

Introduction to Video Art

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Art that involves the use of video and /or audio data and relies on moving pictures

Video Art is distinguished from Cinema but from very early on, artists started to make film Example: *Le Voyage Dans la Lune, A Trip to the Moon, by Georges Méliès (1902)*



When you could carry a camera with you in the 1960s radically altered the progress of video and art.

The most important aspect of video was that it was cheap and easy to make, enabling artists to record and document their performances easily. This put less pressure on where their art was situated giving them freedom outside the gallery.

One of the early pioneers of video was *Bruce Nauman* who used video to reveal the hidden creative processes of the artist by filming himself in his studio. He performed of the camera – using the artist body as a material:



http://ubu.com/film/nauman_perimeter.html

*For this film, Nauman made a square of masking tape on the studio floor, with each side marked at its halfway point. To the sound of a metronome and beginning at one corner, he methodically moves around the perimeter of the square, sometimes facing into its interior, sometimes out. Each pace is the equivalent of half the length of a side of the taped square. He uses the hip-swaying walk in *Walk with Contrapposto*.*

We can associate this work with a lot of other contemporary artist who uses their body as a mean for exploration in a performative way, making performance for the camera and filming them.

Paul Maheke:

<https://vimeo.com/199816224>

Through a varied and often collaborative body of work comprising performance, installation, sound and video, Maheke considers the potential of the body as an archive in order to examine how memory and identity is formed and constituted.



From the 60s to now - As video technology became more sophisticated, the art evolved from:

- Real-time, grainy, black and white recordings:

Name June Paik – Zen for Film, 1964

In an endless loop, unexposed film runs through the projector. The resulting projected image shows a surface illuminated by a bright light, occasionally altered by the appearance of scratches and dust particles in the surface of the damaged film material. Paik uses the emptiness of the image for his art. This a film which depicts only itself and its own material qualities, and which, as an «anti-film,» is meant to encourage viewers to oppose the flood of images from outside with one's own interior images.



- To the present-day with an emphasis on large-scale installations in colour and multi-screened works:

Pipilotti Rist, *Ever Is Over All*, 1997

This video work is the first large-scale installation of the artist, giving spatial dimension to her lush visual language, the installation consists of two overlapping video projections. At left a woman proudly strides down a city sidewalk. She carries a tall flower of a variety that is also seen in the projection at right, which depicts a field of the large tropical blooms. Both videos have been slowed to a hypnotic pace, creating a sense of calm that is periodically disrupted when, in an inexplicable burst of violence, the protagonist forcefully swings the flower at the window of a parked car, which shatters dramatically; in a poetic use of magical realism, the flower is a weapon strong enough to break glass. Meanwhile, an approaching female police officer smiles and salutes her in approval. Through the use of vivid colour and sound, the video could look like a music video pop culture.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDydC2EYVDo>



This was then re-used by **Beyonce** in her music video **Hold Up, 2017**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeonBmeFR8o>

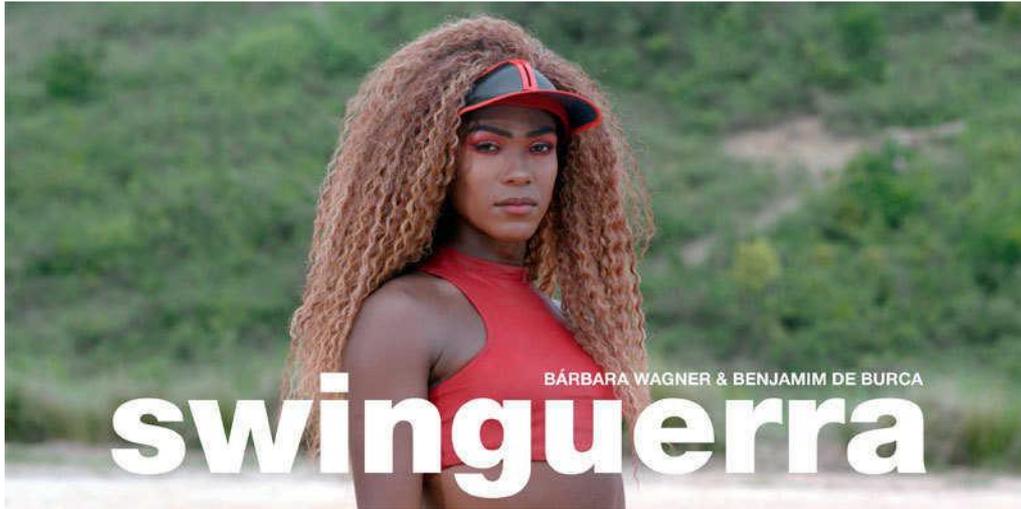
- We can see that there is a real link between art and popular culture.

