# VIDEO ART

# VIDEO ART

## An Anthology

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I. S. and B. K.

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B C D E

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# INTRODUCTION

Video technology was developed in the late 1930's. In the 1950's, as broadcast television, it gained ascendancy as the dominant communications system and marketing medium in the United States. Video itself is a general-purpose tool, although in the United States we came to know it only through the commercial television medium. With the introduction of low-cost videotape equipment in the late 1960's, the noncommercial use of the medium by individuals proliferated, and new alternatives to its development began.

The basic assumption underlying the compilation of this anthology is that the substantial body of video work created by individual artists in the past ten years represents an extension of the traditional context of art, and also of media—specifically, broadcast TV. A second volume will focus on the work of those involved in developing informational and social aspects of the medium.

This particular volume focuses on the work of artists—primarily American artists—who for the most part came to work with video as a natural outgrowth of their work with other media. Many of these artists saw video as a way to extend the spatial and temporal parameters of their work. As the medium has developed, three basic approaches to the video image have emerged: (1) where the artist/performer is subject; (2) where the environment is subject; and (3) where the abstract synthesized image is subject. Any of these approaches, however, may be combined within a single work. In addition, the way in which these approaches are manifested formally (whether single or multi-channel; performance or installation; real time, time delay, pretaped and edited) varies greatly.

The viewpoint of this present compilation is basically comprehensive, and does not espouse a particular aesthetic. Our former publication, *Radical Software* (1970–74), functioned as a conduit through which information about the video medium was disseminated. It provided access to artists to present their philosophies, theories, and beliefs concerning the nature of the medium and its possible applications. It served often as a written preamble to experimental development of the medium, partly due to the changing nature of the video hardware itself, and partly because there were very few outlets for the distribution and exhibition of created works. In the past few years, however, along with the more sophisticated development of the low-cost technology, the increasing opportunities for artists to exhibit works at galleries and museums, and public television support designed to aid production and present videotapes of artists, the body of video work has grown considerably.

This anthology, then, presents statements by seventy-three artists related to aspects of their video work, as well as articles by artists, curators, and reviewers regarding the development of different aesthetic approaches to the medium. Though the anthology is comprehensive, it is by no means complete. It does, however, represent the type of work being done, and the kind of thinking that often motivates it. And it is our hope that it is the type of anthology which will stimulate future thought concerning video, and contribute to the quality of work still to emerge.

Beryl Korot and Ira Schneider

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# VIDEO ART

## Vito Acconci

# 10-POINT PLAN FOR VIDEO

1. Video as an idea, as a working method, rather than a specific medium, a particular piece—something to keep in the back of my mind while I'm doing something else. (It can bring me up front, pull me back onto the surface, keep me from slipping away into abstraction.)

2. Thinking of landscape in terms of movie (I'm forced then to treat landscape as dream, myth, history of a culture). Thinking of person, close-up, in terms of video (I'm forced then to treat person as on-the-spot news, convoluted soap opera).

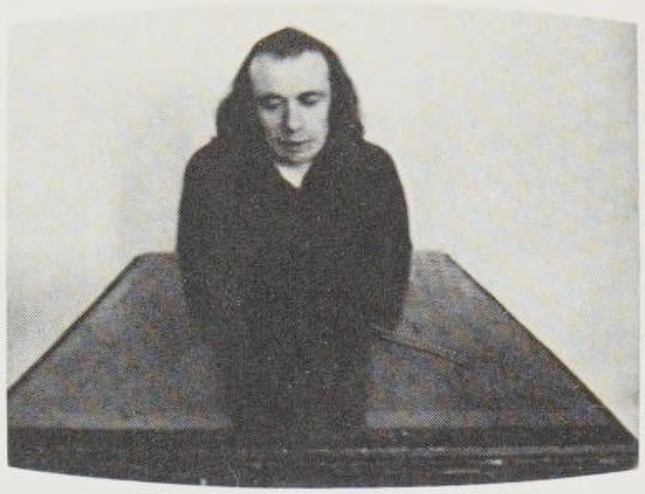
3. Video monitor as one point in a face-to-face relationship: on-screen, I face the viewer, off-screen. (Since the image is poorly defined, we're forced to depend on sound more than sight: "intimate distance.")

4. Starting point: Where am I in relation to the viewer—above, below, to the side? Once my position is established, the reasons for that position shape the content: I can improvise, keep talking, fight to hold my stance in front of the viewer. (At the same time, I'm fighting the neutrality of the medium by pushing myself up against the screen—I'm building an image for myself lest I dissolve into dots, sink back into grayness.)

5. But my image breaks the face-to-face contact: The viewer faces a screen of me, an image under glass, me-in-a-fishbowl. Rather than being in a situation *with* me, the viewer is in front of a situation *about* me.

6. In order to keep up my image, I should give up my person. I could be dead—and therefore have no recourse but this ghost of myself; or I could simplify myself into a cardboard figure (superior stance: "I'm here to give you information, that's all you need to know, you'll

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UNDERTONE (30 MIN.; 1973)

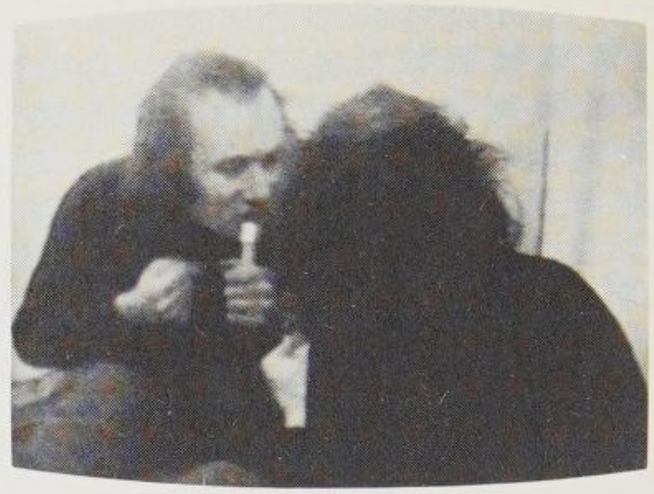
MY HANDS ARE ON THE TABLE: I'M FACING THE VIEWER: 'I NEED TO LOOK YOU STRAIGHT IN THE EYE, TO PROVE I'M NOT HIDING ANYTHING...'

MY HANDS GO UNDER THE TABLE: MY EYES ARE LOWERED: 'I WANT TO BELIEVE THERE'S A GIRL HERE — SHE'S TOUCHING MY LEG...'

FACING THE VIEWER AGAIN: 'I NEED YOU TO STAND UP AGAINST ME, TO KEEP ME FROM DECEIVING YOU...'

UNDER THE TABLE AGAIN: 'I WANT TO BELIEVE THERE'S NO ONE ELSE HERE — I'M TOUCHING MY LEG...'

**BUILD MYSELF UP: VIEWER AS BELIEVER**



AIR TIME (60 MIN.; 1973)

I'M FACING A MIRROR, TALKING TO YOU (SPECIFIC PERSON): 'I WANT TO SEE MYSELF THE WAY YOU'VE SEEN ME FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS, THE TIME WE'VE LIVED TOGETHER...'

I'M RE-ENACTING OLD TIMES: 'SPEER ON MY LIPS...YES, THAT'S HOW I PUNCHED YOU... YOU'RE RIGHT: I SOUND AS IF I'M TALKING TO A CHILD, AN ANIMAL...'

BUT I KNOW THAT YOU (THE VIEWER) ARE WATCHING: 'NOW THAT THEY SEE HOW I'VE BEEN WITH YOU, I CAN'T DENY IT... I HAVE TO FACE IT... I HAVE TO ADMIT I CAN'T CHANGE... I HAVE TO LEAVE YOU...'

**TEAR MYSELF AWAY: VIEWER AS WITNESS**



THEME SONG (30 MIN.; 1973)

LYING ON THE FLOOR: PLAYING SONGS ON A TAPE RECORDER: I CAN BRING MY LEGS AROUND TO WRAP YOU UP...

~~I CAN'T SEE YOUR FACE IN MY MIND~~
'I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE YET... BUT I KNOW SOMEONE'S THERE...'

'TAKE IT EASY... COME ON...'
~~I'LL BE YOUR BABY TONIGHT~~

'IT'S BIGGER THAN BOTH OF US... A DREAM LOVE...'
~~SPREAD YOUR WINGS, BELLY, JUST LIKE A BALLERINA~~

'BUT THERE'LL BE PROBLEMS... I'D HURT YOU!'
~~LIKE A BIRD ON THE WIRE~~

'SO YOU HAVE TO LEAVE ME...'
~~DON'T LOOK SO SAD, I KNOW IT'S OVER~~

'I'LL REMEMBER THE TIMES WE COULD HAVE HAD...'
~~TRADE ALL MY TOMORROWS FOR A TIMELESS YESTERDAY~~

**TAKE YOU IN: VIEWER AS PARTNER**



COMMAND PERFORMANCE (30 MIN.; 1974)

VIDEO MONITOR FACES A STOOL: STOOL IS IN THE SPOTLIGHT.

I'M SEEN THE WAY A DOCTOR WOULD SEE ME: I'M HUMMING - DREAMING MYSELF INTO THE SPACE - DREAMING YOU IN THE SPACE.

'STEP RIGHT UP... DADA-DADA-DA-DA... LIKE A DANCING BEAR.. YOUR TURN TO PLAY THE FOOL... I DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ANYMORE...'

'GIVE ME MORE... SHOW THEM HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU ARE.. LALA-LA-LALA... GIVE YOURSELF TO THEM BUT COME BACK TO ME...'

'DOO-DOO-DOO... SNEAK AROUND THEM... YOU WON'T BETRAY HOW MUCH YOU HATE THEM...'

'BOOM-BOOM-BOOM... YOU'RE TURNING AGAINST ME... I DESERVE IT... PUNISH ME... NOW TERRIFY THEM...'

'ZAZA-ZAZAZA-ZA-ZA... YOU'LL BE GRAND IN THE SPOTLIGHT... OUR LEADER... YOU'LL DO WHAT I COULD NEVER DO... CHANGE THE WORLD...'

**GIVE MYSELF OVER: VIEWER AS SURROGATE**

never get me"; or inferor stance: "I'm begging for charity, I'm not good for anything else, take me")—and therefore give up the need for a changing and equalized relationship.

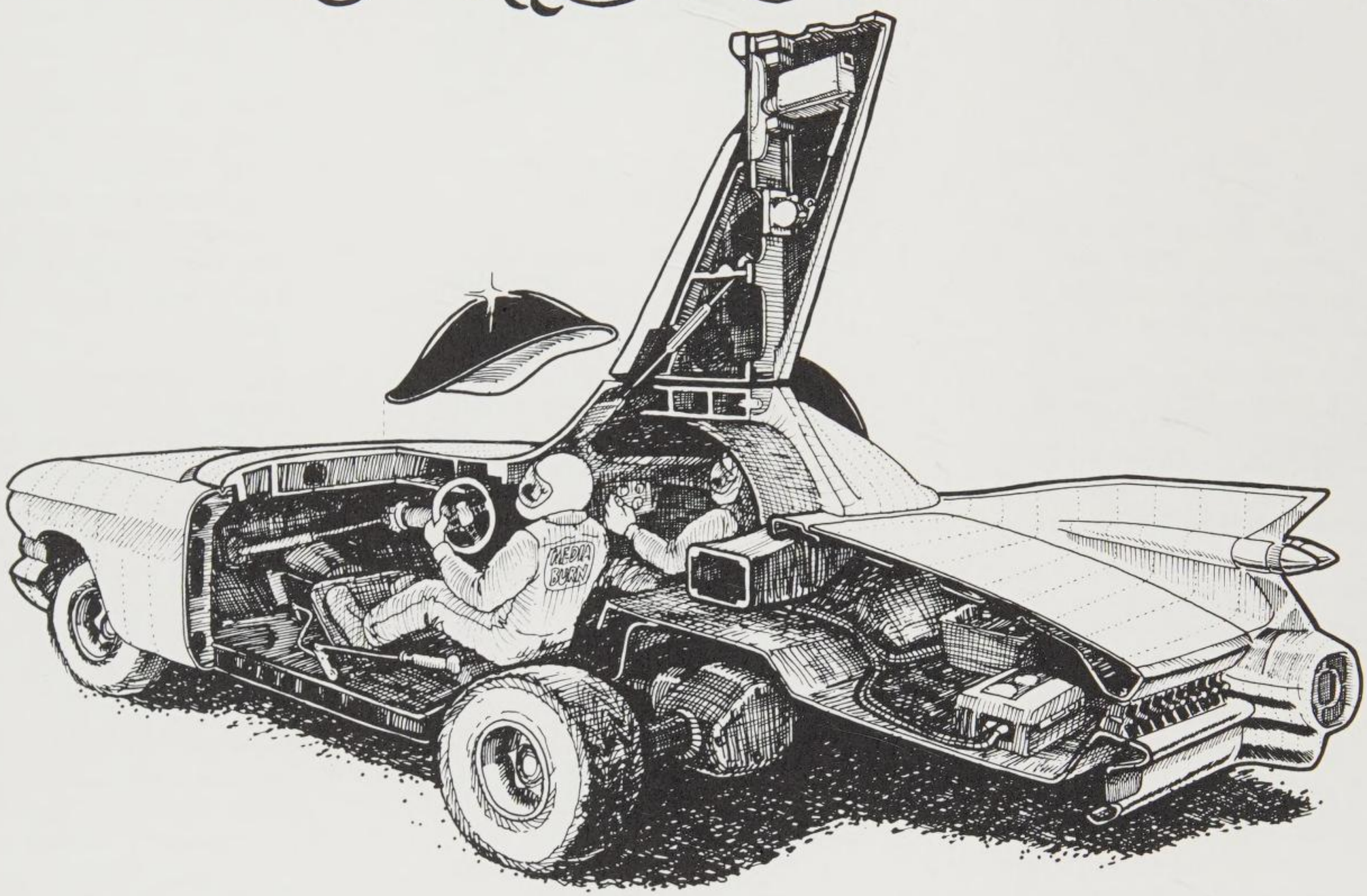
7. The alternative is to leave out my image, stay behind the scenes. The video monitor, then, can function as a middle ground, a depository for objects—an area where I, off-screen on one side, can hand things over to the viewer, off-screen on the other side. The viewer and I can be concerned *about* the objects while we're *with* each other. (Since objects are screened to begin with, since they don't talk back, their mode of presence is adaptable to the screen. Their image doesn't interfere with our contact.)

8. The catch is: The screen-person might be the normal state—video might be a model for an existent situation, a socio-political ambience that turns people into screens of themselves. (The choice, then, to substitute objects could be a way to refuse that situation, to escape that control.)

9. In any case, my ground is clear: The most available showing places for my work are museums and galleries. To show my face there, with the hope that a viewer will come in front of it, is to make a tacit assumption that the gallery provides a fertile ground for relationship. In effect, I'm clouding the economic and social meaning of the gallery. (To use the monitor instead as a kind of gift box, a calling card, could be a way of saying: Let's be sneaky, don't show your hand.)

10. But I've depended too much on the video monitor, needed its physical qualities as impulse for content. It's time to break out. Consider, for example, video projection: The "punch" of video, the quality of the image coming out at you, is a punch that can be thrown, like throwing a voice—now you see it, here it comes, it's going to hit you smack in the face—now you don't see it—there it is in the back of your mind—a punch at the back of your head.

# MEDIA BURN




The image came out of the subliminal: the idea of stacking up a pile of TV sets in a parking lot and then driving an old car with metal shields over the windshield through the pile. That was in 1971. Since then we have tried the idea out on several art museums, we tried to sell it to a Houston furniture store chain as an ad, we proposed it to the Houston Chamber of Commerce for their Main Street Art Happening, and we tried to get it sponsored by a couple of East Coast magazines. None of them would touch it. We figured it must be good if it inspired such instant refusal by these varied purveyors of American culture, so in January we set out to do it on our own.

We had a 1959 Cadillac convertible in cherry condition all ready to go to the body shop for a new paint job. Then someone ran a red light and wasted the front fender and left door of the Caddy. The insurance company said it was totaled, and we knew we had the basis for a Phantom Dream Car. Over the next few months we gutted the interior and began the transformation that would make it into a two-seater with a fourteen-foot hood. It would be driven from where the back seat used to be by viewing the road on a TV Monitor. The camera or eye of the car was mounted in a huge tail fin reminiscent of a jet fighter plane.

The driving controls all had to be extended to reach the new cockpit, and care was taken to insure that the Fiberglas canopy would withstand the shock of bouncing television sets at fifty-five miles per hour. Curtis, our in-house electronics wizard, built a video system that connected the camera to the monitor and added a digital countdown device and a digital

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speedometer that appear on the screen of the TV monitor. The bucket seats were from a Thunderbird. The real wood dashboard was finished just hours before the event was scheduled to take place.

One unknown entity remained elusive throughout the process of building the car: What was the real danger to the two drivers? We knew that the mass of a 4,000-pound car moving at fifty-five miles per hour was far greater than that of a stack of old TV sets, but what if one set were to jam under the front wheel well throwing the car into a spin? There was no way to predict every unknown.

The Phantom Dream Car was test-driven in front of the Ant Farm studio a few days before the event. On July fourth the nearly 500 friends and acquaintances (by invitation only, the invitation admitted a carload) who played the roles of spectators, arrived to find the car covered with red, white, and blue bunting and on display in the overcast Cow Palace parking lot. Until the program began they entertained themselves by talking to the hired security guards or buying souvenir T-shirt while recorded TV ads played over the P.A. system.

At 2:30 P.M. a man introduced as John F. Kennedy arrived at the bunting-draped podium in a black Lincoln convertible, protected by four men in suits wearing sunglasses. The artist-president looked like Kennedy and he spoke like Kennedy as he delivered the Independence Day address: "Mass-media monopolies control people by their control of information . . . Who can deny that we are a nation addicted to television and the constant flow of media? Now I ask you, my fellow Americans, haven't you ever wanted to put your foot through your television screen?" The crowd cheered. TV crews shot cutaways. Still photographers clicked away. Kennedy disappeared in his Lincoln convertible.

The artist-dummies arrived and mounted the Dream Car. They stood at attention on either side of the tail fin as the national anthem was played over the P.A. system. Still photographers clicked away. Then the artist-dummies slid into the cockpit and began a twelve-minute check list and countdown. Spectators crowded the yellow barricades. Photographers and TV crews hurried down range to get good camera angles for the impending Burn.

Unseen behind the pyramid of forty-two TV sets, Uncle Buddie was soaking everything with kerosene. At the proper moment he lit the pile and the Media Burn was under way. Back at the staging area the artist-dummies hesitated, unable to detect the flames on their nine-inch monitor. Then they took off, slowly at first, but soon gunning it to fifty-five. The crowd cheered. The car hit the pile with a ballistics boom. A photographer who has been deaf since birth said it was the first sound he had heard in years. The crowd went wild.

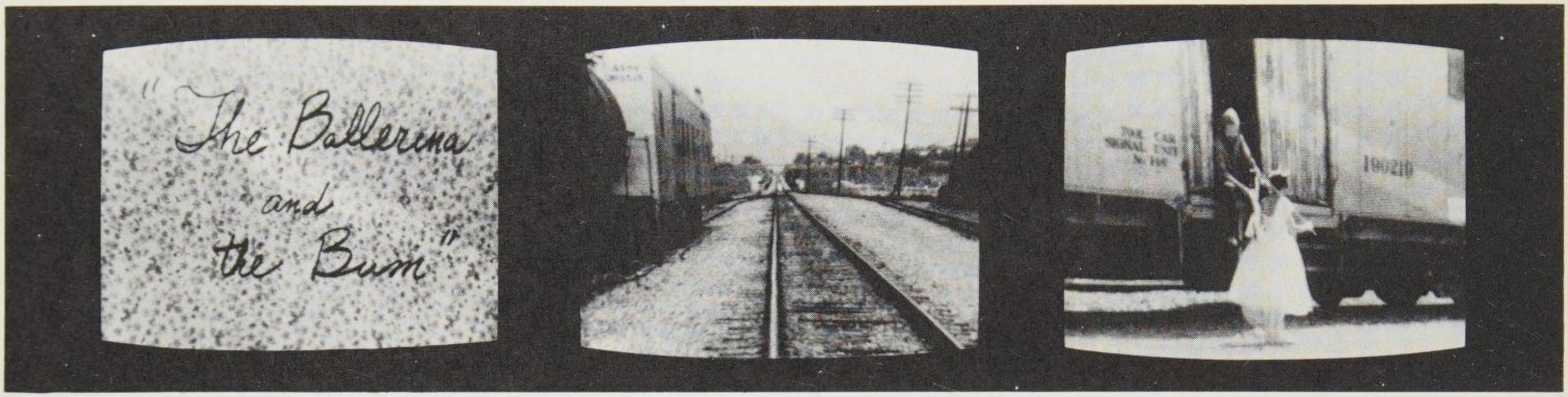
The Dream Car stopped just short of the end of the parking lot. An artist-dummy got out and signaled the crowd that they were safe. The Lincoln convertible picked them up and drove back past the barricades. The crowd cheered some more.

Chip Lord, Doug Michels, Curtis Schreier



photos: Diane Hall

# ELEANOR ANTIN




54 min., black & white, 1974

"Howdy!"
"Howdy!"



"What I really need is a stake."

"The Russians are the best dancers."
"Yeah—the best!"

"Banks aren't people."



"If you sign up for ten ballet lessons they throw in ten Hawaiian lessons for free."
"I like Hawaiian dancing."

"He couldn't make up his mind . . . till he got a terminal disease. That made up his mind for him."

"Do you think they'll like me in New York?"

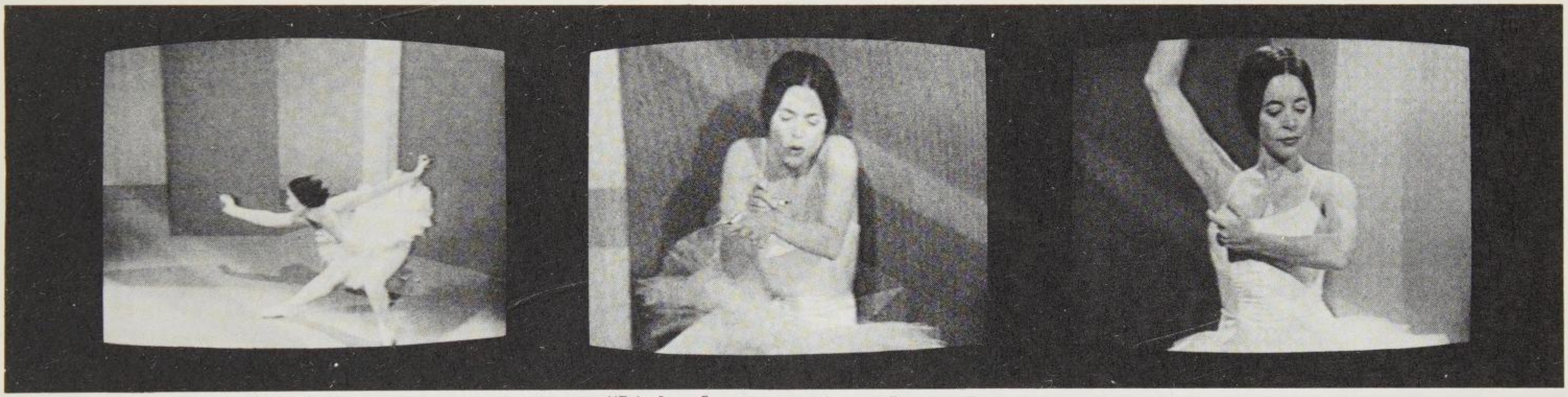

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27 min., color, 1975

"Won't you buy my matches, kind sir? I'm so cold."

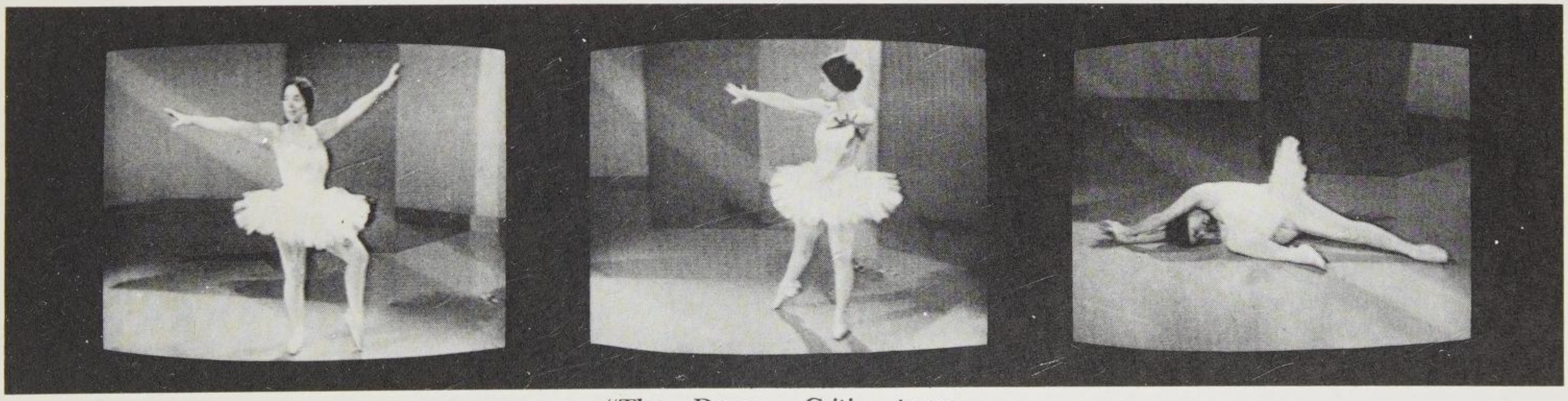
"Actresses never have to light their own cigarettes."



"A little old man comes out with a key and locks the door of Macy's."

"Little flame, precious flame, I love you even if nobody else wants you."

"I arise as The Black Match Girl."



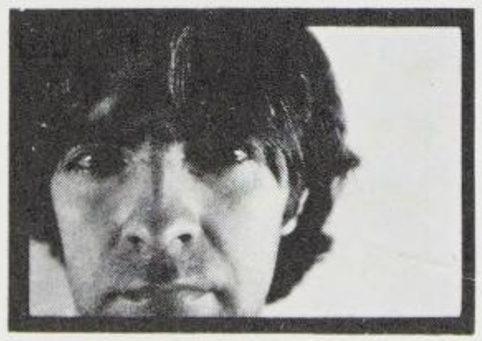
"Now I don't need a chair—I have a partner."

"The Demon Critic turns—AIEEEE!—And he spurns me . . ."

"I fall—I die . . ."

My work in video began out of what seemed a natural evolution from environmental pieces. I was attracted by the lack of historical concerns, psychic familiarity from being a product of the TV generation, and video's adaptability to traditional studio situations. It was still basically one on one, and a situation of play. I denied my self-image, unconsciously at first, and worked with immediately available things, constructed situations, hanging around the house. The commerical and its carefully designed structure, clarity of communication, and compression of time formed my working base. Nothing superfluous. A beginning and an end. Stopwatch time. Microview. Fixed camera. Passive observer vs. aggressive manipulator. Aesthetic information. And, paradoxically, always a potentially schizophrenic situation—loss of contact with environment while pursuing an intimacy, fragmenting of personality while seeking a whole.

PERCEPTIONS OF A PHYSIOGNOMIST/A STUDY OF PROJECTIONS 1975, b&w

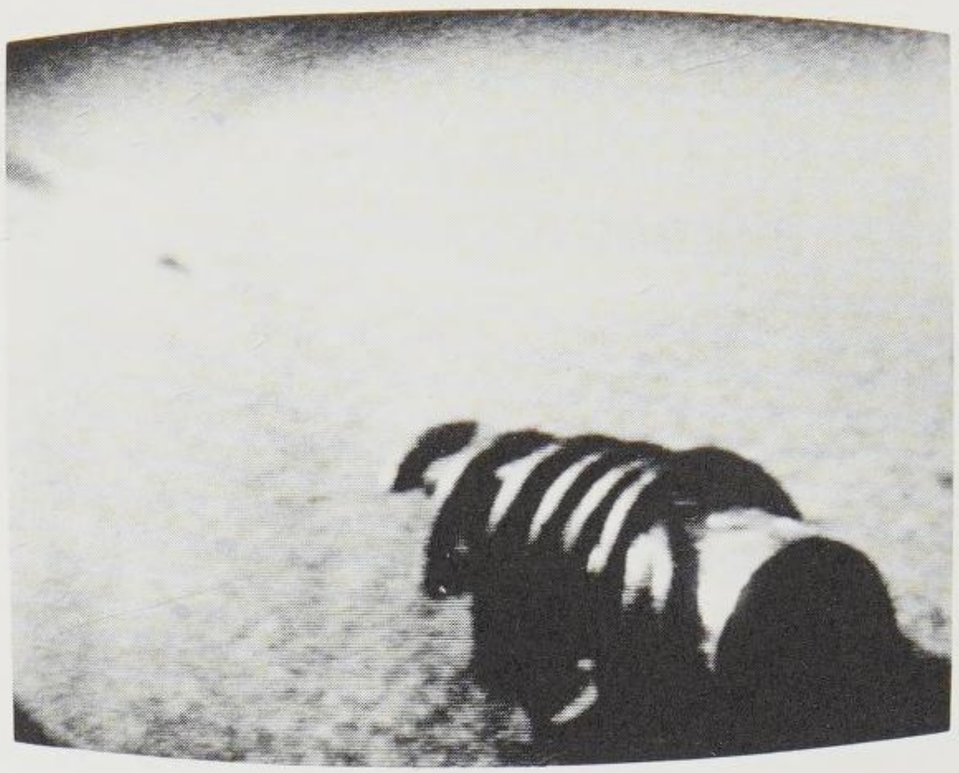


*your eyebrows too bushy*
*inner organs too weak*


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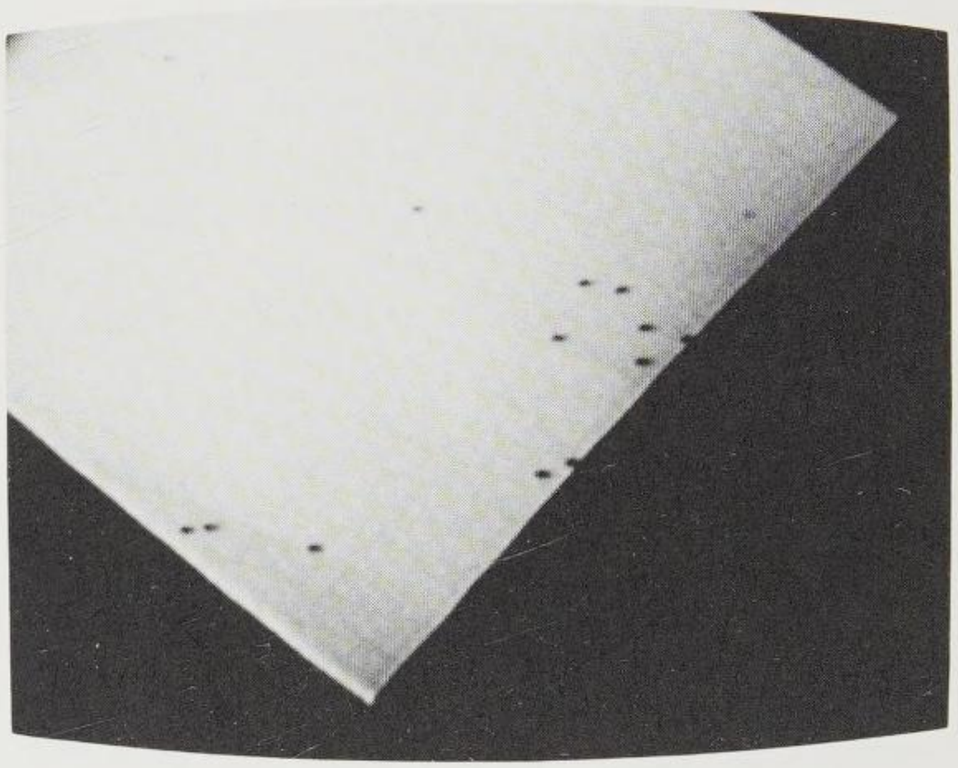
*Sand*, 1972, b&w, 5 min.

In Sand, a macro/micro relationship is explored as the surface/screen area of the monitor is slowly unveiled from top to bottom through the displacement of sand by air. As this step in the evolutionary process is completed, an object (microphone) is unearthed, resulting in the formerly contained sound now being totally released. With the "event" completed, the process is reversed, and the screen restructured and filled through the recurring displacement of sand.
Audio: Blowing sound is amplified through an external audio system, close to maximum gain.



*Dots*, 1973, b&w, 5 min.

This tape attempts to graphically demonstrate (1) A process which at first appears to be random direction of change, but in fact is conceived of as a progression of interrelated phenomena. Dots move, are flipped twenty pages/frames per minute across a grid surface and dissolve into the surrounding "blackness," reappear, and are absorbed again. This visual process is accompanied by a low-level drone (audio signal, origin unknown) prerecorded off the monitor. (2) The nature of an image structured in frames and transmitted through lines.



*Icebox*, 1974, b&w, 6 min.

Through the use of two VTR systems, the image of an icebox interior is projected onto a monitor. The information is then outlined and recorded with a magic marker onto the monitor screen while being accompanied by a sound track (Stravinsky) from a local radio station which includes a discourse on the return to neoclassicism and the turning away from romanticism. As the "drawing" is completed, the icebox door is closed, thereby completing the transfer of information from icebox to monitor.



# EAT YOUR TOTEMS MARY ASHLEY

## A three-hour video poem of changes describing one year's rush into the unknown




Copyright © 1976 by Mary Ashley

Can I hate the form whose essence I've tried to enter?
She said she said.
Can I hate the form whose essence I've tried to enter?
Before there can be imitation, the original must exist she said.
The original must exist.
And then can I hate the form she said whose essence I've tried to enter?
And having found the struggle, she was no way near breathing through it.
Breathing through it she said.
Not worrying through it. Not defeated by it. Not diminished by it.
But to breathe through it she said.
And certainly she said, not to, quote, solve it he said.
So many times it would seem the urge is to solve it she said.
But no she reminded herself, no solving it.
Breathe through it and let the struggle breathe through you she always said.
Outside, in the distance, a wild cat did growl he always said, she said.
To find the form she said. The essence of it, if you will.
Whose proportion pleases in people and in cities.
To find it and to release it.
As it must have been and perhaps she said, perhaps still is for some she said.
How hard it is once the idea comes without the mask of some god.
Without the mask of some system, of some authority calling the shots.
How hard it is she said.
It would seem that living to be seventy or eighty or ninety is necessary.
If only because it allows . . . No. Wrong word.
If only because then she said, then it catches up with you and you can be free.
It is free she said. Yes.
Right. Right.
Is it ironic? It could be she said, if you knew what the word meant she said.
And since you don't rightly know what the word is, then maybe it isn't she said.
But sometimes I feel that way.
And like a record stuck in some delicious groove, she didn't mind.
Stay with me she said, and let me have this comforting loop she said.
But wouldn't you know, without meaning to, she moved away.
And outside, the wild cat did growl she always said.
And when she said, when is one point all points?
When she said, when is the point, is the point of glory she said.
The point of glory. And the spider she said?
The spider in outer space continues to weave its web on one point she said.
Weaving its web on one point.
All points she said.
And it is true sometimes, she said softly to herself in her dreams.
Softly in her mostly dreams.
In the soul of every artist the murderer's ghost lives on she said.
She said she said.
And that maybe is the word that spells irony. For me. At least for me she said.
But now she said, now you're rushing ahead.
You're rushing a head into the unknown one more once she shall say she said.
And in the soul of every artist the murderer's ghost lives on.
What to do? What to do she said.
The wild cat growling in the distance.
The spider in outer space weaving its web on one point.
The murderer's ghost within every artist.
O my she did say she said. O my my.
A landscape peopled with strange, alien? images. Not forms. No.
Not yet the forms that are free of the images.
When will they show themselves?
The fucking language again. Again the fucking language displaces the feeling she said.
And so comes the hate. The hate of the form whose essence she tried to enter.
She tried to enter with the cat, the spider, and the ghost she said.
With them she said Adìo.




*THE ITALIAN TAPE* Italian hand gestures with English and Italian translations make up a hypothetical dialogue between an American artist and an Italian critic, which finally ends in an impasse. Carlo Buti sings throughout, and it is his singing that determines the rhythm of this tape. Nov. '74, ½″ b&w, 9 min.

 Copyright © 1976 by John Baldessari



*ED HENDERSON SUGGESTS SOUND TRACKS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS* Movie sound tracks are tentatively matched to various still photographs to determine if any "marriage" can be enacted. Sound takes priority over image in this tape. April '75, ½" b&w, 28 min.

# VIDEOGRAPHICS

**Reflections on the art of video.**

We live in the electronic age. Thus it is appropriate that artists turn to electronic techniques in expressing the consciousness prevalent in this Yuga.

Television has a history based largely on the objective, photographic image. Experimental television is for me a process of exploring and portraying images of an opposite polarity. This type of image communicates with the viewer via a process of induction rather than through a logical or didactic method. In any event, the exchange is of a relative nature, depending upon both what the video work and the viewer bring to the situation.

Personally I have been interested in the symbolic, ideographic, and nonobjective modes of images, those which originate internally within the mind's eye. Affected by images of color and movement, I was lead to invent the Direct Video Synthesizer instrument. Conceiving of it as a compositional instrument rather than a distortion device, I incorporated a theory of visual "ingredients" of color, form, motion, and texture into electronic circuit modules which generate these building-block elements on a television display. The images that appear are due to the interplay of electronic vibrations, established by the artist, which create them.

At first I worked with "standard" electronic waves such as sine, triangle, and square. However, I have been less interested in the fact that a given image is produced with a sine wave or whatever, and more interested in the possibilities that a sine wave could suggest, say, a womb or a double helix DNA molecule, as in my tape *Conception*, or that it possessed a subjective quality distinctly different from a square wave.

Later in my work I learned how to expand electronic control into more complex contour and movement areas; so now I have such things as fire-, air-, and water-molecules. Flexibility in image control is the result of being able to design and construct working video



circuits to realize artistic needs, coupled with developing the visualization of images mentally.

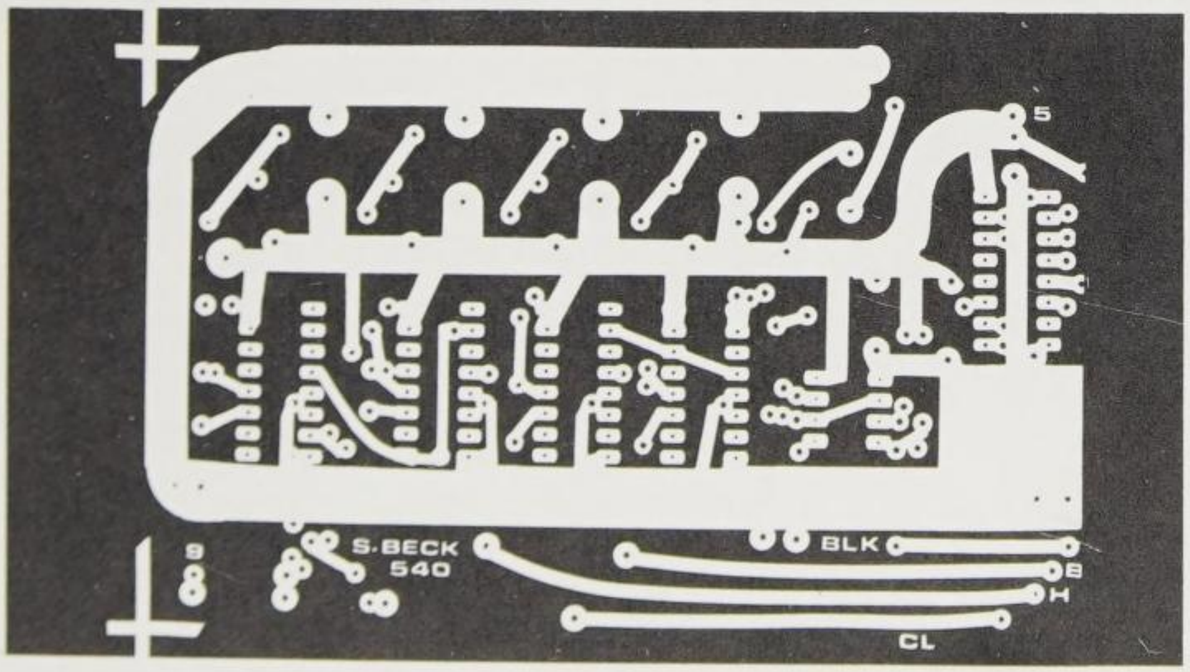
One comes to be aware of a visual language at work, that is, a grammar, syntax, and order in the arrangement and sequence of images. Video works can best be understood in terms of dialects of the basic visual language. In any case, the work cannot fail to express the Force which underlies it all.

Stephen Beck

Below left: Circuit pattern, Direct Video Synthesizer, chroma modulator, etched copper on glass epoxy

Below right: Still frame from *Anima*, a video light dance by Stephen Beck and Katie McGuire, 1974

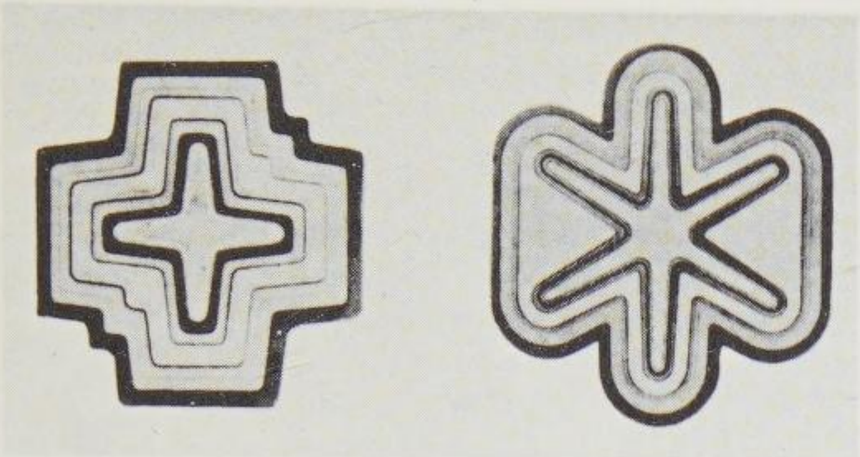
Above: Stephen Beck playing Direct Video Synthesizer, Berkeley, California, 1975







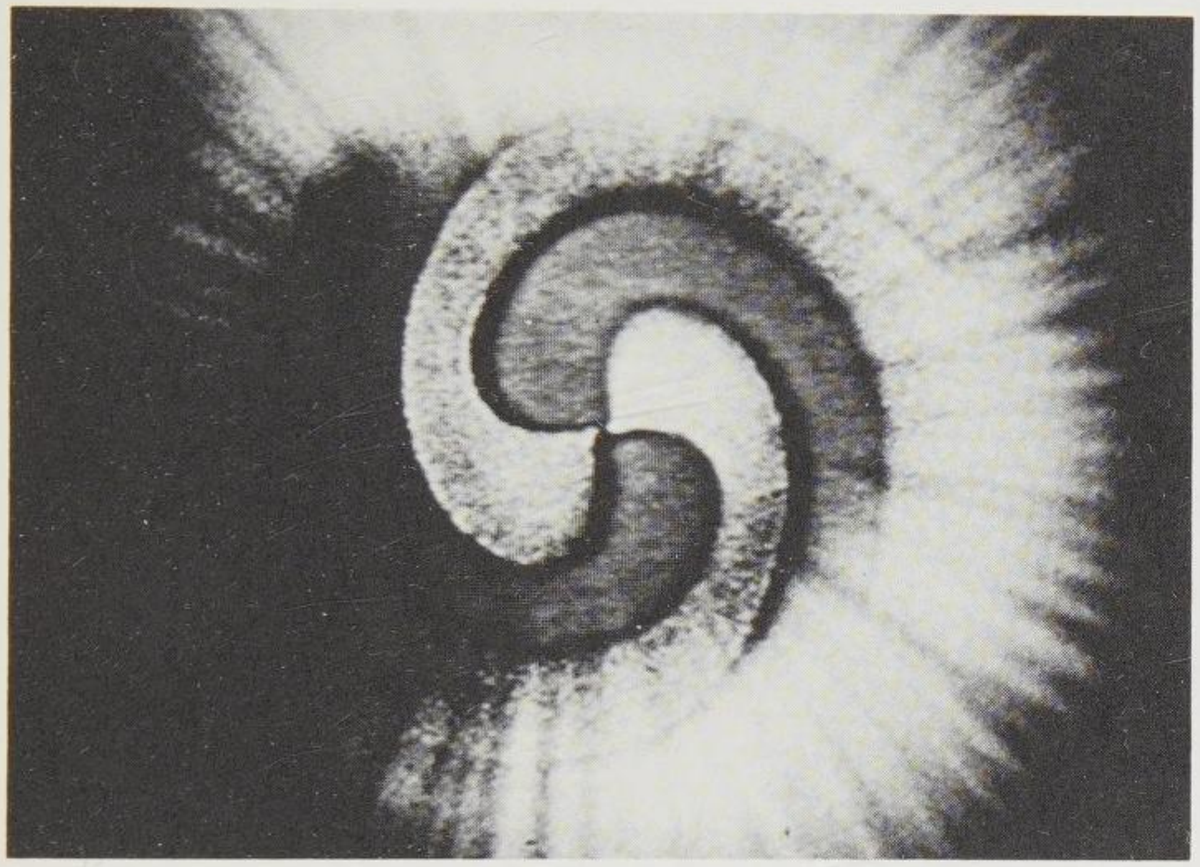
Copyright © 1976 by Stephen Beck

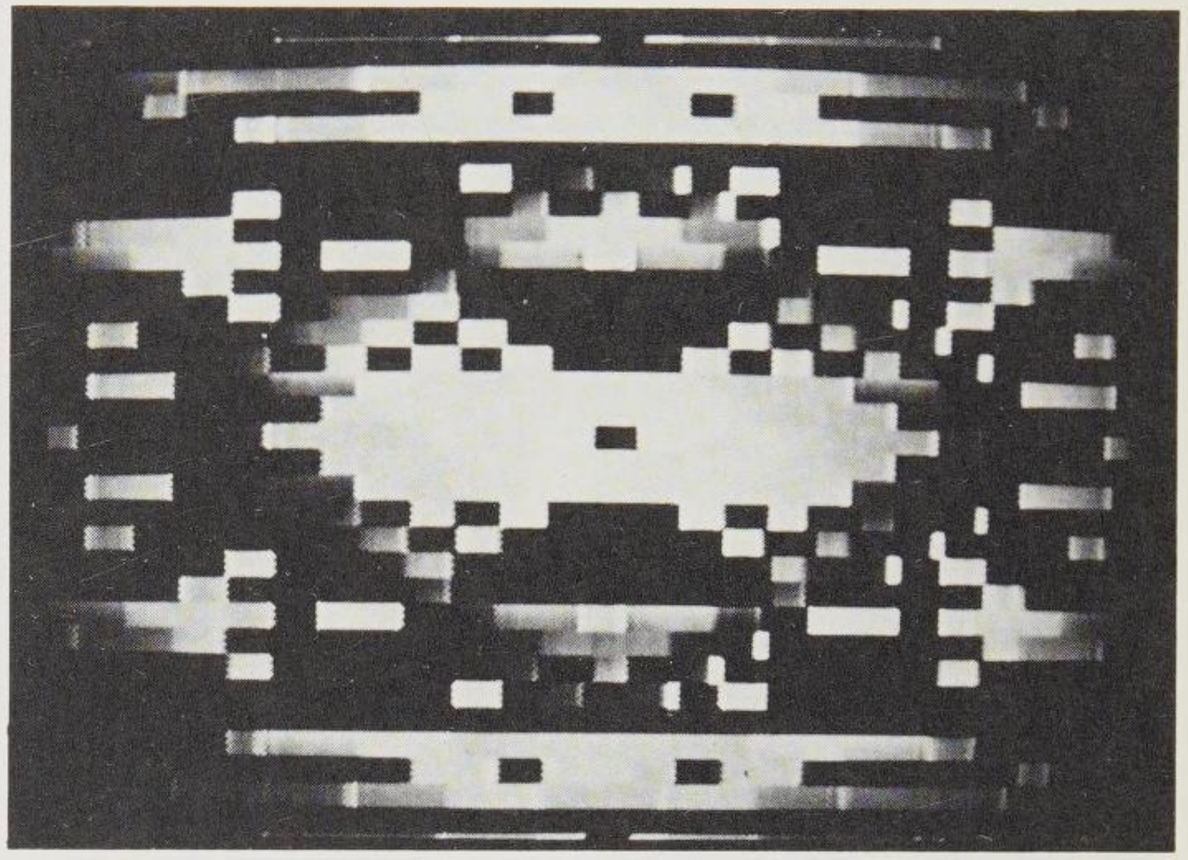


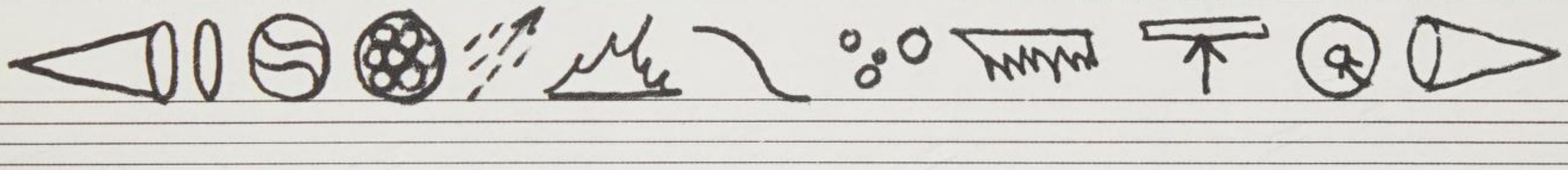
Left: Microphotographs of high frequency transistors typically used in video synthesizer-integrated circuits. Electron waves are emitted from central structure. Radiating outward, this wave is modulated by electric fields in the surrounding region and is then collected at the periphery. Thus the basic electronic sculpting process is effected.

Center left: Still frame from *Cycles*, a videofilm by Stephen Beck and Jordan Belson, 1974

Center right: Image from Beck Video Weaver–an electronic loom for television using digital circuit techniques, 1975





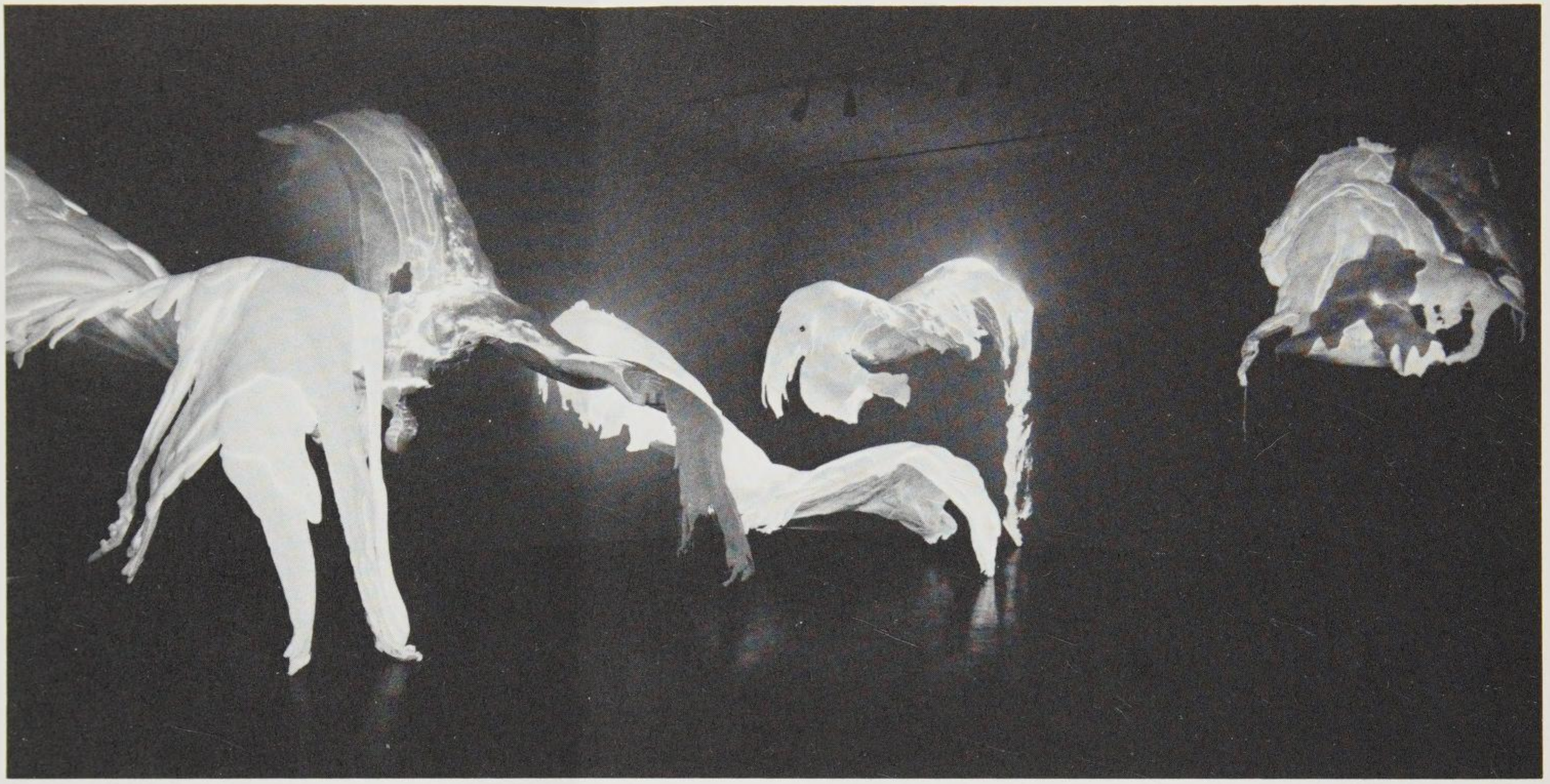


Visual score from *Cycles*

For me the direct video synthesizer functions not as something artificial, as the term "synthetic" has come to connote, but as a compositional device which "sculpts" electronic current in the hands of an artisan. One aspect of electronic synthesizers is that they can churn out hours and hours of oblivious images proceeding from their own electronic structure. The composition in this case lies in the circuit design and programming of the instrument. Another aspect of synthesizers is that they can be used by an image composer to achieve specific images that exist internally in his mind's eye, where no camera can probe; that is, to cull images from a subjective reality or nonobjective plane.

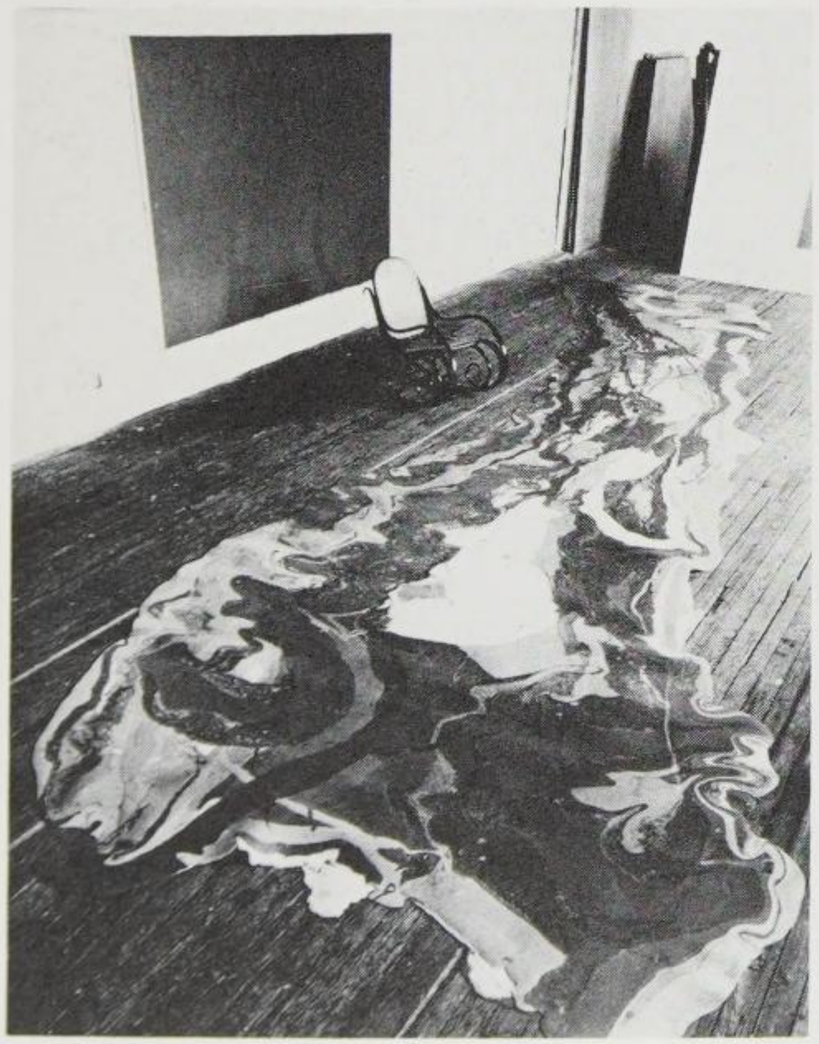
"It is we ourselves who make a picture/
Either we see it or we don't/
It is as simple as that or this/
The way lies not in the equipment."

from *ZEN in the Art of Photography*
by Robert Leverant, Images Press (Book People),
California, 1969.



*For Darkness*, 1971, pigmented phosphorescent polyurethane foam

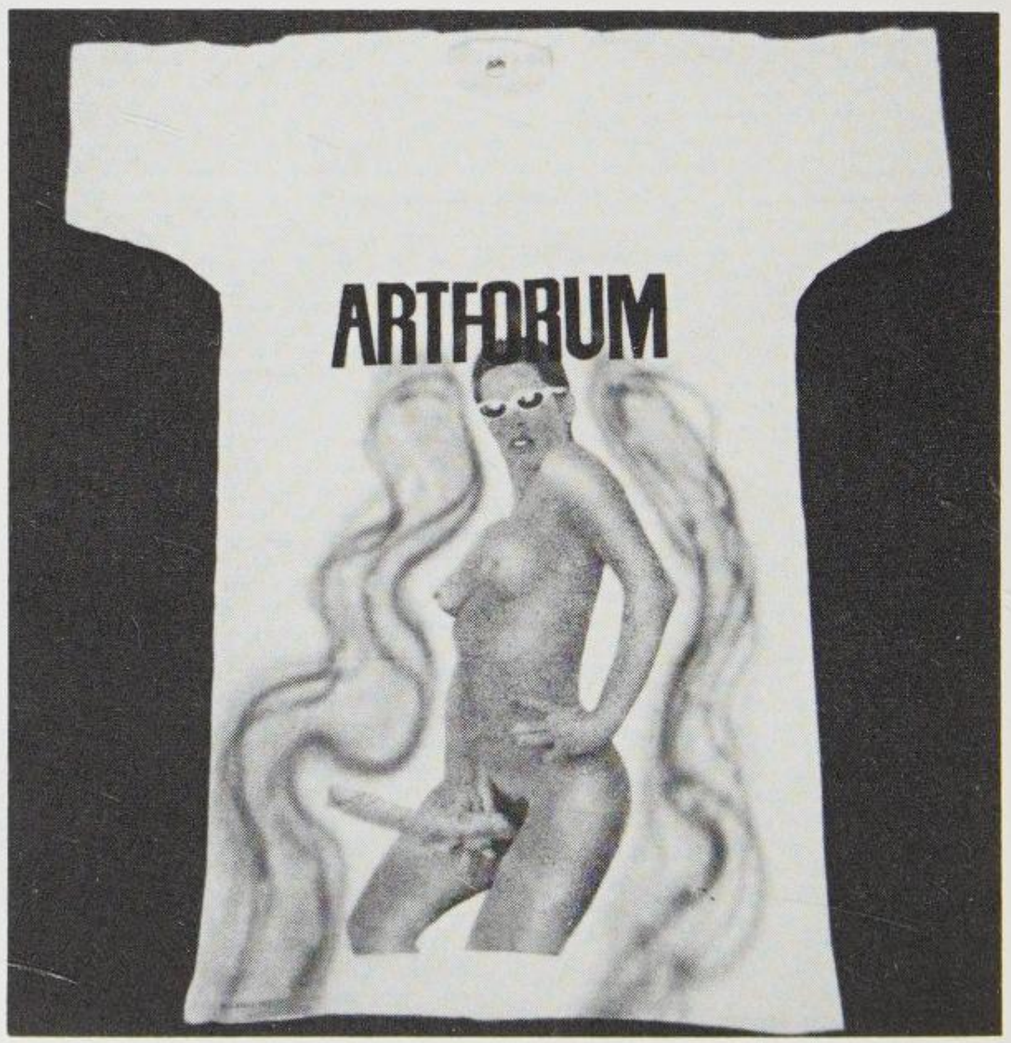
photo: P. Richard Fells



*Planet*, 1968, pigmented latex, ca. 37′ × 8′
photo: Norman Seef



*Zooker*, 1971, purified beeswax, damar resin on masonite, 36″ × 5″
photo: Geoffrey Clements




*T-Shirt*, 1974, silkscreen on cotton T-shirt, ed. 50, Bill Weege, printer


Copyright © 1976 by Lynda Benglis

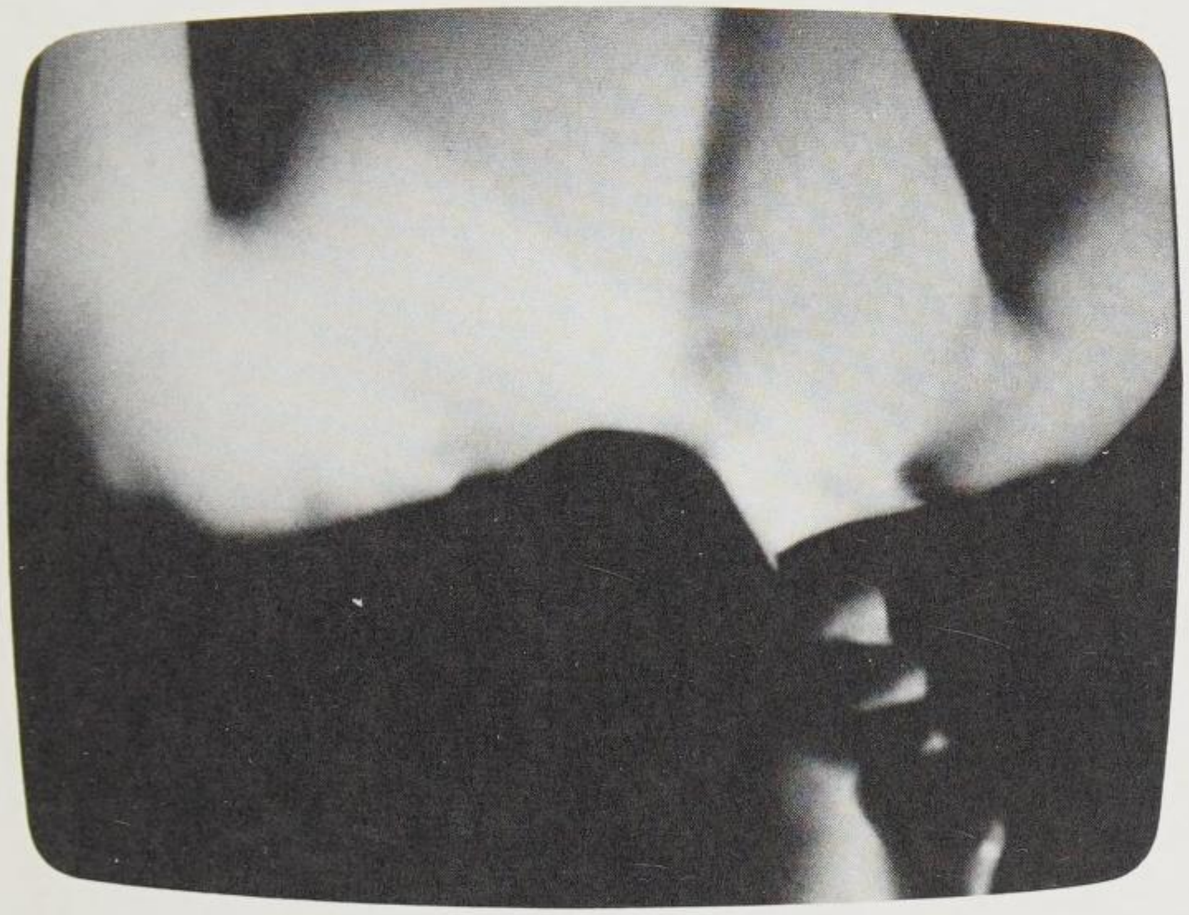


*Female Sensibility*, 1974, color

photo: Gwen Thomas

"Video is no more or less than one of several mediums I use to make art—all deal with the layering of time and space. Video has given me an opportunity to use my everyday surroundings."

# JAMES BYRNE



From *Handheld*, 1974

James Byrne is a second-generation video artist, among those uninterested in the electronic gadgetry and gimmickry of the medium. The electronic people, who came before, with computers, oscilloscopes, and synthesizers, are descendants of the kinetic electric-light movement of the sixties. The musically generated, vibrating video graphics and large, time-lag installations belong more to that period than to this. Byrne does not. Neither does he use video as a documentary tool for performance, literary, film, or conceptual work. Instead, he is drawn to organic, electronically uncomplicated (however visually and conceptually rich) work integrally involved with the essence of the medium (such that it could not be done in another medium). Byrne's work is free of the loose collage and gross spontaneity so abundant in the medium's current vacuum of critical standards. He was a student of Peter Campus, and although his early work was obviously affected by Campus, it has developed an independence and identity of its own.

Byrne's work was at first in tape (using the monitor only as a means to play back the tape) and later evolved into environmental installations (the monitor becoming another element in a larger scheme) to support and extend the medium. Performance is an important part of his work in that in nearly all his tapes he bodily defines certain spaces and identities in front of a stationary camera. He then goes on to develop relationships with a complex layering of these definitions. In an inevitable development of these relationships, his performance has moved outside the monitor into "real space" in the form of diagrams, props, and in person.

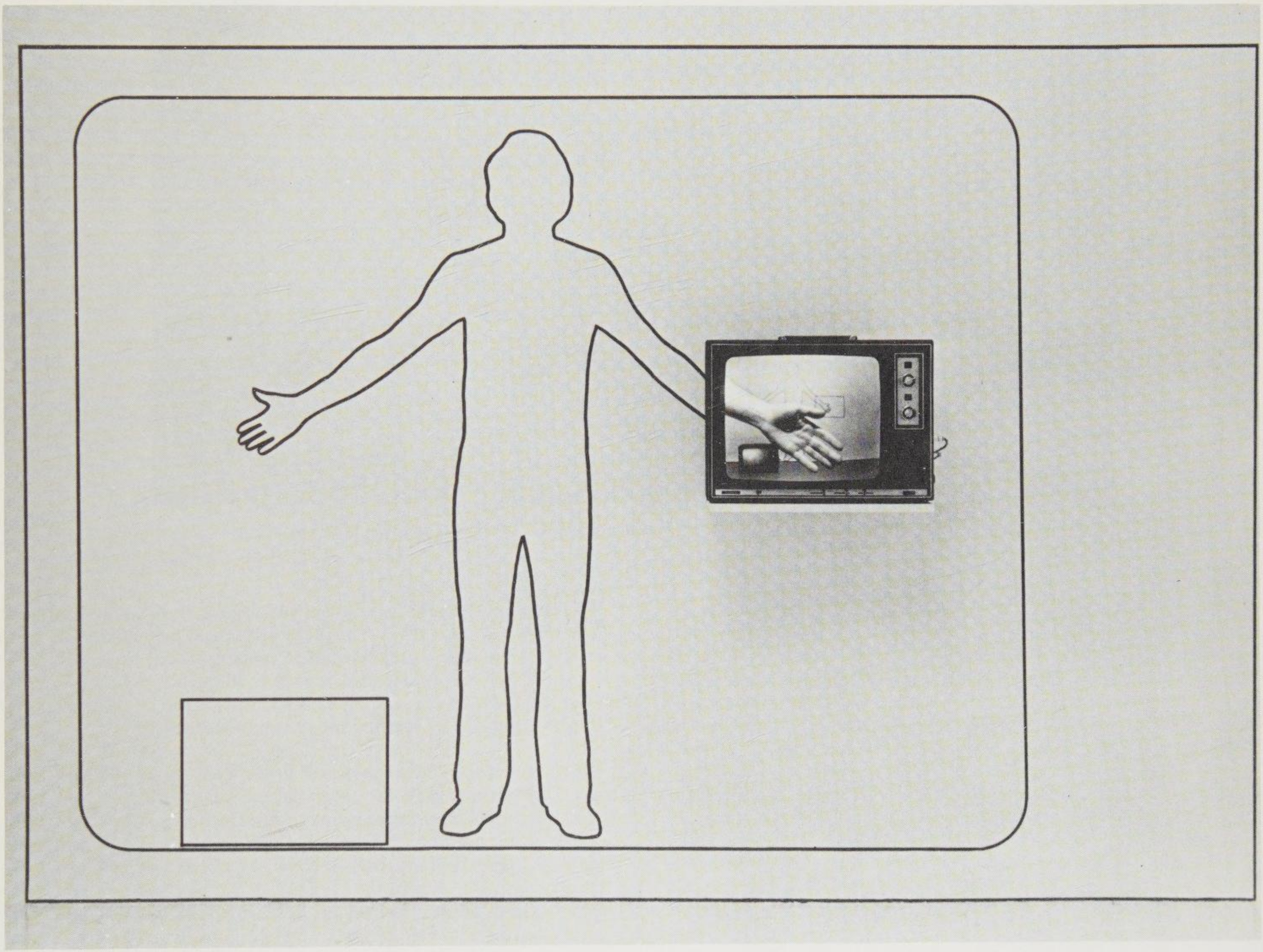
Byrne is a constructivist, in that pretaped performances are carefully worked out first on paper, then taped so that certain elements come together or become apparent in time and space, then are allowed to drift apart and realign in dramatic abstract episodes. Most pieces are developed over a long period of time, so the final work has been gone over twenty to fifty times. And yet the piece is very fluid, playful, theatrical, and nonmechanical. It has a sort of studied spontaneity.

In the current conceptual art climate Byrne's serious introduction of visual concern into video is a maturing factor. An example of this visual concern is *Handheld II* 1974, where the making of the image of each instant of viewing is as important as the total image and concept. Its semiabstract image reveals (and is) the process as well as a classical studio study in life drawing or sculpture. It has dramatic tension, relief, and humor, all in a very fluid rhythm. Each image (if you could break down the image continuum) has the cool dreamlike abstraction of a Bill Brandt nude.

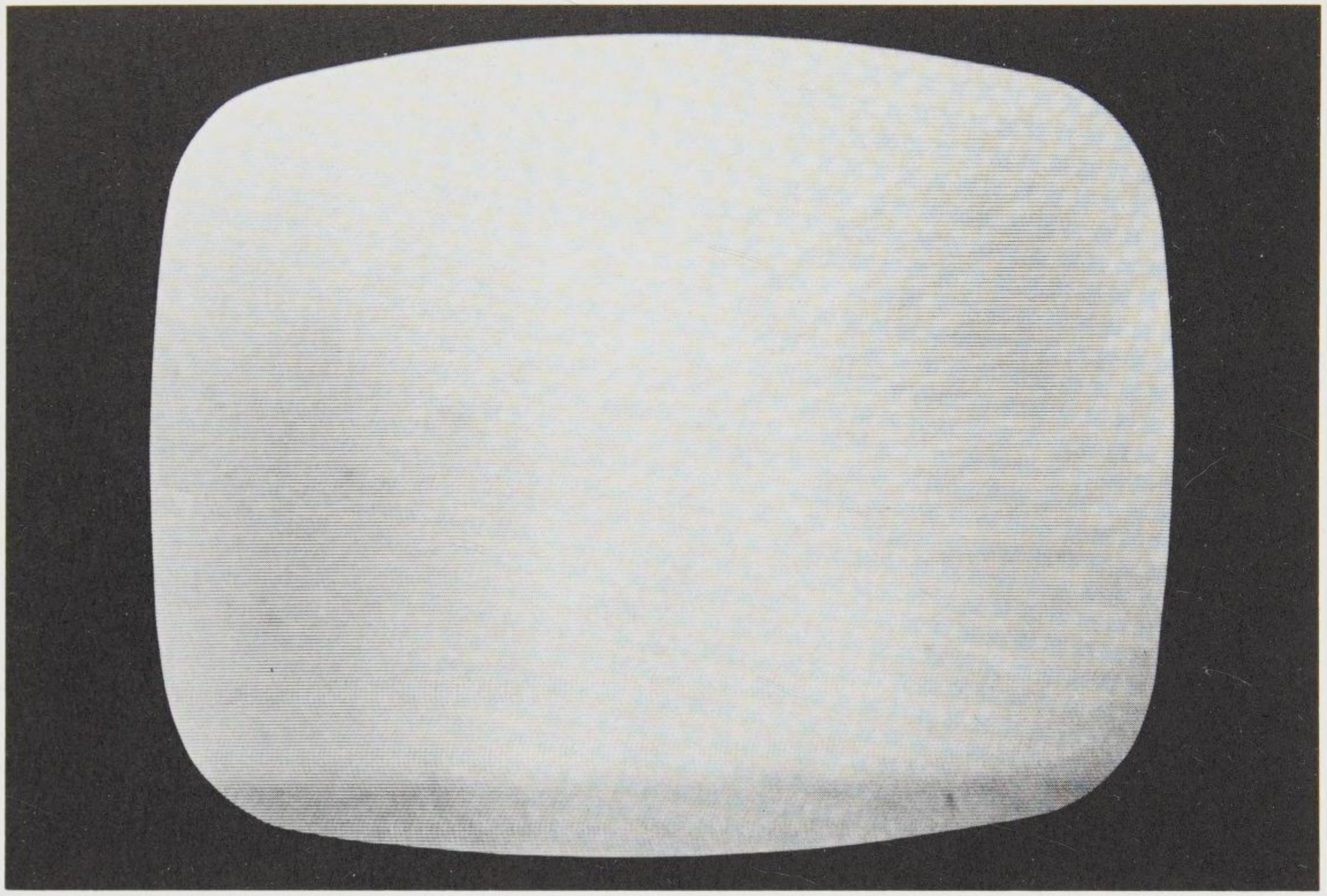
Byrne is changing the TV box (aside from the cultural baggage that entails) from the traditional proscenium arch theater into a thrust stage, if not full theater in the round. By dramatically destroying our sense of scale, measurement, placement, surface, and frame, he is building a third dimension from a two-dimensional screen. Rather than using flat traditional forms of depicting the third dimension—perspective, color, placement—he crosses over the categorical boundaries between second- and third-dimensional concepts. In this way his work is much like that of film maker Michael Snow. An example of this is Byrne's *Scale Drawing* 1975, where he measures the distance between the monitor screen and a point far behind the museum wall, from within the monitor. Actions and images and spaces like this one are contained in, and in turn contain, others of disproportionate scale. When one image contains, creates, defines, or destroys others, problems arise as to which image is prior, original, or more real than the others. Typical of his work, these slices of reality integrally sandwiched together create disorienting puzzles and paradoxes of space and identity.

TIM HARDING


Copyright © 1976 by James Byrne



From Scale Drawing 1975



1. *Keeping the Camera in Contact with the Model's Body*, 1972–74, black and white videotape, ½-hour (for continuous replay)

The roots lay in painting and I consciously attempted to formulate an art that would respond to the same strategy and make itself available under the same conditions. I looked for ways of using the camera to generate as a by-product a structure of sound and vision, which might be highly emotive, but would be anchored by the fact of the activity that gave rise to it. (That was what the best painting since Pollock seemed to have been about—and my own.)

Playing back in a gallery, each piece to its own monitor, the structural basis would become evident in a few seconds, no matter at what point in the tape the viewer came upon it, but in general I tried to avoid exact repetitions. The intention was never to make pseudopaintings out of television sets, but rather to exploit the situation that emerged out of treating them as if they might be; the interpenetration of sound was an enrichment, and the movements of other pieces glimpsed in peripheral vision.

Everything was worked out in words first, and the words were important. If I were inserting the lens of a camera into my mouth, that might be clear from the image, but if I were walking with the camera fastened by its own lead to my ankle, only the words would indicate it was my left ankle—and then I would do another indistinguishable tape with it tied to my right.

The vein I struck was a rich one, and I have continually been able to remake pieces with an intensification and refinement of form and emotion. The words have been revised several times, too. The constant hovers somewhere between language, act, and image. (For further details see Eric Cameron, "Notes for Video Art [Expurgated] 1972," forthcoming in *Arts Magazine*.)

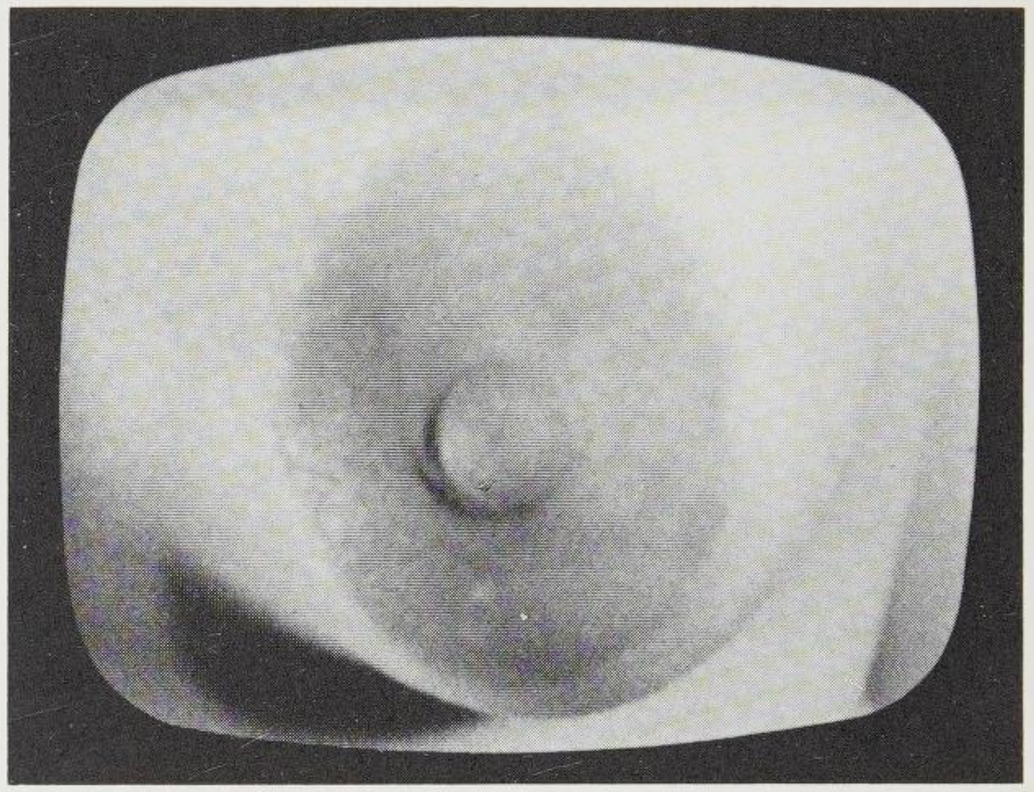
In the meantime, there are other, short, fixed-length pieces dealing more specifically with the interrelationship of content and structure; very often they involve speech or verbal captions. In a gallery, these tapes would be repeated over and over with a few seconds of black between; but recently several have been amalgamated in a composite work, *Artist and Model*. Conversations between Donna Perrin and myself act as bridging passages, while the ambiguities of the blank screen are brought into play to make transitions an integral part; the conventions of the recording situation are manipulated willfully. So if powerful real-life issues impinge, the tape also locks back more determinedly on its own structure. In a literary sense it is cyclical, concluding with one end of a telephone call that is responded to at the beginning, but the tape can only be viewed properly as a program.


Copyright © 1976 by Eric Cameron

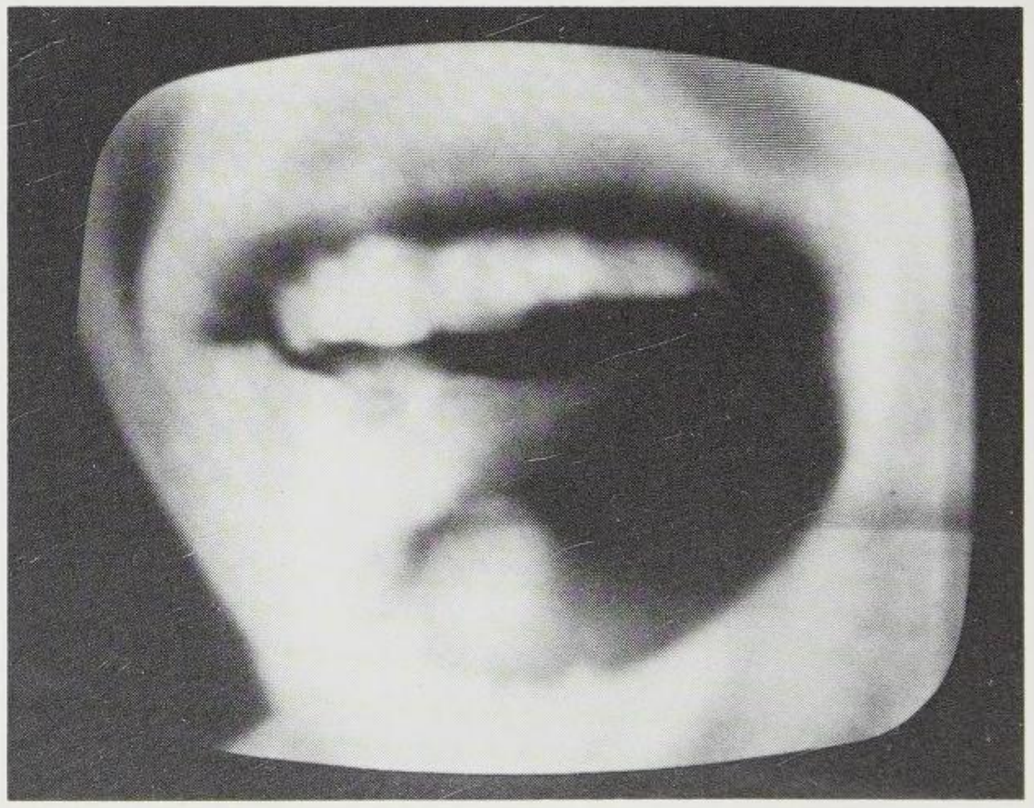
2. *Sto/ol*, 1974, black and white videotape, 10 seconds
Two cameras are trained on a symmetrical stool from different angles and the top of one image matched with the bottom of the other. As I jump over the stool and then, running back, knock one camera, the irrationality of the action interlocks with that of the image structure.



3. *100 Bull's-eyes*, 1974, black and white videotape, 2 minutes
I observed that the trigger-operated camera of the portapak felt like a gun and that a girl's breasts looked like targets, so I shot the left breast, then the right, then the left, then the right. As the camera was switched off when moving from left to right, it seemed as if it moved continuously around the girl's body, finding another breast at each turn. With each "shot" the image breaks up slightly.



4. (with Donna Perrin) *Ha-ha*, 1975, black and white videotape, 2 minutes
Two cameras are fitted with small wide-angle lens and the images mixed. When the piece opens Donna and I each have a lens in our mouths; the screen is blank. She draws back and begins a forced laugh: "Ha-ha-ha-ha . . ." After a few seconds I join her and our laughter mingles. Conspicuously out of step at first, image and sound are slowly synchronized—and then we alternately shout "Ha" and engulf the lens in our mouths. The piece develops powerful erotic connotations.

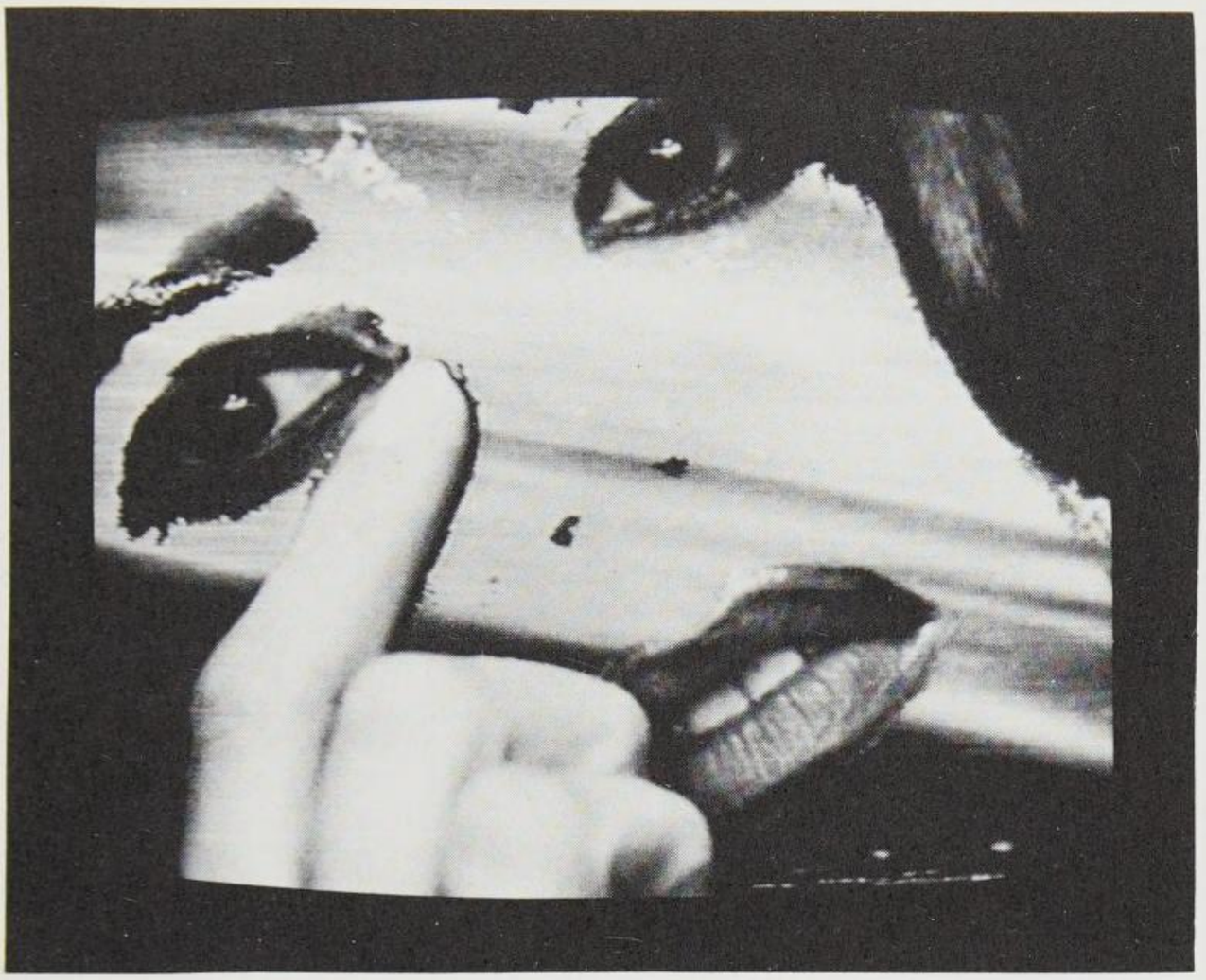


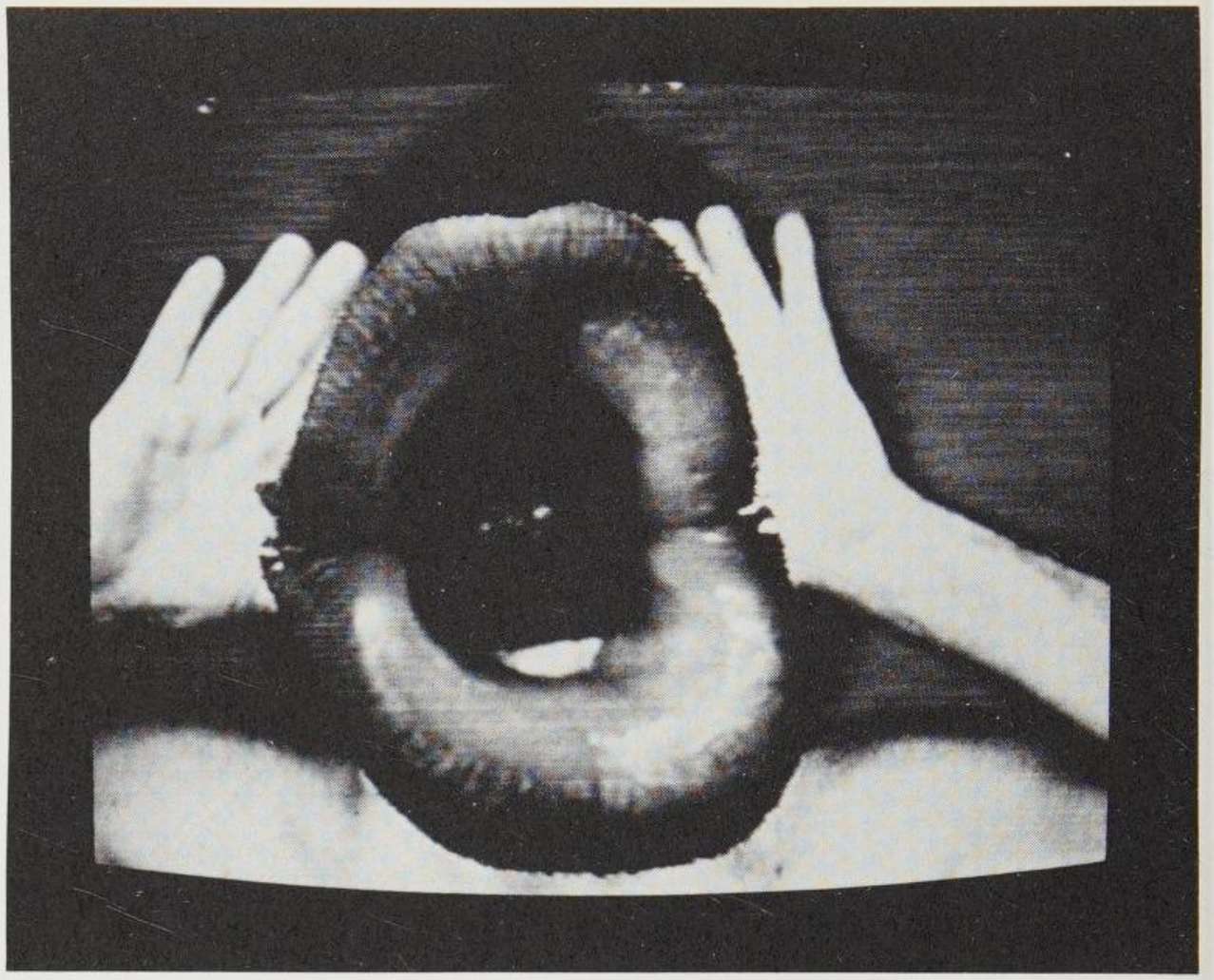


The experience of my video fields is formed by the accumulation of images, the locus of all body motions determined by these images, the coordination of direct and derived perception, and the expansion of one's envelope of self to contain all of these and the surrounding void.

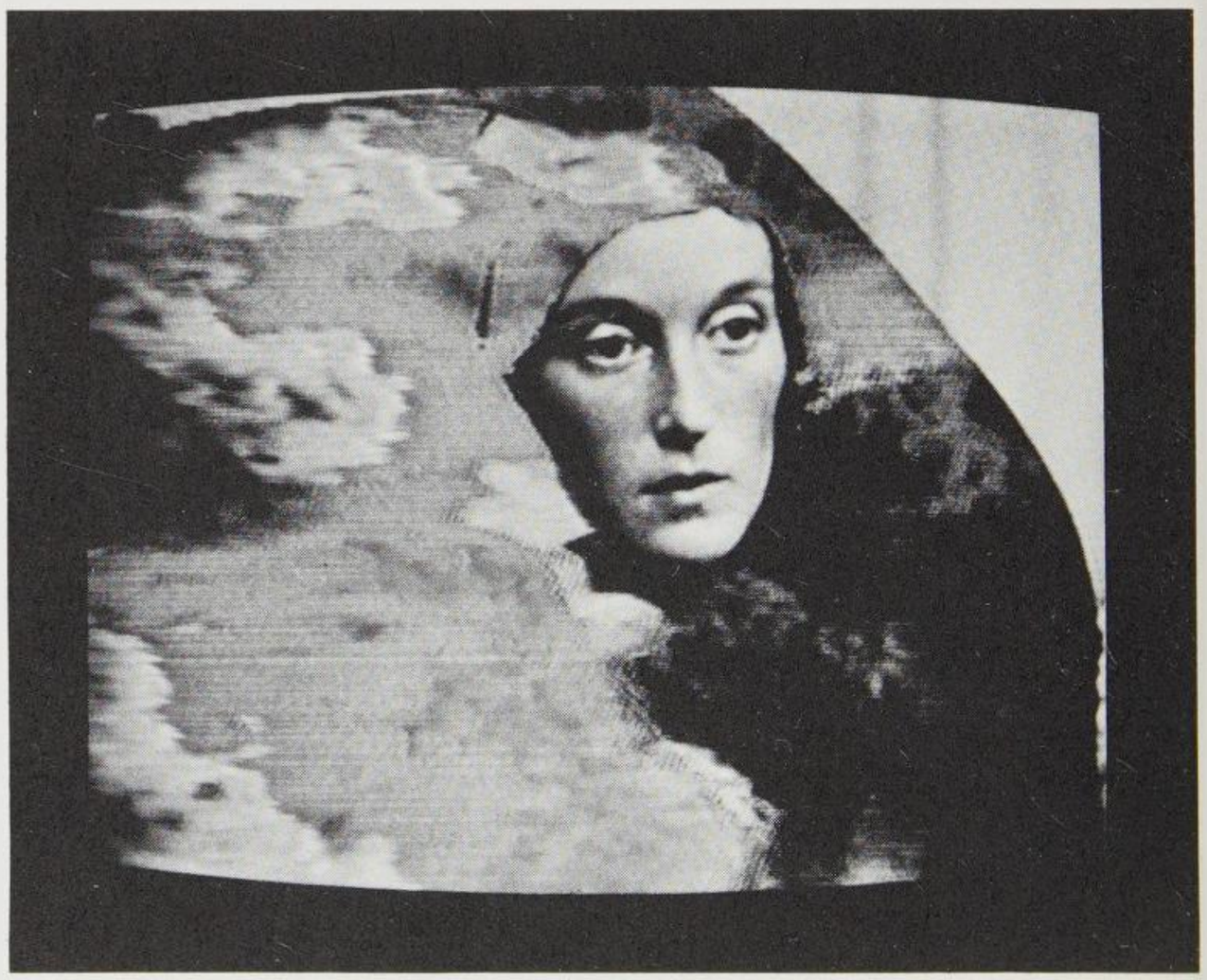
*Shadow Projection* (1974), Closed Circuit Video Installation

Copyright © 1976 by Peter Campus





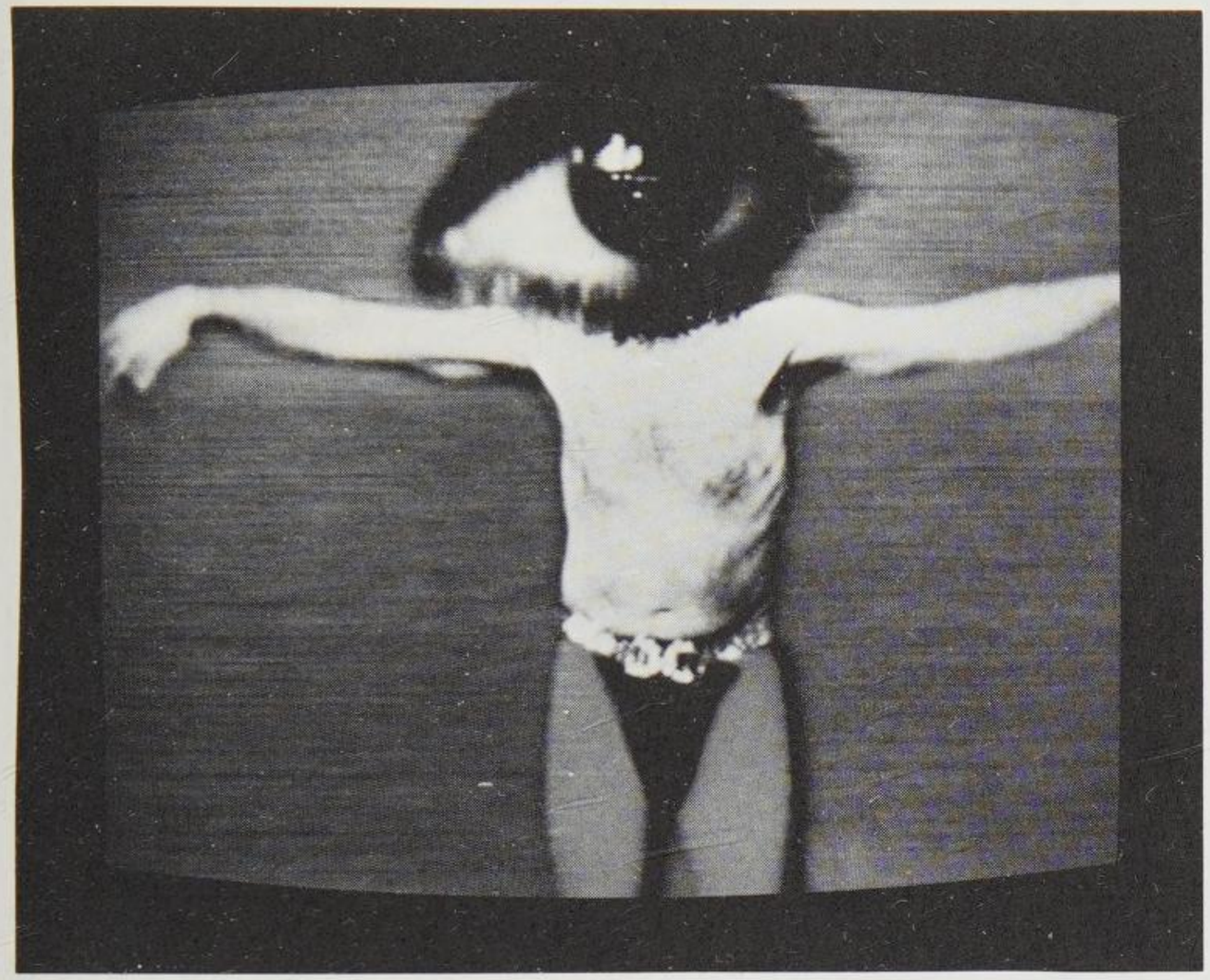


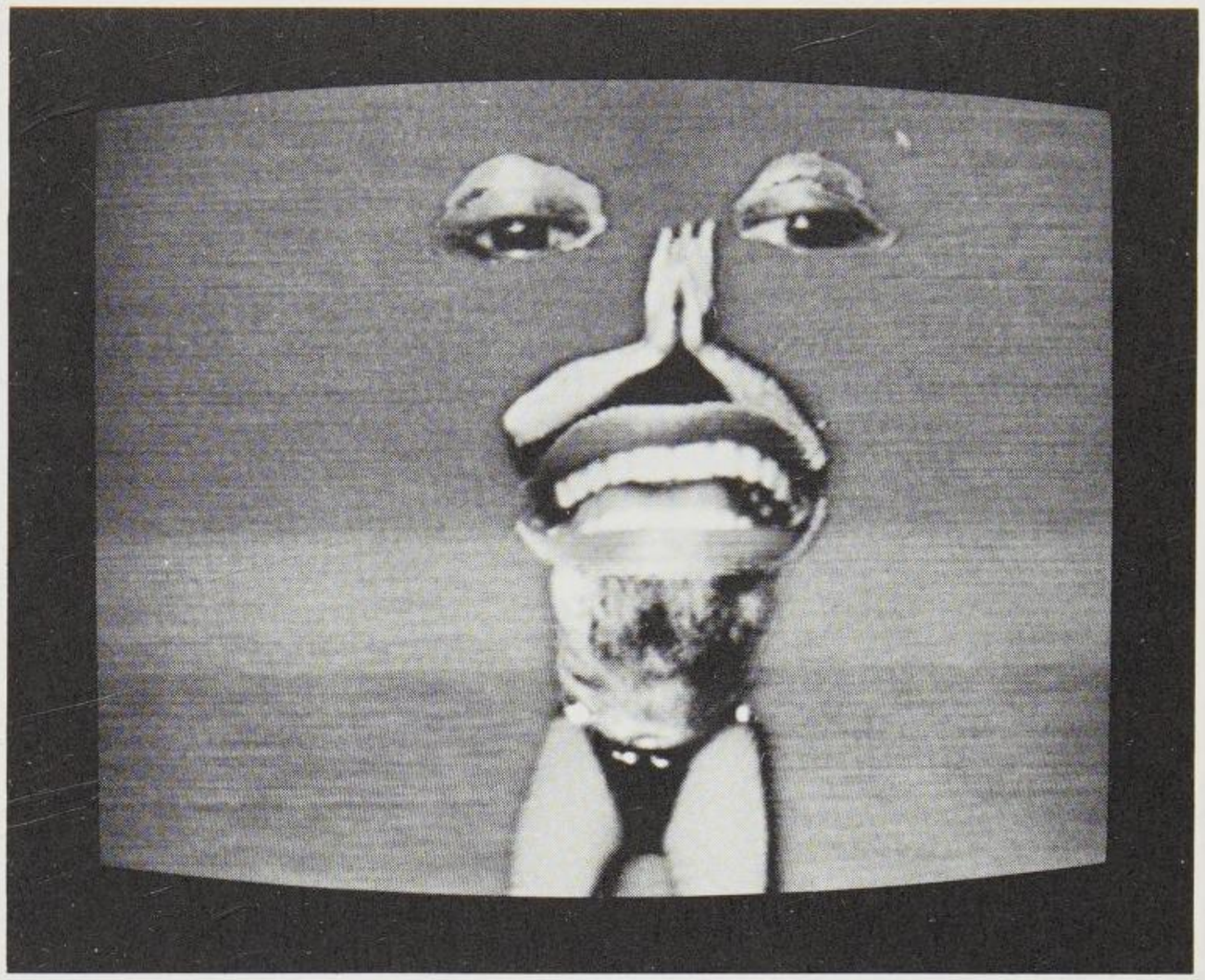


# VIDEOPHONES AND VIDEOMIRRORS

## Interactive Videospace Environment Images

 Copyright © 1976 by David Cort









photos: Ann Woodward

# INTERVIEW WITH DOUGLAS DAVIS
## by David Ross

*Ross: Why use videotape rather than something else? Doesn't it run the danger of replacing spatial illusions with temporal illusion?*

Davis: There are many kinds of realities; everyone responds to a different set of them on a different level. I came out of real-time events to video, as you know, where nothing was left behind but a memory. That memory became an intense reality in the mind, changing as time went on. It wasn't any less of a reality than the event itself. Videotape is as close to this kind of reality as any I can think of. Furthermore, it relates to the event-performance on a temporal basis; memory does not.

*R.: The whole question of temporality is crucial in your work. Is it your view that time is always passing by a fixed point? In any case, video locks us into a point-oriented conception of time, as opposed to the environmental view of time, which is directionless.*

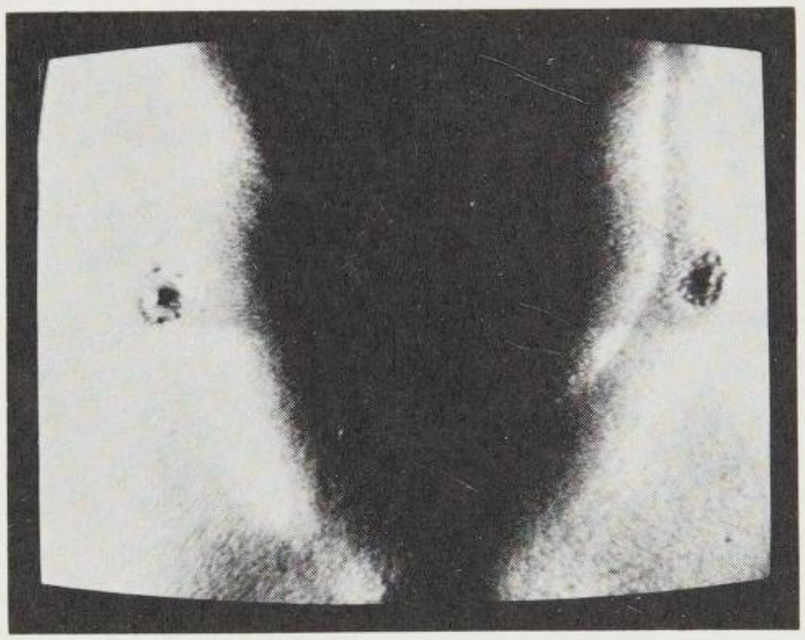
D.: No, it is not my view that time is linear. It moves on, objectively speaking. But you and I always exist in one tense, that of the present. It is the one temporal reality we know. Everything else is an illusion. The past is a memory, the future is a prophecy. The present tense is endless, even circular in a sense. I want to act consciously in this time. Another way to say it is that the dynamic or moving view of time is not fleeting or materialist.

*R.: When we play back a videotape, even one made in real time, it acts as an overlay on another time, thus becoming a temporal illusion, don't you think?*

D.: There is no attempt in my tapes to reproduce the original temporal experience. That would be exceedingly naïve. I want to act in real time, primarily for myself, rather than in edited time. By so doing I have found that what occurs is richer than when I distort time by remaking or rearranging it. When I know that the camera is on and I'm not going to edit what happens, I work in a heightened state of mind, and the work that results is always better.

*R.: Why does it heighten your state of mind? Is it because you know you can replay and review it right away?*

D.: It has more to do with living and human values. I believe that the present tense is a moment of great value, when perceived as such, and not as a mere step into another, future time, or the conclusion to a process begun in the past. Every second is a moment which has unique potential for self and environmental realization. When I know that the minute I'm making the work *is* the work, I find that I act differently and perceive associations differently. I can't defend this rationally. All I know is that it works, for me.



*Backing* (*Austrian tapes*), 1974, 5 min., color, sound



*Handing* (*Austrian tapes*), 1974, 5 min., color, sound

*R.: Staying right on the edge, you mean. In* Studies of Myself *I think that you are not only putting yourself on the edge of making, but also bringing the viewer to that same point. By making the output of the character-generator visible, the last sentence of the last word forms an edge that allows the viewer to get in sync with it.*

D.: I'm always aware of the world watching. I know that I don't act alone. That has something to do with the opening and expanding that occurs in real-time performance.

*R.: If the whole world were watching, would you do the best thing you could do?*

D.: Yes.

*R.: What would you do?*

D.: Anything. It would depend upon the sense of the moment. I might do nothing. I might live on the camera, for a day and a night.

*R.: In your manifesto for the 1973 Everson exhibition, you said "The camera is a pencil." What did you mean?*

D.: When I first began to work in video I was surrounded for the most part by people who were very heavily into the equipment, the portapak as a liberating tool, the techniques of the control room, and so on. I could never be a part of that—I'm too easily bored by machinery, I guess—and always felt guilty about being that way. Then one day while I was working with Paik I noticed that he had great trouble cleaning the heads of the VTR. Worse, he began cursing technology—"I hate it," he said. From that day on I felt a free man. *The Black-White Studies* came shortly thereafter. I determined beforehand to use the camera like a pencil, as naturally as I draw. It was a "soft" approach to technology, using it as an extension of me, not working from inside the equipment, following where that led. Unless you use the camera as you use your hand—poking it wherever you want it to poke—the work will never come out like a drawing can, that is, close to your primal self. The camera as me, in other words, and as you, whether hand, foot, or penis.

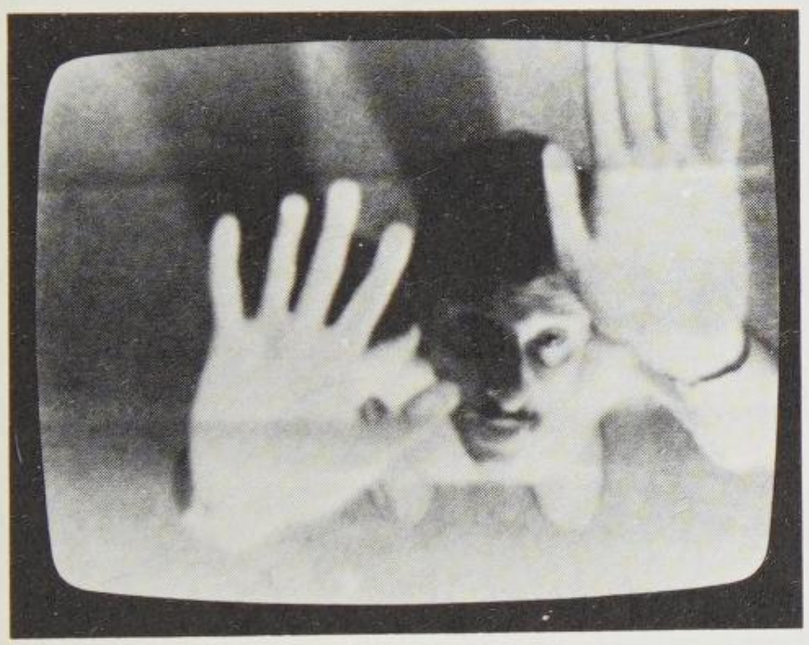
*R.: That's only an analogy, of course. The*

*camera is not really part of your body. It is at best analogous to an extension of your nervous system.*

D.: The pencil has the same qualifications. Drawing is the freest form of static art, but you have to know what the pencil and the paper can do.

*R.: Using it freely doesn't mean ignoring its intrinsic properties. I agree. The critic Walter Benjamin, whose writings are central in your work, said that mechanical reproduction of the work of art freed the artist from a parasitical dependence on ritual, freeing him to pursue politics in a pure form. Isn't the making of video itself a ritual?*

D.: Let me sidestep that question for a minute. Video is the latest step in a process that is destroying the spectator ritual in art



*Holding* (*Florence tapes*), 1974, 6 min., B & W, sound

—the going out to the temple to see it—but by no means the last. The next step is to get rid of the intervening structure, the cameras, the monitors, and telecasting circuitry.

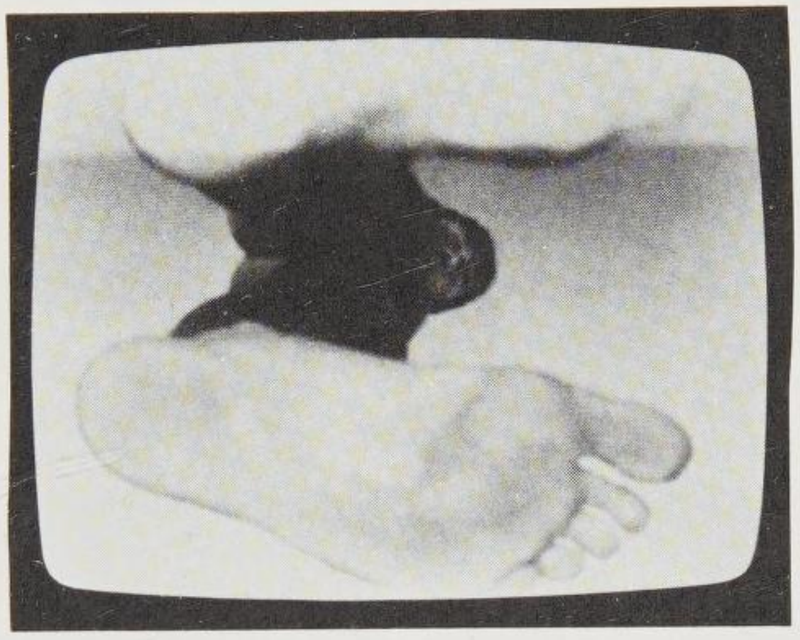
*R.: We need another Malraux to ask for television without walls.*

D.: Exactly. So that I can transmit to and receive from your mind instantly, without the need for the tape or the camera.

*R.: We agree that videotape has made a quantum leap in the process that Benjamin described. What I'm getting to is that this leap has affected your own sense of inner ritual. I mean you seek that heightened state you describe through the medium. Your work is very carefully planned and organized. By the time you get to that immediate point in time you have put yourself through a very exacting process of preparation. Everything has been thought through beforehand. Even when the work appears slipshod, it is in no sense slipshod.*

D.: The plan and the reality are different. The reality is the edge you mentioned before; in order to get to that edge I have to put myself there, starting from inside out. Agnes Martin said about artwork that its attraction is its exhaustion. Out on the edge you are completely used up. But once there, which is, I suppose, the form or the organization you are talking about, the reality is immediate. And I agree that the reality is neither casual nor everyday in nature. But it is temporal.

*R.: Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht both had a sense of impending doom, which*



*Walking* (*Florence tapes*), 1974, 6 min., B & W, sound

*is what the Marxist idea is about, getting your shit together. It's a survival mentality. Unfortunately this idea has never been recognized in contemporary art. But I think it's about that, about breaking down belief systems, in order to get a grasp on a whole picture that includes art. In other words, it is a political tool. The artist knows that, or should. Some artists cry all the way to the bank, others really suffer.*

D.: I don't see any other reason for making art than to try to discover things in myself that I don't understand. Art is a poor way to accumulate worldly goods. If it's not exhausting and demanding, if it doesn't constantly put you on a personal edge, it wouldn't be worth doing. The only art I've ever been interested in functioned that way, close to personal risk. Rauschenberg said a beautiful thing about it: "Success in art is easy. How to fail is the problem."

*R.: What about the audience?*

D.: It is always there. It is a two-way process, for me. I don't hold with the performance aesthetic—that art is only what happens to me. What happens to me is only a means of making contact with the viewer, and with the world. It is a two-way process.

*R.: What do you get back from it?*

D.: Knowing that I am involved in the evolution of a deeper, more diversified system of communication, between myself and the world and back. It has nothing to do with specific response.

*R.: But you have used the two-way concept specifically, in live telecasts. Do you still see any specific use of that ahead?*

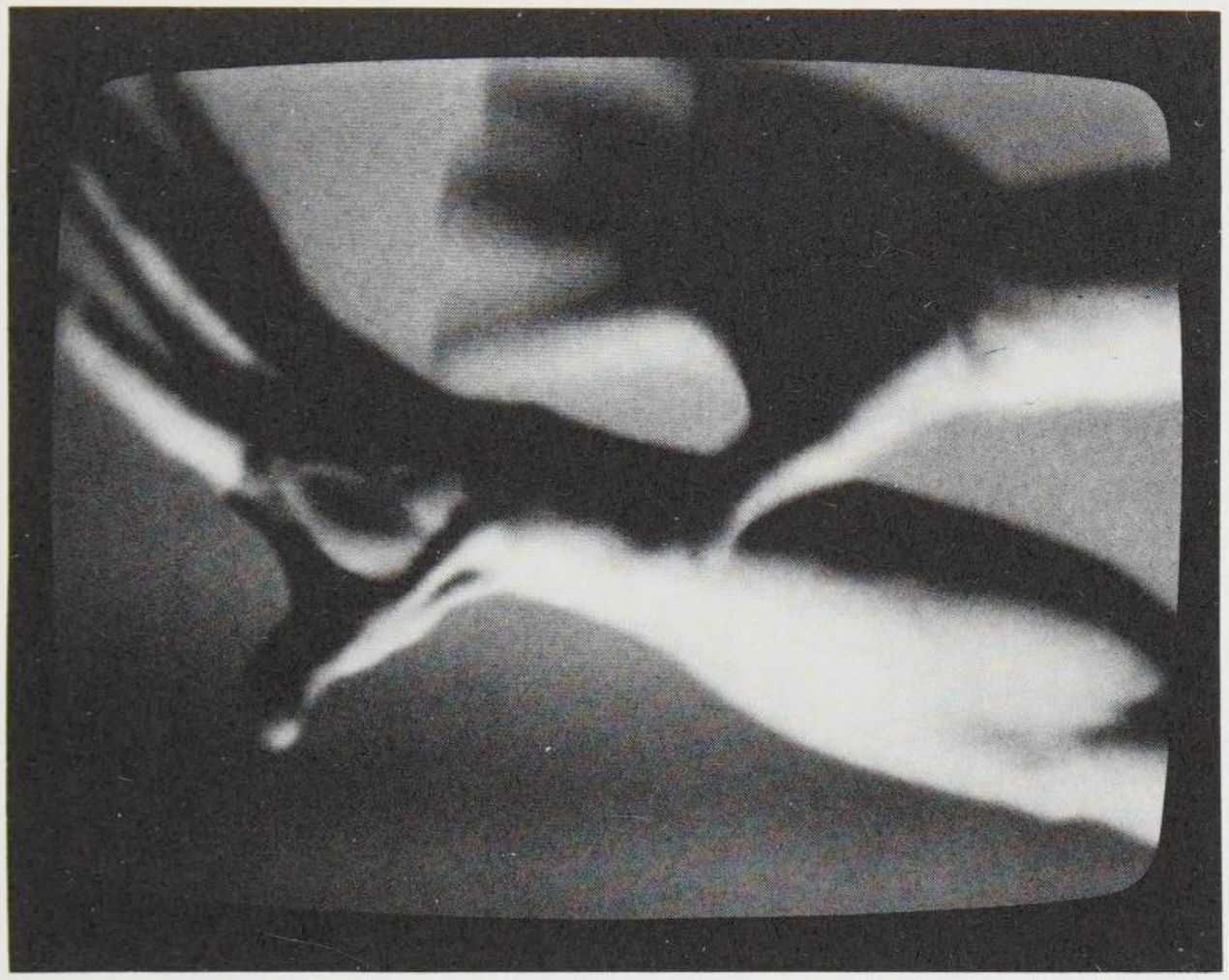
D.: Yes. As you know, my first thought about the television set was to activate it, as a link in a live sending as well as receiving link. We are almost blind to the two-way nature of television. Bertolt Brecht wrote an astounding essay, "Theory of Radio," in 1932, and that is about it as far as I know. He correctly pointed out that the decision to manufacture radio sets as receivers only was a political decision, not an economic one. The same is true of television; it is a conscious (and subconscious) decision that renders it one-way. My attempt was and is to inject two-way metaphors—via live telecasts—into our thinking process. All the early two-way telecasts were structural invasions, then, very different from the other work we have been discussing, though I hope that the two kinds of investigation will finally merge (that is, that I can make a two-way telecast function on the deepest level of communication).

*R.: When you say "two-way" you don't necessarily mean one person to one person. You mean output-input, or what Paik calls "point to space" communication.*

D.: Yes, sending and receiving. I mean you're sending into what you receive, over a network that is common property.

First printed in *FLASH ART* , No. 54–55, May 1975.

# DIMITRI DEVYATKIN



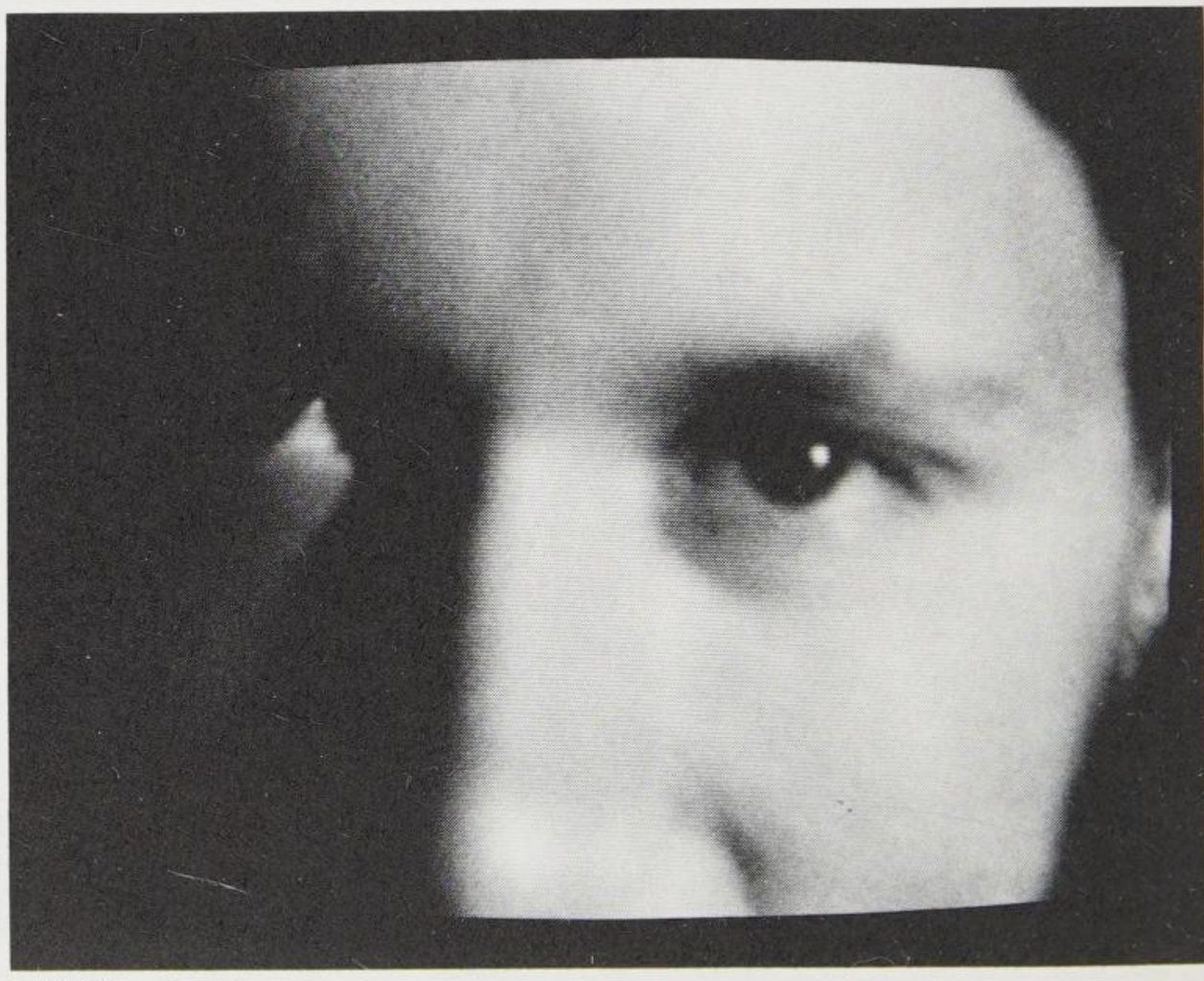
Hands of a mime



*Antiworlds*–a play by the Taganka Theatre



Actor from *Ten Days That Shook the World*–The Taganka Theatre



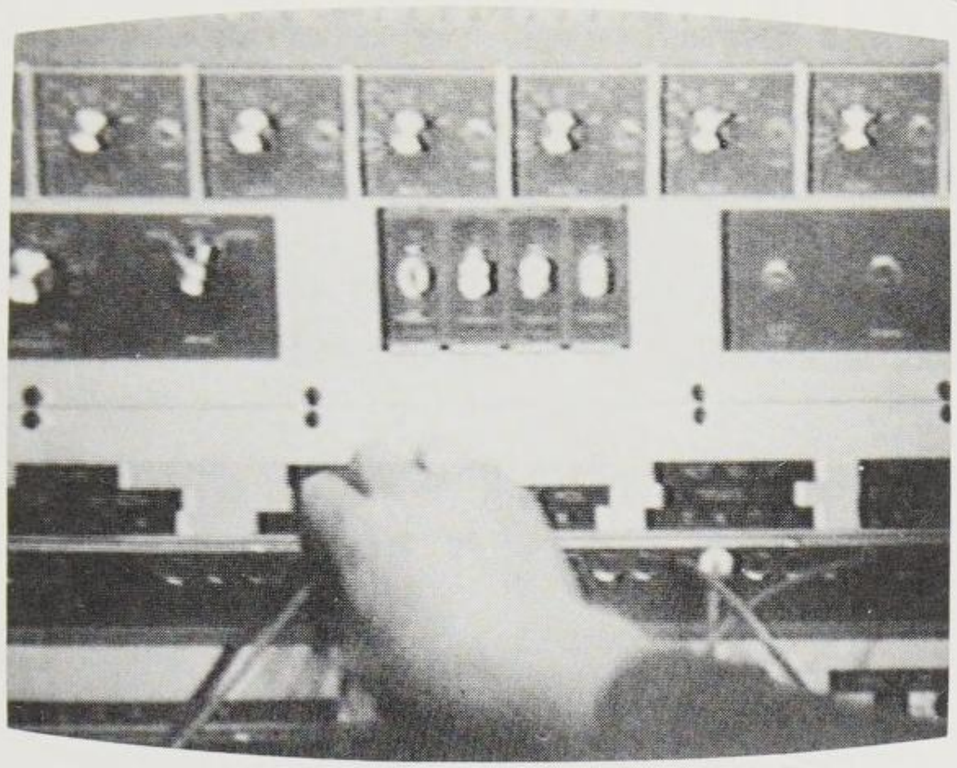
Self-portrait

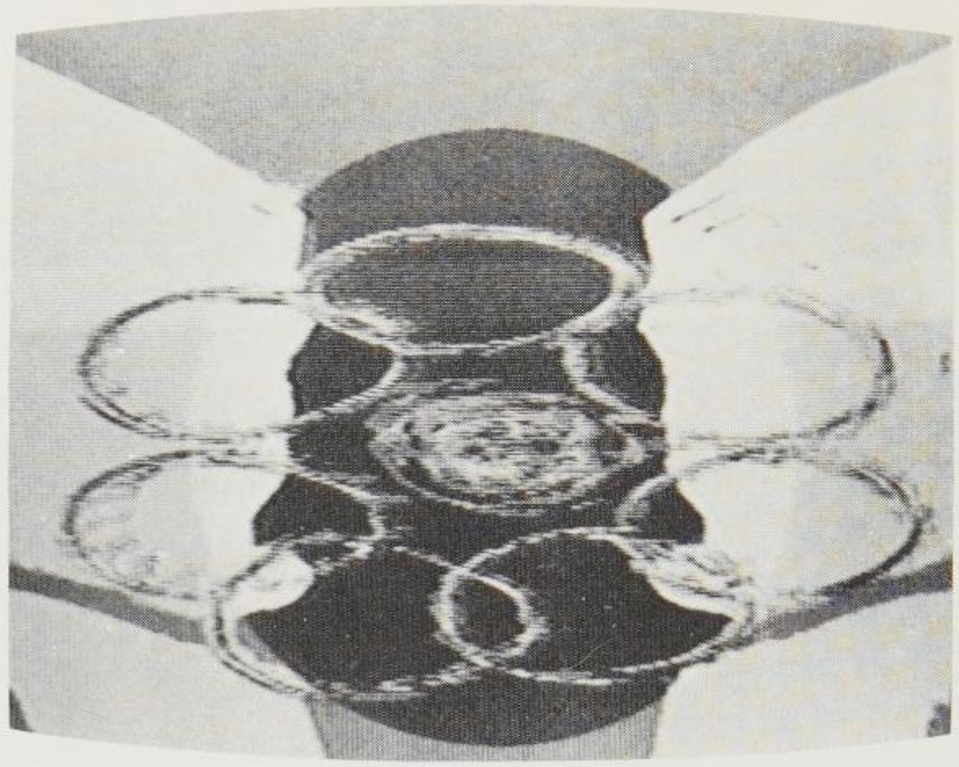
Video stills by Dimitri Devyatkin

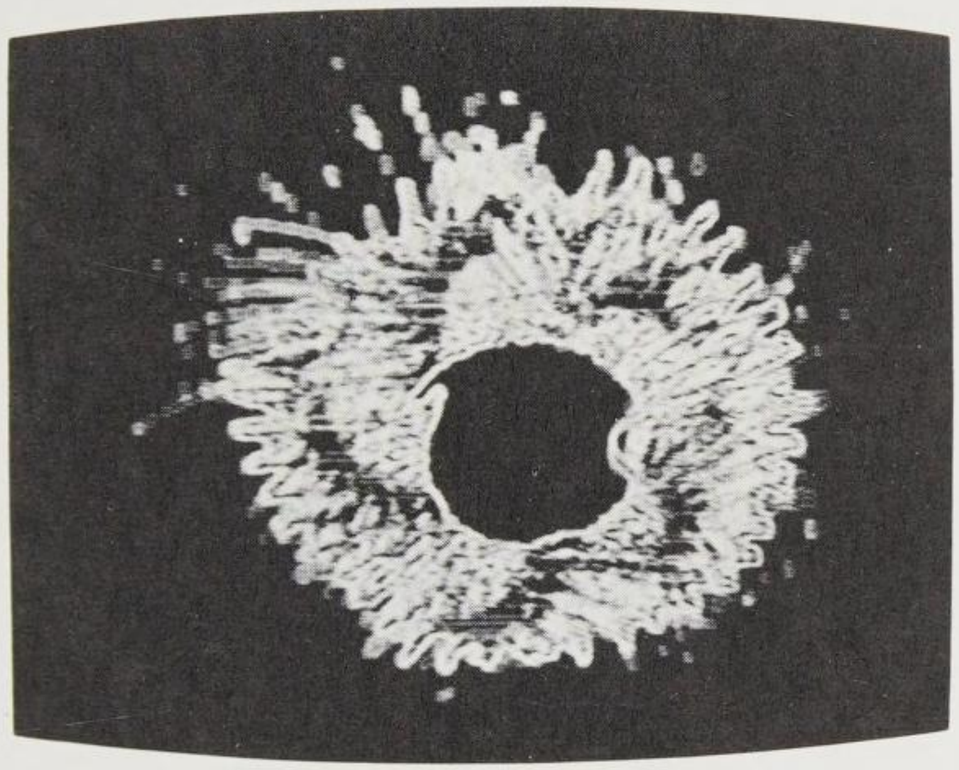

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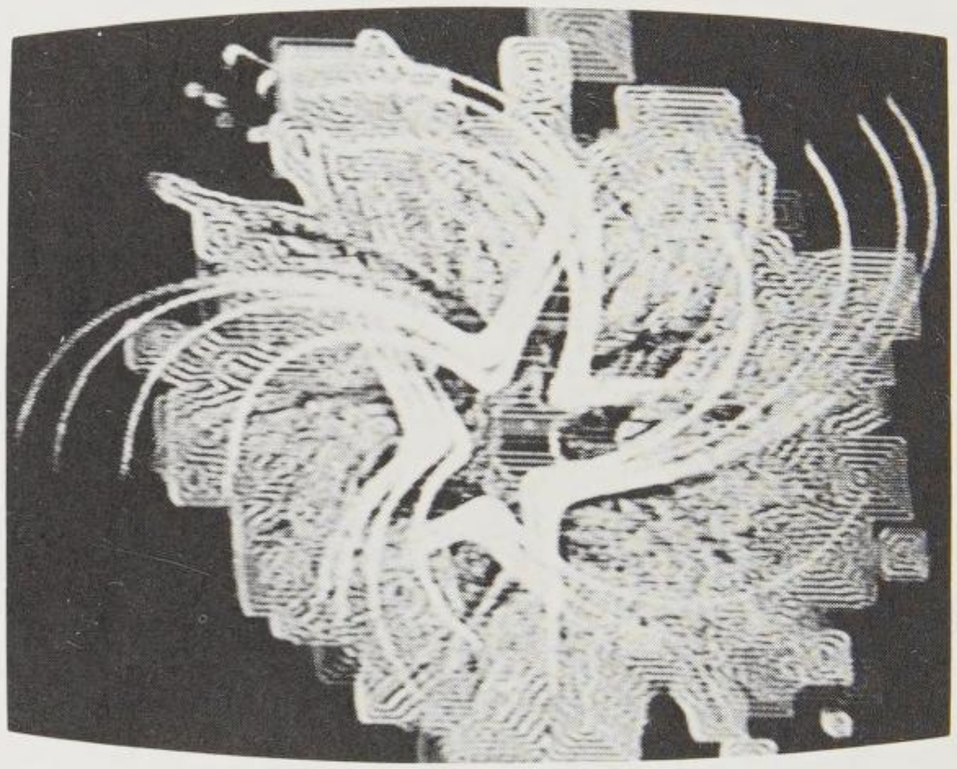
## Video Programs

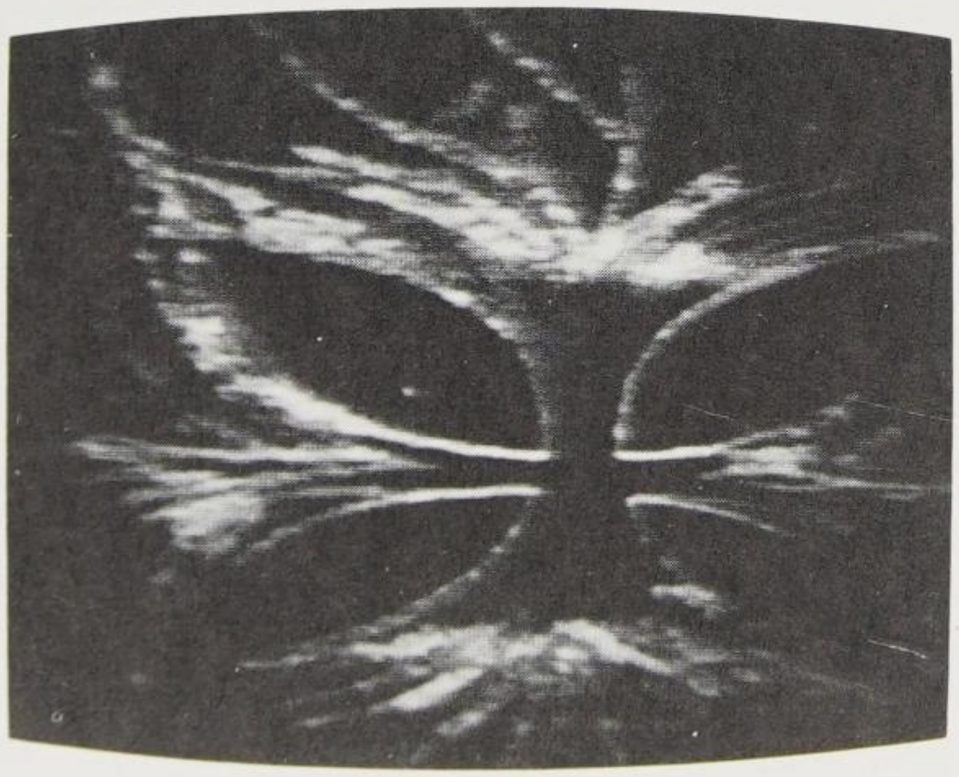
| Title and description | Date | Time | B&W or Color |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1) *Suggestopedia, A Science of Learning*<br>Demonstrations of psychological methods used to teach French, at the prestigous Moscow State Pedagogical Institute. The narration by the teachers has been translated into English. | 1975 | 30 min. | B&W |
| (2) *Scene in Russia*<br>A personal video window, concentrating on people. Scenes included are the May Day Parade, an Orthodox Church service, the Taganka Theatre, and a man from Siberia who sings like an electric guitar. With subtitles. | 1975 | 30 min. | B&W & color |
| (3) *Interview with Dr. Georgi Lozanov* (In English)<br>Dr. Lozanov is the founder of Suggestopedia, and the Director of the Research Institute of Suggestology, in Sofia, Bulgaria. He discusses some new developments, and stresses the psychotherapeutic effects of Suggestopedia. | 1975 | 20 min. | B&W |
| Four plays by the Taganka Theatre, all in Russian. | | | |
| (4) *Ten Days That Shook the World* | 1974 | 2 hours | B&W |
| (5) *Hamlet* (Russian text by Boris Pasternak) | 1974 | 2 hours | B&W |
| (6) *Antiworlds* (Verse by Andrei Voznesensky) | 1974 | ½ hr. | B&W |
| (7) *Rush Hour* (A contemporary Polish comedy) | 1974 | 2 hours | B&W |
| (8) *La Scala Opera* from Milan, Italy, performing "Cinderella" at the Bolshoi Opera House, Moscow | 1974 | 2 hours | B&W |
| (9) *Berliner Ensemble* performing selections from plays by Bertolt Brecht. Recorded in Berlin, GDR | 1973 | 30 min. | B&W |
| (10) *Tenth World Youth Festival* Berlin, GDR | 1973 | 30 min. | B&W |
| (11) *Of Whales and Men* The United Nations Conference on Human Environment, Stockholm, Sweden | 1972 | 30 min. | B&W |
| Real and abstract color images using the Dolphin Scanimate | | | |
| (12) *Vasantrai* (Indian Sarod Player) | 1973 | 30 min. | Color |
| (13) *The Sordid Affair* (Starring Richard Nixon) | 1973 | 20 min. | Color |
| (14) *Motown Edit* (With Soul Music) | 1972 | 25 min. | Color |
| (15) *Steep Turns* (Cybernatic Rap, with Brahm's Violin Sonata) | 1972 | 30 min. | Color |
| (16) *Sachdev* (Indian Flute Player) | 1972 | 25 min. | Color |
| Earlier works | | | |
| (17) *The House of the Horizontal Sync* | 1972 | 15 min. | B&W |
| (18) *The Video Tunnel* | 1971 | 10 min. | B&W |

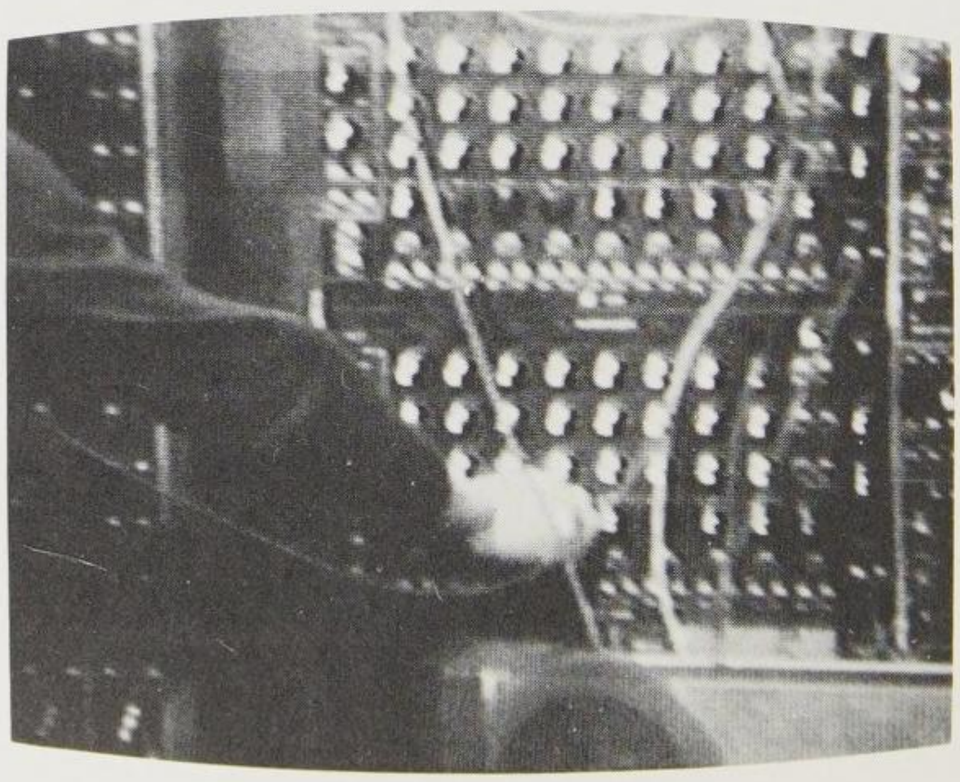




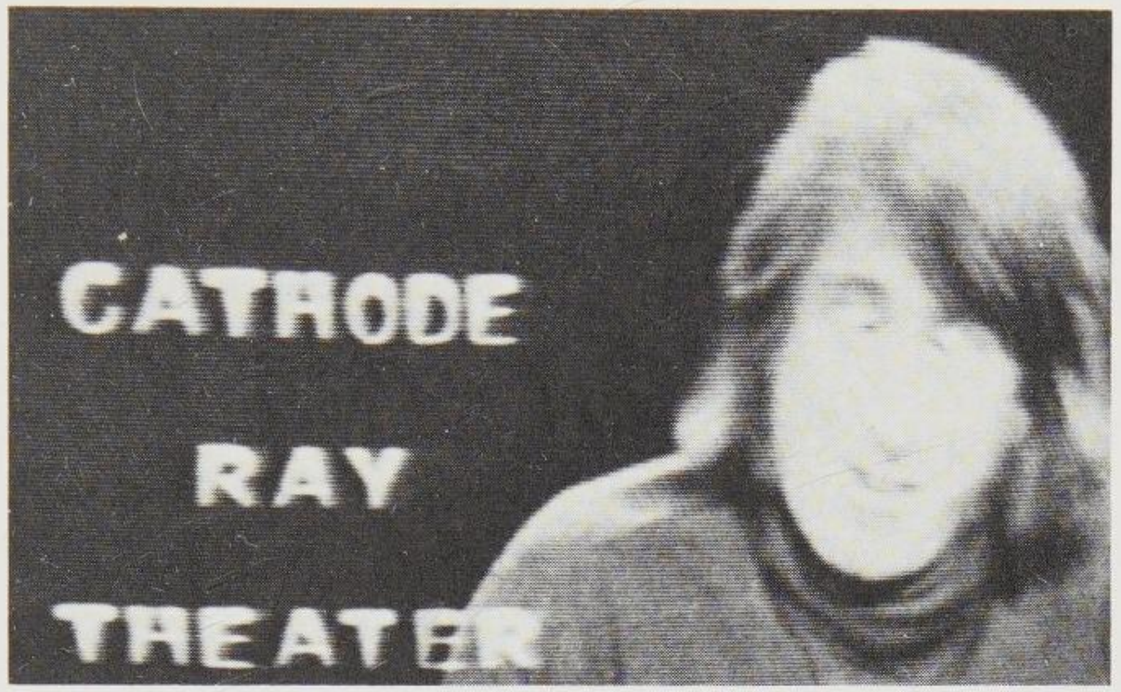









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Art is artificial. The image on the video screen is an illusion. Yet unlike the illusion put on canvas or paper, the video image is generated by machine. The automaton that makes the video image is no more an artist than the violin is the musician or the paint the painter. The artistry takes place at the points of interaction with the medium. Video artists need a handle on the machine.

