

**Press  
 Release**

Title	<b>Nam June Paik's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition</b> <i>The Last Consummate Second – Symphony No. 2</i>	
Inquiry	Curator : Han Noori t.031-201-8545 m.010-3478-1220	
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**Nam June Paik's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition**  
*The Last Consummate Second – Symphony No. 2*



- A premiere in Korea that presents a performance of *Symphony for 20 Rooms*, a text score composed by Paik in 1961.
- A new form of exhibition that will be completed by artists and audiences together, following Paik's thoughts on art to break free from fixed thinking and find the freedom in our sensory experiences.

## ■ Overview

- Title: *The Last Consummate Second - Symphony No. 2*
- Period: March 24 – June 19, 2022
- Venue: Gallery 2, Nam June Paik Art Center
- Curator: Han Noori (Curator, Nam June Paik Art Center)
- Artist: sOojung kae, Daum Kim, Yongju Kwon, Moon Hae-Joo, OC.m, Ji Park, Sun Hyuck Song
- Reading: Bek Hyunjin, Chang Kiha, LEE CHANGSUB, Lang Lee, sunwoojunga, Haegue Yang
- Writing: Chung Serang, Heekyung Lee, Nam June Paik
- Hosted and Organized by Nam June Paik Art Center, Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation
- Supported by Noroo Paint

## ■ Introduction

***The Last Consummate Second – Symphony No. 2* to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Nam June Paik's birth from March 24 to June 19, 2022.** A premiere in Korea presents a performance of *Symphony for 20 Rooms*, a text score composed by Paik in 1961. This is his second symphony and is viewed as an important work that foreshowed his thoughts on art although it was not performed while he was alive.

The audience may assume that *Symphony for 20 Rooms* has 20 rooms on the score as suggested by the title, but it is actually composed of a total of 16 rooms, that is, 16 movements, including an empty room. It does not look like a musical score that we are familiar with – only instructions (text) that replace the functions of scales or notes are written not on music paper, but on square-shaped lines presumed to be rooms. Dynamic marks are the only hints that this is a music score. Paik assigned various sounds (tape recorders), objects, and devices that stimulate the senses in 16 rooms. The devices and objects that work not only on auditory, but also on visual, olfactory, and tactual senses induce actions from the audience, making them walk through the rooms as if moving on to the next movement.

As such, the order of the rooms or the overall sounds continuously changes depending on who turns the score pages, how they move between rooms, and how they operate devices. This variability is a clue as to why Paik included ‘20 rooms’ instead of ‘16 rooms’ in the title. In his 1962 writing *About the Exposition of the Music*, Paik explains *Symphony for 20 Rooms* as follows: “[here] the audience has a choice of at least 20 different sound sources, between which they can freely circulate.” For him, a room is not for physical division, and rather, it is a metaphor for a real-time sound and situation.

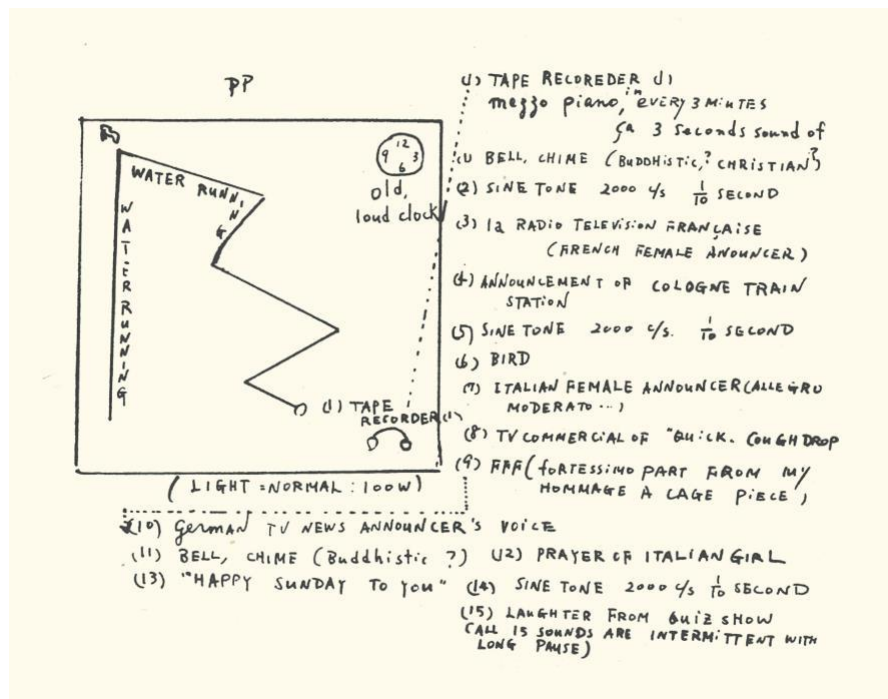
Paik wanted to convey that the single second as fixed, unchanging and absolute may not exist, but that the last consummate second as a relative concept does exist and the key to it lies with us. Following Paik’s direction, this exhibition seeks to generate the true last consummate

second together that he wanted to find. As Paik stated “I have not composed any indetermined music, or graphic music, [...] I expose music,” *The Last Consummate Second* presents *Symphony for 20 Rooms* in the form of an exhibition.