<https://vimeo.com/337528627>

For example, in *Swinguerra* by **Bárbara Wagner & Benjamin de Burca**, film commissioned for the Brazilian Pavilion of the 58th Venice Biennale, 2019. *Bárbara Wagner & Benjamin de Burca's* films focus on music and dance forms that draw under-represented communities together, highlighting visibility, legal rights and self-representation. The resulting films are a hybrid of music documentary and socio-political study that deftly communicate complex issues with a broad-reaching and upbeat attitude. Wagner & de Burca conduct in-depth primary research in specific social contexts, building relationships with individuals who actively elaborate their

own roles in their film-scripts, resulting in a vibrant and inclusive collaborative film-making practice.

Wagner & de Burca represented Brazil at the Venice Biennale 2019, with *Swinguerra*, a film that documents an expressive contemporary dance phenomenon performed mainly by transgender and non-binary dancers. In the context of changing social and political conditions in Brazil, *swinguerra* is an artform that calls for liberation and participation.



- Also there is a real mix between art and TV:

The work of the artist **Arthur Jafa**, and of those who have preceded and those who will follow, affirms a multitude of unyielding, multilayered, exceptional art that exerts an aesthetic independent of Eurocentricism. Jafa's work has exemplified the black aesthetic. Black aesthetic is a term born from the Black Arts Movement that means, simply, to centralize black life in art without the focus on or use of Eurocentric ideals or rules. His work is a combination of video clip for musicians:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=86&v=YTtrnDbOQAU&feature=emb_title

to video for museums and exhibition space: *Love Is the Message, The Message Is Death*

<https://vimeo.com/312673757>



- A lot of artists have used TV as a medium:

Auto Italia Live, in 2010 Auto Italia transforms into a functioning independent TV studio. Showcasing new work from both established and emerging artists, the weekly episodes present projects engaging with the traditions and contemporary forms of broadcast media. The programme looks at artists' relationships to mainstream media and cultural programming, as well as the historic role of artists accessing and exploiting the format of TV as a platform to present work, projects and themselves.



<https://vimeo.com/29899573>

Throughout the years, Video art has become a valid means of artistic creation with its own set of conventions and history. It became very democratise as everyone could use it so it was not as 'precious' or elitist as other art forms.

We can identify that Video Art is taking a variety of forms:

➤ From gallery installations

Issac Julien, *Ten Thousand Waves (2010)* is an immersive film installation projected onto nine double-sided screens arranged in a dynamic structure. Especially conceived for The Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium, the installation choreographs visitors' movement through the space. The original inspiration for this recently acquired, 55-minute moving image installation was the Morecambe Bay tragedy of 2004, in which more than 20 Chinese cockle pickers drowned on a flooded sandbank off the coast in northwest England.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/moma/the-museum-of-modern-art/moma-artist-interviews/v/isaac-julien>



➤ And sculptures that incorporate television sets,

Dara Birnbaum

Dara Birnbaum's pioneering video, media, and installation work has, over the past four decades, addressed the ideological and the aesthetic character of mass media imagery and has been considered fundamental to our understanding the history of media art. She was one of the first artists to design complex and innovative installations that juxtapose imagery from multiple sources while also integrating three dimensional elements—large-scale photographs, sculptural or architectural elements—into the work. She is known for her groundbreaking strategies and for using manipulated television footage.

