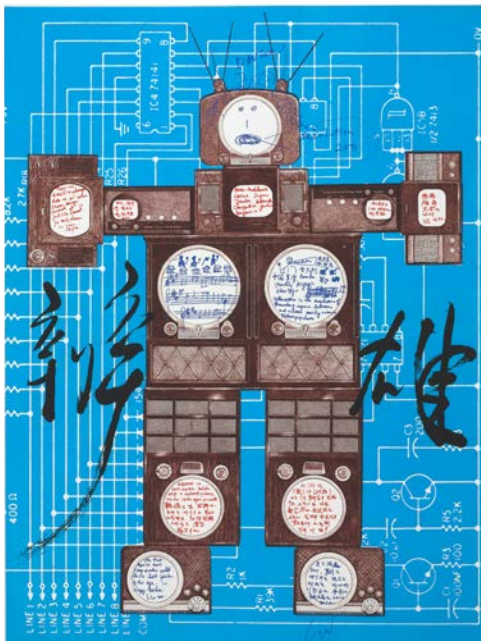




APRIL 2016

TV Robots

Nam June Paik | *Evolution, Revolution, Resolution*



VISIT THE BMA

and see an ever-changing
selection of works on paper.

Nam June Paik (American, born South Korea, 1932–2006). *Danton (Oratory or Eloquence)* from the portfolio *Evolution, Revolution, Resolution*, 1989. Color etching and lithograph. 29¹³/₁₆ x 22⁵/₁₆ inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of George H. Dalsheimer, Baltimore, BMA 2008.4.3

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Years ago, before digital devices were everywhere, Nam June Paik was hard at work in a studio piled high with old television sets. He wasn't watching TV shows. He was busy dismantling the sets and altering their picture tubes and wiring, figuring out ways to use old TVs to create a new kind of electronic sculpture that nobody had thought of before.

Some of Paik's electronic sculptures were robots well over six feet tall with arms, legs, bodies, and heads made of blockish TVs and radios from the 1960s and 70s. The robots couldn't move, but their screens were alive with moving images—videos that Paik himself manipulated and presented on a single closed-circuit TV channel. Paik's first TV robots formed a traditional family group of parents, grandparents, aunt, uncle, and children. Several years later, he created another group of sculptures to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution. The eight prints you see here, bearing the names of French philosophers and political firebrands of the 18th century, are derived from those sculptures.

Among these eight robots, there is a clear likeness. All appear to be made of old-fashioned TV sets or radios. All are placed on electronic circuit boards and surrounded by titles written in calligraphy. Still, each robot remains an individual with its own name, pose, and background color, as well as its own collection of Paik's personal insights and sketches scribbled onto the TV screens.

Paik spent a lifetime imagining and devising utterly new ways for people around the world to interact with technology. Over the years, he dazzled viewers with wildly inventive installations involving hundreds of TV monitors as he opened up new challenges for media artists to explore.

CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Compare Nam June Paik's robot prints to his robot sculptures.

bit.ly/1RLOP6z See the kind of vintage TVs that Paik used for his robots and discuss how the robots would look different if Paik were using TVs sold today. bit.ly/1MQnAe6

Explore Paik's *Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S.*, an enormous map of the United States featuring 336 TV monitors. s.si.edu/1W9WTTI. Read about Paik's life as an artist. s.si.edu/1oyZ9q5

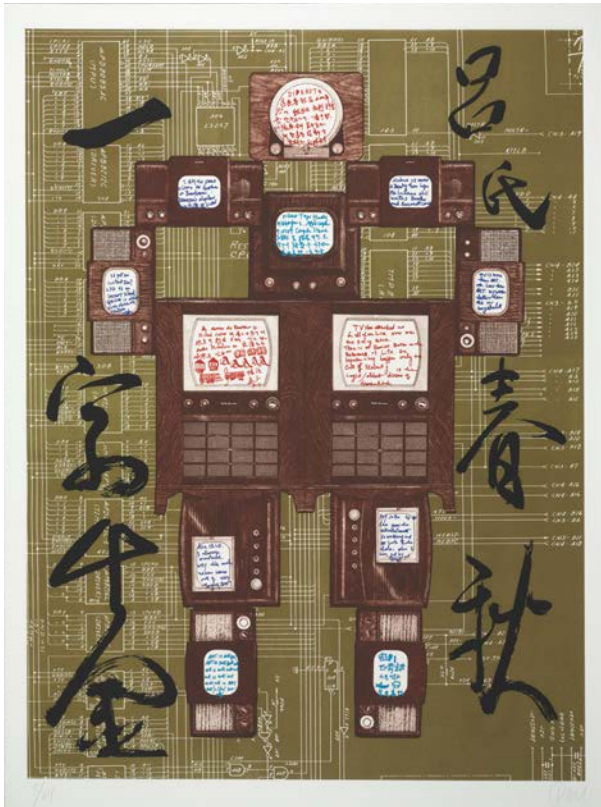
Google the names of all eight of Paik's French subjects. Learn more about them and see how they appear in 18th-century portraits.

PRINT THE IMAGES ON PAGES 2–5 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.

