

# THE VASULKAS

S T E I N A  
I N S T A L L A T I O N S  
& M A T R I X E S

# PROFILE OF STEINA

Steina, born in Iceland in 1940, attended the Music Conservatory in Prague from 1959 to 1963, and joined the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra in 1964. She came to the United States the following year and has participated in the development of the electronic arts since 1970, both as co-founder of The Kitchen, a major exhibition center in New York City, and as a continuing explorer of the possibilities for the generation and manipulation of the electronic image through a broad range of technological tools and aesthetic concerns. Her tapes have been exhibited and broadcast extensively in the United States and Europe. She is a Guggenheim Fellow, and has received numerous other distinctions, including grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Maya Deren Award from the American Film Institute in 1992.

In the late seventies she developed a series of installations on the theme "Machine Vision," which was exhibited at the Albright Knox Gallery in Buffalo, New York. Since moving to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1980, Steina has produced several synchronous video matrix installations displayed through multi-monitor systems, titled: *The West*, *Geomania*, *Ptolemy*, *Vocalizations*, and *Tokyo Four*. *The West* traveled throughout New York state as a video exhibition organized by the New York Statewide Committee for the Arts. *Tokyo Four* is based on images of Japan from her six-month stay in 1988 on a fellowship commission.

As a violinist, Steina was one of the first to interface video with musical performance, which she continues to develop through her own live interactive performances. In a cycle titled *Violin Power*, she controls the presentation of video laser disk images by playing her MIDI-interfaced violin. She co-curated the exhibition on early video instruments, *Eigenwelt der Apparatewelt: Pioneers of Electronic Art*, for Ars Electronica in Linz, Austria, in 1992. During the same year she was a guest professor at The Institute for New Media in Frankfurt, and at Die Hochschule Fur Angewandte Kunst in Vienna. She also lectured in Berne, Berlin, and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. This spring Steina exhibited a new work, *Borealis*, for the National Gallery in Reykjavik, Iceland.

September 1993

## INSTALLATIONS & MATRIXES

*Steina's recent installations involve landscape — and what it reveals about the passage of time and the action of elemental forces. The installations entice the viewer to move into another space orchestrated musically through multiple monitors or multiple screens, or displayed on multi-channel synchronous video matrixes.*

### **Borealis**

1993

"Videotaped in Iceland in 1992, *Borealis* is a two-channel installation in which two video projectors, through split beam mirrors, project onto four translucent screens. The images appear, with a left-right mirroring, on both sides of vertically positioned screens, standing four feet high. With these projectors, I was able to set up a magical environment of free-standing self-illuminated moving imagery placed in a space otherwise totally dark. You are immersed in the rhythm of the imagery, surrounded by it as you walk in and around it." — *Steina*

"This is archetypal Nature: the viewer looks down from cliffs onto turbulent waves, is plunged into waterspouts exploding and collapsing in spasmodic motion. Numinous vapor confounds a sense of direction, the obscene volition of plant life forces the strictures of rationality. Roiling ocean waters appear variously as molten metals, fossil patterning, the impulse of emergent crystal growth, the fanning of deluvial plains, the push and strain inside one's own arteries. All this seething and breathing in mindless flux is accompanied by real-time processed natural sound. . . . At first the chaos seems contained, a benign native institution. But soon any notion of permanence has been obliterated. This is primordial Nature with her endless emendations witnessed as beauty, passion, and confusion. Man, with his machines and gods, has come and gone without a trace." — *Melody Sumner*

### **Tokyo Four**

1991

"No form of moving-image art comes as close to musical composition as multiscreen video, where the different channels of image and sound are equivalent to musical polyphony, each functioning like a voice in a musical ensemble. And no multiscreen work is as spectacularly musical as Steina's. She works as a composer would, playing on the visual equivalents of timbre, texture, and tone. *Tokyo Four* is the audio-visual equivalent of a string quartet. In one compositional strategy, Steina begins by assembling a long single channel segment which represents the 'melody,' or what she calls the 'ground track.' Sometimes one screen is the melody and the others are accompaniment, then another screen takes the lead. A musical syntax emerges from this visual point/counterpoint organized around duration, interval, rhythm, repetition, and series. *Tokyo Four* is organized around categories of imagery: Shinto priests meticulously grooming their Zen garden on New Year's Eve; train conductors monitoring rush hour crowds;

