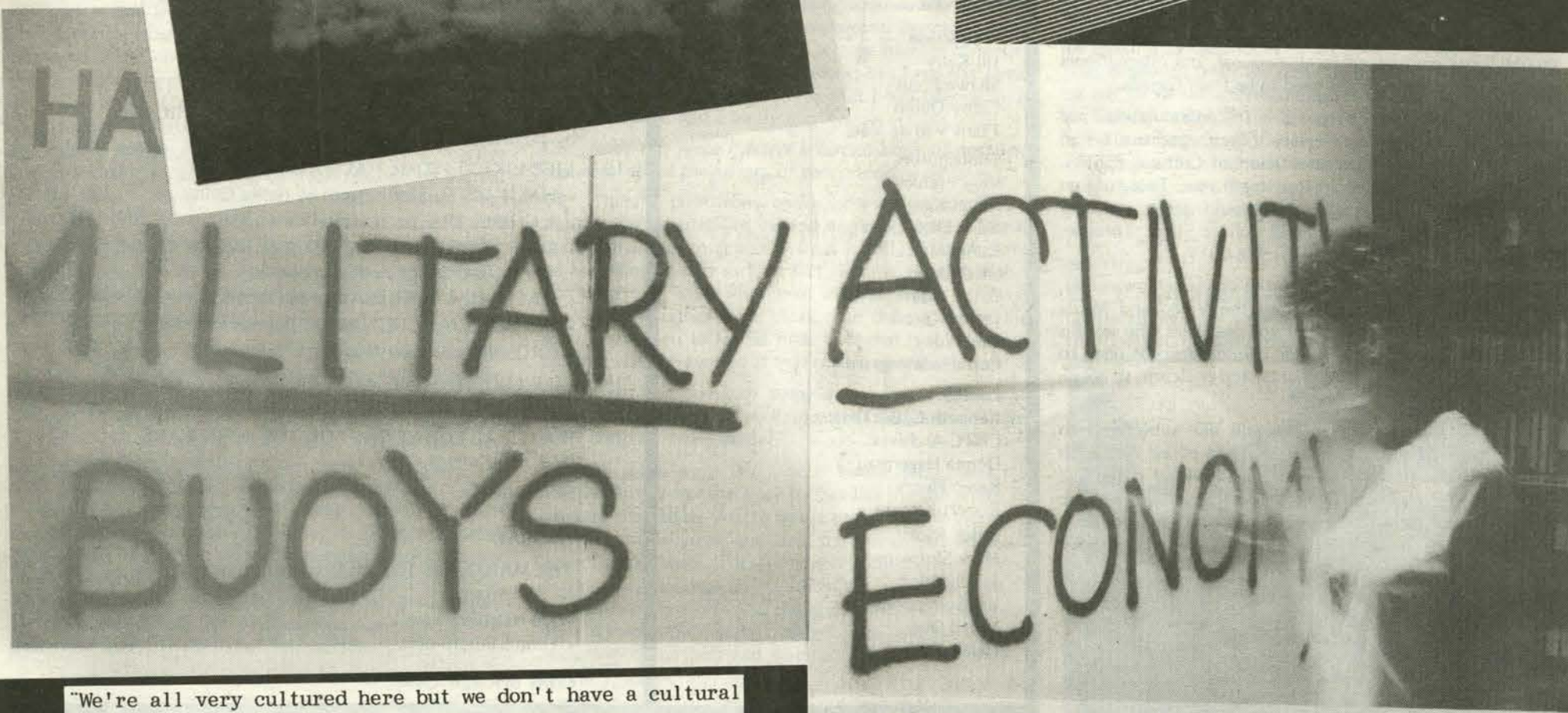


VIDEO GUIDE

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LIFE LIKE IT

*Some
Halifax
Video*



"We're all very cultured here but we don't have a cultural department."
Bernie Smith, Financial Director, City of Halifax

STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL

What do artists want? Can artists be politically involved without sacrificing their productivity and independence? What are the problems associated with private funding and public funding? How do artists fare under different political systems? These are a few of the questions which were addressed in the Strategies For Survival Conference held by the Vancouver Artists' League in early June. The three day conference offered a comparative study of the situation of artists in Canada with those in Japan, West Germany, Belgium, Great Britain, Poland, El Salvador, Netherlands, and the U.S.A. — an around the globe look at art and politics.

On the structural level there were comparisons of dictatorial control of content with the negotiating base of socialist groups and the competition for private and state funding in the capitalist system. The struggle for artistic freedom and financial well-being was common to everyone. These two factors balanced precariously in various states of unresolve in every situation. On the home front there was concern for the lack of consistent funding, the difficulties of younger artists and galleries getting started, and the ongoing insecurities of older artists.

Very little concrete direction came from the Conference itself. The Status of the Artists research paper delivered by Keith Kelly of the Department of Communications offered formal recognition of the role of the artist in Canadian culture and suggestions for systems benefits such as UIC and pensions. Some of the recommendations were consistent with those of the Independent Artists' Union in Toronto. Their platform aims at an eventual guaranteed wage for working artists. But some participants felt that their political independence was central to legitimate artmaking. No resolutions were adopted concerning strategy, but a lot of information was exchanged and problems and issues aired. The information will be useful in the continuing struggle for a 'strategy' — an organized effort to improve the working reality of artists.

The papers are available for reading in the Video Inn Print Library. Copies are available from Vancouver Artists League, P.O. Box 3980, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, V6B 3Z4.

The participants were: Dr. Thomas Deeke, West Germany; Margaret Harrison, Britain; Tatsuo Yamamoto, Japan; Guy Schraenen, Belgium; Judy Moran, U.S.A.; Jerzy Onuch, Poland; Clive Robertson, Canada; Wilma DeJong, Netherlands; Jose Ventura, El Salvador.



Jerzy Onuch, Guy Schraenen



Marion Barling, Wilma DeJong, Guy Schraenen



Margaret Harrison



Lisa Steele, Keith Kelly

EDIT

In Vancouver summer is over and it's back to the rain. It is our hope to plan next year's issues soon, so if you have any ideas for themes, articles, etc., please write to the Editorial Board. At the Annual General Meeting of the Satellite Video Exchange Society we appointed a new Editorial Board and it is as follows: Jill Kelly, Sara Diamond, Cornelia Wyngaarden, Shawn Preus, Lisa Hebert, Joe Sarahan, and Jeanette Reinhardt. *Video Guide's* current policy is to accept guest editors, so anyone interested in guest editing an issue of *Video Guide* should submit a proposal to the Managing Editor for consideration. Fees for guest editing will depend on each proposal and how much work is to be done by the guest editor. Guest editors should focus content on local, national, and international topics. Guest editors do not need to be from Canada.

Video Guide would like to join in congratulating *Fuse* magazine on its tenth anniversary. *Fuse* magazine plays an important role in the representation of Cultural Politics. *Video Guide* wishes *Fuse* a happy tenth year. Those of you who haven't seen or read *Fuse* should get a copy by contacting them at 5th floor, 489 College Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6G 1A5, (416) 928-0914.

Video Guide is committed to the continued awareness, appreciation, and development of the Video and Media Arts, and we encourage those of you out there who see this as important to contribute. *Video Guide* office is open to suggestions, inquiries, compliments, and criticism, so please feel free to contact us.

The circulation department would like subscribers to be conscious of your renewal date and please renew on time. The issue number on your mailing label is the last issue you will receive on your paid subscription — please check this. For issue themes, deadlines, and fee rates, write or phone *Video Guide*, 261 Powell Street, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, V6A 1G3, (604) 688-4336.