Seven contemporary artists invited as performers to perform the symphony are those who are active in various fields including visual artists, pianists, cellists, and acousticians. Based on the score of *Symphony for 20 Rooms*, they present different types of works such as sound, installation, and video. Also a novelist, a researcher, musicians, and artists contribute to the score’s performance by means of reading and writing. The sounds and situations from each work are interconnected with one another to create a single symphony. This can be complete only when the audience participation is made, as both viewers and performers. Paik unfolds his score like the square and asks the audience to take part. The participatory elements throughout the rooms allow them to have hands-on experiences and create sounds themselves, thus completing the symphonic music as performers together with the artists. The exhibition *The Last Consummate Second – Symphony No. 2* is to unfold the freedom that Paik’s work offers, and the last consummate second you would encounter on that freedom will be your own vivid senses.

## ■ Works

The exhibition consists of 16 rooms based on Paik's text score *Symphony for 20 Rooms*. Among the rooms are the following works.



Nam June Paik, *Symphony for 20 Rooms* (ca. 1961) detail, Peter Wenzel collection

With dynamic mark “pianissimo(pp)” and 100-watt lighting, the first room features running water, a pendulum clock with a loud ring, and a tape recorder that plays 15 sounds. Heterogenous sounds played for about 3 seconds every 3 minutes, ranging from the sounds of broadcasting that can be easily encountered in daily life to the sounds of a 2000Hz sine wave. This room, which marks the beginning of *Symphony for 20 Rooms*, implicitly embodies the various forms of sounds that Paik wanted to express through the score.

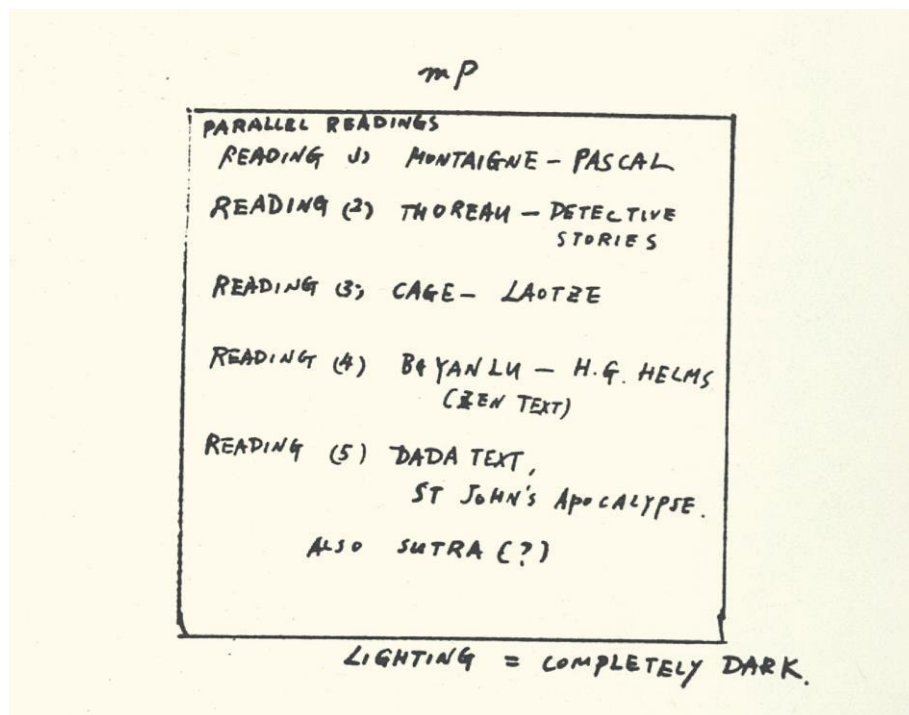
Yongju Kwon captures a cross section of the society as a landscape through the objects that have lost their original functions. The installation work *Running Water x 2* is a realization of Paik's instruction for running water. Inspired by *Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns* (1965), a performance by Paik and Charlotte Moorman, *Running Water x 2* replaces the unidentified symbols in the instruction with objects. A lump of object falls into and rises from a drum filled with water repeatedly. The object that falls at a tedious pace is submerged in the water with a slight splash, and after being in the water for about 5 minutes, it rises at about a 5 times slower pace. The slowly-risen object drains the water inside very gently through the holes on its body.



