

# The phenomenon of screen in the development and change process of video art

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## Abstract

In this study, which analyzes the development and change of video art from its inception to the present day, it examines the process by which the screen, which began as a cinematic narrative conveying visual meaning, shrank in line with technological developments to become television screens, and then, with the development of portable video technology in the 1960s, became part of cultural narrative. Today has taken on the form of digital installations and interactive creations that also incorporate space. Initially, the physical reality of the screen as a cultural form/part of a form, which began with the use of tube televisions in installations pioneered by artists such as Nam June Paik, first gave way to LED screens and then to duplicated arrangements in which the image was reduced to a simulated reality. In the ongoing process, the image is reassembled, and from the early 2000s onwards, the screen is reduced to the physical reality of the space, and the virtuality of the image is re-dimensioned. However, since the emergence of video art, it has been argued that the transition of the screen from a physical to a virtual form, together with its changing uses and the evolving interaction between viewer and artwork, remains in constant flux. The screen, once positioned within the gallery space, can be relocated to the public sphere within conceptual art, approached as a purely aesthetic form, or employed as a medium for conveying critical meaning. On the other hand, the interactive structure of video installations, which are among today's technology-based forms of creation, the relationship established with the viewer, and, therefore, the nature of the work, which is completed by the viewer's presence, are also among the fundamental research problems. In this context, the aim is to fill a gap in the field by reevaluating the position of the screen in today's technology-based art, as it moves beyond being merely a physical transmission device to becoming part of cultural narrative and thus reconstructing the representation of reality.

**Keywords:** Video art, screen phenomenon, technological development, cultural progress, Nam June Paik, Refik Anadol, interactive art

## Extended Abstract

The process spanning from the emergence of video art to the present day presents a multi-layered historical trajectory in which technological advancement and the conceptual transformation of art have progressed in parallel. This research aims to reveal how the video form has been redefined in contemporary art practices by examining the evolution of video art not only in the context of technical innovations but also through the screen's physical, cultural, and spatial transformations. The study focuses on the process of the screen transforming from an image carrier into a cultural representation tool, the changing viewer experience, and the space-artwork relationship reshaped by technological possibilities. In the early period of video art, visual transmission, a legacy of the cinematographic narrative tradition, offered a one-way viewing experience through a fixed screen. This period is characterized by the transfer of the image from the theater stage to the cinema screen, and then to television screens, which became smaller as technological developments progressed. With the emergence of portable video technologies in the 1960s, video became more democratic in terms of both its production form and its capacity for circulation, becoming an important part of cultural narrative. This democratization allowed artists to record everyday life and social relationships directly. Thus, video ceased to be merely a technical tool and became a platform for critical narrative. Pioneering artists such as Nam June Paik used tube televisions in their installations, developing a new way of thinking about the screen's physical reality. The rigid, rectangular form of the television, visible through cables and signals, emphasizes the screen's physical presence, inviting viewers to consider it as a tangible object within space, fostering curiosity about its materiality and cultural significance.

With the rapid development of technology, tube television screens have given way to LED screens. This new form, high-resolution, bright, light, and portable, has enabled multi-screen arrangements in which images are multiplied and transformed into a simulated reality. The spatially integrated structure of LED screens has redefined the relationship between the image and the physical world. Screens are no longer objects hung on walls, but surfaces that envelop space, sometimes integrated into the architecture. This transformation can be described in video art as "the multiplication of the image, its integration with the surface, and the increase in the simulation effect". Since the early 2000s, the image has been reintegrated into its relationship with space. During this period, the screen itself has become less of an object and more of a surface that is part of space's physical reality. Advances in projection technology have fundamentally

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redefined the concept of the screen, enabling images to be projected onto walls, floors, ceilings, and even three-dimensional objects. Thus, the screen has become less of a "device" and more of a superficial quality of space. The virtuality of the image intersects with the physical reality of space, creating new forms of aesthetic experience. This historical transformation has also played an important role in shaping the viewer-artwork relationship. Whereas in the early days of video art, the viewer was passive, watching a single screen placed in front of them, today the viewer has become an actor who interacts with the work, moving around and expanding the field of experience. The interactive nature of digital installations makes the viewer's presence part of the creative process while the work takes on an open-ended structure that the viewer completes. One of the fundamental problems of this research is how the interactive nature of video installations transforms artistic meaning and how it reconfigures the viewer's body, experiential space, and perceptual processes.

Another axis of discussion in this work is how the transformation of the screen from physical to virtual produces different meanings in public spaces, galleries, and digital platforms. Today, the screen functions not only as an aesthetic form but also as a critical representational tool. Screen installations in public spaces offer structures that engage viewers within the flow of daily life and draw them into a process of reflection while in digital media, the screen serves as a cultural common ground, the most fundamental surface for the circulation of artistic production. In this context, the research aims to analyze the process by which the screen has evolved from a simple image transmitter into a cultural narrative element, to reveal how the technology-based forms of creation that video art has achieved today have reshaped this transformation. The study aims to shed light on how contemporary art reconfigures the representation of reality by re-evaluating the screen's position within its historical, cultural, and spatial context.

## Introduction

The impact of technology on art, along with the innovations and opportunities it has created in the art world over time, continues to evolve and advance every day. In the first stage of this research, which analyzes the meaning and function of the screen phenomenon parallel to the process of change and development in video art since the second half of the 20th century, the historical development of video art as a cultural form is examined, providing an in-depth analysis of the process by which video became an expressive medium in art and its use as a medium for the transmission of audiovisual data. The visual aesthetics of video art are examined under the influence of artists such as Nam June Paik, Ernie Kovacs, Wolf Vostell, Dara Birnbaum, Alan Kaprow, Otto Piene, Aldo Tambellini, James Seawright, and Thomas Tadlock. The second stage of the research exemplifies new art forms that have developed with the phenomenon of the screen and digitalization, and the new narrative possibilities that technological development offers to video art are analyzed through the works of artists such as Bill Viola, Dan Graham, Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, Matthew Barney, and Shirin Neshat. Subsequently, the conceptual possibilities of video art are explained through the works of artists such as Bruce Nauman, Bill Viola, Dan Graham, Joan Jonas, Frank Gillette, Ira Schneider, Nil Yalter, and Nicole Croiset. It is argued that video art is not merely about image transmission but also involves a process of intellectual inquiry beyond the visual experience through viewer-object interaction. Finally, the study examines the aesthetic, critical, and conceptual context of the screen phenomenon, analyzing the work of artists such as Ei Arakawa, Nam June Paik, Dara Birnbaum, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Christian Boltanski, Refik Anadol, Trevor Paglen, Casey Reas, Hito Steyerl, and Zach Blas, who transform the phenomenon of the screen into virtual reality within the axis of digital culture. It is emphasized that video narrative in today's cultural production is not merely an aesthetic experience but also opens the door to an experiential field that extends to social, cultural, and other areas of inquiry.

