

HILL

<< **REWIND:**

**VIDEO ART
AND
ALTERNATIVE MEDIA
IN THE
UNITED STATES
1968-1980**

***Draft
manuscript***

**Video
Data
Bank**

THE SCHOOL • THE ART
INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO
112 SOUTH MICHIGAN AVENUE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
60603 U S A
PHONE 312.345.3550
FAX 312.541.8073

REWIND:

Video Art and Alternative Media in the United States

Chris Hill, Editor
Kate Horsfield and Maria Troy, Collaborating Editors
Deirdre Boyle, Consulting Editor

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SURVEYING THE FIRST DECADE: VIDEO ART AND ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN THE U.S. (1968-80)

Executive Producer: Kate Horsfield
Survey Curator: Chris Hill
Project Coordinator: Maria Troy
Rewind Editor: Chris Hill
Rewind Consulting Editor: Deirdre Boyle
Rewind Collaborating Editors: Kate Horsfield, Maria Troy

Surveying the First Decade: Video Art and Alternative Media in the U.S. (1968-80) is designed to enrich the resources currently available to media audiences and students of media, communications, art history, American studies, gender studies, and others who would examine this period (1968-80) of radical cultural and social experimentation. This 17-hour (8 programs, VHS) remastered tape collection features early works recognized as landmarks in video art, video and performance, artists' exploration of evolving electronic tools, independent journalism, and documentations of the late 1960s counter-cultural scenes and community valorized events. Some of these tapes are remarkable cultural artifacts, and yet have not been screened since the early 1970s.

The radical and widespread questioning of institutions and human potential in the late 1960s in combination with the appearance of the user-friendly video production unit, the portapak (commercially available in 1968), inspired early video artists to participate in the shift of late modernist art strategies toward valorizing perceptual process over commodified art product, and galvanized media makers to educate and promote television consumers as video producers in their enthusiastic efforts to democratize telecommunications.

While remaining somewhat marginal to the more widely known mainstream commercial media, a diverse videotape "literature" and an alternative and decentralized cultural infrastructure was envisioned and evolved out of the late 1960s. Supported by public arts and cable access funding since the early 1970s, video art, independent video journalism, and community access projects survive today along with the burgeoning Internet, intertextual "new media" activity and independent film production. The individual and institutional experiments, accomplishments, and disappointments of the first decade of electronic image production are a critical platform from which to address the media configurations of the present.

These various video histories, those included in this project and others yet to be rediscovered and restored, are additionally timely in view of the advent of international media hardware and software expansion, the democratic use of which can only be realized with considerable efforts toward universal media literacy and access to these tools. A comprehensive contemporary media education would include the history of independent video, its aspirations for reconfiguring relationships between production and reception, its audiences, its discourses, as well as consumers' relationships with the spectacle of corporate television in the U.S., and on a much broader scale than has been established to date.

While it has been possible in the course of researching this project to identify remarkable work from 1968-80 through existing catalogues, program notes, and lists from festival screenings, and to access tapes through the collections of some distributors, museums, media art center, libraries, public access facilities, universities, and collections of individual artists, the fact remains that much of the videotape recorded during this period is currently in dire need of preservation. The media arts field and future students need to address the great body of work remaining on shelves which has yet to reveal the insights of its many unsung makers and early communications collaborations.

The VHS video collection **Surveying the First Decade: Video Art and Alternative Media in the U.S. (1968-80)** will be accompanied by a companion book, *Rewind* (anticipated publication late 1990). This 400+ page resource will include texts published between 1962 and 1983 by artists and critics, many of them now out-of-print, together with contemporary interpretive material, including curatorial essay, educators' guide, descriptive material on the tapes and extensive bibliographic resources. *Rewind* will serve to contextualize the cultural and social agendas of these tapes with the aesthetic and communications-oriented discourses and "alternative" production and exhibition environments of the period. The manifestos, reviews, commentary, ephemeral publicity and interpretive materials evolving out of these collaborative associations of artists and producers who participated as production support, audiences, and critics for each others' work can be referenced and researched along with celebrated tapes in constructing multiple interpretive structures for the period. *Rewind* will provide tools for accessing the comprehensive tape survey as well as a template for further research into both the actively distributed video collections and the extensive but largely dormant video archives scattered around the country.