https://www.google.com/search?q=dara+birnbaum+installation&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwiixsSg27rqAhXQ0oUKHVD5DK4Q2-cCegQIABAA&oq=dara+birnbaum+installation&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAzoCCAA6BAgA

[EB46BAgAEBhQ1okCWIK4AmCFuwJoAnAAeACAAYQBiAGhBZIBBDEyLjGYAQCgAQGqAQtd3Mtd2I6LWltZw&scient=img&ei=9TAEX-L3KtCllwTQ8rPwCg&bih=712&biw=1271&rlz=1C5CHFA_enGB860GB860](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ts5uT0Pdj4c)



➤ Projectors

Artist **Lis Rhodes** is a major figure in the history of artists' film-making in Britain. Her practice crosses into installation, sound art, performance and writing. She also taught at the Slade from 1978, influencing many generations of artists.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ts5uT0Pdj4c>



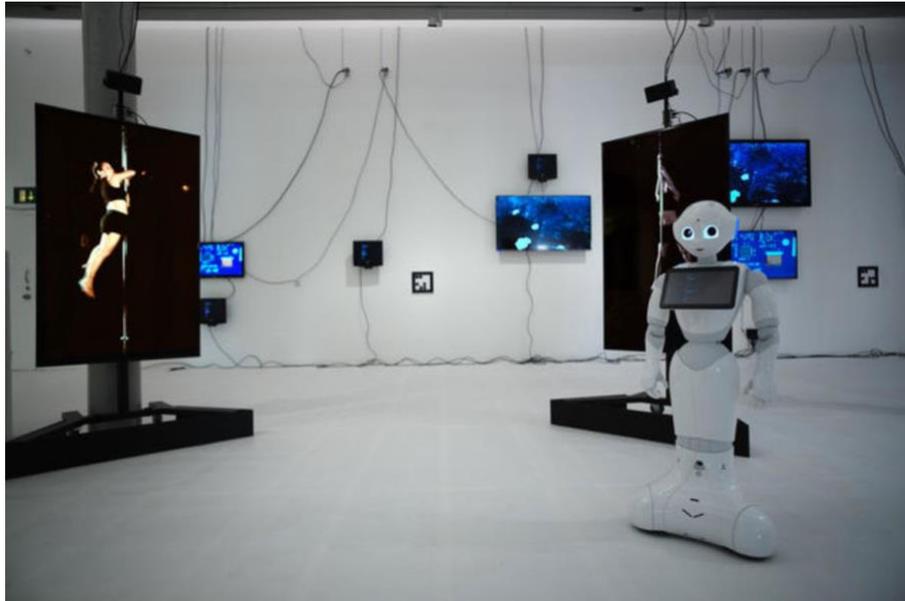
➤ Computer peripherals

Cecile B Evans

Sprung a Leak, 2017, is an automated play in which two humanoid robots, a robot dog, a chorus of users, and a fountain play the central roles. The main characters A-

Plot, B-Plot, and C-Plot cope with information streaming in from the digital system that surrounds them. Through this system we discover Liberty, an animated beauty blogger that everyone is in love with and who, apparently, needs saving from the system itself. From there, Cécile B. Evans' unusual play unfolds across three acts.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UBWJ4FYphU>



➤ To recordings of performance art:

Michèle Magma's artistic work is placed in an intermediate zone, a mental space, a produced border, a gap located between Western and African projections. The plurality of its memberships allows it to question its history of a nation, a continent and more widely of the World. Her relationship with stories and history allows her to invent a critical posture. Michèle stages herself, and lets appear at the same time, her questioning and her discernment through her photos and video installations imbued with an intimate femininity, while addressing fundamental points in the history of humanity. In *Elément*, the artist tries to put in exotic images universal projections implied. A humming voice, sensual feet, dressed in white, accompany a hand that picks cotton on the asphalt. A head, fragment, advancing in profile, balancing a basin. The same feet, ankle chained, move slowly, in pumps. The three images coexist, carried by a long tracking shot which makes it possible to follow this woman, like the watermark of an evocation of the female condition in general. Again, Michèle Magma tells and repeats history in pictures. Drawing from the archives, restoring a balance in a staggering reality, she pursues her singular quest linked to her own cultural diversity as well as to her feminine gender.

