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## Preface

When Marshall McLuhan famously wrote that every new technology must first act as a container for the ones that came before it, he was driving at an idea of technology that was radically non-linear — that shuddered along, expanding and contracting and eventually, sometimes, achieving something of value. In his seminal 1964 text *Understanding Media*, McLuhan speculated about a technological future that has now more or less come to pass: The computer, he predicted, would one day become an extension of the human body and, like an extra nervous system, would help us process vast stores of information. The coming electronic age would permanently supplant mechanical production and, perhaps most importantly, it would be artists who by their ability to recognize contemporary culture as largely information-driven would help usher these changes into being.

One year after McLuhan published *Understanding Media*, a Swede named Knut Wiggen began planning a festival of art and technology in Stockholm. The festival would take some of these ideas as its founding principles — that the coming computer age should be embraced and that the marriage of art and technology had the potential to alter the fabric of society for the better. What followed was a year of planning and pleading, magical thinking, passion, bitter arguments, disappointment, and ultimately not one, but two festivals celebrating art and technology.

Contained within these pages is an examination of that time, and of the relationship between art and technology now, in 2013. Many of the issues raised here will be addressed in the 2013 iteration of the Stockholm Festival for Art and Technology — *Visions of the Now* — created

by artist Anna Lundh at Fylkingen in Stockholm. This publication extends the themes of the festival without explaining them; it is a catching place for ideas and propositions better suited to print than a lecture or performance, and an archive of material that documents both our now and the now of 1966. We've invited writers and theorists, artists, composers and historians to address our themes, including original contributions by Rosi Braidotti, Laurel Ptak, Goodiepal, Julie Martin, Sanne Krogh Groth, Lars-Gunnar Bodin and Brian Droitcour.

And because this 2013 festival is based on the seminal and very controversial 1966 festival that not only landed Fylkingen on the international map but also spurred the visionary performance series *9 Evenings* at the New York Armory, we took this opportunity to examine and document that complex and torrid history. Julie Martin remembers firsthand the events leading up to and surrounding *9 Evenings*, and historian Sanne Krogh Groth and Lars-Gunnar Bodin describe the skeleton festival in Stockholm. Tucked inside the catalogue's inner pages are the original documents pertaining to the 1966 festival, including never-before published correspondence with John Cage and Buckminster Fuller and texts by Alvin Lucier and Nam June Paik, as well as newspaper clippings and rare photographs that tell their own story about a time in history when technology and art were newly wed. In a way, you could say that this publication is another participant in the festival, one that will continue its life long after the last performance at Fylkingen has concluded.