

MIT List Visual Arts Center

Media Contact

Mark Linga
mlinga@mit.edu
617.452.3586
listart.mit.edu

Before Projection: Video Sculpture, 1974–1995
Hayden and Reference Galleries
On view: February 8–April 15, 2018

Opening Reception: Wednesday, February 7, 6–8 PM

January 9, 2018. Cambridge, MA—*Before Projection: Video Sculpture 1974–1995* shines a spotlight on a body of work in the history of video art that has been largely overlooked since its inception. The exhibition explores the connections between our current moment and the point just before video art was transformed dramatically by the entry of large-scale, cinematic installation into the gallery space. The exhibition will present a re-evaluation of monitor-based sculpture since the mid-1970s with a tightly focused survey of works that have been rarely seen in the last twenty years, presenting both canonical artists and figures little known in the United States.

From video art's beginnings, artists engaged with the sculptural properties of the television set, as well as the possibilities afforded by combining multiple moving images next to each other. Artists assembled monitors in multiple configurations and video walls, and, from the 1980s onwards, incorporated TV sets into elaborate environments and architectural settings. In concert with technological advances, video editing and effects also grew more sophisticated. These video works articulated a range of conceptual and thematic concerns related to the television medium, the still and moving image, seriality, figuration, landscape, and identity. The material heft of the cube monitor (before the advent of the flat screen) also anchored these works firmly in three-dimensional space and sculpture. *Before Projection* focuses on the period after very early experimentation in video and before video art's full arrival—coinciding with the wide availability of video projection equipment—in the gallery and museum alongside painting and sculpture. While video sculpture is clearly situated alongside, rather than in isolation from, single-screen tapes and projection, this exhibition highlights specific kinds of works that fell out of favor almost instantly in the mid-1990s and have received little critical attention since.

Ernst Caramelle's *Video Pong-Pong* (1974), made at MIT while the artist was a fellow at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS), examines the relationship between the human body and video by recording a ping-pong match, which is played back on two monitors mounted on AV carts at approximately eye level and positioned in front of a "real" ping pong table. The early two-channel video installation *Attack Piece* (1975) by Dara Birnbaum consists of two monitors facing each other. One shows a series of still photographs of men armed with Super 8 cameras intruding on the photographer's (Birnbaum) visual field, while the opposing monitor presents the film footage taken simultaneously of her. Transferred to video, the spectator becomes caught in a visual attack field that considers the apparatus of the camera, gender dynamics, as well as the relationship between celluloid and the electronic video signal. For *Equinox* (1979), a subversive meditation on nature and video, Mary Lucier



trained her video camera onto the sun for twelve consecutive days, burning the camera tube and leaving more and more marks on the images, which are then presented on seven pedestal-mounted monitors of increasing size. Shigeko Kubota's *River* (1979-81), contemplating the flow of the electronic signal and her idea of video as "liquid reality," mounts three monitors above a trough filled with water reflecting images, including those of herself swimming in gentle waves. Takahiko Imura's *TV for TV* (1983) performs the humorous gesture of turning the screens of two television sets to each other so that the unrelenting broadcast signal plays only to technology itself. Maria Vedder's rarely shown *PAL or Never the Same Color* (1988), which will be reconstructed for the exhibition, employs one of the earliest video wall systems and looks at the different broadcast standards established in Europe and North America—PAL and NTSC—while considering their aesthetic and geopolitical implications. In her early work *Snake River* (1994), Diana Thater, who represents a younger generation of artists working in video, utilizes three monitors, each displaying footage in one of the three primary colors—red, green, or blue—which together make a full-color image on a CRT monitor. This tactic makes visible the "additive" system of color mixing, which is usually imperceptible, highlighting not only technological standards but also the mechanics of human visual perception.

Artists in the exhibition are Dara Birnbaum, Ernst Caramelle, Takahiko Imura, Shigeko Kubota, Mary Lucier, Muntadas, Tony Oursler, Nam June Paik, Friederike Pezold, Adrian Piper, Diana Thater, and Maria Vedder.

Before Projection: Video Sculpture 1974-1995 is organized by Henriette Huldish, Director of Exhibitions and Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue edited by Henriette Huldish with additional contributions by Edith Decker-Phillips and Emily Watlington, published by Hirmer Verlag in association with the MIT List Visual Arts Center.

The exhibition is presented as part of a citywide partnership of arts and educational institutions organized to recognize the outsized role greater Boston has played in the history and development of technology. The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston initiated this partnership to link concurrent exhibitions and programs related to the themes of the ICA exhibition *Art in the Age of the Internet, 1989 to Today*.

Exhibitions at the List Center are made possible with the support of Fotene Demoulas & Tom Coté, Audrey & James Foster, Jane & Neil Pappalardo, Cynthia & John Reed, and Terry & Rick Stone. In-kind media sponsorship provided by 90.9 WBUR.

Additional support for *Before Projection: Video Projection 1974-1995* was provided by Lévy Gorvy and SPAIN arts & culture.

General operating support is provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Council for the Arts at MIT, Philip S. Khoury, Associate Provost at MIT, the MIT School of Architecture + Planning, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and many generous individual donors. The Advisory Committee Members of the List Visual Arts Center are gratefully acknowledged.

For a full listing of related events and programs visit: <https://listart.mit.edu/events-programs>



About the MIT List Visual Arts Center

Located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the List Visual Arts Center is a creative laboratory that provides artists with a space to freely experiment and push existing boundaries. As the contemporary art museum at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the List Center presents a dynamic program of six to nine special exhibitions in its galleries annually, a program of exhibitions by emerging artists known as the List Projects, as well as a broad range of educational programs, events, and publications.

The List also maintains and adds to MIT's permanent art collection; commissions new works through the MIT Percent-for-Art program, a collection of more than 60 site specific artworks throughout the campus; and oversees the Student Loan Art Program, which lends more than 600 works of art annually to MIT undergraduate and graduate students.

Originally named the Hayden Gallery, MIT established this center for the visual arts in 1950 to provide a dedicated structure upon which to build the Institute's existing relationship to the arts. It was renamed the List Visual Arts Center in 1985 in recognition of a gift from Vera and Albert List, and relocated to its current expanded location in the Wiesner Building on the campus of MIT, which was designed by MIT alumnus I.M. Pei (B.S. Architecture, 1940) and Partners Architects.

###