<https://vimeo.com/414586969>



- to works created specifically to be encountered via distribution on tape, DVD or digital file

Experimental website www.screen-talk.com, built around the Screen Talk mini-series produced by the artist **Neil Beloufa**.

Adapted from a film originally shot in 2014, the Screen Talk project depicts a world affected by a strange pandemic, with a precursory vision and an offbeat tone. Additionally, this new project is an exploratory look at a new model of producing artistic work with online distribution.

The series was produced in 2014 by Franco-Algerian artist Neil Beloufa, based on a screenplay co-written with cartoonist Léo Maret and a script co-written with American artist Jory Rabinovitz, and was shot with non-professional actors from the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Canada. Originally conceived as pure fiction, without imagining an analogy with a possible reality, the series resonates deeply as we witness the current global health situation.

Screen Talk is accessible via an interactive and dynamic website www.screen-talk.com, the design of which has been conceived as a work of art itself. Website visitors can play games that follow a non-linear narrative, letting them unlock new episodes of Screen Talk. Alternatively, they can download origami artwork to print out and make at home.

The artistic intention of the project is to consider the internet as even more than a space for dissemination, exchange, or transposition: the internet can be thought of as the birthplace of artworks, akin to physical exhibition spaces, with all of its digital strengths and constraints. A bold proposal that favors a new way of understanding art, through creations that have been artistically, technically, and economically conceived for the web.



Video is now considered in rank equal to other mediums. It is considered a genre rather than a movement in the traditional sense and is not to be confused with theatrical cinema, or artists' (or experimental) film.

Looking beyond video's recording capabilities, many artists use it as a medium for its distinctive properties with work that mimics more traditional forms of art like painting, sculpture, collage, or abstraction. This might emerge as:

- a series of blurred, spliced scenes composed as a visual image.

Trisha Baga

Trisha Baga is known for her performance and video installations, but draws upon the legacies of sculpture, painting, music, photography, and literature in her practice. The subjects and themes she explores include contemporary events, hero and celebrity worship, and collective history. Baga's installations often include a film comprised of montaged and collaged found footage and photographs, layered in such a way that some images obscure others; the films are projected directly onto a wall, over personal items and detritus from her studio—like toiletries, electronics, and boxes—such that they cast shadows onto the projection. Baga explains that these seemingly random objects participate in the installation because they had informed the making of the work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2h-kjMEGY0>



- It may take the shape of a recording of performance

Steven McQueen - *Deadpan* (1997)

Deadpan is based on the iconic hurricane scene in Buster Keaton's 1928 film *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*, in which the title character (played by Keaton) stands in front of a house as its facade, detached by strong winds, collapses around him. In one of the most legendary stunts in silent-film history, Bill is positioned in the exact spot where an open window hits the ground, leaving him unscathed. With *Deadpan* McQueen has reimagined this scene as a short film, casting himself as Bill. A sequence of shots dissects it from various angles, transforming slapstick into a cinematographic study. By positioning his body in relation to Keaton's, McQueen implicitly comments on the invisibility of black identity in the early cinema canon. While Keaton quickly scampers away after a comically delayed reaction, McQueen remains in the wreckage, stoic and unfazed by near disaster. As the action relentlessly repeats, the speed at which the house collapses increase.

<https://twitter.com/riocinema/status/1059878271968595969>



- Meant as a reflection on movement or the perception of space.

