

Collaborative Method for Overcoming the Lack

Historical comparison and suggested solution for preserving Japanese experimental moving image



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AMIA Conference Portland 2015
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COLLABORATIVE CATALOGING JAPAN

US-JAPAN HISTORICAL COMPARISONS—1960s/1970s

1. INFRASTRUCTURE / AGENCIES

TV Broadcast start year: US: 1941; Japan: 1953
Number of TV per 1,000 people*

	1953	1958	1960	1963
US	169	284	310	332
Japan	0.1	17	64	140

William A Bresun "Impact of TV" in Michael Goldberg, "Appeal of Communication," Kikan Film No. 11 (1974, April)



N.J. Paik, Video-Synthesizer, 1969

1960s/70s Research labs, museums, distributors, exhibitors, universities

US: WGBH, WNET, Artist Television Network, Electronic Arts Intermix, Video Data Bank, Bonino Gallery, Castelli Gallery, Howard Wise Gallery, Smolin Gallery, Corcoran Gallery, Anthology Film Archive, The Kitchen, The Museum of Modern Art, Long Beach Museum, etc.

Japan: Japan Film Makers Cooperative, Naiqua Gallery, Ginza Sony Building, Sogetsu Art Center, Asahi Shinbun Hall, Gallery 16, Art Core

The popularization of television was late in Japan compared to the U.S. In the U.S., broadcast networks served a significant role in artists' early experiments. Broadcasters such as Boston's WGBH, New York's WNET and the independent cable access station Artist Television Network (ATN) received funding from the government and private foundations to provide laboratories to artists. For example, the famous Paik/Abe synthesizer by Nam June Paik and Abe Shuya was made at WGBH in 1969. Around the late-1960s, galleries were beginning to represent video artists, providing an economic supporting structure for media artists. In addition, as well as exhibition venues helped establish distribution channels and presentation platforms for artists. By the 1980s in the U.S., a number of independent organizations and museums were collecting and preserving moving image works. And by the early 1990s, these collecting institutions were concerned with preservation of their collection. These activities historicized the experimental moving image field, which led to the establishment of educational curriculum in universities, creating an ecology of art making, study, and archiving. In comparison, Japan did not have formal residencies at television broadcast stations, which left artists to experiment using their personal connections to access equipment and use independent funding. The commercial gallery system was not developed in Japan as it was in the U.S., and though there were exhibition spaces and opportunities to present, these activities were either self-funded, or privately supported. Not until recently, experimental moving image entered museum collections, and further, experimental moving image is rarely taught in universities and is generally left out of art history or film history discourses.

2. MONETARY RESOURCES

Income Source

US:

- Governments (national, state, city grant programs)
- Private foundations and individual donations
- Distribution income

Japan

- Project-based support from regional governments, broadcast stations
- Electronic manufactures (Sony, Panasonic)

In the U.S., large-scale government grants private foundations helped establish experiment with moving image. For example, the Rockefeller Foundation was a supporter of programs promoting broadcast experiments in the U.S. such as the WNET's TV Lab, which started in 1972. Such relatively large-scale funding was not available in Japan. In some instances, electronic manufacturers sponsored exhibitions such as in the case of the first Fukui International Video Biennale organized by the video artist Yamamoto Keigo in 1985. However, these funding were limited and often regional entities, governments, as well as international governments gave support.

3. MODES OF ACCESS IN JAPAN

Japanese Film Makers Cooperative (1968-69)

- Proceeds breakdown: 75% to artists, 25% to operation
- At its start, 70 works by 32 artists were distributed

Underground Center (1969-1971)

Image Forum (1977-today; *Not a distributor)

Video Gallery SCAN (1980s-early 1990s)

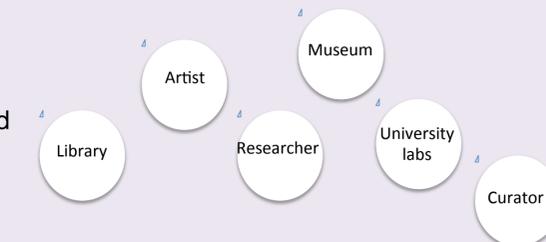
Fukui International Video Biennale (1985-1999)

