interpreted the underground as a unified culture that is the manifestation of “a generation that tries to sensitively grasp the shift in the environment that is technologically driven.”<sup>10</sup>

The “dissolution of objects” that Joselit described, resembles the filmmaker Kanesaka Kenji’s interpretation of the underground (which was included in Tone’s essay). For Kanesaka, the underground is an expression of “perception” (*chikaku*) not of “consciousness” (*ishiki*). Consciousness represents the dominance of language in the hierarchical order of civil

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<sup>8</sup> Joselit, David. *Feedback: Television Against Democracy*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007. 72-73.

<sup>9</sup> Tone Yasunao interviewed playwright and proponent of Situation Theater (Jyoko Gekijo) Kara Juro, filmmaker Kanesaka Kenji, butoh dancer Hijikata Tatsumi, performative action instigator Kato Yoshihiro of the Zero Dimension collective, musician Shiomi Mieko, and fine artist Akasegawa Genpei.

<sup>10</sup> Yasunao Tone, “Geijutsu no chikaku hendo: Expo kara hippie made,” *Bijutsu techo* No.289, November 1967, pp.98-109. Translated into English in: Chong, Doryun, et al. *From Postwar to Postmodern, Art in Japan 1945–1989: Primary Documents*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2013. 241-247.

organization, in which language symbolizes the establishment. In contrast, perception, is that which comes before cognition, and is what cannot be contained within language. The emphasis on the dissolution of visual object for both Japanese and American counter cultures favored the intuitive procedure that expressed resistance to the established, civil, and capitalist order.

Though there were no Japanese broadcast laboratories officially supporting experimentation of electronic image manipulation, Japanese artists also explored new techniques using television equipment. By sneaking afterhours into the television studio where he worked, filmmaker Ando Kohei made *Oh! My Mother* (1969). Using a television camera and monitor, Ando looped a film projection of three images which was then multiplied and animated by the video signal feedback, metaphorically expressing the technological evolution of a son who represents electronic technology and is born out of the film medium (the mother), is processed by electronic signals and disrupts and violates the mother/film, and through the feedback loop, is born from her (film) again.

Using the same method of magnet interference of television image as Nam June Paik's *Electronic Opera #1*, filmmaker Matsumoto Toshio manipulated broadcast footage of the political demonstration of Anpo, the US-Japan Security Treaty of 1960<sup>11</sup> in the work, *Magnetic Scramble* (1968). This piece was included as part of the feature film *Funeral Parade of Roses* (1968) directed by Matsumoto, which chronicled the mysterious and psychedelic life of young people who are immersed in the *angura* culture (underground culture). Matsumoto's motive in directing *Funeral Parade of Roses* was to explore the 1960s culture and political landscape that

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<sup>11</sup> The US-Japan Security Treaty, first signed in 1952, provided a basis for security relations between Japan, which regained sovereignty after the allied occupation, and the United States. Though the treaty established mutual defense obligations between the two countries, it gave US the right to continue its military presence within Japan. The revision signed in 1960 did not alleviate the status of the unequal treaty, and stirred protests by leftist opposition including students and unions.

hit many parts of the world and impacted the paradigm change of the generation of young Japanese'.<sup>12</sup> Matsumoto furthered his experiments with electronic moving imagery in *Metastasis* (1971), in which he used Electro Color Processor, a device used in the field of medicine and engineering. The use of magnetic fields was a point of entry for both American and Japanese artists that produced a new visual language unique to the electronic mediums of both television and video.

### **Works for Broadcast and Alternative Communication**

Besides visual experimentation, American broadcast stations both public and private encouraged the use of video as a new form of alternative documentary and communication, as well as radical journalism. Artists received opportunities to present their video work and alternative reporting on broadcast television, which was explored through the use of portapak video cameras as an inexpensive and portable tool. In contrast, there was a lack of such broadcast entities that hosted experimental programming in Japan but there were still activities by artists who sought to use video's immediacy for social engagement.

In addition to WGBH, the independent organization Artist Television Network (ATN), established in 1976 in New York, offered programs of video art to the general audience through cable access television. Its operation consisted of roughly four parts. First and its prominent program was the weekly cablecast of programs that included performance, theater, dance, simulcast music, video art, and interviews. Second, ATN facilitated the production of programs, including making arrangements on behalf of the artists/directors for low-cost production and

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Matsumoto Toshio by Morimura Yasumasa. Oshigane, Junji, et al. *Kyokairyuiki no souzouteki kaos: bijutsu x eizo. Matsumoto Toshio hen*. Tokyo: Bijutsu shuppansha, 2010.

post-production facilities, and paid artists as well as the cost of crew and facilities. Third, ATN published and distributed annual catalog of programs and rented programs to other cable stations of which half of the proceeds were paid as royalties to the artist. And forth, ATN studied technology and economics of cablecasting in the local SoHo area. Through the broadcast series, SoHo Television and the Live Show produced by ATN's founder Jaime Davidovich, ATN presented regular weekly telecasts of programs created by visual and performing artists, from 1978 to 1983. Programs included video art works such as Kubota Shigeo's *Video Girls and Video Songs for Navajo Sky* (1973), Terry Fox's *Children Tapes* (1974), Joan Jonas' *I Want to Live in the Country* (1976), among many other seminal video art.

The public broadcast station in New York, WNET / Thirteen hosted Television Laboratory from 1972 to 1984, and carried the mission to "research into the nature of television, exploration of its artistic limits, and its effect on human perception."<sup>13</sup> The TV Lab's Video and Television Review (VTR) Series broadcast fiction and nonfiction programs, including video art such as Ed Emschwiller's *Scapemates* (1972) and Nam June Paik's *Global Groove* (1973); documentary and experimental non-fiction such as Arthur Ginsberg's *The Continuing Story of Carel and Ferd* (1970–1975) and Shirley Clark's *Bridges Go Round* (1958); and alternative journalism by video collectives such as Top Value Television (T VTV)'s *Lord of the Universe* (1974), and Videofreex's *Lanesville TV* (1972–1977).

Like early broadcast laboratory of WGBH's Artists-in-Television program, WNET's TV Lab also broadcast works by artists who used synthesizers to manipulate video signals. In addition, TV Lab collaborated with the collective T VTV to explore the possibility of alternative journalism. The yearlong residency of T VTV in 1974 actively used the portable video

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<sup>13</sup> The Television Laboratory at Thirteen, Report 1975. Fales Library Archive, New York University, Guerrilla TV Archive, Box: 2 Folder: 56 (Mixed materials (31142042240591)).

equipment, resulting in the production of *Lord of the Universe*, a documentary about the sixteen-year-old Guru Maharaj Jiand. Using portable video recorder, TVTV exposed the irony behind the fervent followers and the corruption of Maharaj Jiand. The piece set new standards to professionalism for independent video and portapak users across the country.

Around early 1970s, a number of collectives were formed including TVTV, Videofreex, and Raindance, among others, which utilized the strategy of Guerrilla television to use television as a more democratic medium of communication. Members of the Raindance collective, Frank Gillette and Paul Ryan first came to using video through working at Marshal McLuhan's Center for Media Understanding at Fordham University in New York. The Center offered four Sony Portapak video cameras through the donation of the president of Sony Corporation, who was a member of the Board of Trustees of McLuhan's Center. Inheriting McLuhan's theory of viewers' participation in the systems of media communication and production, Gillette and Ryan picked up the portapak video cameras to act on the theory. In their practice, they were motivated by the potential of 'decentralizing the power base of broadcast television.'<sup>14</sup> Michael Shamberg published *Guerrilla Television* (1971), which expressed ideas on activism and a subversive tactic that opposes technocratic control of major broadcast television, and its hope for Guerrilla television to demonstrate the potential of decentralized video technology. This mission served as inspiration for a number of collectives who exercised alternative television journalism and produced vérité documentaries on US politics and culture. These productions were presented on national television, some of which were supported through the residency program at WNET/Thirteen's TV Lab. Rather than using existing major broadcast network, another collective Videofreex established their own pirate television station, the Lanesville TV, in the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York. Lanesville TV engaged with the Lanesville community

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<sup>14</sup> Rush, Michael. *Video Art*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003.

through workshops in which the local residents learned how to produce their own television programs and report on local news.