Diderot (One word is 1,000 dollars)

BMA 2008.4.1

Denis Diderot (1713–1784) was a philosopher, critic, and editor of the *Encyclopédie*, which contained information on arts and sciences.



Robespierre (Does the revolution justify the violence?)

BMA 2008.4.2

Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794) was a powerful advocate for the working class and a ruthless revolutionary.

The robot's name appears on his head.



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From the portfolio *Evolution, Revolution, Resolution*

Nam June Paik (American, born South Korea, 1932–2006). 1989. Color etching and lithograph. Sheet: 29¹³/₁₆ x 22⁵/₁₆ inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of George H. Dalsheimer, Baltimore, BMA 2008.4.1–8

Danton (Oratory or Eloquence)

BMA 2008.4.3

Georges Danton (1759–1794) was a powerful orator and a leading force in the overthrow of the French monarchy. Danton was a skilled orator.

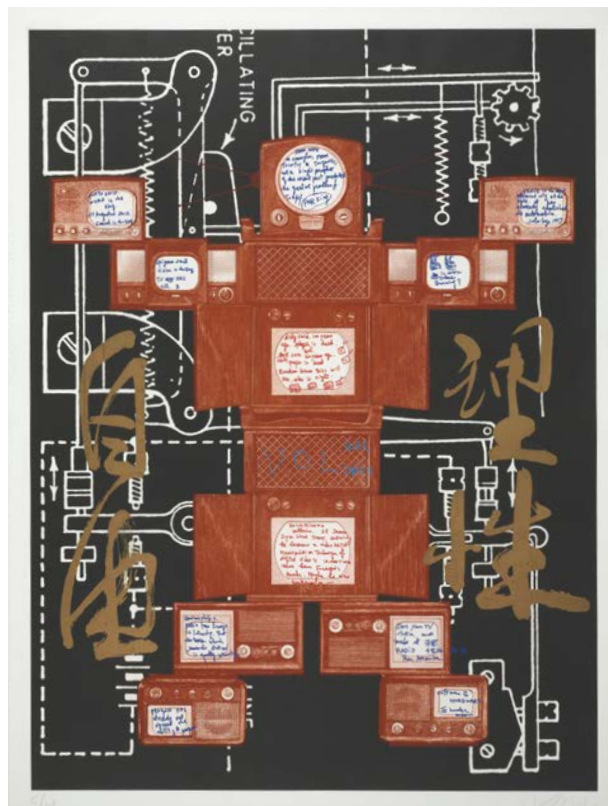
His robot has a wide-open mouth.



Voltaire (Liberty, Reason)

BMA 2008.4.8

Voltaire (1694–1778) was a philosopher, writer, and historian who argued for freedom of religion and expression. He was famous for his wit.



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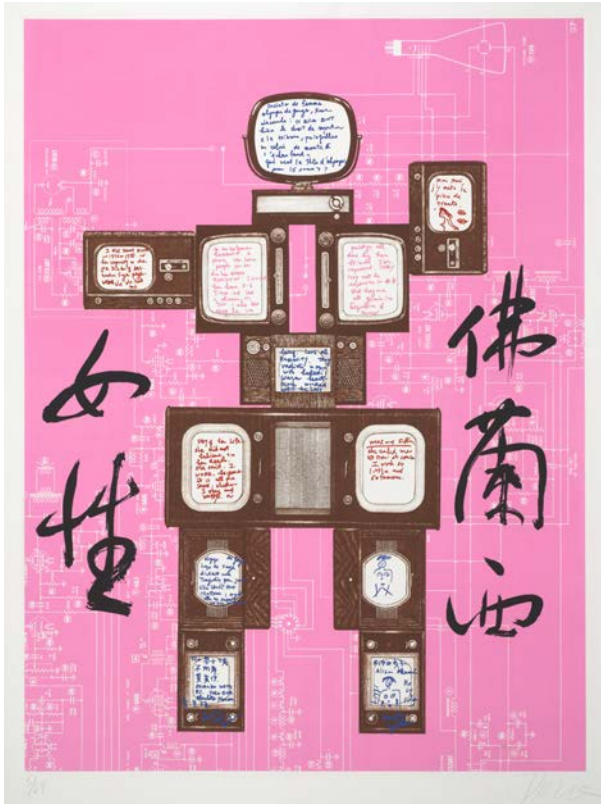
From the portfolio *Evolution, Revolution, Resolution*

Nam June Paik (American, born South Korea, 1932–2006). 1989. Color etching and lithograph.
Sheet: 29 $\frac{13}{16}$ x 22 $\frac{5}{16}$ inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of George H. Dalsheimer, Baltimore,
BMA 2008.4.1–8

Olympe de Gouges (Women, French)

BMA 2008.4.5

Olympe de Gouges (1748–1793) was a feminist playwright and political activist.