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for the Satellite Video Exchange Society

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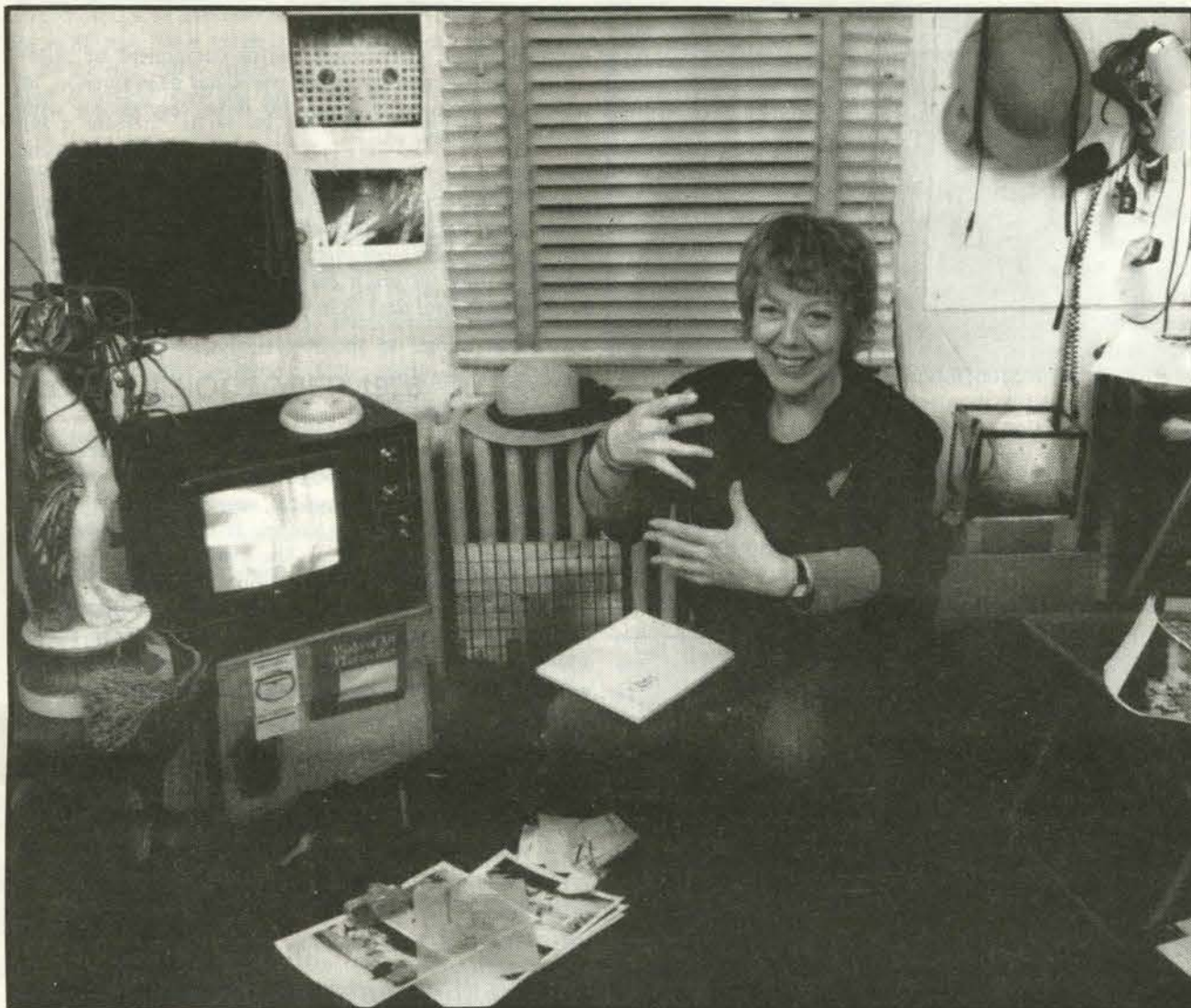


Photo by Helena Wilson

VERA FRENKEL

Interviewed by Cornelia Wyngaarden

The following interview by Cornelia Wyngaarden took place at Koji's on Broadway on the evening of March 15, 1986, three days after the completion of Vera Frenkel's installation with video, tableaux, audio, and texts. The installation, titled *Lost Art: A Cargo Cult Romance*, was part of Luminous Sites and was presented at the Community Arts Centre in Vancouver.

Cornelia Wyngaarden: *The first thing that pops into my mind is that you very often use, almost like souvenirs, items that you have used in your previous art or installations; that you carry baggage along with you from one art piece to another yourself. I wondered if that had anything to do with the title? Do you have a metaphorical meaning for each of these objects or is this just your unique way of working?*

Vera Frenkel: I don't think of my work in terms of its uniqueness. I think I am simply more deliberate in doing what we all do, and that is a retroactive re-framing of things that have gone before. I simply acknowledge that process in the work. And yes, there is usually a strong metaphorical structure. In this work, the cargo cult notion is central. The object which the cargo cult addresses, in this case a flying prison toilet, is not one which I invented but one which I came across, have been present at an event where it was made. I'm interested in the invention of culture and part of why I use strategies of retroactive re-contextualizing in my own work is because we do that all the time; I simply would like it to be evident in what I do. The shifts in perception and changes in me over time are reflected in the work and easy for the viewer to see.

CW: *I would like to ask you once and for all: was there really a panel on rendering? It seems to me a very bizarre kind of topic for a panel discussion.*

VF: Well, it wasn't a panel discussion. It was a demonstration of techniques of representation, but it had the same physical format: people sitting at tables. Yes, and No, are my answers to that. I was at Banff for a short time in 1977. There were people there with certain very specialized skills in rendering and those skills seemed to have little relation to each other or to the content of what was rendered. There were these strange codes of representation that seemed to have fallen out of the realm of what we call art. The notion of precise representation of things in the world and of making recognizable images of objects seemed no longer to be the province of these highly developed specialists. All of them had come to Banff to paint abstractly. The situation intrigued me.

It made sense, in a way, that they would integrate their skills and make whatever they could make. It was both a form of wishful thinking and bizarre to make an image

that was whole instead of making only fragments. The tape from that event has been lurking about since 1977. It is almost completely ruined; it flickers like the most dreadful strobe light. What we did to that footage was a miracle of restoration. None of us knows really enough about how to do that, but we captured every healthy frame and sustained it until the next healthy frame, and that gave a sense of what might have happened. The audio was undisturbed. It wasn't good, but we could hear it and it wasn't intermittent the way the image was. The only part where any colour remained was during the signing of the work.

There are several lost arts at work in the piece, not just the work of art that was made on that occasion and has since disappeared. Seven years later when I went back and wanted to look at it (I was just curious), I asked myself: did that actually happen? It was such an odd event. It was even odder that the painting would have disappeared. Who would want it? In the course of searching for it, I asked myself: who would steal it? Who would destroy it? Hide it? Lose it? It's an interesting absence and I've been interested in absence as a phenomenon in some of my work. The missing novelist; the strange murder mysteries I made reference to in earlier work; but here was a real absence and it was of something that I had been witness to, so I was haunted a bit by it.

CW: *With this piece I detect a certain sense of nostalgia and irony about the history of contemporary art.*

VF: There is both irony and a sense of loss together. I think the art that has to depend on rendering is as lost as the art that tries to get away from it and isn't dependent on rendering of that sort. In fact, what is gone, though I don't regret it, is the illusion of what art might be. What I'm saying is rather more bleak than the surface of the work allows you to feel at first. But what is it, if it's not art, that was represented at that rendering presentation?