The organization Japanese Filmmakers Cooperative was founded in 1968 and became an organization called the Underground Center a year later. The organization modeled its distribution and financing on that of the Filmmaker's Cooperative. However, by 1971, distribution service was canceled, leaving Japan without any supporting agency to distribute works. In the 1980s, Tokyo's Video Gallery SCAN, started by Fujiko Nakaya, played a large role in encouraging emerging artists to create video work and introducing Japanese video art in the U.S. and in Europe. In 1984 in particular, the gallery presented Japanese works at the Venice Biennale, VIDEO '84 in Canada, and at American Film Institute National Video Festival in the U.S. In the late 1980s, domestic festivals continued to promote video art including the annual Image Forum Festival, Video Gallery SCAN's Video Television Festival, the Fukui International Video Biennale, and the International Biennale Artec in Nagoya.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN JAPAN: A FIELD REPORT

NO MAJOR ARCHIVES OR DISTRIBUTORS OF EXPERIMENTAL VIDEO & FILM

Today, there are not many institutions that hold collections of experimental film and video in Japan, and where there are efforts of collecting and preserving works by researchers, curators, artists, etc., they are often done on a case-by-case basis, which has contributed to a general lack of systematic and comprehensive cataloging of existing works.



DIFFICULTY OF OBTAINING LARGE FUNDING DEDICATED TO MEDIA ART PRESERVATION

The individual researchers, curators, and artists who work to preserve the works apply their own research grants, exhibition budgets, and other one-time fund resources for preservation. There are no orchestrated efforts among the individuals, and the techniques used for preservation and digitization vary. In general government grants for preserving cultural heritage are mainly focused on traditional artifacts such as ceramics, work on paper, and architectural sites.



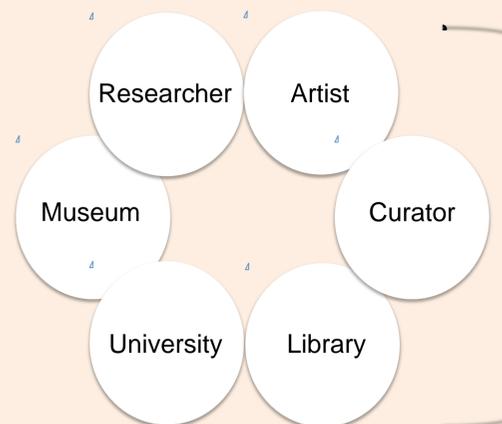
NO SET STANDARDS FOR PRESERVATION & ARCHIVING TECHNIQUES FOR VIDEO OR DIGITAL WORKS. LACK OF RESOURCES & ASSOCIATIONS AROUND ARCHIVING & PRESERVATION

The lack of communication platform and an organizational structure between those individuals and organizations that are working to collect and preserve experimental film and video, has demonstrated an idiosyncratic way of maintenance, leading to an ineffective preservation efforts. Organizing a professional association and holding workshops and training courses for media archiving and preservation may help those individuals to work in concerted effort.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION

FORM A COLLABORATIVE ASSOCIATION AMONG THOSE WORKING ON PRESERVATION

Rather than building a physical, centralized archive, which is cost prohibitive, form a platform for discussing common issues and strategize fundraising as a unified effort.



PRESERVATION & RESOURCE SHARING

Organize Media Archive Workshops

Translation of best-practice guidelines from English into Japanese

Collaborative preservation projects—sharing of technical, personnel, and monetary, resources to preserve; strategize fundraising:

- Archival copies for museums
- Exhibition-use for museums/artists
- Educational-use for universities/libraries
- Previews for curators

DOCUMENTATION

An expansive documentation of Japanese avant-garde moving image does not currently exist; such resource will benefit researchers domestic and abroad. By creating an extensive or comprehensive list of existing works, duplications and works with urgent need of care become apparent, assisting with strategy for organizing preservation projects among the collaborators.

ACCESS

Online database

- Excerpt of works
- Descriptions
- Author bios
- Primary & secondary documents
- Essays, etc.

International access to material that were previously difficult to research.