The interest in community building that attracted Videofreex to video technology resonates closer to what the Japanese conceived as the possibility of video, rather than the focus on a large-scale subversion of the communication system, the mission of Guerilla television. Here, the reception of the technology in the two cultures bifurcates into different, distinct, trajectories.

Shamberg's *Guerrilla Television* was translated by Nakaya Fujiko, one of the main organizers of the Japanese collective Video Hiroba, and was published in Japan in 1974. In Tokyo, the notion of using video as an alternative to the main television broadcast, was introduced by the Canadian video artist Michael Goldberg. Nakaya, who had participated in Experiment in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) in New York since 1966, tested the use of video as a communication device and with others who took interest in video, organized symposia, events, and the collective Video Hiroba. In February 1972, Nakaya organized with Michael Goldberg, an eleven-day symposium 'Video Communication DO IT YOURSELF KIT,' held at the Sony Building. Many artists who participated in the symposium, including Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, Matsumoto Toshio, Miyai Rikuro, and others, learned to use video as a documentary and communication device from Goldberg. These artists' works were presented alongside pieces from the U.S. and Canada during the symposium.

In the symposium, participants discussed the video's potential as something that allows a community to self-reflexively reflect and better understand themselves through capturing and viewing footage of their community. Nakaya spoke about her experience of using video in the work *Friends of Minamata Victims—Video Diary* (1971–1972) in which she documented the

people protesting the Chisso company whose metal leakage caused the Minamata disease outbreak. Nakaya and Kobayashi Hakudo, a filmmaker, documented the protesters, and immediately after they presented the footage to the protesters by placing a monitor at their site. She discovered that the protesters used the monitor as a kind of a mirror from which they self-reflexively reviewed their activities and learned about the members of the protest, whom they didn't always know personally. Video was not used as a device to communicate a message from the group to the opposition, but a tool to strengthen the ties within the group. Moreover, according to the panel participant Komatsuzaki Kiyosuke, the inward nature demonstrated in the use of video was consistent with the Japanese culture to value harmonious dynamic within a community, instead of asserting an individual's opinion. Video Hiroba continued to create socially engaged video projects that used video as a tool of communication. In 1973, Video Hiroba was commissioned by the Economic Planning Agency in Yokohama to research models of communication surrounding local urban planning.<sup>15</sup> The group members presented to city officials documented interviews with local residents, and interviews with city officials to local residents, effectively facilitating communication. Though work of Video Hiroba was never broadcast, their activities brought impact to small communities.

Work by another collective founded in 1971 by artist Nakajima Ko, Video Earth, found channels of presentation on broadcast television. Through his work with Video Earth, Nakajima documented a wide-range of subjects such as humanism from birth to death, national politics, and homelessness.<sup>16</sup> Another collective, Video Information Center, organized by Tezuka Ichiro

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<sup>15</sup> Adachi, Ann, et al. *Vital Signals*. New York: Electronic Arts Intermix, 2010. 88.

<sup>16</sup> One of the few female video artists, Idemitsu Mako also took social concerns into her video work. In *What a Woman Made* (1973), Idemitsu shows a tampon floating on a toilet while a male narrator describes numerous expectations towards proper speech and behavior of girls. Through its covert tactic of presenting societal oppression, Idemitsu protests the limitation Japanese women face in society. In contrast to Idemitsu's quiet protest, the Americans Martha Rosler and Joan Jonas' message of social criticism were more direct. For example, a protest of domesticity is expressed in Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) in which Rosler in the manner of a

and others, aimed to document live events including theater, butoh, and other types of performances. Instead of the pointed anti-establishment sentiment central to many American collectives and artists, video in Japan found a niche in collaboration among the public, the state, and corporations.

In contrast to the social projects by video collectives in Tokyo, works using moving image in the Kansai region were made within the context of the fine art movement of that period, which questioned the very act of art making or viewing as something that belongs to a prescribed form.<sup>17</sup> The broadcast piece, *Image of Image—Seeing* (1973), was produced for the television program, ‘Hyogo no jikan’ (Hyogo time) presented by the Kobe headquarter of NHK, the national television broadcaster which produced a program series introducing local artists’ activities.<sup>18</sup> Though the program was intended to introduce work of artists in the Kansai region, when fine artist Kawaguchi Tatsuo was invited to participate, he proposed to create a work specific for broadcasting. Kawaguchi invited artists Muraoka Saburo and Uematsu Keiji to collaboratively create a work for television. In the piece, artists manipulate televised images shown on a monitor through destructive methods such as painting over the monitor, taping over

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cooking show, uses various kitchen utensils to show violent gestures. In a more complex interplay of video mechanics and identity, Joan Jonas explores female roles through a TV persona she created in *Organic Honey’s Visual Telepathy* (1972).

<sup>17</sup> Kyoto was an active center of activities using moving image by fine artists (compared to people using video in Tokyo who came from a wide-range of background). There was an annual exhibition series *Gendai no zokei—eizō hyōgen* (Contemporary Fine Art—Moving Image Expression) that started in 1969 and 1972 which demonstrates the active scene of the Kansai moving image movement. The series exhibitions were held at Kyoto City Museum, Gallery 16, Art Core, and presented works by such artists as Imai Norio, Kawaguchi Tatsuo, Nomura Hitoshi, Uematsu Keiji, and many others. The exhibition showcased interest in media and moving image by fine artists in the Kansai region, which was a distinct movement than that of Tokyo and the Kanto region. Moving image works were presented since the 1969 *Dai nikai gendai no zokei—yagai zokei* exhibition (The second contemporary fine art—outdoor fine art); followed by *Dai sankai gendai no zokei—firumu zokei* (The third contemporary fine art—film fine art) exhibition in 1970; the exhibition in 1971 *Dai yonkai gendai no zokei—eizō hyōgen ’71* (The fourth contemporary fine art—moving image expression ’71); and the exhibition in 1972, *Gendai no zokei—eizō hyōgen ’72. Mono, ba, jikan, kukan—Equivalent Cinema* (Contemporary fine art—moving image expression ’72. Things, place, time, space—Equivalent cinema).

<sup>18</sup> Rika Iezumi Hiro has written on Video Earth’s programs for a cable television station in Shizuoka Prefecture. Hiro, Rika Iezumi Hiro. “Between Absence and Presence: Exploring Video Earth’s *What is Photography?*,” *Invisible Culture*, Issue No. 15 (Fall, 2010).



the monitor, burying the monitor, dumping the monitor in a river, and eventually destroying the monitor.

Broadcast television offered Muraoka, Uematsu, and Kawaguchi an opportunity to think about inherently different type of audience and subject matter than that of the gallery space—the proximity to the audience mediated through television allowed them to engage a broad, national audience. Through the performative phenomenological examination, three artists invited the audience sitting in front of a monitor to question the meaning of watching television.<sup>19</sup> Their interest is again differently nuanced than the American activists' use of broadcast, which aimed to cultivate critical audience by airing alternative journalism.

