

## Press Release

Title	Nam June Paik Art Center 2023 Special Exhibition <i>Transmission</i>	
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Press Release	See attached files or Download from link in email	
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### Nam June Paik Art Center 2023 Special Exhibition *Transmission*



■ **Overview**

- Title: *Transmission*
- Period: August 31 – December 3, 2023
- Venue: Outside and Gallery 2, Nam June Paik Art Center
- Curators: Park Sang Ae, Kim Yoonseo (Nam June Paik Art Center)
- Artworks: Nam June Paik, *Transmission Tower* (2002), *32 Cars for the 20th Century: Play Mozart's Requiem Quietly* (1997), *Three Elements: Triangle* (1999), *Tiger Lives* (1999)
- Laser: Norman Ballard (2002), Jeho Yun (2023)
- Technician: Lee Kijun (Nam June Paik Art Center)
- In collaboration with Kim YouSuk (RGB Lab)
- Acknowledgement: Leeum Museum of Art
- Hosted and Organized by Nam June Paik Art Center, Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation

■ **Opening Event**

◦ Date: August 31, 2023, 4:30pm-7:00pm

4:30pm	Opening Ceremony and Exhibition Tour	Outside & Gallery 2, Nam June Paik Art Center
6:00pm	<i>Transmission Tower</i> Lighting Ceremony	Outside, Nam June Paik Art Center
6:30pm	<i>Resonating Frequency</i> by Jeho Yun	

## ■ Introduction

The Nam June Paik Art Center presents the special exhibition *Transmission* from August 31 to December 3, 2023. The exhibition presents Nam June Paik's large-scale outdoor laser installation *Transmission Tower*, for the first time in Korea. The work was previously displayed at the Rockefeller Center in New York in 2002 and the Opera House in Sydney in 2004. The exhibition expands to Gallery of Nam June Paik Art Center, where archives related to *Transmission Tower* and Paik's performance video engage with outdoor installations, separated only by the glass walls. **Highlight of the exhibition is a vibrant and breathtaking laser show, which will captivate the audience outside Nam June Paik Art Center from 5pm to 8pm.** The opening events on August 31 will feature a lighting ceremony and a laser performance, *Resonating Frequency*, by Jeho Yun, who installed the lasers for *Transmission Tower*.

Paik's *Transmission Tower* first met the public in the summer of 2002 as one of several public art projects when New York city was still in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. At the exhibition's opening, Paik performed a piano piece titled *20/21* with the intention of expressing his sympathies and showing support. Norman Ballard, Paik's long-time collaborator in laser technology, programmed the neon and laser to interact with the sound of Paik's piano, empowering the elderly maestro, who had limited mobility, to manipulate the lights easily. *Transmission Tower* is an 8-meter tall tower with red, blue, yellow, and green neons decorating the sides and lasers installed at the top. Steel towers resembling transmission towers, accompanied by neon elements and lasers, symbolize the information age of the 21st century through light.

Paik displayed *Transmission Tower* together with *32 Cars for the 20th Century: Play Mozart's Requiem Quietly* in New York and Sydney. Gaining great attention when it was first presented at the Münster Sculpture Project in 1997, *32 Cars for the 20th Century* consists of 32 old cars no longer in use. The car seats are filled with remnants of televisions and other audiovisual devices. This work, which bids farewell to the technological civilization that epitomized the 20th century through the automobile, is exhibited alongside *Transmission Tower* employing lasers, a new century's medium, to illustrate the transformation of technological civilization throughout the century. Paik mentioned, "Car is a symbol of 20th-century machine culture. And laser is a symbol of 21st-century information culture," commenting that they embodied a metaphorical message for both centuries.

The exhibition, by presenting this work from the Leeum Museum of Art Collection alongside *Transmission Tower*, recreates the encounter between these two works, offering a tribute to their significance. Furthermore, in 2023, laser and sound design by Jeho Yun will be incorporated into *Transmission Tower*, serving as Yun's homage to Paik. Yun fragmented, superimposed, extended, and digitally reprocessed the notes of Mozart's Requiem, as well as the four-color elements of the neon surrounding the tower and the laser beams at the top, in order to generate a resonance between space and time. The tower's laser cuts through the woods and hills, creating a spectacular landscape. A media environment that balances technology, information, and ecology, as envisioned by Paik 20 years ago, unfolds before our eyes.