CW: *I get the sense of being a cultural archaeologist when I go and see your work; that I get flashes and details, but what puts it all together?*

VF: In some ways it's a very simple piece, and the components in the space are in fact like pins on a map or markers that allow you to put it together. The interplay between the tableaux, the tape, the sound, and the texts integrates the work. I draw evidence from the tape so you can experience things physically in the space and look at representations of them at the same time. There's a two-way representation, really: each — tape and tableaux — reflecting the other, and both alluding to the original event. I want that double vision at work. But I use combinations of sound, image, and text that are contradictory, rather than congruent, in order to create spaces

between them, so that people can enter the work in a way that is deeper than intellectual.

The cargo cult metaphor is a reminder for me to consider how we learn to believe, how we look for redemption and how we attribute power to forces outside ourselves. Here are all our human longings for peace and order and bliss and redemption and plenty and harmony. (That's one of the reasons I use the Kurt Weill song about Youkali, the imaginary island of bliss. It was written just before World War II broke out.) There's something very familiar here, something at its root that we all share. No different from someone in the South Sea Islands, worshipping military debris and attributing to it the power to take us into the realm of light and plenty. I find that a moving and frightening spectacle.

CW: *Well, do you believe that the art cult has that same kind of pretension to imagine?*

VF: I think attributions of false meaning take place in the art world all the time, often connected to a profit motive or to status desires or to a lot of things extraneous to the usefulness of art. So, if the cargo cult phenomenon, or some version of it, operates in the art world, and I think you're suggesting that it does, it is probably my concern to balance that with another way of talking about it. I mean work that acknowledges what we don't know. Work that acknowledges our limitations. We know only fragments of things, from which we extrapolate entireties. We don't know whole things: we may imagine we do. We would like to. And what this work is, is a lament regarding the illusions of order and what the need for these does to us. We need to think that what we do has a certain meaning, and that we're not inventing that meaning from whole cloth, and that we are not misreading it. What I'm saying is that culture is a form of hypnosis in which one attributes meaning and passes on one's attributions to the next generation, often very mistakenly, and this generates practices which are passed on from generation to generation, giving the fiction more substance.

This work, *Lost Art*, is one in which a moment in a kind of culture is invented in front of you, and yet is related to things we know. Like the stuff really does come on shore — ships founder and cargo arrives — so the physical artifacts — the rifle butt, or the coke bottle, or the helmet or whatever the debris is — and the bits and pieces are assembled as they're washed up and made into shrines around which rituals are elaborated. It's a kind of spiritual fetishism that parallels many other ways of believing. I would like my contribution, in this case, to be a look at that.

CW: *The thing that baffled me the most is the actual existence of the rendering of a flying prison toilet. Did they really make that?*

VF: Yes, they did. There is an actual piece of art that is missing.

CW: *What was the intention in its creation? And why in this ultra-realistic style? I presume it was ultra-realistic.*

VF: It was very precise with perhaps the small exception that it was flying. Doug Haynes painted this beautiful sky to give the impression it was flying. We all signed the work.

CW: *Were you part of this rendering team?*

VF: I was not on the team, but I was there. I had agreed to act as commentator or moderator. It was in the context of looking at techniques of art gone by. Part of the loss that is alluded to in the piece is the loss of the usefulness of art. Or of our understanding of why it is useful. I think art is very useful. It has the deep integrating function of mind and body and of everything else; it's the antithesis of propaganda, the real locus of critique. It's central, critical, and renewing, which is why, in a very destructive culture, it is denigrated or appropriated.

CW: *I wonder if I understand what you mean with rendering?*

VF: I don't have a lot of interest in rendering. I'm interested in it as a phenomenon. I'm not interested in enshrining it, nor am I interested in enshrining its absence.



photo by Robert Keziere



photo by Helena Wilson

What fascinated me was that people I met in Banff that have major reputations as abstract painters were denying those other skills. It's like having a pick-up truck and always walking. I was interested that they preferred to make the kind of art that didn't use their many resources; in why we lead split lives.

CW: In this case these people when they are artists are making abstract paintings without the use of rendering, and when they use rendering to make a living they are not making art; they call it work.

VF: Yes, and I'm saying that phenomenon is strange.

CW: I suppose it is a strange phenomenon.

VF: I'm not saying that one is better than the other. I'm saying the split is strange.

CW: There are always fundamental questions that concern our lives that even if they're not in your mind consciously, are at least there unconsciously, and they manifest themselves during the production of an art piece.

VF: Well, I was very affected by the spectacle of four skilled people combining their efforts and making this strange object. I thought there was something going on that was larger than the event itself, that dealt with issues of fragmentation. It dealt with the ridiculous; it dealt with puritanism; it dealt with longing to soar and fly. It seemed to have in its structure, some of the things that interest me.

CW: Why did you go and look for that painting?

VF: I was curious.

CW: There are lots of events in our lives that arouse our curiosity that we don't follow up on.

VF: That's right, but I happened to be in Banff, within the context of an interdisciplinary program. People were talking about collaboration, and this was a collaboration that had taken place seven years earlier.

Here is an indirect example of what in this piece matters to me. It's very indirect, but coming at it from a different point of view:

At York, I refused this year to teach in the fine arts building because of the air system. It's a closed air system. It has windows that are sealed shut.

CW: So you get circulating bad air.

VF: For the last twelve years or more, for the life of the building, there has not been enough fresh air for those who work there. The artists in the building use all kinds of chemicals and solvents and so on, which accumulate.

Smokers smoke. Photographers use formaldehyde. Print-makers use nitric acid, and so on. I began feeling more and more wretched when I spent time in the building. Then I discovered that in its wisdom the University had injected something called Deercide 771 into the air we breathed. It's a biocide designed to kill biological material like the bacteria that cause Legionnaires' Disease. (This sort of treatment is not unusual.) So I got hold of the specifications of Deercide 771 and discovered that there are two known toxins in that substance, known to do certain awful things to rats and mice in research settings, and these toxins are being injected into our air system ostensibly for our protection, but in fact they are very harmful. It has taken me five months of very hard work to put a stop to the injection of Deercide 771 and for us to get a study done. We were opposed all the way by the very people whose job it is to care for our safety.

I began by just doing homework on chemical saturation and the immune system, and very soon I realized that people lie. They lie to themselves and they were lying to us. So I have to breathe toxins that could ruin my internal chemical balance and not for reasons that have anything to do with protecting my health, but to protect the university legally in case Legionnaire's disease or some such thing breaks out. Instead of finding a way to open the windows.

CW: I guess they don't want to get sued.

VF: In a choice between a closed-air system disease or chemical poisoning, they are going to get class action suits anyway. It's an absence of judgement to think otherwise. It's a separation of practice from feeling. One hears all kinds of things about the separation between thinking and feeling, or a range of what seems to be acceptable to do as opposed to what is morally correct to do. In my view it is morally correct to create a healthy environment for people who work there, not to lie to them, or do chemical things to them without letting this be known and discussed. Administrators sometimes think they have to lie. Or sometimes they don't even know they're lying, but they are. They are fragmented.

This fragmentation is somehow implicit in the spectacle trying to overcome it to make a single image. They had made a composite image of an unprecedented thing which turns out to be a flying prison toilet. Trying to make sense of bits of information. I found it a useful image to work with. The compartmentalization of talents that were at work reflects for me what people do to themselves or have done to them. Artists subvert that. Art cuts across that and short-circuits it and says, wait a minute now. And people in general have been very perceptive about this image, so it has struck a chord somewhere.

I'm interested in having people develop a skepticism towards the media and towards orthodoxy. If I trace the structure of orthodoxy as being somehow related to the cargo cult phenomenon, people may begin to say, well I don't want to be a victim of my illusions. I don't want to think that a coke bottle is the messiah. I must be smarter than that. Then they may think, maybe I'm not smarter than that — maybe the whole nature of humanness has to do with mistaken attributions of meaning of just that kind. If these mistakes are sufficiently congruent with reality, we may act on them again and again.

