

has been done in performance, playing their audio and video synthesizers together. They have given concerts in the U.S. and Canada, and have made a European tour as well.

It is obvious that both men share a rare set of talents; not only are they involved in pioneering technical work, but they are also capable of explaining what they have done—they are born teachers. In addition to a masterful, darkly symbolic tape, *Procession*, they produced a lighthearted *Electronic Notebook* tape for the National Center, which explains in a marvelously clear way what feedback is.

Minneapolis

Jim Byrne was just out of art school when he attended a National Videotape Festival Workshop held at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. He says he had been at loose ends, depressed by all the “bad art” he saw being produced. The teachers at the workshop included Peter Campus, and Byrne was immediately impressed by his work. He became Campus’s student and worked with him for a year and a half; he is working independently now. In a sense, he is in a second generation of video artists.

His work reminds one of Campus’s in that he does both installations and tapes, and his tapes are concise statements often made using one special effect obtainable only in video. One of the tapes Byrne produced in 1974, *Tangent*, is typical. To start, he has prerecorded an image of himself moving about a space. Sometimes he comes up close to the camera and stares out so that one sees only his head; sometimes he walks back and stands against a far wall. In *Tangent*, Byrne plays this tape on a monitor, then tapes himself picking up the monitor and reacting to the image, comparing his space to the image of himself in the space on the monitor. Sometimes he holds the monitor up to the camera so the frame matches the frame of “our” monitor: it looks as if the prerecorded image is playing directly on our monitor. Then he twists the monitor back so only one side of it coincides with our monitor. The space both inside and outside our monitor seems to warp. What Byrne has done is create a set of powerful illusions that make our space seem to meet tangentially with the spaces in the monitor. Watching the tape changes the way you think about the illusion of the TV image. By presenting us with such a clear, real space and person, himself, Byrne

has opened a door—he has allowed us to compare our own environment with that on a television monitor and so has displayed its illusion to us.

Byrne works alone in Minneapolis and some of his work has been shown at the Walker Art Center there. There is an excellent video access center in Minneapolis, the University Community Video Center at the University of Minnesota. They have one-half-inch video tape equipment, both for recording and editing, and Byrne did his first work on their equipment.

Halifax

The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax is run by Garry Neill Kennedy, an art internationalist. He invites artists from many places to come to NSCAD to teach, and consequently the school combines a beautiful seaport location with a cosmopolitan teaching program. The school has very modest video equipment, all black and white, some portapak, and the idea has been to conduct a purposeful investigation of the medium. A review of tapes made at the school since 1970 is a mini-review of the general course conceptual art has taken over the past five years.

The first tapes done, in Pat Kelly’s teaching classes, are very straightforward explorations of the medium, with members of the class trying out different ways of filling the monitor’s space with their bodies. Soon the tapes reveal a search for a way to structure time and events, and this often takes the form of counting or repeating so the structure is as self-evident as possible. Some tapes examine more specific problems, like sound-image relationships.

For example, in David Askevold’s *Fill*, the artist wraps pieces of foil around a microphone head; as the image (the silver ball of foil) increases, the sound (the rustle of foil on the mike) becomes muffled and decreases. As he removes the pieces of foil one by one, the process is reversed.

A second series of tapes, done since 1974, are cleaner, tighter, more polished products based on the early explorations. An example is Lauren Butler’s *Untitled*. We see bare feet walking around on white paper. The person is carrying a bucket filled with dark liquid; from time to time the person puts his/her feet into the bucket to dye them, so the feet leave tracks on the paper. We can only see the pacing feet

and footprints we can't see the edges of the paper. Finally, the person walks off the paper, the camera zooms back, and we see the footprints spell out "one step at a time"

The most recent tapes indicate a new, more personal direction. *One*, by Dede Bazyck, was in the "Southland Video Anthology." It is a surreal journal, a collection of vivid little impressions and actions strung together through time by the artist.