## The historical development of video art

The word "video" derives from the Latin root "videre," meaning "to see". In a technological context, it refers to the recording, transmission, and playback of moving images in an electronic or digital environment. As Akay states, "video

produces images of real scenes, records sounds, and does so as close to reality as a photograph, as moving and audible as a film, and most importantly, in real time" (2002, p. 31). With this quality, video has become a powerful tool in the fields of information transfer, entertainment, art, and communication at both the individual and societal levels. Technically, video refers to the recording and transmission of images in analog or digital formats. Conceptually, it refers to the use of time-based visual information in an aesthetic and communicative context. The historical development of video technology gained momentum in the mid-20th century with television broadcasting, and portable video recording devices such as Sony's Portapak, introduced in 1965, enabled individual creations. As Altunay states,

Although the emergence of video technology and its entry into the art world involved a long and arduous process, today's video technology has become an indispensable tool for both professionals and home users, known as amateurs. Video cameras are now used in a wide range of applications, from recording high-culture artworks to preserving images of newborn children as memories in homes (2006, p. 236).

In this context, video has emerged as an individual production tool, distinct from traditional visual communication tools such as television and cinema, offering fast, low-cost filming capabilities. Therefore, it is possible to define video art as an art form that uses these technical possibilities as a means of artistic expression and generally encompasses creations that bring together visual and auditory elements. Today, it has evolved into a multidisciplinary field that uses technology creatively, distinct from traditional art forms. However, before understanding video art and the transformations within this context, it is important to examine the historical background and development process of cinema art.

The historical development of cinema began in the late 19th century, in 1895, when the Lumière Brothers captured the first moving images using their *Caméra Cinématographe* [*Cinematograph*] device. Looking at the first examples, it can be seen that they consisted of silent films, as no device could record sound and image simultaneously, and they generally featured images from everyday life or theatrical scenes. Georges Méliès' 1902 film *Le Voyage dans la Lune* [*A Trip to the Moon*] is considered the first science fiction film. At the beginning of the 20th century, as cinema emerged as a form of mass communication and art, the invention and development of television influenced its social and cultural aspects. Television made it possible to consume visual content in the home environment, contrasting the large-screen, collective viewing experience in movie theaters with the possibility of individual viewing on small screens. The art of cinema and television technology progressed in parallel, ultimately becoming a complementary, mutually influential structure. The development of video art began with changes in the structure of video cameras and the emergence of portable video recording devices in the 1960s, which were previously very heavy and could only be used in studios. Artists began to use this new technology as a means of production (Çankır, 2017, p. 34).

The first examples of video art, unlike cinema, aimed to view the viewer not only as a passive consumer but also as an active participant. As King states, "video artists often criticized popular film, video, and television culture in their works, which played with cinematic forms such as moving images and sound" (2010, p. 528). Looking at the early works of video artists, it is clear that these works were based on the use of video recording devices and television screens. In video art, it is not possible to use video alone and purely as a tool while this art form has evolved into a structure that interacts with other disciplines.



Figure 1. Nam June Paik, Magnet TV, 1965, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Year	Artist	Screen	Context	Structure	Screen Usage
1965	Nam June Paik	Television	Critical/Conceptual (Media)	Dynamic/Interactive	Purpose/Tool

It creates a multifaceted field of expression by establishing relationships with diverse art forms, including performance, sculpture, music, painting, and digital media. In this context, video functions not only as a recording or display device but also as an interdisciplinary art form. Drawing on the immediate and direct impact of performance art in particular, video offers the possibility of establishing a dynamic relationship between the viewer and the art. These characteristics are one of the fundamental elements that distinguish video art from other art forms and highlight its innovative structure. As Kiliç also states,

"Nam June Paik and Dara Birnbaum are pioneering artists who introduced electronic images into the art world. The first experiments with electronic images in the 1960s consisted of Nam June Paik distorting the image on the screen with a magnet and manually adjusting its speed while playing a recorded videotape. The surrealist images and sound recordings that emerged from these studies on the formation process or output of electronic images have no relation to television in terms of either their essence or their outcome. The first video artists began their work using portable video cameras and recording devices and conducting experimental studies based on the structural characteristics of electronic image creation systems" (1995, p. 10-11).

One of the earliest examples of video art, Nam June Paik's *Magnet TV* (1965), consists of a large magnet placed on a black-and-white television (Figure 1). The magnet interferes with the television's magnetic field and electronic signals, transforming the broadcast image into an abstract form that changes according to the magnet's movement. In this way, the television image is transformed into an art object that can be changed at will. With this feature, *Magnet TV* has an interactive structure and allows for viewer participation. At the same time, it conveys the idea of interfering with television's seemingly untouchable power. As Kiliç points out: "Artists who experimented with video, such as Nam June Paik and Ernie Kovacs, disrupted television signals with magnets, transforming electronic images into plastic material" (2000, p. 3-4). Although it is known that Ernie Kovacs also conducted various visual experiments by disrupting television signals in 1952, it is accepted that the artists who truly introduced video images into the art world from the 1960s onwards were Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell, and Dara Birnbaum (Özgen, 2012). In 1974, the Museum of Modern Art in New York created the first dedicated exhibition space for video art, bringing it to audiences in its galleries.

It is also known that during this period, public television channels used video art commercially. WGBH studios commissioned a video series from six artists -Alan Kaprow, Otto Piene, Aldo Tambellini, James Seawright, Nam June Paik, and Thomas Tadlock- for a program series to be broadcast under the title *The Medium is the Medium* (Figure 2-3-4-5). Described as the convergence of art and technology, this program encouraged viewers to think about media by taking media tools beyond mere communication channels. One notable aspect of the program is that each artist adopted a different approach. Nam June Paik used television as a canvas to reflect on the relationships among sound, light, and movement, while Otto Piene aimed to establish a physical connection with the audience by combining light and kinetic energy in his work, *Electronic Light Ballet* (1969). Alan Kaprow, in his work *Hello* (1969), brought performance art to television and questioned the viewer's interaction with it. These approaches prove that art can be displayed not only in galleries but also on screens. Aldo Tambellini's work *Black* created abstract worlds with black-and-white aesthetics, pushing the visual boundaries of television. At the same time, James Seawright's technological interventions shed light on the mechanical and digital aspects of art. Thomas Tadlock, on the other hand, treats television as a mirror reflecting the social and cultural issues of the time (Moss, 2010).