elevator girls bringing a superfluous, but charming High Touch to the high tech world of the shopping malls, reminding shoppers to watch their umbrellas and to not forget their children; a segment about food, beginning with the vertiginous fisheye lens in a supermarket; and an emotionally charged meta-choreography of a dance troupe's performance and curtain call. . . . Her compositional devices include flipping or reversing an image and playing it at imperceptibly different speeds on different screens, which gradually all synchronize at the same speed. These strategies are especially effective in the final movement when the female dancer is bowing. The Strauss waltz the dancers use would be banal without the manipulations of Steina's spectacular visual matrix, which transforms it into something at once exotic and poignant."

— Gene Youngblood

### **Ptolemy**

1990

"In *Ptolemy*, Steina circles inside a space, delineating its boundaries with a mechanized choreography of camera movement. This is a world of circular movements, a vertiginous dance of machine and ordinary objects. The installation of *Ptolemy*, a four-channel piece in a multi-monitor matrix, further compounds the action; a disjunctive world circles to sudden but inevitable conjunctions. Light and shadow, reflections in a mirror ball and the camera lens itself trace an optical trajectory to a sound track of machine music. This installation premiered at *Ars Electronica* (Linz, Austria) in 1990." — Woody Vasulka

### **Vocalizations**

(with Joan La Barbara)

1990

"*Vocalizations* comes from a series of live performances for video images and voice. Vocalist Joan La Barbara's voice patterns are visualized here as video and provide an active syntactic element, combining a foreground/background of moving video images. Additional strategies are brought into this process including forward/reverse motion and speed changes in tape transport and digital sound processing. The final work plays together on four separate video channels."

— Woody Vasulka

"There is an integration of sound and image in which the singing voice of Joan La Barbara produces energetic permutations in a grid of lines reminiscent of the musical staff of traditional music notation, forming a window onto images of a moving landscape. The rifts, chants and scat singing of La Barbara's voice become a visual dance in this electronic scape." — Marita Sturken

### **Geomania**

1986

"*Geomania* is a continuous two-channel sound and video environment presented on a circle of monitors. Site recorded images and sounds are electronically layered so that the North Atlantic

surf washes through Arches National Park, and a bubbling Icelandic hot spring percolates through the desert clouds—a sensuous display of electronically generated color and texture. There are many paradoxes in this piece, not only the paradox between free-form image gathering and very rigorous presentation requirements, and the paradox between the land and the sea, but the real obvious one between an emphasis on technology and romantic beauty. In a way, this work seems to be a sweet autobiographical romance.” — *MaLin Wilson*

“To me, living in the 20th century, nature not altered by man is romantic. Landscape can never be ugly. I have spent a lot of time thinking about what is beautiful art and what is ugly art, and why people engineer certain ugliness into their images, often very successfully. If you are working with the landscape you basically eliminate ugliness, which is, in a certain way, intimidating. I moved here in 1980 from Buffalo, New York because I wanted to experience what it is to live in the beauty. I did not want to think that it was going to affect my images as much as it did. For the first two years I resisted it. First of all because the beauty of the West is so seductive. And, secondly, I didn’t feel up to it. I mean, are you going to take on God?” — *Steina*

“In *Geomania*, images wash through the dry desert in waves, the steam and gases of the volatile Icelandic landscape and viscous lava rock unfold on the screen. Steina sets up dichotomies and then dismisses them. One is encouraged to see the global interplay of the earth. The ancient land of the Southwest represents the accumulated time of the earth — a slowly eroding land, etched with the refuse of time; the bubbling energy of the Icelandic terrain is the formation of solid from liquid, the birth of the land from sea and the beginning of the earth . . . both are fused to present the earth as a regenerating force, as a living organism. Here, the landscape is not rooted in gravity, it is amorphous, malleable, and changeable. Embedded with layers of geological time, it is simultaneously death and birth; it transcends time.”