Toronto

Another center for video activity in Canada is in Toronto. It is focused around two organizations in the city. The first is a group of three artists, Michael Tims, Ron Gabe, and Joree Saia, who call themselves General Idea. They are engaged in many activities, but most of them center around locating and restaging contemporary rituals. For example, from 1968 to 1971, they staged annual Miss General Idea pageants based on the ritual of Miss Anything beauty pageants, and managed to embroil an elaborate statement about the contemporary iconography of glamour. They are now involved in a complicated campaign of maneuvers and preparations for their biggest event, the Miss General Idea pageant of 1984. They first used video in 1970 to document that year's pageant and have continued to use it off and on. They have worked a great deal with mirrors and made an exquisite tape in 1970 called *Double-Mirror Video*. Two mirrors are set up opposite each other at the water's edge on a lakeshore. The mirrors are tilted, creating infinite echoes of reflections (a pure example of nonelectronic feedback). The camera zooms slowly in and out of the mirror images; one is never sure how deep inside the illusion one is until the very end, when the camera draws back from the mirror reflection altogether. It is a short, perfectly crafted work that capitalizes on the seeming transparency and clarity of water, mirrors, and light to disorient the viewer.

One member of the group, Michael Tims, has also organized a media distribution system called Art Metropole. They have a highly selective catalogue listing an excellent group of books, films, and video tapes. Their video tape distribution is handled by Peggy Gale, who was until recently the head of video funding for the Canada Council.

Another center in Toronto is A Space, an art gallery that supports video and has a library of

tapes. Parked under the gallery is a van with a studio color camera and editing equipment; this van provides access to equipment for local artists. One person who uses the equipment is Terry McGlade, who works mostly with dance. He has made a wide variety of interesting tapes exploring all kinds of dance-videospace relationships.

In addition, Toronto is becoming a center for a newly emerging kind of video. Bits of it exist elsewhere—in some of the tapes from the "Southland Video Anthology," in Joel Glassman's work in San Francisco, and in some tapes made in the last year or two in New York City. In Toronto, two artists in particular, Lisa Steele and Colin Campbell, have concentrated on it. All these artists share a concern with finding ways of structuring autobiographical material in new nonnarrative ways. In Steele's and Campbell's work, recent tapes string together a series of images, or quiet events. Often the artist appears as the sole person in the tapes; almost always one hears his or her voice, telling you the "story." Often there are recurring images, ones that seem to have a special hold on the artist's mind.

Lisa Steele puts her objectives clearly:

I got sick of people portraying dreams as foggy dry-ice-and-water type scenes. Dreams aren't like that. They are crystal clear. They just seem to follow a logic of their own. I'm trying to reconstruct that logic in my tapes.

This is reminiscent of Glassman's recent tape, *Dreams*, but hers are even more directly personal, since the artist often looks directly out at the viewer.

Campbell and Steele base their tapes on everyday visual reality. Nothing at all extraordinary is put in front of the camera physically. Campbell shows us the view from his window, Steele examines her plant collection. It is the means of showing these things, the order and way in which we are asked to perceive them that is extraordinary. It reminds one of Analytic Cubism: Picasso and Braque were also interested in perception itself, in how people take in information. However, the means of depicting this, the new techniques, is so strange to look at at first that there was the danger people wouldn't be able to "read" the paintings at all. Therefore, the painters used as a foil for their new mode recognizable everyday content—guitars, coffee cups, wineglasses, people. Much of the fascination of these paintings



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comes from the tension between what you can recognize and what is new to you.

Some of the new video tapes do the same thing, albeit in different ways. Campbell's and Steele's work shows you everyday physical reality in new sequences; they are using both the camera's ability to record our daily living environment and its ability to structure this information through time to construct new modes of perception.

New York State

Owing largely to support from the New York State Council for the Arts, New York State has the most energetic and diverse range of video activities of any area in this country or Canada. Most of the activity started in the early years of the video movement in New York City. Over the years, people left the city for smaller communities and set up small groups and organizations, each with its own perspective.