Figure 2. (Left) Aldo Tambellini, Black, 1969, 3:51 min, b&w, sound



Figure 3. (Right) Allan Kaprow, Hello, 1969, 4:23 min, b&w, sound

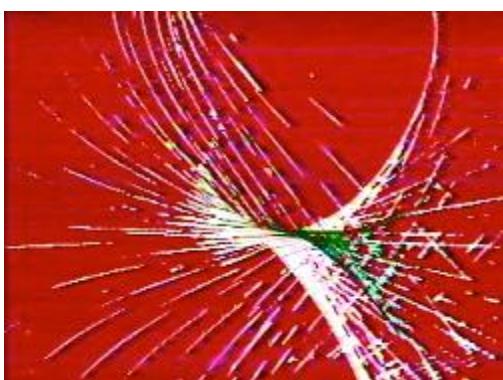


Figure 4. (Right) Otto Piene, Electronic Light Ballet, 1969, 4:38 min, color, sound



Figure 5. (Left) Electronic Opera#1, WGBH, 1969, 4:45 min, color, sound

Year	Artist	Screen	Context	Structure	Screen Usage
1969	Aldo Tambellini	Television	Aesthetic/Conceptual	Static	Medium
1969	Alan Kaprow	Television	Aesthetic/Conceptual	Static	Medium
1969	Otto Piene	Projection	Conceptual	Dynamic/Interactive	Purpose

Bill Viola was appointed as a guest artist at *WNET Channel 13 Television Laboratory* in New York in 1976, which also allowed him to show some of his works on television. Viola's works demonstrated that television is not merely an entertainment medium but can also serve as a platform for artistic and philosophical expression. In this context, he aimed to leverage television's capacity to reach large audiences to transform viewers from passive recipients into active participants.

### The screen phenomenon and new art forms developing in parallel with digitalization

Video art aims to provide a visual experience through moving images and sound. Video installations expand this experience by integrating videos and the screens on which they are projected into a physical space, allowing viewers to interact with the artwork. As King defines it, “Bill Viola, Dan Graham, Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, and Matthew Barney are among the leading names in video art” (King, 2010, p. 528). These artists’ works often require intense attention from the viewer, as the installations gain meaning through the viewer’s active participation. According to Rosalind Krauss, “video art transcends traditional art forms and represents a new aesthetic paradigm called the post-media age” (1999, p. 21-24). A video installation transforms the artwork into an experiential space, removing the viewer from the

position of mere observer and enabling them to establish both a physical and emotional relationship with the work. In this context, the relationship between the two art forms raises important questions about the role of technology and spatial perception in art practice. For example, Dan Graham's signature series, "Past, Future, and Now," exhibited between 1972 and 1974, invited viewers to interact with the installation. In this context, Graham's work *Present Continuous Past(s) Present Passe(s) Continu(s)* (1974) invites the viewer to confront their own existence through mirrors and video screens (Figure 6-7).

Graham brings together elements of both video art and installation in this work, immersing the viewer in both a temporal and spatial experience. Such works clearly demonstrate the potential for the interaction between video art and video installation to expand the boundaries of art. As Hall and Fifer put it, "Mirrors reflect the present time. The video camera records the area immediately in front of it and all the reflections visible on the mirrored wall opposite. This mirror reflects only the present time (in a static manner)" (1990, p. 186).

Dan Graham's video installation, *Present Continuous Past(s)*, presents a perceptual structure based on delay technology that simultaneously transforms the viewer's perception of time and space. As Barbara London notes, it consists of "a room with mirrored walls and a monitor placed in the center of one of these walls," and all reflections within the room "appear to extend toward a distant horizon." The camera continuously records to cover the entire space; however, an eight-second delay device that is inserted between the camera and the system transmitting the image causes the recorded image to appear on the monitor with a time shift. As long as the viewer's body does not interrupt the camera's line of sight to the mirror, the camera records both the reflection of the space in the mirror and the mirrored version of the image displayed on the monitor, which is produced with an eight-second delay. However, as London emphasizes, what is impressive about Graham's arrangement is that "the mirrored room recorded by a hidden camera appears on the monitor and thus becomes part of an infinite chain of reflections" (1995, p. 425). This mechanism, thanks to the delay of a few seconds created between the camera and the monitor, "produces a structure where space and time come together" (1995, p. 426). It causes the viewer to perceive their own image both as it was eight seconds ago and within a second-time layer that appears with a 16-second delay via the mirror's reflection. Thus, the installation creates a temporal cycle that is not static but continuous, with time folding back on itself in successive segments. This situation, in London's words, can be said to produce an experience in which "the knowledge that the present moment will become a memory after a short delay creates an intense awareness of the present in the viewer" (1995, p. 425). Thus, Graham's installation creates a unique experiential space by placing the viewer within the multiple layers of both the present immediately following the past and technologically produced time, where time folds back on itself and is reproduced through division within continuity. The second mirror, positioned at a right angle to the space, presents a reflection of the "present" independent of the viewer's intervention and the time layers produced by the delay mechanism, making visible the time difference between the subjective experience of time and the objectively presented time in the space.