The American broadcast stations' mission to explore untried artistic expression and ways of communication served the artists to develop a cohesive group of works that became known as video art. The examples of Japanese works listed above were not supported by organizations, perhaps contributing to a sense of individualized or one-off movement. Even though each project was supported by some institution—Video Hiroba's commission by the local government; and Video Earth and the three Kasnai artists' presentation by television stations—there was no unified interest or common mission by these institutions to explore the potential of the new technology.

### **Performative Explorations**

In the late-1960s New York, galleries were beginning to represent video artists, such as the Bonino Gallery and Castelli, as well as the Howard Wise Gallery. Gallery spaces provided

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<sup>19</sup> Sakamoto, Hirofumi, et al. *Retrospective Exhibition of the Early Video Art*. Nagoya: Shoki Bideo Ato Saiko Jikko Inikai, 2006. 81.

physical space to explore another aspect of the video medium, the interactivity made possible by video's immediacy of feedback. For the American artists, the same question that motivated Guerilla television, the passive acceptance of information by the viewer/consumer, inspired exploration of the interactive systems that allowed the viewer to disrupt the imagery in the monitor. Such motives were behind the works in the 1969 exhibition at Howard Wise Gallery, *TV as a Creative Medium*, one of the earliest exhibitions devoted to video.

*TV as a Creative Medium* presented works that interacted with the audience, such as Nam June Paik's *Participation TV II* (1968), in which live recording of the visitors was transformed through video manipulation and shown live on a monitor.<sup>20</sup> Ira Schneider and Frank Gillette, members of the Raindance collective,<sup>21</sup> presented *Wipe Cycle* (1969) on nine television screens that recorded live image of gallery visitors and combined them with found footage from commercial television and footages from pre-recorded tapes. The work involved interception with mass media through live manipulation by the audience of found footage, and experimented with the time-based quality of video through time delay. In these installations, audience directly engaged in the manipulation of television image through their own actions and means.

Howard Wise was a fervent supporter of kinetic and media art, which he presented at his gallery in New York from 1960 to 1970. In order to provide a more direct support to artists, Wise closed the gallery and founded in 1971 Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), a non-profit organization that sponsored projects and events, provided production facility, and distributed artists' work.<sup>22</sup> Like the broadcast laboratories mentioned earlier, EAI's founding mission was the development of video as a form of artistic expression and communication.

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<sup>20</sup> This piece was a second iteration of *Participation TV* (1963), in which audience could transform visuals on a monitor through their voices.

<sup>21</sup> Ira Schneider and Frank Gillette are two of the four members (other two are Paul Ryan and Michael Shamberg) of the media collective, Raindance which was founded in 1969.

<sup>22</sup> Further information about EAI is detailed in Chapter 2.

The earliest use of video as a closed-circuit system in Japan was presented at the 1968 performative symposium, 'EXPOSE 1968: Say Something, I'm Trying' (Expose 1968: Nanika ittekure ima, sagasu) which was hosted at the Sogetsu Art Center Hall, a venue established by the Sogetsu Ikebana school. During the symposium, art critic Tono Yoshiaki dressed as an old woman in a small green room and broadcast his action live to an audience in the large Sogetsu hall. The coordinator of the broadcast system was the artist Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, who later actively used video in his art work, from installations to participation in the collective Video Hiroba.<sup>23</sup> As an exercise of shooting, seeing, and performing, Video Hiroba members Yamaguchi and Hakudo Kobayashi presented the video performance *Eat* in the 11-day symposium 'Video Communication DO IT YOURSELF KIT.' In the performance two performers sit at a table: one records the other eating, then they switch roles. The live video feed of the performance was displayed on a monitor in the exhibition space.

In another piece presented in the fifth *Cross Talk/Intermedia* held in the Asahi Shimbun Hall (Asahi newspaper company hall) in 1971, filmmaker Iimura Takahiko experimented with live-stream in the performance, *Outside / Inside* (1971). Iimura recorded the audience and people outside in the street, and projected the live footage on the auditorium screen, inviting the audience to experience being viewed and viewing. In an interview of the artist by film scholar Julian Ross,<sup>24</sup> Iimura explains his motivation as something similar to Allan Kaprow's *Hello*,<sup>25</sup> an

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<sup>23</sup> Yamaguchi Katsuhiro continued his exploration on video in his kinetic art *Image Modulator* (Eizo Henchoki), which he presented in 1969 at the *Electromagica '69—International Psytech Art* in the Ginza Sony building. The *Image Modulator* was an extension of his kinetic sculptural work, *Vitrine* series he began making in 1952, which used semi-translucent glass to distort and create a mosaic effect of an image behind the glass by the movement of the viewer. The same mechanism for the *Vitrine* series is used in *Image Modulator* but the image behind the glass is video presented on a monitor. The kinetic movement of the video creates changes in the abstracted mosaic images.

<sup>24</sup> Iimura, Takahiko. "Midnight Eye interview: Takahiko Iimura" *Midnight Eye: Visions of Japanese Cinema*. Midnight Eye, 2010. <http://www.midnighteye.com/interviews/takahiko-iimura/>. August, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> See endnote 6.

interactive video happening in which live exchange of ‘faces’ was broadcast on *Medium is the Medium*.<sup>26</sup>

Instant feedback was a brand new avenue of artistic experimentation for both American and Japanese artists. Video’s ability to present the immediacy of capturing and being captured on camera was one of video’s unique features from which artists conducted their exploratory acts. In addition, video inspired new electronic visual vocabulary and strategies for technological art making, as well as investigations of forms of communication.

The examples present both countries’ simultaneous surge of creativity that emerged out of technological capabilities, which were developed separately without one dominating the other. The differences are revealed in the meanings of video within each culture as well as the public’s relationship to mass communication. Moreover, contrast can be found in the role of institutional support, which in the U.S., common missions to explore new avenues of artistic expression and communication contributed to the emergence of a unified movement and the categorization of video as an art form, a subject further studied in Chapter Two.

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<sup>26</sup> In another piece by Imura, *Project Yourself* (1973) presented in Berlin, Imura directly engaged with the audience by instructing the audience to speak about whatever into the camera for one minute, which streamed on a monitor nearby. This piece was not only a conceptual exercise of viewing and being viewed, but provided a platform for individual speech through its instruction to ‘say anything.’ The possibility Imura saw in the individual’s use of video for voicing opinions, was precisely the excitement some American artists based their hope in alternative journalism using video.

## CHAPTER 2 / INFRASTRUCTURE AROUND VIDEO ART

### Economy for Production and Distribution

#### U.S.

Private and governmental funding in the U.S. supported laboratories, broadcast networks, and distributors, which then supported the artists to produce work and help generate revenue and exposure to their work. There were many institutions in the U.S. which helped artists to experiment and establish video art as a new artistic genre, such as the aforementioned television broadcast labs Boston's WGBH, New York's WNET and Artist Television Network (ATN); and distributor Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI). These organizations received funding in order to facilitate the production and distribution of artists' works, and helped establish a system for generating income.