Sun Hyuck Song, sound design of 8 rooms, 2022, open-reel tapes, tape recorders, custom speakers etc.

The room of “red lamp used at X-ray room” and dynamic mark “piano piano(p p)” features a collection of sounds of people, nature, and things. The composition of the room is the same as the “pianissimo” room, but with an additional olfactory element of “mystical incense (?)” In one corner of the room, a tape recorder is playing Bach’s *Matthäus Passion, O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (O HAUPT VOLL WUND UND BLUT)* twice as slow. From a tape recorder on the other side, the noises from inside a train are played. In addition to the two tape recorders, there is a telephone answering machine. Instead of the machine’s normal sound, it plays “lottery number, toto number, news, stock market, and movie schedule.” On top of all these, the sound of “live bird” can be heard. In this space, which is neither an X-ray room nor a train, nor nature, multisensory stimuli simultaneously provide synaesthetic imagery.

Sound designer Sun Hyuck Song collects, translates, and presents to the audience the sounds instructed by Paik who suggested clear yet non-specific sounds which can be different by who imagines them how. Song materializes the sounds of 8 rooms in *Symphony for 20 Rooms* deciphering the Paik’s clues from 1961.



Nam June Paik, *Symphony for 20 Rooms* (ca. 1961) detail, Peter Wenzel collection

The “Parallel Readings” room of “mezzo piano(mp)” consists of Reading (1) through Reading (5), and “Sutra (?)” Except for the sutra, each reading has a set of two scripts. In the exhibition each number from 1 to 5 is viewed as a single narrator, and a scene is imagined where one narrator read two texts in parallel. Two stories told by one narrator may sound like two people’s dialog or two voices within one person. The last text, Sutra with a question mark added, can be different scriptures. This exhibition proposes Paik’s *New Ontology of Music* (1963) for it because you can discover his thoughts on music and the clues to *Symphony for 20 Rooms* in there.

The artists – Bek Hyunjin, Chang Kiha, LEE CHANGSUB, Lang Lee, sunwoojunga, Haegue Yang – who are active in various fields, from art to music and acting, appear as readers in this room. Standing in front of a microphone with the given text and only the instruction of “reading,” they read the text with their own interpretations. The instruction of “completely dark” is realized as a black screen of the monitor, which becomes the reader’s stage, that is, another room. Two stories by one reader are played from one video and two speakers, so the audience can hear either only one story clearly or both stories faintly, depending on where they are. The reading’s message can be conveyed differently depending on the position and movement of the audience.



Daum Kim, *Liminal*, 2022, 8-channel video, sound, loop / fluorescent lamps, variable dimensions

The first room of “FORTISSIMO CELLAR (fff)” epitomizes Paik’s “action music.” He explained in his 1963 text *New Ontology of Music*, “in the normal concert, the sounds move, the audience sit down,” and declared that in his “action music, the sounds, etc. move, the audience is attacked by me.” The room, where the word “torture” first appears, is full of stimulants that human senses cannot bear. The numbers at the bottom of the score could be anything like a beat, a sequence, or a numeric signal. Tangible and intangible multisensory media including 3000-watt lighting that is “as bright as possible,” “vinegar smell,” and “very hot stove” form a relationship with each other in this room.

Daum Kim is interested in the various traces out of people and places and materializes them with a variety of media. Based on the instruction of the ‘torture’ room, Kim uses the elements as stimuli for imagination. The score reminded him of an uncanny story on the internet, that people who are thrown out of the society for unknown reasons can be trapped in the “space in between.” People trapped in the in-between space expand their territory instead of escaping from it. Kim considers this room as a liminal space and suggests imaginary stimuli to expand it.



OC.m, *Fortissimo CELLAR (2)*, 2022, multi-channel speaker, microphone, interactive multi-channel projection, variable dimensions

The second room of “FORTISSIMO CELLAR (fff)” is a movement that heralds audience participation. The “lighting : strong blue (?)” creates a different mood from the first cellar with the brightest lighting. The score has a metal platform that allows spectators to roam freely, as well as a Albis filter, sine wave generators and square wave generators. Paik envisioned the room as a space where the audience could be free to create sounds with each element in the instruction. In particular, Paik imagined what would happen on the metal platform and how the audience could freely “jump or fight” on it. He also placed devices for the audience to operate themselves that could produce different sounds. This room shows Paik’s intention to invite the audience as spectators and performers at once.