— *Marita Sturken*

## **The West**

(audio by Woody Vasulka)

1983

“*The West* is a two-channel, multi-monitor study (on a 30 minute cycle) of the marking of the landscape of the American Southwest. This work traces the efforts of humankind to alter and map the land, from the ancient cliff dwellings of the Anasazi Indians to the more recent Very Large Array (VLA) radio-telescope systems that eerily rotate toward the sky. The desert landscape, in which human imprints become etched into the earth for eternity, is woven into complex movement across multiple screens and symbolizes the spectrum of human technologies. For Steina, history is inscribed not in fragments of archival footage but within nature; it is not the history of human beings, but the history of the land, of geological processes, of fire, water, and earth.” — *Marita Sturken*

"*The West* revels in the vastness of the western spaces, the primeval quality of the landscape and ancient architecture, the rich colors of the earth and sky, and the all-encompassing light and warmth of the sun. The complex layering of spaces and the electronic manipulation of image, color and form so central in Steina's earlier work is still an important aspect of this installation. But *The West* is emphatically a tribute to the grandeur of nature." — William D. Judson

"Metaphors are engaged in *The West* that do not simply rest on obvious or singular interpretations. Surely one could read it as a poetic indictment of the contemporary reconstruction of this space for industrial and military purposes, or conversely, as a fascination with the forms that obliterate such a reading by an equally poetic vision of both."

— Maureen Turim and Scott Nygren

### **Machine Vision**

1976

"*Machine Vision* is a series of installations with a mirror sphere, two cameras and two monitors, signifying the awareness of an intelligent, yet not human vision. *Machine Vision* does not involve video tape, but rather uses real-time space surveillance. My *Machine Vision* installations are performing systems, they occur in the studio, out in the landscape, or in an exhibition. The act of seeing, the image source and the kinetic resources come from the installation itself, choreographed and programmed by the cyclical nature of its mechanized performance." — Steina

"*Machine Vision* is a group of videotapes and installations concerned with creating a camera view that moves beyond the restrictions of the human eye. One of the first works of Steina's *Machine Vision* project, and central to it, *Allvision* is a rotating spherical device that mediates the viewer's experience of the viewing space. Steina's concept of 'allvision' involves exploring a way of seeing that is an all-encompassing, machine-derived vision. In *Allvision*, the all-seeing mirror sphere transcends spatial limits such as up/down, and inner/outer by situating the viewer within abstract electronic space. *Allvision* restructures the space of a room so that the viewer's position within that space is always mediated through the machine. Through the reflective sphere, the cameras scan the space and re-map it. The image of the viewer entering the space of the installation is thus transposed via the mirrored sphere into the abstract image space of the monitors, a space in which they are seen in a rotating cycle by the camera mechanism."

— Marita Sturken

## **SELECTED INSTALLATIONS:**

### **Borealis**

National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik Iceland, 1993

### **Tokyo Four**

Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo, New York, 1993

Atlantic Center for the Arts, Smyrna Beach, Florida, 1993

The Gallery at the Rep, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1993

Manifestation for the Unstable Media, S'Hertogenbosch, Holland, 1992

Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland, 1992

Denver Art Museum, Denver Colorado, 1992

L'immagine Elettronica, Festival, Ferrara, Italy, 1991

### **Ptolemy**

L'immagine Elettronica Festival, Ferrara, Italy, 1991

Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria, 1990

### **Vocalizations**

Manifestation for the Unstable Media, S'Hertogenbosch, Holland, 1992

Ohio University, Bowling Green, Ohio, 1990

### **Geomania**

Montevideo Gallery, Amsterdam, Holland, 1990

Arizona Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona, 1987

Jonson Gallery, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1986

### **The West**

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California, 1988

Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1988

International Video Festival, Locarno, Switzerland, 1986

Montevideo Gallery, Amsterdam, Holland, 1985

Museum of the 20th Century, Vienna, Austria, 1985

Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, 1985

State University of New York campuses, sponsored by SUNY Statewide Committee on the Arts with grants from the NEA and the Rockefeller Foundation, 1984-85.