The Rockefeller Foundation, a private sponsor, was a key supporter of programs promoting broadcast experiments in the U.S., both at WGBH and WNET / Thirteen. For example, the Rockefeller Foundation supported WNET's TV Lab, beginning with a \$150,000 grant that supported the Lab's first year in 1972, followed by an award of \$340,000 the following year. Since 1972, the Rockefeller Foundation gave the lab a total of \$900,000 "to explore the psychological effects of television and the artistic and technical nature of television."<sup>27</sup> The president of WNET / Thirteen in a statement in 1974, expressed the impact of Rockefeller Foundation's grants:

"The Rockefeller Foundation's continued support of the Television Lab has provided the impetus for pure research into the nature of television, exploration of its artistic limits and

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<sup>27</sup> The Television Laboratory at Thirteen, June 1974-75 report. Fales Library Archive, New York University, Guerrilla TV Archive, Box: 2 Folder: 56.

its effect on human perception. All of us who have an interest in television, the public as well as the industry are grateful for the Rockefeller's support."<sup>28</sup>

According to a report of TV Lab published in 1975, other private funders contributed in local television and radio broadcast activities which impacted programming in local stations. Such grant-giving institutions included the Jerome Foundation, Howard and Bush Foundation, and the AW Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust.<sup>29</sup>

State and national funding also played critical role in supporting broadcast stations, which then support artists to produce content for their program. New York State Arts Council (NYSCA) supported the initial \$55,000 budget for the first year of WNET TV Lab's Video and Television Review (VTR) Series, which ran from 1975 until 1977. The VTR Series programs focused on the relationships between community video groups and their regional cable and broadcast TV systems, and presented their programs at WNET's Resident Artists Lab, Boston's WGBH-TV, and San Francisco's KQED-TV, airing a total of thirteen programs. Most contents were produced at the TV Lab, but of the thirteen programs, a few were acquired, which its producers received \$10 per minute from WNET. For those programs produced at TV Lab, shows received an average of \$3,000 to \$4,000 each in the form of production and/or post-production support from WNET. As described in Chapter One, contents broadcast on the channel included video art, experimental non-fiction documentaries, local reports, and performances.<sup>30</sup> These

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<sup>28</sup> Press Release, June 12, 1974. The Television Laboratory at Thirteen, June 1974-75 report. Fales Library Archive, New York University, Guerrilla TV Archive, Box: 2 Folder: 56.

<sup>29</sup> The Television Laboratory at Thirteen, June 1974-75 report. Fales Library Archive, New York University, Guerrilla TV Archive, Box: 2 Folder: 56.

<sup>30</sup> Example of works for broadcast include nonfictions TVTV's *Lord of the Universe* and *Gerald Ford's America: Win*; programs by Downtown Community TV (DCTV); Shirley Clarke's *Bridges Go Roun*; Aurthur Ginsberg's seminal real life documentary, *The Continuing Story of Carel and Ferd*; programs by Lanesville TV; programs about figures such as John Cage and Allen Ginsberg; video art programs *The Medium Is The Medium* and Ed Emshwiller's *Scape-mates*; and performances by William Wegman and Peter Campus.

shows of the VTR Series were then marketed as a package for distribution by WNET, through the national PBS system as well as non-broadcast format through Electronic Arts Intermix.<sup>31</sup>

The independent broadcast station, Artist Television Network (ATN) in SoHo, New York, was established in 1976 through a joint collaboration by the exhibition space Kitchen, the video production group Global Village, the screening venue Anthology Film Archives, and a number of individuals. It received funding by the New York State Council of the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, The Beard's Fund, and by individuals. ATN rented works from artists at \$50 per cablecast, which were dubbed for cablecasting. Besides renting already produced content, ATN also paid artists and the cost of crew and facilities to produce new content. The distribution of the programs was limited to the local area, through Cable Access Channels of the Manhattan Cable and Teleprompter Cable systems, which reached nearly 14,000 audience persons. Besides local cable broadcast, ATN rented out programs to other cable stations of which half of the proceeds were paid as royalties to the artists. ATN's programs were rented out and featured at Warner QUBE Cable systems of Columbus Ohio, Ohio State University, University of Iowa, Queen's University in Canada, College of Architecture in Barcelona, London Video Arts, Process Art of Tokyo, Radio Amsterdam, and University Public Broadcast Service of Mexico. The royalties paid to the artists were 50% of the rental income.

Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), which began as a nonprofit organization in 1971, operated under the mission to provide alternative support system for artists experimenting with video as an artistic medium and communication tool. In the first years, EAI sponsored media art festivals, research for developing new video technologies, provided editing facilities, and a distribution program, one of EAI's core mission today. EAI's distribution program operates

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<sup>31</sup> Fales Library Archive, New York University, Guerrilla TV Archive, BOX 5, Folder 156.

under a co-operative model much like the Film Makers Coop, wherein the income from the distribution of works are applied toward the operation of the organization and towards paying artists' royalty. Much like the operation of ATN, artists received income from the distribution of their work, establishing a sustainable economic model for artists working in moving image. Over the years, EAI has promoted preservation initiatives, including digitization and providing online resources, which is detailed in the next section. Another organization, Video Data Bank (VDB) in Chicago has also served a similar mission since 1976 to distribute, support artists, and provide research resource to the public nationally and internationally.

## **Japan**

Japanese public broadcast station, NHK, began its broadcast in February 1953, which was followed by the first private broadcast service by Nippon Television Network Corporation (Nihon TV) in August of the same year. Laboratories for visual experimentation or alternative broadcast programs such like those in the U.S. did not exist in Japan, or did cable access stations such as the ATN were established to air independent programs. In some instances, Japanese broadcast stations both public and private hired artists and filmmakers to produce artistic content for their programs. Besides the previously mentioned *Image of Image—Seeing* (1973), which was presented by the Kobe headquarter of NHK, in 1965, the private broadcast company Tokyo Broadcast Television System Television, Inc., (TBS) hired the avant-garde dramatist Terayama Shuji to write the script for a documentary program, *Anatawa....* The work illustrates the Tokyo's social landscape of the period through a series of interviews conducted with random people on the street.



Without systematic funding from the government or private foundations, artists in Japan often utilized their own resources to produce works. Though there were no formal residencies or laboratories that sponsored video experimentation, there were some instances of using television equipment at broadcast stations, such as Ando Kohei's *Oh! My Mother* in 1969, as mentioned in Chapter One. Fully-fledged video art activity in Japan did not emerge until the formation of Video Hiroba in 1972, which brought together artists of different genres who became the first generation of Japanese "video artists."<sup>32</sup> Like the laboratories and residencies in the U.S., exhibition and screening opportunities were a major factor for the development of video art and experimental film in Japan. These exhibitions and festivals were often sponsored by private entities.

In the late-1960s, there were not many experiments using video technology as seen in the U.S., but instead, experimental film developed as an important part of the Japanese postwar avant-garde. A few independently run venues acted as catalyst for encouraging production of experimental films. The Sogetsu Art Center, a momentous site of avant-garde practice in 1960s, was privately sponsored by the Sogetsu School of ikebana. Sogetsu Art Center, directed by Sogetsu founder's son, Teshigahara Hiroshi, played an important role for experimental film, starting with the center's inaugural event, Cinema '58 screening program in which Teshigahara, together with filmmaker Hani Susumu and others, presented the groundbreaking experimental film *Tokyo 1958*. Thereafter, Sogetsu Art Center hosted numerous historic experimental film events including the Animation Festival in 1964; the 9<sup>th</sup> Sogetsu Cinemateque, which screened works by Iimura Takahiko, Donald Ritchie, Obayashi Nobuhiko and others who won awards at the Third Belgium International Experimental Film Festival; and the 1966 Sogetsu Cinemateque:

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<sup>32</sup> Iina, Shinsuke. "A Brief History of Video Art in Japan," *Japanese Experimental Film & Video 1955–1994*. Tokyo: Image Forum, 1994. 100.