THE CENTER FOR EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION —



FRAME 106 step through next 39 frames

is in Binghamton. It exists completely independently of SUNY, but a professor from the university, Ralph Hocking, runs it. He is assisted by Sherry Miller and R and D persons Don McArthur and David Jones. It is an access center—anyone can come in and check out equipment to make any kind of tape. One of Hocking's main interests, however, is for processed color imagery, and he has done all he can to encourage that kind of video at the center. Nam June Paik was the first artist-in-residence, and he built his second synthesizer there. Lately, the current artist-in-residence, Walter Wright, who comes from a computer background, has been working with Hocking to design new equipment and build up an image bank. This bank is a collection of black-and-white tapes that have been processed in increasingly sophisticated ways; the resulting images have truly amazing colors and solarized effects. It is interesting to note that the image bank material is not purely abstract. Wright feels that computer generated art is often dull. He says viewers can intuitively complete the whole pattern after having seen only a tiny portion, and watching it work itself out becomes boring. Wright's basic black-and-white footage is of "natural" imagery, moving water being an example. The movement is rhythmic and has a

certain regularity, but since in nature there are so many variables causing motion, it paradoxically also seems to have a random element, and so holds surprise. One of the most intriguing things about watching these images is that most of one's ability to recognize the base image through all the color and special effects is dependent upon its movement; one can always recognize rippling water, whereas a still frame from the tape would be illegible, abstract. Wright has traveled around the state, giving synthesizer performances.

A second focus of activity in the state has been Syracuse. The Everson Museum has had an amazing number of exhibitions of many different kinds of video art, first under the direction of David Ross and now under Richard Simmons. Many artists have had first one-person shows there. All in all, it has been the consistently best place on the East Coast to see new video art. Also in Syracuse is Synapse, a very posh, well-equipped cable system at the university. Students there have received excellent technical training. One of them, John Trayna, is now the technician at Electronic Arts Intermix in New York City; another, Bill Viola, is running Art Tapes 22 in Florence, Italy.

Woodstock Community Video is directed by Ken Marsh. He was an original member of People's Video Theatre, an early video group in New York City. In Woodstock, he has been committed to getting alternate material on cable TV. An independent, non-institutional group named Media Bus live in Lanesville, New York. Their roots are also in the city; as the Videofreex, they were one of the first groups to form. They moved to Lanesville to see if they could establish a genuinely alternative television system for a small community, and they have largely succeeded. They have a regular Saturday-night show, for and about the community. The membership of the group is diverse—they do all kinds of work, from local reporting to video games, and members of the group do individual creative work as well.

One of the best "documentary" tapes was made by Nancy Cain of Media Bus. It is a very short piece titled *Harriet*. It shows Harriet, a Lanesville woman, at home, taking care of her children, making beds, fixing meals. Her life seems made up of rather dull work, but she is a very spirited and lively person. At the end of the tape, she acts out a fantasy for the camera: she packs her bag, screams she's fed up with Lanesville, jumps in the car and takes off down the road, laughing uproariously, radio blaring. It



was a marvelous documentary of the type professional documentary groups are only talking about—a mixture of fiction, nonfiction, everyday routine and fantasy, all of which adds up to a most sensitive portrait.

In recent years, Buffalo has become a small think-tank for studies in media. This is largely due to the energy, enthusiasm, and ambition of GERALD O'GRADY, —



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who has set up the Media Study Center, an independent department within SUNY at Buffalo. He has assembled a faculty that includes some of the most interesting people working in film and video today—Paul Sharits and Hollis Frampton in film, and WOODY AND STEINA VASULKA —



FRAME 223 step through next 5 frames

in video. O'Grady has a constant schedule of workshops and conferences, lectures and viewings. He is interested in all aspects of media, from each individual work to the role all the mass media play in our society.

The Vasulkas are probably among the most thoughtful, intelligent people working in video, and their work is central to the basic concerns of the medium. Steina is a violinist from Iceland and Woody is a film-maker from Czechoslovakia; both have been interested in electronic arts of all kinds for a long time. They lived for several years in New York City where they set up THE KITCHEN,



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a kind of free-form gallery and electronic-arts performance center, in the summer of 1971, and showed much early video there as well as helping to organize some of the first video tape festivals.

Woody remembers how they felt when they first began to use video:

Our context was not really artistic when we started to work with video. It was very far from what I would recognize as art. . . . There are various motives for people who stumble into video. In some cases, it was pure accident; in some cases, it was hope. In my case, I had been in things I couldn't work with. I was in film, and I couldn't do anything with it. It was



STEP BACK



STEP FORWARD



The Kitchen, 1972

absolutely a closed medium to me. I was educated in film at a film school. I was exposed to all the narrative structures of film, but they weren't real to me and I couldn't understand what independent film was. I was totally locked into this inability to cope with the medium I was trained in. So for me, video represented being able to disregard all that and find new material which had no esthetic content or context. When I first saw video feedback, I knew I had seen the cave fire. It had nothing to do with anything, just a perpetuation of some kind of energy . . .