Cine-MBXA/Cinedoc, Paris France, 1984

Museo des Belas Artes, Madrid, Spain, 1984

Montbeliard Video Festival, Montbeliard, France 1984

University Art Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1983

C. G. Rein Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1983

The Kitchen, New York City, 1983

## **Machine Vision**

Cine-MBXA/Cinedoc, Paris France, 1984  
Volkwang Museum, Essen, Germany, 1979  
Albright Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York 1978  
Hallwalls Gallery, Buffalo, New York 1976  
The Kitchen, New York, New York, 1977  
Cathedral Park, Buffalo, New York 1975

## **LIVE VIDEO PERFORMANCES:**

*Interactive MIDI-violin/laserdisk performances — titled “Violin Power” when performed solo and “Hyena Days” when performed with Michael Saup (guitar)*

### **Violin Power**

Telluride Institute, Telluride, Colorado, 1993  
National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1993  
Rock Cafe Media Club, Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1992  
Brno Polytechnic Institute, Brno, Czechoslovakia, 1992  
Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1991  
Santa Fe, New Mexico/Santa Monica, California, 1991\*

*\*Interactive MIDI-violin / laserdisk performance in which the violin played by Steina in Santa Fe controlled via telephone a video laserdisk in Santa Monica. This event took place during a concert at the Santa Monica Electronic Cafe.*

### **Hyena Days**

Deutsche Welle T.V. Program, Frankfurt, Germany, 1992  
S’Hertogenbosch, Holland, 1992  
Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria, 1992



## STEINA ON INSTALLATIONS & MATRIXES

*Q: You use anywhere from 4 to 48 monitors in your installations. How do you decide what number to use?*

Steina: I don't think of the installations as being large or small depending on the number of monitors involved, but depending on the number of channels. More channels means a more elaborate piece to work with and edit. I am flexible about the size of the display. However, I do like a big display. The monitors can be arranged in many ways. For example, for *Geomania* [1986] my favorite constellation is a pyramid.

I shoot everything with one camera. My usual way of working is to make a ground image and duplicate it three times. Then I find other images and drop them in variously on those other three copies. The other images are also from the original tape. For me, it is part of the "composing" to find something when I am shooting that I know will go with something else — or contradict it. Very often I know that I have a pair of images or four images that could work well together. I keep adding episodes and sections until the composition is complete. As I add images things begin changing between the channels. Sometimes I work on the four tapes simultaneously scene by scene. But it is usually easier to format one line and then fill in the others.

The aspect of creation I like most is the initial taping, that is, being on location. Whether sleet or snow or howling rain, I love that part, especially if I am alone out in nature. There is often an in-between step before I begin "composing" that I call the "inter-materials." That is where I alter and mix the images.

I call what I do composing because it reminds me of composing music: you make a melody and then you start filling in the harmonic lines. As with music, sometimes the melody isn't really in the main instrument after all. Since I do so much on four channels, I like to compare it to playing quartets. If you listen to a quartet, there is either an intricate melodic structure that interweaves for all four instruments, or something started in one instrument is picked up by another in a horizontal composing. The structuring of harmonics is vertical composing. I make use of both phenomena in my video work.

*So you can show those four channels on four different monitors or on forty-eight. How does that work?*

One of the first things Woody and I started out with in the early seventies was playing around with the horizontal drift — images drifting from one monitor to the adjacent one. I bridge the four channels so that there can be a bank of monitors playing one image and another bank playing another. I try to throw off the predictability of the images by not setting them up symmetrically. Right now I am working on display that will not be a stack of monitors or a wall but something more spacial — two channels projected onto half translucent screens where the image appears on both sides.

But for me, the display has always been secondary. My main emphasis and where I spend most of my attention is in the composing of the images. Then for the display, I often decide how it will look based on what is available.

*In the original shooting, do you start with an idea or a feeling?*

I always start with an idea but I usually abandon it. One does not just go out with a camera and say I am going to shoot this. Because by the time one is ready to shoot *this* thing it is really *that* thing that has become interesting. I can never stick to any original idea. In Japan, I wasn't particularly interested in elevator girls [in *Elevator Girls*, and *Tokyo Four*, 1991]— I was interested in the whole sense of performance in Japan by people in the street, by everybody. People there have a social protocol that to us looks like performance but to them is just daily life. The way they bow, the way they make certain signs. Like when they want to cut through a crowd because they are in a hurry, they put their hand forward in a chopping gesture. They have hand signals for “yes” and “no” and “maybe.” To me this was fantastic theater. I found it very strange even the way the Japanese dress and how each keeps his body together as a unit. Basically you cannot touch anybody there, it is not part of their social protocol. This was all of intense interest to me and so I considered all of it part of my material. Here in New Mexico my material is rivers, mountains, and trees, but when I found myself smack down in the middle of Tokyo, my material became the people.