Underground Cinema Nihon/America (“Underground cinema Japan/US”), which showed American experimental films such as works by Jonas Mekas, Stan Brakhage, Stan VanDerBeek, and Jud Yalkut, among others. In addition, a couple galleries became key venues for experimental film including the Naiqua Gallery and the Runami Gallery. Film collectives were also a major part of experimental film making, which included Nihon University Film Study Club (Nihon Daigaku Geijitsu Gakubu Eiga Kenkyukai) known as the Nichidai Eiken, established in 1958; VAN Film Research Center (VAN Eiga Kagaku Kenkyujo) started in 1960; and Film Independent, a group started in 1964.

The independent organization Japanese Filmmakers Cooperative was founded in 1968 and became the Underground Center a year later. The organization modeled its distribution and financing on that of the London Filmmaker’s Cooperative. Works distributed by the Underground Center were mainly films, which were allowed to enter the collection as long as it was an independent work. Works in the collection were rented out to cine clubs and universities around the country, through which 75% of its revenue was paid to the artists while the remaining was applied to run the organization. At its start, 70 works by 32 artists entered the collection. However, the Underground Center did not sustain its distribution program due to disagreement among the members. Some members of the organization continued its operation under the new name Image Forum starting in 1977, and expanded its programming to include genres other than experimental film, however it did not continue the cooperative distribution system. Today, Image Forum holds a collection of historical experimental film that remained from the operation of Underground Center, but does not publish its holdings, distribute, or actively preserve those works.

Starting with the formation of Video Hiroba in 1972, video became more widely used for works of experimental moving image. Video art production was stimulated by a host of video festivals and competitions, often sponsored by manufacturing companies. For instance, the Sony Corporation provided space for the first video art event by Video Hiroba, *Video Communication DO IT YOURSELF* festival in 1972, and the Tokyo Video Festival (TVF), which started in 1978, was sponsored by the Victor Company of Japan (JVC). In the 1980s, Tokyo's Video Gallery SCAN, started by Video Hiroba member Nakaya Fujiko, played a large role in encouraging emerging artists to create video work and introducing Japanese video art in the U.S. and in Europe. In 1984 in particular, the gallery presented Japanese works at the Venice Biennale, VIDEO '84 in Canada, and at American Film Institute National Video Festival in the U.S.<sup>33</sup> The gallery also presented works by Video Hiroba, as well as works by Western artists such as Bill Viola, Gary Hill and Nam June Paik. In the late 1980s, domestic festivals continued to promote video art activities including the annual Image Forum Festival, Video Gallery SCAN's Video Television Festival, the Fukui International Video Biennale, and the International Biennale Artec in Nagoya. Financing of the domestic festivals did not include national government funding. For example in the case of the first Fukui International Video organized by the video artist Yamamoto Keigo in 1985, the organization had difficulty finding funding until four weeks before its opening, when finally the regional government and the Fukui Museum sponsored the biennale, along with the Sony Corporation and the Panasonic Corporation. Furthermore, Dutch and Canadian governments sponsored the installation costs of those artists chosen from their country to exhibit during the biennale.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Iina, Shinsuke. "A Brief History of Video Art in Japan," *Japanese Experimental Film & Video 1955–1994*. Tokyo: Image Forum, 1994. 100.

<sup>34</sup> Ruhe, Monique. "Fukui Video Biennale," *Mediamatic Magazine*. Vol. 2, No.4, 1988. <http://www.mediamatic.net/317797/en/fukui-video-biennale>. December 2013.

Even with difficulty of finding financial sources, these exhibiting opportunities encouraged cultivation of artists and emergence of Japanese video art. However, as in the U.S., after the rise of video art in the 1980s, the momentum of the video art movement slowed down. And without a well-established distributor in Japan, the works did not circulate well within exhibition platforms or educational channels. The Underground Center, the only organization that provided distribution of experimental films in the late 1960s, did not continue its service in the 1970s when video art gained its momentum, leaving artists without a springboard to expand their practice.

## **Archive, Preservation, and Digitization**

### **Japan**

Today, there are not many institutions that hold collections of experimental film and video in Japan, and where there are efforts of collecting and preserving works, they are often done on a case-by-case basis, which has contributed to a general lack of systematic and comprehensive cataloging of existing works. The National Film Center in Tokyo, the only national institution for archiving Japanese films, only collects feature films, leaving avant-garde works out of support from national funding. On the other hand, the Film Center's affiliate institution, the National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo has digitized selected film works, but the effort has been limited to film works made by fine artists. The Kawasaki City Museum holds selected works from the Video Gallery SCAN collection, in addition to film and video works by Matsumoto Toshio, and education films produced in immediate postwar years. The museum serves as a depository of works but the institution does not have financial means to start preservation or conservation programs, or establish a way for the public to access the collection.

The Fukuoka City Library has collected a handful of experimental films for which they have restored and produced archival and exhibition copies. Video Art Center Tokyo, a nonprofit organization that supports Japanese video artists, organizes screenings and exhibitions, distributes works, and hosts a video library for research purpose at their site in Tokyo. However, works in the video library collection are limited to eleven artists who are mainly artists of younger generation and the organization does not act as an archive or preserve works. The aforementioned Underground Center, which operated the only cooperation distribution system in Japan in the late-1960s, now named Image Forum, has kept its collection of works after the organization stopped its distribution service. Though it holds a rich experimental film collection, Image Forum does not have programs to distribute the collection, or to preserve them. Since 1997, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp (NTT)'s InterCommunication Center (ICC) has provided exhibition opportunities, research resources, and public programs for media art and its history, but ICC does not hold a collection. In some instances, the lack of institutional effort to restore and preserve works have been filled, in small efforts, by individual curators and professors who apply their research grants they have obtained or use part of an exhibition budget to restore works and produce exhibition copies. One of the very few museums with fully fledged program for collecting and archiving experimental film works is the Metropolitan Museum of Photography.

As the above paragraphs illustrate, there are institutions and individuals who are working to collect or preserve experimental film and video, however, the lack of organized structure has demonstrated an idiosyncratic way of keeping information and has led to the absence of comprehensive catalog of experimental works. Lack of communication platforms such as associations or media cataloging and preservation education courses may have contributed to no

practice of sharing resources and knowledge, and no history of collective effort to strategize fundraising.

## US

By the 1980s in the U.S., a number of independent organizations and museums were collecting and preserving moving image works for exhibition or distribution such as The Kitchen, Video Data Bank, the Long Beach Museum, Anthology Film Archives, EAI, and The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). According to the discussions at the *Preservation: Media Alliance* conference held at MoMA in 1991, cataloging and preservation programs of these organizations were largely supported by governmental funds.<sup>35</sup> For example, at the national level, the Media Arts Program, Museum Program, and Dance program of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) supported preservation initiatives at The Kitchen (New York), Video Data Bank (Illinois), Long Beach Museum (California), and The Cunningham Dance Foundation (New York). At the state level, The New York State Council of the Arts (NYSCA) funded preservation programs at Anthology Film Archives, EAI, and MoMA. Besides preservation projects, cataloging of media art works was also an important initiative at that time. The National Center for Film and Video Preservation gave grants to develop cataloging models: one in 1987 for \$15,000 to the Long Beach Museum to develop a cataloging model for its video collections; and a \$10,000 grant to EAI in 1989 to initiate the National Moving Image Database (NAMID) Archival Database Project.

