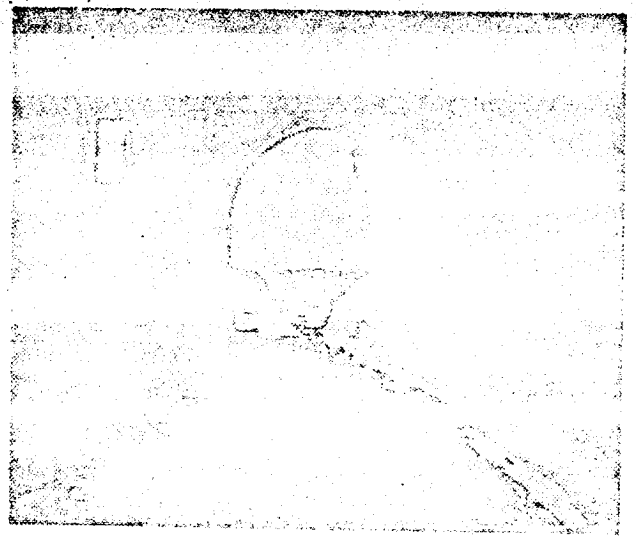


Videotape Replaces Canvas for Artists Who Use TV Technology in New Way



An image from a video work by Peter Campus, who has worked in experimental psychology.



A video image of the poet Allen Ginsberg from Nam June Paik's "Suite (212): Allen Ginsberg."

By GRACE GLUECK

Frank Gillette's new work for television is not the sort of thing that's geared to peddle soap. The 14-minute videotape shot on Cape Cod has as its sole subject the flow of water into and around a cove.

"I'm interested in two extremes," says Mr. Gillette, a 34-year-old artist who used to work with the more conventional paint and canvas. "I want to take this advanced technological tool of television and turn it back on itself, to convey the most primordial of sources, our basic life-support system."

Mr. Gillette, whose new work is part of a 12-piece cycle with an ecological theme, is one of a growing breed of video artists, for whom the TV screen has become an esthetic medium. Uninterested in commercial television, they produce videotapes that take ingenious advantage of its technology, from crude vignettes shot on site to elaborate productions that call on the full technical resources of a TV studio.

Their visually transient work, dismissed by the object-oriented art world only a few years ago, is now highly evident on the museum and gallery circuit. In New York, the Museum of Modern Art schedules videotape shows, and they were a feature of the Whitney Museum's recent biennial exhibition. Tapes may also be regularly viewed at such galleries as Leo Castelli and Ileana Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway, and at other places such as The Kitchen, 59 Wooster Street, and Global Village, 454 Broome Street.

A Ménage à Trois

A proliferation of video festivals has also occurred during the last year. One is now at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Caracas, Venezuela, and in New York a women's video festival is in progress at the Women's Interart Center, 549 West 52d Street.

And the number of videotapes is being broadcast on the network of public television stations. "There's a significant body of works being produced by independent videomakers that warrants weekly exposure on the public television system," says David Loxton, director of the Television Laboratory at Channel 13.

Thanks to the Television Laboratory, for the first time a regular program of artists' tapes is appearing on the air. Funded with \$4,000 by the New York State Council on the Arts, the laboratory is currently sponsoring tapes by independent videomakers. In all, the program has had a total of 12 tapes, and the next one is the next.

The tapes range from Nam June Paik's "Global Village" to a series of images of cities, nature and abstract images, to Arthur Ginsberg's "The Continuing Story of Carol and Ferd," which documents an extraordinary ménage à trois among a San Francisco couple and a portable video camera.

Individuality is already notable among the most producers of the videotape video artists. Peter Campus, who has worked in experimental psychology, tends to deal with perception, as in "RGB," a complex work in four parts that gives the viewer many different encounters with color.

"I'm not interested in exploring the medium," Mr. Campus says, "but on the other hand everything I do relates to it."