The traditional point of interaction with the video medium is the camera. The art of performing in front of the camera has its roots in theatrical art. The camera documents an event, and if the event evokes fantasy there is art. The degree to which the video camera operator can augment this documentation is very limited. It is on a creative par with a painter selecting an angle from which to view a model or a landscape. It is the action before the camera which dominates the process.

Between the instant of light striking the camera and electrons striking the phosphor to duplicate that light, a complex electronic process takes place. Serious and important work is currently under way to open that process for manipulation by the artist. This work follows on the heels of similar work in music that demonstrated that the electronic processing of sound was as much a medium of expression as traditional instrumentation. But the video artist is faced with aesthetic problems that were resolved centuries ago in musical history.

What are meaningful time-related spatial changes? Can light be codified in some equivalent to musical theory? Are there primal forms from which a vocabulary of shape can be built? As fundamental as these questions are, they must be answered before video art can really develop. A common vocabulary must be decided upon and a notational system derived if there is to be a strong foundation to support subsequent growth. While there are many interesting things one can do playing with the guts of TV sets and computers, the basic aesthetic questions of space must be solved before universal compositional machines can be built.

Recently I have experimented with the relationships between musical and graphic structures. The videotapes *Philharmonica* and *Studies for Philharmonica* are built from forms which were derived from the harmonic content of music synthesized simultaneously. The most elemental of these harmonigrams is the circle, and the variations appear as multipetaled roses.

The outcome of these experiments shows that a rose is not only a rose, but when the selection of images is a deliberate act, a rose can be hypnotic or monotonous, melodic or idiotic. The artist plays the part of editor-selector, charting a course through 500,000 points per frame, 30 frames a second. As I navigate this flood I realize that dada has given way to data, that video art is on the other side of the keyhole cut in the wall of art history by the black canvas and the exploding sculpture.

# TRAVELOGUES OF VIDEO TRANS AMERICAS

## Juan Downey

**Tennessee, July 19, 1973.**
We are eager to cross the Mexican border. Last night we drove until exhaustion. A couple of hours before dawn we parked off the road to rest. The scent of wild flowers; the grass yellow-green; the mountains blue in the pure atmosphere of sunrise; when cops woke us up ordering to keep on moving.

Our attitude is to understand the energy of places and occasions, to weave ourselves into each circumstance, to dilute ourselves in the surrounding forces.

**Approaching the Mexican border, July 20, 1973.**
Onandagas, Cherokees, Navahos, Apaches, Hopis, Aztecs, Olmecs, Mayans, Incas, Mapuches, and Alacalufes all share a communal mythical nature in death and in time. An Indian of the Americas was used to watching him- or herself react to his or her culture and to enrich spiritual processes by dialoguing with the unknown. This myth becomes contemporary in the piggyback riding of C.C.T.V.: to observe oneself observing increases the focusing of one's mind.

Beyond informing or documenting, let us share a love for cultural shocks. Let us burst minds apart and open events to occur on the vastness of the three American continents. Never forget the harmonious connective balance of this large island that was devoured not too long ago by Industrialized Judeo-Christianism.

Video is a mirror that can be manipulated in time as well as in space.

In my late childhood, I made up my mind to drive along the American continents. Later, I was enchanted by the reading of Jack Kerouac's highway epics. In my twenties after exposure to the New York Art World I decided to return down South and recuperate my culture. After ten years spent in Spain, France, and the U.S.A., I realized that I would never adapt to the Developed World, and, mirrorly opposed, my own third world would never be a market for my cultural aesthetic makings.

A perpetual cultural shock was easy to handle at first; but age only increased the gap and the *saudade* for a country that no longer exists.

Someone told me once that Jorge Luis Borges had been given credit for a very precise description of one's destiny encountering one's life and, as a result, one's self focusing on a single line of experience. In other words, one is joyfully stuck!

With video the differentiation between art and life became a non-functional fog.

We wish to eroticize politics. Eroticism understood as the quest of survival for our species connected to other species by the same blood system and sprouting from the same guts in a scream of life.

Social aesthetics refer to the collective unconscious and to a massive eroticism which involves humanity in politics as a ritualization of survival and perpetuation of the human race. Popular symbols of power move to tears. Political propaganda operates on the level of rapid, shaking emotions which are beside the point of art.

We propose an aesthetic that manipulates society itself as if it were three-dimensional stuff. It is not political power that we want to obtain via art; but survival, reproduction, and pleasure for our species. Give to every human the right of exclusive mysteries. Confrontation with the unknown is the only valuable quest.

**San Luis Potosi, Mexico, July 25, 1973.**
The Spanish utilized the traditional indigenous craft of stone-carving in imposing their religion. Indians were enslaved in giving permanence to the two-sided economics of a distorted Judeo-Christian dogma. In this case, Architecture is Media; and the Conquest controlled the dominant communication network: Mysticism.

Highly sophisticated Inca craftsmen carved and assembled stone walls that were to resist centuries of earthquakes. Those same hands were bent by the gold-carved Conquistadors to carve a different geometry based on 90 degrees in the name of an abstract God whose churches did not stand through an earthquake. In this case, Architecture is divorced from Mass-Media Communications and it is divorced from the energy right there and from God. "European fragmentation."

It is not a set of political ideas that we wish to express via art. The aesthetic experience, because it is nothing but enjoying the unthinkable, sometimes manipulates social systems as if they were sculptural material.

Although Art grows from the unconscious, deciphers symbols, and generates inner light, it is chiefly erotic in nature since it inputs to the bloody survival of our species; and this beautiful plight for life is political and deeply rooted in everybody's guts.

In 1938 Diego Rivera painted a mural in the Rockefeller Center. Mexican Muralism has attempted to politicize a huge mass of illiterate peasants. Stained-glass windows in gothic feudalism oppressed the illiterate servants with the agony of a dogma. The above cases illustrate Wiener's homeostasis controlled by the rich.

Late afternoon, a downtown car ride. Spicy hot food in a restaurant and drinks in a live-music bar. A full night anguished by the destiny of my country! Fear, rage, impotence. No sleep.

**Mexico City, the next morning, July 28, 1973.**
The news of the assassination of the Dean of the Chilean Navy recently appointed by President Salvador Allende. Pigs are killing Chileans in the middle of their sleep!

To make an art
of heavy political implications;
an art of ritual enjoyment,
an art with brain potentials,
an art with a spatial infinity,
an art with roots:
to rip off, emancipate,

 Copyright © 1976 by Juan Downey

to blind with light,
to revolt and sing.

**Tajin, Mexico, July 30, 1973.**
At dawn we drove slowly between temples that are half pyramid and half knoll. Outrageous tropical low jungle upon undulating conical hills! Banana trees, clusters of hanging fruits, large purple leaves and suddenly the corner of a temple:
Breathtaking proportions when scaled to the human.
Complexity of ornamentation within a well-grounded simple structure.
Rich clay of the early Indian mysticism.

I must design a strategy that will insure the sustainment of this expedition. I am now committed to a fresh sensitivity that is still to be defined.

**Zempola, Mexico, August 1, 1973.**
We gave a ride to a couple of old sisters with their centenarian mother, after having camped by their hut the previous night. One of them was nicknamed "La Gringa" and looked like one. We stopped in a fishing village where they had relatives, shot some tape, and swam across powerful waves. I wonder about that centenarian Mexican woman who eighty years ago fucked an American she loved and gave birth to "La Gringa." Today I hate that love.

**New York, September 11, 1973.**
NEVER NEVER NEVER
SHALL I FORGIVE YOU FOR THE DEATH OF MY PRESIDENT
SALVADOR ALLENDE.

**Quinteros, Chile, July 1974.**
The dark ocean and the smell of pine buds in the wild wind. Blood bursting through arteries. Black-blue dome of changing clouds, moon, stars. Blinded and anxious I fell to the ground penetrating the earth's vagina: I grab with both hands the dew of the fresh herbs; but the grass smells like rotten leftovers from a seafood restaurant, garbage dump from a neighboring hotel. From pleasure to sudden repulsion, felt a gray thin snake falling on my spine. Forever that smell was embedded in the woolen scarf I was wearing that night. That particular piece of wasteland and the smell of rotten fish for many years were the physicality of poisonous sin.

It took me many religious experiences to purify myself of those horrible monsters.

Today I'm standing on the cliffs of the coast of Chile, an ex-democracy which is today altogether controlled by enraged monsters, carnivorous sharks. And the smell of dead organisms inhabits the no-longer-pure atmosphere of that place in front of the ocean.

**Santiago, Chile, August 1974.**
My costume acquired many camouflages this summer to allow myself to make an art of social criticism in the context of political repression. I endangered others and myself with the conviction that video can prepare a million minds for sharing the unconscious.

**On Public Art. New York, May 1975.**
Video more clearly than any other art material or procedure brought my aesthetic endeavors closer to political and social issues.

V.T.A. deeply rooted in anthropological and cybernetic soils became a vigorous passion as we moved away from Washington, D.C. This clash of two beauties (the conceptual structure, and on the other hand, politics understood as society's erotic survival) generated a high aesthetic level among those participating in V.T.A.

The development of social aesthetics appeared in my work in Washington, D.C.; although the passion for making such art was well conformed with the appearance of my sexual potency. Semen and social action are to be equated with individual and political power. They both deal with private and collective Myths about life/death cycles. Public Art first appeared to me as the poetry of information theory.

Total feedback: mirrorize the world.

**New York, 1975.**
I preserve an audiotape of my Father's voice: "Work like a peasant." Neurosis was a period in my life when I eagerly affirmed my freedom and my masculinity.

My mother was born in a green archipelago. As a child she rode horses across the cold of a subtropical rain forest to discover the surprising red of a Copihue flower. It was always bright after the purifying storm.

The unconscious of a person contains the memories of many.

**New York, May 1975.**
The Video Trans Americas black and white expeditions have been completed.

Like a chemical catalyst I expected to remain as before after my video exchange which would enlighten many American peoples by the cross references of their cultures. I proved to be a false catalyst; I was devoured by the effervescence of myths, nature, and linguistic structures. The pretentious asshole leveled off! Only then did I grow creative and in manifold directions. Me, the agent of change, manipulating video to decode my own roots, I was forever deciphered and became a true offspring of my soil, less intellectual and more poetic.

An unexpected level was reached among the strange roads of the heart!

**New York, Spring 1975.**
I decided to learn about myself, to discover my radiant center, to recover the security of the fetus, the enlightenment of the saint, and the alpha level of meditating brains. To discover my interior sphere of calm and induce you to self-introspection.

A shelter and an invasion.
A shell of benefic magnetism
and an invasion of poetry.

**New York, August 25, 1975.**
Two decades ago today, I was Confirmed as a Soldier of Christ by the Archbishop of "a place whose name I do not wish to recall."* I still remain to say that video clarified each stage of this consistent process: making correct impacts and speeding up each experience upon whose totality I cannot verbalize. Its meaning is locked in the V.T.A. tapes.

VIDEO TRANS AMERICAS 39 WHITE ST. N.Y. N.Y. 10013

* Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quijote*.

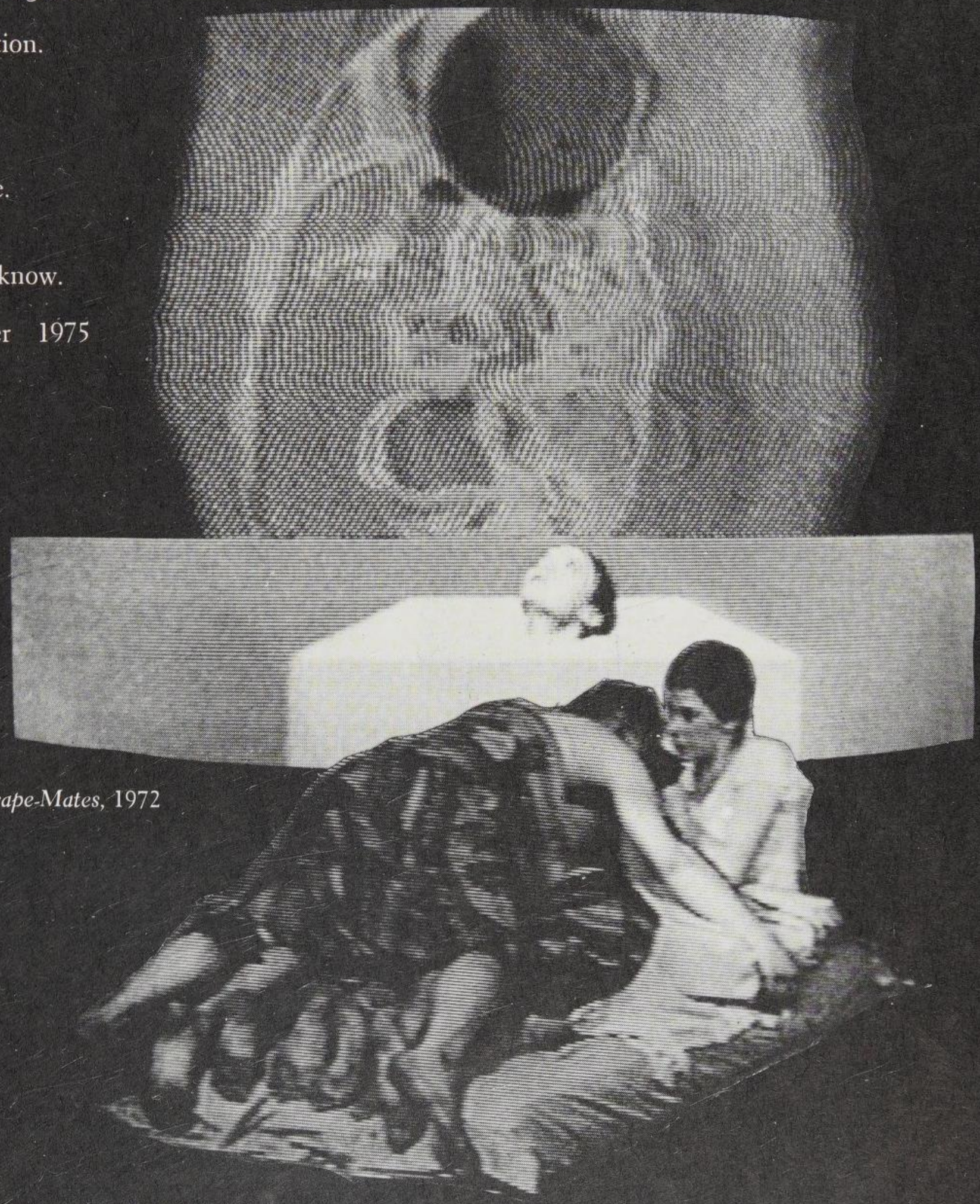
*Crossings and Meetings*, 1975

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1
Imagemaking is central to my life.
Finding satisfactory forms is a struggle and a joy.
Art is the physical manifestation of certain forms of imagination.
Imagination is the novel combination and transformation of memory traces.
Video has exceptional flexibility in combining and transforming images.
Video can be a form of concretized imagination.

2
For me video is like painting, immediate.
For me video is like film, a collaborative art.
For me video is like dance, a sensual pleasure.
For me video is a series of questions.
For me video is a process of discovery.
For me video is the most exciting medium I know.

Ed Emshwiller 1975



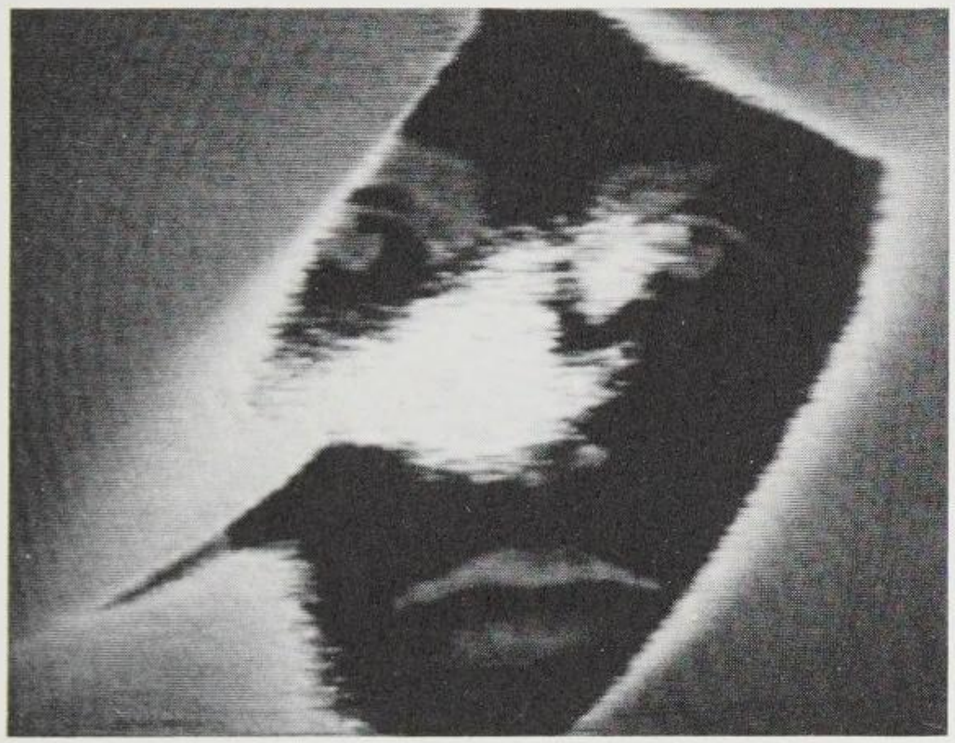
*Scape-Mates,* 1972

*Pilobolus and Joan,* 1974

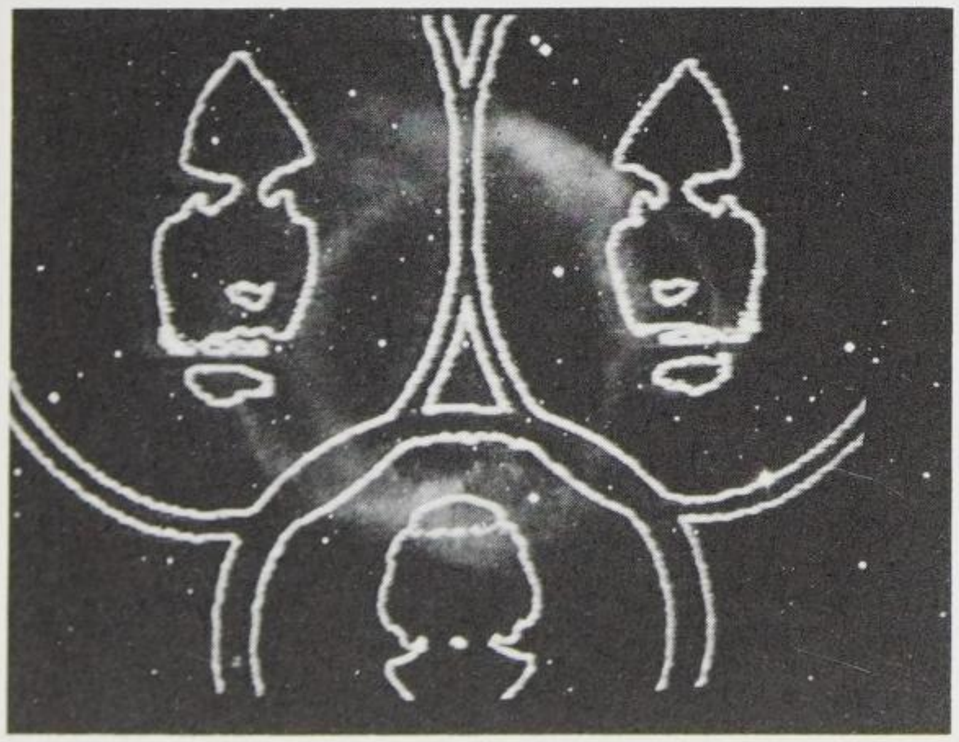
**ED EMSHWILLER**



*Astral Projections*



*Laser Quantum L*



*Narcissicon*

# VIDEO
## Bill and Louise Etra

1971—BILL ETRA

—earliest work in video as a documentary cameraman

—*Onward Christian Soldier*—first video work involving manipulation of imagery and feedback techniques

1972—BILL ETRA

—continued experimentation in video feedback; began working with laser modulation and audio oscillators

—began working at WNET-TV Lab as an Artist in Residence

—*Mars: An Optic Aspic* and *Laser Quantum L* were produced with this technology

1973—BILL ETRA

—coinvented the Rutt/Etra video synthesizer—primary responsibility for systems design and configuration engineering of the first portable voltage control analog video synthesizer

—*PDP11-10—Abstractions on a Bedsheet*—first video synthesizer/digital computer interface tape

—BILL AND LOUISE ETRA

—*Video Wallpaper*—14 short studies in color and motion using the Paik/Abe colorizer and 6 free running oscillators

—*Narcissicon*—first tape using the R/E synthesizer—a narrative self-discovery theme done in real time in the art nouveau style

 Copyright © 1976 by Bill and Louise Etra

—*Heartbeat Tape*—with Peter Crown—uses biotelemetry equipment and video synthesizer

1974—BILL AND LOUISE ETRA

—*Astral Projections*—coproduced with Survival Arts Media (5 performances at the Strasenburgh Planetarium in Rochester—live music and video event

—Codirectors 2nd International Computer Art Festival—The Kitchen

—began researching the use of the computer as a compositional tool for video

—*Lady of the Lake*—a short piece of Gothic horror

1975—BILL AND LOUISE ETRA

—continuing research in computer technology and video

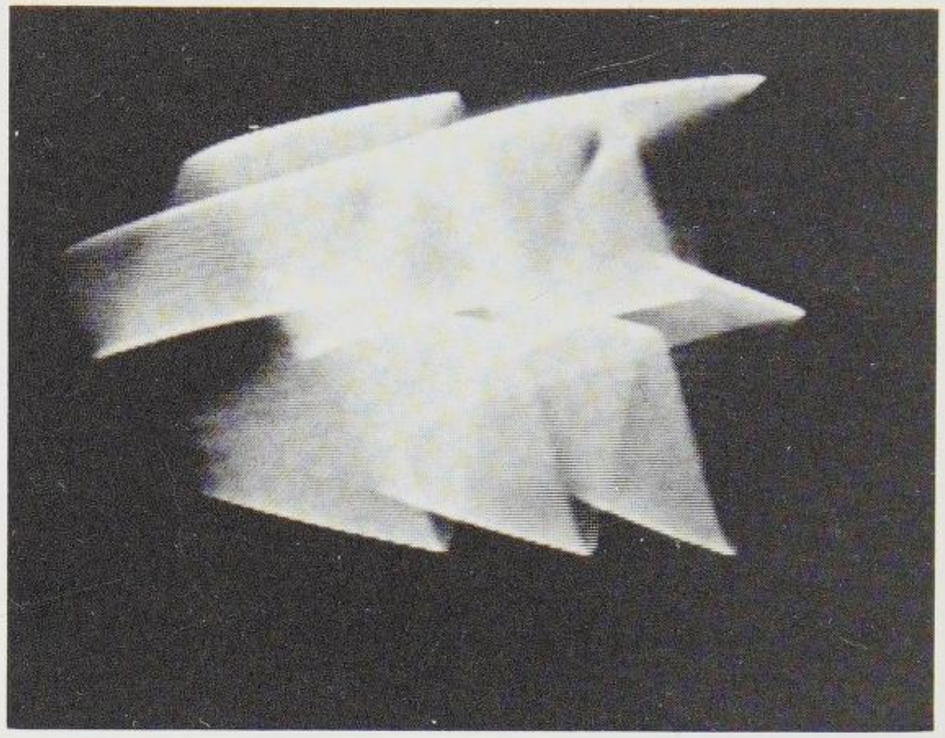
—Codirectors 3rd International Computer Art Festival—The Graduate Center—C.U.N.Y.

—*Ms. Muffet*—computer/video interface piece—with Dr. Lou Katz

—BILL ETRA

—*The Tube and Eye*—with Peter Crown—a show on perception and television watching behavior for the WNET series *VTR*

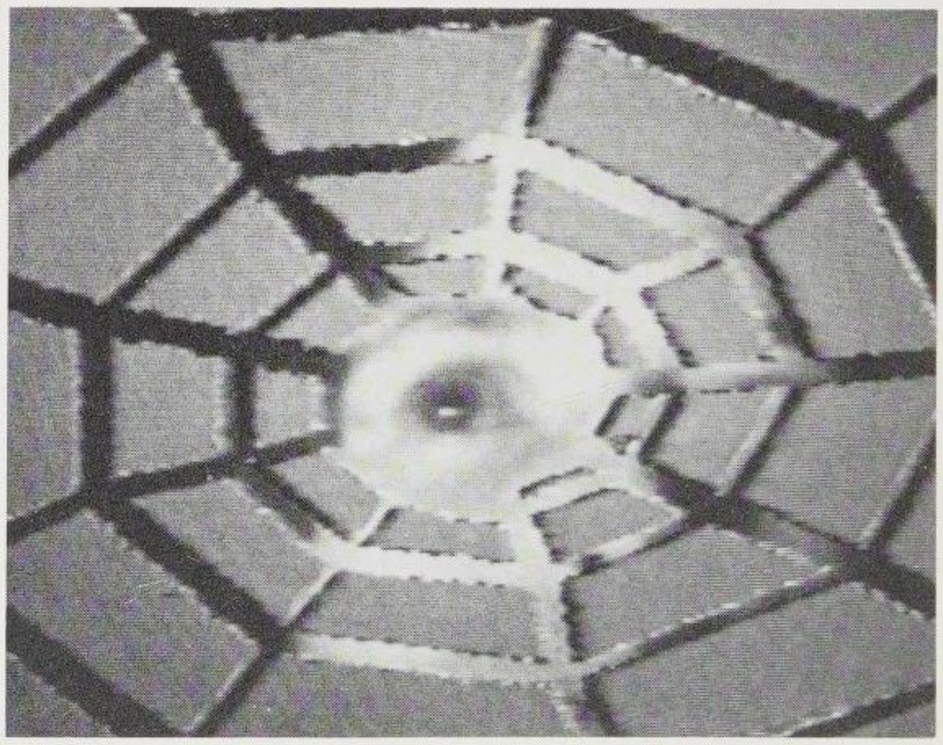
—*Das Ring*—computer/video interface piece—with Dr. Lou Katz and Laurie Spiegel



*PDP11–10–Abstractions on a Bedsheet*



*Lady of the Lake*



*Ms. Muffet*





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TERRY FOX: *CHILDREN'S TAPES* (34), 1974



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Stills from 3½-minute videotape, *Cloth draws water to the spoon.*

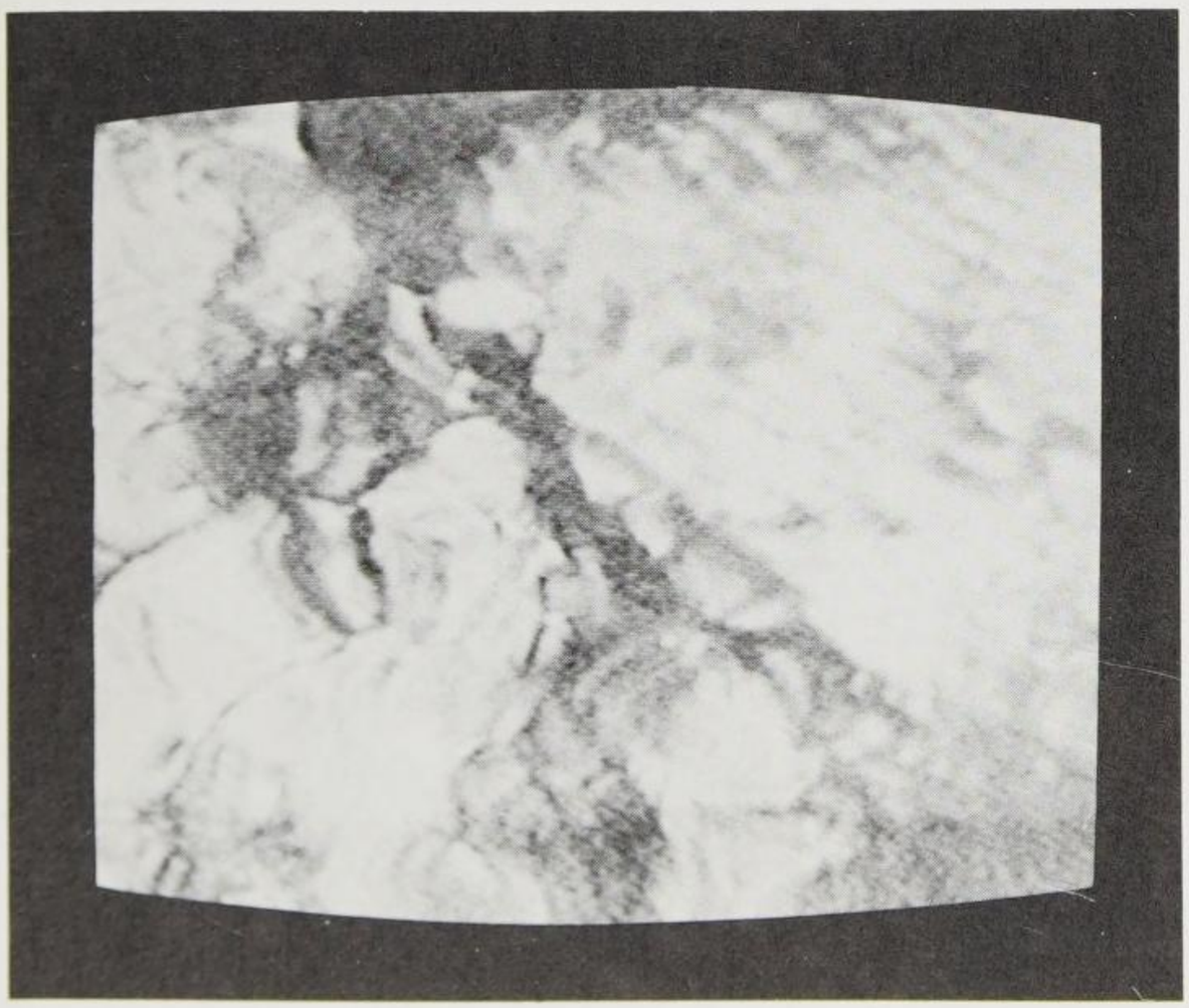
**TERRY FOX**





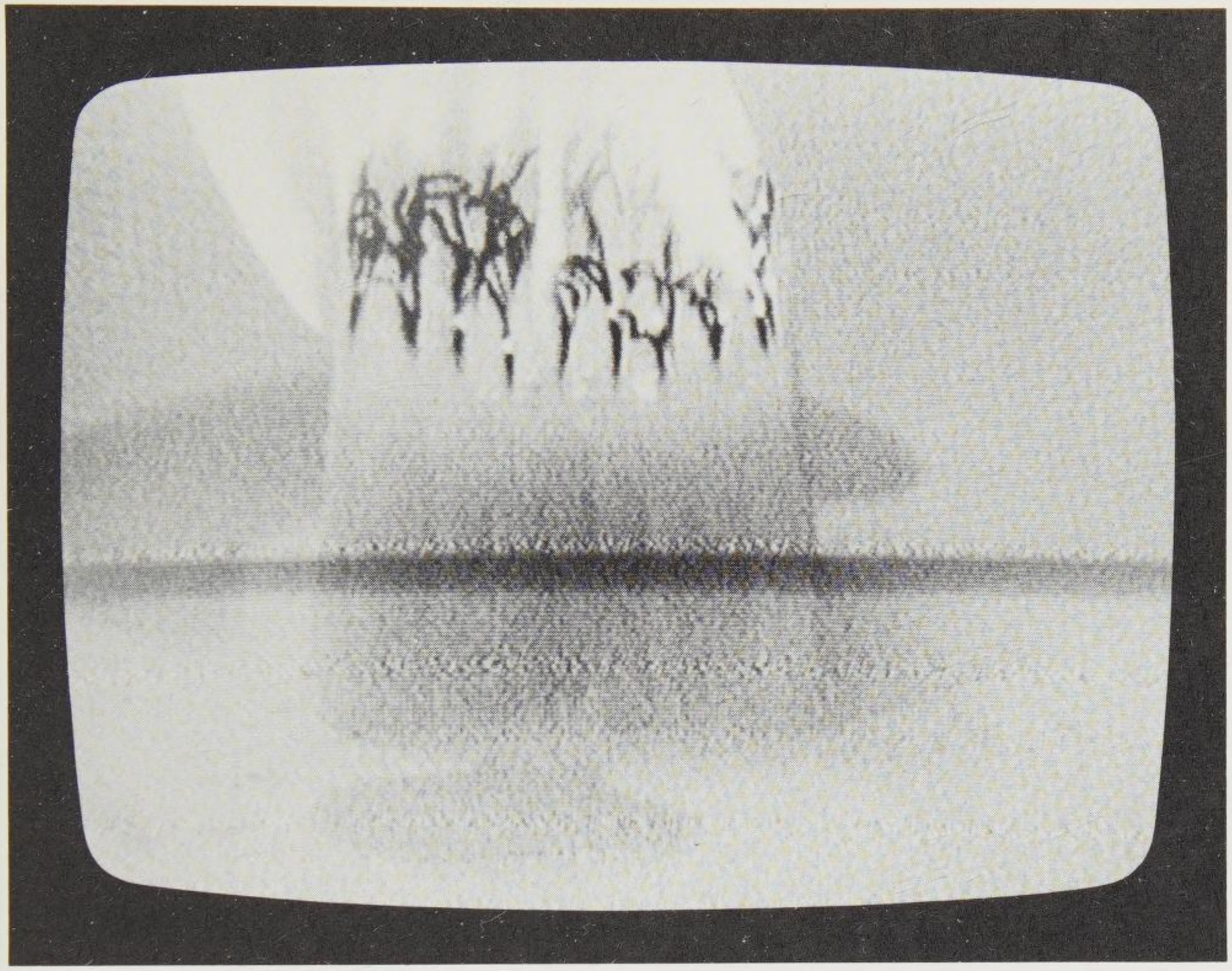
GAS: an aeriform Fluid, having neither independent shape nor volume, but tending to expand indefinitely.

The word GAS was selected to symbolize a series of communication collaborations performed during the summer of 1966. The purpose was to incorporate the documentation of large landscape performances as an integral part of the events that occurred on the land, sea, and air of the northeastern tip of Long Island. This collaboration included Dwan Gallery, Allan Kaprow, CBS, artists, film makers, photographers, writers, newspapers, Southampton railroad station, two hovercraft, flares, oil drums, weather balloons, Coast Guard Beach, two rock bands, inflated sculpture, kits, four parachutists, two skywriters, Shelter Island ferry, police, firemen, Montauk cliffs, solid fuel rockets, firefighting foam, Springs dump, thousands of vacationers, Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Modern Art, *Time*, *New Yorker*, Arts Forum and a half-hour television document by CBS *Eye on New York* shown to Manhattan in the fall of 1966.



*PACIFIC RING* refers to the body of culture encircling the Pacific Ocean. A great mountain rim has long contributed to the isolation of the Pacific Basin from the rest of the world. The Andes stretch northward from Cape Horn along the western shore of South America. The rim continues through the Rocky Mountains in North America. The frozen mountains of northeastern Siberia rise beyond Bering Strait. The barrier continues deep into middle Asia with the Stanovoi, Yablonoi, Sayan, Altai and T'ien Shan where the Pamirs climb to the "Roof of the World." Southward the high plateaus of Tibet and interior China open to the mountainous arc which moves out to sea through the Malay Archipelago.

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MAGIC SQUARE

*HAPPY BIRTHDAY:* A cube of eighty-one candles was videotaped during its melting into a pool of wax. The cube was conceived as a three-dimensional extension of a magic square. Both the video and the burning transformed the volume back into a flat pattern. The magic square, which is also Islamic and Indian, came originally from China—the source of all magic squares. The function of a magic square is to be bountiful. Islamic thought drew from the East and West; from Greece, Rome, Persia, Egypt, India and China. It contains a model of knowledge of the ultimate order of an ordered universe based on Sound. This work was produced at the Long Beach Museum of Art for the Southlands Video Anthology curated by David Ross, Video-Film Director.





*WATER GLASSES*: Event: Lining and filling glasses
Space warp: Transparency of the glass, the viscosity of the water, and two camera views.
Time warp: Elimination of the activity of placing the glasses.
Seriality: Repetition of the event with all of its variables.

*TWO FACES*: Monitoring my image. Responding to the monitor space. Responding to myself. Two simultaneous images of myself, left and right sides of my face looking at each other. The event is a video fiction, a psycho-feedback event, possible only with video. Narcissism. Symmetry-asymmetry.

*ME-YOU*: Two separate views, simultaneously. The impossibility of objectively describing a space or a situation. Psychodrama through interaction between two people through the monitor. Subjectivity displayed with minimal information. Subjective vs. objective vision.

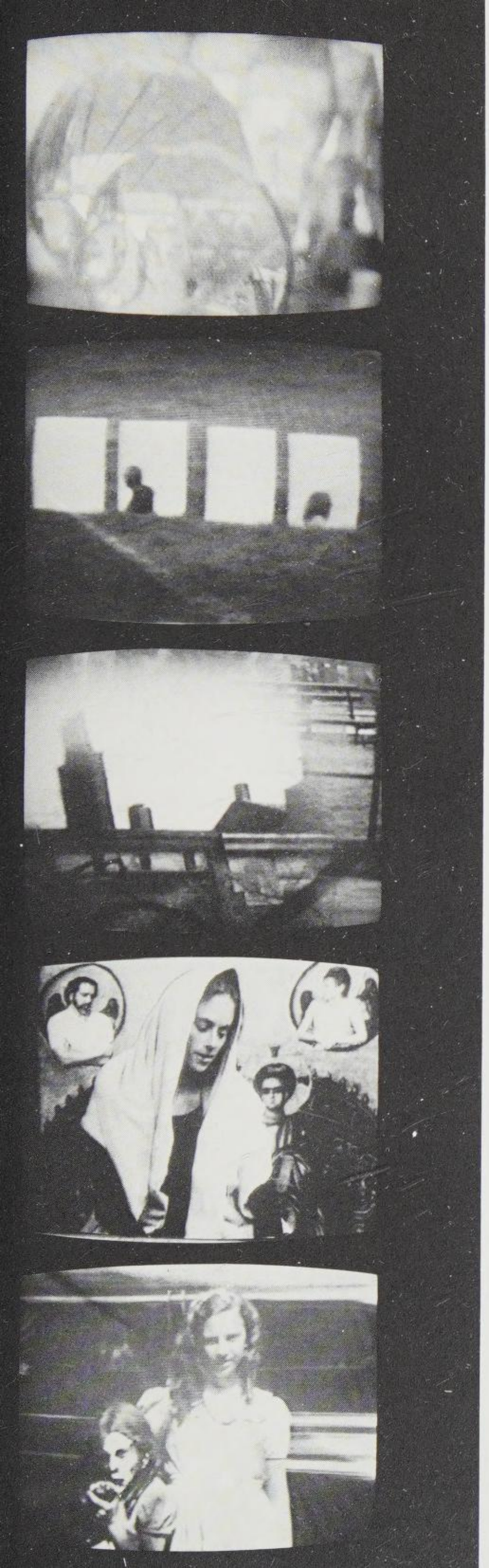
*I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN*: The illusionistic possibilities of a real mirror vs. those of a video mirror. Response to video image. Found sound, structured time and image.

*360°*: Simultaneously in space and time. The line between what is known and what is seen. Impossibility of objectively defining a space. City vs. country. 360° of space, simultaneously → spatial ambiguity.

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I used to fantasize about a machine that could take automatic audio-video read-outs of my thoughts, no matter how quickly they came or how many at a time. It would have been possible, with that machine, to spend the day lying on the beach with it attached to my brain and make works of art. I'm not going to claim that video does all of that, but given the necessity of producing, it's been pretty useful. Spontaneity, recording sight and sound at once all fit my life style in a way that painting could never do for me. However, after several years of doing video, my tapes are getting more and more complicated, more and more planned. It took me at least a year each to produce my last two tapes. If only I had a machine that could take automatic audio-video read-outs of my thoughts.

I've been thinking a lot this summer about that line between spontaneity and plan; intellect and intuition, really. Sometimes I think that everything I do, no matter how spontaneous, is calculated to fit the models of my ideas about art and video. But, especially when I look back at old work, I am also aware of the particulars of my own life that have made me do whatever I have done, however unconscious I may have been about those particulars when I made the tapes. I take for granted aspects of video psycho-feedback. The objectification of the self



*360° × ∞:* Simultaneity and mirror feedback. Complexity into order.

*SPACE HOLES:* Space warp. Time warp. Spatial and temporal ambiguity. Movement in space. The still frame vs. the moving frame.

*SHOW AND TELL:* The impossibility of a camera describing a space or an event. Public vs. private information. Deep space vs. close-ups and cubist-type space. Time warp in events. The past and the present. Cyclic nature of events. Ambiguity in space and information.

*ART HERSTORY:* The alteration of the past through reinterpretation in the present. Superimposition of the present over the past. Role playing. The discrepancy between the image and the event. History and actuality. The individual in time and place. The still frame vs. the moving frame. Time in history.

*FAMILY ALBUM:* Time in memory; memory in time. Temporal composition/Memory vs. experience. The present as a construct of the past. The past as a reconstruction in the present. The still frame vs. the moving frame.

which takes place with video is a fact, but the fact that I have paid particular attention to it has everything to do with me. Once, when asked to write an essay about my work for a catalogue, I found myself writing about my relationship to my father. His strong will, his sense of absolute right and wrong, has had more to do with shaping my personality than anything else I know about. We always disagreed. I saw no reason to assume that the fact that he did things the way he did them meant that that was the only way to live in the world. I always looked for alternatives, multiple viewpoints which manifested itself in role playing and, in my work, in looking at the world from a multiplicity of viewpoints (saying that the camera is not a tool devised to record objective reality).

I can't trace thoughts about time as clearly. I remember time travel and space travel (teleportation, that is) as being rather early childhood fantasies which, clearly, are still with me. The two video fantasies I have (one difficult to achieve, the other, so far as I know, impossible) are two sets of monitor banks, say 20–36 monitors each. One would have 20–36 places in the world played back live simultaneously, the other would have the same place 20–36 times, played back from different times in history, simultaneously.



Dialogue

*Ich muss jetzt mal aufraeumen . . .*

. . . no, no, . . . it's comfortable—how do you say in German?

KOMFORTABEL

there is another word for it, though, you use . . . bequem.

*Ja, das ist sehr bequem.*

Danke sehr.

*Das ist ein scheiss, Du . . .*
*Also, Kay, Du musst nach Deutschland kommen; ich hab' auch eine sehr bequeme Wohnung.*

O.K. I'm coming.

*Wenn der Dieter nicht mitkommt—*
*.'ne, dann kommst Du ganz alleine.*
*Du kannst da ueberall wohnen . . .*
*in Frankfurt/*
*in Muenchen/*
*in Karlsruhe/ eh,*
*in Karlsruhe, in Muenchen*

in Berlin

*ja, in Berlin*

mit Manfred und Daniella

*eh, ja, und . . .*

RENATE

*JA, aber . . .*

I don't know Renate, but I might be considered on the other side of friends. Yeah?

Ja, eh . . .

How is Renate?—Wie ist Renate?

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# ALLATION)

Performed at 3 Mercer St. Store, NYC, April, 1975

# RE-STAGE OF HISTORIC SCENE



Vertical Structure.

A friend came to visit. He talked German to Kay and me. Kay answered in English though we all understand German.

PREFACE

He wants to organize the place he slept last night.
He invites us to visit in Germany.

PROTOTYPE

He names cities, connected with friends we have in common.

EPILOGUE

Kay asks about Renate in Berlin.

Horizontal Structure.

The "Historic Event" (any recorded past event): Selection from H.E.: The "Historic Scene" (PREFACE, PROTOTYPE, EPILOGUE)

"HISTORIC SCENE" (form of presentation)

1. Videorecording of original Prototype ½-hr. loop (70 edits X 25 sec. scene)
   Monitor

2. film of original Preface and epilogue filmed off videomonitor.
   23-feet filmloop; projection

"RE-STAGE" (reenactment of Historic Scene)

Memory (recall of stored information)

Analysis of Historic Scene (assumed sequence): Reconstructing / Comparing / Imitating / Repeating / Interpreting

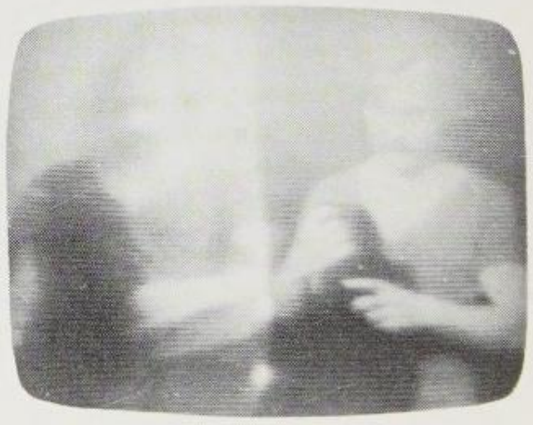
Potential solution—New Form (ritual)

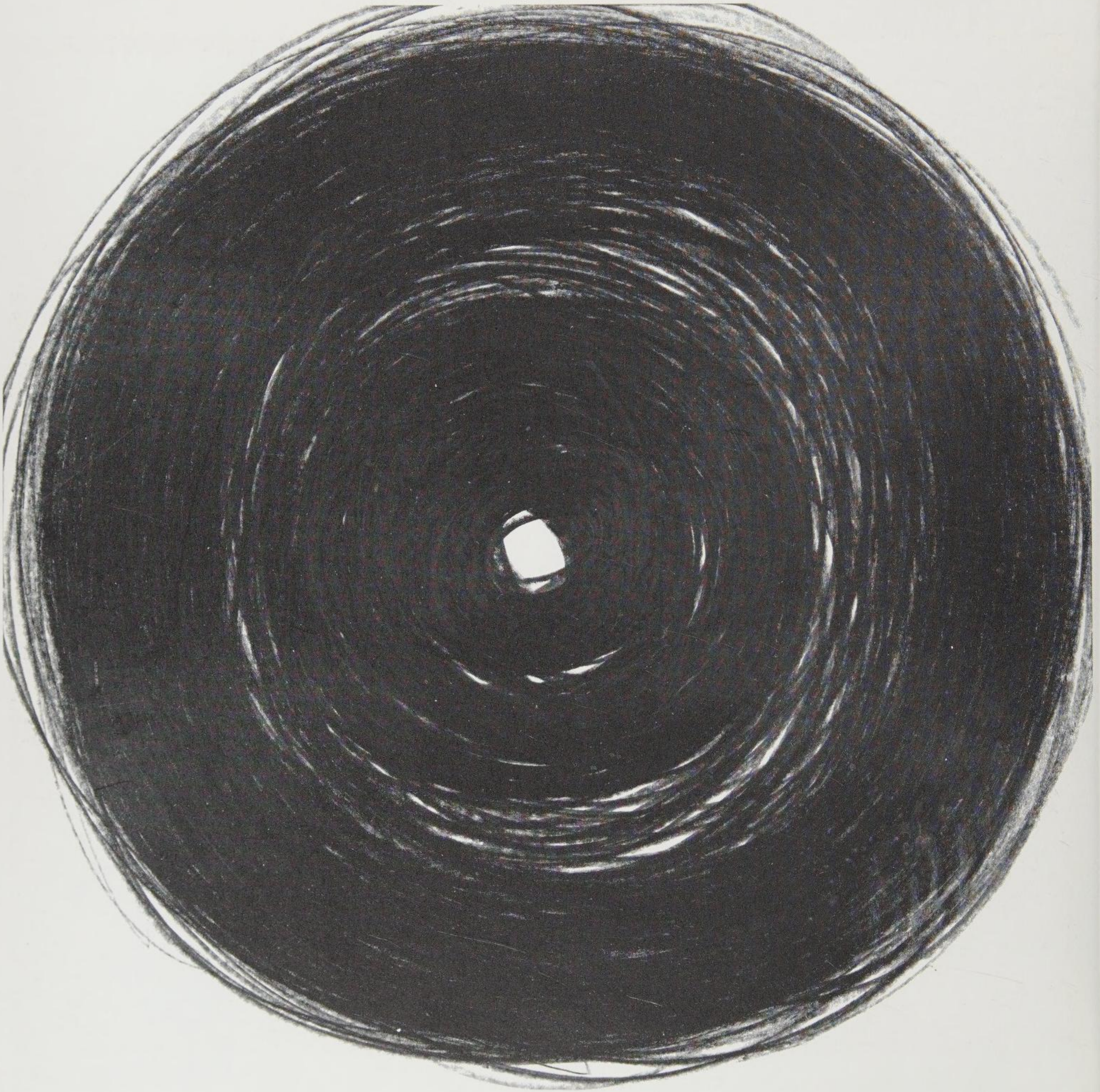
"RE-STAGE" OF PROTOTYPE (form of presentation)

3. film of 2 reenactment scenes;
   25-feet film loop; projection.

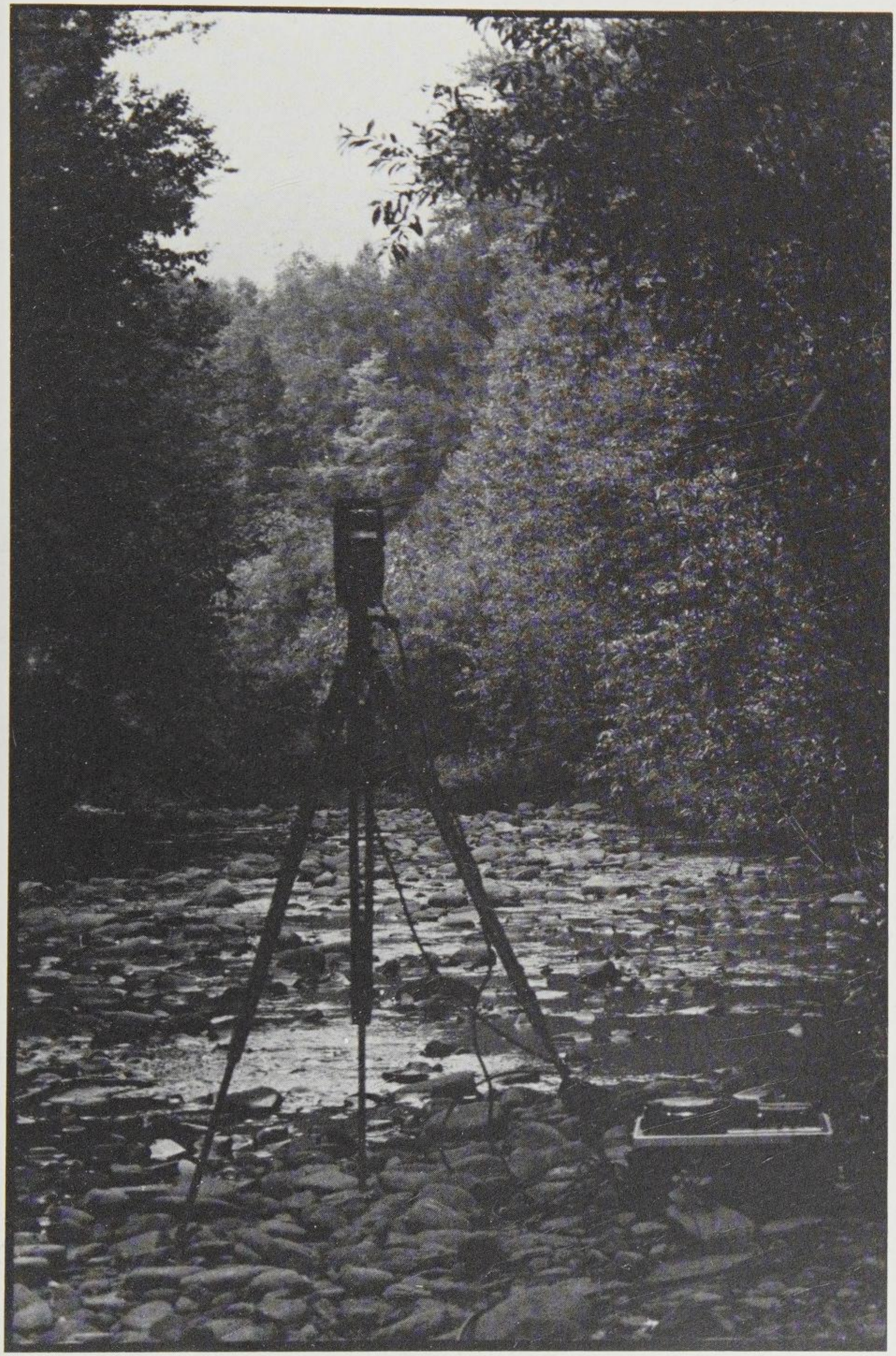
4. stills of 4 reenactment scenes;
   80 B&W slides; projection (automatic repeat)

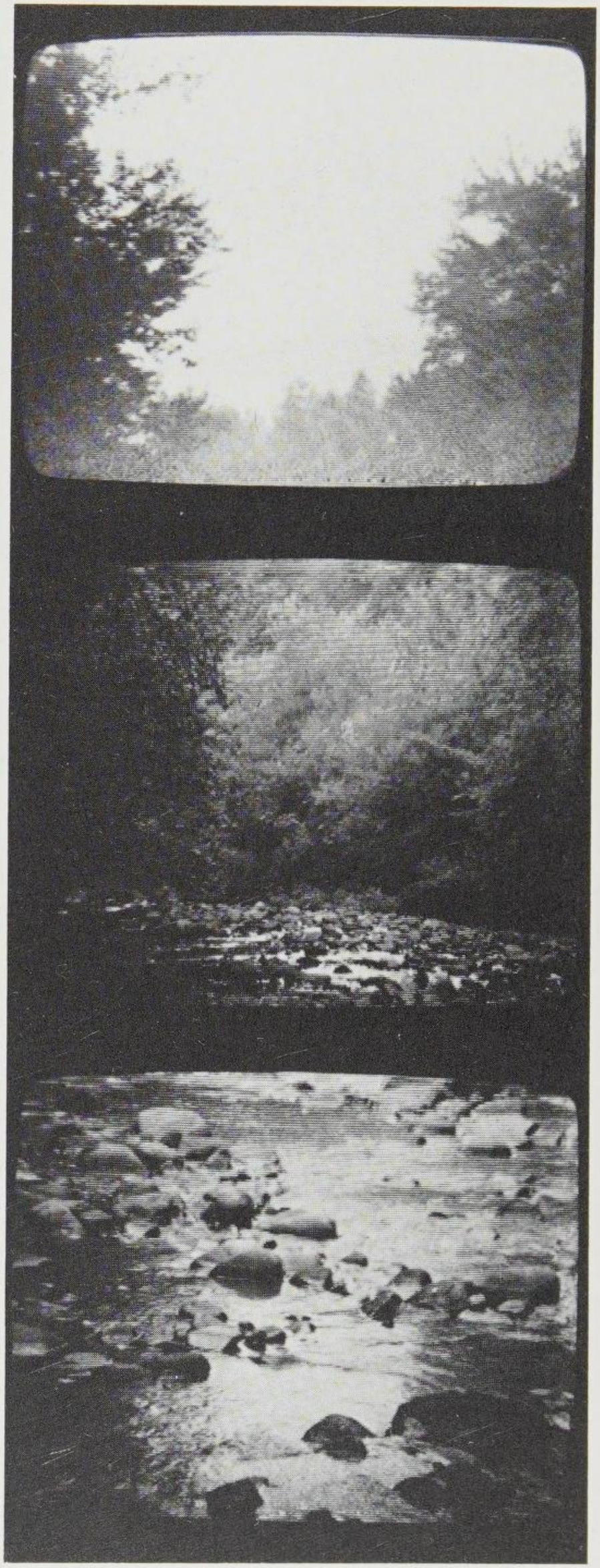
From Videotape series
"Re-stage I"—Prototypes
Split Screen.
Left: Historic Scene
Right: Re-stage






Copyright © 1976 by Davidson Gigliotti

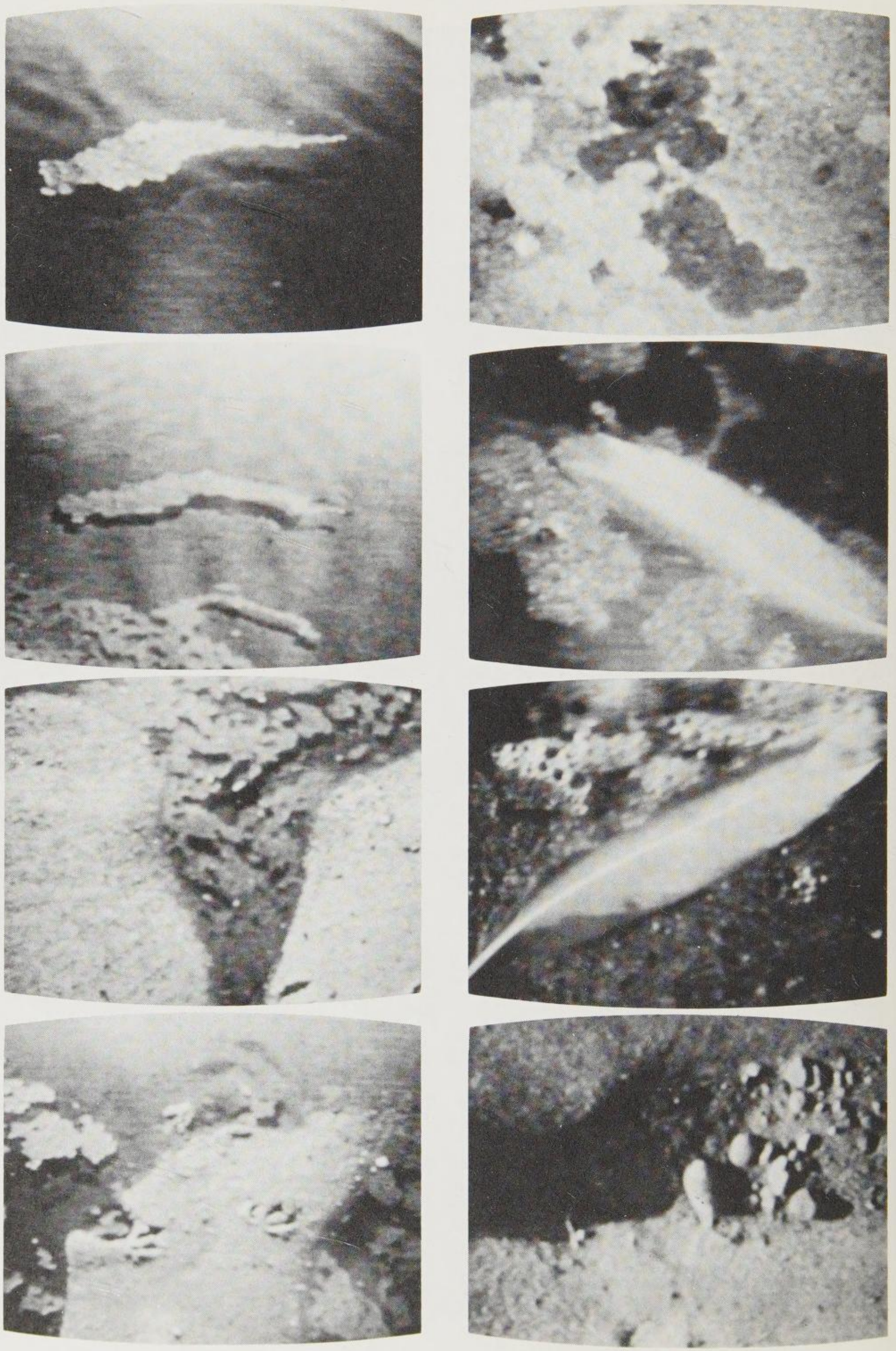




# QUIDDITAS

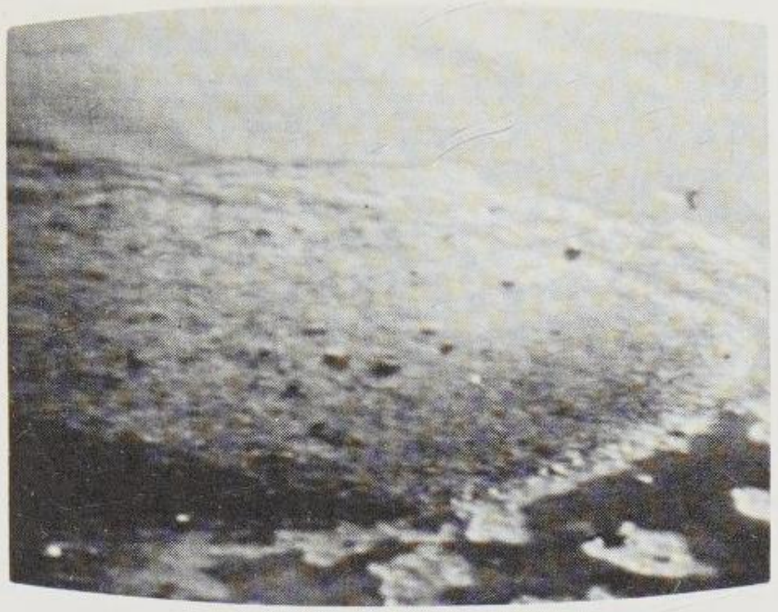
## Frank Gillette

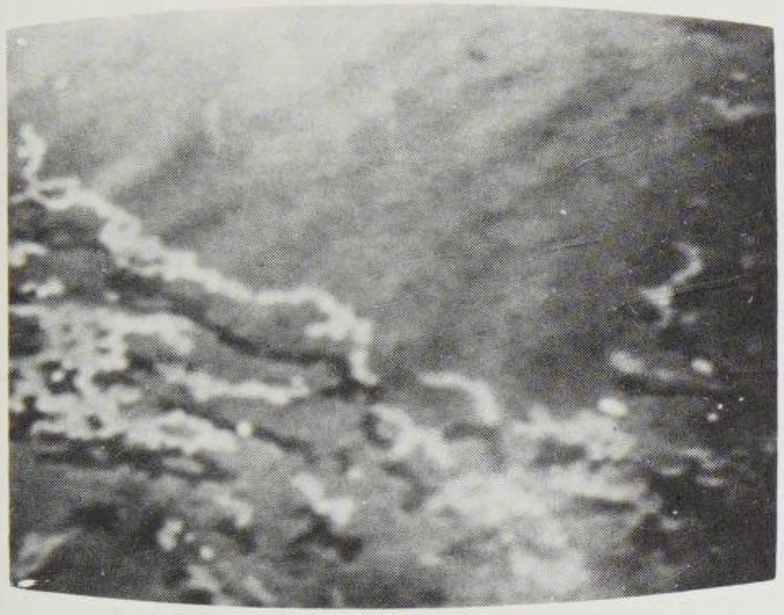
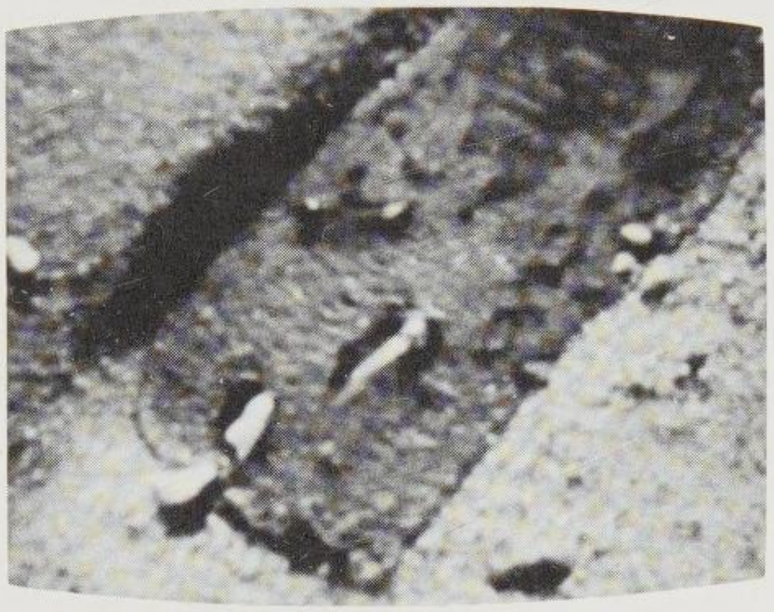
Stills from *tidal flats*, the sixth of twelve locations presented simultaneously on three horizontally aligned screens. The whole is entitled *Quidditas* (1974–1975, color). The piece concerns contrasting phases in natural process as they are intercepted and monitored in real time. It focuses upon the varying synchronies between dissimilar settings in landscape. Each setting marks a primary climatic, tidal, and/or gravitational exchange. All of the locations were collected within single twelve-hours-of-daylight sessions as follows: bough, snow/brook, woods' floor, field/dusk, lake (52 min.); tidal flats, dunes, sea (57 min.); pond, grove, salt marsh, scrub pines (48 min.).

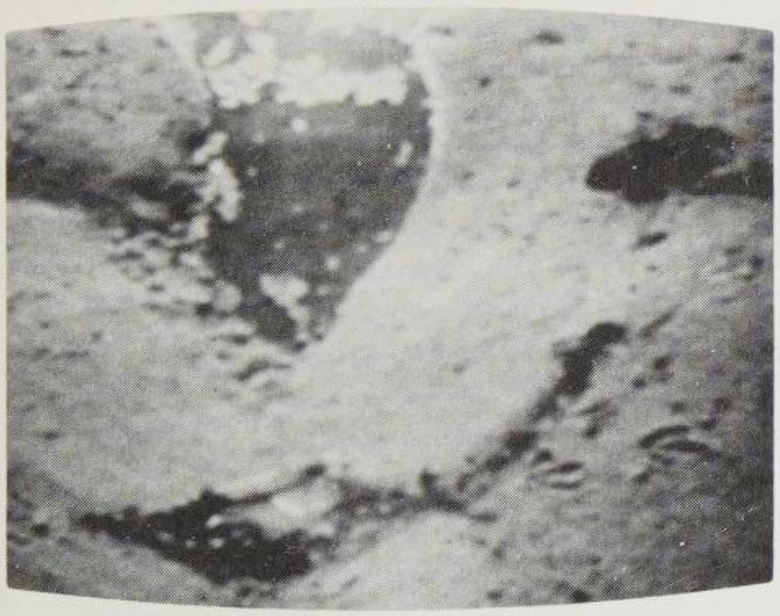
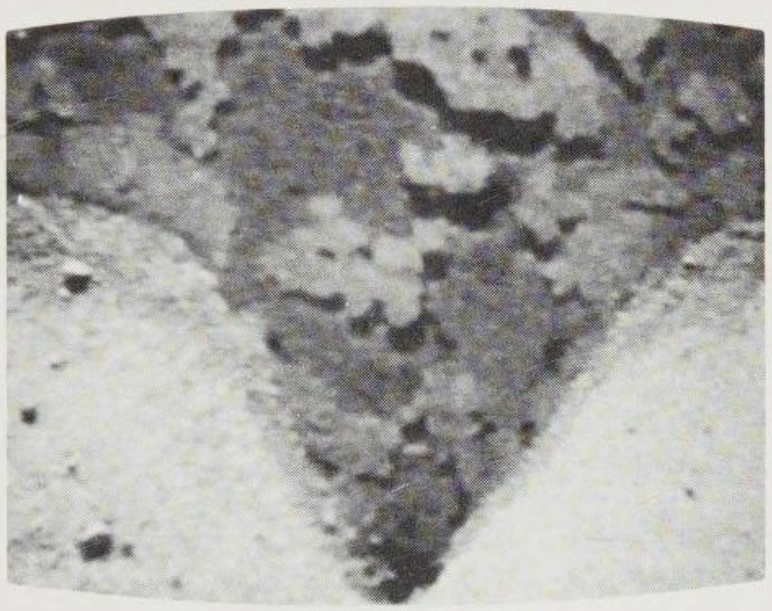


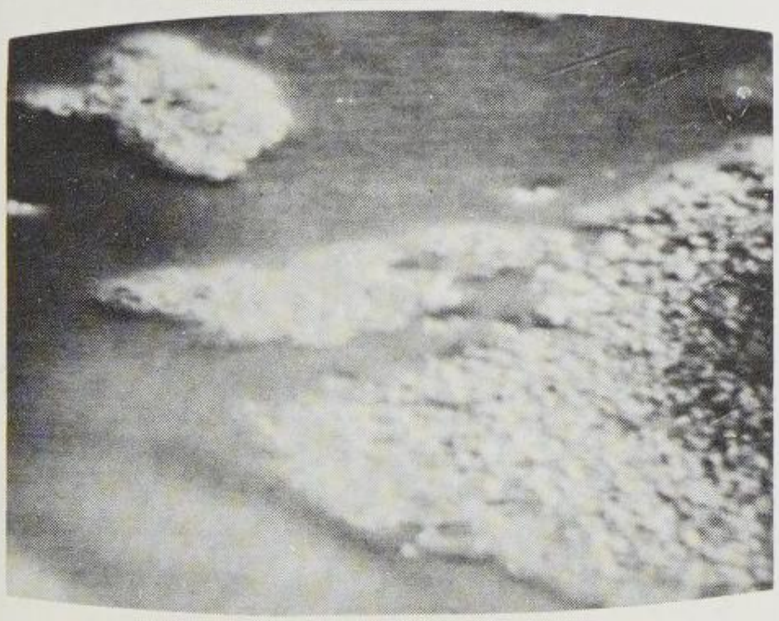
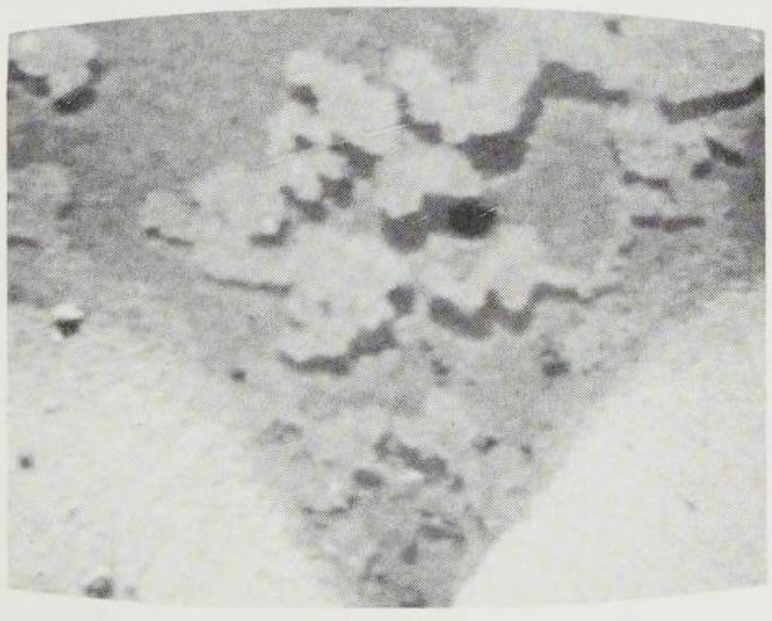
photos: Gwen Thomas

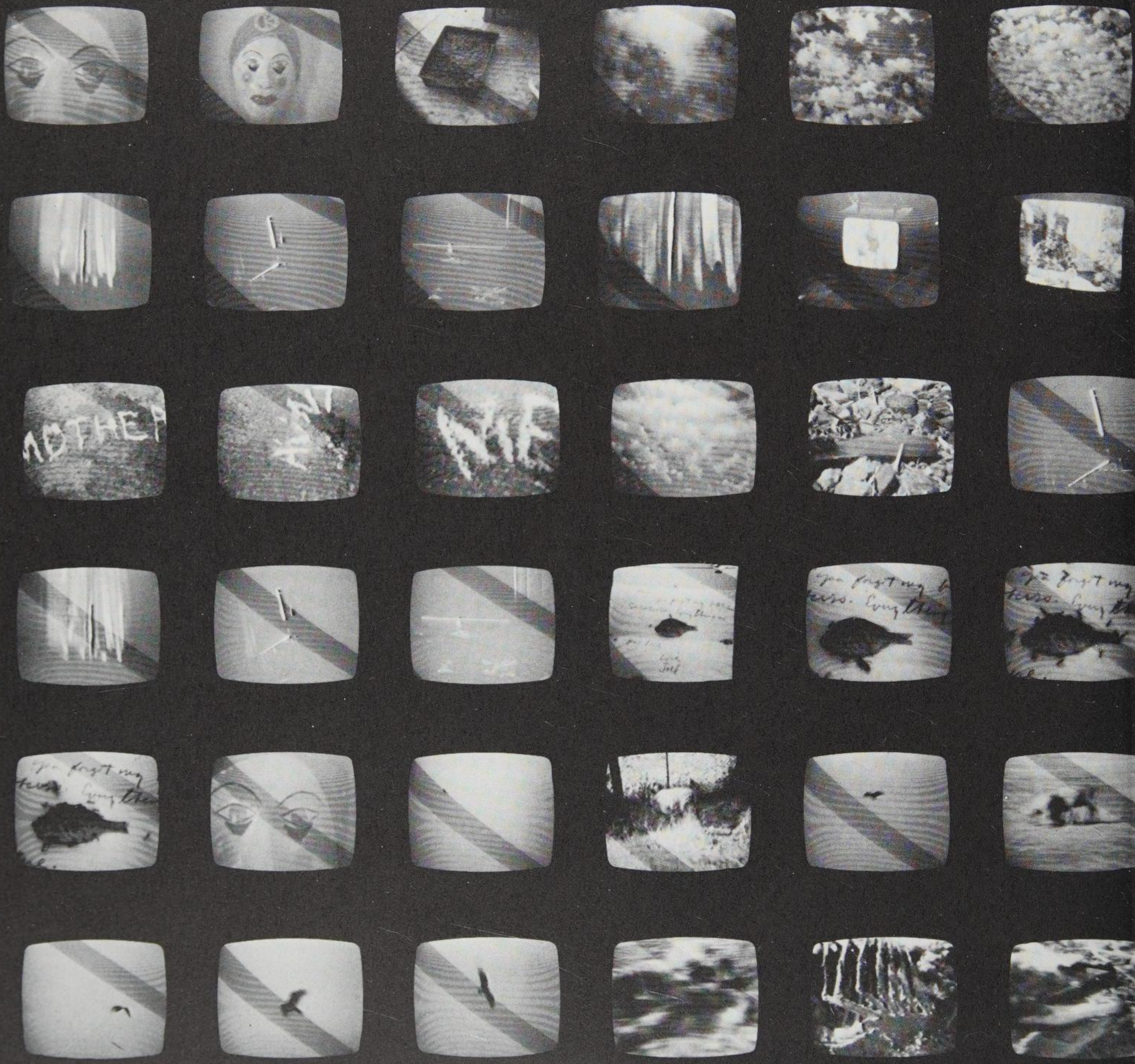

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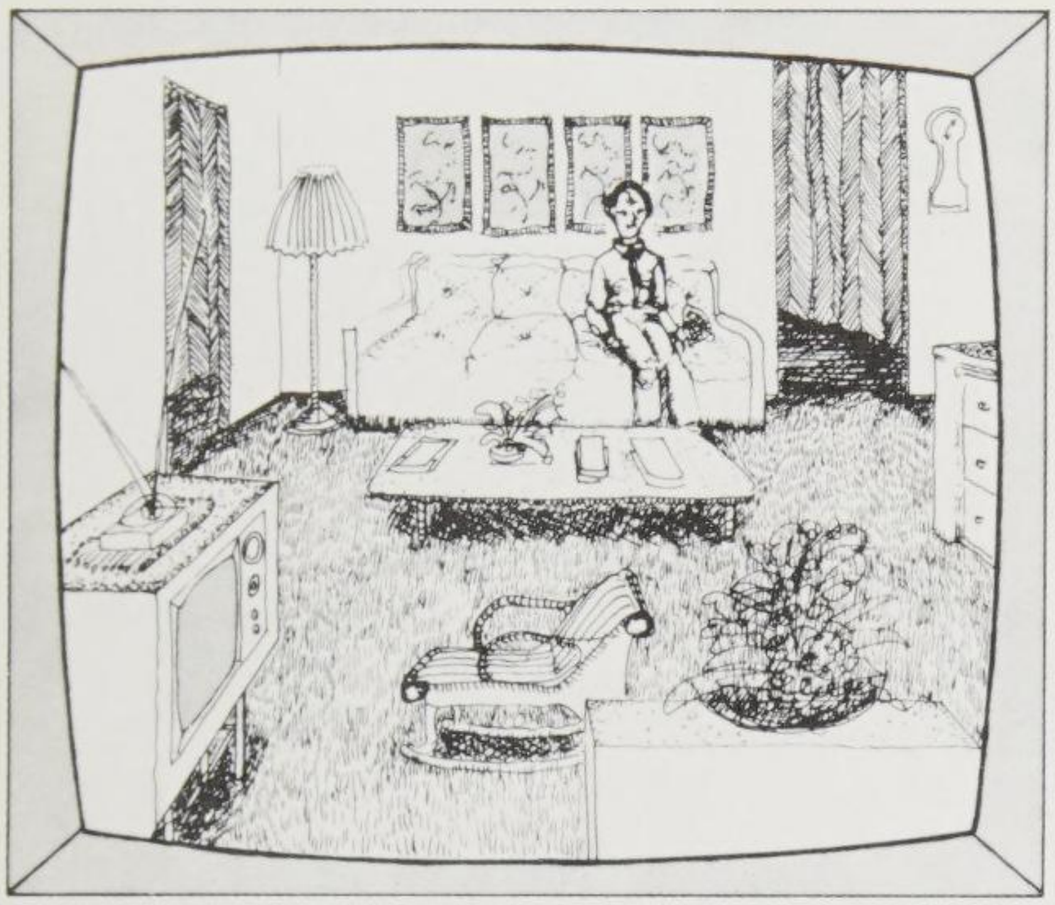
Copyright © 1976 by Joel Glassman

We remembered her most when she was
not with us... and we fled to the sea
for protection from that which could
only be heard, and not seen... we loved
her for all she had given us... and all
she had promised us... and we re-
membered back even further... to
what was hers... ours... what we
had shared together... and we began
to cry... and everyone grew older
before my eyes... and it was then
that she answered "I love you all
... I always will... you will become
me... and I will become something else
and that is the way it will be!"
(from the tape "dreams" 1973-4 J. Glassman)

JOEL GLASSMAN

# INTERIOR SPACE/EXTERIOR SPACE

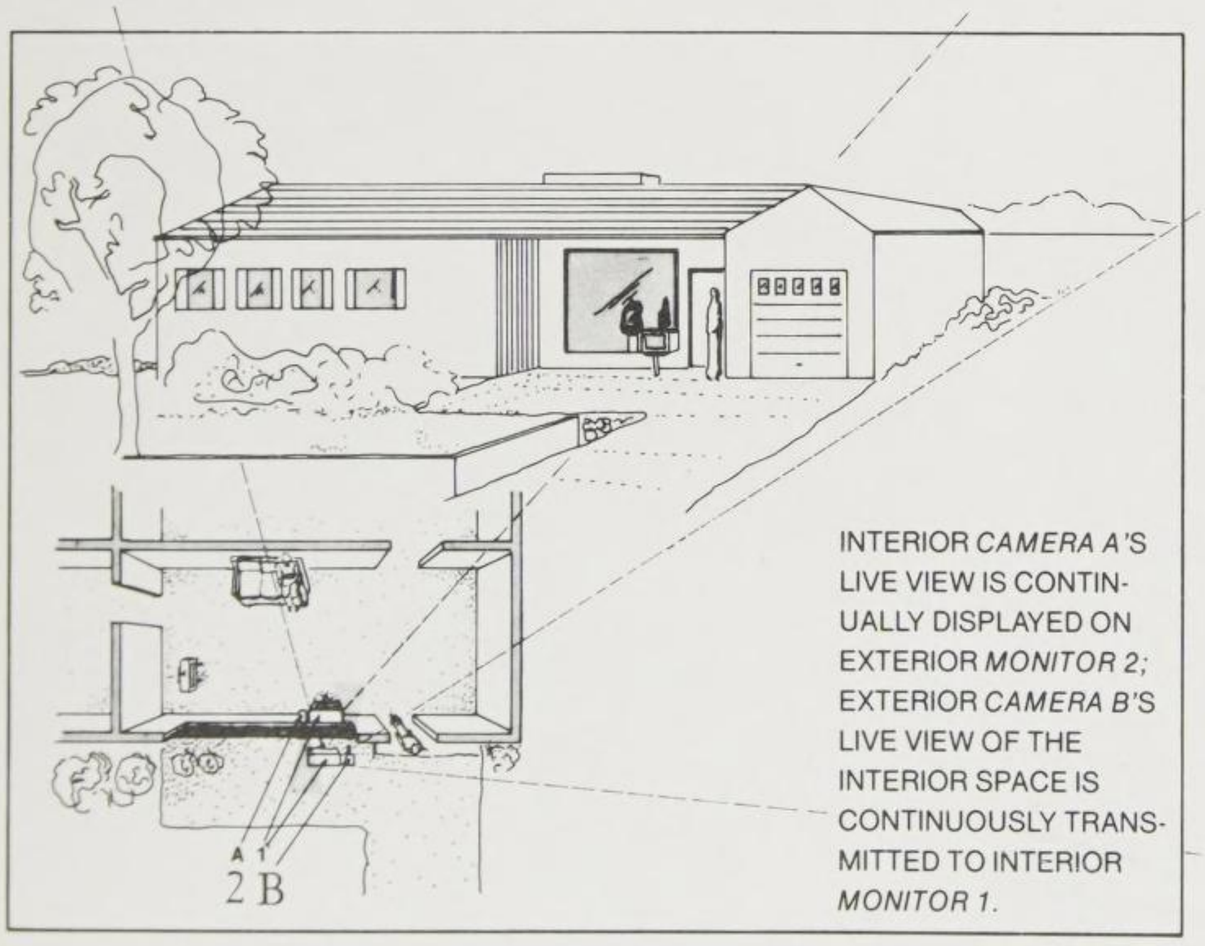
## An Addition to a Conventional House



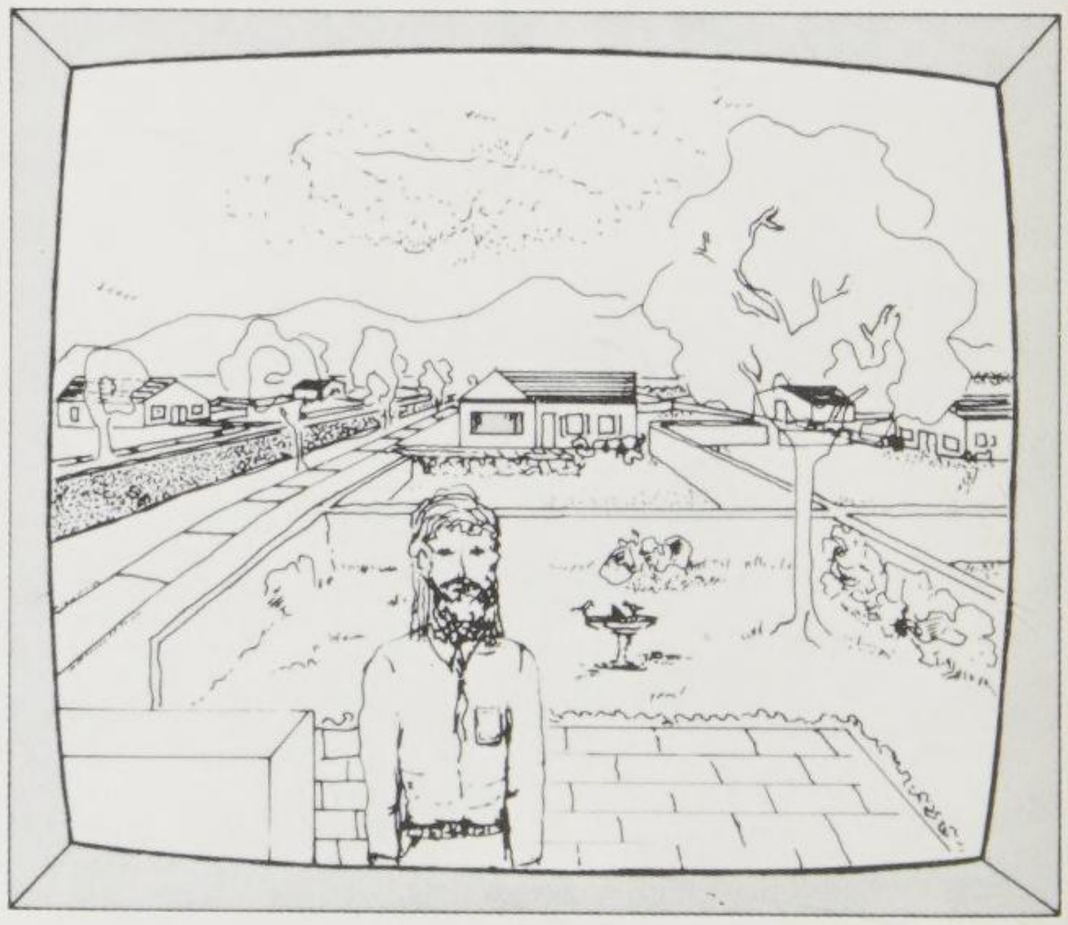
1

THE MAN INSIDE CAN SIMULTANEOUSLY VIEW (LOOKING THROUGH THE WINDOW) THE EXTERIOR *AND* (ON THE MONITOR) THE VIEW FROM THE EXTERIOR OF HIM INSIDE HIS INTERIOR.

THE OUTDOORS MAN CAN SIMULTANEOUSLY VIEW (LOOKING IN THROUGH THE WINDOW) THE INTERIOR *AND* (ON THE MONITOR) THE VIEW FROM THE INTERIOR OF HIM IN THE OUTSIDE.




INTERIOR *CAMERA A'S* LIVE VIEW IS CONTINUALLY DISPLAYED ON EXTERIOR *MONITOR 2;* EXTERIOR *CAMERA B'S* LIVE VIEW OF THE INTERIOR SPACE IS CONTINUOUSLY TRANSMITTED TO INTERIOR *MONITOR 1.*



2


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"Interior Space/Exterior Space"
As a conventional sign a "picture window" gives for those outside a view of a family's living space while, inversely, for that family, it (mirrors) relates them to the community of more or less similar family units. While the view of the interior seen by the spectator outside corresponds to public conventions of private life, the portion of the outside viewed by those inside provides a frame for (is contextual to) their private existence.

But in practice a person outside quickly gazes at the "picture window" and then averts his eyes, not desiring to look beyond the immediate sign of conventional normalcy to look closely at what might be seen inside.

The video camera/monitor is analogous to the window; they both mediate inside and outside space, but from an architecturally (socially) controlled vantage.

Here each of the video monitors' images in conjunction with the window show, simultaneously, both interior and exterior views, subverting the exclusive interior private or exterior public perspectives. Both interior and exterior observer's gaze (and behavior) are given a self-consciousness. A person is drawn in, toward the window.

An observer drawn toward the window may alternate his focus:
(1) to observe the "picture window" in itself: simultaneously, *material*, a certain dimension of glass with varying degrees of exterior and self-reflections (depending upon the interior illumination and exterior position of sun's light) in relation to transparency, and sign, the architectural convention, the convention of transparency.
(2) to look *literally* through the window and at what is to be seen inside or outside.



# TRUE CONFESSIONS

## A Description of Recent Videotapes

### MIDORI NO KUTSU SHITA

Or as it is more popularly known, Green Sox. A highly repetitive work, using tape echo, testing over and over again the theory that when a statement is repeated over and over again, people will believe it over and over again.

### COCAINE

Presents a unique socio-ecological viewpoint toward the world. Taped while standing on my head at the bottom of a trash heap. Typical conceptual stuff.

### CAESAR THE CHEF

A must for recipe freaks. Julia Child would boil over if she saw this little soufflé. After I cooked it up I got fed up with feedback.

### GARGLIN' BLUES

An attempt to answer the musical question, "can Black men sing the Whites?" Also a comment on artistic incest. The tape is characterized by its reverse chiaroscuro effects.

### ARROWS

Paste yourself up to look like a cubist painting, chant a rose is a rose is a rose through a synthesizer, and before you know it all your friends will begin to avoid you.

### LAUGHING

The fulfillment of a momentary, simplistic, and short-lived dream to become a stand-up comic who knows only one joke. Did you get it?

### NIHON KARA KITA

A sutra with a slant, with backing vocals by the Zen Tabernacle Choir. This tape depicts and describes how Japan economically bamboozled the United States in retaliation for dropping the A-bomb. Very popular with all of my Japanese friends.

### A REEL HOEDOWN

An attempt to play Bluegrass fiddle backward in front of a black and white camera, while I have both ears plugged. The result looks and sounds like a Bach fugue.

### AMERICA AND THE CLASSICS

A highly metaphysical selection, inspired by a line written by Ezra Pound. Documents what five years in New York can do to an innocent and naïve young kid from out Idaho way.

### VAMPIRE VIDEO

When I read the original *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, I knew I'd be able to put it to creative use someday. I must admit that the thought of a living death with all those luscious and voluptuous women running around in diaphanous clothing makes me bite my lower lip.

### FATAGAGA

An example culled from my Dada and Mama period. A primal piece—reaching into the psyche for anything that's kicking around down there.

### A LOVE SONG

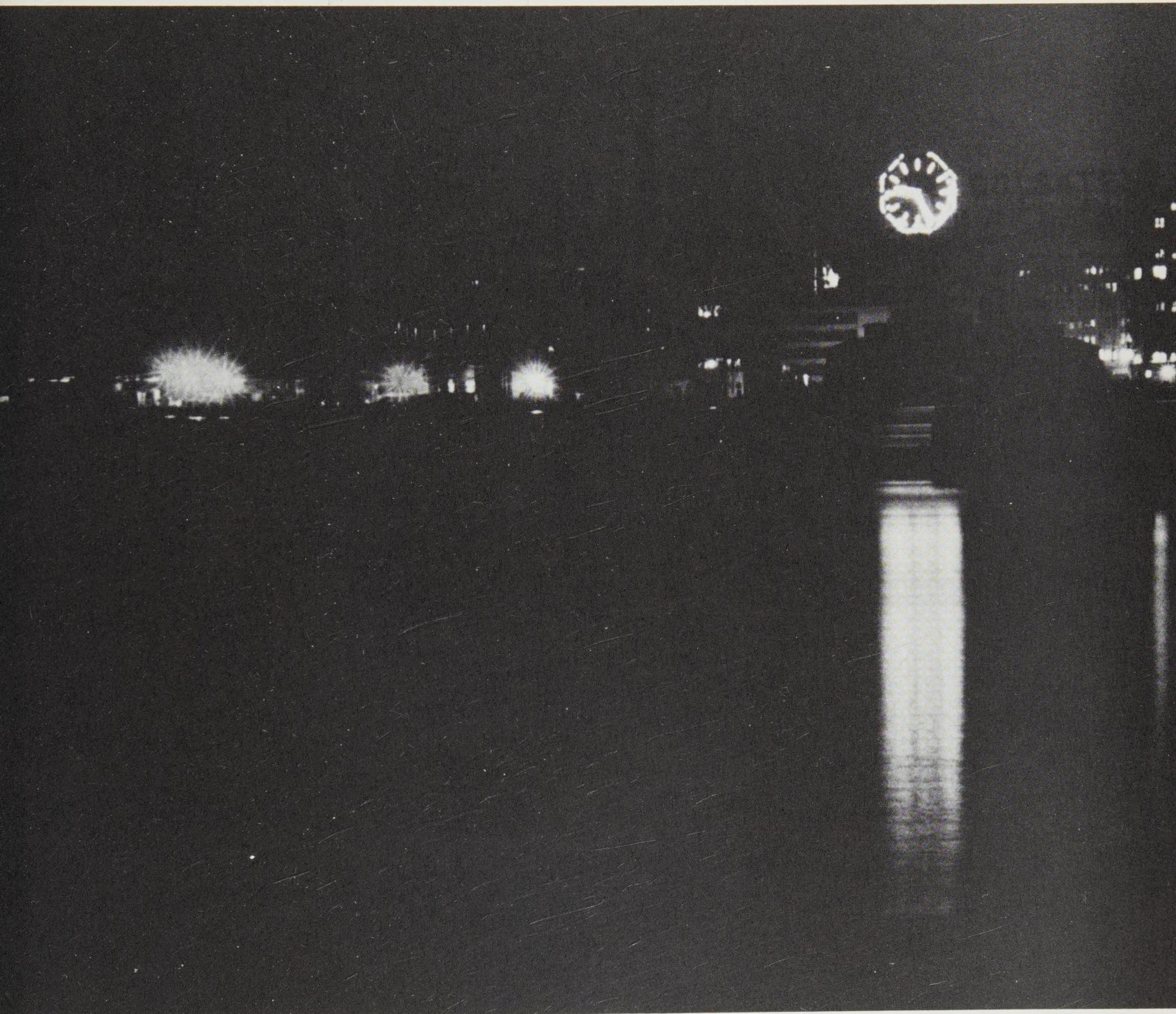
Proof of the old adage that looking at the world through broken bottles will give a person a distorted outlook toward life, beauty, and rose-colored glasses.

Copyright © 1976 by Ernest Gusella

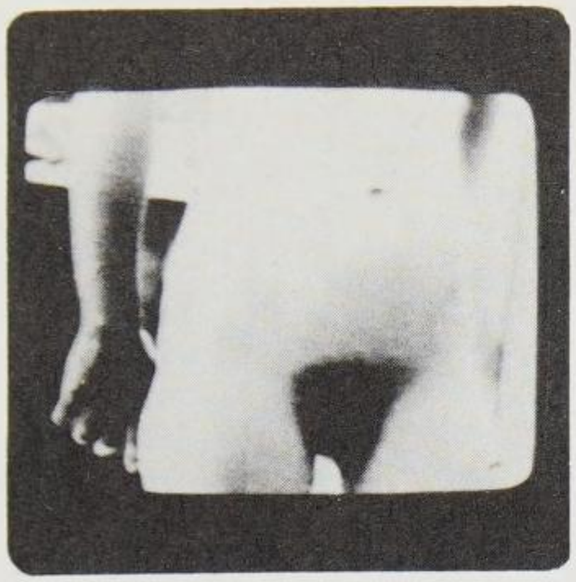
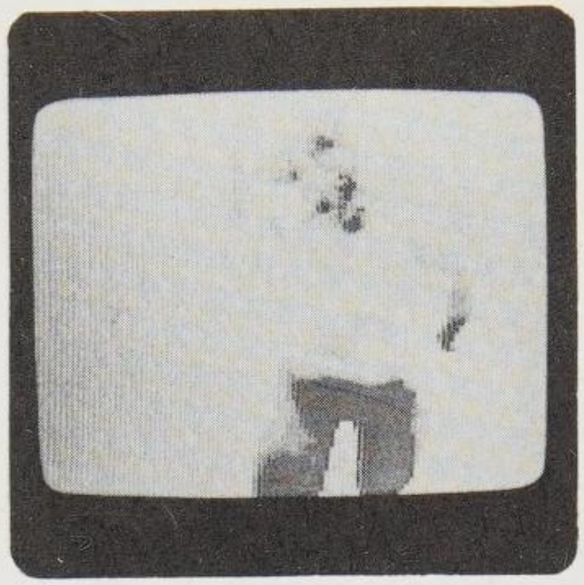
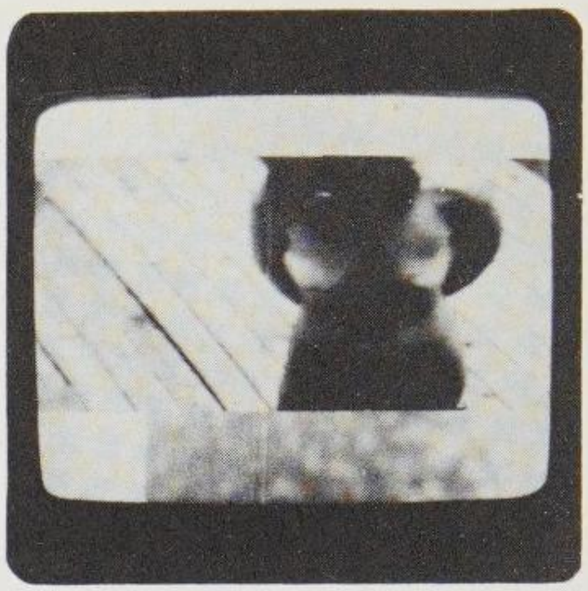
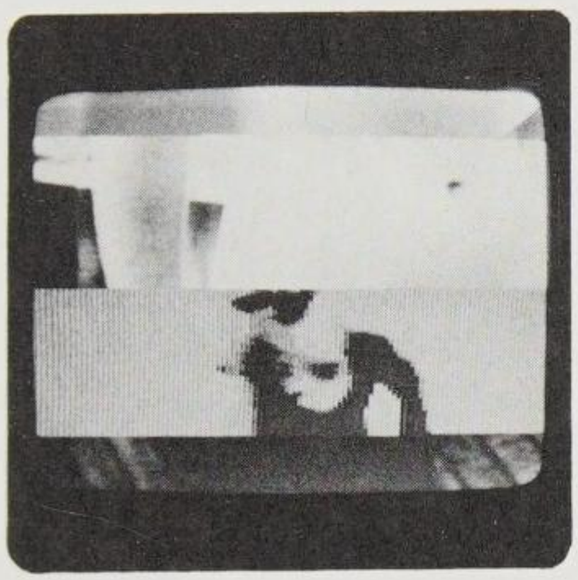
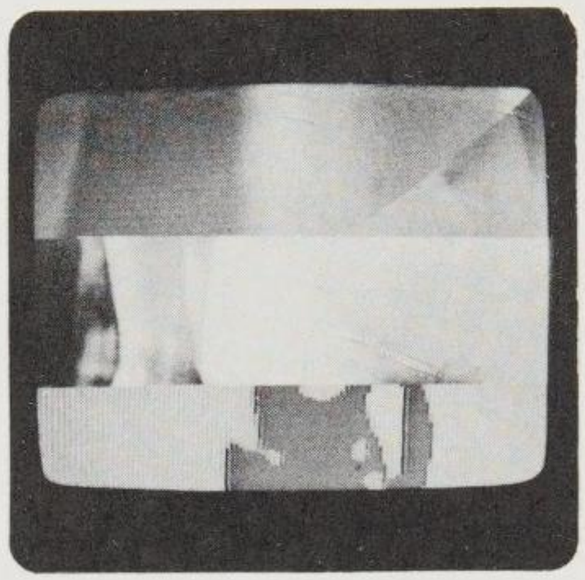
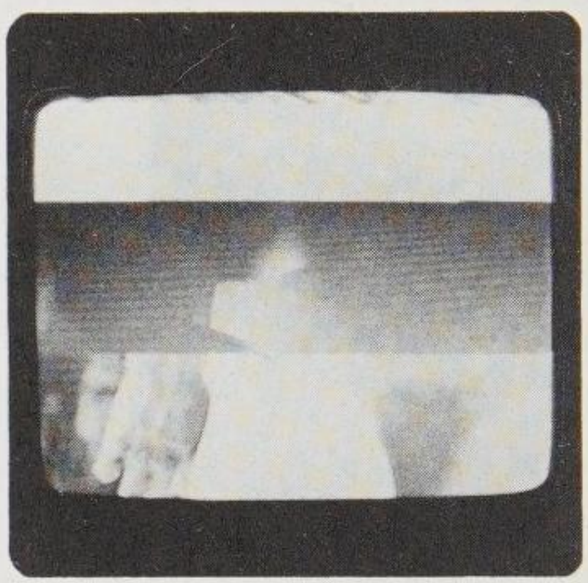
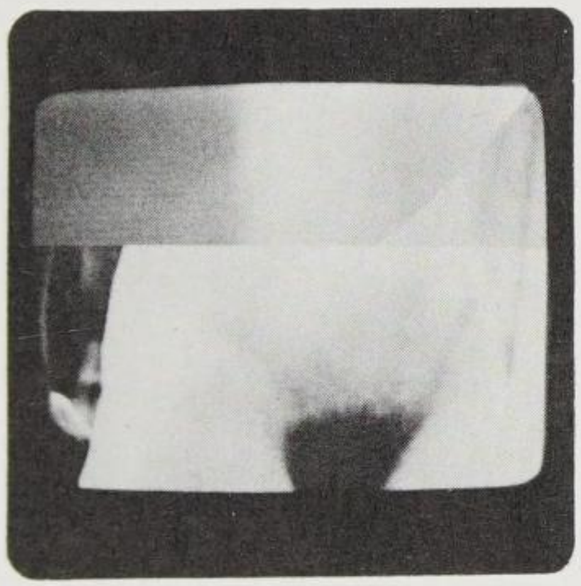


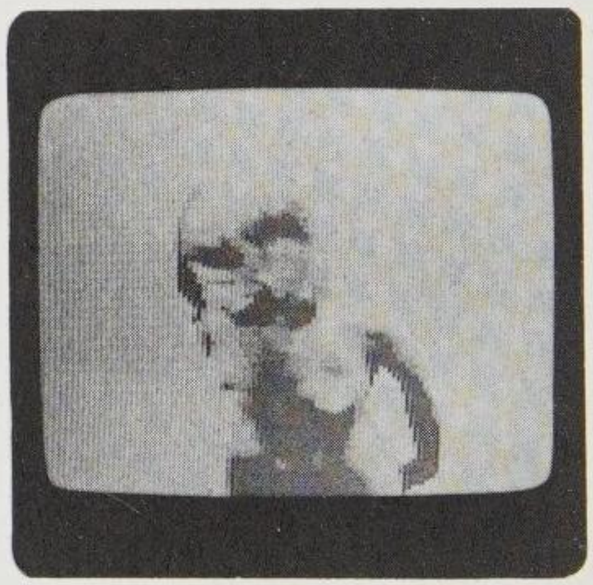
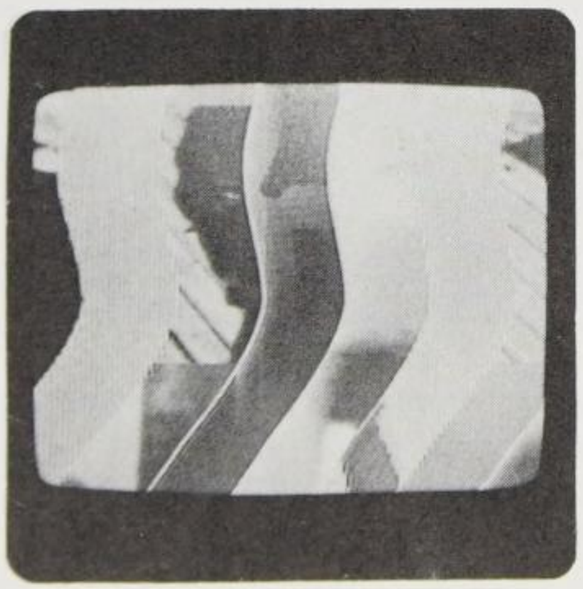
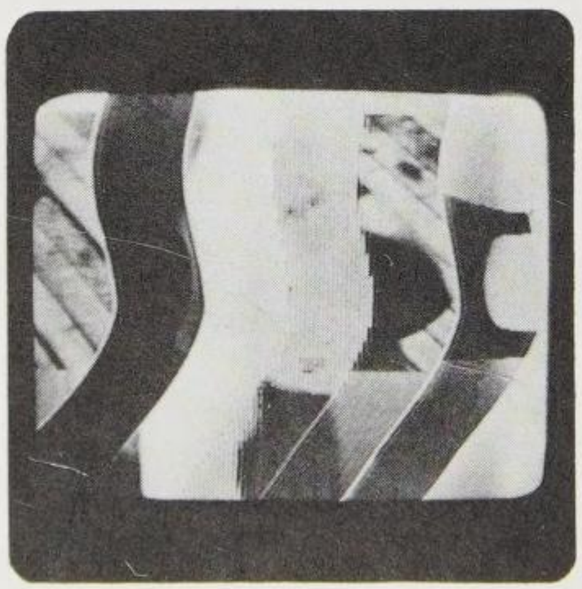
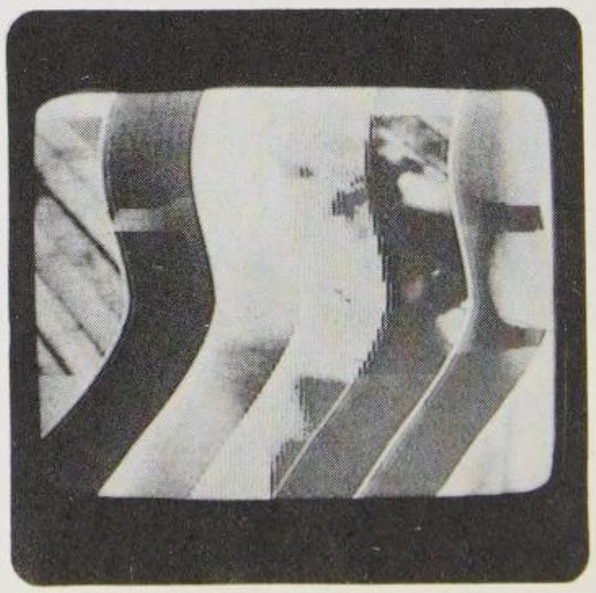
EVOLUTION OF A MEDIA: Big sharks, preying on live time, buying satellites, laying cables, buying Hollywood, taking free-TV, making pay-TV with better reception, uninterrupted uncensored movies, and Muhammed Ali. But none of these operations will ever involve anyone in this book and nothing we do will ever affect anything they do.

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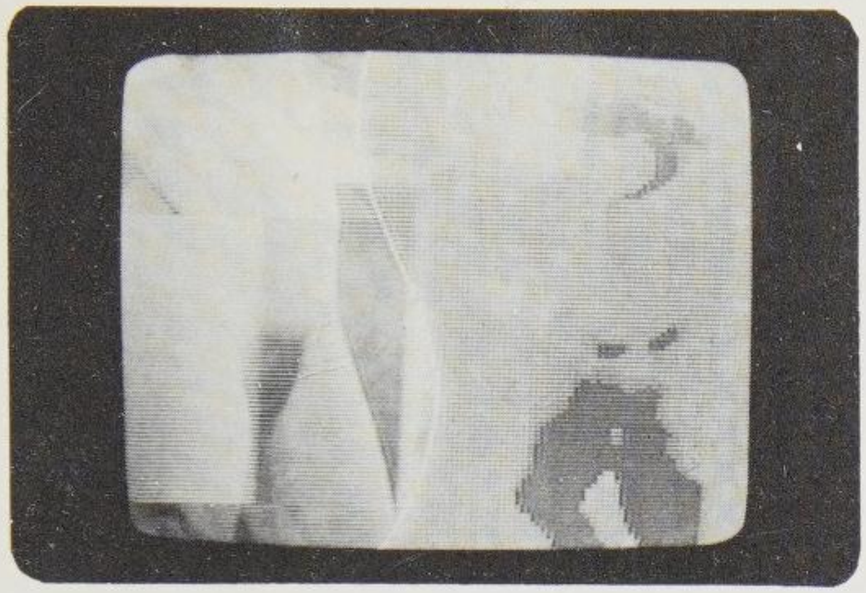


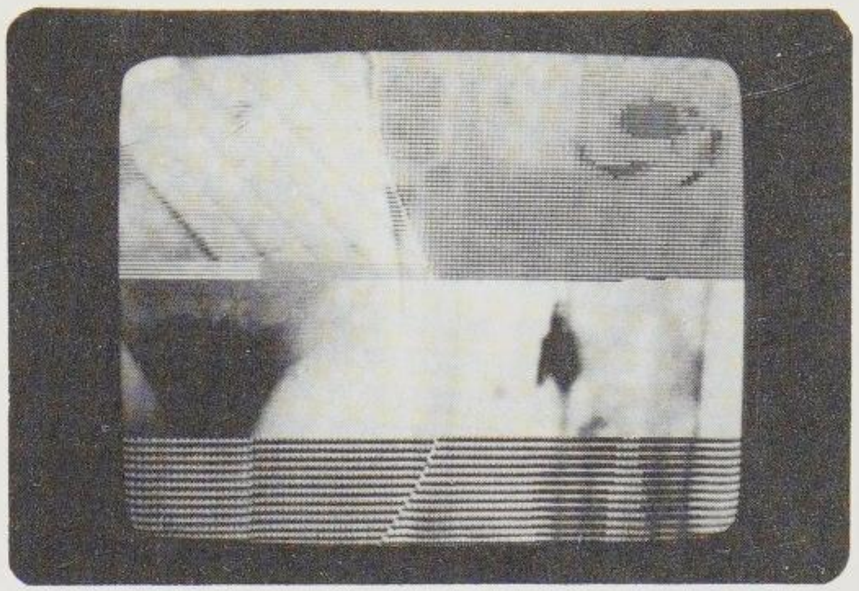
However, our time is dependent on their time. We'll make TV as a product (video disc), as opposed to a hobby, only if they let us. They could completely monopolize the production of video disc (disc being the only chance for the medium to be accessible to individual efforts, and support itself). Who cares if it's RCA, MCA, NBC, CBS, ABC or HBO who wins. They're all closed systems. *Fish fish. That's the way the networks.*

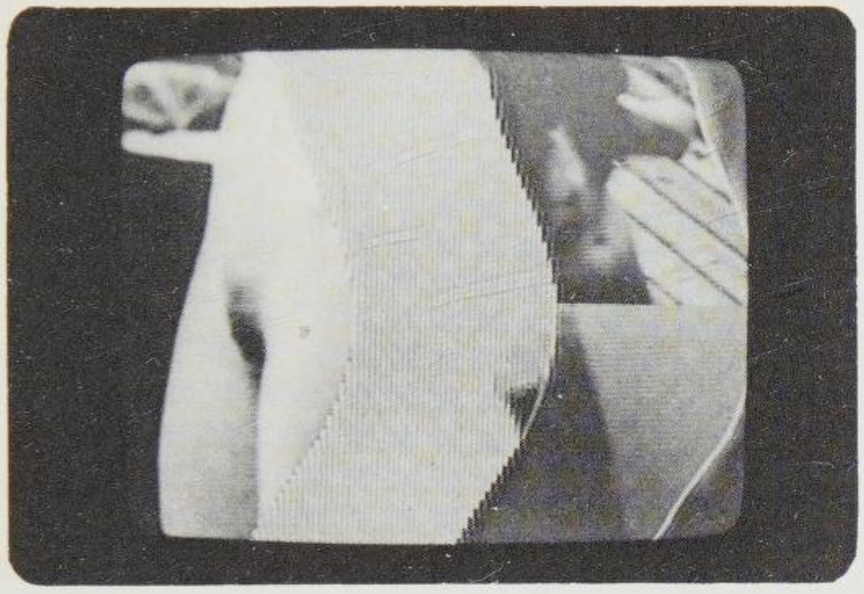








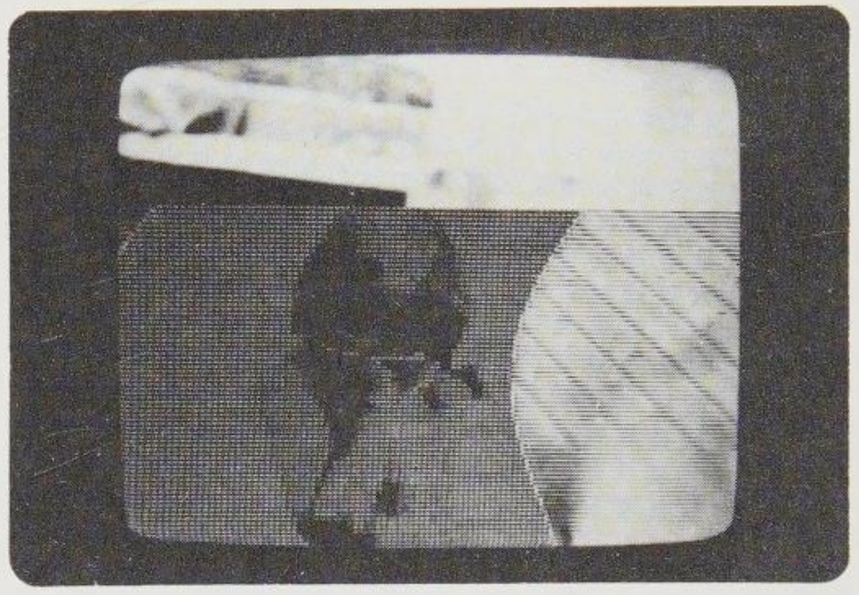





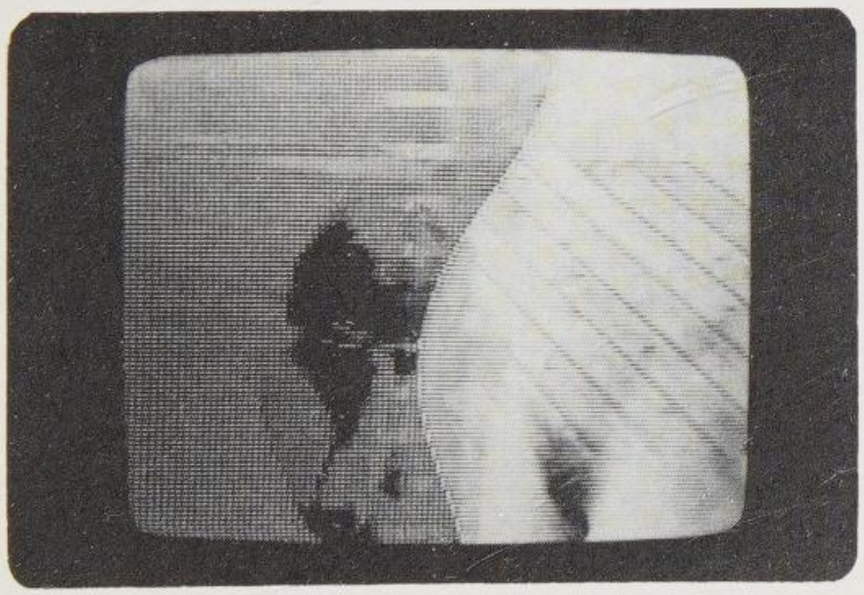
 Copyright © 1976 by Ralph Hocking



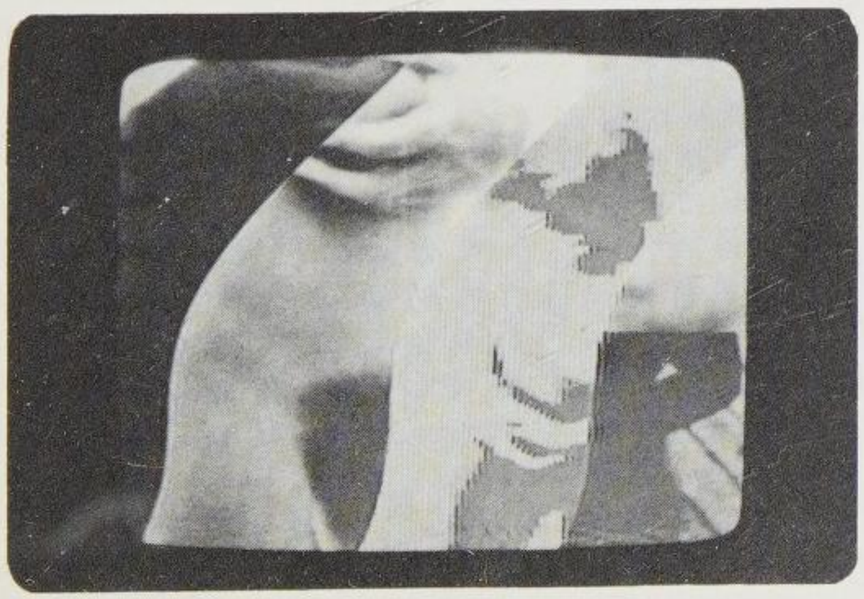








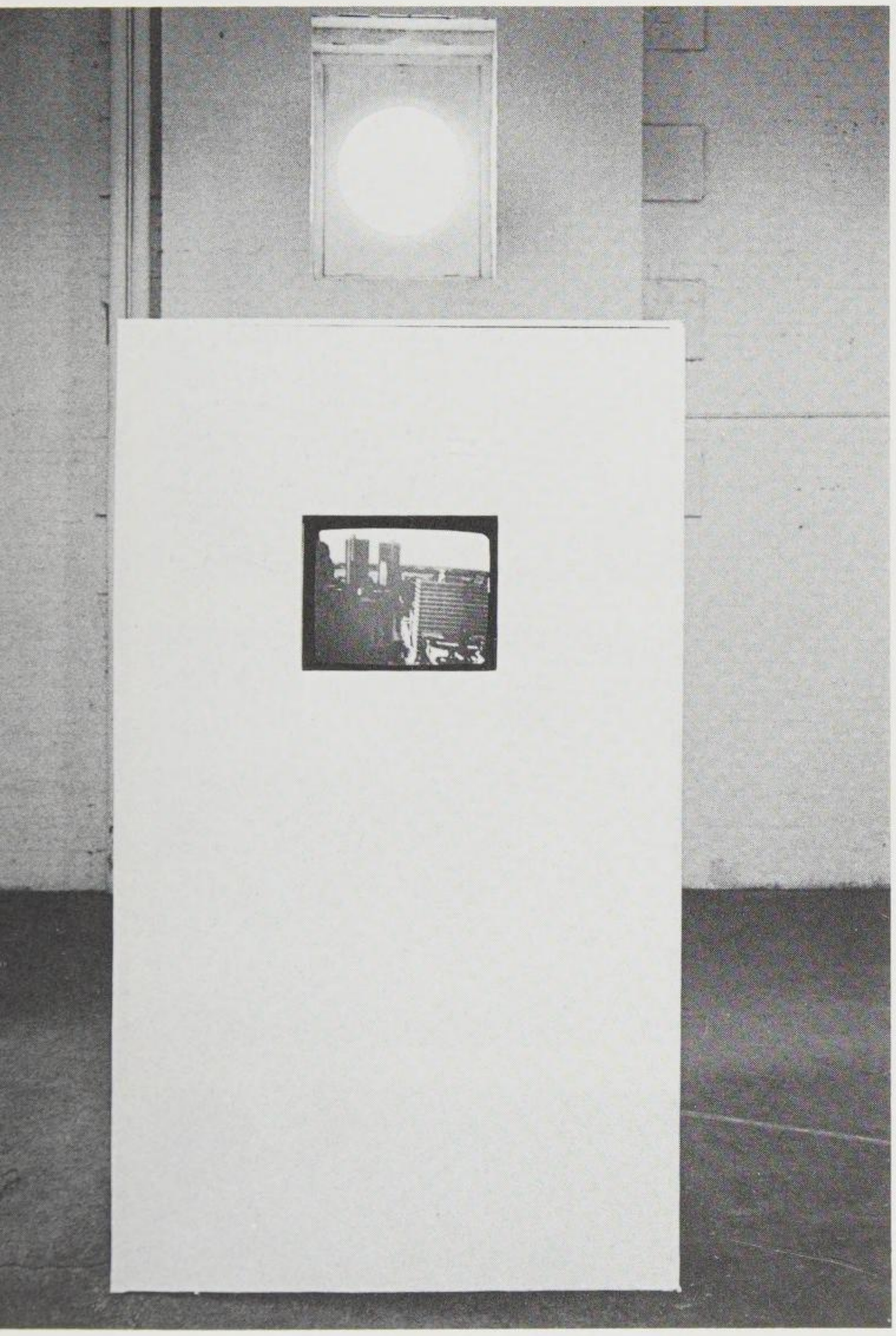
My involvement with video varies from day to day. My personal challenges are designing the CRT and helping to bring into existence the systems important for the exploration of this stage of the art. My current problems with these systems include trying to deal with the incredible speed at which electronic images are constructed, natural and synthetic color, fracturing and reconstructing simultaneous views of



objects and spaces in a particular situation, and keeping the wires soldered. At present the results of these investigations are only perceivable by viewing a field-by-field playback. A few of the fields are presented here. The video systems I use were built by Shuya Abe, David Jones, and Don McArthur. I thank them. I also thank Sherleen Miller.

# SOME NOTES ON VIDEO WORKS

**Nancy Holt**

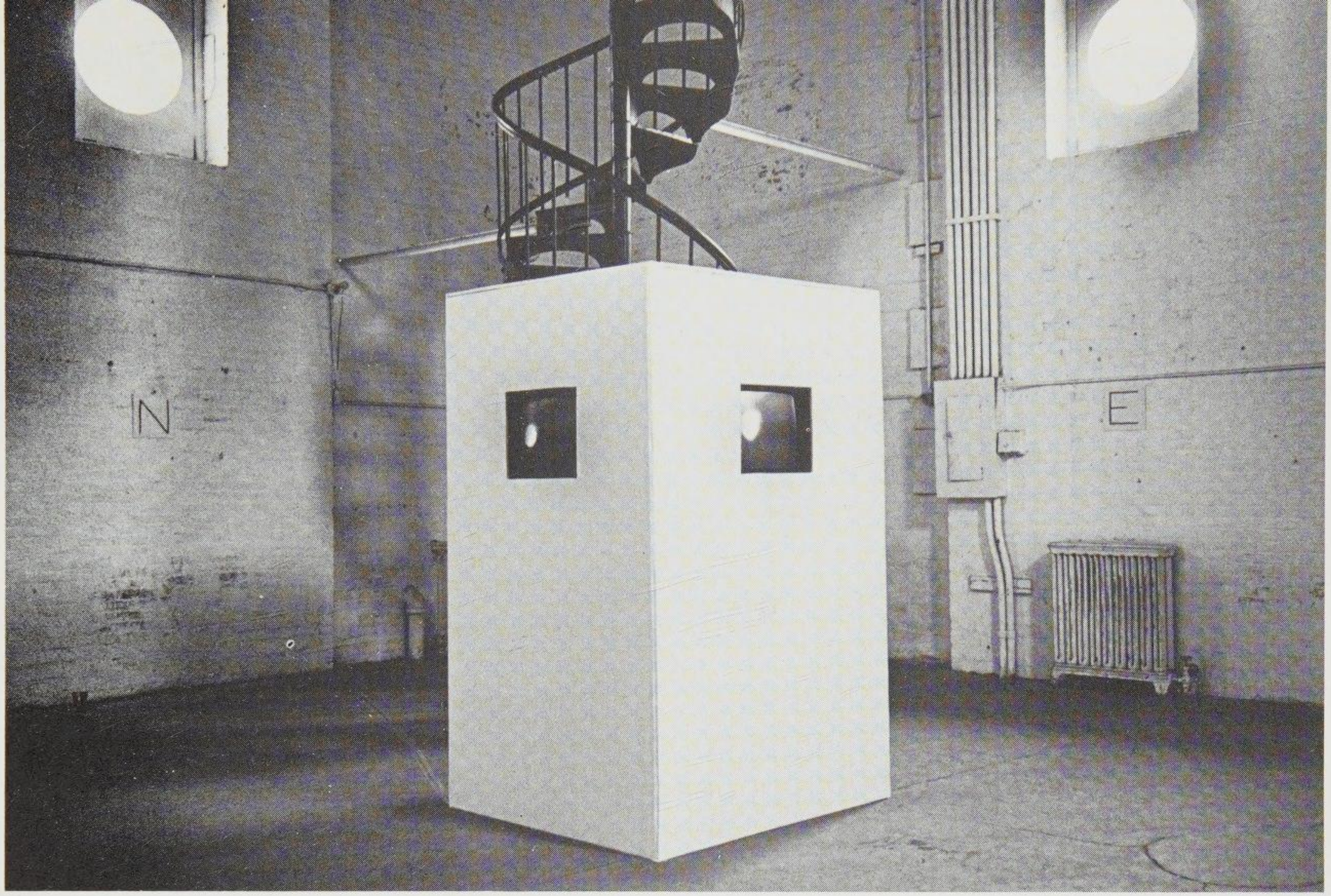


*Points of View*, Nancy Holt, Video Installation, Clocktower, N.Y., May 1974
Produced by: Carlotta Schoolman
Audio: Carl Andre, Liza Bear, Bruce Boice, Tina Girouard, Klaus Kertess, Ruth Kligman, Lucy Lippard, Richard Serra

In *Points of View* (an installation at the Clocktower, N.Y., May 1974), four monitors were placed facing out N,E,S,W at eye level in the center of the room. They were enclosed in a white rectangular structure 6½′ x 4½′ with monitor screens exposed 4½′–5½′ from the floor. This structure repeated the structure of the square room with its high walls and four windows N,E,S,W overhead. Four tapes, previously shot from the four windows through a static camera with a movable circular tube in front of the lens, were played back simultaneously on all four monitors, revealing passing circular glimpses of the world outside. The windows themselves were made circular, causing an interaction between the circles of sunlight shining into the space and the circles of video light being emitted by the monitors. Eight persons (two per tape) have a dialogue about what they are seeing on the screen in a sound-over audio track. The video installation unit thus became a repository of divergent interpretations of the world as it can be seen from the heights of the clocktower through the video system (a vision not available in the room itself since the windows are above eye level). The view is quite vast; it includes lower and mid-Manhattan, the East and Hudson rivers, and parts of Brooklyn and New Jersey, as well as things closer in, such as flues, chimneys, and water towers. Verification of video perceptions was possible by going through a door in the room out onto a walkway which completely surrounded the outside of the clocktower. So the outside was brought inside through video, and this inside "looking" led to a recomposition of vision (a double take) when the actual outside was confronted. This visual transposition brought about a constant rereferencing toward the center (video unit) followed by counter movements out again toward the periphery (tower walkway).

Perceptual concerns predominate in my video works. In *Locating #2*, *Zeroing In*, and *Points of View*, large outdoor spaces, as much as five miles in depth and one mile in width from fifteen floors up, are spanned on the video screen. Space is flattened and contracted. By placing a prop (a movable tube or a piece of cardboard with holes that open and close) in front of the camera, I block off most of the static camera view, leaving one or more circular images to come and go. The movement of the videotape is then for the

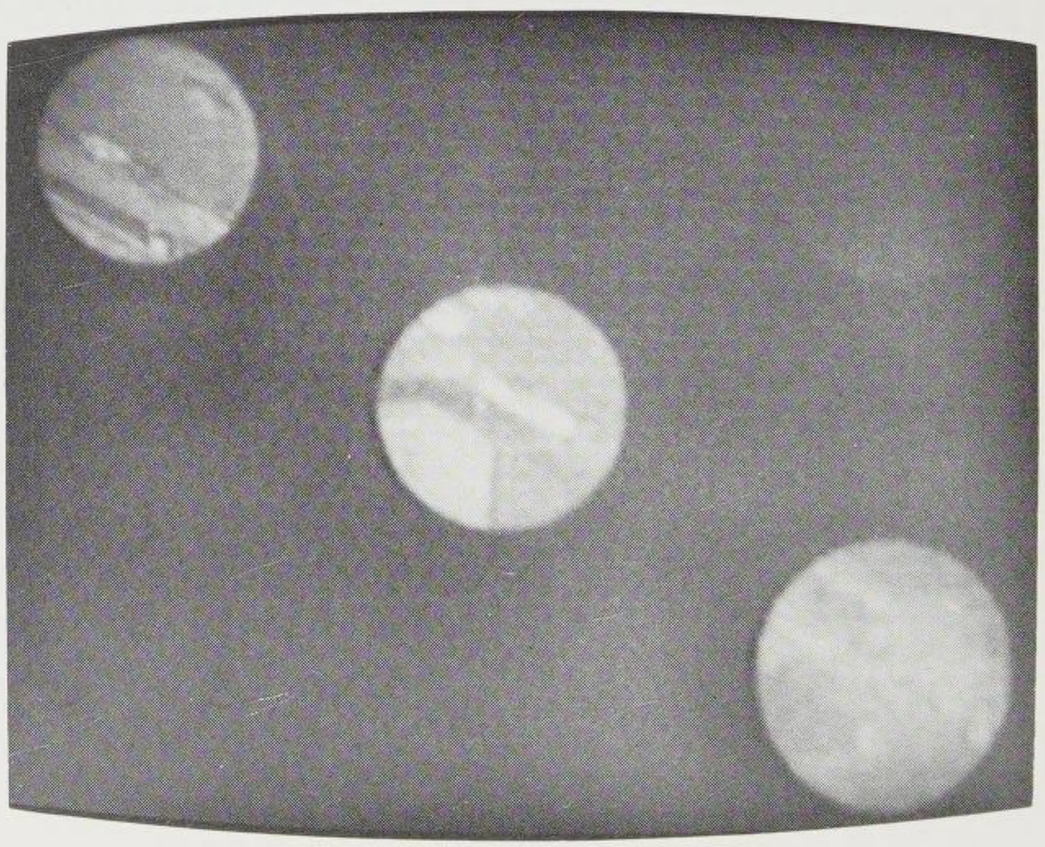
 Copyright © 1976 by Nancy Holt




*Points of View*, Nancy Holt, Clocktower, N.Y., May 1974

most part the movement of the prop. The circles move rhythmically across the screen, forming changing patterns. Perception is naturally disorientated at heights such as fifteen floors—common things like trees and cars seem like miniatures, the mind does a double take. The video camera and the prop in front of it add their own double distancing to an already naturally distanced view. Background and foreground merge in the circular segments. Ordinary objects become difficult to discern as they come into view. What is seen is immediately put into words in the audio system by two persons, chosen initially because of their differences in outlook. The dialogue instantaneously sets up an interplay between words and the things seen in the video image. Mental sets and world views of participants of course affect their interpretations of what is seen. The viewer is drawn into interpreting what is being seen at the same moment as those commenting in the audio track. The viewer and the participants are both seeing the videotape for the first time. The original participants have no special knowledge over the viewers; everyone comes in on an equal basis. Partial glimpses through circular holes set up a desire for the whole camera view, yet memory fails to retain the visual fragments necessary to recompose the whole view. The whole continuously eludes us. At the end of each tape the prop is removed. The total camera view is always a new confrontation.

*Zeroing In*, Nancy Holt, 1972; special assistance: Hermine Freed; audio: Ted Castle

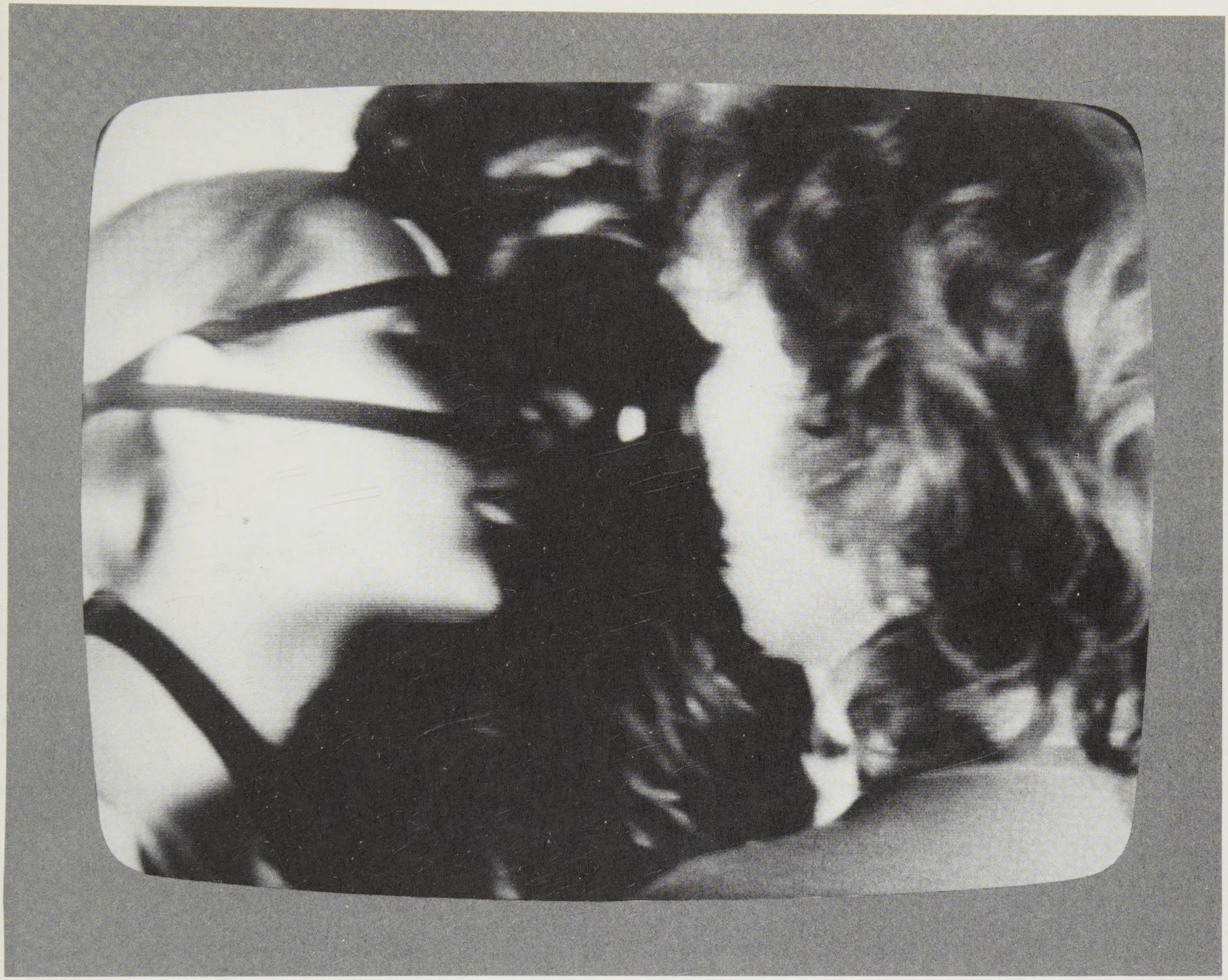




PENCILMASK (7min.)

Nine straps are tied around my head—three vertically, six horizontally. At each crossing point of the straps a pencil is attached. All pencils are about two inches long and reproduce the profile of my face in three dimensions. I move my body rhythmically from left to right in front of a white wall. The pencils make marks on the wall, which visualize exactly the rhythm of my movements.

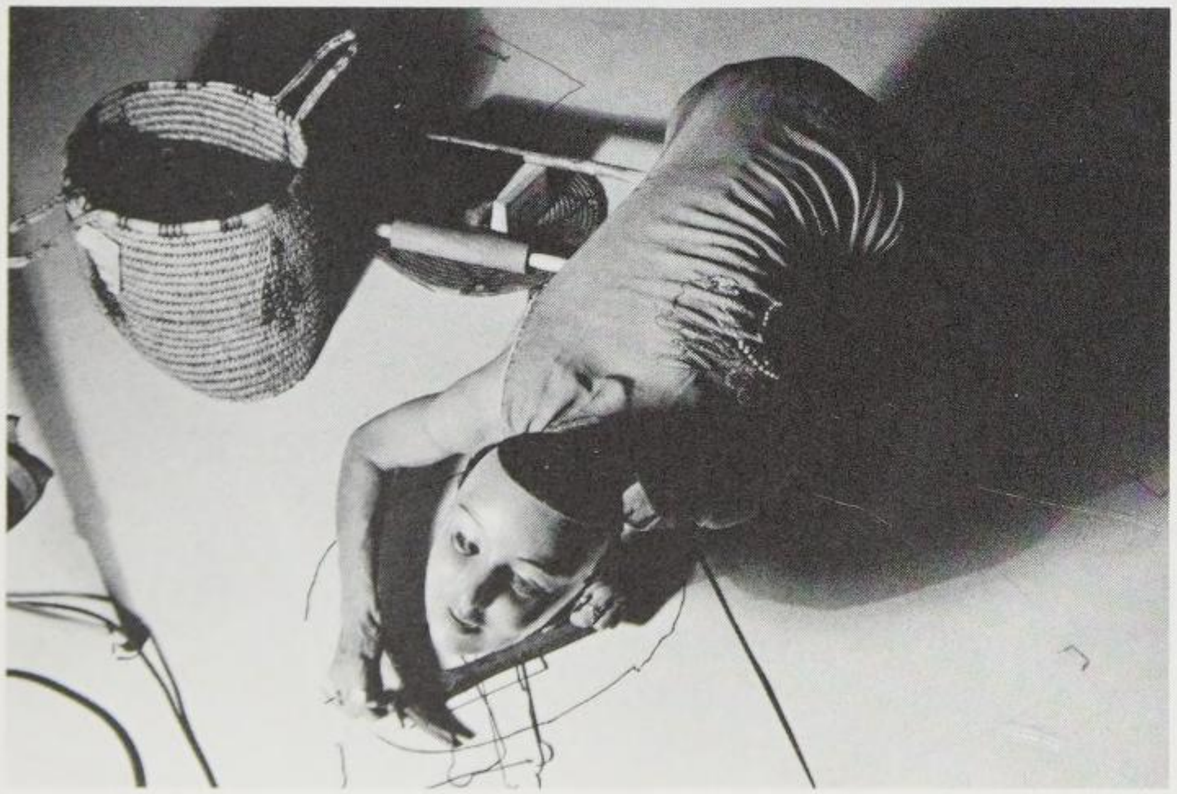
 Copyright © 1976 by Rebecca Horn



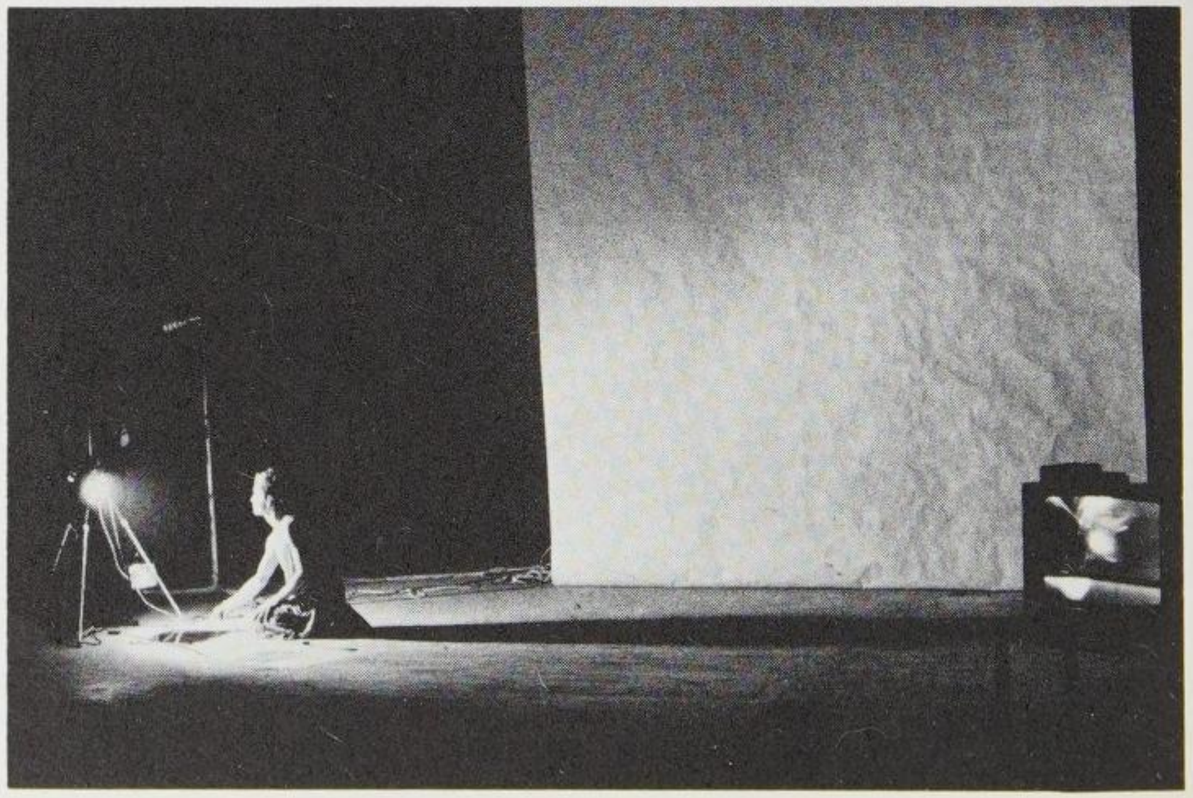
COCKFEATHERMASK (5 min.)

The cockfeathers are attached to a replica of my profile, half an inch wide, which is strapped on my head. With the feathers I caress the face of a person standing close to me. The intimate space between us is filled with tactile tension. My sight is obstructed by the feathers —I can only see the face of the other when I turn my head, looking with one eye like a bird.