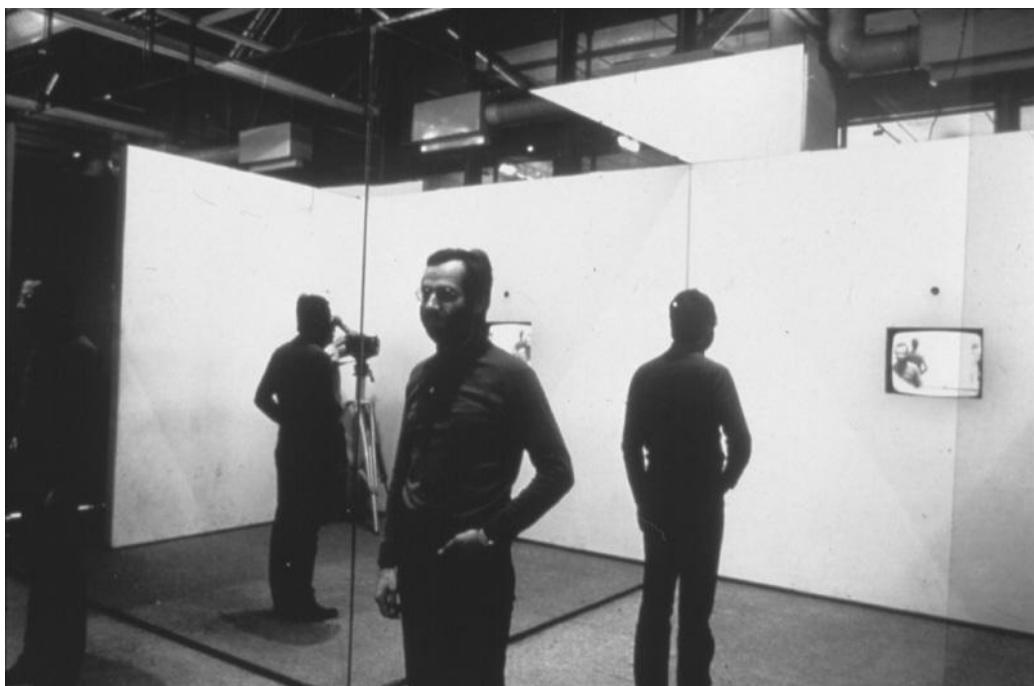
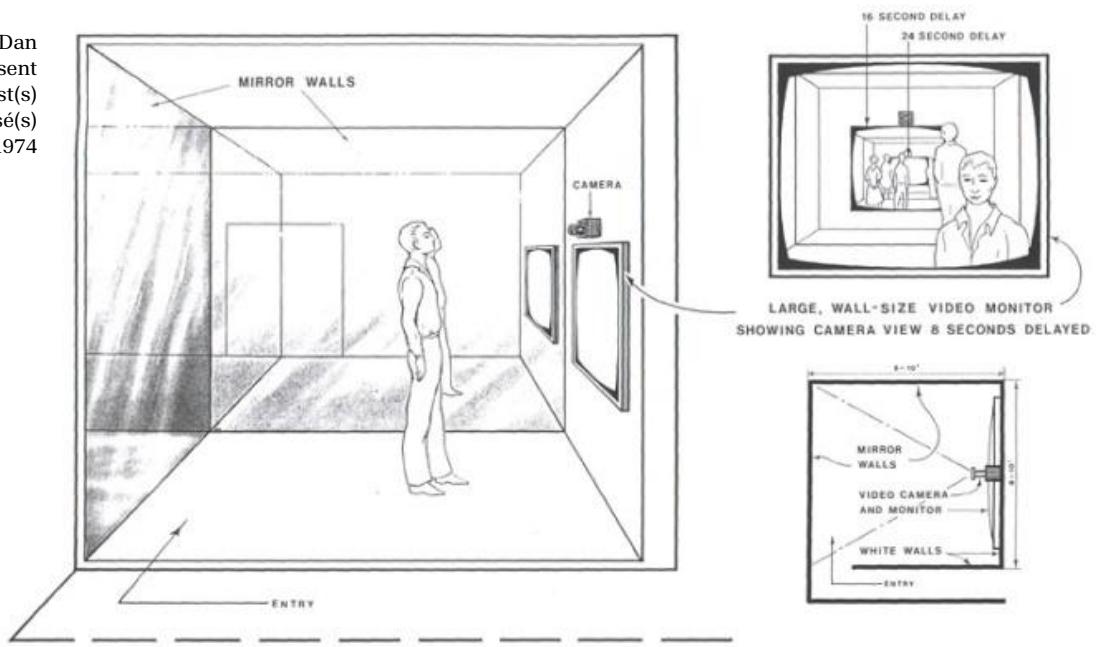


Figure 6. Dan Graham, Present Continuous Past(s) Présent Passé(s) Continu(s), 1974

Year	Artist	Screen	Context	Structure	Screen Usage
1974	Dan Graham	Television	Conceptual/Aesthetic	Static/Interactive	Purpose/Tool

Figure 7. Dan Graham, Present Continuous Past(s) Présent Passé(s) Continu(s), 1974



Video art, however, makes significant contributions to the dynamics of modern visual culture by expanding the conceptual and aesthetic boundaries of the screen phenomenon. The treatment of the screen as a medium of representation is highlighted in video art both as a technical possibility and as a critical tool. In this context, as Lev Manovich states in his article *The Language of New Media*, “the screen has become one of the central metaphors of modern visual culture” (2001, p. 94). By questioning the direct relationship, the screen establishes with the viewer, video art can redefine both perception and, as seen in Graham’s example, time-space experiences. This demonstrates that video art is not merely a form of expression but also a field that critically examines the social and cultural functions of screen technologies.

Shirin Neshat’s 1999 video installation *Soliloquy [Monologue]* is also proof that new video technologies and video art, which have developed in parallel with digitization, are not solely about transmitting images but also serve as vehicles for social and cultural interaction (Figure 8). Neshat’s work is an important example of a video and sound installation that deeply examines the artist’s identity split between Eastern and Western cultures. The work, shown on two facing screens, includes scenes shot by Neshat in both the Western metropolis of New York and the Turkish city of Mardin. It is known that the artist primarily wanted to shoot scenes from Eastern culture in Iran, but, unable to obtain permission, Mardin, located close to the Iranian border, was chosen for the Eastern scenes of the video installation. The Western scenes were mostly shot in New York and Albany, and the scene outside the subway station was filmed in the lobby of the World Trade Center in Manhattan. The work forces the viewer to move back and forth between two different cultural and spatial realities, questioning the artist’s experience of exile and her sense of belonging between two worlds. A veiled woman, representing the artist herself, is depicted making parallel journeys through two different cultural landscapes. In one video, she is depicted in a Middle Eastern city on the edge of the desert, while in the other, she is in a Western

metropolis. For most of the film's seventeen-and-a-half-minute duration, the action alternates between the two environments. When the woman on one screen is active, walking from place to place, her counterpart on the other projection remains motionless, often looking directly at the camera, thus appearing to watch her alter ego on the opposite screen. As Neshat also describes (2020),

"Soliloquy, while not a biographical work, is based on my personal experiences (...). Those of us living in an 'in-between' state have certain advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is being exposed to a new culture and, in my case, the freedom that comes with living in the US. The disadvantage is that I will never again feel 'at home' in a 'center' or anywhere else in the full sense of the word."