Elevator girls are maximally-stylized instant theater, as are the train conductors, and the taxi drivers wearing their white gloves. Once you have one elevator girl on tape you immediately think: “Now I need another!”, a matching shot.

*What happens in the editing process for you?*

All the compromises begin. The footage that I really counted on, the footage that was going to be so great isn't there. And then I find some other footage that I hardly noticed and it is really good! Or maybe I walked away from the camera when there was nothing happening but something acted out in front of it that I wasn't aware of, and it is exactly what I need. In the editing, you have to give up your original idea and just go with the material.

Actually, the multiscreen thing comes out of a certain problem I have with editing. I find editing excruciating because I don't really know when one thing is over and another should begin. When I look at other people's work I generally don't like their timing; it is usually too fast for me. But then I realize that I am out of the mainstream. The mainstream wants things fast. I don't like them that fast. At a certain point though, I must decide what the piece *is* finally. I would say that Woody is much better at that. He knows instantly what is good timing and what is not. I know most clearly about timing when I show my work to an audience. Then I see it their way — it is a very strange phenomenon. I suffer greatly from certain things that don't work. I know immediately how to change it. What started as a beginning might easily become the ending, and vice versa. I never do any final editing on a tape until I have seen it many times in front of an audience.

*Ideally, where would you like the large installations to be experienced — a museum or a shopping mall, in someone's home?*

In my mind they should be shown in a quiet dark place. A museum could be a good place. But the museums always seem interested in putting it in a maximally-visible location — they think they are pleasing me when they say, “we are going to give you the lobby.” I find that to be counterproductive because I want people to be able to sit and watch the video quietly. Ideally, my work is made for a thousand monitors and one viewer — not one monitor and a thousand viewers.

*What ideally is experienced by the viewer?*

I want the viewer to be transfixed. That is my wish: that they get absorbed by the piece so that they forget time and space. It may be a megalomaniacal idea, but that's what I want. I want the viewer to get to the next level of the mind (be it up or down), which is what happens if you are jolted by something, if something really touches you. I am looking for the viewer to share the kind of strong feeling that I have about the material. My dilemma is I feel transfixed by the material, and I expect if I just show them everybody else will be as well.

But very few people do get it. They don't see it with my eyes. They have a different background, or they are in a hurry. Maybe they are irritated that they don't see the social agenda that they were expecting, or they just don't want to see what I want them to see. God knows why!

*You have been called an "ecstatic," is it that state of mind you are after?*

No. I just want the viewer to be touched. I can't predict what they will feel. There was a man who watched my Japanese tape, *Tokyo four*, and he came up to me after and said that it was all about death. At that moment I knew that he had really seen it — even though it isn't all about death. That was his interpretation. And it was very flattering to me to get a response like that because I knew that in a way, like everything else, it is also about death. This man was old. He was much closer to death. It could have been the Japanese attitude to death that he perceived.

*Is there a particular experiencing of art in your past that inspired you to want to give back to the world some of the same?*

Music saved my life when I was a kid. I wouldn't otherwise have had any childhood. (Early childhood was fine but later I had a lot of trouble, I was always sick and just basically out of it.) My love affair with art from the beginning was very intense. It was all-consuming from the time I was eight or nine until my late teens. I lived by it. I went to all theater performances, all opera performances, all concerts, all recitals, all gallery shows and openings. I was crazy about it. Nothing else in life made any sense to me. I never chose to be an artist, I just knew I wouldn't be able to work in a bank or be a waitress or anything else.

Though I never made it through high school, I had a classical education really. My parents, especially my father, took me to the concerts. I had an aunt who took me to art events and taught me how to appreciate modern painting. I didn't realize until I came here how few people get that kind of exposure.