The lasers from the tower reach into the exhibition gallery. Archival footages filling the gallery wall present scenes from the Rockefeller Center in 2002. While watching the opening of the New York show and the glistening tower during the evening, one can listen to Paik's piano performance *20/21* from beginning to end, comprised of familiar American repertoire. *Tiger*

*Lives*, a single channel video created for the millennium, captures Paik singing the Korean song ‘I Will Live in Geumgang’ in front of the laser sculpture *Three Elements*. This work encapsulates the spirit of experimentation and artistic freedom that characterized Paik’s art, grounded in a traditional Korean narrative imagination. Another laser sculpture, *Three Elements: Triangle*, creates a mysterious spectacle with dynamically moving laser light.

We live in an information age that Paik had foreseen through laser light. Paik envisioned a media environment where humans and technology coexist harmoniously. *Transmission* revitalizes Paik’s laser from two decades ago, aspiring to deliver his message about the media landscape to audiences.

## ■ Works

### 1) Nam June Paik, *Transmission Tower*, 2002

dimensions variable, stainless steel main tower and side towers, mirrors, neon, laser

Laser: Norman Ballard (2002)

Laser: Jeho Yun (2023)

Neon and lighting system: Kim YouSuk (RGB Lab) (2023)

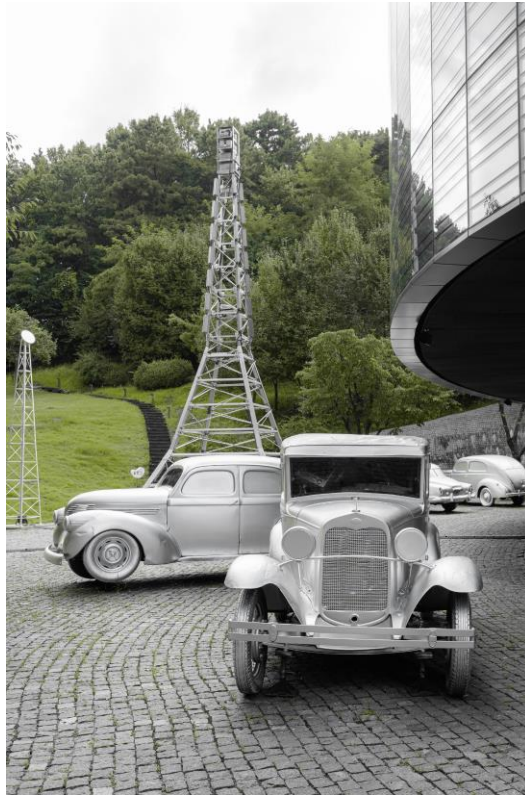


*Transmission Tower* is an outdoor laser installation consisting of an 8-meter-tall steel tower and smaller side towers in the shape of a transmission tower. The four sides of the main tower are illuminated with red, blue, yellow, and green neon, while laser beams from the top expand into the surrounding area. The circular mirrors atop the 5.5-meter side towers create a spectacular reflection of laser light coming from the main tower.

The number of side towers varies according to the characteristics of the location. Two side towers were displayed in New York, and three were installed in Sydney. In 2023, a main tower and two side towers are set up outside Nam June Paik Art Center, and three side towers are placed inside the exhibition gallery. The side towers in the exhibition gallery evoke the experience of the space and allow the audience to sense the transmission visually.

In 2002, the New York-based laser artist Norman Ballard, Paik's long-time collaborator in laser technology, oversaw the implementation of the laser. Ballard arranged for the light to be freely controlled by Nam June Paik, who had limited mobility, and programmed the lasers and neon to respond to the sound of Paik's piano performance on the opening day. In 2023, laser and sound design by Jeho Yun will be incorporated into *Transmission Tower*, serving as Yun's homage to Paik. Yun fragmented, superimposed, extended, and digitally reprocessed the notes of Mozart's Requiem, as well as the four-color elements of the neon surrounding the tower and the laser beams at the top, in order to generate a resonance between space and time. Laser beams originating from the central tower traverse the space, projecting onto the adjacent side towers and extending into the interior of the exhibition gallery.

