VIDEO ART: A SHORT GUIDE TO NOW

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This recent rise of video art seems inexplicable. Video has been around in one form or another for half a century. It has been an established part of art practice, exhibited widely in museums and galleries, taught in art schools and has emerged as the subject of wide-ranging critical inquiry. Yet the increase in the visibility of video art over the past five years is undeniable. What’s changed? To begin to answer this question we need to consider the history of video technology as an accessible and available tool, and look at how contemporary artists are using it.
playback, creating a stuttering yet comprehensible
declaration. This project continues the artist’s
interest in endurance performance – a sub-genre
of performance art – and also romanticism,
McMillen’s B toys the sea, 2004, for example, quoted
the figure from Caspar David Friedrich’s Monk by
the sea, 1808–10, the artist standing on a seaside
ciff top for twelve hours, recording the event as a
tape loop shot. The finished work was presented
in a gallery setting as a continuous video loop,
giving a sense of both the performance and the
time it took to create, while quoting a ‘painting’ by
using the video projector to create a static frame
on the gallery wall.

The proliferation of personal video technologies
over the last thirty years – consumer-friendly devices
such as portable video cameras, VCRs and, more
recently, DVDs and hard-disk recorders – has created
an unprecedented context for contemporary video.
From the late 1950s artists have incorporated
新兴 video technologies into their work.
Standard histories of video art always cite Andy
Warhol, Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell as the
artists who first explored the possibilities of
using a video camera to record events around the
Factory. Park incorporated video in various forms into
sculptures, interventions and happenings, and Vostell
repeated televisions as ready-made sculpture.
Paik is now famous for his Dog Eat Dog (1967–68), a
video camera to record events around the Factory.
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sculpture, interventions and happenings, and Vostell
developed video into a new art form.

While the precedents for Smith’s video work
might be traced back to the 1960s, what sets him
and many of his contemporaries apart is the
way in which the video and sculpture are an integral part
of the exhibition and the work of the artist.
Smith’s ideas of form and space might just as well be those
of a contemporary sculptor like生产总值 (1984) in his work, Slimer, 2007, finding within
a range of approaches to video, comprising
sculptural installations mixed with stand-alone
video works and a suite of photographs. The point
of difference for their work was not so much in the
forms that it took, but in the artist’s use of personal
video archives as their basis. Raising family video
data and blending contemporary elements with
old VHS tapes, Smith created a kind of walk-in
archive. In Videochromes for the alone: The love cats,
1991–2007, for example, Mr (aged about thirteen) perofrms an original dance routine to The Cure
song ‘The Love Cats’ before a high school
assembly. The right-hand side of the screen,
inserted using an intentionally rough video overlay,