The tape survey **Surveying the First Decade** together with the publication *Rewind* provide comprehensive primary source material which will support further scholarship into the period's assertive initiation of media art and independent documentary production, electronic moving image analysis, and decentralized access to media tools.

For further information or to order contact:
Video Data Bank
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
112 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60603, USA
(312) 345-3550 (tel)
(312) 541-8072/3 (fax)

VDB HISTORY PROJECT/ CHRIS HILL, CURATOR/ 4/95--DRAFT!
(Each program on 2-hour VHS cassette)

1. EXPLORATIONS OF PRESENCE, RECORDING, AUDIENCE, PERFORMANCE

DAN GRAHAM. Performance/Audience/Mirror (23)
WILLIAM WEGMAN. Selections (10)
VITO ACCONCI. Undertone (15/30)
JOAN JONAS. Vertical Roll (20)
SHIGEKO KUBOTA. My Father (15)
JOHN BALDESSARI. Baldessari Sings Lewitt (15)
ROBERT MORRIS & LYNDA BENGLIS. Exchange (32)

Total minutes 115

2. INVESTIGATIONS OF SPACE, SOUND & LIGHT

BRUCE NAUMAN. Wall Floor Positions (10/60)
BRUCE NAUMAN. Stamping in the Studio (5/60)
PETER CAMPUS. Double Vision (15)
GARY HILL. Around and About (10)
RICHARD SERRA & NANCY HOLT. Boomerang (10)
CHARLEMAGNE PALESTINE. Island Song (10)
TONY CONRAD. Cycles of 3's and 7's (3)
PAUL & MARLENE KOS. Lightning (2)
BILL VIOLA. Sweet Light (9)
TERRY FOX. Children's Tapes (30)

Total minutes 99

3. ANTICIPATING NARRATIVE

VITO ACCONCI. The Red Tapes, part 2 (58)
RICHARD FOREMAN. Out of the Body Travel (25/42)
ARTHUR GINSBURG & VIDEO FREE AMERICA. ...Carel & Ferd (30/60)

Total minutes 113

4. GENDERED CONFRONTATIONS

HERMINE FRE ~~...~~ Art Herstory (15/22)
LYNDA BENGLIS. Female Sensibility (14)
CARA DEVITO. Always Love Your Man (19)
ILENE SEGALOVE. The Mom Tapes (7) * minutes subtracted
MARTHA ROSLER. Vital Statistics... (38)
LINDA MONTANO. Primal Scenes (11)
NANCY ANGELO & CANDACE COMPTON. Nun & Deviant (13)

Total minutes 117

5. PERFORMANCE OF VIDEO IMAGING TOOLS

WOODY & STEINA VASULKA. Calligrams (4)
SKIP SWEENEY. Dance Feedback (5)
STEPHEN BECK. Video Weavings (4/28)
DAN SANDIN. 5 Minute Romp Through the IP (5)
DAN SANDIN. Triangle in Front of Circle in Front of Square (5)
ERNIE GUSELLA. Video Taping (5)
ERNIE GUSELLA. Exquisite Corpse (5)
ERIC SIEGEL. Einsteine (6)
PHIL MORTON. General Motors (10/60)
NAM JUNE PAIK. Global Groove (15/30)
ED EMSHWILLER. Sunstone (3)
RALPH HOCKING. Oval Series--Yellow Sin Wave (5/?)
BARBARA BUCKNER. Pictures of the Lost (10/23)
PEER BODE. Video Locomotion (4/?)
PEER Bode. Music on Triggering Surfaces (4/?)
WOODY VASULKA (VASULKAS). C-Trend (7/?)
STEINA (VASULKAS). Switch!Monitor!Drift! (12)

Total minutes 109

Note to Steina: These times (in parentheses) may be adjusted. This program can be 116 minutes so some of the tapes that are now excerpted may be able to fit in as whole works.

