

**Art, Forms, and  
Landforms**  
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The emergence of new media in our daily lives, as with anything that makes a presence in our society, will ultimately be scrutinized in the form of art. It is the way we compute their relevance and understand them for their whole worth that make this process of evaluation critical. Nam June Paik helped introduce new-media forms into the art world, sparking a dialogue between technology and its representation that is now commonplace in the work of today's avant-garde. Paik's art was especially effective in appraising technology in its evolving role within society. The new museum would be a container for Nam June Paik's relevant works, preserving and displaying a sort of timeline of the way technology is perceived in an ever-changing global climate. This proposes an opportunity to design a new type of space that perceives the present future, in all of its past mutations. The design of the Nam June Paik Museum involved a careful consideration for expressing its content through form. It strives to communicate the weight of our responsibility when dealing with the supposed real and artificial as they approach potential synergy with every new technological trick up science's sleeve. What then becomes precedent for such an active container? The programme of the building calls for space to display Paik's work and hints at their evolution from his personal studio space to final product. This narrative also involves the manner in which the real, fake, and everything in between jostle about; how they can only exist in a measured juxtaposition to each other. A space that deals with these issues must find a like-minded form which involves as much tension as the content without losing sight of its role as container and backdrop; though its role as container and backdrop must remain relevant in order to put their content into suitable context. Precedents that



*Nam June Paik's Magnet TV*



*Nam June Paik's TV Garden*

deal with space for art, space complimenting new-media, and space dealing with communication and transformations had influenced the building's identity. These are found in Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York City, Zaha Hadid's Contemporary Arts Center in Rome, Foreign Office's Yokohama Terminal in Japan, and John S. Johnson's Eyebeam competition in New York City.

Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum proposed an alternative to displaying and 'narrating' artwork. It is in its unique circulation that distinguished the space as an active vessel for its exhibitions. The continuous floor space imagined a progression or evolution of ideas that can give depth to its subject matter. This manner of showcasing work seemed appropriate for the Nam June Paik Gallery as it compliments the movement that is featured in Paik's work and what it represents; a dynamic society with a penchant for the newest toy. Wright's vision of an organic gallery enjoyed the absence of abrupt changes. The eye is free to perceive evolution in the work or follow a composed sequence. Since the pieces provided in the Nam June Paik Museum will be permanent in many parts of the gallery the opportunity to compose a pedagogical space is facilitated with a clear path. Though, what also occurs in Wright's Guggenheim and the design for the Nam June Paik Museum is a certain flexibility involved in spaces that do not have a pre-scripted termination in their architecture. Thus, a story can be told in long and short interchangeable chapters.

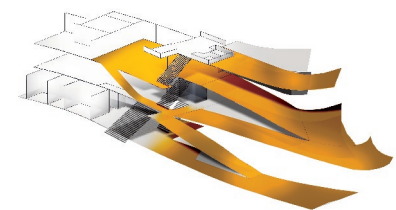
The route sculpted out of the building's site is manifest from ideas presented in Zaha Hadid's winning competition design for the Contemporary Arts Center in Rome. Hadid



*Nam June Paik's exhibit in Guggenheim*



*interior circulation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York*



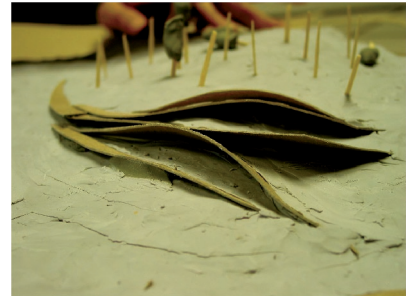
*interior circulation of the Nam June Paik Museum*

relishes in composing spaces as landscape analogies<sup>1</sup>. She often designs open, fluid, and ambiguous organizations of space to reflect upon natural terrains such as hills and valleys. In the case of the Contemporary Arts Center, Hadid derives its physiognomy and orientation from the context, assimilating itself to the specific conditions of the site. In respect to the Nam June Paik Museum, a similar strategy is optimized as its internal circulation follows the drift of geologic conditions. The building's aesthetic and flow is sculpted out of the dramatic landform of the site, hugging the valley, and emulating its contours. This is a conscious effort to distort the perception of the natural and contrived. This is the supposed essence of much of Paik's work. The fake collaborates with the real and gives a polarized energy to the space. This contrasting and often ironic relationship characterizes Paik's playful approach to new-media and is meant to govern the theme of the building.

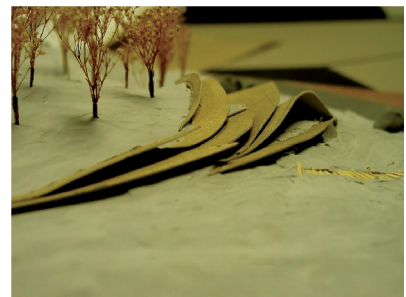
Other such aspirations to configure an 'organic' circulation that approaches movement as a fluid within a sculpted container are found in Foreign Office's Yokohama Terminal. This project examines how a higher consideration for circulation can mold a project. It is this attitude that is meant to pervade in the Nam June Paik design. The terminal pier is structured to attain fluid and uninterrupted space. While its typology is dissimilar to the Museum, it involves a spirit that excites movement within its walls, encouraging its users to explore the internal and external setting. This was an important issue in the Nam June Paik Museum because of the intended juxtaposition of natural and artificial. This is essential in Paik's work as he incorporates new-media and technology into his installations. They often blend organic



