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Me, or 6D 65 reinterprets Nam June Paik's *TV Buddha* (1974) for the digital age, replacing the analogue camera and monitor with a digital camera and a raw data visualisation. Where Paik's Buddha confronts its mediated image, this work exposes the ontological rupture of digital mediation: the Buddha gazes not at a reflection but at the encoded data that constitutes its digital existence. The installation critiques how digital technologies reduce reality to quantifiable abstractions, severing the phenomenological connection between self and image. By revealing the logico-quantitative underpinnings of digital representation, *Me, or 6D 65* invites reflection on the true causes of alienation inherent in our increasingly data-driven world.

Keywords: Media, Analogue vs. Digital,
Paik, Terminal, Self.

DOI [10.34626/2026_xcoax_031](https://doi.org/10.34626/2026_xcoax_031)

Artist Statement: Me, or 6D 65

Me, or 6D 65 is a contemporary reinterpretation of Nam June Paik's seminal 1974 installation, *TV Buddha* (Paik 1974). In Paik's work, a Buddha statue gazes at its own image, captured by a closed-circuit analogue camera and displayed on a CRT television monitor. The piece is a profound meditation on the intersection of Eastern spirituality and Western technological culture, as well as the relationship between self and media. The Buddha, a symbol of enlightenment and introspection, confronts not a mirror but a technologically mediated reflection—an image of itself filtered through the apparatus of a television. Paik's installation invites viewers to recognise themselves in the Buddha's position: we, too, see ourselves through the lens of technology, and in doing so, we experience a diminished, mediated version of our own existence. As Marshall McLuhan famously declared, “the medium is the message” (1964)—the technological infrastructure that transmits our image shapes our perception far more than the content of the image itself. The Buddha's gaze is not directed at a true reflection but at a representation, one that is inherently reduced by the medium's limitations.

Paik's *TV Buddha* remains deeply resonant today, perhaps even more so in an era dominated by digital technology. When we look at the monitor displaying the Buddha's image, we understand that it is not the Buddha *per se* but a technologically constructed version of it. This mediation is not neutral; it alters our relationship with ourselves and the world. The Buddha's contemplation of its own mediated image becomes a metaphor for our own alienation in the age of mass media—a reminder that our self-perception is increasingly shaped by the tools we use to capture and represent reality.

Yet, while Paik's work critiques the mediation of analogue technology, *Me, or 6D 65* pushes this critique further by exposing the fundamental differences between analogue and digital mediation. My installation replaces the analogue camera and television with a digital camera and the raw data it captures. The Buddha no longer gazes at its own image on a screen. Instead, it confronts the raw data produced by the digital camera and displayed in an endless string in a Terminal window—a stream of numbers, measurements, and encoded information that constitute its existence within the digital realm. This shift is not merely technical; it is ontological. It reveals how digital technology does not just mediate our image but redefines our very being in logico-quantitative terms.

The Ontological Rupture: Analogue vs. Digital Mediation

To fully grasp the significance of *Me, or 6D 65*, one must understand the distinct mechanics of analogue and digital technologies—mechanics that produce radically different forms of mediation (Torre 2021).

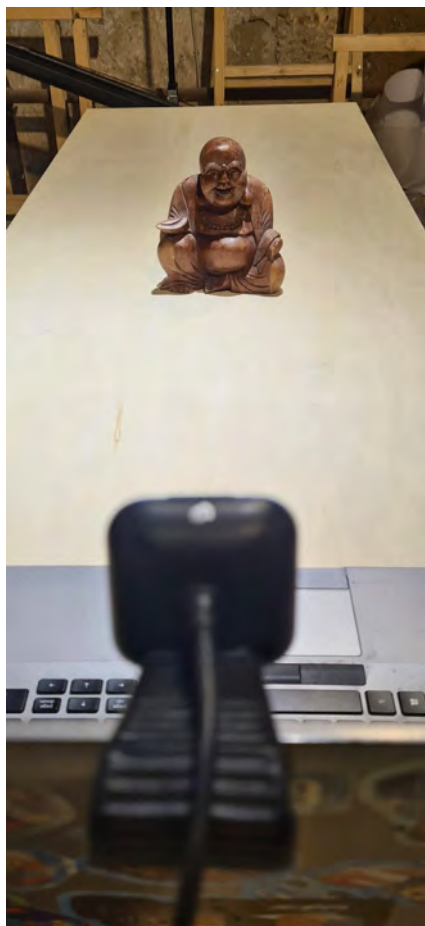


Fig. 1 and 2. *Me, or 6D 65* installation views.