*Funnel*, 1974 photo: Babette Mangolte

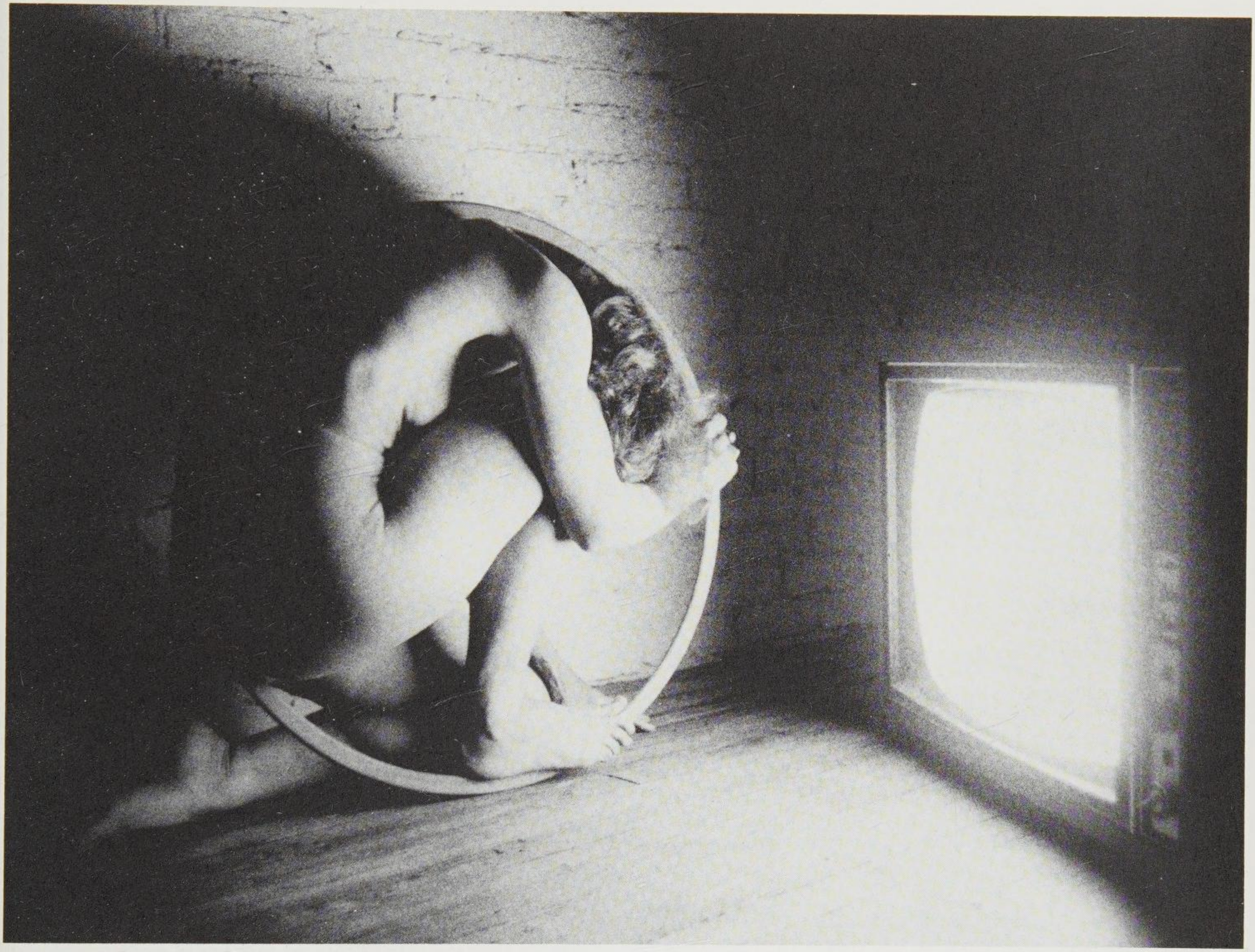


*Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*, 1972 photo: Roberta Neiman



*Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, 1973 photo: © Giorgio Colombo

 Copyright © 1976 by Joan Jonas



*Twilight*, 1975

photo: Gwenn Thomas

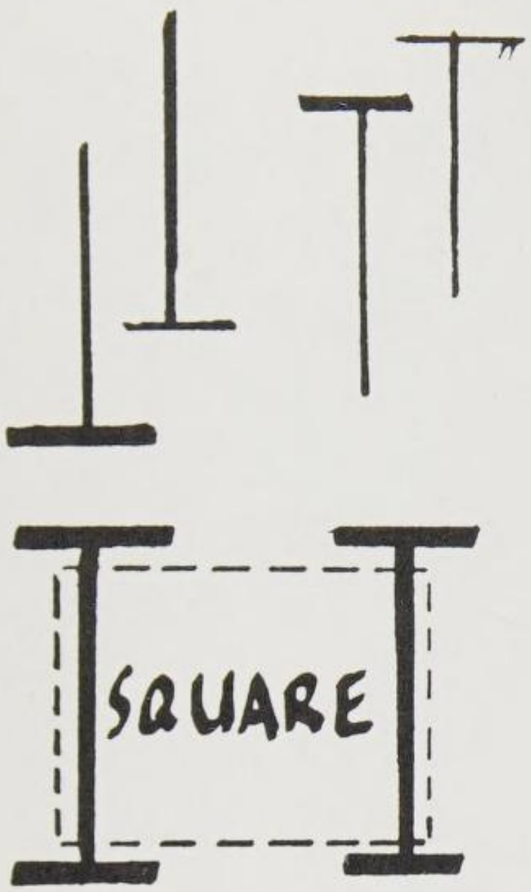
At first I saw the monitor/projector as an ongoing mirror. Watching myself I tried to alter the image using objects, costumes, and masks, moving through various identities (the sorcerer, the floozie, the howling dog). Narcissism was a habit. Every move was for the monitor.

Space was always a primary concern, and in considering the space of the monitor I then dealt with its boxlike structure, positioning it in relation to myself. I tried to climb into the box, attempting to turn the illusion of flatness to one of depth. The focus was off myself.

Finally there were no images. The monitor was a source of light.

Video is a device extending the boundaries of my interior dialogue to include the audience. The perception is of a double reality: me as image and as performer. I think of the work in terms of imagist poetry; disparate elements juxtaposed . . . alchemy.

# ONTOLOGY OF [ENVIRONMENTAL] VIDEO:



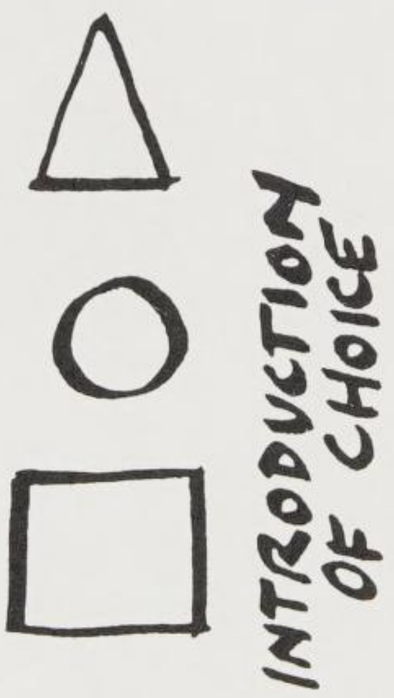

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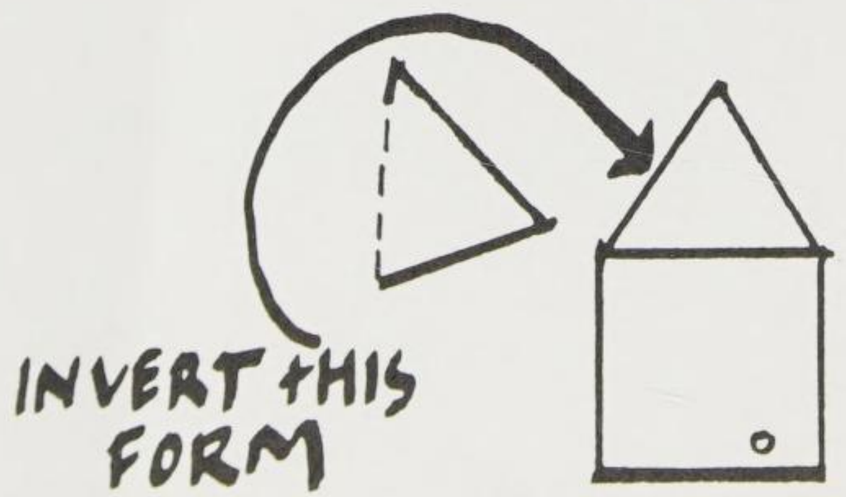
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IMAGE

TEXTURE TASTE

SMELL SOUND




DYNAMICS OF A

METAMORPHOSIS OF A PRIMARY FORM

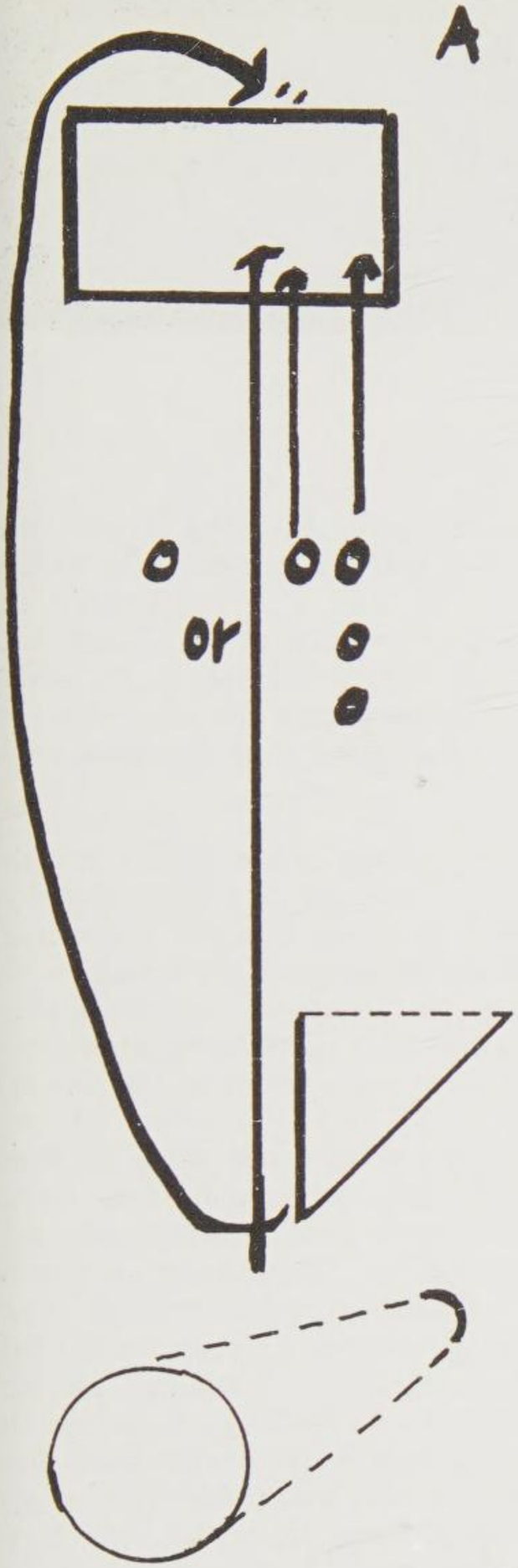
DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN OBJECT · SUBJECT THRU A BALANCE OF THE SENSES

A COMBINED SET OF ALTERNATIVES

A STRUCTURE WHICH DESIGNATES COMPLETE UTILIZATION OF THE SENSES

 Copyright © 1976 by Daile Kaplan

# A EUCLIDEAN NARRATIVE




- EVOLUTION OF A BASIC TENSION IN THE RIGHT ANGLE [INHERENT TO A SQUARE]
- SIGNIFIER OF A VERTICAL SENSIBILITY; NEW DIRECTION OF T MAY BE INTRODUCED THO THE FORM IS STILL CONTAINED

- PLACEMENT OF DISSIMILAR CONSTRUCTS RESULTS IN SOME RELEASE OF TENSION IN

- ABILITY TO EXERCISE CONTROL OF CHOICE RESULTS IN ACTUAL CHANGES IN

- INTRODUCTION OF [INVISIBLE] 4TH DIMENSION: SCULPTURAL POSSIBILITIES OF OBJECT-SUBJECT RELATIONSHIPS.

- ASSIMILATION OF TENSIONS THRU A TUBE. REDUCTION OF TIME AND SPACE: DEVELOPMENT OF AN IMAGE:: RELATIONSHIP OF IMAGE TO FORM(S): INTERRACTION OF IMAGE:: FORM:: VIEWER.

. TV .

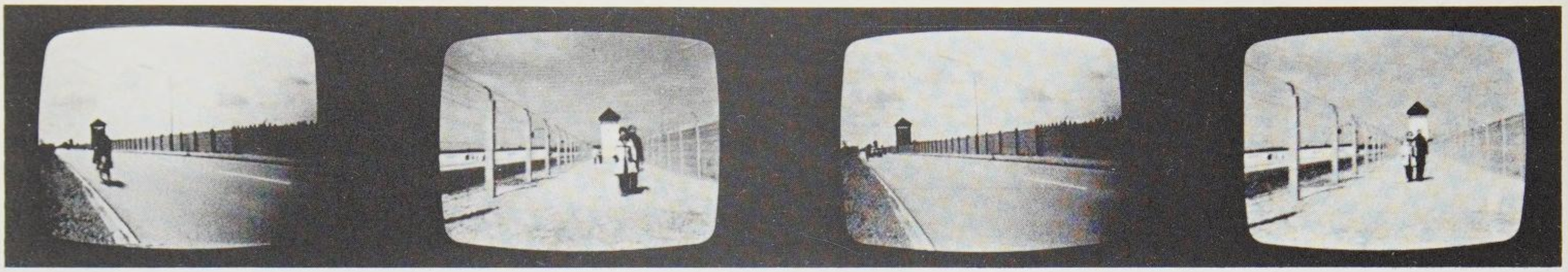


Figure 1 These are the first 4 of the 18 configurations within this 24-min. work.

# DACHAU 1974

In making the 4 channel video work *Dachau 1974*, my experience as a weaver directly influenced the basic structuring of the work. The content itself was taped in 1974 at the former concentration camp, Dachau. The symmetry of the architecture and the *present* ambience of this space were the focus of the recordings. The past was recorded only insofar as the sounds and voices of the present commingled with the feeling absorbed in wood and revealed in the structure of forms which no amount of time can erase. In retrospect, from a historical perspective, what seems most unique about Dachau symbolically is the expression of that darker side of the human spirit, manifested here through the use of specific tools and techniques of a highly sophisticated and efficient nature.

Once the material for the work was gathered, I turned to the ancient technology of the loom to help solve problems I'd long been having in working with video.

The technology of the loom and the art of weaving both literally and metaphorically represent the combining of many separate elements (literally in the form of threads) to develop patterns which evolve in time to create fabric. That is, the rhythmic body time (as expressed through hand movements)/eye/mind relationship of the individual weaver works in harmony with the laws of the machine itself. For a particular work, the weaver passes weft threads over and under warp threads on the loom, which has been threaded (programmed) by the weaver so that preselected pattern possibilities remain for the weaver to develop, or ignore, when creating a work.

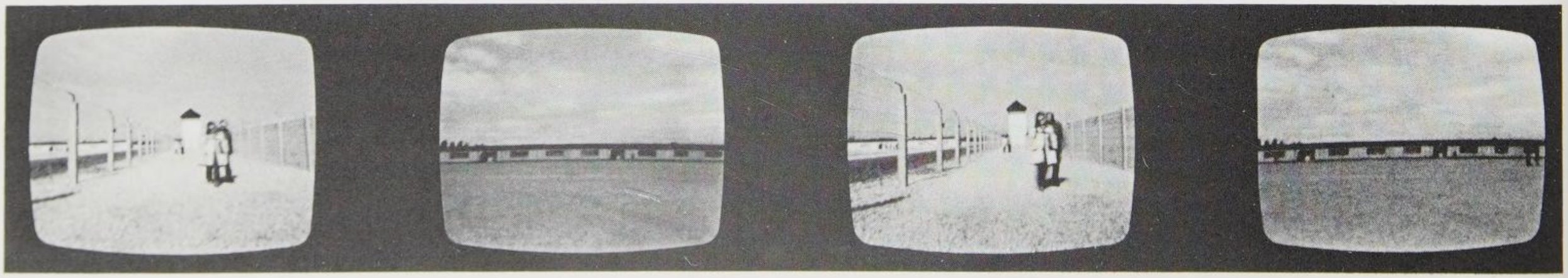
The tactile relationship of the hand and mind working cooperatively within the ancient and sophisticated parameters of this earliest of *threaded* technologies has created indispensable objects of mundane use as well as works of great beauty, endurance, and complex visual structuring.

Just as the spinning and gathering of wool serve as the raw material for a weave, so the artist working with video selects images to serve as the basic substance of the work. All technology, in its capacity to instantly reproduce, store, and retrieve information, has moved continually in a direction that seeks to free us from laboring with our hands by giving us greater conceptual freedom to organize, select, and judge. For myself, it's become clear that the greater my understanding of the role of craftsmanship in working with the video medium, and the more manually active I remain in the selection processes, the greater the possibility for making a technological work true to my intentions.

In the actual making of the work I sought primarily to: (1) introduce a patient, molding attitude toward selection and structuring of the recorded images, and (2) to work with time on multiple channels in such a way that carefully composed image/time relationships would seem live and present to the viewer.

Ultimately, I structured the work for four channels. (Working with multiple channels, in general, permits a richness of input and variables, as well as a simultaneity of action which I feel can give this type of work vitality, greater spatial scale and potential structural substance.) Selecting specific image/time relationships for each channel in the editing process, working with small sections of time repeated with slight variations played against one another on different channels, and editing from a drawn sketch of the overall structure of the work (illustrated

Figure 3



 Copyright © 1976 by Beryl Korot

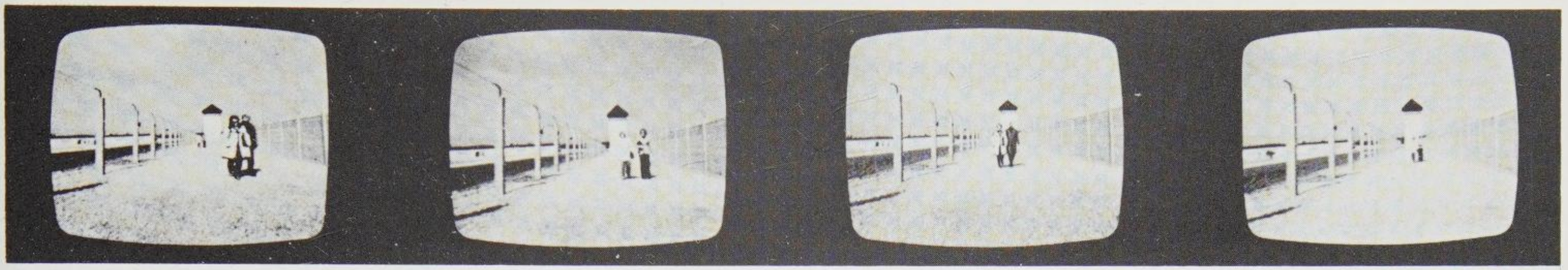
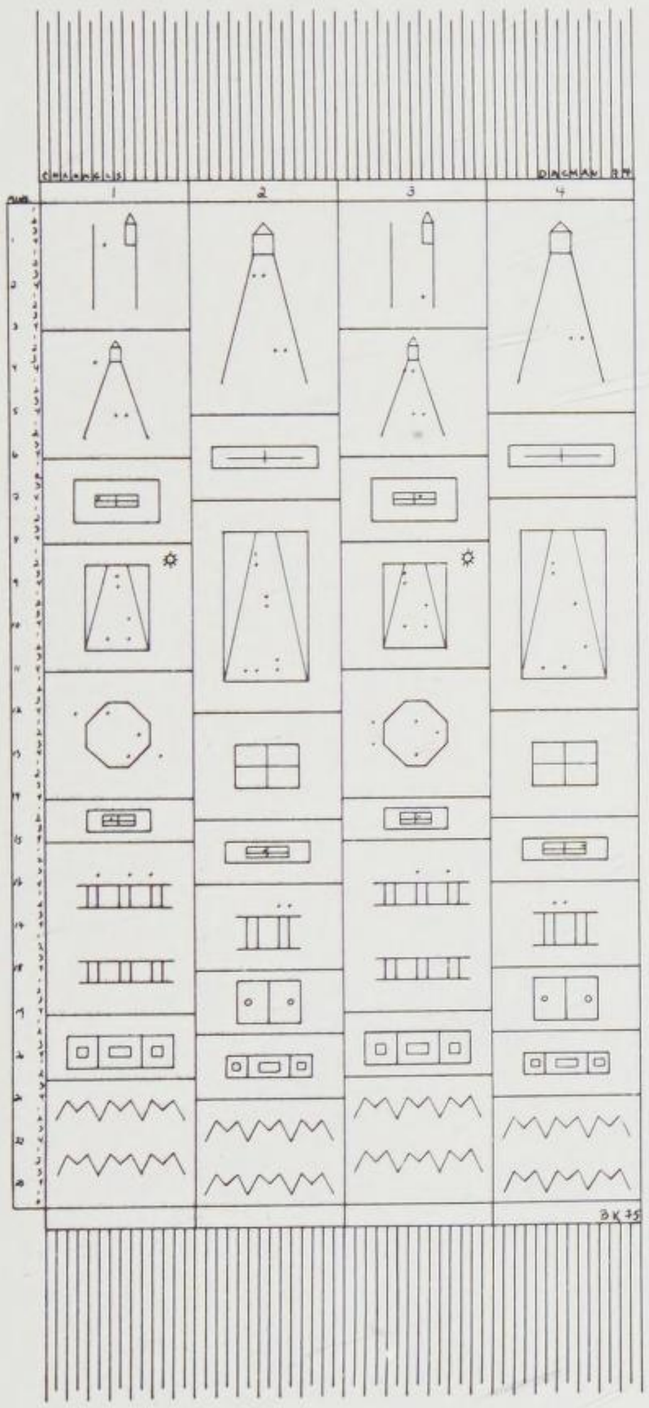


Figure 2

photos: Mary Lucier



here) permitted the physical/conceptual relationship I was seeking.

In the actual construction of the work my concern was to re-present the space of Dachau through the development of time patterns. This was accomplished by assigning specific time values to specific images (per channel) and by repeating images to create image blocks.

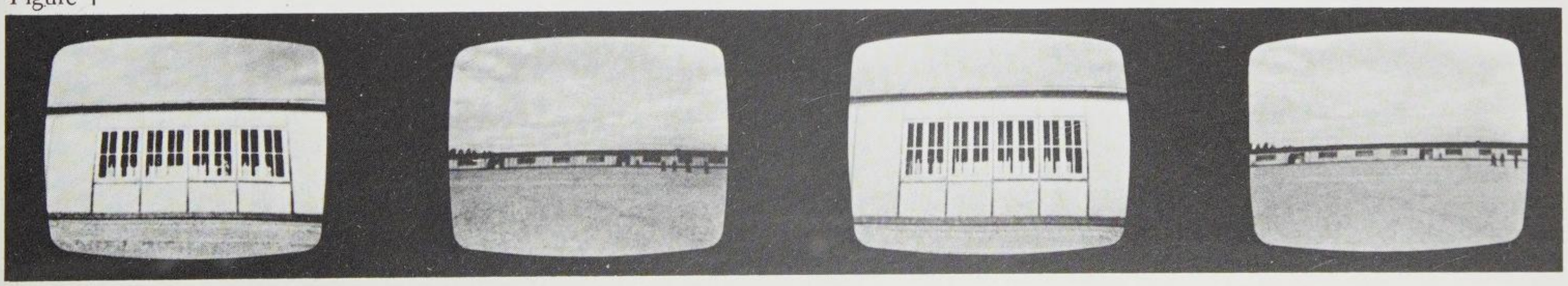
Each channel was conceived as representing a thread. Channels (1 and 3) and (2 and 4) form the interlocking thread combinations which bind the work as it proceeds in time. The same apparent image block always plays on channels 1 and 3, and another on 2 and 4, for predesignated amounts of time. After 3 minutes, say, and at slightly different moments, the image block on channels 1 and 3 changes to the same apparent one as on 2 and 4; in a while, 2 and 4 change to another block while 1 and 3 hold; and, again, 1 and 3 change while 2 and 4 hold, and so on.

As these two sets of corresponding images proceed in time, they always share a direct contextual relationship (e.g., you might be inside the barracks on 2 and 4 while on 1 and 3 you are outside looking in). In addition to this vertical block progression of time, and though channels (1 and 3) and (2 and 4) always show the same apparent image (facilitated since most images were shot on tripod), each channel has been given a slightly different rhythm which remains constant for the work's 24 minutes. (In other words, channel 1 always has 15 seconds of image and a 1-second pause; channel 2, 11 seconds and a 1-second pause; channel 3, 7 seconds and a 1-second pause; and channel 4, 15 seconds and a 1-second pause. (The pause is represented by gray leader edited in for 1 second after each duration of 15, 11, or 7 seconds.) This concept of playing back preselected time/image segments on itself was my way of infusing the work with liveness and presence.

As for the audio, it was all recorded and edited in sync with the images. Thus, image and sound together, through constant repetition of small sections of time within the larger image blocks, reinforce each other and, for me, the feeling of this particular place.

In the exhibition space where the work was presented, four 22″ monitors were cut into a false white wall (approx. 10′ x 10′), easily constructed from foam board. A small wooden bench was placed in front of this wall at comfortable viewing distance.

Figure 4






# PAUL KOS
# 1973-75

Copyright © 1976 by Paul Kos

the pen is harder than

the pencil

but the [illegible]

of [illegible]

PAUL KOS



Copyright © 1976 by Jack Krueger and Paula Barr

# SONYA

written by JACK A. KRUEGER and PAULA BARR
A video performance using video images as characters.

**Character Description:**

MOTHER—(Monitor #1)—The original Jewish American Princess (J.A.P.) who has escaped from the family and is hiding as "Sonya" on 23rd Street. She has been a crystal-ball gazer, fortune teller, and palmist for the last twenty years.

MOTHER'S ECHO—(Monitor #2)—2nd-person comparison of Father from Mother's point of view (P.O.V.).

DAUGHTER—(live actress)—She has been raised by her father, and discovers Mother on 23rd Street when she goes to seek guidance from the famous "Sonya."

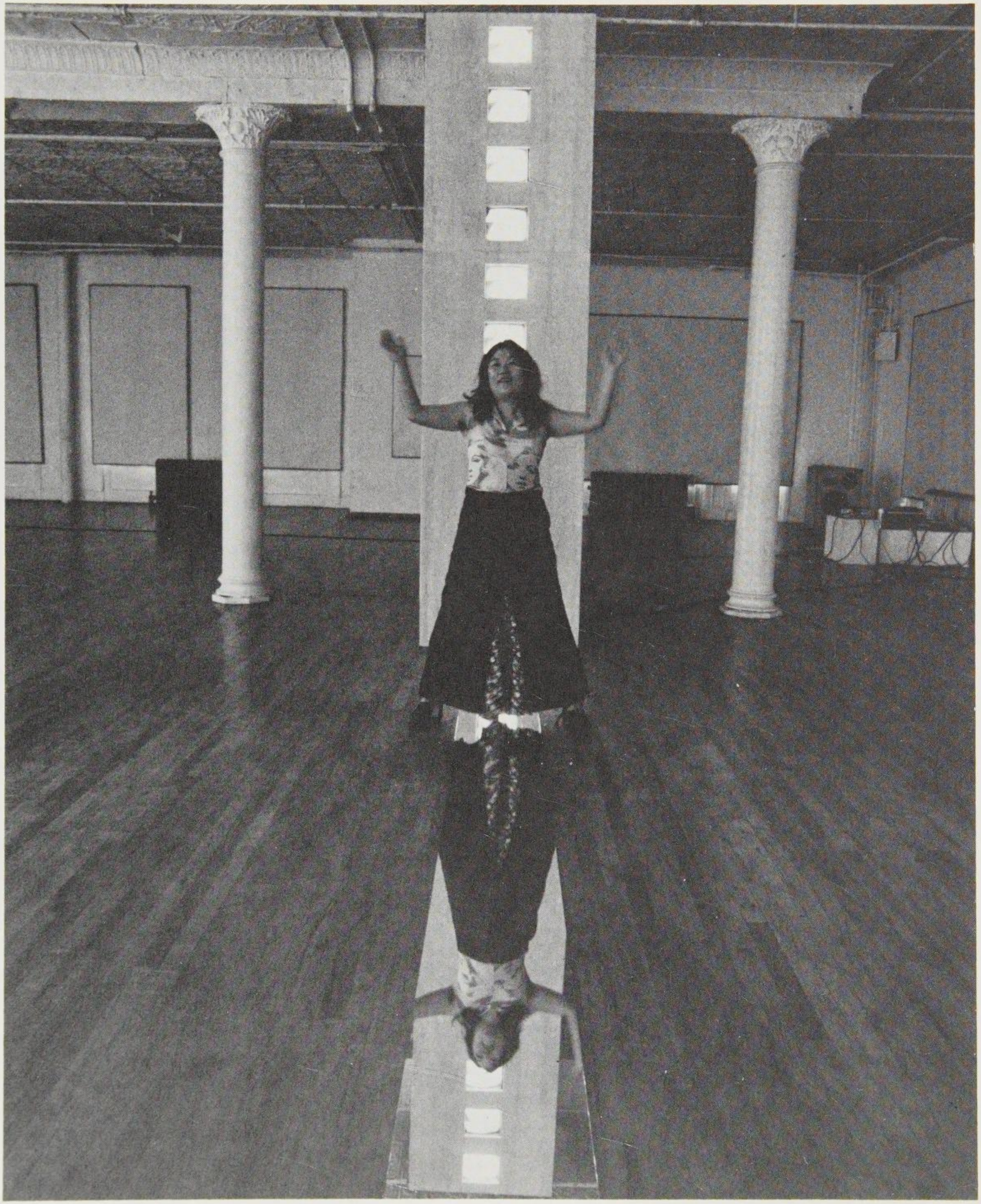
FATHER'S BUSINESS PARTNER—(live actor)—He is much younger than father and is daughter's fiancé.

FATHER—(Monitor #3)—The exact action that has been prerecorded.

**Direction:**

All characters speaking at once; BUSINESS PARTNER is selfishly discussing wedding plans for Thursday—the procedures and tightly planned events of the honeymoon in a mundane drone. DAUGHTER is feverishly trying to interject; her outbursts create the necessary spaces in which to quietly insert her discoveries of her lost mother and her mother's timely advice. The DAUGHTER can't hold the attention of fiancé as he is preoccupied with coming events. MONITOR #1 (MOTHER)—videotape of her original advice telling how she went against the wishes of her husband who wanted her to be his J.A.P. and revealing the fact that he is trying to re-create the situation of his own lost romance by casting his young business partner as himself and his daughter as his ideal bride. MONITOR #2—live action MOTHER making analysis of the way the DAUGHTER is actually handling her advice and encouraging her to fulfill MOTHER's P.O.V. by making statements of what would make her FATHER happy. MONITOR #3 (FATHER)—observing his own megalomania believing his direction is being followed.

The actual performance of dialogue is a delicate electronic audio mix using the sound like a wave form.



*Video Poem: Video without Video* Marcel Duchamp's grave "D'ailleurs c'est toujours les autres qui meurent"


Copyright © 1976 by Shigeko Kubota

# Video Poem by Shigeko Kubota

Behind the Video Door
I travel alone with my portapak on my back, as Vietnamese women do with their baby.
I like Video, because it's heavy.
Portapak and I traveled all over Europe, Navajo land and Japan without male accompany. Portapak tears down my shoulder, backbone and waist. I felt like a Soviet woman, working at the Siberian Railway. I made a videotape called, "Europe on a half-inch a Day," instead of a popular travel book, "Europe on 5 dollars a Day." I had one summer with Navajo family in Chinle, Arizona, I made a videotape called, "An American Family."

Behind the Video Life
Man thinks, "I think, therefore I am."
I, a woman, feel, "I Bleed, therefore I am."
Recently I bled in half-inch . . . 3M or SONY . . . ten thousand feet every month. Man shoots me every night . . . I can't resist. I shoot him back at broad daylight with vidicon or tivicon flaming in overexposure.
Video is Vengeance of Vagina.
Video is Victory of Vagina.
Video is Venereal Disease of Intellectuals.
Video is Vacant Apartment.
Video is Vacation of Art.
Viva Video . . .




*Video Poem: Self-Portrait*

photos: Mary Lucier

# ARTISTIC
## Les Levine

*Excerpts from* Artistic, *30 min., color: Taking the concept of autism, the artist is seen in a room unable to control his actions arriving at a state where he has no control over his body. On the sound track is a voiceover of the artist discussing the role of the artist in society.*

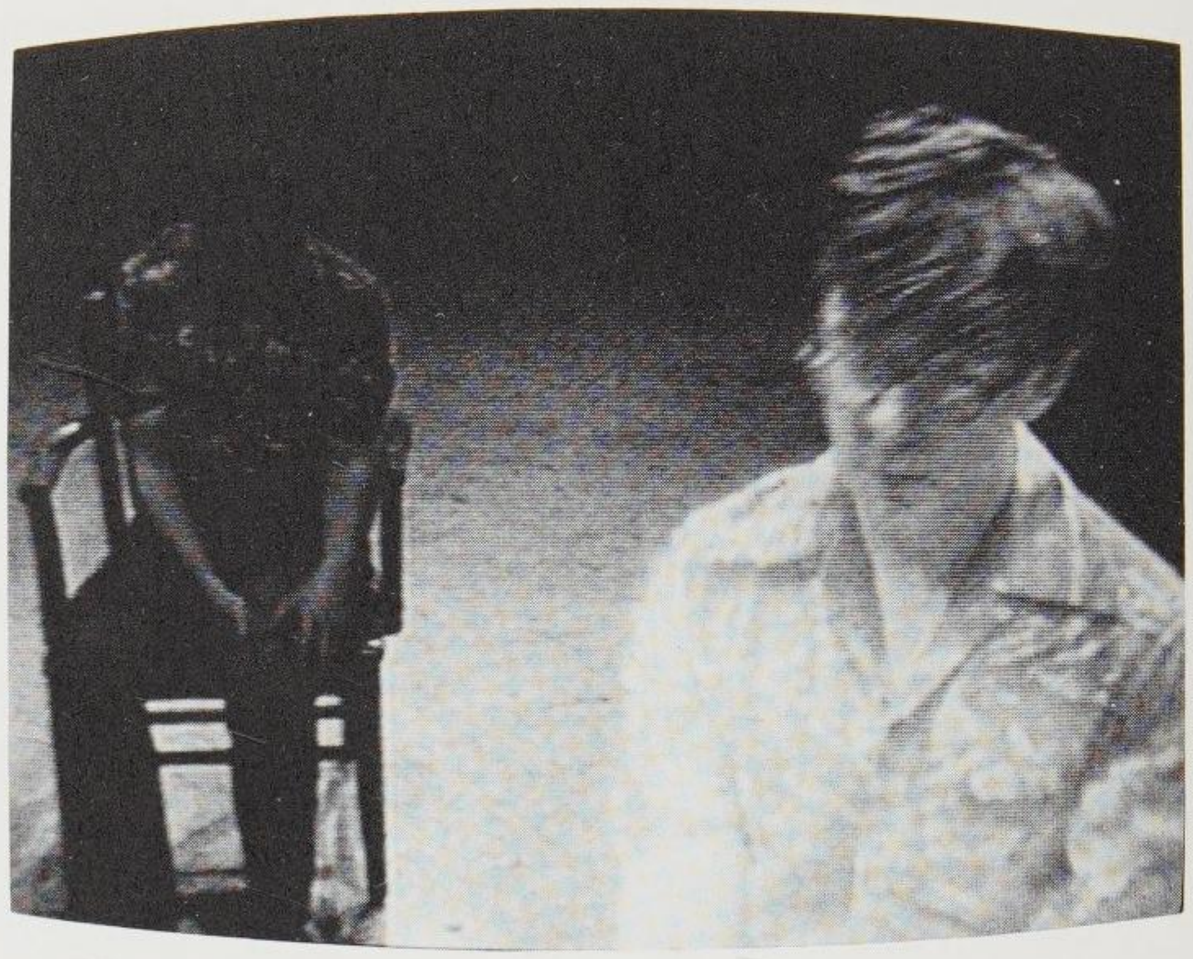
What the audience expects from the artist is that you be some heroic figure, whom they can look up to. They want to say, "I'm the greatest goddamned artist you have ever seen. I'm the greatest." But as soon as you've said it, the very instant you say it, they say, "Look at that artist saying such awful, pretentious, ugly things about himself." But they still have to have the satisfaction of you presenting yourself as some hero.

When you present yourself in such a way that you say, "Here I am trying to sing before you. I can't sing, but I'm trying to sing. And it's totally obvious that I can't sing," then you're no better than they are. That's the way they are. They know they can't sing. Here you are doing what they can do, doing exactly what they do, and you're not being any better than them. You're not allowing yourself to be any better for them. They're embarrassed you're not any better than they are. They're also irritated you're not any better than they are. They've relegated everything to professionals. They assume that if you can't sing, you're not supposed to sing. Only doctors are supposed to know about medicine; only newspapermen know anything about newspapers. The system knows only about itself. Nobody else knows about it. So a person who's not a singer couldn't sing. That's out of the question. They have this sort of middle-class conception about specialists. And they want the artist to be a specialist. That's what they want from him —that he not fall down on his job. So when they're embarrassed by his being not better than they are, they don't just assume that indeed maybe he is no better than they are. They won't accept that. They won't accept the artist saying, "I'm not better than you. I'm just as fucked up as you are."

What they will say is: "He's gone mad." Because being no better than they are is a state of madness. As far as they can see, being no better than them is totally mad. "He is an absolute psychological case. That man needs treatment." Because they all need treatment. They need the treatment and now you've given them something which is a serious problem. Now you've given them a model of yourself as themselves. They have some understanding of that model and they start to see that model. So at that point they just automatically assume that something has gone wrong. That they are not witnessing what they are supposed to witness. Their minds will not allow them to authenticate the experience they're having at that time.

It's being dissatisfied with their situation, and the reason they got themselves into that situation in the first place was being dissatisfied with whatever they were doing before.

So the artist is going to straighten it out for us. The artist will show us



*Artistic*

how to see. The artist will see for us. But the artist tells you he can't see any better than you can.

It's the condition of being alive. The relationship between the artist and whoever is more a universal relationship between everybody and their condition. So the state of dissatisfaction is a universal state for both the artist and the audience, only it's the artist who's pointing it out.

The artist in that situation has got to do something absolute. An absolute form in itself. It can't be questionable. I mean it can't be interesting or boring, or randomly exciting, or new or fresh, or dramatic or undramatic. It can be all of those things, but it's got to be them spontaneously. It can't be made to be them. It has got to be those things because that's what it is; that's the nature of it to be that way. Because when you have decided you will absorb the energy of the audience, and permit the audience to come toward you in such a way that you absorb the audience's anxiety and present the audience back with that anxiety, that has to be a totally genuine thing.

If it's not a totally genuine thing, if you're attempting to conjure it in any way, I think it would be a mess. In that kind of a situation you have got to act as a kind of open screen or open vessel for their vibrations at that given moment. And that's what you've got to feed back. It can't be anything you've essentially created.

It's so far-out, the idea that creativity itself is the most negative aspect of art. That's really beautiful. In that the artist creating, or attempting to create, is like the destruction of creation. By attempting to create something, or creating something, he totally destroys the creative process because the creative process is not to create anything, but to allow what is happening to be absorbed by you in such a way that you can express it and clarify it and make it clear. So that when you're making it clear, people might say that what you've done is creative.

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photos: © by Les Levine

The only thing that is creative is to allow whatever is happening to be reabsorbed into itself, which is what the artist does on his highest level. He mirrors it back. Or it is just the making available of that information however it manifests itself. That is essentially art. Anything other than that is blockage.

I was thinking about how there is a difference between exposing the complete process of how you do something and all the anxieties that go along with it. There's a very crucial point at which it cannot become an experience which people can deal with, because it's just your own personal sickness or anxiety. People just look at you and say, "You have these problems and these problems need attention." So what I think it has to do with, when it really activates, has something to do with anxieties that are real. The realization that when the audience realizes that you have these problems that you have to deal with, it's that moment when those problems are their problems. That's what a performance is, rather than becoming separated from each of them. First of all, you've got to relate to other people's anxieties. You've got to be their anxieties. You've got to become their anxieties in some way, and therefore it can't be the kind of anxiety that merely comes out of your own ego, which would destroy the structure and would make it meaningless. It would make people just think, "Well, that's an ego trip." So it's got to be something which is really a pivotal anxiety of anybody, of any person, not just your own problem.

It has to be an underlying cultural anxiety. And somehow it also has to shed light on that anxiety. It has to expose that anxiety in such a way that people can see it as an anxiety, and not take it to be part of their equilibrium, but see it's not part of their equilibrium, that it's a negative force that's trying to upset them. Trying to pull the rug out from underneath them.

Besides that, the only thing people have to do is feel it. What generally happens with anxiety is that you try to anesthetize it so that you don't feel the pain. You know the anxiety is there because you feel anxiety and you try to rid of it as quickly as possible, like with American pills, drugs, etc. The whole point is to feel anxiety because when you totally feel anxiety and begin to understand the nature of it, then it doesn't exist. It just fades away.

Actually it's more complicated than that. Because the first thing to do is to feel the anxiety. Let it all of a sudden out in the open, let it overwhelm you, let it get out of control, let it annihilate you. Then second is becoming more aware of that anxiety. Where it arises from. What is the cause that's producing this effect. What is the whole relationship other than simple neurotic self-centeredness. Once you get into the cause and effect and see the whole landscape, everything changes.

The idea is to center one in one's space. At least demand that amount of reality. That you are here now. If someone is talking to you in a space or having a conversation with you in a space, that you should feel the presence of that person, and the communication is based on what is possible to communicate at that moment, and not on some secondary notice. I mean if you're in a place and you make some kind of verbal exchange with a person, even though you've made a verbal exchange with that person, there's not necessarily any communication. Nothing has been communicated. Because what you've done really is express the sort of surface level façade of how society says you must talk to one another, or how you must get along. If you're in a space or a room with a person, and you demand that they absolutely respond to you, that they be themselves in this situation, and because they are themselves, you automatically would have to be more of yourself. And so that would be very direct communication. It's very difficult for people. They don't want to do that or they can't do it.

There's the milk. The container of milk on the table there has to do with the idea that all ideas in that kind of space are external ideas. What I meant when I said, "There's the milk," is that all things you have in any given situation are external concepts. They're not your concepts. You don't know how you feel about them. The world has these things and you're in the world so you take these things that the world has at that moment. You go to a supermarket and buy everything that everybody else buys. Not all the things. But you don't think about whether that stuff should be in the supermarket in the first place. That never occurred to you. That's what I mean about your own communication with yourself. All these things that you think you're thinking, or anybody thinks they're thinking. They're not thinking. They went into the supermarket, which is a preset kind of situation, and the supermarket said to them, "You should eat the stuff that is here." And they do it. Then they think, they thought they should do it. But they didn't think they should do it. When they talk to somebody, what they're saying to that person is the same thing. All the words that are coming out came out of another supermarket. Not a food supermarket, but another supermarket—a word bank. They deal with it the same way. They think it's all their own words and all their own way of thinking, but it's not. The very least one should demand of life is that you're actually saying what you're saying, and you're actually thinking what you're saying. That's not a very big demand.

# THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH (1972)

For players, responsive surfaces, strewn material and closed-circuit television monitor systems.

Commissioned by and dedicated to Gerald Shapiro and the New Music Ensemble, Providence, Rhode Island.

Sing, speak or play electronic or acoustic musical instruments in such a way as to activate metal plates, drumheads, sheets of glass or any wood, copper, steel, glass, cardboard, earthenware or other responsive surfaces upon which are strewn quartz sand, silver salt, iron filings, lycopodium, granulated sugar, pearled barley or grains of other kinds or other similar materials suitable for making visible the effects of sound.

Surfaces may be excited by making sounds through nearby loudspeakers, directly coupled audio transducers or directly on or very near the vibrating media themselves.

As the strewn material responds to the disturbances caused by the musical sounds in the vibrating media, observe, while playing, continuous variations of concentric radial patterns in round surfaces, parallel diagonal patterns in rectangular surfaces, increases in the number of elements with increases in frequency, whole movements or migrations with increases in amplitude, interference phenomena, visible beats and imperfectly formed patterns caused by the peculiarities of both the musical sounds and the vibrating media.

Make musical activity either to discover in real time the visual images characteristic of the identity of the performing ensemble with respect to the time and place of the performance, or make predetermined patterns including lattices, networks, labyrinths, flows, currents, rotations, bridges, streams, beams, heaps, eddies, dunes, honeycombs, imbrications, cells, textures, turbulences, vortices, layers, figure-eights, lemniscates, spirals, rings, rivulets, trees, branches, pools, dendrites, bushes, balls, pigeon eggs, quadratoids, tetragons, pentagons, hexagons, flowers, hollows, ramparts, figurines, walls, peaks, pillars, columns, volutes, annuli, fissures, plates, rams' horns, crypts, spicules, worms, webs, clouds, storms, spherules, zebras, plumes, embryos, rills, buttes, mesas, grooves, fountains, swastikas, mandalas, crowns, crosses, scapulas, beads, medallions, topologies of near or far environs, plaids, tweeds, road signs, floor plans, tapestries, diamonds, stars of David, gardens, corals, sunbursts, faces, angels' wings, fans, berms, gullies, washes, mosses, daisies, weaves, signs of the zodiac, almonds, clock faces, calendars, moons, planets, mirrors, demons, gems, stigmates, sanctuaries, playing fields, wheels, whales, palms, ferns, cypresses, blindfolds, ladders, urns, Adams and Eves, cisterns, sepulchres, tongues, dragons, toads, eagles, swans, fishes, dishes, plumes, rooms, tombs, hosts, hats, animal tracks, fossils, footprints, rugs, bones and ghosts.

From time to time, apply fire and ice to the vibrating surfaces to change their temperature environment and thereby alter their characteristics.

Make liquid versions using water, glycerine, mercury, plasma, heated raolin paste or other viscous liquids to bring about hydrodynamic phenomena including frequency-dependent site locations, constant directions of eddy-rotations, amplitude-dependent rotation speeds, the creation of Lissajous figures and antigravitation effects which occur if sounds remain constant and the vibrating media are tilted or held vertically.

Take sounds from the vibrating media by contact, vibration or air microphones in order to discover and amplify changes in the original sounds due to the physical characteristics of the media through which they travel and for purposes of single or multi-channeled playback during performance or recording on electromagnetic tape.

Use closed-circuit television monitor systems in fixed closeup positions with rear-screen projectors to verticalize and enlarge for the players and audience the visual images made by the players' sounds on the material-strewn surfaces.

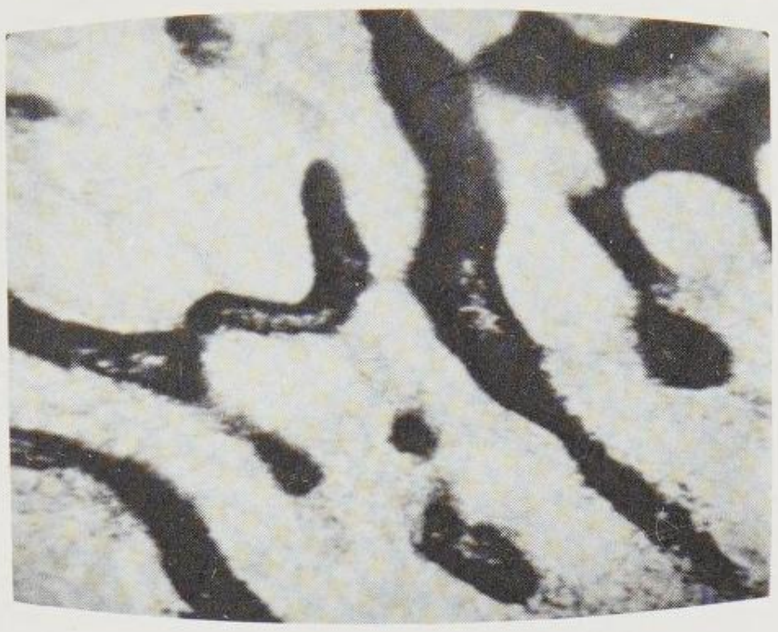
All musical considerations including pitch, timbre, lengths of sounds, texture, density, attack, decay and continuity are determined only by the real-time decisions necessary to the image-making processes.

Thanks to E. F. P. Chladni (1756–1827) and Hans Jenny (1904–).

Alvin Lucier
January 19, 1972
Middletown, Connecticut


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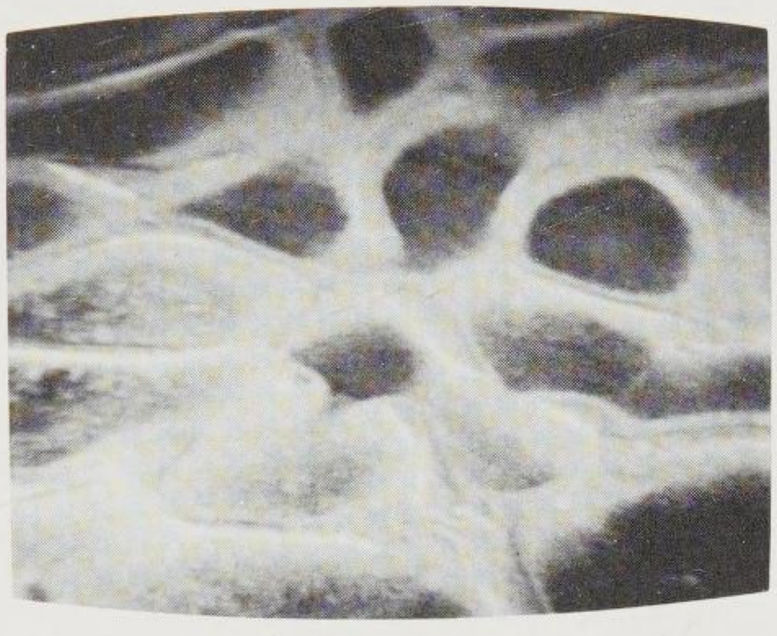


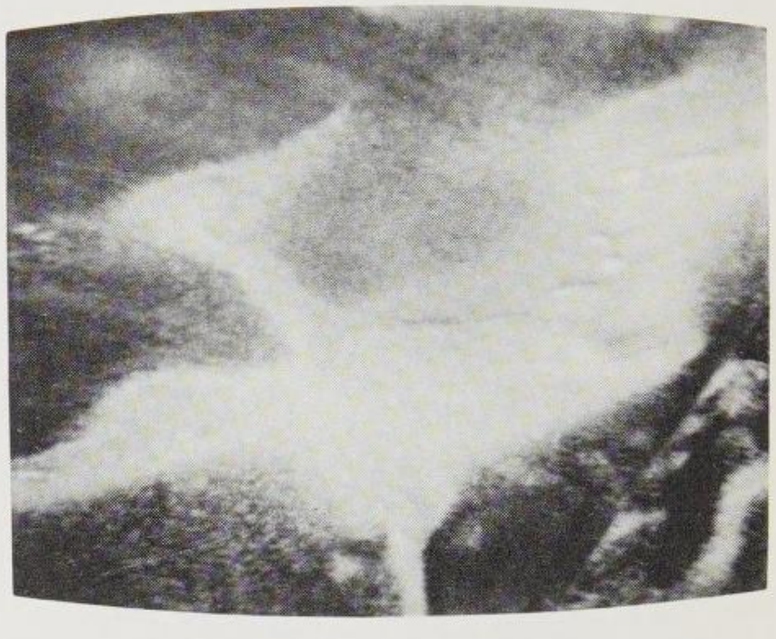




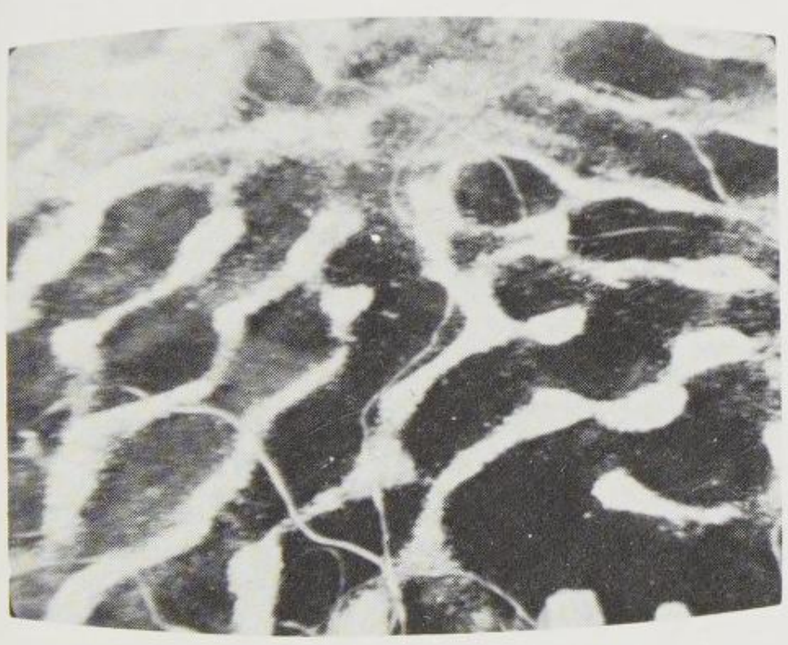
Coffee on Plywood

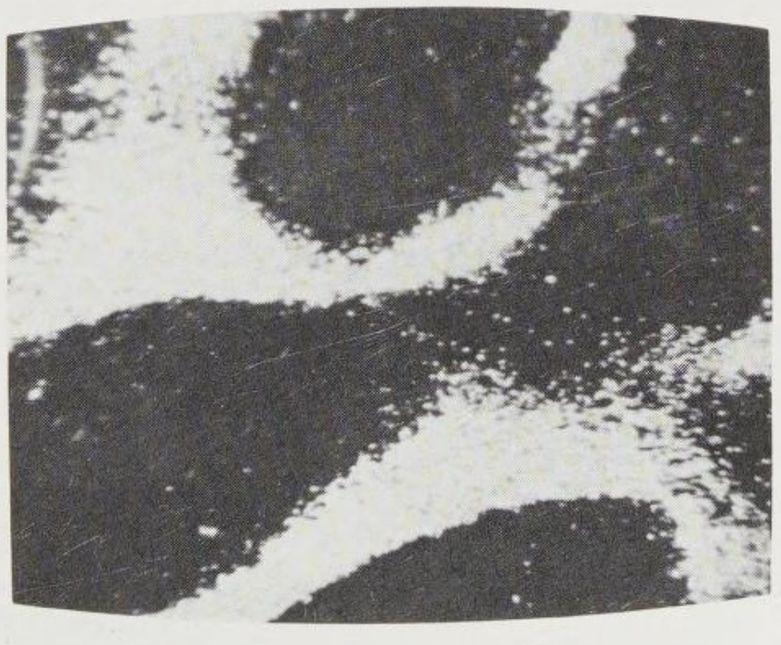






Sand on Metal

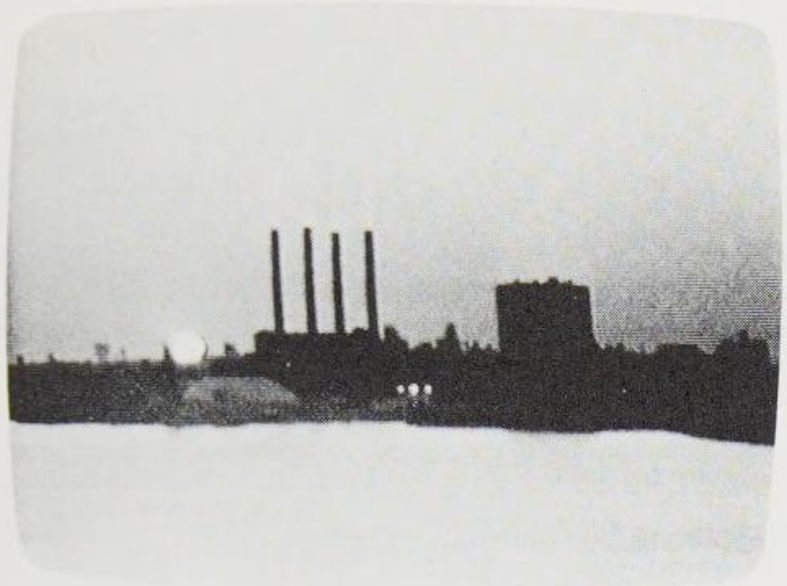


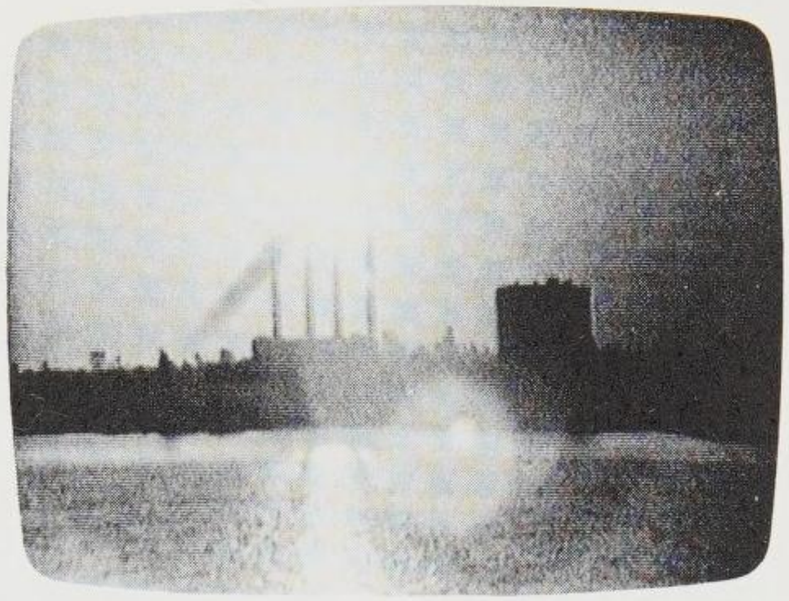




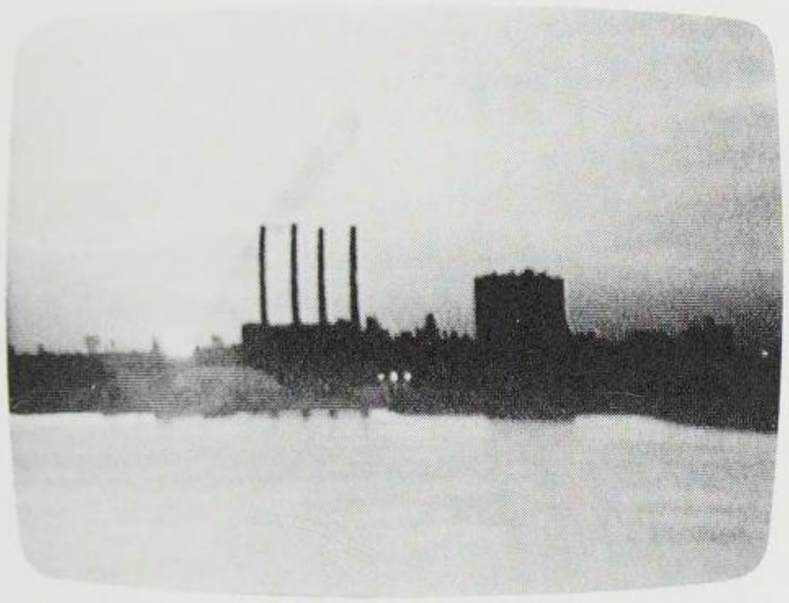
Wheat on Plexiglass

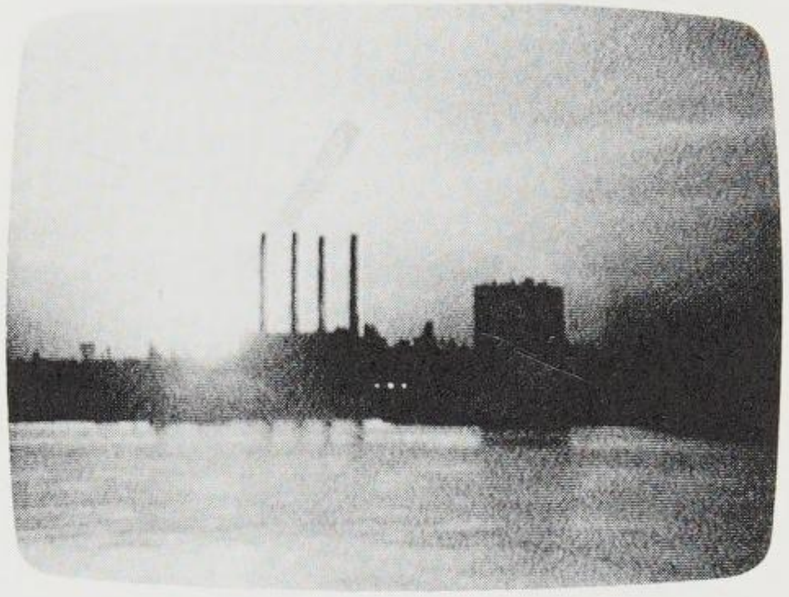
photos: Carol Reck



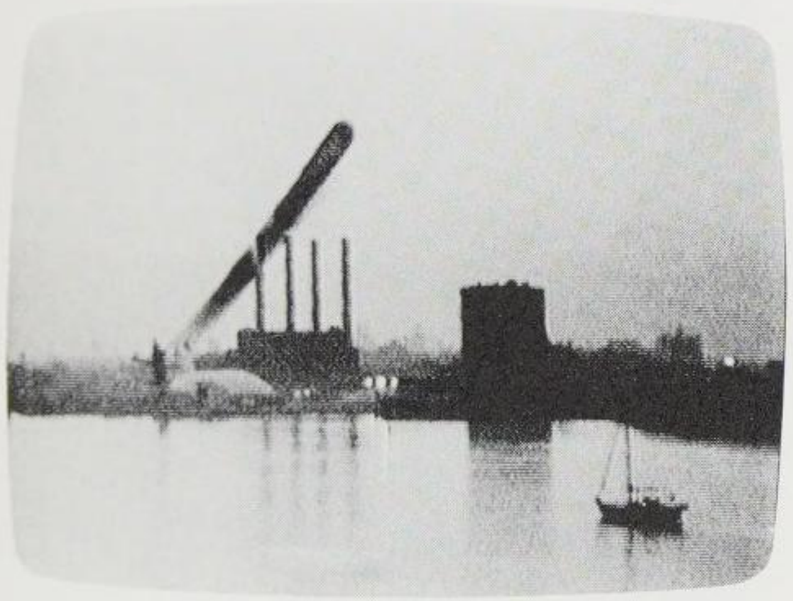


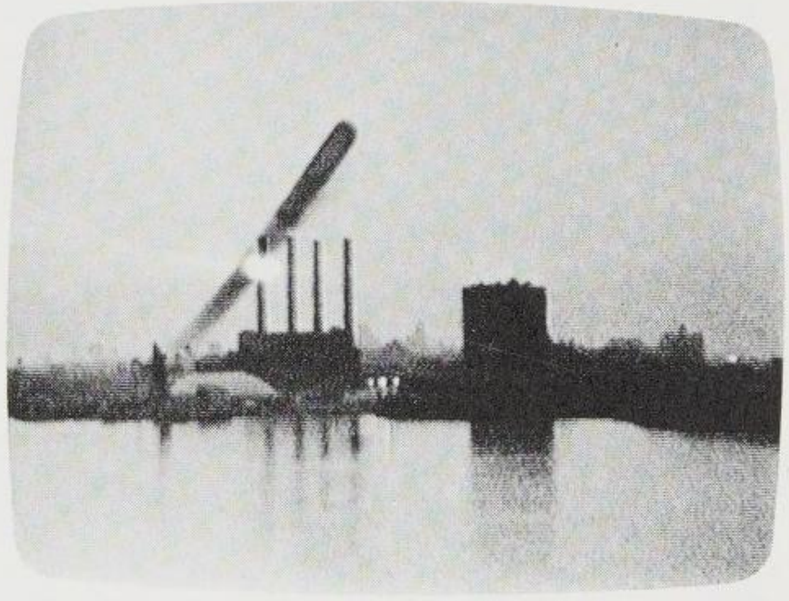
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5:34 AM / 5:49 AM



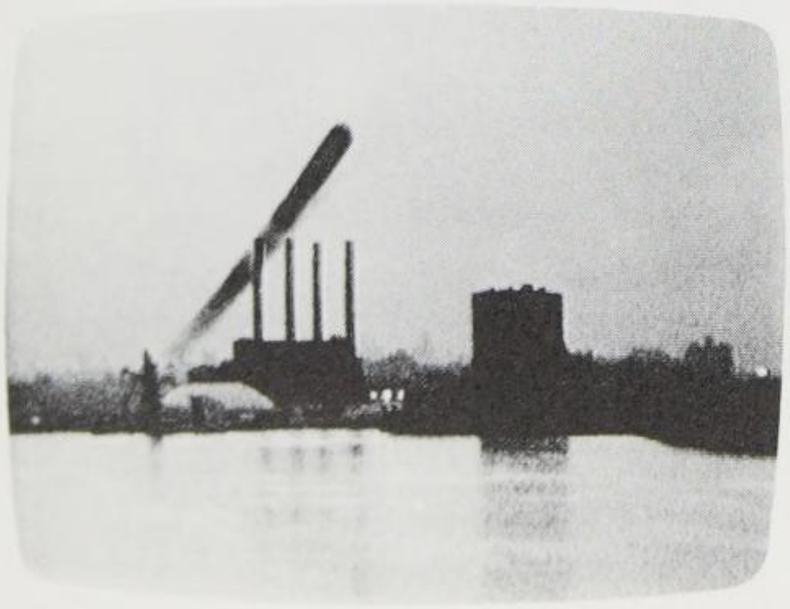


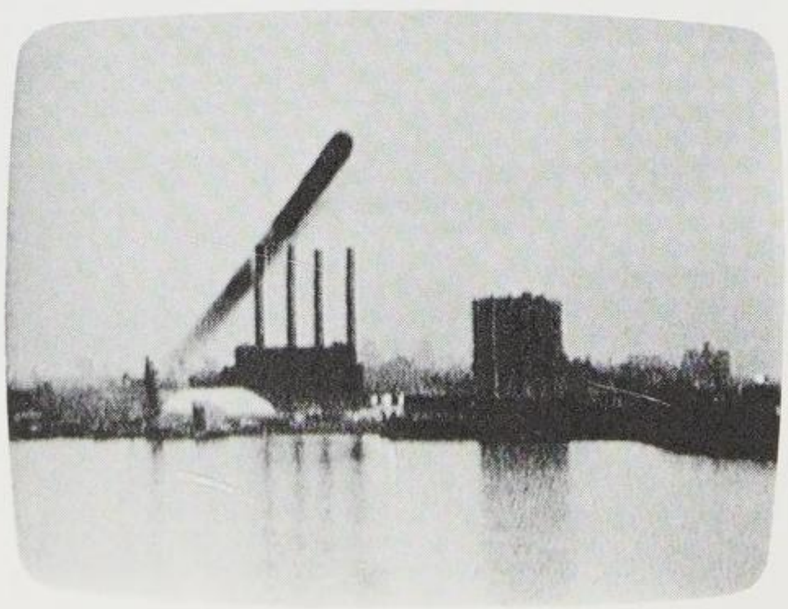
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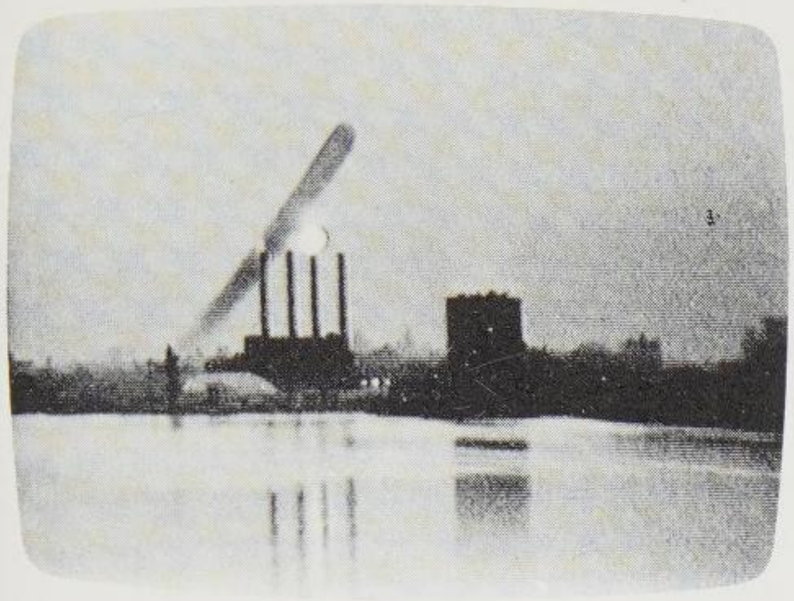
July 6, 1975
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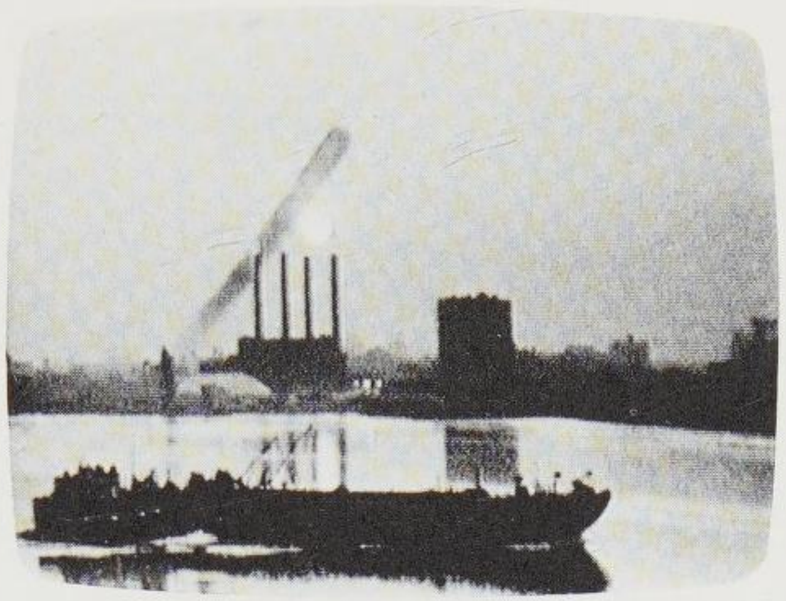


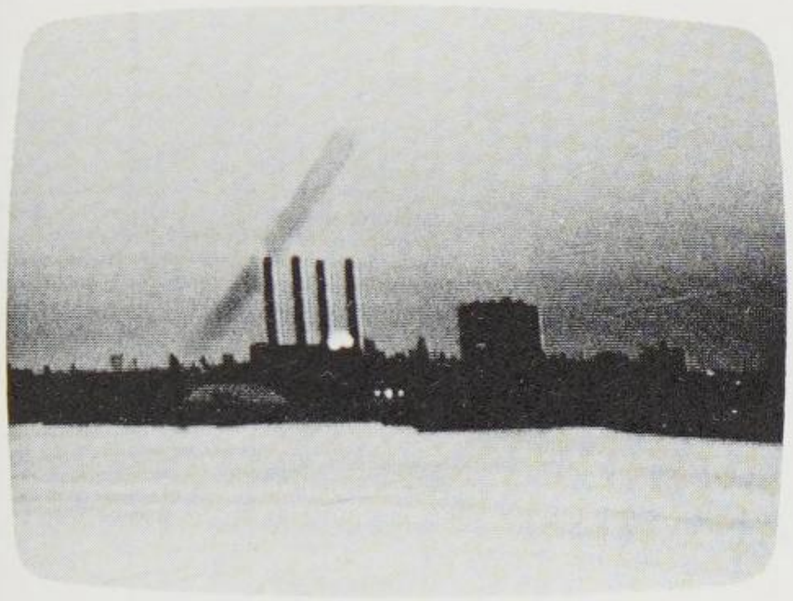
July 7, 1975
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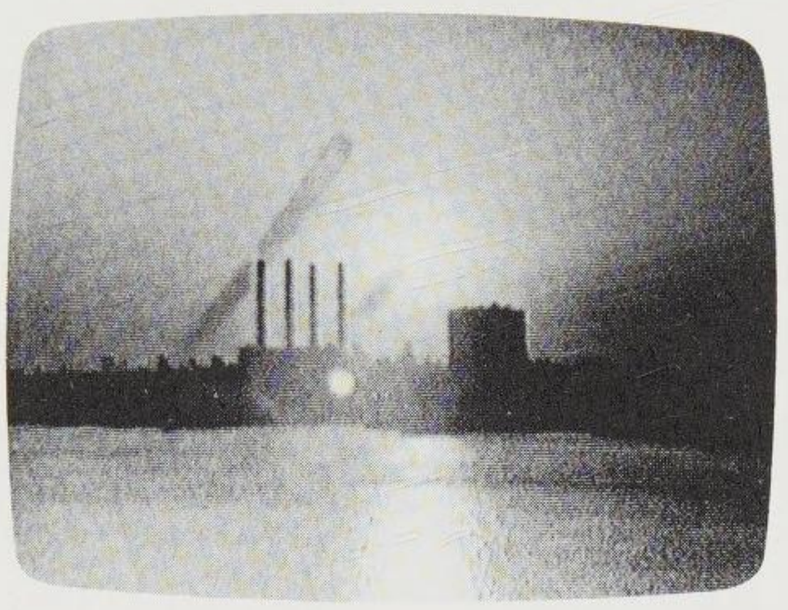


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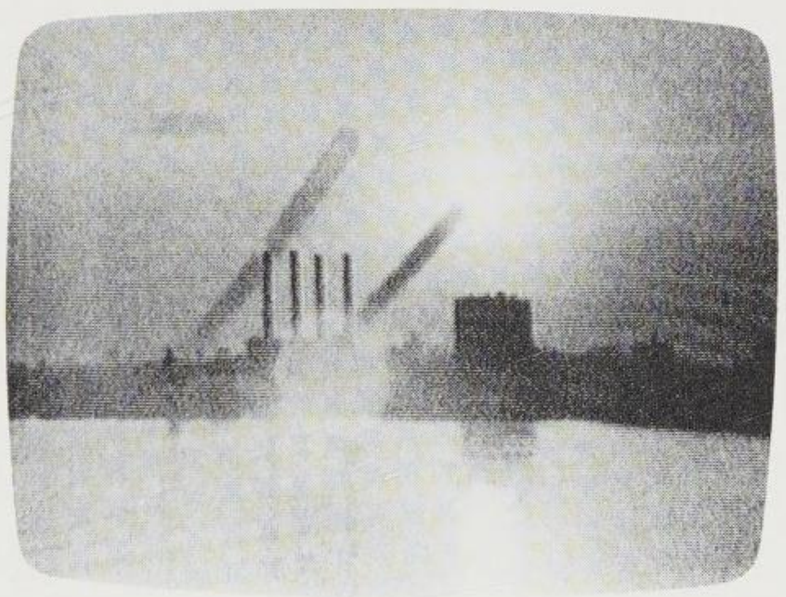


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5:49 AM/6:05AM

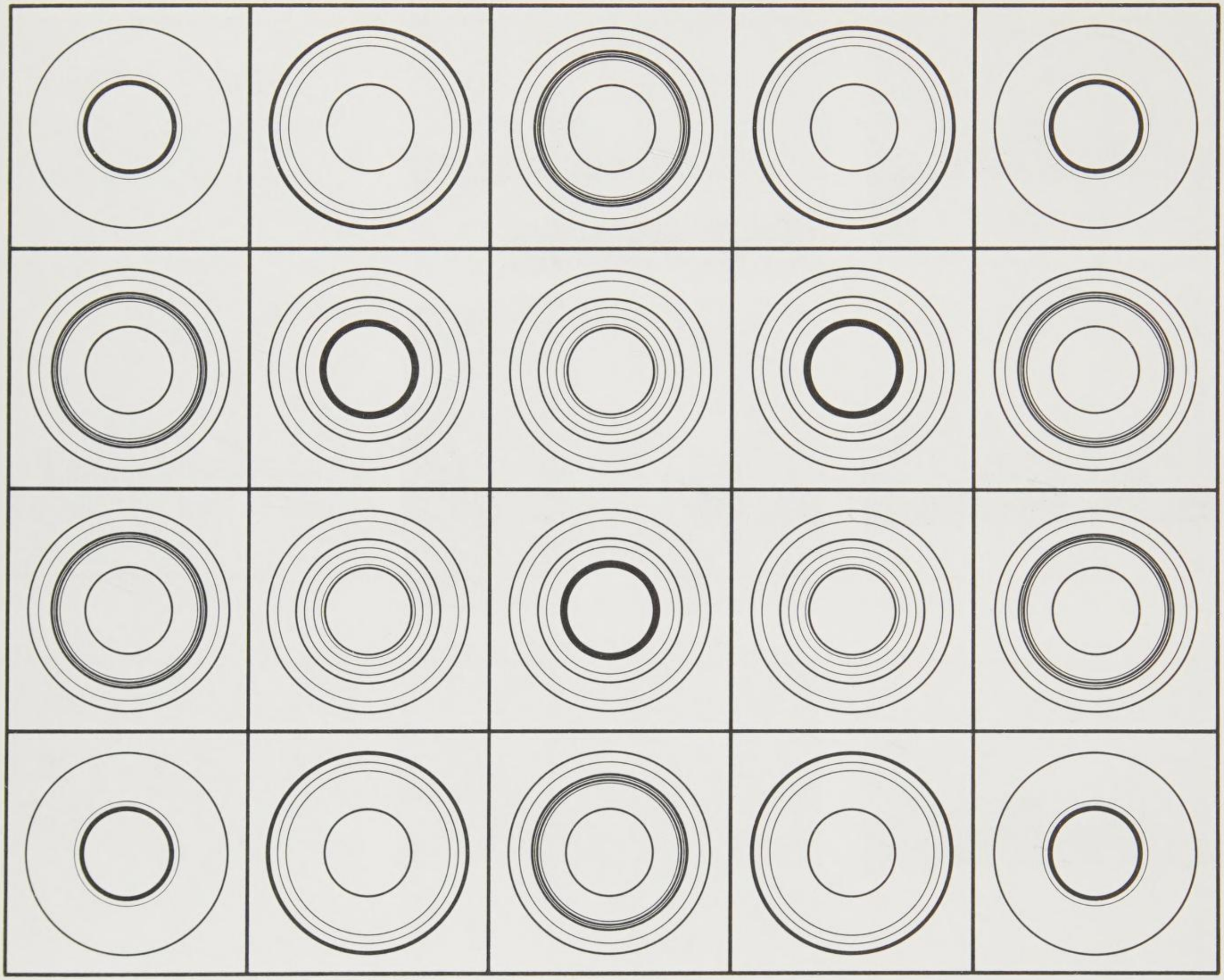




July 23, 1975
5:52 AM/6:12AM



*DAWN BURN* (A multi-channel installation for seven horizontally aligned monitors with single 35mm. color projection). This piece consists of seven days' cumulative taping during July 1975, of a timed portion of the sun rising over the East River, New York City. Each thirty minutes of sunrise is burned onto the vidicon tube according to the variations in the sun's path each morning. The camera remains in a stationary position throughout the seven days' taping, and at the same focal point, except for a search-and-register process during the first five minutes of each tape following day #1. In playback, all days' dawns are viewed simultaneously and sequentially on the seven monitors, each tape displaying the progressive accumulated burn of those before it. A wide-angle color image from the same location is projected large above the line of monitors. There is no audio.



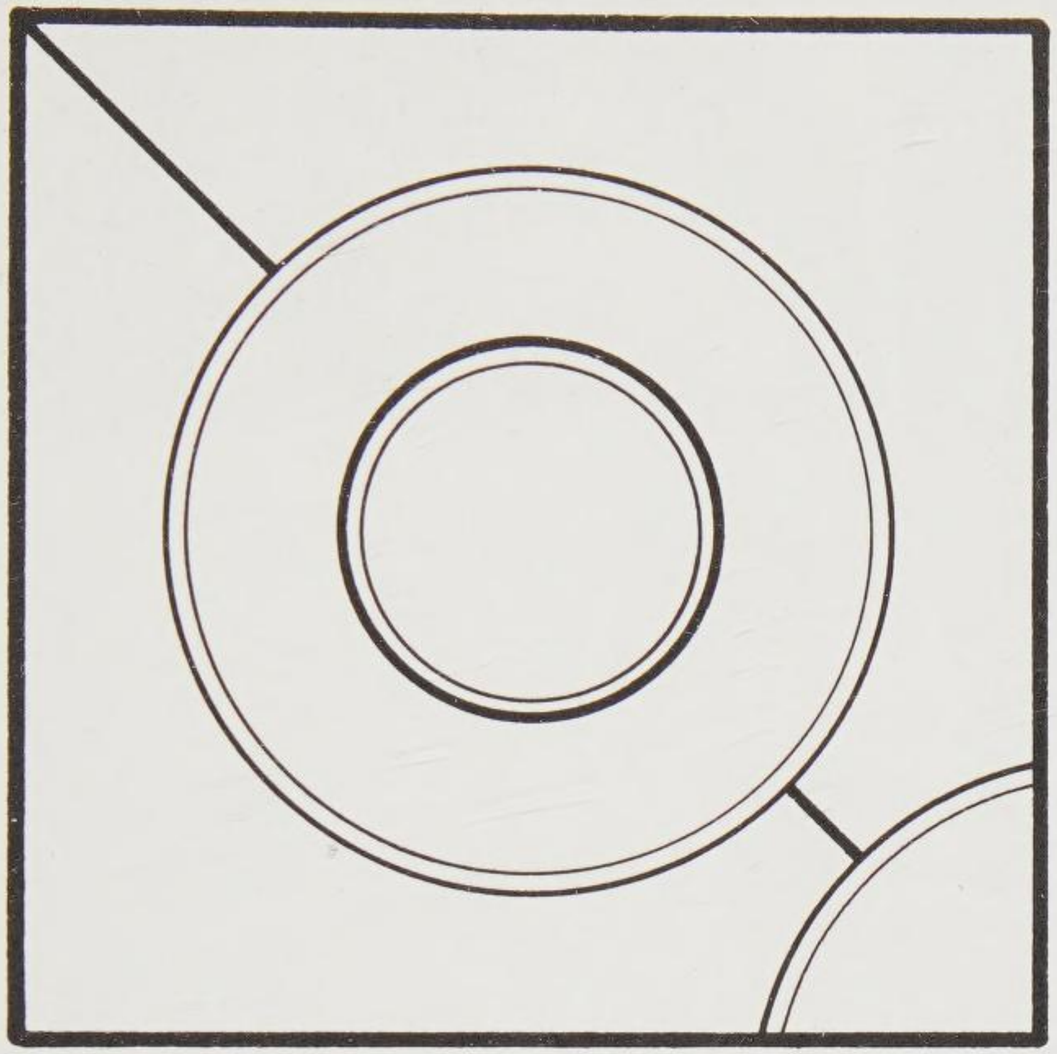
Hello, friends: The drawing on the opposite page represents *X-Matrix*. *X-Matrix* is a single-channel, four monitor video installation. The single video channel is played on an endless video loop, a self-restarting video cassette, or a live camera. The monitors can be black and white or color, and any four identical monitors can be used as long as they are stackable.

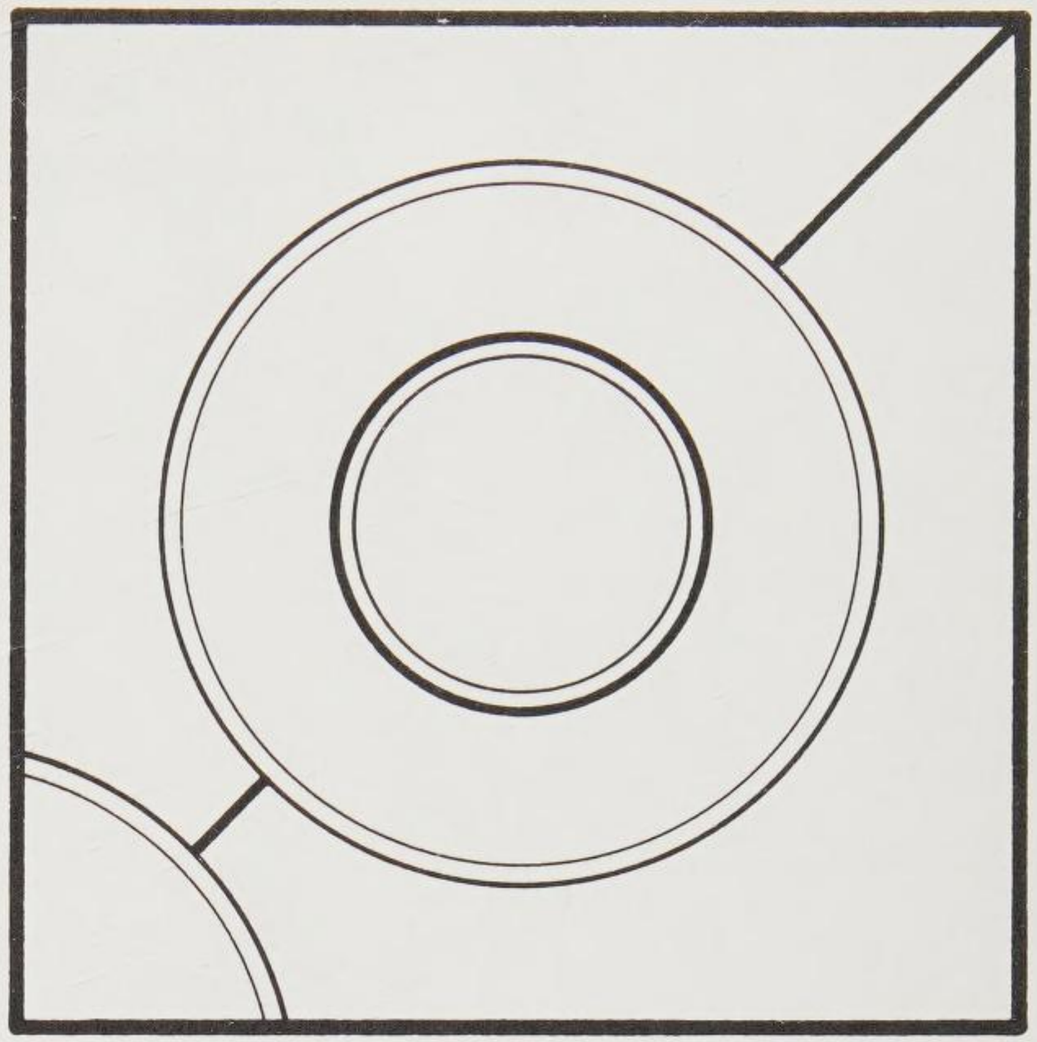
The reversal of image is effected by simple rewiring inside the monitors. The vertical deflection-coil leads are reversed in the two bottom monitors. This inverts their images. The horizontal deflection-coil leads are reversed in the two left-hand monitors. This reverses left and right in their pictures.

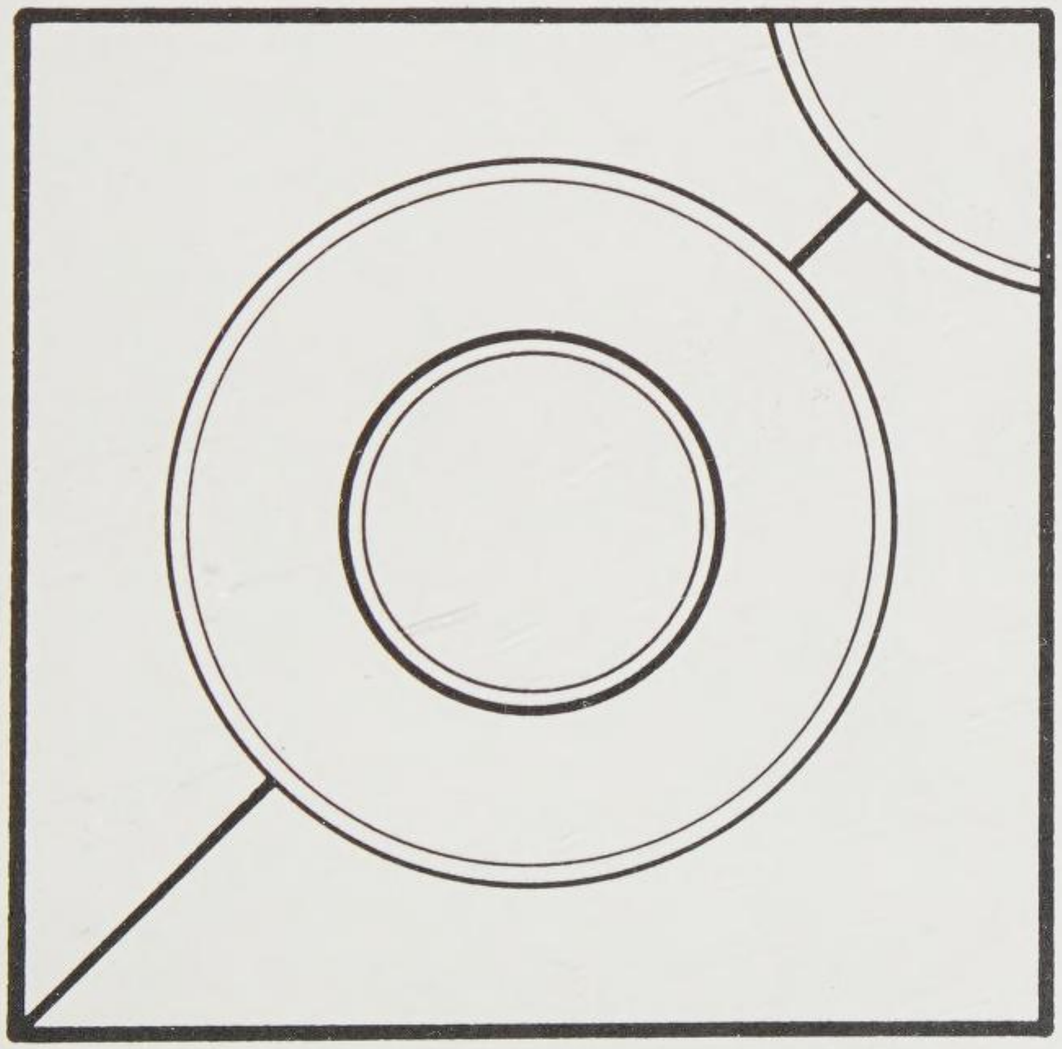
I built one version of *X-Matrix* at the Everson Museum in 1975. The image was taken from a tape I shot of a nearby waterfall. When I shot the tape I tried to keep in mind that I was shooting the upper right-hand quarter of the complete image.

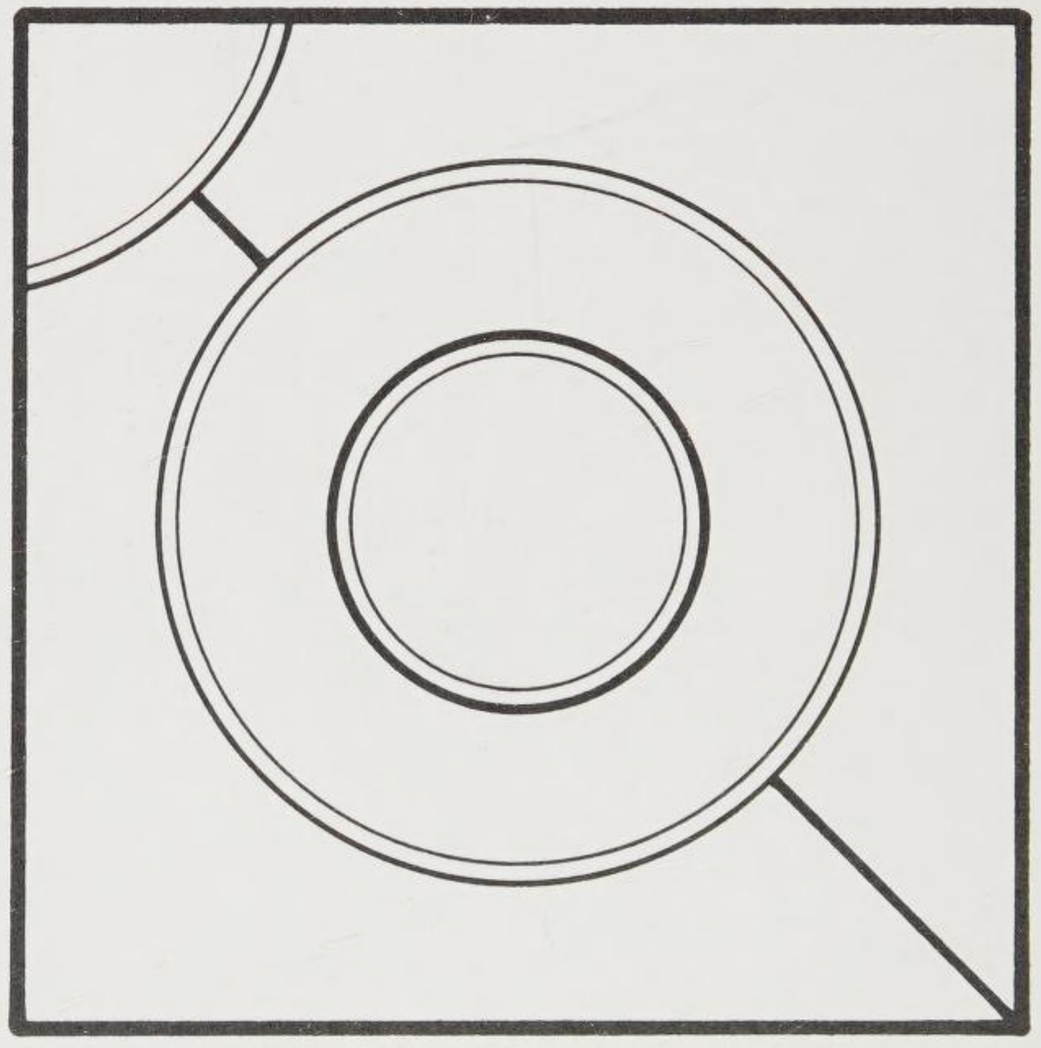
The drawing above is the plan for a five-channel, twenty monitor installation which has yet to be built.


Copyright © 1976 by Andy Mann











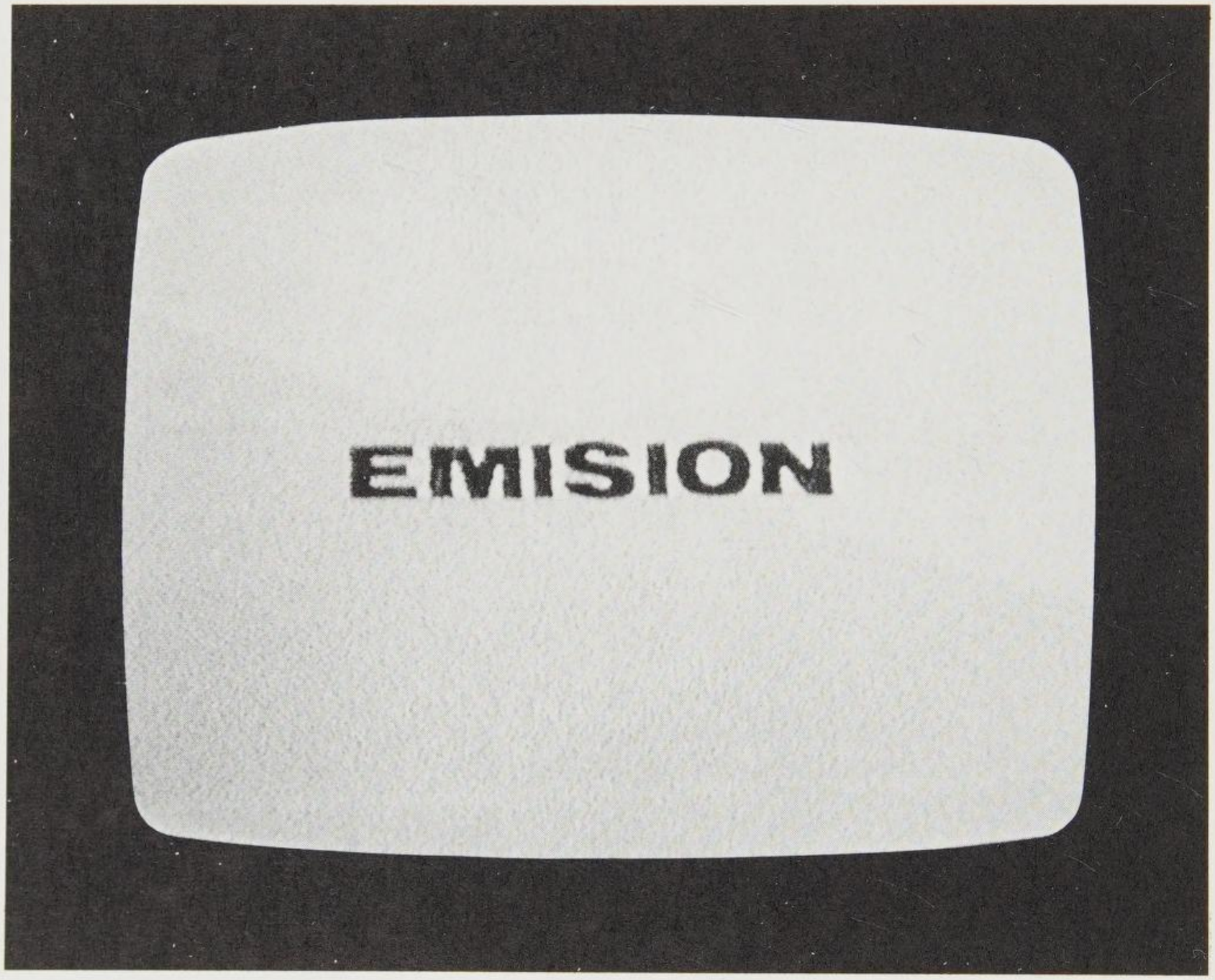

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# THE VIDEO SWING - 1974

## Susan Milano

**photo: Dan Hedges**
**at Technivision**

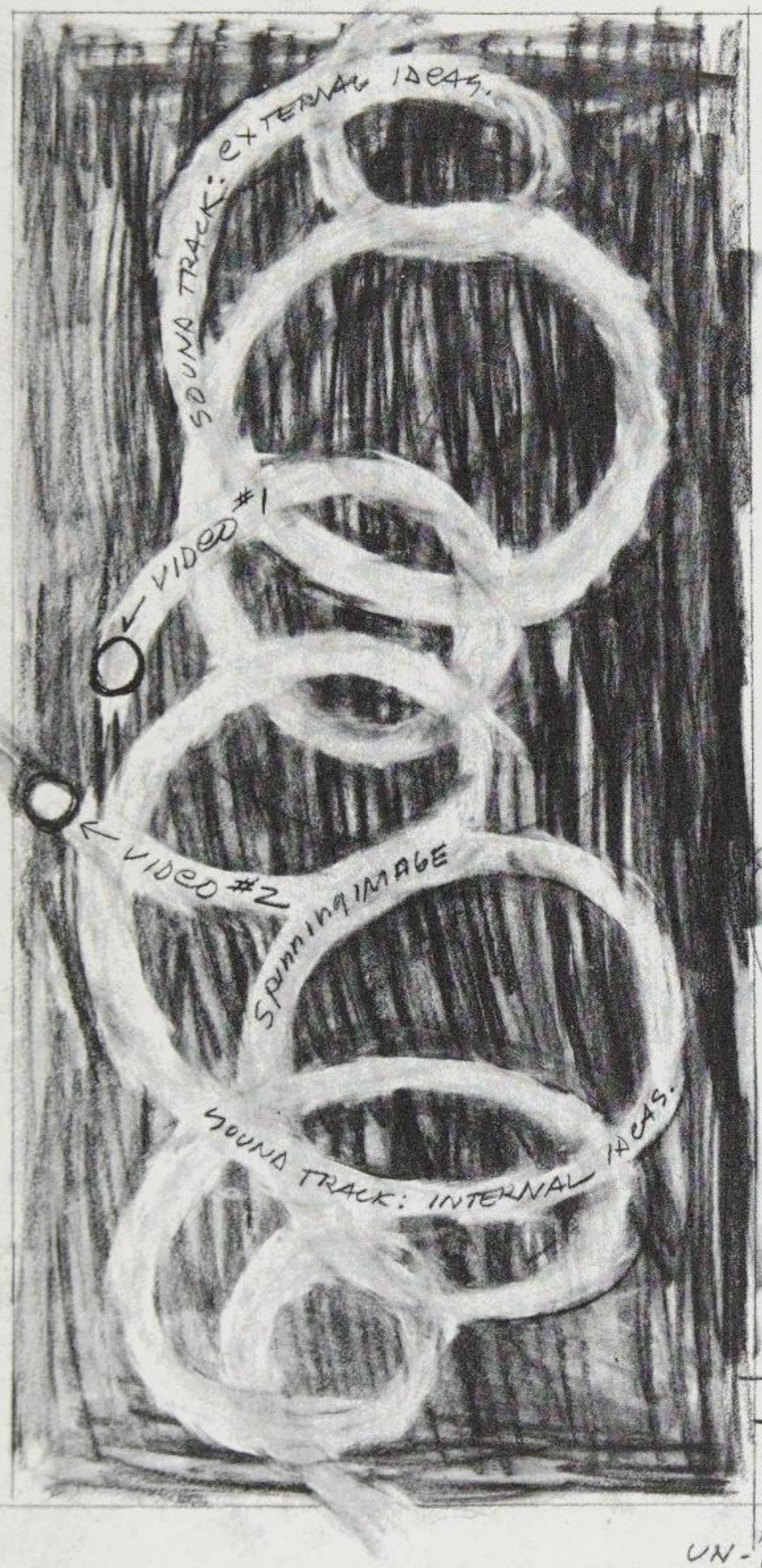
SUSAN MILANO




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RECEPCION

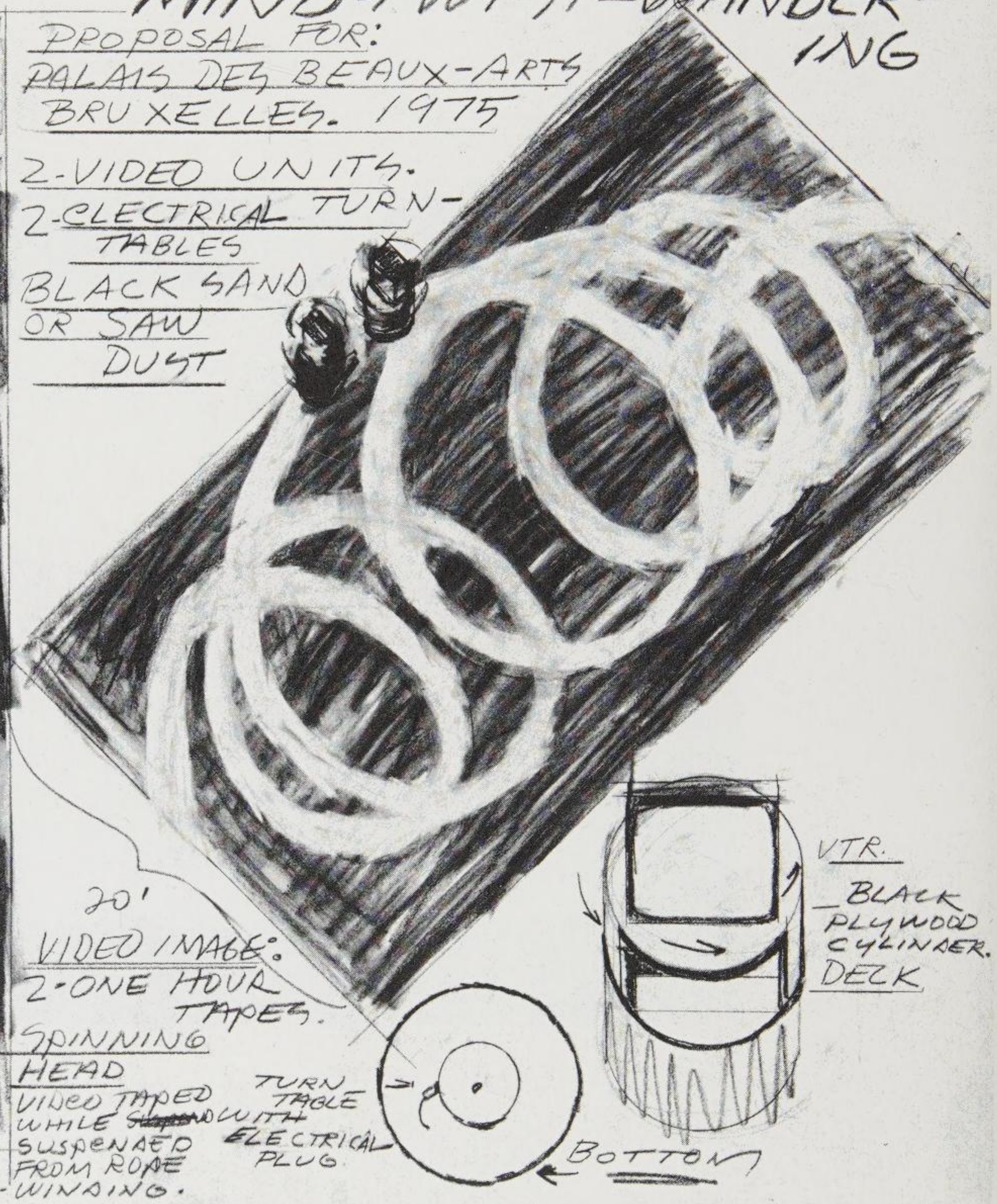
TOP VIEW.




# MIND-TWIST-WANDER-ING

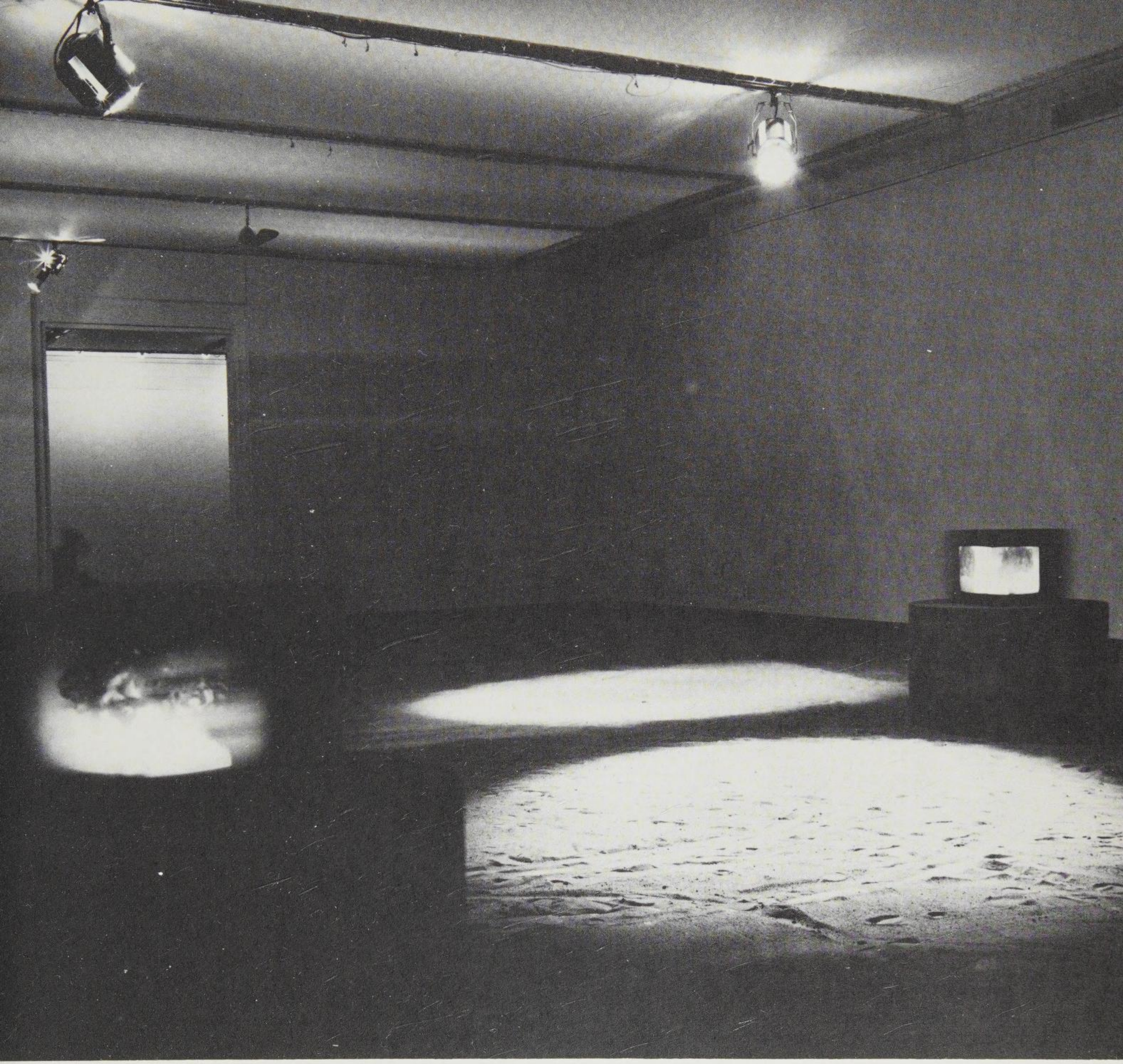
PROPOSAL FOR:
PALAIS DES BEAUX-ARTS
BRUXELLES. 1975

2-VIDEO UNITS.
2-ELECTRICAL TURN-TABLES
BLACK SAND OR SAW DUST





Copyright © 1976 by Dennis Oppenheim



Installation detail of *MIND-TWIST*, 22′ x 75′, Palais des Beaux-Arts,
Brussels, Belgium, 1975

# INPUT-TIME AND OUTPUT-TIME

**Nam June Paik**

The more I work with Video, the more I think about Lessing's distinction of Space art and Time art in the eighteenth century. Video is preemptive. If you are watching NBC, you cannot watch CBS . . . or if you are watching Ira Schneider, you are not watching Frank Gillette (or vice versa).

Napoleon said, "You can always recover the space lost, but you can never recover the time lost." Time is a very limited commodity. (Oil is also a limited commodity, because you need geological time to produce it, unlike corn or rice.) A rich collector can buy up big space and fill it with many paintings. However, he cannot add even one single second to his life-span. The poor and the rich are equal before death. Time is money, according to folk saying, but time is actually the inverse of money. Modern consumer society found out that the more money you have, the less time you have. (Compare a farmer in Mexico and a swinging couple who shuttle between Fire Island and the East Side.) Likewise art lovers do not mind strolling the vast space in the Hirschhorn Museum or Norton Simon's Pasadena Museum, viewing hundreds of mediocre paintings, but they refuse to sit through even a single stretch of a mediocre film or play . . . they get up and leave . . . and even tell their neighbors to avoid that film or play. . . .

Much confusion about today's video art comes from the lack of categories to distinguish

"good *and* boring art"
from
"bad *and* boring art."

Boredom itself is far from being a negative quality. It is rather a sign of aristocracy in Asia. And again this confusion stems from the confusion about INPUT-time and OUTPUT-time.

In the overzealousness to counter the CBS-type entertainment, or in order to preserve the purity of information or experience, some video artists refuse to edit or to change the time-structure of performances or happenstance. In other words, they insist that INPUT-time and OUTPUT-time be equal. However in our real life—say, live life—the relationship of input-time and output-time is much more complex—e.g., in some extreme situations or in dreams our whole life can be experienced as a flashback compressed into a split second (the survivors from air crashes or ski accidents tell of it often) . . . or, as in the example of Proust, one can brood over a brief childhood experience practically all of one's life in the isolation of a cork-lined room. That means, certain input-time can be extended or compressed in output-time at will . . . and this metamorphosis (not only in quantity, but also in quality) is the very function of our brain which is, in computer terms, the *central processing unit* itself. The painstaking process of editing is nothing but the simulation of this brain function.

Once on videotape, you are not allowed to die . . . in a sense. Three artists, Paul Ryan, Shigeko Kubota, and Maxi Cohen, videotaped their fathers before death. Videotaped death changed their relationship to death. Video art imitates nature, not in its appearance or mass, but in its intimate "time-structure". . . which is the process of AGING (a certain kind of *irreversibility*). Norbert Wiener, in his design of the Radar system (a micro two-way enveloping-time analysis), did the most profound thinking about Newtonian Time (reversible) and Bergsonian Time (irreversible). Edmund Husserl, in his lecture on "The Phenomenology of the Inner Time-consciousness" (1928), quotes St. Augustine (the best aesthetician of music in the Medieval Age), who said "What is TIME?? If no one asks me, I know . . . if some one asks me, I know not." This paradox in a twentieth-century modulation connects us to the Sartrian paradox "I am always not what I am, and, I am always what I am not."

On my recent trip to Tokyo I bought dozens of books about TIME by Oriental and Occidental thinkers. On my return to New York, I found out that I have no TIME to read them.

photos: Mary Lucier


Copyright © 1976 by Nam June Paik





*Snake*, b&w, 1974

**using body and voice to**







*On the Run*, 1975 photos: Elaine Hartnett

Copyright © 1976 by Charlemagne Palestine

*Internal Tantrum*, b&w, 1975

**articulate personal drama**

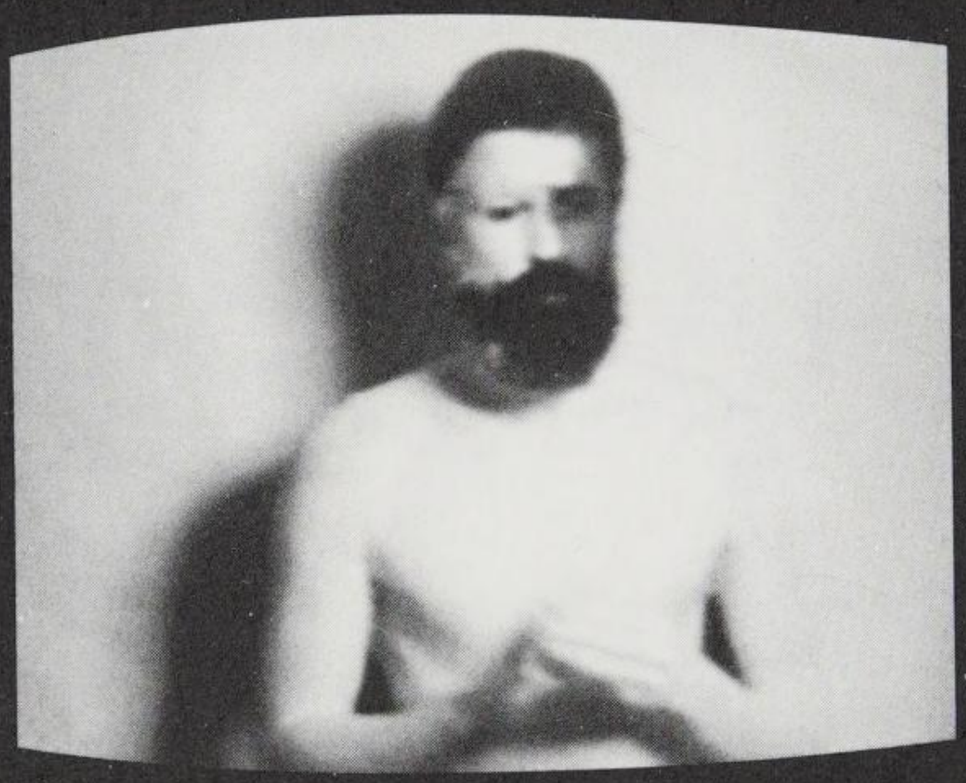


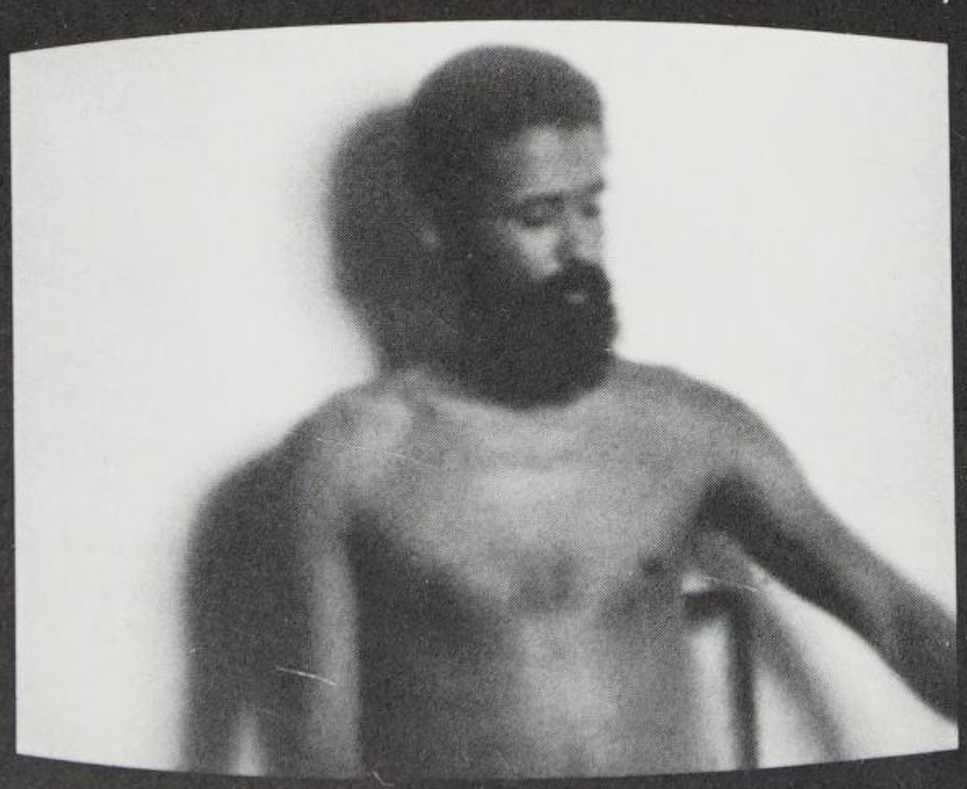




CHARLEMAGNE PALESTINE













photos: Fred Dubetsky

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# Videotape and a Composer

**Steve Reich**

**September 1975**

There are two ways I've worked or thought of working with videotape. The first is videotaping performances of musical compositions and the second is composing pieces for videotape.

1. For me, with few exceptions, the effect of watching and listening to a musical performance on a television screen and loudspeaker is one of trivializing the music. This trivialization happens because the sound quality is poor and the image small and also not of high quality. Can you ever remember a musically moving experience you had while watching and listening to a television receiver?

   What are the "few exceptions" mentioned above? These tend to be those cases where the instrumentation is relatively simple, the number of performers relatively few, and the bodies of the performers readily observable so that their posture, gestures, and general psychophysical presence can be seen and felt while they play. It seems to me that the medium of television, whether as commercial broadcast, art gallery installation, or whatever, is the most psychological medium I have ever encountered. By that I mean that it is, for me, more important to see and feel the presence of the performer on a television broadcast or recording than it is in live performance, or on an audio broadcast or recording, where it may be preferable to simply close one's eyes and listen.

   As examples of the above I have made videotapes of performances of my compositions *Clapping Music* (1972) and *Music for Pieces of Wood* (1973). The instrumentation of the former is simply two musicians clapping, that of the latter, five musicians playing tuned claves, or small tuned cylinders of hard wood. In both cases the sound sources are relatively simple compared to the acoustic spectrum of a piano, marimba, violin, or other musical instrument, and in both cases the number of performers is small enough so that the viewer can enjoy their posture, gestures, and presence. I should add that, in accord with these ideas, *Clapping Music*, which is the simpler of the two both in instrumentation and in number of performers, seems the more effective on videotape.

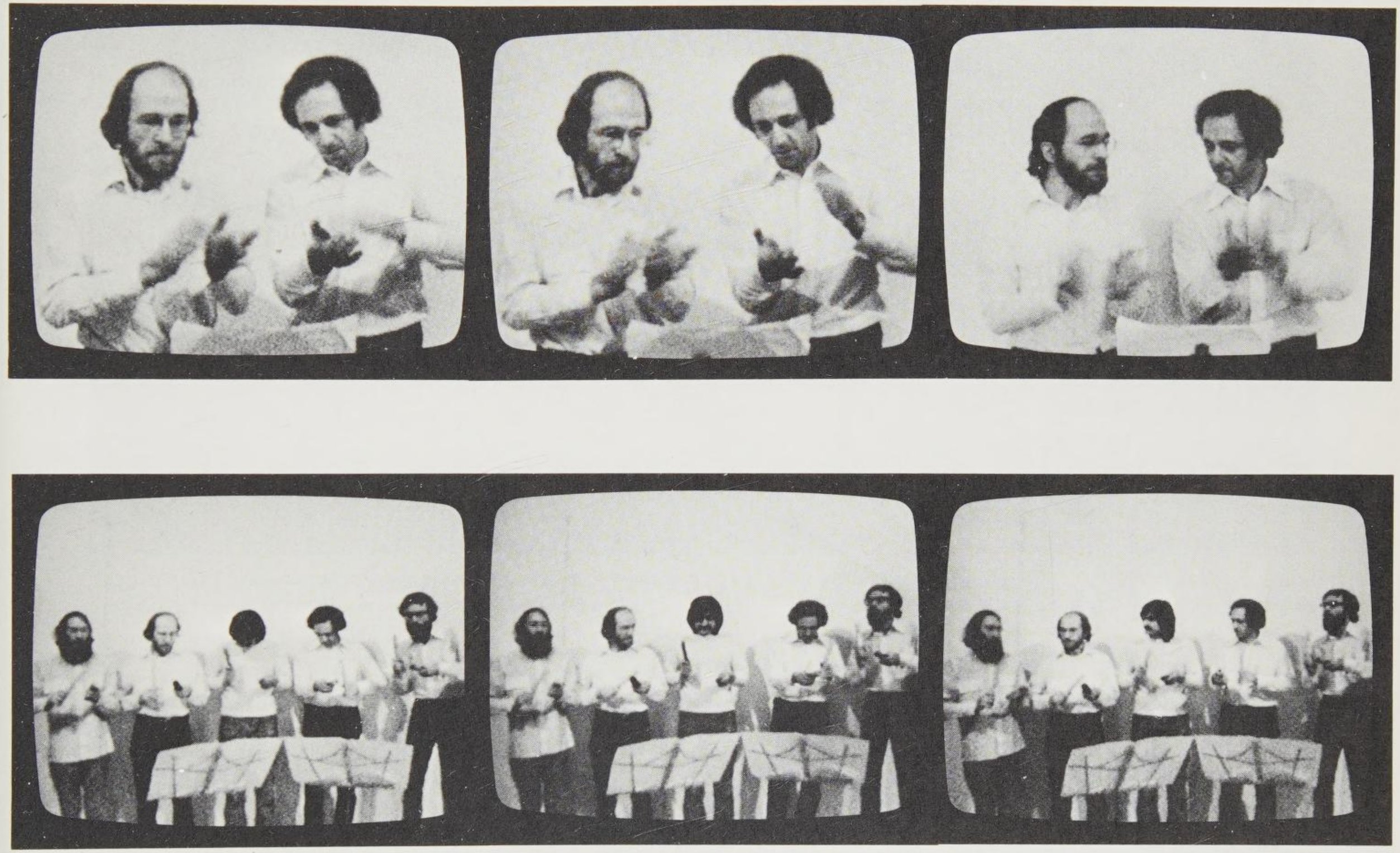
2. In the 1950's and 1960's composers began composing pieces on magnetic audio tape. More recently a few composers have begun to work with videotape as the medium of a particular musical work. As in relation to taped performances, I believe that for videotape compositions the most interesting image is that of the human body and face, close up; and the most interesting sound is that of human speech. As a composer, the image in a videotape composition, for me, is simply the "sync image" of the sound track.

   As examples of videotape compositions, I have two closely related multi-channel pieces in mind to be realized, I hope, in the future.

   The first, *My Name Is* (video), is simply the video version of my piece of the same name of 1967 for three or more audiotape recorders. In the video version the faces of three or more men, women, or children are videotaped close up saying, "My name is . . ." and their first name. Each "My name is . . ." is then made into a loop by dubbing it over and over again onto another reel or cassette for one or two minutes. Then the completed reel or cassette of three or more people each saying "My name is . . ." is itself reproduced three or more times. These duplicate reels or cassettes are then played on three or more separate decks into three or more monitors simultaneously, all beginning at exactly the same instant. The identical sound and image loop plays on three or more monitors simultaneously and, due to minute differences in motor speed, tape imperfections, etc., the tapes begin to gradually move in and out of phase with each other, producing audio-visual canons, or rounds.

   The second piece, *Portraits*, is identical in form and only slightly different in content. In this piece three or more people are videotaped close up saying words or making sounds that give some direct intuitive insight into who they are. A casual remark accompanied by a typical gesture, a habitual speech melody or rhythm, or even a sigh or sneeze might contain the brief (one to three seconds or so) sound and image necessary for the portrait. Each brief videotape is then duplicated as a loop, as mentioned above, and played on three or more decks and monitors, as described above. Again slight differences in motor speed of the decks, minute differences in the tapes, etc., will produce gradually shifting phase relations perceived as audio-visual canons or rounds.


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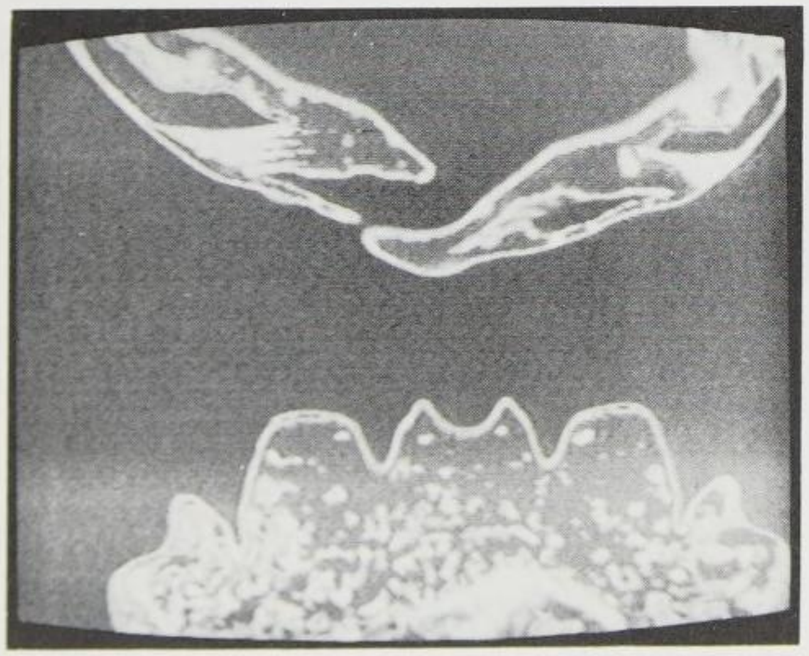


Top row: *Clapping Music* (1972). From left to right: Russ Hartenberger, Steve Reich
Bottom row: *Music for Pieces of Wood* (1973). From left to right: Bob Becker, Russ Hartenberger, Glen Velez, Steve Reich, James Preiss

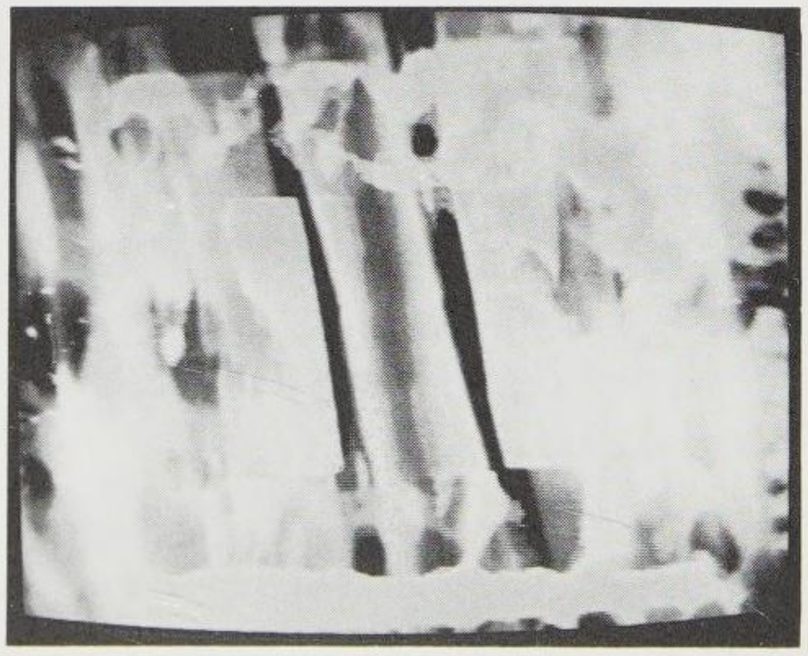


Videostat from CRT, 1972. Almost a year passed during the initial experiments with video before these were recorded, but hundreds of displays were photographed.

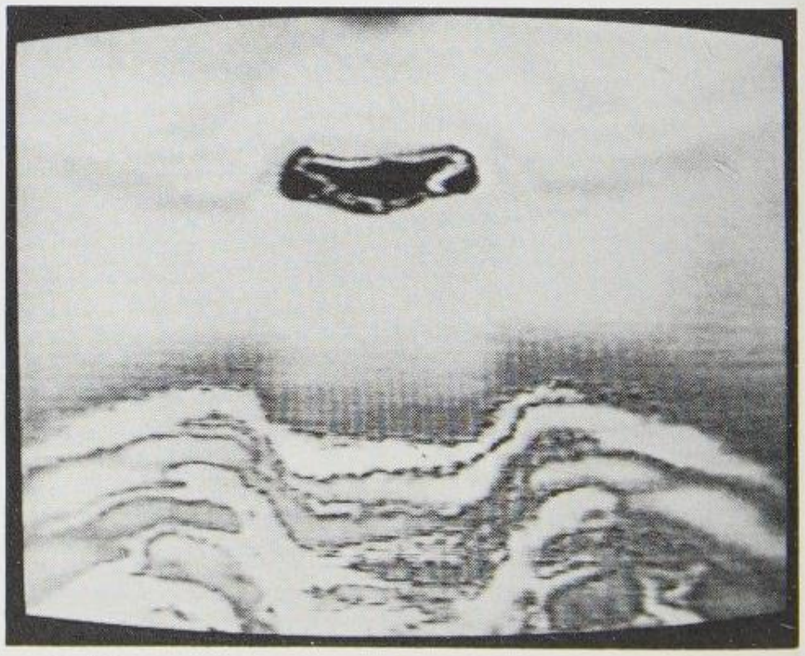
photos: Bill Ritchie and Letcher Ross



*The Hands of Carl Chew on My Father's Farm*, 1972



Videostat from *Lunch with Terry Riley*, 1972



Still from *The Hands of Carl Chew*, color, 1974

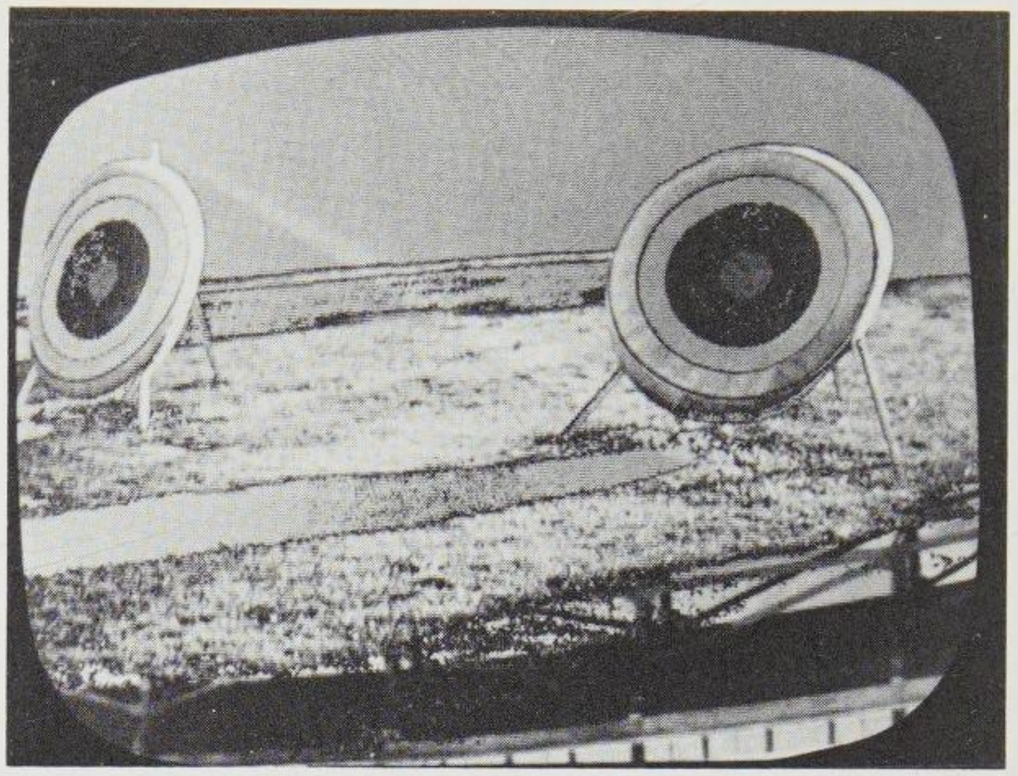
 Copyright © 1976 by Bill Ritchie

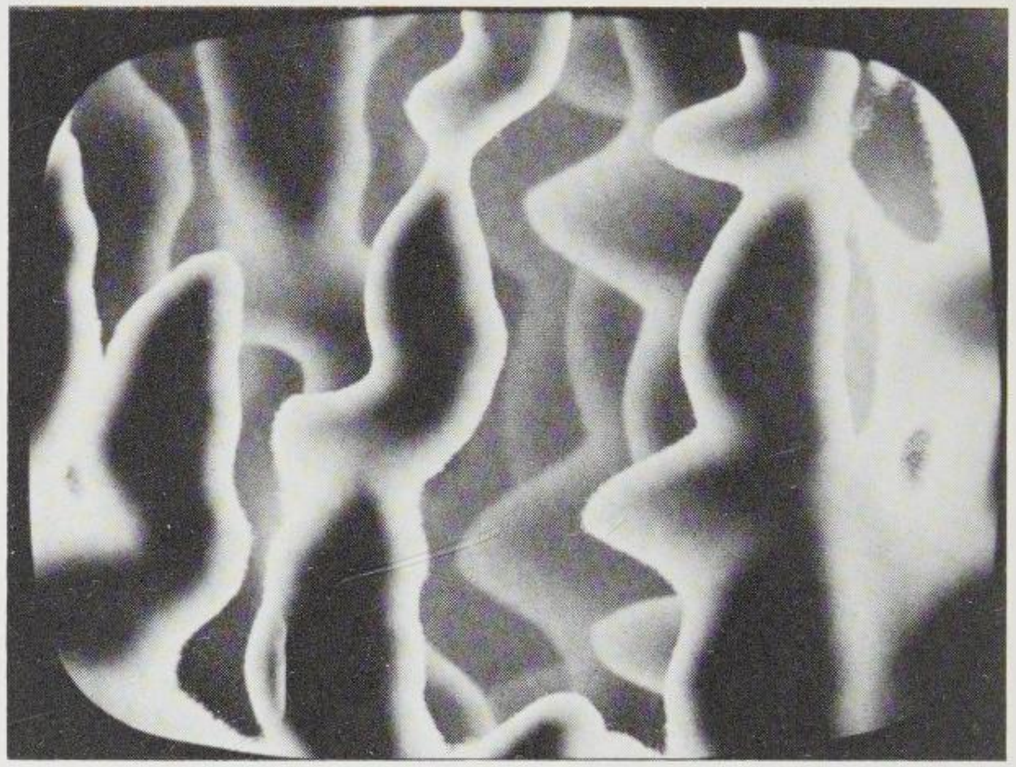
# BILL RITCHIE

Beginning in a conventionally enclosed field of interest in prints, my work led to some unsuspected overlaps with the special effects of television. Video gave my subject matter a new look, and revolutionized my perception of mediated artistry.

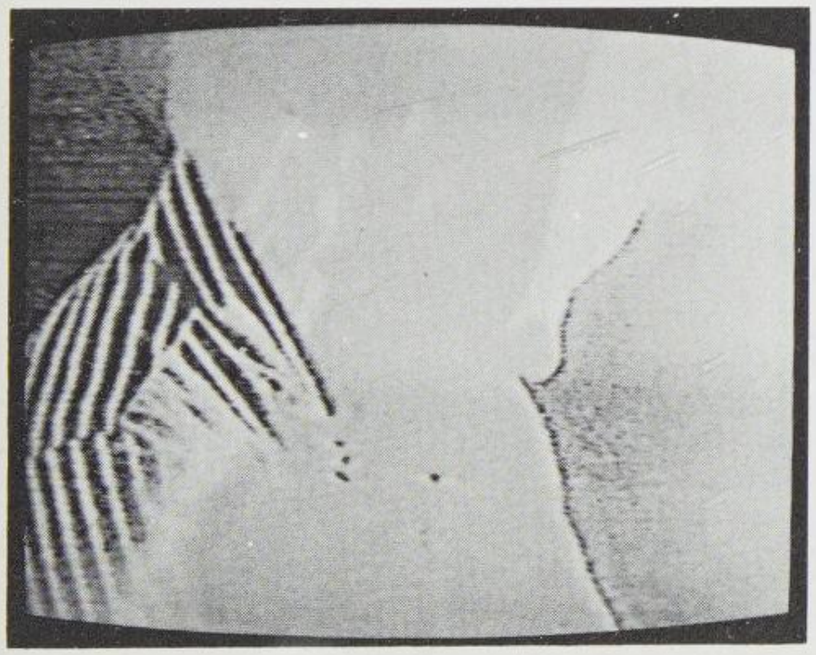
Conditions were right, in 1971, for original thinking and artistic creation in print and video, and their two streams began to offer evidence that they might converge and in some manner be combined. The integration of media—and of media with my ideas—was not the simple operation of adding them together. It was a process of mutual interference and cross-fertilization, in the course of which both forms were transformed.

In an ensemble approach to making videotapes, mine was a collaboration with gifted students who shared their talent and their interest in several disciplines. The University of Washington served our needs as well as set the limits to our techniques, and so there was a decided reliance on chance coincidence and a fascination with time and interpretation.

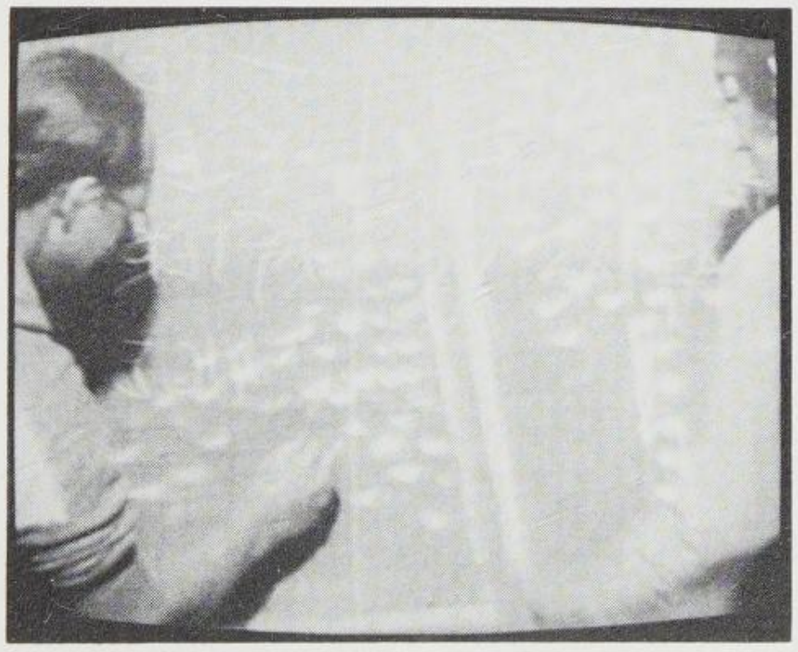




Top: *Two Targets*, videostat from CRT. Bottom: *Complementary Space*, videostat, 1972.