Hermine Freed, one of the increasing number of women working in videotape, also uses it in a complex, "layered" way. A gifted visual and verbal punner, she has most recently made "Art History," which she describes as "a

video recapitulation of art history from the Middle Ages to the present." The work, using paintings of women and a superimposition device that allows Miss Freed to appear as some of the women in the paintings, comments on what she sees as "the cultural schizophrenia of contemporary women."

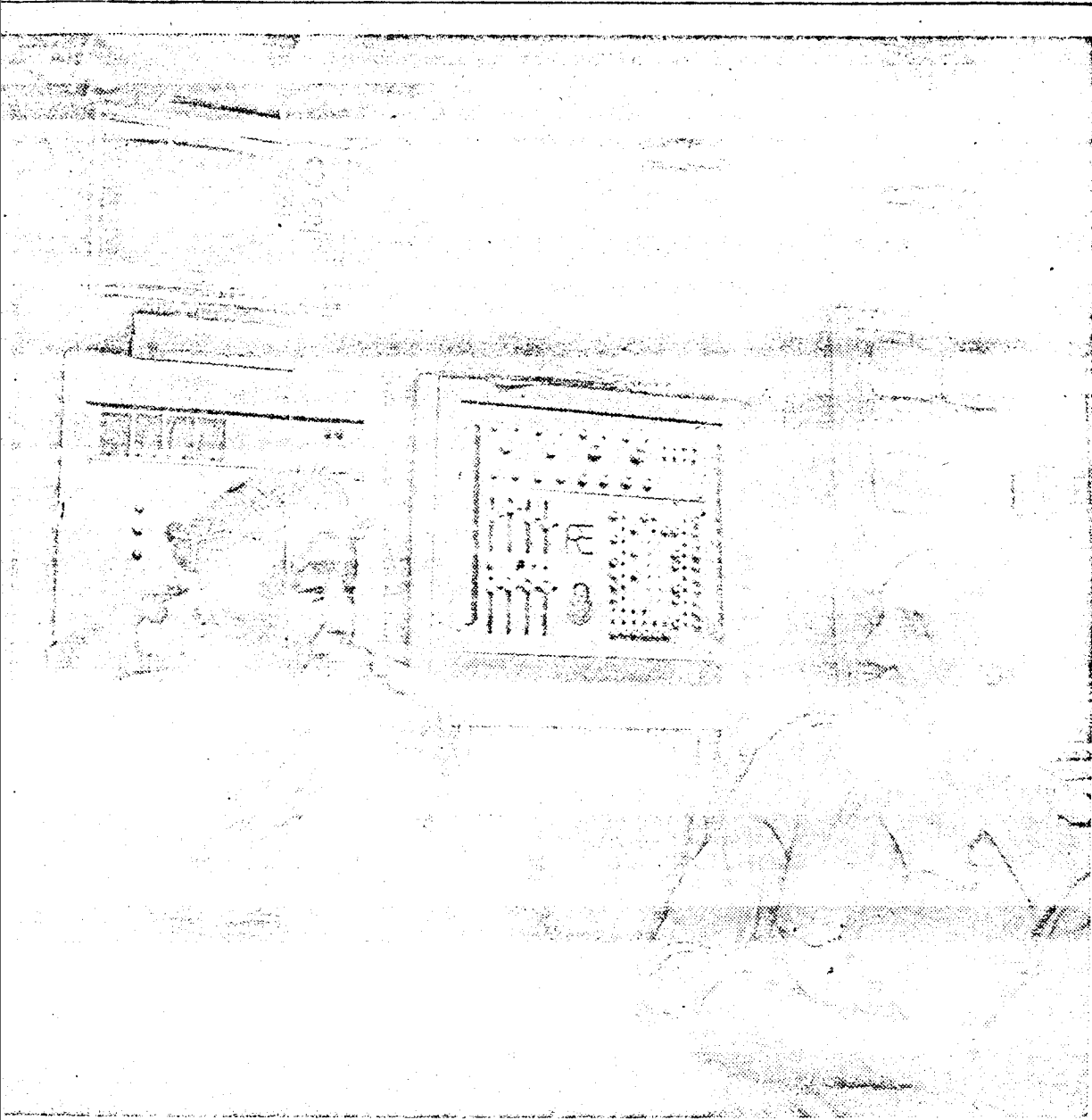
The works of Bill Wegman and Andy Mann are somewhat less cued to perceptual and technical devices. Mr. Wegman, who frequently stars with his dog, Man Ray (known as the Rin-Tin-Tin of video), can often be accused of humor, a quality not yet greatly in evidence among his colleagues in the field. In one of his short pieces, "The Spelling Lesson," for instance, he gives a terse critique of his dog's spelling to which the animal actually gives responses.

