

# INPUT-TIME AND OUTPUT-TIME

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The more I work with Video, the more I think about Lessing's distinction of Space art and Time art in the eighteenth century. Video is preemptive. If you are watching NBC, you cannot watch CBS . . . or if you are watching Ira Schneider, you are not watching Frank Gillette (or vice versa).

Napoleon said, "You can always recover the space lost, but you can never recover the time lost." Time is a very limited commodity. (Oil is also a limited commodity, because you need geological time to produce it, unlike corn or rice.) A rich collector can buy up big space and fill it with many paintings. However, he cannot add even one single second to his life-span. The poor and the rich are equal before death. Time is money, according to folk saying, but time is actually the inverse of money. Modern consumer society found out that the more money you have, the less time you have. (Compare a farmer in Mexico and a swinging couple who shuttle between Fire Island and the East Side.) Likewise art lovers do not mind strolling the vast space in the Hirschhorn Museum or Norton Simon's Pasadena Museum, viewing hundreds of mediocre paintings, but they refuse to sit through even a single stretch of a mediocre film or play . . . they get up and leave . . . and even tell their neighbors to avoid that film or play. . . .

Much confusion about today's video art comes from the lack of categories to distinguish

"good and boring art"  
from  
"bad and boring art."

Boredom itself is far from being a negative quality. It is rather a sign of aristocracy in Asia. And again this confusion stems from the confusion about INPUT-time and OUTPUT-time.

In the overzealousness to counter the CBS-type entertainment, or in order to preserve the purity of information or experience, some video artists refuse to edit or to change the

time-structure of performances or happenstance. In other words, they insist that INPUT-time and OUTPUT-time be equal. However in our real life—say, live life—the relationship of input-time and output-time is much more complex—e.g., in some extreme situations or in dreams our whole life can be experienced as a flashback compressed into a split second (the survivors from air crashes or ski accidents tell of it often) . . . or, as in the example of Proust, one can brood over a brief childhood experience practically all of one's life in the isolation of a cork-lined room. That means, certain input-time can be extended or compressed in output-time at will . . . and this metamorphosis (not only in quantity, but also in quality) is the very function of our brain which is, in computer terms, the *central processing unit* itself. The painstaking process of editing is nothing but the simulation of this brain function.

Once on videotape, you are not allowed to die . . . in a sense. Three artists, Paul Ryan, Shigeo Kubota, and Maxi Cohen, videotaped their fathers before death. Videotaped death changed their relationship to death. Video art imitates nature, not in its appearance or mass, but in its intimate "time-structure" . . . which is the process of AGING (a certain kind of *irreversibility*). Norbert Wiener, in his design of the Radar system (a micro two-way enveloping-time analysis), did the most profound thinking about Newtonian Time (reversible) and Bergsonian Time (irreversible). Edmund Husserl, in his lecture on "The Phenomenology of the Inner Time-consciousness" (1928), quotes St. Augustine (the best aesthete of music in the Medieval Age), who said "What is TIME?? If no one asks me, I know . . . if some one asks me, I know not." This paradox in a twentieth-century modulation connects us to the Sartrean paradox "I am always not what I am, and, I am always what I am not."

On my recent trip to Tokyo I bought dozens of books about TIME by Oriental and Occidental thinkers. On my return to New York, I found out that I have no TIME to read them.

VIDEO ART 1976



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