My favourite example: a friend of mine had a pet sloth, Jimmy. My friend was a lab psychologist at the time and had access to animals, and this was Jimmy the lab sloth. The sloth is apparently very endearing.

CW: Well, they're cute, but not very entertaining I would imagine.

VF: Well, he developed this affection for the sloth. Of all the lab animals, Jimmy the Sloth was the one he liked best. Every day he would go and tickle Jimmy the Sloth and Jimmy the Sloth would sort of go tee hee hee, and raise his arms and flap them in pleasure. My friend is a decent guy. Years later (he was reading some research literature), he learned that in sloth behaviour, this flapping of the arms and squealing with apparent delight is an expression of acute anguish.

This happened years ago, when my friend was a student, and he still feels dreadful about it. I found out about it because one day he was throwing away a photograph of Jimmy because he couldn't bear to look at it. Every time he saw that cute little animal he thought, how could I have been so cruel? How could I have caused that animal daily anguish for weeks on end?

My own view of learning and of culture and of how we assume who we are and how consciousness is formed has in it an awareness of the likelihood that we think we are doing one thing while in fact we are doing another. People like to imagine they know what is true, that the truth is self-evident. It's sobering to discover how easily "truths" are invented (sometimes cynically, sometimes by mistake) and absorbed without question, and then acted upon with sometimes dire results. Mini-cultures

within families, given the hypnosis component of child-rearing, are susceptible to this particular phenomenon, in which our torment is caused by those very people who cared most to love us.

CW: Some say that the Western dichotomy comes from a peculiar externalization of the idea of God — God being other than the self, somewhere out there. It eventually has blocked some more integrated notion of what is really out there that we are a part of. It may not always have been this way and isn't in some Eastern philosophies.

VF: That brings up the whole issue of projection, of attributing to others what transpires within. *Lost Art* addresses that through a consideration of experts and what happens if we give ourselves over to them. At the same time, I do believe that objects embody ideas and feelings, and in its use of objects and what emanates from them, the work is very physical, sensual, apprehended in a direct way through the senses. It is not apprehended intellectually at first, if at all. The humour of the tape and the contradictions in the installation allow people to come back to their senses, to retrieve their own powers of judgement, to take back their projected notions. I also address issues of meaning in the work, but I would never set out just to make a piece about the meaning of art.

CW: The meaning of art has been questioned since Aristotle, and I don't see any hope of it being settled in the near future.

VF: Well, I hope not.

CW: Yet it does create tension in an artist who comes up against that question and knows that it may never be answered, but that there is definitely a question.

VF: I like that. Don't you like that?

CW: What do you think happened to the — I'm assuming now that there really was such a rendering — flying toilet? Taking it at face value, what do you think happened to it? Even a mundane idea? Did someone think it had no value and toss it out?

VF: I thought that either it had been thrown out by mistake or that somebody connected with the original event, thinking that nobody would mind, simply appropriated it and is enjoying it as a souvenir, having decided that this is not really art, not really part of the collection, so that he or she has the right to it. I thought both those things were possible, but then at Banff they did this incredible search, some of which is on the videotape. They go through the card files; they go through the vaults; people at Banff went through the whole place, asking for evidence, clues. Announcements were everywhere on video monitors, asking what happened to the flying toilet. It really was curious why it would disappear. As I said earlier, who would want to throw it out? The Banff Collection has its share of nonsense as most collections have. Why would they throw this particular thing away? Did it disturb somebody? The event was done in good faith. I didn't think anybody felt they'd created God or the Devil. They were just struttin' their stuff and putting it all together. The value of the event was that nobody pretended it was anything other than it was — a collaborative effort demonstrating some skills in reproduction. However, the work of art that resulted is missing.

CW: Would it disturb you if that by your addressing this issue and creating a piece of art about the missing flying toilet it may increase its market value?

VF: I never thought about that. So you think I am increasing the value of what belongs to the thief?



photos by Robert Kezler

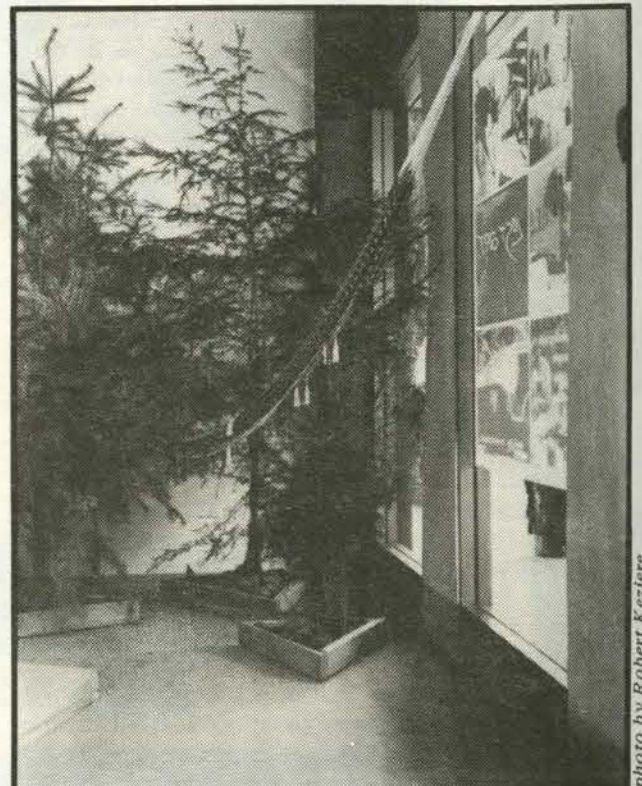


photo by Robert Kezler

CW: *You have also increased the value of the crime. Someone may have taken it quite innocently believing it to be of not much value. Thinking that no one would think it would have any merit even in the future. They kept a souvenir of an art event and now have become unethical criminals.*

VF: I shouldn't be very surprised to have someone phone me and say, I've had that wretched thing up in my bathroom all these years. I didn't know it had any external worth at all. I thought we were just sort of having a good time. No what do I do? I don't know what I would say to that person. Return it to the collection? The thing may have more resonance in his or in her home that it ever had in the vaults at Banff. I don't know. I address the absence of the work and its implications; I haven't addressed the market value. It seems to me not important.

CW: *You painted quite a lot of the set.*

VF: Yes, there's a fair amount of painting that looks rather effortless, but it was carefully thought out.

CW: *Yes, I think it succeeds on that level, but why?*

VF: Partly to reveal the artifice that is at work. A number of people have told me that they have been drawn into the work and been quite carried away in watching the tape, and then are returned to a reality where all around them is practical evidence of what they have just seen in an illusory way. One woman said it was like coming out of a movie theatre into the bright light, and now she was obliged to return to another aspect of her consciousness, more appraising, more intellectual, to judge the meaning of the things around her. I like the idea that people can be transported and left intact at the same time, and somehow returned to their sensoria, not transported and lost.

CW: *Yes, it certainly did work for me that way. Only half the glass was painted silver. When you stand on one side of the glass you don't even notice that it's been painted, and it all looks very beautiful. The painting has made it look very beautiful. I just wish that when they have real panel discussions, they would do this.*

VF: Well, it isn't to make them look nice. It is to situate them in two worlds at the same time, to allow the raw wood to show and the layers of primer, silver and gold. It is a physical embodiment of retroactive reframing of experience. I'm using painting precisely that way. Most of the physical things I do in an installation embody a range of the intellectual and emotional things I do in the tape. The tension between tape and installation is the ambience in which it all sits and breathes and contradicts itself.