Still from color videotape *Sleep*, 1974



Ensemble work entitled *Theory of Gravity*, 1975



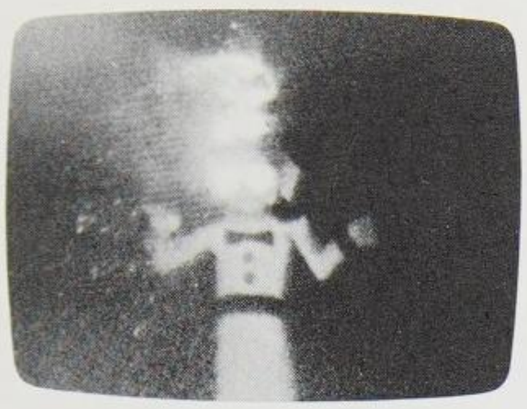
Bill Ritchie in 1975 tape, *Things You Can't See*

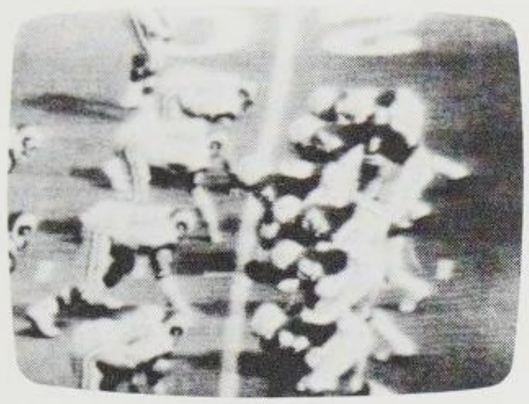


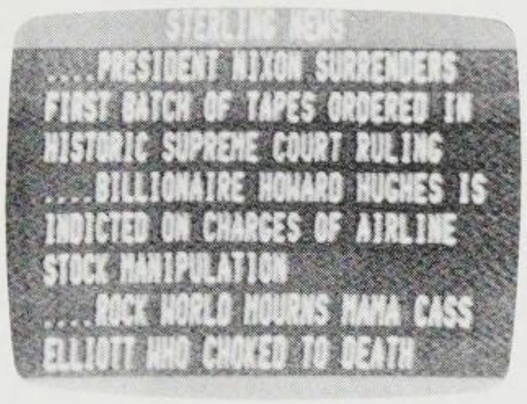

Copyright © 1976 by Lynda Rodolitz

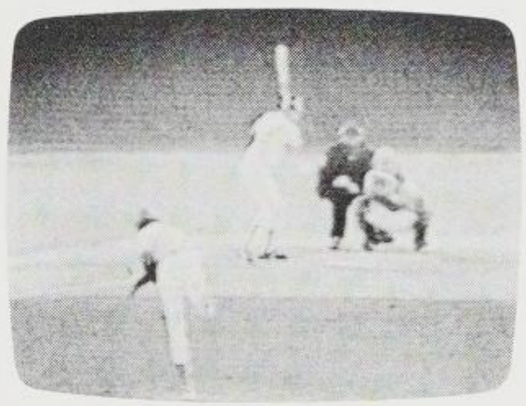
*of a FRIEND*

LYNDA RODOLITZ







photos: Kirsten Bates

# Photos from

## Whetting Your Videotape Taste

VIDEO ART EXHIBITION AND WORKSHOP, New Orleans Museum of Art, City Park, through July 8.

The first videotape festival in these parts is currently on-the-beam at the New Orleans Museum of Art. The exhibition features the work of six internationally famed video artists —Vito Acconci, Joan Jonas, William Wegman, Peter Campus, Nam June Paik and Ira Schneider. . . .

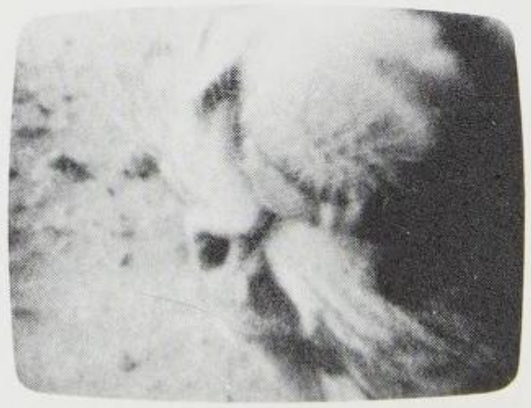
Of the first three, Wegman is the most interesting and entertaining. His humorous social situations are presented with the timing and attitudes found in a stand-up comic.

Campus specializes in the sophisticated technological use of the medium, and his film features two simultaneous images, each presented with the rocking motion of a train. Schneider, who is co-founder of the magazine "Radical Software," the video bible, shows a not-too-interesting piece called "Bits, Chunks and Pieces."

If you only have time for one film, however, let it be the simply beautiful one by Nam June Paik. . . .

Luba Glade

Excerpt from *Lagniappe*, New Orleans, June 27, 1975





 Copyright © 1976 by Ira Schneider

# BITS, CHUNKS & PIECES
## A Video Album

### Schneider's "Album" a Work of Realized Videotape Artistry

By MIMI CROSSLEY
*Post* Art Writer

A videotape "album" by video master Ira Schneider, showing at the Contemporary Arts Museum, demonstrates what a realized work of video art is all about.

Schneider, editor of the leading video journal "Radical Software" has shown in museums and at The Kitchen, a video workshop in New York.

His 54-minute long-play video album "Bits, Chunks and Pieces," was taped as a personal documentary from travels in the USA and Mexico a year ago.

Schneider shows his complete technical mastery of the basic backpack Sony videotape recorder with half-inch tape. Using the standard lens, he can get perfectly exposed detailed distance shots, movement, close-ups—almost anything conventional television film can do plus retaining and exploring the natural advantages of tape and the small camera.

The structure is rhythmic, based on his theme of showing the environment of the country and its organisms—people and animals—in a setting of ritual and myth. We see landscapes interspersed with Mexican festivals, striptease, joints, baseball games and television news along with animals in their own ritual dances.

The rhythm varies between lazy realtime segments and cut-in bits of action, some fast, some slow. While his images are beautifully constructed—the work can also be seen as a photo album of striking images—they are not shot and edited in slick commercial television style.

At first, the desultory, easy-going look of the tapes belies the subtle structure that slowly builds up through Schneider's masterful eye for natural composition enhanced by editing. He makes a sensitive mood and image look easy, but the highly edited tape stays clear of the tight look of "bullfight" structured commercial television by making clearly defined, rough transitions from time to time.

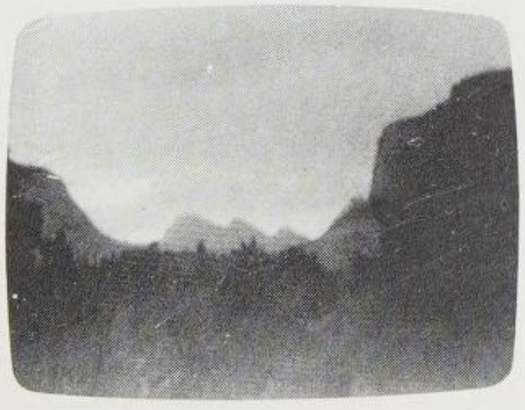
By quickly shifting the camera back and forth to jar the eye and define a jump, Schneider also reminds us it is a personal art form by an artist, not the fool-the-eye attempt at conning us into thinking it is real, something a commercial editor would never let his cameraman reveal.

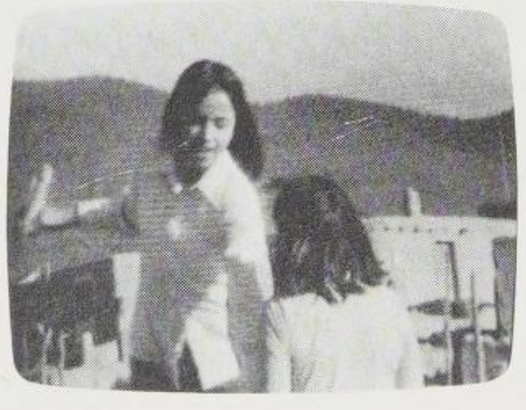
The value of seeing Schneider's work here is to at last give video fans the knowledge they don't have to put up with poor technical quality, unintentional accidents or badly realized video art.

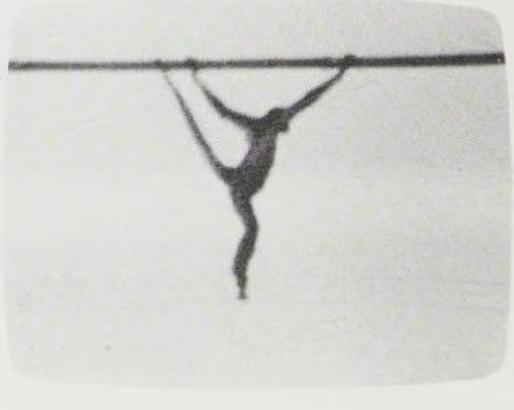
**and two reviews**

Portions of the article "Schneider's album a work of realized videotape artistry" by Mimi Crossley are reprinted by permission of *The Houston Post* (© 1975).









# VIDEO STAR



Mrs. Elaine Segalove, star of *The Professional Retirement Home; Mom, Where Can I Get a Toastmaster; Mom, I'm Bored;* and *Oy,* submits to her first telephone interview while watching television.

 Copyright © 1976 by Ilene Segalove

# TALKS ON TELEPHONE

MRS. SEGALOVE, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR DAUGHTER MAKING VIDEOTAPES?

My daughter has always been an artist—ever since she could hold a pencil. I feel that making video is just another form of making art. There are so many forms of art. You know, housekeeping is an art. Well, I think Ilene is investigating a new field that might just help her find out what she is really interested in doing.

DO YOU LIKE SEEING YOURSELF ON TV?

Not really. I don't like looking at myself as a very special person in a unique situation where I know I will be watched. Maybe I would not mind if just close friends watched with me in private. I might say to them, "Look how fat she is," or "Look, she walks just like a football player," or "Does my voice really sound that way?"

BUT MRS. SEGALOVE, YOU STARRED ALONE ON TAPES WHICH SHOWED IN PUBLIC . . .

Well, I guess it depends on the tape. I liked that tape at the Whitney Museum. I did well for an amateur. I didn't perform. I just played myself. That doesn't mean I didn't work. I worked hard. I just didn't get as involved as an actress might.

WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PROCESS OF MAKING VIDEOTAPES?

I have learned a great deal about things I never gave thought to. I mean a person has to go through so much to tell a story. It gets nerve-racking after a while. There is equipment to handle, problems with lighting and sound, phones ringing. You know, it is unbelievable!

DO YOU FEEL ANY OF THE TAPES POKE FUN AT YOU?

No. I do not. Ilene comes up with a story. She and I put it together on tape. She knows me. She has observed me for years. She writes a better script for me than anyone else could.

WOULD YOUR HUSBAND LIKE TO BE IN A VIDEOTAPE?

It depends on the type of tape. He is far more of a perfectionist than I. I like the natural way. We are all human beings, and we can't be perfect or we would be like dummies in a window.

ARE THERE ANY TAPES YOU LIKE A LOT?

Yes. I like the one where Ilene and I are yelling at one another and I am throwing different objects onto some lovely chairs. It's called, *Mom, I'm Bored!*

DO YOU WATCH REGULAR TV?

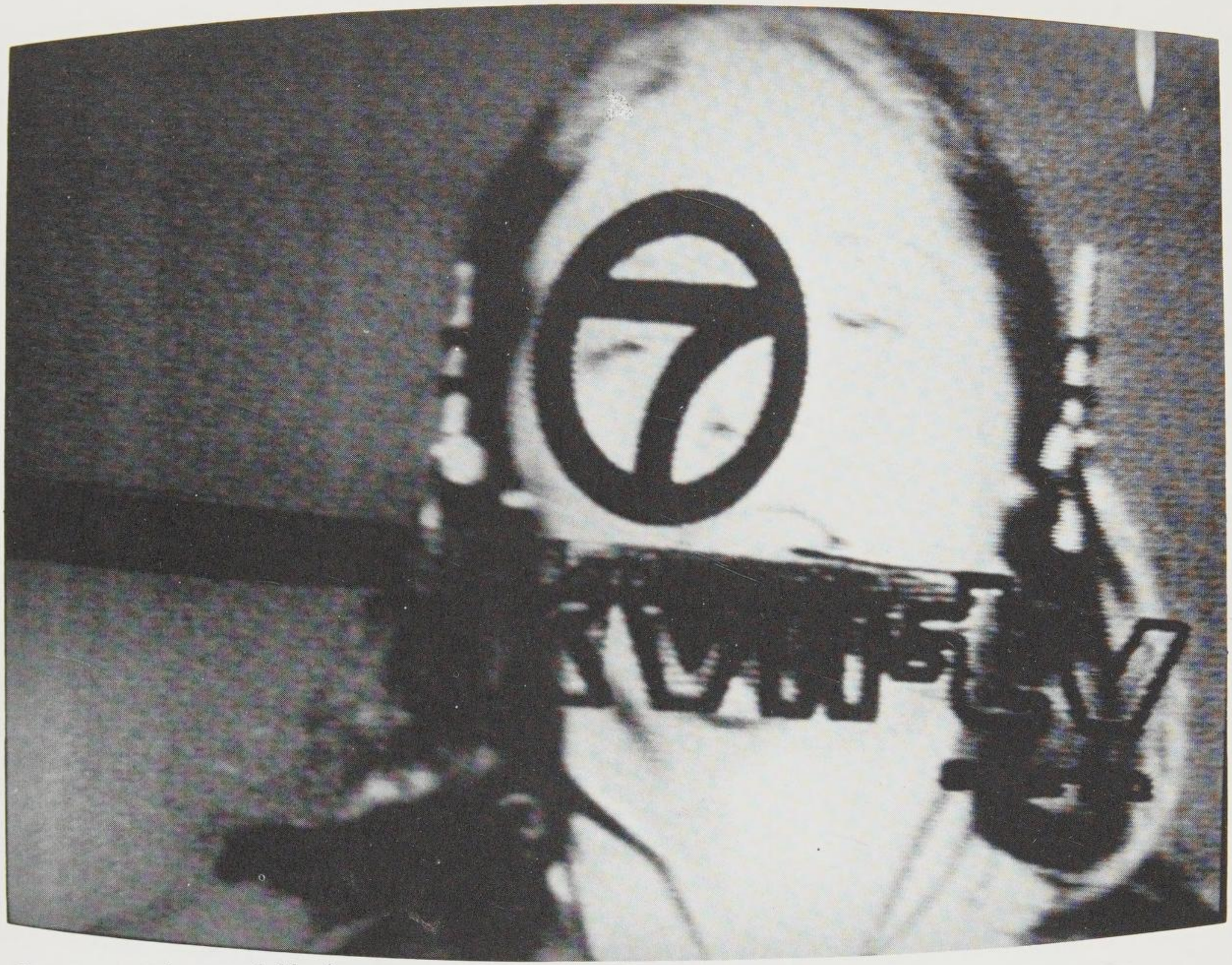
Sure. The tube has everybody going crazy. I like good movies and comedies. I think Carol Burnett is great. I like to laugh. I really can't stand police stories or mysteries. They are boring and repetitive.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS?

I think the people work very hard at it but I don't appreciate all of them. I think rock groups play too loud. If they played softer their music would be beautiful. It's a dog-eat-dog business, but I respect their efforts.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

Yes. I think the field is fascinating. But unless you have connections it is hard to get into. It's not how much you know but who you know. I feel you should contact Cousin Barry. I definitely think you should (don't tape this, honey) go over and talk to him about a lot of things—if you are interested. Go have dinner with him. Call him up, or call up his wife. You've got to start somewhere. He'll give you some names.



*Boomerang*, color, sound, 11 min.

A delayed audio feedback system (two tape recorders, earphones) was set up in a television studio. A headset allowed a person to investigate simultaneously the formulation of thoughts and language as the words spilled out and returned to the ear. The voice was picked up with microphones in the studio recorder and fed back through the earphones. The person spoke and heard his voice fractured and delayed.

This system established a distance between the apprehension and the comprehension of language as words split, delayed, mirrored, and returned. Thoughts were partially being formulated, comprehended, and vocalized. The reiteration presented a revolving, involuting experience, because parts of the words coming back in on themselves stimulated a new direction for thoughts. The paradox of the literalness of the word and the immateriality of the sound of one's voice echoing back forced a reorganization and rearticulation.

This unit of discourse examines and reveals the structural framework of the system. The comprehension and functional significance of the act in context was being exposed in the mind of the investigator.

"Boomerang" does not involve itself with a narrative cinematic organization. The good "filmic shot" or "the take" is akin to the spoken word. In film, once "the take" is established—the chase or whatever—the story can unfold in a succession of images.

The word phrase establishes the possibility for any device to follow—entertainment, jokes, montage, special effects, tricks of staging, and so on; all is accepted. The paradox of the narrative film is the spoken word, the isolation of a meaning in the flow of successive images. Hence most films and tapes have a strong image content but a weak code.

*Boomerang* is a tape which analyzes its own discourse and processes as it is being formulated. The language of *Boomerang* and the relation between the description and what is being described is not arbitrary. Language and image are being formed and revealed as they are organized.

 Copyright © 1976 by Richard Serra

The product of television, commercial television, is the audience.

3

Television delivers people to an advertiser.

3

There is no such thing as mass media in the United States except for television.

3

Mass media means that a medium can deliver masses of people.

2

Commercial television delivers 20 million people a minute.

2

In commercial broadcasting the viewer pays for the privilege of having himself sold.

2

It is the consumer who is consumed.

2

You are the product of TV

3

You are delivered to the advertiser who is the customer.

1

He consumes you.

3

The viewer is not responsible for programming———

1

You are the end product.

1

You are the end product delivered en masse to the advertiser.

6

You are the product of TV

6

Everything on television is educational in the sense that it teaches something.

2

What television teaches through commercialism is materialistic consumption.

2

The NEW MEDIA STATE is predicated on media control.

2

Media asserts an influence over an entire cultural spectrum without effort or qualification.

2

We are persuaded daily by a corporate oligarchy.

3

Corporate control advocates materialistic propaganda.

3

Television establishments are committed to economic survival: . . . . . .

2

Propaganda for profit.

3

Television is the prime instrument for the management of consumer demands.

2

Commercial television defines the world in specific terms.

1

Commercial television defines the world so as not to threaten the status quo.

2

Television defines the world so as not to threaten you.

1

Soft propaganda is considered entertainment.

2

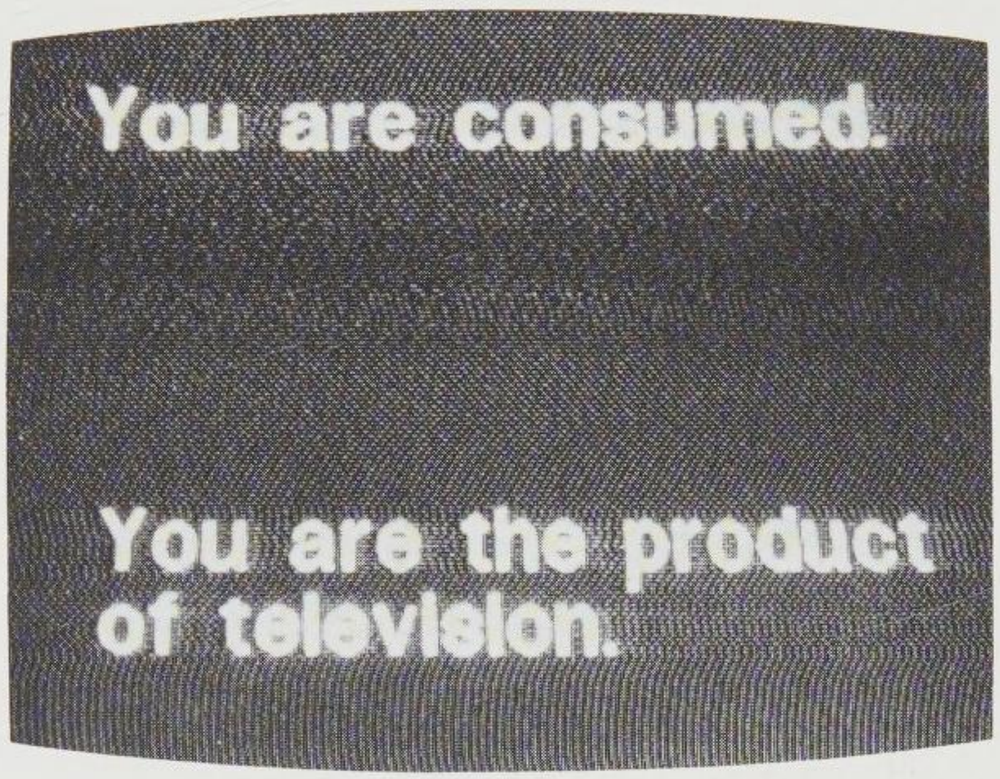
POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT IS BASICALLY PROPAGANDA FOR THE STATUS QUO.

3

Control over broadcasting is an exercise in controlling society.

3

Seventy-five per cent




*Television Delivers People*, color, sound, 6 min., 1973.

of news is received by you from television.

2

What goes on over the news is what you know.

2

It is the basis by WHICH YOU MAKE JUDGMENTS. By which you think.

2

You are the controlled product of news programming.

3

Television programming dominates the exposure of ideas and information.

3

There is inherent conflict between:

2

COMMERCE,

2

INFORMATION,

2

ENTERTAINMENT.

3

There is a mass media compulsion to reinforce the status quo.

To reinforce the distribution of power.

3

The NEW MEDIA STATE is dependent on television for its existence.

6

The NEW MEDIA STATE is dependent on propaganda for its existence.

6

Corporations that own networks control them.

6

CORPORATIONS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE.

2

CORPORATIONS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE TO GOVERNMENT.

2

CORPORATIONS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE TO THEIR EMPLOYEES.

2

CORPORATIONS ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE TO THEIR SHAREHOLDERS.

3

Shareholders do not organize and enforce their will.

Shareholders buy stock in companies and don't even know what the companies do.

3

Corporations mitigate information.

3

Every dollar spent by the television industry in physical equipment needed to send a message to you is matched by forty dollars spent by you to receive it.

3

You pay the money to allow someone else to make the choice.

4

You are consumed.

4

You are the product of television.

4

Television delivers people.

"TELEVISION DELIVERS PEOPLE"

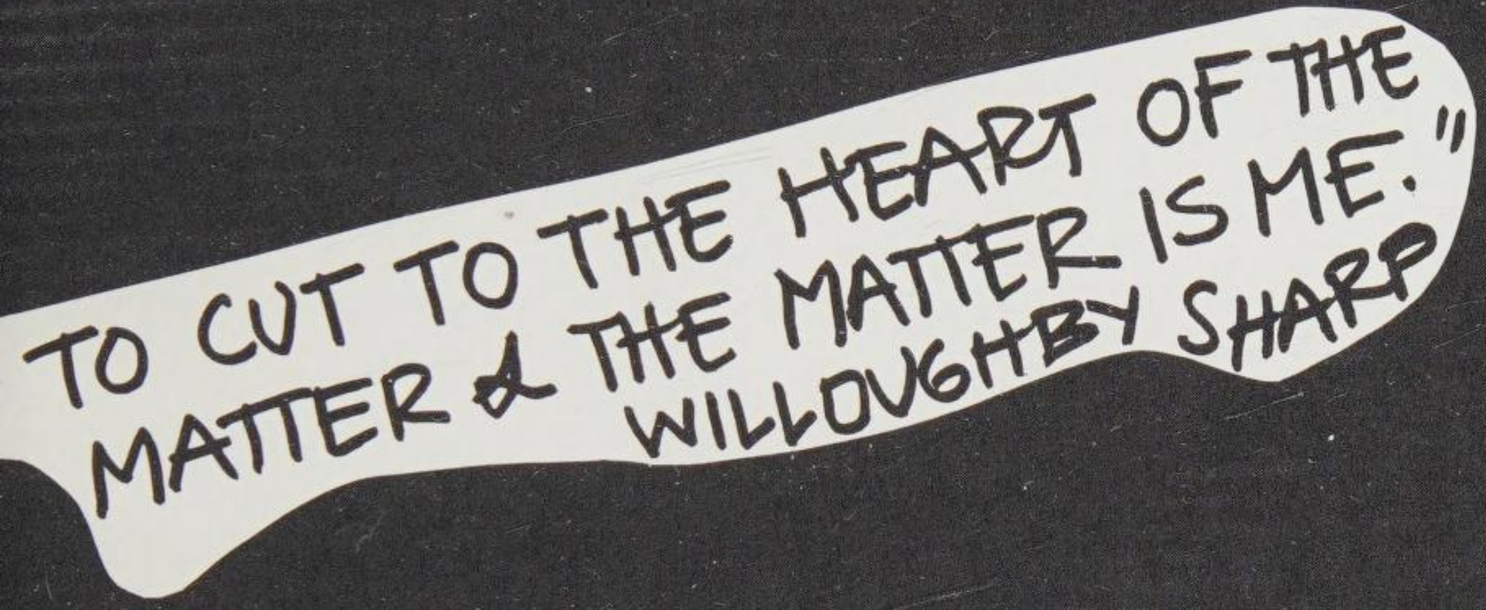
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Richard Serra

1

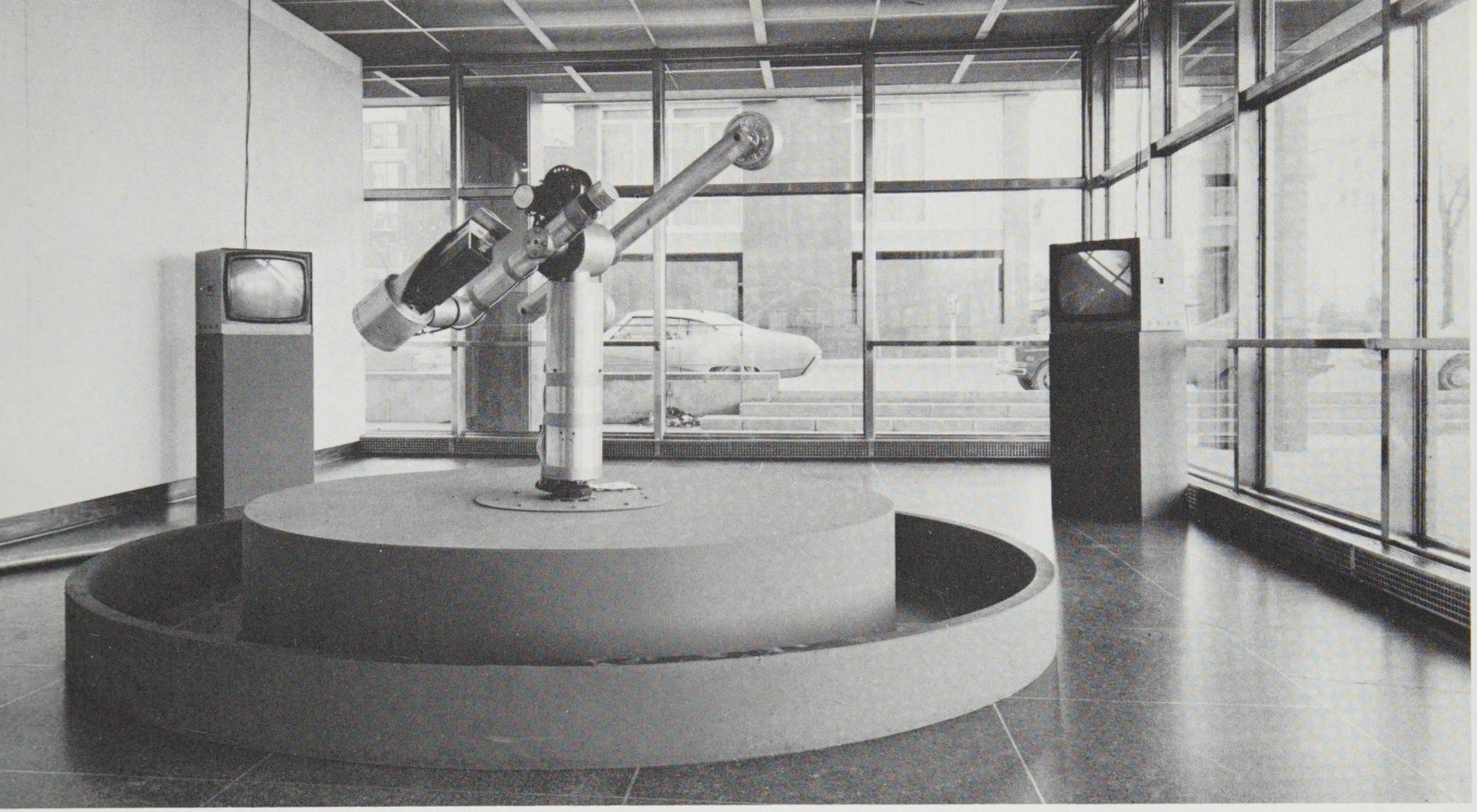
Carlotta Fay Schoolman


"I USE VIDEO AS A KNIFE




yright © 1976 by Willoughby Sharp

WILLOUGHBY SHARP



# De La 1969-1972

## Michael Snow

Aluminum and steel mechanical sculpture, with electronic controls, television camera, and four monitors, 72″ × 72″; painted circular wood base, 96″ diameter.

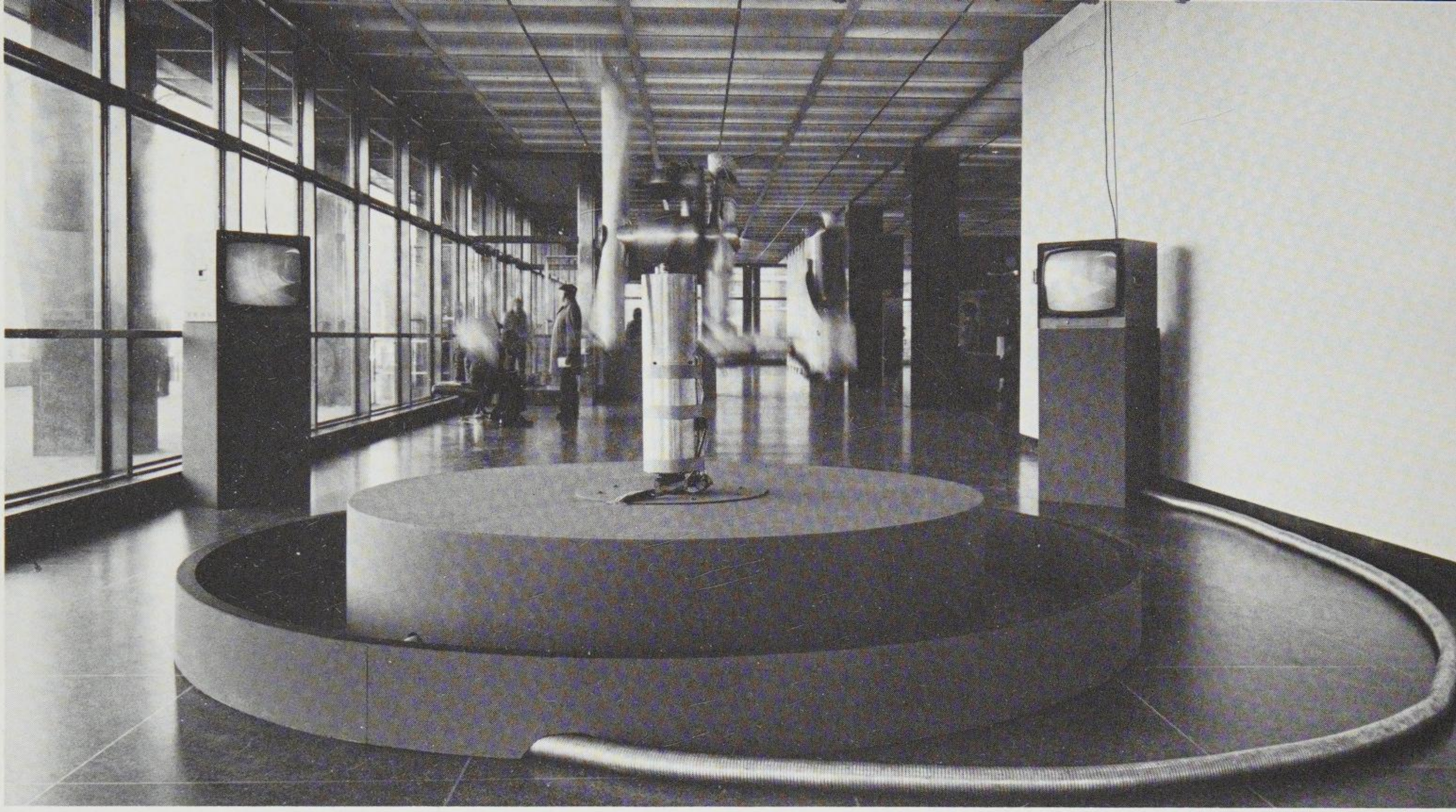
*Exhibition:* Ottawa, The National Gallery of Canada, March 12–April 11, 1971, *La Région Centrale*.

In many cases, new works by Michael Snow incorporate objects that were used in his earlier works, either as subject matter or as material within them. In this instance, *De La* is the result of his making *La Région Centrale*. For *La Région Centrale* he needed a machine that could, for all practical purposes, film in every direction from a central axis, and without interruption, in order to change the movements or angles of the camera.

Many solutions were discussed. Pierre Abbeloos, a Montreal technician, built the machine specifically for the film camera. Snow had given him the maximum size of the machine as well as the size of its rotating arcs. *Because of what I wanted to happen on the screen, it had to be at man-sized height from the ground.* The machine was built in June 1969, and the film was shot during the last week of September 1970. *I started to think of the machine as an object in itself as it was being built and to see that it was beautiful; I was thinking of other uses for it when we made the film.* In January and February 1971, Pierre Abbeloos, in cooperation with Astro Electronics and R.C.A., Ltd., of Montreal, made the necessary technical adaptations to the machine so it could be used to hold a television camera transmitting images by cable to four monitors.

After the first presentation of the work in Ottawa, under the title *From/De La Région Centrale*, the motors, the sets of gear wheels and the electronic circuits were changed by technicians at Dumco Metal Products of Montreal in order to render permanent the use of the machine with a television camera and monitors. The final result of these transformations is a new work, *De La*, entitled by Michael Snow in November 1971. The original machine was never intended to be seen in relation to the film *La Région Centrale*, and only its fleeting shadow appears in it.

De La *precisely has to do with seeing the machine make what you see. . . . There's a really interesting separation between the maker of the images and the images. . . . You can follow the movements that are made by the sources of the image as well as the results of those movements on the four screens. Contrary to the film, it doesn't have anything to do with affecting a sense of fictional gravity. . . .* De La *is a sculpture and it's really important that you see how the machine moves and how beautiful it is. . . . It is a kind of dialogue about perception.*



photos: The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. 1971.

Everything surrounding the machine, including the intensity of ambient light, is the subject of its visual scrutiny, the result of which appears as fleeting images within the rectangular frames of the four television screens. The machine itself, although it can point at the television screens and multiply their images indefinitely, is absent from all the images it can produce. In this sense it is like the artist, whose image is normally absent from those he produces; but unlike him, it cannot become part of them by altering the rules—as in *Authorization* (1969), when Snow photographed himself photographing a mirror, or in *Venetian Blind* (1970), when he photographed himself "being photographed." The machine's only presence in the composition is an actual one, within the real space it occupies.

Metaphorically, it does, however, represent the artist by looking at things and assuming them as images. Specifically, it recreates and varies indefinitely the gestures Snow made when he shot *8 × 10* (1969).

As in *Sink* (1970) and *Untitled Slidelength* (1969–71), *De La* incorporates a series of images into one composition in time; yet, in this case, they are themselves ephemeral and disappear as quickly as they appeared.

The images themselves are silent; the sound accompanying the images is made through the movements of the rotating base and arms of the machine. *The TV image is magic, even though it is in real time; simultaneously, it is a ghost of the actual events which one is, in this case, part of. The machine that is orchestrating these ghost images is never seen in them: It belongs exclusively to the real side of this equation. The sound is an essential part of the concreteness of the machine; if it were silent it would tend more toward a representation and also have less "personality" as a unique Thing-in-the-world.*

(Italicized portions are quotes from Michael Snow's letter to Pierre Théberge, March 1971. The commentary was reprinted from the catalogue by Théberge, *About 30 Works by Michael Snow*, presented by the Center for Inter-American Relations and published by The National Gallery of Canada, 1972 © 1972 by The National Gallery of Canada for the Corporation of the National Museums of Canada, 1972.)

# EEG VIDEO TELEMETRY ENVIRONMENT









**Installed at the Contempory Arts Museum in Houston, Texas, 1975**

Copyright © 1976 by Nina Sobel

# TELEMETRIC DRAWINGS

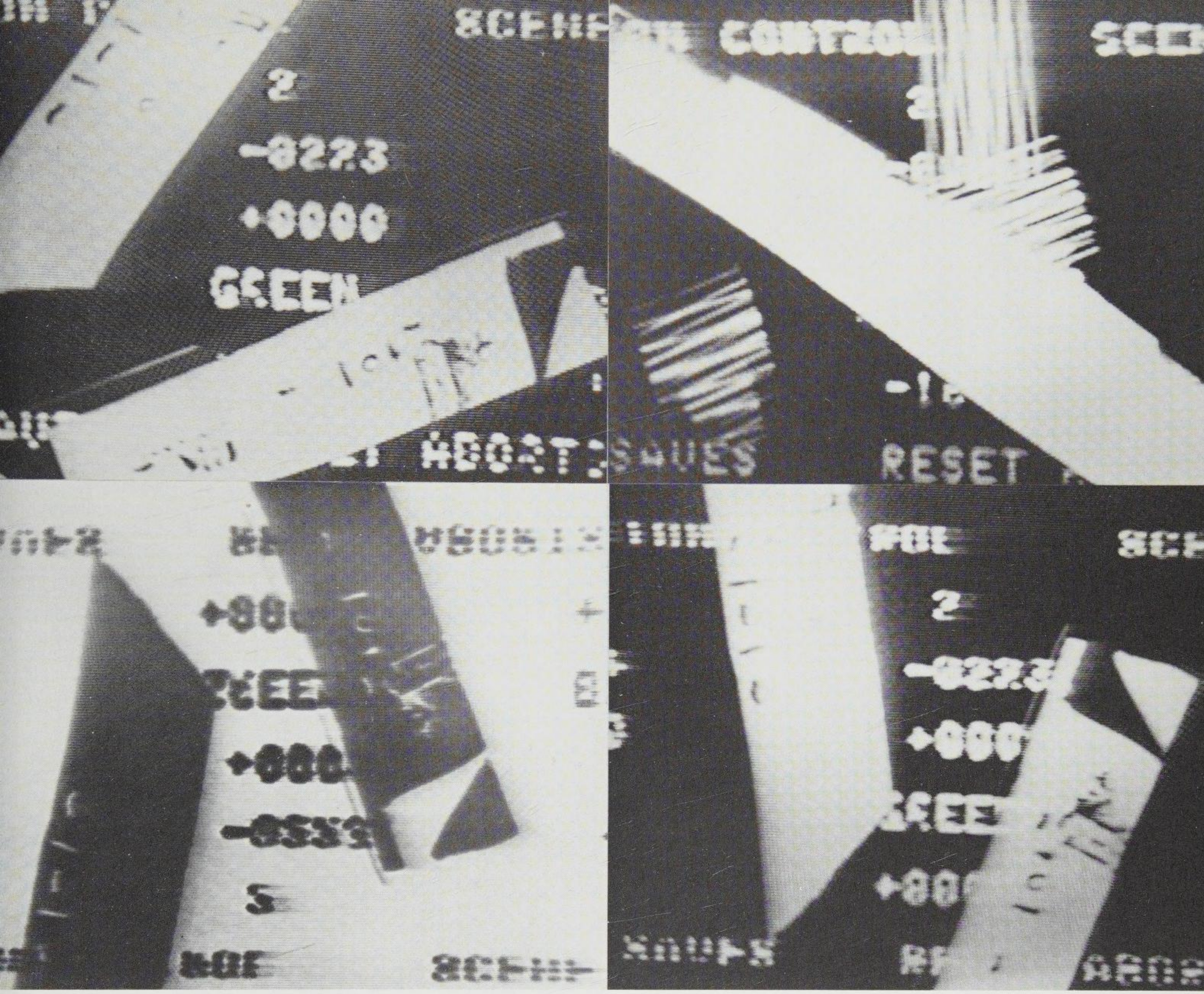


NINA SOBEL



# KEITH SONNIER
# ANIMATION II, 1974, 25 min. sound

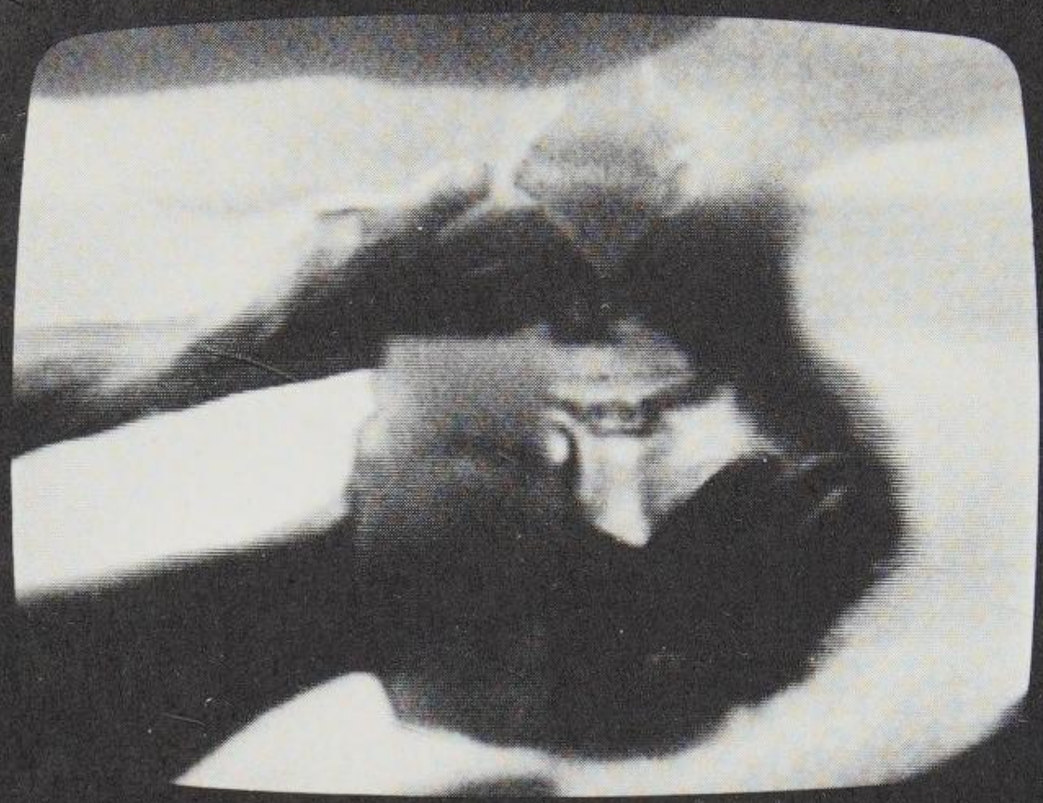
Copyright © 1976 by Keith Sonnier



These are video stills taken at one-minute intervals from a section of *Animation II*. *Animation II* was taped at Computer Image in Denver, Colorado. An electronic character and type animation computer was used.

The computer can control seven different inputs of taped or real time. Each input can be superimposed or sectioned into the original video frame. Each division can have a separate axis so that entire images can be fully framed, enlarged, or keyed into other neighboring tracks. The information in the tape combines use of stored information which the computer pre-arranged, as well as real-time manipulation of the different computer tracks.



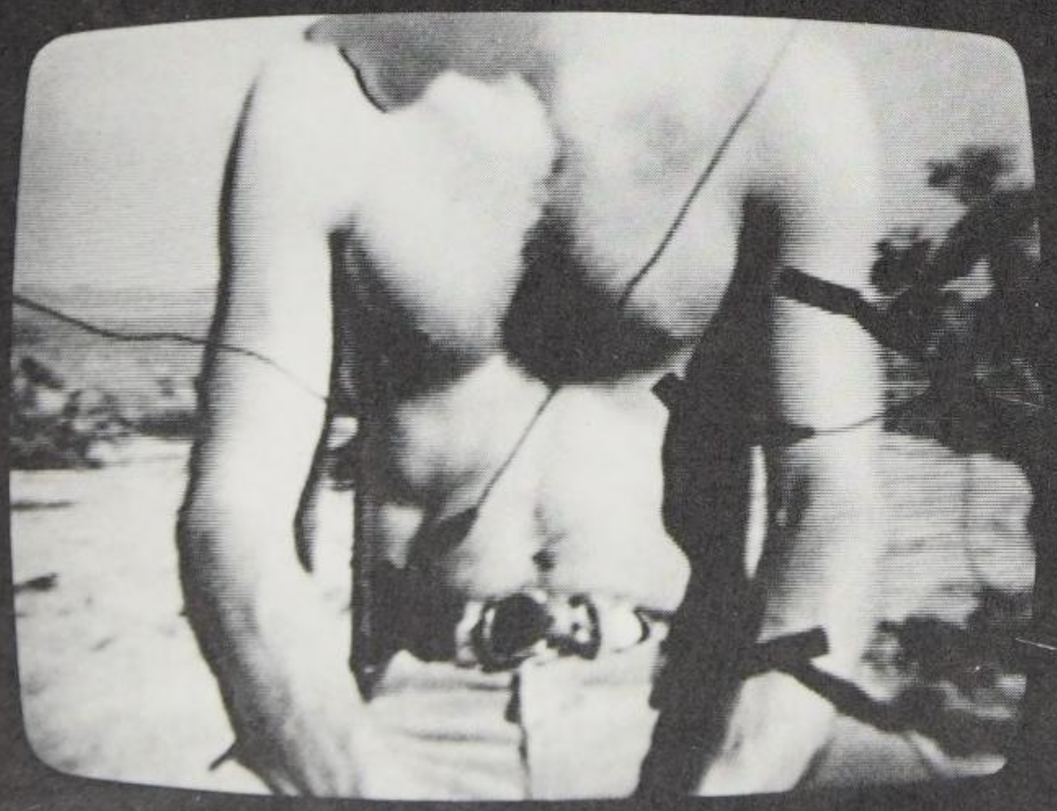


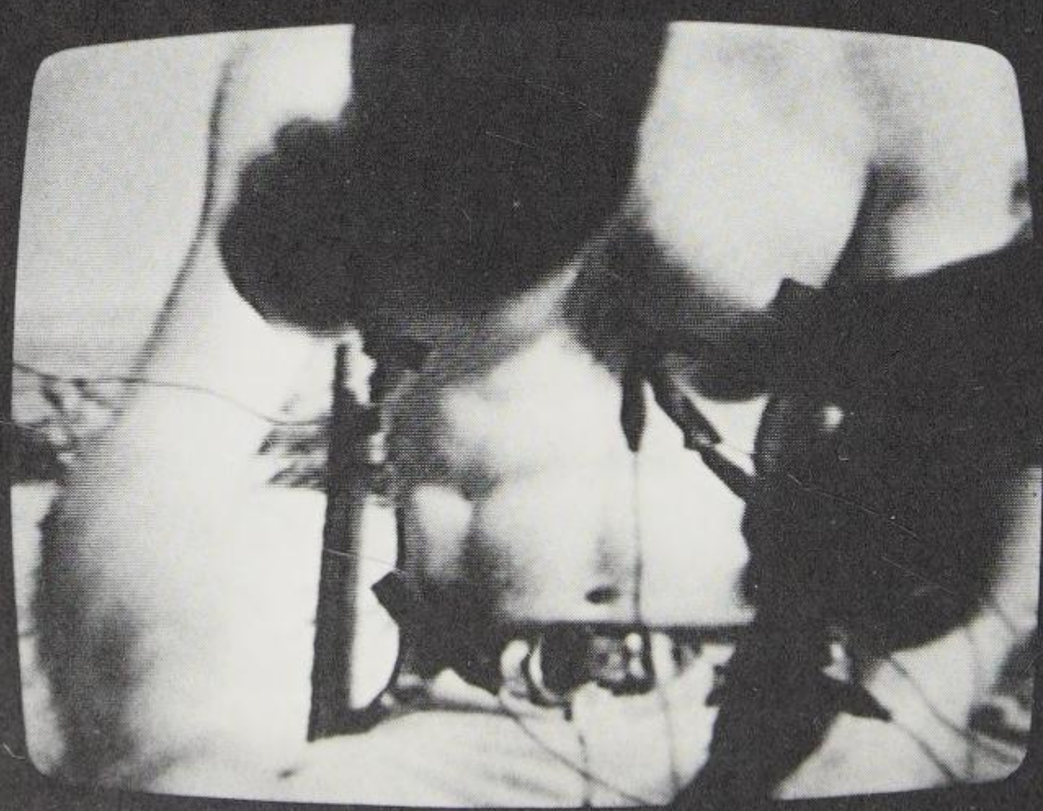
(water piece)
'74





NOR/MAL
CON/VERSE
'74





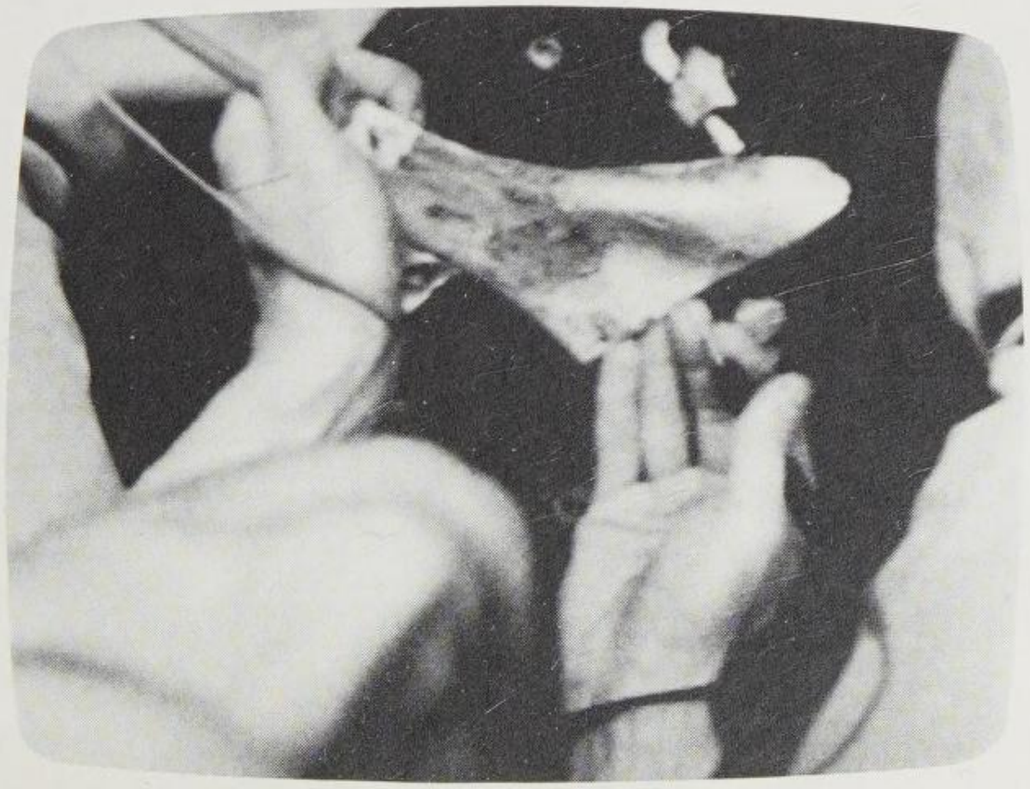
Shirt
'74

Copyright © 1976 by John Sturgeon

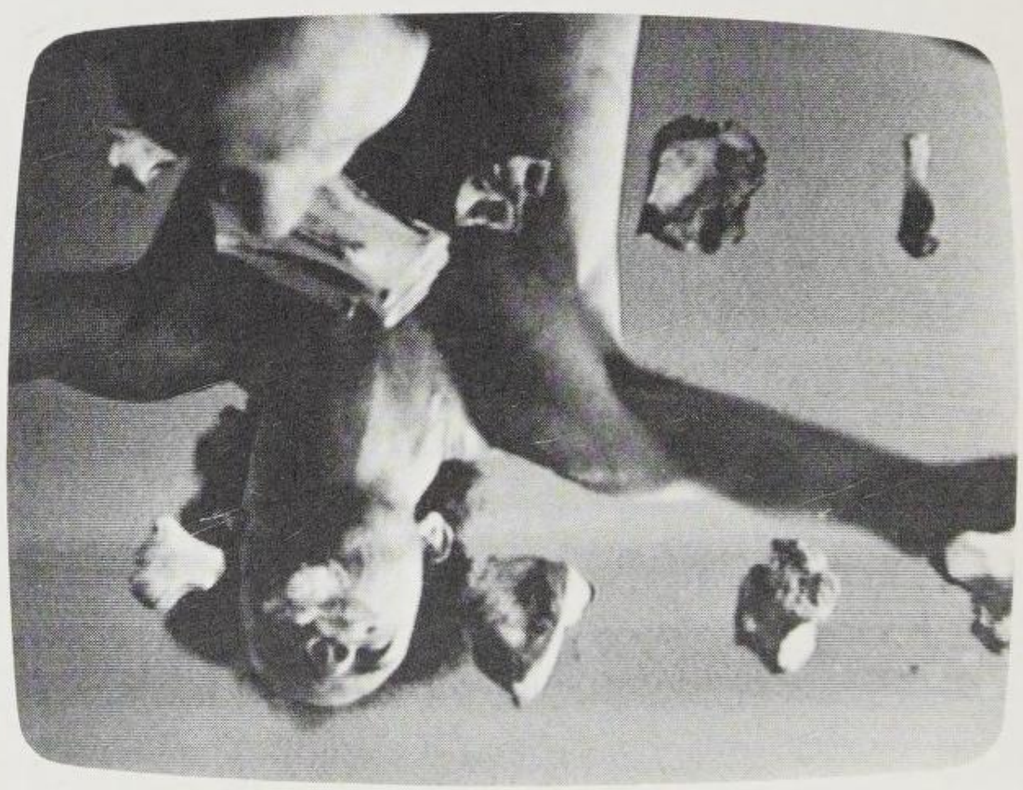
Egyptian
Access
'75



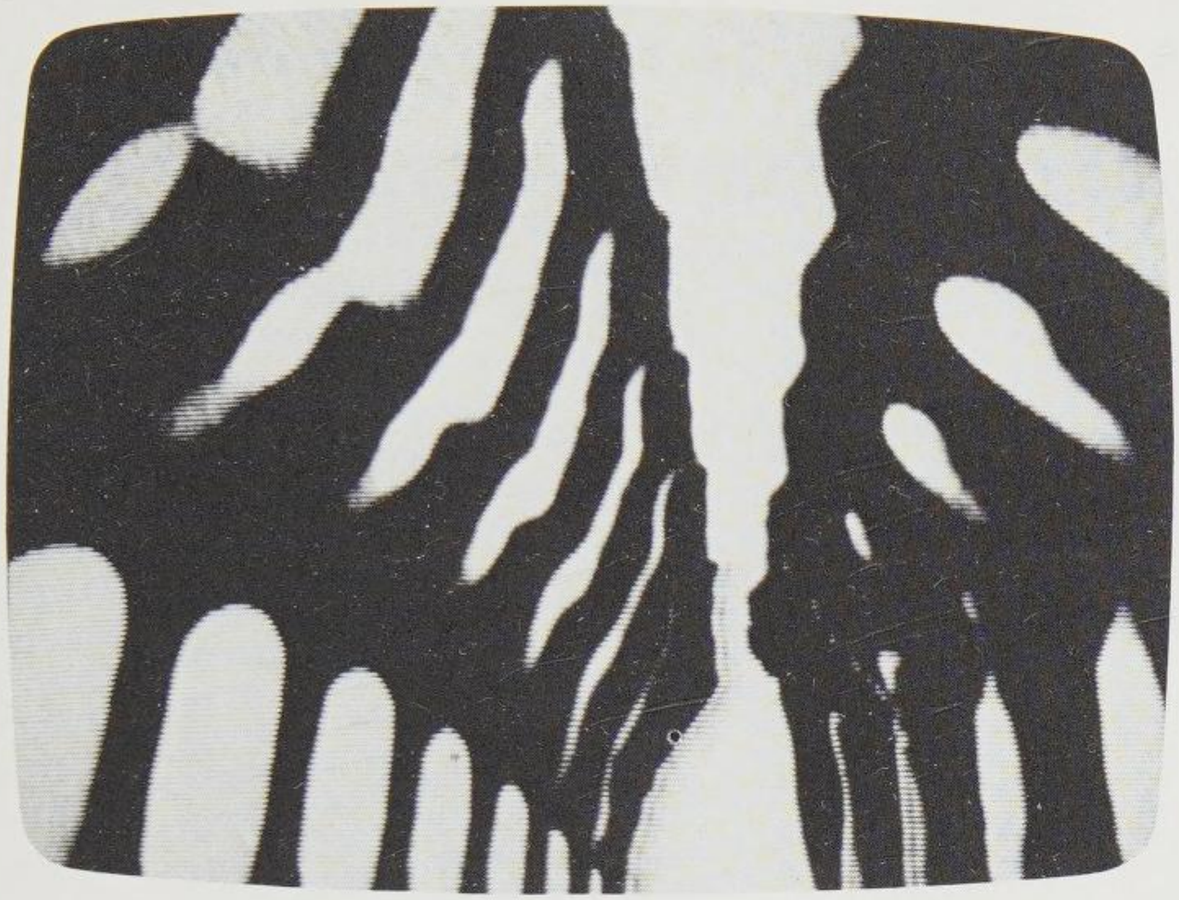
Hands
Up
'75



Egyptian
Access
'75









# VIDANCE

Off-screen photos from *Vidance* (1973), by Skip Sweeney and Joanne Kelly. The dancers are Kathy McClintock and Gail Teton. Recent dance/video works of theirs have been performed in live interaction events at the Cunningham Studio—Westbeth, Chicago Art Institute, Everson Museum of Art, Video Free American Studio, and Live Oak Theater.



Copyright © 1976 by Skip Sweeney and Joanne Kelly

# ANNE TARDOS



# STONED ON SONY

 Copyright © 1976 by Anne Tardos

# CONFESSIONS OF AN ERASIST

I ERASE TAPES

SOME OF MY BEST TAPES ARE GONE FOREVER.

DEMAGNETIZED INTO THE WORLD OF ANTI-MATTER.

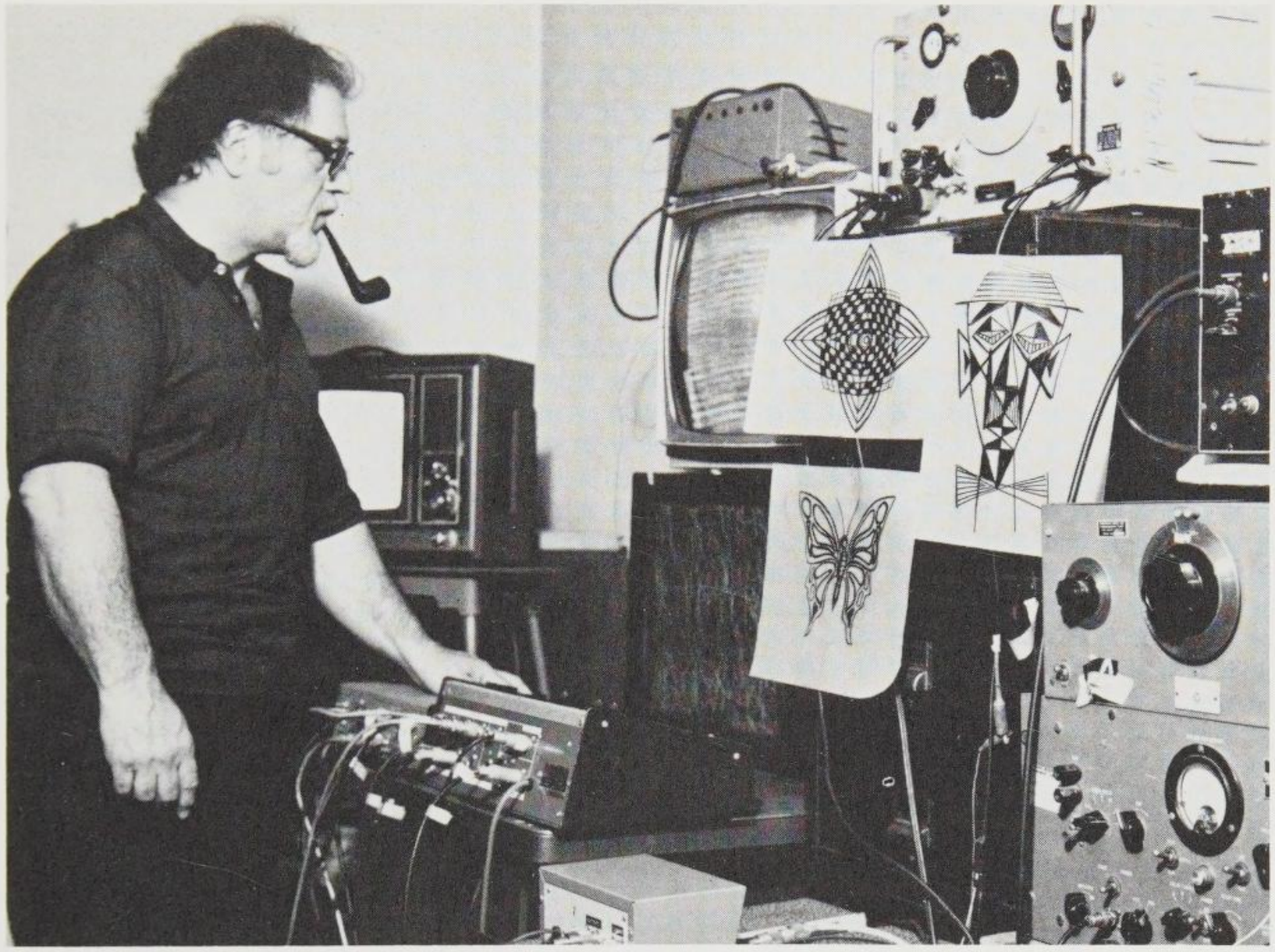
NO WONDER I NEVER GET A GRANT . . . .

ERASE YOUR TAPES.

FIGHT ART-POLLUTION

BEST NOT TO LOVE VIDEO.

BEST NOT TO HATE VIDEO.



Drawings controlled and processed through the synthesizer

# VIDEO ART

## Ben Tatti

My approach to video as an art medium utilizes current electronic technology as well as traditional materials and equipment to produce a work of art.

The methodology used can be divided into three areas:

*Electronic imagery:* Developing two- and three-dimensional abstract forms with sound and motion through the use of an audio-video synthesizer of my own design.

*Drawing and painting:* Creating and converting black and white artwork to color and color artwork to black and white through the application of a keyer and colorizer to the audio-video synthesizer.

*Video sculpture:* Projecting video images through constructed transparent sculpture of optical and reflective surfaces which interracts with audio. Videotapes and audio are specifically designed for the sculpture, thereby creating an integrated work of video-audio sculpture.

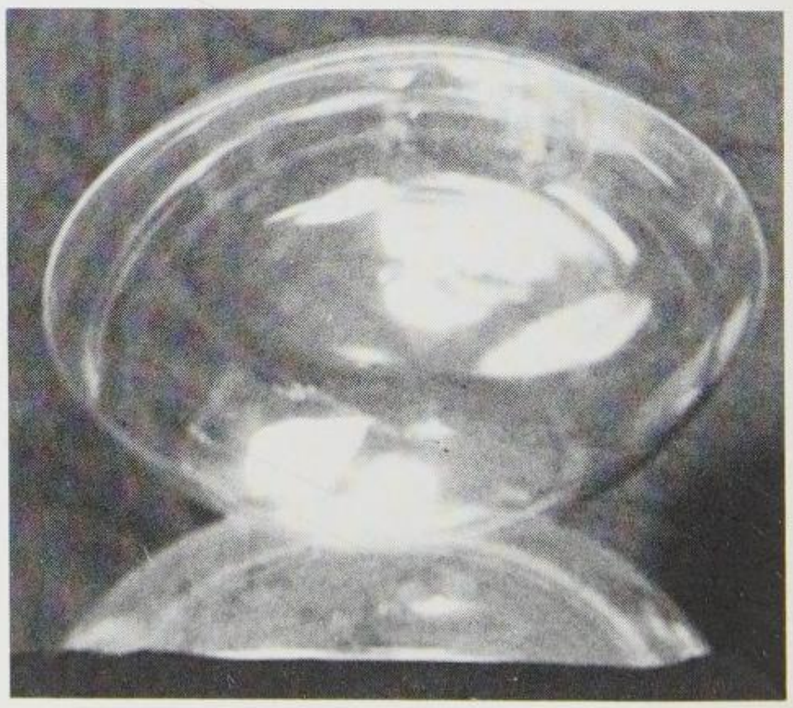
In viewing television the spectator might regard wormy, bending, ghosting, superimposed, or an otherwise distorted picture as defective. To an artist, however, these characteristics may become the special effects of electronic imagery. Through selection, alteration, and control, the video artist can design and compose electronic "distortions" into an aesthetic experience.

Video is a comparatively new tool; it meets many demands of the artist. He can electronically draw, paint, shape, and interrelate sound and motion in black and white or color. Because the medium is electronic it enables the video artist to experiment in "real time." It offers opportunities for immediate aesthetic conceptualization that are endless and unburdened by the physicality of traditional media. Video art may place the traditional arts (done by hand) such as painting and sculpture in the realm of antiquity art. From a communication standpoint, video art will reach an audience far beyond the confines of gallery or museum exhibition, since television is well within the means of the average person. It will return art to the people and free it from the limitations of institutional showplaces.

The artist in his exploration of form, line, and shape will discover that the basic sine wave is characteristic of nature. It is a component of nature and the elements, from the movement of a snake, the waters of the ocean, or the currents of the air. Unlike frozen blocks of architecture, static statues of sculpture, and arrested stillness of paintings, video art reflects the pulse of contemporary and future art in a technological society.

### The Electronic Approach to Video Art

This approach requires time, experimentation, and used equipment, and is a method of modifying or altering electronic equipment to develop special effects.



Video Sculpture using reflective surfaces

 Copyright © 1976 by Ben Tatti

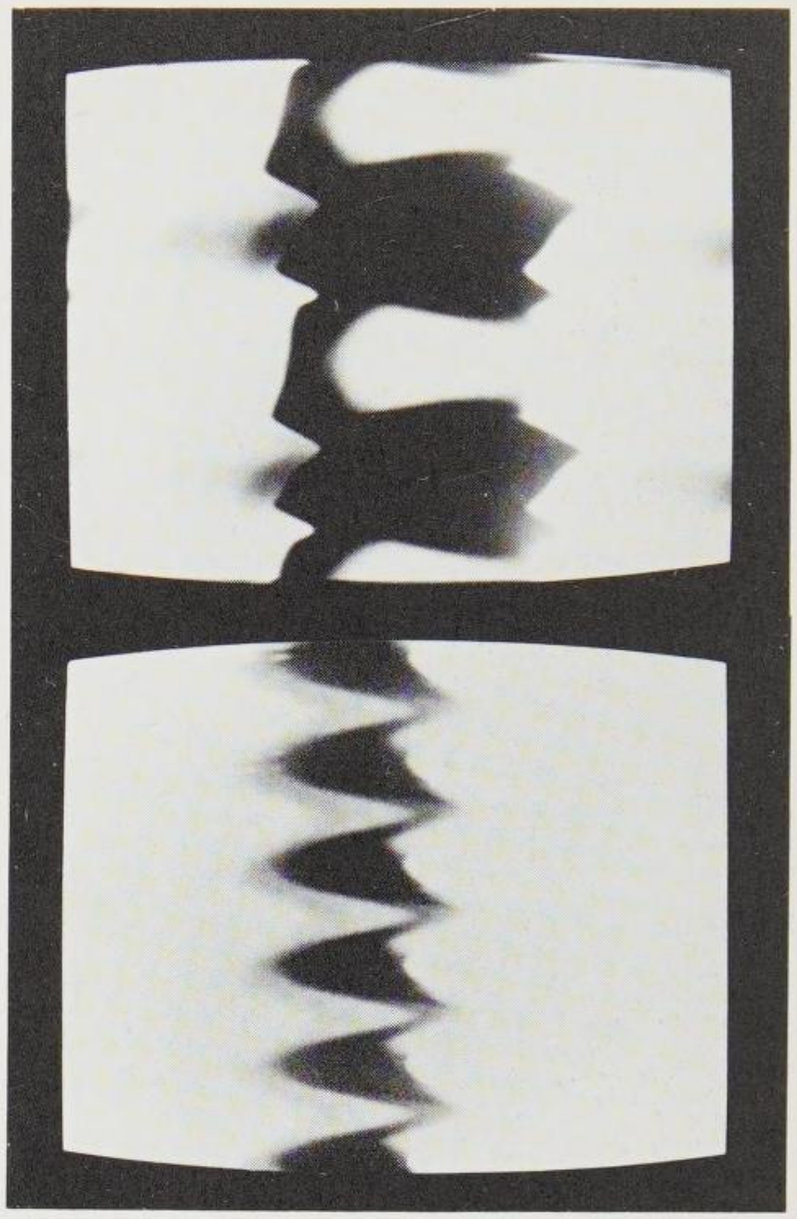
*The Camera*—Effects such as large areas of light or lag trails of image can be obtained by beam control misadjustment and defocusing the electron control for diffusion of images. Caution must be observed while working on live inner circuitry. Plastic-insulated shank screwdrivers and tools are recommended. With technical electronic assistance, a camera can be modified with switches to create negative, positive, and reverse imagery. The quickest and easiest way to create electronic imagery with alteration is to point a camera at the monitor; it will result in an electronic abstraction called feedback.

*The TV Set or Monitor*—The simplest way to create distortion in a TV set or monitor is to manipulate and misadjust the control knobs that regulate the linearity of the set. Another way to interact with a video image is to slowly move a permanent or electric magnet in front of the TV raster. This should create a Lissajous (bending images). Further controlled distortions can be obtained by yoke manipulation. The image can be defocused, tilted, twisted, shaped, reduced, reversed (upside down), or mirror-imaged. A switch can be affixed to reverse image at will. However, this means working inside a live set at times. Do not attempt this method without proper qualified electronic assistance or guidance. TV sets and monitors carry high voltage and one should take necessary measures to avoid shock. All experimentation should be conducted on used equipment.

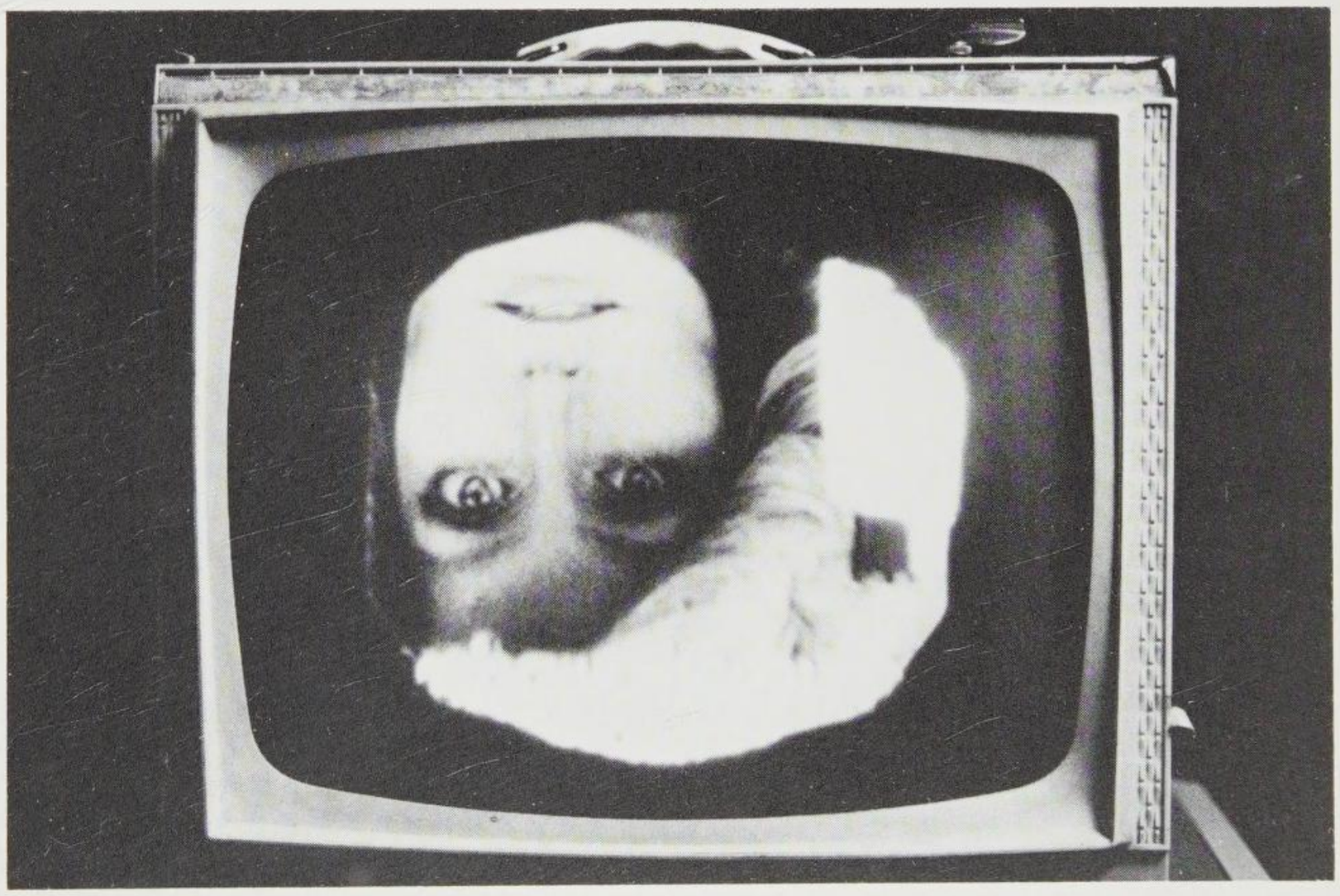
*Video Tape Recorder* (VTR)—Because of its complex circuitry, the video tape recorder (VTR) does not allow for much experimentation. However, a tape delay method can result in some interesting effects. Two decks, a monitor, and a camera are required. Two decks are placed next to each other; one deck records and the other deck plays back. What the camera feeds into one is played back seconds later, creating a time distance of the image. A sort of a slow-motion effect can be obtained by misadjusting or slowing down the speed regulator in the tape deck. However, the assistance of a technician might be necessary to do this. For dubbing audio over an existing sound on tape, cover the erase head with a piece of paper, then dub in the new sound.

### The Traditional Art Approach to Video Art

The description that follows outlines a procedure for using existing art techniques such as drawing, painting, and sculpture, in combination with video. Graphics or paintings can be developed with an orientation toward electronic incorporation of striped-surface strobe and checkered-surface bleed. Shoot and process the art work through the synthesizer and finally to the VTR. Black and white drawings can be interpreted in color, and color paintings can be converted to black and white, when processed through the colorizer. Sculpture on three-dimensional objects can be electronically changed from a static posture, pulled apart, turned around, and fluctuated to sound. The result will be an original magnetic videotape of artwork that has undergone a metamorphosis from handwork to technology. Further selection and control of imagery may be accomplished by formal video editing techniques.



Electronic Imagery created by audio-video synthesizer



Vignette and inverted mirror image on TV raster through yoke manipulation and circuitry rewiring

photos: Alex Siodmak









# FLIP AND THE DANCE OF THE CHAIRS

## by Paul Tschinkel

*I present here a script written after the tape was made. It is of a sequence taken out of a tape which consists of a series of inventions. My recent work has consisted of making these sequences which I view as part of a continuous extending chain which can be cut apart and reordered. The following sequence, like others on the same "tape," is composed of edits—that is, direct edits—on my 3650, and is a series of stills or moving stills. The duration of the takes varies from one-and-a-half to about six seconds.*

Flip Frost performs in this particular sequence.
Props: Six chairs—two white danish chairs, one rocker,
one leather desk chair, two high metal stools with backs.

*TAKE ONE:* Six chairs lined up across the screen: rocker, white, stools, white, leather, against a blank background. All chairs face the camera.
*TAKE TWO:* Flip sits on third chair from left (white) with legs crossed. No sound.
*TAKE THREE:* Flip sits on fourth chair (stool). No sound.
*TAKE FOUR:* Flip sits on first chair (rocker) and rocks back and forth. Here, I turned on the radio and his rocking is accompanied by some nondescript music.
*TAKE FIVE:* Flip; head to waist shot. He does not wear shirt, looks hung over and bedraggled, and also looks as if he is belching. Toward the end of this take there is a segment of a piece of saxophone music played by Melody Peach.

*Note: This shot comes as a shock in that it does not really belong to the sequence. It throws the viewer totally off guard. I sort of like that and this is much in keeping with the general style of most of my other work. I believe the viewer should never be able to predict what comes next. Also, this sequence is a left-over of another tape shot in the evening a few days before.*

*TAKE SIX:* Flip sits on the fifth chair (white) with arms and legs crossed. No sound.
*TAKE SEVEN:* Flip sits on the fourth chair (stool) with arms crossed. I turned radio on and there is music that accompanies this shot.
*TAKE EIGHT:* Flip sits on the fifth chair (white) with legs crossed. His right elbow rests on the fourth (stool) and his head rests on his hand. No sound.
*TAKE NINE:* Flip sits in sixth chair (leather) rather casually and there is music from the radio.
*TAKE TEN:* Flip sits in sixth chair (leather). The third chair (white) changes direction and now faces away from the camera. No sound.

*The change is barely visible, as is the change in the next take. Perhaps the chair should have been turned to a sideways position. As it stands now, the switch is almost lost unless one looks very carefully.*

 Copyright © 1976 by Paul Tschinkel

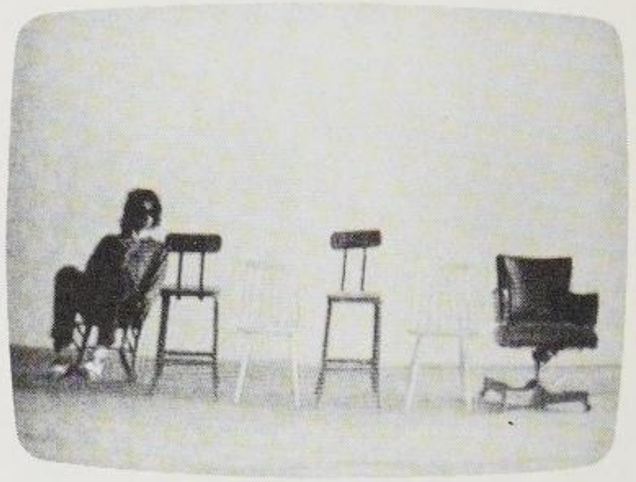
*TAKE ELEVEN:* Flip sits again in sixth chair. The second chair now faces away from the camera. Flip moves slightly from the previous take. No sound.
*TAKE TWELVE:* Flip sits in sixth chair. The first chair (rocker) is rocking. No sound.
*TAKE THIRTEEN:* Flip sits in third chair (white). Both the chair and Flip have backs to camera. Music from radio.
*TAKE FOURTEEN:* Flip sits on fourth chair (stool). Both face camera. Sound from radio.
*TAKE FIFTEEN:* Flip sits on fourth chair again, with back toward camera. No sound.
*TAKE SIXTEEN:* Person, nude to the waist, sits in front of camera. He smiles. No sound.

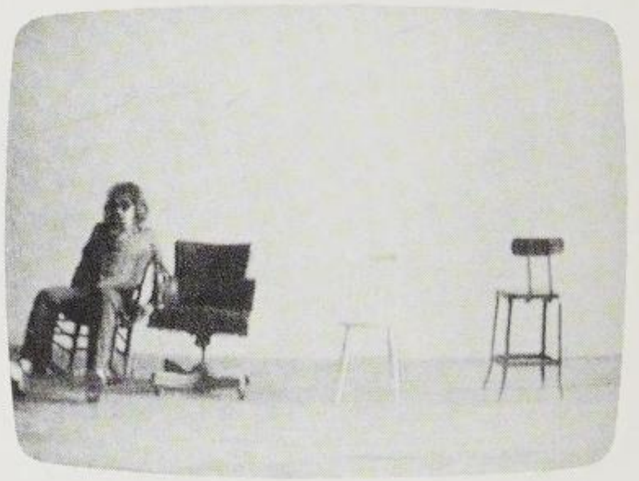
*Note: This was also a take that was left over from a tape shot at another time.*

*TAKE SEVENTEEN:* Flip in first chair rocks while second and third chair change places. No sound.
*TAKE EIGHTEEN:* Flip continues rocking while third and fifth chairs change places, leaving the two white chairs next to Flip and the two stools next to them on the right.
*TAKE NINETEEN:* Flip continues rocking while fifth and sixth chairs change position. Leather chair ends up between the two stools. Still no sound.
*TAKE TWENTY:* Flip still rocks. Leather chair moves one position to the left, leaving the order: Flip, two white chairs, leather chair, two stools. No sound.
*TAKE TWENTY-ONE:* Flip continues rocking. Leather chair moves one position to the left. White chair, which was there, moves two to the right and stool, which was there, disappears, leaving fourth space void. No sound.
*TAKE TWENTY-TWO:* Flip continues rocking. Leather chair again moves one position to the left. White chair, which was there, moves right two positions, leaving third position void. Music starts in the middle of the take and stops at the end of the take.
*TAKE TWENTY-THREE:* Flip again rocking. White chair in fifth position disappears. A shadow appears on a shaft of light which had been growing on the floor. No sound.
*TAKE TWENTY-FOUR:* Flip rocks and in the process tilts his head backward. The shaft of light and shadow disappear. Music from radio.
*TAKE TWENTY-FIVE:* Flip rocks. Leather chair, in second position, disappears and the shaft of light reappears. No sound.
*TAKE TWENTY-SIX:* Flip rocks while stool, in sixth position, disappears. Sound from radio.
*TAKE TWENTY-SEVEN:* Flip rocks while white chair, in fourth position, disappears. No sound.
*TAKE TWENTY-EIGHT:* Flip disappears while chair continues rocking. Shaft of light is still on the floor. Music from radio accompanies the take—the take fades—end of sequence.

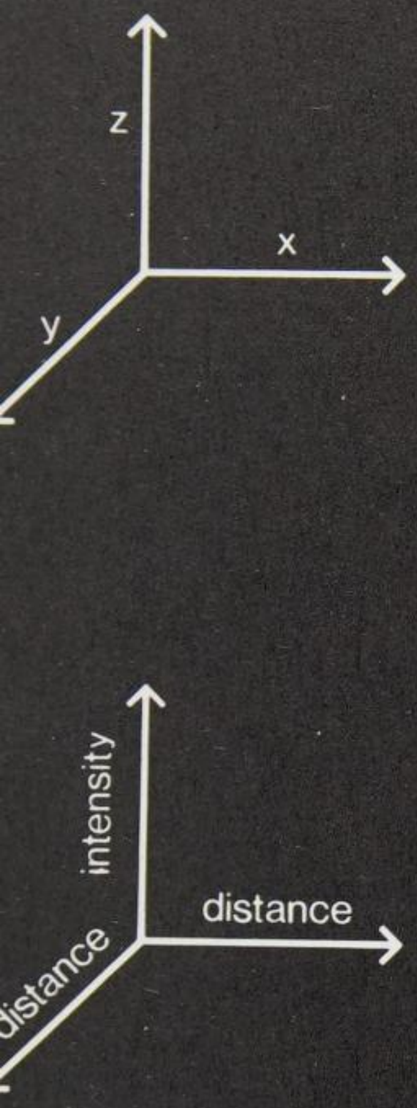
*Taped in my studio. Early summer 1975.*



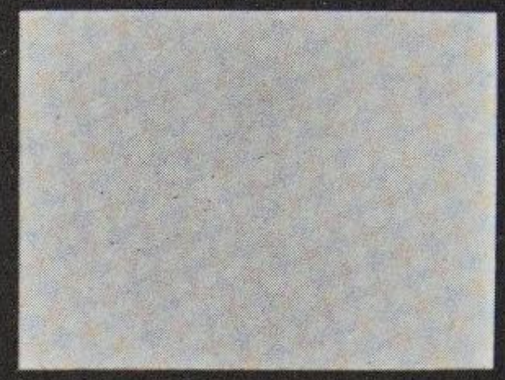






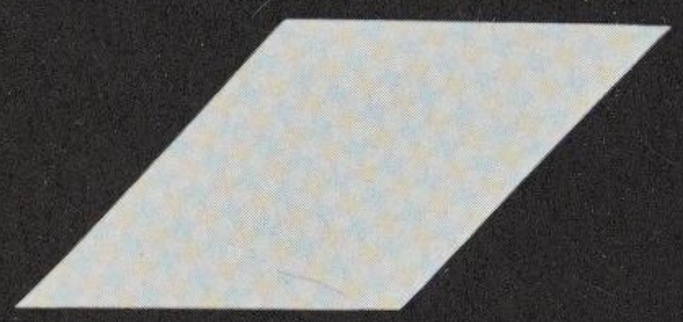


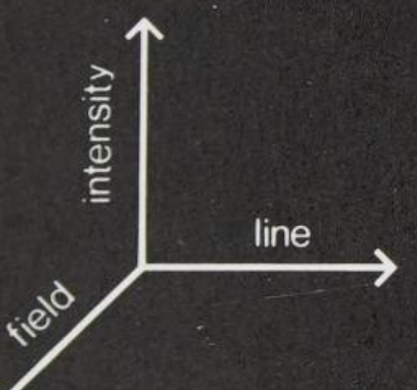


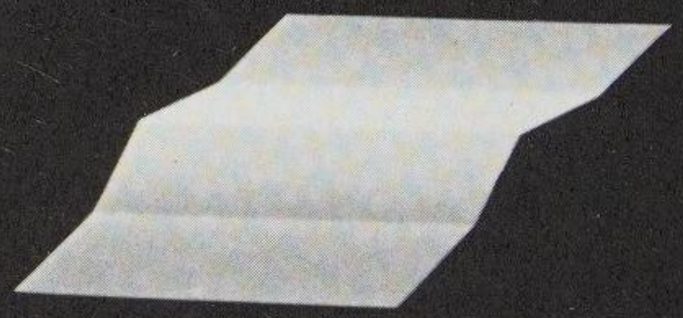


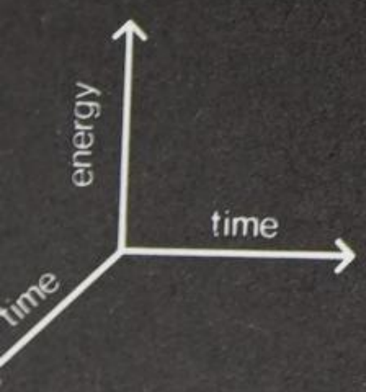


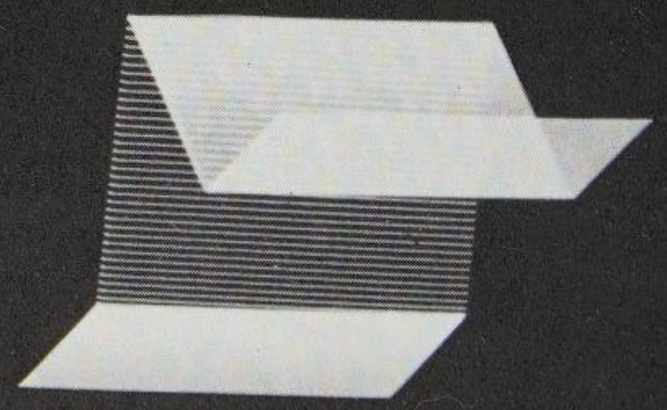




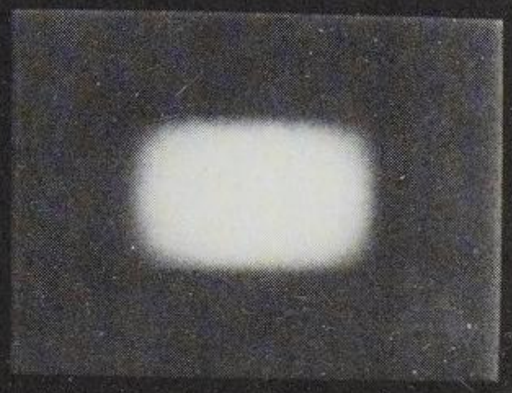



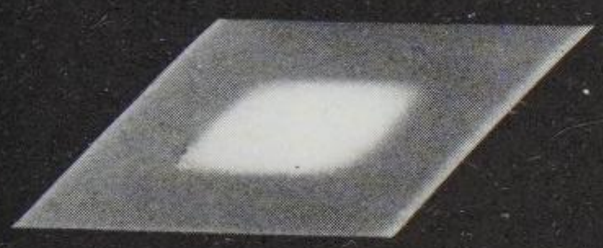


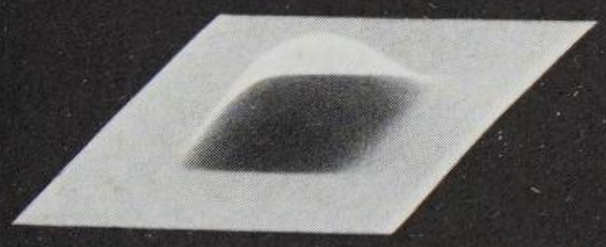
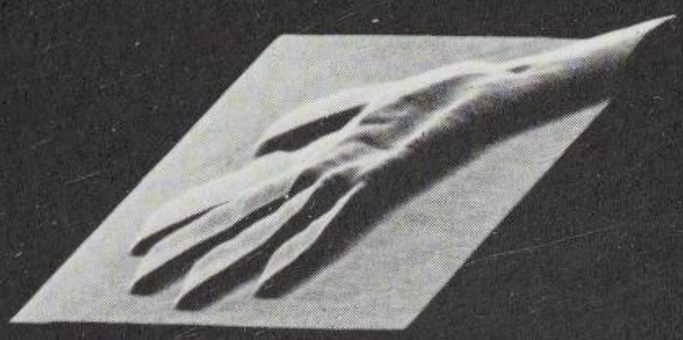
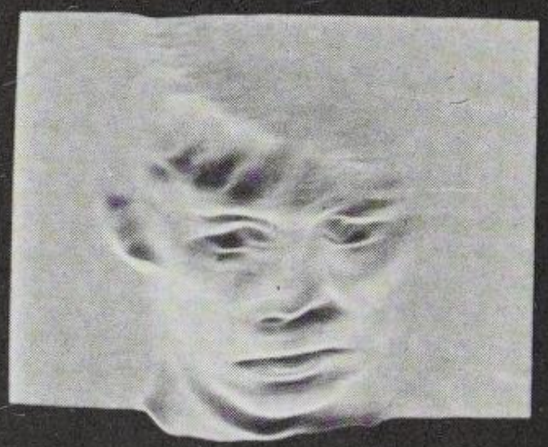
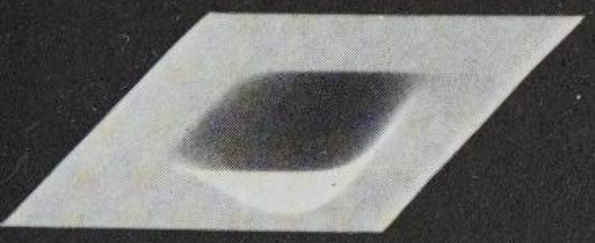
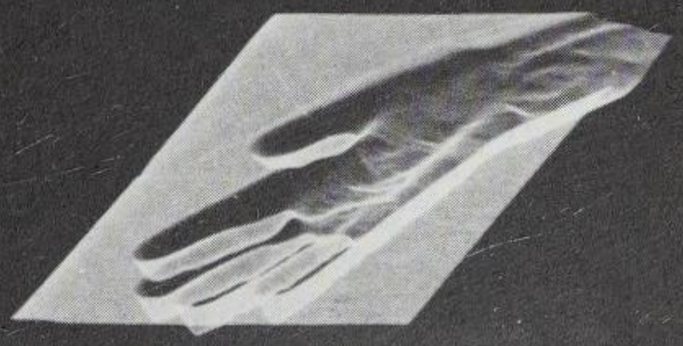


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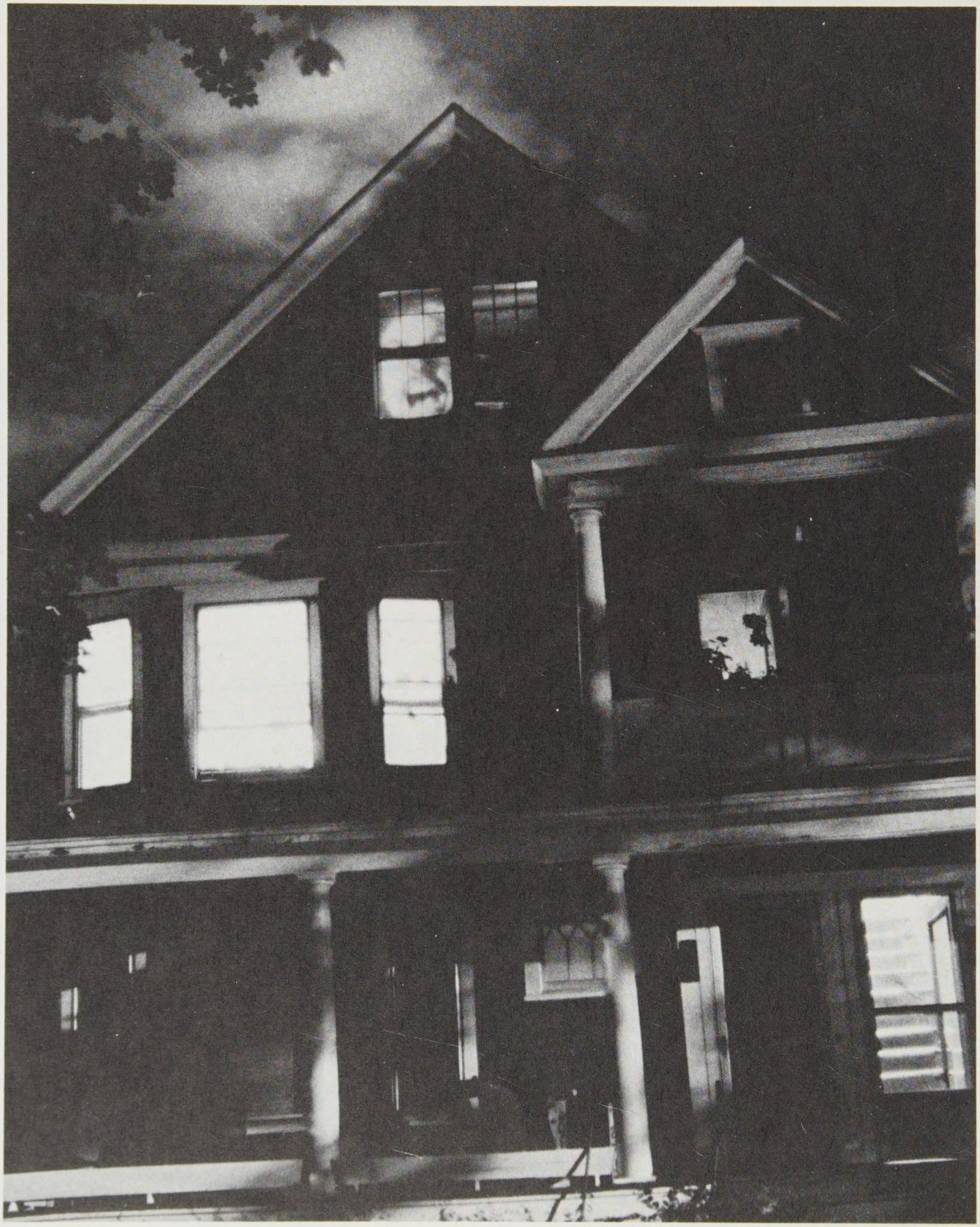


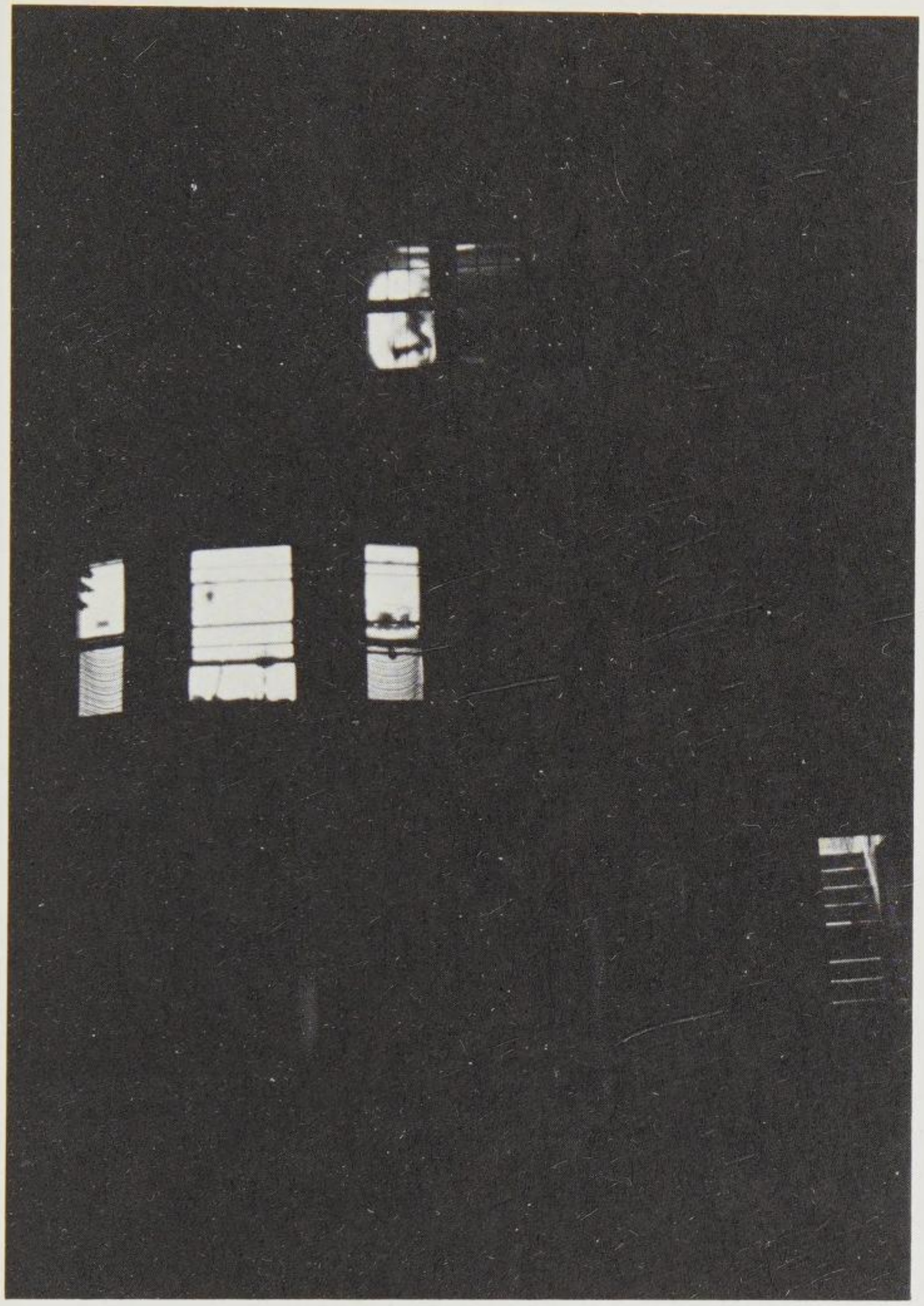







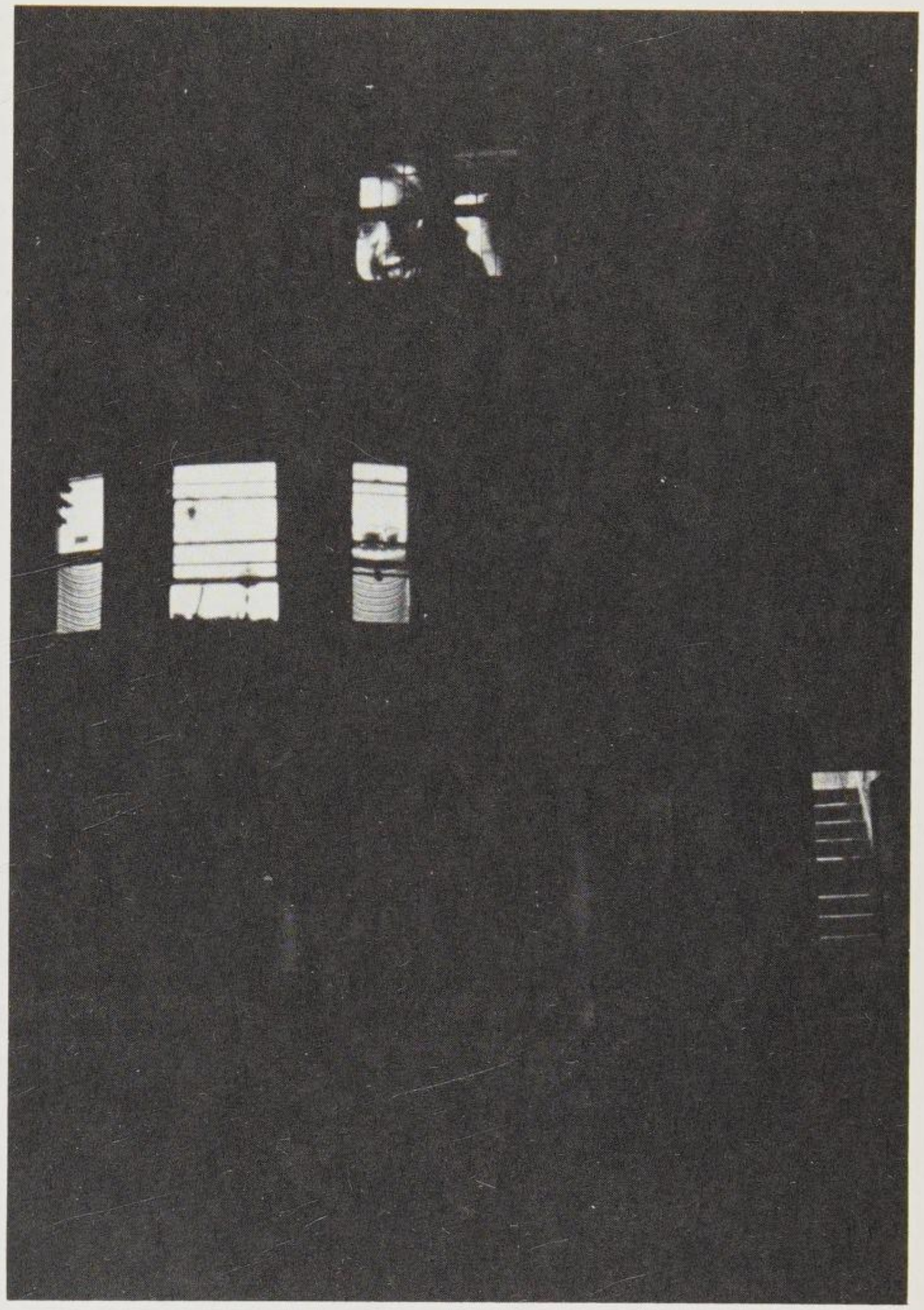

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WOODY VASULKA



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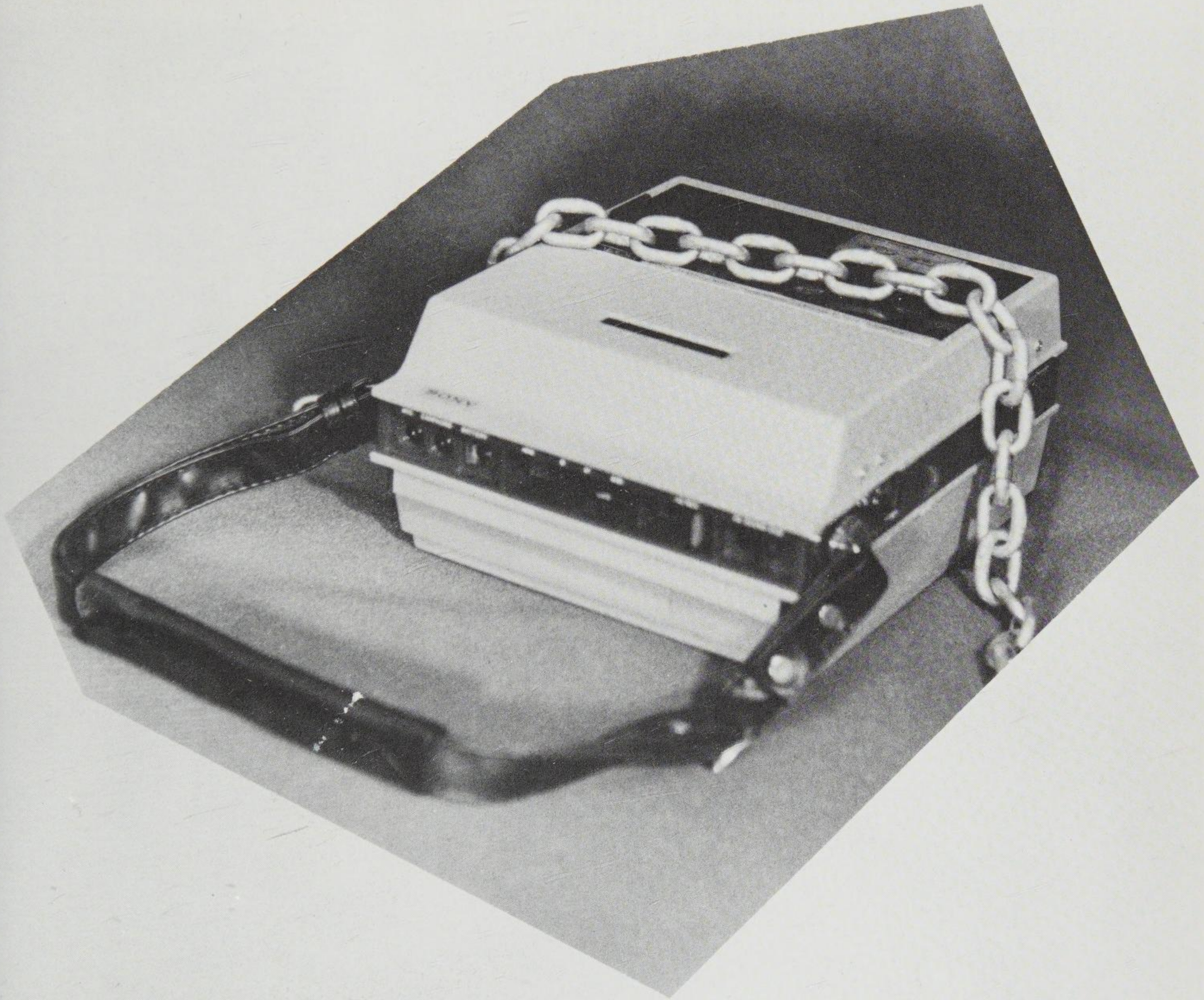
photos: Phil Block

# AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN VIDEO PIECE

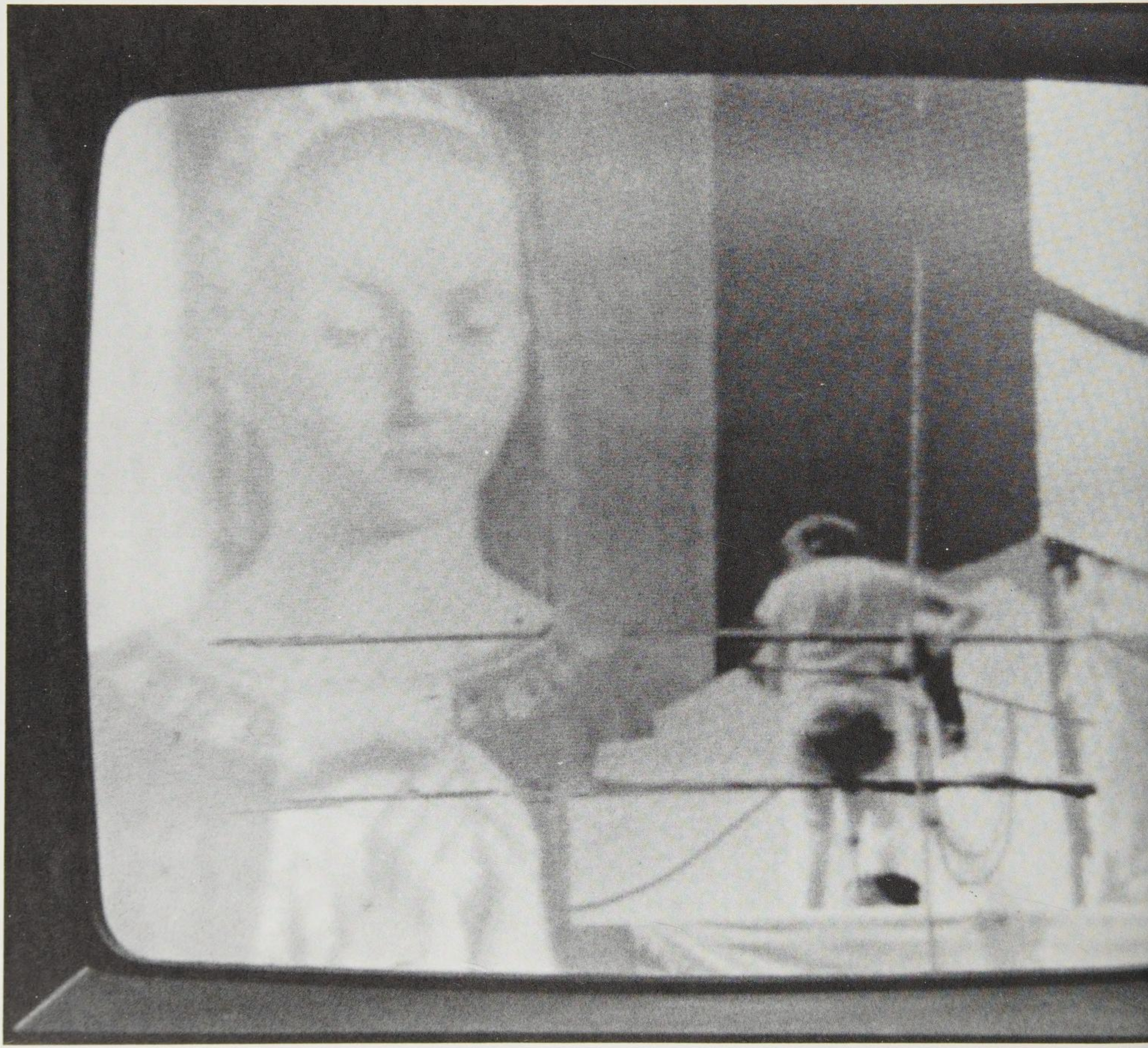
In August I got hold of a video projector for use in my studio, which was above my home in a residential neighborhood in Syracuse, N.Y. I made a videotape of my face, very close up, pressing against a pane of glass, and banging and yelling loudly. Late one night, unannounced, I videoprojected that tape on a rear screen stretched behind my two windows facing the street. The sound was amplified top volume on two loudspeakers behind the window. This all lasted for a few hours and was widely acclaimed by the unsuspecting local residents as the most exciting event on the block in years.



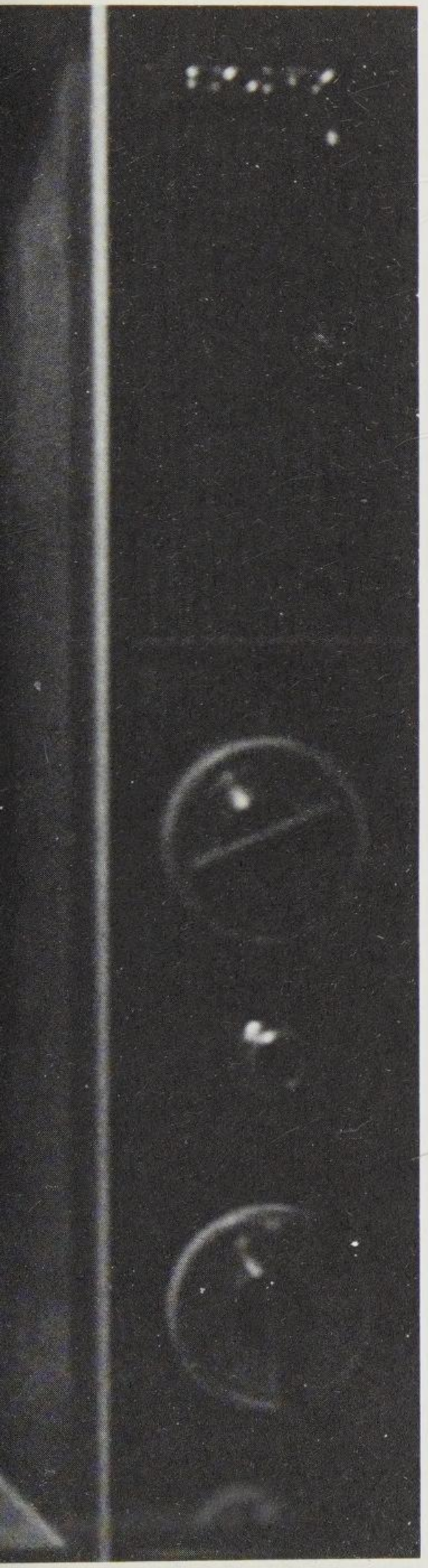
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# THE EYELASHES OF THE MADONNA



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All art is illusion. We never perceive anything in a work of art that is not a symbol, a representation, or an imitation of an object, idea, or emotion. Video is a device in a long line of devices that communicate illusions. Its predecessors—the sound, the word, the picture, the gesture—make it both a refinement and a composite of the older illusion devices. The hostility expressed toward video by other visual artists is testimony to the fear that video is a replacement of the older forms. Yet this fear is only meaningful within the context of our marketplace culture. There will be other forms that will come down the pike which in turn will capture the interest/fear kind of thing video is now experiencing. But video, like the other forms, will remain as long as people can use it.

Video is often broken into many areas of exploration. I basically see only two. One includes tapes that are essentially contentless works which stem from the fine arts and communicate form or structure. The other is documentary tapes which derive from journalism or literature and communicate values. The rivalry between the two areas—one claiming to be relevant, one claiming to be *haute kaka*, is silly. What is important is a quality in the work that transcends the mode. I see John Reilly, Nam June Paik, and Joan Jonas of equal stature, and any attempt to divide up the field is a marketing technique.

The argument for pigeonholing is always that it will promote better understanding of the form. But an artist's work can never be explained anyway—only experienced. For the artist, the idea behind his work is always a personal expression, its communication being a side product. There's a story of a painter on a high scaffold, working on the ceiling of a Renaissance cathedral. Far below, his partner tries to get him to knock off for lunch. The one on the scaffold shouts down that he must finish the Madonna's eyelashes before the plaster dries. "Forget about the eyelashes," says his partner. "Who will see them?" "God will see them," answers his friend.

My commitment is to the process inherent in each tape. The process shows me the way each successive tape should flow. The aesthetic values developed with older art forms may not be particularly applicable to video. Video, after all, is a recording machine. Video for me is also communication, not with the "masses," but with myself. It is a working out of fears, loves, confusions, and what-have-you of my own psyche; the extent that my experience is shared with you is the degree of relevance.

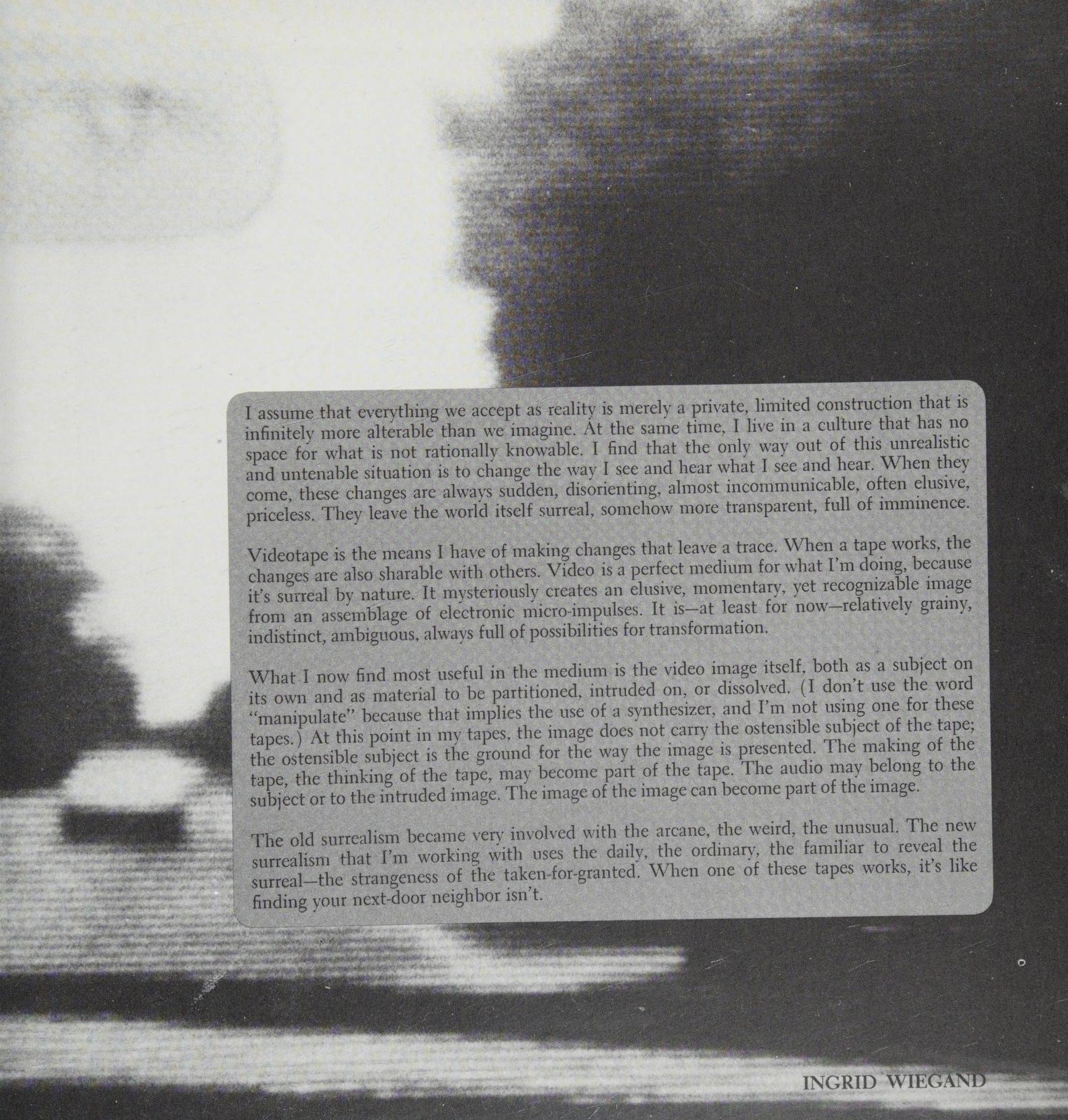
Our common experiences—the will to survive, competitive character, and a sense of optimism, as in my (and Ingrid Wiegand's) tape, *Walter;* or middle-age adjustment, sexual fantasy, and a sense of pessimism as in *Nat*—is elicited by the medium. In *Airland,* a visit to a rinky-dink airport is both a visual and an experiential situation—the shapes of the planes as they move, their markings, etc., and the feeling of the special experience of flight; the first as a living cubism, the second as mystical expressionism: one hard, one soft. In *Snowtree,* I put the beginning with the middle (on a split screen) and let the two sequences run to the end. There was a change in the juxtaposed density of the snow—beginning of the storm, low density of snow, left of screen; middle of the storm, heavy density, right of screen. Gradually the two sides change. At the end, the left side of the screen has dense snow (the middle of the storm) and the right side of the screen has little snow (the end of the storm).

These four tapes all deal with experience—*Walter* naturalistically, *Nat* rather surrealistically, *Airland* and *Snowtree* rather abstractly—and all are recordings. That is, they are records of information that are important to me, and probably to you. In fact, in choosing subjects to make tapes with, the element of shared experience is essential.

My tapes are about things I see and hear; things that I could not paint about or would not be interested in painting. Basically, my tapes are not about people, airplanes, or snowstorms. They are about me. They are the eyelashes of the Madonna.

# SURREAL VIDEO

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I assume that everything we accept as reality is merely a private, limited construction that is infinitely more alterable than we imagine. At the same time, I live in a culture that has no space for what is not rationally knowable. I find that the only way out of this unrealistic and untenable situation is to change the way I see and hear what I see and hear. When they come, these changes are always sudden, disorienting, almost incommunicable, often elusive, priceless. They leave the world itself surreal, somehow more transparent, full of imminence.

Videotape is the means I have of making changes that leave a trace. When a tape works, the changes are also sharable with others. Video is a perfect medium for what I'm doing, because it's surreal by nature. It mysteriously creates an elusive, momentary, yet recognizable image from an assemblage of electronic micro-impulses. It is—at least for now—relatively grainy, indistinct, ambiguous, always full of possibilities for transformation.

What I now find most useful in the medium is the video image itself, both as a subject on its own and as material to be partitioned, intruded on, or dissolved. (I don't use the word "manipulate" because that implies the use of a synthesizer, and I'm not using one for these tapes.) At this point in my tapes, the image does not carry the ostensible subject of the tape; the ostensible subject is the ground for the way the image is presented. The making of the tape, the thinking of the tape, may become part of the tape. The audio may belong to the subject or to the intruded image. The image of the image can become part of the image.

The old surrealism became very involved with the arcane, the weird, the unusual. The new surrealism that I'm working with uses the daily, the ordinary, the familiar to reveal the surreal—the strangeness of the taken-for-granted. When one of these tapes works, it's like finding your next-door neighbor isn't.

INGRID WIEGAND

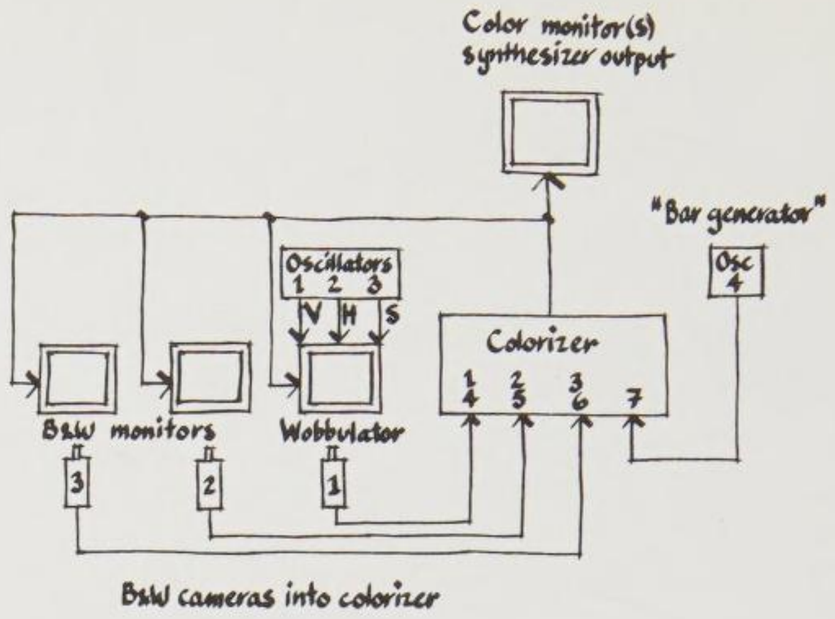
# WALTER WRIGHT

As artist-in-residence (1973–75) at the Experimental Television Center, Binghamton, N.Y., I developed the Paik/Abe video synthesizer as a performance instrument. The PAVS accepts as many as 7 b&w video or audio inputs. Video inputs must be in sync; however, prerecorded material is rescanned from a b&w monitor. For pattern generation, audio signals are input directly to the colorizer. The output from the synthesizer is a color image of broadcast quality.

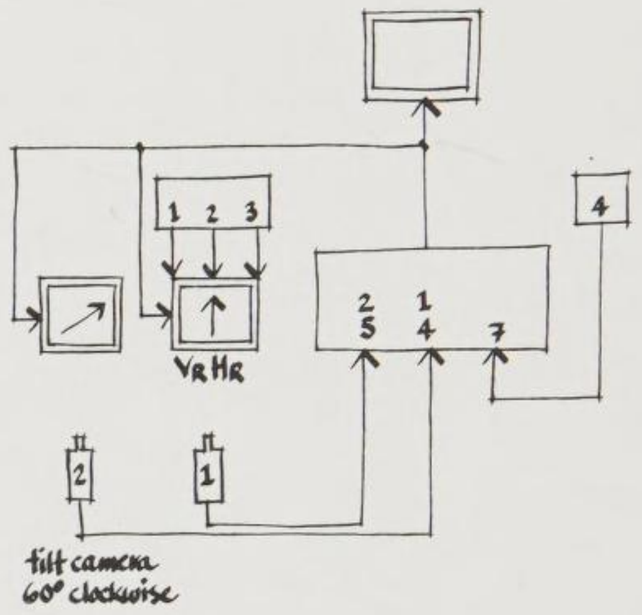
The synthesizer combines several modules including sync generator, cameras, oscillators, colorizer, and the *wobbulator*. The colorizer is a 7-channel mixer plus colorizer. The input levels are continuously variable from zero to maximum gain using control "pots" on the front panel. Each of the 7 input images is washed with a separate color. These colors are shifted with a single hue control (all channels change color simultaneously). Through the selection of different combinations of colorizer stages and gains, a variety of effects are available, including high contrast (virtually a key), solarization, etc.

The wobbulator is a module unique to the PAVS. It is a modified 7-inch Sony TV receiver and functions as both receiver and monitor. The image is distorted by extra yokes added to the set. In addition to the normal b&w yoke, the wobbulator has a color receiver yoke and a continuous wind yoke. The horizontal portion of the color yoke (H) pulls the image from side to side; the vertical portion (V) rolls up the image top to bottom. The continuous wind yoke (S) produces an "s" curve pattern. The yokes are driven by audio amplifiers which take their input from the audio oscillators. The wobbulator has switches to reverse the image left to right (mirrored) and to turn the image upside down. There are also horizontal and vertical size controls which reduce the image to a line or point.

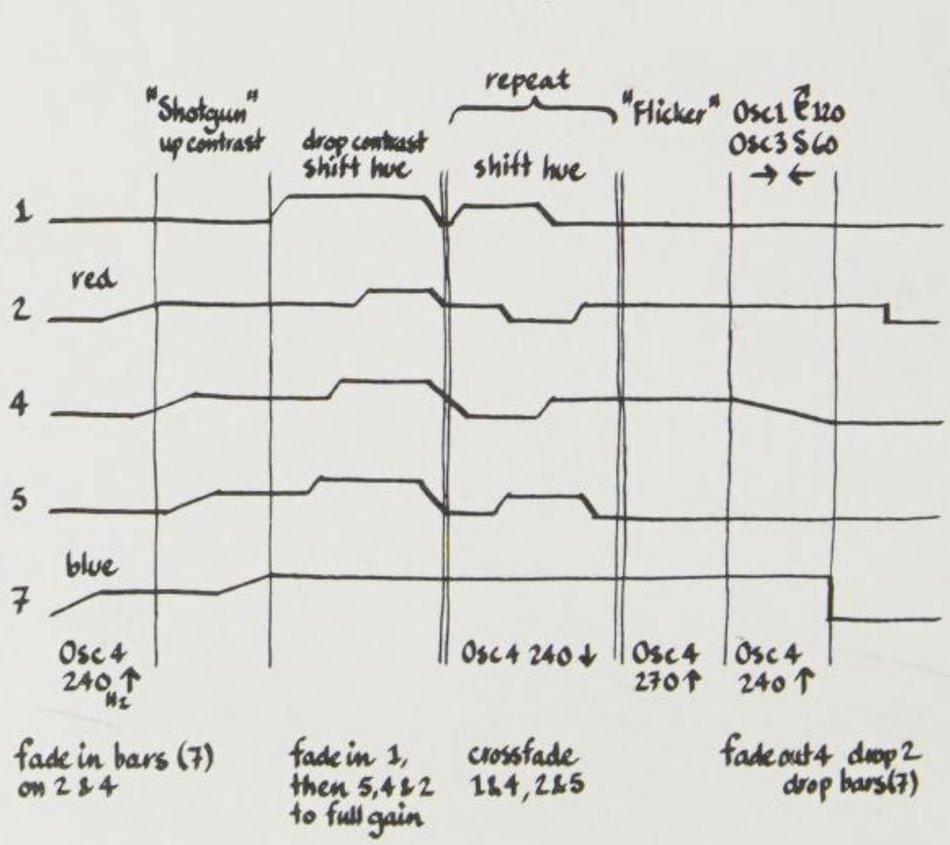
This past year (1974–75) Susan Wolfson and I performed several original compositions on the PAVS. The compositions are scored using a patching diagram and a fading chart. The notes and images for (two) of these compositions are shown in the accompanying illustrations. Next year Susan and I will be using video synthesizer modules developed by Dave Jones, our technician at the ETC.




Paik / Abé Video Synthesizer

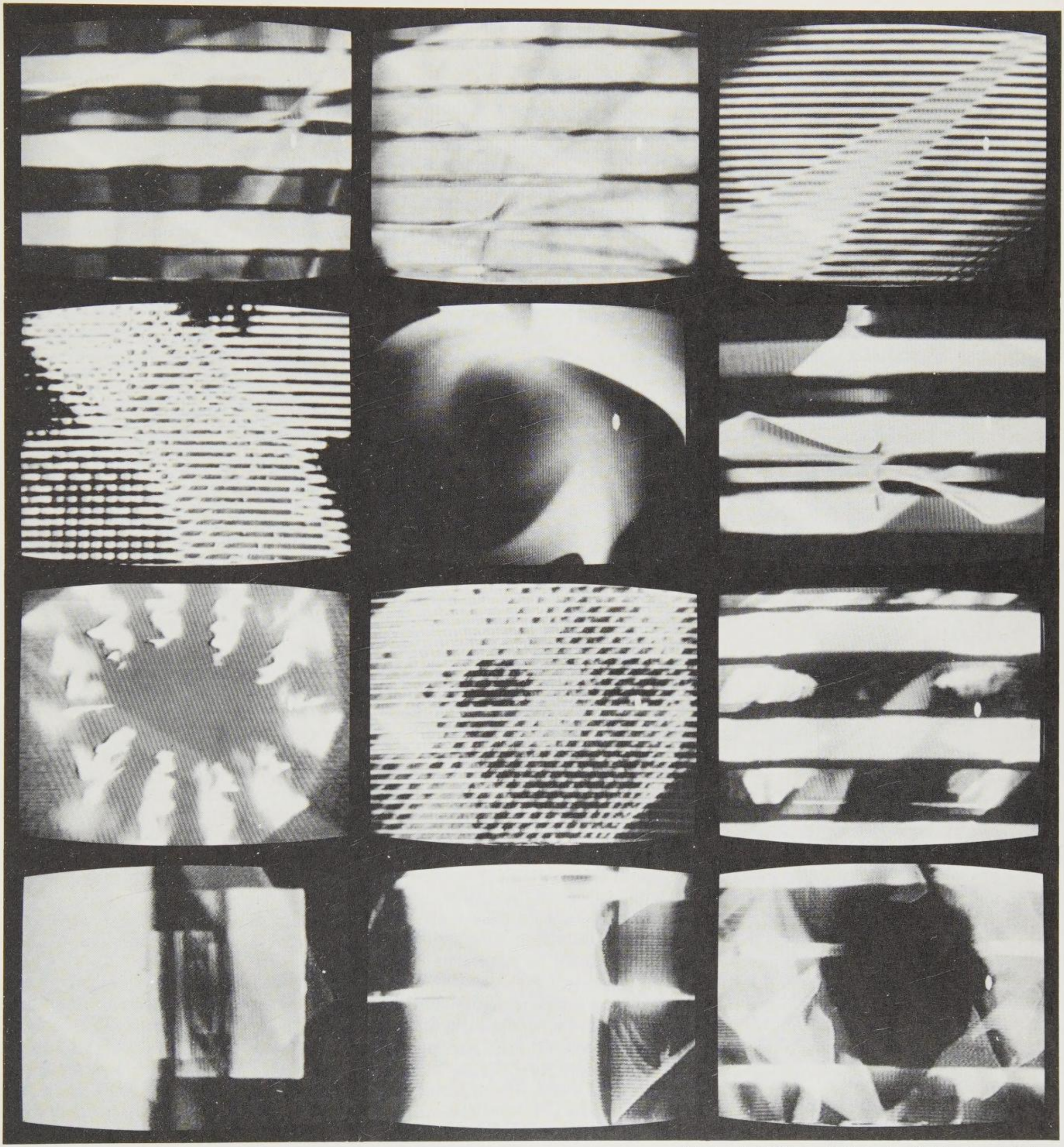



A Tape for Bridget & Bally 1/75




A Tape for Susan 12/74

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Photos 1–6 from *A Tape for Susan*

Photos 7–12 from *A Tape for Bridget and Bally*



*Beatles Electroniques* (1966–9)



*Videotape Study No. 3* (1967–9)



*Videotape Study No. 3* (1967–9)

# JUD YALKUT

Some film makers have totally converted to video, usually in search of a more efficient sound-sync medium combined with portability and continuous run capability. Others have gained access to television studio facilities with their unique image-processing possibilities to generate videographic material for use in a final film product. A handful, myself included, have pursued inroads into video while still continuing film work.

I have continued in my own work to explore the interfacing of film and video, in the belief that continued brushing against each other by the two media will assist in polishing and defining their individual essences. Such films as *Aquarian Rushes* (1970), a psychic energy portrait of the Woodstock Festival, and *Ohio Master Arts Program*, now being completed for the Ohio Arts Council, interface kinescoped black and white video with sync sound with time-expanded-and-contracted original color film footage, composed in camera and through optical printing.

In 1969, with access to video portapak equipment through The Raindance Corporation, I began work with video camera techniques. At the present, I find the Bolex 16mm and the Technisphere-modified Sony portapak equally conducive to the generation of my work, some visions requiring one or the other medium for their ultimate realization, and others requiring continued probing of the intermeshing of both media.

Guest-artist-in-residencies at the WNET Television Laboratory in New York permitted me vision realization with a fully interfaced color-capable system. *The Astrolabe of God* (1972) utilized two color studio cameras, the ability to prepare an electronically colorized feedback tape to serve as sync source and visual input during production, and chroma-key capability, exchanging foreground and background, to crystallize the spiritual base of the tape centered on the unity of within and without in the relationship of the human being to the cosmos. In 1973, *26′ 1.1499″ for String Player: A Video Realization of the Concert Realization by Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik* utilized the Paik-Abe video synthesizer, then installed at the Television Laboratory, to generate a sync input tape of processed edited material of previous Cage piece performances filmed from 1966 to 1969, introducing mirror-images, oscillations, reversals, and colorizations, as well as synthesizing other related film material during the live production. Both realizations at the TV Lab occurred in real-time, one-take situations, a premise which continues to interest me as being unique to the video system. Intensive preproduction preparation, as contrasted to the dependency on post-production (editing, opticals, sound synchronization) of film, has always seemed to me germane for proper utilization of the video medium.

Each videotape has presented an opportunity for direct confrontation with both technical sophistications and inherent aesthetic visual considerations. An opportunity to work with an analogue "video computer" system, capable of modifying graphic work wholly or in segments through rotation and oscillation in x, y, and z axes, with the technical assistance of Walter Wright, produced two colorized video works, *The Mirror of Heaven*, six permutations of an astrolabe image into a starfield, and *The Whirling Ecstasy*, transmutations of a whirling dervish figure within three-space. At Synapse/Intervision Media Systems at Syracuse, these images were further synthesized with chroma-keyed backgrounds and feedback into *The Mirror of Heaven Remirrored* (1974). Also at Syracuse, work began on a series of interfaces through a "plant response detector," permitting voltage variations from the leaves of a *Gloxiola* to visually modify portions of the video image, resulting in a video collaboration between plant and human in *Experiments in Interspecies Communications No. 1* (1974).

A further realization of the real-time element in video has been my continuing work with the Video Film Collective, originating in New York with work by Jeni Engel, Frank Gillette, Andy Mann, and myself on documentation of the only live concert by Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra (1972), continued now in southwestern Ohio with a three-camera portable system utilizing live SEG and switcher capabilities, as well as live

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sound mixing. With the collaboration of Ms. Engel, Philip Krauss, Jon and Robin Graubarth, Spencer Rumsey, Trisha Dare, and others, as participating members, the Collective has produced such projects as *Baba Ram Dass at Ghetto's Palace* in Dayton, two Antioch College Theater productions (Antonin Artaud's *The Cenci* and Arthur Schnitzler's *Round Dance*) the *Environmental Sculpture Symposium* with Robert Irwin, Stephen Antonakis, Michael Hall, and Robert Doty (confronting the problems of manipulation of a talking/discussion situation) at Wright State University, and much work with the Living Theater Collective (*Seven Meditations on Political Sado-Masochism, Six Public Acts*, and *The Tower of Money*).

Video, like film and other contemporary synthesizing media, has many access ways. In my incarnation as film maker, and multimedia artist with the artist-engineer combine USCO (1965 through 1968), television imagery refilmed in 16mm was an integral part of my visual repertory.

Early experiments in the transmutation of television broadcasting icons involved superimposition with other material, and channel switching, introducing pseudo-random programming analogous to film editing technique but with the added media involvement of "noise," "hash," or interference inherent in TV reception and video recording technology. Part of the touring six-part multimedia presentation "Hubbub" which USCO manifested in 1965 was a section entitled *Cathode Ray*, initiated by Rochester film maker Brian Peterson, consisting of 35mm slide images of TV material, film in 8 and 16mm, and live oscilloscopic interpolation of the audio, for which I contributed two channels of "refilmed TV."

In 1965, while filming material for *Turn Turn Turn*, an exploration in the filmic translation of kinetic and luministic artworks inspired by the "effect rather than content" media theory of McLuhan, I met Nam June Paik during his first New York "TV Art" exhibition at the Bonino Gallery and filmed his work for incorporation into the film. Thus was completed the film's evolutionary patterning: from cybernated light-refracting sculptures (Nicolas Schoffer), moving reflected "lumia" light (Julio LeParc), electronically controlled and strobbed light (USCO), to the "pure" electronic light which the cathode ray tube emits (Paik).

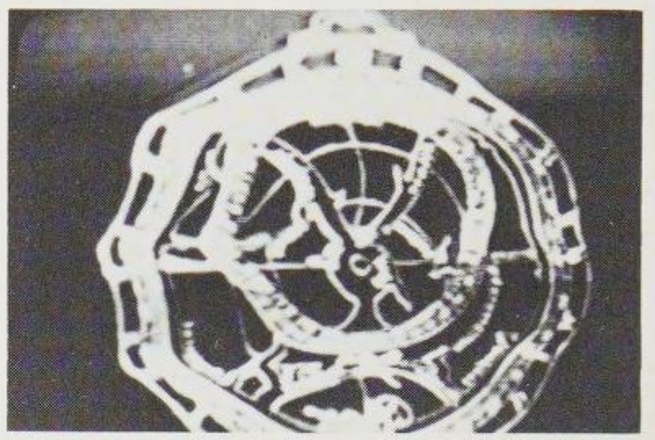
Thus began the ongoing collaboration between Paik and myself, producing videofilms which interface the syntactical qualities of both media, sometimes retinal/kinetic, and most often conceptual/metaphysical. Our "Statement of Objectives," published in the "Expanded Arts Issue" (No. 43) of *Film Culture*, were (1) The study of electronic images composed by purely electronic means directly on the cathode ray screen, (2) the articulation of metaphysics in cinema, aiming to deepen the ontological meaning of monotony, and (3) the transmutation of popular cliché images familiar to any contemporary consciousness, reiterated and metamorphosed beyond their popular meanings into abstraction.

Exemplary of point 3 are such videofilms as *Videotape Study No. 3* (1967–69), in which pretaped press conferences by John Lindsay and Lyndon Johnson are altered electronically and manually by stopping the tape and moving in slow and reversed motion, and by repeated actions; *Beatles Electroniques* (1966–69), with electromagnetically improvised distortions of live and prerecorded takes of the Beatles at Shea Stadium and on the Ed Sullivan show; and *Waiting for Commercials* (1972), in which authentic Japanese-produced TV commercials relentlessly interrupt a media monologue by McLuhan. Indicative of "the articulation of metaphysics" are *Cinéma Métaphysique No. 1* (1966), concerning the concept of scale between the two media, a minute CRT image becoming life-size in the lower right and upper left corners of a full-size film projection; and *Cinéma Métaphysique No. 5* where all the "action" takes place on the edges of the film frame, outside of the *Safe Action Area*, prohibiting "safe" reproduction on black and white and color home receivers.

Other videofilms, like *Electronic Moon No. 2* (1969) and *Electronic Fables* (1972), correlate the gyrating kinetics of electronic video manipulation of the raster with the sustained meditative experience.