6. COMMUNICATIONS PROJECTS

DAVID CORT (& VIDEOFREEEX). Mayday Reeltime (10/60)
PEOPLE'S VIDEO THEATER. 1st Women's Liberation March NYC, 1st Gay Liberation March NYC, AIM Occupies Plymouth Rock, Protest occupation of Harlem church by Young Lords (28)
VASULKAS. Participation (6/30)
ACTV. First transmission with George Stoney (4)
BROADSIDE TV. Jonesboro Storytelling--Windham's ghost stories (6)
PORTABLE CHANNEL (Rochester). Attica Interviews (10)
ANONYMOUS NYC CABLE PRODUCERS (NYC/CT).Queen Mother Moore at Greenhaven Prison (17)
JUAN DOWNEY. Laughing Alligator. (27)

Total minutes 118

7. CRITIQUES OF ART & MEDIA AS COMMODITY &/OR SPECTACLE

ANT FARM & T.R.UTHCO. Eternal Frame (24)
RICHARD SERRA. TV Delivers People (6)
UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY VIDEO (Minnesota). The Business of
Television News (15/?)
PAUL RYAN & RAINDANCE. Proto Media Primer (14)
TONY RAMOS. About Media (17/26)
OPTIC NERVE. 50 Wonderful Years (28)
DARA BIRNBAUM. Wonder Woman (7)

Total minutes 113

Possible addition:

LES LEVINE. Bum

8. INDEPENDENTS ADDRESS TV AUDIENCES

DCTV. Healthcare--Your Money or Your Life (58)
PETER BULL & ALEX GIBNEY. The Ruling Classroom (58)

Total minutes 116

Program 5

Performance of Video Imaging Tools

Introduction

I started with light, light and shadow, a typical filmic agenda; I started working with stroboscopic lights. Then I encountered video, whose principles essentially negate film. I gave up film instantly. Video was undefined, free territory, no competition, a very free medium. The community was naive, young, strong, cooperative, a welcoming tribe. There was instantly a movement mediated by two influences. One, the portapak made an international movement possible, and two, the generation of images through alternative means--the camera no longer carried the codes.—Woody Vasulka (Hill, 1995)

Distribution Religion: The image processor may be copied by individuals and not-for-profit institutions without charge. For-profit institutions will have to negotiate for permission to copy. I think culture has to learn to use high-tek [sic] machines for personal, aesthetic, religious, intuitive, comprehensive, exploratory growth. The development of machines like the Image Processor is part of this evolution. I am paid by the state, at least in part, to do and disseminate [sic] this information; so I do.—Dan Sandin (Furlong, 1983)

Artists who explored video as an electronic "material" were interested in the process of translating energy and time into waveforms, frequencies, voltages, and finally into video and audio images. Some artists stated their intentions to develop a new formal "vocabulary" for this electronic medium, collaborating with independent engineers to develop new analog and, eventually, digital imaging tools. Tapes were often documents of "dialogues with tools" (Vasulkas) or real-time performances of tools where a video signal would be routed through an interface of modifiable electronic instruments.

An elementary vocabulary for what second generation video artists in the '80s came to regard as video's "special effects" was developed in the late '60s and early '70s by artists inspired by, among other phenomena, the production of light shows and the possible adaptation of audio synthesizer design to video. Eventually, the video and electronics industry marketed standardized instruments for producing a range of video effects. The first generation of video artists, however, were introduced to the image-making potential and formal vocabulary of the medium through hand-built instruments like Bill Hearn's Vidium (1969), the Paik/Abe Synthesizer and Scan Modulator (1970), Eric Siegel's Electronic Video Synthesizer (1970), Dan Sandin's Image Processor (1972), George Brown's Video Sequencer and Multikeyer (1973), the Rutt/Etra Scan Processor (1973), and Stephen Beck's Direct Video Synthesizer (1974). Working outside the television industry during most of the '70s, these artists and independent engineers established opportunities for others to work directly with their custom-built tools through access programs in media art centers, artist-run residency projects, university media programs, and experimental labs at public television stations.

"Video synthesizer" refers to machines designed to produce a video image without using a camera as well as instruments that alter or "process" the camera image. In the production of a video image, the video signal can be generated by the electron scan of a video camera, but it also can be produced by a wave form generator, or an audio signal. Video signal mixing, coloring, and luminance and chroma keying are a few of the fundamental video effects that can be produced using basic image processing tools. The self-generating, pulsing vortex of video feedback, achieved by pointing a video camera at the monitor to which it is cabled, was the simplest of effects yet it fascinated many early producers.