CW: *The tape is very interesting because there are times when it looks like investigative journalism. Investigating the missing piece of art, when you have people like Lorne Falk asking very interesting questions such as, Who would benefit from its disappearance, from its absence — which is the key and most interesting question.*

VF: It is a serious question, isn't it? Whenever I see de-personalizing attitudes around me, or when I'm treated in a way that is designed to be de-personalizing, and I'm not sure who, in particular, benefits from that sort of thing, I ask the same question: Who benefits from this nonsense? And when malice combines with ambition, the art world is no exception. It's always interesting to ask who will benefit from this.

And it's more serious than just profit-motive nonsense. We see clearly how people find it useful to trivialize, mock, and de-personalize others for profit. That in itself is awful enough. In relation to this, the two things I've been doing work about in the last while have been the issues of tourism and pornography. The piece called *The Business of Frightened Desires*, or *The Making of a Pornographer* dealt with the collusion between government and pornography. I think they feed each other. I thought it was a collusive relationship of no particular benefit to anyone except politicians who want to stay in power and pornographers who want to make a profit. The piece is more interesting than that simplistic way of



putting it suggests, but it's in that arena, addressing those issues.

CW: *It is almost impossible to make art out of something so bizarre that people would not believe in it as the real world. However, there you are and what are you to do? Life imitates art full of all its ironies, and they live them out.*

VF: My concern is that cynicism, self-deception, and puritanism make people ill. Cynical puritans may be those who benefit from the absence of art. There: you've led me to the answer to the question that remains open in the tape.

I have seen, in Italy and Greece in particular, when I lived there, shifts in people's conduct in relation to visitors. We've all seen it. Where the process of tourism that is funded by big business — the MacDonalds' of the hotel business, for example — force people into states of being dispossessed, traveller and native alike. I found that in Venice, too, when I lived there. The locals hated the transient foreigners, and foreigners mistrusted the locals, and it was a dance of death right through. The Venetians, in particular, were fairly exploitative, as if it might be foolish not to be. I thought to myself, who benefits from tourism of this kind? Who benefits from leeching whole parts of the world of meaning? Who benefits, for example, by touring the Vatican Collection? I don't like the deeper answer to that. I don't have a clear answer, but I feel that it is people who are power-mongers and dehumanizing — especially when disguised as art lovers — whether for religious or economic motives, that are the enemy. Whether they are dealing in explicit sexual imagery or not, they are pornographers.

One of the dangers of pornography has to do with de-sexing sex. This is serious because it really does subvert humanness in some crucial way. And while I'm utterly against censorship, I still see the implications of the kind of sludge that is marketed as so-called adult entertainment. People that work their audiences that way terrify me by their attitudes.

CW: *I think they're cynical all right, but I also think they really believe — perhaps it came with the development of their psychology in a way — they believe that what you don't think about won't occur to you.*

VF: But that is so patronizing.

CW: *The inverse of this is that in some way knowledge will hurt you.*

VF: Yes, that's interesting. So they want to keep you 'before the Fall'.

CW: *Yes, they want to keep you naive because it keeps you safe. If you don't know that you're sick, then you're not sick. In the meantime, you could be dying of cancer.*

VF: I think it is worse than that: if you don't know that you are sick, but experience the pain of being sick while being told all's well, you begin thinking you are crazy. If you think you are crazy but don't quite know where or how or why, you then believe other people's accounts of who you are. You become their pawn and their creature. I feel that one of the tasks of art is to reverse that process, that is, to return people to themselves and to their senses, their judgement, and their own experience, and to give dignity to that process of apprehension, and to do that in whatever way possible; whether you do it through

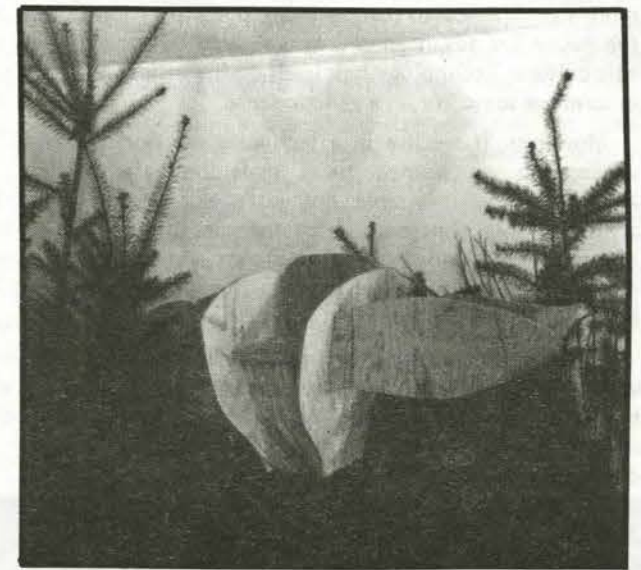
humour, or contradiction, or whatever it is that I try to do, or what other people try to do in their ways, the art that interests me does that.

CW: *The thing that worries me about the structure of our society is that, yes, people who have this power and use this knowledge, but even those without power, try to manipulate the world in this way. Part of the late Twentieth Century, people have become smaller because they have become manipulative on very low levels. They see that something can be gained from manipulating their image, but are not quite clever enough to actually gain from it.*

VF: But they feel better by putting you down. It's a disease. In which no one is responsible for anything. Everything's written in the passive voice. Real authority and real wisdom are rare. If you're slowly being turned into a cipher — eating food that isn't food and breathing air that's not air and working in ways that fragment consciousness — you are ready to be bought and sold. You are ready for big corporations to take you in hand and find you a cipher's job. The antithesis of that is art-making. That is what I meant at the beginning when I said the arts are useful. By that I mean the cutting-edge arts, not just the reaffirmation that is high art of the vogueish polemic that passes for a sort of 'avante-garde'.

It's a bleak view that I have when I talk about cargo cult romance. I'm talking about layered illusions. 'Romance' is used as the invention of the narrative of one's life. It may be supposed to represent reality, but doesn't. I suppose I'd like to open up to view the kinds of attributions of meaning that encourage people to abandon themselves; to create a kind of early warning system around the habit of falling in love with situations onto which one can project, taking some unknown or absence and saying, this is going to save us: i.e., if we really believe in this hole in the wall, all we have to do is the right thing in relation to the hole. The proper ritual. I'm saying hey, we have made the hole, invented it, and we have invented this moment and the perception of it. Let's have a look at why we're doing this.

There's not much I can do about the longing for rescue except allow the concerns to surface in my work, find visual, temporal, and spatial forms for it. That's why installation interests me. It allows me to work on several levels at the same time. I can build structures that reveal how we come to believe in what we think we know. This particular work, *Lost Art*, traces some of the underpinnings of the millennial fantasy, this time as it arises from an image created of unrelated parts, and looks at our desire to worship norms, from rules of representation to false messiahs, that are badly out of whack.



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The original rendering, 1977



"WE INTERRUPT YOU"

A review of "A Retrospective of Canadian Feminist Production"

"A Retrospective of Canadian Feminist Production" was presented by Renee Baert in a workshop at Women In Focus and was attended by twenty-five women from the Vancouver art community on August 16 and 17. Baert, involved in early feminist video productions, *Reel Feelings*, has written articles about video, curated video shows, worked as a Media Arts officer for Canada Council, and lectured extensively throughout Canada and other countries. In the Fall she will be teaching at Concordia University in Montreal.

Her presentation at the workshop, organized by Kellie Marlowe, production coordinator for Women In Focus, covered various video styles in feminist art.

Baert's show and seven other feminist video workshops are being partially sponsored by the Canada Council (Arts and Media Workshop Program) from August 1986 to February 1987 at Women In Focus.

Her categories and area of discourse focused on the political strategies in producing feminist work: 1. deconstructive; 2. collective self-representation in which producers identify their interest with the subjects represented; and 3. position of 'I', first-person narrative as context.