Mr. Mann, a 28-year-old tapemaker who is also an expert technician, does penetrating candid-camera-style tapes wherever he "happens to be," and often becomes

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Nancy Holt viewing her work at the Leo Castelli gallery.



The New York Times/Dan Huxley/Charles

June Paik, left, discussing his work with David Loxton, director of the television laboratory at Channel 13

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Videotape Is Replacing Paint and Canvas for Artists

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involved with his subjects. In "One-Eyed Bum," for instance, he persuades a Bowery derelict to talk revealingly about his life and his street philosophy.

Not all tapemakers work in broadcast video. Some, for whom the medium is still best suited to gallery viewing, prefer installations in which multiple images are seen simultaneously on a number of monitors placed around the gallery. One of these is Beryl Korot's "Dachau," a four-screen study of the German concentration camp in which the camera takes a deadpan "tourist" point of view.

Miss Korot, who with another tapemaker, Ira Schneider, founded and edits the video

magazine *Radical Software*, does not see her work as geared to a mass "broadcast" audience. "I want a more intimate gallery situation," she says.

Some artists work well in both gallery and broadcast modes, however. An elaborate recent environment by Mr. Paik had as one feature a closed-circuit color filming of live fish suspended in tanks from the ceiling, then projected across the ceiling as fleeting images. Mr. Campus's most recent work at the Bykert Gallery comprised live video installations that, activated by the viewer's presence, projected psychologically unsettling images of him on the walls.

The short history of video—the term as used by tapemakers and differentiates their work from commercial TV—goes back only to about 1968 and the development of half-inch tape, which allowed for cheaper and more portable equipment than the one-inch and quarter-inch broadcast tape in studio use. The "portapak" device for using the tape, comprising a hand-held camera and a battery-operated videotape recorder, gave artists instant mobility.

At about the same time, some

experimenters were fooling around with the commercial TV imagery, notably Mr. Paik, a Korean-born musician known as "the father of video." With such devices as electromagnets and signal interceptors, he broke up images on the screen, melting performers into iridescent puddles, and exploding deodorant ads into geometric flowers.

Mr. Paik showed some of his "adjusted" TV sets at the Howard Wise Gallery in 1969, along with such other videomakers as Mr. Gillette and Mr. Schneider, co-creators of a multi-image, delayed-feedback piece called "Wipe Cycle." The Wise show is generally regarded as the first gallery presentation of video art (the first museum show was staged by Russian émigré, now director of the video art

Foundation, in 1970 at Brandeis University's Rose Art Museum). Later, with the Japanese engineer Shuya Abe, Mr. Paik developed the Tele-Abs Synthesizer, a complex device that allows for still more sophisticated manipulation of TV signals.

Meanwhile, the future of video art does not seem unpromising. A crop of young videomakers is already emerging from art schools. Funding agencies, such as the Rockefeller Foundation (which gave

money to establish, and has since given large grants to, the Television Laboratory at Channel 13), the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment on the Arts are now providing money for "alternate" video, including work by artists.

Centers for video experiment and theory, such as the Channel 13 Laboratory, the WGBH New Television Workshop in Boston and the National Center for Experimental Television in San Francisco, are providing artists with technically sophisticated facilities in which to work. And the new Long Beach Cable Museum of Art, now in air conditioning, will house an experimental video station, directed by David Laing, a young video maker and curator.