The Vasulkas have done both "documentary" and "abstract" video over the years: this discussion will cover only the latter. They stuck to their guns—there is no dramatic structure in their work; the tapes have fast-moving rhythms, but shifts occur according to permutations in the way the image is structured, not according to any dramatic plan. Their early work pursued two themes, according to Steina:

We approached the art material, meaning that we dealt with voltages and frequencies. We are dealing with the signal, that is the audio signal and the video signal. . . .

Woody: What was really, truly significant to us at that time was something nobody really detected. That was to make pictures by audio frequencies, and to get audio frequencies out of pictures.

The first tool the Vasulkas got was a portapak; the second was an audio synthesizer. They hooked the two up and sometimes could use the audio signal to generate video images, and sometimes use the video signal to generate sounds.

Steina: *That was the first approach we had. Secondly, another characteristic of our work has been a consistent traveling of the frame, horizontal traveling.*

Much abstract video imagery has the tendency to move vertically. The Vasulkas insisted on moving theirs horizontally, often along lines of monitors so it looked as if the image was traveling down the line from one monitor to the next. Woody explains:

At that time I was totally obsessed with this idea that there was no single frame anymore. I come from the movies, where the frame was extremely rigid, and I understood that electronic material has no limitation within its existence. It only has limitation when it reaches the screen because the screen itself is a rigid time structure. But the electro-magnetic spectrum itself exists, organized or unorganized, totally in space. Confining it in a single monitor is like a view through a camera, or a single projection frame. All this gave us the idea that there was no truly rigid frame, just particular organizations of time and energy. The image is fed into a sound synthesizer . . . the organizational mark itself is electronic. That's what we in video call horizontal and vertical pulse—it paces the image. These are the sync marks which are usually hidden behind the frame. It's all on the images, just as film has sprocket holes which are normally hidden. Electronically, there are also frames. What this does is disregard the reference of being locked into a single frame. It travels; there are two time layers. One is static, and the other is dynamic and all this is exposed. . . .

All this means that one is often watching a horizontally drifting image, and that the sound and the image are directly related in some way. The total effect is of a totally integrated work that is nevertheless dynamic, always energetic, always moving.

The Vasulkas' work has tended to evolve with their equipment. Woody says:

Our work is a dialogue between the tool and the image, so we would not preconceive an image, separately make a conscious model of it, and then try to match it, as other people do. We would rather make a tool and dialogue with it; that's how we belong with 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.

During the years 1972-1973, they went through a surrealist period. They had been going through picture books of Magritte's work, figuring out how natural it would be to do some of his works with video special effects. One work, *The Golden Voyage*, is directly based on Magritte's painting *The Golden Legend*—a loaf of bread travels like a finger, opening up certain areas of the image to special effects. Even in these works, where there is no horizontal drift, there are at least two kinds of motion going on in each image; motion, rates of change, are always present in their work.

Their latest work involves raster manipulation; each line of the video image becomes a carrier of energy through time. Sometimes the images are sketches of simple wave patterns. Sometimes a portapak tape of a street scene is used, and the raster is altered according to the brightness or energy in the image. So what one is seeing is a topographical map of the brightness of an image; where the image is bright, it lifts the lines; where it is black, they fall. The Vasulkas call this recoding, and indeed it does make one recode the way the image is looked at because new kinds of information are being given.

Woody explains what he is attempting to do with this new imagery, which can look quite stark and unaesthetic, because it is so new:

You should be precise about your pleasures, and communicate those to the audience, rather than those which are widely shared. That's what I have against any dramatic structures. They already appeal to an experience which is built through the centuries. . . . I walk somewhere, and I see something which is art, and I agree with it. But then I question it. I say "Why did I like this? Because it is art?" And then after all, I feel frustrated that I really enjoyed it, because there were other qualities that were missing. . . . Right now I am interested in knowing, in knowledge, than in the esthetic end of it. So then I must say, "Did it say anything towards my own process?" And often I have to say it didn't, it just extended what is called art, in its beauty, or its accomplishments, but it didn't say anything to my personal problems. Sometimes when I watch people's work, I tend to underestimate it because it's not

beautiful. But then I have to re-evaluate it and change my preference, because in the long run, that work which was not so beautiful, might have been more important. . . .

