

# Art Basel Miami Beach

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## Venue and Description

Botanical Garden Building, 2000 Convention Center Drive (access from Hall D, Miami Beach Convention Center)

Lounge with comprehensive program of contemporary video art (projections and videotheque)

### Art Video Lounge and Art Sound Lounge Program 2006.pdf

Whether in the form of narratives, structural experiments, short personal meditations, large-scale cinematic installations, or brief performances, video art has assumed a position of legitimacy, indeed prominence, in the art world that few would have predicted in the early 1980's. In fact the widespread availability of digital technology since the mid-1990's has placed media art, including video, at the forefront of an artistic revolution. Painters now "draw" on computers before approaching the canvas; sculptors, following in a tradition stretching back to Richard Serra and Bruce Nauman, consider video installations as part of their practice. An immersive installation by Doug Aitken or Julian Rosefeldt is the moving image equivalent of a monumental, multi-unit Serra sculpture.

It is also a unique work of art that resists easy comparisons with sculpture or painting. If video and other media artists are teaching us anything, it is that these media are irreducibly art unto themselves. The works chosen for this year's video lounge reflect the singularity of moving-image art. Though references to historically older practices such as painting and sculpture may exist, the works cannot be viewed solely in comparison to these other media. They are essentially, necessarily art of the moving image. Moving image art, moreover, as represented primarily by cinema, achieved a high level of sophistication almost from the start. Abel Gance's 1920 film, *Napoleon*, was, remarkably, a three-screen projection, conceived well in advance of the multi-surface projections now so favored by many artists.

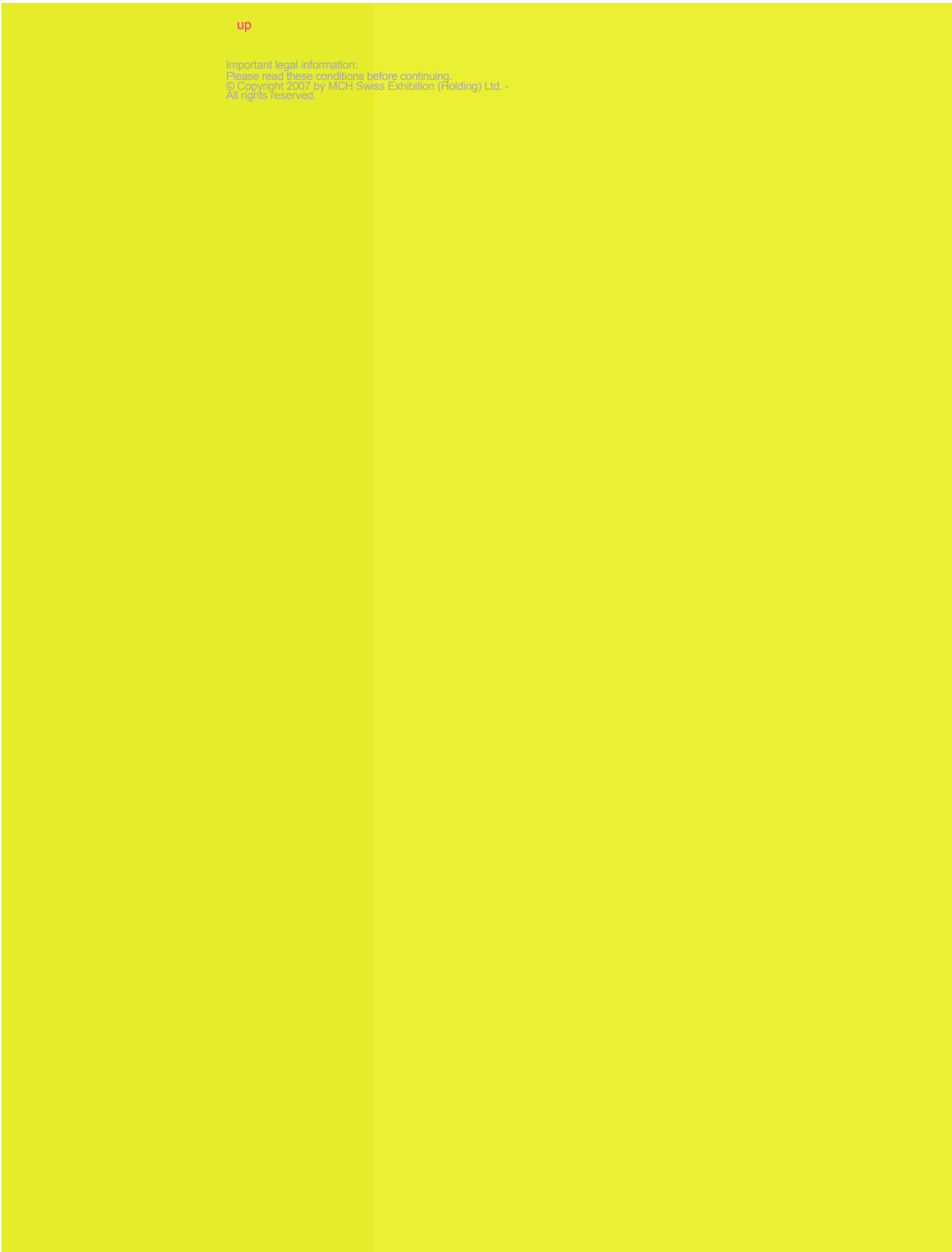
Cinema was, arguably, the dominant art form of the twentieth-century, certainly in terms of global reach and popularity. The grand story of cinema, based on lush 35mm or 70mm images, is over. Cinema has become an art of video. The great directors of our time, including Jean-Luc Godard and Steven Spielberg may be called new media artists: artists as familiar with digital technology as they are with the Panavisions of yesteryear. Video, in its digital and high definition forms, is becoming the preferred medium of filmmaking, a fact profoundly challenging to video artists. With superior technologies now available to all (portable high definition video camcorders, with four times the resolution of standard video and available for around \$1000, can make student films look like