In Paik's *TV Buddha*, the analogue camera captures the light reflecting off the Buddha statue and converts it into electrical voltages. These voltages are then transmitted to a cathode-ray tube (CRT) television, which reconstructs the image on its screen. The process is one of seamless transformation: light is converted into electrical energy, which is then converted back into light. The image on the screen is a direct, continuous representation of the Buddha, albeit mediated by the technological apparatus. There is no inherent separation between the Buddha and its image; the energy flows from one form to another, preserving a phenomenological unity between the object and its representation.

This analogue process is uncountable *a priori*—it does not require measurement or quantification to function. The electrical signals in the circuit exist as a continuous flow, and while they can be measured *after the fact* (e.g., by analysing the voltage levels), such measurement is not necessary for the system to operate. The image on the screen is an extension of the Buddha's physical presence, transformed but not fundamentally altered in its essence. In this sense, the analogue medium operates much like a spiritual medium in the traditional sense: it channels energy from one realm to another without breaking the connection between the source and its representation. This is why, for example, some have sought to find “trapped spirits” in the static noise of analogue television (and not in digital ones)—because the medium itself is perceived as a conduit for energy, a bridge between the physical and the ethereal.

The analogue medium, then, is not just a tool but a participant in the process of perception. It does not impose a rigid structure on reality; instead, it allows reality to flow through it, transforming but not fragmenting the relationship between the self and its image. The static noise of an analogue TV, for example, is not an error but a manifestation of the medium's engagement with its “invisible surroundings”—a reminder that the image is part of a larger, uninterrupted continuum of energy.

Me, or 6D 65 disrupts this continuity. In this installation, the digital camera does not merely capture light; it encodes it. The light reflecting off the Buddha is measured, quantified, and packaged into data. This data is not an image in itself; it is a mathematical representation of the Buddha, a translation of its physical presence into a logico-quantitative structure.

Unlike the analogue process, digital mediation must be countable *a priori*—that is, only that which can be counted can enter the digital realm. The camera does not simply transform light into an image; it breaks the light into countable units, assigning numerical values to the energy recorded by each light-sensitive photodiodes before sending those to the screen to reconstruct the image. But here's the crucial point: the image is incidental. The data produced by the camera could just as easily be used to generate sound, control a motor, or feed into an algorithm. The Buddha's image is not a necessary outcome of the data; it is merely one possible interpretation among infinite others. The digital camera does not capture the Buddha's essence—it captures a measurement of it.

This distinction is at the heart of *Me, or 6D 65*. The Buddha is not looking at itself but at the data that represents it. Its image is no longer a

seamless extension of its physical form but a construction, a product of the camera's ability to count and categorize. In the digital realm, the Buddha's existence is reduced to numbers.

In the analogue world, the medium is a conduit for energy, a bridge between the physical and the represented. But in the digital world, the medium is something far more conservative and rigid: it is a mathematical framework, a system of counting and measurement that stands between us and reality. Where analogue technology preserves a phenomenological connection between the self and its image, digital technology severs that connection, replacing it with a representational system grounded in abstraction.

This shift has profound implications for how we understand ourselves in a digital world. When we look at a digital image of ourselves, we are not seeing a reflection but a reconstruction—one that is fundamentally shaped by the limits and biases of the counting process. Our faces, our voices, our very identities are translated into data points. We have become numbers, and our relationship with reality is mediated by the mathematical logic governing digital systems.

This is the stark, sad truth of our existence in the digital age. The Buddha's contemplation of its own data is a metaphor for our own alienation from our physical selves.

We are no longer the subjects of our own perception; we are objects of measurement, defined by the parameters of the machines that capture us.

The digital self is not a reflection but a *simulacrum*, a copy without an original, a representation without a source.

Our identities are no longer our own; they are constructed by the machines that count us.

This work can be accessed at:

<https://giuseppetorre.gitlab.io/meor6D65.html>

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