Basically art provides a continuous stream of models of consciousness. There are always certain historical periods when new consciousness is created, for example, when Freud reached a new understanding of the relationship between people. Eventually there is a construct of consciousness which has art as a model. . . . Now, what I am interested in is if there is the possibility of actual, total redesign of consciousness in the sense of its model. During the early part of my life, I was looking into myself for an alternate model of consciousness, and I didn't find it. Now turning more and more towards material, I'm trying to find this new model of consciousness within the material. . . .

Since we look at reality mostly through our eyes, the reality has total dependence on perception, on how images are formed in the eye. . . . But through an electronically-generated image, I found non-lens, non-eye possibilities of restructuring the image. . . . I am not totally dependent on reality as we know it through the lens or eye. . . . Through electronics, I think there is a way of interacting with real models, with models taken from nature, and a new concept of nature can be synthesized.

. . . The closest thing to all this is radio astronomy. The universe as we knew it until now was constructed on information of light, which reached our eyes and provided a model of the conscious universe. But now, with radio astronomy, we are getting a very different notion of our universe. First of all, we receive information which is not visible. It's not points or spheres anymore. It's energy which is not in a permanent state; it is permutating, as a matter of fact, all the time. So that suddenly, through the instruments we have, we are reconstructing the universe in some visual sense, because eventually we translate radio waves into some visual model. We are now trying to visualize space which exists only as electro-magnetic forces. . . . It's the notion of the organization of energy in time that for me is the key to all sorts of changes within life.

New York City

New York City has continued to be the single most productive place in the video art world. There are several places people can watch tapes and see installations: Castelli-Sonnabend, Electronic Arts Intermix, The Kitchen, and at Anthology Film Archives, the video part of which is directed by video artist Shigeko Kubota, to mention only a few of the most prominent. Some artists can work at the TV Lab; independent artists can now find access centers for equipment and editing facilities. There are frequently exhibitions, as well as new books and articles. A discussion of the work of three artists, Ira Schneider, Peter Campus, and Bill Gwin, may serve to indicate in a modest way the richness and diversity of work being produced.

Ira Schneider's work has been as central to the medium as that of the Vasulkas. He was present during the very earliest months of the movement, and seems to have been a founding member of most of the original groups. Together with Frank Gillette, he did one of the earliest multimonitor installations, *Wipe Cycle*, at the "Television as a Creative Medium" exhibition held at Howard Wise's gallery in 1969. It was a nine-monitor piece, a console of monitors three high and three wide. Images shuttled from monitor to monitor, following four separate programmed cycles; there were live and delayed images of the gallery itself, broadcast images, prerecorded tapes, and gray "light" pulses.

This mix of images, which Schneider calls "information collage," has remained central to his work. In the spring of 1974, he did an installation at both the Everson Museum and The Kitchen called *Manhattan Is an Island*. Twenty-four monitors were arranged in the shape of Manhattan Island. The outside ring of monitors showed tapes of images of the island from boats; bus, land, architecture, and people tapes were all played on monitors in a logical part of the "island." The monitors were arranged at different heights, following the topography of the island. One monitor, facing up, displayed tape taken from a helicopter. Viewers could move in amongst the monitors, seeing specific bits and views of cityscape, or stand outside and watch the whole island hum along. The tapes from this piece have been edited down into a single tape one can watch on a single monitor.