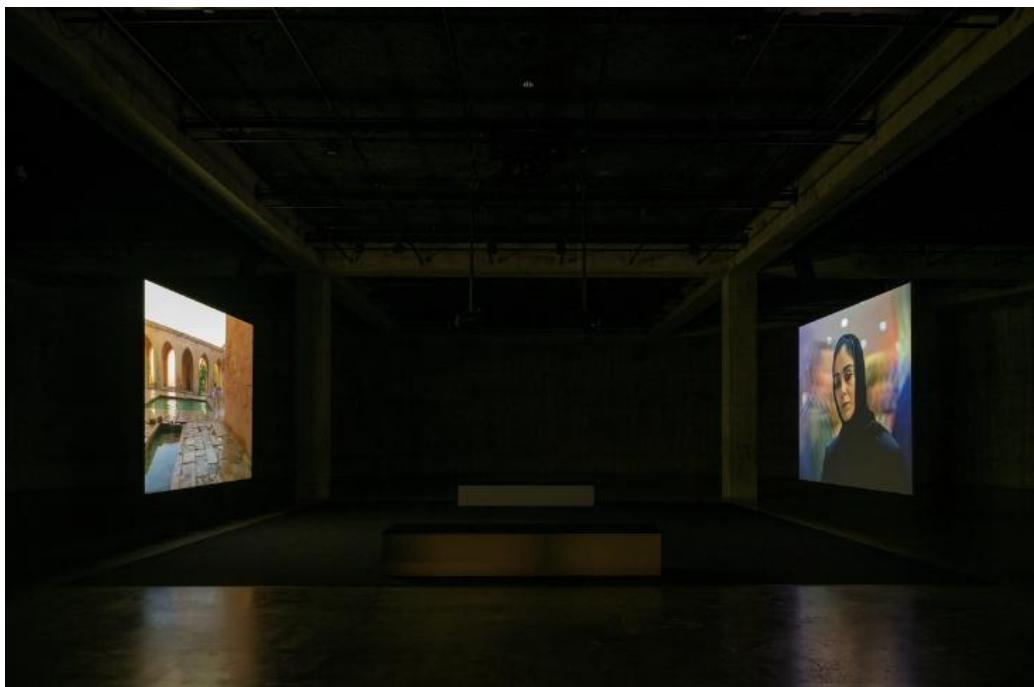


Figure 8. Shirin Neshat, *Soliloquy* [Monologue], 1999

Year	Artist	Screen	Context	Structure	Screen Usage
1999	Shirin Neshat	LED Screen	Critical/Conceptual (Cultural values)	Dynamic	Tool

Dan Graham's work under examination explores the phenomenon of the screen both physically and conceptually. Through mirrors, screens, and video cameras, it confronts the viewer with how time creates a continuous cycle within a constant flow. It is evident that the screen ceases to be merely an object that the viewer observes and instead transforms the viewer into an active element of the work. Similarly, Shirin Neshat's dual-screen video installation, *Soliloquy*, uses the screen phenomenon to reflect two different cultural realities simultaneously. Neshat deeply examines the identity divide between East and West through the simultaneous display of images shot in different geographical locations. While focusing on the scene on one screen, the viewer interacts with the corresponding image on the other screen. This demonstrates that the screen is a tool that forces the viewer to navigate between two realities, both temporal and spatial. In both Graham's and Neshat's works, the screen is not merely a means of representation but also an element that

shapes the viewer's perceptual experience. Therefore, the screen in video art can be defined not only as a technology but also as a platform that establishes a dynamic relationship between the viewer and the artwork.

### The potential uses of video art in conceptual art

Video art became a frequently used tool in conceptual art in the early 1970s. Conceptual art is an art form that emphasizes the idea or concept behind the artistic object rather than the object itself. As Lewitt stated, "Conceptual art is about the idea, not the artistic object... all planning and decisions are made in advance, and the execution is a secondary process. The idea becomes a machine that produces art" (1967, p. 79). In this context, digital tools such as screens and video provide artists with the opportunity to convey their messages and reach a broad audience. The use of screens in video art engages the viewer with ideas, in line with the thought-centered nature of conceptual art. By conveying an idea through visual and auditory tools, it lays the groundwork for questioning the meaning of art. Bruce Nauman, Bill Viola, Dan Graham, and Joan Jonas are among the important artists who emphasize the conceptual aspect of video art. While Nauman worked on video art and performance art, Viola and Graham focused on video installation. Video art has redefined the relationship between the viewer and the artwork by combining the temporal and spatial flexibility of screen technology with conceptual art practices. Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider's 1969 video installation *Wipe Cycle* questions the phenomenon of the screen by placing the viewer in the role of an active participant (Figure 9). The video installation, consisting of a closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera, six video recorders, nine television monitors (one of which is a receiver), an audio recorder, and an automatic switch, plays two pre-recorded materials from the images on the screen, while four record and play time-delayed loops (Kostelanetz, 1970).

The installation, consisting of nine monitors, was constructed for the exhibition *TV as a Creative Medium* at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York. It combines live camera footage, pre-recorded videos, and television broadcasts with specific time delays, allowing viewers to experience their own image across different time frames. In doing so, it redefines the viewer's relationship with the screen, emphasizing that the screen is not just a viewing device but also an interactive environment. Frank Gillette described this work as "a television mural that aims to combine the viewer's television 'image' across three separate times and five different spaces" (1969). In this sense, *Wipe Cycle* can be considered an important work that details the relationship between video art and screen technologies, transforming the viewer's interaction with and perception of the media. As Mondloch also defines it, the work in question is considered "one of the earliest examples of the use of real-time closed-circuit video technology in art galleries" (2011, p. 19). In this context, Gillette and Schneider not only brought a technological innovation into the art field but also questioned the traditional boundaries between media and the viewer. The use of real-time video technology created an experiential awareness by allowing the viewer to see themselves within the artwork, while also transforming the one-way communication structure of television. Horsfield and Hilderbrand state that *Wipe Cycle* "has shifted the viewer's relationship with the artwork from passive reception to active participation (2006, p. 118). Video art, within the context of conceptual art, has redefined the relationship between art and the viewer by combining the elements of space, time, and interaction.



Figure 9. Frank Gillette, Ira Schneider, Wipe Cycle, 1969

Year	Artist	Screen	Context	Structure	Screen Usage
1969	Frank Gillette & Ira Schneider	Television	Conceptual/Critical (Media)	Dynamic/Interactive	Purpose/Tool

Similarly, the installations by Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell, using television sets, reinforced the place of video art within conceptual art. In his 1963 exhibition Exposition of Music-Electronic Television at the Parnass Gallery in Wuppertal, Paik manipulated television sets with magnetic fields to distort images, prompting viewers to reflect on the nature of the screen (Neuburger, 2009). Vostell also used television as an art object and questioned the visual language of the media with works such as

*Television Décollage (TV-De-coll/age)* (Hanhardt, 1992). Nil Yalter is an artist who addresses issues of gender, identity, and migration through video art. Video and the screen have become powerful tools in her work, particularly in questioning themes of identity and society. Yalter has used the screen and video not only as visual elements but also as tools that establish deep intellectual and emotional connections with the viewer. By using video and the screen to emphasize the “idea”-focused nature of conceptual art, she aims to offer the viewer the opportunity to question social, cultural, and individual issues. Nil Yalter and Nicole Croiset’s work, *The Rituals*, addresses gender, identity, and the universality of rituals (Figure 10). In this video performance piece, the space is divided into two equal areas, each containing a video monitor and a camera. The setup is designed to connect the two areas, with each camera connected to the monitor in the opposite area. As Yalter and Croiset move around their own areas, they are confronted with images filmed in the other area or pre-recorded on the other monitor. As Mérédieu stated (2003), “this situation led to a constant exchange between two types of rituals: masculinity and femininity, rituals associated with warriorhood or motherhood.”