Few people in today's culture would admit they weren't aware of women's issues. A self-consciously homogenous atmosphere pervades our social structure, whereby women lead political parties, head governments, and some even receive equal pay for work of equal value and are recipients of a lip-service equality. Video is a very powerful machine that artists utilize to address prevailing attitudes, and the formal structures, of course, can vary widely, as Baert pointed out.

Why video? As we are already aware, technology is far more significant than merely being the expression of and the means for advancement, as is viewed by our materialistic culture. Technology has, itself, an intrinsic orientation in terms of sexuality, in a generic sense.

Moreover, if we live in a technological world, then a subjugation of women to a male-dominated system appears to be inevitable not just because of learned attitudinal bias, but because of the very nature of technology — it is mostly men who own and control mass media. Consequently, the videos in this show do not look like television broadcasting.

In a sense these women producers create an intervention to television. There is a relationship or dialectic between women and technology and a very different relationship or dialectic between men and technology — dialectics which are hidden within technology itself and which, remaining hidden, will have a profound impact on the more visible, apparently direct relationship between men and women.

The videos using deconstruction undermine highly encoded images/messages about women in the capitalist world. Duchamp, the originator of Found Art, would be amused by this appropriation of images — everything including the image he made infamous, a toilet, is up for grabs. Deconstruction of the 'they' category, in Louise Gendron's *Femmes de Reve* (*Dream Women*), 1978, 15 min. and Lisa Steele's and Kim Tomczak's *Working the Double Shift*, 1984, 20 min. create critiques that deconstruct the 'status quo' in mass media focusing on contemporary sexual politics.

Dream Women by Gendron attempts to deal with the female role (mother/housewife/lover) using high-tech "off-air" ads juxtaposed with text. The result is ironic and, therefore, somewhat critical. Words such as 'fragiles', 'fraiche', and 'folle' disrupt the imagery seemingly denying it, then challenging it. As well, the black & white imagery distances the viewer and "de-seduces" the normally viewed coloured imagery. However, the deconstructive approach can be dangerous when dealing with subject matter than can be unfortunately reinforced instead of critiqued. The edge is so close in some cases that it merely perpetuates the very notions addressed.

Working the Double Shift pushed the "edge" successfully, bridging the gap between critique and perpetuation. The use of inserted text, voice-over, a three-act structure, new additional imagery, and montaging, control the deconstructive process. Like *Dream Women*, it directly addresses how the female is constructed in the mass media. The use of montage usurps the aggressive ad imagery in a highly didactic and humorous way. Inserted texts, such as 'construction of masculinity', 'construction of femininity', 'this is a product', 'this is ideology', 'this is propaganda' with stereotypical TV ads are succinct and salient. Also, the insertion of clips from the House of Commons showing one member after another standing up to vote with a voice-over saying 'a vote is merely a formality' weaves its way through the added text, voice-overs, and ads. The "off-air" ads juxtaposed with the virtually all-male members in the House of Commons slyly critique the difference between what is represented on TV and what is real. Another successful sequence shows a high-quality car ad with a voice-over talking about day care centres. Following this, a woman scrubbing a toilet bowl with a voice-over talks about mothers enrolling in retraining programs.

The riveting didacticism comes to a climax as inserted text slides across the monitor: 'we may think we have answered the child by example', 'the media culture is dominant', 'representation of our lives is invisible', and 'representation of our lives is absent'. The deconstructive style applied in *Working the Double Shift* did critique what we, as the viewer, saw. Formally, their strategy of interrupting the totality of the production, thereby working against the creation of any illusion and exposing the conditions of the form (in this case video), dramatically reduces the viewer's role of complacency.

Baert's presentation focused more on the other two categories than on the deconstructive style as she considered deconstruction videos to be more limiting in feminist strategies. The two remaining categories use a documentary format.

Baert defines the second category as "The Collective Self-representation", the condition of 'we' showing women in transformative action. Mass media imagery is employed, but rather than being deconstructive, it is disruptive.

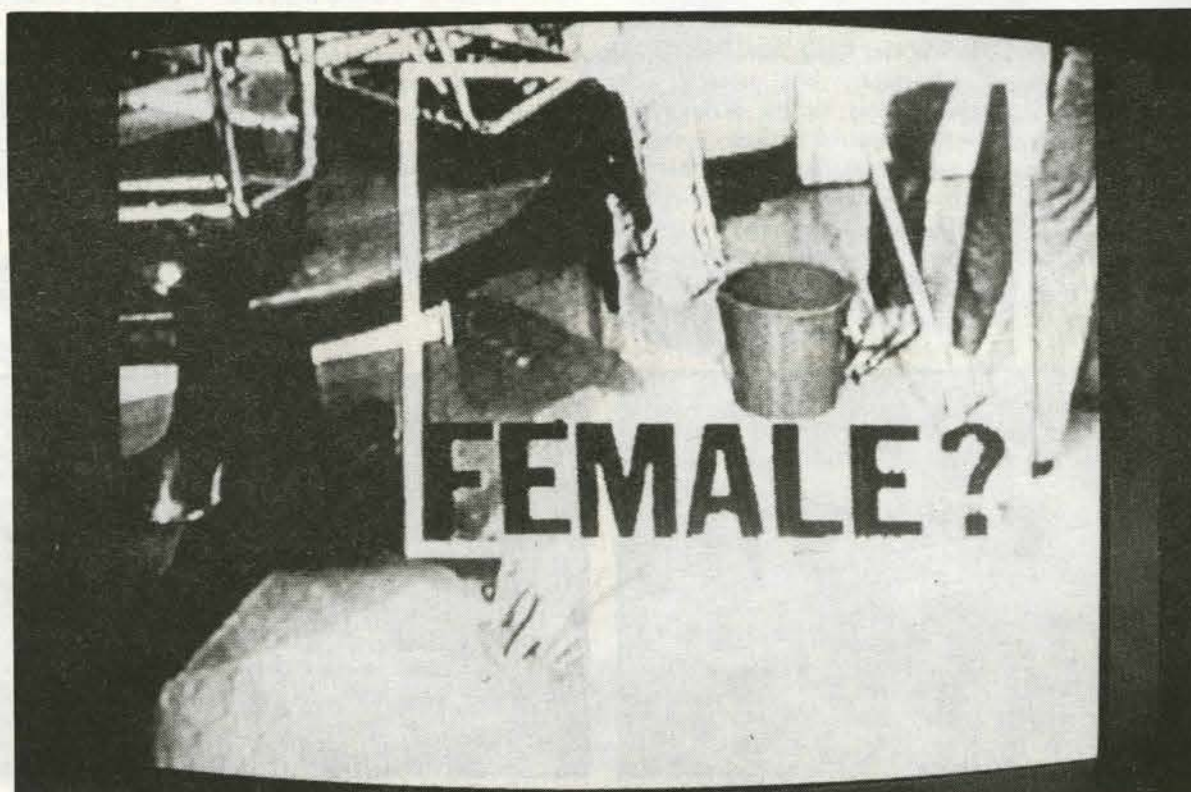
Great Expectations, Amelia Productions, 1982, 25 min. and *Fleck Women*, Kem March, 1978, 24 min., in the documentary tradition, incorporate "off-air" imagery. Two other videos, *Gloria Tapes*, Lisa Steele, 1979-80,

55 min. and *Chaperons Rouges* (Little Red Riding Hood), G.I.V., 1979, 45 min., are also in the documentary tradition and employ either melodrama or performance. All of the videos in this group align themselves politically to the subject matter. The producers declare an allegiance and collaborate with the individuals being represented. The question, "Who is appropriate to speak?" is implicit to the works.