Schneider says he tries to establish conditions with the information he provides, and so "guide not

push" an audience along a route of perception. His latest tape, *Bits, Chunks, and Pieces*, does precisely that. So far, it is a black-and-white fifty-four minute "video album." It is very clearly and elegantly taped and moves the viewer along through different kinds of American landscape. One goes from "Santa Fe Fiesta" to "Tex-Mex" to "Rock 1," zooming along looking out a car window, stopping to see an eighty-five-foot doll named Zozobra explode in fireworks at the fiesta. Toward the end, the pace quickens, one becomes aware that the sound doesn't necessarily match the image, and certain sequences are repeated over and over (one remembers especially a line of cows swinging along the side of a road while "Put on Your High-Heeled Sneakers" blares on the car radio). Schneider stresses the nonnarrative nature of his album; he wants each viewer to figure out the information by himself.

Peter Campus was in the film business for several years. From about 1966 to 1970 he underwent a gradual change, disentangling himself from film: eventually he made the decision to become an artist and began to do work in video. His work takes two forms—he does both tapes and gallery installations. The tapes typically use some visual effect special to video, chroma-key or two camera images superimposed, to set up a shift in perception. His two best-known works, *Three Transitions* and *Set of Coincidence*, each have three parts, and each one builds quietly on the statement made by the previous part, from concrete to abstract, from witty to somber.

One sees the image of Campus himself in the tapes; the installations are triggered by the viewer, who usually deals with an image of himself. Generally, there is a darkened room that holds a camera and a video projector. The viewer walks in; his image is picked up by the camera and projected against a wall, usually in a way that distorts the image or makes it elusive in some way. By walking around the space, the viewer can explore the parameters of the piece—where the camera will or will not pick up his image, how his placement in the room affects the size and shape of his image on the wall, and so on.

Campus talked about his work:

My departure from Paik, well from most people working in video, is that I'm less interested in broadcast television than I am in surveillance television. . . . I'm more interested in that kind of narrative. . . . I don't allow anyone to touch the camera; the camera is

always still. It really is the human stuff in opposition to the electronic stuff. They are pitted against each other. That seems to be one facet. Another facet is I'm very consciously working with transformations of energy. . . . You think of the video process: light is focused by the lens in the camera, which is photon energy, hits the vidicon tube and is translated into electrical energy, comes out on the monitor as electrons, the stream of electrons hits that phosphorous stuff and becomes light energy, photons again, is focused by the eye, hits the retina and becomes neuron energy. The relationship between all that interests me. I think with my installation pieces, one has the feeling that the wall is alive with energy. . . . And then on another level, I'm interested in the relationship between light and mass, mass being the human figure. I believe that the human figure belongs in art, and so have consciously kept it in my work. . . . I feel that when the [installation] pieces are successful, there is a parameter of behavior that is set up, and in order to fully explore the work you have to fully explore all the parameters of the piece.

. . . The idea is really derived from an Indian sense of temple architecture where they had very specific paths you would have to travel in order to experience the space.

. . . Although in my newest piece, I've eliminated even that. I'm really interested in forming an almost static image that's generated by the viewer. I'm getting to the point where I'm interested in eliminating movement, and there's just a transformation of energy. They're very intense. I'm beginning to be interested in the viewer being transfixed in some way. . . . I think my installations are more special to me because they eliminate the mind-body dichotomy, the Cartesian flaw, because you are thinking with your body in those pieces—well, not exactly; you are thinking with your mind/body. They don't make that separation.

My work at its worst is overloaded with content. I'm constantly working against that, trying to fit this humanity back into it. That's the way I must work. . . . I'm trying to make some kinds of information that we've always gotten from books accessible to the intuitive, experiential being.



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BILL GWIN is perhaps the most fine-arts-oriented of all the video artists. He operates firmly within the traditions of modern art and is pushing the limits of those traditions in new directions. He spends half his time painting and half making video. He says:

These two things bear a very close relationship one to another; they feed off each other. The thrust of my work seems to switch, to alternate between the two. . . . Monet is a principal influence for my work, in particular the water lilies. I spent a year in Paris and I spent a great deal of time in the Orangerie with those paintings. It's an influence you could see in my painting I did at the same time as Irving Bridge, almost four years ago.