*26'1.1499 for String Player*



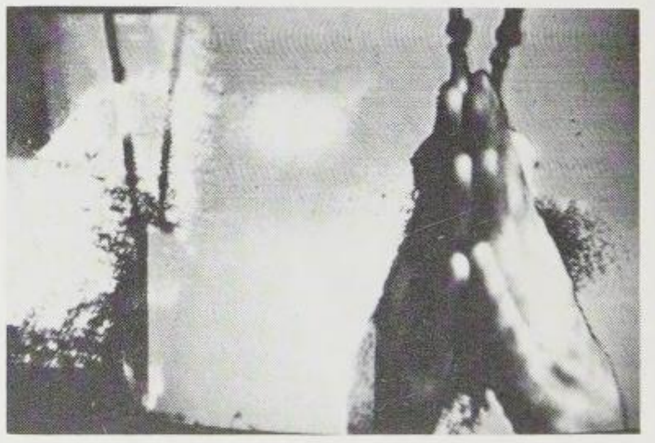
*The Mirror of Heaven*



*The Mirror of Heaven Remirrored*



*Experiments in Interspecies Communication*



*The Astrolabe of God* photos: Jud Yalkut

# BROADCAST AND CLOSED-CIRCUIT EXHIBITION

# ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES VIDEO PROGRAM

## From Film to Video

## Shigeko Kubota

Film and video are not mutually competing media, but mutually complementing ones. Film is superior in projection, shooting, and editing; video is more versatile in transmission, postproduction image mixing, and sound-sync matching. Harmonious interfacing of these two media would therefore be very beneficial for the future development of video and film art.

The exploration of the outer limit of the medium in both content and form has been the intention of Anthology Film Archives since the early days of the New York Cinemathèque. It is only logical that Anthology Film Archives should expand its excellent collection and activity to include video and to open its research and performance facilities to video artists.

The following are video programs presented at Anthology Film Archives in 1974 and 1975. (Artists were present for the video lecture series *From Film to Video.*)

November 2, 2:30 P.M. and November 3, 8:00 P.M., **Hollis Frampton**

(1) *Travelling Matte*, Videotape, B&W, 22 Min., 1971.
(2) *Travelling Matte*, 16mm Film, B&W, 33 Min., 1971.
(3) *Memoranda for a Dream of Magellan*, Videotape, Color, 120 Min., 1972.

November 9, 2:30 P.M. and November 10, 8:00 P.M., **Ed Emshwiller**

(1) *Thermogenesis*, Videotape, Color, 12 Min.
(2) *Media Meditation Piece*, Live Performance (Real, Video, Film), 3 Min.
(3) *Pilobolus and Joan*, Videotape, Color, 58 Min.
(4) *Scape-Mates*, Videotape, Color and Kinescope Film, Color, 29 Min.

November 16, 2:30 P.M., VIDEO: **Open House**

Artists who attended and brought videotape:

(1) Steve Bellayr, *Qu'es-tu, mon père?*, 9 Min., B&W, *Happy Today*, B&W, 3 Min.
(2) Walter Ungerer, *Among the Oobies*, B&W, 30 Min.

November 17, 8:00 P.M., Live Video Concert, **Nam June Paik** *Fluxus Sonata II.*

November 23, 2:30 P.M. and November 24, 8:00 P.M., **Tom DeWitt**

(1) *Birdcage At Albany*, 12 Min., for three 16mm projectors and one videotape commemorating a concert by John Cage and David Tudor at the State University of New York at Albany, 1972.
(2) *Lecturevideographic*, 16mm Film, a pedagogic polywog incorporates *Atmosphere*, 1966, 6 Min., and *The Leap*, 1968, 8 Min., in a vain effort to explain what's cooking in video, 20 Min., 1969.
(3) *Fall*, a Videofilm that tells the myth of Icarus in an iconic language, 1971.
(4) *Philadelphia, Rings, Rob Roy*, three abstract graphic pieces with synchronous electronic sound produced in collaboration with Phil Edelstein, Laurie Spiegel, and Randy Cohen, 10 Min., 1974.
(5) *Zierot*, selected episodes from experiments with mime, 10 Min., 1972.
(6) *Cathode Ray Theater*, Video Vaudeville including *Fordth Of You Lie, No Smoking, Rings; War Walls*, Color, 26 Min., 1974.

November 30, 2:30 P.M. and December 1, 8:00 P.M., **Ira Schneider**

Film and Video Information Collages

(1) *Peanut Butter on My Roof*, 1965, 10 Min., edited by the late David Brooks, who preferred to call it *Redcap*.
(2) *Media Primer*, 1970, 20 Min., edited after the '70 elections and before the advent of low-cost, clean video editing, a collage of material from broadcast TV and material from the Raindance data bank.
(3) *Lost in Cuddihy*, 1966, 15 Min., Part I of a Trilogy of films descriptive (ontology) of American (sub)-cultural experience of mid-'60s (I got lost in Cuddihy on my way to Racine to see Ike & Tina Turner at a concert.) (Parts II & III of the Trilogy listed below as Nos. 5 & 8).

(4) *The Fourth of July in Saugerties*, 1972, 15 Min., a traditional American celebration, produced with Beryl Korot.
(5) *The Ghost of Wittgenstein*, 1967, 15 Min., Part II of Trilogy, narrative written by Ray Lucas, spoken by Ben Sidran and George Brown, Visuals from Madison, Wisconsin, and New York City (Epistemology).
(6) *The Boring Years*, 1973, 5 Min., Video/Poem/Collage.
(7) Selections from *Manhattan Is An Island*, a six-channel Video/Topological/Environment, 1974, 10 Min. Video representations from around, about, and above Manhattan. Video technician, Junafi Lamadrid.
(8) *I'd Rather Be Half-Right Than Vice-President*, 1968, 5 Min., Part III of Trilogy . . . reveling in the absurd . . . Trilogy starring D. Stein, M. Schwartz & M. Rosenthal.
(9) Selection from *Bits, Chunks & Pieces*, 1974. *Bits, Chunks & Pieces* is designed as a video album, for inclusion in projected video environments.
(10) *The Great Suds Your Duds Robbery*, 1963, 3 Min., old-style short comedy film.
(11) Another selection from *Bits, Chunks & Pieces*, 1974, current work in progress.

December 7, 2:30 P.M. and December 8, 8:00 P.M., **Woody & Steina Vasulka**
(1) *Didactic Materials*, Color, 30 Min., 1974.
(2) *Soundgated Images*, Color, 30 Min., 1974.
(3) *Recoded Messages* (NOT recorded, *Recoded*), Color, 30 Min., 1974.

December 14, 2:30 P.M. and December 15, 8:00 P.M., **Aldo Tambellini**
*From Film Black TV to Video Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn*, three-channel Video pieces.

December 21, 2:30 P.M. and December 22, 8:00 P.M., **Jud Yalkut**
Both Shows:
(1) *The Mirror of Heaven Remirrored*, 1974, Color, 10 Min. (Thanks to Walter Wright and Synapse/Innervision Media Systems).
(2) *Video-Pravda*, 1974, B&W, 15 Min. (A Video tribute to Dziga Vertov; a prototype for future newsreels).
(3) *The Astrolabe of God*, 1972, Color, 25 Min. (Produced at the WNET Television Laboratory; with Jeni Engel, dancer.)
(4) *Experiments in Interspecies Communications*, 1974, Color. (Thanks to Synapse/Innervision Media Systems; an interface between plant and human being, with Jeni Engel; and thanks to the plant, GLOXIOLA, for assisting in the manipulation of the electronic image.)
(5) *Beatnik Heaven*, 1974, B&W, 20 Min. (Starring Lawrence Leclair, pioneer Beat, painter, and muralist, and star of Ron Rice's film *Senseless*.)

Plus, Sunday showing only:
Videofilms by **Jud Yalkut and Nam June Paik** (A Selection):
(1) *Cinema Metaphysique No. 1–5* (1966–72), B&W, 16mm Film, 10 Min.
(2) *Videotape Study No. 3* (1967–69), B&W, 16mm Film, 4 Min.
(3) *Beatles Electroniques* (1967–69), Color and B&W, 16mm Film, 3 Min.
(4) *Electronic Moon No. 2* (1969), Color, 16mm Film, 5 Min.
(5) *Electronic Fables* (1972), Color, 16mm Film, 10 Min.

December 28, 2:30 P.M., VIDEO: **Open House**
Artists who attended and brought videotape:
(1) Robert Lynnkazmayer, New Theatre Workshop, *Improvisation I*.
(2) Ernie Gusella, *Muhammadan Eggs*, B&W, 30 Min.
(3) Paul Tschinkel, *Videotape for Cable TV*, B&W, 30 Min.

December 29, 8:00 P.M., **Dimitri Devyatkin**
*Moscow, January 1974*, seen in Moscow (Zagorsk, May Day, Taganka Theatre, Leningrad, Stutterer's Clinic, Light Music, Man Singing La Scala Opera). *House of the Horizontal Sync; Steep Turns & Motown; The Sordid Affair.*

January 4, 2:30 P.M. and January 5, 8:00 P.M., **Stan Vanderbeek**
*(1) *Moaning Lisa*, 1975, 10 Min., Color, variations on a well-known theme.
(2) *Meta-Tations*, 1975, Color, 10 Min., images set to Gregorian chants.
*(3) *Winter Solstice*, 1975, Color, 10 Min.
(4) *Time Tunnels*, 1974, 15 Min., a Kinescope of video

* Done at the WGBH video workshop.

experiments done at WNET's TV Lab.

(5) *R.E.M.*, 1974, 30 Min., a work in progress done at WNET's TV lab, to be part of an 8-hour work; part of the Sleep Theatre experiment.

(6) *Computer Generation*, 1973, 30 Min., a documentary about Stan's work done at M.I.T.'s Center for Advanced Visual Studies. It includes three video and computer graphic films entitled *Symmetriks*, *Poem Field #8* and *Videospace*.

(7) *Newsreel of Dreams*, 7 Min., Film.

January 11, 2:30 P.M. and January 12, 8:00 P.M., **Douglas Davis**

Recent videotapes made in Europe.

(1) *Numbers*, a Videotape Event for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, 1970, 7 Min., Color. Made at WGBH-TV as part of Video Variations. A mixing of numbers from the most disparate sources (kids painting, computers, signs on the street, digital clocks, etc.) . . . based in the mysteries of physics and life.

(2) *The Santa Clara Tapes*, 1973, 30 Min., Color. Made in collaboration with the De Saisset Museum, University of Santa Clara, California. Camera is used freely, as if it were a pencil . . . without reverence, digging into the body of a nude model, crashing through a mirror, dangling outside a tall building, spinning around the end of a cable. Other things happen, too. Titles: *Knocking/Digging/Breaking/Reaching/Lighting.*

(3) *Studies in Myself II*, 1973, 30 Min., Color. Made in collaboration with the Everson Museum of Art, at Synapse Studio (Syracuse, N.Y.). A character generator, while the camera watches. This tape is about myself, others, sex, death, art and life, visually rendered . . . it is not about the equipment, nor is it intended to be poetry.

(4) *The Cologne Tapes*, 1974, 18 Min., B&W. Made for the Kolnischer Kunstverein's Projekt '74. The ultimate abuse of "The Camera." It is offered free on the streets of Cologne, with no takers. It is buried in a German forest at midnight . . . at the first break of dawn, the camera resurrects itself, and searches for the first strong rays of light. Titles: *Against Video/Burying Camera/Finding Sun.*

(5) *The Austrian Tapes* (*Handing/Facing/Backing*), 1974, 5 Min. each, 15 Min. in total, Color. A performance for Art as a Living Ritual and for the Austrian Television Network . . . Trying to touch the hands, cheeks, lips, chest, back, and mind of the viewer.

(6) *The Florence Tapes*, 1974, 6 Min. each, 24 Min. total, B&W. Made at Art/Tapes, Florence, Italy. Production Engineer: Bill Viola. The viewer (and myself) . . . taking off not only clothes, but the sense of place, the way the body arranges itself before the television set . . . and the mind, of course . . . Michelangelo and Pirandello both had a hand in these tapes. Titles: *Clothing/Walking/Lifting/Leaving.*

(7) *Street Sentences*, 1970, 30 Min., B&W. Made for the Television Laboratory, WNET-TV. Face after face after face . . . bizarrely clear answers to "Say a sentence for television."

(8) *Conclusion to Talk-Out*, 1972, last 20 Min. of original 210 Min. telecast of videotapes and live two-way dialogue with the viewing audience (which responds via telephone and print-out message on the screen) . . . Final image taken from *Studio in Color Videotape II* (1972) . . . Made in collaboration with WCNY-TV (Syracuse) and the Everson Museum of Art.

January 25, 12:30–4:30 P.M. and January 26, 6:00–10:00 P.M., **Jackson MacLow**

*Tree Movie* (1961); Three Video Versions: 1971, 1972 and 1972. Each showing with Live performance of *Tree* by the artist.

*Tree* Movie*

Select a tree. Set up and Focus a movie camera so that the tree fills most of the picture. Turn on the camera and leave it on without moving it for any number of hours. If the camera is about to run out of film, substitute a camera with fresh film. The two cameras may be alternated in this way any number of times. Sound recording equipment may be turned on simultaneously with the movie cameras. Beginning at any point in the film, any length of it may be projected at a showing.

Three Video Realizations:

(1) In Shirley Clarke's garden, the roof of the Chelsea Hotel, West 23rd Street, New York, N.Y., November 14, 1971. (Produced with Shirley Clarke, Barry Rosen, Peter Miller, and Randy Dickerson.)

(2) On Glenn Conklin's farm, Silver Lake Township, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, March 26, 1972. (Produced with Ken Dominick.)

(3) Near a playground in Central Park, 96th Street & Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y., August 15, 1972. (Produced with Shigeko Kubota, Norman Bauman.)

* For the word "tree," one may substitute "mountain," "sea," "flower," "lake," etc.

February 1, 2:30 P.M. and February 2, 8:00 P.M., **William Wegman**

*What It Will Be Like in the Future*, and other short works.

(1) *Semi-Buffet*, Color, 1975. Made with WGBH workshop.
(2) Selections from other short works, B&W.

February 8, 2:30 P.M. and February 9, 8:00 P.M., **Walter Wright with Experimental Television Center in Binghamton**

Videotapes and Live Video
Performance with the Paik/Abe Video Synthesizer with Susan Wolfson.

February 15, 1:30 P.M. and 3:30 P.M. and February 16, 7:00 P.M. and 9:00 P.M. and February 17, 7:00 P.M. and 9:00 P.M., **Joan Jonas**

*Twilight*, a Video Performance.
With Ariel Bach, Paula Longendyke, Robin Winters, Linda Zadikian, and Andy Mann.

February 22, 2:30 P.M. and February 23, 8:00 P.M., **Jon Alpert, Keiko Tsuno, and Yoko Maruyama**

(1) *Cuba: The People*
(2) Other videotapes about Cuba.

March 1, 12 Noon to 8:00 P.M. and March 2, 12 Noon to 8:00 P.M., **Peter Campus**

Closed-circuit video installation.

March 8, 2:30 P.M. and March 9, 8:00 P.M., **Bill and Louise Etra**

*The Other Side of the Mountain*—A Personal Topography.

March 10, 8:00 P.M., **TVTV with Michael Shamberg**

A Special Video Program

March 15, 2:30 P.M., VIDEO: **Open House**

Artists who attended and brought videotape:

(1) Jeff Frankel, Six or seven short pieces, B&W, 25 Min.
(2) Barbara Buckner, Work in progress—excerpted images, B&W, 30 Min.
(3) Gary Hill, *Rock City Road*, Color, 17 Min.
(4) Joseph Curtis, *Bring on Rain*, B&W, 30 Min.

March 16, 8:00 P.M., **Video Group Show I**

(1) Loren Sears: *Day/Year, The Pacific Lake, Tribal Vision, Native Medicine*, B&W.
(2) Toshio Matsumoto, *Autonomy, Metastasis, Expansion, Video Mona Lisa.*
(3) Steve Bellayr, *Qu'es-tu, mon pere?, Happy Today.*

March 22, 2:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. and March 23, 2:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M., **Wendy Clarke**

Video Toys. Video Installation and Video Participation. The program of live toys begins on time like a performance. Toys conceived and directed by Wendy Clarke, carpentry and design by Lech Kowalski, additional painting by Ted Kowalski. Video part conceived and directed by Wendy Clarke with help from Lech Kowalski, Shridar Bapat, Andrew Gurian, Susan Milano, Lynda Rodolitz, all of the TP Videospace Troupe, and Shigeko Kubota.

(1) *Tribute to Mamie Eisenhower*
(2) *Frog and the Princess*
(3) *Elephant*
(4) *Polish Farm*
(5) *Jasper*

March 29, 2:30 P.M. and March 30, 8:00 P.M., **John Reilly and Julie Gustafson**

A History of Global Village, Videotapes from Global Village.

April 5, 2:30 P.M. and April 6, 8:00 P.M., **Creative Artists Public Service Program Video Winners' Videotapes**

(1) Wendy Appel, *Mary*, B&W, 10 Min.
(2) Ned Bobkoff, *Transformation Video*, B&W, 15 Min.
(3) Jeffrey Byrd/Jacques Cook, *Street Games:* Their extension into the classroom, B&W, 20 Min.
(4) Jaime Davidovich, *Blue, Red and Yellow*, Color, 20 Min.
(5) Stephen DeVita, *The Rollin Skeets Story*, B&W, 20 Min.

April 12, 2:30 P.M. and April 13, 8:00 P.M., **Creative Artists Public Service Program**

Video Winners' Videotapes

(1) William Gwin, *Boysea, Sweet Verticality*, Color, 45 Min.
(2) Joan Jonas, *Glass Puzzle*, B&W, 15 Min.
(3) Lewis Lusardi, *Solipsisms*, Color, 25 Min.
(4) Stefan Moore, *The Irish Tapes*, B&W, 50 Min.
(5) Edin Velez, *Phaedra, Rainbow of Curved Air, Andes*

April 19, 2:30 P.M. and April 20, 8:00 P.M., **Bill Viola**

*Video Alla Florence*

April 26, 2:30 P.M. and April 27, 8:00 P.M., **Hermine Freed**
(1) *Two Faces*, 1972, B&W, 6 Min.
(2) *360°*, 1973.
(3) *Show and Tell*, 1974, 10 Min.
(a) My brother's apartment
(b) My old neighborhood
(c) A movie I saw on TV
(4) *Art Herstory*, 1974, Color, 20 Min.
(5) *Family Album*, in process, B&W, 10 Min.

May 3, 2:30 P.M. and May 4, 8:00 P.M., **Juan Downey**
(1) *Happy '74 Peru, Macchu-Picchu*, Two channels, B&W, 30 Min.
(2) Representation with Carmen Beuchat and Suzanne Harris.

May 10, 2:30 P.M. and May 11, 8:00 P.M., **Hans Haacke**
Museum Workers' Association of New York City meeting at P.S. 41, December 5, 1973, B&W, 30 Min.

May 17, 2:30 P.M. and May 18, 8:00 P.M., **Paul Ryan**
*Using the Video Tool to Invent Triadic Behavior*, B&W, 30 Min.

May 24, 2:30 P.M. and May 25, 8:00 P.M., **Willoughby Sharp**
Fragments from Willoughby Sharp's *Video Performances*, 1973–1975.

May 31, 2:30 P.M. and June 1, 8:00 P.M., **The TP Videospace Troupe** with Shridar Bapat, Ray Dobbins, Andrew Gurian, DeeDee Halleck, Susan Milano, Lynda Rodolitz, and Pat Whitaker.
*Yesterday's Papers* Live Video Participation Show.
Please, bring a baby picture or old snapshot of yourself.

June 7, 2:30 P.M. and June 8, 8:00 P.M., **Barbara Buckner**
(1) *Gentle Door*, B&W, 1975.
(2) *Lune*, B&W, 1975.
(3) *Tectonic Portrait*, B&W, 1975.

June 14, 2:30 P.M. and June 15, 8:00 P.M., **Takahiko Iimura**
*Self Identity #1*
(1) (sync) *I am Takahiko Iimura*, 10″, B&W.
(2) (a.r.) *I am Takahiko Iimura*, 15″.
(3) (sync) *I am Takahiko Iimura*, 25″.
(4) (a.r.) *I am not Takahiko Iimura*, 30″.
(5) (sync) *I am not Takahiko Iimura*, 40″.
(6) (a.r.) *I am Takahiko Iimura*, 45″.
(7) (sync & a.r.) *I am not Takahiko Iimura*, 55″
(cut) 60″.
sync = synchronized; a.r. = after recorded

June 21, 2:30 P.M. and June 22, 8:00 P.M., **Daile Kaplan**
Video Installation. Real Time Series (*The Sea, The Shower, The Window, Shopping*).

June 28, 2:30 P.M. and June 29, 8:00 P.M., **Ben Tatti**
Video Art and Electronic Imagery tapes, Videotapes and Sculpture.

July 5, 2:30 P.M., VIDEO: **Open House**
Artist who attended and brought videotape:
Arnold Dreyblatt, *Carbon, Fluctuations, Burst, Uranus*, Color, 30 Min.

July 6, 8:00 P.M., VIDEO: **Open House**
Artists who attended and brought videotape:
(1) Herschel Silverman, *Poetry Reading by J. J. Murphy*, Global Village.
(2) Daile Kaplan, *The Suitcase by Larry Miller*, 30 Min., B&W.
(3) Ellen Grossman, *Family Events*, Five-channel pieces, B&W.
(4) Kip Hanrahan, Work in progress, 7 Min., B&W.
(5) Michael Jacobson, *Brooklyn Variety Night*, 30 Min., B&W.

July 12, 2:30 P.M. and July 13, 8:00 P.M., **Francis Lee**
(1) *Trees*, Color, 6 Min.
(2) *Where do all the people come from?*, Videofilm; Film by Elliot Rose, Color, 7½ Min.
(3) *Sumi E*, Film, B&W, 7 Min.
(4) *The Studio*, four-part Video
Part 1: *Studio Interior*, Color, 7 Min.
Part 2: *The Electricians*, Color, 10 Min.
Part 3: *Self-Portrait with Video Synthesizer*, Color, 5 Min.
Part 4: *Portrait of Ralph Hocking*, Color, 9 Min.
(5) *Synthesis*, Videofilm, Color, synthesized by Nam June Paik, 7 Min.

July 19, 2:30 P.M. and July 20, 8:00 P.M., **Seven Young White Middle Class Video Workers** (Artists graduated from Cooper Union, Video Class, 1975)

July 19, 2:30 P.M., **Kip Hanrahan, John Martin, William Lafferty**
(1) Kip Hanrahan, three tapes about revolution and Marxism, B&W, 12 Min.
(2) John Martin, *Information*, B&W, 30 Min.
(3) William Lafferty, *Parts 1 to 8*, B&W, 20 Min.

July 20, 8:00 P.M., **Shawn Gargagliano, Ron Mitkowski, Susan West, John Murray**

(1) Shawn Gargagliano, *In which our hero, no longer living on a commune, moves to Ithaca and works at making sandals and getting sexual experience*, B&W, 15 Min.
(2) Ron Mitkowski, *Informational Tape*, B&W, 11 Min.
(3) Susan West, Short pieces, B&W, 20 Min.
(4) John Murray, *Sanctuary*, B&W, 30 Min.

July 26, 2:30 P.M. and July 27, 8:00 P.M., **Video Group Show III with Gary Hill and Jeff Frankel***

(1) Gary Hill (a member of Woodstock Community Video), *Earth Pulse, Embryonics* and *Rock City Road*, Color, 30 Min.
(2) Jeff Frankel (student at Antioch College); *Drag Queens in Action*, B&W, *Videomasturbation, Banana Fantasies or Tribute to Busby Berkley, Anti-Gravi TV, The Big Show, Dreams by the Sea*, B&W, 30 Min.

September 6, 2:30 P.M., **Dennis Oppenheim**

(1) *Ground Cell*, 1972, 35mm Slide Dissolve Projection, 7 Min.
(2) *Aspen Projects*, 1970, 16mm Film, 30 Min.
(3) *Whirlpool*, 1974, 16mm Film, 6 Min.
(4) *Black Walls/Black Skin*, 1975, Two-channel Video Cassette Systems, B&W, 10 Min.
(5) *Remainder of Aspen Projects*, 1970, 16mm Film, 25 Min.

September 7, 8:00 P.M., **Dennis Oppenheim**

(1) *Black Walls/Black Skin*
(2) *Shadow Projection*, 1972, 35mm slide projection, 15 Min.
(3) *Mittens*, 1974, 16mm Film, 7 Min.
(4) Selected Videotapes, 1970–1974, 30 Min.

September 13, 2:30 P.M. and September 14, 8:00 P.M., **Woodstock Community Video, Tobe J. Carey**

Documentary Video, *Video Birth, Videotapes*, 1971–1975.

September 20, 2:30 P.M. and September 21, 8:00 P.M., **Frank Gillette**

*Quidditas*, Three-channel Piece.

* Video artists represented on Group Show were selected from the Open Video Screening held at Anthology Film Archives, Video Program.

September 27, 2:30 P.M. and September 28, 8:00 P.M., **Bob and Ingrid Wiegand**

Video, Video, Video.

October 4, 2:30 P.M. and October 5, 8:00 P.M., **Davidson Gigliotti**

Closed-Circuit Video Installation—Video Landscape

October 11, 2:30 P.M. and October 12, 8:00 P.M., **Doris Chase**

Dancing/Video/Film/Computer/Sculpture

October 18, 2:30 P.M., VIDEO: Open House with **John Handardt,** curator of the Whitney Museum who organized *Projected Video*

**October 19, 8:00 P.M., Curator's Choice, Gerald O'Grady**

The artist who was chosen by Gerald O'Grady is William Gwin.

October 25, 2:30 P.M. and October 26, 8:00 P.M., **Lynda Benglis**

Video Work, Color.

Video programs will continue in the future at Anthology Film Archives. Please check our monthly Video Program; we are happy to see you on our video program. Thanks to the artists who support our video program.

Video Selection Committee: Douglas Davis, Hollis Frampton, Shigeko Kubota, Jonas Mekas and Gerald O'Grady*

Video Curator: Shigeko Kubota

Assistant Engineer: Bob Harris

Guest Engineer: Shridar Bapat and John Trayna

The Video Program is partially supported by the New York State Council on the Arts, The National Endowment for the Arts, and Electronic Arts Intermix.

* Most of the video programs were programmed by Shigeko Kubota.




# TV/VT AT THE MFA

## Looking Back and a Little Bit Ahead

**Rebecca Lawrence**

It looks and feels like a sanctuary, just another museum for time's exiled objects, the last place you would expect to pioneer in communications. But snaking behind those marble walls are thousands of feet of video cable. In TV chronology, the cable is antique, circa 1955. It was used continuously for twelve years in hundreds of productions. Patricia Barnard produced the weekly programs with a museum staff of three and crews and equipment from WGBH, then known as our "educational" station. The lore of those early days is filled with people who have gone on to their own brands of fame in television: Brian O'Doherty, host of the first series, *Invitation to Art*, now art critic for the *Today* show; Russell Connor, host of *Museum Open House*, well-known as an advocate of video in all its forms; Fred Barzyk, Rick Hauser, and David Atwood, then just beginning at GBH, now looked on as almost classical heroes by some who value innovation in, and understanding of, the medium. If someone wanted to do a scholarly study of video thinkers like Russell, Fred, and Rick, it would be possible to see signs of the directions they have taken in some of the modest video experiments in these old museum shows—a keying device here and a tricky super there—but on the whole, Mrs. Barnard was against "gimmicks" that might distort the viewers' experience of the work of art, so the basic format of a host talking about art in a gallery was consistent.

In 1967, GBH converted to color and made the old cable obsolete. The focus on showing off the treasures in the galleries began to seem obsolete, too. Although I was hired at this time to be associate producer for a new color version of the *Museum Open House* series, the old format just didn't work any more. Mrs. Barnard left, and Thalia Kennedy (soon to become Haak) took over as producer. A four-year period of experimentation began. The most significant program to come out was *Tree* in 1968. Fred Barzyk, by now a producer-director at GBH, was the creative force that shattered the narrative restrictions of the old format. *Tree* is a collection of segments ranging from ten seconds to five minutes that were aired between programs. Each one focused on a different way of looking at trees—in paintings, in nature, in childrens' interpretations, as wood carved into furniture, etc. Together the segments are a minicatalogue of different ways of communicating information without resorting to the talking-face syndrome. The result was a big success with both museum and television people.

The next step after this experiment was to try to incorporate the liveliness of the short segments into a more structured half-hour. Thanks to a grant from NEH, we were able to try the idea out in a series called *Eye to Eye*. Production began in 1971; Thalia had

Top: Old days of "live" broadcasting direct from the MFA Center: Russell Connor hosts *Museum Open House* Bottom: Brian O'Doherty chats with Patricia Barnard on a typical production day

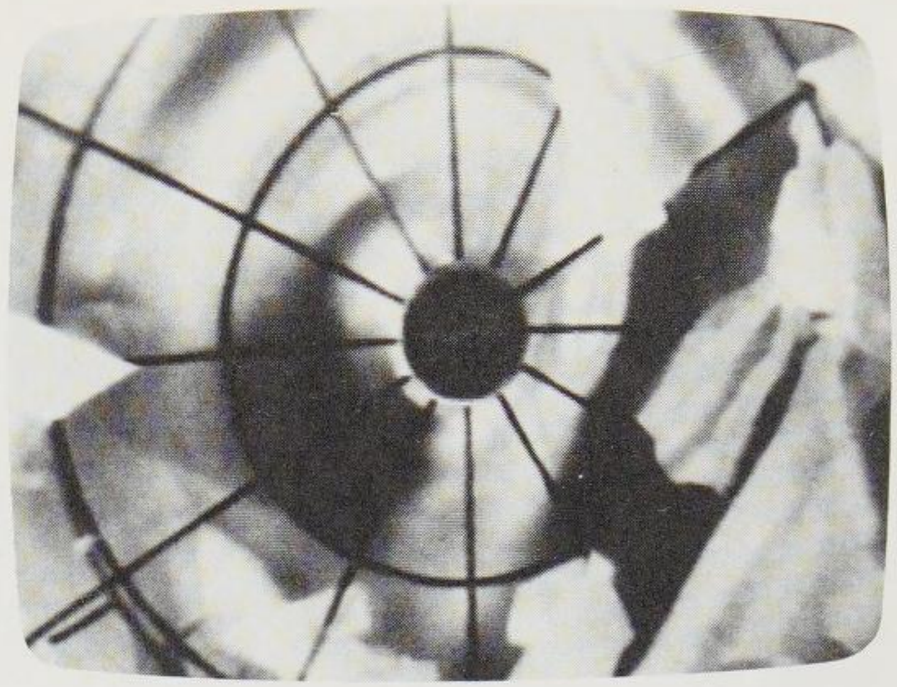
left, Rick Hauser was contracted as producer, and I was in charge of the museum's point of view. Philosophically, *Eye to Eye* is the antithesis to the old museum shows. Nothing was shot in a gallery. Television was used to interpret the art rather than a roomful of objects. Unlike *Tree*, these programs have a host, Stephen Koch, but his appearances are confined to discreet interludes rather than providing explanatory linkage. The themes that worked best with this approach were general topics like *Fakes* and *Monuments*. The more historical programs we tried needed a more linear treatment.

When the programs were aired, the TV people applauded and the museum people cringed. The difficult dichotomy of interpreting static visual media with a process-oriented medium was made manifest. Accusations of superficiality and distortion were hurled by nearly everyone who claimed to have genuine feeling for and understanding of art. The museum's image of itself was nowhere to be seen. But then *Fakes* received the CPB award for excellence; positive criticism in the print media outweighed the negative; and when the broadcasting was finished across the country, Howard Wise's selective EAI picked up the series for cassette distribution.

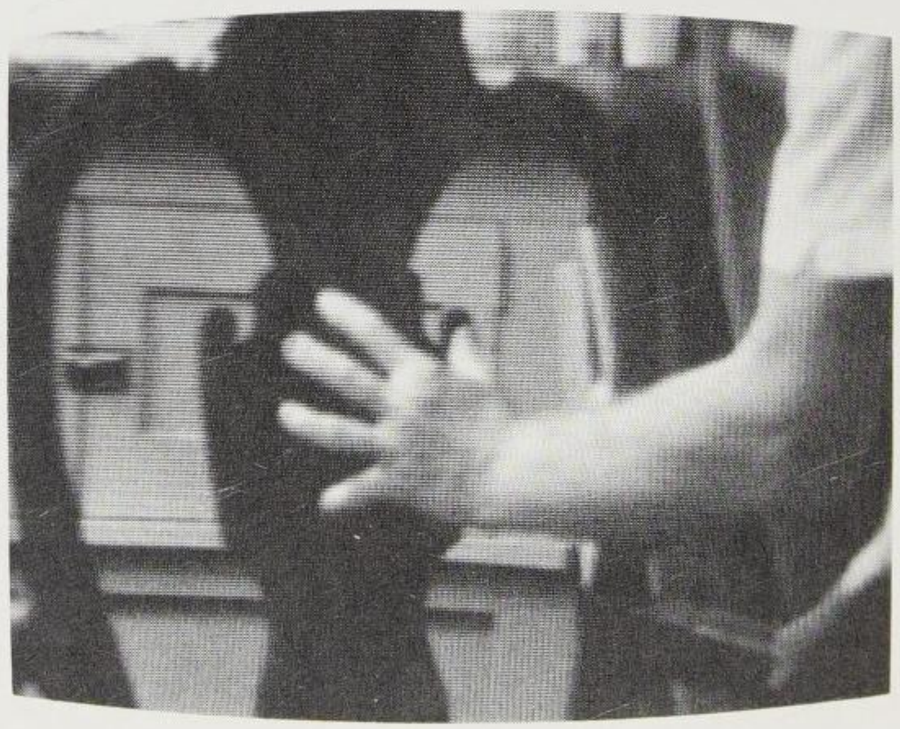
Inside the museum, many still long for the old days of Brian O'Doherty (whatever happened to that nice Irish boy, they say to me) and the half-dozen or so specials I have produced for WGBH since *Eye to Eye* stopped have been constricted in budget and in innovation. But the restrictions I've felt in working for broadcast TV have led me to start an underground movement to use and exhibit video. In January of 1974, I showed David Ross's *Circuit* in the Museum School gallery. We added four tapes by local artists: *Arty Vignettes* by Dean Nimmer and Gregg Amenoff; a collection of short segments by Hudson/TAVA; *April 21, 1973* by Donald Burgy; and a selection from the work of Elizabeth Clark. Another exhibition, aided by a grant from the Massachusetts Council on the Humanities, was presented in the fall of '75. It brought to Boston some of the most recent tapes by artists in New York and California, as well as showing new works by local artists.

Last April, we got a grant from NEA to set up a small video production unit of our own. David Atwood has helped me buy and install the equipment. My co-workers, David Douglas and Jan Wilson, and I have started to produce a few tapes on people and events in the museum. We're also working with Dean Nimmer and Gregg Amenoff on a more elaborate version of their "Tour of the MFA"—a parody on all the pretensions that go into "explaining art."

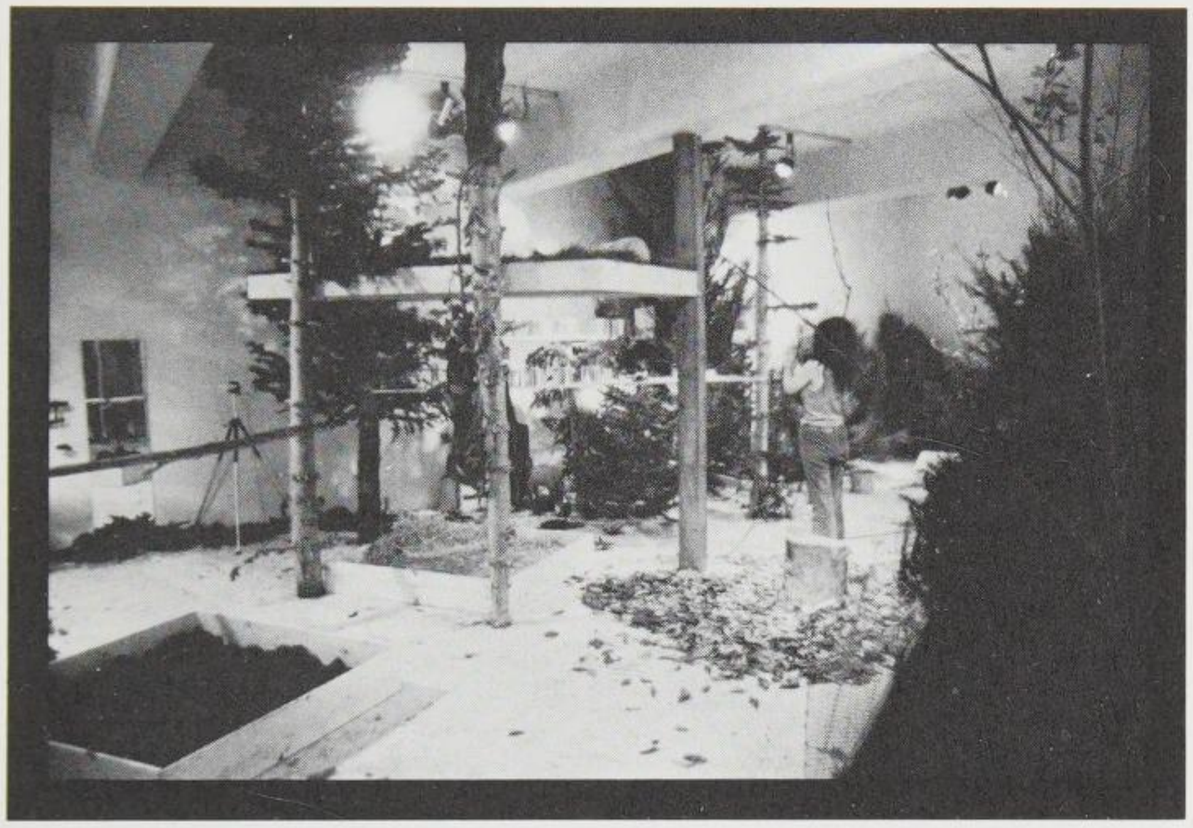
When the acting director of the Museum saw our portapak in action at an opening, he commented that it was quite a gadget. A few other people suspect our productions may be leading to another major subversion of the museum's image, like *Eye to Eye*. If we're lucky, they may be right. If not, it is still quite a gadget.



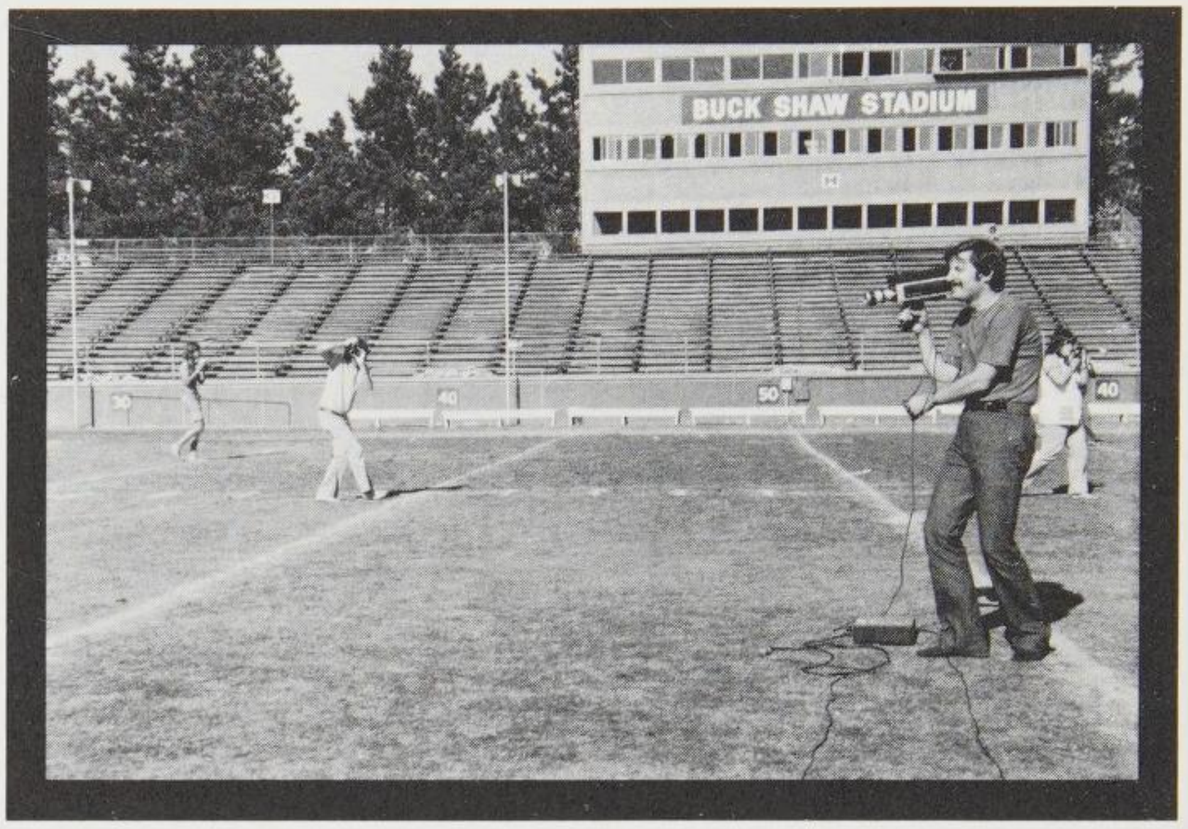




Top: *Test Patterns* by Hudson/TAVA shown in "Circuit in Boston," 1974
Center: A video document of *Cut Piece*—part of a performance by Charlotte Moorman at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Bottom: *Portrait of Vincent*–a video portrait in progress of the furniture restorer at the museum



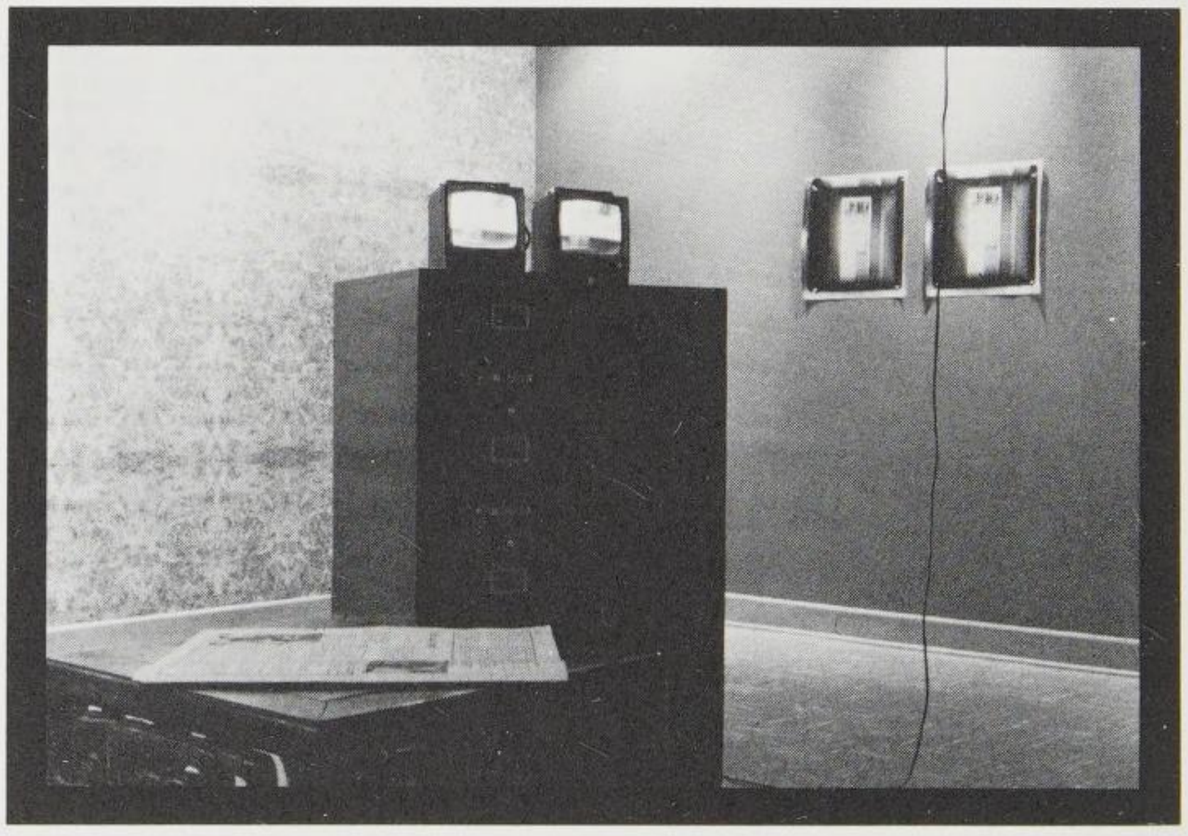
*Living in the Forest* Bonnie Sherk




*Santa Clara Tapes* Douglas Davis



*The Rake's Progress* Terry Fox



*Sea Shell Sea Sick at Saw Sea Sea Soar* Howard Fried

# DE SAISSET ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

The de Saisset Art Gallery and Museum at the University of Santa Clara began its video program in 1969 with the production of videotape documentaries of those artists exhibiting at the museum. The videotapes were produced on a ½-inch video system. At that time, portable video systems were scarce and relatively unobtainable in the Bay Area Art community.

With the advent of the '70's, the primary art movement in the Bay Area was performance sculpture. The museum contracted its first major exhibition in January 1971, with Terry Fox, Paul Kos and Allen Fish (Tom Marioni). The exhibition "Fish, Fox, Kos" and its attendant performances allowed for the shift of the museum video program from documentaries to performance documentation.

In 1972, the museum opened its video gallery for the regular exhibition of videotapes. Prior to that time, video was part of a yearly invitational and subsequently took its place as a regular adjunct to the museum exhibition calendar.

The video gallery continues to function as a regular feature of the de Saisset Art Gallery and Museum, concentrating on the total overview of works by video artists from the United States, Europe, and Japan.

By 1974, videotape equipment had become widely available, and the museum's role as a videotape production agent for artists was no longer necessary as a regular function. Foreseeing this change, the museum began to solicit funds for the production of specialized art programming designed for closed circuit and broadcast. The video program, working under grants from the NEH, the Adolph's Foundation, and International Video Corporation, is presently producing an extensive documentary on Federal Art in California as part of its "New Deal Art: California" exhibition set to open in January of 1976. The *New Deal Art: California* videotape will be used in the museum and distributed throughout California for broadcast.

George Bolling
Video Curator

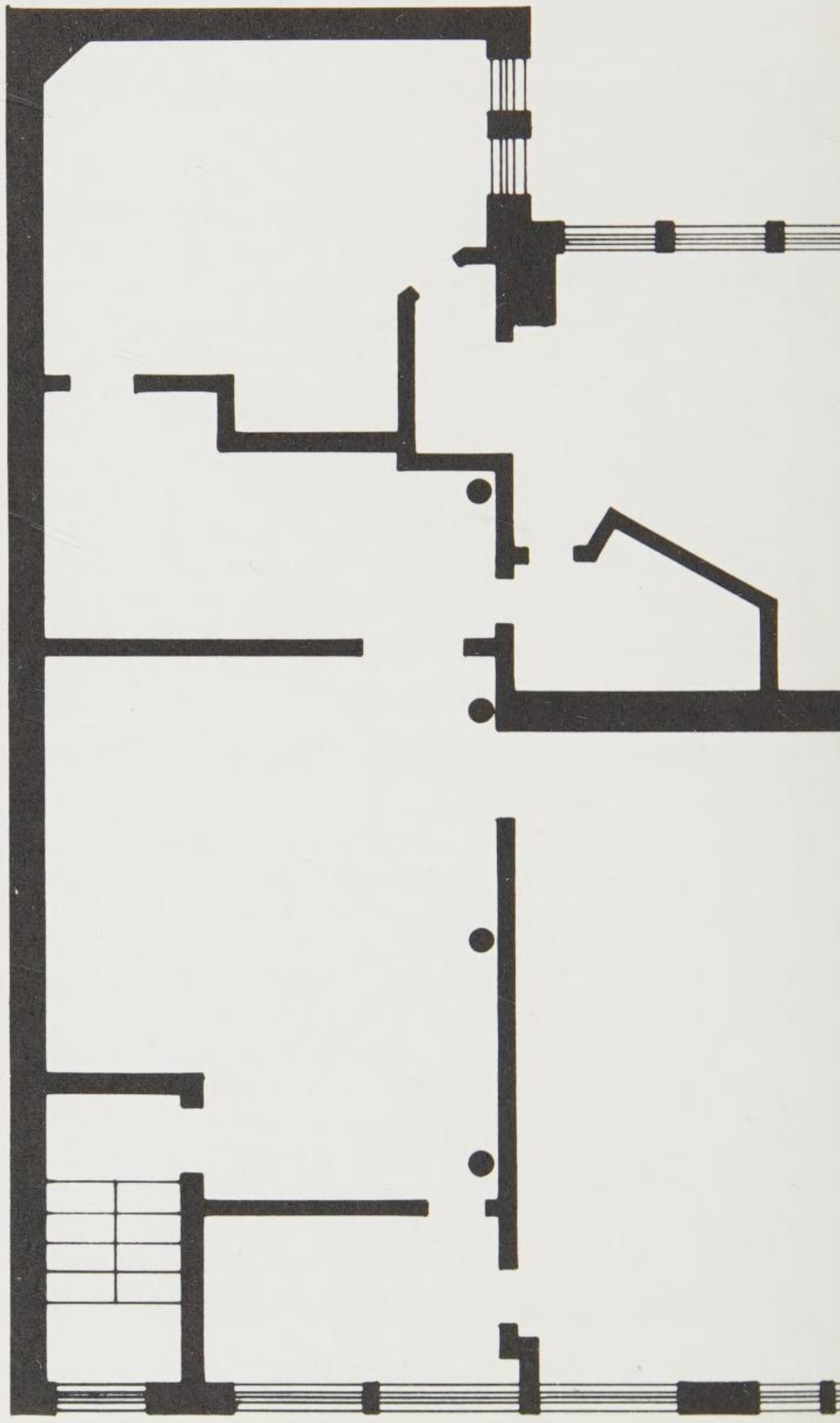
# the kitchen

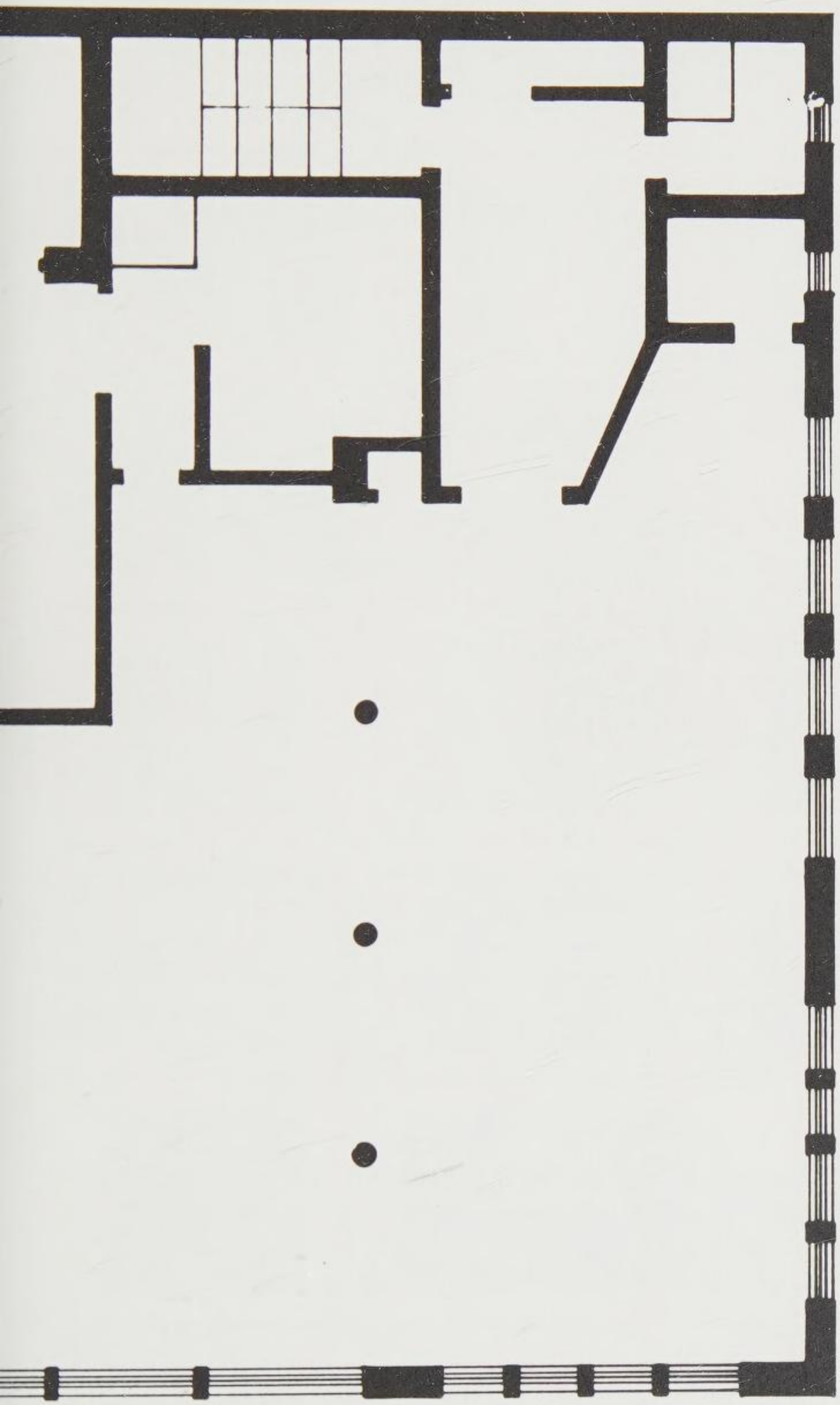
## Robert Stearns

The Kitchen exhibits closed-circuit video as art. Such work at present may be the most difficult of the art media to present to the public. Unlike broadcast television, which by omnipresent transmission waves enters the private space, closed-circuit environments and videotapes must be viewed by people willing to situate themselves in foreign, formalized environments.

Videotapes can be and have been shown in a theater context, with a group of tapes presented at an announced time to a gathered audience. More enigmatic, however, are the continuous exhibitions of tapes and "prepared" spaces—environments—including those utilizing single monitors and more complex multi-monitor/multi-channel systems. Both all too often receive the same response: a viewer who is reluctant to spend the time necessary to see, or more generally to experience, a piece through. Aesthetic merit cannot be rated by the length of time someone views any work of art, but unlike more traditional objects, video art does often have a minimum requirement: its physical length or a necessary interaction period.

Perhaps as much because of the state of Art as the state of the art, video has made its way into galleries and museums. Even so, a gallery or museum visitor is intimidated by the presence of a video monitor in a realm reserved for more indeterminate and individually chosen viewing periods. There is a sense of disorientation, due, in part, to the often highly personal nature of much video art—autobiographical and incongruous with the more familiar, formularized product of network television. Video's legacy is the mannerism of network television programming from which the artist may draw inspiration, even desperation. Video artists are as consciously concerned with principles of Art History as they are aware of the regulations of the Federal Communications Commission. Video art reveals more of the personality of the artist/producer not necessarily because of a quality inherent to video, but, more simply, because the artist wants it to do so. Both defying the celebrity syndrome generated by network TV's need to appeal to the masses and consciously denying the tactility and sensuous presence offered by High Art, the video artist may formally choose





a common, mundane role. The viewer might prefer to keep the personal idiosyncracies of others at a more manageable distance, but they come uncomfortably close to home while he is not even at home.

Intrusion is particularly felt in those works which force themselves on the viewer with not only the personal but also the repetitious and the self-reflexive. Such works are often called boring. The artist seeks not to eradicate, mollify or pacify the time he uses, but, conversely, to point directly to it: expand, contract, and otherwise convert it. By using time consciously, he of course makes his viewer conscious of it, too. The last thing we want is to be wrist watch-watching while watching art. We know it is not polite. Sensing that, we realize that all the social manners of concert attendance are called for. We feel caught, conspicuous in entering and leaving if we do it at the wrong time.

This reaction is a serious deterrent to communication. It comes primarily from not being at home with the potentials and achievements of the medium. Applications of conceptual advances are met by manners appropriate to their most recent predecessors; each technological advance is made to look like what it replaced—the early cars looked like horseless carriages; movie theaters looked like opera houses; televisions looked like radios. Video as art, video as used by artists, is presented in formats reminiscent of painting and sculpture; it is offered in large-screen format with schedules similar to film showings; it is produced in multiples and marketed like objects as many of its early adherents thought, and hoped, it never would be. It is treated by some artists as a replacement for live performance.

It would, however, be an injustice to video to expect it to deliver like TV or to assume that it should possess the same elements as performance, especially that undefinable quality called live "presence." The presence that scale affords to film cannot be assumed to be missing in video, nor is video something to grasp or behold like an object.

If video is to continue to be exhibited in the art context, perhaps the public will come to regard it without expecting a substitute for other media. Those of us who present it must look for ways to allow video to make its own qualities clear and clearly felt.

Director: Robert Stearns
Video Director: Carlotta Schoolman
The Kitchen Center for Video and Music

# WGBH WORKSHOP

## James Beck

In the beginning, there was Television, and Television created a vast wasteland, and the people who had sets looked upon It and said, "It is good, perhaps as good as Radio." Then, in the third or fourth days of Network (the funny commercial and the made-for-TV movies), public broadcasting appeared as an alternative. Somewhere, after hours, in the back rooms of public television, video experimentation snorted, opened myriad eyes. Video synthesis fed itself, and grew: Middle America thought that this must be what one saw when smoking LSD. Once again, individuals decided that there could be freedom of expression: Rec rooms became studios, with corkboard walls, and college tuition money was spent lavishly to outfit them. Portapak equipment went into the field, once as far as Miami; the people, imaginations inflamed, reelected Richard Nixon.

Did that do it? We may never know. We *can* be certain that throughout the country, tens and even fifteens of gaffers cut (or straightened) their hair and set out to capture their sides of The Story on videotape. This happened even in Boston, even at the WGBH New Television Workshop.

NTVW, cleverly disguised as a bombed-out theater, completed some sixty-five projects in its first year in spite of WGBH's decision to "coordinate" the otherwise all-volunteer staff through the emplacement of one paid, experienced employee. The quality of the work completed in that year was high, though much will never reach the public except via a broadcast showcase format, or at a video gallery.

Now, during NTVW's second year, everything has changed. Many artists, lured by promises of creative freedom, fame, easy money (in very small quantities of unmarked, very small bills), and the chance to produce with broadcast-standard equipment (run by friendly, watchful professional engineers), are returning with new proposed works which will be a new fall offering for viewers in the privacy of their own homes. And, while these veterans make their mark in prime time, others will still arrive at the workshop for their first project, or for additional experimental work. Does all this mean that decadence (even bureaucracy) is creeping into the video waves of the future? There *will* be more money spent on productions-for-air. Add the up-to-the-minute equipment, scores of experienced visionaries, and assured air dates (which still allow ample time for innovation), and it's not too difficult to see creativity as the coming manifestation of societal degeneration. With a new trough in the waves of media history not far behind.

Nevertheless, those who return to NTVW may manage to preserve their ideals and visions even while they are working with the constant threat of public exposure. And all proposals will be subjected to closed-circuit scrutiny by public television's bold, adventurous, forward-thinking executives who have been staunchly unafraid to demand that new programming enlarge the audience in exciting, meaningful ways.

With the fruition of the NTVW efforts, and those of other groups, the video artist's final hurdle will be cleared. Sources of funding for video research (long enough a concern of only a few philanthropic organizations) will become more numerous, perhaps so numerous that artists will be forced to allow "equal time" as thousands of impressed corporations scramble to underwrite their air time. The end of "while you're up, get me a grant" may finally be . . . in sight.

# YEAR ONE
































Row 1: Rick Hauser, Tony Kahn and Arnie Reisman, Nancy Mason, Katheryn Posin Dance Company, Ros Barron
Row 2: John Budde and Elizabeth Keene Dance Company, Fred Barzyk, Andy Mann, Olivia Tappan, Caravan Theater
Row 3: TVTV, William Wegman, Dorothy Chiesa, Peter Campus, Donald Burgy
Row 4: David Atwood, Stan Vanderbeek, Frank Gillette, Gerd Stern, Robert Goldman
Row 5: Louis Falco Dance Company, Dance Collective, George Stadnik, Elon Soltes, Mark Allen
Row 6: Ron Hayes, Jo Sandman, The Living Theater, David Wilson, Counterpoint

# VIDEO GETS A ONE

## Russell Connor

When the presentation of a massive video art exhibition was considered a few years ago at the Museum of Modern Art, Nam June Paik expressed caution: "Sometimes big show can kill a movement. Maybe better to stay underground, and last longer, like underground film." He was possibly thinking of the Museum's OP Art Show of 1965, which began with a glittering opening attended by models in dresses inspired, so to speak, by the paintings of Bridget Riley and others that hung on the walls. It did for the OP Art movement, as such, what the iceberg did for the Titanic. The museum's aesthetic reserve spared video this fatal embrace, and everyone settled instead for an international video conference (Open Circuits, 1972).

Mr. Paik's reservation came to mind when I was invited by the TV Lab of New York's public television station, WNET (Channel 13) to write and host a broadcast series on the subject of video in the spring of 1975, supported by the New York State Council on the Arts with additional help from the Rockefeller Foundation.

Video had escaped the hazards of being formally consecrated as High Art in the main temple. Some of its champions felt it was even more risky to expose the still young movement to the public indifference, rejection, or hostility that such a series might provoke. If they thought it, no one seemed worried that it might prove . . . how shall I say . . . popular.

We went ahead and did the series, calling it *VTR: Video and Television Review*. Although the twenty-two-week series was shown at a late hour, it consistently gathered a Nielson rating of One in New York and Boston, which carried it a week later. One (meaning one per cent of the viewing audience) doesn't sound like much, but it is high in public television terms. One of its most acclaimed series, for instance, *Bill Moyers' Journal*, also gets a One.

The original concept for the series was developed by the TV Lab's director, David Loxton, and David Silver. Candida Harper was coordinating producer.

The role of TV host seems a rather quaint and archaic one in the futuristic world of video. I struggled with my reservations, and my natural modesty, for a full ten seconds and introduced the series this way:

"I'm Russell Connor, and I'll be your host for this series which will explore some aspects of television with particular emphasis on the recent phenomenon of video, or video art. Way back in the '60's I did a weekly art series with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and WGBH. . . . I would ask my colleagues to stop and look at the extraordinary medium we were using, television, and do a program about the art of TV. People would smile sympathetically and say they were looking forward to next week's program on Rembrandt or some other struggling unknown.

"Happily, there were people out there, like Nam June Paik, Stan Vanderbeek, and others whom you'll meet in this series, who were actually doing something in this medium, and using it for personal and artistic expression. In the mid '60's a prototype of this relatively inexpensive, portable VTR appeared on the scene, and a new generation of artists and social activists who had literally grown up with television seized on it as both an artistic tool and a cybernetic means of circumventing the network's control of media information.

"It became possible for one person to record his or her view of the world and play it back immediately. Artists grappled with the technology and developed video synthesizers which allowed for electronic paintings of infinite subtlety and variety. Galleries and museums began to show video. Experimental centers associated with public TV stations were formed first in San Francisco and then in New York and Boston. I was involved with the New York State Council on the Arts, helping to support various video ventures, including the founding of this TV Lab, the research and experimental department of WNET/Channel 13.

"In this series we will be showing work produced at the Lab, and talking with artists, as well as seeing works produced around the States, and at major experimental centers both here and abroad. We'll be showing video by people who use portable video as a means of presenting an alternate view of

contemporary life from that which conventional TV can or will provide."

*At the end of each program an announcer solicited opinions about the series from viewers. The sample letters presented here suggest that there is a ready audience (should we say videance?) for the continuing presence of video art on the home screen.*

VTR #1: *TVTV*
February 7, 1975 (30 Min.)

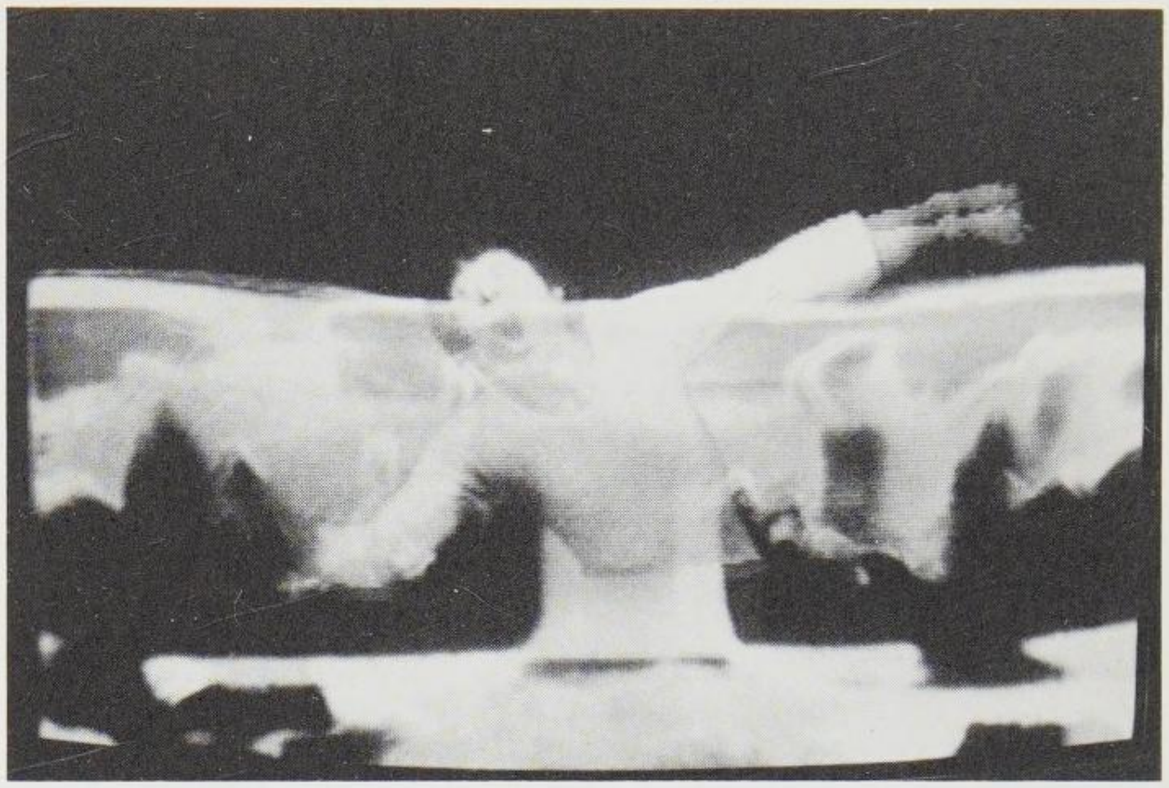
"I'm sure many of you have seen, in recent weeks, the four-part series, *Gerald Ford's America*, produced on ½-inch video by a group called TVTV, Top Value TV. It was the first result of what will be a year's relationship between TVTV and the TV Lab, exploring new concepts in journalistic and documentary forms, specifically using one-half-inch video technology. In October when TVTV was in Washington completing the series, the TV Lab's David Silver and videotape artist Andy Mann took a portapak to the capital city to document something of the group's style and philosophy. Our first program on the series features this report, and also includes some of TVTV's earlier work. It is truly a Washington show—a tape of the tapers taping."



VTR #1: TVTV's Megan Williams

VTR #2: *Transcending*
February 14, 1975 (30 Min.)

"Anyone interested in the art of film, especially those short, independent works often referred to as art films or, because



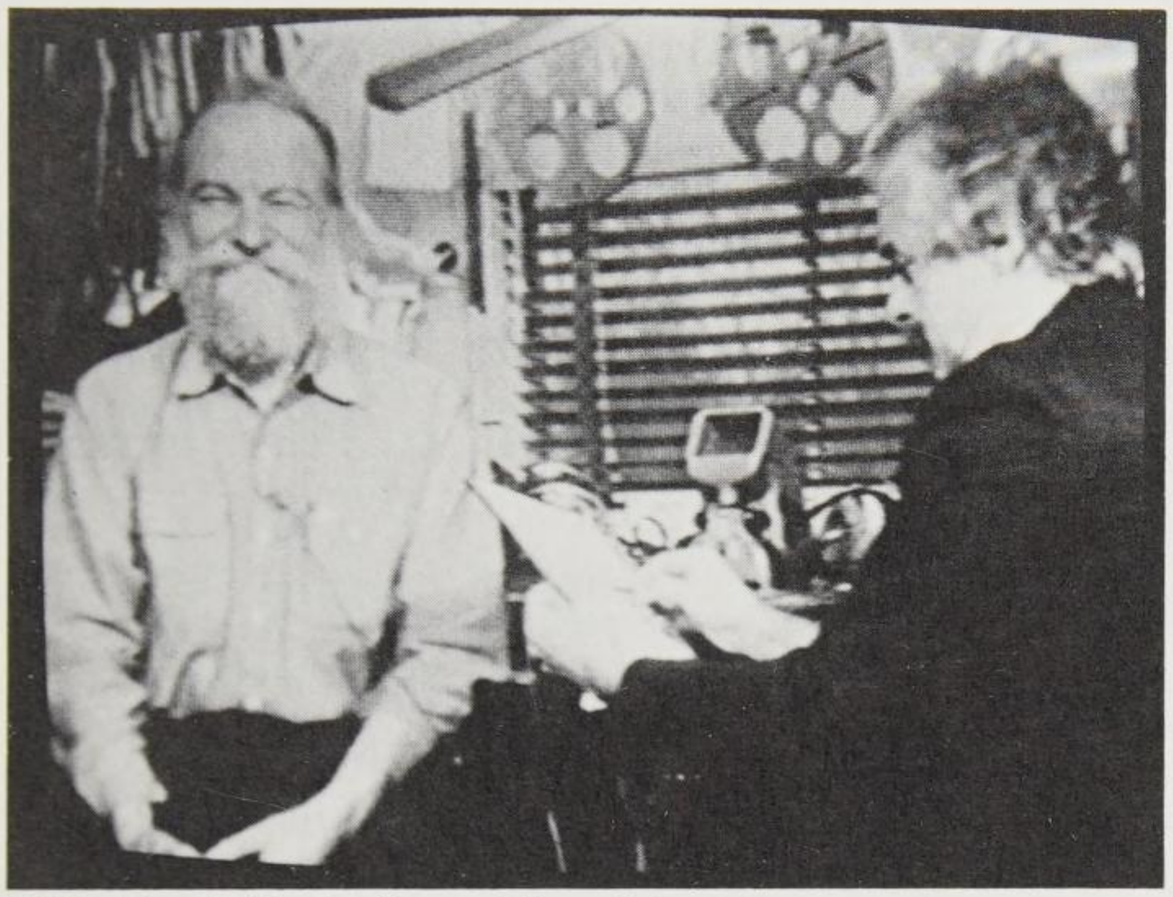
VTR #2: Yass Hakoshima

they are created beneath the artificial surface structure of the film establishment, as underground film, has seen at least one film by Ian Hugo. For twenty-five years this former engraver has worked, in his own words, on the frontiers of his dream, fashioning a richly evocative world of hauntingly surreal images—the subject's usually a human journey through a myriad of land, sea, or air, occupied by memory, premonition—celebrated in myth, ritual, symbol, mysterious but strangely familiar in its intimate probing of the human imagination. The films are full of optical effects, superimposed images which the artist holds firmly in the service of his vision. In his 1972 film, *Levitation*, Ian Hugo began a collaboration with the extraordinary Japanese mime, Yass Hakoshima. Together they explored the creative possibilities in fusion of the filmic images and effects on the art of mime. Ian Hugo has now found a new medium which he finds ideal for suggesting that surreal domain between the waking world and the dream world—videotape. Last year at the TV Lab he again worked with Yass Hakoshima to create his first videotape, *Transcending*, and it's about the two different people that inhabit each of us."

VTR #3: *Crossings and Meetings*
February 21, 1975 (30 Min.)

"We don't know the full range and potential of video as an art medium. Like every art form, it stretches the limits of the imagination of those who use it. Our sense of what video *might* be . . . and of what *art* might be is wider because of the work of Ed Emshwiller. His background as a painter and illustrator gave a strong graphic dimension to an early film in which a dancer interacts with the passionate gestures of Emshwiller's action painting. Working with Alvin Nikolais, he stretched the language of film poetry in a work inspired

by Nikolais's dance *Totem*. In his videotape *Scape-Mates*, created at the TV Lab in 1972, he combined video and computer graphics to create a hypnotic journey through electronic landscapes. Tonight, a new videotape—*Crossings and Meetings*—Ed Emshwiller's latest exploration at the boundaries of television."



VTR #3: Ed Emshwiller and Russell Connor

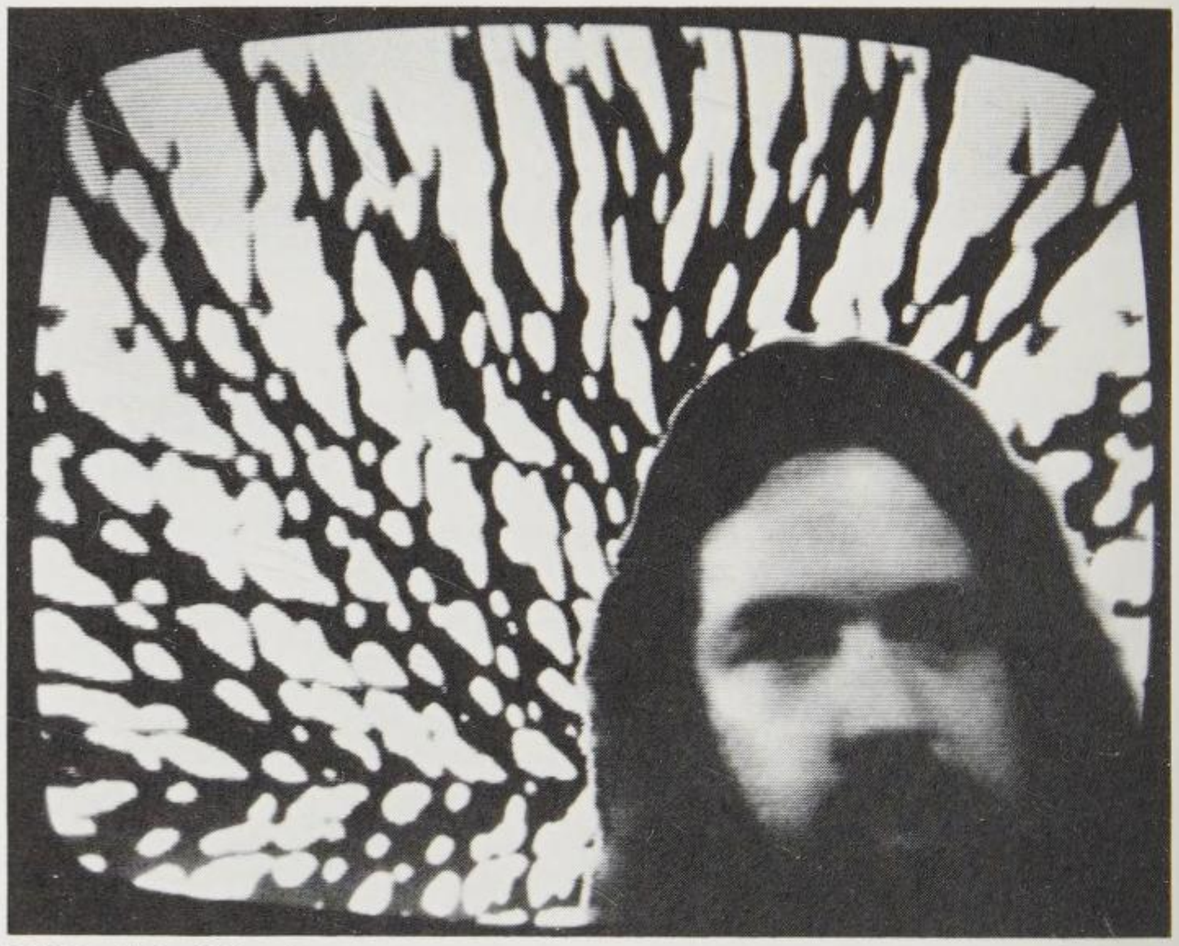
VTR #4: *The Irish Tapes*
February 28, 1975 (1 Hr.)

"*The Irish Tapes*, made by John Reilly and Stefan Moore in 1972, was one of the first major documentaries using ½-inch black and white portable video. Supported in part by John Lennon, Reilly and Moore took advantage of the portapak's lightweight flexibility and relatively low cost to shoot over one hundred hours of tape during the most tense and agonized time of the struggle in Northern Ireland. I remember seeing a two-channel video-theater version of it then, which I found very moving, and later in this special one-hour program we'll talk with John Reilly and Stefen Moore about their experience making *The Irish Tapes* and about the idea behind multi-channel video presentations. First, this forty-six-minute version of *The Irish Tapes*—for *one* channel. Some of it is now history; much too much of its seems timeless. As Yeats wrote in 1916, 'Too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart/ O, when may it suffice?' "



VTR #4: *The Irish Tapes*

VTR #5: *Illuminatin' Skip Sweeney* by Skip Sweeney
March 7, 1975 (30 Min.)



VTR #5: Skip Sweeney

VTR #6: *All Across Boston*
March 21, 1975 (30 Min.)

"Andy Mann and his video camera are as firmly associated in my mind as George Burns and his cigar, Sam Spade and his gun, and Cyrano de Bergerac and his nose. Like those historic protuberances, Andy's camera serves as a vehicle for engaging with the world around him. The results are sometimes funny, sometimes touching, sometimes vertiginous . . . but always human—and to me the very essence of personal portapak video. This work, taped in Boston and Cambridge while Andy worked with WGBH's New Television Workshop, is called *All Across Boston*."



VTR #6: *All Across Boston*

VTR #7: *Three Transitions* and *Set of Coincidence*
March 28, 1975 (30 Min.)

"My first impressions of the work of Peter Campus were a mixture of shock and recognition—the recognition of a sensibility and an attitude that are closer to an artist working alone in a studio than that of many people working in video and in television. Beyond the surface appeal, the electronic magic of his work, there's a quiet focusing on concepts of time and space and illusion that link his work to an artistic heritage and to a wide range of current art activity."



VTR #7: *Three Transitions*

AMERICAN
KENNELS

215 Park Avenue South, New York,
New York 10003;
(212) 777-2690; George Rosenthal,
President

March 31, 1975

T.V. LAB
356 W. 58th St.
NYC

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:
I saw your show on WNET and would like to meet with Mr. Peter Campus, in reference to the possibility of his doing a TV Commercial for our Company.

Very truly yours,
George Rosenthal
President

April 2, 1975

Television and Video Lab
WNET
356 West 58th Street
New York, New York

Dear Sirs:

I am writing in regard to the great show offered to your viewers, 3/30/75, entitled VIDEO AND TELEVISION REVIEW which featured a display of works by Peter Campus, *Three Transitions*.

I found the show completely fascinating. Although viewing it was purely accidental, it held my interest completely with no real knowledge of video concept. I believe I have found a new subject in which to try to absorb. The presentation was excellent and really lets the viewer think about what actually was to be delivered and what future television and film might become.

I would appreciate any information on Mr. Campus, regarding articles, presentations, or shows or any information on video concept offered by WNET or the Board of Education.

Thank you,
Edward DiCarlucci
1036 Clarence Avenue
Bronx, New York 10465

VTR #8: *Downtown Community Television*
April 4, 1975 (30 Min.)

"A lot of pious things have been said and written about community video. This is the place where it's really needed and where it's really happening, in New York's Chinatown in the Lower East Side. The means by which many people of this community are getting their hands on television, using it for information, for education, for gaining a new sense of their own identity is the Downtown Community Television Center. And we are here with the three directors, Keiko Tsuno, Jon Alpert, and Yoko Maruyama."



VTR #8: Downtown Community Television

VTR #9: *Global Groove* by Nam June Paik
April 11, 1975 (30 Min.)

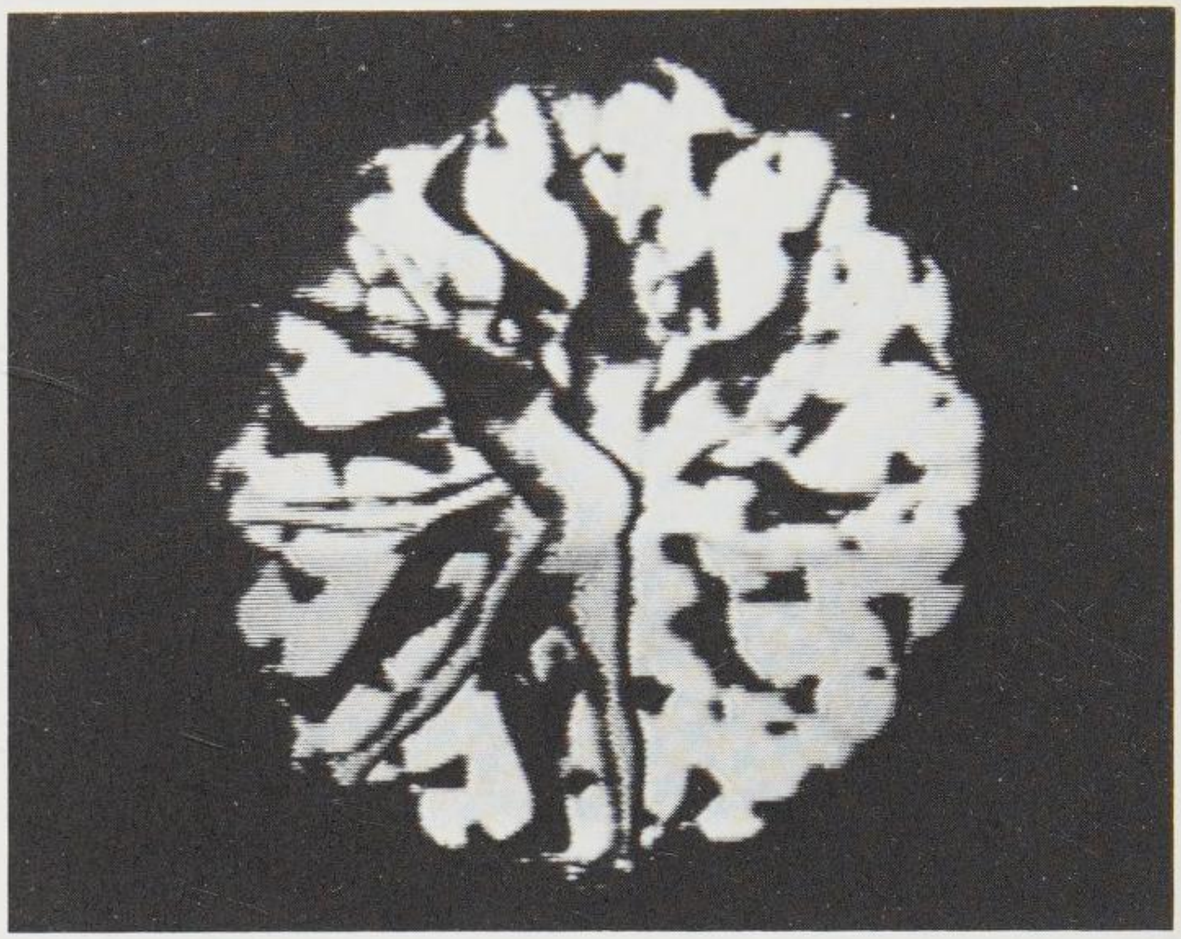
VTR #10: *The Wit of William Wegman*
April 18, 1975 (30 Min.)

"Russell: How do you judge a tape that fails?

William: The sweat technique. If I perspire, when the tape is on, then I know there's something wrong with it.

Russell: What about the audience you would really like to ideally have for the tapes you're making?

William: I like all different audiences to see them. I like the artists as well as my mother . . . I like a tape that only runs about twenty seconds; if you don't like it, it's gotta be over very soon. I don't think much about what my sources are going to be until I get right in front of the equipment and turn it on."



VTR #9: *Global Groove*

Saturday April 19

Dear Channel 13, WNET, T.V. Lab,

I feel last night's *Video and Television Review* was ingenious. Unfortunately I missed the beginning of the show and hope you rerun it. I particularly liked the singing torso and the Weimaraner.

It was refreshingly obtuse. More please.

Mrs. P.S., Brooklyn



VTR #10: William Wegman and Man Ray

April 26, '75

T.V. Lab
WNET
356 West 58th St.
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dear Sirs:

You asked for a reaction to the *Carel and Ferd* tapes and so here is mine, "Fantastic." I was totally captivated by this ingenious method of taping real people in the reality that surrounds them. The best part, somehow, was the juxtaposition of the March '75 discussion with the earlier tapes. It strongly makes the point of change in human beings as time and events flow on.

Curiously, I was constantly aware of the fact that these two people were physically attractive. Had they been extremely homely or even plain the tapes would have been unbearable and even ugly to view. I felt the same way about the Loud family series; constantly aware and pleased by Mr. Loud's handsomeness and Mrs. Loud's beautiful smile.

I think that when you choose to scrutinize couples by camera, physical beauty becomes a part that can't be overlooked. In this case it helped me to more fully accept two people whose early lifestyle was very different from mine and perhaps too radical for me to relate to.

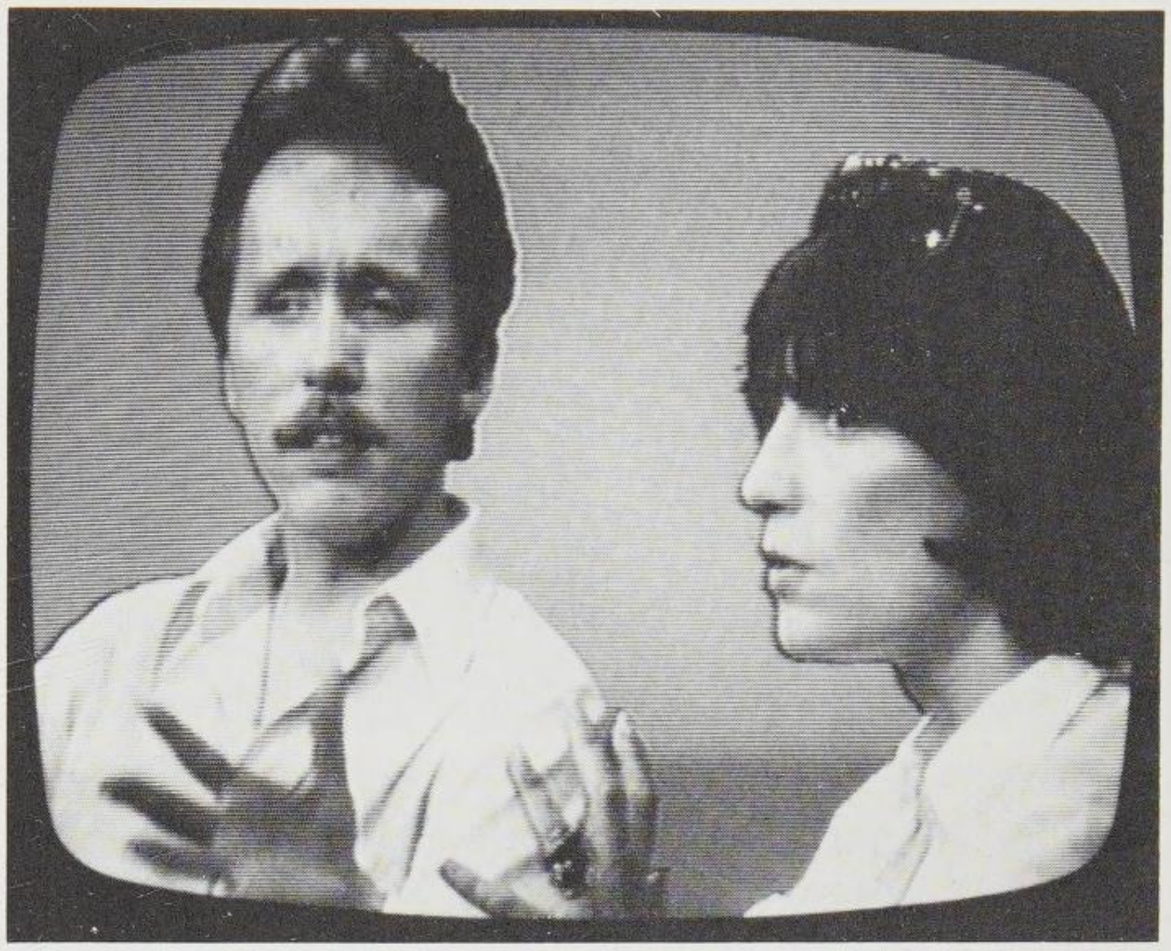
All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed this presentation and am very impressed with all the videotape programs. There's something very "real" about videotape that comes across when you're watching it. I hope to see many more programs that expand on this fascinating new "art form."

Just for the record and if you're interested in knowing what "type" of viewer has written this letter here is a brief description: 35-year-old not-yet-liberated housewife, 3 children school-age, living in Bronx, high school and 1 year college, an avid fan of Channel 13, main interests reading, music.

I hope my letter is of some help to you in getting an idea of what viewer reaction is like. This viewer gives your program very high marks.

Your truly,
Mrs. R. Brandler
140-5 Carver Loop
Bronx, N.Y. 10475

VTR #11: *Carel and Ferd* by Carel Rowe, Ferd Egan; Arthur Ginsberg, producer
April 25, 1975 (1 Hr.)



VTR #11: Ferd and Carel

VTR #12: *Cathode Ray Theatre* by Tom DeWitt
May 2, 1975 (30 Min.)



VTR #12: Tom DeWitt

Photos: The Television Laboratory, WNET/Channel 13

T.V. Laboratory
356 W. 58 St.
New York, N.Y. 10019

Gentlemen—

We were most impressed with your program on May 4 following *International Animation* featuring electronic effects and pantomime. *Philharmonia* was fantastic. Could you please give me a list of the electronic equipment used. Also, would it be possible to contact Tom DeWitt concerning possibilities of further applications of this technique?

We feel the potentials for this type of effect are limitless and would appreciate all the information you can supply.

Sincerely,
M.L.

VTR #13: *Ama L'uomo Tuo (Always Love Your Man)*
May 16, 1975 (30 Min.)

"Tonight there'll be three tapes on VTR, a review of some recent books on video, a video art piece with music and dancing, and we begin with a very moving video portrait. In the biographic documentary or video portrait it's very important to let the camera roll, to let the tape roll, while the subject learns to relax in front of the camera. All this gives a psychological ease, a latitude which can result in videotapes of remarkable intensity and emotional intimacy, especially when the subject is a member of one's own family. Cara DeVito moved into her grandmother's house in Brooklyn, in late 1974, for about a week. The tape which resulted is very strong stuff. Cara thinks of it as a personal blend of love and politics which has contributed to her grandmother's self-respect. The title, rich in irony, is *Always Love Your Man.*"

VTR #14: *Art Herstory* by Hermine Freed
*The Advent of the Advent* by David Silver, producer
May 23, 1975 (30 Min.)

VTR #15: *Scape-Mates* by Ed Emshwiller
May 30, 1975 (30 Min.)

VTR #16: *Video Is Child's Play* by Joe Goldman and Teri Mack; David Silver, producer
June 19, 1975 (30 Min.)



June 3, 1975

T.V. Lab
356 W. 58th Street
New York City

Dear T.V. Lab,

I was sitting with friends last night watching Channel 13, and our conversation dwindled and was forgotten as a visual banquet unfolded which we later learned was *Scape-Mates* by Ed Emshwiller.

Although we were limited to black and white and the relatively poor reception of northern Westchester, we were overwhelmed and laid waste by the beauty, originality, and excellence of this video "event." I am not up on the state of the art, and frankly have seen nothing of the New Video until last night; but if this is any indication of what's going on, the other arts should retire and massive funding should be poured into your coffers.

I'm grasping for tired superlatives; so instead let me just say that it was great, I have never enjoyed *anything* on the boob tube as much in my entire life, and I hope to see more. I also hope, things being as they are $$$-wise, that you can and will continue to explore the seemingly limitless reaches of your equipment and your talents.

I'm not a subscriber to 13, and don't even own a T.V. set. If there is any way or time you can let me know of more such productions (either broadcasts or live-audience events), I would greatly appreciate it.

In short: BRAVO! ENCORE! And a thundering round of applause.

Very sincerely,
Robert B. Byars
Main Street
Goldens Bridge, N.Y. 10526

6/2/75

Watched Sunday nite for the first time and enjoyed—

I'm a steady viewer from now on—it's a new world and as a painter I find it stimulating.

Edwin C. Brown
75-51 113th Street
Forest Hills, New York 11375

VTR #17: *Lanesville TV*
June 26, 1975 (1 Hr.)
"One of the already familiar clichés about portable video is that it decentralizes television, allowing for a genuinely local use of the medium. To see how it works, we went to the country, to Lanesville in the Catskill Mountains. There, one of the pioneer groups in video, Media Bus, formerly known as the Videofreex, has been running what may be the smallest television station in the world, reaching, on a big night, as many as three hundred people. Lanesville TV could be one of the signposts toward a future in which we'll all have video cameras. It certainly is the most neighborly television around."

VTR #18: *Hodge Podge* by Douglas Davis
July 3, 1975 (30 Min.)

VTR #19: *Artists and Computers* with Lillian Schwartz, Peter Foldes, others
July 10, 1975 (30 Min.)

VTR #20: *Quidditas* by Frank Gillette
July 17, 1975 (30 Min.)

VTR #21: *The Tube and Eye* by Peter Crown and Bill Etra
July 24, 1975 (20 Min.)

VTR #22: *Nam June Paik—Edited for Television*
July 31, 1975 (30 Min.)



Photo: Ann Woodward

VTR #17: Russell Connor, Harriet Benjamin, and Nancy Cain

# COMMENTARY

# VIDEO: THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE MEDIUM

David Antin

VIDEO ART. The name is equivocal. A good name. It leaves open all the questions and asks them anyway. Is this an art form, a new genre? An anthology of valued activity conducted in a particular arena defined by display on a cathode ray tube? The kind of video made by a special class of people—artists—whose works are exhibited primarily in what is called "the art world" —ARTISTS' VIDEO? An inspection of the names in the catalogue* gives the easy and not quite sufficient answer that it is this last we are considering, ARTISTS' VIDEO. But is this a class apart? Artists have been making video pieces for scarcely ten years—if we disregard one or two flimsy studio jobs and Nam June Paik's 1963 kamikaze TV modifications—and video has been a fact of gallery life for barely five years. Yet we've already had group exhibitions, panels, symposia, magazine issues devoted to this phenomenon, for the very good reasons that more and more artists are using video and some of the best work being done in the art world is being done with video. Which is why a discourse has already arisen to greet it. Actually two discourses: one, a kind of enthusiastic welcoming prose peppered with fragments of communication theory and McLuhanesque media talk; the other, a rather nervous attempt to locate the "unique properties of the medium." Discourse 1 could be called "cyberscat" and Discourse 2, because it engages the issues that pass for "formalism" in the art world, could be called "the formalist rap." Though there is no necessary relation between them, the two discourses occasionally occur together as they do in the words of Frank Gillette, which offers a convenient sample:

> D1 The emergence of relationships between the culture you're in and the parameters that allow you expression are fed back through a technology. It's the state of the art technology within a particular culture that gives shape to ideas.
>
> D2 What I'm consciously involved in is devising a way that is structurally intrinsic to television. For example, what makes it *not* film? Part of it is that you look *into* the source of light, with film you look *with* the source of light. In television, the source of light and the source of information are one.[1]

Though it is not entirely clear what "high class" technology has to do with the rather pleasantly shabby technical state of contemporary video art, or what the significance is to human beings of the light source in two adjacent representational media, statements of this type are characteristic, and similar quotes could be multiplied endlessly. And if these concerns seem somewhat gratuitous or insufficient with respect to the work at hand, they often share a kind of aptness of detail, even though it is rarely clear what the detail explains of the larger pattern of activity in which these artists are involved. In fact, what seems most typical of both types of discourse is a certain anxiety, which may be seen most clearly in a recent piece by Hollis Frampton:

> Moreover it is doubly important that we try to say what video art is at present because we posit for it a privileged future. Since the birth of video art from the Jovian backside (I dare not say brow) of the Other Thing called television, I for one have felt a more and more pressing need for precise definitions of what film art *is*, since I extend to film, as well, the hope of a privileged future.[2]

It would be so much more convenient to develop the refined discussion of the possible differences between film and video, if we could only forget the Other Thing—television. Yet television haunts all exhibitions of video art, though when actually present it is only minimally represented, with perhaps a few commercials or "the golden performances" of Ernie Kovacs (a television "artist"); otherwise its presence is manifest mainly in quotes, allusion, parody, and protest, as in Telethon's *TV History*, Douglas Davis's installation piece with the TV set forced to face the wall, or Richard Serra's *Television Delivers People*. No doubt, in time there will be an *auteur* theory of television, which will do for Milton Berle and Sid Caesar what Sarris and Farber and *Cahiers du Cinéma* have done for John Ford and Nicholas Ray and Howard Hawkes. But the politics of the art world is, for good reasons, rather hostile to Pop, and that kind of admiring discussion will have to wait; even *Cahiers du Cinéma* has abandoned Hitchcock

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and Nicholas Ray for Dziga Vertov and the European avant-garde on sociopolitical, aesthetic grounds. But it's unwise to despise an enemy, especially a more powerful, older enemy, who happens also to be your frightful parent. So it is with television that we have to begin to consider video, because if anything has defined the formal and technical properties of the video medium, it is the television industry.

The history of television in the United States is well known. Commercial television is essentially a post–World War phenomenon, and its use was, logically enough, patterned on commercial radio, since control of the new medium was in the hands of the powerful radio networks, which constitute essentially a government-protected, private monopoly. This situation determined many of the fundamental communication characteristics of the new medium. The most basic of these is the social relation between "sending" and "receiving," which is profoundly unequal and asymmetrical. Since the main potential broadcasters, the powerful radio networks, were already deeply involved with the electronics industry through complex ownership affiliation, and since they also constituted the single largest potential customer for the electronic components of television, the components were developed entirely for their convenience and profit. While this may not seem surprising, the result was that the acts of "picture-taking" and "transmission" were made enormously expensive: Cameras and transmission systems were designed and priced out of the reach of anything but corporate ownership. Moreover, government regulations set standards on "picture quality" and the transmission signal, which effectively ensured that "taking" and "transmission" control would remain in the hands of the industry into which the federal government had already assigned the airwaves channel by channel. The receivers alone were priced within the range of individual ownership. This fundamental ordering—establishing the relations between the taker-sender and the receiver—had, of course, been worked out for commercial radio.

Only ham transmission—also hemmed in severely by government regulation—and special uses like ship-to-shore, pilot-to-control tower, and police band radio deal in the otherwise merely potential equalities of wireless telephony. That this was not technically inevitable, but merely an outcome of the social situation and the marketing strategies of the industry, is obvious. There is nothing necessarily more complex or expensive in the camera than there is in the receiver. It is merely that the great expense of receiver technology was defrayed by the mass production of the sets, whose multiplication multiplied the dollar exchange value of transmission time sold by the transmitter to his advertisers. So the broadcasters underwrote receiver development, because every set bought delivers its viewers as salable goods in an exchange that pays for the "expensive" technology.

For television also there is a special-use domain—educational, industrial, and now artistic—where the relation between the camera and receiver may be more or less equalized, but this is because transmission is not an issue and the distribution of the images is severely restricted. The economic fact remains—transmission is more expensive than reception. This ensures a power hierarchy—transmission dominates reception. And it follows from this asymmetry of power relations that the taker-transmitter dominates whatever communication takes place.

This is clearer when you consider the manners of telephony. A would-be transmitter asks for permission to transmit, rings the home of a potential receiver. It's like ringing a doorbell. Or a would-be receiver rings the home of a possible transmitter, asks him/her to transmit. This formal set of relations has become even more refined with the introduction of the *Answerphone* and the answering service, which mediates between the ring—an anonymous invitation to communicate—and the response, requiring the caller to identify himself and leaving the receiver with a choice of whether or not to respond. In telephony manners are everything. While in commercial television manners are nothing. If you have a receiver you merely plug in to the possibility of a signal, which may or may not be there and which you cannot modify except in the trivial manner of switching to a nearly identical transmission or in a decisive but final manner by switching off. Choice is in the hands of the sender.

Now while this asymmetry is not inherent in the technology, it has become so normative for the medium that it forms the all-pervasive and invisible background of all video. This may not be so dramatically manifested in most artwork video, but that's because most artworks have very equivocal relations to the notion of communication and are, like industry, producer-dominated. Yet it has a formidable effect on all attempts at interactive video, which operates primarily in reaction to this norm. In this sense the social structure of the medium is a matrix that defines the formal properties of the medium—since it limits the possibilities of a video communication genre—and these limits then become the target against which any number of artists have aimed their works. What else could Ira Schneider have had in mind about the 1969 piece, *Wipe Cycle*, he devised with Frank Gillette:

> The most important thing was the notion of information presentation, and the notion of the integration of the audience into the information. One sees oneself exiting from the elevator. If one stands there for 8

> seconds, one sees oneself entering the gallery from the elevator again. Now at the same time one is apt to be seeing oneself standing there watching *Wipe Cycle*. You can watch yourself live watching yourself 8 seconds ago, watching yourself 16 seconds ago, *eventually feeling free enough to interact with this matrix, realizing one's own potential as an actor.*[3] [my italics]

What is attempted is the conversion (liberation) of an audience (receiver) into an actor (transmitter), which Schneider and Gillette must have hoped to accomplish by neutralizing as much as possible the acts of "taking" and electronic transmission. If they failed to accomplish this, they were hardly alone in their failure, which seems to have been the fate of just about every interactive artwork employing significantly technological means. Apparently, the social and economic distribution of technological resources in this culture has a nearly determining effect on the semiotics of technological resources. More concretely, an expensive video camera and transmission system switched on and ready for use don't lose their peculiar prestigious properties just because an artist may make them available under special circumstances for casual use to an otherwise passive public. In fact, this kind of interactive video situation almost invariably begins by intimidating an unprepared audience, which has already been indoctrinated about the amount of preparedness (professionalism) the video camera deserves, regardless of the trivial nature of television professionalism, which is not measured by competence (as in the elegant relation of ends to means) but by the amount of money notably expended on this preparation. Yet while the most fundamental property of television is its social organization, this is manifested most clearly in its money metric, which applies to every aspect of the medium, determining the tempo of its representations and the style of the performances, as well as the visual syntax of its editing. The money metric has also played a determining role in neutralizing what is usually considered the most markedly distinctive feature of the medium: the capacity for instantaneous transmission.

In principle, television seemed to combine the photographic reproduction capacities of the camera, the motion capabilities of film, and the instantaneous transmission properties of the telephone. But just as the photographic reproduction capacity of the camera is essentially equivocal and mainly significant as mythology, so is the fabled instantaneity of television essentially a rumor that combines with photographic duplicity to produce a quasi-recording medium, the main feature of which is unlikeliness in relation to any notion of reality. The history of the industry is very instructive with respect to this remarkable outcome.

In the beginning television made widespread use of live broadcasting both for transmitting instant news of events that were elapsing in real time and for more or less well-rehearsed studio performances; and some of the most interesting events recorded by media were the result of the unpredictability of instantaneous transmission. Spokesmen for the industry never failed to call attention to this feature of instantaneity, and as late as 1968 a standard handbook for television direction and production by Stasheff and Bretz asserted:

> Perhaps the most distinctive function of television is its ability to show distant events at the moment when they are taking place. The Kefauver hearings, with a close-up of the hands of gangster Frank Costello; the Army-McCarthy hearings; the complete coverage of the orbital shots; the presidential nominating conventions; the Great Debates of 1960; the live transmissions from Europe and Japan via satellite—this is television doing what no other medium can do.[4]

Yet the same handbook casually points out a few pages later that between 1947 and 1957, kine-recordings, films taken directly from the TV screen, were in constant and heavy use, especially for delayed broadcast of East Coast programs on the West Coast, in spite of the much poorer image quality of the kines, and that by 1961 virtually all television dramatic programs were being produced on film. There were, apparently, from the industry's standpoint, great inconveniences in instantaneous transmission. The most obvious of these was that at the same instant of time the life cycles of New York and Los Angeles are separated by three full hours, and since the day for the industry is metrically divided into prime and nonprime viewing time, in accordance with whether more or fewer viewers may be sold to the advertisers, the money value of instantaneous transmission is inversely related in a complicated way to the temporal distance of transmission. But this is only the most obvious manner in which the money metric worked to eliminate instantaneity. A more basic conflict exists between the structure of the industry and the possibility of instantaneity and unpredictability.

Any series of events that is unfolding for the first time, or in a new way, or with unanticipated intensity or duration threatens to overrun or elude the framing conventions of the recording artists (the cameramen and directors). This element of surprise is always in conflict with the image of smoothness, which has the semiotic function of marking the producer's competence by emphasizing his mastery and control, his grasp of events. The signs of unpredictability and surprise are discontinuities and ragged edges that mark the boundaries of that competence by puncturing or lacerating that grasp. The image of smoothness depends always upon the appearance of the un-

impeded forward course of the producer's intention, of facility, which means that there must be no doubt in the viewer's mind that what is transmitted is what the transmitter wants to transmit. And the only ways to achieve this were through (a) repeated preparation of the events (b) very careful selection of highly predictable events or (c) deletion of unexpected and undesirable aspects of events, which meant editing a recorded version of these events. Videotape came in 1956, and at the beginning Ampex was taping the Douglas Edwards newscasts and, not much later, the stage presentations of *Playhouse 90*. Once again, according to Stasheff and Bretz:

> . . . by 1957 a new TV revolution was under way. Undistinguishable from live TV on the home receiver, video tape quickly replaced the kine-recording done by the TV networks. Not only did the stations put out a better picture, but the savings were tremendous. . . . Live production, video-tape recording of live production, kine-recording, and film began to assume complementary roles in the pattern of TV production. Videotape recording by 1961 became so commonplace that the true live production—reaching the home at the moment of its origination—was a rarity limited largely to sports and special events. *The live production on video tape, though delayed in reaching the home by a few hours or a few days, was generally accepted as actual live television by the average viewer.*[5] [my italics]

Yet this did not place television in the same position as film, which from its origins appeared to be situated squarely in the domain of illusion. Film, after all, has made very few and very insubstantial claims to facticity. Amet's bathtub battle of Santiago Bay may have convinced Spanish military historians of its authenticity, but that was back in 1897 before the movie palaces together with the moviemakers dispelled any illusion of potential facticity. Flaherty looks as clearly fictional as Melies now. But a genre that is marked "fictional" doesn't raise issues of truth and falsehood, and television never ceases to raise these issues. The social uses of television continually force the issue of "truth" to the center of attention. A President goes on television to declare his "honesty," a minister announces his "intentions," the evening news reports "what is being done to curb the inflation." The medium maintains a continual assertion that it can and does provide an adequate representation of reality, while everyone's experience continually denies it. Moreover, the industry exhibits a persistent positive tropism toward the appearance of the spontaneous and unrehearsed event in its perpetually recurring panel shows and quiz programs and in the apparently casual format of its late-evening news shows. According to Stasheff and Bretz:

> . . . the television audience will not only accept, but even enjoy, a production error or even a comedian who blows his lines and admits it or who asks his straight man to feed him a cue once again so that he can make another try at getting the gag to come out right. This leniency on the part of the audience is caused by the increased feeling of spontaneity and immediacy which minor crises create. The audience loves to admire the adroitness with which the performer "pulls himself out of a jam."[6]

The industry wishes, or feels obligated, to maintain the illusion of immediacy, which it defines rather precisely as "the *feeling* that what one sees on the TV screen is living and actual reality, at that very moment taking place."[7] The perfection of videotape made possible the careful manipulation and selective presentation of desirable "errors" and "minor crises" as marks of spontaneity, which became as equivocal in their implications as the drips and blots of third-generation Abstract Expressionists. It's not that you couldn't see the Los Angeles police department's tactical assault squad in real time, in full living color, in your own living room, leveling a small section of the city in search of three or four suspected criminals, but that what you would see couldn't be certainly discriminated from a carefully edited videotape screened three hours later. So what television provides video with is a tradition not of falseness, which would be a kind of guarantee of at least a certain negative reliability, but of a profoundly menacing equivocation and mannerism, determining a species of unlikeness.

At first glance artists' video seems to be defined by the total absence of any of the features that define television. But this apparent lack of relation is in fact a very definite and predictable inverse relation. If we temporarily ignore the subfamily of installation pieces, which are actually quite diverse among themselves but nevertheless constitute a single genre, the most striking contrast between video pieces and television is in relation to time. It may not be quite hip to say so without qualification, but it is a commonplace to describe artists' videotapes as "boring" or "long," even when one feels that this in no way invalidates or dishonors the tapes in question (viz. Bruce Boice's comment that Lynda Benglis's video is "boring, interesting and funny";[8] or Richard Serra's own videotape, *Prisoners' Dilemma*, where one character advises another that he may have to spend two hours in the basement of the Castelli Gallery, which is "twice as long as the average boring videotape"). This perceived quality of being boring or long has little to do with the actual length of the tapes. It has much more to do with the attitude of just about all the artists using video to the task at hand. John Baldessari has a tape called *Some Words I Mispronounce*. He turns to a blackboard and

writes:

1. poor
2. cask
3. bade
4. Beelzebub
5. bough
6. sword

As soon as he completes the "d" of "sword" the tape is over. Running time is under a minute. It feels amazingly short. But it is longer than most commercials.

Robert Morris's *Exchange*, a series of verbal meditations on exchanges of information, collaborations, and interferences with a woman, accompanied by a variety of images taped and retaped from other tapes and photographs for the most part as indefinite and suggestive as the discourse, goes on till it arrives at a single distinct and comic story of not getting to see the Gattamelata, after which the tape trails off in a more or less leisurely fashion. Running time is forty-three minutes. Television has many programs that are much longer. The two artists' tapes are very different. Baldessari's is a routine, explicitly defined from the outset and carried out deadpan to its swift conclusion. *Exchange* is a typical member of what is by now a well-defined genre of artist narrative, essentially an extended voiceover in a carefully framed literary style that seeks its end intuitively in the exhaustion of its mild narrative energy. But they both have the same attitude toward time: The work ends whenever its intention is accomplished. The time is inherent time, the time required for the task at hand. The work is "boring," as Les Levine remarked, "if you demand that it be something else. If you demand that it be itself then it is not boring."[9] Which is not to say that the videotapes may not be uninteresting. Whether they are interesting or not is largely a matter of judging the value of the task at hand, and this could hardly be the issue for people who can look with equanimity at what hangs on the wall in the most distinguished galleries. For whatever we think of the videotapes of Morris, or Sonnier, or Serra, these are certainly not inferior to whatever else they put in the gallery. Levine is right. Videotapes are boring if you demand that they be something else. But they're not judged boring by comparison with paintings or sculpture, they're judged boring in comparison with television, which for the last twenty years has set the standard of video time.

But the time standard of television is based firmly on the social and economic nature of the industry itself, and has nothing whatever to do with the absolute technical and phenomenological possibilities of visual representation by cathode ray tube. For television, time has an absolute existence independent of any imagery that may or may not be transmitted over its well-defended airwaves and cables. It is television's only solid, a tangible commodity that is precisely divisible into further and further subdivisible homogeneous units, the smallest quantum of which is measured by the smallest segment that could be purchased by a potential advertiser, which is itself defined by the minimum particle required to isolate a salable product from among a variable number of equivalent alternatives. The smallest salable piece turns out to be the ten-second spot, and all television is assembled from it.

But the social conventions of television dictate a code of behavior according to which the transmitter must assume two apparently different roles in transmission. In one he must appear to address the viewer on the station's behalf as entertainer; in the other on the sponsor's behalf as salesman. The rules of the game, which are legally codified, prescribe a sharp demarcation between the roles, and the industry makes a great show of marking off the boundaries between its two types of performances—the programs and the commercials. At their extremes of hard-sell and soft-show, one might suppose that the stylistic features of the two roles would be sufficient to distinguish them, but the extremes are rare, the social function of the roles are not so distinct, and the stylistic features seldom provide sufficient separation. Since the industry's most tangible presentation is metrically divisible time, the industry seems to mark the separation emphatically by assigning the two roles different time signatures. The commercial is built on a scale of the minute out of multiple ten-second units. It comes in four common sizes—10, 30, 60 and 120 seconds—of which the thirty-second slot is by far the commonest. The program is built on the scale of the hour out of truncated and hinged fifteen-minute units that are also commonly assembled in four sizes—15, 30, and 60 and 120 minutes—of which the half-hour program is the commonest, though the hour length is usual for important programs, two hours quite frequent for specials and feature films, and fifteen minutes not entirely a rarity for commentary. Television inherited the split roles and the two time signatures from radio, as well as the habit of alternating them in regularly recurrent intervals, which creates the arbitrary-appearing, mechanical segmentation of both media's presentations. But television carried this mechanical segmentation to a new extreme and presented it in such a novel way —through a special combination of its own peculiar technology and production conventions—that television time, in spite of structural similarity with radio time, has an entirely different appearance from it, bearing the relationship to it of an electronically driven, digital counter to a spring-driven, hand-wound alarm clock.

Television achieved its extreme segmentation of transmission

time mainly through the intense development of multiple sponsorship. Old radio programs from the 1930's and 1940's tended to have a single sponsor. *The Lone Ranger* was sponsored for years by Silvercup Bread, *Ma Perkins* by Oxydol, *Uncle Don* by Ovaltine, and these sponsors would reappear regularly at the beginning, middle, and end of each program with pretty much the same commercial pitch. This pattern continued by and large into the early days of television with *Hallmark Theater*, *The Kraft Playhouse*, and so on. But current television practice is generally quite different. A half-hour program might have something like six minutes of commercial fitted to it in three two-minute blocks at the beginning, middle, and end of the program. But these six minutes of commercial time might promote the commodities of twelve different sponsors, or twelve different commodities of some smaller number of sponsoring agencies. The commodities could be nearly anything—a car, a cruise, a furniture polish, a breakfast food, a funeral service, a scent for men, a cure for smoking, an ice show, an X-rated movie, or a politician. In principle they could apply to nearly any aspect of human life and be presented in any order, with strategies of advocacy more various than the commodities themselves. In practice the range of commodity and styles of advocacy are somewhat more limited, but the fact remains that in half an hour you might see a succession of four complete, distinct, and unrelated thirty-second presentations, followed by a twelve-minute half of a presentation, followed by a one-minute presentation, one thirty-second presentation, and two ten-second presentations, followed by the second and concluding half presentation (twelve minutes long), followed by yet another four unrelated thirty-second presentations. But since this would lead to bunching of two two-minute commercials into a four-minute package of commercial at the end of every hour, and since viewers are supposed to want mainly to look at the programs —or because program-makers are rather possessive about their own commercials and want complete credit for them—the program-makers have recently developed the habit of presenting a small segment of their own program as a kind of prologue before the opening commercial, to separate it from the tail end of the preceding program, while the program-makers of the preceding program may attempt to tag onto the end of their own program a small epilogue at the end of their last commercial, to affix it more securely to their own program. Meanwhile the station may itself interject a small commercial promoting itself or its future presentations. All of these additional segments—prologues, epilogues, station promotions, and coming attractions—usually last no more than two minutes, are scaled to commercial time, and are in their functional nature promotions for either immediately succeeding or eventually succeeding transmissions. This means that you may see upward of fourteen distinct segments of presentation in any half-hour, all but two of which will be scaled to commercial time. Since commercial time is the most common signature, we could expect it to dominate the tempo of television, especially since the commercial segments constitute the only example of integral (complete and uninterrupted) presentation in the medium. And it does, but not in the way one would generally suppose.

It is very easy to exaggerate the apparent differences between commercial time and program time by concentrating on the dramatic program. Television has many programs that share a mechanically segmented structure with the packet of commercials. The most extreme cases are the news programs, contests, and the so-called talk shows. What is called news on television is a chain of successive, distinct, and structurally unrelated narrations called stories. These average from thirty seconds to two minutes in length, are usually presented in successions of three or four in a row, and are bracketed between packets of commercials from one to two minutes long. The "full" story is built very much like a common commercial. It will usually have a ten- to thirty-second introduction narrated by an actor seen in a chest shot, followed by a segment of film footage about one minute in length. There are alternate forms, but all of them are built on exactly the same type of segmentation. The narrating actor may merely narrate (read off) the event from the same chest shot seen against a background of one or two slides plausibly related to the event. The only continuity for the six- or seven-minute packet of programming called news consists of an abstract categorial designation (e.g., national) and the recurrent shots of the newsmen, actors who project some well-defined character considered appropriate for this part of the show, such as informed concern, alert aggressiveness, world-weary moralism, or genial confidence. This tends to be more obvious in the packets designated as sports and weather, where what passes for information consists of bits so small, numerous, and unrelated that they come down to mere lists. These may be held together respectively by more obvious character actors like a suave ex-jock and a soft-touch comic.

Similarly, contest shows consist of structurally identical, separate events joined edge to edge and connected mainly by the continuous presence of the leading actor (the host). Television has also—through selection of the events themselves and manner of representation—managed to present most of its sports programs as sequences of nearly identical unrelated events. Baseball gets reduced to a succession of pitches, hits, and catches, football to a succession of runs, passes, and tackles, while the ensemble of events that may be unfolding lies outside the system of representation. If we count together all the programs that are constructed out of these linearly succesive, distinct segments of commercial scale, the contrast between commercial and program becomes much less sharp.

Moreover, a closer inspection of both will show that there are really no clear stylistic distinctions between commercials and programs, because just about every genre of program appears also as a commercial. Dramas, comedies, documentaries, science talks, lists, all show up in thirty- and sixty-second forms. Even their distinctive integralness can be exaggerated, because often there is a clean partition between the programmatic parts of the commercial—its dramatic or imagistic material—and the details of the pitch that specify the name of the product and where you can get it. This separation is so common that it is possible to watch three thirty-second commercials in succession with some pleasure and find it difficult to remember the name or even the nature of the commodity promoted. This is not a functional defect in the commercial, the main function of which is to produce a kind of praise poetry that will elevate to a mild prominence one member out of the general family of commodities that television promotes as a whole tribe all of its transmitting day. Poems in praise of particular princes are addressed to an audience already familiar with the tribe, and commercials are constructed to particularize an already existing interest. Nobody unconcerned with body odors will care which deodorant checks them best. It takes the whole television day to encode the positive images of smoothness, cleanliness, or blandness upon which the massive marketing of deodorants and soaps depends. There is no fundamental distinction between commercial and program, there is only a difference in focus and conciseness, which gives the thirty-second commercial its appearance of much greater elegance and style. Both commercials and programs are assembled out of the same syntax: the linear succession of logically independent units of nearly equal duration. But this mechanically divisible, metrical presentation had none of the percussive or disjunctive properties of radio presentation. This is because of the conventions of camerawork and editing that television has developed to soften the shock of its basically mechanical procedures.

It is probably fair to say that the entire technology, from the shape of the monitor screen to the design of camera mounts, was worked out to soften the tick of its metronome. Almost every instrument of television technique and technology seems to have the effect of a shock absorber. As in film, the television presentation is assembled out of separate shots. But these shots are very limited in type and duration. Because of the poor resolution of the television image (525 bits of information presented on photosensitive phosphors) and the normal screen size, the bread-and-butter shots of television are almost all subforms of what film would consider a close-up. Common shot names illustrate this—knee shot, thigh shot, waist shot, bust shot, head shot, tight head shot. Or else they count the number of people in the frame—two shot, four shot, etc. Probably primarily for this reason shot durations are very limited in range—usually from two to ten seconds—and very predictable in function and type. The two- to three-second shot is almost always a reaction shot or a transition detail in a narrative, so it will usually be a head shot or detail of some activity. Distant shots of moving cars, or whatever, will usually run seven to ten seconds, like action in general. Shots of a second and under are very rare and only used for special occasions, but distinct shots over twenty seconds are practically nonexistent. "Distinct" because television's camera conventions include a cameraman who is trained to act like an antiaircraft gunner, constantly making minute adjustments of the camera—loosening up a bit here, tightening up there, gently panning and trucking in a nearly imperceptible manner to keep the target on some imaginary pair of cross hairs. These endless, silken adjustments, encouraged and sometimes specifically called for by the director and usually built into the cameraman's training, tend to blur the edges of what the film director would normally consider a shot. To this we can add the widespread use of fade-ins and fade-outs and dissolves to effect temporal and spatial transitions, and the directors' regular habit of cutting on movement to cushion the switch from one camera to another. This whole arsenal of techniques has a single function —to soften all shocks of transition. Naturally the different apparent functions of various genres of program or commercial will alter the degree of softening, so a news program will maintain a sense of urgency through its use of cuts, soft though they may be, while the soap opera constantly melts together its various close shots with liquid adjustment and blends scene to scene in recurrent dissolves and fades. This ceaseless softening combines with the regular segmentation to transform the metronomic tick-tock of the transmission into the silent succession of numbers on a digital clock.

Because of the television industry's special aesthetic of time and the electronics industry's primary adaptation of the technology to the needs and desires of television, the appearance of an art-world video had to wait for the electronics industry to attempt to expand the market for its technology into special institutional and consumer domains. The basic tool kit of artists' video is the portapak with its small, mobile camera and one-half–inch black and white videotape recorder that can accommodate nothing larger than thirty-minute tapes. Combined with a small monitor and perhaps an additional microphone, the whole operation costs something in the vicinity of $2,000—a bit less than a cheap car and a bit more than a good stereo system. This is the fundamental unit, but it allows no editing whatever. The most minimal editing—edge-to-edge assembling of tapes into units larger than thirty minutes—requires access to at least another videotape recorder with a built-in editing facility, which means the investment of at least another $1,200. This is a primitive editing capacity, but in-

creases the unit cost by 50 per cent to about $3,000. Yet precision editing and smoothness are still out of the question. Unlike film, where editing is a scissors-and-paste job anyone can do with very little equipment, and where you can sit in a small room and shave pieces of film down to the half-frame with no great difficulty, video pictures have to be edited electronically by assembling image sequences from some source or sources in the desired order on the tape of a second machine. The images are electronically marked off from each other by an electronic signal recurring (in the U.S.) thirty times a second. If you want to place one sequence of images right after another that you've already recorded onto the second tape, you have to join the front edge of the first new frame to the final edge of the other, which means that motors of both machines have to be synchronized to the thirtieth of a second and that there must be a way of reading off each frame edge to assure that the two recorded sequences are in phase with each other. Half-inch equipment is not designed to do this, and the alignment of frame edge with frame edge is a matter of accident.

Alignment of a particular frame edge with a particular frame edge is out of the question. If the frame edges don't come together, the tape is marked by a characteristic momentary breakup or instability of the image. You may or may not mind this, but it's the distinctive mark of this type of editing. Since this is absolutely unlike television editing, it carries its special mark of homemade or cheap or unfinicky or direct or honest. But the dominance of television aesthetics over anything seen on a TV screen makes this rather casual punctuation mark very emphatic and loaded with either positive or negative value. An installation with synchronized, multiple cameras, with capabilities for switching through cutting, fading, and dissolving, and some few special effects like black and white reversal, will cost somewhere in the $10,000 range, provided you stick to black and white and half-inch equipment. This is only a minor increase in editing control and a cost increase of one order of magnitude. If you want reliably smooth edits that will allow you to join predictably an edge to an edge, without specifying which edge, you will need access to an installation whose cost begins at around $100,000. One major art gallery has a reduced form of such a facility that permits this sort of editing, which costs about half that. Again we have an increase of control that is nearly minimal and a cost increase of another order of magnitude. Some artists have solved this problem by obtaining occasional access to institutions possessing this kind of installation, but usually this takes complete editing control out of the hands of most artists. There are also ways of adapting the one-inch system to precisionist frame-for-frame capacity, but that requires the investment of several thousand dollars more. A rule of thumb might specify that each increase in editing capacity represents an order of magnitude increase in cost. Color is still another special problem. Though it is hardly necessary, and possibly a great drawback in the sensible use of video for most artists' purposes (viz., Sonnier's pointless color work), it is by now television's common form and has certain normative marks associated with it. To use black and white is a marked move, regardless of what the mark may be construed to mean. So, many artists will seek color for mere neutrality. But it comes at a price. There are bargain-basement color systems, wonderfully cheesy in appearance, but the most common system is the three-quarter-inch cassette ensemble, which together with camera, videotape recorder, and monitor goes at about $10,000. If the portapak is the Volkswagen, this is the Porsche of individual artists' video. For editing control the system of escalation in color runs parallel to black and white. The model of ultimate refinement and control is the television industry's two-inch system, and since that's what you see in action in any motel over the TV set, interesting or not, everyone takes it for the state of the art.

These conditions may not seem promising, but artists are as good at surviving as cockroaches, and they've developed three basic strategies for action. They can take the lack of technical refinements as a given and explore the theater of poverty. They can beg, borrow, or steal access to technical wealth and explore the ambiguous role of the poor relation, the unwelcome guest, the court jester, the sycophant, or the spy. This isn't a common solution; the studios don't make their facilities available so readily. But it includes works done by Allan Kaprow, Peter Campus, Les Levine, Nam June Paik, and numerous others. Artists can also raid the technology as a set of found objects or instruments with phenomenological implications in installation pieces. There are numerous examples from the work of Peter Campus, Dan Graham, Nam June Paik, Frank Gillette, etc. To a great extent the significance of all types of video art derives from its stance with respect to some aspect of television, which is itself profoundly related to the present state of our culture. In this way video art embarks on a curiously mediated but serious critique of the culture. And this reference to television, and through it to the culture, is not dependent on whether or not the artist sees the work in relation to television. The relation between television and video is created by the shared technologies and conditions of viewing, in the same way the relation of movies to underground film is created by the shared conditions of cinema. Nevertheless, an artist may exploit the relation very knowingly and may choose any aspect of the relation for attack.

If Nancy Holt's *Underscan* is an innocent masterpiece that narrates in its toneless voice a terrifying, impoverished story over a sequence of simple photographic images ruined twice over by the television raster, the correlated Benglis *Collage* and

Morris *Exchange* are cunning parodies that use the cheesy video image to depreciate a filmic genre that would sensuously exploit the personal glamour of stars like Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, replaced here by the mock glamour of two pseudocelebrities in a visual soup. Holt calls into question anything that the medium has ever represented as documentary with her sheer simplicity of means, while Morris and Benglis produce a total burlesque of the public figure through the manifest absurdity of their claims.

Acconci's *Undertone* is an even more precise example of this type of burlesque. In a visual style of address exactly equivalent to the Presidential address, the face-to-face camera regards The Insignificant Man making The Outrageous Confession that is as likely as not to be an Incredible Lie. Who can escape the television image of Nixon?

In Baldessari's wonderful *Inventory*, the artist presents to the camera for thirty minutes an accumulation of indiscriminate and not easily legible objects arranged in order of increasing size and accompanied by a deadpan description—only to have the sense of their relative size destroyed by the continual readjustment of the camera's focal length that is required to keep them within the frame. Who can forget Adlai Stevenson's solemn television demonstration of the "conclusive photographic evidence" of the Cuban missile sites, discernible over the TV screen as only gray blurs?

What the artists constantly re-evoke and engage with is television's fundamental equivocation and mannerism, which may really be the distinctive feature of the medium. But they may do this from two diametrically opposed angles, either by parodying the television system and providing some amazing bubble or by offering to demonstrate how, with virtually no resources, they can do all the worthwhile things that television should do or could do in principle and has never yet done and never will do.

Terry Fox's *Children's Tapes* exhibit nothing more nor less than the simple laws of the physical world in terms of small common objects—a spoon, a cup, an ice cube, a piece of cloth. They make use of a single camera, adjusted only enough to get the objects and events into the frame, and no edits. The hands crumple a spoon handle, place an ice cube in it over a small piece of cloth, balance it at the neck over the rim of a cup. You watch. It takes how long for you to figure out that the ice cube will melt? That the cloth will absorb the water. That the balance will be upset. But which way? Will the water absorbed into the cloth be drawn further from the fulcrum and increase the downward movement on the ice cube side? Or will the water dripping from the spoon reduce the downward movement and send the spoon toppling into the cup? You watch as though waiting for an explosion. It takes minutes to come and you feel relieved. It has the form of drama. You'll never see anything like it on educational television or any other television. It takes too much time, intelligence, and intensity of attention to watch—except on video. There are, I believe, twenty-two of them. They have the brilliance of still life and the intelligence of a powerful didactic art. But it is also a critique of means. Other works similar in this respect of means are Richard Serra's *Prisoners' Dilemma* and Eleanor Antin's *The Ballerina and the Bum*.

The Serra piece shamelessly adapts a casual stage skit and a contest show format to illustrate hilariously and with absolute simplicity a moral-logical dilemma with grave implications for human action. The problem is apparently simple. There are two prisoners, A and B. Each is offered a chance to betray the other and go free—but here is the first catch—provided the other refuses to betray him. In the event that this happens the prisoner who refuses to betray will receive the maximum sentence—this is the second catch. The other alternatives are that both prisoners will refuse to betray each other—this will get both prisoners the second lightest penalty; or that both prisoners will attempt to betray each other, which will get each prisoner the second gravest penalty. On the face of it we have a straightforward $2 \times 4$ matrix with four outcomes for each player, but all the outcomes are linked pairs: You go free only if he gets life imprisonment and he goes free only if you get life imprisonment; you both get away with two years' imprisonment if you both hold out against betrayal; you both get ten years' imprisonment if you both try betrayal. If each player plays the game as a zero-sum game for his own advantage, he will inspect the reward columns and come to the single conclusion that the worst possible outcome is life imprisonment, which can only happen if he refuses to betray. This prevents the other player from screwing him and leaves the original player the chance of screwing his opponent. Since both players —regarded as unrelated individuals who will consider their own individual advantage—will both play to minimize their loss, they will each play to cut their losses and inevitably come out with the next-to-worse payoff, ten years in prison. There is no way to win and no way to play for mutual nonbetrayal, because failure to betray always risks total loss. But the video piece is more brilliant than that. It sets up two precise illustrations—comic, yes; casual, yes—but elegant in the way it demonstrates that any two unrelated prisoners—say a pair of suspected criminals picked up in the street—will inevitably betray each other and take the consequences. But any two prisoners who have a real community bond between them have no choice but to play for nonbetrayal, because they must consider the value of the outcome in terms of its value for both players. Obviously, the

differences in negative weights assigned to the penalties will work differently in deciding the outcome. Still, nothing in the world of this low-budget game could make Leo Castelli betray Bruce Boice in public. This low-budget marker calls up beautiful improvisational acting from all of the players and loose styles from all of the collaborators in this group piece. The logical structuring of the piece owes a great deal to Robert Bell, who occupies a role somewhere between scriptwriter and director, and to all of the actors, whose improvisatory performances contribute markedly to the final outcome of the piece, which must be considered a community venture, with Richard Serra assuming the producer's role. This piece is also of a sort that will never appear on television and has the force of a parable.

Antin's *Ballerina and the Bum*, another low-budget job, with single Portapak camera and two improvising actors, declares itself, from its five-minute opening shot, against television, time, and money. The camera changes position only if it has to, to keep something in view, pans once along three cars of a freight train to count them, moves inside the car. The mike has no windscreen. The sounds of the world of 1974—cars, airplanes, children, and chickens—intermittently penetrate the film-style illusion of the image of a Sylphides-costumed, New York–accented ballerina "from the sticks" and a twenty-five-year-old grizzled bum on the way to the big city. Nothing happens but what they say and do. She practices ballet, sets up light housekeeping in the boxcar, they daydream of success, he cooks some beans, she eats them, the train goes nowhere. Everything else is moving—cars, planes, and other trains. A whole Chaplin movie for the price of a good dub.

Other successful examples of this low-budget strategy are Andy Mann's *One-Eyed Bum* and Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot's *4th of July in Saugerties*, which bring to bear the video of limited means upon documentary as a kind of artist's reminder of the ambiguities of "honesty" and "simplicity." It is no accident that the best of these works have, at least in part, a didactic and moral element behind them and are "exemplary." And even the tapes that are not specifically presented in an exemplary mode become exemplary in their fundamental disdain for television time.

But the theater of poverty isn't the only way. Peter Campus somehow infiltrated WGBH-TV, Boston, to produce a single deadly piece precisely aimed through their expensive equipment. A man holds a photograph, seemingly of himself. You see him set fire to it and watch it burn from all four sides. Gradually you notice that the photograph is breathing, its eyes are blinking. This is the image of television.

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# IMAGE PROCESSING AND VIDEO SYNTHESIS

**Stephen Beck**

This article outlines the structural distinctions between various instruments constructed and used by video artists. In addition two typical circuits, the comparator and colorizers, are discussed. The intent is to clarify for the viewer the approaches to electronic video image-making presently in use.

I. **Electronic imaging techniques.** These techniques, as applied to television, utilize the inherent plasticity of the medium to expand it beyond a strictly photographic/realistic, representational aspect which characterizes the history of television in general. A wide variety of electronic instruments have been constructed by engineers, artists, and engineer-artist collaborations in the past several years which operate specifically with TV sets as primary display or "canvas." Each imaging system that has been developed reflects the artistic and technical capabilities of its originators, and tends to be utilized according to distinctly different aesthetic theories. In some cases the resultant image is largely due to the inherent circuit designs of a given instrument. In other cases, the instrument is utilized to produce an image with a specific visual or psychological effect, the electronic aspect being more of a means than an end to the realization.

Regardless of the specific aesthetic usage of particular instruments, some insight may be obtained by examining the structural differences and similarities between typical video synthesizers and image processors, as well as some of the basic circuitry used in these devices. In every case, the video synthesizer may be viewed as a "tip of the iceberg" of electronic technology and visual arts. Vast armies of individuals make the transistors, resistors, capacitors, and integrated circuits which comprise a synthesizing instrument, when properly assembled under the direction of visually inclined electronic artists.

II. **Categorical distinctions of electronic video instruments.** Just as in the science of biology many classifications of life forms exist, so there are several genres of video synthesizers. In the sense that a synthesizer in general is something which combines parts to form a whole entity, just about all video instruments could be classified as such. However, in terms of structural details, some clarification can be made. I have listed several categories of video image instruments according to the unique qualities of their principle of operation, along with some criteria for making the distinction, and artists and engineers in the video art field who are using these methods.

A. **Camera image processor types.** These types include such techniques as *colorizer* which adds chrominance signal to black and white (monochrome) signal from TV camera; *keyers* and *quantizers* which separate value levels in a scene and allow other processes to take place in the scene, add synthetic color, place another image in certain places of the original, obtain matte effects; *modifiers* which do not alter the geometry of the image but rather affect its gray scale, such as polarity inversion, or which generate an edge around elements of the image, or which *mix* by superimposition several image sources. Systems that are essentially of the image processor type described include those built by Paik/Abe, Siegel (CVS), Templeton, Sandeen, Hearn, Vasulkas, and others.

B. **Direct Video synthesizer types.** These types are in principle conceived to operate without the use of any camera image, though some of them can also perform the processing operations described above. Basically, a complete TV signal is formed from electronic generators which comprise the synthesizer circuits, which include circuitry such as *color generators* which produce chrominance signals according to either I-Q methods, Hue-Saturation methods, or Red-Green-Blue methods; *form generators* which establish the necessary pulse vibrations to produce shapes, planes, lines, or points, and to move them in various ways by use of *motion modulators* with simple electronic waves such as ramps, sines, or triangles, with more complex curves, or even with audio frequency sound signals; *texture amplifiers* which allow for color manipulation to achieve shading, chiaroscuro, "airbrush," or granulated effects (roughly, could be thought of as electronic brush effects). Instruments using the Direct Video process include those by Beck (Direct Video Synthesizer), Siegel (EVS), Dupouy (Movicolor), EMS (Spectron), and others.

C. **Scan modulation/Re-scan types.** These types rely on the principle of a TV camera viewing an *oscillo-*

*scope* or *television screen* that displays the image from another TV camera. The image on the screen can then be manipulated geometrically (stretched, squeezed, rotated, reflected, etc.) by means of *deflection modulation*, either magnetically or electronically. The second TV camera then transforms this image into one bearing a proper TV scan relationship, and may then be colorized or processed by techniques outlined in section A. These systems can also be used without an input camera, in which case the image consists only of the manipulation of the raster, producing Lissajous-type images. Systems using this method include those by Harrison (Computer Image), Paik/Abe, Rutt/Etra, and others.

D. **Non-VTR recordable types.** These types are included for completeness and encompass those video displays which do not actually produce a standard TV signal waveform and can hence only be utilized on one set which is specially prepared, and cannot be directly recorded on magnetic videotape. Most are based primarily upon magnetic distortion of the normal TV scan pattern, or else they utilize a color picture tube as if it were an oscilloscope screen. Such individuals as Paik, Tadlock (Archetron), and Hearn (Vidium) have utilized these techniques in their video sculpture.

I have not included in this categorization the studio switcher and special-effects generator to be found in most teleproduction studios, which include processing and wipe generation, or the emerging video game box, which is in principle a direct video signal generator of very specific configuration. Nor have I alluded to video feedback techniques, which all systems are capable of sustaining in one of its various forms.

In every case, the individual approach to video instruments encompasses a wide variety of circuit designs and processes. Some require cameras, others do not; some utilize a form of voltage control which permits color, image size, or movement rate, for example, to be changed by some other circuit, in addition to being changed by an operator. This factor introduces an interesting dilemma into the realm of electronic images: How much is the image a product of the instrument rather than of the instrumentalist?

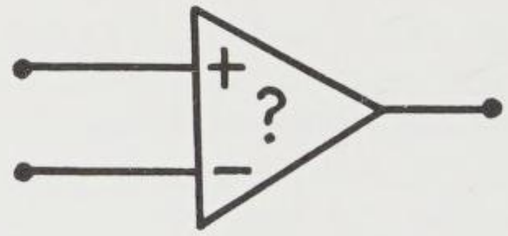
A video synthesizer can be set to conditions which generate image after image for hour upon hour—perhaps interesting, perhaps not, depending on the viewer's taste. But in this case the images have their composition in the circuit design and programming of the instrument. Or the image may be altered and shaped temporarily by someone playing the video synthesizer, in which case the images have their composition in the mental image of the player, interacting with the circuit design.

One can conceive of a synthesizer as a generative device which forms the resultant picture by a process of assemblage of electronic pulsation, or one can conceive of it as a filtration device in which, due to the proper selection of numerous electronic conditions, a given image out of the infinity of possible images results as a picture. Giordono Bruno in his thesis *De Immenso, Innumerabilius et Infigurabilibus* postulates an infinite number of universes which are perceived by a selective process to form a reality distinctly unique to the viewer. Thus it is that a video synthesizer and Marconi Mark V color studio camera reveal very different images—each is filtering according to very different criteria, neither one more or less valid.

When visual literacy has advanced sufficiently, many will no longer consider the synthesized image as a by-product of television technology, but as a visual reality of its own, distinct from the terms of a representational, photographic image, an image which is more glyphic than literal.

III. **Two examples of video synthesizer circuit structures.** In order to illustrate in more detail some typical electronic techniques utilized in video synthesizer and image processor circuits I shall mention the *comparator* circuit and *colorizing* techniques.

The *comparator* is a very general circuit used in keyers, quantizers, wipe generators, and form generators. It is symbolized electronically as a triangle enclosing a question mark. There




are two inputs and one output. The inputs can be continuous voltages from, say, a scale of 0–10. The output, however, is allowed only two conditions: ON or OFF. The appropriate condition is determined by comparing the values of the two inputs. If the + input value is greater than the — input value the output is ON; if the + input is the same as or less than the — input the output is OFF. A typical circuit used for this function is the u710 integrated circuit, about the size of a dime.

When the continuous voltage to one input comes from a monochrome TV camera, the value 0 represents any black

areas in the image, while the value 10 represents the brightest white areas in the picture, with value 5 representing an area of medium gray. Imagine the image to be a white cross inside a gray square surrounded by a black background. The image could be depicted schematically as

```
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
0 0 5 5 5 5 0 0
0 0 5 9 9 5 0 0
0 0 9 9 9 9 0 0
0 0 5 9 9 5 0 0
0 0 5 5 5 5 0 0
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
```

If the other input to the comparator comes from a fixed value source, called the *threshold*, then the resultant circuit is a simple keyer. The output will be OFF whenever the picture element is less than the threshold and will be ON whenever the picture element is more than the threshold.

For example, the white cross could be colorized by setting the threshold to, say, value 7 and connecting the output of the comparator to a colorizer-activated circuit. Only where the picture value exceeds value 7 will the color be turned on, in the region occupied by the cross. If another comparator were introduced with its threshold set to value 4, then the output would be ON in the region occupied by the gray box and the white cross, and it could be used to control a second colorizer producing a colored square, which might be combined with the colorized cross. If the two inputs to comparator 2 were exchanged, then the color would be inserted into the area surrounding the gray square.

Clearly this example can be extended to many channels, 8 or even 16 not being uncommon, and forms the basis for quantizing colorizers and multiple-level keyers used by some video artists. Bear in mind that the scanning process traverses each line of picture elements in some 52-millionths of a second, with each element being occupied for only 250 nanoseconds (billionths of a second) so that the comparison must be performed very fast. The u710 can make a comparison in less than twenty nanoseconds. But at this high speed, and when the picture and threshold levels are almost equal (within a few thousandths of a volt), the output often is indecisive, oscillating back and forth for a time, producing the speculated or "torn" edge characteristic of keying.

*Colorizing* is based on the following techniques: In order to create color television, three types of phosphors are applied to the inside surface of the picture tube; each emits a different color light when excited by electrons scanning across them. The three colors are red, green, and blue, and are applied in either triadic clusters of tiny dots or in very thin strips, so that at normal viewing distances the individual phosphors are not discernible as such, but tend to fuse their colors according to the subjective process of color vision. Each of the primary colors can be varied in intensity from zero to 100 per cent by modulating the intensity of the electron streams exciting them. In this manner, polychromatic reproduction is achieved by controlling the admixture of three primary colors. Since the color process is additive and involves the mixture of emitted light, all three colors when excited in equal amounts produce the sensation of white or gray values. When just the red and the green colors are stimulated, a yellow color is sensed, or when red and blue are excited, purples result.