Great Expectations juxtaposes direct, personal interviews with film stills effecting the viewer's perspective in an emotive sense which is absent in the deconstructive style. Personal testimony from battered women, romantic images, and songs of sweet and tragic love are meshed throughout. Directly addressed in this video about battered women is the reality that women are subsumed by Romantic notions they see in films, magazines, and newspapers. However, one in ten of women in our society who do marry get beaten. Their horrific stories demonstrate all too clearly the power their husbands have and the utter isolation they experience. Comments like 'I felt like a failure as a wife', 'he would often want sex after he beat me', 'I can never seem to please him', and the classic 'I believed after all that I deserved to be beaten' are representative of today's society. Film stills, such as James Cagney rubbing a grapefruit into a woman's face or a cowboy with a girl (woman) over his knee giving her a love smack are incorporated into the video amplifying the issue even more. Included are songs — 'We will raise a family', 'Give him all the love you can', and 'I call a copper if I'm beat up by my poppa, it ain't nobody's business' — which add to the reality.

The video confirms the beliefs these women hold and shows how idealized romantic notions can be destructive. The video ends with information on transition houses and assists the women in finding new ways to live.

The Fleck Women is in the documentary tradition and deals with women who are bashed around not by husbands but rather by police in a labour dispute. It, as well, incorporates "off-air" imagery. The video documents a Canadian factory in Ontario that was responsible for brutal union bashing, and the incidents take place not at the turn of the century, but in the last decade. The video shows women workers were expected to survive in a place without heat and that had half an inch of water on the floor which covered electrical equipment and had garbage stacked up in the cafeteria. One of their bosses is a former Minister of Tourism and Industry in Ontario. When the Fleck women marched in an illegal picket line



Working the Double Shift by Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak

FOR THIS MESSAGE"

by Mary Ellen Lower

Workshop given by Renee Baert at Women In Focus, Vancouver, B.C.

to protest dangerous working conditions, riot police with black sticks smashed their necks, chests, and ribs. This brutality continued for months with full media coverage.

Again, the use of direct personal testimony created some extraordinary tape. Intercut with shots of the media filming the walk-out, shots of the police cruelty made for hard-core documentation.

Obviously, the deconstructive format would not be applicable in this situation given that we do not see material of this nature in ads or popular imagery.

The Gloria Tapes does not deal with physical battering, but covers the life of a woman who is psychologically battered. There is not any live footage, but it is in the documentary tradition. The video gives facts in a fictional setting about being a woman who is pregnant, has virtually no money, no job, an unreliable boy friend, complications in the pregnancy, and who is confronted by a patronizing medical system. The twist to the documentary tradition is the use of melodrama.

The first sequence depicts a fictional character, played by the producer, Lisa Steele, who is faced with hurdles placed by the medical system. Gloria is portrayed as a woman filled with guilt because she can't buy the groceries 'they' recommend, and filled with fear because no one will really tell her what is going on with her pregnancy.

Steele's approach allows our cultural system (medical, in this case) to be exposed in a melodramatic format by using someone who is utterly overwhelmed. The approach allows us, as viewers, to experience a subjective view. As well, of course, as a critique on 'soaps', it certainly doesn't look like the high romance seen on daytime TV.

Chaperons Rouges (Little Red Riding Hood), does not look like TV either. Documentation through group discussions as opposed to direct interviews with performance material make up the format for this video about rape.

The most powerful sequence is a solo performance depicting rape. The 'solo' concept is brilliantly effective. The violence and personal invasion of the male looms all around the performer, and yet the male is completely absent. However, his presence is deeply felt as the performer helplessly cries out. Because sexual arousal can occur in men when viewing rape scenes, the choice of eliminating the male allows absolute focus on the woman. The performance itself is shot with such delicacy that no emotion but that which is intended can arise.

Formally, the use of group interaction compared to direct interviewing is a technique employed in the video. Twice, discussions about rape occur — once with children and once with women.

Renee Baert's final category of first-person narrative as context contains three excellent videos produced by Lisa Steele, Sara Diamond, and Kate Craig. In the 'I' category, the feminist subject matter and documentary structure take on another dimension. It is the artist's own personal self that is vulnerable to the audience.

The viewer has "instant feedback" as Lisa Steele tells *A Very Personal Story*, 1979, about the death of her mother. Steele sits down in front of the camera and begins to tell her story. The inherent qualities of video are utilized — one camera, one performer, and one recorder are used.

She begins the story by telling us what the story is about with no suspense, no nonsense. Her hand and shoulders are tightly framed in a black & white image. She keeps her hands up, blocking her mouth throughout the video. She clasps her hands as if to comfort herself while keeping the viewer ever so slightly distanced from her. She tells us she has never before told this story about the day her mother died. Her voice alters, sounding like a little girl. We, as viewer, experience how Lisa feels. Her recounting is as moving and heartfelt as if we were inside her head. The tape ends with Lisa saying, "... nobody really wants to hear about it too much." Her hands come down revealing her mouth; she gets up and turns off the video recorder. Abruptly it is over, and we are back in our own thoughts and feelings.

Influences of My Mother, Sara Diamond, 1982, 25 min. is also a story about the artist's mother and her death. It is in the 'I' position, a narrative in documentary form. The story is in five acts using clips from family footage, objects that belonged to her mother, historical books from her mother's time period, and herself as the subject. Sara is searching for truth, truth about her feelings about her mother.

The different acts move the viewer from one perspective to another. The acts change and the emotions shift as Sara sifts through the belongings and searches her memories.

A unique and successful approach was utilized by Diamond bridging the notions of public and private. She managed to present a very intimate event using only public documentation. Just as Steele used formal elements

in her story about her mother, Diamond also created an innovative strategy. Private thoughts about her mother's working life were extracted from books that contextualized the public framework in which her mother lived. In the video *Diamond* is seen leafing through the pages of books which documented union activities and demonstrations during the McCarthy era in the United States. Searching for her mother's private life through public information created an emotionally charged sequence that allowed us, the viewer, to experience an intimate act.

As the tape ends, Diamond inserts text: 'There is no neutrality in History.' We see Sara on the screen and are left unsure as to how she is now feeling. However, the viewer is left with the sense that to know Sara's mother is to know Sara. Diamond's was one of the most powerful videos seen during Baert's retrospective.

Those notions of public/private take on another perspective in *Delicate Issue*, Kate Craig, 1978, during 12 very close minutes. The subject matter is the nude, in this case Craig's nudity.