Irving Bridge, discussed earlier, is one of the classic tapes done at the National Center in 1972. Soon after completing that tape and one more, *Pt. Lobos*, Gwin came to New York City, where he has lived ever since. In 1973–1974, he received one of the artist-in-residence positions at the TV Lab at WNET, and made a tape about New York City called *Sweet Verticality*. It is a visual poem, really, set to a written poem by Joe Ribar. The tape has much more motion than his earlier work; the camera pans up the length of Park Avenue, down the World Trade Center, zooms along in subways. The raw footage is 16-mm. film stock that Gwin later processed at the lab. He is a very methodical worker; he knows what he wants when he goes in to use the equipment, and each bit is carefully rehearsed. He explains why:

With video, the medium can take over, much more easily than with painting. In the working relationship it's a much more powerful, aggressive kind of medium. Maybe you have to be a little firmer with your ideas, and be careful not to let it get out of hand, which I think happens a great deal with people's work. It's perfectly understandable. It's a hard thing to avoid. Video can be very captivating; it's easy to do up to a point, and then it becomes very difficult. But there is a certain amount of stuff that it makes all by itself, like spontaneous generation. You can sit there, and you turn one knob, and all this stuff goes on. . . . If you don't know, you can get lost inside of it. There's

nothing wrong with that; in fact, it's a wonderful way to learn. That's exactly the way I did learn. But you need a longer time than the two weeks the TV Lab can give you to mix a program: I did it for three years.

From *Irving Bridge* to *Sweet Verticality* there is a marked change of intent in Gwin's work. He has been led to an interest in language, not just music or electronic sounds, but language in his visual work:

*Irving Bridge was intended to be a kind of stimulus, something that would start people's minds working in a way that was different from the way your mind normally functions. You are given a situation that asks you to redirect the way you think. But there is no effort to make any kind of precise and intelligible statement. It was only an attempt to get people to start to think, and the way they went would be totally dependent upon themselves—most people would vary considerably in their responses. I think I want to move in the direction of a more precise statement. At least I want to know if I can make that kind of precise statement if I choose to. So that I'm not always trying to get people to think, but that I'm also trying to say something. This has led me to the use of language. I guess it's one of the most central things to my thinking, both in my paintings and my video tapes. . . . That was the question *Sweet Verticality* raised. It's how to put language into what is essentially a visual form. Language is a wonderful thing, you know. There are things you can say with language you just can't say any other way. At the same time, there is something particular about the kind of responses you can elicit with visual things. And I think, if you could put those two elements together in some way that was cohesive, you would have opened up the possibility for a huge range of statements, statements of most any sort, from the most abstract, purely visual kinds, to the kinds of specific statements you can make with language.*

Sweet Verticality has single voices and choruses speaking the poem as readers (Gwin is careful to distinguish between readers and narrators), and printed words stream across the screen as well.

In his most recent painting, a self-portrait, phrases and bits of autobiographical information are written on the canvas, buried in the painted collage of material the way he buries his words in the

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passing time of *Sweet Verticality*. In both cases, he is searching for a medium versatile enough to hold both image and language.

In this move from *Irving Bridge* to *Sweet Verticality*, Gwin marks a change that has occurred in many artists' work in video. The early fascination with the limits of the medium itself, with its ability to shape and pace time, its ability to record "natural" events as well as construct abstract ones, has shifted to an interest in using these inherent characteristics to make more specific statements. This is happening in many different ways, however, reflecting as always the flexibility and openness of the medium. As Gwin says:

It's still a very young thing. Ten years is a short time. It's impossible to see what direction it will take . . . it's such an immensely flexible medium, perhaps the most flexible medium that's ever been made available. It just can do an astounding number of things, so people are doing a lot of different things with it. But that's exciting.

The following barcodes access images which are related to the time period roughly covered by this article but not explicitly referred to:



VIDEOHEADS, AMSTERDAM
FRAME 146 step through next 1 frame



GARY HILL
FRAME 148 step through next 8 frames



J-P BOYER
FRAME 157



ERNEST GUSELLA
FRAME 178 step through next 5 frames



BEN TATTI
FRAME 207



W. WRIGHT: Scanimat Explained
NANO A frame 10069 to 23265



J-P BOYER: Biofeedback I
NANO C frame 253 to 4779



J-P BOYER: Biofeedback II
NANO C frame 4786 to 7782



P. PERLMAN: Biofeedback
NANO C frame 7805 to 10029



P. CROWN: Biofeedback
NANO C frame 10040 to 11713



STEP BACK



STEP FORWARD