

Whitney Museum of American Art 18

The New American Filmmakers Series

EXHIBITIONS OF INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO

New American Video Art: A Historical Survey, 1967–1980

June 13–July 1, 1984

Gallery Talk by John G. Hanhardt
Thursday, June 21, at 1:00.

Program 1

Videotape Study No. 3, 1967–69. Jud Yalkut and Nam June Paik. 5 minutes.
The Medium Is the Medium, 1969. WGBH, Boston. 30 minutes.
TV as a Creative Medium, 1969. Ira Schneider. 13 minutes.

Program 2

Lip Sync, 1969. Bruce Nauman. 60 minutes.

Program 3

Vertical Roll, 1972. Joan Jonas. 20 minutes.
Undertone, 1972. Vito Acconci. 30 minutes.

Program 4

Inventory, 1972. John Baldessari. 30 minutes.
Selected Works, Reel 4, 1972. William Wegman. 20 minutes.
Three Transitions, 1973. Peter Campus. 5 minutes.

Program 5

Television Delivers People, 1973. Richard Serra. 6 minutes.
Global Groove, 1973. Nam June Paik. 30 minutes.
Handling (The Austrian Tapes), 1974. Douglas Davis. 5 minutes.
Fourth of July in Saugerties, 1972. Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot. 15 minutes.

Program 6

Scapemates, 1972. Ed Emshwiller. 29 minutes.
Vocabulary, 1973. Woody and Steina Vasulka. 5 minutes.
Underscan, 1974. Nancy Holt. 8 minutes.
Female Sensibility, 1974. Lynda Benglis. 14 minutes.

Program 7

Hark Hork, 1973. Frank Gillette. 18 minutes.
One-Eyed Bum, 1974. Andy Mann. 6 minutes.
Moving, 1974. Juan Downey. 30 minutes.

Program 8

Semiotics of the Kitchen, 1975. Martha Rosler. 7 minutes.
Children's Tapes: A Selection, 1974. Terry Fox. 30 minutes.
Boomerang, 1974. Richard Serra. 10 minutes.
Running Outburst, 1975. Charlemagne Palestine. 8 minutes.

Program 9

Video Ecotopia, 1975. Stephen Beck. 5 minutes.
Media Burn, 1975. Ant Farm. 25 minutes.
Birth of an Industry, 1977. TVTV. 18 minutes.

Program 10

I Want to Live in the Country (and Other Romances), 1976. Joan Jonas. 30 minutes.
A Newsreel of Dreams, 1976. Stan VanDerBeek. 24 minutes.

Program 11

Four Sided Tape, 1976. Peter Campus. 3 minutes.
The Space between the Teeth, 1976. Bill Viola. 9 minutes.
The Morning after the Night of Power, 1977. Bill Viola. 10 minutes.
Vito's Reef, 1978. Howard Fried. 34 minutes.

Program 12

Laughing Alligator, 1979. Juan Downey. 29 minutes.
After Montgolfier, 1979. Davidson Gigliotti. 10 minutes.
El Corandero, 1979. Shalom Gorewitz. 6 minutes.

Program 13

Lake Placid '80, 1980. Nam June Paik. 4 minutes.
Olympic Fragments, 1980. Kit Fitzgerald and John Sanborn. 10 minutes.
Chott el-Djerid (A Portrait in Light and Heat), 1979. Bill Viola. 28 minutes.

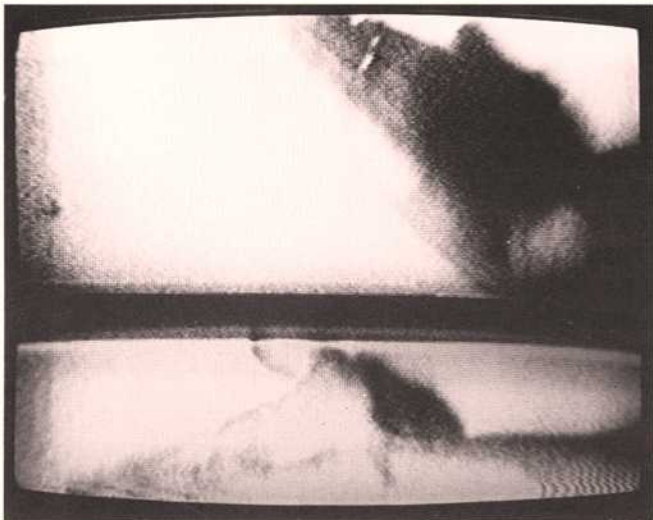
Program 14

Wonder Woman, 1979. Dara Birnbaum. 7 minutes.
Sunstone, 1979. Ed Emshwiller. 3 minutes.
Hearts, 1979. Barbara Buckner. 12 minutes.
Artifacts, 1980. Woody Vasulka. 22 minutes.