Program 5—Performance of Video-Imaging Tools

Artists' efforts to produce new kinds of synthetic or processed images led them to use the range of video and audio instruments available. The tapes included in this program foreground such aesthetic issues as the relationship between electronic sound and image synthesis (Bode) and the possibility of radically reconceptualizing the unit of the frame (Vasulka), a structural element common to both video and film but produced by entirely different electronic and chemical processes. These works sample a range of sensibilities—psychedelic play (Gusella, Emshwiller), formal abstraction (Hocking), spirituality (Buckner), rock music (Sweeney), bravado (Morton)—and testify to the formal, visual, and musical ambitions of the artists.

Tape List

Calligrams Woody and Steina Vasulka	1970	4:00
Illuminatin' Sweeney Skip Sweeney	1975	29:00 ex. 5:00
Video Weavings Stephen Beck	1976	28:00 ex. 4:00
5 Minute Romp Through the IP Dan Sandin	1973	6:30
Triangle in Front of Square in Front of Circle in Front of Triangle Dan Sandin	1973	2:00
Video-Taping Ernest Gusella	1974	3:00 silent
Exquisite Corpse Ernest Gusella	1978	8:00 silent
Einsteine Eric Siegel	1968	5:00
General Motors Phil Morton	1976	60:00 ex. 10:00
Merce by Merce by Paik Nam June Paik	1978	28:00
Crossings and Meetings Ed Emshwiller	1974	27:33 ex. 4:00
Complex Wave Forms Ralph Hocking	1977	5:00 ex. 4:00
Pictures of the Lost Barbara Buckner	1978	23:00 ex. 8:00 silent
Video Locomotion Peer Bode	1978	5:00 silent
Music on Triggering Surfaces Peer Bode	1978	3:00
C-Trend Woody Vasulka	1974	9:00 ex. 7:00
Switch! Monitor! Drift! Steina	1976	4:00

Tape Descriptions

Calligrams

Woody and Steina Vasulka 1970 ex 4:00

Calligrams is one of the Vasulkas' earliest experiments with altering the analog video image. An image is rescanned from the monitor "to capture and preserve the violated state of the standard television signal." The "violations" include deliberately re-adjusting the horizontal hold of the monitor, and then slowly advancing the reel-to-reel tape manually. The repetition of the horizontally drifting video image not only functions as visual rhythm, but is key to the conceptualization of the video image as unrestricted by the concrete frame, as in film. The Vasulkas have described their work in the '70s as "didactic," exemplified in this tape by Steina's voiceover. Their commitment to foregrounding a new electronic image vocabulary and working with other artist/engineers to develop new video instrumentation led to work that reveals the process of its making.



Our works are forms of demos, artifacts. They were never intended to be compositions... We're both from socialist countries. The transmission of knowledge is important. This was the mission of our times—not to compete with painting. Of course this [concern with communication] is utopian. —Woody Vasulka (Hill, 1995)

Collection of the artists.

Illuminatin' Sweeney

Skip Sweeney 1975 28:38 ex. 5:00

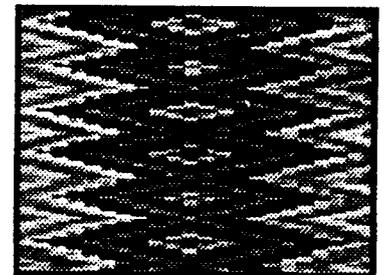
Skip Sweeney was an early and proficient experimenter with video feedback. A feedback loop is produced by pointing a camera at the monitor to which it is cabled. Infinite patterns and variations of feedback can be derived from manipulating the relative positions of camera and monitor, adjusting the monitor controls, and interfacing the signal with other video processing tools. The image constantly spins out of control, becoming a swirling vortex. Sweeney and others were intrigued with feedback's ability to generate pulsing images like a living organism. He claimed he would "just as soon be a video rock-and-roll musician" and produce feedback as a performance instrument. (Anthology Film Archives, 1981) Sweeney produced many variations of feedback and processed imagery, and is especially noted for his works incorporating dance and movement. *Illuminatin' Sweeney* was produced for WNET, New York's "Video and Television Review." This sampling of Sweeney's work shows feedback processed through a combination of a Moog audio synthesizer and the Vidium colorizing synthesizer invented by Bill Hearn in 1969. Recorded off the monitor with a black and white camera, the images were later colorized. Sweeney produced this feedback during a "video jam session" at Video Free America.

Distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix.

Video Weavings

Stephen Beck 1976 28:00 ex 4:00

Inspired by the analogy between weaving (vertical warp threads traversed by horizontal weft threads) and the construction of the television image (vertical and horizontal scans of an electron gun), Stephen Beck built the Video Weaver in 1974, and produced *Video Weavings* in 1976. The patterns in this tape are based on sequences of colors in dynamic mathematical progressions, inspired by non-representational Islamic art. Beck was also intrigued with the problem of synthesizing aspects of human perception. Arriving at video through music, Beck had moved from jazz to electronic music and then to electronic instrument building. For many of the early video tool designers, audio synthesizers served as important models. Beck developed his first video instrument, the Direct Video Synthesizer, in 1970 during his residency with the National Center for Experiments in Television (NCET) in San Francisco.



(Video Weavings, continued)

Television has a history based on the objective, photographic image. Experimental television is for me a process of exploring and portraying images of an opposite polarity.—Stephen Beck (Schneider and Korot, 1976)

I was also doing a lot of work at this time in inner visual phenomena, partially with things like phosphenes...The synthesizer was sort of an outgrowth...I began to realize that you could break an image from the visual field down into discrete elements, create those elements in a synthesizer, then put those elements back together to make any image. — Stephen Beck (1977)

Distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix

5 Minute Romp Through the IP

Dan Sandin 1973 5:00

In 1973, Dan Sandin designed and built a comprehensive video instrument for artists, the Image Processor (IP), a modular, patch programmable, analog computer optimized for the manipulation of gray level information of multiple video inputs. Sandin decided that the best distribution strategy for his instrument "was to give away the plans for the IP and encourage artists to build their own copies. This gave rise to a community of artists with their own advanced video production capabilities and many shared goals and experiences." (Furlong, 1983). In this segment, Sandin demonstrates the routing of the camera signal through several basic modules of the IP, producing a "primitive"

vocabulary of effects specific to video. This tape was produced at the University of Illinois Chicago. Collection of the artist.



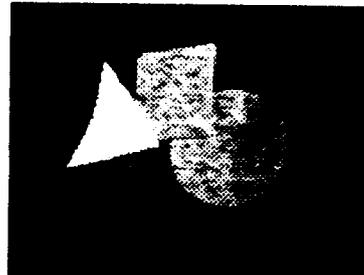
Triangle in Front of Square in Front of Circle

Dan Sandin [1973] 3:00

In this elegant demonstration, Sandin explains the mistake of using common language concepts and spatial relations to describe what actually can happen on the video screen. The images generated in the tape act according to specific parameters set by the artist. Sandin has stated "The analog Image Processor was programmed to implement the logic equations: if triangle and square show triangle, if square and circle show square, if triangle and circle show circle." —Dan Sandin (letter to author, 1995) In this tape, Sandin is in effect arguing for a distinct video vocabulary that replaces the classical concept of perspective. This tape was produced at the University of Illinois Chicago.

The moral of the story is that the language you use to describe a video event can limit what you think is possible from a video event" —Dan Sandin (video letter to Woody and Steina Vasulka, 1974).

Collection of the artist.



Video-Taping

Ernie Gusella 1974 5:00

Gusella's title creates a pun on the term video "tape" by using a split screen in which one half is the electronic negative of the other. Gusella set up a glass sheet and suspended it from light poles. The glass was covered with black or white tape. As he slowly removes the obscuring tape from one half of the screen, his ghostly negative image emerges, further confusing the viewer. Electronically constructed using a VideoLab—a voltage controllable, multi-channel switcher, keyer, and colorizer built

by Bill Hearn—the tape relies on the use of a luminance keyer to "cut out" specific brightness levels (determined by voltage) from one video signal and replace them with a video signal from a second camera. Keying is a video effect seen commonly on television weather reports, in which the images of the map displayed behind the announcer are electronically matted into the image.