Today, funding for preservation of avant-garde film and video works is not easy to

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<sup>35</sup> Based on the discussions at the *Preservation: Media Alliance* conference held at MoMA in 1991. During the conference, it was noted that with an exception of a MacArthur Grant to the Carnegie Museum for the Warhol Collection, no private monies have been allocated to support the preservation and cataloging of independent video archives. Fales Library Archive, New York University, Guerilla TV Box 6, Folder 185.

obtain, and a lot of times takes multiple resources. There is funding available through entities like the NEA and the National Film Preservation Fund, however, early cinema often takes precedence for funding over works of 1960s and '70s, which leaves avant-garde works especially vulnerable when these funds have its annual budgets cut. Private individuals and foundations play a role in preservation initiatives.<sup>36</sup> Organizations that hold copies of the same work, but use the work for different purposes may work collaboratively to cover the cost of a particular preservation project. For example, the Anthology Film Archive (AFA), which holds an archival film copy of an artist's super 8mm film work, initiated preservation of the work. In order to apply for preservation funding, AFA collaborated with three other organizations: EAI, which is interested in obtaining a new video version of the same work for its distribution operation; MoMA, which is interested in obtaining a new exhibition copy; and the artist's studio, which is interested in preserving the work.<sup>37</sup>

Anthology Film Archive was founded in 1969 by Jonas Mekas, along with several others who were committed to presenting to the public important avant-garde films. Since 1974, AFA has also included presentation of video programs. From its start, the presentation of seminal, rare film works brought up the issue of the need to archive those works, thus adding archive and preservation an essential part of their mission in addition to the exhibition of works. Today, AFA applies revenue from tickets and membership to fund their operation, in addition to some funding from NYSCA, other grants for preservation projects, and private donations. EAI and Video Data Bank (VDB), both a prominent archive of video works and offer distribution service that supports artists, receive funding for operation from the state and/or NEA, as well as some

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<sup>36</sup> For example the Kramlich Foundation, which paved a path for private collecting practice of digital works, and Celeste Bartos, who helped MoMA build its film preservation facility.

<sup>37</sup> According to an interview the author conducted with Andrew Lampert of Anthology Film Archives, November 2013.

individual donors. In addition, revenue from distribution supports the artists as well as the organizations' operation costs. Over the past twenty years, EAI has undertaken preservation projects, providing cleaning and transfer of re-mastered version of the work to archival formats such as Digital Betacam.

### **Problems in Japan and the Digital as a Potential Solution**

As Chapter One illustrates, there were productive experimental video art and film activities in Japan in 1960s through 1970s, comparable to those of the U.S. Yet lack of federal and private funding, as well as scarce institutional support have resulted in the absence of a catalog, as well as poor practice of conservation, archiving, and public access to the works. The lack of large archival institution in Japan such as the American AFA, EAI, or VDB has contributed to a sense of fragmented history, and has raised issues of preservation and maintenance of works for the future. Works made in film and outdated video formats are in danger of losing its content permanently, if preservation will not take place in the next several years. However, cost of preservation is prohibitive, especially when there are no grant programs for media conservation, either at federal or private organizations.

In the past several years, with the support of NYSCA, EAI has digitized their collection and are storing the work in uncompressed files, which allows EAI to archive the work in the best physical and digital formats available, and distribute the work as digital copies, a format that is increasingly used for exhibition as well as for teaching. EAI and VDB distribute works that are uneditioned, meaning unlimited copies are available for use by educational, exhibition, or for collection at multiple institutions. Policy to unedition works allows the work to be used for viewing and studying by an unlimited number of audience for a nominal fee, as opposed to



editioning a work, which raises the value of each of the limited number of copies, but only a handful of people can view the work. EAI has advocated for a distribution model that allows the use of work by a large number of people, but this economic model is sustainable only when all subscribers pay some fee. In the recent past years, digital online streaming has become a key method for viewing works particularly for teaching purposes, transforming the economy of distribution that affect distributors, for-profit art market, and artists. Contents streamed online are often available for free and arguments can be made based on educational fair use for allowing contents to be viewed for free. The expectation, and the educational benefit of having online contents free of charge can work in parallel with the economy of the distribution of exhibition-quality copies, and foster a need to maintain those physical copies.

Dissemination of avant-garde film and video on the Internet has changed the way students, teachers, and artists learn and teach about those works, but not the way works are exhibited. The rough quality of contents available for viewing online is acceptable for reference-use (as in classroom use or for research), however, it does not provide ideal quality resolution for screening or exhibition. Exhibition copies still need to be properly sourced and royalties must be paid in exchange of exhibiting a work. The two-tiered system of distribution can form a symbiotic relationship: the free digital streaming provides wide access, encouraging higher literacy and awareness about the works; which in turn may drive demand for the screening, exhibition or acquisition versions, as well as support for preservation of the works. A free, and more nimble access to information through digital platforms may enliven a part of history that has been underrepresented, and could lead to formal exhibitions, and an awareness of the need to properly care for those works.

The historical analyses and the problems discussed in the previous chapters serve as the foundation for examining possible solutions offered by today's culture of digitally networked new infrastructures and new technology. While historical issues of funding and institutionalization also accompany in today's production of digital platforms in which grants and institutional backing are crucial to realizing projects, the exploration of the digital archive and its potential for access and learning is the focus of the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3 / METHOD OF DIGITAL HUMANITIES & SUGGESTED SOLUTION FOR ACCESS IN JAPAN

Based on the above observation of the economy of two-tiered distribution system of experimental moving image works—the free, online streaming distribution, and the physical copy distribution with fee—the roles of the digital and the physical archive, as well as types of distribution, are made distinct. The digital database provides educational resources while the physical archive preserves the integrity of the work. How then is the concept of an archive transformed when we consider it on the digital realm? Before discussing the particular benefits of the digital platform as applicable to Japan, the next subsection examines the theoretical frameworks of the digital archive, bringing forth a consideration about the distinction of physical and digital archives, the shift of thinking that accompanies the digitization of information, and the positive aspects discussed in the field of digital humanities. These concepts are developed in the following sections which discusses practical application for the current circumstance in Japan, culminating in a proposition of a digital platform that offers a collaborative working space through which emerges a new type of networked infrastructure that is not bound by traditional institutional framework.

### **Theoretical Discussion**

When discussing a collection of material, distinctions of terminologies between the “database” and the “archive” is made by Ed Folsom, co-editor of *Walt Whitman Archive* (*whitmanarchive.org*), a digital collection of Walt Whitman’s work made available for research

and teaching use.<sup>38</sup> Folsom reflects on the physical nature of an archive, which is an organically collected body of material that does not always signify comprehensiveness. There is uniqueness to an archive that may embody an expression of an individual about whom the archive revolves around, or who actively collects material around a certain passion or interest. The ways in which the archive is organized speaks to the individual who cared for the material, and may be considered as part of the narrative of the archive. Certain material may be categorized under an author, medium, date, etc., which, because of its physicality, the organizing principle produces a certain distinct narrative that is characteristic of the individual who organized it. In this manner, a physical archive may be characterized as having an authorial voice.

Quoting new media theorist Lev Manovich, Folsom brings to attention the history of the transformation from the literary and cinema, to the digital and computer age, where the grand narrative no longer exists and instead, “the world appears to us as an endless and unstructured collection of images, texts, and other data records, it is only appropriate that we will be moved to model it as a database.”<sup>39</sup> Folsom suggests that the database is becoming a new genre that is an addition to the traditional literary genre. The linear, singular narrative that is part of a physical archive is transformed into an experience of disembodied reading when it is turned into an online database.