The national tour of *New American Video Art: A Historical Survey, 1967–1980* is supported by the National Committee of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

"New American Video Art" surveys video as an art form from its beginnings in 1967 to 1980. These first years in the history of video art saw a wide variety of approaches, describing and defining a new field of art-making. But behind the diversity of these initial efforts lie three features common to video art in this period: its collaboration with the other arts, its involvement with political and ideological debates, and its intentional distinction from commercial television.

By the late 1960s television had become a pervasive mass medium viewed in virtually every home. On home television sets, the public was offered a homogeneous selection of programming that followed formulas for structure, running time, and content. The viewer's perception of the medium was largely determined by the role television had come to play as a commercial entertainment and information industry whose success—and therefore profit—was



Still from *Vertical Roll*, 1972, by Joan Jonas.

gauged by the number of viewers it attracted. In an attempt to challenge the television industry's hegemony, many activists worked—often as collectives—to use video as a tool for social change. At the same time, video artists began producing tapes and installations designed to explore the medium's potential for a new aesthetic discourse. It is the work of this latter group that "New American Video Art" seeks to elucidate.

While a number of people began experimenting with television in the mid-1960s, the direct appropriation of television began with the manipulation or destruction of the television set itself in the early Fluxus art projects of the Korean-born composer and musician Nam June Paik and of the German artist Wolf Vostell. Vostell's and Paik's actions signaled a rethinking of the television set as a cultural icon and as a technology removed from the control of the individual. Their first exhibitions, held in West Germany and the United States, reflect the international dimension of video art's beginnings. They also show how television contributed to the changing dynamic of the arts in the early 1960s, a process that involved the re-examination of sacrosanct visual traditions. One manifestation of this change was the focus on popular culture at large, formalized in painting and sculpture as Pop Art.

Just as the emergence of independent filmmaking in the 1940s owed much to the development of the small-gauge 16mm camera, video became more accessible to artists and activists in 1965, when the Sony Corporation introduced its portable videotape recorder to the New York market. Nam June Paik and Les Levine were the first artists to use it. In 1965, at the Café à Go-Go, Paik showed his first videotape—of Pope Paul VI's visit to New York, shot with a portable video camera he had bought that day. In a sense Paik's action symbolizes the initial attraction of this system: it was portable, and unlike film, which had to be processed, one could immediately see what the video camera was recording.

It was commonly believed that the new video equipment would enable the visionary producer to remove the pro-

duction of video from the economic and ideological constraints of the television industry. Further, in keeping with Marshall McLuhan's theories, encapsulated in his aphorism the "medium is the message," many artists envisioned an electronic age where individual and collective producers would participate in a "global village" of information and images that superseded national and cultural boundaries.

The fourteen programs of "New American Video Art" examine, within a chronological framework, the kinds of technical, aesthetic, and philosophical issues that appear and reappear throughout the period. These include: *image processing*, whereby the artist develops new tools and a range of abstract and representational forms for transforming both prerecorded and electronically generated imagery through colorizing and other means; *personal documentaries*, which use the portable hand-held video camera to explore the dynamic of places and events; *performance-based videotapes*, which employ a range of narrative strategies to re-examine the artist's self, the psychology of manipulation, and the relationship between the viewer and the artist/performer; *perceptual studies*, which explore the epistemology of perception and the properties of the video image and image-making process; and *narratives, texts, and actions* produced to criticize or counter the pervasive presence of commercial television.

John G. Hanhardt
Curator, *Film and Video*

Whitney Museum of American Art
945 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10021

Hours:
Tuesday 11:00–6:00
Wednesday–Saturday 11:00–6:00
Sunday 12:00–6:00

Film and video information: (212) 570-0537