The three properties of color include *hue*—the wavelength of the color (i.e., yellow as opposed to green or blue); *saturation*—how intense or vivid is the hue; and *brightness* or *value*—how much is the color diluted or made pastel by the addition of white or gray. Any video colorizer must determine each of the three properties. In black-and-white television (more properly known as monochrome) the picture is composed entirely of various intensities of light of a bluish-white nature. This signal is known in television terminology as the *luminance* signal. It conveys information of values. With color television an additional information-bearing signal is used to convey the hue and saturation information, called the *chrominance* signal, or chroma.

This chrominance signal is present in the form of a color subcarrier that vibrates at 3,579,549 cycles per second. Its intensity or amplitude is varied according to the saturation of the color, and its phase is varied according to the hue of the color. This technique of phase modulation requires the presence of a pilot, or reference signal, to supply the phase angle reference, known as the color burst.

In essence, the color spectrum may be visualized as occupying a circular distribution. The center of the circle represents no saturation, while any distance outward from the center represents progressively more saturation, with the direction representing the hue of the color. In fact, there are actually two elements of the color subcarrier which can be controlled to produce synthetic color; the I and Q components, standing for inphase and quadrature.

The simplest colorizers operate on the hue-saturation principle, with one control affecting the phase of the color subcarrier and thus determining red, yellow, green, cyan, blue, or magenta hues, while the other control affects the amplitude of the subcarrier and so determines the vividness or saturation of the

desired hue. An additional control may be used to introduce a luminance value, or the subcarrier can be added electronically to an existing monochrome signal derived from a camera.

Another type of colorizer operates by modulating the intensity of the I and Q subcarrier components. The combined effect of two independent modulations generates both hue and saturation information, with the two variables being affected simultaneously. Thus, to change the vividness of a given hue, both controls must be changed at the same time.

A third type of colorizer circuit is the red-green-blue encoding method. Three controls determine the saturation levels of red, green, and blue primaries, which then mix in the encoder to produce luminance and chrominance signals of the standard video signal. Besides operating in a graphic mode, this type of colorizer can be readily adapted to other TV systems in use by substituting encoding circuitry. The I-Q and Hue-Saturation methods normally require different techniques for each type of television system used.

Many colorizers are limited to full screen color or quantized color type of operation. This allows for basically hard-edge color. In the Beck Direct Video synthesizer I have been particularly interested in surmounting this limitation and achieving a full range of color contouring.

IV. **Video synthesis and computer graphics.** In the strict sense of the word a digital computer is but a large collection of electronic switches arranged to operate on binary bits of information. As such, most video synthesizers do not qualify as computers; although the analog computer, with op-amps, differentiators, integrators, and amplifiers, more closely resembles the structure of video synthesizers. Computer graphics generally has been done with oscilloscope displays under computer control, though some newer systems do generate images on color television displays directly. We can expect to see the use of digital computers in the control of video synthesizers by implementation of digital-to-analog converters. When one compares the bandwidth of video images (4,200,000 cycles per second) with computer processing speeds (typically 500,000 bits per second) or with audio signals (20,000 cycles per second), the gap between computer output speeds and the necessary information rates to generate a moving video image becomes apparent.

In terms of circuit devices, most video synthesizers and image processors utilize discrete transistors and some types of integrated microcircuits. We can expect to see the emergence in two or three years of video-integrated circuits designed specifically for the imaging functions of television display.

Video synthesizers consume electrical power of from fifty watts to several hundred watts—far less than even a single spotlight utilized by the dozen in standard camera studios. They also require far fewer personnel to operate them than does standard teleproduction. Both of these factors make video-synthesized television images appealing from an economic perspective.

V. **Electronic imaging instruments.** The appearance of electronic imaging instruments such as the video synthesizer and image processors ushers in a new language of the screen. Nonrepresentational and departing from the conventional television image, these methods will stimulate the awareness of new images in the culture. Any growth of the video-synthesized image will be contingent on the ability of video artists to become proficient in techniques of composing and presenting synthesized imagery. The instruments themselves will not perform without the artistic consciousness of a skilled operator.

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# STRUCTURAL VIDEOTAPE IN CANADA

**Eric Cameron**

The richest vein of video art has been that which marks most precisely the abutment of the reality of image content with that of screen, tape, and camera. To either side vast horizons unfold—a whole world of sound and vision on the one hand, and the embellishment of seemingly endless electronic wizardry on the other. That the more limited approach has been much more productive is perhaps simply because it is closer to the scale of everyday human experience—of a changing pattern of light and dark across the glass front of a box that we might touch or carry; of a space engendered within the pattern of tones that has a kinship with the space in which we live and move and have our being; of a band of fragile, uniformly gray tape passing through another box that is just as tangible; and of the camera as a mechanism responding to the touch of hands that might be our hands.

Two areas of structural videotape may be distinguished—one more purely analytical, in which the process of signification itself becomes the ultimate content of the work, the other having identifiable subject matter but so tightly interlocked with structural elements that it might almost seem to be an amplification of latent connotations of the medium. This area aligns generally with the narrative tendency of much recent art, in which experimental and emotional aspects are more accentuated, while the self-referentiality of analytical video links it with so-called conceptual art. The nature of the medium is such, however—duplicating as it does an aspect of the world it describes—that the questions to which the analysis must address itself impinge from the start on fundamental human concerns: the interpretation of perceptual experience, the mode of knowing environment, and the sensory cues to one's own existence.

Historically, analytical video is closely linked with the documentation of conceptual performance, and if in the most austere work the person of the performer is presented in so general a way as to become interchangeable with the activation of a spectator in a closed-circuit installation, yet at the other extreme a more specific focus causes self-reference to slip over imperceptibly into autobiography. Structural-analytical and structural-narrative video are no more clearly separated than conceptual art and story art, but in Canada the accidents of localization confer a greater measure of distinctness. Analytical video has come chiefly from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, while the narrative aspect has centered more recently in the Toronto region.

The appointment of Gray Kennedy as president of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 1967 saw the beginning of its rise to a position among the most enlightened centers of art education anywhere and also marked the inception of one of the most creditable episodes in the history of art in Canada. The peak of video activity came as far back as the spring of 1971; it is already becoming a part of history and can be treated generally and briefly here.[1]

The distinguishing characteristic of the college was its readiness to grapple with new ideas, and that openness expressed itself in an extensive visitors' program which brought in the most innovative artists from across Canada and around the world. Success depended on the fact that Kennedy himself and his faculty were able to hold their own as artists and in dialogue with the famous names who appeared; and whereas the Lithography Workshop hinged largely on the activity of visitors, with video the college came into its own.

In part the tapes were the work of faculty, in part of students, and in one instance at least the outcome of a set project, *13 Spatial Definitions* from Patrick Kelly's class in November 1971. In Gary White's section the floor of a room is shown receding from the camera. People enter and the feet line up along the back closing the space; then more feet in front of those until the room is filled—or perhaps not filled, because at the end all we see are the shins of the three or four pairs of legs immediately in front of the camera. The piece is characteristically simple, but (also characteristically), it touches several levels of significance. The feet at first establish the scale of the space. As the rows line up nearer the camera they alter its proportions, but also emphasize the regulating effect of the containing box of the monitor. As more feet continue to appear, a doubt arises: Are there really that many people, or just the same ones going around for the

second time? Out of the doubt arises an awareness that what we see is not so much an interplay of surface and depth as of one plane surface, that of the monitor, and of another complex surface, that of the nearest objects in front of the camera. In another section, by Dorit Cypis, a balloon is blown up until it completely fills the screen, leaving it blank except for a softly defined highlight, yet that vestige of information fully sustains the emotional tension until the balloon eventually pops.

Among the faculty, Gerald Ferguson may have been most responsive to those shifting crosscurrents of meaning that form the particular content of the analytical phase, but in that period it was Patrick Kelly's application to video that seems most intensive. David Askevold was the only one to sustain an interest at the same level, and he moved into narrative; he was among the original group of "story" artists shown by John Gibson in 1973.

Askevold's art is extraordinarily complex, and the complexity is part and parcel of it. *Fill* of 1970, in the context of the college's analytical work, is an assay in the interrelationship of sound and vision. The microphone in the center of the image is wrapped in layers of aluminum foil until the screen is filled. In relation to his later work, the richness and ambiguity of the resulting image take on more significance. At one time a rational basis would usually be established, the intellectual challenge and emotional drama resulting from our difficulty in detecting the basis of paradox or grasping the multiple strands of interdependence of a situation. Later the *form* of elucidation is used as a cover for an irrationality that cannot be resolved within contained meaning, but only in the understanding of the means by which the effect is achieved. A text of two grammatically correct sentences may link elements of five photographs in narrative sequence and sustain a profound feeling of dramatic crisis without in any way making sense of what is going on. Alternatively, actual apparatus may be constructed so that Kepler's music of the spheres can be played by six snakes that are only painted into the photograph.

In the videotape *My Recall of an Imprint from a Hypothetical Jungle* of 1973, a complex pattern of shadows is suggestive of dense vegetation, though one guesses it emanates from potted plants. A form (figure?) at the base roles forward until it eventually covers the screen with a bamboo pattern on cloth (a shirt?). High-pitched oscillating sounds set a background to the artist's voice as he talks about escaping from the jungle.

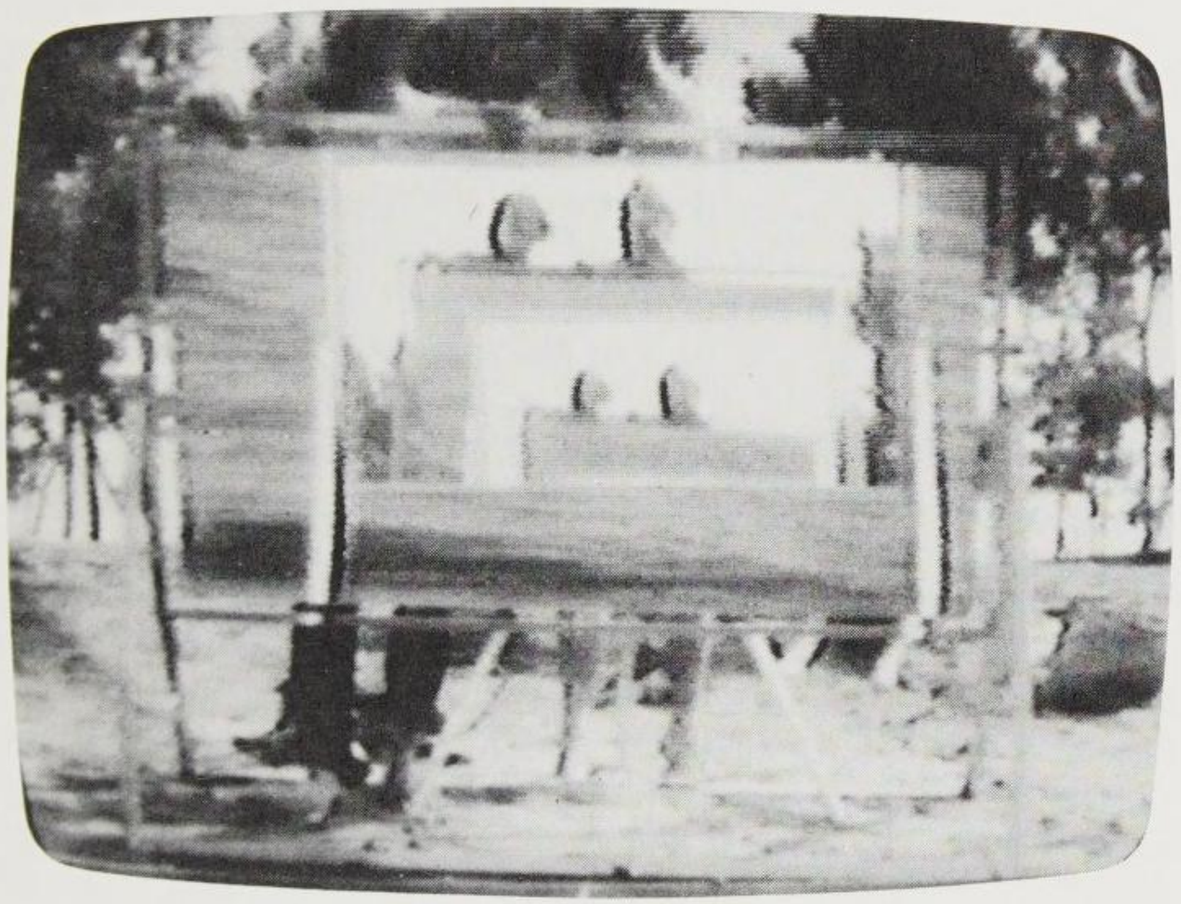
Occasionally there may be a danger of intellectual remoteness, but more often his exotic subject matter touches those nuances of psychological symbolism that makes snakes, jungles, and universal harmony part of the everyday mythology of metaphor.

Among NSCAD students it is Douglas Waterman who stands out from the analytical phase, and one tape, *Shuffle* (1971) may come closer to the actuality of videotape than any other piece produced anywhere. The camera, trained on its own recording mechanism, is placed beside him on the carpet. Shuffling his feet builds up static electricity in his body. After a while he stoops and touches the tape as it comes off the recording head; the discharge erases a band that appears in replay *before* we see him bend down and touch the tape. Other works may frequently and readily expose the dependence of illusion on camera, microphone, or monitor, but it is the band of uniformly gray tape that forms the connecting link between the reality of the subject and its evocation on the screen. In *Shuffle*, Douglas Waterman for once breaks through its obdurate neutrality.

Of more recent graduates John Watt has lately become prominent. There are some points of similarity to David Askevold. *Hypothetical Fornication* of 1973 also combines an ambiguous image with oscillating sounds. A hairy-looking form rising and falling at the base of the screen is almost certainly not a human backside. *I'm a Killer*, also of 1973, exploits the ambiguity of articulation of sounds in a spoken phrase. Under the suggestion of the title it seems to be saying, "We have killed her." In other works echoes muffle sound, or there may be as many as three voices speaking simultaneously. There is a puzzle-picture aspect to it that gives an exclusive, esoteric character. Internal clues may permit elucidation, but often we just have to be told. *Peepers*, a silent tape from 1973, shows the artist's eyes staring at the camera for twenty minutes. In fact he is looking from above, and under the strain of staring and the bright light, tears form and drop onto the lens, causing loss of definition. Works like this develop an emotional aspect that links them with the Toronto scene of his present activity. A lot of Toronto art is characterized by a strain of emotionalism that can become much less subtle than in John Watt's work; one suspects a basic insensitivity in the Ontario audience.

Though less consistent, there have been other ventures into analytical video outside Nova Scotia—for example, some of Michael Hayden's work,[2] like *Scan/Gaspe* of 1972. Hayden is based in Toronto and so is a group of artists working under the name of General Idea. Their one tape with an analytical aspect, *Light On*, came about as a by-product of work they did with a pair of mirrors in 1970–1971. In one sequence the mirrors face each other and are slowly inclined at different

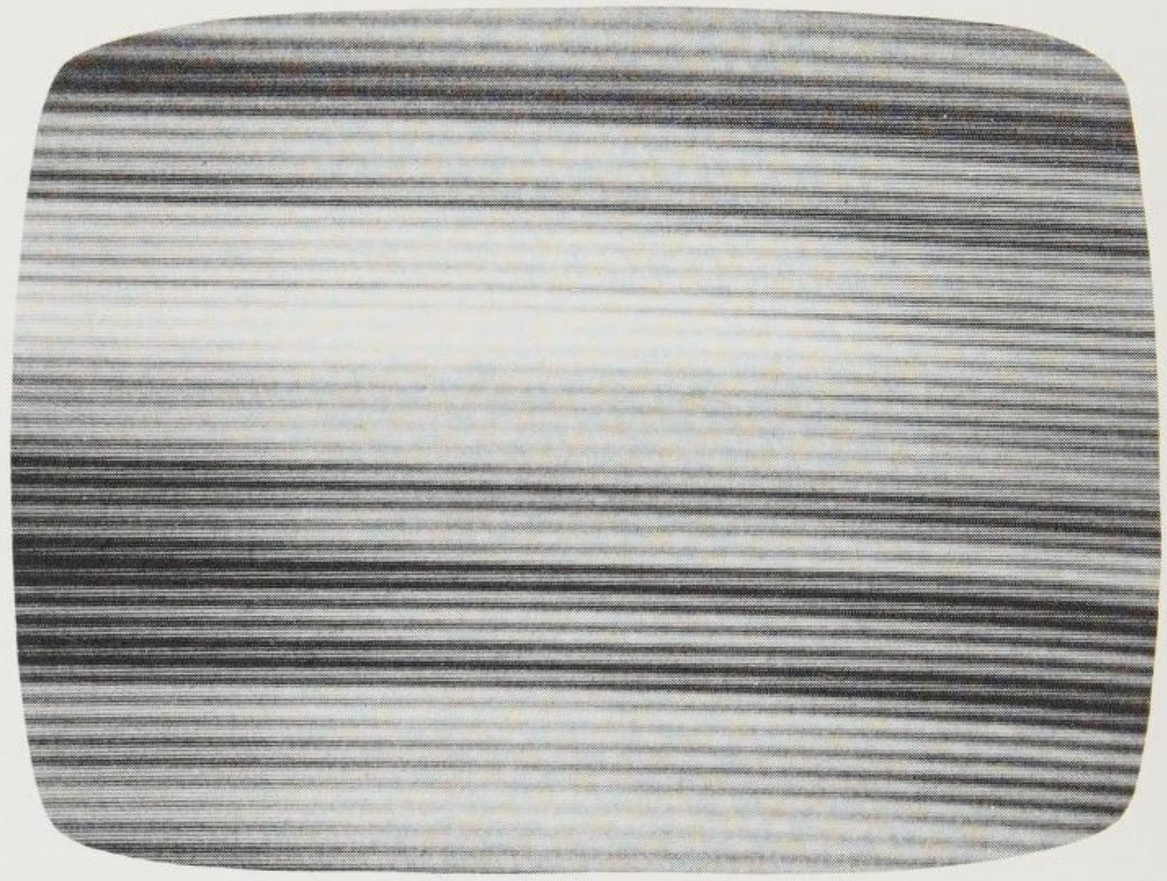
angles, exposing successive layers of what one had assumed to be reality as mere reflections of reflections. Elsewhere light is reflected from the mirrors onto passing railway wagons or the shaded arches of a bridge, or across an open area of sandy beach. At one point the surface reads with bland neutrality until the camera pulls back to identify a drive-in movie screen. In the original form of 1970–1971 the sections were just strung together, and the work suffered from a certain looseness accentuated by attempts at humor on the side. In 1974 these were edited out. The addition of background music emphasized a poetic aspect that is in keeping with the changing direction of art—and perhaps with the continuing need to sugar the analytical pill for a Toronto audience—but it does emerge a much better work.



General Idea: *Light On*, 1970–74, 25 minutes, sound.

At the University of Guelph the classes of Allyn Lite, who introduced video from New York, Noel Harding, and I produced some very process-conscious work before any of us had seen the NSCAD tapes, but NSCAD contacts did have the effect of clarifying our own direction. Two of our students have produced notable work since graduation.

Jeffrey Spalding went on to graduate work at Nova Scotia, via Ohio State University. He is mainly a painter and perhaps the most promising young artist in Canada. His ventures into video are diverse, but paintings and videotapes alike reveal the consistent strategy of a systemic approach. *The Intention of This Tape* of 1973 divided the monitor into three horizontal bands, and within these developed a permutation of black, white, and snow combinations producing just enough variations to encode the letters of the alphabet and leave one over for gaps between words. The deciphered message is just an explanation of the principles of the code itself, but the image has an exceptional visual power, both because of its formal clarity and because the shimmering movement of the snow and the shallow space it generates intensify the suggestion of landscape latent in any pattern of horizontal bands.



Jeffrey Spalding: *Scanning Lines*, 1973, 30 minutes, silent.

In the simplest—and best—of a series of feedback pieces from Ohio State, the camera was placed as close as possible to its own monitor while still yielding a focused image. An enlarged pattern of scanning lines results, but constantly modified by gentle, rippling variations of tone up and down the screen as the interplay of electrical impulses causes the light level to build up and subside irregularly.

At Halifax a very recent tape has some similarities to John Watt's *Peepers*, but in this case when Jeffrey Spalding spits straight in one's eye, there is no doubt at all what is happening. The lens rapidly covers over with saliva, obscuring the image of his face. For a while it clears partially as each new wad pushes the bubbles to the side—and then we see just wave movements out from the side and reverting to a total blank.

In the last months at Guelph, Winston McNamee began a series of tapes that focus on the artist's responses to his own

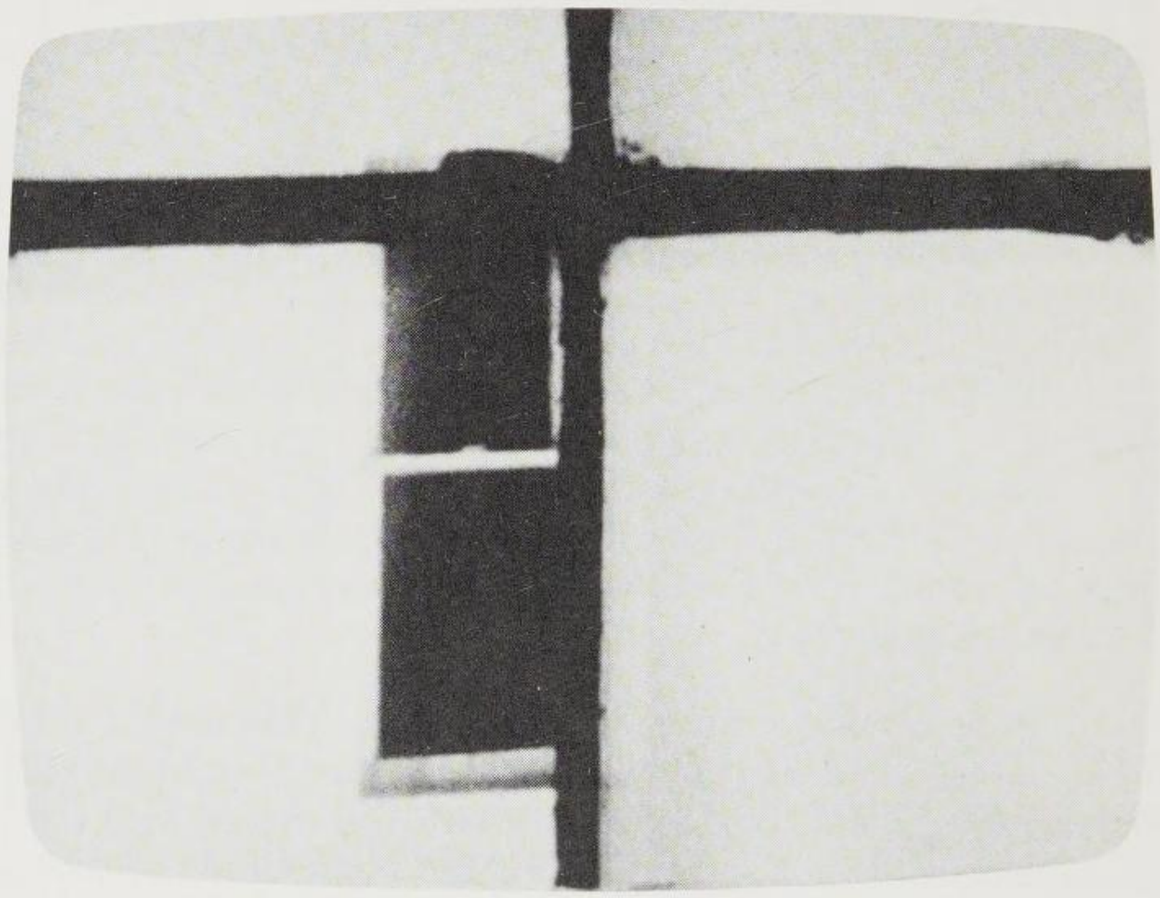
image on the monitor. Sometimes the response is at a visual level, as when he stands with arms outstretched and pivots from side to side, matching the image with another prerecorded version until the interplay seems to make the head and arms spin full circle while the feet remain fixed on the spot. Other works deal with communication through language. In a student tape from 1973 he repeats the phrase "Good evening, gentlemen," at the same time filling his mouth with tissues that eventually stifle the sound. The same is done even more succinctly in a very short recent tape in which we see only his neck and mouth as he repeats "I can't understand" without taking a breath, until the sound croaks to nothing and his veins stand out from strain. The central objectives of his program are expressed most explicitly in *Reality Series* #2, 1974, where he addresses his image on the monitor in the second person. Verbally he asserts his control, but when the tape is played back and mixed with a new "live" layer three times over, he does his utmost to make sound and vision conform to the prerecorded version. Very close beneath the artifice of the video situation is the real life issue of the subtle interdependence of the intention of one's attempts at communication and the image one knows one presents of oneself.

There is in video an innate predisposition toward a sort of dualism that results in the first place from the coincidence of a radically factual medium and a low definition image. Apart from electronic manipulations that are usually very obvious, a view on a television screen implies that a camera did at some time confront just such a situation, but its reduction to a scan of shifting tones across a very visible matrix of horizontal bands leaves ample room for subjective interpretation. Deceptions are easily achieved, and they may be difficult to revoke completely though we may understand perfectly well what is going on. But even under less extreme conditions, there is likely to be some disjuncture between our assimilation of the facts of a situation and our sensate experience of it—in a word, between inner and outer realities. The general tendency is reinforced by specific dualities within the process: of sound and vision, and of those standard special effects that permit the amalgamation of two images by simple mixture or split screen, and by the fact that the live monitor allows the artist, at the moment of recording an external view of his activity, to set against his immediate awareness of self.

Dualism (at least to a certain level) is pervasive, and is certainly evident in several works already discussed. A small number of artists working in the Toronto region have in common that they engage particular ramifications in a parallel manner.

The production of a videotape can be a very intimate one-person affair, and replay can as easily find a single individual threading tape and then drawing close to the monitor to gain as much as possible from the small-scale screen. Intimacy at this end, however, may lead to a sense of intrusion into that other intimate situation rather than a merging with it. A suggestion of voyeurism is entailed, and the window front that transmits the television image from the inside contributes further. Glass permits observation, but is also a barrier that denies the possibility of more active involvement; the participatory aspect of the low-definition image is assertively confined to the sphere of imaginative projection.

Colin Campbell came to Toronto after a spell of teaching at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. There he had some contact with nearby NSCAD and came to know Dennis Oppenheim, who gave his video art its initial impetus. Oppenheim, along with Vito Acconci, had been an important influence in Toronto, too, through exhibitions at A Space, so that when Campbell arrived in 1973 his work fit readily into a context of video performance represented by artists like Robert Bowers or Stephen Cruise. But with Colin Campbell there is a more radical shift of focus from the generalities of performance toward the specifics of the personality of the performer; and from the beginning, performance is inextricably tied to the sense of the video medium.



Colin Campbell: *Hindsight*, 1974, 20 minutes, sound.

Colin Campbell dates the real beginnings of *True/False* to 1972. The camera, in a fixed position throughout, shows the

artist's head first in profile, then front view, as he slowly repeats a series of statements about himself: "I snort coke . . . I like Sackville . . . I am heterosexual . . . I am part Indian." After each he pauses, says "True," pauses again, and says "False." The dichotomy of truth and falsehood that forms the external basis of the work interlocks tightly with the internal dualism of the video medium. The question raised by objective understanding of the words seeks a resolution in the expressive sense of sound and image.

*True/False* marks a breakthrough of great significance. There follows a series of works in which the artist confronts his own body in the nude, but also his soul laid bare in naked truth, as the saying might have it. The works are characterized by an intensity of emotional expression that I do not always find they are able to sustain. Two humorous works, *Sackville I'm Yours* and *Smile*, both of 1972, are perhaps the most fully rounded achievements, but in retrospect *Janus* may be more significant, though it seems to manifest the faults of the rest in the most disagreeable way. It is constructed around a life-size nude photograph of the artist against which he lovingly presses his body while the camera moves slowly over both figures. At first one may not be aware that the photographic image is not real, and it may become sculptural before finally flattening out onto the surface, but it is not so much the shock of recognizing the possibility of a homosexual or autoerotic act, of narcissism or pygmalianism, that alienates; rather it is the cloying intensity of the expressive movement of body over card, and camera over both.[3]

These works were done in Sackville. The new works in Toronto eventually turn the camera away from the artist altogether, yet seem to hunt out images that are a reflection of the eye that discovered them. In *Love-Life* of 1974, Colin Campbell reads love letters sent to him by different people as the image alternates between a view of shrubs seen through a wire-reinforced window and another into an apartment across the street, within which a figure is indistinctly seen moving about. The interplay of words and images develops resonances that can be very beautiful.

A group of tapes recently produced in New York with the aid of a Canada Council grant readmits Campbell's own presence before the camera, but compared with the earlier work they seem concerned not so much with the observation of self as with the examination, at one stage removed, of the meaning of the situation of self-observation through the video mechanism.

They all exploit the peculiarities of the plan of his apartment; it has three windows looking out onto one another around a light well. The two layers of glass entail distinct separation of the self that observes and the self that is observed. On the far side, Campbell is seen moving around in the kitchen, lighting a cigarette, reading a letter, or removing an article of clothing (though rather more discreetly than in earlier works). On the near side, only his hands are seen as he draws back a curtain, or his shadow passing over it, or the suggestions of a reflection in the nearest pane of glass. They are the images of self one sees every day.

Glass separates sound from vision, and through the windows the televised self moves silently; from this side the nearer self addresses the other in a whisper or chants "I'm a voyeur" in a self-consciously homespun mockery of a pop song. The environment generates a strangely confined quality that has to do not just with physical limitations of space, but also with the total dominance of things made by man for human use—walls, windows, kitchen utensils—and bearing the stamp of prolonged human contact; only the stylized forms of plants and animals in the curtains provide a partial relief. The strangeness reads as part of the reality of the place, but the whole is contained within an equally explicit structure of artifice. The camera is seen reflected in the window and, in *Secrets*, the word "secret" is stuck up in plastic letters on the glass. The ultimate dualism resides in the contrast of emotional intensity and the exposure of the mechanisms by which it is contrived. Only at the end of *I'm a Voyeur* do the words of an actual pop record blare out "When will I see you again?," breaking the tension and contributing an explicit irony.

*Secrets* and *I'm a Voyeur*, like the earlier performance works, are constructed out of shots from fixed camera positions. *Hindsight*, like the later works in that series, develops to moving shots that may pull back through both layers of glass, creating some of the finest images ever produced on a video monitor, but the piece as a whole reaches out too far—several shots of the artist himself that try too hard to be dramatic, and a subject that broaches the supernatural.

For Colin Campbell the latent dualism of the medium surfaces in a division of personality that allows one aspect of self to subsume the role of "other" in intimate personal relationships. For Lisa Steele it fixes rather on the twin realities of waking and dreaming—continuous realities within the unfolding of individual consciousness, but radically discontinuous within the video medium, since one cannot point a camera at a dream. In *Sleep/Dream Vigil* of 1973, a two-monitor work, the image of a sleeping figure is accompanied by a reading from a book on dreams.

A three-monitor work from 1975 represents the summation of Lisa Steele's video work to date. *Internal Pornography* begins on the center monitor only with the artist making a series of statements about her sexuality: that the real reason for sex is procreation; that she had a recurring fantasy of being fucked by a crocodile, that "if he really knew what goes on inside me, he wouldn't want to know me"; and eventually that "the creature of the future is the hermaphrodite." Captions then appear on all three screens, "Sleeping" on the left, "Planting" in the center, and "Waking" at the right. Lying in bed on the left screen she recounts her dreams: of exhuming the body of her mother buried in a sandy beach; of her father appearing after years of absence as a trumpet player in a local band; of trying to get away from a man who eventually stabs her in the chest; of a baby with real ruby eyes that she had to sell to sustain life itself; of a dog that carries the blind baby. (While she is talking, her cat walks over the bed.) On the right monitor her nude body, from just above the breasts to just below the groin, is set in front of a map of the world. She reads from a pamphlet on birth-control methods. Late in the piece she draws the reproductive organs on herself and then erases them. In the center screen her hands gently fondle the leaves of plants to musical accompaniment that locates the emotional accent of the piece on that monitor.

In some early tapes the juxtapositions are quite stark—a turtle or an earthworm accompanied by reading about turtles or earthworms from a book--but when in another piece from the same year, 1972, she paints her face with clown makeup and then puts an egg into her mouth and removes it, it is more difficult to resist the imputation of a nonliteral level of meaning.

One appreciates the artist's concern that her work should not be overrationalized. The richness of the work does reside, as she claims, in the juxtaposition of things—and also in the beauty of the verbal and pictorial images in which they are contained. It is necessary in order to sustain that focus that analysis should not reduce them to the status of tokens in a psychological equation; and yet the emotional resonances seem to depend on one's intuition of nuances that must imply, if not decipherment, then at least a recognition of the sort of role that men, for instance, habitually play within her dreams —absentee father, vampire brother, or the attacker who stabs her six times (though between stabs five and six, she noticed it was a beautiful day)—and one recalls the fantasy of intercourse with a crocodile. Likewise the relationship of mother and child—one remembers the egg; and in a very recent tape the way she draws attention to the fact that the nasturtium



Lisa Steele: *Internal Pornography*, 1975, 30 minutes, sound.

In conversation Lisa Steele resists the suggestion of symbolic meaning; at one time she prefaced an exhibition of photographs with a statement that "the objects photographed are not meant to be mysterious, symbolic, or representative of anything other than what they are." She explains that she chooses objects with a view only to the emotive quality of their juxtaposition. They may be drawn from dreams, but then her dreams are very specific, not at all ineffable. She regards them as "visions," not in the mystical sense but simply as an extension of visual experience; about one in five is "mythical."

leaves she was eating were only fourteen days old. The plants in the center of *Internal Pornography* gain in significance from this cross-reference, and even more so from the cut to a shot of her clitoris inspected under a magnifying glass that immediately follows the nasturtium-eating sequence. In the context of these interrelationships a somewhat grating, antagonistic quality in the title and the introduction also finds a level of consistency with the rest.

On the issue of sexual relationships, her work presents an

interesting parallel to that of Colin Campbell, but also a contrast, which is in part that of a woman's viewpoint, but also of Steele's personal psychology. For Colin Campbell sex is construed as an androgynous union of person experiencing and person experienced; for Lisa Steele the procreative connotations are more positive and, as an extension of that, reflect the dual female roles of mother and daughter. For both, sex is a literally self-centered experience, and so it appears in other video works, like Marien Lewis's important two-monitor enactment of her own wedding with numerous female attendants but no bridegroom.[2]

The three-monitor format of *Internal Pornography* has yielded two or three of the best video works to come out of Ontario. Noel Harding's *Three Pieces for Circuits*, 1973, was the first to be shown, but Lisa Steele's decision was made independently before then. What determined her choice was the fact of an "inside" between two "outside" monitors; and that symbolized dualism may be the crucial significance of the arrangement throughout.

Another artist from the circle around A Space, Bruce Emilson, produced an extraordinarily fine three-monitor piece that is also available in a single-monitor version. *Disturbances* of 1974 begins with the contrast of video "snow" with a view of natural snow falling. Later, with the change of subject to a rainstorm, the electronic and pictorial levels merge as lightning flashes register on the image and simultaneously cause it to break up through their effect on the electricity supply. From the silence of the snow, sound builds up as the rainstorm reaches its climax, and (as with the visual image) part is recorded sound and part the result of electrical interference. In the three-monitor version, where different sections are juxtaposed, the two merge indistinguishably as the crescendo rises to a great barrage of noise. In that context, too, the duality of subject and the process of its observation are intensified by the duality of inner and outer (even though each tape is constructed out of similar material); that sense is underlined again by the fact that the storm is mostly shot through a window, and there develops an extraordinary sense of the presence of the glass as the rain creates a network of linear flow channels over the surface. The scale of the image makes the most precise accommodation of depicted glass with the actual glass surface of the monitor, and even in a black and white image this gives an intensely disorienting impression of metamorphosis of the set itself. The work is locked at one end into the meaning of the mechanism itself, but that in no way diminishes the imminent analogy with a personal level of psychological disturbance.

Guelph, where Noel Harding and I have taught video at the University since Allyn Lite returned to New York in 1972, is in many ways part of the same phenomenon as the Toronto-region video. Noel Harding's work also treats sexual relationships from a viewpoint which in that special sense may be called self-centered, but in contradistinction to Colin Campbell[3] and Lisa Steele self-centeredness does not imply self-sufficiency. Though the girls in Noel Harding's video tapes are never realized beyond their emotional imprint on the artist, sex implies in his work a dependent relationship, and the mood of the work varies from one of separateness in the presence of the love object to an isolation that is intensely negative. The ability to invoke mood through the manipulation of the camera is his most conspicuous talent—the residue of his experience as a professional television cameraman before he turned to video art. In some pieces where the camera winds around a room or pans back and forth, there are resemblances to Michael Snow's films, but in Noel Harding's case the camerawork is never quite so autonomous, the subject always more central. Moreover, the pieces that show the resemblance most clearly were produced before he had seen any of Snow's films.

Noel Harding dates the full emergence of his video works to *Birth's Child* of 1972, but it shows him in the least flattering light. The child is seated between the legs of its naked mother. It begins to cry; its nose runs profusely, but mother (and cameraman) remain impassive. The scene is shot dramatically, and the expression is intensified by some sharp editing toward the end. The sense of isolation—of coming into the world alone, etc.—registers unmistakably, but so, too, does a built-in backlash to the romantic approach that expresses compassion for the universal symbol of suffering at the price of ignoring the reality at the mundane level of the child's actual discomfort.

There follows a series of three works, *Cynthia's Portrait*, *Kathy's Room*, and *Clouds*, each centering on the presence of a girl. These are the works that come closest to the condition of regular television camerawork, scanning Cynthia's face or exploring Kathy's room in search for the poignant or emotive image, discovering Kathy herself framed in the doorway or against the lengthened evening shadow of a window frame; these pieces build up a mood of dramatic expectancy, but there is no plot, just a continued conjuring up of imminent narrative potentialities that never condense about a story line. Technically, the use of a fluid-head tripod is crucial as the camera winds around the room, contributing to the nostalgic mood through the heavy, heady rhythms of its own movement, or in *Clouds*, soaring into the sky as the girl retreats, to meet her advancing from another corner of the garden as it de-

scends. Only at one point do the sexual connotations become explicit—in *Clouds*, when the girl, advancing till her face fills the screen, says "I love you," but the words do not come through; the microphone is far away in another part of the garden collecting its own ready-made mood music of birds, crickets, distant traffic, and the sound of a neighbor's lawn mower.

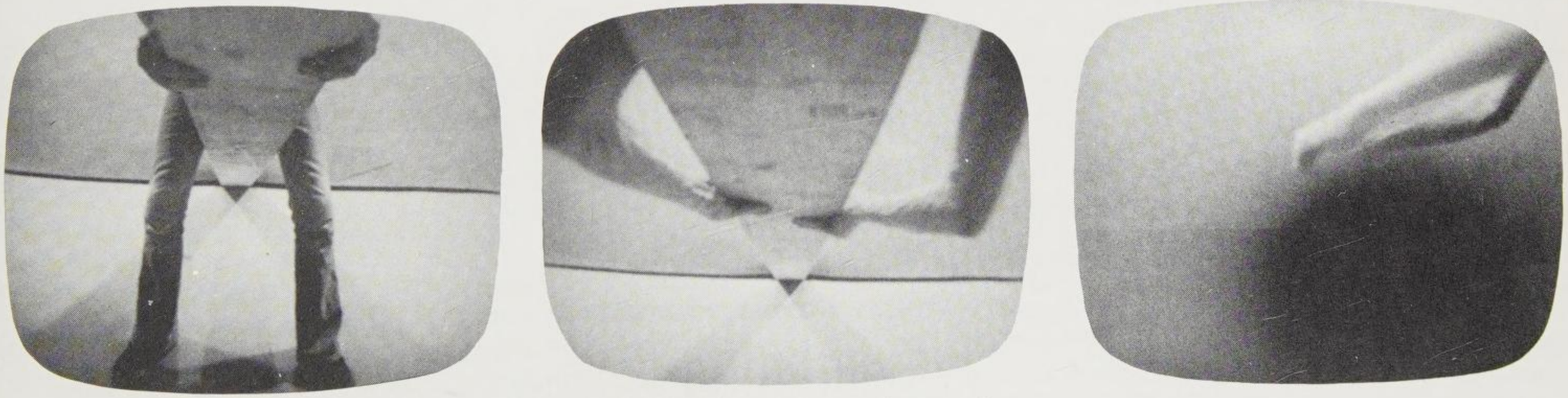
*Table and Chairs* evokes a starker mood and is more terse in structure. The camera fans with a more regular, more insistent movement across two wooden chairs behind a rough wooden table. The setting and the movements of the camera suggest a social, conversational relationship, but only one actor appears, a man now, stripped to the waist and looking as stark as the setting. He sits down first in one chair, then in the other. In the earlier pieces the primary relationship was between the girl and the responsive presence of the cameraman. Here where the camera movements are more mechanical, the psychological axis shifts to the male actor and the empty chair.

It was after this work that Harding produced *Three Pieces for Circuits*, his first three-monitor installation. Here it is his own performance that is featured, in a highly abstracted situation with a plank, in the left and center screens, with one end balanced above the camera and the other wedged in the angle between floor and wall. At the left his legs straddle the plank, which he rocks with spasmodic, jerking movements. In the center only his arms are seen as he leans over from behind the camera and rubs and strikes the underside of the plank. At the right he rotates a rod inside the lens mounting. Hence the sense of inner and outer monitors is expressed in the way the center of the camera looks with the artist, the outer ones at him.

The emotive sense of the artist's isolation is dramatized by the abrupt perspective of planks and pole, and (in left and center) by the claustrophobic closing of the space. Jerking movements accompanied by intermixed rapping sounds generate a sense of intense anxiety. Noel Harding disputes the autoerotic connotation, but says he knew before I saw it that I would construe it that way—perhaps that is the fairest way to leave it. His more recent *Three Works for Mind-Body* has an image of himself nude in the center, clapping his hands to alternately conceal and expose his genitals; the outside pieces involve a nude girl.

At Guelph, Noel Harding and I have worked together well and there has been a beneficial exchange of ideas in both directions, but beneath the similarities our approaches are poles apart. If a lot of each of our work is structured around the movements of the camera, mine is an extension of the process orientation of painting of the 1960's, his an abstraction of the craft of the television cameraman; and whereas in his work the movements are deeply engaged with the subject and contribute to building up the mood, mine aim rather to provide a neutralizing balance.

So, too, in relation to that larger "Toronto-region" group: If my art, like theirs, picks on ramifications of the pervasive dualism of video, theirs always leans toward the side of inner personal experience; mine aims to resolve the dualism in favor of reasonable understanding.



Noel Harding: *Three Pieces for Circuits*, 1973, 15-minute loops for continuous play, sound.

NOTES

1. See Gary Neil Kennedy, "Video at NSCAD," *Arts Canada* (October 1973), and Eric Cameron, "The Grammar of the Video Image," *Arts Magazine* (December 1974).

2. These artists are treated individually elsewhere in this book, and are accordingly passed over here.

3. For more detailed treatment of Colin Campbell's early work, see Eric Cameron, "Colin Campbell: The Story of Art Star," *Vie des Arts* (Spring 1974).

# VIDEO IN THE MID-'70'S: PRELUDE TO AN END/FUTURE

**Douglas Davis**

In his extraordinary new book, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Erving Goffman quotes a classic example of the instinctive human recourse to pattern in the face of an event that signifies danger—one that threatens to break the comfortable "frame," or structure, of everyday life. In this case, the frame is restored by a guard at Buckingham Palace who accidentally slices open his hand with a bayonet, yet never breaks stride or stance, according to a newspaper account:

> The woman who shrieked and another woman ran forward to bandage the guard's hand with a handkerchief. But he did not move until a police constable had told the orderly officer. A replacement was marched on, and the wounded guard marched off—head high, lip still stiff.[1]

In the face of a similar cut into its own frame of experience, the world of art is standing firm and inflexible, acting as though the phenomenon we have come to call (unfortunately) Video Art had not let any blood whatsoever. On the right, there is a steady barrage of criticism aimed at the supposed inability of video artists to create entirely new image-systems, devoid of the memories of painting. On the classic left, among the members of what is now the congealed avant-garde of the 1950's and the 1960's, there is an anxious attempt to join and to reform a movement in the name of antiart and populism, thus establishing it as no more than the electronic extension of Duchamp (not to say McLuhan).

It is to remind you that video fits potentially into neither frame—it is not concerned either with image-making or with demolishing the object (a futile and fraudulent enterprise in any case)—that I write at present. I don't intend here to boost or to hail Video Art as art (examined from that height, it is often tedious and always misinterpreted), but to define its meaning and intent properly, at a time when the "movement" is being both praised and attacked for the wrong reasons. This is also a time when Video Art is coming to the attention of a larger public, through major museum exhibitions throughout the West and occasional broadcast television exposure.

Let me give you a very specific and vulgar example of how the art world is zipping "video" into a convenient frame. Not long ago I found myself on a panel of artists, critics, and academicians discussing the proper role of the arts in education. I was the only one among those present who had worked in or written about video, so I began to talk about it. To my left (he was misplaced) sat a good friend, a sculptor: "Oh, yes, video!" he suddenly announced, in a loud, baritone voice. "Isn't that the *latest thing*?"

Do not mistake that remark for hostility. It is in fact one of several signs that the art system is about to kill "Video Art" with kindness. Faced with a surge of remarkable energy and activity—touching every nation that can now get its hands on portable cameras and videotape recorders—Art resists, then gives in, allotting video a place (the latest place) in what it conceives to be a never-ending parade of reforms upon a central ethic, a series of charges to the barricade ending inevitably in the restoration of the *ancien régime* in new guise. That this is not at all the case—that Video Art is not a movement at all but simply the first step in a major structural transformation of art—cuts too sharp to be tolerable. And thus the first signs of this activity are quickly joined together in articles, interviews, art magazines, and catalogues, housed in references tolerable to traditional art space (monitors in galleries; performances in museums using cameras and videotape; banks of TV sets pyramided as sculpture), and given what feels to be the assigned weight of years. In the United States, Video really "arrived" around 1973; it is now—by these terms—nearing the peak of attention; and the end (which is the historicizing of the movement) ought to be about 1978.

That this immediate political truth can coexist with another truth, completely opposite in its nature, is further proof of the irony inherent in history and in the evolution of man. Art historians and critics can "frame" any new experience, from bloody revolution itself to Action Painting, *Tachisme*, kinetic-light-space construction, the Happening, guerilla theater, and concept-as-form. Art history can even decide that the act of working in television—a medium whose rapidity of dissemination and directness of contact exceed any other—is simply

another genre bound like any other with linking ideas, heroes, and iconography. By this means, new experience can be recognized and then—because it now exists—destroyed. That is one level of truth, with a foreseeable shape, rhythm, and finality. Yet one level higher, beyond this frame, another frame is forming, with a corner left open to an infinite contingency.

Before I describe that contingency, let me provide a context and describe a battlefield. The context is remarkably like the context in which photography developed one century ago. When Arago first addressed the French Chamber of Deputies in 1848—to argue that photography should be made available to all by releasing the patent on it (for a sum paid by the state to the inventor)—he said that the hopes placed on any new medium "are always insignificant compared with the number of subsequent discoveries of which the instrument was the origin." At first, men believed that photography would fix the exact essence of nature—that is, reproduce the world. Walter Benjamin preferred the early daguerreotypes because they duplicated more exactly than the flat photograph the three-dimensional essence of a human face. But it was not long after Daguerre that cameras were in the hands of the many, not the few, and the sharp, clear, one-of-a-kind daguerreotype had degenerated into millions of snapshots and billions of newspaper reproductions; this flood of images steadily re-formed our view of the world, until the world became itself the reproduction of photography, not the reverse. The "art" of photography ended in its first decade, Benjamin believed; after that, it was Industry, no more, no less.

But even Benjamin conceded the later genius of Atget, in no sense a popular artist, who raised the grany impermanence of industrialized photography to unprecedented heights. What is constant through every new medium—occasionally forgotten by Benjamin, never remembered by McLuhan and his followers—is the human mind itself, in all its infinite variety. Television is passing through an evolution similar to photography, though the political structure behind it is totally different. From its inception, television aesthetics has been in the hands of the corporate and bureaucratic few, not the many, yet these few have insisted on defining its nature as thoroughly mindless and populist. With a few exceptions—early live telecasts, athletic events, sly popular entertainers—television had no daguerreotype period. From its first day, it was middle-aged, dedicated to bland, soothing effects. It is not surprising—considering who "owned" television in the beginning (governments and corporations)—that this should be so. What is surprising is that so many intellectuals have accepted this fact, cheered on by McLuhan and the preachers of a Papal-Global-Village ethic.

It is into this context that Video Art has come—at first through the form of works of sculpture containing TV monitors and playback self-images, then through brightly colored special-effects wizardry, recorded on tape—and is now operating. But it was inevitable that Video Art would not stay anchored in this retrograde base. The moment the first Sony videotape recorders were being marketed in the United States and Europe was a moment when the avant-garde in the West was moving toward a greater concern with patterns of thought and politics than with halcyon imagery: The videotapes that began to appear in art galleries and museums (and occasionally broadcast on adventurous television stations) between 1968 and 1972 were anything but "pretty." They dealt in ideas and in positions; they appeared to have more to do with currents of art than with electrons. These rough, badly thought-out videotapes may have been the first attempt to use "television"—either in closed-circuit or in broadcast form—for anything like the intense communication (mind to mind) that is the very substance of print.

In this sense, the Video Art that interests me the most (and which I try to make) is antitelevision, antipopulist. Most of it is very far as yet from high art, from realizing the perfect achievement that occurs when thought and medium come cleanly together (most of the 1968–1972 work in fact takes no account of its medium). But inner-directed video is acting slowly and subtly upon the television system very much as Atget's work acted on photography. And the action has just begun. Although I realize I speak against an inexorable art-political tide, I say that the moment to define, label, and package Video Art is far off. John Baldessari once said—and I agree, in part—that no great art will be made with a video camera until it is as easy to pick up and work with as a pencil.

The other part of what I have to say about the context in which video now operates—the part that disagrees, gently, with Baldessari—is the incalculable power of video not only to disseminate, eye to eye, mind to mind, but to do so in real, organic time—the time of the sender and the time of the receiver can be the same. Video is not the same kind of tool as is the pencil, in other words, or the film camera. We must think through its implications and possibilities with at least the rigor applied to paint and flat surfaces. Here, alas, I can do no better than quote from an essay I wrote three years ago, in an attempt to define the singular qualities of video for an audience of film makers:

> Let me return again to where and how we see video, to catch it there in a very special moment. Alone once more, in the home, not formally seated, or surrounded by large numbers of people. In that moment, we can

also be connected to the uncertainty of real life. Film is always prepared for us, its time telescoped by the making hand. In the theater we inhabit the same time in which the players perform, but we know that the next step, and the step after that, has been predetermined by the playwright. What we have come to call "live" video links with "life" in a highly concentrated form; when we are watching "live" phenomena on the screen we participate in a subtle existentialism. Often it is so subtle that it nears boredom. Yet we stay, participating. The endless moon walk, the endless convention, the endless, in another way, *American Family*. In all these cases, the "live" dimension kept its audience there, before the small screen, alone, at home, waiting, because it knows that anything may happen next, as in life. I mention *An American Family* deliberately; though edited, it made less attempt to structure and pace narrative events than any popular television series yet. Often, long stretches of meaningless, boring conversation were allowed to play out, unstructured. "Live" time approached life time. For this reason, and because we knew the *Family* was "real" we stayed, waiting, aware that something unpredictably "live" might occur next.

Video is not life, of course, any more than art is. Unlike the other arts, though, it approaches the pace and unpredictability of life, and is seen in a perceptual system grounded in the home and the self. I do not know how we moviegoers are going to understand this, thoroughly, but we must. The link between the formal occasion that is film and the private occasion that is video must be both recognized and forgotten. There will be no video art until we approach this medium as if it had not existed before.[2]

This, then, is the context in which Video Art is beginning to make itself felt—a context heavy with misunderstanding and wishful thinking, and with unlimited potential. The battleground I described a while back is occupied on the one hand by those who are engaged in discovering and working through this potential—and, on the other, by those anxious to define and limit that process, in terms of their own understanding. It is ludicrous, for example, to define and judge Video Art on the basis of heavy "indoor" gallery or museum installations (as necessary as those works were ten years ago) or to complain—as Allan Kaprow has done—about the persistent use (in galleries, again) of time-lag devices, in neither case touching the demands of broadcast. That is like criticizing Daguerre in 1848 because his images were limited to one of a kind, or difficult to carry. Not long after Daguerre, small cameras and reproducible negatives were at large in the world. The same is true of video: Tiny cameras, small videotape recorders, and large, paper-thin screens are very near. When that happens, Video Art will cease to be a medium-heavy medium. It will be (and is, now, in part) mediumless, properly defined by its message. The message, gentlemen, is the medium.

It is a message, of course, that darts everywhere, quickly, through visual structures. In this sense it is an intensification of print, and an intensification of all the minds joined in it. What is ahead—what is already apparent in the first television generation in the United States—is a more diversified, fragmented, and self-rooted society, not the tribal village dreamed of in McLuhan's prophecies.

It is remarkable how little has been written or thought about the disorienting, decentralizing, and individualizing effect of television, even in its earliest years, when nothing but network homogenization prevailed. Not long ago, Nam June Paik and I attended a conference of media experts trying to develop a set of recommendations for future funding in television. Speaker after speaker revealed in his conclusions the notion that the only effective means of communication in Western society is *through the tube in prime time*, "where the tribe gathers," as one voice put it. If this were so—if Western society had actually been shaped by this process—we would be in fact a blind, dumb, and benignly passive civilization (the civilization envisaged by the men who shape network programming). In reality, we are dissent-ridden, politically active, culturally hungry (virtually every Western nation has recently increased its support of "high" art out of all proportion to its budget), and literally unpredictable. It is clear that "mass"-oriented television stirs as much disbelief as acceptance; it is furthermore clear that the public honors other avenues of information, from print to rumor, as much as it honors NBC, BBC, or ORTF. With the advent of cable television and video-disc alternatives, the dominance of prime-time television (always an illusion in any case) is likely to lessen.

The notion that *quantity* alone determines the effect of an idea or a program (Paik and I were consistently rebuked in our support of CATV alternatives by comparative audience figures) is yet another symptom of the false reliance on form rather than content (about which I have written at great length elsewhere).* The power and force of an idea—or a body of work—will always counteract the circumstance of audience size. Time and again we see the proof of this—of ideas prevailing against

* *The Idea of a Twenty-First Century Museum*, lecture given at the Long Beach Museum of Art, California, May 1975.

force and size—in politics, in revolution, in science, in art and, finally, in television. We are blind most of all to the latter, because television has arrived so late in the scale of time, and because McLuhan has filled an intellectual void with his sermons. He has prepared us for 1100 A.D. when in fact it is 1400, a period in human evolution when the mind is engaged in a thicket of dense, one-to-one communication, across time, media, and genres. Again I repeat—it is an era driven by content, not form.

The part that artists play in this process is exactly the part they have always played: elevating and provoking the mind that is watching/listening/thinking. It is only in this sense that Video Art is linked to the past or that the work it does is functionally traditional. In every other sense, video is different. It is, to tear the clothes away from the myth, not a "movement" at all. It is not bound by a common group of ideas, like Pop Art, or *Tachisme*, or Dada; the only thought we all share is a disposition to work in the medium in the first place. And—the most important difference of all—the medium employed is *central* to the business of the world. A thought laid upon videotape is a thought that has the potential of broadcasting everywhere, at once. Of course this is (properly faced) a frightening thought. It is no wonder that so little broadcast of this kind has either been allowed or attempted. Bertolt Brecht's "Theory of Radio" (1929) explains why: Radio took its one-way form (as opposed to two-way, which was also technically feasible) in response to deep-seated political instincts.

What I am trying to say is this: Placing the kind of communication we have come to call "art" on television—*as broadcast*—is a shattering of the frame of the past. A complete shattering. Compared to this, Duchamp's purchase of a bicycle wheel in a store (later exhibited as Art), Dada's antibourgeois sneering, and even the marketing of personal videotapes in large, low-cost editions is all child's play. It is no wonder that the full implications of Video Art have been ignored until now. They are in sum a challenge to media-cultural authority and to the cherished pretensions of art itself. Once art is stripped down to naked communication, in broadcast, without the armor of physical presence, it must speak to matters of consequence, or die. What is ahead of us—the infinite contingency I spoke of before—is a decidedly risky transformation. When it is finished, the temporary phenomenon we call Video Art will probably not exist in anything like the physical form or conceptual function we now know. The same is therefore true of the society in which alternative television first appeared.

This essay was first published in translation under a different title in the catalogue of the 1975 Paris Biennale. Since then, it has been revised and extended.

NOTES

1. (New York, 1974), pp. 203–204.

2. "Filmgoing/Videogoing: Making Distinctions," *American Film Institute Journal* (May 1973), pp. 51–52.

# VIDEO IN SEATTLE

**Anne Focke**

The following is personal history. It describes my own experiences, from about 1968 through 1975, as someone who had an interest and involvement in television and video, and details the way that interest was expressed in Seattle. It stresses the activities more than the theories and covers embarrassing moments as well as enlarging or enlightening ones. It is deliberately personal, since the vantage point of my living and working in Seattle makes a general overview or critical evaluation of the entire field difficult. At the same time, although my experiences offer one view of the story of video in Seattle, I make no attempt to present an inclusive history of all video activities in this region.

In 1968 and 1969, I began taking part in several regular television shows, and eventually developed my own segments about art and artists in the city for a magazine show at KCTS/9, Seattle's public television station. Slowly and, I thought then, with great imagination I began to consider the possibilities of TV as a separate medium, rather than as a channel through which to present other forms. In 1970, encouraged by brief references to a European "television gallery," and by a short encounter with a film maker who created images with television equipment, I produced a program—broadcast on KCTS—called *TV Gallery*. Five artists were invited to do work specifically for television broadcast. Two used the time essentially for showing film. One dealt with aspects of commercial television through an "instant replay" presented between the other artists' pieces. One used overlaid images, sound from a personally made synthesizer, and photo cells on a monitor screen used as audio controls. The last did a series of performances on film and in the studio. Due to the "archaic" nature of the equipment then available at the station, there was no possibility for concern with color or special effects. Although the program was significant in a number of ways—most importantly for bringing artists in contact with the station—we felt considerable frustration and disappointment in the program as a whole. It seemed to me that, with a couple of exceptions, we hadn't really dealt with ideas or work specifically for television.

A brief encounter with a commercial station—coproducing a pilot program for a series that I thought would allow artists to work again with the TV medium—increased my understanding of the technical capabilities of a reasonably well equipped station. I began to consider the potential in tinkering with the dials and meters, and learned about the electronic systems involved.

*The Medium Is the Medium* was broadcast in Seattle at just about this time and was essentially my first contact with work being done elsewhere. Except for this program and brief contact with a Paik-Abe Synthesizer, my enthusiasm and interest in television and video was stimulated almost entirely by secondhand sources: *Radical Software*, Gene Youngblood's writing, occasional reviews in art magazines, and conversations with people who had seen some video work elsewhere.

Throughout this first year or so, I developed a growing awareness of the nature of the television audience, and tried in several ways to more specifically understand its character. The overwhelming concept for me was that the audience existed in very small living-room groups, all over the city or country—each viewer largely unconscious of the others. At the time, this seemed to be the most important aspect of television, and I was intrigued by the possibility of eliciting some kind of response or participation from that audience, perhaps by encouraging them to reach for and "play" with the few controls available to them. My interest in small-format and portable video was slow in developing, since I remained fascinated by the character of this audience.

In the summer of 1971, I included a video project in an arts event called "Contact:Northwest," organized for the city of Seattle. An artist, Ken Leback, was given the opportunity to use rented equipment for a single afternoon. Although he had previously used a portable camera and monitor in a series of projects, this was one of his first opportunities to use a video recorder. In retrospect, the situation seems absurd: He had the equipment for a total of about two hours, he drove to Seattle that morning from his home in Portland, and he worked in a crowded storage room at the art museum with the materials that happened to be on hand, plus three packages of Mexican jumping beans purchased just before the taping at a nearby

variety store. Under these circumstances he produced three short tapes, one of which, *Still Life*, remains a strong favorite of mine. This tape, approximately twenty minutes in length, includes the three beans on a white ground and a single horizontal black line toward the lower edge of the screen. The camera is motionless and the sound track silent, with the only movement being the occasional and unpredictable jerks of the beans.

The following spring (1972) I purchased a Sony portapak. It became a fairly normal and accepted part of my home, used on a daily basis by myself and friends, primarily to record and play back pieces of our lives. An almost incidental effect of having the equipment continually around was an eventual acceptance of my own face and shape, replacing my earlier tendency to apologize to myself for not meeting some ideal standards. There were instances when I was briefly pleased with my own use of the portapak—for example, a very short tape made of a friend, asleep and snoring, played back immediately through the TV set at his feet, for a "stereo snore." However, I think I learned at least as much about the potential of the equipment through its use by others as I did by my own use of it.

In 1972 and 1973, video activity in Seattle reached a peak of intensity, with considerable talk about changing the world, community access, alternative news, and political change. By sitting on panels, attending conferences and hearings, and by giving some support to the Community Television Project (Seattle's experiment in community access television), I expressed concern about the development of cable systems and public access to the production tools and distribution channels. In all this activity there was little distinction between artists using video and anybody else using it—a distinction that is not always necessary, but one that eventually seemed helpful in sorting out the effective work from the rest. I began to feel that "access" was fairly meaningless without good programs.

Another activity that began in late 1972 (and continues in 1975, though sporadically) was the Artist Television Workshop at KCTS. This project, which I helped organize and direct, offered artists the opportunity, on a weekly basis, to work with the equipment and studios of the station. The purpose of this workshop was to bring artists into the station, affecting and creating opportunities for both, although the artists probably benefited more directly than did the station. This was just about the first opportunity for Seattle artists to explore a television station's tools on a fairly open basis. From the beginning, the station established an informal connection with the National Center for Experiments in Television in San Francisco. People from the Center came to Seattle periodically for workshops and discussions, and several of us from Seattle visited in San Francisco. This exchange helped to focus some of my own questions about "video art," and was the stimulus for a great deal of discussion among the people I worked with. Although a number of very useful concepts concerning the nature and space of video were presented, I couldn't identify with the artists' stated concern to remove from their work aspects of broadcast television, journalism, narrative interests and so on, stressing a primary alignment of video with painting and music. I felt many of the limitations were unnecessary, and found the work, although sometimes interesting technically, seldom to be conceptually absorbing.

A certain luxury resulted from the KCTS connection with the National Center for Experiments in Television. The Center's influence resulted in a lack of pressure for the scheduled production of completed, broadcast-capable programs, although there have been several Artist Television Workshop broadcasts. This gave the work and the artists some additional room to find their direction. Very little of the work done was saved, and nothing on two-inch tape. This was due primarily to a lack of funds for tape and an initial misunderstanding—I hadn't realized that only two tapes were allocated to the workshop, and they simply were reused each time. Most of the work that was completed (and saved on ½-inch tape) utilized a very straightforward technique, an interesting amount of humor and subtle surprises, and an essentially conceptual orientation. An example of the work is a tape by Karen Helmerson which develops from the following premise: Each half of an interview dialogue was separately produced—each created and spoken by the same person—and these two images were presented through monitors sitting on chairs in a comfortable studio interview set. The lack of sophisticated color equipment probably encouraged these directions and made the facility less appealing to those interested in visual manipulation or more complex technical structures.

Broadcast was not often an available outlet for completed work, especially work done outside a TV station, and I began to consider new viewing situations. Through rather superficial magazine coverage of one or two "video theaters," I envisioned a kind of darkened film theater with a large audience. The format, as I imagined it, seemed completely unworkable, and in this judgment I undoubtedly referred back to my concept of the broadcast audience, with my ideal of a small and informal group in an unpretentious space (a living room). The first viewing situation that I arranged was a showing of tapes produced for "Contact:Northwest," held at the Henry Gallery of the University of Washington. It was a fairly ineffective first try. I presented two tapes simultaneously on monitors at either end of a gallery full of an unrelated exhibition that included a

camper, pinball machine, and hunting memorabilia. Even though one of the two tapes had essentially no sound track, and even though I avoided rows of chairs simply by not having any, the total effect was confusing.

The following summer, in "Group C," an event sponsored by the city of Seattle and part of its summer arts festival, a very direct and workable system evolved, though still fairly uncomfortable, since a concrete floor and a few chairs provided the only seating. Tapes documenting various festival events were immediately played back on a series of monitors, allowing a large group to break up into several smaller ones to watch the same tape.

After these efforts, I had several opportunities to see installations done by others. In the fall of 1972, the Tacoma Art Museum sponsored an exhibition called "Video Tape as Fine Art," and although this was the first museum in our area to acknowledge and show work on videotape (primarily from the Northwest and the San Francisco Bay area) I felt that the presentation was dreadful. It consisted of one very large room, completely, stumbling dark, with no seats, a large TV monitor mounted very high in each corner, and two tapes playing at once. In contrast, during a visit to New York the following spring, I saw and appreciated the videotape room at the Whitney Annual, which, when I was there, was lit normally, with a low island of three monitors in the center, each facing a different wall. There were couches, several chairs and pillows, and a rug on the floor. It appeared that much of this first work was done with little conscious thought of the viewing environment, and it seems to me that the implied environment in that work was the familiar one—the living room.

A very important exhibition for me in Seattle was "Circuit," organized by David Ross and presented by the Henry Gallery. It was the first real opportunity to see examples of videotapes by a substantial number of artists—fifty altogether—and I felt a little like a martyr in seeing almost all of them. During the hours I spent there, I learned of one difficulty in presenting video in a museum or gallery, at least at the time. Visitors to an exhibition generally expect to spend two or three minutes with each piece, and a single videotape required much more than that. In "Circuit" the average tape was about thirty minutes—an unendurable period for most people under the circumstances. Also, since in each room two monitors faced each other from opposite walls, the viewer could see more than one monitor from a single location, encouraging a comparison of color and tonal quality between the two images, which I found fairly distracting.

In addition to my growing concern for the proper presentation of individual tapes, I became gradually aware of work that goes beyond the format established by broadcast television and that is not presented with a single monitor and deck—video in an "expanded" situation. Probably the earliest example of this for me was a piece by Ken Leback, installed in his home in Portland in about 1970. A slice of meat lay on the roof outside a window for a month, with the image of the meat presented on a monitor in his kitchen through a stationary camera. Leback was interested partly in the changes that occurred over the thirty-day period, while I was intrigued that most people found it easier to watch the video image than to look out the window directly at the meat.

During "Group C" there were several examples of "expanded" projects, most of them well within the standard repertory of video "tricks," but new to us then. One was a fairly successful camera and tape delay set up for passing visitors. Another, the life-size real-time projection of viewers, was disappointing; the room we were in was extremely bright, the large rear-screen booth we had constructed of black plastic and shower curtain was definitely not adequate, and shortly after we got the piece going in a marginal way, the projector stopped working altogether. The most significant piece for me developed during an afternoon when a dance company came in to watch a tape just made of their performance. As they watched the tape, I photographed them with a polaroid camera, copied the photographs on a Xerox machine, and handed them each a copy. I became particularly conscious of the ability of these "instant" media to involve and respond to an audience.

With the important exceptions of seeing Peter Campus's *Kiva* (a closed-circuit installation with camera, monitor, and suspended mirrors) and seeing a performance by Mabou Mines with nine monitors, three cameras, and nine chanting performers, all my information about "expanded" work being done outside Seattle came from written sources undoubtedly embellished by my imagination.

Early in 1974, I established an organization named *and/or* which, in addition to a wide range of other activities, has had regular presentations of videotapes and events incorporating video. These have consisted primarily of the work of artists from the Northwest; despite occasional visits by artists from out of town, our primary connection to events and work done in other parts of the world continues to be secondhand—print and tales told by friends. Ken Leback describes an interesting effect of the lack of firsthand experience in his very regular disappointment upon finally seeing original work; he has found that it very rarely lives up to the mental image generated by earlier descriptions.

The lack of frequent public showings in the past and the continuing lack of work from other places also means that there has been little chance for the development of an intelligent and responsive audience, although I think we have established a beginning. In addition to being, of necessity, self-reliant in terms of finding equipment, the individual artist using video in Seattle must be his/her own audience, critic, and stimulus. The audience response has only now begun to grow beyond the point of being impressed simply by the presence of the equipment.

The video presentations at *and/or* have given me and the people who work here the chance to explore a variety of methods of exhibition, and our flexible and open space has been essential. Video has recently begun to be included in film festivals and programs in the Northwest, but these seem to ask video to fit a film format—to become a "little film." The film programs are generally held in auditoriums or theaters and are usually unable to deal with much of video's potential—closed-circuit installations, live performance, multiple-monitor constructions, etc.

I find there are distinct advantages to being in a city that is small enough for connections and cooperation to develop between *and/or* (and by implication, between artists using video) and television stations, the art museum, dance and theater companies, and the university. I think this also keeps us a little closer to the general community and within a fairly broad context that includes the gospel mission and Kentucky Fried Chicken, our close neighbors, as well as larger segments of the community such as ethnic communities and the city government. Partly because of the size of the city, there is no feasible way to focus an organization solely on video, even if that were desired. At *and/or* the interweaving of video in an overall program with performance, books, practical workshops, sculpture, and installation pieces increases my understanding of it as simply one more tool, and enables me to move from idea to idea through different media.

# VIDEO ART INSTALLATIONS: THE TELENVIRONMENT

**Peter Frank**

Video is commonly regarded as a temporal medium. The technological nature of video, however, gives it relevance not only in time but in space. Due to the nature(s) of its presentation, video exists spatially as well as temporally. A whole area of video art has capitalized on this spatial factor, permitting the manipulation of video not only as image but as object.

Like film, its most immediate aesthetic predecessor, video presents a series of evolving or more rapid sequential images, normally accompanied by sound. As in film, the video image usually appears in a specific, recognizable visual frame, has a specific visual texture, and undergoes a specific kind of distortion in its "removal" from tactile, three-dimensional reality. The most common method of displaying video, on the tube of a television set, differs distinctly from the traditional method of displaying cinema. But the console monitor, as an isolated image-bearing object, maintains much of the "show" relationship to its audience that characterizes cinema: The proscenium stage that cinema inherited from live theater is perpetuated by the television screen (the intimate box format of the console even suggesting a puppet stage). Interestingly, recently developed methods of projecting video onto large screens, as much as they might mimic the usual manner of presenting cinema, accentuate the peculiar "feel" of video by enlarging the details of its picture (its grain, its color, its figural distortion). Video is thus removed that much further from film in sensory terms, while the two media are brought closer together methodologically.

As much as video might resemble cinema, its technical aspects distance it significantly from the film medium. Video does not operate on the concept of the photograph animated by sequential occurrence at trompe-l'oeil speed. Rather, video is a medium of electronic transmission. The transmission can be onto a specially treated tape whose magnetic bands are rearranged to record the visual-sonic message for later playback (as with sound-recording tape), or the transmission can bypass this recording process and appear with the speed of light on a video screen, like a visual telephone. Video thus affords present- or past-tense viewing, in forms that expand and even transcend the static, purely pictorial format of film projection, insisting on a whatness and/or a whereness uncharacteristic of the cinema screen. The medium of video thus permits, even provokes, the manipulation of space as well as of time.

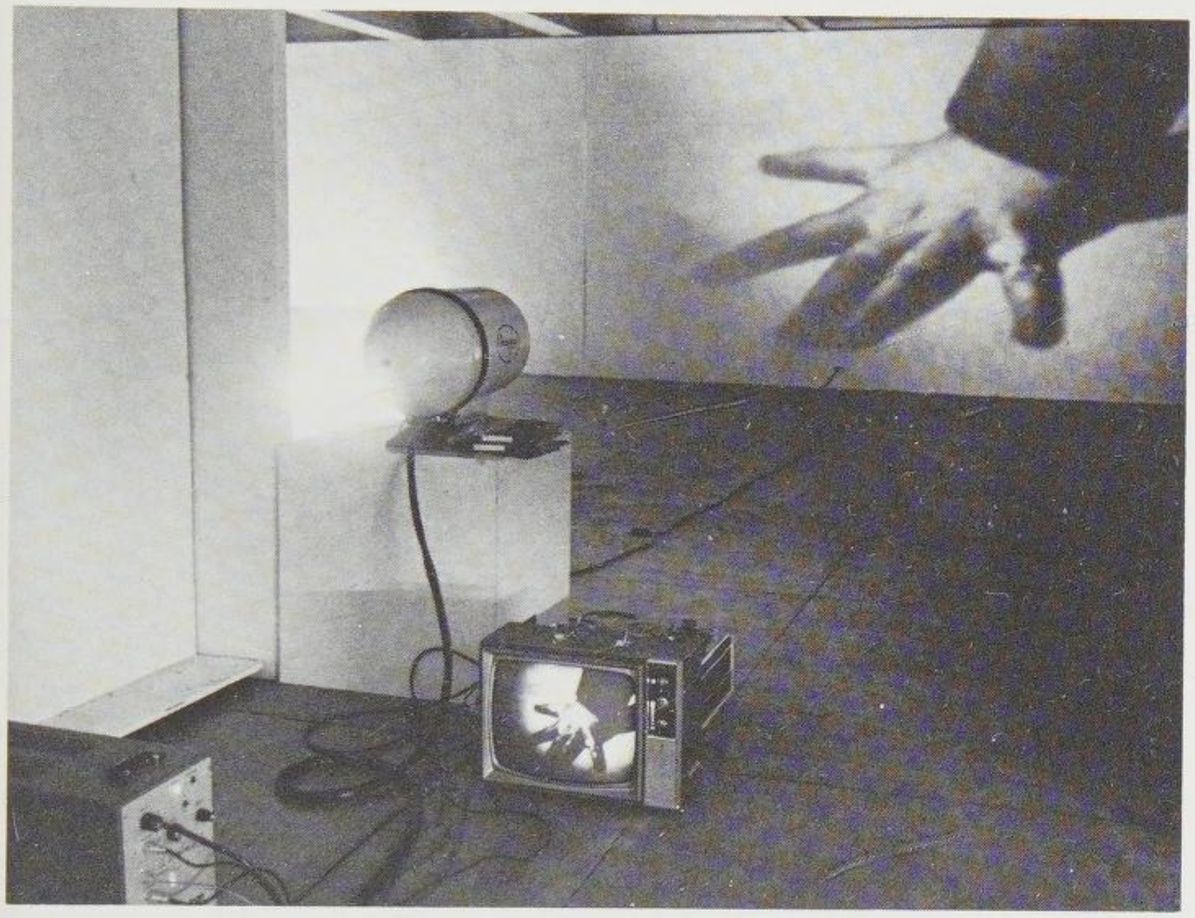
The interface in video of the third and fourth dimensions allows the creation of a situation—an object or an environment—kineticized by the variable images that comprise it, partly or *in toto*. This includes situations as direct as multi-monitor tapes, discussed elsewhere in this book, or as complex as installations occupying whole galleries, museums, or like spaces.[1]

The artwork realized so far in video-cum-installation has encompassed as many different aesthetic styles as has the rest of video art. One basic distinction can be made on a technical basis, however, between installations incorporating video monitors and installations incorporating video projectors.[2]

The use of video projectors has not been nearly as widespread as that of monitors. This may be due to the impressive "heritage" of monitor installations—which predates that fateful day in October of 1965 when Nam June Paik introduced video itself as an artistic medium—or, more likely, due to the shortcomings of projectors themselves, at least until recently. Earlier projectors were not only prohibitively expensive, but also ludicrously unfaithful to the transmitted image. The magnification of the image made the electronic scan lines all too pronounced, and the color registration, where possible, was extremely sour. Only in the last couple of years have video projectors been improved to a point where they are good enough and cheap enough to employ commonly in the home.

Certain artists, however, always tend to be creative with the flaws of a medium. Keith Sonnier, for instance, put the grotesque distorting properties of the old Amphitron projector to good use in his environments of 1970–1972. In the earliest environment, set up at the Castelli Gallery warehouse in New York, the vibrant, flickering videotaped images (of people manipulating the foam rubber cubes that comprised the environment's most tactile element) were coordinated into an open arrangement of light and light-related elements (neon light, glass, mirrors). This use of projected video as light image continued in Sonnier's installation at the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, Holland. In his New York Museum of

Modern Art installation, Sonnier introduced live video transmission that, with other elements in the piece, accentuated the role of spatial distortion—without minimizing the role of light. The effect of this expanded role for video projection was to create, in Kenneth Baker's words, a "pictorial space," literal rather than, or as well as, optical.[3] In his 1972 Castelli Gallery installation Sonnier gave the projected video, live and taped, an almost exclusive role in establishing the nature of the space, including few other items in the environment.



*Video Wall Projection*, Keith Sonnier, 1970. photo: Peter Moore courtesy Castelli Gallery

Peter Campus, who has created almost a dozen projected live video installations since 1972, concentrates even more exclusively on the video component. Rather than using the video image as a factor in a "pictorial space," Campus creates an actual "video space," projected on walls and on quasi-reflective barriers, that poses a direct and disconcerting confrontation of the viewer with his or her own image.

The most disconcerting aspect of this confrontation is not that it provides a normal reflection, but that it doesn't. What is encountered is another version of oneself, a sometimes vertigo-inducing *de*flection of one's image into an image that exists neither in the form nor the space to which one is accustomed when looking in a mirror or seeing oneself "on TV." Approaching *Shadow Projection*, one's projected image coincides with one's shadow, one shrinking while the other grows. The same anticongruent superimposition occurs in *Interface*, this time between one's projected image and one's image reflected in glass. One's perfectly mirrored image does become a component in *Kiva*, but Campus throws mirrored reality for a loop by arranging a complex intersection of two rotating mirrors which feed into the camera and reflect the monitor at once—or, due to the rotation pattern, alternately. (Here the projection of the image is effected by mirror rather than projector.) Campus toys with the viewer's attempts to come into contact with his or her image in *col*, wherein the camera's line of sight runs parallel to the wall of projection, but the projection itself falls on the wall at an oblique angle, so that the viewer's image moves frustratingly back and out of focus as the viewer moves toward it.

Campus's visual-spatial conundra are all the more effective for their disarming physical simplicity, their material openness and spareness. They capitalize very simply and directly on certain physical laws and relationships that closed-circuit video projection, by transmitting "around corners" and into space, enlivens into richly complex sensory illusions.

If the use of a video projector casts the video image into an environment, allowing it not only to be in, but to *be*, a space, the use of video monitors concentrates the image back into a pictorial state, encapsulated in an object. The objecthood of the TV box might be minimized by multiple-monitor formations; on the other hand, artists might capitalize on this very objecthood. In fact, the earliest "television art," predating videotape work, concentrated on the TV set as an object—an object embodying a social phenomenon.

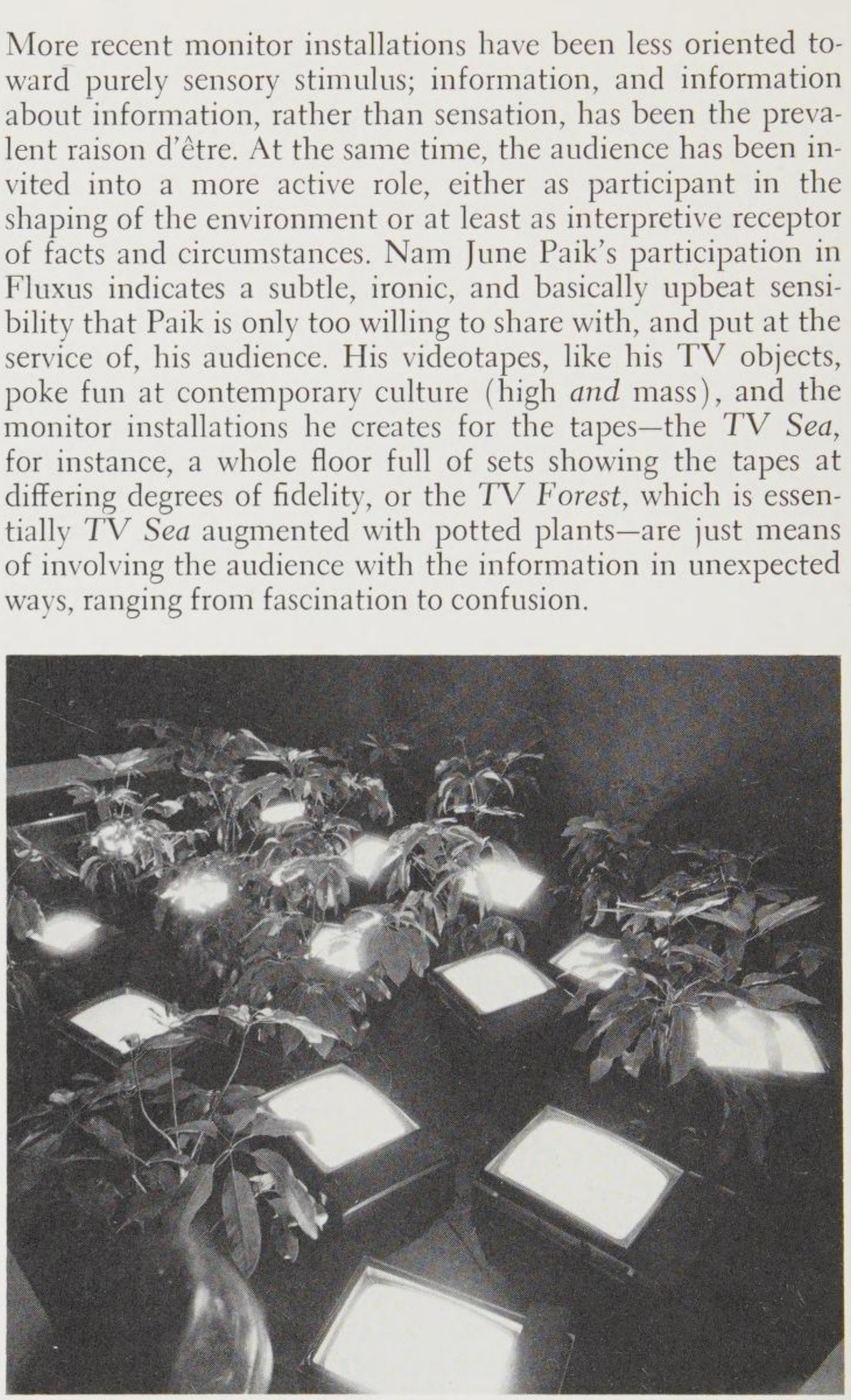
These TV works came out of Germany in the early 1960's, produced by artists whose responsiveness to the lingering memory of Dada, and to other aesthetic manifestations this memory had spawned,[4] brought them into Fluxus. Fluxus was an antimovement dedicated to undermining the seriousness of conventional avant-garde culture (by 1960 the avant-garde had assumed definite conventions) by slipping into the art-stream small doses of what passed for foolishness and ennui, but actually posed serious existential questions, in Zen ironies, about aesthetics. For most such Fluxus and Fluxus-allied artists, such as Wolf Vostell of Germany—who in his *TV-De-Collages* desanctified the value and purity of the still-new invention by disrupting the picture and even damaging the box—television was just one device of many in the consumer society. But for Nam June Paik, a Korean working at the electronic music studio at the Cologne radio station, television became the paramount medium. Paik began working with television in 1960, manipulating the picture through electromagnetic and electronic means (and ultimately developing, with the Japanese Shuya Abe, a video synthesizer). As often as not, however, Paik would utilize the set itself as an object, a sculptural mass with distinct cultural connotations.

Paik's willingness to let the video medium speak through its most common, commercial format—video as furniture, a familiar fixture in the household—continues in his more recent droll inventions, such as a television replacing the seat of a chair (face up) and a Buddha figure staring at its own live TV image (miniaturization of the set abetting these inventions), not to mention puns on the monitor screen made of castoff set frames. Paik's inventions for cellist Charlotte Moorman—a cello made of televisions, a "TV bed," even a "TV bra"—further typify his fond irreverence for the TV set. Other video artists of a similarly wry turn of mind emulate Paik's rich perception of the television phenomenon. Shigeko Kubota has draped a veil over a set showing her tapes. Douglas Davis has turned a set, tuned to a nonbroadcast channel, to the wall in a dark room. Davis, in fact, has treated the video *camera* as an object in tapes made in Santa Clara and Cologne, subjecting it to all sorts of indignities (burying it, smashing it into a mirror, lowering it out a window) and recording the experience through the camera's own eye. A similar objectifying and process recording of the video equipment occurs in *Going In*, a large film of a camera-holding Davis walking toward the cinema camera coupled with a videotape of film maker Jud Yalkut holding a camera and backing away from the video camera. (The film-video conjunction approaches an installation format.)

These manifestations are "environmental" only by implication, suggesting a world of video outside the screen by heightening awareness of the objecthood—sculptural and/or societal—of video paraphernalia. The sensory, and by extension the participatory, character of the video image itself as defined by the monitor format is exploited by many artists who wish to redefine the context in which a video image is experienced. The set is unimportant, except as the bearer of the image. As in projected video environments, environments of video monitors make an object of the image itself.

Early examples of video-monitor environments, realized in the late 1960's, came out of the then prevailing aesthetic pertaining to technology. The spectator was seen as the more-or-less passive focus for a bombardment of visual and aural sensations. The John Reilly-Rudi Stern *Intertube* of 1970, an enclosed space in which the viewer is surrounded by kaleidoscopic reflections of his or her live video image, exemplified this. Aldo Tambellini's Black Gate work with monitors (showing both tapes and closed-circuit images) in conjunction with projected slides and live light sources went further in enriching the visual fabric of the space. Richer yet was *Photon: Strangeness 4*, an environment designed in 1968 by Les Levine which combined an electromechanically triggered video system with vibrating wires and kinetic mirrors.

More recent monitor installations have been less oriented toward purely sensory stimulus; information, and information about information, rather than sensation, has been the prevalent raison d'être. At the same time, the audience has been invited into a more active role, either as participant in the shaping of the environment or at least as interpretive receptor of facts and circumstances. Nam June Paik's participation in Fluxus indicates a subtle, ironic, and basically upbeat sensibility that Paik is only too willing to share with, and put at the service of, his audience. His videotapes, like his TV objects, poke fun at contemporary culture (high *and* mass), and the monitor installations he creates for the tapes—the *TV Sea*, for instance, a whole floor full of sets showing the tapes at differing degrees of fidelity, or the *TV Forest*, which is essentially *TV Sea* augmented with potted plants—are just means of involving the audience with the information in unexpected ways, ranging from fascination to confusion.



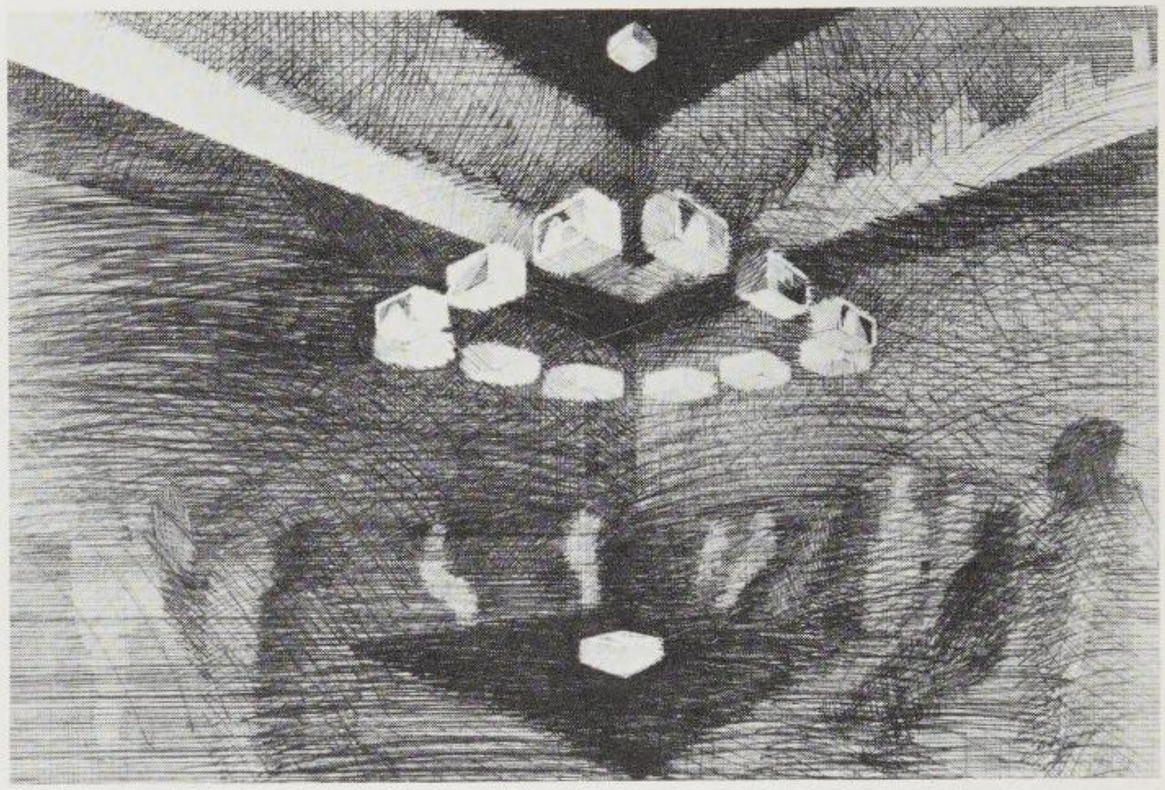
*TV Garden*, Nam June Paik, 1974 photo: Will Brown

While Paik creates fun houses around his tapes which focus ultimately on the tapes and not on the space, other artists who incorporate monitors into their environments create a give-and-take of information between the tapes and the spaces erected around them. Paul Kos, in his *REVOLUTION: Notes for the Invasion MAR MAR MARCH*, places a monitor face up in a pulpit-like platform that also bears a typewriter. Viewers reach this platform by stepping over a series of planks set on the floor at regular intervals. On the monitor is a tape

of a figure high-stepping, as if over the planks, her feet coming down on the words "MAR MAR MAR MARCH . . ." as they are typed below her by a huge typewriting mechanism. The experience of approaching the monitor (across the planks) is essential to the comprehension of the video information, and vice versa. Likewise, a videotaped interview between Roger Welch and the only person ever to survive an accidental spill over Niagara Falls, while informative in and of itself, is given greater significance when situated across a darkened room from a huge screen on which is projected a larger than life-size film simulating the path he took down the rapids and over the falls. Finally, the objecthood of the monitor itself is reemphasized by Dennis Oppenheim in an unrealized project wherein two sets are dragged over a sooty floor, leaving tracks, and are brought to rest on either side of a glass partition. The monitors show information—a mouth "relating aspects of *int*ernalization . . . vs. *externalizing*"—that serve to clarify the symbolic content of the installation (one side of the glass vs. the other).

The use of video monitors—and, for that matter, video projection—in multimedia manifestations continues from the 1960's, although the hardware has become a great deal more sophisticated since Tambellini and Otto Piene brought together video and projected lights and slides in Cologne (not a decade ago!). The Ant Farm, a collective based in San Francisco, utilized video as just one medium among many in their time-space spectacular, *20/20 Vision*, done in Houston and complete with a hookup to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Bill Etra habitually combines his abstract video syntheses with other media such as lasers and strobe lights; in *Astral Projections* Etra joined forces with Survival Arts Media and the Central Maine Power Music Company to create a "polyfusion of media" in the Strasenburgh Planetarium of Rochester, New York.

Juan Downey frequently combines video with other media in the creation of ambitious performances and installations whose anti-imperialist political message is sometimes overt and always unmistakable (no less so since the wave of repression in Downey's native Chile). Downey's earliest multimedia piece, *Communication*, was realized in Washington, D.C., in 1968. *Communication* was an almost didactic demonstration of communications theory and practice. Such means of communication as radio, telegram, walkie-talkie, and closed-circuit video were brought together and interworked. In the 1973 *Plato Now*, staged at the Everson Museum in Syracuse, Downey combined video and prerecorded audio with brain-wave detection (the alpha waves of the participants, whose faces were seen on the monitors, triggered recorded quotations from Plato); another performance in Syracuse, *Three-Way Communication by Light*, effected the exchange of faces and voices through the use of video, super-8 film, and laser beams. The more recent *Video Transamerica Debriefing Pyramid* is pretty much a single-medium performance work, although the arrangement of the monitors is based on the proportions of the Cheops pyramid in Egypt (proportions that, not coincidentally, have been shown to be relevant throughout science). The monitors, suspended in their octohedral formation from the ceiling, display tapes of pyramids and other ruins of the great Mexican and Central American Indian civilizations. In performance, a dancer moves centered beneath the octohedron and around a closed-circuit image of herself imbedded in the platform on which she dances. Downey's most recent installation, *The Maidens of Honor*, incorporates pretaped and closed-circuit video. The tape documents a performance (which itself incorporated film), and the closed circuit views the interaction of the audience and projected slides. The slides are of Velázquez's "La Meninas," and, in fact, the closed-circuit camera is positioned behind a large reproduction of the painting (so that its vantage is equivalent to that of the king and queen in the background).



*Video Trans Americas Debriefing Pyramid*, Juan Downey, 1974.
photo: Harry Shunk

A less extended form of monitor environment, stemming essentially from multi-monitor, is the installation of closed-circuit monitors in which not only space, but also time, is distorted. Time-delay systems employed in multi-monitor arrangements create disorienting situations in which the present is experienced concurrently with several pasts. Two of the earliest examples of such work are Les Levine's *Contact: A Cybernetic Sculpture* and *Wipe Cycle* by Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider. In *Contact* the disjuncture between monitors is established in time *and* space; the eighteen monitors are linked

to nine cameras, aimed in different directions. *Wipe Cycle* disperses the time-space unity even further, including as it does prerecorded videotape information and even commercial broadcasts.

A more recent work by Schneider, *Information Collage for the First Days of the Last Quarter of the Twentieth Century*, not only disperses the monitors themselves about the space (*Wipe Cycle* was called a "TV mural" because of its flat, single-vantage presentation), but also enriches the multi-temporal experience by capitalizing on a phenomenon of closed-circuit broadcast wherein figures and objects in motion leave distinct "shadows" of themselves that decay relatively slowly; in other words, there is a record on a single screen of the immediate past and of its continuous progression into the present. Schneider calls this phenomenon "video echo."



*Video 75: An Information Collage for the First Days of the Last Quarter of the 20th Century*, Ira Schneider, 1975.
photo: Kathy Landman

Gillette's more recent pieces have included several environments in which biological phenomena—chickens hatching, the progress of a termite colony, the life cycles of different plants and animals—are broadcast in real time on multi-monitor matrices. In *Track/Trace* and other works, Gillette has continued as well the use of time delay in involving the viewer in his or her own image.

A conceptually intricate use of time delay, used in conjunction with closed-circuit broadcasts bridging disparate spaces, is found in the recent installation work of Dan Graham. Graham, whose video performances of the late 1960's and early 1970's emphasized the singular vantage of the video camera (with regard to the changing position of its bearer), has since designed several video situations for "normal" environments (suburban homes and the like) in which the perception of vantages is disrupted. Time-delay techniques have been employed in Graham's more "public" installations, such as the mirror-lined room entitled *Present Continuous Pasts* in which the monitor in the wall, showing an eight-second delay image, interrupts the visual and temporal continuity of the present-tense image reflected by the wall. An even more disconcerting work is *Yesterday*. In it one room of the gallery is seen and heard on a monitor placed in another room. But while the sounds are those being produced simultaneously with the broadcast, the image is of the remote room as it appeared precisely twenty-four hours earlier.

If many of the works discussed so far have effected spatial, as well as temporal, disjuncture through the use of projection and multi-monitor installations, Bruce Nauman's "performance corridors," from 1968–1970, each establish—or at least intimate—such disjuncture by using only a single monitor. The monitor happens to sit at the far end of a long, narrow corridor made of two extremely high construction-board walls. The journey down the corridor is itself disorienting, and when the participant comes close enough to the monitor to perceive its image, he or she finds that it is a totally different view of the same corridor—a view, say, of the participant from behind. The video image, like that in Graham's *Yesterday*, does not effect an actual sensory disorientation so much as it postulates an ideational one. The eye is not confused; reason is challenged.

The personal scale of Graham's and especially Nauman's spaces is turned by Vito Acconci and Willoughby Sharp into autobiographical revelation. The environments on which they train their closed-circuit systems are defined not by the presence of the spectators, but by the presence and actions of the artists themselves. Acconci has locked himself in a small room and ruminated passionately (if abstractly) on his personal affairs, his face and voice broadcast onto monitors scattered about the main exhibition space. For his part, Sharp lived in a sealed artificial space erected within a gallery for several weeks, his confined daily routines visible to the outside world via monitors. In these and other video actions by Acconci and Sharp—broadcast live and recorded on tape—ambiguities are established in the distance between artist and audience. The artist is physically removed from the spectators, but at the same time he indulges in intense psychological self-exposure, allowing spectators at least a voyeuristic role through the unidirectional communication of closed-circuit transmission.



*Air Time*, Vito Acconci, 1973 photo courtesy Sonnabend

The audience is drawn into video intimacies of its own in a recent device by David Cort, a video love couch that transmits information about each partner to the other. The love couch grew out of Cort's *Transposer*, a device connected to a monitor that allowed the participant to modify the image merely by moving his or her hand over a surface analagous to the screen and modifying it accordingly.

Dieter Froese's *Re/stages*, which incorporate film, photography, and other reproductive media—with video usually the predominant medium—go even further in making a participant of the spectator. The spectator *is* the sole subject matter: Froese records a movement or gesture by a participant, then asks him or her to restage that movement, all the while subjecting that movement-image-idea to technical and conceptual restaging of his own. If the original movement is recorded with video, the restage may be recorded with another video, or with a Polaroid snapshot, which may then be projected on the wall, a tracing made of the projection, a written description made of the tracing, etc.

The participation of the spectator is also of prime significance in the situations—part classroom, part sideshow, and part laboratory—that have been created by Shirley Clarke and her TP Videospace Troupe. With the help of cheerful "guides" the spectator experiences the phenomenon of closed-circuit transmission directly; he or she becomes an integral part of the installation in a palpable sense. The spectator is the reason for the presence of video in the first place as well as the information that the cameras happen to feed to the monitors.

The participatory video environment grows outward from here—especially if one were to consider the artist-designed video events aired live by such adventurous television stations as WGBH in Boston which invite spectators to come into contact with their home viewing screens or even to call into the station and feed their own information into the broadcast. Technically these broadcasted works do not qualify as environmental installations; their information is confined to the screen of the TV at home. Conceptually, however, they operate within, and with, the natural, everyday environment. They hint at a societal environment enlivened aesthetically—and culturally in a broader sense—by a system of broadcast into which anyone can feed information, and which anyone can avoid at will by changing the channel or pushing the Off switch. This is not a *1984* usurpation of privacy; it is the democratization of communications technology.

Meanwhile, artists continue, and will continue, to make public and private installations incorporating monitor and projected, pretaped and closed-circuit, sensory and participatory video. (If and when the utopia postulated above becomes a reality, that continually changing and growing body of material can become a source, one of many, of information and imagery for video artists.) I have tried to give consideration to as many such artists as I know of, all the while haunted by the certainty that I am neglecting someone or other of significance.

This essay, written in New York, has an East Coast bias. West Coast and Middle American video artists may very well not be fairly represented; European video artists, not at all well known in the United States, are certainly short-changed. Then, too, those factors defining a video "installation" from other kinds of video work are debatable; perhaps I should have considered simple multimonitor arrangements, or perhaps I should not have considered video performances. Where image ends and environment begins, where environment ends and performance begins—these boundaries are tenuous, if they exist at all.

NOTES

1. Multimonitor installations such as those created by Andy Mann, Beryl Korot, Woody and Steina Vasulka, and others, in which the focus of attention is purely the videotape transmission—despite spatial installation of the monitors—fall outside the scope of this article (although not very far).

2. Performance pieces have also incorporated both monitors and projectors, with the latter having the more dramatic effect; witness its early use in the pieces by Alex Hay and Robert Whitman from the Nine Evenings for Art and Technology staged in New York in November of 1966.

3. Kenneth Baker, "Keith Sonnier at the Modern," *Artforum* (March 1971).

4. Including the aesthetic philosophy of musician John Cage, the manifestations in the late 1950's and early 1960's of *nouveau réalistes* such as Yves Klein and Jean Tinguely, and the Happenings of the Japanese Gutai group and of artists like Allan Kaprow and Claes Oldenburg in America.

# "WHERE DO WE COME FROM?, WHERE ARE WE?, WHERE ARE WE GOING?"

**Hermine Freed**

From the point of view of postformalist developments in art, the portapak would seem to have been invented specifically for use by artists. Just when pure formalism had run its course; just when it became politically embarrassing to make objects, but ludicrous to make nothing; just when many artists were doing performance works but had nowhere to perform, or felt the need to keep a record of their performances; just when it began to seem silly to ask the same old Berkelian question, "If you build a sculpture in the desert where no one can see it, does it exist?"; just when it became clear that TV communicates more information to more people than large walls do; just when we understood that in order to define space it is necessary to encompass time; just when many established ideas in other disciplines were being questioned and new models were proposed—just then the portapak became available.

Many of these issues have been raised elsewhere, yet I shall reiterate the basic thrust of postformalist concepts specifically in reference to their relationship to video. Video has several qualities that make it a particularly useful tool for coming to terms with some of the most difficult social and philosophical issues raised.

Formalism brought artmaking to such a stalemate that it forced a requestioning of both the meaning and purpose of art. The formalist position was, in brief, that the meaning of art was in its form, and that all art is and always has been art because of the nature and quality of its form, and the content (i.e., extra-aesthetic content) was irrelevant to its value as art. It is, they said, of no concern to the aesthetics of a painting that the woman depicted is a madonna. From the viewpoint of art, she might as well be a whore. The conceptualist position was more supportive of this view than most of its proponents are wont to admit. They agreed that all art was about art, but pointed out that the form is arrived at through ideas about art and nonreferential form is not only unnecessary but also impossible to achieve.

If conceptualists favored content, most continued to eschew extra-aesthetic content, at least at first. But the result, if followed to its logical conclusion, would be a void. New strategies were proposed which focused on relational meaning; body and performance art; earth art; experimental conceptualism—these were offered as alternatives which could expand the possibilities of meaning in art. The question remained, "What is valid as content in the art context and what is not?"

Before continuing, I would like to point out that there was a strong social current running against the tide of formalism. If, on the one hand, meaning was a philosophical question, purpose was the social side of the coin. How would paintings and sculptures be used once they were made? Intentions and messages aside, they would, it was hoped, be sold, but to whom? If sold in the private realm, they would, in all likelihood, be bought by the affluent and function as sophisticated interior decorations. Or, as Hans Haacke has adequately explained, they are purchased by corporations or museums (which are essentially corporations), supporting, once again, the power structure. Most of the audience for art owns little or nothing of it. Arguments abound against the art marketing system, the making of cultural artifacts which may well be irrelevant to the culture, the relegation of art to museums, etc., etc. The alternative, once again, was performance and body art (which is not product-oriented), earthworks (which are ephemeral), and conceptualism (which exists on paper).

If paintings and sculpture are elitist and available to the very few, performances, body works, earthworks, and conceptualism tend to be even more elitist, albeit in another realm, as they are available only through information about them in the media. Very few have firsthand experience of these works. But, the argument goes, all that we know about any art is what we know through the media. It is rare in Peoria to see a real painting.

Built into artmaking, at least on some level, is the desire to make cultural artifacts. Every medium leaves some record of its existence. Composers leave scores, playwrights leave scripts. But, the argument goes, we oughtn't to bother leaving records because they are subject to change and to reinterpretation.

A "Mona Lisa" in a museum, color changed with age, may have little to do with the "Mona Lisa," *in situ*, when it was first made. In my view, this is true and unavoidable. The past is constantly reinterpreted in the present, and if one wishes to participate in the present, one leaves oneself open to misunderstanding and reinterpretation. And, in point of fact, those doing performances have made films and tapes to keep a record of those performances; earth artists have made films, photos, tapes, sketches, and models of their work in order to keep a record of it (and to make salable items), and conceptualists, too, have visualized their ideas as objects for sale.

Most of us do wish to make something when we make art, but something neither irrelevant nor truly misused, even in the present.

I myself was drawn to video in this climate of uncertainty largely because it seemed to by-pass all of the problems raised. It is difficult to use video tapes for interior decoration. They are infinitely reproducible and can, theoretically, be owned by anyone. Elitism in art is essentially different from elitism in, say, music and literature, since books and records are economically available to almost anyone and painting and sculpture are not. Video offers the possibility of mass marketing in the form of cassettes (which are admittedly still fairly expensive) and, in the near future, discs (which will be as inexpensive as records). In point of fact, video is potentially economically totally nonexclusive, since it can be, and has been, shown over the air waves, either on TV or CATV, bypassing the art marketing system and ownership entirely. A recent conceptualist publication, *The Fox* took that marketing system so heartily to task that I was surprised to note that there was no mention made of video in the entire issue. Yet videotape can by-pass all of the problems of marketability, reproduction, availability, and function which no other medium can. The purpose of art, after all, is communication, and television is a far more relevant medium for communication today than is canvas.

But we must return to questions of meaning. What is to be communicated? What makes communication in art different from communication in literature or theater? How does video as art differ, if at all, from television? Since the video image exists in time as well as space, records sound as well as sight, can be altered, and can be shown in large scale, multiple-monitor (or projection) installations as well as in single channels, it offers enormous possibilities in expanding the parameters of art. At the same time, it helps to clarify those overstated form-content, life-art controversies through the use of image. In this sense, video is more closely aligned to early modernism than it is to formalism, because the image is used in the service of content but is not necessarily the content itself. In impressionist painting, the image may be a landscape, but the content is the effect of light on visual perception. For the cubists, the image was a still life or a portrait, but the content, in oversimplified terms, was the relationship between the viewer and the object viewed in respect to time and place. In abstract expressionism, the imagery is abstract but the content (to oversimplify once again) related to Freudian free association and Jungian myth. With video, too, the image is in the service of the content, but since it is in constant flux, it is neither the content nor the extra-aesthetic subject matter. Rather, it is an abstract construct, a metaphor for the idea which may have little to do, per se, with the image perceived (which is why still frames from videotapes are often so meaningless). The image is the vehicle for the content of the work. A tape of a person walking, talking, or kissing is not about walking, talking, or kissing, but rather about, for example, duration, extension, time and interaction with the monitor image. The gestures in video that may seem meaningless are demonstrations of aesthetic principles through time.

The question of time is crucial to the importance and meaning of video art. Our sense of time has been so radically altered in the last quarter-century that it seems impossible today to consider visual perception without its temporal component.[1] The airplane, space travel, the telephone, the computer, and television have altered our sense of time and place far beyond the comprehension of our fellow humans one hundred years ago. We may well question the quality of the TV product, but there is no question that it has changed our awareness of time and space; more information is transmitted simultaneously to more people in more places about more people in more places via television than through any medium previously known. That alteration of consciousness has affected our sense of being in the world, our awareness of events. It has reduced the line between public and private information; communications systems make secrecy in public life rather difficult.

I believe one major reason that video has been more attractive to artists than film is the possibilities inherent in the sense of spontaneity and simultaneity which are particular to video. Anyone who has been in a TV control room where several camera shots from the studio and several channels from other studios, on and off the air waves, are monitored at once understands that sense of simultaneity in real time which is unique to video.

It is not surprising that the content of a great deal of video art is time. Early video tended to be an exploration of those

aspects of time which are unique to video—instantaneity resulting from the ability to play back a tape immediately without processing; time delay; the simultaneous use of several cameras or several monitors allowing the possibility of recording or playing back several images in the same place, or several images from different places all occurring at the same time. The possibilities are endless, and the methodologies vary enormously. Dan Graham's time-delay video mirror room is a live installation comparing the video mirror with a real mirror. The room is a mirrored cube with a video monitor installed in the wall. As the viewer enters the room, he is at first struck by the multiple mirror images of himself. The monitor, however, seems to mirror the space, yet without the viewer's image. Suddenly, he sees himself entering the room on the monitor—a rather startling and dislocating experience. The discrepancy between the video image and the mirror image operates on several levels. A video image is a "normal" one; you see yourself as others see you, as opposed to the reversed image of a mirror. In time delay, you see yourself objectified, in the same relationship to yourself as to anyone else in the room. Playing back a videotape of yourself, close to the time of the recording, causes you to see yourself as others see you, according to your behavior, rather than as you normally see yourself, according to your feelings. If many video artists have been involved in psychodrama, it is in direct reference to this aspect of the medium.

The psychodrama of video may seem revolutionary, but it does have its precedents, especially in the work of the abstract expressionists and surrealists. Self-portraiture, too, can be taken as a variety of psychodrama. It can be considered as that aspect of art which focuses on the process of artmaking and the persona and ideas of the artist rather than on the product and the object perceived.

Most video art can be seen, in fact, as process- and idea-oriented rather than product- and object-oriented. The time element itself intensifies the unfolding aspect of both form and idea. If the abstract expressionists' work was process-oriented, we are still left with the product. I've written elsewhere about the relationship between video and abstract expressionism, and, in particular, about some of Bruce Nauman's early work as a metaphor for the process in a Pollock painting, although it is doubtful that he meant it to be such a metaphor. In Pollock's work, the image is paint. In Nauman's, the image is Nauman. In video, the human element in artmaking is primary. If motion is desired, human motion is most controllable. If many artists use themselves, it is because they have the firmest control over themselves; it is easier to do something the way you want it done than to try to explain what you want to someone else. Artists are accustomed to working alone. If the artist uses his or her own image, it is more likely to be because of that need to work alone than because of narcissism.

With video, the process is the product. All images or apsects of an image function in service of an idea. In that sense, it is more difficult to discuss the form of video than the form of painting, since the video image is in flux. The structure is as much a function of time as of space. A single videotape might explore all the variables of a form that would engage a painter for a year. But since it is ideas more than forms that structure tapes, one tape by a particular artist may look very different from another, although the operating principles may be similar.

The image may be of relatively little importance; John Baldessari's talking tapes and many of Bill Wegman's tapes, for example, seem more involved with conversation than with image. The framing edge is still, and they might be seen as moving portraits. The image of the artist is an exemplification of the fact that art is made by artists, that people are products, and that we know more, through the mass media, about personas than about products.

Wegman's work, in particular, pushes at the boundary between TV and art. His jokes are often related to perception: dropping a ball and then its shadow, changing a personality with facial gestures. He plays with the response to his monitor image, but he uses video as TV.

A great deal of video art breaks down boundaries between the various disciplines. If art is about art, what are the parameters of art? This question was asked by dancers in the mid-sixties whose dance was understood more in the art world than in the world of dance. Artists today are questioning principles of time, space, motion, consciousness, experience. The methodologies may differ, but we are looking for interrelationships. These interrelationships might be understood more clearly if related to disciplines other than the arts. Only recently have scientists begun interdisciplinary cooperation, opening such new fields as biophysics, astrobiology, psychomedicine. Specialization has frequently blinded us to the obvious. Video is an art tool which permits the breakdown of boundaries in many directions. There are those video artists far more concerned with the extensions of the boundaries of television or dance, for example, than with artmaking per se. Yet even those particularly involved with artmaking are pushing at boundaries. Vito Acconci's work becomes psychodrama with highly formalized metaphor. Joan Jonas's work is interaction

between performance, dance, and video, sensitively using the video image as an end in itself.

Narrative in video pushes at the boundary of literature and poetry. My most recent tape, *Family Album*, could be taken, on one level, as an autobiography, although my intention had little to do with personal revelation. It is about time in memory, memory in time. Its structure and organization are arranged as a composition in time on the one hand, and a metaphor for memory on the other. Past collides with present, present is superimposed on past. The narrative may relate to my life, but the phrases are all time warp phrases: "What do I feel today that is a reflection of what I felt when I was three?"; "I remember saying that I would never be that way when I grew up but I don't remember what way." In my eyes, the tape is a work of art because of the content, the structure, the composition. Yet it pushes at several boundaries at once, and I'm sure there are those who respond to it as literature.

Does the use of electronic music in video make it visualized music or art with a music sound track? At best, it is an interaction between the two. Video artists have had to learn from other disciplines which have always been temporal.

I, for one, still think that art is about art, although I'll concede that my definition of art is probably a great deal broader than it might have been a decade ago. The abstract expressionists and surrealists showed that all perception is not in the eye. Today many of us question the view of reality we see with our eyes, recognizing it to be but a small fraction of whatever might be real. Video artists have worked with camera images, often in order to negate the absolute reality of the images their cameras see. Video, in fact, is an excellent tool for working with altered states of consciousness and vision, since it has many properties which make alterations of reality seem ordinary. The use of several cameras at once to create superimpositions (either opaque or transparent), split screens, and holes in space, and use of synthesizers to create distorted images, artificial color, etc., can create images which have little to do with what we actually see with our eyes. For those who are skeptical about video because they cannot understand objective imagery as art, I can only point out that distorted video is as subjective as a painting and even straightforward, single-camera video is, a priori, subjective as is any image framed and isolated from its context.

Video artists make pinning down definitions difficult, and that is its strength. Recently WNET-TV produced a TV program of videotapes, *Video and Television Review*. It was, at first, startling to see art on television. Then it seemed only reasonable, since it was helping to break down just one more barrier.

1. Hermine Freed, "In Time of Time," *Arts Magazine* (June 1975).

# OBSERVATIONS ON THE SCOPE OF MULTI-CHANNEL VIDEO WORK

**Davidson Gigliotti**

Video artworks encompass a wide variety of aesthetic positions, but some distinctions can be made. There is, for example, a difference between video works that refer to the broadcast environment, and video works that do not. There is a difference between interactive works, works predicated upon a direct relationship between camera, monitor, and viewer, and fully appreciable only by direct experience; and works that make no participatory demands. There is a difference between works that extend the systematic and contextual scope of the medium, and works that use it only to record activity. The inherent flexibility of video ensures other differences as well.

These distinctions are important only to demonstrate that one critical framework will not cover the whole practice of video art. The purpose of this article is to look at some of the distinctions between multi- and single-channel work and, within that context, to offer some observations on video and time.

For some artists there are certain tensions leading to a dissatisfaction with single-channel work. These tensions are involved with the enforced visual and temporal linearity inherent in the single channel, limiting the area of our focus to the contents of a single screen, with its pervasive mental reference to broadcast television and all its implications.

Anyone who has ever been in a television control room, or even seen a picture of one, will realize that the multi-channel video experience is not new to video, nor is it a product of video art. Input flows into the control room from all the cameras on the floor, plus whatever auxiliary inputs there are; each is displayed on its own monitor in an array that can easily be seen by the control-room occupants.

Surveillance systems in plants, office buildings, and larger apartment buildings are often multi-channel video environments and, in financial terms, constitute the largest use of closed-circuit video. Our activities in space are observed on banks of monitors on Earth, each adding its information to the matrix. Multi-channel displays are to be found in war rooms, newsrooms, classrooms, laboratories, therapy institutions of all kinds, not to mention police and fire departments and other governmental agencies. That they are sometimes used in socially negative and unproductive ways does not detract from the fact that they add dimensions to observation uncontainable by a single-channel system. Among these dimensions is scale.

Scale is not usually what one thinks of as a feature of video, but multi-channel works of all kinds reflect scale in that they cause us to distribute our attention over an array of monitors, making the perception of the relationships among them important. Single-channel works that are presented on several monitors do not sustain this. After a short time we usually settle on one monitor for viewing purposes. The kind of scale to which I refer puts the viewer into the position of being invited to widen his or her perceptual focus. As focus widens to include the whole work, it loses intensity but gains extensity. Single-channel work demands strict attention to the screen, since it is the sole visual manifestation of the program. To take one's eyes away from it for a moment interrupts the program substantially. Multi-channel work demands a different kind of attention. As our perceptual focus widens, we begin to ask ourselves: How is this work to be viewed? Do these channels all carry information of the same value? Are we to view them all at once, or in some kind of order? Does the nature of the programming provide some kind of clue, or perhaps the nature of the system? Where are we supposed to stand?

In single-channel work these questions hardly arise. As viewers, we have a handy and convenient mode for watching single-channel information. Our focus is on the content; we take the form for granted. In multi-channel work these questions are as much a part of the artist's problem as the program material. With this in mind, let us look at a simple delay system.

Delay systems proliferated in the late sixties and early seventies; by now they are part of the classic video-art vocabulary. The often eerie beauty of some of these pieces opened the eyes of many to the aesthetic possibilities of multi-channel work.

Imagine a simple delay system requiring two decks, two monitors, and a camera. The decks are set up with the tape threaded on the machines so that it passes off the drum of the recording deck onto the drum of the playback deck, by-passing the take-up reel of the former and the feed reel of the latter. The decks must be carefully positioned as to relative height and angle to each other. The delay period is determined by the distance the tape must pass from drum to drum. Plug the camera into the recording deck and start the machines; the camera image pops up on the recording deck monitor, and several seconds later on the playback monitor as well. With additional processing the two images could be shown on one monitor; or decks and monitors could be added to the system, with a delayed procession of images occurring at intervals down the line. The manipulation of the time track is the essence of the delay system. The programs are visually identical, but are being played in adjacent time as well as adjacent space, like a visual "round." There's a lot going on. A perceptual adjustment has to be made in order to view the piece; watching a single monitor won't tell you anything about it.

Another perceptual dimension peculiar to multi-channel work has to do with apparent resolution. The quality of the single video image itself is generally reckoned poor by optical standards. The 525 lines that are flashed on the screen every thirtieth of a second can organize only a limited amount of information. In conventional broadcast practice, this limits the kinds of images that are considered to be effective on the screen to close-ups of easily recognizable shapes. Resolution is considered too poor for complicated images. This militates against the kind of attention that single-channel work demands, particularly when the program material is unfamiliar, as art programming often is. It is possible that much of the boredom complained about in video art is as much a product of poor resolution as poor programming. By adding more channels to the system, however, the field of information is increased; and although resolution remains just as poor on the individual screens, the actual number of lines available to carry information is multiplied by the number of channels added. If resolution can be defined as the capability of making closely adjacent optical images distinguishable, and if we can consider the increased field of information as a whole, then I believe we can say that multi-channel work has the capability of increased apparent resolution, enabling complicated visual information to be handled with more precision.

Video, both single- and multi-channel, is a temporal as well as a visual art. Time in music, dance, traditional poetry, and ancient Greek tragedy is measured in beats, which are valuated by their creators and performers relative to changes in melody, movement, language, and mood. Time in film and television is traditionally measured according to principles derived from storytelling, where the concepts of narrative, continuity, and editing probably began.

Storytelling, an aural-temporal activity whose structure is probably related to the structure of memory, became literature, a visual-spatial activity. Duration in literature is measured in pages and paragraphs, and only in the broadest sense in terms of time. Editing is the process of organizing literary space economically, and continuity is a product of this. The assumption is that some information is more important to the storytelling process than other information, and that compressing the whole field of information in the interest of the former will elucidate the story, emphasize continuity, and save space and reading time. When these principles are applied to film and video, the units of measure become lengths of time instead of pages and paragraphs. I call this approach to organizing information *compressed* time.

In our culture, compressed time is the preferred method of indicating time in media of all kinds, for understandable reasons. Humans take twenty years to mature (at least!), age relentlessly, and seldom live a hundred years. Our understanding of time and our evaluation of it are circumscribed by this harsh schedule. Compressed time is our way of saving time where possible. It is bizarrely but logically implicit in our cultural equation of time and money. Money itself is a compressed-time device. So widespread is this attitude that most individuals and institutions demand information in compressed time. Radio and television both began as real-time media; but in response to cultural pressure a compressed-time format was imposed on most programming, even though aired in real time. The development of recording and editing techniques has served to reinforce its use in that way.

When I think of time in the everyday sense I am tempted to call it real time; but this term, which is derived from computer terminology, is almost always used to mean an abstraction of everyday temporal experience. True everyday temporal experience is subject to all kinds of conditions to which real time is not. Not only does our memory tend to compress time as it becomes past, and our unconscious to compress time as we sleep, but our direct perception of time is not always uniform. Einstein's charming illustration of relativity demonstrates this. Time spent in the company of one's beloved is experienced very differently from time spent sitting on a hot stove, even though both periods might be of equal duration. Real time occurs only when everyday temporal experience is translated into media. When we speak of real time in video art, it seems

to suggest a more uniform experience than time in the everyday sense, although that may be what the artist wishes to denote.

At least some part of the revision of art in the last fifty years has been a product of concern with everyday temporal experience; serial photography, stream-of-consciousness literature, some modern and postmodern music, drama, dance, and film have been exercises in this area. Though compressed time is still the preferred style, these works have successfully raised our appreciation of real time to the degree that there is an acceptance, in art at least, of a real time vocabulary. Not surprisingly, a great many video artworks are produced from a real time point of view, with a subsequent increase in our critical sensibilities in this area. This is a product of an interest in everyday temporal experience, a preoccupation with performance on the part of some, and the unique adaptability of the video medium to real-time expression. This last feature deserves further consideration; after all, film also has the capability of real-time expression, and has occasionally and notably been so used. Long sequences in film are costly to produce. The kind of equipment necessary to "take" an uninterrupted half-hour, and the resources necessary to process it, preclude the casual experimentation that is required if one is to become familiar with the nature of real-time expression. The simplicity with which this can be done in video tends to militate against the use of film in works where time is the subject.

When I refer to real time and compressed time, I mean mediated time; in this case, time as it is expressed in video. I consider real time to be a media model of everyday temporal experience, and compressed time to be a media model of the subjective experience of memory. Both of these aspcts of time are capable of single- and multi-channel expression.

There is another mode of mediated time, which I call *expanded* time, and which I associate with multi-channel work. I identify its analogue in subjective temporal experience with contemplation. It is similar to the sort of time that we experience when viewing the sea, the stars, fire, fish, clouds passing overhead. These experiences have certain things in common—an element of predictability, an emphasis on the present and the moments adjacent to it, and the absence of a clear-cut beginning or end to the experience. What is "expanded" about it is the sense of the present moment. In Einstein's illustration it is time spent in the company of one's beloved. As one example of expanded time, let us consider the delay system again in this happy light.

The delay system has no programmatic beginning or end, no single point of focus, no narrative, and yet it engages a broad spectrum of our attention. The emphasis is clearly on the present moment and the moments adjacent to the present moments. The spell of the delay system is the spell of pure continuity unencumbered by narrative. This situation is aided considerably by the dimensions of scale and apparent resolution mentioned earlier in the article. These two elements work against the sense of boredom that narrow focus on a poor-quality image would entail if the same treatment of time were attempted in a single-channel work. They relieve viewing pressure, allowing for the possibility of a more contemplative state. You might say that video works that express expanded time could be considered media models of meditation.

One of the things that video art has to be is a search for new methods of structuring information. Multi-channel work seems to offer flexibility and precision, both visually and temporally, and so it seems attractive to me. Other kinds of work and other considerations than those that I have mentioned are equally important. We are all still at the beginning of this work, and tomorrow we will make new structures.

# MASQUE IN REAL TIME[1]

**Frank Gillette**

Occidental industrial man has defined himself into a shrinking niche of separateness, isolation, and condescension vis-à-vis the natural world while believing he has conquered it. This belief, with its accompanying myths and rationalizations, culminates in an unlimited exercise of private judgment linked with an "advanced" technology positing itself against the "external" environment. Ecocide and extinction are now authentic possibilities.

A nascent function (or role) of art, the artist, and aesthetic agencies lies in countering and reversing this belief, these myths and rationalizations. Through the *sensual* embodiment of a select perceptual range, art, indirectly and directly, generates stratagems of purification and ecological world models. From the image of a stag painted on the walls of Lascaux some 15,000 years ago to the most recent electronic articulation in light, the unique value of artistic form derives from its "capacity to convey information that cannot be coded in any other way."[2]

1. Any substantial body of work in art is an evolution of a private (emotive, subjective) yet somehow shared and accessible epistemology, or *way of knowing*. The artist's task, his stock in trade, is sustaining a coherent and dynamic equilibrium while creating an evolving variety of forms. Art is the *sine qua non* for developing informational contexts, or realms of discourse, through which discontinuous and novel synthesis integrates the heretofore unlinked. By breaking in fresh psychological or psychic space the artist, therefore, informs survival, which requires a constant "supply of uncommitted potentiality for change, i.e., flexibility."[3]

1.1 Although any specific aesthetic process involves its embodiment in a medium, art is not restricted to any limited range of media and behaviors. The identification of art with certain historically sanctified media supports the same prevailing myth that characterizes art as essentially antienvironmental, and the aesthetic process as one that is exclusively isolative. Communication technologies provide a new continuum of media categorically different from and independent of the historicity of *prime objects*.[4]

1.2 "Mind is eternal, insofar as it apprehends an object under the species of eternity."[5] Thus art is here defined as (a) the production of "objects (or contexts) under the species of eternity," (b) as the medium for the transmission (or programming) of increasing degrees of discontinuous variance, (c) synergistically, as the best (optimum) possible combination of materials, events, systems, ideas, (d) functionally, as the trace (mapping, recapitulation, metaphorization) of the flow of essences (processes) through their course of (probable, anticipated, potential) changes-in-direction (differences-in-pattern, rate, paradigm) as experienced (perceived, intercepted) by the artist.

1.3 A deliberate deviation from a given body of rules which determine formal concerns governs germane aesthetic activity. Each case involves individual human beings behaving in eccentric characterological ways. Communications technology, on the other hand, has been programmed and deployed overwhelmingly by contrary means, i.e., with great emphasis on low variety, conformity, and repetition. Since art provides the incentive to experience the unfamiliar, any event/object/concept utilizing contemporary communications technology as its medium is a priori a declarative statement, heuristic in spirit. This confluence of attitude-of-mind and technology represents an alternative course to the automatic, conforming influence of technological application.

2. Video systems are the most accessible and viable means to this conjunction of aesthetic process and technical sophistication. They materialize the potential link between the artist and the planetary exoskeleton of communications systems, television, holography, protean computer networks, satellites, etc. Inasmuch as video is the first full materialization of this *linkage* principle, it exemplifies the proposition that art is environmental. This primacy will obtain until the subsequent displacement shift in communications technology.

2.1 Since video does not redefine established relations between viewer and *prime object*, but opens and develops new relations, its aesthetic capacities cannot be under-

stood in the wake of prior models of interaction. Video is in itself an unprecedented channel of relation through which the artist evokes and transmits states of awareness, sensations, perceptions, compulsions, affects, and thoughts. Paradoxically, as the artist gives shape to this set of relationships, his role returns to revive the primordial functions of the shaman and the alchemist, since art becomes a *record* of a process and not the manipulation of passive materials. Within this view, the artist's subjective-emotional state, i.e., his hybrid forms of introspection, and the technology which conveys them constitute parallel continuums.

2.2 Artistic media can be understood as extensions of the body. The video *network*, in this sense, is the extension of a neurophysiological channel, the connection between the world and the visual-perceptual system terminating in the prefrontal neocortex. Video can thus become a record of the resonance between that channel—eye/ear/prefrontal neocortex—and natural processes in time. The first criterion for a video aesthetic, then, is the economy of movement in the use of the camera as a record of mediation between the "eye-body," taken as the symbol and substance of the entire viscero-somatic system in video art, and the processes being recorded. Through a kinaesthetic *signature* which individuates the "loop"—eye-body, the technology itself, and the processes being recorded—the artist transmutes random information into an aesthetic pattern.

2.3 In the longer arcs of biological/genetic activity, continuity is the rule, while in the interstices of history—epochs, eras, generations, and individuals—continuity is the exception. The imposition of values derived from a perception of continuity, as history, upon the high variety and discontinuity of day-to-day living results in a distortion of our expenditure of flexibility and capacity to adapt. A corollary effect of the increasing use of video systems is the alteration of our apprehension of both the historical record and daily existence. Since video is a medium of real time, i.e., it transmits the temporal quality of the process being recorded, it alters our experience of our own memory, of history, and of daily life. This alteration is always idiosyncratic to the artist's attitude, or orientation, toward his center of gravity as he steers the camera. The body sense in relation to its environment through technology is the impacted perception which that complex of eye-body/technology/environment is itself recording. Thus video is a primary ecological medium.

3. "The proliferation of resemblances extends an object."[6]

Orthodox aesthetic hierarchies are rooted in systems in which value, in general, is measured by the rarity of *prime objects*. Within the context of the video medium, however, it is possible to produce masters which can be replicated indefinitely, each copy equal in fidelity to the other and all to the original. Since video is purely informational (conceptual) and provides one example of the dematerialization of art, it requires new criteria for choice of content—an original *axiom of choice*. The nature of recording in videotape, in this perspective, involves bringing previously undetected patterns above the threshold of perception. These include configurations of meaning and metaphysical relationships that are subject to exposure in real time as well as purely visual patterns and aural textures. Choice of subject/content/process in videotape presupposes an awareness of the distributive nature of the medium. Hence, the place of *prime objects* in hierarchical aesthetic systems is filled, in the electronic media, by the concept of *network*.

3.1 Change is commonly associated with the overthrow of hierarchies. Things change for the better or for the worse; they never merely change. The central obstruction to the full acceptance of the video network as an artistic medium in its own right is the fear that somehow or other *prime objects* will be devalued and traditional hierarchies, some of which have been accorded the status of guiding myth, will be replaced. In reality the issue is one of expanding our expectations of the potential of art to move and affect the world. It requires an integrative, as opposed to a reductionist, attitude of mind that favors diversity, variety, and novelty as evolutionary ends in themselves. For "human consciousness is in perpetual pursuit of a language and style. To assume consciousness is at once to assume form. Even at levels far below the zone of definition and clarity, forms, measures and relationships exist. The chief characteristic of the mind is to be constantly describing *itself*."[7]

NOTES

1. This paper is a version of a presentation given at the World Man conference in Moltrasio, Italy, September 1974. It has been edited with the assistance of Marco Vassi.

2. E. H. Gombrich, "The Visual Image," *Scientific American* (September 1972).

3. Gregory Bateson, *Steps To an Ecology of Mind* (New York: 1972).

4. The term "prime object" is from George Kubler, *The Shape Of Time* (London: 1962).

5. Spinoza, *Ethics* (V. prop. 31) "Mens aeterna est, quatenus res sub aeternitatis specie concipit."

6. Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel* (New York: 1951).

7. Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art* (New York: 1955).

# VIDEO/TELEVISION SPACE

**John Hanhardt**

This essay is not an exhaustive survey of the current state of video art as expressed in video installations, or a proposal of multi-/single-monitor, projected, or environmental/sculptural possibilities. Rather, I will deal with a selection of specific multi- and single-monitor installations discussed within the context of the cultural and social experience of television. This does not include the use of monitors in performance (as in the work of Nam June Paik or Joan Jonas) or the television set as the subject of a videotape as in Paik's *Suite 212: The Selling of New York*. My comments are centered on examining four video installations, one each by Telethon, Beryl Korot, Frank Gillette, and Shigeko Kubota, and are devoted to raising some questions about what the viewer experiences in dealing with them. The viewer is seen as being conditioned by a specific television experience, namely that of commercial television. I am aided here by having viewed all except one of the video pieces under discussion and by having the aid of still photographs that document the exhibitions to refresh my memory. In addition, I am a fairly regular television viewer attempting to assess my experience with television.

The medium of video is a new medium of representation. In the hands of the artist it has been used to record and encode experience through normative and radical formal strategies. One way to discuss video art is to see it strictly in terms of its own history and practitioners. I am not attempting to do this. Rather, I wish to look at a series of video environments as activators and occupiers of specific architectural spaces, and draw some comparisons between them and regular commercial television viewing within the generalized living space of the general viewer. The facts about the pervasiveness of the television set and its programming in, and on, American culture and society have often been stated and interpreted from a variety of points of view. Telethon, one of whose video installations is cited here, has noted the following statistics and taken its cue in its video tapes and environments:

> Since its beginnings in the 1930's, television has become a vital force in determining our culture, our values, and our fantasies. Despite what people think about commercial television, consider these facts: the TV set is on an average of five hours and forty-five minutes a day; ninety-seven per cent of all families in the United States have at least one set; and between the ages of two and sixty-five, an average American will spend nine full years watching television—one quarter of his waking life. [Telethon]

The single fact that 97 per cent of all American homes have television sets and that millions of individuals experience the same program is significant to the video artist because he cannot escape this background which he shares with the audience. The story of television, for most of us, is one of nostalgia and half-remembered viewing experiences. This possession of television by the viewer's memory is enhanced by the fact that its viewing takes place in the home. As opposed to the motion picture, with its history of genres and styles embedded in the public's mind through the consistent effort of directors and studios and the iconography of stars and genres, the television networks' product has not been allowed to develop various styles and forms to the same extent or depth. Television is instead remembered much as one might remember one's undistinguished children's books, for the association of images and readings.

The space in which one customarily receives television is a living home/environment. One's perception of the television screen takes in everything else filling in the space as the eye darts about a fully lit and occupied territory. In addition, the viewer sees the screen from various perspectives and places as he moves out of the "television room" and continues the "television experience." The television screen is a part of a piece of furniture which the viewer takes in from a variety of perspectives and levels of attention. This is not the case for film or for most of our cultural experiences that are not home-oriented. In the theater, which is a foreign space, attention is focused on the screen or stage, unlike television where program design and narrative structures do not require close attention or any concentration.

All of these factors come into play when the artist approaches video and the audience perceives it. Much as the independent

film artist is in a continual process of discovering new forms of narrative structures, or new forms of expression to make his work independent of those structures; or as the poet seeks to utilize formal conventions or explores new openings for language compositions, the video artist is in the position, whether consciously or not, of working against the conventions of a medium which is so associated with the forms of commercial television. This does not deny extra contexts an artist may acknowledge or be unaware of, such as aesthetic or theoretical concerns in the other arts or the influences of other video artists. But it does propose that we appreciate the associations and tensions that the viewer brings to video art. By this is meant the content and form of the image and the contradictions of the television monitor in gallery and museum contexts. The complex of contradictions and associations attached to the medium of television demands our attention when we are dealing with independent video art. The works selected for discussion do not directly acknowledge television, with the exception of Telethon, which embraces it with a single-minded purpose both in terms of the videotape and the installation. It is a necessary step for the history and theory of the medium that we begin to place those achievements within this context for examination.

THE TELEVISION ENVIRONMENT. Telethon is the group name for Billy Adler, John Margolies, Van Schley, and Ilene Segalove (though the membership of the group has changed over the years). The video installation produced by Telethon that I have selected for discussion is called a "living room tableau" and was exhibited in 1972 at The Art Galleries, University of California, Santa Barbara, and at The Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. Telethon describes the



*The Television Environment* by Telethon.

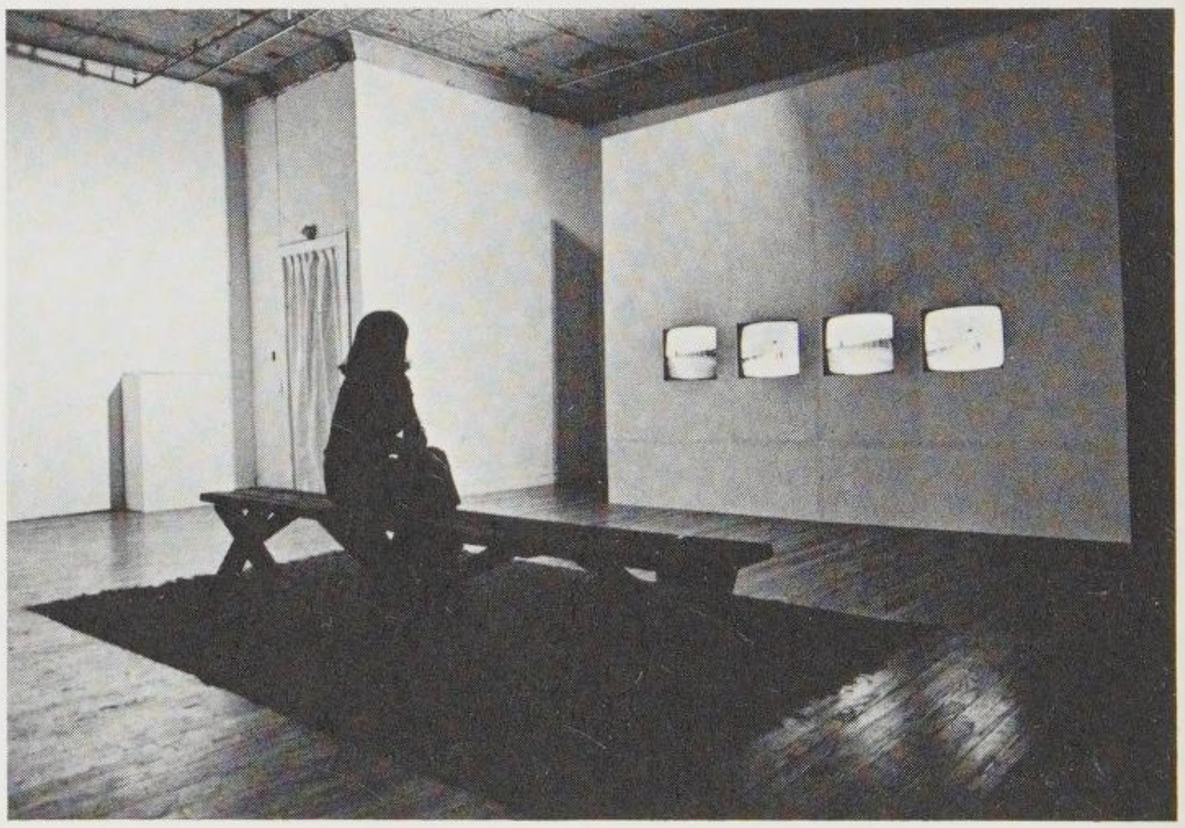
environment as a "prototypical living room tableau" in which the gallery-goer can sit and watch Telethon videotapes. The tapes are edited collages from commercial television, and Telethon has produced a number of them (*Richard Nixon: 1968–1974; Commercial Television Collage*). I will not describe here all the activities or the genesis of Telethon; I refer the interested reader to *Radical Software*, "The TV Environment," vol. 2, no. 2, and *Film Comment*, "Television: Videology," August–June 1975.

The living room tableau provocatively confronts many of the questions raised in the beginning of this paper. Although it is the one exhibition mentioned that I have not viewed, it least suffers from this fact. The tableau tacitly acknowledges television's very quality of being an integral part of the home environment and, in the process of placing such an arrangement in a gallery, reveals what the space actually is. It is a living space in which the television is a central article of furniture. The semicircular arrangement of chairs in relation to the television acknowledges its centrality and membership in the communal/family living space. While conversation is often about material on the TV, the TV set can also serve as a silent observer to conversation. The nature of television programming requires little concentration, so the viewer is able to glance, talk, walk in and out of the room, turn the sound off, and keep the picture on—that is, to deal with the television as an unaggressive and generally passive family member.

The viewer of the Telethon environment in the museum concentrates on the image on the screen both because of its familiarity (images collected from commercial television) and because the "tableau" makes them reflect on their accustomed approach to television. Telethon's presentation of its tapes accepts the associations of the television environment and in the process places it in a museum context. Commercial television does not figure as directly in the other installations, yet these works subtly acknowledge television by attempting to subvert it.

DACHAU 1974. Beryl Korot's four-monitor installation is a treatment of a place, the concentration camp in Dachau, West Germany. The monitors are horizontally placed, with monitors one and three and two and four each having identical sequences. The rhythms articulated through the timing of sequences and juxtaposition of spatial perspectives create for the viewer a many-leveled experience. There is the nature of the images—selective compositions which cumulatively present the camp as a geographic, architectural place. The viewer is disturbed when he realizes what the place actually is. There is also the elegant structuring of sequences which involves the viewer on an exploratory participation into the interconnections and decipherment of these sequences.

The entire presentation is a contradiction of television and a subversion of its accustomed presentation. The documentary expectation of television is totally subverted. The presentation of the camp is unlike what one expects from single-monitor (image) television. Also, each of the four images is masked by a white partition that only leaves room for the individual screen. This demands from the spectator a frontal viewing, and the four screens require the viewer's complete concentration. The greater the attention paid the work, the more rewarding the work is, as its viewing is a process of discovering both what the place is and how it's presented. Its installation at The Kitchen in New York had a simple bench placed directly in front of the monitors, and positioned on a nearby wall was a diagram describing in chartlike form the sequencing of images. This schematized chart is a further step in divorcing the experience from television, by describing the conscious plan involved in presenting the four sequences. The further



*Dachau 1974*, a 4-channel work by Beryl Korot. photo: Mary Lucier

masking by the paneling eliminates the dials of the monitor, including its casing, thus even denying the screen its context within the television set.