*concept painting for the Contemporary Arts Center in Rome*



*concept model for the Nam June Paik Museum*



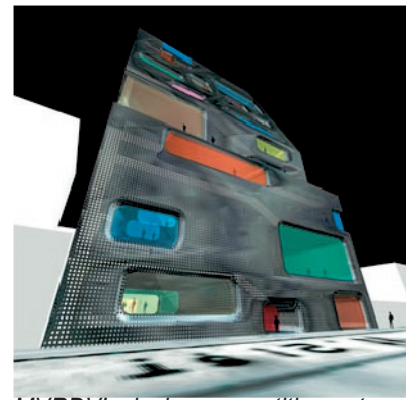
*Foreign Office's Yokohama Terminal*

elements and electronic gadgets, composing an art that speaks two different languages playing off one another. This beckons the question then; what is the language of the new world of globalization and quickening technologies? How can a space facilitate the promise of the infinite?

While the infinite may be out of reach for the time being, ambitions to create a space to house current new-media artist work fueled the design of Eyebeam's Museum of Art and Technology in New York. Eyebeam is the brainchild of film-director John S. Johnson who established the non-profit organization to provide access, education and support for artists, students and the public in the emerging fields of computer-generated and digital art<sup>2</sup>. The building, which became the prize of an intense invited design competition, is meant to provide extensive production and exhibition spaces for artists exploring the implications and potential of new media. The competition intentionally ballooned into an intensive forum of ideas about how to facilitate the future manifestations of electronic art. Entrant's imagination went beyond the original program and tempted revision, and although the winner, Diller and Scofidio, had been announced, the design may very well start from scratch given all the new ideas which emerge continually as the technological climate changes. This is the problem and potential of such a programme. In the competition, flexibility, intersection, integration and connectivity in proximity became some of the most relevant issues. This type of building, while different from the Nam June Paik Museum, shares a similar relationship to an ever-changing field. For the NJP museum, much attention is paid to the connectivity of the work to its surroundings, the nature that grounds our



*Leeser Architect's design competition entry for Eyebeam*



*MVRDV's design competition entry for Eyebeam*



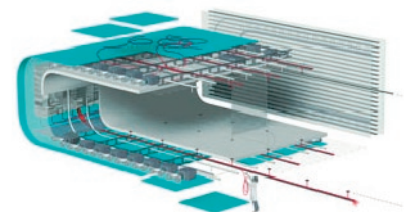
*Diller + Scofidio's winning design competition entry for Eyebeam*

technological heights. What is important in both programmes is the interaction between a person, the elements, and the synthesis that they provoke. The most successful designs entered into the Eyebeam competition, including the winner, employed a fluid, malleable container that allowed circulation to 'flow' within a facilitative membrane. It exploits its urban context as the human element of technology as the Nam June Paik Museum exploits its natural context in its site. The NJP museum also recognizes the human element in providing a prominent public space that anchors the free-flowing form.

As a product of precedents, the design for the Nam June Paik Museum is a calculated amalgamation of typologies. They each provide strategies to deal with the Nam June Paik Museum as a collage of programs. Some strategies are embedded in older typological systems such as Wright's Guggenheim, and some are searching for solutions to new agendas such as the Eyebeam design competition. This is what made the NJP Museum design a new problem, dealing with a formal gallery and its expansive content; dealing with a frozen glimpse of the future and allowing space to capture and document that same future in its evolution. The artist showcased within the spaces demanded a suitable container that does not just house the installations, but give it provocation. Paik's work promotes new perspectives and re-evaluation of perceived institutions. The technologies in his work are not necessarily steps forward or backward, but are posed against nature as an absolute; this is what the museum attempts to achieve. Change and organicism in an electronic world is the dominant theme in the art and architecture. This is the matter that is extracted from the

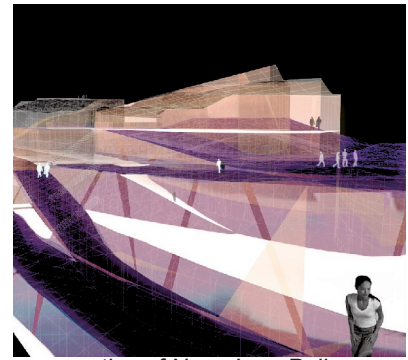


*perspective of Diller + Scofidio's Eyebeam design*



*double-ribbon with facilitative elements between*

precedent projects mentioned, scrutinized and employed in context to find an identity in form and form in identity. And as long as technological advancements stay relevant in society, a world of art is waiting to consume it and create with it. New media and the digital world is one that is uniquely inclusive rather than exclusive from other disciplines and modes of thinking. It is an opportunity for architecture to integrate itself and facilitate the growth of a new technological epoch.



*perspective of Nam June Paik  
Museum*

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<sup>1</sup> Zaha Hadid, "Landscape as Plan [a conversation with Zaha Hadid]", *El Croquis: 1996 2001 Zaha Hadid*

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Slessor, *The Architectural Review*, Nov, 2002