Figure 10. Nil Yalter and Nicole Croiset, *The Rituals*, 1980



Year	Artist	Screen	Context	Structure	Screen Usage
1980	Nil Yalter and Nicole Croiset	Television	Critical/Conceptual (Social roles)	Dynamic/Interactive	Purpose/Tool

Two artists interact with each other’s images as they move within their own fields. This mutual interaction shows the audience how social and cultural rituals are shaped and that these roles are not fixed. Yalter’s work examines in depth the dynamics between male and female rituals. Rituals question how social norms and roles shape individuals’ identities. By combining the contrasts between masculinity and femininity, symbolic roles such as warrior and motherhood through screens, it establishes a connection between these two worlds. Each ritual encourages the viewer to consider the boundaries between social expectations and individual identity. The technical structure of the work is consistent with Yalter’s methodology of critiquing social structures regarding gender roles. The interaction between cameras and monitors symbolizes constant surveillance and observation. This emphasizes that social rituals are processes repeatedly performed to observe, imitate, and gain social acceptance. The different paths Yalter and Croiset take in crossing the line between “reality” and “image” in their respective fields become an

evolutionary interpretation of different gender roles. This performance reveals the dynamic and variable nature of gender in society while allowing the viewer to experience both sides. In this context, Yalter's work generally encourages reflection on transitions between identities and the flexibility of social roles. Consequently, video art plays an important role as a tool for visualizing the intellectual processes underlying conceptual art and for interacting with the viewer. Therefore, the use of screens in video art can be defined as enabling direct interaction with the viewer and transforming art from a mere visual experience into an intellectual inquiry.

### **The aesthetic, critical, and conceptual context of the screen phenomenon**

Screens and video have created a multifaceted field of study in today's world, encompassing aesthetic, critical, and conceptual dimensions. Aesthetically, it offers a visual experience that, critically, serves as a medium for media and surveillance criticism. Conceptually, it has become a creative space through which artists convey their messages. In this context, the screen can be examined not merely as a technological device but as a medium reflecting art and thought. Screens, ubiquitous in modern society, occupy an important place both visually and intellectually. With the advancement of technology, the screen technologies of devices such as televisions, phones, computers, and tablets have also developed in the same direction. Evaluating the screen not only as a technological interface but also as an artistic and expressive tool allows for the redefinition of aesthetic experiences in the digital age and enables the individual's emotions, thoughts, and imagination to be reflected across different dimensions. In video art, aesthetics, color, composition, movement, and light, which are traditions inherited from cinema and painting, interact to create a dynamic and contemporary form of expression that aims to establish a different relationship with the viewer. The dynamic structure and manipulation of the image offer the viewer both a perceptual and an intellectual experience. This process also establishes a relationship in which the viewer is no longer just a passive observer but interacts with the work and adds their own interpretation. In video art, the screen can sometimes be positioned as a work of art in a gallery environment. At the same time, it can serve as a carrier of a message/video containing visual elements.

The screen's placement within the space is an important element that directly affects the viewer's experience. The placement, size, angle, and relationship of the screen with its surroundings shape how the work is perceived while also making it part of the spatial context. This allows the screen to function not only as a carrier of images but also as a spatial narrative tool. Screens attract attention not only in limited exhibition spaces such as galleries, but also in public spaces, where they are used to display art and foster social interaction. The use of screens in public spaces serves multifaceted functions, including information sharing, communication, and bringing art into the public sphere. Used in different contexts, from billboards to interactive installations, from giant screens in city squares to information screens in public vehicles, these tools shape the aesthetics and functionality of public spaces. Screens transform public spaces into centers of cultural expression and interaction by providing an effective platform for public art projects and social messages. Ei Arakawa's 2017 work *Harsh Citation*, *Harsh Pastoral*, *Harsh Münster*, exhibited as part of Skulptur Projekte Münster, is an innovative installation that reflects the artist's interest in performative and collective creative processes (Figure 11).

Arakawa's work invites viewers to a visual and intellectual experience through screens placed in open spaces and natural landscapes. McClean, in evaluating Arakawa's work, emphasizes that the screen "establishes a direct relationship with

both the physical space and the viewer's perceptual boundaries as a performance tool" (2018). In this context, the work can be considered not only a video installation but also a conceptual platform. Arakawa's work is also an important testament to how screens can be a means of expression beyond traditional exhibition spaces. The work consists of seven LED panels -located on the lawn in front of Haus Kump- that were inspired by works by artists such as Gustave Courbet, Joan Mitchell, and Atsuko Tanaka. Each panel interacts with light and sound as a digital interpretation of the work it is connected to, offering viewers a multidimensional experience. The artist's criticism of the perception of a painting as a static object hanging on a wall is clearly evident in this work. During the exhibition period, one of the panels was stolen in June 2017. However, the artist considered this an integral part of the work and replaced the missing panel with a black PVC sheet (Skulptur Projekte Archiv, 2017; ArtReview, 2017). Arakawa's statement regarding the incident is recorded as follows: "One reason is that it takes less time to replace it, but also because I do not want future visitors to see that a public artwork has been stolen. You can enjoy the other six LED paintings, an empty metal frame, and the songs" (Russeth, 2017). This intervention drew attention to the dangers public artworks may face in public spaces and made the transformation the artwork underwent visible. In this sense, *Harsh Citation, Harsh Pastoral, and Harsh Münster* can be seen as a reflection of Arakawa's artistic approach, which emphasizes collective and participatory energy. By inviting the viewer into a digital, interactive experience in a natural landscape, the work questions and redefines how traditional artworks are perceived. The use of images and screens as fundamental components that strengthen the critical aspect of video art within the scope of conceptual art enables the artist to convey their conceptual messages more effectively while also encouraging the viewer's participation in the art.

