

Image as Object

These photographs by Woody Vasulka are electronically generated works taken from the video screen. Woody's intent in creating static images from moving electronic forms is to map the process of the moving electronic image. He says, "I call these works 'didactic' because the impulse to assemble them was primarily the need to understand, explain, and educate myself, and possibly others." These photographs reveal the transformative stages an image goes through when processed by analog or digital imaging machines.

Actions of Waveforms (1975) and Transformations (1975) are from Woody's first photographic series "Didactic Video." These images form part of Woody's overall project to explore electronic images that are not produced by a camera but from the electronic signal in the video machine itself. (Some of these images are originally derived from a camera image, others are derived purely from the electronic signal.) Here, Woody uses the Rutt/Etra scan processor (a device that manipulates the video raster of scan lines) to generate images of electronic waveforms and to use the video scan lines to create forms that suggest a three-dimensionality. Thus, the machine is used to create the illusion of an image object.

The Syntax of Binary Image series (1978) represents Woody's initial foray into the process of digital imaging, using the Vasulkas' Digital Image Articulator (Imager), a device they designed with Jeffrey Schier. In digital technology, the system

of image transformation is based on mathematical principles. Woody maps out the different mathematical combinations of the Imager as a means of creating a kind of reference manual for digital imaging. His intent is therefore to create a kind of "unambiguous language," that is, a notational system by which one could reference this syntax of binary images to design a digital work, and know in advance precisely how it would look.

The Hybrid Images (1979-89) are derived through a combination of the Rutt/Etra (analog) technology and the Imager (digital). The image is first generated by a camera, digitized by the Imager, and then further altered by the scan processor. Here, Woody is concerned with the kinds of images that can be created by combining the very different qualities of analog and digital imaging--the analog image is a fluid one, more closely allied with the photographic image. The digital image is one of rhythmic pattern and highly textured surfaces. These hybrid images represent innovative ways of exploring three-dimensionality in electronic imaging, and the possibilities of rendering the two-dimensional video image into an object.