Database is favorable in the digital field, where an aggregate of information is easily mobilized and displayed based on the category the user attributes such as year, title, name, format, etc. The organizational principle is often numeric or alphabetical and may be filtered through the attributed metadata. Literary theorist Katherine Hayles in her response to Folsom’s essay, expresses the fundamental difference between the two forms of information display,

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<sup>38</sup> Folsom, Ed. “Database as Genre: The Epic Transformation of Archives.” *The Walt Whitman Archive*. <http://www.whitmanarchive.org/about/articles/anc.00142.html>. November, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. Boston: MIT Press, 2002.

where the computational database is spatial and the narrative is temporal, “bound to the linear order of language through syntax.”<sup>40</sup>

Through the spatial and rhizomatic display of information on the internet, a digital database has potential for a wider access, raising what literary scholar Peter Stallybrass suggests, a shift in the notion of originality and the ownership of knowledge. Making information available online has a potential to release the archive from physical boundaries and economic control posited by traditional institutions—materials may be made available for free access on a digital platform.<sup>41</sup> Not only privileged scholars with the right credentials and travel fund can access the archive, but anyone can view the material online. Kenneth Price, co-editor of *Walt Whitman Archive* raises the possibility for trans-linguistic, cross-cultural understandings of material as access are made available. As suggested by Stallybrass the internet’s rhizomatic structure is ideal for a shared knowledge making, not a model of original intellectual production, as annotation on the material are openly written and discussed by unrestricted number of people who contribute to its study, feeding and nesting within the structure of information.

Access and knowledge making, as well as forging of the networked community around a topic of study, are positive and innovative aspects of the digital archive. The neutral open forum that the educational or referential digital platforms can provide, is an ideal space for collaborative projects. Specifically in the case of Japanese experimental film and video, as illustrated in Chapter Two, individual organizations and persons hold selected works on a case-by-case basis, however there is no communication among the parties or standardized practice of

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<sup>40</sup> Hayles, N. Katherine. “Narrative and Database: Natural Symbionts,” *Responses to Ed Folsom’s Database as Genre: The Epic Transformation of Archives*. Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, Issue 122, No. 5 (October, 2007). 1603-1608.

<sup>41</sup> Stallybrass, Peter. “Against Thinking,” *Responses to Ed Folsom’s Database as Genre: The Epic Transformation of Archives*. . Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, Issue 122, No. 5 (October, 2007). 1580-1587.

cataloging or archiving, contributing to an unbalanced information about the existing works. A collaborative cataloging of works on the digital database may yield a comprehensive “Master Catalog,” one that incorporates understudied or underrepresented material. Making the list available to the general public online offers a kind of accessibility that is international, cross-cultural, and serves multiple levels of educational purpose.

The compromise of the database, however, is the loss of tactility and experience of the object of the physical archive. The digital archive cannot replace the physical, which, in the case of media works, the distinctions of the two functions are more well-defined: the digital database offers lower-quality referential excerpts; and physical archive maintains exhibition and archival copies. Therefore, the digital archive is an educational tool for knowledge sharing and making with potential for cross-cultural exchange, and the physical archive is a collection of tactile material cared for by certain persons. In addition, even though digital archive is released from its physical institutionalization, it does not mean that it exists in a neutral field ignorant of the cultural and social environment in which its proprietor conducts the organization, categorization, labeling, and tagging. Many digital archives do not present their materials as a database, but rather, according to the organizational principles that governed a certain narrative in the physical archive. Even if the material is presented with a few curated categories, database may still be bound to the taxonomy familiar to the culture of the proprietor. The production of digital archives and platforms that encourage cross-cultural and networked study would require a careful consideration on the categorization, labeling, and tagging, perhaps calling for a participatory process involving the users.

## **Suggested Solution for Access In Japan**

Though there are individuals who collect and preserve works, the lack of monetary support for collecting, archiving, and preserving experimental film and video in Japan studied in Chapter Two suggests infrastructural difficulty in establishing a central, physical archive. So then, instead of forming a physical institution, establishing digital platform may offer a ground onto which the individuals who has collections can deposit digitized materials and work together to create a Master Catalog of existing works, forming a network of individuals who retains the physical material at their site. The catalog, along with art historical writings about those works, interviews, digitized primary documents, and reference clips of the works may be made available online for research purposes which in turn could encourage further scholarships and exhibition of these works within and outside of Japan. The aim of this project is to provide access to foundational research resource and foster a community of those interested in the material at the digital, online-level, in order to raise awareness of these important works and eventually initiate a distribution and preservation program that is funded and sustainable. The digital platform is the starting point from which to build a community and infrastructure, without relying on large monetary and institutional support.

In summary, the goals of the project are:

- 1) Create a Master Catalog of existing works (both institutional and private collections).
- 2) Provide research resource online—a catalog, description of works, archival material, primary documents, and excerpts of works.
- 3) Develop an online community of scholars, researchers, curators, conservators, archivist whose work involve these film/video works.

- 4) Strategize ways for maintaining (preserving and archiving) physical works as well as archival printed material.

## **Work Plan**

Field research is needed to collect data about the existing formats, the current condition of the media works, and preservation and acquisition histories in order to create a “Master Catalog” of works produced from 1960s through 1970s. Data may be collected through partnership with scholars, curators, and archivists whose research concerns these works, and institutions (libraries, universities, and museums) that maintain a collection of works. The research information will be made available to participating institutions and partners, as well as to the public on the digital platform.

The project is roughly divided into two phases: the first is the data collection (Master Catalog Research); and the second is the construction of an online platform. In addition, conferences may be held in Japan in order to collectively identify and communicate issues among the Japanese institutions and individuals working on exhibition and preservation of video art and experimental film.

### **Work Plan:**

- i. Master Catalog Research
- ii. Content Production: Edit catalog information (description and representative image of works); create excerpts of works (where permitted; may be for private-use); and edit research resources (bibliography, essays, links, etc.)
- iii. Web Design: Partner with web developer to create a digital platform that includes:
  - a. Database
  - b. Descriptions of the archival material / work
  - c. Visual representation of the community of partners and users
  - d. Interface for users’ participation (comments, responses, messaging, etc.)



- iv. Marketing & Communication: Utilize process-marketing (tweet or blog during the process of this project). Also ask constituents to promote the project and use the website.

## **Master Catalog Research**

The partnering individual and institutions may collect and enter data on a privately shared database.

### i. Works Under Research

- Produced between 1950s and 1970s
- Formats in film (35mm, 16mm, 8mm)
- Formats in video (analog and digital tapes)
- Single-channel, installation, animation, documentation of artistic activity and performance events
- Example of works:
  - Works by Iimura Takahiko, whose works include film in 1960s, then conceptual video since the 1970s.
  - Video, and media installation works by Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, as well as some works with Jikken Kobo and Video Hiroba.
  - Film and video works and documentation of performance by fine artists (painters & sculptors) such as Kawaguchi Tatsuo and Imai Norio.
  - Film works by filmmakers such as Miyai Rikuro, Matsumoto Toshio, among many others.
  - Documentation of happenings and performances.
  - Experimental animation by artists such as Kuri Yoji and Awazu Kiyoshi

### ii. Criteria of Database

- Location of where the film/tape is kept. (One work may have several existing copies at different archives or locations.)
- Format of the copy (8, 16, 35 mm, BetaSP, Digibeta, DVCam, etc.—one work may have several different existing formats)
- Preservation record and/or duplication record
- Condition of the copy
- Housing notes and/or notes on the label
- Accession and license information

## **The Online Platform**

The data collected in the Master Catalog Research will be made accessible online for use by a) researchers and administrators of the works researched (private access); b) and general users (public access). By making the database available to those who administer the physical copy, identification of any duplicates that exist in other locations will be possible, allowing identification of works that need priority for preservation. By making the resources available to the public, a more diverse community of people around the world will gain access to Japanese experimental moving image works of 1960s and 1970s. Developing literacy about this subject may lead to exhibitions, research publications, and incorporation of this history in film studies or art history, contributing to an increase in the awareness and need to preserve and archive these works.