OC.m, a unit group of OSISUN CREW, is a multidisciplinary collective consisting of an artist, a designer, a composer, and a 3D artist. OC.m proposes a new-level movement of a new level out of the instruction. OC.m sees the sound of sine waves or square waves as vibration, and reproduces the sound in a visual dimension. The metal platform devised by OC.m recognizes the vibrations created by the audience’s footsteps and delivers them back to the audience as a tactile sensation. At the same time, the sound derived from the audience’s movement is input into a microphone placed in front of a metal platform to present visual amplitude on the wall surrounding the room. These multi-dimensional senses, sounds, and vibrations are mixed with each other to create unpredictable variations.





Ji Park, *Terrible, Blur, Peculiar*, 2022, 3-channel video, sound, 30 mins

This room with “free orchestra made up of bad players” consists of things that produce different sounds such as classical instruments, a record player, a tape, whistles, and toys. Paik seems to have envisioned the space for a free orchestra that can be joined by anyone at any time for a performance by placing devices and instruments in this room.

Paik’s score is reenacted by cellist Ji Park. She forwarded this instruction to fellow artists, asking them for ‘bad play.’ Eleven musicians from Germany, Austria, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Korea played Paik’s score with their own methods and interpretations. Their poor performances are organically interwoven with each other through a three-channel video installation, leading to a conclusion that no one would expect. Their performances from different times and spaces under the same instruction have an open ending rather than a closed structure of a finished work.



sOjung kae, *Good Night Mr. Paik : 90 Times of Action*, 2022,  
grand piano, upright piano, mixed material etc.,  
variable dimensions

Paik wrote down two “prepared pianos” played by audiences in the room of “audience participation.” As he did in 1959 and 1963, sOjung kae uses objects to transform and disassemble the piano. The pianos, which take on a new look with things brought by sOjung kae herself, such as rubber from waste tire, nails, a phone, a video player, stones, and a skateboard, are played for her composition *Good Night Mr. Paik : 90 Times of Action*. sOjung kae places 9 alphabets from the title that can be connected to the scale in the work’s base, and composes a melody with the 9th higher and lower intervals from each of the bass notes upon which the pianist plays improvised music. This work is played once at the exhibition’s opening on March 24, with the performances by calligrapher Noah Choi and musician Jun Park added to sOjung kae’s piano to reproduce Paik’s action music. During the exhibition, the audience can play the prepared pianos, which will be truly a completion of *Good Night Mr. Paik* at last.



Moon Hae-Joo, *Symphony of Natural Fragments*, 2022, chairs, wind chimes, ceramics, stones, wood pieces, variable dimensions

Another room of “audience participation” presents several materials. Wood pieces, stones, small pebbles, metal fragments, earth, and metal sheets are scattered throughout the room, and Paik asks the audience to “kick around many objects and enjoy sounds and tactile feeling” of these materials. If other rooms offer sounds from a tape recorder or other devices, you can hear the sound of materials itself in this room.

With the materials mentioned in the instruction, Moon Hae-Joo devises a playground for the audience to participate and enjoy in. The artist presents the materials in an expanded form so that the audience can more actively touch and feel them. Wood pieces are transformed into old chairs while metal fragments and metal sheets are transformed into wind chimes to be placed in the room. The chairs and wind chimes are objects that the artist has used as important materials in her previous projects. Moon’s work in this room provides a variety of devices to communicate with the audience rather than simply displaying things. The chairs and wind chimes placed in the room are moved around by the audience, creating heterogeneous yet harmonious sounds. The rest of Paik’s materials are reborn into the artist’s hand-made ‘stamps.’ The material symbols drawn by Paik in the instruction were engraved on the wood, stone, and soil (ceramics) so that they could function as a musical note. On a square-shaped piece of paper resembling Paik's ‘Room,’ the audience can create their own score by stamping these musical notes.

## ■ Opening Performance

- Title: *Good Night Mr. Paik : 90 Times of Action*
- Date: March 24, 2022, 4pm
- Venue: Black Box, Gallery 2, Nam June Paik Art Center
- Performers: sOojung kae, Jun Park, Noah Choi
- \* Reservation-in-advance at [njp.ggcf.kr](http://njp.ggcf.kr)

## ■ Information

- Free Admission
- Opening Hours: 10am - 6pm (Last entry one hour before closing)
- Closed on Mondays (excluding holidays)

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