

PROJECT 5

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik, 1976

Moorman + Paik

Exhibition and performances

22 – 26 March 1976

Art Gallery of South Australia; Adelaide Festival Theatre plaza; Adelaide Festival Theatre rooftop and Elder Park

1 – 11 April 1976

Art Gallery of New South Wales; Coventry Gallery and Sydney Opera House forecourt

BIOGRAPHY

Hailed as the ‘father of video art’ and the ‘Jeanne d’Arc of new music’, Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman fused music and sculpture, performance and video, challenging conventions and creating new sounds, images and experiences. Charlotte Moorman was a classically trained cellist and became key figure in ‘new music’ in the 60s and 70s. Through films, performances and installations, Paik remodelled our ways of seeing the temporal image in contemporary art, transforming museum architecture into energetic audio visual spaces.

FACTS

- *I made the video synthesiser for the people who are longing for a new relationship with machines... The video art movement maintains that people must have a right to talk back.*
– Nam June Paik
- *I am a sculpture and not a concert.*
– Charlotte Moorman
- During their project in 1976, Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik collaborated on more than 40 exhibitions and performances in Sydney and Adelaide.
- Over their three-week visit they performed daring performances written by Paik, along with works by Jim McWilliams, Joseph Beuys, Yoko Ono and John Cage.
- For *Ice music for Sydney*, Moorman performed with a 90kg cello carved from a block of ice. The ice took three hours to melt away, while the sound of its dripping was amplified with a microphone.
- *Chocolate cello* involved Moorman and her cello smothered in 13kg of chocolate fudge and positioned in a display of fake grass and colourfully wrapped Easter eggs.
- *Sky Kiss* was a one-hour performance featuring Moorman suspended from balloons drifting high above the Sydney Opera House for more than 2000 spectators.
- Documents and notes from their visit to Australia indicate that Moorman was required to wear protective clothing to shield her body from radiation during performances.

PROJECT 5

Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik, 1976

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Pioneers of avant-garde video and performance, artist Nam June Paik and cellist Charlotte Moorman collaborated in Adelaide and Sydney during 1976 on an exhibition and series of more than 40 performances for Project 5. The exhibition included a selection of Paik's famous video sculptures – constructions from TV sets that screened his experiments with synthesised video and feedback – and was accompanied by artistically and physically daring performances written by Paik and their contemporaries, including Jim McWilliams, Joseph Beuys, Yoko Ono and John Cage. They captured the attention of the media as Moorman performed naked with a cello carved from ice, swinging from a 12-metre trapeze, smothered in 13 kilograms of chocolate fudge, and suspended from balloons drifting above the Sydney Opera House forecourt.

Hailed as the 'father of video art' and the 'Jeanne d'Arc of new music', together Paik and Moorman fused music and sculpture, performance and video, challenging conventions and creating new sounds, images and experiences. Their exhibition in Australia was shown at the Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide and later the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, presenting newly created versions of Paik's famous video sculptures *TV Buddha* and *Video Garden* and his sculptures created for Moorman, *TV cello*, *TV bed* and *TV bra for living sculpture*.

At the time of their visit, Moorman and Paik had collaborated for over 10 years and together they presented a program of special recitals, performing Fluxus works composed by Paik and other collaborators. Special events were also staged by Moorman in both Adelaide and Sydney, including *Ice music for Adelaide* and *Ice music for Sydney*, in which Moorman wore nothing but a wreath of flowers and played a 90-kilogram block of ice carved in the form of a cello, surrounded by radiators and spotlights, until the instrument melted. A daytime performance of *Flying cello* in Adelaide's Elder Park involved a highwire trapeze act conceived by Jim McWilliams. Mieko Shiomi's *Cello sonata* was another vertiginous performance by Moorman, who dangled her cello from a bamboo pole positioned at the top of the Adelaide Festival Theatre rooftop and then in Sydney from the roof of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

An Easter performance of Jim McWilliams' *Chocolate cello* was performed at Coventry Gallery in Sydney, with Moorman and her cello smeared in 13 kilograms of fudge. For the finale of the visit, Moorman performed Jim McWilliams' *Sky kiss* above the Sydney Opera House forecourt. Dressed in a black leotard and white satin cape, she played Jimmy Webb's *Up, up and away*, suspended by helium balloons.

Kaldor Public Art Project 5: Moorman + Paik, *Sky Kiss*, composition by Jim McWilliams, performed by Charlotte Moorman, Sydney Opera House Forecourt on 11 April 1976

Photo: Kerry Dundas



Kaldor Public Art Project 5: Moorman + Paik, *Mieko Shiomi's Cello Sonata*, performed by Charlotte Moorman, Art Gallery of NSW, 1976

Photo: John Delacour