The basis of keying is a comparison within the circuitry of the keyer, between voltages, or luminances. More simply, the user of the keyer decides upon a threshold level of brightness, and that any portion of an image-signal of a brightness above or below that threshold will be replaced by a second image/input. The effect is often one of revealing the second image as though it were behind the first; in actuality, we are seeing a special type of composite of two video signals. (Minkowsky, 1978)

Collection of the artist.

Exquisite Corpse

Ernie Gusella 1978 5:00

The "exquisite corpse" named in the title of this piece refers to a favorite game of the Surrealists, played by passing a folded sheet of paper among a group; each person draws one section of a body on the folded segment without looking at the other sides.

What was done with pen and paper, Gusella accomplishes electronically using the VideoLab. Utilizing quick, voltage-controlled live switching between two cameras, Gusella approximates composite images. For example, his torso appears to combine with a close-up of his face. The perceptual effect is mesmerizing and disorienting.

Exquisite Corpse is a piece about the inability of the human eye and mind to perceive the differences between fast switching images because of the inherent lag of our physical processing mechanisms, which results in persistence of vision. —Ernest Gusella (Letter to author 1995)

Collection of the artist.



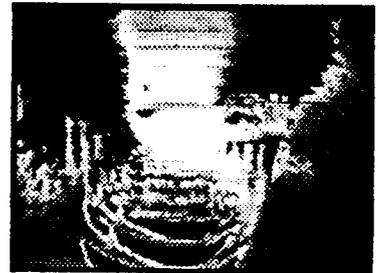
Einsteine

Eric Siegel 1968 6:00

Eric Siegel, a child prodigy in electronics, built his first TV set out of scrap parts at the age of 14. He developed his first video synthesizer, the Processing Chrominance Synthesizer in 1968-69; it was used to generate the installation *Psychedelevision in Color* for the seminal "TV as a Creative Medium" exhibition held at the Howard Wise Gallery in 1969. Because the early version of the machine was unable to record the images it generated, *Einsteine* was re-created by Siegel after the exhibition. The tape uses colorized video feedback to generate its psychedelic effects, as a picture of Albert Einstein dissolves into a shimmering play of light. Besides the reflection of a countercultural sensibility, the tape romanticizes science through its coupling of Albert Einstein's image with the heraldic strains of Rimsky-Korsakov.

I see television as bringing psychology into the cybernetic twenty-first century. I see television as a psychic healing medium creating mass cosmic consciousness, awakening higher levels of the mind, bringing awareness of the soul. —Eric Siegel (Youngblood, 1970)

Distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix



General Motors

Phil Morton 1976 60:00 ex 10:00

A response to the inability his local General Motors dealer to fix Morton's 1974 Chevy van to his satisfaction, this tape blends experimental image-processing techniques with documentation of the faulty vehicle. Morton states that he is upset primarily because General Motors "can't get their tech together," and as a video producer involved with using and maintaining high-tech equipment, this strikes Morton as especially bothersome. The

tape reads like a consumer's manifesto, and addresses the popular notion that video could be used to reconfigure power relations, for example, between manufacturers and consumers. Morton delivers his psychedelically-inflected performance with humor and the conviction of an embattled consumer. The tape was produced at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Collection of the artist.



Merce by Merce by Paik

Nam June Paik 1978 28:00 ex 10:00

Merce by Merce by Paik is a two-part tribute to choreographer Merce Cunningham and artist Marcel Duchamp. The first section, *Blue Studio: Five Segments*, is an innovative work of video-dance produced by Merce Cunningham and videomaker Charles Atlas. The dance was choreographed by Cunningham specifically for the two-dimensional video monitor screen. Atlas uses a variety of video imaging effects, including chroma key to electronically transport Cunningham's studio performance into a series of outdoor landscapes. (Chroma key is also known as



"blue box," where a performer or event is videotaped against a blue set; anything with the color blue is then "subtracted" electronically from the image and replaced with another video signal.) The audio track includes the voices of John Cage and Jasper Johns. The second part, produced by Paik and Shigeko Kubota, further queries the relationship between everyday gestures and formal notions of dance. Snapshots of the New York art world, a rare interview with Marcel Duchamp by Russell Connor, and a meeting between Jasper Johns and Leo Castelli are re-edited by Paik. The seemingly random mixing of material produced by artists—such as Bill Gwin, Nancy Graves, Jean Marie Drot, Steina and Woody Vasulka, and Erik Martin—with commercial television programming can be traced to Paik's training in music and the influence of John Cage's ideas about chance in artmaking. The montage includes video images produced by colorizers, mixers, chroma-key, and a Rutt-Etra Scan Processor. This tape was produced at the TV Lab at WNET, New York.