Korot has very deliberately stripped the piece of any connection to television or customary framing of the experience or approaches to the television set. *Dachau 1974* demands to be seen as a piece in time—it should be seen all the way through from beginning to end—and from a direct frontal position with no distractions. The strategies to achieve this have included eliminating all evidence of the TV set, including

isolating the monitor's screen by masking. The screen is that part of the television with which the viewer is least familiar, since television is customarily taken as a whole experience and a complete piece of furniture (as Telethon has shown).

TRACK/TRACE.

> Three television cameras record and transmit the contents of the gallery to a matrix of 15 television monitors arranged in the face of a tetrahedron. A switching device changes images every 12 seconds. One monitor is mounted at the apex, two monitors are mounted on the second row, and so on to the last row of five monitors. One of the three television cameras picks up the viewer and feeds his "live" real-time image to the single apex monitor. The image is delayed three seconds and then replayed on the second row. It is then delayed an additional three seconds (now a total of six seconds) and replayed on the third row. This cascade process continues until the last, or fifth row, displays the original image twelve seconds after its appearance on the top monitor. When the cycle is complete, these images (from the three alternating cameras) generate 36 variations in time and space. All 15 monitors feed back their contents simultaneously. ["New Learning Spaces and Places," *Design Quarterly* 90/91. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.]

This quotation from artist Frank Gillette succinctly states the technical achievement of this work, which I saw installed at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Gillette's tetrahedron of monitors displays the instantaneous recording of activity in front of the monitors through a complex delay of playback. The viewer's experience with this work is the initial realization that he is "on television" and being recorded. The display of monitors makes it clear that we are seeing individual TV sets. As the viewer becomes more involved in the piece, the spatial and temporal displacement reveals a more complex scenario of experience to him. The display of the monitors is totemlike in its acknowledgment of the medium's iconographic significance, as the video camera's eye is made to read the room and the content of its recording is played back to that room. The viewer's attention scans the continously changing image/message, causing him to reflect upon himself within a specific space. Rather than being a scientific or transcendental experience *Track/Trace* makes the viewer aware of his physical size and proportions in relation to the distance from the camera and within the television's frame.

Gillette's installation is "live" television, which displays the unique multi-image reading of a place and situation. It is a

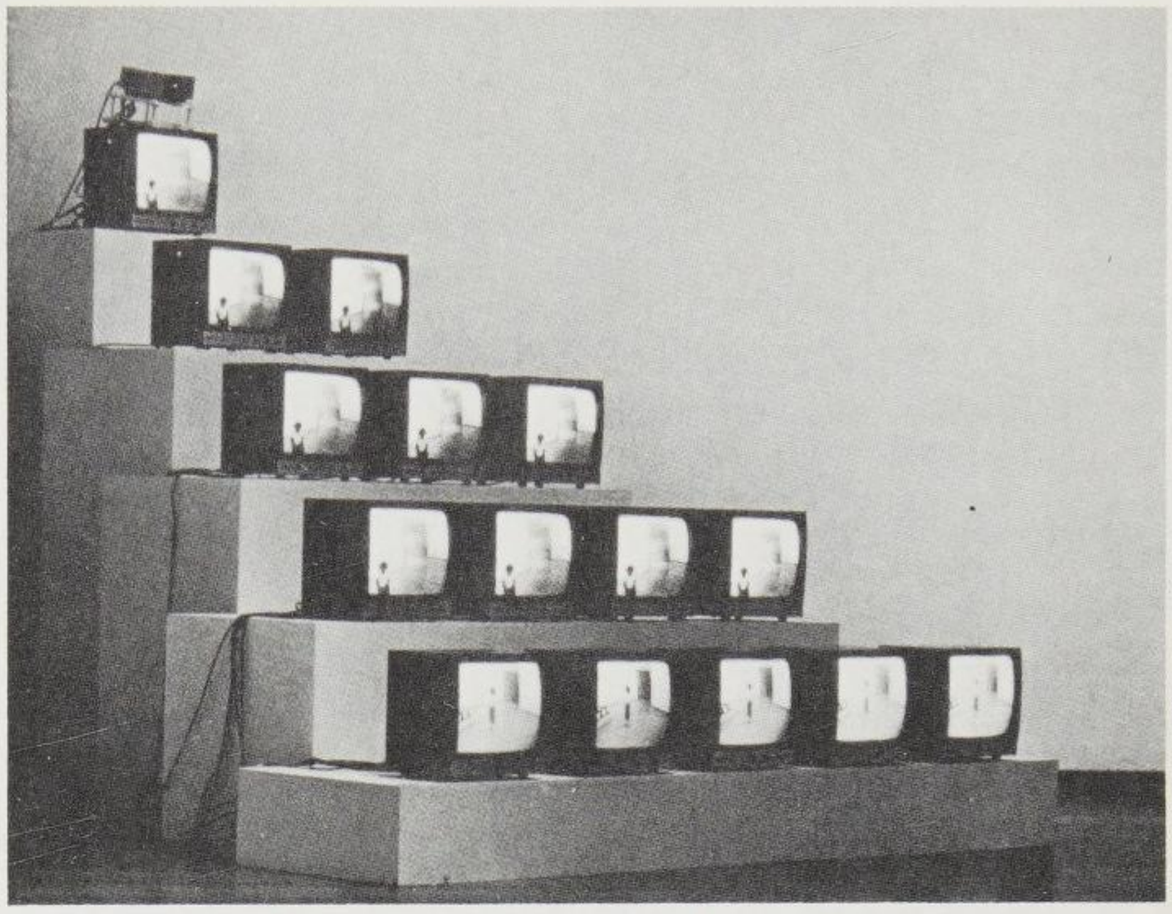


photo: Les Turnau

*Track/Trace*, a video time/space work by Frank Gillette.

definite extension of the video experience. The movement of the moving image from screen to screen displaces the importance of the single image while affirming the need to look at the monitors both singly and collectively. The space in front of the Gillette piece is activated by the video-camera dissection and playback of the space, while in the television environment of the home the TV set's passive image is interacted with as a surface message. *Track/Trace* opens up the monitor and the medium.

VIDEO POEM. Shigeko Kubota's installation at the Kitchen in New York employs eleven color monitors placed vertically on top of one another. Stretched out on the floor in front of the monitors is a mirror. The same videotape is playing on all the monitors (a tape of Marcel Duchamp's grave, which has been colorized). There is a wall statement on Duchamp at the end of the floor mirror opposite the monitors, creating a continuum from the monitors' image/information which is reflected across the floor to the wall statement. Thus the gallery's space is enclosed by the movement of the monitors' images and their reflection. The viewer participates by reading the monitors and moving around the mirrored "carpet."

The monitors are used by Kubota as a sculptural piece. All the images flow into one another, and the screens are masked by the housing which contains the monitors. It is a display that acts as a vertical construction of video screens. The screens are all small, further reducing one's ability to read them. Thus, as one examines a sculpture to appreciate its details but can

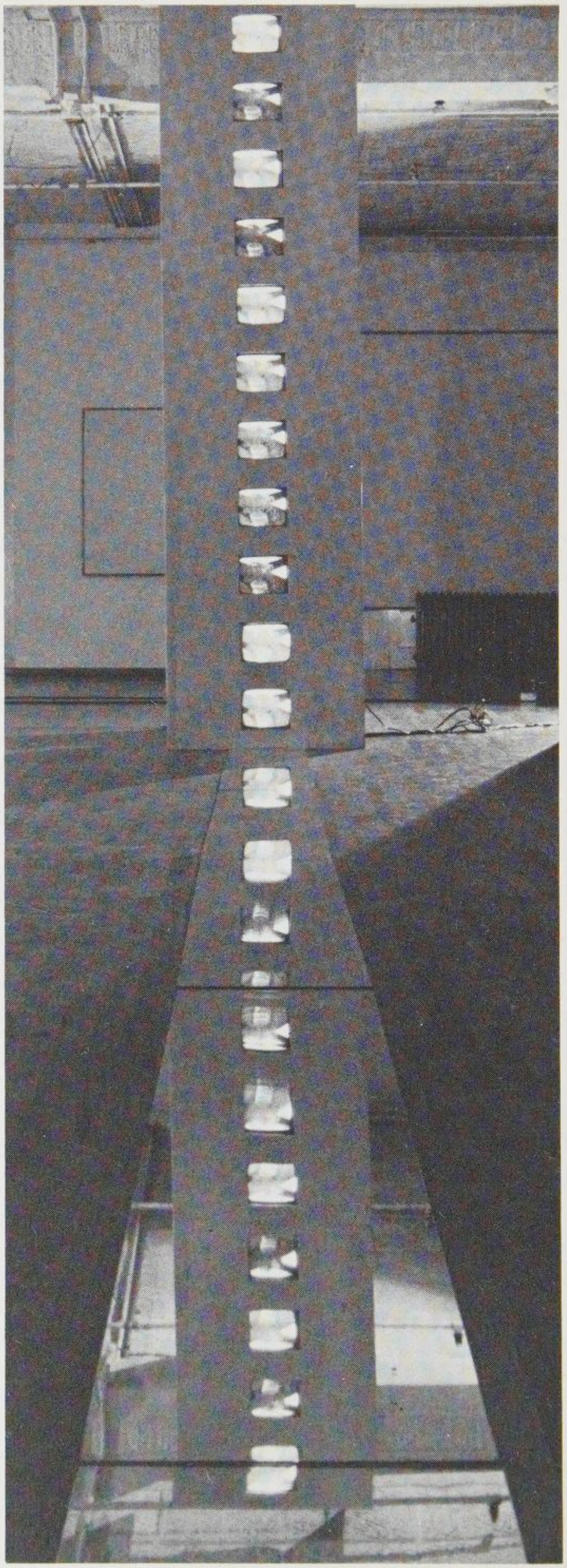
appreciate its impact only when it is seen as a whole, so the viewer of *Video Poem* sees the whole as a rhythmical and recursive display of patterns that is translatable at various distances but must be examined at close range for its parts to be discerned.

Kubota has distanced us from the familiar connotations of the television set by masking everything except the screen, repeating the image in each of the eleven monitors, and placing them vertically in such a way that the images dissolve into a matrix of weaving colors, camera movements, and recognizable patterns. In a sense one is experiencing the video as a sculpture/collage whose effectiveness is achieved through an abstraction of image and of video screen. The recognizability of the image creates a tension within its multiplicity. The mirror reaffirms that the images are important for generating video patterns that activate a space and engage us in an experience. The wall statement and video images of Duchamp's grave only serve to anchor the work in a thesis/celebration of Duchamp's spirit.

The mirror on the floor affirms that we do not have to look at the monitors directly. We can look at them through their reflection.

*Video Poem* is to be perceived as an experience viewed from various perspectives. Kubota's serial imagery is a further subversion of the television set as a single-image conduit of messages into the "living room tableau," where the medium and this essay began.

Each of the installations discussed above shows various ways in which artists have created new possibilities for the medium of video and for the television monitor. Since its invention, television has displayed its effectiveness and power by its sheer pervasiveness as a commercial channel with a message. The video artist is now reflecting both on that experience and on the possibilities of destroying one's ties to it, with the creation of whole new vocabularies of video-monitor experience.



*Video Poem* by Shigeko Kubota.

photo: K. Landman

# VIDEO ART IN WEST GERMANY

Wulf Herzogenrath

## I. From reproduction to creative works suited to the medium.

Video as a technology is already almost two generations old. The first television transmissions on a large scale were produced as propaganda: The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin were viewed, as well as heard, live—i.e., at the same time as the events themselves. Simultaneity and picture-sound synchronization represented a big step in the development of comprehensive, direct information with a high degree of realism.

This is not the place to discuss television as a medium in our daily lives, or its influence on politics and its manipulation of the television audience. I ask only that your bear in mind the fact that video technology was originally invented and intended for the purpose of the accurate reproduction of reality, and for the distribution of information. It was only freed from its functional framework a generation later, to do more than relay information about things which had already taken place.

In the history of graphic techniques, this progression appears again and again. The woodcut was used originally for distribution of the Bible and ideas related to the church, as well as for pictorial communication of sensational and macabre figures and events. These pictures made no claim to artistic value; they were intended only to reproduce as clearly as possible and to make known the subjects dictated by the person commissioning the work. Artists did not begin to use this technique until about a generation later. They were interested in the new representational possibilities of the technique, and the ability to make multiple copies. Likewise, copper-plate engraving and lithography were used at first only as reproduction techniques in books and newspapers, until artists recognized and began to use the mechanical and artistic possibilities of these new graphic processes.

This span of about one generation's time between the discovery and socioeconomic use of a duplication technology and its artistic use become especially clear in the case of silk-screen printing. In the twenties, brightly colored and large-format posters were needed in large editions for publicity campaigns. These two qualities could be provided only by silk-screening, an old technique for prints of unusual size, which only then began to be adopted on a wide scale. Using silk-screen printing, one could make an unlimited number of relatively large and brilliantly colored prints. The consumer industry developed this technique to a high level, and a generation later the artist Willi Baumeister, working under Poldi Domberger in Stuttgart, first used it experimentally. From then on, this new graphic medium was available to everyone, and its popularity spread with such speed that today we have trouble remembering that artists before the 1960's hardly knew of it. (The German national authorities still do not recognize silk-screen printing as an "artistic" technique; they tax it under the laws for commercial, purely reproductive processes. Bureaucracy limps along a generation behind the real world!)

The two media/groupings of photography and film, and radio and television, naturally introduce other problems—not because they are less artistic, i.e., experimental and creative, in their uses—but rather because these media offer completely new opportunities for different kinds of communication, which are put to use in various ways in the mass societies, the pluralistic democracies, and the information-dictatorships. Namely, these media offer direct inclusion of reality, through the same electronic processes by which they work, and close contact with, and even feedback from, consumers, who themselves can and should become participants.

If we consider briefly at this point the artistic influence in the development of media, we can draw one conclusion about the development of all newly discovered processes: Every new medium imitates the technical or stylistic methods and content of its predecessor. Gutenberg, for example, printed his first Bible in 1455 with the hot-metal process, imitating 290 different forms of the old manuscript letters with painful accuracy and acting completely against the characteristics of the medium he was using. He did so, perhaps, not so much on aesthetic grounds, but from economic considerations: He had to find buyers for his printed products, and he thought he could keep his "invention" a secret.

Likewise, the first portrait photographers carried over the pictorial style of seventeenth-century painting, until certain outstanding photographers (August Sander, Hugo Erfurth,

Man Ray) freed themselves from the clichés of the earlier medium and the social significance of those clichés.

The first films, too, beginning with the earliest performance in 1895, copied live theater performances for nearly a generation, maintaining an artificiality appropriate to the live theater. It remained for artists like Chaplin, Eisenstein, and Viking Eggeling to explore the inherent qualities of film in a creative and distinctive way.

From these comparisons we can conclude that each new medium at first copies the themes and forms of an older, related medium—perhaps not even from ignorance of the new possibilities, but rather from the need to demonstrate the economic benefits of the new discovery. This fact should not be surprising; what is astonishing is the generally uniform length of time between a new medium's discovery and its adoption by artists who experiment with its unique applications.

Thus, television also began as "radio with pictures" or actualized theater; and even today there are too few people in positions of importance in the television establishment concerning themselves with forms appropriate to the medium. Television studios buy old films in response to public tastes; and for fear that sociopolitical novelty might offend, they develop no new forms of direct communication.

It is also worth noting that the development of cheap videotape and playback units, the so-called portapak selling for just DM 5000 ($1900), was not inspired by a desire to use the medium artistically; for years it was built only to meet the needs of business. Video was installed for security uses in department stories and banks, for traffic supervision by the police, or for training purposes in large international companies. Only since the end of the '60's has the portapak been available on the general market. As soon as it appeared, it became a rapidly spreading instrument for individual communication, private documentary television, and experiments. With the possibility of private production, the video medium moved forward into an area which radio, as well as the audiotape recorder, already occupied.

As early as 1932, Bertolt Brecht made his "Proposal for the Reorganization of Radio": "Radio can be transformed from a distribution mechanism into a communications apparatus. Radio would then be conceivably the most splendid communications network in our public life, an enormous channeling system. That is, it would be this way if it saw its role not only as sending out but also as receiving; in other words, if it gave the listener a chance to be heard as well as to hear, and did not isolate him but set him in contact. Radio would accordingly have to organize the listener as a contributor." (In *Writings on Literature and Art*, vol. 1 [Frankfurt: Suhrkampverlag, 1967], p. 134.)

Radio could fulfill this role only to a limited extent. Sound recordings, in spite of its relative technical simplicity, stimulated no media revolution and brought about no change in the "one-way-street" system of public radio, even though all the media and technical opportunities were present.

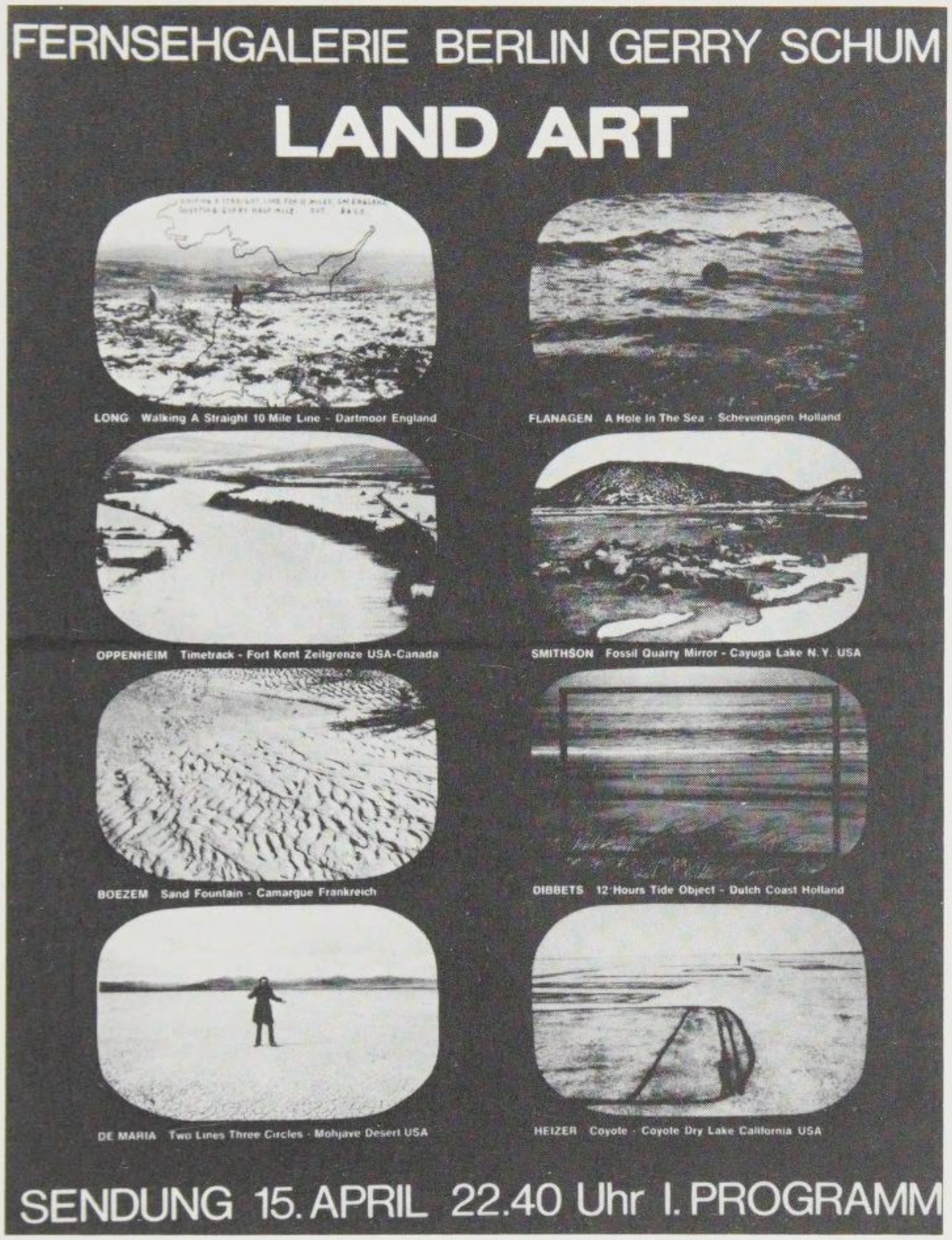
In this realm, video—picture and sound—signified the closest reference to reality. Television, with its seemingly true, pictorially genuine reality, made the event easy to comprehend. Television always suggests reality, regardless of all its manipulation and deceptions. Even though radio is "live" and close to reality, it leaves a great part of the observer's imagination free; and film, on the other hand, plays constantly with fiction, with illusion. This is apparent from the simple fact of star-worship: the film star fascinates through his film roles. He is presented through shows, publicity, even through typecasting in serial shows, as a seemingly "private" person; and therefore the viewer always wants to see him in his role, in his "typical" behavior, which is taken for real. (The audience often knows only the name of the character, not the name of the actor!)

## II. The four areas of video art in the German Federal Republic.

This first area, television's claim to reality, is an important theme of video artists, even though it comes a generation after the discovery and popularization of the medium. They can count on the viewers' attention to their product, since the audience sees it on the same set that gives them their other programs. Television ought to be considered more as an employer of artists than as a distributor of video works especially for the medium. However, since the two productions of Gerry Schum's TV Gallery, there have been no similar works.

Schum produced two films—*Land Art* (1969) and *Identification* (1970)—with artists who created special pieces for these films. These were not artworks in the usual sense, but footprints that were quickly washed away by the tide, activities that had meaning in that they were shown on the television screen. The German artists Rinke, Ruckriem, Ruthenbeck and Walther all participated. Keith Arnatt, in a courageous step vis-à-vis the television authorities of 1969, put on a week-long sequence of pictures, in which each day at the same time the next picture faded in, and the viewer saw Arnatt himself sink-

ing further and further into the floor, until in the last picture he was not visible at all.




Gary Schum, poster for the broadcast *Land Art* from the Schum Television Gallery, 1969. Photo by Joschik Kerstin.

Interruption of habitual viewing patterns, and inquiry into the meaning and the reality level of television programs, are appropriate themes for video artists. The great success of a television production called *Standing on My Own Head* by the Canadian artist Robin Page, then living in Cologne, proves that it is possible to awaken the interest of the usually passive and change-resistant public. At the end of 1972 he challenged the viewers of a show called *Artists' Portraits* to draw him and to send him the drawing, in exchange for which he would send them the portrait he was making during those same two minutes, a portrait of the onlooker (actually of the monitoring camera). In those two minutes nothing happened on the screen except quiet observation; and the same thing happened in the homes of many German television viewers, of whom three thousand had the courage to send in their drawings.

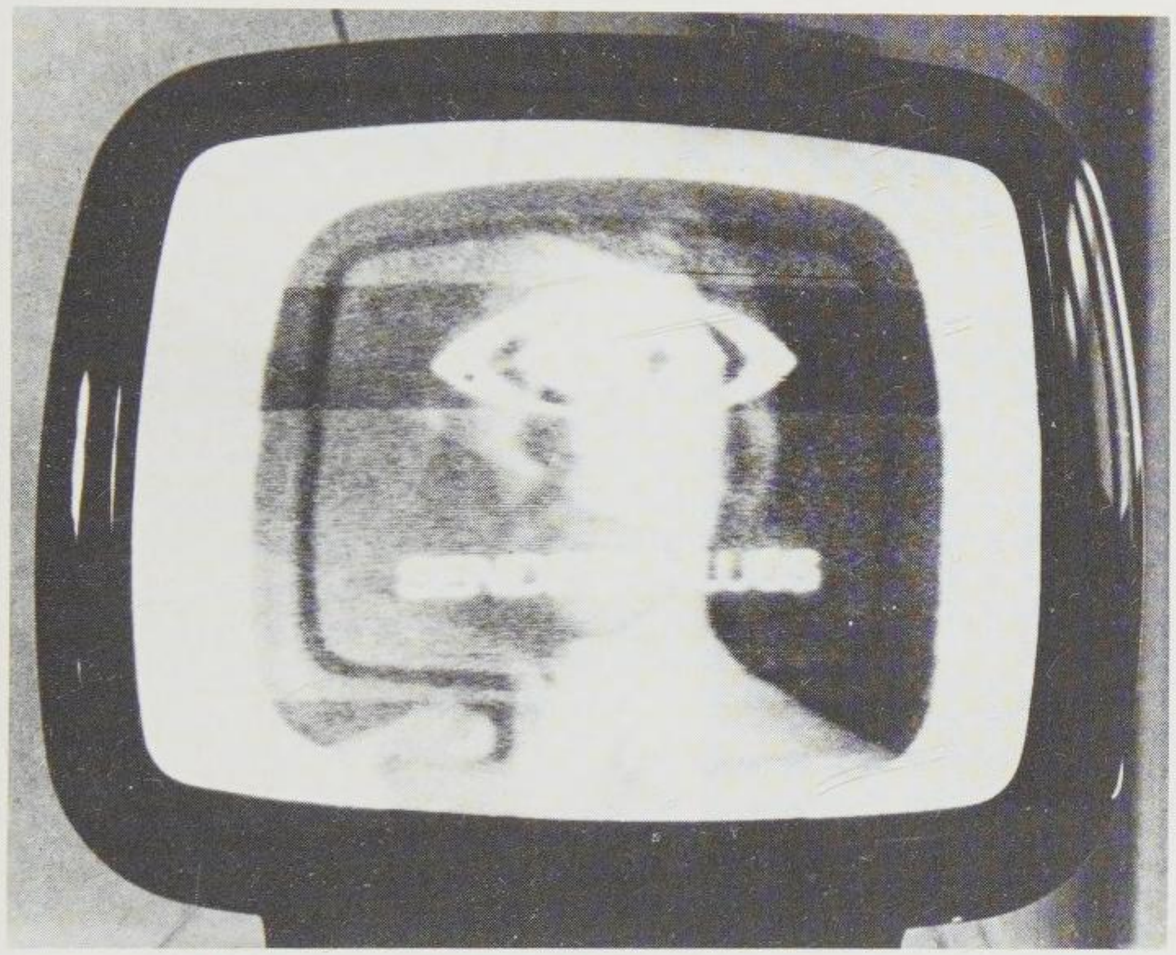
Activities with viewer participation were publicized as early as 1963 by Wolf Vostell. Despite this, it took him until 1969 to announce such activities as these on the radio: "Kiss someone on the television screen"; "Hold your naked stomach up to the screen." This sort of play activity with the viewers, developing out of Fluxus happenings, could prove to be useful to the viewing audience. Vostell's suggestions for observing the television set from a different viewpoint—as a TV sculpture—are also helpful. In 1963, for example, he suggested wrapping the set in barbed wire, throwing a cream pie at it, and then watching the rest of the program; or watching it through cut-out pictures, photographs, etc.; or even, after a festive meal with friends, taking the television set outside and burying it.

Such activities, or even more strenuous ones, are necessary to help the viewing public achieve a critical, distanced relation to television, to the medium and its content. It has been documented, for instance, that viewers undress in the evening on the blind side of their TV sets. As another example, the viewing public complained bitterly in letters about the mustache that a very popular television announcer grew during his vacation, and succeeded in making him shave it off. Here we see televised reality merging with private reality. The television personality is no longer merely part of an external, illustrated world, but a true family member.

Jochen Hiltmann's *Video-Tape II* (1972) is a convincing illustration of television viewing habits. In the thirty-minute tape a small television set is turned on, and the friendly woman announcer of the Third WDR program (Third channel) appears on it. Then the televised picture of the small set is taken over by its own monitor. We see a man, who appears to be inside the picture tube, feeling along the edges and knocking, getting more and more excited and nervous, trying to get out, and finally seeming to crash through the front of the picture tube. After his last, violent blow a sign appears—"Technical difficulties—Please change channels"—which remains on the screen for a long time, until the tape ends.

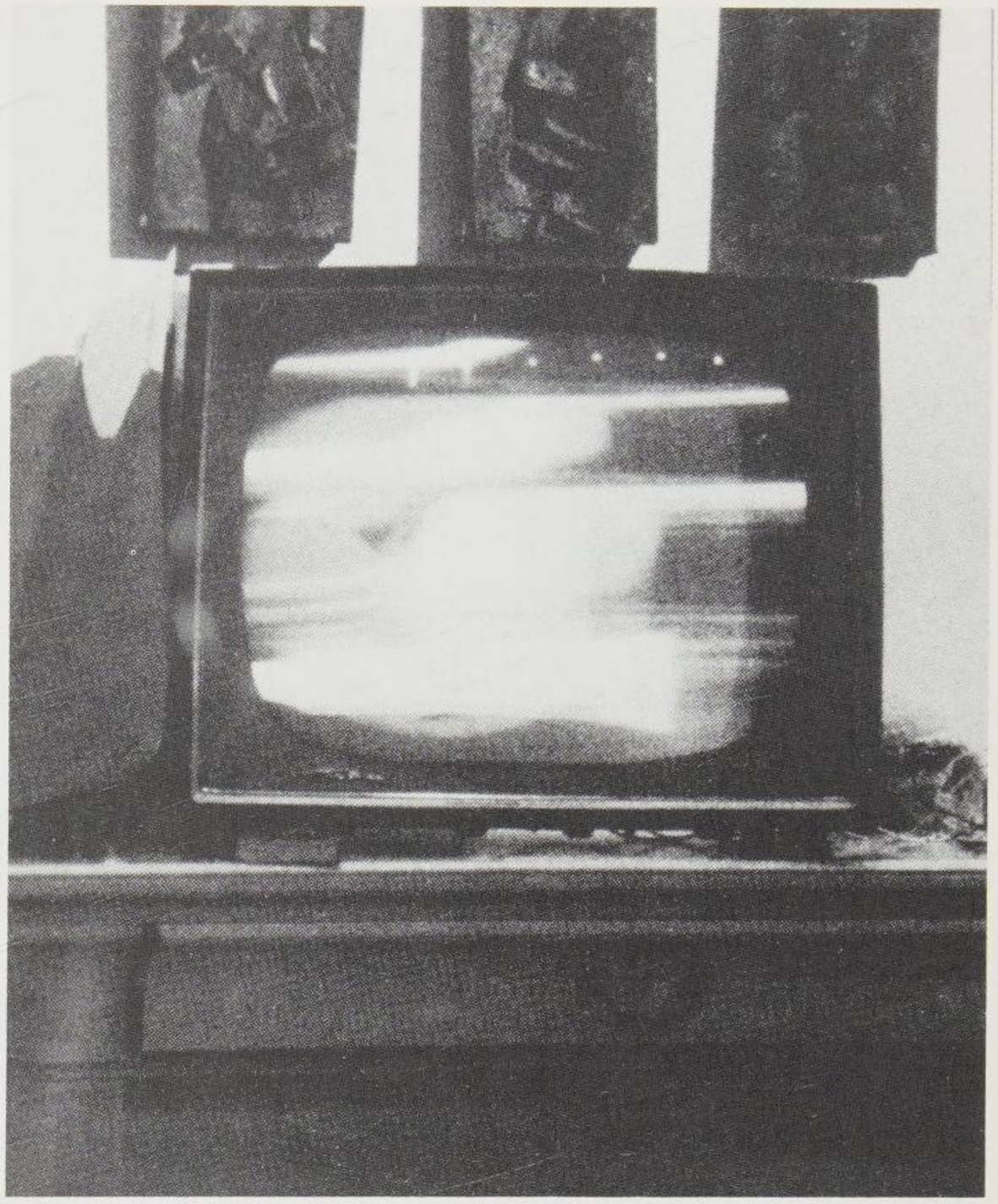
In 1973 Harold Ortlieb created a private, self-operated activity on a thirty-minute videotape, *Television I*, in which he attempts to overcome the distance of the viewer from the television program: The TV viewer fades in and out of the running television program in the rhythm of his breath frequency. Inhaling means that his face fades in, and exhaling means it fades out. The viewer meets himself on the screen, before the background of the permanent television picture. Confronted

with this visual feedback, the viewer begins to meditate. In organic rhythm he "releases" himself and engages in contemplation. Phases of attention to the program alternate with phases of self-awareness. External direction and internal direction dominate by turns. The consciousness of the viewer changes. Passive reception gives way to active penetration of the object of perception, the television program. He is not only the receiver, he himself becomes a sender. He perceives broadcast time as living time. The medium does not control him, but he controls the medium.



Harald Ortlieb, still photo from the videotape *24-Standen Aktion* ("24-Hour Action"), Hamburg, 1973. Photo by Harald Ortlieb.

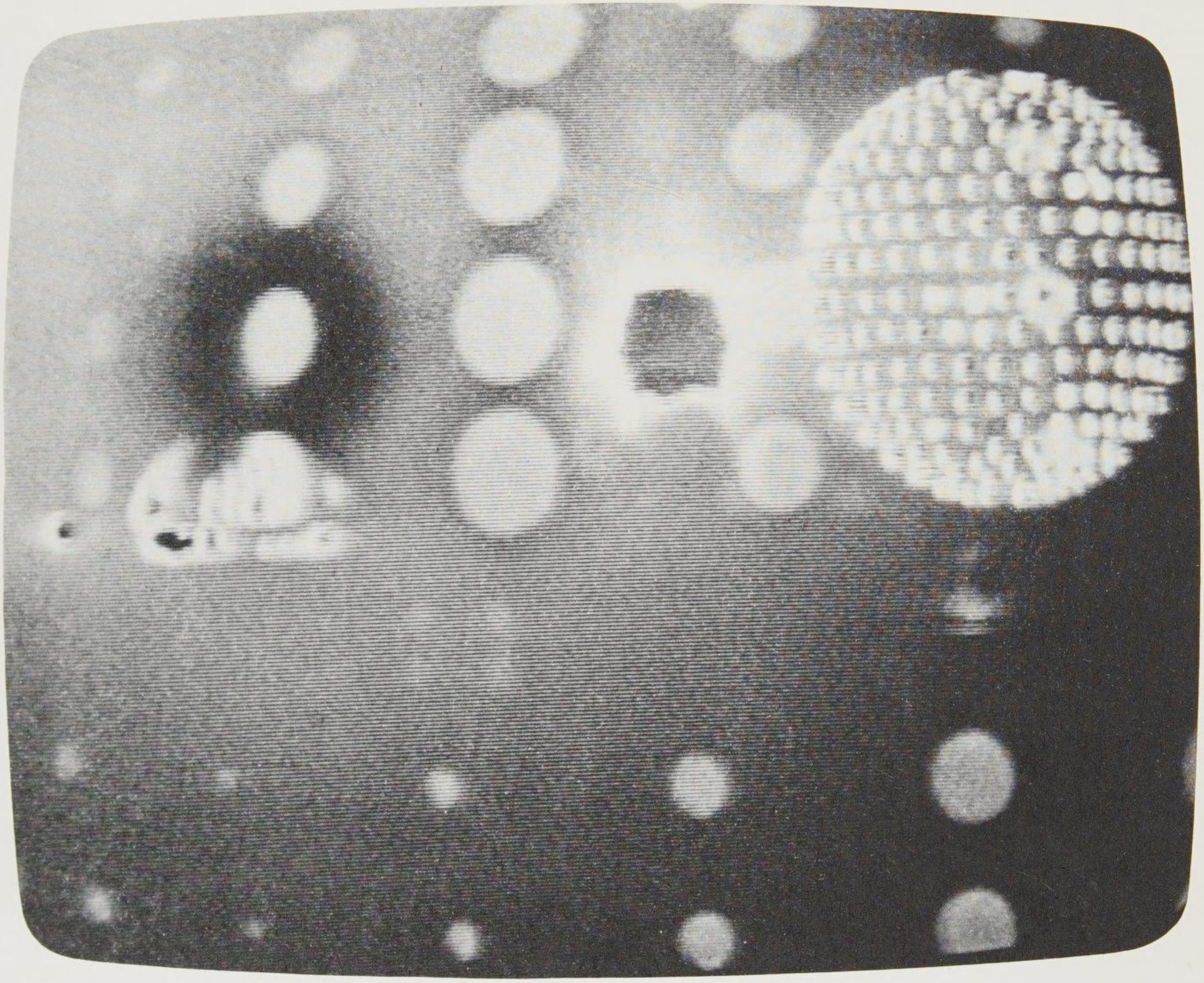
The second area consists of electronics with its multitude of technical possibilities. As early as 1963, in their first "happenings" in Wuppertal, Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell altered the television picture with magnets, electric household appliances, and other manipulations, and made visible the artificiality of the 625 European picture lines. Paik, together with his friend Shuya Abe, of Japan, perfected the first video synthesizer in 1970 in New York. With this device and its many descendants, it is possible to call forth electronically every color, form, dimension, rhythm, etc. As early as the end of 1968, Otto Piene and Aldo Tambellini produced their half-hour video film *Black Gate Cologne* on West German TV. In this film, documentary pictures of an action with inflatable pillows and illumination devices were altered by the superimposition of electronically produced forms. These colorful



Nam June Paik, electronic object *Verändertes Fernschgerät* ("Transformed TV Set"), from his one-man show in the Parnassus Gallery, Wuppertal, 1963. Photographer unknown (repro).

superimpositions showed the possibilities of the electronic medium.

Such electronic elements have, of course, been used in West German television only as pause-fillers, or in shows and television plays by directors like Jean Christophe Averty, Pierre Koralnik, Michael Leckenbusch, George Moorse, Bob Rooyens, or Peter Zadek. Only the music division of the WDR (directed by Montez-Baquer) has broadcast various ballets with electronic video processes as artistically equivalent forms to the music and dance movements. Since the big public television stations in the German Federal Republic still have no experimental studios, like those that developed here so early and so commendably for electronic music, West Germany has nothing at all to show in this area. We here in Europe cannot compete with the richly furnished studios of Boston, New York, San Francisco, and even Canada.



Otto Piene and Aldo Tambellini, still photo from the videotape *Black Gate Cologne*, a production of the WDR station, Cologne, 1968. Photo by Joschik Kerstin.

Despite all the critical acclaim for the often purely decoratively used video abstractions, the lack of experimental studies is regrettable, especially in Germany, where in the '20's the foundation for this development was laid. Contributing to this foundation were the "absolute" films of Walter Ruttmann (shown first in 1921), Viking Eggeling (shown in progress in 1921, first publicly shown in 1922), Hans Richter, Oskar Fischinger, Werner Graeff, Kurt Franz, as well as the color-and-light shows of Kurt Schwerdtfeger and Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack (first performed in 1922 at the Bauhaus).

The combination of nonrepresentational form with music ("a visualization of music"), the chief theme of many videotapes, was achieved optically and intelligibly, following the pioneering projects of Skriabin with Alexander Laszlo's "color-and-light organ" (developed before 1924) and by the music-films of Oskar Fischinger, who after his emigration to Los Angeles began to have a strong influence there on the first generation of experimental film makers and video artists. After this point no other West German artists come on the scene, and the departure of Nam June Paik, who as an artist in Musik-Fluxus,

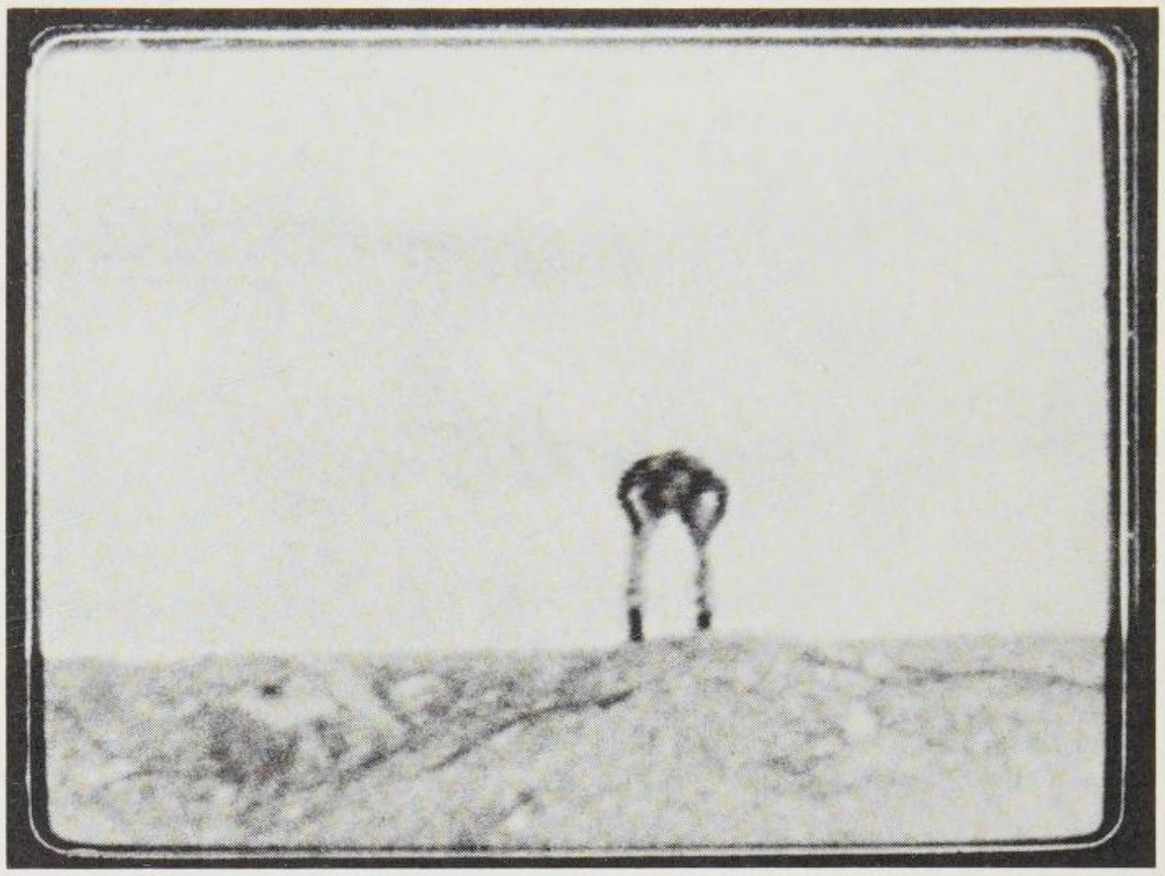
in his "Exposition of Music—Electronic Television" (Wuppertal, Galerie Parnass, March 1963—the very first video exposition) laid the foundations for his later, influential work, left behind a great gap that was only made more apparent by his brief "guest appearances" afterward. Of course, if he had continued to work with German television studios, he could not have come close to the opportunities that he has found in New York.

In the third major area I would include video therapy, video performance, video plays, and video communication. Here video, as a universally available medium, usable even with normal interior lighting and independent of networks, can be said to promote individual creativity and spontaneity, using a previously designed stimulus and followed by shared viewing of the events which have just been taped.

The Berlin group Video-Audio Media and the Darmstadt group Telewissen ("Tele-knowledge") have undertaken pioneering efforts in this field. There are similar groups in Hamburg and in Munich, which have worked with video therapeutically in the area of drugs. Here the concept of art is consciously abandoned as being too limiting: "The spontaneous improvisation of trivial and fictitious roles creates a framework of social and communicative creativity, which lends itself to the development of new and appropriate forms of behavior and consciousness-raising; it makes an emancipating contribution over and above mere artistic production." These words by Michael Geissler of Video-Audio Media state the viewpoint underlying the varied spectrum of that group's activities; likewise the slogan "Make your own television" of Telewissen. It becomes apparent in the work of these groups that video can be used by everybody like a notebook, an electronic journal.



Video Audio Media (Michael Geissler), still photo from the videotape *Ich will nicht nach Casablanca* ("I don't want go to Casablanca"), 1973. Photo by Joschik Kerstin.

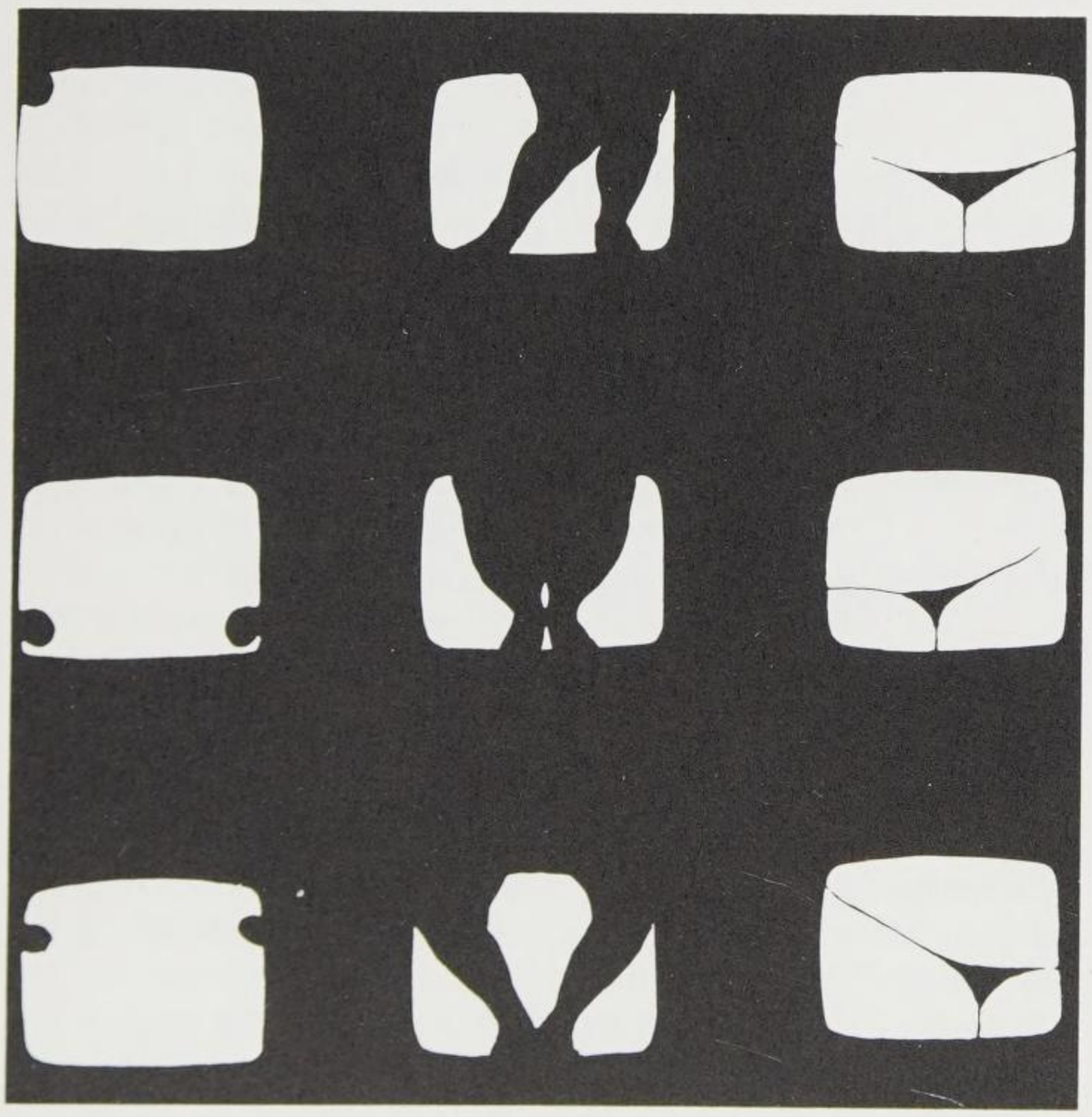


Jochen Gerz, still photo from the videotape *Rufen bis zur Erschöpfung* ("Shouting to Exhaustion"), 1972. Photo by Jochen Gerz.

In the realm of art, this realistic, easily available documentation medium is especially important to artists who choose not to create on canvas or paper, in stone or wood, but rather to portray processes, changes, and events. Videotape is the only possibility, the only medium that brings events closer after they occur and makes them visible. When Jochen Gerz, in his tape *Shouting to Exhaustion*, 1972, places himself sixty meters from his camera and synchronized microphone, and then calls "Hello" as loudly as possible, videotape provides an accurate documentation of these twenty-five minutes of physical exertion. Rebecca Horn illustrates her actions: Pencils are put on the mask of a head; or fingers are alarmingly lengthened with long, black sticks that feel around a room; or feathers stroke searchingly and tenderly. Ulrike Rosenbach has been carrying out live performances since 1973, in which she records herself with a camera and then includes the monitor picture in its piecemeal presentation with the large space and process of movement. She usually includes looped tapes of music for intensification of the psychologically penetrating quality of her movements. Frederike Pezold does her video work on the theme of: "The body language of one sex, according to the rules of anatomy, geometry, and kinetics." She records her body in such a way that almost nonrepresentational black and white pictures in countless variations emerge, from which she makes photo enlargements and sequences of drawings.



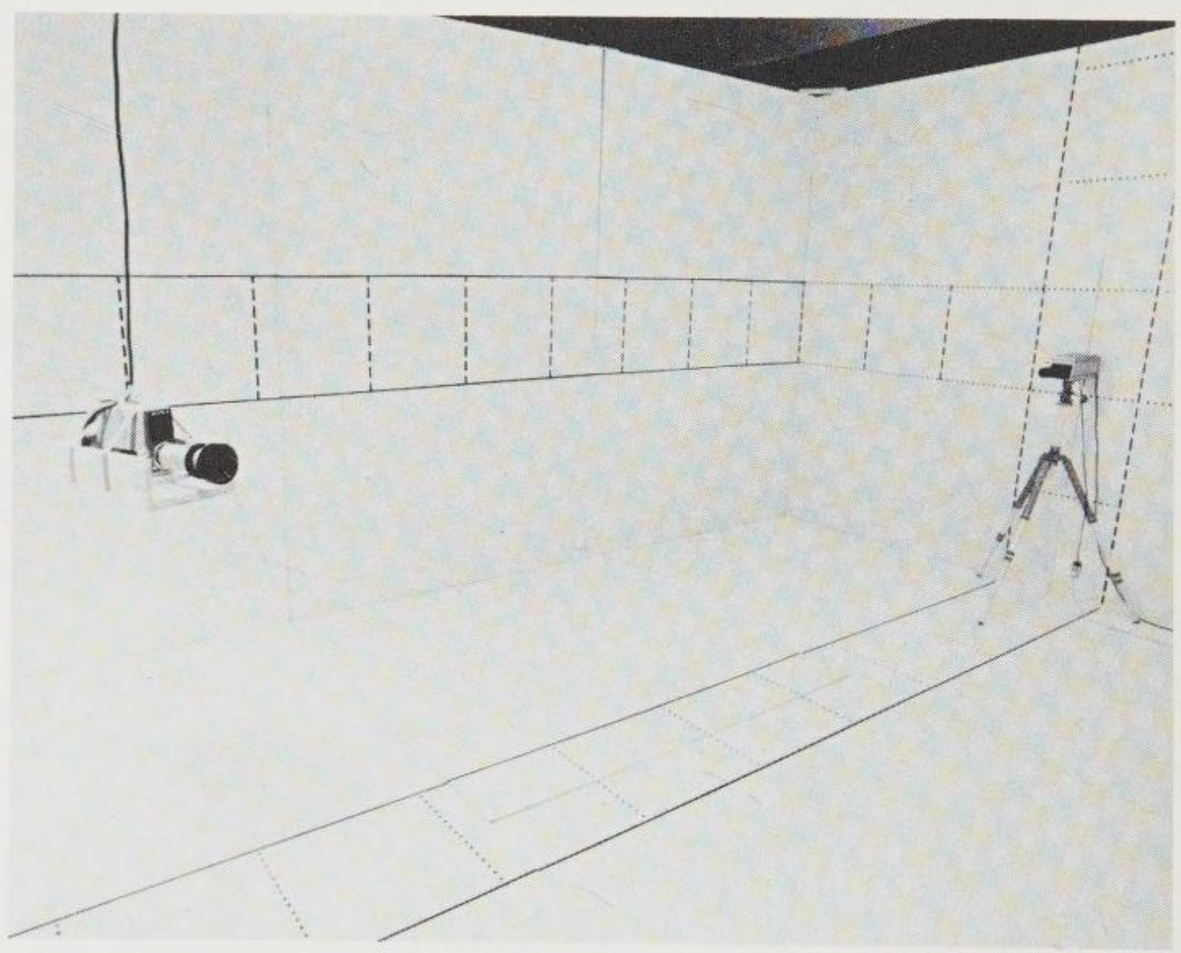
Ulrike Rosenbach during a live performance, 1972. Photo by Videofeedback.



Fridericke Pezold, photo-collage of three videotapes, 1972–73. Photo by Joschik Kerstin.

The videotape *Object for Concealment of a Video Scene*, created in 1972 by Reiner Ruthenbeck, has a completely different intention. A wooden board shaped in the exact proportions and form of a picture tube, with its characteristic rounded corners, stands in the middle of a busy street on a slender music stand. Slowly the camera zooms in on this object, which gradually fills more and more of the picture surface. The optical fascination of the specially indeterminate, almost totally flat surface of the picture tube is practically indescribable. Here Ruthenbeck has created a work perfectly suited to the medium.

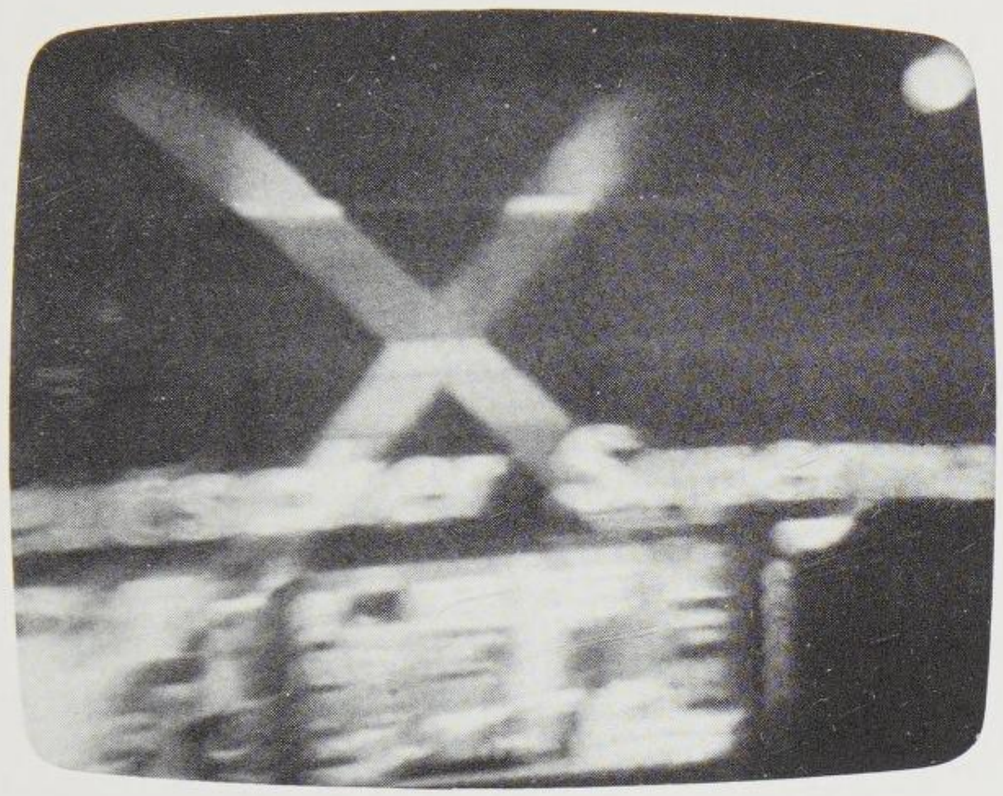
Heinz Breloh explores spaces with two differently moving cameras, in such a way that pendulum movements and black and white exposures help transform the space into two dimensions. Gerry Schum, besides his two full-length productions for television, also produced single tapes.



Heinz Breloh, *Erfaasung eines Raumes mit zwei Videokameras* ("Tracing a Space with Two Video Cameras") Projekt '74, Cologne, 1974. Photo by Joschik Kerstin.

But the "pieces" by Ulrich Rückriem, Klaus Rinke, and others are documentaries recorded with a static camera, in which the video medium plays no part, even as to setting. Only the tape *X-Projection* by Knoebel builds on specific video effects and has a surprisingly multilevel optical effect in its conceptual simplicity. An X-form was projected steadily from a moving car at night, and recorded by a video camera. Due to the changing perspectives of the rows of houses, and the different objects and materials it passed over, the X-shaped light was

continually projected in different ways; street lights and illuminated signs left behind short, burned-out streaks. The boring nighttime city scene was subjected from this viewing angle to a new type of observation.



Knoebel, still photo from the videotape *X-Projektion* ("X-Projection"), 1972. Photo by Joschik Kerstin with permission of the Galerie Projektion, Cologne.

With these names I practically come to the end of the list of artists in the German Federal Republic who have concerned themselves intensively with this medium in this way. That there are video facilities in nearly all academies and technical schools, at the intermediate schools and pedagogical high schools, and that these are not used for experimental purposes, is a fact that I find hard to explain.

In the fourth complex of the use of this medium in art, we can group together video installations and video objects. In contrast to the two previous groups—video electronics and video communication—these works are realizable only with video. For the large-dimensional transformations of video effects in films, as we see as early as 1968 in Stanley Kubrick's *2001—A Space Odyssey*, make it clear that the monitor in the camera in its tiny proportions, and even the economical but distance-limited video projections, are suitable equipment only for certain video works and communication. In the installations the artists attempt to draw the observer in, and to depict and use the simultaneity of the real moment and of their created reality as an artistically effective experience. But in order to implement such installations, the artist needs knowledge and hardware which naturally he cannot obtain by himself. In this matter, the video studio of the Folkwang Museum in Essen, for several years endowed with very good video equipment, was able to play a stimulating and helpful role, which up to this point it has done without sufficient recognition. Other institutions (museums and galleries) have not yet become sufficiently involved, because the financial outlay required is too great. In Cologne the gallery Projection Ursula Revers represents an exception, continually introducing and supporting video artists: and also Ingrid Oppenheim. But as a rule, ideas like those of Claus Böhmler, who involved himself very early with the possibilties of video (direct exposures from TV, reversals, solarization, the breakdown of single pictures, transformation into other media, etc.), have, in the Federal Republic, been forced to remain on paper.

In pulling together what has been said here, it must first be stressed that video does play an important role in the Federal Republic as far as video by public television stations, individual political works of video groups, and artistic works are concerned. But this is not at all comparable with the boom in the United States and Canada. This fact may stem from the skepticism of Europeans with regard to electronic media, as well as from their aversion to direct, realistic communication. For it is true that television does not possess so commanding an influence here, and even though the beginnings of the kind of video art I have been discussing are rooted in the Federal Republic (the first TV actions by Paik and Vostell; the first television gallery; the early activities of public television), it has proved impossible for artists to follow through.

The creative, experimental video activity of the '60's in the Rhine area has no counterpart today, even though more artists and institutions are now concerned with it. But skepticism regarding the video medium is not wholly a bad thing. We can quote once again the blind man who, when he finds his sight restored, is first fascinated by the multitude of impressions, and then regrets the loss of the world he created for himself through fantasy. It is these factors (devotion to reality, banality, passivity) that limit the medium. On the one hand it is an informing medium, which demands only a passive receptivity; on the other hand it is an activating medium for the field of personal exploration. For the artist it is the only possible form of documenting events, as it presents him with the opportunity of manifesting the intellectual exercise of combining "reality" with the "realities" of video.

This article was translated by Ann Singsen.

# THE PRESENT TENSE

## Bruce Kurtz

Our perception of television, more than that of any other medium that artists have chosen to work in, is overwhelmingly influenced by the commercial application of the technology. While many magazine, newspaper, and outdoor advertisements are painted, painting as a fine art form preceded painting as an advertising medium, but television was first developed as a commercial enterprise. The history that our perception of the medium has accrued via our abundant experience with it in commercial applications is as essential to our perception of video art as the history of art, and maybe more so.

Commercial television and video art are, after all, the same medium, designated by different names to identify their differences but nonetheless employing the same technology, a similarity equally as important as their differences. This may seem obvious, but it is not generally acknowledged. Of course, the patterns of production techniques are divergent—the emphasis of commercial television is studio production, while the emphasis of video art has been portable production—but neither method of production is inherent in the medium, and both commercial television and video art are moving more into each other's production methods, especially as the studios of WGBH, WNET, and KQED become more accessible to artists and ½-inch portable technology becomes advanced enough for broadcasting.

The distinction between television and video art mainly has to do with the intent of the work. While commercial television is oriented toward entertainment for the sake of exploitation via advertising, video art has concerned itself for the most part with the content of the form and the inherent characteristics of the medium. But our perception of the content of the form is inevitably conditioned by the development of those characteristics (though perhaps unwittingly) in commercial television. Though the ostensible content of commercial television is programming, its greatest impact, whether or not intentionally, has had more to do with its particular sense of space and time, and that is a feature of the medium which has been of interest to artists. Artists have tended to explore the inherent characteristics of the medium as an end in itself more than have the commercial producers, partly because an exploration of the inherent characteristics of a medium is within the modernist tradition, and partly because it is the inherent characteristics of the medium which are the most transformative aspects of it. The most powerful aspect of the medium is its ability to transform even the events of ancient history into the flowing present, whether or not what is being telecast, or what appears on the monitor, is actually live, taped, or filmed.

The degree of the transformative influence of television's unique sense of space and time has been due not only to its being an inherent characteristic of the medium, but also to its reach, its pervasiveness. For a consequence of its pervasiveness is not only the breadth but also the depth of its influence, as reflected in the degree of literacy we have developed for it, as a culture. It is no exaggeration to say that as a medium, television is a magnetic mythology.

> Ninety-two U.S. households out of 100 have telephones, but 96 have at least one working TV set; nearly half have two sets or more, and nearly half have color sets. Even among families with incomes of less than $5,000 a year, one in four has a color set.[1]
>
> In the average home the television is turned on some five hours forty-five minutes a day. The average male viewer, between his second and sixty-fifth year, will watch television for over 3,000 entire days—roughly nine full years of his life. During the average weekly winter evening nearly half of the American people are to be found silently seated with fixed gaze upon a phosphorescent screen.
>
> Americans receive decidedly more of their education from television than from elementary and high schools. By the time the average child enters kindergarten he has already spent more hours learning about his world from television than the hours he would spend in a college classroom earning a B.A. degree.[2]

More American experience is filtered through television than through any other medium, so it is not surprising that Americans have a highly developed literacy for the medium. But that

literacy is apparently almost entirely unconscious, for most viewers will insist that the content of television is programming.

Human beings have always been fascinated with flickering, colored light. Primitive societies still gather around a communal campfire, and during the nineteenth century every home had several fireplaces into which the family would gaze after dinner. Films seen in theaters replaced the communal campfire, and color television in the living room replaced the fireplace. Viewing films in theaters is communal, while viewing television is more private and personal, even though millions of people might be watching the same program.

Most of what we see on commercial television is film. Our relationship to film on television is different from our relationship to film in a theater. There is a greater sense of intimacy and of immediacy because the television is in the living room, the bedroom, the kitchen, the bathroom, or wherever we are in our private space, rather than in the shared public space of a film theater. Even films on television seem more immediate and live because they appear at the flick of a switch in our own space. The sense of immediacy inherent in the medium is rarely used deliberately in the imagery except in commercials, which are the best programming on television and which have been largely responsible for conditioning an entire nation toward a predilection for instant gratification. This effect of television is very deeply reflected in every aspect of our culture's value system.

Though one of the characteristics of the medium of television is its sense of immediacy, commercial television rarely makes use of the unique live-time factor of the medium except in live coverage of events such as the McCarthy hearings, President Kennedy's funeral, Lee Harvey Oswald's shooting, Princess Anne's wedding, the Watergate hearings, the moon walk, Nixon's resignation, political conventions, and sports. For the most part, even TV news is still journalism, where we are *told* about events, not *shown* the events. The medium of commercial television has the capacity of giving totally different meaning to experience, that of our participating in major events rather than being told about them, but commercial television rarely makes use of this capacity except where urgency precludes the compression of time characteristic of film.

> Film is always prepared for us, its time telescaped by the making hand. In the theater we inhabit the same time in which the players perform, but we know that the next step, and the step after that, has been predetermined by the playwright. What we have come to call "live" video links with "life" in a highly concentrated form; when we are watching "live" phenomena on the screen we participate in a subtle existentialism. Often it is so subtle that it nears boredom. The endless moon walk, the endless convention, the endless (in another way) *American Family*. In all these cases, the "live" dimension kept its audience there, before the small screen, alone, at home, waiting, because it knows that anything may happen next, as in life.[3]

It is possible to hold a piece of film up to the light and see the images, but the magnetic information on a videotape is invisible. The tape must be threaded through a mediating apparatus before it can be seen, and it never appears exactly the same twice even when shown again on the same apparatus. The invisible magnetic information which signals the apparatus to form the configuration that is the image seen is never the same twice. Each viewing is the first viewing, each viewing is in the present, with no past similar to the history accrued in multiple viewings of films or of paintings. And of course, viewed on a different apparatus, videotapes appear even more different than in multiple viewings on the same apparatus. There is the additional factor of gradual breakdown of the magnetic information on each individual tape, changing the image each time it is seen.

Newness, intimacy, immediacy, involvement, and a sense of the present tense are all characteristics of the medium. Even in prerecorded programming on commercial television, the present tense prevails in the idiosyncrasies of our sets, in the "disturbances" which constantly occur in the image, in the intrusion of daily life into the programming, in the interjected comments by local stations, in the dancing dots, and in the constantly changing image. Film, with its twenty-four complete still frames per second, is an illusion of movement, while television, with its constantly changing configuration of dots of light, is an illusion of stillness. Even when filmed material is telecast, these conditions prevail. Even the most blatantly obtuse television programming, or a television set turned on but receiving no signal, is qualified by these conditions. Our national preoccupation with presentness, with the immediate, the instant, the latest, the current, the new, the young, probably has to do not only with television programming's ability to take us to the moon, to Mexico, and to the bottom of the sea with a flick of the switch, while we simultaneously remain in our own spaces, but also with the more subtle and primarily unseen features of the medium. These are features which video artists and the most creative television persons have chosen to explore, but they are features which are present in even the most unaware television programming and for which Americans seem to have an insatiable appetite.

There is a kind of magic involved in being able to "turn on" an inanimate object and suddenly have it come to life, pulling otherwise invisible images and sound out of the air at our command. "Turn on" was a common phrase of the drug culture of the sixties, meaning, in effect, to come alive. The people of the drug culture were of the first generation to be weaned on television, and their communal sense of shared experience, such as evidenced at Woodstock, had to do with television and related mass media, such as records. The colors of color television are not those of nature, but are highly saturated, "psychedelic." The private gathering around the television set while simultaneously sharing this kind of experience with millions of other people is related to, is maybe even actually responsible for, a social revolution. This kind of magic is most powerful when live events are shared, but it is present even in filmed or prerecorded material shown on television.

The television generation is obsessed with sound, particularly as evidenced in various kinds of electronically aided popular music, an appetite which might have been abetted by the primacy of audio in television. Unlike the visually oriented print technology, audio has no "point of view," but surrounds and bathes the listener. Unlike film, which is usually projected from behind the viewer, onto the screen, television is projected at the viewer: The viewer becomes the screen and the vanishing point, and everyone has the best seat.

Television is a more involving, more immediate medium than film. The sense of involvement, of immediacy, and of a lack of point of view gives the sense of being in the present rather than of witnessing old, processed information, a condition which advertisers have used to their advantage. Our national obsession with the new, combined with the very common attitude that things and people become old very quickly, is a consequence both of the characteristics of the medium and of advertisers' manipulation of those features.

The sense of the present tense is not limited to live television or to video, but is seen as an inherent characteristic of the medium. This shared sense of presentness and our orientation toward the present tense is what commercial television and video art have in common. The presentness of the medium is probably its single most consequential feature, followed by the technical composition of the image and its perceptual consequences, and finally the programming. In commercial television there is usually little relationship between the programming and the most consequential aspects of the medium, except in advertising, but in video art the relationship is most deliberate.

For the most part, those in control of commercial television have used the most pervasive method of communication ever devised by man to exploit, manipulate, and control for social, economic, and political gain. We do not have to look very deeply into our recent political life to know that those who control the information control the power. While the programming of commercial television is homogeneous pap, the message of the medium is manipulated to control and exploit.

This is now common knowledge, but it was not realized to such an extent until alternative approaches to the medium came about. With the advent of relatively inexpensive portable video equipment in the late sixties came the possibility, and the actuality, of alternate television, called video. Artists brought their unique backgrounds, and the histories of the media they had worked in, to video, and other creative video workers brought their own perceptions, not necessarily from an art bias. In time the criteria for determining quality have more or less equalized, and we refer to their works as video art, but not because they deal solely with aesthetic issues, though some of them do. Before the advent of portable video equipment, some American artists dealt with the present tense in other media. An obsession with the present tense, the offshoot of television, has dominated our national consciousness for at least twenty-five years.

In 1951 Edward R. Murrow and Fred Friendly broadcast live on their CBS program the Golden Gate Bridge and the Brooklyn Bridge simultaneously on a split television screen. It was a relatively unnoticed event, but it was the first time that the entire breadth of the nation was spanned in a live broadcast. Since then, Houston, New York, and the moon have been linked with invisible television signals. Though the San Francisco–New York event was relatively unheralded, it marked the beginning of an entirely different perception of time and space. An entire generation of Americans weaned on television has matured in the twenty-five years since that broadcast with a uniquely television-oriented sense of space and time: the urgency of the here and now.

"I feel I'm very much a part of my times, of my culture, as much a part of it as rockets and television."[4] "In the future, everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes."[5] The speaker is Andy Warhol, the first major American artist to work most emphatically in the present tense, an artist with a media awareness that made him a culture hero and his name a household word. All of Warhol's best work has about it the quality of existing in the present tense. Though it is a film, one cannot predict the next action in *Chelsea Girls* any more than one knows which window of *Empire* will light up next: "The Empire State Building is a star."[6]

> With film you just turn on the camera and photograph something. I leave the camera running until it runs out of film because that way I can catch people being themselves. It's better to act naturally than to set up a scene and act like someone else. You get a better picture of people being themselves instead of trying to act like they're themselves.[7]

The improvisational character of the performances in Warhol films, combined with the real-time aspect of the structure of the film, creates a sense of an actual event instead of a prerecorded event.

A classic example of Warhol's real time is the "Pope Ondine" sequence from *Chelsea Girls*, when Ondine, after his rage, turns to the camera and says, "Dear God, how much longer do I have to go?"[8] Of course, it was an existential question as well as a filmic one, but filmically it was an assertion of the real time of the thirty-minute reel he had to fill. The rage and what preceded it were not acting, via a playwright and all the calculated contrivances of time condensation, but an enactment of a real-life situation in the present tense.

Another aspect in filmic terms of the present tense in *Chelsea Girls* was the fact that when it was first shown to general audiences, the order of the reels was different every time. Apparently the decision of the order of the reels was up to the projectionist, the one consistency being that after about five minutes of one image on one side of the screen, another would come on the other side, with the sound switching from one to the other, sometimes staying with one reel throughout the reel, and sometimes changing during the reel. Whatever happened looked good, and that is part of the interest of the film, that it is so much in the present tense it appears to never be the same twice.

Warhol's paintings and prints always seemed to be extremely topical, to be absolutely the latest. His early black-and-white silk-screened images have the kind of texture of black-and-white television, and the colors of the Marilyn Monroes and Elizabeth Taylors are those of color television, colors not seen in painting before, though Stella was to employ them after Warhol. The luminous, lush, vivacious, blooming colors almost seem to fade before one's eyes as if the image were about to change, and that is one quality about the works that makes them still very moving.

Warhol picked up on the preeminence of audio, too, and began tape-recording his face-to-face and telephone conversations, sometimes unknown to the participants, long before Nixon. The fact that Warhol and Nixon both very deliberately created themselves through manipulation of the media gives them a great deal in common: Richard Nixon and Andy Warhol are the world's two greatest media drag queens.

Much of Warhol's art has stood the test of time and still exists in the present tense. Considering that much of it was made ten years ago or more, which is a long time in our instantaneous media time, his accomplishment has been great. Warhol now seems more inclined toward using the media as his medium, which he has done in one way or another all along, and he may be in the process of appropriating, in his own way, the New York *Post*, in which he appears almost daily, among other vehicles.

Michael Heizer wrote in 1969, "The position of art as malleable barter-exchange item falters as the cumulative economic structure gluts. The museums and collections are stuffed, the floors are sagging, but the real space still exists. This dry lake was leased indefinitely, with the option to buy. What is sold here is land, not art. Potentially, the most malleable aspect of this work is the deed to the property."[9] In the late sixties, at about the same time that there developed a widespread concern with the earth as a total system, as manifest in population control and ecology, artists were becoming concerned with various attitudes toward time that stressed impermanence, malleability, and the present. Included in this investigation was a search for alternative systems, the most notable of which were works made on the site, or Earthworks.

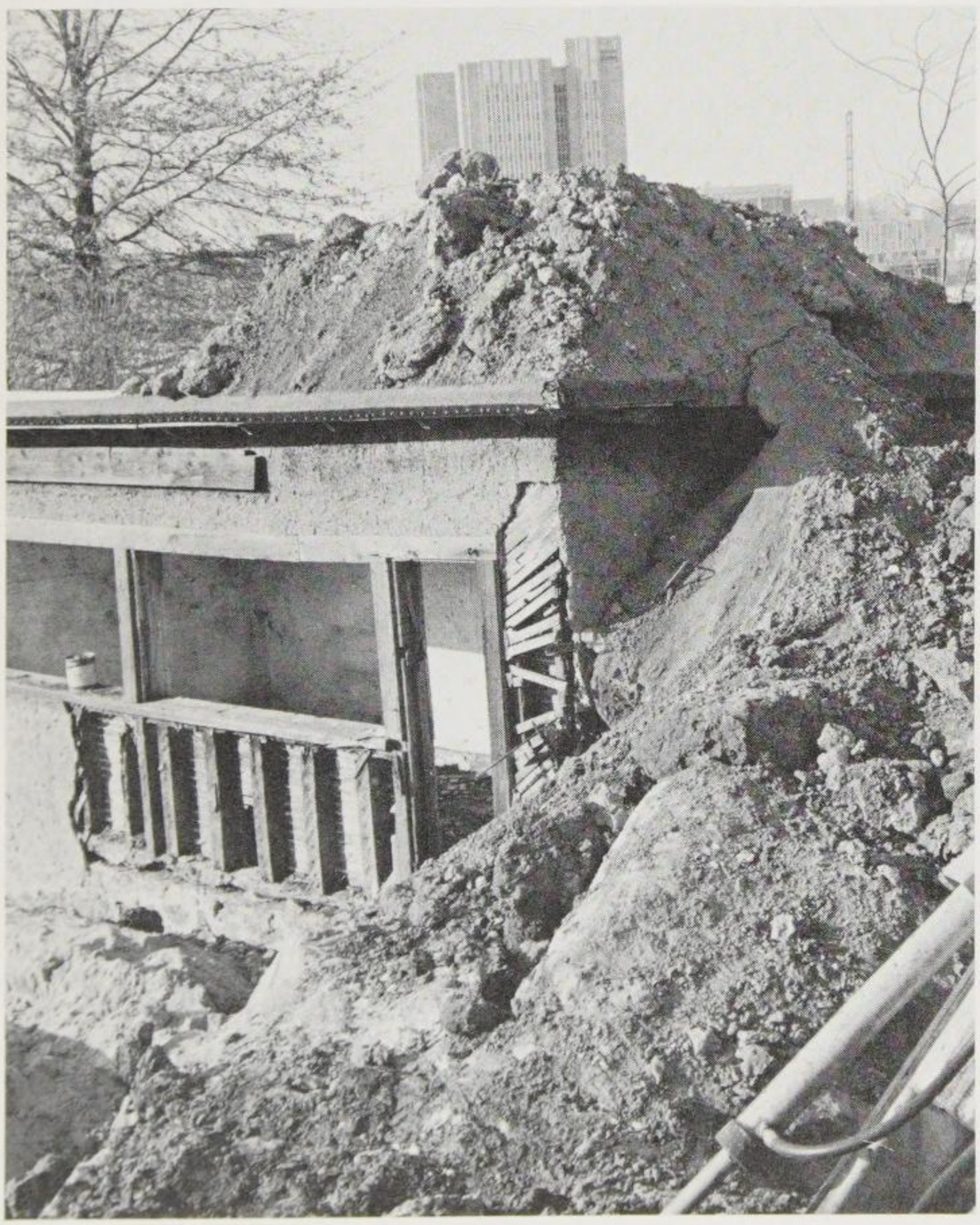
Impermanence was evidenced in works about physical processes that eventually destroyed the works as objects, like Heizer's *Nevada Depressions*. The present and a concern with the here and now were evidenced also in the vague categories of Distribution Sculpture and Conceptual Art, for different reasons: the former for the fact of its being different each time it is shown in a different space, or of the materials being discarded after the show if the piece was not sold; the latter for minimizing the importance of objecthood. At any rate, the strong tendency toward a greater concern with the present tense began to be evidenced in the late sixties among widely diverse artists, for various motives, and I think this interest in the present tense grew out of, at least in part, an awareness of media, especially television. Artists, with Warhol at the lead, became the media stars of the sixties, and the art world temporarily replaced Hollywood as the dispensary of ideals.

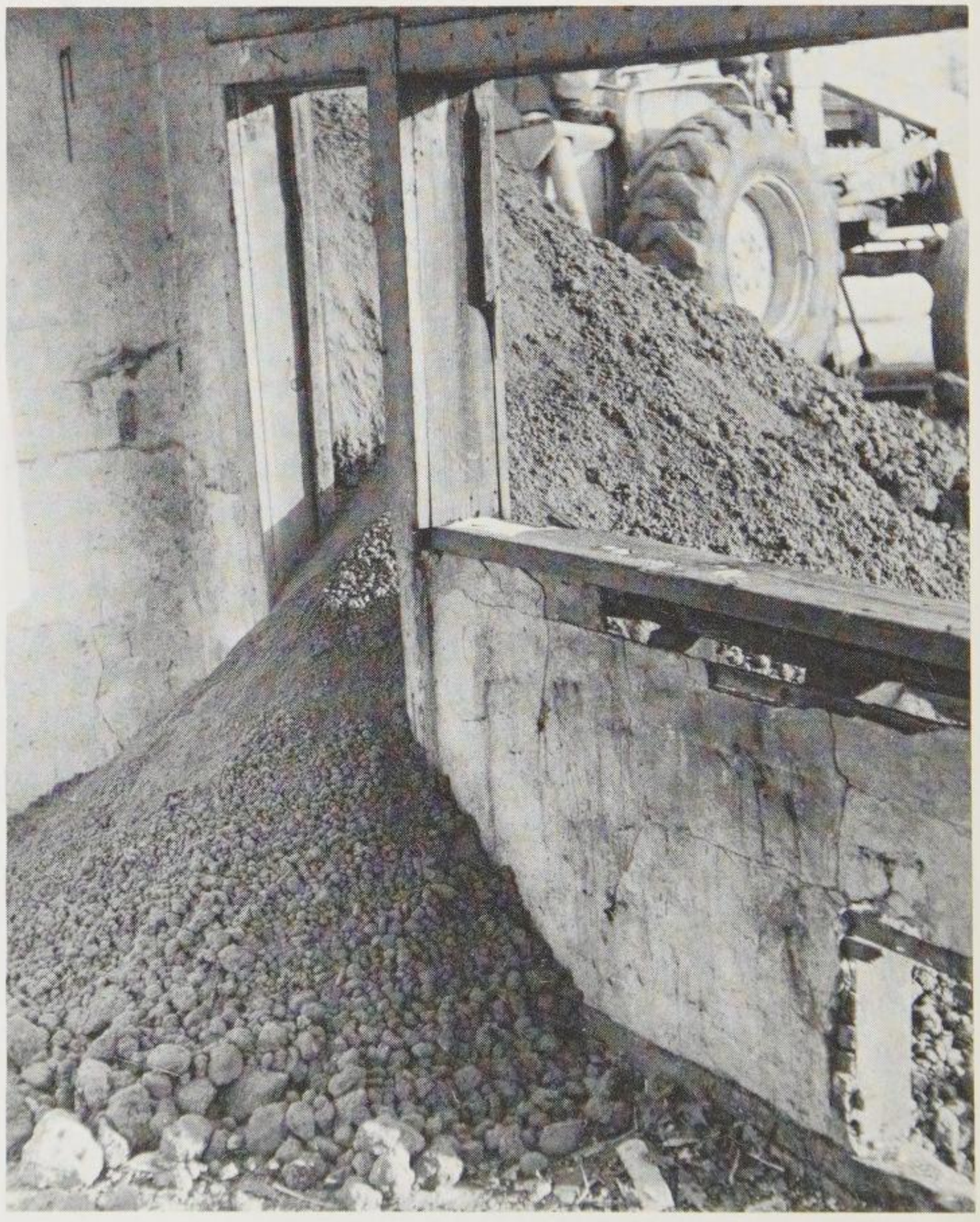
In 1969, three years after *Chelsea Girls* was made, Harold Szeeman wrote in the catalogue for his very important exhibition, "When Attitudes Become Form." "The major characteristic of today's art is no longer articulation of space but human activity, the activity of the artist has become the domi-

nant theme and content."[10] In 1971 Daniel J. Boorstin wrote in *Life* magazine, "Almost everything about television tempts the medium to a time-myopia—to focus our interest on the here-and-now, the exciting, disturbing, inspiring, or catastrophic instantaneous now."[11] What we have witnessed is the influence on fine art of the time sense of the most pervasive and persuasive image-making mentality of our time—television.

Robert Smithson's work exists in geological time, not even in human time. Written human history is 5,000 years long. Art history is, at most, 30,000 to 40,000 years long. The time dimension Smithson's works occupy makes human history and art history infinitesimal, for they deal with the history of the earth, with hundreds of millions of years. And they are relatively permanent, besides being outside the barter and exchange market, or "commodity fetish," as Smithson used to say. That time is one of its most important aspects of Smithson's art is a significant indication of the extent of our cultural time-myopia, as his art is a powerful antidote and extremely intelligent response to our cultural lack of a sense of history. "Of all the forces which have tempted us to lose our sense of history, none has been more potent than television."[12] In the time dimension of Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, human history is dwarfed into its correct physical perspective in the history of the earth.

Because of the emphasis of television as a medium in the present tense, video as art emphasizes an entirely different relationship between the artist and the outside world. The traditional art establishment is interested in permanent treasures, and video art challenges this most basic assumption. Museums are a banking system of sorts, cultural control relying on a sense of permanence behind the currency, while video art devalues the currency by its sense of impermanence. By its nature video's most important aspect is its potential for transformation, not its objecthood. Television has transformed our entire culture, so, at least potentially, video art has the same capabil-





*Partially Buried Woodshed*, Robert Smithson, 1970.

photos: John Weber Gallery

ity, though this may be more a philosophical argument than a practical one. At any rate, it is curious that William S. Paley is chairman of CBS and The Museum of Modern Art.

As we have seen, a sense of the present tense is a feature of all video and television, whether or not it is a quality which is maximized. All video art has about it a sense of the present tense, but some video art makes greater use of it. We will concentrate on video art that makes deliberate use of some aspect of the present tense of the medium, but it should be stressed that this is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of all the best work to do so. Rather, it is a representative selection. Description will be minimized, and the reader is encouraged to refer to other parts of this book for that kind of information.

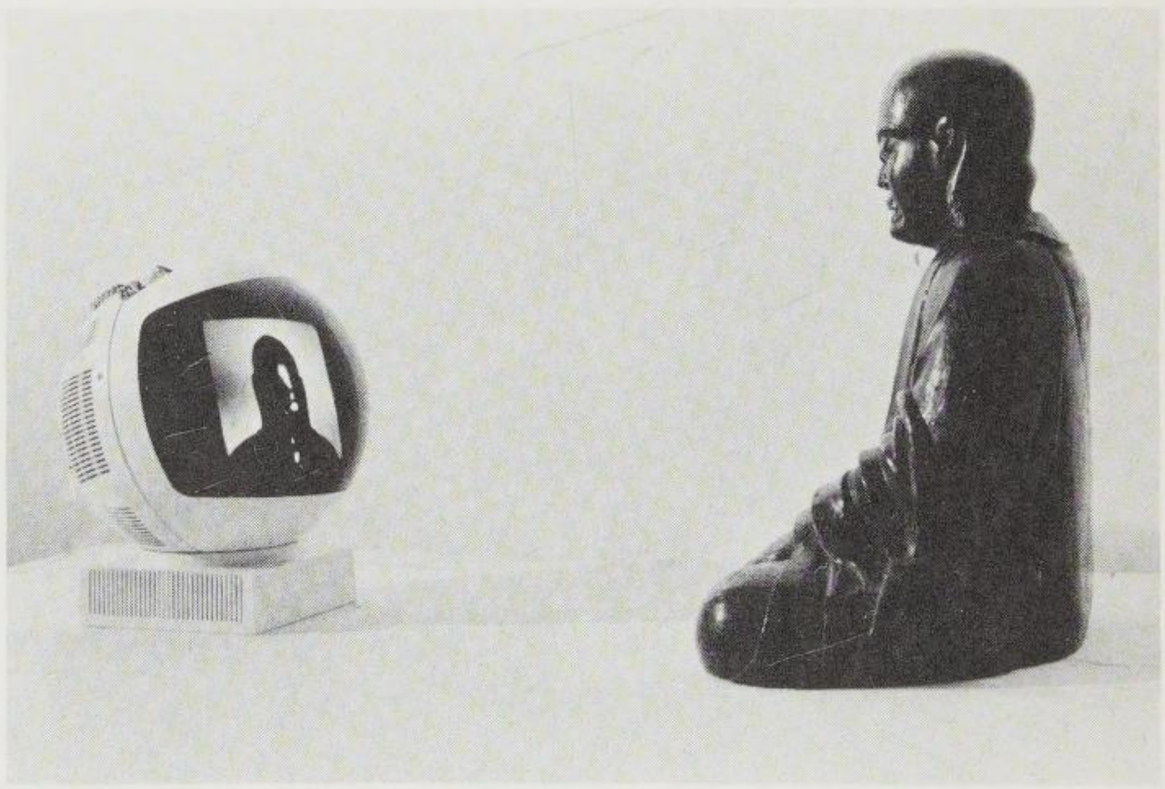
Nam June Paik was one of the first artists to work in video, altering television sets in Germany in 1959 to change the images of broadcast television. In New York in 1964 Paik bought one of the first portable videotape recorder systems. Paik and Shuya Abe together invented the first video synthesizer in 1970. Paik's relationship to fine art institutions and to the commercial media was very astutely observed by Douglas Davis when he wrote, "Someone once complained to me about Paik's genius with the media. He surrounds everything he does with social/metaphysical constructs, I was told. It is interesting that Paik has very few collectors and an extremely hot press."[13]

Paik is constantly changing his individual works over long periods of time, with the result that his work is always news. It is always difficult to know what state of a work is being discussed when Paik's work enters a conversation, because he relates to his work so much in terms of constant transmutations. He is always willing to cannibalize part of one tape to use it in another, an attitude which has caused some critics to say he rarely does anything new in his tapes; but every time a sequence appears in his work it seems to be different, or at least informed by a different attitude due to the context in which it is seen. Paik relates almost solely to the present, having produced many stages of a relatively small number of tapes, and this is one reason he is so newsworthy. Another reason is that Paik has crystallized major ideas about the medium in simple, newsworthy statements with meaning on many different levels; and still another is his participation in the invention of, and almost exclusive ability to effectively use, the Paik-Abe video synthesizer, requiring split-second timing. Paik is a Korean and a Buddhist, and all of his work is permeated with a very subtle mysticism; one gets a sense that it is a kind of celebration of the here and now. Video is a medium very well suited to Paik's predilections.

In Paik's work there is a very strong inclination toward impermanence and change, evidenced in the many stages of his tapes, in the altered televisions, in the video synthesizer, and in his use of live feedback. The imagery of the altered televisions was constantly changing, and was not recorded, existing only in the present. Paik's video-synthesized imagery, recorded or live, with its tactile sense of bathing the spectator in color, is a complete sensual surround, like audio, both of which are always experienced in the present tense.

Paik has made many video works that capitalize on the immediacy and intimacy of the medium, such as *TV Bra*, *TV Chair*, and *TV Bed*. The subject of these works is the experience of the immediacy and intimacy of the medium itself, and as such they are extremely pure, though they also operate on the level of humor and of flamboyant showmanship characteristic of Paik's work and of his newsworthiness, another aspect of his sense of time.

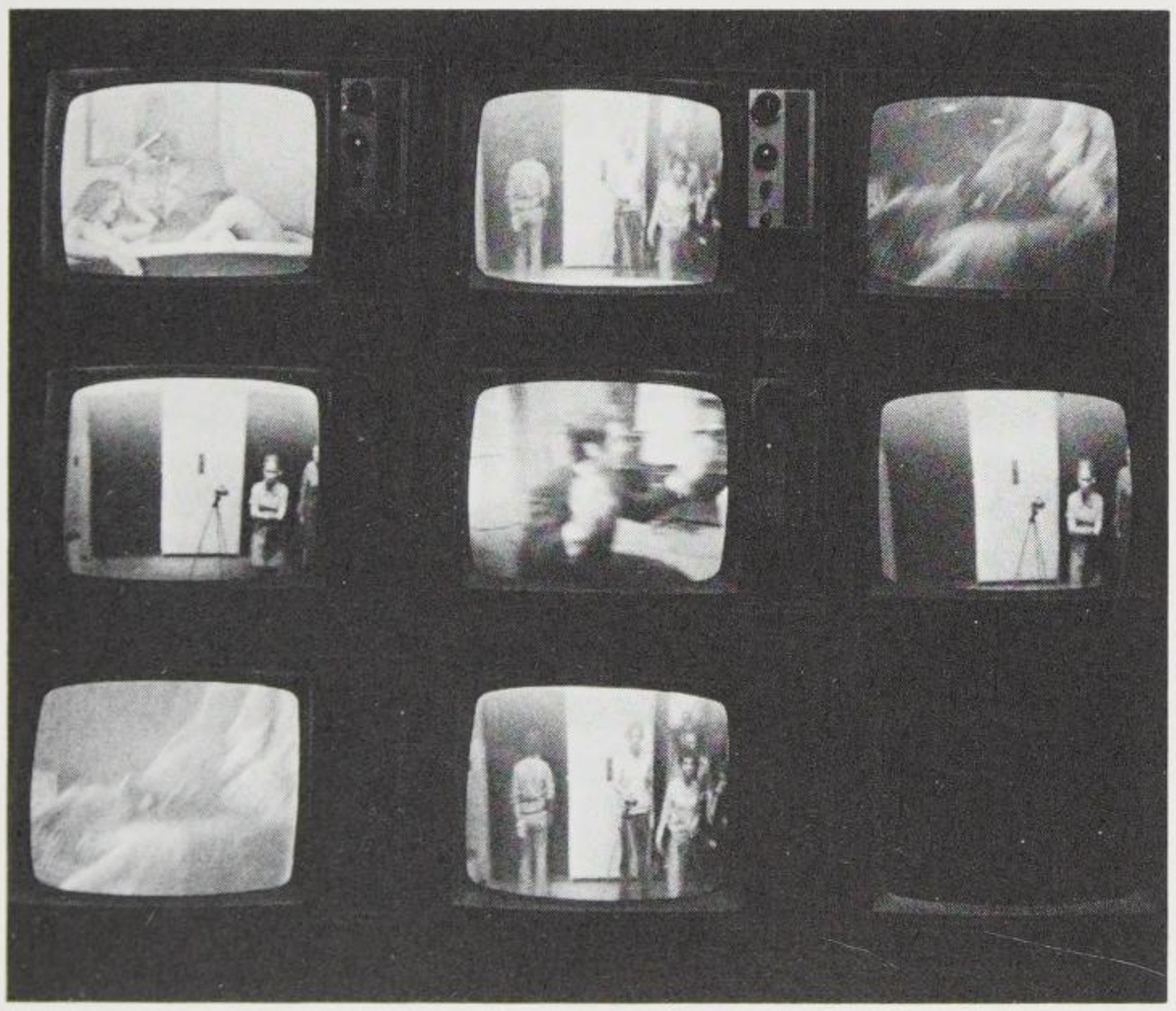
Paik's *TV Buddha* is one of his most subtle and complex works. Employing video's entirely unique capability for live feedback, the work is constantly and instantaneously renewing and regenerating an image of a small sculpture of Buddha on a small monitor. This apparently simple work exists in so many dimensions of time simultaneously that all the time dimensions are being constantly and instantaneously conjugated to the present tense. Nobody but Paik could get away with it.



*TV Buddha*, Nam June Paik, 1974 photo: Mary Lucier

*Wipe Cycle* by Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider was first shown in the "Television as a Creative Medium" exhibition at the pioneering Howard Wise Gallery in 1969. When the unsuspecting viewer came out of the elevator he was confronted

with live, eight-second, and sixteen-second delay images of himself, plus broadcast, taped, and tape collage material on nine different monitors. Gillette stated in Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970) that part of the intent of the work was for the viewer to experience himself as being "as much a piece of information as tomorrow morning's headlines," and Schneider stated that "The most important function of *Wipe Cycle* was to integrate the audience into the information." At that time, with video being such a new medium in such a context, experiencing oneself as being integrated within an information network from which one was normally separated brought about an entirely novel psychological and physical experience of space and time. Not only was the viewer in three places at one time—standing there here and now, and on two monitors there and now—but also on a monitor there and then, eight seconds ago and sixteen seconds ago. This kind of space and time experience can only be achieved with video, and when it was first made available to people for whom television was always a medium separate from themselves (though still a controlling one), the result was a completely new awareness. This completely new awareness was the subject of *Wipe Cycle*, and that subject only existed in the present.



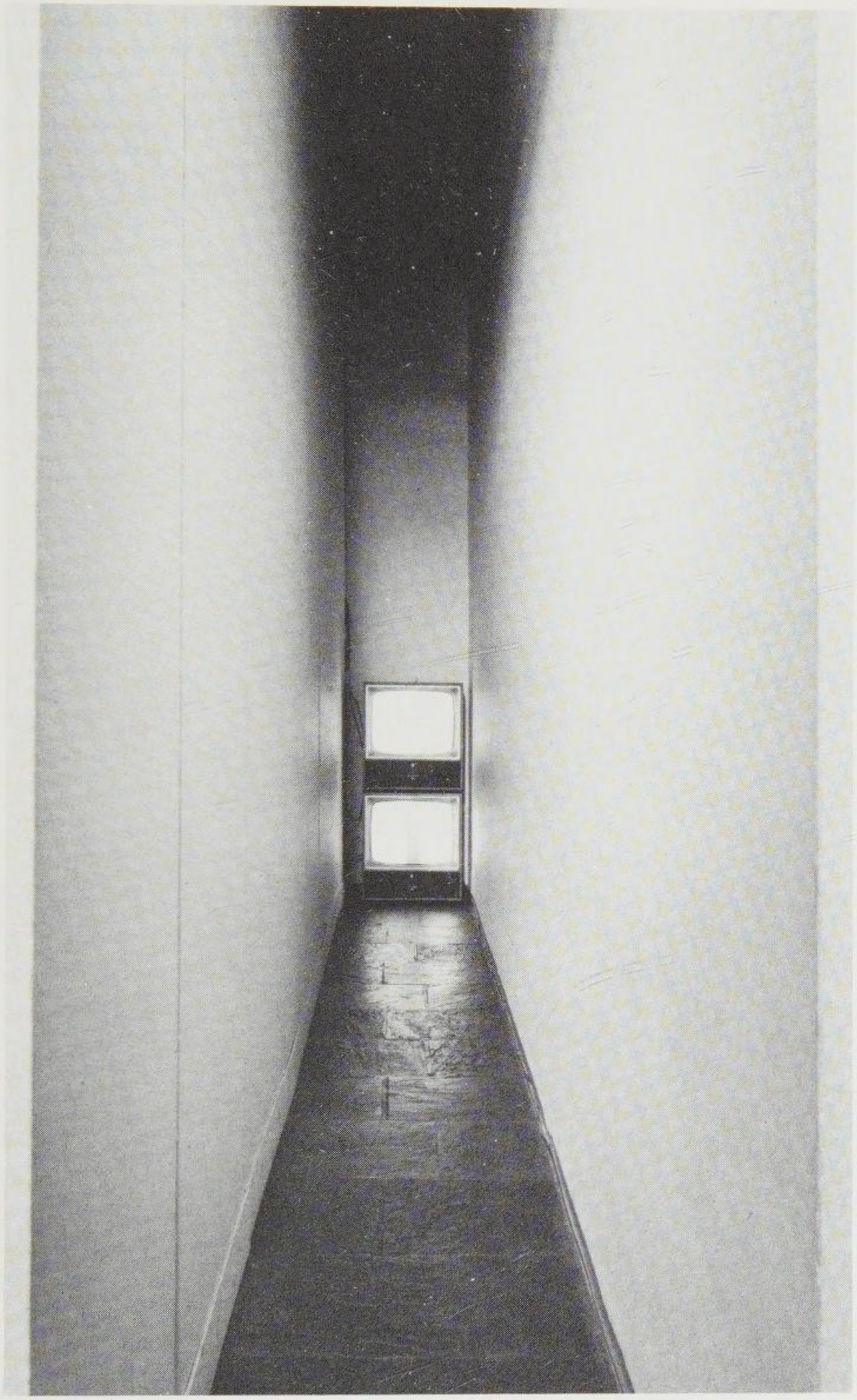
*Wipe Cycle*, Ira Schneider and Frank Gillette, 1969. photo: Allen Frank

The fact that *Wipe Cycle* related to a particular psychological and temporal space also emphasizes its presentness because it could not be as effectively re-presented now. Another interesting feature of it is Schneider and Gillette's interest in communications theory and in perceptions of the conditions of commercial media that were used very effectively as a norm against which to measure the new responses. This is somewhat related to Paik's information exchange with the press and with commercial television.

The viewers' experiencing of a certain kind of psychological and physical space, rather than of an object, focuses the attention of a work of art on the very precise time dimension of the viewers' present. Experience that is not the consequence of vision only, but of an integration of all the senses, physical and metaphysical, can occur only in such a dimension. Visual perception is then not primary, but is an aspect of location in a particular time and space, as in life. This kind of sensory integration is a feature of art which successfully employs live feedback video, though it also occurs in some environments by Michael Asher and Bruce Nauman.

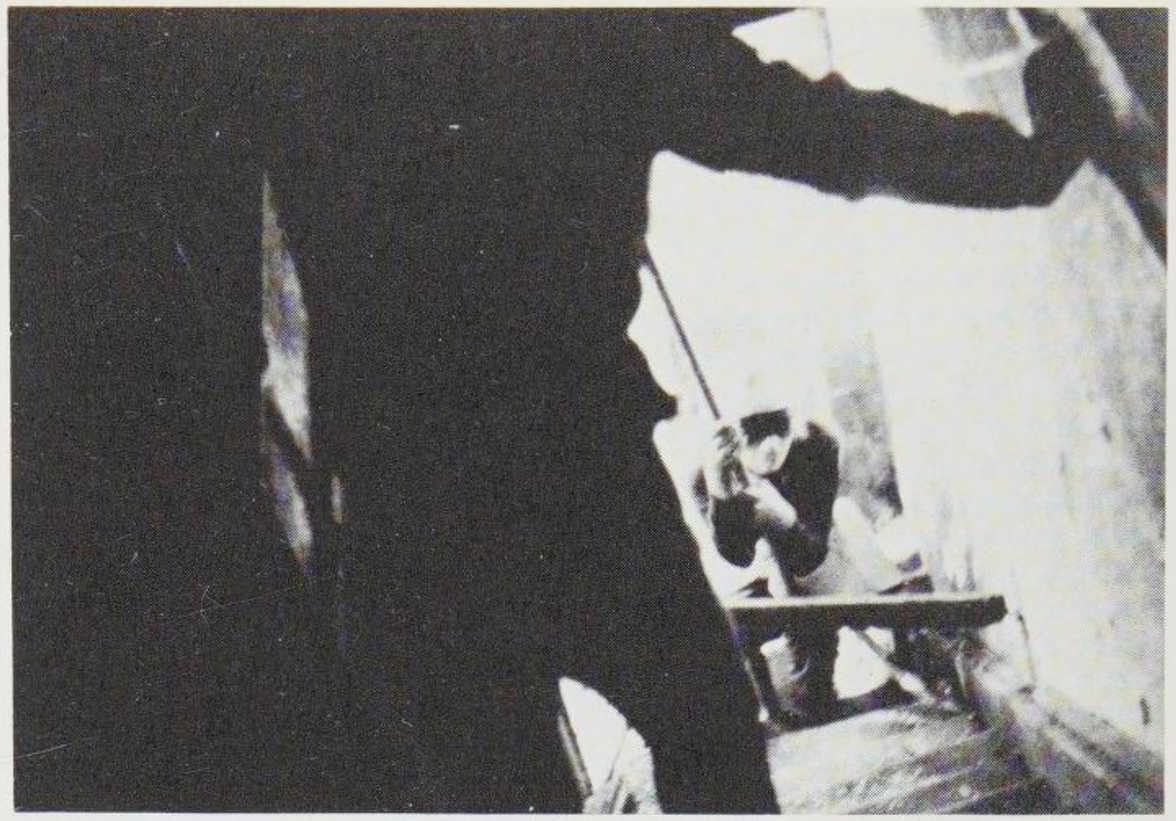
Nauman has made several environments integrated with live feedback video; most notable is his *Live Taped Video Corridor* from 1969 to 1970. "A live video camera is mounted 10 feet from the floor just outside the corridor. On entering the corridor, you look into the top monitor to see yourself entering the corridor, but the top monitor shows a tape of the empty corridor. You keep watching, waiting for yourself to appear as you enter, and then notice that you are appearing in the bottom monitor."[14] The experience of the work involves a reorientation of one's position in time and space, because the tape of the empty corridor gives one the sense of being absent, or of being there either earlier or later than one thinks, while at the same time the live image corroborates one's presence, resulting in the simultaneous experience of the dimensions of presence and absence, as well as of the time dimensions of now, before, and after. This kind of experience of time-space dislocation would not be possible without the medium of live feedback video which Nauman has used to redefine experience in relation to language.

Space charged with normally hidden psychological intensity has characterized the work of Vito Acconci. Acconci's works play on levels of the hidden and the revealed, articulating spatial-temporal psychological layers. Acconci's psychology is more Freudian than Gestalt, dealing with basic fears, anxieties, drives, and needs. *Claim*, first performed in 1971, makes use of a fixed-camera live video image in one monitor of Acconci, blindfolded, verbally and physically threatening to harm anyone who would dare to enter the space he occupies beyond a door which is behind the monitor. Because the video is live, the spectator knows that the space beyond the door is dangerous even though it is not seen. The hidden, in this case, is more



*Live Taped Video Corridor*, Bruce Nauman, 1969–70.
photo: Rudolph Burckhardt

revealed, in a particular way, than if it were actually seen, but it still remains hidden, evoking a kind of knowing which is purely emotional. Like an only partially conscious fear, a largely unseen space is vivid because it is hidden and forbidden. In this work Acconci's particular sense of space and time brings into the physical world of actual experience a dream consciousness similar to that of which the surrealists made images.



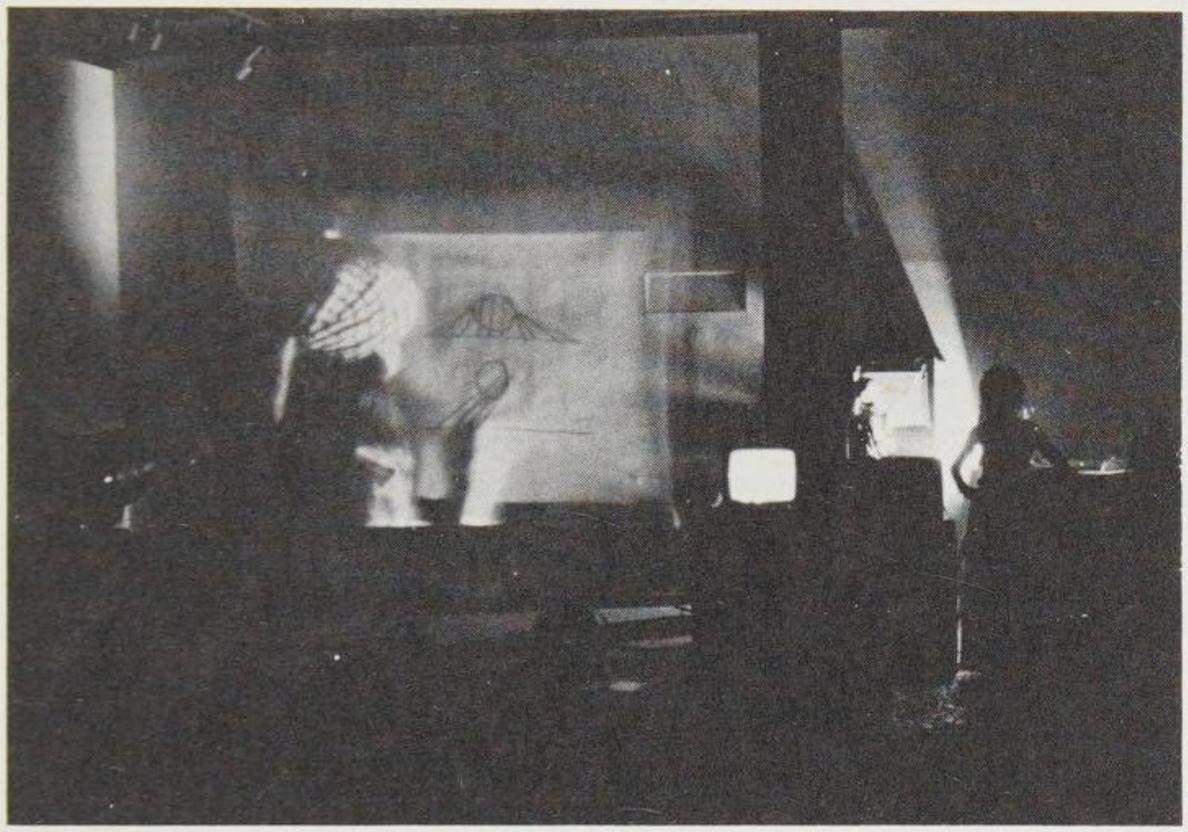
*Claim*, Vito Acconci, 1971. photo: *Avalanche*

In addition to recorded videotapes that are shown as works in themselves, Joan Jonas uses both recorded tapes and live feedback, in video projection or on a monitor, in her live performances. With live feedback Jonas can magnify and call attention to the details she especially wants the audience to notice, thus using video as a series of live clues to the performance. The camera circulates freely around the performance space, in prearranged movements and shots, so even though the audience is seated in front of the performance space, its relationship to the space of the performance is not fixed. The audience relationship to the space is, however, carefully controlled by Jonas, who uses the video camera as part of the choreography.

Jonas is consistently concerned with space in her live and recorded work. "My own thinking and production has focused on issues of space—ways of dislocating it, attenuating it, flattening it, turning it inside out, always attempting to explore it without ever giving to myself or to others the permission to penetrate it."[15] Video is one of the tools Jonas uses to flatten, dislocate, attenuate, and otherwise manipulate space.

In *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*, 1972, Jonas made use of a monitor and a video projector to project an 8-foot by 12-foot live image on the wall. Whether a monitor or a projector is used in live performance, the scale is always changed, creating a discrepancy in space perception between the real event and the image of the event. In this case both were used, causing a triple reading of the same event—one image was larger than the event, one smaller. In many cases the image can be seen more clearly than the actual event. Questions arise as to which perceptions are of real events and which are of

images: The imagery and the actual event become completely integrated. Controlled in this way, not only the space dislocation but also the parameters of the field of vision have a great deal to do with how the space is perceived. The live dimension is essential to this kind of control.



*Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*, Joan Jonas, 1972. photo: Peter Moore

*Funnel*, performed in 1974, makes use of both live and taped video on a single monitor within the space. A large paper funnel is used as a prop, and the actual space is constructed so that the walls create an exaggerated illusion of perspective. Illusions of spatial depth are explored in the videotape *Glass Puzzle*, which is part of the performance, though video as a medium tends to flatten space. Both distortion feedback and live feedback are employed as additional means for manipulating space.

*Vertical Roll*, a twenty-minute videotape produced in 1972 and used in 1973 in the performance *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, drastically alters perception of the space of the room in which it is seen. The floor, walls, and ceiling appear to undulate, expand, contract, throb, and sway, causing disorientation and confusion. Even though the work is recorded, the viewer experiences it in terms of his actual present space. The subject of the work is the alteration of space perception outside the monitor, and that illusion, which exists in the viewer's actual space, is very much in the present tense.

Of all the artists working with live video, Jonas is the most purely formal, dealing with abstract formal relationships. Her work has identified a unique area of activity that is hard to describe because it is so extremely abstract. She has identified a live dimension of space perception which is linked to the live dimension of video.

The live video projection works of Peter Campus provide dynamic fields which the participant activates. The relationship between the work and the perceiver is not passive, as the designations spectator, audience or viewer might indicate, but active and involving. In fact, the works do not exist until a participant activates the field.

All of Campus's live video projection works reveal to the participant simultaneous dimensions of himself, physical and metaphysical, which could not be seen in any other way. The only other way one can perceive a live image of oneself is with a mirror, one of the devices used by Joan Jonas, but the mirror is not capable of as much manipulation as the projected video image.

Campus has used a sheet of glass, in *Interface*, as a mirrorlike surface, but with the important difference that the glass, while reflective, is transparent. The surface, and consequently the space, of Campus's works is subtle, varied, and elusive. One can never exactly place one's image in a particular space in his projection works because the experience they provide is so novel that there is no way to relate it to something already known. The feeling is of being in another space dimension, and though the time dimension is actually live, it, too, is elusive. The works are relatively simple physically, but they provide very complex and subtle experiences.

*Mem*, 1974, consists of a single video camera and a projector. The camera is placed parallel to a wall about two feet out from it and is hooked up to the video projector next to it, which throws the image from the camera at an oblique angle onto the wall parallel to the camera. As you walk into the camera range, toward the wall on which the image is being projected, your image travels across the wall perpendicularly in relation to the actual action. This is a total contradiction of all expectations because it is so completely contrary to the behavior of mirror images. As the image moves across the wall, toward the camera, it becomes smaller because of the angle of the projector. You momentarily expect the image to become larger as it gets closer to the camera until you realize that it's only your image, not you. At this point the participant is completely baffled and has to hesitate a moment to experiment and develop a set of reflexes for dealing with this space orientation so contrary to normal expectations. And this is only the beginning. There follows a process of developing reflexes and of discovering the space, which can only be discovered through time.

*Mem* deals with a kind of space that has to be experienced and



*Mem*, Peter Campus, 1974. photo: Bevan Davies

that can be discovered only through time. The time that *Mem* employs is uniquely characteristic of video. New dimensions of both space and time are revealed as separate, though related, experiences.

Beryl Korot's four-channel video work, *Dachau 1974*, weaves very precisely timed paired images back and forth in relation to each other. In subtle and complex relationships, these images of the former concentration camp, now a tourist attraction, seem to weave in and out of memory, from the past to the present. An acute sense of rhythm and of very carefully controlled composition results in a series of completely compelling visual waves from one monitor to another and back, a kind of weaving itself. The weaving of imagery is not just two-dimensional, or even three-dimensional, but also involves peaks of emotional involvement with the subject as it emerges into the present, which naturally evokes associations of the past. Dachau explores a kind of space that has to do with very deeply felt emotions outside of language and its narrative derivatives, and outside of purely visual drama. It has to do with surface, but with a surface that fluctuates from near to far, from now to then, and a kind of emotional landscape that can be developed only through time.

Though the work is recorded, it has about it a sense of urgency that projects it into a sense of the present. At the same time, it retains its links with the past. In *Dachau 1974*, Beryl Korot may have discovered a means of employing video to deal with a profound sense of history without using literary or primarily visual devices, but by using the unique time and space of the medium.

Other recorded and live video works also make different uses of the time and space dimensions of the medium, but many have been written about elsewhere. Because a sense of the present tense is an inherent feature of the medium, it is present to a greater or lesser degree in all video work. I have attempted to concentrate on some works which have been instrumental in defining new dimensions.

The time dimension of video is most emphatically present tense, though the variety of conjugations within that tense is wide and may require new language, in the long run, to identify new dimensions. Space, always the province of the artist, is also being discovered to have experiential, not imaginary, dimensions that we might not have expected. The time and space experiences of video art relate very directly to integrated sensory and mind reflexes required for successfully communicating with the media environment, which is, after all, our world.

NOTES

1. Louis Harris, "Do We Like What We Watch?" *Life Magazine* (September 10, 1971), p. 43.

2. Nicholas Johnson, *How To Talk Back To Your Television Set* (New York: Bantam, 1970), p. 11.

3. Douglas Davis, "Filmgoing/Videogoing," *American Film Institute Report* (May 1973), pp. 50–52.

4. John Coplans, *Andy Warhol*, New York Graphic Society, 1970, "Raggedy Andy," by Calvin Tomkins, p. 12.

5. Andy Warhol, Exhibition Catalogue, Moderna Museet, February–March 1968.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Coplans, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

8. Stephen Koch, *Star Gazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films* (New York: Praeger, 1974), p. 87.

9. Michael Heizer, "The Art of Michael Heizer," *Art Forum* (September 1969), p. 34.

10. Harold Szeeman, "When Attitudes Become Form," exhibition catalogue, The Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (September 28, 1969–October 27, 1969).

11. Daniel J. Boorstin, "Television," *Life Magazine* (September 10, 1971), p. 38.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

13. Douglas Davis, "Media/Art/Media," *Arts Magazine* (September/October 1971), p. 45.

14. Bruce Kurtz, "Video Is Being Invented," *Arts Magazine* (December/January 1973), p. 43.

15. Joan Jonas (with Rosalind Krause), "Seven Years," *The Drama Review* (T-65), p. 13.

# THE PERSONAL ATTITUDE

**David Ross**

Since so much of the literature that has resulted from the development of video art begins with a suitably cryptic quote from the Korean-born televisionary artist and composer Nam June Paik, I seriously considered avoiding what must by now be considered one of the prime clichés of this particular genre. After reconsidering the matter, it seemed that evoking Paik's name might indeed make it possible to set the proper tone for a discussion of art and television and just how they affect each other. In the mid-sixties, Paik frightened and delighted a great number of people by predicting, in the spirit of progress, that the cathode ray tube would replace brush and canvas in much the same way that the collage had replaced oil painting.[1] Now, ten years later, in the spirit of détente, Paik had declared peace with paper and canvas, stating quite succinctly that paper TV (his TV screen drawings) relates to real TV in much the same way that TV Dinner relates to real dinner.

Although Paik seems to have a knack for making complex issues sound simple, one can't help wondering why it is so hard for people to understand why artists are involving themselves in television. The fact is, an increasing number of artists working in the United States and Europe are using the tools of television production to make art. The confusion stems, in part, from the perhaps more obvious fact that it has taken artists nearly thirty years to initiate this involvement. Further, the kinds of art being made with television represent just about the entire range of contemporary artistic concerns, yet they are referred to by the common and fairly vague term "video art."[2] Most important, however, are the political connotations of artistic intervention in the dominant communication system. These connotations not only confuse a formal understanding of video activities, but threaten and anger many people as well.

If, as Daniel Buren noted in his protest to the subversion of political statement in the "Projekt '74" at the Walraf Richartz Museum in Cologne, Germany, "Art remains political," then perhaps in the United States, video is the current manifestation of that phenomenon. Video art did not derive from artists' fascination with the tools of television per se. Neither can the origins of the activity be traced to the nihilistic art and technology movement of the early and middle sixties, which placed the artist (more often than not) in the role of conspicuous consumer of *technology* in the broadest sense and, if anything, pointed out the fact that the artist was as effectively pacified by technology as everyone else. It is far easier to see the development of video as coincidental with the range of specific aesthetic issues that led to the evolution of a generalized postobject orientation. These issues include the rise in concern for the social and political implications of artworks and the artists' relationship to subject matter in general, brought about by the fairly comprehensive radicalization of the sixties and early seventies, as well as (perhaps most significantly) an understanding and genuine respect for the powerful ramifications of one particular technology: television. Mudbath sculpture bubbling to the sound of mud bubbling now seems to have been part of another generation entirely.[3] The question that remains unanswered, however, is whether or not art must lose its traditional sphere of introspective inquiry to produce substantive change, or whether political character is intrinsic to a work of art—the function of the artist's intent regardless of the work's immediate impact.

Without a doubt, when one considers the roots of video art, one must consider what film historian Annette Michelson calls the radical aspiration[4]—only here I am not referring to her description of the evolution of film, but rather to the evolution of a subtle and perhaps more pervasive attitude that transcends the development of any particular medium in contemporary art. Video art is a mongrel form that appeared a full quarter-century after television had established itself in the popular consciousness. Unlike film, television seems to have developed in such a corporate manner that the artist's individual vision and energy were deemed unnecessary to that development. In television, the artist became involved after the systems of expectation and control were established through decades of continuous conditioning. Whereas European film makers like Eisenstein and Pudovkin engaged in discussions that helped shape the form of film, and made contributions that became inextricably woven into the grammar of the medium, the video artist has been introduced well

after the fact. If one sees the history of film as a constantly reemerging struggle between the "revolutionary" aspects bred into the medium, and the "reactionary" forces fighting to keep these revolutionary aspects in check, it becomes easier to understand why the film industry, which developed the television industry, has kept the artist so far from the process for so long. There was no provision made for the individual attitude. Even today, video art exists in broadcast television only as the result of the continuing public broadcasting struggle to find novelty programming capable of wresting an audience from the commercial competitors. As such, it is hard to point to techniques or grammar in television production or direction in the use of television systems that have *resulted* from the work of artists involved with the medium. If anything, the opposite is closer to the truth, as most of the successful works on videotape (those of Nam June Paik, William Wegman, Richard Serra, and Peter Campus, for example) have borrowed elements from their commercial predecessors. In direct contrast to the role that the artist played in the development of film technique and grammar, the artist in television is working in the only area left open to him, the development of a personal attitude.

The earliest artworks involving video are attributed to Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell, working simultaneously in Cologne around the composer, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and the scene he generated at WDR (West Deutsche Rundfunk), the experimental sector of the German radio network. At about the same time, a group of musicians and performers concerned with random and indeterminate structures—Paik, Vostell, George Brecht, Diter Rot, Henry Flynt, Ben Vautier, Yoko Ono, and others[5]—initiated a series of activities they called Fluxus, which they also named themselves. Relating to the works of Alan Kaprow, Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg, and the American Happening scene, as well as to the early works of the pop movement and the general revival of neodadaism that surfaced as various conceptual and anti-art activities, Fluxus was, according to George Brecht, widely misunderstood as a movement allying a group of artists with some common principle of agreed-upon program. Brecht noted that "In Fluxus there has never been any attempt to agree on aims or methods; individuals with something unnameable in common have simply naturally coalesced to publish and perform their work. . . . Fluxus encompasses opposites. Consider opposing it, supporting it, ignoring it, changing your mind."[6] As far as Paik was concerned, he felt that the visual arts had ignored randomness, a Zen concept that had resurfaced in the music of John Cage, in much the same way that music had ignored sex. Vostell, whose magazine dé-collage served as the central correspondence vehicle for Fluxus, was concerned primarily with the breakdown of culture and the integration of that attitude in the kind of active and extended situations that television and publishing provided. Accordingly, Paik's earliest video works were analogous to Cage's prepared piano works. Magnets placed on the television screen, coupled with adjustments to the deflection coils within the set itself, produced a randomized though fixed set of parameters through which the television image would contort and twist. Vostell's works tended to be more closely allied to his dé-collage environmental works, in which television sets were placed atop piles of old shoes and boots, and destroyed television sets were shown as sculpture.

In any event, it was at this point that the first direction that artists were to take in television began to take form, though few saw these scattered actions as the beginning of any kind of concerted artistic involvement with television. It seems, however, that the alternate media activity of the past five years has tended to cloud these roots with a kind of mock involvement. The video artists' role, in relation to television, has always been, and will probably remain, a posteriori. The fact that the artist now possesses the tools of television production has given him the illusion that he is an active participant in the process. The smoke screen produced by the quasi-admission of the artist to the television process has totally obscured the fact that there will never be any but the most limited tolerance of the individual artist within television's broadcast structure. It remains that the artist's responsibility lies not in producing programs, but in dealing with notions of art and artistic responsibility made evident by the state of television in its grossest sense.

Paik had been in the United States barely a year when the Sony Corporation announced their intention to market a nonbroadcast portable camera and ½-inch video recorder (the portapak) at approximately one-twentieth the cost and one hundred times the flexibility of all previously manufactured broadcast television equipment. In 1965, he made arrangements to purchase one of the first units delivered for sale in New York.

The situation that existed before the introduction of the relatively inexpensive consumer-grade videotape production equipment was roughly analogous to that of a society that possessed a tightly controlled radio industry and no telephone service. Few people had the idea that they could *make* TV as well as watch it. Many, including the artist, were coming to understand the way in which the medium worked to suppress ideological dissent and promote commercially and, ultimately, politically expedient attitudes. The artists involved in the New

York Happening movement, resigned to their seemingly inescapable reactive role in the culture, began to stage events which provided them with an illusion of active involvement, and with the ability to provoke and create aesthetically controlled situations in much the same way that a composer or choreographer can score a theatrical performance. The outcome of these events was threefold. First, they illustrated that it was possible to use media coverage as a central element in a work of art; second, they provided the ground for the development of much of the intermedia work that was to follow by acknowledging the dissolution of the boundaries between different kinds of art theory and artmaking; and third, that it was indeed possible to create works of art that directly acknowledged both complicity with and critical distance from the popular culture. The implications of these issues, though central to the development of video, have yet to make an impact on cultural institutions in general.

The period from 1969 to 1970 contained the seeds of the art world's recognition of the artist's work in video. In 1969, Los Angeles dealer Nicholas Wilder made the first sale of an artist's videotape in the United States—Bruce Nauman's *Video Pieces A–N*—to a European collector. Perhaps more significantly, in the same season New York dealer Howard Wise (whose 57th Street Gallery had been the center of a great deal of the kinetic art activity of the sixties) held an impressive exhibition of young artists, some of whom had been working with the new Sony video equipment for several years. The exhibition, entitled "TV As A Creative Medium," included work by Paik, Eric Siegel (inventor of one of the first direct-video synthesizers), Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider (whose collaborative work *Wipe Cycle* used live and taped video to include the viewer in the work), Paul Ryan, and others. In contrast to Nauman's early videotapes, which were an extension of his performance/sculpture concerns, most of the works in the Wise exhibition (*Wipe Cycle* in particular) related to the social and political aspects of the radical changes that seemed to be occurring—within the technology itself and in the communications industry in general. As a result of this exhibition, Paik, who like Siegel had devised a synthesizer capable of distorting the television image with a great deal of variation, continues to be mistakenly allied with those artists whose concerns were rooted within the technology alone. The rift between those overtly radicalized artists who were literally in the streets, making tape and showing it in community video theaters (those who immediately seized upon television as a way of integrating their artwork into the culture) and those who saw television as a new and interesting way to make images, grew quite formidable. Still another attitude developed among those more established conceptual artists who saw the overt nature of video-related politics as something to be avoided, yet recognized the potential of using videotape as a cheap way of documenting and extending the audience for performances of one kind or another. Interestingly enough, this rift seems to be as pronounced as ever, once again mirroring the divisions within the art world in general.

In 1970, museums began to take notice of some of the video activity then flourishing in New York. Russell Connor, of the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, produced the exhibition "Vision and Television," while Elaine Varian organized "Projected Art" for the Finch College Museum later that same year. In 1971, the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York, established a gallery and department specifically devoted to video art. Museum involvement with video art and television appeared in response to the growing interest of artists in the medium, and in response to the unique set of social and political pressures that have forced many museums to reevaluate their relationship to communities. Much of that reevaluation is still having an impact today. But museums and galleries served a function far more significant than one would traditionally expect, for they provided artists with some very valuable feedback on the effectiveness of single-monitor video work in the art context.

It soon became obvious that public closed-circuit viewing galleries would probably provide the major forum for the public exchange of video art, since the private collector could not be expected to move into this area for any number of economic reasons; and broadcasters had little use for the majority of this esoteric work, which they judged inadequate by their prevailing technical and programming standards. But even artists like William Wegman, whose short, funny tapes are easily broadcastable, are only televised in the context of academic-type treatments of the "artist and his work." The artist, working alone, is never allowed direct access to the viewer. His work is always interpreted. Broadcasters continue to see their role as that of central translator for the entire society. In addition, the problem is quite unlike the Chinese model, where all television viewing exists as a collective activity for the community, a notion introduced well after the revolution. The Western concept of television viewing, on the contrary, has always been connected to the politics of the individual controlled in privacy. So either the museum or gallery has to create the illusion of the home environment (a task which literally defies the architecture of all but the smallest and homiest museums), or the artist has to take into account, a priori, the conditions in which his work will actually be seen. For many, this fact confirmed a growing feeling of futility in terms of political efforts to introduce the personal attitude directly into the macro-television system. Artists found themselves confined to producing videotapes to be

viewed in museums which would be regarded, by most, as sculpture that demanded too much time to view and interfered with a casual stroll through museum galleries.

Some artists saw the reality of presenting work in this context as an impetus for exploring new television structures, in much the same way Paik and Vostell had done in their earlier environmental works. Environmental works may be thought of as performing sculptures, or epistemological puzzles that choreograph the interaction of the viewer and the work, placing the viewer unwittingly in the performer's role. Artists like Paik, Gillette, Schneider, Downey, Graham, Mann, Campus, Levine, Nauman, and Sonnier produced works using complex environmental constructions, large-screen video projections, multiple-monitor arrangements, and multi-input matrices mixing live and time-delayed camera inputs to create and describe a wide range of conditions and situations.

Paik, for example, created his *T.V. Garden* as a way of showcasing his broadcast video montage *Global Groove*, and of reasserting the artist's ability to rework not only the programmatic nature of television, but also whole notions of the medium that include atypical orientation and groupings of television sets as a way of upsetting viewer expectations. *T.V. Garden* consisted of twenty-five color televisions placed face up in a bed of plants and flowers and viewed from a balcony, well above the garden itself. The viewer was confronted with a stunning array of poorly-tuned color sets beaming skyward to the accompaniment of an ever-changing selection of rock, classical, avant-garde, Korean, native American, and Nigerian music blaring at high volume.

Bruce Nauman's *Video Corridor* used a live camera and a monitor to heighten powerful phenomenological investigations resulting from the placement of the viewer-participant in spaces that enforced both physical and intellectual reorientations.

In *Track/Trace* Gillette further expanded on *Wipe Cycle*, his collective piece with Ira Schneider. As Schneider noted shortly after the Wise Gallery show, *Wipe Cycle* was an attempt to "integrate the audience into the information."[7] That integration included a manipulation of the audience's sense of time and space, giving the work the combined impact of a live performance, an automatic sculpture, and a wry message regarding the viewer's place in relation to the broadcast media. The piece consisted of a bank of nine monitors arranged three square and programmed into four distinct cycles, including two prerecorded tape inputs, eight- and sixteen-second time-delay loops, a four-second live feedback, four-second off-air mix, and a unifying gray wipe that swept the field counter-clockwise once every sixteen seconds. Richard Kostelanetz noted at the time that "the spectator [felt] caught in an intelligent, watchful, oblivious system whose incessant and variable observations remain compelling and mysterious even after their operation is explained."[8]

*Wipe Cycle* was an investigation of the nature of the information mix, but it was primarily concerned with the effect that a shifting time orientation has upon the viewer as the switching mechanism (a mechanical structuring device) moves the audience's view of itself through the same matrix as the prerecorded information and broadcast programming.

In *Track/Trace* Gillette eliminated all of the elements except the time-delay loop, which he amplified to five steps. Fifteen monitors were stacked in a pyramid with one on the top and five on the bottom level. Three cameras and a sequential switching device provided an alternating scan of the gallery space made visible, as a result of the five-point time-delay loop, at five points in time ranging from real time to fifteen seconds past. A heuristic work, the piece had the effect of a kind of choreography imposed upon the viewer who wrestled with the appearance of the simultaneously presented views of time and space.

In opposition to film, video, with its connection to notions of real time, has always seemed highly suitable to temporal exploration. More difficult in video, perhaps, has been the exploration of spatial and architectural systems in relation to time.

Having dealt with observable and metaphorical differences between areas of light and shadow, images produced by reflection and projection, motion created by relative oppositions, and the mediation of the present with the immediate past, Peter Campus continues to explore "video as a function of reality."[9] As Campus stated in the exhibition notes to his one-man show at the Everson Museum of Art in 1974, "If we are to avoid the problem of creating a visual system that will reduce the capacity of the eye, it is necessary to disassociate the video camera from the eye and make it an extension of the room." He went on to say that "Instead of limiting the amount of visual information coming to the eye-brain by replacing the natural field of vision with an abstracted one, it is possible to include the video information in the viewer's field of vision, increasing the potential of the visual situation."[10]

Campus creates complex sculptural systems using television cameras, video projectors, and picture monitors as primary

structural elements while relying upon light-defined fields and the interactive process of the viewer to complete the work. In *sev*, Campus's latest work, he continues to utilize the viewer-participant to create an induced experience, brought about by neither the artist nor the viewer directly, but by the work itself, coupled with the passage of time. Less diffused than many of Campus' earlier works, *sev* exists as a concentrated cluster of light glowing in an almost completely darkened room. The video projector is located quite close to the wall, throwing an extremely intense image of the viewer-participant and imparting a sense of looking through the wall rather than looking into it. Ultimately, this work leads to the conclusion that within a work of art there exists no fixed point of reference in regard to either time or space.

A number of artists have used multiple-monitor constructions to explore the sculptural status that the work achieves purely because the monitor on a pedestal occupies a place similar to that of traditional sculpture. Some work deals with the manipulation of the time-based nature of videotape as the basis of multi-monitor constructions. Beryl Korot's four-screen work *Dachau 1974*, in which a series of carefully composed shots of the infamous Nazi death camps are juxtaposed and rejuxtaposed among four television screens according to a detailed score, illustrates how time (an element usually fixed by editing conventions including the literary flashback and parallel editing) can be isolated and recombined in the fashion of traditional weaving. Andy Mann's four-square matrix piece *One-Eyed Bum* illustrates the use of precision editing of the same nature in order to achieve a series of shifting, geometric patterns across the face of the matrix. During the course of a conversation with the partially blind Bowery bum—a narrative thread that runs throughout the work—Mann works out the complete set of possible combinations given four inputs and four rows of four monitors.

In *Manhattan Is An Island*, Ira Schneider literally re-created Manhattan Island as an interactive television sculpture. Within an outer ring of monitors playing a view of the island from a Circle Line boat cruise, Schneider built a series of sub-environments, or neighborhoods, with endless loops of *vérité* tape simultaneously presenting information from different sections of the city. As in David Tudor's musical composition "Rainforest," in which the audience moves about through a series of sound-producing objects suspended in an environment, the viewer of *Manhattan Is An Island* wanders freely, composing a fresh view of the work at all times.

It should be noted that these works, with perhaps the exception of Campus's, were produced by artists whose primary relationship to the medium had developed around the production of videotapes, as entities unto themselves, to be broadcast, cablecast, or shown in closed-circuit loft or gallery situations. In other words, the works can be seen, in part, as the result of the continued exclusion of the artist from the broadcast medium and from the resistance of most museums to substantive change.

During the period in which video art developed, a number of performing artists found that the use of video and other multimedia techniques provided their work with a kind of elasticity previously impossible. Further, many of the artists who became involved in performance came out of nontheatrical backgrounds, some expanding sculptural concerns to include the body as material, some employing poetic structure in order to produce works less bound by the conventions of traditional language systems.

For the most part, performance-oriented artists like Vito Acconci have used videotape and video systems extensively in performance situations or, alternatively, to re-create the personal intensity of performance spaces. Though many performers first became involved with video as an inexpensive way of documenting works, it soon became apparent that the lack of detail provided only the barest of documents, while the fixed-camera approach made works barely watchable. If, however, the video camera were used to create, or re-create, the kind of intimate space that people associate with television viewing, the artist could provide the viewer, as Acconci did in his tapes *Face Off* and *Theme Song*, with an intimate and revealing experience. William Wegman, in contrast, employs the cool, distant style of the amateur TV pitchman or the man on the street giving testimony, unaware he is being taped, in order to develop the confidence and attention of an audience that feels, in a way, that they are watching something broadcast accidentally. Wegman used video as a device to place his deadpan humor out of context by creating standard comic expectations while at the same time exaggerating his relationship to the medium, and to the viewer as well.

Chris Burden, whose fascination with the "mass-media" aspect of broadcast television, has produced two works in which he purchased ten-second television "I.D." spots, using each occasion to produce a work of art, distributed indiscriminately. Each piece involved a simple performance: The first, *Through The Night Softly*, consisted of a six-second piece of film of the artist crawling through broken glass and four seconds of titles. The second piece, *Poem for L.A.*, consisted of a three-line poem (Science has Failed; Heat is Life; Time Kills) delivered in print and direct reading. Burden's most direct use of video, and not television, was in his performance of *Velvet Water* at the Chicago Art Institute. The audience for the piece saw

Burden attempting to "breathe water" on a set of monitors placed in front of them. The fact that he used the system to isolate and energize his presence illustrates his understanding of the power inherent in the television abstraction process.

In *The Children's Tapes*, Terry Fox demonstrated his ability to create a ritual intensity of performance, though in this work it was divorced from his physical presence. An artist whose early experiments with video involved the simple documentary recording of performances (both public and private), Fox became convinced that there was a way in which he could translate his particular attitude into tape directly, without producing a second-generation work. Using much the same symbolic lexicon as is present in many of his performance works, Fox created a series of active tableaux involving, among other things, a spoon, a bowl, a candle, and shreds of cloth to illustrate basic scientific principles. The results are amusing and engrossing, leading the viewer into and beyond literal levels of interest and providing a rather elegant and understated view of a very private world.

Finally, there are artists who, in a more theatrical mode, use videotapes and live systems as active elements in performance works. The odd thing about using video in this manner is that, for the most part, it takes television completely out of context. Part of the nature of television's radical difference from theater is the artificially produced intimacy calculated to replace the real and human intimacy generated by live actors and live audience responding in concert.

Juan Downey and Carmen Beuchat, performing together in 1974, made use of a system of suspended cameras and monitors fed by live and taped video. This served as counterpoint to the dance while providing the dancer, Beuchat, with a way to orient herself—she had a fixed view of her motion from above, and a shifting view of her activity, provided by Downey who moved around the periphery of the stage with a remote camera. Joan Jonas, in her performance work *Vertical Roll*, used prerecorded tape to create a kind of rhythmic structure as an overlay for the entire work. This was done by taping a continuous vertical roll into the picture, and accenting each flip with a clapping sound. In a later work two dancers explore and illuminate each others bodies with small, hand-held TV sets beaming empty blue light on a silent, darkened stage.

Of course, the performance tapes of musicians like Richard Landry, Charlemagne Palestine, and Alvin Lucier seem a logical extension of their previous audio-recording activities. Though the visual complement is a complete addition, unlike what one expects to see when the popular music industry starts producing rock-and-roll video discs, the visual is usually dependent upon a concept primarily approached in sound. In Landry's *Divided Alto* and *Quad Suite*, straight camera shots showing the performers' hands and lips are double-tracked with the double-track audio providing a clear and direct rendition of a performance that exists only on the tape itself.

Lucier has recently produced a videotape of his composition *Queen of the South*, in which a transducer belted to a board transmits a particular oscillation to a coating of sand, producing a series of transfiguring patterns in the sand's surface. The tape of the piece, showing at first a long shot and then a close-up of the sand field, quickly loses all scale, taking on the character of what could be a monumental earth work, or the formation of the land markings of Nazca, Peru, or perhaps a grainy, live transmission of a moonscape with sand particles in frenzied motion, moving in complete harmony.

Palestine, in an early tape entitled *Body Music*, produced a fixed-camera recording of his performance piece, during which he developed a progression of body sounds while moving in an ever-expanding spiral toward the edges of the gallery space. In relation to the performance, these tapes provided a distinctly secondary experience, because the fixed view and microphone limit the document to a single point of view external to the work. In *Body Music II*, however, Palestine carries camera and microphone with him, as he careens through the empty hallways of a deserted Florentine villa. The experience of the tape is as directly linked with the concept of this piece as Lucier's sand particles were in sync with the vibrating wooden plank.

There are numerous performance tapes of diverse approaches which could be described, but the point has been made: For any number of reasons, television and video tools are emerging as an important factor in artists' work for a broad range of reasons, while for a number of reasons the converse just doesn't seem to be so.

At the 1975 conference of the American Association of Museums, the issue of validating modern art was discussed at length by a panel of museum directors representing some of the most prestigious and powerful modern art museums in the world. Although they differed in many respects, they all seemed to agree that museums indeed play a significant role in validating a small segment of contemporary art by giving tacit or indirect approval to a particular artist's work, or a particular type of work, such as video art. The point was never made, however, that the validating processes have become reciprocal: artists validating museums and galleries, collectors validating galleries, museums, and artists, just as . . . on and on. The closed nature of this system has, in recent years, become even more evident.

As artists further develop their capacity to deal directly with the public, without the intervention of validating institutions, it will become increasingly evident that all institutions with an investment in the maintenance of centrally controlled mass media stand to lose power as a direct result of the artists' participation in the decentralization processes. As a generally post-object art depends less and less upon the physical presence of the museum system, and seems to demand more in the way of entrepreneurial support, one might well question whether the contemporary art museum of the future will consist of a television station and a direct-mail publishing house.

One artist whose work explores what one might call the future relationship of the artist to television is Douglas Davis, who has been unusually successful in integrating into his work a thorough understanding of the sociopolitical implications of television communication. In his *Austrian Tapes*, an off-air record of a live performance piece on the Austrian television network in the summer of 1974, Davis quite specifically attacks the still prevailing notions of viewer passivity in relation to both television and art in general. By suggesting and actually acting out a series of direct encounters with the viewer, during which time the participant is invited to undress along with the artist and "touch" body parts in what seems like an awfully broad metaphor for connection, Davis at once exploits latent fears of the cold, impersonal nature of the mass medium and effectively heightens (in a way that instructional television never quite can) the medium's one-to-one character (in contrast to the myth of the mass audience.) Only a few artists, such as Joseph Beuys and Han Haake, have so forcefully explored the use of art in the exploration of the character of social systems through the investigation of specific aspects of highly visible societal structures.

In 1934, the German critic Walter Benjamin, writing in an essay entitled "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," noted that during the early part of the twentieth century, a great deal of time was devoted to the question of whether or not photography, as it was then known, could be considered an art. He noted, however, that the primary question—whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the nature of art entirely—was not even raised, much less answered. Is it not time, then, to answer that very question with a broad-based inquiry into the changed nature and actual character of art itself?

NOTES

1. Nam June Paik, "Electric Video Recorder," letter to the New School for Social Research, 1965, published in *Nam June Paik: Video 'n' Videology*, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, 1974.

2. Though some might object, we might best define video art as any work involving video tools—television cameras, television receivers and monitors, videotape recorders, video projectors, etc.—or television systems in general. Sculptural works that exploit the capacities of video tools in order to deal with any number of spatial, temporal, epistemological, or metaphysical problems are generally referred to as video sculpture, though the term seems of limited value.

3. Reference here is to "Mud Muse," Robert Rauschenberg, 1971, cll: Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

4. Annette Michelson, "Film and the Radical Aspiration: An Introduction," *New Forms in Film*, Montreux, 1974.

5. For a complete treatment of Fluxus, see *Fluxus & Happening*, Cologne Kunstverein, Cologne, 1970.

6. George Brecht, "Something About Fluxus," in *Fluxus & Happening* (May 1964).

7. Jud Yalkut, "Interview with Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider," *East Village Other* (July 30, 1969), vol. 4, no. 35, reprinted in "Radical Software" (Spring 1970), issue 1.

8. Richard Kostelanetz, "Artistic Machines," *Chicago Review*" (1971), vol. 23, no. 1, p. 124.

9. Peter Campus, "Video As a function of Reality," from the catalogue of his exhibition at the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, 1974.

10. *Ibid.*

# VIDEOPERFORMANCE

## Willoughby Sharp

Video art now occupies a particularly paradoxical position within the currently expanding network of artistic expression. Since 1966, when Sony first placed an inexpensive half-inch portable video system on the market, a growing number of individuals, mostly artists, have produced a body of video work which indicates the vast potential the medium possesses as an almost ideal communicator of aesthetic facts. In the late sixties, when many innovative artists began to move away from traditional modes like painting and static sculpture into domains designated as "Process Sculpture," "Anti-form," "Earth Art," "Body Works," and varieties of "Conceptual Art," video became a significant channel through which the newer aesthetics could pass. As artists became more involved with process than product, gallery walls began to give way to video screens as the main ground of artistic information. Studio activities, the actual working out of specific sculptural problems, became instantly transplantable into the alien world of the casual museum-goer. And art became more immediate, more *personal*. When this emphasis on product began shifting, the gallery-museum system had to change to accommodate itself to the more modern modes of creation. Storage racks for painting and sculpture were cleared to make way for shelves to hold videotapes. Space was emptied so that TV monitors could be installed to show the new work. As several influential New York galleries began to quietly reconsider their commitments, the international museum network that feeds off of the galleries' reservoir of work started to respond. A rush of museum shows, both in the United States and Europe, heralded video as the "New Wave," and a larger public suddenly was confronted with a whole new area of artistic exploration.