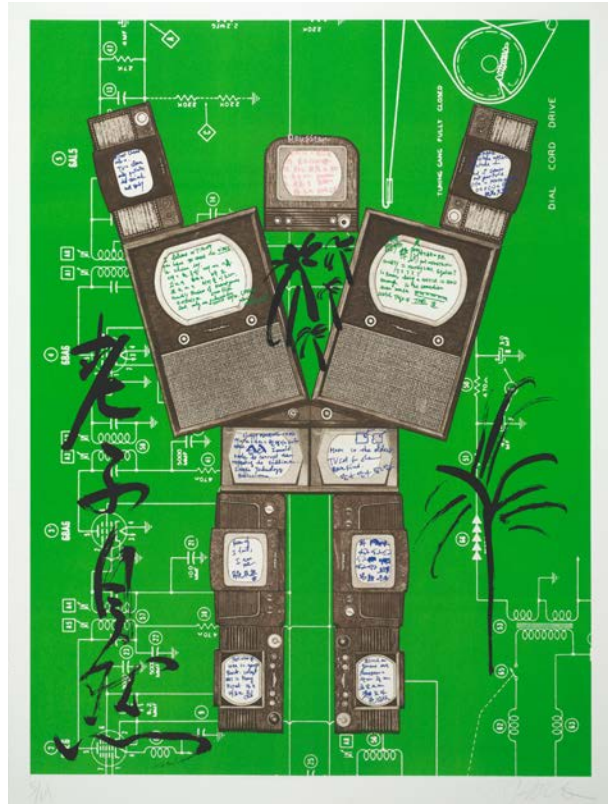


Rousseau (Laotze also pleaded for the return to Mother Nature)

BMA 2008.4.4

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was a philosopher and political theorist whose writings inspired the French Revolution.

A tree suggests Rousseau's love of nature.



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Marat (Assassination)

BMA 2008.4.6

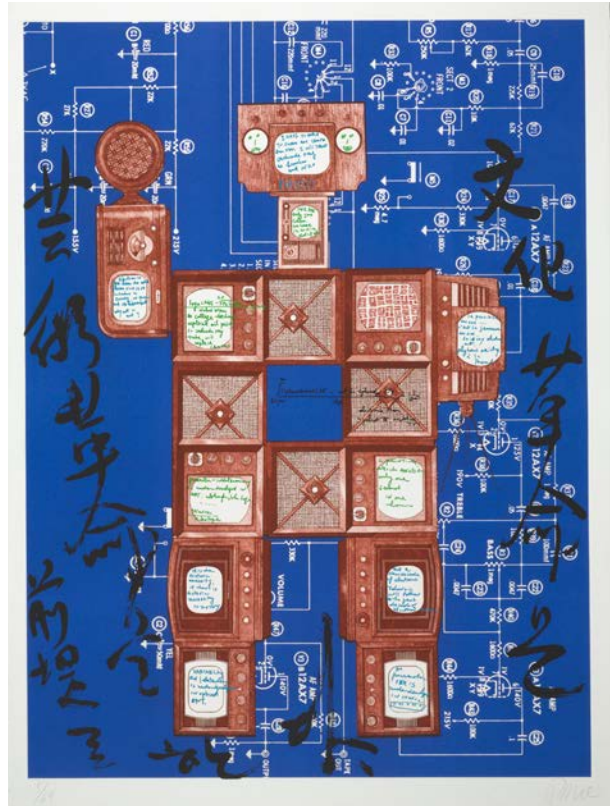
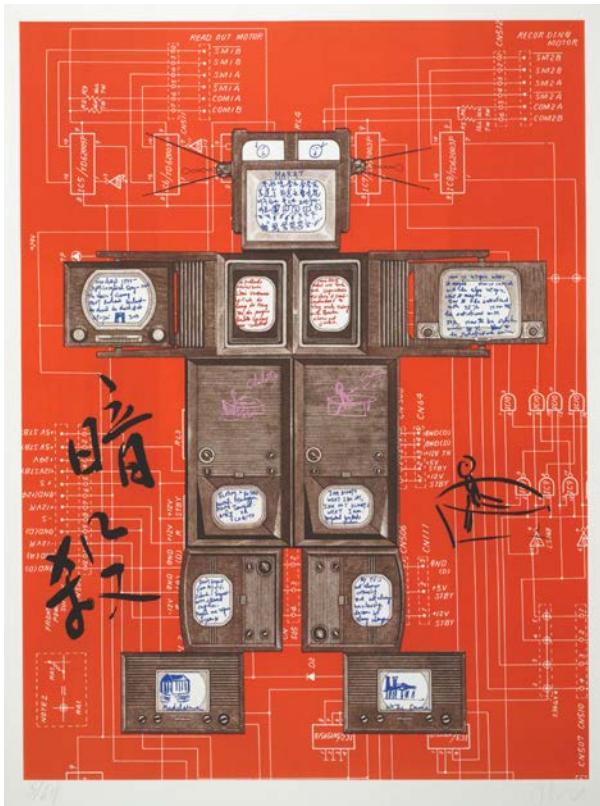
Jean-Paul Marat (1743–1793) was one of the most radical voices of the French Revolution.

He was assassinated in his bathtub.

David (The cultural-revolution requires the ART revolution as the pre-requisite and as the pre-condition)

BMA 2008.4.7

Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) was a painter and supporter of the French Revolution. He painted a scene of Marat's assassination.



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