Indeterminism and variability are underdeveloped parameters in the optical arts, though they have been the central problem in music for the last two decades. —Nam June Paik (*Fluxus newspaper*, June 1964)

I think I understand time better than the video artists who came from painting-sculpture. Music is the manipulation of time. All music forms have different structures and buildup. As painters understand abstract *space*, I understand abstract *time*. — Nam June Paik (Paik and Schimmel, 1974)

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Crossings and Meetings

Ed Emshwiller, Produced at the TV Lab at WNET/Thirteen

1974 27:33 ex. 3:00

Crossings and Meetings explores the image and sound of a walking man, expanding a simple image into increasingly complex permutations and arriving at what Emshwiller calls a "visual fugue" in time and space. Emshwiller uses various techniques to develop his images: fast-forward, rewind, multiple keying, audio modulations, etc. With its rhythmic repetition of images and concatenation of sound, this tape represents the fusion of audio, video, and dance explored by many artists during this period. According to Emshwiller, this tape was an attempt to use video techniques in an essentially musical structure. Produced at the TV Lab at WNET, New York.

The aspects of video that appeal to me most at this time are the immediacy of seeing what you have just done and the great flexibility one has in mixing, keying, and transforming images...

Like opera, video can incorporate many art forms: film, live action, music, dance, literature. — Ed Emshwiller (Feldman, January 1975)

Distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix.

Complex Wave Forms

Ralph Hocking 1977 5:00 ex. 4:00

Produced without camera input, this intense electronic landscape transports the viewer into a world that is an abstract study in machine-generated imagery. Produced at the Experimental Television Center.

Complex Wave Forms is one in a series of short tapes which explored oscillators. In the series oscillators had multiple uses—to create images and sounds directly and to control voltages, which interfaced with additional image processing instrumentation. Signals were generated, mixed and controlled in amplitude and frequency by using a machine that was designed and

Program 5—Performance of Video-Imaging Tools

built by David Jones and Richard Brewster. The audio and video were controlled by the same voltages, resulting in an interconnection between the two. The video output was fed into a Paik/Abe colorizer and recorded, along with the stereo audio signal in real time.

—Ralph Hocking (letter to author, 1995)

Collection of the artist.

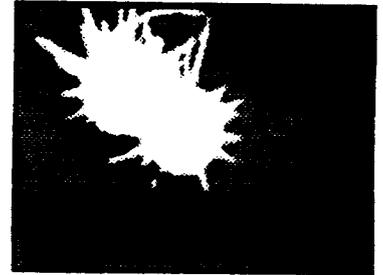
Pictures of the Lost

Barbara Buckner 1978 23:00 ex. 8:00

Composed in 22 movements that introduce a series of silent, haunting, other-worldly landscapes, *Pictures of the Lost* hovers between figuration and abstraction, and reveals Buckner's sustained interest in spirituality. Produced at the Experimental Television Center.

I began with a desire to create a kind of electronic poetics, where the video image expressed a metaphoric identity emerging from its organic structure, yet had a universal quality drawing on the traditions of poetry, painting, and music. There were always two central concerns—exploring the medium with the tools that were available, and expressing inner states of beingness and becoming... —Barbara Buckner (Sturken, 1985)

Distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix.



Video Locomotion (man performing forward hand leap)

Peer Bode 1978 5:00

In this homage to photographer Edward Muybridge, a photo grid of a walking man is resituated in video space. Movement is created by detuning the video synchronization (time base) signal, producing horizontal and vertical drifts that expose the electronic space between the video frames, which is visually identifiable as black horizontal and vertical bars. A second image is luminance-keyed into this area, giving the appearance of two discrete image layers. These image planes are

manipulated to apparently "drift" at different speeds in different directions. Borrowing images from Muybridge's serial photographic studies in the perception of motion, Bode produces a crude persistence of vision system, creating his own type of "para-cinematic shutter." Produced at the Experimental Television Center.