Today, with the first decade of "Video Art" almost over, the basic outlines of the current situation are becoming clear. The "New Wave" has crested. Most of the work that has been produced is of a tentative nature, made on outmoded black and white equipment which hardly competes with the standard of commercial color TV. Much of the work thus far is like a rough sketch, merely delineating the boundaries that the new art seeks to fill. For video *is* a new art. More than just a new form or a new tool, video has the unique potential of conveying the aesthetic aspirations of an entire generation. Video art has the historic responsibility of reaching that vast audience that watches almost seven hours of television a day.

However, although video art is now endowed with the possibility of almost instant visibility through broadcast TV, it remains as sedentary software housed in the select world of galleries and museums, and consequently the artistic energy encoded onto videotape stays as opaque as the glossy brown mylar videotape itself. Like painting and sculpture, video work is primarily communicated through the print media via photographs. But unlike static art, video pieces cannot be understood by looking at a single photograph. It is necessary to see the whole program in real time. If one has not done this, one has not seen the work. Therefore, relatively few video works have actually been seen. This is even truer with "videoperformance" works, which are generally presented only once, for audiences that rarely exceed one hundred. Due to these factors, and the relative newness of the medium itself, video art must still be considered very much in its infancy.

### BRUCE NAUMAN: Pioneer of Performance-Activity Video

"An awareness of yourself comes from a certain amount of activity and you can't get it from just thinking about yourself. You do exercises. . . ."[1]

The thirty-four-year-old Californian Bruce Nauman was the first artist to use video systematically to record his artistic concerns. While he was a Master of Fine Arts graduate student at the University of California at Davis in 1965, he did two public performance pieces which first signaled his deep interest in bodily activities. In the first, Nauman held seven consecutive positions for one minute each—standing, leaning, bending, squatting, sitting, reclining, and lying down—in four different stances: facing the wall, back to the wall, facing ninety degrees left, facing ninety degrees right. In his second public performance, he sat with his legs spread wide and manipulated an eight-foot fluorescent light. Since he had just stopped making paintings and had quite a bit of free time, he wanted to do more of these performances, but no opportunities offered themselves. So he decided to execute them in front of a rented 16mm film camera screwed onto a tripod in his Vacaville, California, studio. He produced a small number of

filmic studies like *Manipulating the T-Bar* (1965–66), *Thighing* (1967), *Playing a Note on the Violin While I Walk Around the Studio* (1967–68), and *Bouncing Two Balls Between the Floor and Ceiling with Changing Rhythms* (1967–68) before he decided to work with video, a move he made because it was easier for him to get video than film equipment at the time.

Although accessibility was his main reason for switching from film to video, Nauman quickly became aware of the inherent benefits of video. While his first video works of "recorded performance activities," like *Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube* (1968), were replicas of his original public performance, and another very early tape, *Flesh to Black to White to Flesh* (1968) derived from his earlier *Art Make Up* films, as he acquired more experience, he began to experiment with wide-angle lenses, off-angle shots, and unusual perspectives to great advantage. For most of 1968, Nauman usually had the video equipment set up in his studio so that he could use it on a moment's notice. When he wanted to make a tape, he would just turn it on. So it was natural that his first tapes were of straightforward activities that he normally did in his studio—like pacing around. As he was beginning this work he met Meredith Monk, the dancer, and read Frederick Perls's *Gestalt Therapy;* both reinforced the general direction of his work.[2]

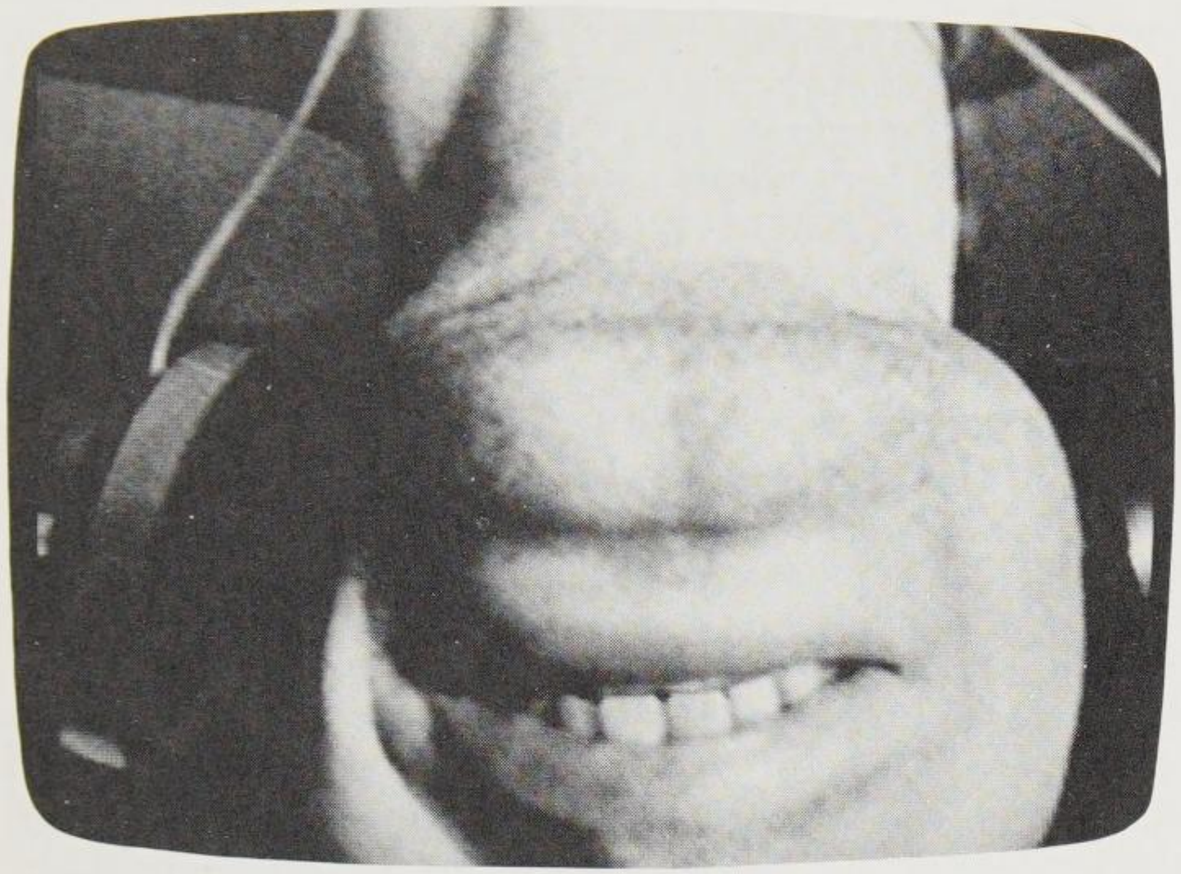
In one of the earliest tapes, *Violin Tuned D.E.A.D.* (April 27, 1968), Nauman tilted the camera on its right side so that his body, seen from the back, was parallel to the floor. For Nauman it was a "problem where it wouldn't matter whether I knew how to play the violin or not. What I did was to play as fast as I could on all four strings with the violin tuned D.E.A.D. I thought it would just be a lot of noise, but it turned out to be musically very interesting."[3] This tape, like all the others of 1968—*Wall/Floor Positions* (Nov. 5), *Slow Angle Walk* (Nov. 6), *Stamping in the Studio* (Nov. 16), and *Bouncing in a Corner* (Nov. 27)—lasts for sixty minutes. Just as his previous films' length was determined by "reel time," Nauman's video works took advantage of the actual length of the tape. This was because he wanted to "have no beginning or end [so that] one should be able to come in at any time and nothing would change."[4] This remarkable and innovative approach rendered it unnecessary to edit any of these works. If Nauman wasn't satisfied with the first take, he would merely do it again.



*Violin TunedD.E.A.D.*, Bruce Nauman, 1968
photo courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery

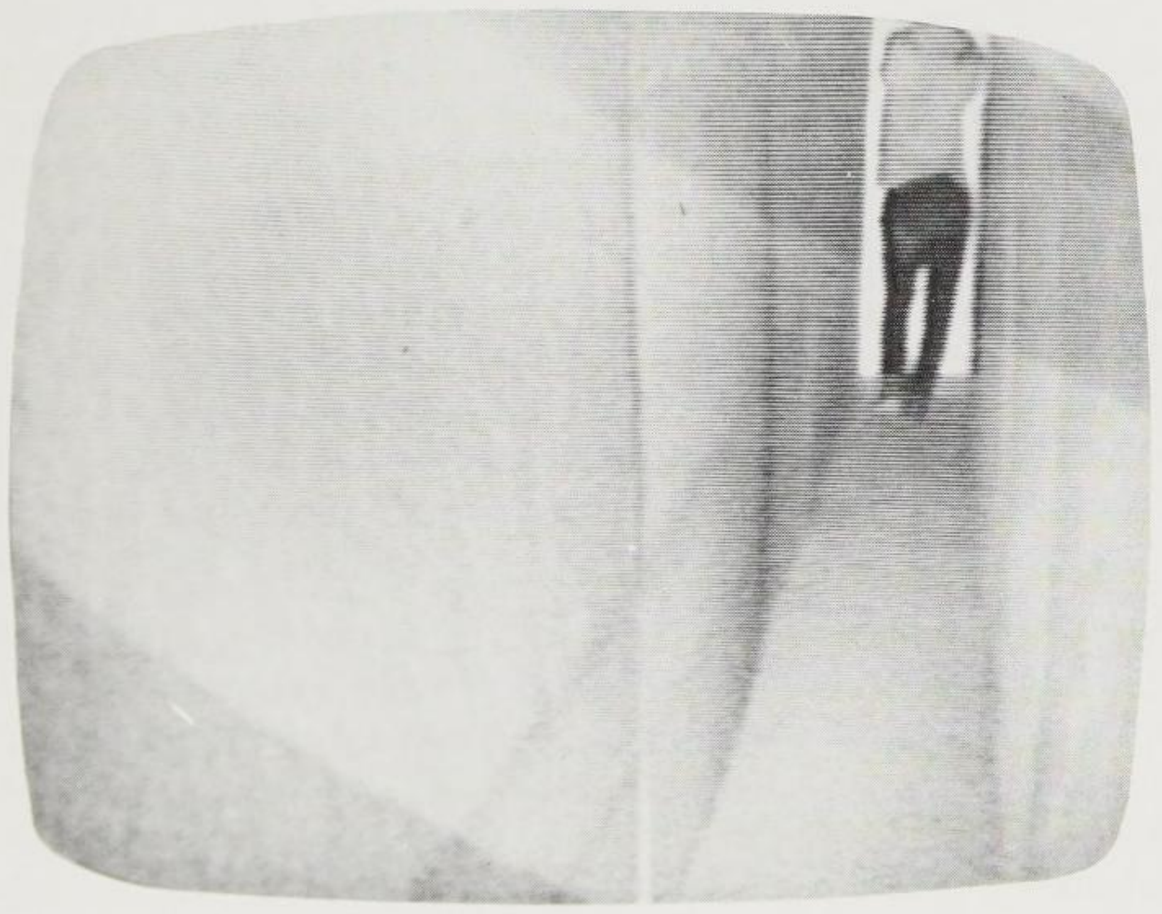
Nauman's early black and white video works, which include the five pieces that he executed in his Southampton, Long Island studio in 1969—*Revolving Upside Down, Pacing Upside Down, Walking in Contraposto* (Feb. 25), *Bouncing in a Corner* (Feb. 27), and *Lip Sync* (March 27)—are distinctive in their single-mindedness. The strength of these works, which focus on the repetitive, seemingly unimportant, or even banal activities described by their titles, derives from the fact that, as Nauman says, "if you really believe in what you're doing and do it as well as you can, then there will be a certain amount of tension—if you are honestly getting tired, or if you are honestly trying to balance on one foot for a long time, there has to be a certain sympathetic response in someone who is watching you. It is a kind of body response, they feel that foot and that tension."[5] Nauman's cool, detached videotapes are successful to the degree that the spectator becomes involved in the seriousness and sincerity of the artist's attempt to persevere in each particular activity. This effect is heightened by de-emphasizing the artist's particular persona; the works are more about anyone in an unusual situational activity than about Bruce Nauman himself. Energy rather than ego. Biology more than biography. As the artist explained: "I wanted the tension of waiting for something to happen, and then you should just get drawn into the rhythm of the thing."[6]

Since March 1969, with *Lip Sync*, in which Nauman is seen upside down in an extremely tight shot, mostly mouth, regularly repeating the words ". . . lip sync . . . lip sync . . . lip sync . . ." which glide in and out of visible/audible sync with his lip movements, he has not made another "self-performance" video piece. Instead, he has turned his attention to works in which others are the active element. The first of these, the 20″ × 20′ *Performance Corridor*, exhibited in the



*Lip Sync*, Bruce Nauman, 1969 photo: Gwen Thomas

"Anti-Illusion:Procedures/Materials" show at the Whitney Museum, New York in May–July 1969, encouraged the spectator to walk down a very narrow hallway to nowhere. This was actually a prop, taken from his Southampton, Long Island, studio, which he had used to make the videotape *Walking in Contrapposto* (1969). The work was purposely shown without the video component, and it was the first work in which the sculptural and the performance aspects of



*Walk with Contraposto*, Bruce Nauman, 1969
photo courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery

Nauman's work met. Since then, he has executed a wide variety of corridor-like pieces, many with video, some without. A few seem to be centered on behaviorist concerns, and feeling space with different parts of one's body (such as one's ears). The Video Corridor pieces generally include a single camera or a set of cameras and monitors with both live and prerecorded video information. Normally the cameras are installed in unexpected places—for example, high above the spectator's head, so that when he enters the corridor, he is able to see the back of his head on the monitor at the far end of the passage. A variant of this concept was shown at San Francisco's Reese Palley Gallery in 1970: "The point of the piece is to make a visual corridor in which you must walk in order to keep yourself visible on the monitor screen. At the same time, one must keep oneself visible on the monitor in order to stay in the corridor."[7] To make this problem more difficult, Nauman directed the camera away from the monitor, so that walking toward the screen took the participant away from rather than along the correct line. Also, the cameras were rotated on their horizontal axis 90 and 180 degrees, so that only about one-quarter of the image was visible and the rest faded off to gray. Finally, the camera that recorded was always at the spectator's back, so that the reference image was strangely unfamiliar. Nauman's attitude has been described as "perverse," but it is rather the result of an amazingly inventive and intuitive mind, deeply involved in the intricacies of sensory manipulation. This explains why Nauman has "tried to make the situation sufficiently limiting so that spectators can't display themselves easily. . . . It has . . . to do with my not allowing people to make their own performance out of my art. . . . [A spectator] can do only what I want him to do. I mistrust audience participation."[8]

Although the major focus of this essay is on the various contributions to Videoperformance video, I must acknowledge that Nauman's video work is brilliant, original, and wide-ranging. With his early "self-performance" videotapes—Video Corridors, Surveillance Pieces, and the more recent color studio productions—he has already established many of the basic parameters that other artists are just beginning to explore today.

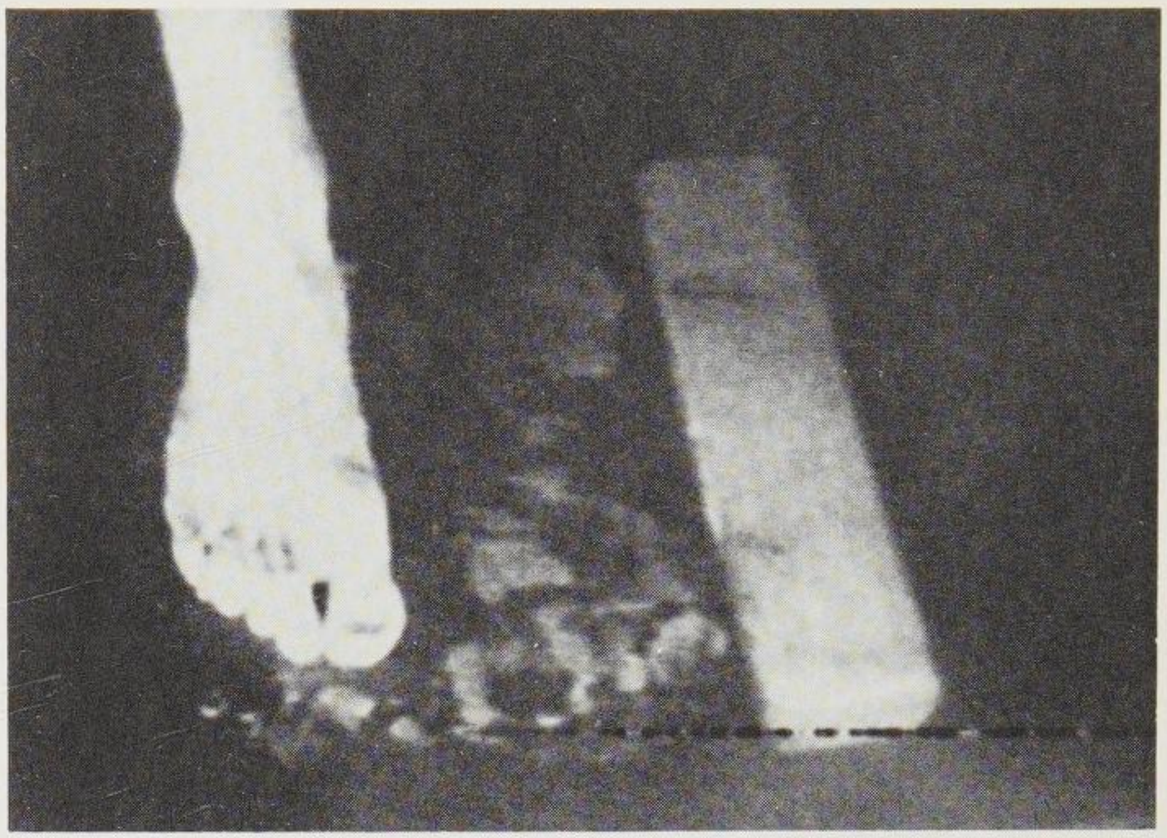
**KEITH SONNIER: Situational Video**
". . . art is still about—experience. . . ."[9]

Keith Sonnier's work has often been compared to Nauman's, but this is due more to the coincidence that they were both born in 1941 and have both been represented at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York since 1968. Because they have shown together in most of the major international exhibitions, one is inclined to assume a shared aesthetic. However, al-

though certain early sculptural pieces can be related, their respective video pieces offer more contrasts than similarities. In their earliest video pieces, Nauman generally worked alone while Sonnier usually collaborated with a tight group of friends. Nauman always used himself; Sonnier rarely did. Nauman's work was simple and straightforward; Sonnier's was complex and elegant. Nauman's content was strongly conceptual; Sonnier's was strongly situational.

After graduating as a Master of Fine Arts from Rutgers University in 1966, Sonnier moved into the large Mulberry Street studio he still occupies, on the north edge of New York's Chinatown. His first publicly exhibited works were segmental floor pieces made from unusual materials like cheesecloth and latex. He worked with soft materials and a variety of fabrics.[10] After a series of wall works composed of flocking material, impregnated cloth, and rope, he executed a large number of luminic pieces, such as colored light bulbs around which tubes of neon were twisted. But by March 1970, the time of his first American one-man show at the Leo Castelli Warehouse on West 108th Street, N.Y.C., Sonnier had already started to establish a body of video work. The most remarkable single aspect of this show was the Amphicon video projector piece, which threw immense, film-size images of the videotapes that Sonnier and his friends had just recorded in that space while installing the rest of the show—assemblages of large foam-rubber blocks and two sheets of clear glass, one square, one circular, spot-lit with the corresponding shape.[11]

*Painted Foot: Black Light* (1970), which was projected on the Amphicon during the Castelli show and later transferred to film to keep the large scale, is representative of Sonnier's early video work. It concentrates for sixteen minutes on the artist's foot and leg, which, after being coated with a luminous liquid, manipulate a two-foot-long piece of $2'' \times 4''$ wood while an unseen strobe light flashes continuously. Sonnier expressed his general working procedure during this period when he said, "I just make a piece where I am with the materials that I have."[12] Often these materials are other performers, whom Sonnier does not direct but rather allows to interact with one another and/or props. His first two collaborators, Tina Girouard and Richard Landry, arrived in New York on July 28, 1968, from Louisiana, where they had been attending the University of Southwestern Louisana, Lafayette, the school from which Sonnier himself had graduated. Although they had heard of one another, they did not actually meet until 1969, but soon after they started working together in Sonnier's studio. Sonnier's inclination for unusual but common materials like plate glass, foam rubber, mirrors, light bulbs, and glowing pigment had already transformed most of his studio into something of a "pre-set," which Sonnier defines as "a situation on a stage before the action takes place."[13] With the introduction of the half-inch video equipment he got from his gallery, "situational video" began to take form.



*Painted Foot*, Keith Sonnier, 1970 photo: Babette Mangolte



*Light Bulb and Fire*, Keith Sonnier, 1970 photo: Gwen Thomas

*Light Bulb and Fire* (1970) is one of Sonnier's earliest situational videotapes. A variety of props—a cordless trick light bulb, spray paint, fire powder, and sheets of paper—are manipulated on the studio floor by the feet and hands of faceless performers. A single camera statically concentrates on the activity, except for making occasional slow zooms. The con-

tinuity of the twenty-minute tape, which was extracted unedited from the total shooting sequence, is provided by the use of a SEG (special effects generator).

*Rubdown*, another black and white work from 1970, is unique in that it was made for and projected during a live performance at the University of California, San Diego, where it was produced on one-inch tape at the University's television studio. A male torso lies diagonally across the top two-thirds of the screen while someone's right hand rubs a foam mat in the foreground. The sound track, picked up by two off-camera microphones, is the crunch of the foam. Wood blocks are placed around the reclining performer, but his torso remains motionless. The main interest during this eleven-minute tape derives from the switching between the two cameras and the special effects—dissolves, wipes, and positive-negative reversals—rather than any psychological insight or exploration of the properties of the wood props. Sonnier has said, "I am much more interested in the way material functions than I am in the properties of the material itself."[14]

This improvisational attitude characterizes all of Sonnier's video work from 1969 to 1973. *Negative* (1971), *Black Light/White Light* (1972), *Mat Key & Radio Track* (1972), *TV In & TV Out* (1972), and *Color Wipe* (1972), just to mention a few, all demonstrate the central concerns of situational video. Props were chosen and placed in a working area with the video equipment. At first the artists worked in the studio, but later, when more sophisticated color equipment was needed, they moved to professionally equipped television studios. Four people besides Sonnier generally participated: Tina Girouard, Richard Landry, Suzanne Harris, and Kurt Munkacsi. The two women, who were dancers and artists, would do something very private, interact with each other, or use the props. They were very free, feeding off the ongoing activities. Landry often played a variety of musical instruments—tenor saxophones, alto flutes, finger cymbals, harmonicas, recorders, etc.—while Kurt Munkacsi explored the musical capabilities of the electronic equipment on hand. Objects were often utilized until they became tiresome. Sonnier, very sensitive to what was happening, would generally remain in the background, occasionally making a suggestion. As he said, "It wasn't 'making' the work so much as 'getting the piece to be.'"[15] Unusual illumination was provided by stroboscopic, ultraviolet, fluorescent, neon, and black light. Often two cameras were set on tripods and turned on, sometimes manned, sometimes unmanned. In the former case, special effects like wipes, fades, dissolves, superimpositions, split screen, and positive-negative reversals were employed. In 1971 color increasingly became a major concern, especially solarized color, which tended to make the work more abstract, more illusionistic.

The basically improvisational nature of situational video is indicated by Sonnier's remark that "the reason why I like using video is that you can see what you're doing while you're doing it."[16] Many different things were tried, but little of it was selected as "work." From many weeks of taping, Sonnier has often taken only a few minutes of tape, those isolated segments in which the props, the performers, and the special effects came together in what Suzanne Harris has called "Sonnier's special visualization."[17] Describing a live performance, *Illustrated Time—Proscenium II*, in which they all collaborated at the Stadt Theatre in Kassel, Germany, on July 3, 1972, for the "Documenta" exhibition, Tina Girouard explained the situational aesthetic: "We don't play basketball together or go fishing together but we do this together and Keith brings his set of tricks, his props; Dickie brings his props, his horns; Suzie and I bring ourselves and no props, but when we get to a place, we really dig into the situation, the place where we're going to have to be; that's what our job is. It's to be in the place."[18]

Even though this performance did not make use of video, it was extremely important in the development of situational video because, as a result of it, all of the performers had the feeling that the demands of performance were becoming so great that they had to either make a major commitment to this area or stop. They stopped. Partly as a result of accomplishing a large body of work and partly as a result of each performer's need to explore his or her *individual* aesthetic, only a few situational videotapes were made in 1973. That summer, Sonnier went to California and his friends went to Louisiana. In the fall, he started work on *Animation I* (1973), which lead to *Animation II* (1974). Both are nonsituational works. The first uses commercial TV material like the Watergate hearings, character-generated letters and numbers, and Kodaliths, which have all been fed into a Scanimate computer. The second uses animated cartoons and type, and was produced at Computer Image in Denver, Colorado, on a computer named "Caesar."

For four years, from 1969 to 1973, Sonnier and his friends produced an enormous volume of outstanding work, the implications of which are only now beginning to be realized.

## VITO ACCONCI: Relational Video

". . . you know how I took what was happening with us and transferred it into work."[19]

Unlike Nauman and Sonnier, Vito Acconci did not study art. He was born in the Bronx in 1940, attended strict Jesuit

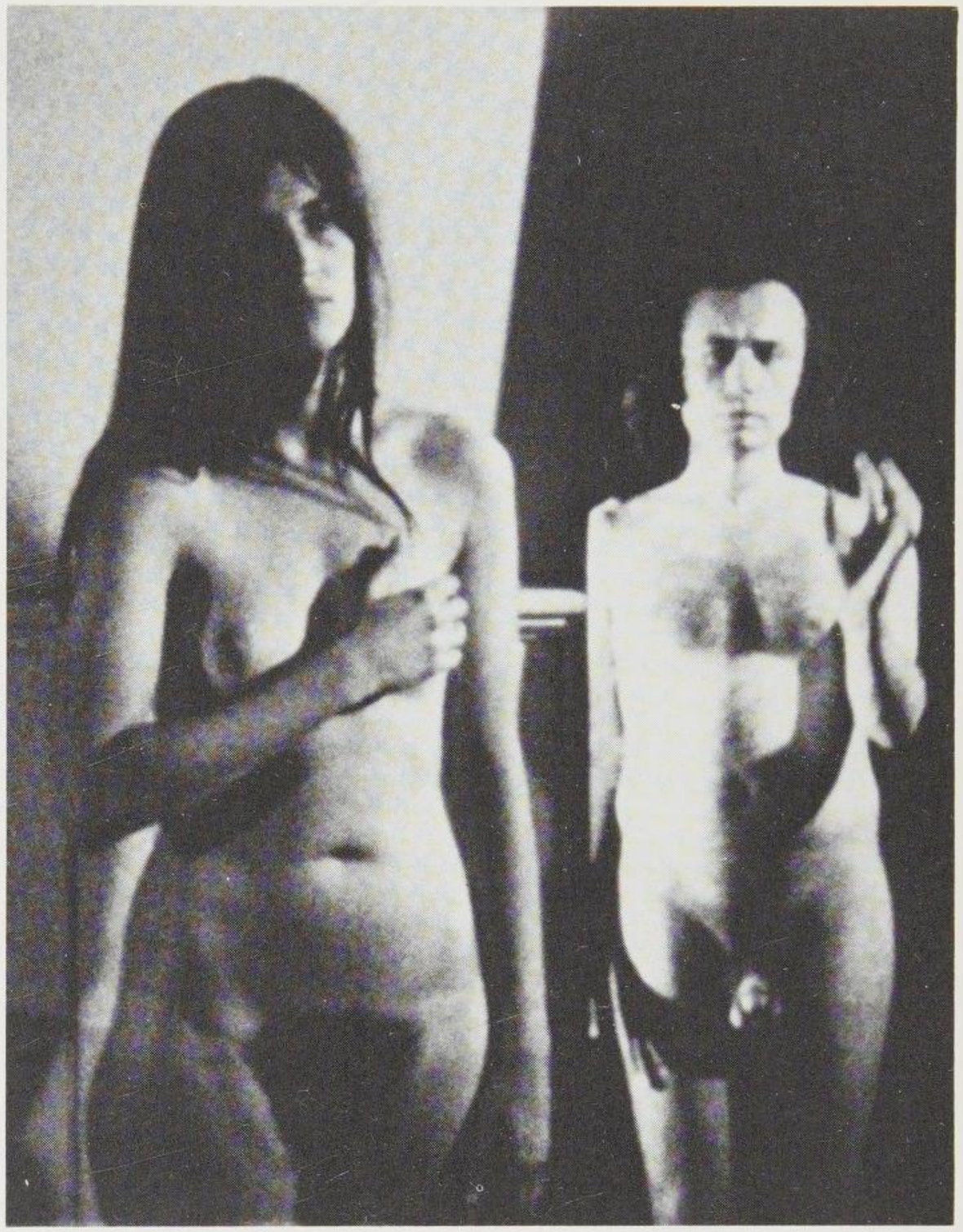
schools, joined the Marines when he was twenty, and then went to graduate school at the University of Iowa, where he studied writing.[20] His early work consisted mostly of prose (short stories, parts of a novel, some isolated poems) until 1964; he then concentrated on poetry until 1968–69:

> On the one hand there is a finger.
> On the one hand there is another finger.
> On the one hand there is another finger.
> On the one hand there is another finger.
> On the one hand there is another finger.
> —Untitled poem, 1967

His writing did not have ordinary linguistic aims. He wanted to make literature "hard," make words more physical. His intention was to "use language to cover a space rather than to uncover a meaning."[21]

In 1968–69 his interests shifted away from poetry and *0 to 9*, the New York poetry publication he edited, to performances presented at poetry readings. In November 1968, at the Orient Coffee House, he randomly distributed 8½ × 11 sheets of paper, each with one letter of the alphabet. Then, in alphabetical order, he picked up each sheet from each table and uttered an adverbial or prepositional phrase beginning with that particular letter (A—"along the way"). For Acconci, this kind of work was a way off the page, a way to take page space out into the more physical environment of the real world. At that time, he had few close friends in the poetry circle and was feeling increasingly estranged from that world, so when, late in 1968, a number of artists began to do "Street Works" (organized by John Perreault, the art critic for New York's *Village Voice*), Acconci joined them, and began his association with a group of people whose interests were more artistic than poetic.

Not having studied art enabled Acconci to fall back on himself rather than already established aesthetic modes.[22] His first nonpoetry works were a series of audiotapes and photographic pieces. *Roll* (August 1969) is a one-hour audiotape in which Acconci repeatedly rolls a rubber ball in a large loft, waiting for it to stop, walking over to it and picking it up, saying "Here." *Slap* (September 1969), a thirty-minute audiotape in which he slapped the microphone as hard and as fast as he could, was literally an attempt to put his body into sound. In *Fall* (October 1969), he took a photograph as he hit the ground. In *Push-Ups* (November 1969), he did one hundred push-ups on the Jones Beach sand, taking a photo of his imprint after each. The artist explains: ". . . when I started doing pieces, the initial attempts were very much oriented towards defining my body in space, finding a ground for myself, an alternate ground for the page ground I had as a poet."[23]



*Manipulations*, Vito Acconci, 1970 (with Kathy Dillon)
photo: Babette Mangolte

The harder he pushed against spatial boundaries, the more quickly he found the real ground of his art. On a Saturday afternoon in May 1970, he sat at a table in Max's Kansas City, a well-known artist's restaurant and bar in Manhattan. For one hour, he rubbed his left forearm with the fingers of his right hand. *Rubbing Piece* produced a sore that was photographed as the work. In September 1970, he sat naked and bit as much of his body as he could reach, then applied printers' ink to the bite marks. *Trademarks* was the result. Thus, Acconci discovered his body as artistic space, as place. Marking his body, he established the ground of his aesthetic activity, staking his claim to what was fast becoming, in large

part through his own work, a recognized variety of seventies sculpture, "Body Works."

Acconci's first videotape, *Corrections* (August 1970) was commissioned for the first traveling video exhibition in America, "Body Works."[24] Sitting in a large, naturally lit New York loft on an August afternoon, Acconci, with a TV monitor in front of him so that he could see what he was doing, repeatedly applied lighted kitchen matches to a small tuft of hair at the nape of his neck. The camera, set on a tripod, was pointed directly at the back of his head, so that the focal point, the burning clump of hair, was in the center of the screen. Explaining this work, he later wrote:

> Video as a determinant of value: I need an action that can coincide with the feedback capacity—I have to find something to redo—I can sit in front of the monitor, stay concentrated on myself, have eyes in the back of my head, dwell on myself, see myself in the round —I can look on my body for something that demands correction—the tuft of hair can be considered an imperfection—I might have no trouble believing this, it might be a habit I've grown up with—or I might have to force myself to need the hair removed, I have to build up a value, a standard of perfection—I have to carry this through, set up another value (I have to believe that something that's been postponed so long can only be done now drastically).[25]

It was not until six months later, in February 1971, that Acconci did his second videotape. Neither owning video equipment himself, nor having a gallery to lend it to him, he had to take advantage of art institutions with video departments for access to these tools. Also, he was satisfied to realize his work in a range of other media including Super 8 film, at least fourteen of which were completed by late 1971. Early that year, two invitations to Canada, one to the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, Halifax, and the other to A Space, Toronto, enabled Acconci to produce a substantial series of video works in which "Body as Place" was the main concern. *Centers* (February 1971) shows the artist pointing the index finger of his right hand into a camera for twenty minutes ("My attempt is to keep my finger constantly in the center of the screen—I keep narrowing my focus into my finger").[26] *Passes* (February 1971) shows him extending his right arm forward and moving it back and forth in front of his face, until it is stopped by his facial skin ("A way to establish relations: you watch my hand withdraw from you, while I watch it advance to me . . .").[27]

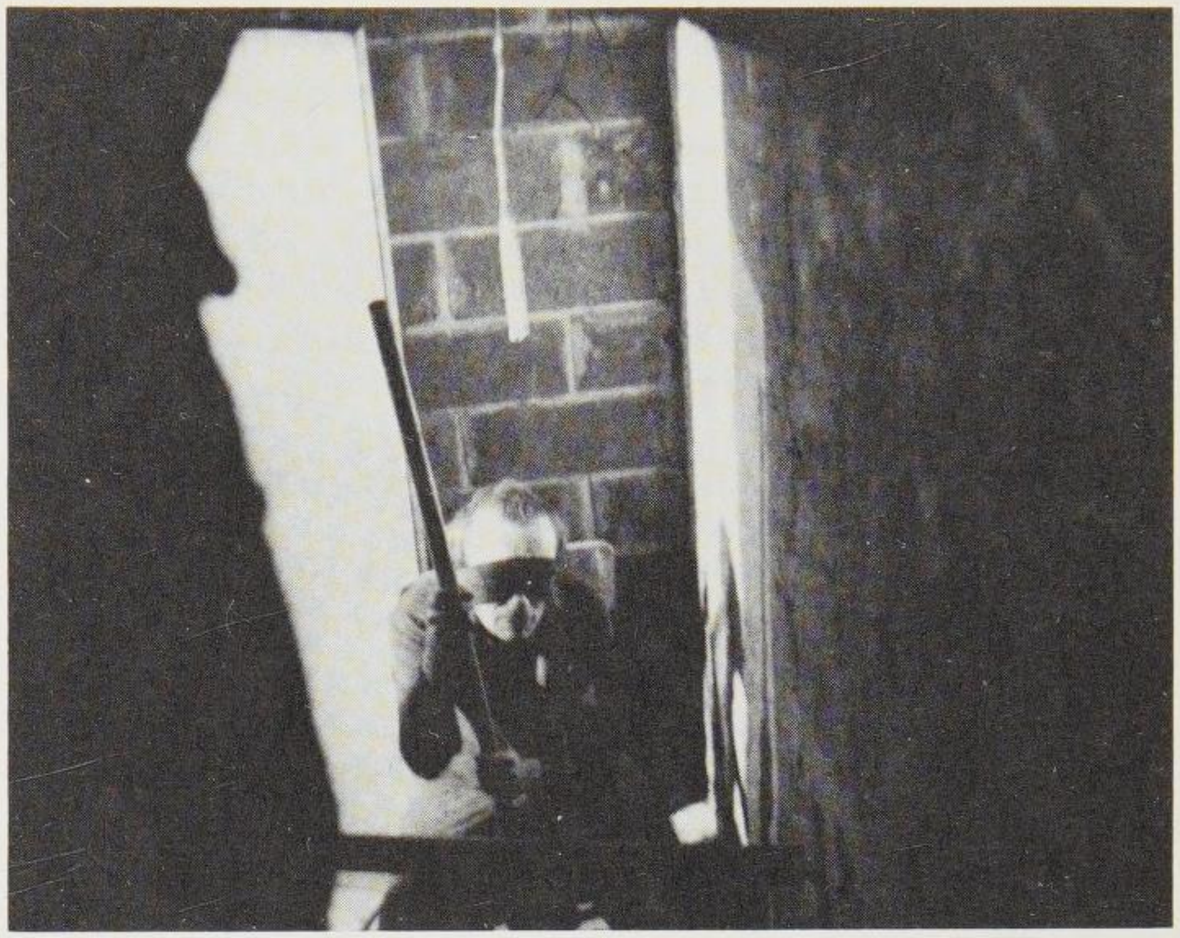
At the same time that he executed these two works, Acconci made a video performance tape with Doug Waterman, an advanced student at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. Acconci and Waterman, both barefoot, wearing black blindfolds and earplugs, moved around an open loft space. One hears on the videotape but not during the performance an off-camera voice saying, "Mel, Vito is walking forward . . . Vito, turn around to get into Mel's position . . . Mel . . . turn around and get into his position." The goal, similar to that of group-therapy exercises, was to induce supersensitivity to another person's presence. This was an important work, the first sign of Acconci's growing interest in interaction and relations with others in performance situations.

Two months later, in a group show of films and live events entitled "Body," organized by John Gibson at New York University's Loeb Student Center Auditorium, Acconci performed two related works before a small, seated audience with Kathy Dillon. In *Pull* (April 1971), "Kathy rotates in the center, I walk in a circle around her: our goal is to keep staring at each other—each of us tries to hold the other's gaze—while following the other's direction. . . ."[28] In *Prying* (April 1971), he struggles to force Dillon's tightly closed eyes open while a video cameraman tries to keep her face in focus. Acconci explained that "these pieces can be used, later, as schemes for stages in a relationship: time out or back off for a while from the relationship (each person can try out either role); forecast (anticipate the potential course of a relationship); test (reveal certain imbalances in an existent relationship); role-reversal (try out the accustomed roles); rehearsal (try out the role one would like to play in the future)."[29]

It is necessary to realize that neither these works, *Pull* and *Prying*, nor other related live performances like *Sound Barrier* (July 1971) and *Sounding Board* (July 1971), which were executed at A Space in Toronto along with Jay Jaroslav's work, were conceived of as "video performances" by Acconci. Rather, in his words, they were performances "documented on video." If a video performance is defined as a live performance work in which a video system is so integral to and inseparable from the performance itself—from the way it is *seen* by the audience—that the work cannot be conceived of without the video elements, then few artists have actually executed video performances. The determinant factor is: Would the piece exist as a work for the artist without the video element? If so, then it is not a video performance. Well, what about Acconci's *Claim*? This was one of the rare instances in which the nature of the invitation to perform demanded the use of a video system. Acconci was one of four artists (the others were Bill Beckley, Terry Fox, and William Wegman) invited to create a new performance work at 93 Grand Street, New York. One camera, a deck, and a 23″ TV monitor were placed

at each artist's disposal. Acconci visited the site and scrutinized the physical layout. He chose the stairway leading from the street-level floor to the basement. The camera was placed so that it gave a good close-up view of the artist seated at the bottom, next to the open door leading into the basement. During the performance, before which several hundred postcard announcements were sent to friends and artists in the neighborhood (it was not called SoHo then), Acconci sat blindfolded on a wood chair at the foot of the stairs. In his hands he held a long crowbar, and under his seat were two six-foot metal pipes. The audience came in through the street entrance and a rusty metal door. A 20′ × 70′ derelict industrial-type loft, empty except for a large pile of crates containing spools of thread, confronted the small group that had come to see Acconci. He was not in the space, but the TV monitor indicated his possible presence. Perhaps it was only a videotape made previously. Many members of the audience thought that was the case. As he began the piece and got into it ("I'm alone down here . . . I'm alone here in the basement . . . I want to stay alone here . . . I don't want anyone with me . . . I'll stop anyone from coming down the stairs . . ."), he began to strike out with the crowbar and hit the side wall, causing the whole stairway to shake. This was both seen and heard on the TV and *felt* in the space. He *was* there, somewhere behind the monitor, somewhere through the door next to the monitor. It soon became obvious that he was just a few feet away down the stairs. But during the whole four-hour-long performance, only three people were brave enough to open the door and actually look for him. His intensity and conviction prevented anyone from even trying to get past him: "I'll keep you away . . . I'll do anything to stop you . . . I'll keep you out . . . I'll kill you . . ." As Acconci later wrote about this piece, "If, during the first hour, I had hit someone, I would have stopped, shocked, horrified; if, during the third hour, I had hit someone, I would have used that as a marker, a proof of success, a signal to keep hitting."[30]

The aim of this work was to claim a territory that was inviolable. Physical contact with the artist was impossible to risk. Interaction was unthinkable. During this period, the strength of Acconci's work rested on the fact that one had to take him at his word. He *was* going to brutally hit anyone who got in his way. He was dedicated to keeping distance between himself and the audience. This unwillingness to confront his audience is evident in much of his other performance work. One of the reasons for this is that he does not want to win over or enlighten anyone. "I'm not conscious of the aim being to lead to my own or even to other people's self-awareness."[31] Discussing this kind of performance situation, he said, "The tragic would put the performer on a myth, legend level; the dramatic or melodramatic would put him on a psychologically analyzable level—neither of which I would want."[32]



*Claim*, Vito Acconci, 1971 photo: Doug Conner, courtesy of *Avalanche*

Rather, the idea of relations, relationships, is central to Acconci's thinking. He tries to establish a "power field" in which to test his control over others. One month after *Claim*, in October 1971, he participated in the "Projected Art" show at Finch College, New York, with a work entitled *Remote Control*, in which he was crouched in a wooden box looking into a camera recording him and at a monitor showing Kathy Dillon, who was in another room, also in a box, with a camera recording her. A two-way, closed-circuit video system allowed them instant communication with each other. Acconci started: "I have to try to convince myself that you're here. . . . I'm still conscious of the TV . . . it's not like a real person yet." Acconci then tried to manipulate Dillon into tying herself up with fifty yards of rope by saying, "I'm bringing the rope over your knees slowly . . . I'm lifting your legs now, gently . . . passing the rope under your legs . . . as if I was doing it myself. . . ." She complied, tied herself up slowly and, after an hour, was completely bound.

Discussing the sources of his work, Acconci has cited Erving Goffman's work on interaction—setting up "performance areas," as discussed in *Principles of Topological Psychology*—as a particularly important influence after 1969, but he also remarked in reference to these performance pieces that "The farthest thing from my mind was anything psychological then. My concerns were strictly physical."[33]

The following summer, in August 1972, two years after making his first videotape, Acconci obtained a Sony 3400 video system from his friend Jay Jaroslav and made two tapes in his new Chrystie Street studio for the "Circuit" show that was then being organized by David Ross. *Face-Off* shows Acconci trying to drown out his recorded voice, which is revealing intimate details of his private life, by saying that he does not want the person concerned to know what he has said. In *Undertone*, Acconci sits at the end of a long table facing the camera. Occasionally he reaches under the table. He says that he is trying to convince himself that there is a woman under the table rubbing his crotch. But then he shifts his discourse to the audience and says, "I need you to screen out my lies, filter out the lies from the real point of view."

Even though Acconci professes little psychological involvement with his work, he always tries to come to terms with himself vis-à-vis the work itself. As his work has gained greater attention, and as more has been written about it, he has been using his past work as a source of reference. He has begun to assume that his audience is aware of specific pieces and their place in the continuity of his developing *oeuvre*. Consequently, autobiographical references have become more and more frequent. Sometimes he presents himself as persona. Sometimes his actual life comes so close to a work that they almost intertwine, though never completely. He has said that it has never been his intention to use real-life situations in an art context.[34] But he has come close. *Air time*, one of his most personally revealing works, was executed as a gallery performance with video- and soundtape. In the spring of 1973 he went to the Sonnabend Gallery in New York from Tuesday through Saturday for two weeks. He was on a set schedule with two ninety-minute performances separated by a fifteen-minute rest. Situated in an "isolation chamber," a locked closet to one side of the main gallery space, he confronted himself in a large mirror, holding a mike, which could be seen by a video camera attached to a monitor displayed outside for the gallery-going public to watch. Acconci focuses on Kathy Dillon and their long, intimate relationship. He tries to combat her criticism of him, his mistreatment of her. He confesses that he has abused her. He scolds her, blaming her for what has gone wrong, often arrogantly putting her down. Then, finally, he realizes, "Maybe coming to terms with our relationship means ending our relationship." It did. Within weeks after this piece, Acconci terminated his five-year-long relationship with Kathy Dillon, a relationship that had provided him with the interactive substance of a good part of his first four years' work.

Even though his separation from Dillon was final and he had already established a new one with another woman, he retained strong guilt feelings and compared every aspect of the two relationships. Four thirty-minute black and white videotapes produced in the Florence studios of Art/Tapes/22 in mid-1973 evince this continued connection to the not-forgotten relationship. In two of these tapes he addresses Kathy Dillon. Talking about his new love in *Walk-Over* he taunts: "You want to hear about her . . . her hair is blond . . . your hair could never be like hers . . . she has her own life . . . I'm interested in what she's thinking . . . we could never have had a relationship like this." Then in *Home Movies*, as he watches the projected images of past pieces, he says, "But you know what was really going on . . . you were there . . . you could really explain these pieces . . . you know how I took what was happening with us and transferred it into work." This videotape is almost totally stream-of-consciousness, as if Acconci is trying to get it all off his chest, to come clean.

There was considerable reaction in the New York art world to such blatantly personal performance work, and Acconci was heavily critized both publicly and privately for revealing such intimate thoughts. Some of this criticism may have affected him, because in 1974 he admitted, "I've had questions recently about the use of specific people, specific relationships in my pieces . . . I'm putting them in a helpless position."[35] Perhaps as a result of these second thoughts, Acconci's work, after the summer of 1973, became more inner-directed, less relational.

By January 1974, there was such an abundance of both excellent video and performance work that there was a need for a large, public exhibition devoted to the interface of these two important new art forms. For the "Video Performance" exhibition, ten artists were invited to do new works which were presented on consecutive evenings at the 112 Greene Street Gallery, New York, an artist's space that already had a tradition of showing some of the most advanced work then being produced.[36]

Before participating in this show, Acconci had had a string of European gallery shows in which his actual physical presence became almost object-like. In *Reception Room* (1973) at Lucio Amelio's Modern Art Agency, Naples, Acconci lay naked on a bed with a sheet over him two hours each day for three days. In the entrance corridor, a tape recorder was playing in the artist's voice: "I should have been here to greet you, to invite you to sit down . . . I should have been able to talk to you, get closer to you . . . But I wouldn't have known what to say, what to do. . . ."[37] On an audiotape in the main room, the taped monologue continued: "There has to be something to say for myself, something that people call a

'reason to be'. . ." But Acconci was finding it increasingly more difficult to "need to be," "need to perform." The reason to perform in this piece was "so I can act out what I dislike about myself."[38] And, then, toward the end of the audiotape, he says: "Maybe this is a way to make myself die for myself, die to myself."[39]

Acconci was having more than stage fright or second thoughts; he was beginning to reevaluate his whole aesthetic. As early as the fall of 1972, he already acknowledged "this urge recently to find an alternative for live performance, because it seems that a power field can probably exist without my actual physical presence."[40] In other words, he was more interested in places for performance than performance itself. Thus, the "Video Performance" exhibition presented Acconci with something of a dilemma. "Because of the nature of the show, its announcement as 'Video Performance,' I wanted to combine video with something live. . . . But I always find that difficult to do; I find it difficult to give the video part a reason for existence; it has to reveal something that the live performance doesn't reveal."[41]

Until the day of the performance, Acconci tried to force himself to do something live. But his desire to "cancel himself out as a performer" was too great. Instead, in the large ground-floor space, he set up and spotlighted a little white stool upon which was focused a video camera attached to a monitor placed on the floor ten feet in front. A second monitor, placed back about ten feet in alignment with the stool and first monitor, showed a one-hour-long, previously videotaped monologue in which Acconci, upside down, head in the foreground, says: ". . . dream, dream the space . . . dream myself out of here, drift out of here, into the space . . . into you . . . come on, step right up . . . into the spotlight . . . now you know how it feels . . . now you're there, where I used to be . . . now I don't have to be there any more . . . you can do it for me. . . ."[42] In the artist's words, this work, *Command Performance* (1974), concerned "what I don't want to do any more, or what I can't do well enough."[43]



*Command Performance*, Vito Acconci, 1974 photo: *Avalanche*

For the last two years, Acconci has done no performances. His only video work has been a series of four color tapes done in Cologne during the second week of July 1974 at the "Project '74" exhibition and a panel discussion on Mexican television in the summer of 1975. Increasingly, he has become highly critical of his performance work, and he has no intentions of continuing doing any. Now his artistic energies go into frequent installation pieces, and, within the last few months, films. Of all of his twenty-eight video works, only seven have been executed as live performances, and five of these Acconci sees as "documented on video" rather than video performances. Only *Claim* and *Air Time* can really be considered as actual video performances, and the latter is not one in the strict sense because of the accompaniment of the tape-recorded installation used to enable this gallery show to carry during the time the artist was not actually present. Nevertheless, *Claim* alone establishes Acconci as the originator of the video performance, one of the most vital areas of video art today.

**OTHER ATTITUDES: Performance, Video & Video Performance**

"Fetch some candles and get on with the show."—Harry Houdini[44]

During the early seventies, a number of other artists began to see the various advantages of working with video. Many of the best known of these people had already established their aesthetic concerns in definable areas of art. After his land works, Dennis Oppenheim turned to body works, but he concentrated on filmic and photographic documentation of these works rather than video performances until 1970, when he did his first videotape, *Hair Piece*, at A Space, Toronto. In it the artist exposed different parts of his scalp to the camera for an hour. Within the wide range of his videography, there are almost no live performances. One rare exception is a live performance at the Reese Palley Gallery, New York on January 16, 1971, in which Acconci and Terry Fox both executed live performances with him. Oppenheim, the only artist of the trio to use video, lay on his stomach, pulling hair from his head

and blowing it down an eight-foot-long wood channel toward a tarantula. This action was videotaped from the end opposite the artist and could easily be seen on a large monitor close-by.[45] But this has been the artist's only live performance with video. Rather than executing video performance works, Oppenheim has concentrated upon using "the video screen as an installational component" in sculptural situations.[46]

Within William Wegman's large body of well-known video work, short, playfully witty unedited pieces in which he either appears with a prop or his "art partner," Man Ray, a handsome, well-trained Weimaraner, are two live video performances, one of which he actually performs with his wife, Gayle. After a few live performances and some outdoor pieces, Wegman started making videotapes on a Craig AC half-inch deck while he was teaching at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1969. He had access to the educational department's video recorder every day, and he did a lot of very short pieces—mostly less than a minute—dealing with props. He discovered that video provided a tremendous breakthrough since he could make his work deal with subjects that really meant something to him. When he and his wife moved to a Long Beach, California, house in 1970, he borrowed a half-inch portapak without a monitor, but since he could not use it every day, he bought a $200 CV machine and an old camera. The camera's focal range did not exceed ten feet and he did not have a good microphone, so he did not attempt to do any narrative works. Just at that time he bought Man Ray, and the dog worked his way into both the photographic and video pieces that Wegman was doing in his home. The next year, he changed his environment and moved to a typical artist's studio in Santa Monica, California. Since there were fewer props around, he began to focus on himself in an amusing way.

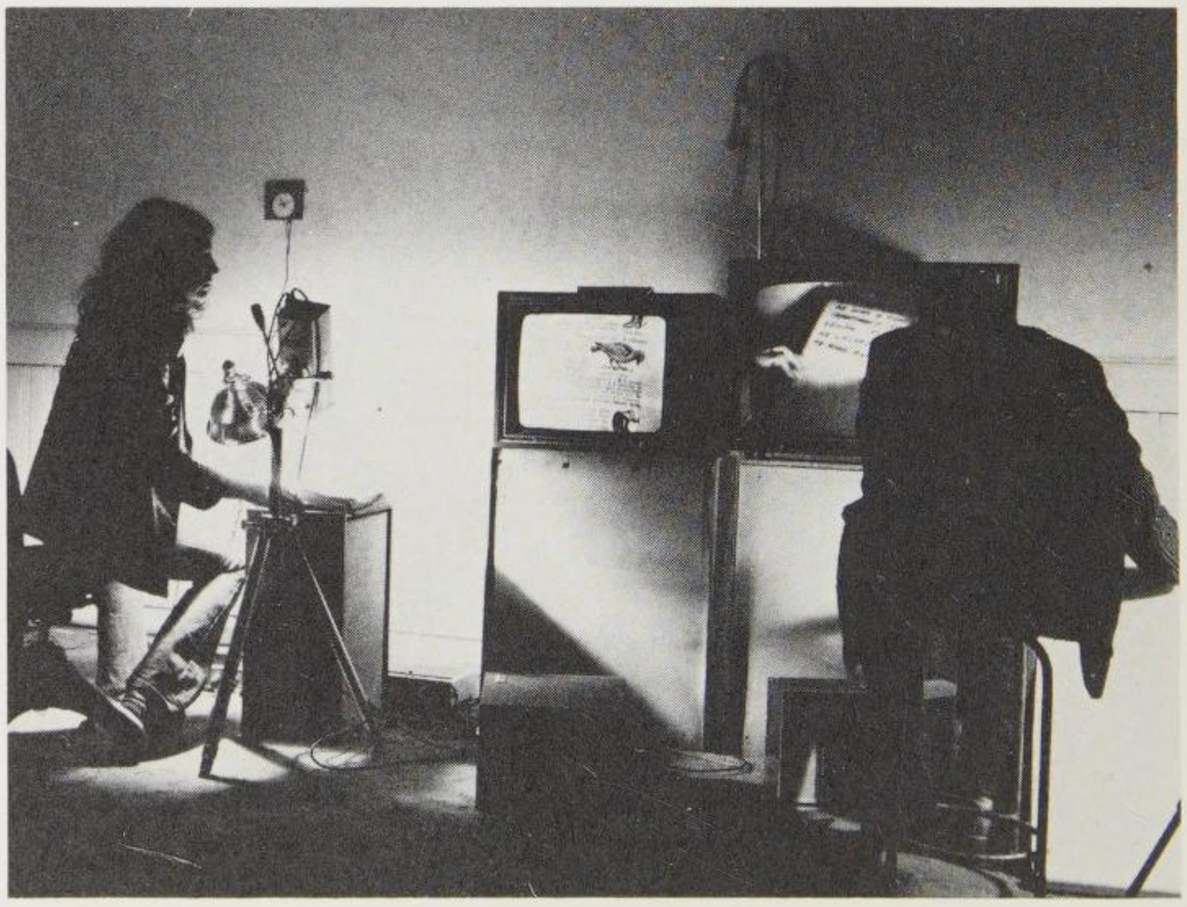
Wegman's working procedure, both in California and later in New York, was to interact with a prop and/or Man Ray in the small video studio he always created in his domestic living space: "I present a situation and develop some kind of explanation around it. By the time the story is over, you get to know why that particular prop or mannerism was displayed."[47] Wegman also explains that "some of the pieces are exaggerations of normal situations and others are a cutting away. The activity or the situation is somehow adapted or bent out of shape and then reconstructed, but I perform it as though that's the way things really are."[48]

In one of Wegman's most ironically humorous tapes, *Spelling Lesson* (1973), the artist sits to the left of the screen talking to his dog, seated in the center behind a long table. Wegman is holding a pen in his right hand, correcting a spelling quiz he has just given Man Ray:

> P-A-R-K was spelt correctly. W*ait* a minute. And you spelt O-U-T right. But when it came to BEACH, you spelt it B-E-*E*-C-H, which is like . . . uh, well, there's a gum called Beech-nut gum, but the correct spelling is . . . we meant beach like the sand, like the ocean, so it should have been B-E-*A*-C-H. (Man Ray whines.) You see, that's the difference. Well, okay, I forgive you, but remember it next time.[49]

The basic principles of Wegman's work, utilizing strong, immediate visual stimuli to promote a spontaneous, tongue-in-cheek reaction revolving around a single, simple idea, were also present in both of his video performance pieces. In *Bobbing for Twins* of September 25, 1971, at 93 Grand Street, New York, he created a closed-circuit video system on both the ground and basement floors, in which a young girl with a wig seated at a wood table upon which was a monitor had direct video communication with her "twin." The downstairs twin wrote something, or drew something on a slate, and the upstairs twin responded in similar manner. The audience passed freely between both floors via the staircase that Acconci had guarded in *Claim*.

In Wegman's only other live video performance, *j. J-Jacobean the Adventures of Jack*—a play with the "J" words on page 538 of Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (fifth edition), of January 14, 1974, for the 112 Greene Street, New York, "Video Performance" show, he and his wife Gayle were seated on a stool



*j. J-Jacobean the Adventures of Jack*, William Wegman, 1974

photo: *Avalanche*

and a chair respectively, facing a wall with their backs to the audience. Two large monitors faced out showing the dictionary page on the left and Wegman's hand copying the definitions of the "J" words as he saw them on the monitor. Wegman writes about this work: "Twenty-seven of the thirty-seven words on this page are *jack* or have *jack* prefixes. Jack is the main character in my play with j. Everyone knows what a *jack in-the-box* is, but did you know that *jack-in-a-box* is 'a tropical tree bearing a drupe that rattles in the calyx when dry?' Jack is tricky; not only is he a dandy, a machine, a knave, and a nickname, he is also a small flag, a bar of iron, and a coarse medieval coat."[50]

Wegman has always preferred to work in the privacy of his own controlled space. For long periods of time he will not produce any video works, turning instead to either photographic works or pencil drawings. Then, when the spirit moves him, he will go into his studio either with a prop he has been thinking about or with Man Ray. He does one take, with the camera on a tripod, examines it on the monitor, and then either keeps it and goes on to another work or redoes the piece. Working almost without interruption, he can assemble a string of pieces on the one-hour master tape. Then he plays the tape back during an extended period of time, perhaps a month or even several months, getting a take on the most successful ones he has done. Finally, when he has a need to finish a reel, generally twenty or thirty minutes, he will select the pieces that are still his favorites, decide on their exact order (seldom deviating from their chronological sequence), and have a dub made, which is kept at his gallery, sent out for showing to educational institutions, or sold. The original work is kept in a closet with controlled temperature, somewhat like photographic negatives, and serves as the master from which additional copies can be made when needed.

This is a highly controlled, systematized approach to video, one that does not easily permit the irritations, distractions, and demands of real time and pressure in dealing with a live audience and the uncertainty of uneditable effect. This explains, in part, why Wegman has not done more than one live video performance; as he says: ". . . videotape live, the possible presence of an audience, unless one is trained to cope with it, can be upsetting to the artist and the outcome of the work unpredictable. . . ."[51]

Joan Jonas has been doing indoor and outdoor performances since 1968. She worked as a figurative sculptor, modeling mythological heroes like Icarus, and then studied dance with Trisha Brown in New York for two years. One of her earliest dance performances took place in 1970 at Alan Saret's Spring Street loft. There, using several other dancers, she created a strong interaction between basement and ground-floor activities, like throwing rags from the basement to the main floor. In one segment, nude dancers holding long, narrow mirrors pointed into the hole allowed the audience to see both itself and the action. In November 1971, she and dancer Barbara Dilley collaborated on a piece at Jones Beach, Long Island, which was meant to be seen from a great distance.

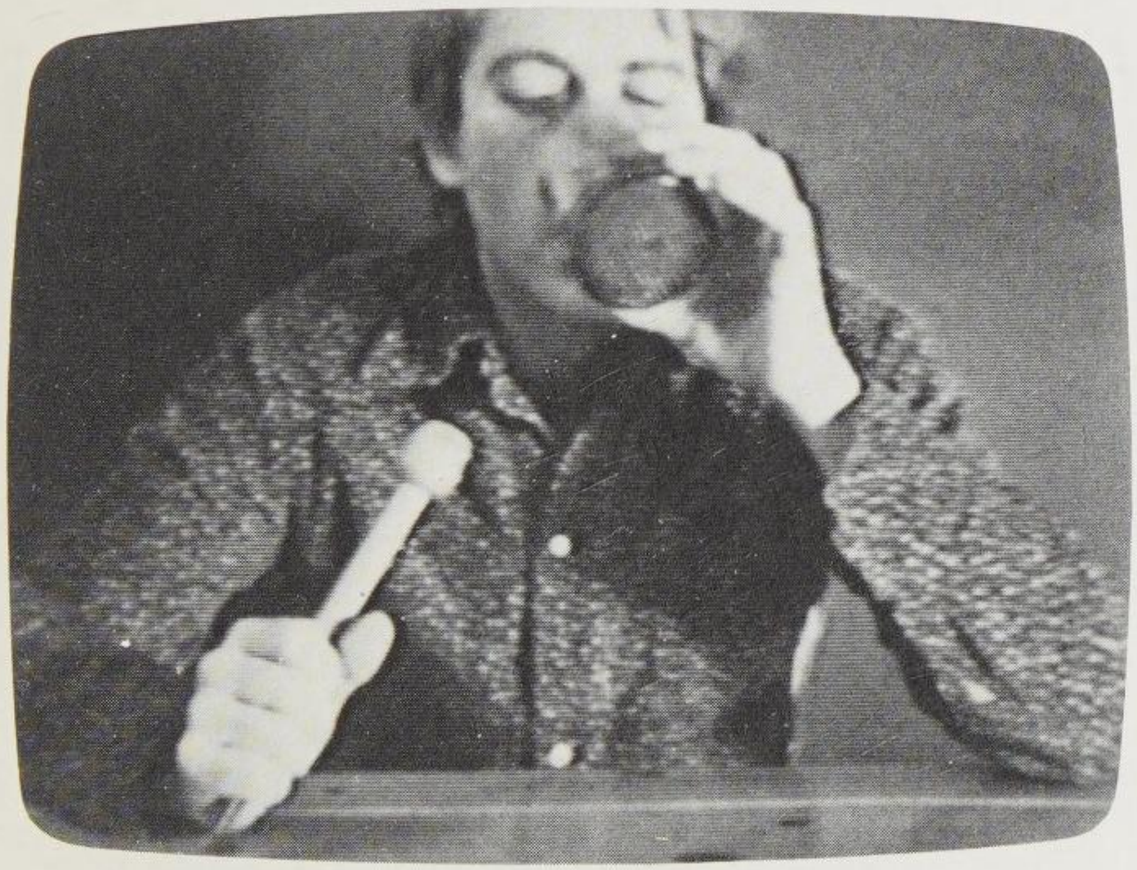
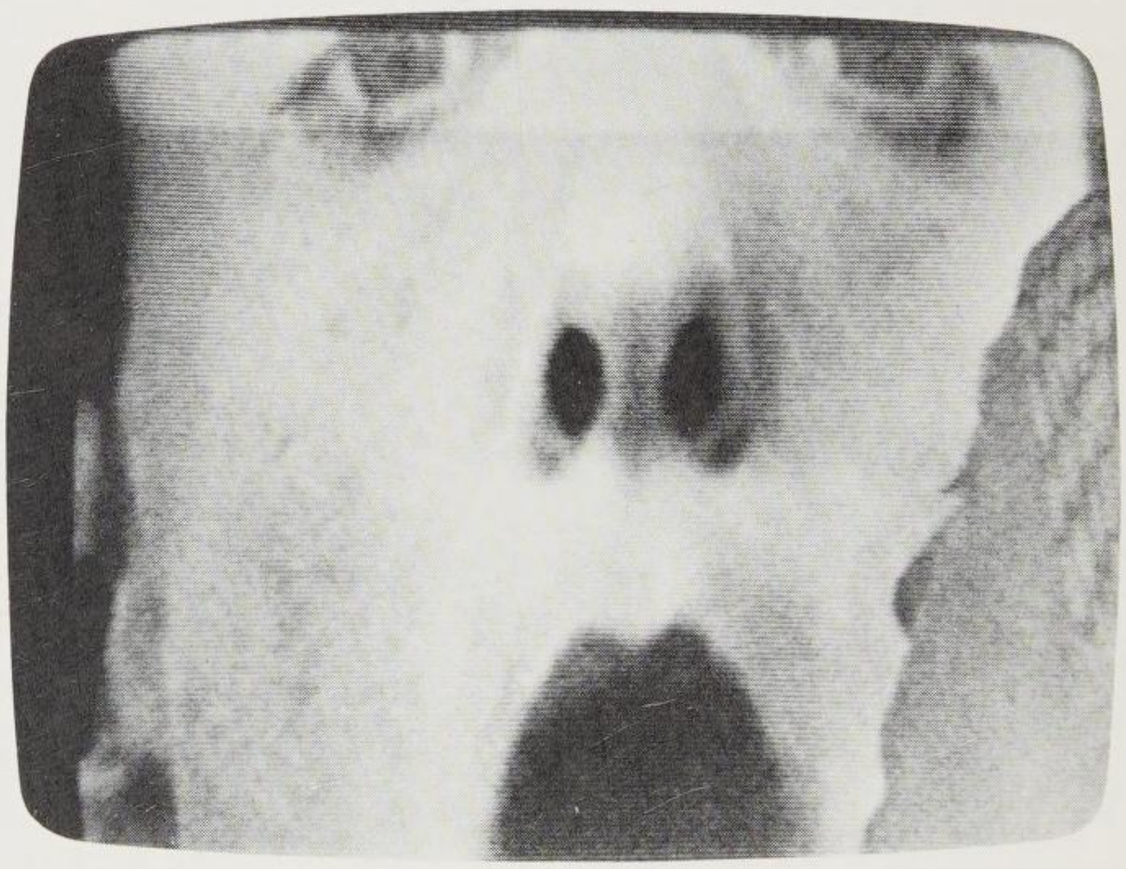


photo courtesy of Sonnabend Gallery

*Selected Works,* William Wegman, 1972

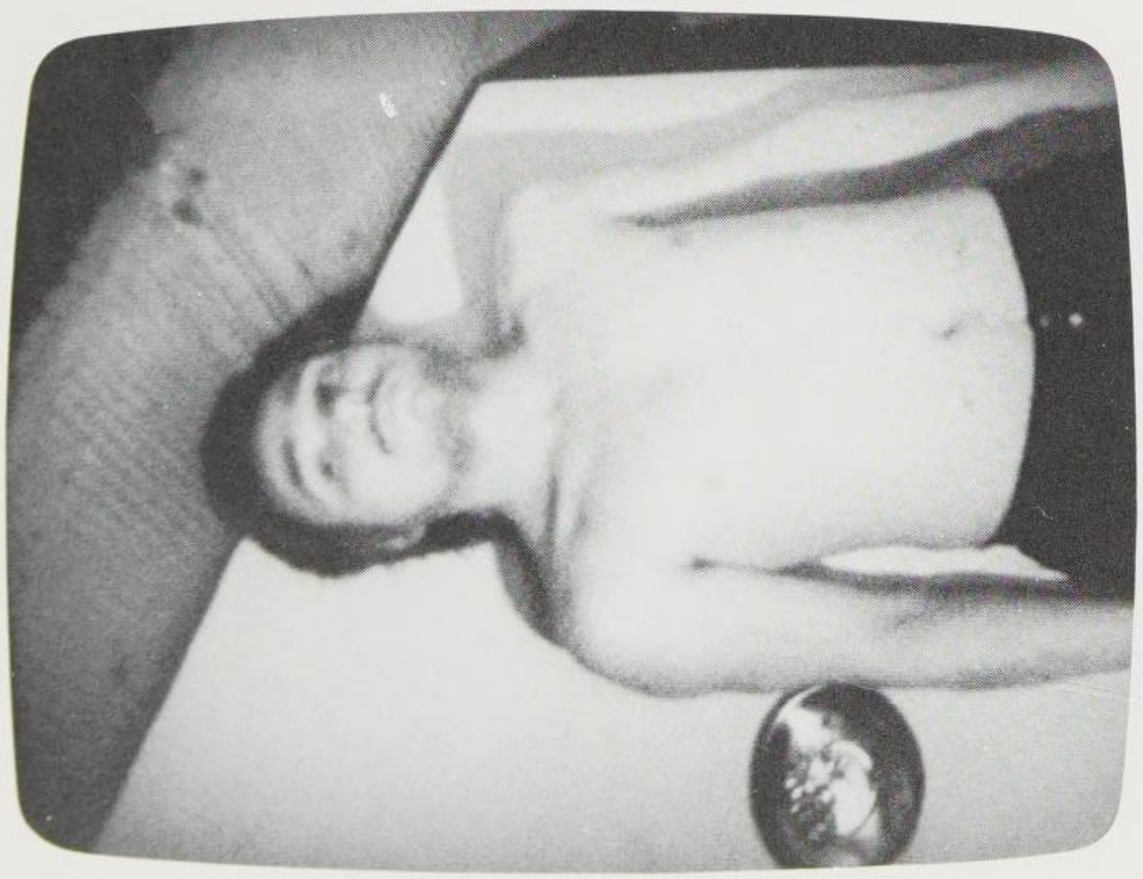


*Duet,* Joan Jonas, 1972 photo: Richard Landry

Distance and distancing, ongoing concerns, were the subject of *Mirror Check*, a piece performed at New York's Emanu-el YMHA and the University of California, San Diego, in the spring of 1971. In it, Jonas, standing naked with a small, round hand mirror, examined details of her body starting with her face and moving downward from left to right while the audience looked on from a distance of thirty feet. The spectator, unable to see the reflected images, had to experience them vicariously through the performer's reaction to the experience.

That year she also collaborated with Richard Serra on a nine-minute black and white film, *Paul Revere*, "a didactic work inspired by the structure of the educational film using instructional cards."[52] At this time, they acquired a Sony 3400 portapak system and started using video in Jonas's dance performances, some of which were held at the Grand Street, New York, loft.

Aside from performances, Jonas used the Rover video system to produce video works that had little to do with her public presentations. *Duet* (1972), one of her first tapes, shows her face in close-up as she barks and howls like a dog. In *Left Side, Right Side* (1972), a seven-minute black and white videotape produced by Carlota Schoolman, Jonas explores the split-screen confines of video space. In 1972, partially as a result of her other video experience, her live performances became more complex, more theatrical. She started using rich costumes, and masks. And then she started working with the vertical roll.



*Left Side, Right Side*, Joan Jonas, 1972 photo: Richard Landry

*Vertical Roll* (1973), a twenty-minute black and white tape, shows Jonas masked and naked, with her head horizontal to the bottom of the roll. It seems as if she were repeatedly being pulled down and out of the picture. Remarking about her work at that time, Jonas said: "I really thought of myself as an object in my early pieces."[53]

Once Jonas had easy access to a dependable video system, she began to experiment widely with different perceptual effects, particularly live scale vs. TV scale. In her live performances, she wanted "to move in relation to the TV."[54] In the frontal theater-dance-video performance she created, dual interest was generally provided by the live action and what was visible on the closed-circuit video system, usually one monitor at first, but later multi-monitor displays. In all of these works, video was used as a prop. Rather than providing a central focus, the video element was just one of many objects that Jonas used to activate the space. In fact, the video presence was often subsumed by the magic and ritualistic content, which was underscored by her jewel studded costumes, scarfs, kimonos, and exotic masks. These seemed to further distance Jonas from her audience, reinforcing the idea that, as she says, "my pieces are about my communication with myself."[55] Because of this concern, coupled with her sculptural and theatrical vision, Jonas, more than other dancers who have used video merely as a tool to document their dance, has succeeded in building up a strong body of video/performance work.[56]

Chris Burden, a young performance artist who has lived in California for the last eight years, has been called "the Evel Knievel of contemporary art." Works like *Five-Day Locker Piece* (1971), in which he lived in a $2' \times 2' \times 3'$ locker in the Art Department of the University of California, Irvine, for five days; *Shoot* (1971), in which he was shot in the left arm with a copper jacket 22-long bullet by a friend; and *Doorway to Heaven* (1973), in which he touched two live electric wires to his bare chest, have raised the issue of mortal risk in seventies art.

Burden's work sets up situations to test his own illusions or fantasies about what will happen. He wants to experience these unusual situations. He asks: "How do you know what it feels like to be shot if you don't get shot?"[57] He performs dangerous pieces in order to get "knowledge that other people don't have, some kind of wisdom."[58]

Among the approximately forty performance pieces Burden has executed in the last four years, three have utilized video. The first, *Match Piece* of March 20, 1972, at Pomona College, Claremont, California, was performed with his wife, Barbara, and described by the artist:

Two-thirds of the gallery floor was covered with white paper. A closed-circuit television system was installed in the room. The monitor was placed facing the action so that the audience could watch the piece or see it in the monitor, but could not do both at once. I sat on the floor at the opposite end of the room. Two miniature TVs were placed so that I could view them while I made match rockets and shot them at my wife lying on the floor 15 feet from me. The rockets are made by wrapping the match head with foil and lighting them with another match. Range and accuracy are impossible to control. Some of the matches landed in the audience. The piece began before the audience arrived and ended when everyone had left, about three hours.[59]

Rather than a video performance, this was a performance with video. Double video. Burden could look at the tiny twin monitors directly in front of him while the audience could not. Also, the spectator had to chose between seeing live action or video action. Video was presented as an alternative mode of seeing, of experiencing.



*Back to You*, Chris Burden, 1974 photo: Gwen Thomas

Burden's first video performance work was conceived for the "Video Performance" exhibition and executed on January 16, 1974, at 112 Greene Street, New York. It was his first New York performance and he wanted to counteract his "death freak" image by doing a work with minimal violence. In *Back to You*, Burden was stretched out on a table made from sheet-covered plywood on two sawhorses inside an elevator with its doors closed. A Sony 3400 camera wired to the elevator's roof pointed down to show the bare-chested artist from the belt up lying horizontally across the television screen. At his right elbow was an aluminum bowl containing several dozen sterilized pushpins with 5/8" tips. At nine o'clock sharp, the doors to the gallery were opened, and about 400 people who had been waiting in the street outside streamed into the 50' × 100' space. Three monitors were positioned near the elevator causing the audience to form a semicircle around the sets. A volunteer was selected from the audience and escorted to the elevator. When he entered and the door was shut, the three monitors snapped on. Inside the elevator, a sign read "*Please Push Pins into My Body.*" The elevator was taken between floors by an assistant while the volunteer decided whether to follow the instructions. He did, and stuck four pushpins into Burden's stomach and one into his right toe. Then the elevator returned to street level and the volunteer was let out. As the door closed behind him, the three monitors went blank. The whole performance took less than fifteen minutes.

Asked if this was the first time that he used video in a piece, Burden answered:

> No, I used it in *Match Piece*, but this was the first time that it really made sense because I could be seen only on the monitors. That's why it was a video performance—it wouldn't have carried as a live performance, for one thing, because the confrontation with the audience would have been too immediate. The volunteer would have been too aware that he was being watched, and it would have diluted the energy between us. Also the video framed the action—it made it more concentrated visually and it gave it more tension—the door shuts, the monitors go on . . . I wanted them to accept it as TV reality, because people automatically believe what they see on the screen—"if the camera picked it up it must have happened . . ."[60]

Burden makes an important distinction here. *Back to You* was a video performance because the piece was visible only on video. This is significantly different from a live performance with video such as *Match Piece* or *Velvet Water* (1975) which were performances that could be seen both on video or live.[61] It is similar to the distinction that Acconci makes. All of Acconci's performances with video are designated not as video performances, but as "documented on video." Thus, as *Claim* is Acconci's only video performance, *Back to You* is Burden's only work in this gender.[62]

Just as video art is in its infancy, "videoperformance" is at its primary stage of development. The pioneering work of the last decade has set forth some of the possibilities of this new creative mode. It has indicated the vast potential of videoperformance–related work as one of the most important contemporary areas of aesthetic exploration. It has signaled a start. The future of both video art and "videoperformance" seems as bright as the fully illuminated, phosphorescent TV screens themselves.

NOTES

1. *Willoughby Sharp Videoviews Bruce Nauman*, a 60-minute television program produced at San Jose University, San Jose, California, on May 7, 1970. An audio transcript of this videotape was edited by the artist and published as "Bruce Nauman," *Avalanche* (Winter 1971), pp. 23–31.

2. Fritz Perls's "The Gestalt Prayer" seems particularly relevant in regard to Nauman's video "performance activity" work:

"I do my thing, and you do your thing.
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.
You are you, and I am I,
And if by chance, we find each other, it's beautiful.
If not, it can't be helped."

3. "Bruce Nauman," *Avalanche* (Winter 1971), p. 29.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. Jane Livingston, "Bruce Nauman," in *Bruce Nauman* (catalogue), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, December 19, 1972–February 18, 1973, p. 26.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

8. Willoughby Sharp, "Nauman Interview," *Arts Magazine* (March 1970), p. 23.

9. "Keith Sonnier('s) NEW YORK LA HOOK-UP," an interview with Liza Béar, *Avalanche* 9 (December 1974), p. 25.

10. Sonnier's least widely known work of this period (most of which is now destroyed) are the cloth-covered, motorized structures that slowly inflated and deflated. One of them was shown in an exhibition entitled "Slow Motion" that I organized at Douglass College, New Brunswick, N.J., January 25–February 10, 1967.

11. For an illustration of Sonnier's Castelli Warehouse video projection installation piece showing the videotape *Hand* of March 1970, see Willoughby Sharp, "Body Works," *Avalanche* 1 (Fall 1970), p. 17.

12. Willoughby Sharp, "Keith Sonnier at Eindhoven: An interview," *Arts Magazine* (February 1971), p. 25.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 26. Sonnier's attitude to photographs is similar for he says (p. 27): "After photographing a set that we have been working on for a few weeks, we look at them for information and decide how to go on." For a book of these photographs by Richard Landry, see *Keith Sonnier: Object Situation Object 1969–70*, Verlag Galerie Ricke, Cologne.

17. In conversation with Suzanne Harris on September 10, 1975.

18. Keith Sonnier, "Illustrated Time—Proscenium II," *Avalanche* 5 (Summer 1972), p. 43.

19. From Vito Acconci's thirty-minute videotape, *Home Movies* (1973), produced at Art/Tapes/22, Florence, Italy.

20. Rosemary Mayer, Acconci's former wife, gives interesting anecdotes, personal information, and photographs relating to the artist's early development in "Performance & Experience," *Arts Magazine* (December–January 1973), pp. 33–6.

21. *Avalanche* 6 (Vito Acconci Issue) (Fall 1972), p. 4.

22. Acconci's evolving aesthetic and entrance into the New York art world was facilitated by several personal interactions. In June 1969, Dan Graham took Dennis Oppenheim, who was then moving away from "Earth Art" concerns, to Acconci's Christopher Street apartment, and they became close friends, exchanging ideas about work, particularly audio and photographic work. Shortly thereafter, in the same summer, Acconci did a "following piece" (a young woman in a white dress) and gave its dedicated documentation to me. A growing friendship ensued. By September, particularly as a result of Graham's efforts to get Nauman's performance activity films and other advanced work shown in New York (he organized an evening of Nauman's films with live events, one of which was a "step piece" by Acconci in the fall of 1969 at New York's Emanuel-el Midtown YM-YMHA), there was a growing awareness of a new aesthetic—one which I designated as "Body Works."

23. *Avalanche* 6 (Fall 1972), p. 71: ". . . a drift with a drive at the back of its mind," excerpts from tapes with Liza Béar.

24. This exhibition, consisting of three hours of black and white videotapes by Acconci (*Corrections*, 1970), Fox (*Tounging*,, 1970), Nauman (*Floor/Wall Positions*, 1968), Oppenheim (*Selected Works*, 1970), Sonnier (*Hand* & other works, 1970), and Wegman (*Selected Works*, 1970), which I organized in August–September 1970, was originally going to open at the Center of Art and Communication (CAYC), Buenos Aires, in October, but when I arrived with the tapes they did not have a video system capable of showing them. Consequently, this exhibition was first seen on October 18, 1970, at Breen's Bar, San Francisco, and was sponsored by Tom Marioni's Museum of Conceptual Art, a nonprofit art organization devoted to performance and video art. A photograph of this showing appears in *Avalanche* 2 (Body Works Issue) (Winter 1971), front, and is reviewed by Jerome Tarshis in *Artforum* (February 1971), pp. 85–86. This exhibition, which I distributed free of charge to art institutions I visited, was subsequently shown at the California Institute of Art, Los Angeles, the Atlanta School of Art, Atlanta, and the University of Iowa, Iowa.

25. *Avalanche* 6 (Fall 1972), p. 24.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

35. "Vito Acconci . . . *Command Performance*," an interview with Liza Béar, *Avalanche* 9 (Video Performance Issue) (December 1974), p. 23.

36. The ten artists were Vito Acconci, Robert Bell, Joseph Beuys, Chris Burden, Dennis Oppenheim, Ulrike Rosenbach, Richard Serra, Willoughby Sharp, Keith Sonnier, and William Wegman.

37. See the Vito Acconci section in *Tri Quarterly* 32, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois (Winter 1975), n.p.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Avalanche* 6 (Fall 1972), p. 76.

41. *Avalanche* 9 (December 1974), p. 22.

42. *Ibid*, p. 21.

43. *Ibid*, p. 22.

44. J. C. Cannell, *The Secrets of Houdini* (Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1973), p. 27.

45. For photographs and an interview concerning this three-way performance, see *Avalanche* 2 (Winter 1971), "A Discussion with Terry Fox, Vito Acconci, and Dennis Oppenheim," pp. 96–99.

46. This artist's use of video is discussed in length in Willoughby Sharp, "Dennis Oppenheim . . . *Recall*," *Avalanche* 9 (May/June 1974), pp. 14–15.

47. "Man Ray, Do You Want To . . .: An Interview with William Wegman by Liza Béar," *Avalanche* 7 (Winter/Spring 1973), p. 43.

48. *Ibid*, p. 44.

49. *Ibid*, p. 42.

50. In "William Wegman . . . Pathetic Readings," *Avalanche* 9 (May/June 1974), p. 9.

51. See "William Wegman," *Art-Rite*, no. 7 (Video Issue) (Autumn 1974), p. 16.

52. See *Videotapes and Films* (catalogue), Castelli-Sonnabend, New York, 1974.

53. From an unpublished dialogue between Joan Jonas and Liza Béar.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*

56. For a discussion of Joan Jonas's recent *Untitled* (1974) video performance, see Noël Carroll, "Joan Jonas: Making the Image Visible," *Artforum* (April 1974), pp. 52–53.

57. Willoughby Sharp and Liza Béar, "Chris Burden: The Church of Human Energy," *Avalanche* 8 (Summer/Fall 1973), p. 54.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

60. "Chris Burden . . . *Back to You:* An Interview with Liza Béar." *Avalanche* 9 (May/June 1974), p. 12.

61. In *Velvet Water* (1974) at the school of the Chicago Art Institute, Burden repeatedly breathed in tap water from a basin monitored by two cameras hooked up to five TV sets on the opposite side of the room.

62. For documentation on Burden's other work, see *Chris Burden 71–73*, Los Angeles, California, 1974.

# THE EUROPEAN SCENE AND OTHER OBSERVATIONS

**Bill Viola**

### A Forethought

The information in this article is the result of the first year I spent in Europe, working as technical director of Art/Tapes/22, an experimental video production and video cassette distribution center located in Florence. The center was initiated in 1973 by Maria Gloria Bicocchi as a place for experimentation by invited artists confronting this new medium, which was still very underexposed in Europe. The actual production/physical organ (the studio) is complemented by video cassette dissemination, which lends an international character to the center. Much of the enthusiasm expressed in this article is due to the working ambience at Art/Tapes/22, where I feel a really open attitude toward the potentials of video as a healthy cross-cultural intersection of expression is being put into physical form daily. Built on the energies and desires of its director, Maria Gloria Bicocchi, it is, I feel, the only place of its kind in all of Europe and the United States, a place where artists from all countries can find a common ground through the medium, and where a personalized, positive working situation opens channels for work.

The development of video in Europe has proved to be both pioneering (in the work of people like Gerry Schum and Wolf Vostell) and yet quite late and timid in taking root (as evidenced by the generally sparse amount of consistent production). It is not my intent to produce a historical document tracing the advances of the video medium in Europe. I've arrived too late on the scene for that, and I feel a more than adequate amount of this data is already available for those interested in it. (I refer the reader to the notes at the end of the article for source listings.) Therefore, what I am presenting is a set of observations and experiences from the point of view of an American directly involved in the growth of video throughout Europe, and more specifically Italy, over the past year. Thus it is a subjective array, which I hope will be taken as just that—an observation from one person speaking for himself, and situated in the very midst of the scene on which he is commenting.

### The European Scene

VIDEO REPORT: Well, Sony announced their new fall line in Paris today. The word is out—half-inch widths are still in! Come this November, the new 8650 (½-inch color) will hit the European scene, and people just can't wait to get their hands on it, complete with a lot of the features we've all been clamoring for, and on PAL standard. In the U-matic line, it looks like cassettes are in and here to stay. The international modes, the dual standard U-matics, will be around again this fall, along with a few new additions. Up in luxurious Paris showrooms we saw the new cassette color portable, and the new automatic cassette editing system, both also due in late autumn. All of this may sound a bit old hat to those of you from the States, but people here are just buzzing with excitement about it. In fact, for those of us here in Europe a lot can be gained by frequent visits to check up on latest technology fashions from the States. END VIDEO REPORT.

> Externally the branch is the origin of the fruit;
> Intrinsically the branch came into
> existence for the sake of the fruit.
> Had there been no hope of the fruit, would the
> gardener have planted the tree?
> Therefore in reality the tree is born of
> the fruit, though it appears to
> be produced by the tree.
>
> from Jalal al-Din Rumi
> *Mathnawi*
> in *Rumi Poet and Mystic*, translated by
> R. A. Nicholson
> (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964)

I have chosen to begin this article from a hardware point of view, since I am in charge of production at Art/Tapes/22, and it is the major focus of my activities. Yet more generally, I feel that the development, release, cost, and particular construction of video hardware systems becomes the major procreational determinant for all software germination, regardless of time, place, and the personal background of the user. (This given fact has only recently begun to change, as more "spaced-out engineer types" continue to modify equipment and design/build their own.) From this initial standpoint the situation in Europe is dominated by a severe time lag, which will

be examined more closely. The information stated at the outset was accurate; people are still waiting here for hardware introduced more than a year ago in the United States. In Tokyo, the Video Vatican, equipment is ordained initially for NTSC, the signal standard used in Japan and the U.S.A. New products are, for the most part, introduced simultaneously in Japan and the United States, and then modified for PAL standard later, at a time lag of often as much as one year.

The European-American signal-standard differentiation means more than the occasional tourist death, when some poor guy plugs his 110-volt American electric shaver into the 220-volt socket of his Rome hotel bathroom and fatally shaves himself clear through to the back of his head. Its ramifications are multiple, affecting both the video maker and viewer alike, and modulating all software display both physically and psychologically.

A more technical note is needed here. Somewhere along the line, a majority of European countries decided to go with a 50-Hertz (cycles per second) 220-volt AC power to supply their populations with the increasingly needed magic juice. On the other side of the Atlantic, they went with a lower voltage (110 volts), and a bit faster (60 HZ, or cycles per second). Since the two continents weren't wired together this pretty much didn't matter, except for the occasional uninformed traveler with electric utensils. When television came along, engineers utilized the frequency (the cycles per second) of the standard current to time the succession of images whizzing by on the screen. Therefore, Americans receive sixty images, or fields of video, every second, to the fifty that Europeans see. As the many new books and articles on the inner workings of video will tell you, each of these fields of video is actually the tracing of a narrow beam of electrons bombarding a phosphor surface, and thus manifesting itself as a glowing phosphor dot on the screen. Sweep this beam around fast enough and (due to persistence of vision and slight lag in the phosphor glow) this point becomes a line; when organized in a neat succession from top to bottom, the lines become a plane—a glowing surface called a raster when empty, the *Johnny Carson Show* when full, and snow when confused. There is a finite number of lines that can be scanned onto the surface area of the screen in the given time interval (60 HZ in America, 50 in Europe). In one-sixtieth of a second this number is 212½ lines; in one-fiftieth of a second, 312 can fit. So one thing becomes clear after all these electrons have flown by—in Europe people get an image that completes itself at a slightly slower rate, but one that contains one hundred more lines than its American counterpart. This yields an image in Europe of noticeably superior resolution (or detail). When I first arrived in Florence, the first videotape I saw was shot with a black and white portapak outdoors in direct sunlight (an optimum shooting ambience). Aside from the slight optical flicker (caused by the slower 50-cycle rate, to which I am now completely habituated) the quality of that image was just amazing. The detail and clarity of that tape was unlike anything I was used to seeing in the States. And color is another point. The technical differences are too complicated to go into here, but the different color reproduction system, combined with increased picture resolution, results in a color television image that is quite amazing for a person of the NTSC persuasion. Europe got its

We know geometrical figures of three kinds:
Figures of one dimension—lines.
Figures of two dimensions—planes.
Figures of three dimensions—solids.
A line is regarded here as the trace of a point moving in space.
A plane—as the trace of a line moving in space. A solid—as the trace of a plane moving in space.

Let us imagine a straight line limited by two points, and let us designate this line by the letter "a." Let us imagine this line "a" moving in space in a direction perpendicular to itself and leaving a trace of its movement. When it has traversed a distance equal to its length, the trace left by it will have the form of a square, the sides of which are equal to the line "a," i.e., "$a^2$."

Let us imagine a square moving in space in a direction perpendicular to two of its adjoining sides and leaving a trace of its movement. When it has traversed a distance equal to the length of one of the sides of the square, its trace will have the form of a cube, i.e., "$a^3$."

Now if we imagine the movement of a cube in space, what form will the trace left by its movement, i.e., "$a^4$," assume? Examining the correlations of figures of one, two, and three dimensions, i.e., lines, planes, and solids, we can deduce the rule that a figure of a higher dimension can be regarded as the trace of the movement of a lower dimension.

. . . Further, a point may be regarded as a cross-section of a line; a line as a cross-section of a surface; a surface as a cross-section of a solid; a three-dimensional body can therefore be determined as a cross-section of a four-dimensional body.

Generally speaking, in every four-dimensional body we shall see its three-dimensional projection or section. A cube, a sphere, a pyramid, a cone, a cylinder, may be projections or cross-sections of four-dimensional bodies unknown to us.

from P. D. Ouspensky
*A New Model of the Universe*
(Vintage Books, 1971)

A New York *Times* article of several years back reported that the C.I.A. had estimated the number of prisoners in Russian prison camps in Siberia to be more than one million. This figure was arrived at mainly by counting the number of prisoners out in the yards during the day, data compiled by satellite photographs. It seems that some surveillance satellites can spot objects on the ground less than a person-width across under optimum weather conditions and from about two hundred miles up, transmitting a video image back to Earth of roughly 10,000 lines resolution. Figuring that much of the technology being used by artists today was the result of World War II, it is just a matter of time before this new hardware is available for the individual.

system after America, a case in point where lateness was beneficial.

But things don't finish here; we got other problems, kids. The two systems are not at all compatible. Tapes made utilizing the NTSC system cannot be played on PAL equipment, and vice versa. Does this mean that Desi can't love Lucy in Italian, too? Well, due to the fact that much material for television was produced originally on film, Hugh Beaumont could leave it to Beaver abroad as well, and the exporting of all this valuable information and rich cultural heritage was not retarded. But for stuff done directly onto video—that's not so easy. Technology exists (at the BBC in London, for example) to transfer electronically between standards, involving some form of time-base correction and digital processing systems, but it's unfortunately out of the reach of the independent video maker in the U.S. or Europe because of its cost. So the only other option available is optical transfer, which is like taking a Xerox of a Xerox; if this is not one's intent, the image degeneration incurred can be quite corrosive. (The process, called scan conversion, involves taking a tape made in one standard, let's say PAL, and first displaying it normally on a monitor. Next we take an NTSC [American standard] camera and point it at that monitor rerecording the image off the screen *optically* onto an NTSC videotape recorder. Thus, picture quality and resolution suffer.) As to the satisfactory solution to this problem, again we are at the mercy of the Sony high priests and must wait.

In the meantime, we've got a small U-matic wonder now flourishing on the market in Europe, but still overlooked in the States. It is a dual-standard ¾-inch video cassette-monitor ensemble capable of playing back or copying either NTSC or PAL video cassettes (but unfortunately not able to transfer between them). In Europe, if one wants to purchase a video cassette player or recorder from Sony, it can only be dual standard. This means that most places in Europe that have acquired video cassette machines can view tapes made in both the U.S. and Europe. Since the dual-standard cassette has arrived relatively late in the States (many places have purchased cassette machines already, and thus have the NTSC models only), this puts Europeans in the position of being able to receive software from the best of both worlds, but makes it very difficult for Europeans to share their efforts with Americans. This one-way information flow imposed by the technology is extremely hazardous, serving to increase the amount of raw information draining from the U.S. and seeping out into the rest of the world, and not allowing it to be replenished from outside sources. Obviously, the ultimate solution lies with some global TV standard or multistandard interface device, resulting from the digital time-base correction technology available today, but until this situation exists—and until each locality is able to develop its own integrity with the medium—any benefits such advances might produce are still a long way off.

### Goldbricking

Television has been acclaimed, in numerous popular analyses by cultural visionaries, as a truly global medium. As to what exactly all this means, I don't know, but I have been observing some recurring patterns of early video interception stretching across national boundaries, which, by the process of elimination, can be attributed to our common biological and genetic factors and/or the construction of the television medium itself. There seem to me to be definite stages of development as video becomes woven within a given social framework. The cultural surround (growth medium) in Europe is, when observed on a certain scale, very different from that of the States. Growing up in New York City and enjoying a seven-channel childhood, I became passively conversant in television skills at quite a young age (though the active application of this vocabulary has proven very difficult in my later video-making experience). This abundant television environment, along with contributing factors such as familiar electric toasters, automatic blenders, luxury refrigerators, microwave ovens, and lush push-button kitchens (which bear more than a visual resemblance to the control room at NBC studios), arrived much later in Europe. The difference in cultural and media backgrounds results in a distinct flavor in the kinds of things people do, which I feel is leading to a definite form people can call "European" video, and which will, by far, be the most important result of this phase of the spreading of personal TV. Right now, the video being produced in many places in Europe demonstrates the processes of learning a language, which unfortunately in the U.S. is often taken as a definitive and final form by persons eager to delineate so-called video aesthetics

and general analyses of the medium—a form that will continually metamorphose as certain levels of literacy are reached. There is a definite maturation process which must be recognized, and within which each point has equal importance and integrity and cannot be considered autonomous or absolute by any means. In addition, this process is, to a certain extent, different for each culture involved, and as a result it is often poorly judged by people who, having themselves experienced the change induced by a new technology, assume that it will hit everyone in the same way. My experiences here in Florence have taught me more about the medium itself than any particular set of characters I can lump together to call the "European video" scene. I choose to pursue this aspect further in this article, rather than dwell on any specific set of differences self-evident to anyone viewing the tapes themselves.

The work being produced on the continent is, for the most part, black and white, ½-inch, with one of the important duration determinants being the length of tape available. In other words, a lot of it is long and difficult to sit through, despite the fact that much of the television, especially from the BBC, is of very high documentary quality, data-rich, and quite concise. This process occurring in America can appear even more extreme, owing to the dominant environmental module of the thirty-second television commercial, which is far more concentrated and prevalent than anything in Europe. Of course, viewing much of video as a reaction against a dominant force, it is easy to see why most initial efforts stretch out rather than compress. (Brevity is not meant to be stressed here as a crucial element as much as a certain organizational awareness necessary at the producing stage.) As I have mentioned in other writings, most people will call many video works boring while not really getting to the source of this discomfort. It is not so much that these tapes are boring because, for example, the images on the screen are static and/or the development in time is rather slow. Quite the contrary—with video, a static image does not exist (as explained earlier); its high-velocity data flow makes it the fastest-changing thing we look at in our daily environment. Physically, it is probably the most difficult and demanding form to which we pay so much attention. Many early video efforts seem to be the most successful in their illumination of this fact.

But this is all in regard to the video maker. It must be noted that the viewer-recipient goes through a learning process as well. One of the most amazing things for me, both in the States and in Europe, is that people will actually watch all this stuff unflinchingly, in its agonizing entirety, provided this instance is one of their first video encounters. In fact, much of my experience, in particular with the common species of large videotape art exhibitions, indicates that initially people will watch almost anything. The excitement in the air of perked-up antennae when, for example, the slight hum of a greatly amplified live microphone or the fresh glow of a newly turned-on television screen first fills the space is very real. I've seen people standing around, at the opening of video art shows, for the longest time just watching snow, which can be attributed either to a childhood infatuation with connect-the-dots books or to the rapture of newly found freedom to arrange the video raster as they please. I remember as a child I kept asking my father how come bugs liked the N.Y. Yankees, too, when we'd spend hot summer evenings in a darkened room watching the baseball players on TV and the moths in the room tried desperately to get through the glass into TV-land.

An experience on a different summer night much later in my studio stands out in my mind here. I got hold of a bunch of video equipment from the local university to fool around with. Among the toys was a favorite of mine, a video projector, which was the first thing I set up. Late one night, as the camera running into the projector was warming up, I turned away for a brief moment to get something. When I turned around again, I was almost knocked over by the huge, glowing image just a few feet from my eyes—a giant brick. Not your normal, everyday, run-of-the-mill brick, mind you, but a giant brick—huge, just floating up there like the Goodyear blimp. It seemed that the camera warming up just happened to be pointed at a red brick lying on the floor of my studio. I quickly located the actual brick in the room. I was relieved—there it was, just a normal brick—but after that experience it sure did seem exceptionally puny and undernourished in real life. Of course, a lot of the initial impact of the video brick was amplified by its size, but a monitor I had set up in the room with the same image on it still bore out the basic fact. That brick just looked *so* good up there, glowing, framed by that monitor box, the word "Sony" sitting proudly right under the image at the bottom edge of the screen. It was special—a gold brick, much nicer than that dirty old thing sitting over there in the corner in front of the camera. And that's when I realized I was up against a problem in the work I was setting out to do. If video makes a regular brick look that good, then there is a real danger in that it's going to make everything look good initially; and it will be difficult not to get seduced into believing that all the stuff I'm putting before the camera will survive taping. The taping part is very important, in that it demands a very different set of production criteria than a closed-circuit or live situation. (This breeds a lot of confusion, in that with video, people can see the final form of their work while, or just after, they make it.) Large video exhibitions for the most part tend to amplify these problems and not diminish them.

**The Continental Drift Theory**

In Italy, we had our first large show in international video-

tapes in Milan in March of 1975. It was organized by Tomasso Trini, editor of *Data Art* magazine, and sponsored by Camel cigarettes (R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.). It was a "Camel Award" art exhibition (as cigarettes are prohibited from advertising in Italian mass media, they tend to organize art shows and sporting matches and the like). It was held in a large public exhibition space called La Rotonda di Via Besana, a very interesting building, as I was to learn from the custodian. It was constructed in the shape of a cross surrounded by a curving wall and oriented dead along the points of the compass. I'm not very clear as to its history, but I gathered that it was a church, then a hospital, and also had the dark distinction of being a housing place for lepers in Milan. Each of the long columns inside supporting the high ceilings contains, near the top, skulls carved in stone, coldly staring down at those on the floor below.

Nonetheless, historical considerations aside, the show went very well, and was (as is often the case with large video shows) very well attended. For many of the tapes, crowds ringed the monitors as at a street-corner intersection after an accident. Since this was an international conglomeration of work, it was very interesting to see how the change in context affected some of the tapes. Ira Schneider's *Manhattan Is An Island*, for example, which some people thought was like adding water to water when shown in New York City, was many Italians' first real view of the legendary "Big Apple," and was watched intensely, having a completely different meaning and function when transplanted to Milan.

Every once in a while the tapes would not be changed on cue, and I would come up on a comfortable little gathering of people settled into some heavy snow-watching till the next organized raster scan greeted their eyes. Actually snow between tapes can serve as a very good cerebral blackboard eraser, easing people into the "clean-slate state" in which they are ready for the next tape. In a large video show, this is often sorely needed by the audience to distinguish the individual pieces they have been told exist, especially when video exhibitions are new to them. The video makers themselves often fail to recognize this phenomenon, a trick video performs so well, as their pieces sink into the giant program of the whole show.

Another aspect peculiar to this event in Milan, and having to do with inundation, was the showing of high-tech color tapes, such as Nam June Paik's *Global Groove*. The huge crowds of glassy-eyed humans entranced and entrenched around the monitors when those tapes went on were amazing to watch. It all really made sense when someone told me that they do not yet broadcast color here in Italy, so that the audience had hardly been prepared for this onslaught of high-energy, super-saturated color. That's like airlifting someone off the Sahara and dropping him down in the surf off Coney Island. This is a bit overstated, but the reaction to the color itself was (as with most video display) markedly more intense.

The Italian government has been in a deadlock over the issue of color television for several years. Very basically, the choice with regard to color in Europe today boils down to a choice between two systems, the French SECAM and the German PAL. Naturally, the decision to go with either system is a political one between the French and the Germans, one that the Italians have just made as I am writing this. So up until today, color programs have not been broadcast in Italy. But color has existed—people living in the north have been able to receive color signals drifting in from across the Swiss, Yugoslavian, and French borders. This leakage is another aspect of broadcast television's potency within the geographic framework of Europe, and will surely dominate future political and social life. The lines of territory written on most maps are becoming about as meaningful as a page of notes written with a Flair pen in the rain. New national boundaries are being defined by the electromagnetic standing wave patterns spilling off the transmitter towers in each country and intermingling in the atmosphere. The smaller and closer together the countries are, the more acute the effect. There are temporary ways around this problem for nations just wiring up, such as the Indian government's hiring of an American firm to supply fixed-frequency radios (nontunable, one station only) and distributing these radios to many villages in the countryside. Like it or lump it. And most did—lump the radios by trying to retune them till they broke under the strain. This plan is just temporary, however; a more durable one has been implemented in "civilized" areas such as Europe, where the great transmitter race is just getting under way, controlling the audience, as in America, but with a bit softer approach.

Getting back to the Milan show and the European/American standard hassles: This problem of standardization at the exhibition was surmounted by the innovative dual-standard Sony cassette machines. But I found myself making an awful blunder, which graphically showed me that the difference in standard ain't just technical. The largest number of tapes supplied for the show came from the Art/Tapes/22 studio, works produced by Americans as well as Europeans. At the show a number of times I would put on a tape made by an American at our studio (therefore, made originally on PAL standard), and flip the switch on the cassette machine into the NTSC (American) playback mode. When the screens would start to go berserk from the mismatch and people's eyes would just kind of roll up inside their heads, I would realize my mistake and, embarrassed, flip the switch to the PAL (European)

standard mode, making sure the word didn't get around about what I had done.

**Video Alla Fiorentina**

It was these moments of transatlantic uncertainty that plagued my first few months of living in Florence. There I was in Florence, speaking English and not being an art history major. The first week alone was so disorienting—my first social contacts were with a group of students playing old Bob Dylan records; on my second night there, they rushed me off to the Space Electronic, a psychedelic disco complete with black light posters on the walls, strobe lights, and colored spots pulsing to the music, a parachute hanging over the dance floor, acid rock music with a colored light show backdrop, and updated with video monitors suspended from the ceiling so one could watch oneself dancing and having a good time. By the end of the night I was blitzed, to say the least. My second night of incoherency was compounded by going to see *Midnight Cowboy*, dubbed into Italian, of course. There was Razzo Rizzo speaking his native tongue, along with eight million other New Yorkers —my entire hometown speaking Italian! Sitting in a Florence movie theater and watching those streets I had known and loved as a child. Boy, was I confused! By the end of the week I had also seen *American Graffiti*, dubbed in Italian as well, and I felt the reprogramming of my childhood was complete. I even contemplated buying a cheap character generator to keep strapped to my belt, generating subtitles for me as a conversational aid.

The whole dubbing process has a very strong effect on most Europeans, yet is it rarely encountered by Americans. A great deal of film, and even more television, is dubbed into Italian, usually from English. I wonder what this does to young children growing up and watching TV, knowing that what's coming out of these guys' mouths is not really what they are saying. In the movies, an Italian actor dubbing the voice of Woody Allen, for example, will dub him in all successive films in which he appears, so as to build up continuity and credibility between films (something extremely vital for the movie industry). So for every Woody Allen and John Wayne, there is an Italian Woody Allen and John Wayne living somewhere in Rome, a kind of surrogate identity hoping his American counterpart will have a long and successful career.

About one month after I arrived in Italy, I was approached by a group of young *avant-guardia* architects about teaching in a cooperative new school. "Great," I said, "what's it called?" "Global Tools," they said. "Oh," I said. We then proceeded to talk about geodesic domes, inflatables, survival arts, solar energy, and statements like, "You are information." So there I was—taking regular trips to the Space Electronic, making video art in Florence, and being approached by Global Tools —living the life of a true fugitive from culture. The most difficult times came when I would go back to New York and collide with the same process happening in the other direction. One time, I arrived at Kennedy Airport and later wound up getting off a train in Penn Station, extremely thirsty. I walked into an "Italian" pizzeria for a Coke, only to be met by an all-Puerto Rican staff speaking Spanish, with life-size plastic hams and sausages dangling majestically from the ceiling. In Florence, it had taken some effort to associate those symbolic plastic replicas with the actual things hanging in most restaurants there, but now to actually see them again in genuine plastic set me back quite a lot.

Although more visible when occurring internationally, this cross-breeding proliferates on the national scale, where indigenous films and television serve most adequately as plastic ham and sausages hanging high in the national skies.

**Be Here Now**

It is almost impossible to walk around Florence and not get in someone's photograph. The number of Botticelli frescoes and Michelangelo *David*s now existing in the world is frightening. They'll shoot anything, as long as it isn't moving. Mom in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, Pop in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, Little Joey in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, Sis eating real Italian ices in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, Mom and Pop together in front of the . . . the possible combinations are endless. Then they go back whence they came, little chunks and pieces of Florence firmly in hand as evidence. What's so strange? We've done it on the moon, why not Italy? One of the first things I realized working in the depths of our studio all day long here is that the inside of a studio can be anywhere in the world. In fact, television studios and airports are probably the first really international spaces we have. With television advances such as satellites and chroma keying, it is now possible to put someone anywhere you choose. In terms of a repeatable form, it is interesting to see the similarity between tourists having their picture taken in front of some public monument, and any newscaster on TV wrapping up a story standing in front of the White House or another notable landmark. It's the same process—a verification quite necessary to establish credibility. It soon becomes obvious that the entire set of spatial-distance clues appears very dubious when dealing with radio or TV. The first week I was here I called my family in New York just to let them know how things were and how the movie ended on the plane. As soon as someone picked up the phone in New York, there was this strange echo effect. I could hear my voice again a split second after I said something. I finally realized that this was a part of my own telephonic signal returning to me. The impulses carrying my voice from

Florence to New York had somehow bounced off the New York end and come back, thus the split-second delay. The feeling of all that space participating in an intercontinental echo chamber was chilling. (I finally had to cut the conversation short.) In radio, it seems the farther away a correspondent gets, the more tinny and garbled his voice sounds. I once heard a radio broadcast from some guy standing on a street corner in Santiago, Chile, an audiotape that could have been much more economically produced by somebody on the corner of Times Square with a cheap-o Radio Shack microphone pumped through a tiny transistor radio. But somehow you just knew that those were real Chilean car noises.

The first time I saw Michelangelo's *David*, it was a shocking experience. He was too big. Obviously, the question becomes, what does "too big" mean? I had been force-fed art history in school and so was somewhat acquainted with the city of Florence before ever having set foot in its streets. I used to really hate art history and all those marvelous marble bodies with their firm marble penises, which I suspected might have something to do with the fact that the dominant population of nubile young art history majors were female. (Just a collegiate sexual fantasy on my part, I'm sure.) But when I arrived in Florence, I realized that the only thing I'd ever studied then was black and white photography. When you actually experience the incredible works of art in a place like this—when you are standing right there, watching, breathing, smelling, hearing —you know. There are no words or photos in any art history book that can substitute for the knowledge of being right there. Those works have taken on a completely different meaning for me, determined for myself by my own feelings at a particular moment and place, and really more by the surroundings than by the center attraction on the pedestal.

An overheard conversation in Florence often has to do with something or other not being like someone "pictured" it to be, usually in terms of scale and dimension. If you haven't pictured the thing before you get to Florence, it's all right there, pictured for you, in the guidebooks you buy when you arrive. So the idea is to first find the photo of this famous thing in your book, then travel around the city until you find a physical object that looks like the image in the photo, compare shape and form, and, once you're sure, take a picture of it yourself. You also might want to check it off to avoid future confusion. Unfortunately, photo-pattern recognition is not strictly limited to tourist behavior. Latent in the technology, it seems to surface in other areas as well, most notably our educational system and independent video making.

### View from the Inside

At the beginning, soon after I had learned basic video skills, I had to satisfy the obligation to initiate others into the secret rites, and found myself teaching several basic video workshops. A common exercise with the class would involve taking the equipment out onto the street and just recording whatever happened to be going on, which, as we all soon discovered, turned out to be a whole lot more than was expected. (This brings us back to goldbricking and something Nam June Paik wrote concerning overtaping.) For these classes, the biggest

(Ouspensky commenting on the work of C. H. Hinton)

What we call perspective is in reality a distortion of visible objects which is produced by a badly constructed optical instrument—the eye. We see all objects distorted.
. . . But, according to Hinton, there is no necessity to visualize objects of the external world in a distorted form. The power of visualisation is not limited by the power of vision. We see all objects distorted, but we know them as they are. And we can free ourselves from the habit of visualising objects as we see them, and we can learn to visualise them as we know they really are. . . . Hinton's idea is precisely that before thinking of developing the capacity of seeing in the fourth dimension, we must learn to visualise objects as they would be seen in the fourth dimension, i.e., first of all, not in perspective, but from all sides at once, as they are known to our "consciousness." The development of this power to visualise objects from all sides at once will be the casting out of the self elements in mental images. According to Hinton, "casting out the self elements in mental images must lead to the casting out of self elements in perceptions." In this way, the development of the power of visualising objects from all sides will be the first step towards the development of seeing objects as they are in the geometrical sense, i.e., the development of what Hinton calls "higher consciousness."

from P. D. Ouspensky
*A New Model of the Universe*
(Vintage Books, 1971)

I don't know how many dull, unedited tapes I had to sit through politely. . . . We should be more conscious of the situation: we are in the era of information overload and it means information retrieval is more tricky than information recording. . . .

from Nam June Paik
*Video 'n' Videology (1959–1973)*
edited by Judson Rosebush
(Everson Museum of Art, 1974)

hit, and the most valuable experience, would be playing back the tapes made out in the daily environment, and also being allowed to tape their roommates, dogs, their block, everything familiar to them, and then play it back. As tape, this may seem much too personal and self-indulgent to be of value to persons other than those involved, but so what? At most, I feel, a successful videotape can only hope to introduce a new view into the familiar context of events and possibly induce some reevaluation—but it will never be a thing in itself, self-enclosed, or else it would lapse into the common-denominator drone of popular entertainment. Problems arise today when video makers cannot distinguish between something that has personal value alone, and something more relevant on a public scale. It is a twilight zone that is very difficult to define, and the currently accepted role of the artist as social deviant who reveals personal oddities to the world tends to cloud things even further. I cannot stress enough that *each* aspect (the personal learning experiences and those publicly meaningful) is of equal value. And as to the set of criteria for one aspect or the other, who can really say (as the most personal situations can often be most publicly relevant), but I think that if more people kept a lot of their video activities on the level of personal, private education, then when they did make a video statement, drawing from this acquired knowledge, they would make it all the more effective.

When an outside observer looks over the videotape scene, a large bulk of the work probably seems very simplistic, basic-level stuff, with a groping for something and not quite hitting it. Consider the potential richness of an interface between the human visual/aural/perceptual system with brain and the electronic data processing/storage capabilities that the television medium can yield. If one closely examines a large amount of the recorded magnetic material labeled video art, it soon becomes evident that these efforts are mostly learning probes expressed in very simple sentences. As a native American I find myself constantly fighting some invisible, imposed blockage on my sensory system and am continually trying to open up and extend my perceptual awareness, rather than let it fold in. I think this frustration is typical of many people who have attempted to expand actively via sight/sound tools such as video and videotape. More and more, as is true with just about every human endeavor, I am finding that the limits are more in myself than in what I am attempting to utilize. I really feel sometimes as if I'd lived a sensory-deprived childhood, and, in regard to video, much of the work I've seen appears to be suffering from the same vitamin deficiency.

> In the use of the olfactory apparatus Americans are culturally underdeveloped. The extensive use of deodorants and the suppression of odor in public places results in a land of olfactory blandness and sameness that would be difficult to duplicate anywhere else in the world. This blandness makes for undifferentiated spaces and deprives us of richness and variety in our life. It also obscures memories, because smell evokes much deeper memories than either vision or sound.
>
> from Edward T. Hall
> *The Hidden Dimension*
> (Doubleday and Co., 1959)

> To state it tersely: if one works with a bottlenose dolphin day in and day out, for many hours, days, and weeks, one is struck with the fact that one's current basic assumptions and even one's current expectations determine, within certain basic limits, the results attained with a particular animal at a particular time.
> . . . You see, what I found after twelve years of work with dolphins is that the limits are not in them, the limits are in us. So I had to go away and find out, who am I? What's this all about?
>
> from John Lilly
> "A Sense of Weirdness"
> in *Mind in the Waters*, edited by
> Joan McIntyre
> (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974)

In this light, the state-funded media centers in America become extremely vital as agents to combat this culturally induced stunted growth. Such centers, particularly abundant in the Northeast coastal areas of the U.S., and popping up now in other parts of that country as well, are virtually nonexistent and sorely needed in Europe. I am speaking of centers of the access-type, which to many people immediately signifies slipshod, technically shabby work, usually on such varied topics as the migrating habits of short-order cooks in inner-city Schenectady, New York, and therefore of very little value. But this attitude is very unhealthy, just as it is unhealthy for funding agencies to be disappointed and consider cutting funds when very little refined or sophisticated work emerges. These are centers to develop literacy and, considered as such, should be increased in number, not limited. You don't teach people how to write and then expect that everyone in the class will be a novelist; it just doesn't work that way. It should be hoped that very soon Europe, too, will recognize the need for such learning spaces, and that this process will be allowed to develop to the fullest extent possible there.

## Picturing—Visual Literacy

Physiologically, we have all the necessary apparatuses to give us an adequate picture of the world. It is just, as stated before, our minds that get in the way and give us a "viewpoint." I remember one time I was asked by the Lincoln First Bank in Rochester, New York, to do a video installation in their lobby —one of the first pieces of "bank video art" ever done. We were up in the offices on top of the Lincoln First Bank Building in downtown Rochester, with a breathtaking view of the city through large wall-sized windows. Commenting on the urban plight led us into staring out of the window onto the landscape, where I immediately noticed a large microwave relay tower poised on a distant hill. I pointed it out, launching into some broadcast media simultaneity rap. One of the bank guys said, "You know, we use this window as a way to tell what people are into. For example, last week we had a guy here who works with HO trains, who might be doing a big installation for our Christmas show. He immediately spotted the Rochester railroad yards over there off to your left." I looked out the window; it was the exact same landscape we both had seen, yet each of us had seen a different view.

*The Elephant in the Dark Room*

Some Hindus were exhibiting an elephant in a dark room, and many people collected to see it. But as the place was too dark to permit them to see the elephant, they all felt it with their hands to gain an idea of what it was like. One felt its trunk, and declared the beast to resemble a water pipe; another felt its ear, and said it must be a large fan; another its leg, and thought it must be a pillar; another felt its back, and declared the beast must be like a great throne. According to the part which he felt, he gave a different description of the animal. One, as it were, called it "Dal," and another "Alif."

from Jalal al-Din Rumi
"The Masnavi"
in *Teachings of Rumi*, translated by
E. H. Whinfield
(E. P. Dutton and Co., 1975)

It's not because we're dumb that we don't see those things. Our sensory systems, especially vision, are extremely complex and highly evolved; it's just that we have it built into our design that we single things out that have to do with our survival, and furthermore, we do this with each sense modality in isolation. Each fully matured human being on this planet enjoys a very complex central nervous system and elaborate sensory reception equipment, with vision at the top of the stack. Each retina is loaded with roughly 100 million photoreceptors, sensitive to frequencies from 311,000,000,000,000 cycles per second (red light) to about 737,000,000,000,000 cycles per second (violet light), all inputs converging down into about one million relay channels to the brain. In other words, we can get a lot of stuff, and get it fast. This high level of visual intelligence (with the capability for sensory integration/balance) seems to have reached an extremely advanced state at one time, as evidenced by the remarkably complex architecture and writing/notational systems of the Mayan and Egyptian civilizations (later passed on in part to the Greeks, Arabs, and Chinese) and the ancient symbolic geometries which their proportions and configurations reveal.

The scattering of sense projection areas which we humans inherit appears to have evolved from conditions of extreme danger orientation. Sight, sound, touch, smell are each bordered by interpretation areas which deal only with one sense modality. When hearing registers a danger sound it does not wait for visual information before signaling alarm. Nor does vision, on seeing the form of a predator, wait for sound or touch. Our intellectual functions have arisen from separate sense modality interpretation areas. Perhaps this may contribute to the ease with which our mental processes become isolated from one another.

from Sterling Bunnel
"The Evolution of Cetacean Intelligence"
in *Mind in the Waters*, edited by
Joan McIntyre
(Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974)

Memory and recall are keys to development of intelligence over time. As has been shown, mnemonic ability is a function of efficiency in encoding data. I heard an interview on the radio with a man who had a computer mind, who had been astounding scientists with his uncanny ability to retain information and unerringly reproduce it at given time intervals. The reporter asked him how he had remembered an exceedingly long list of unrelated items and recited them perfectly. "Well," he said, "I pictured myself on a steet in a city somewhere. I started to take a walk down this street, and at each shop I passed, I put one of the items on the list in the window. When I had walked to the end of the street and the shops were all filled, I was done. Now, if someone wanted me to recite the list, I would just go back to that city in my mind, and take a walk down that street again, looking in the shop windows." It seems that dolphins might have an even more accurate means of recall, if a current theory proves correct. The information they get about their environment is dominantly acoustic, the result of a kind of biological sonar system they possess. Sound waves are sent out by the animal and return in altered patterns

after they have bounced off objects in the immediate line of fire. Reading the difference between outgoing and incoming sound-wave organization yields data about the environment. Some scientists have speculated that the dolphin may be able to reproduce these sound-wave patterns vocally, and thus virtually re-create an object for a fellow dolphin in the form of an acoustic image.

What do we normal folks have to compare with this wonderfully integrated natural apparatus? Well, for now, we have TV. With its high rate of information-processing, highly ordered structure, and ability to operate in "real" time, the television process is the common form coming closest to our language of visual efficiency. And what are people doing with it? A lot of things—watching it for one, on the most passive side, and physically manipulating it on the most active. The physical manipulators are a group of people making images (often involving video synthesizers) and represent, I think, the most extreme reaction to the sensory underdevelopment I was talking about. They are simply making images: representational images, abstract images, and everything in between. It's the control, the ability to create visual forms, that's turning these people on, as evidenced by the fact that it is invariably more fun to do than to watch, and very often more exciting when created "right before your very eyes" than re-created on tape.

The results of video utilization in a more sensory-balanced culture cannot clearly be ascertained, because television in developing countries has been utilized primarily for political motives, and very often by a team of Western experts called in from the outside. It should be noted here that though many people today in Western countries feel attracted to the Eastern way of life, most Eastern nations are trying to become more Westernized.

One inkling of the possibilities that occur when a differently centered culture gains access to television can be found in a program broadcast in Thailand. It is a kind of debate, utilizing the immediacy and the continual changing-ness of the medium to its fullest. Two people, usually a man and a woman, will have an argument—a lover's quarrel, a fight over housekeeping, etc.—and the whole thing will be set to music. The idea is that each tries to outinsult, outargue, the other, yet the replies must all adhere to the melody set down, and, more importantly, the last line of each response must rhyme with the opponent's last line. The winner is the one who outrhymes the other. This is all unrehearsed and done quite spontaneously.

People in the developing countries lack technical information. Apparently, technical instruction and know-how cannot be filtered out from all the other cultural propaganda. This, compounded with governmental desires to Westernize, makes the chances for the emergence of a distinctive, highly advanced audio-visual language quite slim at present. Many individuals who have spent time with the peoples of these countries speak of the "waiting" quality shared by the general population. They have a common sensibility toward life—a life that just plods along, indeterminate, relentless, with all goings held in colloidal suspension, becoming the flow. And so all the events of this life make sense; they have to, that's just the way it is.

On this fair ocean our human forms
Float about, like bowls on the surface of water;
Yea, like cups on the surface, till they are filled;
and when filled, these cups sink into the water.

from Jalal al-Din Rumi
"The Masnavi"
in *Teachings of Rumi*, translated by
E. H. Whinfield
(E. P. Dutton and Co., 1975)

Highest good is like water. Because it excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the way.

. . . The way gives them life;
Virtue rears them;
Things give them shape;
Circumstances bring them to maturity.
Therefore the myriad creatures all revere the way
and honor virtue. Yet the way is revered and virtue
honored
not because this is decreed by authority but because
it is
natural for them to be treated so.
Thus the way gives them life and rears them;
Brings them up and nurses them;
Brings to fruition and maturity;
Feeds them and shelters them.
It gives them life yet claims no possession;
It benefits them yet extracts no gratitude;
It is the steward yet exercises no authority.
Such is called the mysterious virtue.

from Lao Tzu
*Tao Te Ching*, translated by D. C. Lau
(Penguin Books, 1963)

Maybe the television now being nurtured in this vast field of modern technological desolation, if applied and utilized and respected like water, will be cultivated by these wait/watchers into a rich and succulent visual/aural silt, one which is functional from raw need, and yet manifoldly sensitive from a life attitude of patiently (gently) waiting—a fertile reflection of a high degree of visual literacy shared by all beings on this planet. It would be a shame if these words become mere romantic rhetoric in the future, as they appear to be now.

**Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness**

As is often the case, it took one piercing instance to snap me into recognition of how far I, and the situation I was in in the States, had strayed from internal truths. It was at the Open Circuits Conference on the Future of Television held at the Museum of Art, of all places, that I experienced this subtle awakening. Based on the magic Woodstock time interval of three days, and plagued by the normalities of communication retardation, which any discussion by more than three unrelated people using words, excessive human ego, authority designation, and an overabundance of videotape will invariably tend to create, I think the conference did most good on a more interpersonal level, for those who were physically present in that big room.

It was in the closing moments of the third round—rather late in the evening, in a sweaty, stale, cigarette haze that curtained the finale, with an intense panel of artists, museum people, and critics each trying desperately to name the elusive list of video aesthetics—that a familiar, long-term division soon broke onto the surface as expected: the never-ending battle between the video synthesizers and the so-called "conceptual" video utilizers. Round and round it went, and just as the last moments were literally ticking out, a short Oriental fellow by the name of Nam June Paik stood up, "as if disturbed from sleep," yawning and scratching his hair, and spoke out for the synthesizers. He said that video feedback is like sex. (Laughter.) It is a lot of fun for the guy doing it, but everyone else is just a voyeur. But the important part is that, like sex, everyone can do it. It is a form of communication with the self via a responsive machine. And finally, it has made some people happy doing it. (All pause.) Well, the discussion soon continued and promptly got on the same track, only to be left hanging minutes later by the mandatory exodus from the building due to the late hour. But still, that long "Wha?" after Paik's brief statement resounded long into the night. All he said was, "It makes some people happy." Why did the word "happy" seem so out of place in a discussion on video aesthetics, and in a conference on the future of television? I heard that statement not so much as a rebuttal defending the video synthesizer (the first one of which is named after Paik), but more as a general comment on the present situation. How far away from plain human feelings we've wandered if we are that incapable of understanding something with our hearts rather than our heads. Video, more specifically television, offers us the most potential freedom and clarity of expression yet, and we tend to use it for our own little quirks, for narrowing down rather than exploding things way out (along with the threat of possibly us with it)—a bit more dangerous but vastly more exciting in the long run.

Much of the information and ideas expressed here concerning global potentials and media in developing countries emerged from discussions with Lorraine Herm, Communication Program officer for U.N.D.P. (United Nations Development Program), and from the insights her energies and experiences have yielded.

**NOTES**

Concerning the historical development of video in Europe, the bibliography in the Projekt '74 catalogue compiled by David Ross and Wulf Herzogenrath covers both European and American video up until June 1974. The following is a general list of large video exhibitions in 1974–1975.

| | |
|---|---|
| September 1974 | Incontro Internazionale Video e Films, Palais des Expositions, Geneva, Switzerland. |
| October 1974 | Impact Video Art, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Lausanne, Switzerland. |
| November 1974 | Art Video Confrontation '74, ARC Musée National d'Art Moderne de la ville de Paris. |
| February 1975 | Rencontre Internationale Ouverte de Vidéo, CAYC, Espace Chardin, Paris. |
| February 1975 | Artists Videotapes, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, Belgium. |
| March 1975 | Americans in Florence/Europeans in Florence, Videotapes from Art/Tapes/22, Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, Holland. |
| March 1975 | Camel Award, Artevideo e Multivision, La Rotonda di Via Besana, Milan, Italy. |
| May 1975 | Americans in Florence/Europeans in Florence, Travels to Student Cultural Center, Belgrade, Yugoslavia. |
| May 1975 | 3rd International Open Encounter on Video, CAYC at Gallería Civica di Arte Moderna, Ferrara, Italy. |
| June 1975 | The Video Show, Serpentine Gallery, London, England. |

(For information previous to 1974–1975, see *Kunst Bleibt Kunst* catalogue from Projekt '74, International Art Exhibition at the Kunsthalle, Cologne, Germany, July 6–September 8, 1974.)

# THE SURREALITY OF VIDEOTAPE

**Ingrid Weigand**

Defining the exact nature of the video image as an artist's medium has occupied many dreary pages in art magazines since video emerged from the coils of the first CV portapaks. Notwithstanding the fact that the "nature" of painting, photography, and various print media has never been precisely delineated, videophiles feel impelled to pin down the exact essence of video. In part, this is natural. Since their recent beginning, video makers have been bugged by insidious and invidious comparisons with film on the one hand, and broadcast TV on the other. The desire for definition is also a desire to keep up with the intellectualized aesthetic olympics set up by art critics for other artists' media. It is, after all, the current art-world premise that if you can't say a mouthful about it, it isn't art. In part, however, the desire for definition stems from the vain hope that words will help artists to avoid retracking in video the routes that have been traveled—for better or worse—by film and broadcast television.

Nevertheless, video, like other media, cannot be defined meaningfully. Verbal definitions for visual experiences are merely aesthetic games. Video as such can only be experienced, and it can only be fully experienced by the serious video viewer. Nor can definitions help the artist. The only thing that can define video and separate it from other media are the works themselves, and those come, like any works, after hours behind the camera and in front of the decks. For the video artist, it is the glow of the tube and the passage of the image that define the medium, just as the sheer application of paint to the surface *is* the medium for the painter; as the split second in the viewfinder or the image rising on the paper *is* the medium for the photographer.

It is probably true for most contemporary artists that the medium *is* the message. It is the physical excitement of thinking about and actually doing the work that constitutes the most meaningful phase of a project for the artist. The completed work has value primarily as a vehicle for the experience of making it, and as a preserved expression of that experience. This does not mean that the process is more valuable than the result, or that they can be separated in any way, as has been the fashionable viewpoint for some time. The work is the precious talisman of the process; it is the touchstone by which the excitement and intensity of the act of creation of the work can be, however simply, reexperienced. In our materialistic culture, works of art are the only things that remind us of that space in ourselves from which we can create, instead of merely manipulating the familiar. Therefore, for video artists, only work and the work are important.

We can, however, pass the time by making observations *about* video, especially about the way it is seen. One of the attempts to separate video from film has proposed the idea that video is not seen as a continuous image, but as one point at a time, or at the least as a line-by-line-created image. In effect, it is seen in the manner in which it is generated. Clearly, this is nonsense. We do not ever *see*, in any meaningful way, even the twenty-four instantaneous frames that the film medium flashes in front of us every second. Certainly we are not conscious of video's thirty frames, and not even subliminally aware of the 300 to 525 lines per frame, or the 15,750 lines per second, scanned before us on the video screen. In fact, the only time that we are consciously aware that either film or video does not constitute a continously moving image is when the camera has panned fast enough so that the left- and right-hand edges of the frame change significantly between frames, so that the discontinuity appears as a jerking of the image. Further, were video and film to use a comparable degree of resolution, the media would be virtually indistinguishable for virtually all purposes.

What we *do* see—and this is true for both video and film—is an image that is an audible and visible representation of what we perceive as our reality. As with that reality, we try constantly to rationalize this appearance before us into something familiar. "That is a leg," we say. "That is a person, a street, a spoon, a chair. It is a person near, or far away." Only when the images are totally abstract do we relax our watchfulness (although other judgments come into play that don't concern us here). By the same token, if the images are "abstractions"—deliberate distortions of "real" images—the game of identification goes on.

This process of identification, or rationalization, is central to our perception of both film and video (as it is to the everyday,

moment-to-moment process of perceiving the world). In both media we identify what appears to be going on in front of us within a frame of familiar references. These familiar references are almost entirely created by our experience, and especially by our cultural experience. In a film like *Easy Rider*, for example, almost every scene and gesture was clear to us. What was new for us was the way in which the scenes and gestures were arranged. By the same token, a film or tape made by a member of a tribe of the upper Amazon who had no contact with our culture might be almost entirely unintelligible to us—at least in the terms in which it was made—in both content and form. Such a film or tape would appear to us to be very abstract, unless it was accompanied by, for example, ethnographic narration that would rationalize what we are seeing in our own terms. (To carry the point all the way, think of a Martian film or tape, made by a Martian.) Accordingly, although each of these works is an experience in the perception of the way things are (or appear to be), *Easy Rider* is far more likely to be absorbed by us and to become part of the way we perceive and relate to the world in general, just as Claes Oldenburg's soft plastic sculpture changes the way we perceive a pile of tied-up, shiny plastic bags of garbage (to give a simple case).

This selection and ordering of the sequence of images of "reality" is the heart of both film and videotape making. In most films and in broadcast TV, images and image sequences are deliberately repetitive. The entire purpose is the reinforcement and even the celebration of existing experience, to create a sense of safety and reassurance that today is forever. The artist's films and videotapes are—for better or worse—everything else.

Videotape and film diverge radically in the way they present an image. The film image is larger than life, is viewed at a set-aside time in a darkened public place, and—most importantly—is very highly resolved. The video image is generally smaller than life, is viewed primarily in available light, privately and at odd times, and has relatively low resolution. While viewing size and situation are important, the question of resolution is central, because it relates intimately to the way our culture views its reality.

To many people, video is flawed film, flawed primarily because of the low resolution of its image. Our entire culture emphasizes a high degree of definition—intellectually, aurally, and visually. This relates to the fundamental materialistic concept that the more precisely something is consciously understood, heard, or seen, the more completely it is grasped. We view perception as a process of selective information-gathering. In effect, information is equated with knowledge. By contrast, experience is total, instantaneous, and unselective. What is present at a given moment is taken *in toto*, in a way that is simultaneously mental and physical, involving the whole person.

Accordingly, we do not take in our world at a glance, and we rarely view it without judging everything that passes in front of us. We are accustomed to viewing an image point by point, creating our internalized version by storing those details that "place" it within a familiar constellation. High resolution means more detail in an image, and therefore more opportunity to select details that make the image familiar. The entire emphasis on superrealism in film and the photorealist vogue in painting represents an increasingly desperate attempt to conform a vision of reality that yields increasingly meager results, not only aesthetically, but politically and personally.

Video, including broadcast television, by the manner in which it is now constituted, prevents this kind of selective viewing. It forces the viewer to take the image in relatively whole, unfiltered chunks. If one attempts to pick up a video image by assembling multiple visual cues from a screen, one finds oneself viewing small, undefined masses. As a result, we tend to see a sequence of video images as an image *flow*, rather than as a series of events with discrete details. A video or TV image must be perceivable by us with fewer details than a film image to be seen as familiar.

This is one of the basic reasons that broadcast television is so simplistic. Even if the television audience were more homogeneous and sophisticated, the nuances of a more sophisticated "content" would have to be developed for the viewer over *time*—through an image sequence—rather than being presented as harmonic or contrapuntal details of the primary image. In film, we see the shape of an ashtray on the table, the texture of a dress, the peculiar clarity of early evening light. In video, background details, such as those that indicate a given historical period or social class or personal taste, must be indicated directly through dialogue or through associative events.

On the other hand, the limitations of video's momentary image create pressures for its elaboration. In our culture, accustomed to an accelerating level of stimulation, the pressures have led to an increasing image pace. Since the consciousness is not engaged in the extraction of detail from the image, it becomes possible—and in TV, necessary—to speed up the action. The television medium created the demand for the fast cutting to which we are accustomed, and this demand has spilled back into the popular film.

For the video artist, these image characteristics create certain conditions he or she can choose to use. For example, the enlarged role of sound (including its absence) in video is also due to the minimality of image detail. We not only rely more on sound to enable us to familiarize ourselves with what is happening, we can also pay more attention to audio events, very much as the blind develop heightened hearing.

Video artists to date have virtually turned their backs on the use of fast image-pacing as a formal element in their works. Instead, they have developed the minimalized quality of the video image into an element of their aesthetic. Video works tend to be simple, and even banal, in content. Even video documentaries tend to use much slower pacing and simpler camerawork than their film and TV counterparts. While the element of virtual simplicity has been used in video-making as a screen for sheer lack of creative capacity, it has also resulted in some of the best video works.

The elements of overallness and simplicity also limit the degree to which the video image can mimic the familiar. To communicate the mundane, the television image must telegraph blatantly recognizable elements. As such, it is confined within the extremely limited and slow-to-change vocabulary of broadcast TV. The moment the image or image movement moves out of the established vocabulary, we no longer find it easy to grasp what we are looking at. At that moment, the image slides out of our grasp and becomes entirely surreal—that is, it eludes our conforming vision of reality.

The surrealists of the early part of this century defined the surreal in basically literary terms, reflecting its analytic origins and the intellectual bent of the times. The expression of their ideas led to the bizarre juxtapositions that constitute their formal structure, which is also characterized by a high degree of image definition.

In video, on the other hand, the video image enters the surreal everywhere that it steps outside the immediate vocabulary of the popular culture. The use of snippets of broadcast TV out of context, the extreme close-up, slow pacing, or the absence of any pace at all—in short, the use of forms that take the video image outside the current conventions of TV and the popular film immediately results in the creation of a surreal image. In effect, the images we see are at once familiar—they concern a recognizable person, place or thing in recognizable events—and yet unfamiliar—we cannot follow them precisely, as we are accustomed to with television images. This happens because once the video flow does not occur at its accustomed pace and in its usual direction, we are thrown back on the video image. As we have noted, this image is limited, minimal, and relatively undefined. In this situation the lack of image precision creates a potential for image ambiguity. As a result, the images shimmer at the edge of the familiar, eliciting momentary glimpses of unconsciously articulated possibilities. As the video viewer watches, the slowly changing image fails to take the expected turn and blurs its own relation to reality. The end result is a momentary perceptual movement beyond what we perceive as the real into the surreal.

Therefore, the new surrealism in terms of video is a latent potential of the image per se, rather than the self-conscious juxtaposition of image elements. Ultimately, of course, its power rests primarily in the creative power of the artist and secondarily in the ability of the viewer to "see." Nevertheless, this quality of the video image explains a great deal about the incomprehension and even hostility with which video works are viewed. The works press us to alter our preconceptions of the TV medium, a medium which does not usually require us to raise our guard as we normally do when we view what we know to be "art."

This view of artists' video is certainly not the only possible (or practical) one, but it is one that will have enormous repercussions in the near future of the medium. The surreal as a formal element in the creation of videotapes is only beginning to be explored.

# Distribution Sources of Artists' Videotapes

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vito Acconci** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Ant Farm** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Eleanor Antin** | Anna Canepa Video Distribution, Inc., 15 East 57th Street, New York, New York 10022. |
| **John Arvanites** | 183 East Broadway, New York, New York 10002. |
| **Mary Ashley** | 1014 Howard, San Francisco, California 94103. |
| **John Baldessari** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Paula Barr** | 30 Waterside Plaza, Suite 29B, New York, New York 10010. |
| **Stephen Beck** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Lynda Benglis** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **James Byrne** | 649 N.E. Spring, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55413. |
| **Eric Cameron** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Peter Campus** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012; Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **David Cort** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Douglas Davis** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Dimitri Devyatkin** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Tom DeWitt** | Bedell Road, Poughkeepsie, New York 12603. |
| **Juan Downey** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Ed Emshwiller** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Bill Etra** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Louise Etra** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **John Flemming** | c/o Strongbow Productions, 3131 Maple, Dallas, Texas 75201. |
| **Terry Fox** | Anna Canepa Video Distribution, Inc., 15 East 57th Street, New York, New York 10022; Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |

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| **Charles Frazier** | 5280 The Toledo, Long Beach, California 90803. |
| **Hermine Freed** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Dieter Froese** | 133 Chrystie Street, New York, New York 10002. |
| **Davidson Gigliotti** | 537 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Frank Gillette** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012.<br>Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Joel Glassman** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Dan Graham** | Box 380, Knickerbocker Station, New York, New York 10002. |
| **Ernest Gusella** | 118 Forsyth Street, 4th Floor, New York, New York 10002. |
| **Julia Heyward** | 179 Duane Street, New York, New York 10013. |
| **Ralph Hocking** | Experimental TV Center, 164 Court Street, Binghamton, New York 13901. |
| **Nancy Holt** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Rebecca Horn** | 1 Berlin 30, Eisenacher Strasse 118, Germany. |
| **Joan Jonas** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Daile Kaplan** | P.O. Box 341, Canal Street Station, New York, New York 10013. |
| **Joanne Kelly** | Video Free America, 442 Shotwell, San Francisco, California 94110. |
| **Beryl Korot** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012; Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Paul Kos** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Jack Krueger** | 30 Waterside Plaza, Suite 29B, New York, New York 10010. |
| **Shigeko Kubota** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Les Levine** | Anna Canepa Video Distribution, Inc., 15 East 57th Street, New York, New York 10022; Museum of Mott Art, 181 Mott Street, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Alvin Lucier** | Art/Tapes/22, 22 Via Ricasoli, Florence, Italy. |
| **Mary Lucier** | 223 West 20th Street, Apt. 4A, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Andy Mann** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012.<br>Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Susan Milano** | c/o Technivision, 155 East 76th Stret, New York, New York 10021. |
| **Antonio Muntadas** | 228 West Broadway, New York, New York 10013. |

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|---|---|
| **Dennis Oppenheim** | Anna Canepa Video Distribution, Inc., 15 East 57th Street, New York, New York 10022. |
| **Nam June Paik** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Charlemagne Palestine** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Tony Ramos** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Steve Reich** | 16 Warren Street, New York, New York 10007. |
| **Bill Ritchie** | 360 Halladay, Seattle, Washington 98119. |
| **Lynda Rodolitz** | 840 Broadway, 7th Floor, New York, New York 10003. |
| **Ira Schneider** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Ilene Segalove** | 4404 Campbell Drive, Los Angeles, California 90066. |
| **Richard Serra** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Willoughby Sharp** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Michael Snow** | 137 Summerhill Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4T 1B1, Canada. |
| **Nina Sobel** | 5 Dudley Avenue, Venice, California 90291. |
| **Keith Sonnier** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **John Sturgeon** | 11 Dudley Avenue, Venice, California 90291. |
| **Skip Sweeney** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Anne Tardos** | 110 Mercer Street, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Ben Tatti** | 214 East 39th Street, New York, New York 10016. |
| **Paul Tschinkel** | 40 East 10th Street, New York, New York 10003. |
| **Woody Vasulka** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Bill Viola** | Art/Tapes/22, 22 Via Ricasoli, Florence, Italy; Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |
| **Bill Wegman** | Castelli-Sonnabend, Tapes and Films, Inc., 420 West Broadway, New York, New York 10012. |
| **Bob Wiegand** | 16 Greene Street, New York, New York 10013. |
| **Ingrid Wiegand** | 16 Greene Street, New York, New York 10013. |
| **Walter Wright** | c/o Experimental TV Center, 164 Court Street, Binghamton, New York 13901. |
| **Jud Yalkut** | Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 84 Fifth Avenue, Room 403, New York, New York 10011. |

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Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot, pioneers in the field, have put together **Video Art** to demonstrate to a wide range of readers the scope and possibilities of this exciting new art form.

Seventy-three artists have contributed two-page spreads expressing, evoking, or explaining some aspect of their work, many with photographs from their tapes; twenty-two critics and video participants have written articles reviewing some of the major tapes, facilities, and installations, discussing video's history, and speculating on its role as an instrument of change — in society as a whole as well as in the art world.

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Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot have had their videotapes and installations exhibited at museums, galleries, theaters, universities, and art schools in the United States and elsewhere. The authors cofounded the magazine **Radical Software**.

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