This accompanying publication to the exhibition Video, an Art, a History 1965–2010: A Selection from the Centre Pompidou and the Singapore Art Museum Collections brings together studies on video art from Western Europe, the Americas and East Asia. It also introduces recent investigations into video as an emerging artistic practice in Southeast Asia. The 10 essays in this publication comprise critical studies alongside country surveys. The 53 entries present the selection of video projections and installations featured in the exhibition, of which 41 works are from the Centre Pompidou and 12 from the Singapore Art Museum. Extensively illustrated, this rare gathering of some of the most definitive works in video art is designed to address a wide audience ranging from specialists to the general public.
Video, an Art, a History 1965–2010: A Selection from the Centre Pompidou and Singapore Art Museum Collections

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In her article “PheNAUMANology” in 1970, curator and critic Marcia Tucker wrote that Bruce Nauman’s work “is so varied that it has been briefly categorised as ‘Eccentric Abstraction’ (1966), ‘Tunk’ (1967), ‘body art’ (1968), ‘Anti-Form’ (1969), process art (1970) and ‘Conceptual Art’ (1971).” This usefully points to the eclectic modes of expression Nauman uses. Working with rubber, fibreglass and neon, as well as his own body, photography and film, he fundamentally questioned artistic practice or what an artist should do. More concerned with the ideas behind the artwork or the process of making art, he wondered about the validity of producing any object of art. Indeed significantly, in 1969, his work was included in Harald Szeemann’s ground-breaking exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* at the Kunsthalle in Bern, Switzerland.

Nauman graduated from the University of California at Davis in 1966 and lived in San Francisco and Mill Valley until he moved temporarily to Southampton, New York, in 1968. The gallerist Leo Castelli included him in a group show that year and bought video equipment that was shared by Nauman, Keith Sonnier and Richard Serra. Sony had only just released the Portapak portable camera in 1967; this technology was in its infancy, but already a new medium for experimentation by artists like Nam June Paik and Andy Warhol.

Around this time, Nauman made a series of performative single-screen videos in the enclosed private space of his Southampton studio. In *Stamping in the Studio*, the fixed camera is installed high up, rather like a closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance system, and flipped so that the image is upside-down for the viewer. Nauman records himself for the entire 60-minute duration of the tape doing exactly what he had indicated in the title. What we observe, therefore, is one continuous take of the artist walking around in circles, lines or other configurations in and out of the frame of the monitor. A mysterious artistic ritual is captured. Action with no clear object that generally occurs offstage, like a preparatory sketch, is made manifest.

Fascinated by human behaviour and art-world phenomena, Nauman performs the activity of the artist in his workplace. Here “Stamping” can be considered in the sense of marking territory or making a mark. He presents a solitary repetitive action, searching for inspiration, obsessively working out intent. The movements appear to be purposeless and nearly absurd. Rather like in Paul McCarthy’s video *Painter* (1995, also in the Centre Pompidou collection), the creative process is art in itself.

Minimalist music by the likes of Philip Glass and Steve Reich was a great influence for Nauman. Sound – here the quasi-mechanical stomping of his feet on the floor – is an essential element in this video to the extent that it nearly becomes a complex percussion piece in itself. The ascending and descending volume and rhythms of his footwork vary and each sequence is repeated methodically several times. Time and space converge through sound and movement.

The same year, in 1968, Merce Cunningham’s piece *Walkaround Time* was based on Marcel Duchamp’s *Large Glass*. Bay Area artists like Nauman in the 1960s had strong connections with the humour and absurdities of the Dada artists from the beginning of the 20th century. Encounters with dancers, such as Cunningham and Meredith Monk, informed Nauman’s interest in cross-disciplinary experiments. *Stamping in the Studio* integrates body art, performance and dance. His upright body with dangling arms is a material. By monitoring an occupation, occupying space and appropriating the studio, Nauman is practically a living sculpture.

Vladimir: That passed the time.
Estragon: It would have passed in any case.
Vladimir: Yes, but not so rapidly.

Caroline Hancock