

What Is the MoMA Media Lounge?

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MoMA Media Lounge. 2012. Designed by Renée Green. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2012 The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photo: Thomas Griesel

Upon arriving as the new Chief Curator of Media and Performance Art at MoMA about two years ago, I was determined to focus on the acquisition of unique installations and draw a more complete narrative of media and performance art through its representation in videos and photographs in MoMA's collection and exhibitions. In addition, I saw an opportunity to make our substantial single-channel video collection accessible, in an interactive, way to a broad audience on a daily basis. In collaboration with artists, curators, designers, and multiple departments within MoMA, we have developed an interactive display that provides a completely new

encounter with artworks at the Museum.

MoMA's [Department of Media and Performance Art](#) has a collection of over 2,400 works, of which over 900 are complex installations—with films, videos, or props—intended for a gallery space. However, the majority of the collection, nearly 1,500 titles, can be described as single-channel videos (mostly unlimited editions meant to be shown on monitors)—a vast collection covering the history of video art and, to some extent, the history of performance art as documented on video. Until recently these works were only accessible when included in gallery rotations, or upon request in the Department of Media and Performance Art Study Center.

The goal of our new [MoMA Media Lounge](#) is to hand the curatorial power over to the audience, who can select artworks through a specially developed iPad interface using common search criteria like artist, date, title, etc., plus curatorial topics intended to spark inspiration. The interactive system pays tribute to the original intention of artists who use video to challenge the limits of art museums and provide easy access. In order to get there we had to digitize the entire collection (still very much a work-in-progress), which existed in all kinds of video formats from the past 50 years. We reached out to the artists to complete the cataloging and obtain rights for the project. This comprehensive assessment of the holdings and the state of the collection turned out to be extremely stimulating in determining new acquisitions that could fill gaps in the collection—an ongoing project by nature.

The screenshot displays the MoMA Media Lounge website interface. At the top, the title "MoMA MEDIA LOUNGE" is prominently featured in white on a dark background. To the right, there are links for "About", "Feedback", and "Now Playing". Below the title, a navigation bar contains buttons for "Highlights", "Artists", "Dates", "Themes", and "Picks", with "Highlights" currently selected. A "Back" button is located in the top right corner of this navigation bar. The main content area is titled "Collection Highlights" and includes a "SORT BY:" dropdown menu with options for "Artist", "Title", and "Date". The content is organized into a grid of video thumbnails, each with a title and a brief description of the work and its year.

Artist	Work Title	Year
Vito Acconci	The Red Tapes	1977
Laurie Anderson	Personal Service Announcement: National Anthem	1990
Lynda Benglis	Now	1973
Joseph Beuys	I Like America, America Likes Me	1974
Chris Burden	Documentation of Selected Work	1971-75
Patty Chang	Untitled (Eels)	1999
VALIE EXPORT	Body Tape	1970
VALIE EXPORT	TAP and TOUCH Cinema	1969/1989
Harun Farocki	Inextinguishable Fire	1969
Harun Farocki	Between Two Wars	1977-78

The MoMA Media Lounge's custom interface

The vision for the design of this platform, conceived as an environment that offers a radically different encounter with art than the usual gallery setting, was a series of modular, flexible architectural units that can "travel" within the Museum or to other venues, designed by artist Renée Green. Green (b. 1959, Cleveland, OH) creates multimedia installations and immersive environments that invite visitors to interact and participate. Her *Media Bicho*, as she calls the display she has conceived for MoMA, provides an intermediary modular system and space-altering device that can be expanded and contracted into a variety of forms. Green's display refers to the work of Brazilian artist Lygia Clark, who in the 1960s applied *bicho*, the Portuguese or Spanish word for "creature" or "bug," to her geometric metal sculptures, with which viewers can interact to create multiple forms. In Green's *Media Bicho*, multicolored, textured screens are arranged to offer a partial enclosure in which to

experience videos and, hopefully soon, audio works.



MoMA Media Lounge. 2012. Designed by Renée Green. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2012 The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photo: Thomas Griesel

While people are not expected to have a lively debate on artworks in the galleries, I was interested in providing a space for social interaction—a dynamic environment that stimulates both collective and individual experience. The lounge should also serve as a place for educational events—such as artist or scholar talks, readings, discussions, or presentations that relate to the works on view—and allow us to host and organize temporary exhibitions by simply highlighting one of the monitors or screens.

The MoMA Media Lounge is a new platform for collaboration between the Museum's visitors and the curatorial staff. It is an environment in which

people are actively involved in the selection, presentation, and contextualization of artworks; where they get a voice and where the Museum's role as an archive and educational institution is highlighted.

[Read the full-length essay in PDF format](#)