Similarly, early examples of video art include Nam June Paik's *TV Buddha* (1974), Dara Birnbaum's *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978-1979), Krzysztof Wodiczko's *The Homeless Projection* (1986), and Christian Boltanski's *Animitas* (2014) are powerful examples demonstrating that the screen can be used not only as a carrier of images but also as a powerful means of expression and narration for critiquing social, political, and individual issues. Paik's work, *TV Buddha*, consists of a television screen placed before a Buddhist statue. The television reflects the statue itself, creating a loop, and this simple but powerful construction questions the impact of technology on individuals and society, the self-observing nature of the modern world, and technology's potential to create passive viewers (Guggenheim Museum, 2025). Birnbaum's video work, *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman*, manipulates images from a popular television series to question media representations of femininity and the effects of consumer culture, subjecting television and popular culture to a critical re-evaluation. This work can also be considered a powerful example of media criticism using the manipulative potential of the screen (Starick, n.d.).

Krzysztof Wodiczko's public space projection work, *Homeless Projection*, makes visible the problems society ignores by projecting the faces and stories of homeless individuals onto a building in New York. This approach fosters social awareness by positioning the screen as a tool for public-sphere criticism (Wierzchowska, 2015). *Animitas*, on the other hand, is one of Boltanski's installations in nature and space, but this work has a digital context in its use of screens. The work, an installation consisting of small bells set up in the Chilean desert, documents the vibrations and sounds these bells produce through video recordings and conveys them to the

viewer. In this work, Boltanski approaches the screen as a tool that establishes a link between nature and digital recording (Noguchi Museum, n.d.).



Figure 11. Ei Arakawa, Harsh Citation, Harsh Pastoral, Harsh Münster, 2017

Year	Artist	Screen	Context	Structure	Screen Usage
2017	Ei Arakawa	LED Screen	Conceptual/Aesthetic	Static	Purpose/Tool

The use of images and screens in a critical context in conceptual art allows artists to convey their messages more effectively at both the individual and social levels. Especially today, when technology has become an integral part of everyday life, screens and images stand out as important tools for questioning social norms, criticizing power dynamics, and enabling individuals to reevaluate their relationship with the media. Today, screens and video are no longer merely surfaces for transmitting images while they are designed to create an experience that integrates with the space and surrounds the viewer. Refik Anadol's *Sense of Healing: AI Data Sculpture* (2022) allows us to understand how screens and video are designed today, both formally and content-wise, and in line with this approach, it offers an impressive experience with constantly changing organic forms and moving images on massive screens (Figure 12).

Anadol transforms the screen into a dynamic, living structure in his work, *Sense of Healing*, using artificial intelligence and data visualization techniques. The forms on the screen constantly evolve through a balance between randomness and repetition, transforming from a static tool into a work of art in constant flux. In this context, the artist aims to provide the viewer with a different experience each time they look at the screen. Formally, the screen's placement in the space is also part of the work while it removes the viewer from the position of mere observer and encourages them

to connect with the work. In terms of content, *Sense of Healing* is based on large data sets processed by artificial intelligence. Anadol analyzes data on the nature and functioning of the human brain to create visuals that flow across the screen. These visuals manipulate human perception through color, light, and movement, offering a calming experience. In this sense, it is also possible to describe the work as questioning how technology can be used as an emotional healing tool. Anadol and his team aimed to promote mental healing through art by “interpreting data sets of brain activity collected using EEG sensors, fMRI, and DTI imaging techniques to create a multisensory, immersive work of art” (Anadol, 2022). In this sense, the work can be described as “the world’s largest neurotherapeutic AI data sculpture, as well as the first artwork produced on this scale using human brain data” (Anadol, 2022). Anadol’s work at the intersection of artificial intelligence and art, as well as the use of screens and video in other dynamic, interactive artworks produced by artificial intelligence, is in a state of constant transformation in terms of form and content, unlike traditional visual arts. For example, the artist’s *Machine Hallucinations-Nature Dreams* (2021) series uses artificial intelligence and deep learning algorithms to visualize machines’ perception of reality and their “hallucinations”. This work clearly demonstrates how visual perception can be reshaped by artificial intelligence and how this reshaping can find aesthetic meaning.



Figure 12. Refik Anadol, *Sense of Healing: AI Data Sculpture*, 2022

Year	Artist	Screen	Context	Structure	Screen Usage
2022	Refik Anadol	LED Screen	Conceptual/Aesthetic	Dynamic	Vehicle

In addition to Refik Anadol, artists such as Trevor Paglen, Casey Reas, Hito Steyerl, and Zach Blas are also opening up new aesthetic and critical horizons by using technology and the screen as artistic tools. These artists question the social, cultural, and individual impacts of artificial intelligence and digital data, while exploring how art can reveal the creative potential of technology and data. Each question examines how digital technologies shape social norms, individual identities, and visual perception, using these tools not only to create visual aesthetics but also to develop a critical approach that compels the viewer to think deeply. Screens have evolved

beyond mere media tools for presenting visual data while they have become dynamic art objects that interact with viewers and continually evolve. Artists aim to move the viewer beyond the role of mere observer by using screens as “living” structures. For example, Trevor Paglen and Kate Crawford’s *ImageNet Roulette* (2009) work questions how artificial intelligence classification algorithms reinforce social biases and the potential for digital data to be manipulated. Paglen and Crawford demonstrate how artificial intelligence and screen technology shape human perception while offering an important critique of the manipulability of digital data (Paglen & Crawford, 2020). Casey Reas’s works, created with software and algorithms, demonstrate how artificial intelligence and programming can be tools for aesthetic and artistic expression. These works reveal the aesthetic potential of the screen and the transformation of digital data into forms of artistic expression. In *How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* (2013), Hito Steyerl addresses the relationship between visibility and invisibility in the digital environment. While criticizing the effects of digital media and data flows on surveillance, control, and monitoring, she foregrounds social issues through an artistic language (MoMA, 2013). Zach Blas, in works such as *Facial Weaponization Suite* (2012-14), discusses how facial recognition technologies shape individual identities and how digital surveillance technologies deepen inequalities in society (Althoff, 2018; Blas, 2012-2014; Lee-Morrison, 2019).

These artists use digital technologies and data not only as tools, but also as powerful instruments that reshape social structures, cultural norms, and individual identities. Artists do not merely use the screen as a media tool while they also question how technology reshapes social and cultural structures and confront the viewer with this change. In the artists’ works, screens take on dynamic, variable forms, while their content encourages viewers to think, question, and develop a critical perspective. Therefore, it can be stated that screens and video narratives, through artists, aim not only to offer the viewer an aesthetic experience but also to create an experiential space that questions social, cultural, and individual identities.