*You have said that still imagery means nothing to you. It has to be moving.*

I was never really interested in photography. Personally, I could find no way into still images. I have learned to appreciate paintings and photography and things like that as being noble activities that I cannot participate in. I didn't understand that type of composition. But as soon as I had a camera in my hand — as soon as I had the "majestic flow of time" in my command, I knew I had my medium. The element of time is what makes it like music. I find it strange to be called a visual artist. Though I was never even close to composing music, composing is exactly what I think I am doing now with moving images.

*When you teach, as you did recently in Germany, what are you teaching the students? Is it Steina's view of reality?*

I go through the theory and the techniques — video is complex technically. I explain the signal with its timing structure, and things like that. I go into history and show a lot of tapes, mine and those of my colleagues, and we discuss them. We look at the students' work, discuss what they are doing. Then I ask them if they believe in UFOs, at which point the whole class gets very upset. Half of them say they do and half say they don't.

The classes the students seem to appreciate most are the ones in which I present "the world according to Steina." They sort of like that. We discuss the way the galleries sew up the art scene and make the artists kiss ass and so on. Always, I tell them that they don't have to kiss ass. And they seem greatly relieved. They wouldn't have known that otherwise! I remember overhearing one person say — "But we have to do this kind of intellectual work because this is that kind of a school." And I turned around and said, "NO YOU DON'T." And the whole class started laughing because they realized that actually they don't. I tell them that it is every artist's duty to be disobedient. Then we discuss what it means to be a mainstream person and to have a comfortable life, and how if you decide to be an artist you are basically deciding to have a materially uncomfortable life, but in another sense possibly a much more rewarding one. They discuss this back and forth for awhile — not that they haven't thought about it a lot already. But they get lonely, they get confused.

For me, there isn't a grander life than the creative artistic life. It is the unknown, the exploration, the fact of being your own person. I am sure a lot of scientists have a similar kind of rewarding life. They may work on their own ideas, call their own shots. In other fields too this may be the case.

The reason I ask my students about UFOs is that after some of them say that they do believe and some of them say they don't, I say we are not going to talk about UFOs anyway but about how you have to stick to your beliefs. If you believe in UFOs you should raise your hand whether or not you think the other half of the class is going to sneer. You should stick to your beliefs. We went through this discussion about intimidation: How people will lie about what they believe in just to get along. It is too emotionally stressful to admit to having an independent mind. You don't have to be an artist to experience this dilemma. But in a sense, I believe it is the artist's duty to stay on the fringe.

*If you had all the money and funding in the world for your next project what would you do that you cannot do now?*

A lot. I do all kinds of compromises because I don't have the equipment. Modern equipment speeds up the process and makes it easier to edit. I would like to have the optical gismos, editing gismos, state of the art electronics. As a fantasy, I would make larger installations. In one, the whole floor would be made of monitors and they would all be filled with moving imagery. There would also be four-sided corridors. You look down a long lane of images that keep moving toward you, and past you. A higher priority would be to have a better means of production. But for me to buy those things, I would have to sell myself or work for someone or something unacceptable to me. So, my life is as compromised as anybody's. But I have never seen anybody who got all their wishes fulfilled become a better artist because of it.

*Your images changed when you moved to the West you have said. Did your reason for making art change?*

No. I look at my old tapes and see I am still doing the same thing. I think most artists are like that. The motivation is the same. It keeps driving you, you don't know what it is. I am very intrigued by that motivation. It is a phenomenon. Sometimes you ask yourself: Why bother? What makes you think anybody else on earth is interested in this stuff? But even then, you keep doing it. I don't know why.

There are the two ideas about why people make art: to communicate, or as a sort of spiritual exercise. I am much closer to Cage's idea ["to prepare the mind for divine influences"] but essentially all the notions are true. The motivation comes from a deep desire to communicate, and for some artists, to communicate on a quite massive level — something I have never really been interested in. I see no qualitative difference in more people versus one person if I am communicating. But the primary motivation for all art, I believe, is to communicate yourself to yourself — which is a spiritual idea. Every person's life is about communication, is filled with communication.