## 2) Nam June Paik, *32 Cars for the 20th Century: Play Mozart's Requiem Quietly*, 1997 Leeum Museum of Art Collection

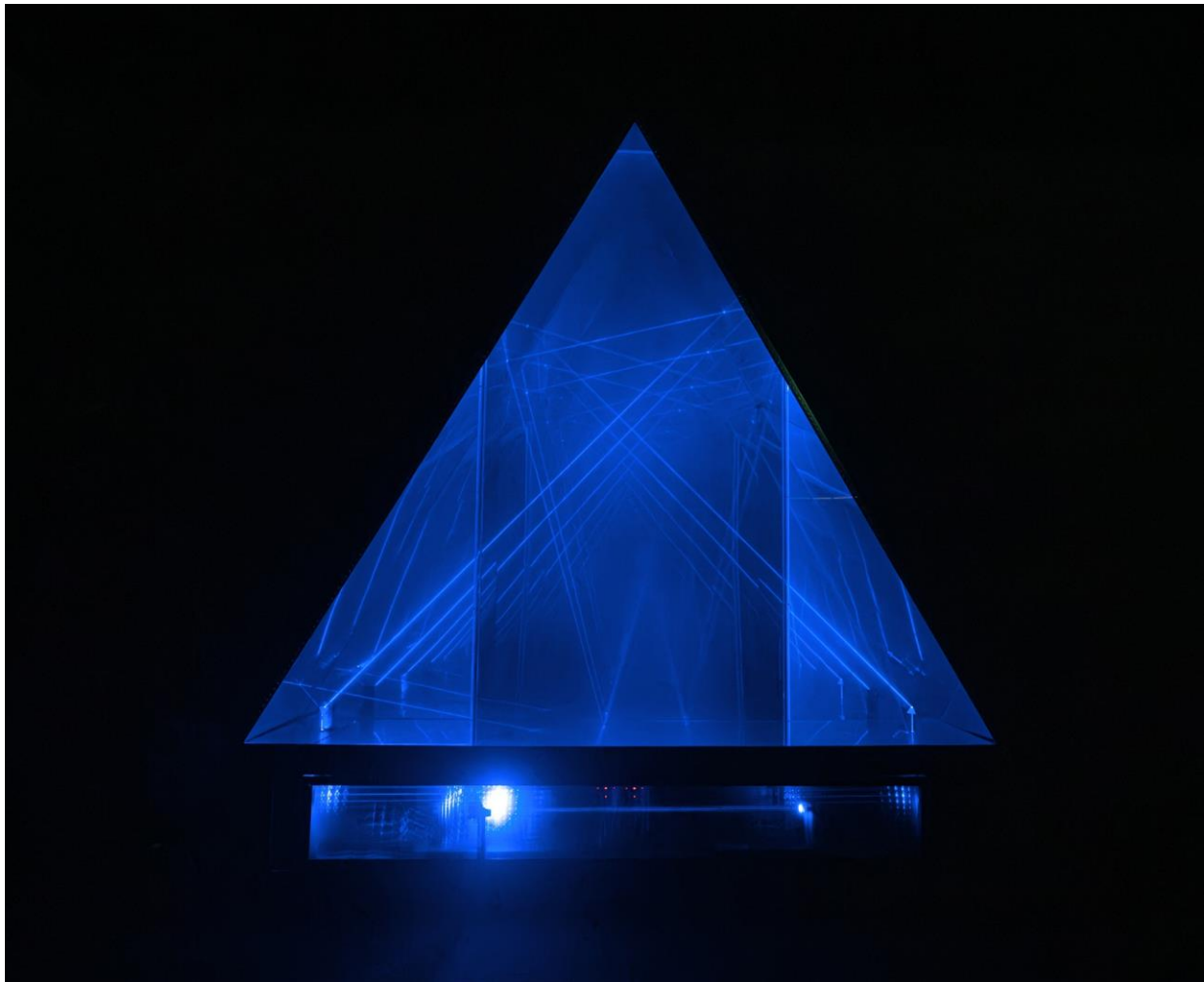


*32 Cars for the 20th Century* is an outdoor installation that pairs 32 retired automobiles with Mozart's Requiem. The work consists of 32 authentic classic cars manufactured from the 1920s to the 1950s. The seats of vintage silver-painted cars are filled with the remains of audio-visual machines that have gone out of use. It is documented that at the 1997 Münster Sculpture Project, when the work was exhibited for the first time, the sounds were played from sunset until midnight. The remnants of devices in the seats signify the limited lifespan of machinery, and the cars that have fulfilled their function symbolize the mechanical civilization of the 20th century. By filling a car that embodies the essence of the 20th-century machine age with obsolete devices, the artwork simultaneously underscores the inherent limitations of machinery and the culmination of a century.