major studio movies), artists must seriously consider if what they do is worth a viewer's time. The challenge to artists was never more cogent: technique is not enough. Content is crucial.

When technique and content blend seamlessly, superior art results, as in the work of exhibiting artists Mark Lewis, Harun Farocki, Mathilde ter Heijne, Jordan Crandall, and Ranbir Kaleka, to name but a few. Lewis, whose short-form works both revere and challenge cinema, are visually stunning examples of the successful union of concept and digital dexterity. Inheriting Minimalism's elegant reductiveness, Lewis enjoins current editing effects from "Smoke" and "Inferno" software to realize his painterly vision. Farocki has been challenging prevailing myths about advertising, architecture and war for more than three decades. Recent works expose how military surveillance techniques have become part of our everyday reality. Though fictional narratives, the works of Crandall and ter Heijne explore the madness of everyday paranoia and fanaticism currently permeating our world. Kaleka, in a mere nineteen second video, represents well the enduring appeal of performance to media artists. The digitally altered gestures of a man with a cockerel summarizes a textbook worth of identity and cultural issues. Indeed, many artists today are grappling with identity in a media environment that can be both erotic and perverse. Reality TV, with its romance with the intrusive camera seems to suggest that we both love and are repulsed by surveillance. Governmental surveillance, the new reality, both terrifies and comforts us.

Video art emerged at a cultural moment in the 1960's marked by riots in the US and worldwide demonstrations of students and anti-war activists. It was also a time when artistic experimentation was heralding the collapse of the walls separating disciplines: dance, film, painting, sculpture, performance were yielding multi-media artworks that today are commonplace. As we celebrate the strong emergence of video as an international art phenomenon (video artists from the far reaches of the former Soviet Union, China, Africa, throughout Latin America are being seen at international exhibitions regularly), we pause to both mourn and honor video's pioneering artist and Miami resident, Nam June Paik, who died earlier this year. Artistic genius is defined, in part, by an inexplicable intuition about the zeitgeist that produces an art that changes forever the way we see the world. Paik, touched by the experimental wizardry of Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage, knew that the techno-box we call the television was itself radically altering the calculus of daily life; and rather than let it control him, he decided to dominate it: first as a material for sculpture, soon after as a means of prophecy, using hundreds of monitors and thousands of images to mirror the televised, advertised, digitized world that now engulfs us. No artist since has maximized the medium of video the way Paik did. As many artists veer increasingly toward the "cinematic" in their installations, Paik remains the essential video artist.

Michael Rush  
Curator



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