How do you make access to this capital-intensive equipment...make sense in terms of what it really takes for people to make art with these tools, to think through something and to spend time really exploring? ...The learning aspect was part of the whole process. This need to learn how these tools worked and what new configurations might be that would deliver what you might want, since possibilities for these electronic tools were largely unknown. The model of industry was not the model one wanted to imitate because it was structured to produce certain genres of work... —Peer Bode (Interview with Chris Hill, 1995)

Collection of the artist



Music on Triggering Surfaces

Peer Bode 1978 3:00

In *Music on Triggering Surfaces*, Bode constructs an interface between audio and video systems. The luminance information (voltage) from the visual images traversed by the black dot is routed to an oscillator to produce the audio signal, which varies according to the changing luminance. The video image itself then triggers the audio. The shifting grey-scale of the image becomes a two-dimensional sound map or audio score. This tape was produced at the Experimental Television Center.

The image is a field of information, a score to control sound. —Peer Bode (Letter to author, 1995)

Collection of the artist.



C-Trend

Woody Vasulka

1974

ex. 3:00

In *C-Trend*, one of Woody Vasulka's "dialogues with tools," the video raster, or monitor screen, is controlled by the Rutt-Etra Scan Processor, a scan deflection tool designed by Steve Rutt and Bill Etra in 1973. The camera image being modified is urban traffic, whose synchronous sounds are clearly recognizable on the audio track. Two basic modifications of the electronic image are evident: each horizontal line scanned by the electron beam is translated into a live graphic display of voltage, radically reconfiguring the luminance information and the video image, and functioning as a wave form monitor. The shape of the video frame itself, the raster, is also skewed. The deflection coils, which electromagnetically control the electron gun and thus the raster, receive mathematically recoded analog information and reconfigure the normally rectilinear video frame. The "empty spaces" between the altered frames, which appear to drift or roll throughout *C-Trend*, are the horizontal and vertical blanking intervals between electronic frames.



The work with the scan processor indicates a whole different trend in my understanding of the electronic image...Emphasis has shifted towards a recognition of a time/energy object and its programmable building element—the waveform...We would...make a tool and dialogue with it...We belong to the family of people who would find images like found objects. But it is more complex because we sometimes design the tools, and so do conceptual work as well. —Woody Vasulka (Minkowsky and Jenkins, 1979).

Collection of the artist

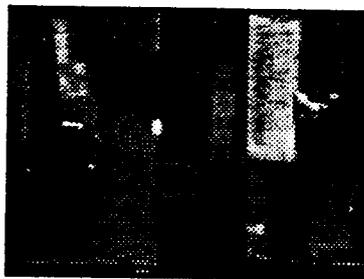
Switch! Monitor! Drift!

Steina

1976

4:00

Switch! Monitor! Drift! is one of a series of "machine visions" constructed by Steina in the '70s. In this documentation of a studio landscape, two cameras' signals are combined through a luminance keyer. One camera is mounted on a turntable; the second camera is pointed at the first. The image from the stationary camera is time-base adjusted so that it appears to drift horizontally across the monitor, exposing the horizontal framing interval, a black (low voltage) area that is normally hidden from view. The signal of the revolving camera is keyed into this area. The revolving second camera continuously pans the studio, occasionally revealing Steina walking around and flipping a directional switch at the turntable. As the tape progresses the luminance key is adjusted to include a broader tonal range through which the signal from the revolving camera is increasingly visible.



It was a challenge to me to create a space that would not deal with the idiosyncrasy of human vision. — Steina (Haller, 1983)

Another characteristic of our work has been a consistent traveling of the frame, horizontal traveling...The television image, rather than a series of fixed celluloid images, is a continuously evolving and decaying sequence of lines being tracked by an electron gun on a phosphor coated television screen. The movements of this electron gun are "normally" regulated by horizontal and vertical control signals, which insure a stable, non-travelling image. —Steina (Minkowsky and Jenkins, 1979)

Collection of the artist

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