Mentioning, "Car is a symbol of 20th-century machine culture. And laser is a symbol of 21st-century information culture" Paik juxtaposed this piece with *Transmission Tower* in New York in 2002 and Sydney in 2004. The two works depict the transition into the new century as a contrast between the finite essence of machinery and the limitless possibilities of information. Two decades later, in 2023, Nam June Paik Art Center highlights the significance of these works by exhibiting *32 Cars for the 20th Century* and *Transmission Tower* together, just as Paik did during his lifetime.

### 3) Nam June Paik, *Three Elements: Triangle*, 1999

325×375×122cm, laser, mirrors, prism, motor, smoke



The laser work *Three Elements*, which Nam June Paik created with the laser expert Norman Ballard, was first exhibited in his retrospective *The Worlds of Nam June Paik* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2000. The work comprises respective pieces in the form of a triangle, a circle, and a square. Among them, the triangle represents water. The blue laser beams, constantly moving at high speeds, create a dynamic and mysterious spectacle, while the laser light resonating within the frame is reflected in mirrors, creating the illusion of an open infinite space. Audiences can experience a new dimension created by the light of the laser. The laser work, a non-linear extension of time and space that Paik explored during his lifetime through music, television, and video, presents a macroscopic vision of communication via electronic media. It aims to communicate with the world and, ultimately, the universe.

#### 4) Nam June Paik, *Tiger Lives*, 1999

45 min, color, sound



*Tiger Lives* is a video produced by Nam June Paik under Korea's Presidential Commission for the New Millennium in 1999. On December 31, a day before the year 2000, the video was screened in Imjingak and broadcast live to 77 countries worldwide, including KBS, ABC, and BBC. The unique situation of the Korean Peninsula - the world's only divided country and one still in a state of armistice instead of a termination of war - was edited with Paik's distinctive dazzling speed and transmitted to the world. The video builds to a crescendo with the music, accelerating the movement of the modulated scanning lines, the dancing patterns, and the laser beams of *Three Elements*, followed by black and white images of a tiger and a bird. A relay of footage continues, from the North Korean production of *The Battle of the Tiger* and the Lion and Tiger folk tales, footage from George Brecht's event, *Motorcycle Sundown*, performed by the New Jersey Orchestra, and American soprano Tracy Leipold singing a song by Larry Miller, to Paik playing 'I Will Live in Geumgang' on the piano. Leipold and Paik stand side by side in front of *Three Elements* and sing their own songs to the fullest. This work encapsulates the spirit of experimentation and artistic freedom that characterized Paik's art, grounded in a traditional Korean narrative imagination. Interpreting the Korean people as tigers, Paik expressed his desire for Koreans to leave behind the past century of ideological suffering and move toward a new prospect.



## 5) Video Archive Footage *Nam June Paik Transmission, New York, 2002*

Nam June Paik Art Center Video Archives



In New York in 2002, when the shock of the September 11 attacks still lingered, Nam June Paik displayed *Transmission Tower* alongside *32 Cars for the 20th Century: Play Mozart's Requiem Quietly* in front of Rockefeller Center. At the exhibition's opening, Paik performed a piano piece titled *20/21* with the intention of expressing his sympathies and showing support. The current exhibition at Nam June Paik Art Center, reconstructs video footage from the 2002 exhibition housed in the video archive into seven scenes. Videos of the installation and the evening view of the exhibition at Rockefeller Center, the opening on June 26, 2002, Paik's performance of *20/21*, and the studio rehearsals in preparation for the show are screened throughout the gallery. The archive video footages also include interview clips of Paik explaining why laser was chosen as next medium, why the cars were painted in silver, and why two different artworks were displayed together.

## ■ Information

- Free Admission
- Opening Hours: 10am - 6pm (Last entry one hour before closing)
- Outdoor Exhibition Hours: 5pm - 8pm (closed during rain)
  - ※ You are free to view the works displayed outdoors after opening hours.
- Closed on Mondays (excluding holidays), Thanksgiving day

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