Eulalia Valldosera

Valldosera creates her unique language by means of projected light on everyday objects, She creates video with objects and projection. Her work explores female identity. In the work vessels: the cult to the mother, we enter the room we perceive a first image. In apparent disorder the detergent bottles resting on piles of books like plinths and the slide projectors illuminating them. At a second moment, we see the silhouettes of the containers projected on an immense scale. They recall women's bodies, alone or related to others. Archetypes: the fairy-woman, the seductress-woman. And yet their curved forms and coloured liquids always resemble one another whatever the name on the container, and the market offers us infinite versions in their presentation as a bottle. The space is conceived as an immense container of shadows. The containers also have contents.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ADkssFOcJE



- Use of props and added materials

Danielle Dean <https://vimeo.com/user9070073>

Danielle Dean is an Alabama-born, London-raised visual artist. Her work explores the interpellation of thoughts, feelings and social relations by power structures working through news, advertising, political speech, and digital media. Dean's work focuses on the multilayered process of constructing and commodifying raced, gendered, aged and classed categories through target-marketing practices.

In a very similar way than Eulalia Valldosera, Dean seeks to deconstruct the gender roles assigned by objects that are used as props, as well as the imaginaires of race and class they evoke. She gathered around her a group of four French women, mainly of African descent, to discuss their relationship to marketing strategies and consumerism. Visually, the video ingeniously merges together images with different qualities, from archives to illustrations, passing through 3D animation. The video embeds in the work the voices of the four participants who recount personal memories collected through interviews throughout the work process.



- It may consist of actual video equipment and its output as objects in a work.

Sondra Perry: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2V0fws7aq0>

"What I'm hoping for in making installation is that people sit in the space for a while, or at least exist there for a while." Sondra Perry is an interdisciplinary artist who works with video, computer-based media, and performance. She explores themes of race, identity, family history, and technology.



➤ Artist might use found footages

The video collagist in **Christian Marclay's** *The Clock* (2010), which ran for 24 hours and featured a mash up of images of clocks from iconic movie scenes. It is a looped 24-hour video supercut that features clocks or timepieces. The artwork itself functions as a clock: its presentation is synchronized with the real time, resulting in the time shown in a scene being the actual time

<https://vimeo.com/28702716>



- Finally, it may be a work that could not exist without the video component such as art pieces that utilize video signals, it is sometime used in live performance and coexist with other art forms such dance and theatre

Charles Atlas is best known for his groundbreaking work in collaboration with choreographers and performers like Merce Cunningham, Michael Clark, Yvonne Rainer, and Leigh Bowery. In this film he presents a new version of MC9 (2012), a multi-channel video piece exploring the intersections of media and dance. This work and two new performances with collaborators have been featured as part of the BMW Tate Live 2013 series.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_IDpe8JR7E



This technology is now available through a wide proliferation of intuitive and DIY software programs easily adaptable across computers, tablets, cameras, smartphones and the Internet. This has opened the context of how and where art can be shown as well:

- **Adham Faramawy**, Make up Tutorial: <https://vimeo.com/281811090>

*This video by artist **Adham Faramawy** is only available online. It is a surreal beauty tutorial that uses the same codes than a 'normal make up tutorial'. In here the artist interrogates how commercial content in the digital age influences our perception of the body and identity*



Artist have started to comment on the technology they are working with. We are living in an environment of surfaces and screens, Video artists' presentations are no longer confined to a single screen, and ideas about the medium itself have led artists to engage with technology, virtual reality, and architecture:

- **Hannah Black**:
<https://www.artforum.com/video/hannah-black-my-bodies-2014-51265>

usually sources online imagery by typing in search terms to find pieces that will eventually inform her themed collage videos. In her piece My Bodies (2014), she Googled "CEO" and "executive" to compile images of white men upon which she overlaid audio tracks of black recording artists such as Rihanna.



Artist such as **Tabita Rezaire** use the internet as their platform to diffuse work. Tabita is bringing a unique dimension to Internet art's ever-expanding universe. In her work Tabita, uses the medium of internet as a platform to critique such phenomena as voyeurism and the performativity that's inherent in social media.



As more video artists look to the Internet as a platform, and the current methodology continues to morph toward the use of webcams, virtual reality, and interactive animation, the field that will continue to expound upon itself at a rapid pace.