Video art, however, is also burgeoning, geared to getting tapes out to school libraries and even to private collectors, in Manhattan, by distributors Casemore, Casemore, Tapes and Films, Inc., and the Video Distribution, Inc., coordinated by Robert Steinberg in collaboration with John Canepa, sell and rent from a large stock of artists' tapes. A third, Electronic Arts and Crafts, Inc., runs a similar business, tapes on a regular basis.

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TV Review

Videotapes Living Up to Star Billing

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR

Since the first Sony Portapak was introduced to this country in 1968, half-inch videotape, offering increased portability and lower costs, has been hailed as the salvation of the electronic artist or journalist attempting to remain independent and "personal." While the road to mass-audience access and recognition has been—and still is—rocky, the medium has produced work of outstanding quality.

A collection of good examples can be found in two new series that begin tomorrow. The first is on public television: "Video and Television Review," a 26-week series produced by WNET/13's experimental Television Laboratory. The second is in a lower-Manhattan loft: "The First Annual Video Documentary Festival," featuring a different schedule on Fridays and Saturdays, at 8:30 P.M., for the next three weeks.

The Channel 13 series, with Russel Connor, artist and critic, as host will attempt a broad survey of videotape and the state of the art. In addition to videotape production—artistic and journalistic—it will include both information about the latest developments in hardware and conversations with artists and producers.

The first program will examine the aims and style of TVTV, a group that gained a respectable measure of national success with "The Lord of the Universe" and, more recently, a four-part series on "Gerald Ford's America." Next week will feature "Transcending," the first videotape of Ian Hugo, veteran film maker. And, in following weeks, it will include a new work by Ed Emshwiller and "The Irish Tapes," a 46-minute documentary on Northern Ireland by John Reilly and Sefan Moore.

The series will obviously provide a valuable forum for a medium in desperate search for any forum. That desperation is the reason for the documentary festival at the Broome Street loft housing the Video Study Center of Global Village. It's at 454 Broome Street (phone 966-7526). Mr. Reilly is director of the center and his "The Irish Tapes" will be included on one of the programs. Much of the material, however, has not found an outlet on either TV or cable, which initially promised "alternative access" but has proved a failure so far.

The "video documentary" generally makes no pretensions to objectivity. Tightly controlled by a few people or even one person, the documentary tends to be extremely subjective. For the "The Irish Tapes," for example, several trips to Ulster were made. Scenes of hate and suffering, on both sides of the conflict, were set in a form that opens and ends with glimpses of a St. Patrick's Day parade in New York. Grim reality is powerfully counterpointed with uniformed fantasy. The "troubles" are portrayed by the participants—defiant, hysterical, puzzled.

The scope and styles of the video documentary are broad. Other works in the festival include:

"The Politics of Intimacy," by Julie Gustafson. Ten Women, recorded in close-up and medium shots, candidly discuss orgasm and sexuality. The "clinical" statements accumulate into sensitive portraits of women of different ages, sexual preferences and socioeconomic backgrounds.

"Hindustan-Part I," by Eric Siegel. A trip through India is recorded without narration, without statistics and with superb camera work.

"Walter" by Bob and Ingrid Wiegand. A gym teacher is interviewed in immediate detail, his work, his boat-sailing and his story about survival in a German slave-labor camp seamlessly intertwined with the whole.

"Giving Birth," by Tobe J. Carey. A desperately modern couple go to Mexico for the delivery of their child. The result is graphic, as planned, and hilarious, as not planned.

In addition, the festival is showing some works that have received some exposure. TVTV's "Four More Years," an irreverent and, particularly in light of Watergate, perceptive view of the 1972 Republican convention in Miami, was shown widely on cable television. And Downtown Community Television's "Cuba: The People" was carried on P.B.S.

For anyone interested in a sadly neglected present containing significant possibilities for the future of television, the festival demands attention. The price of admission, the "contribution," is \$2.

More
Television

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