*Do you think about communicating with the future?*

Yes I think about it because I communicate so exquisitely with people from the past. Some of my best friends have been dead for hundreds of years. Like Beethoven. It is not flippant to think that you communicate through time. But then you also must think about the futility — such as making these elaborate works like I am doing which have never been shown and maybe they never will be shown. It would take just one A-bomb to irradiate the tapes and to irradiate my flesh and I would not have communicated a thing to anybody.

There have been lucky coincidences where artists and their audiences are in the same place at the same time. Paris in the twenties was like that. New York in the late sixties was like that for us. It was a luxury.

*Tell us more about what you are doing for the event in Iceland this spring?*

There are the two projectors projecting with split beam onto four screens which are translucent. As the audience, as a viewer, you can watch the work from far away and see all four screens at once, or, you can be on the inside, which is much more intense, but then you can not see the picture behind you.

The subject material is dedicated to Icelandic images — landscapes of Iceland. It is all about lava flows and water, steam and sprays. For many years I have been going to Iceland with my video camera, and I have been using images from those visits in my work. Always, I had the feeling that one day I'd be able to show these images in Iceland. When the request came from Halldor Bjorn Runolfsson, the curator of the show [which opened May 8th 1993 in Reykjavik at the National Gallery] I was ready. I stopped by Iceland twice last summer to gather materials. My piece is titled *Borealis*, it means "of the north."

interviewed by Melody Sumner

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## **HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS FOR INSTALLATIONS, MATRIXES AND PERFORMANCES BY STEINA:**

### **Borealis**

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2 Video Laser Disk Players with 2 Program Discs  
or:  
2 Sony 3/4" VCRs with 2 Program Video Tapes

2 Video Projectors  
4 Translucent Screens  
2 Projector Tables  
1 Two Channel Synchronizer  
2 Stereo Audio Amplifiers  
4 Speakers

AC outlets: 7

### **Tokyo Four**

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4 Video Laser Disk Players with 4 Program Discs  
or:  
4 Sony 3/4" VCRs with 4 Program Video Tapes

1 Four Channel Synchronizer  
2 Stereo Audio Amplifiers  
4 Speakers  
9 to 48 Video Monitors

AC outlets: 7 + 9 to 48

### **Ptolemy**

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4 Video Laser Disk Players with 4 Program Discs  
or:  
4 Sony 3/4" VCRs with 4 Program Video Tapes

1 Four Channel Synchronizer  
2 Stereo Audio Amplifiers  
4 Speakers  
16 Video Monitors

AC outlets: 23

## **Geomania**

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2 Video Laser Disk Players with 2 Program Discs  
or:  
2 Sony 3/4" VCRs with 2 Program Video Tapes

1 two channel Synchronizer  
1 Stereo Audio Amplifiers  
2 Speakers  
9 Video Monitors

AC outlets: 13

## **Vocalizations**

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4 Video Laser Disk Players with 4 Program Discs  
or:  
4 Sony 3/4" VCRs with 4 Program Video Tapes

1 Four Channel Synchronizer  
2 Stereo Audio Amplifiers  
4 Speakers  
8 Video Monitors

AC outlets: 15

## **The West**

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2 Video Laser Disk Players with 2 Program Discs  
or:  
2 Sony 3/4" VCRs with 2 Program Video Tapes

1 Two Channel Synchronizer  
2 Stereo Audio Amplifiers  
4 Speakers  
22 to 44 Video Monitors

AC outlets: 5 + 22 to 44

## **Allvision**

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2 Cameras with Camera Mounting Hardware  
1 Turntable with a Long Arm  
1 DC Powersupply  
8 Monitors

AC outlets: 11

## **Violin Power - A Performance**

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1 Video Laser Disc Player, Pioneer VL-D 8000  
1 Zeta Electric/MIDI Violin  
1 IVL Technologies ZETA MIDI Controller  
1 IVL Footswitch  
1 Toshiba LapTop Computer  
1 PC Music Maker Interface to MIDI  
1 Digitech Harmony Processor  
1 Lexicon DSP Unit with a Footswitch  
1 Program Video Laser Disk  
1 Video Projector

AC outlets: 7

## **THE VASULKAS**

**ROUTE 6 BOX 100 SANTA FE**

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**PHONE 505 • 471 • 7181**

**FAX 505 • 473 • 0614**



Vasulka Catalogue

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