### i. Example Projects as a Model

#### *Ubuweb.com*

Ubuweb has become a useful resource on avant-garde film, sound, and text material for researchers, artists, teachers, and the general public. Using a method of collection that does not always obtain copyright permission, Ubuweb has advocated “knowledge for everyone” by using the argument of the fair use doctrine. In the past, unpermitted use of copyrighted material on Ubuweb.com was a large issue that upset some artists and organizations whose conflicts included the disruption of revenue from the presentation of their work. As the Internet became accepted and expected to be a free source of information and content, Ubuweb’s charge-free archive of avant-garde material has thrived in parallel to the culture of the Internet. Ubuweb has built its collection partially

through its users' submission, which allows Ubuweb to act as an open, participatory depository while keeping its focus on avant-garde material via a curatorial process by its staff. As a site of reference, Ubuweb has contributed significantly to the way rare avant-garde material is accessed. Without this type of website, certain material may never have reached a wide audience of the Internet. In an effort to develop sustainable economy for artists, Ubuweb can perhaps advocate for their material to be used for educational purpose only and, at least for moving image works, announce where a proper copy of the work can be sourced.

*Asia Art Archive (aaa.org.hk)*

Through its research programs and information gathering, Asia Art Archive (AAA) aims to build a collection of primary and secondary documents related to recent art history in Asia. While it makes the digitized material available on its web platform, AAA, based in Hong Kong, does not import the physical material researched in various regions. This method allows the archival material to remain in its country of origin, preserving its integrity, while opening access to the digitized material worldwide.

*ARCHIVEGRID* (<http://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/>)

As an aggregator of archival material held by thousands of libraries, museums, historical societies and archives, the ArchiveGrid allows users to discover material through text mining, data analysis, and discovery system applications and interfaces. This model may be beneficial to the proposed project if there is already data and text on the existing works (catalog metadata, descriptions, etc.). As the project's Master Catalog is developed, the

large pool of information may benefit from text mining, as well as discovery systems such as the ones used on the ArchiveGrid.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis maps early Japanese and American video art activities representative of the artists' medium-specific experimentations, and the parallel operation of institutional advocacy, which helped foster video art as an artistic genre. The technological potentials of video within the sociopolitical context of 1960s and '70s was for both American and Japanese video art, important background in which artists conducted experiments.

American artists often expressed an anti-establishment sentiment directly through methods of image manipulation of mainstream media, alternative journalism, or technological system that encouraged a questioning of passive consumerism. For the Japanese, the meaning of technology and art within the context of rapid economic development was ambiguous and subtle. Video's capacity to undermine the establishment, as championed by American artists, did not capture Japanese artists' interests, perhaps because of the delay of the infiltration of television among the Japanese public, toning down animosity towards mass media, or maybe because of a general cultural attitude that discouraged direct countering. On the one hand, artistic use of technology carried a more openly optimistic potential, one harbored by the nation state through commissioned projects such as the Osaka Expo '70, and used as a tool for social communication by the artists of Video Hiroba. Yet the technological advancement that became a proud symbol of the Japanese economy did not encourage support for media arts in a sustainable manner.

The similarity in the strategies of artistic production between the American and Japanese artists indicates common fascination over the new technology of video. Its electronic imagery, portability, and feedback capability inspired a parallel method for experimentation. Though points of influence must enter the study, and as art historian Christophe Charles points out, Japanese artists had been consciously aware of Western art for a hundred years prior to video's

emergence, there are distinct narratives that carried separate significance in each country.

Without forcing a “Japanese reading” of the works, the examples given illustrate the subtlety, and the distinctive reaction to the new technology by the Japanese artists. As is the case of many geopolitically unbalanced cross-cultural comparisons, the observation of “similar to” falls in danger of being understood as imitation. However, similarity does not necessarily indicate a temporal cause and effect. In the case of emergence of American and Japanese video art, the technological capacity of the video medium is the cause of simultaneous moments of ingenuity.

Despite the two independent but equivalent dynamic occurrences, the narratives of the two stories did not remain equally. The infrastructural foundation from which American video art history is grounded generates a dominant against the history of Japanese video art, which is almost forgotten. The mission to further the potential significance of video as an artistic medium was shared by American organizations, private foundations, and governmental programs that supported production, exhibition, and dissemination of video art in the early-1970s. Broadcast stations both independent and public, hosted residencies and laboratories for experimentation and production, while establishment of experimental film screening space and archive such as the Anthology Film Archive, and formation of distributors such as Electronic Arts Intermix and Video Data Bank provided artists with consistent support structure. Moreover, video art as a category was legitimized through exhibitions and collection of work by major museums such as the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Long Beach Museum. These early initiatives and organizations helped the institutionalization of video art and infiltrate within the fine art field and art history, calling for the need to conserve those historical works in museum collections and archives.

The absence of the articulation of the history of Japanese video art stem from the absence of institutions that foster video art. The early activities in Japan were made possible, but they were supported by one-off commissions or by corporate sponsors that took interest in the artistic use of the technology their company manufactured. There were no continuous or stable organizations, which was the key to developing a sustaining and substantial movement of video art in the U.S. The self-sustaining cooperative model that the Japan Filmmakers Coop initially intended to operate was unfortunately discontinued. In the 1980s, Video Gallery SCAN served a large role in encouraging artists to produce and present works, but the video art genre in general, and especially domestic video art, was not fully recognized by museums and universities, and the field was never integrated in larger structure of cultural administration. Today, there are organizations that work to historicize the earlier legacy, such as the Video Art Center Tokyo, however, implementing a system for distribution, archive, or preservation is not their primary mission. Without media art archives like EAI and VDB, finding information about the works is difficult, leaving the history of Japanese video art and experimental film relatively unknown within Japan.

In the recent years exhibitions and scholarship on postwar Japanese art and moving image works have brought obscure video or film works to international attention. Yet there is no central depository of Japanese works, nor a comprehensive catalog of existing works. Individuals and selected museums and universities hold copies of works, but they are not systematically recorded. Moreover, these separate institutions have done digitization or preservation of works, but it is done in an irregular and unstandardized manner, resulting in an inefficient preservation effort. The digital platform may serve as a neutral space where people who hold works can collaboratively contribute to create an aggregated list of works, which then can be offered as

online research resource that contains a catalog of works, descriptions, primary and secondary texts, and a digital excerpt of the work. An online platform would open this part of Japanese art history to people around the world, encouraging cross-cultural interpretations, new associations and observations to be made.

Furthermore, increase in awareness of these works will bring recognition to this cultural legacy, which may then stimulate action to preserve, catalog, and archive the physical works. The strategy of the digital offers an infrastructure-building in two ways. The first is shaped from the periphery inward: the demand for the material by the remote network of users, who value the works, motivates the need for the core caretakers to initiate preserve and archive efforts. The second is the collaboration and network formation of the caretakers facilitated by the neutrality of the digital platform that enable a way of working that is not restricted to the conventional institutionalization of the central archive. Instead of aiming to build a physical institution to house the actual tape or film, the online platform acts as the central depository of information, allowing the physical copies to be kept at the current locations. In the financial situation where building a physical archive and initiating preservation programs is not realistic, the digital platform presents possibility for a new type of infrastructure, one where network of individuals becomes the key to mobilize projects.

Moving forward, the digital field opens up a space to review, by the international audience, rare, underrepresented cultural material and its existing art historical narratives, at the same time inspire new narratives and discourses to emerge. The inaccurate perception of Japanese video art history may be reexamined under a whole new group of audience, and the process of cultural production and knowledge making may find ways to circumvent the disinterested cultural institutions.



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