### **Findings and interpretation regarding the sampled works**

Considering this information, when the contexts and structural characteristics of artists’ use of the screen, and the purpose of the screen’s use across different cultural periods, are analyzed, important findings emerge regarding the changing characteristics of video art from its inception to the present day (Table 1). As seen in the table below, these findings can be interpreted from a broad perspective, ranging from the use of the screen phenomenon as a purely physical medium to its treatment as an element with a cultural and social function, from its definition in a critical, aesthetic, and conceptual context to its use by artists as a means to an end.

Looking at the distribution of screen use over the years in the selected artists and artworks, it is seen that the first examples of video art were conveyed through television screens in the works of artists such as Nam June Paik. In the vast majority of these works, the screen phenomenon served as both a means and an end for the transmission of images. However, since the 2000s, the screen has become a means of conveying meaning and context. With technological advances enabling LED screens and virtual reality, television screens have been replaced by projections that transform the space into a screen and large-scale displays.

**Table 1.** The contexts and structural characteristics of screen usage by the sampled artists

Year	Artist	Screen	Context	Structure	Screen Usage
1965	Nam June Paik	Television	Critical/Conceptual (Media)	Dynamic/Interactive	Purpose/Tool
1969	Aldo Tambellini	Television	Aesthetic/Conceptual	Static	Medium
1969	Alan Kaprow	Television	Aesthetic/Conceptual	Static	Medium
1969	Otto Piene	Projection	Conceptual	Dynamic/Interactive	Purpose
1969	Frank Gillette & Ira Schneider	Television	Conceptual/Critical (Media)	Dynamic/Interactive	Purpose/Tool
1974	Dan Graham	Television	Conceptual/Aesthetic	Static/Interactive	Purpose/Tool
1980	Nil Yalter and Nicole Croiset	Television	Critical/Conceptual (Social roles)	Dynamic/Interactive	Purpose/Tool
1999	Shirin Neshat	LED Screen	Critical/Conceptual (Cultural values)	Dynamic	Medium
2017	Ei Arakawa	LED Screen	Conceptual/Aesthetic	Static	Purpose/Tool
2022	Refik Anadol	LED Screen	Conceptual/Aesthetic	Dynamic	Tool

On the other hand, when analyzing the contexts of screen usage in the works of the artists examined, three different contexts emerge: critical, aesthetic, and conceptual. Some of these contexts are interrelated and coexist in the work in question, while others shape the cultural form independently. Two of the works with a critical context (Nam June Paik's *TV Magnet* and Frank Gillette & Ira Schneider's *Wipe Cycle*) bring media criticism to the fore, while Nil Yalter & Nicole Croiset's performative work *The Rituals* develops a critical context regarding social roles. Shirin Neshat's *Soliloquy* does so regarding cultural values and the East-West conflict.

However, it can be stated that almost all of the sampled works produced between 1965 and 2022 have a conceptual context, and that, when looking at the distribution of aesthetic context over the years, there is no meaningful distribution graph. Another distribution that makes it impossible to reach a concrete conclusion is observed in the structural qualities of the sampled works. The distributions of static, dynamic, and interactive art creations do not exhibit regular graphical patterns. Nam June Paik's installation, which can be considered one of the first examples of video art, has a dynamic, interactive structure, while Refik Anadol's 2022 work is also seen to have a dynamic form. However, while the structure of the screen on which the image is transmitted or the form of the image reflected on the screen can be defined as static in 4 works, the presence of a dynamic structure is observed in 6 works, and evidence of viewer-artwork interaction is found in 5 works. When examining the use of screens, it is understood that, except for Otto Piene, screens are used as a tool for transmitting images and reflecting context in the works of all other artists, and that they also serve as a functional element in 6 works. Its use as a purpose has led the screen to become more than just a medium for reflecting images, becoming an aesthetic element in conceptual installation. In this form, it has contributed significantly to the dialogue between video art, conceptual art, and installation art, primarily until the early 2000s.

## Conclusion

This study examines the transformation of the screen phenomenon from the emergence of video art to the present day, exploring its historical, aesthetic, technological, and conceptual dimensions. It reveals that the screen's role within artistic practices is not a fixed structural element but rather a dynamic component that is periodically redefined. The findings show that, since its introduction into the art world in the early 1960s, the screen has become not only a surface for conveying images but also a medium that facilitates the production of intellectual, cultural, and critical meaning. The research found that the approaches of pioneering artists such as Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell, Frank Gillette, and Ira Schneider, who treated the screen as a kind of "electronic intervention space," disrupting the visual authority of the media and transforming the screen into an active field of experience, were decisive in the early conceptualization of the screen phenomenon. These early examples show that video art, unlike cinematic narrative, removes the viewer from the position of observer and places them in an interactive context, thereby rupturing the artist-viewer relationship. In the works of artists such as Dan Graham, Shirin Neshat, and Nil Yalter, the screen has been transported to an epistemological plane where themes such as time, space, identity, culture, and the body are discussed simultaneously, thus elevating video art from a technical medium to an essential component of conceptual production.

One of the study's key findings is the transformation of the screen's spatial presence, parallel to the development of screen technology. With the increasing use of LED screens, large-scale projections, and digital data visualization techniques since the 2000s, the screen has begun to be conceived as an environment that envelops space, a "perceptual space," transcending its physical surface quality. In this context, in the works of contemporary artists such as Refik Anadol, Ei Arakawa, Hito Steyerl, and Trevor Paglen, the screen has become a critical interface where contemporary concepts such as data, algorithms, surveillance, and artificial intelligence are embodied. This transformation demonstrates that the screen is no longer merely a plane of representation but also a cultural actor that reshapes social and cultural structures and directly intervenes in the viewer's cognitive processes. A contextual analysis of screen usage reveals that aesthetic, critical, and conceptual approaches have diversified over time and intertwined in many works, forming a hybrid mode of expression. The fluidity between the use of the screen as a tool and as an end in itself has reinforced the expanding interdisciplinary nature of video art, with the screen becoming a structural element that determines the meaning of the art object, both as a carrier surface and as an essential component of the production process. This situation demonstrates that the screen is not merely a technical device but is positioned as a space for intellectual production, consistent with the "idea-driven" nature of conceptual art.

Consequently, the screen has not historically assumed a fixed function in video art. Instead, it has been continuously redefined in response to technological developments, cultural transformations, and the conceptual orientations of art. The findings show that the screen functions as both an aesthetic experience space and a critical discourse tool in today's technology-based art production, thereby becoming a central element in discussions of concepts such as reality, representation, perception, identity, and audience interaction. This study contributes to theoretical discussions of video art and to the understanding of the interaction between art and technology in the digital age by providing a comprehensive framework for the evolution of the screen from a physical surface to a cultural discourse space.

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