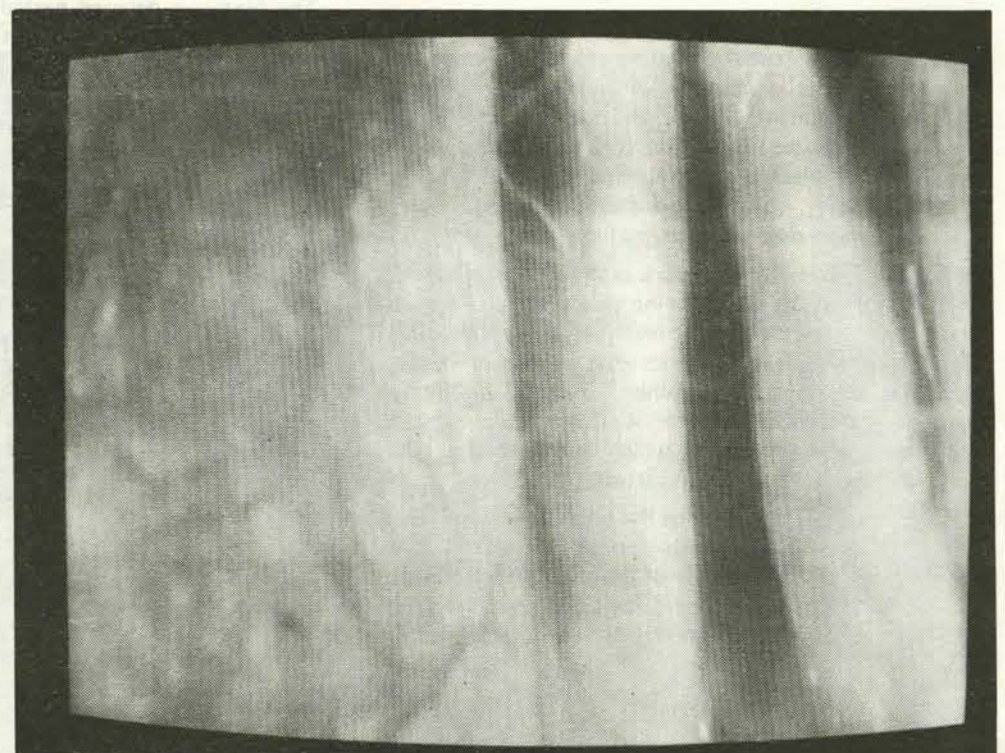
To examine the idea of nudity, Craig didn't use a zoom lens when taping her body, but rather a macro lens. Kate choreographs the camera to record her body in such a close view that at times it is impossible to tell just what it is we are seeing. As the camera lens moves across her body, one square inch at a time, her voice talks to us about what it is we are experiencing. Comments like: 'Do you want to get closer?', 'Do I want you closer?', 'Are you feeling uncomfortable?'. We are very unusual voyeurs as we look at her pubic hair sprouting up like a field of grain on the screen. The parts make up the whole, but we never see the whole.

Her intentions are provocative. Playboy would not have published any of the stills, yet, as the viewer, we see everything. The documentation of the facts transforms the notions of the 'female nude', examining the public/private sphere questioning the viewer's role.

Renee Baert's Canadian Retrospective on feminist videos provided the members of the audience with work that creates an intervention to the material seen on TV. It interrupts with a message that addresses representation of women in our society as brought to us by the North American networks. We are told that there is no neutrality in representation, in history or in memory, but there are alternatives, and there are many superb examples of this in our own backyard. Highly artistic approaches in the medium of video are being produced despite the lack of funding available.



Influences of My Mother by Sara Diamond



Delicate Issue by Kate Craig

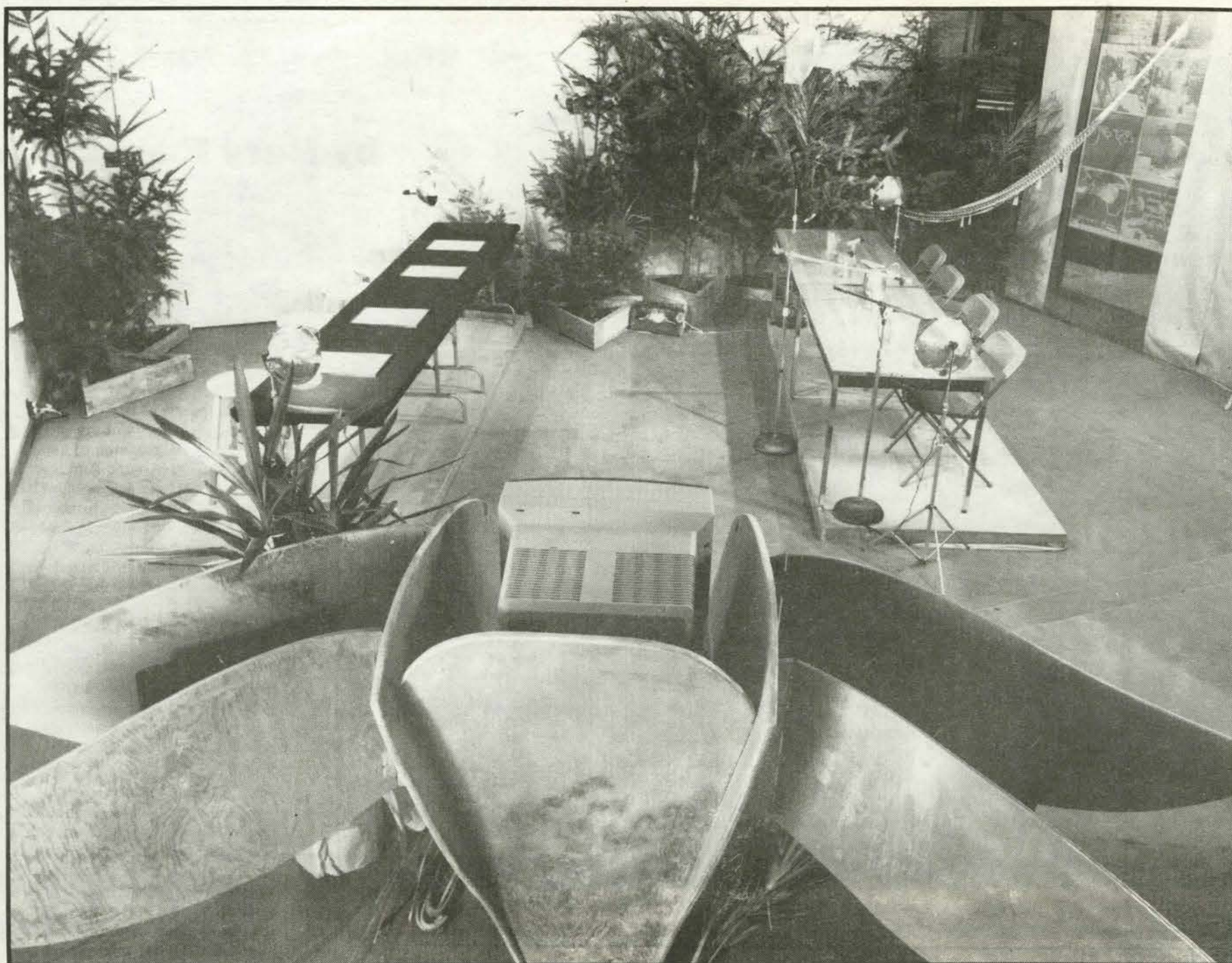


photo by Robert Keziere

Lost Art: A Cargo Cult Romance

Installation by Vera Frenkel

reviewed by Jill Pollack

At first I was only aware of a sense of richness but also disorientation. It was like nothing I'd ever seen before. I didn't know how to approach it. But I walked down the three steps and saw the water glasses and microphones on the long table. I saw the pine trees and palm leaves leaning against the wall. I saw the stools with painted scenes of mountainscapes on their seats. I began to laugh. It was exciting. What an apt comment on so many things. Yes, it was all true.

Vera Frenkel's *Lost Art: A Cargo Cult Romance* sings.¹ It presents a complex narrative which accurately pinpoints a situation pertinent to the business of art, but not confined to it. The installation is a touchstone — it has the ability to reflect the discrepancy between, on the one hand, perceived, culturally-adopted truth and on the other, personally-defined, experientially-based truth.

The overt theme of the work is the disappearance of a rendering of an object (a flying prison toilet)² and the subsequent search for its retrieval. At the same time, it also speaks of power dynamics that can occur between one group of people and another.³ Further, and perhaps most significantly, *Lost Art: A Cargo Cult Romance* makes clear the structures which surround the public presentation and esteem of the art object.

On other levels, it refers to the phenomenon of "cargo cult" and alludes to modern applications of that 19th century practice. At the base of this work is a determined attempt to prod perception and evoke a recognition of the individual's responsibility and right over her/his own life.

And there is more. This piece, by its very composition, discusses the narrative, installation art, and one way in which video can be used.

Lost Art: A Cargo Cult Romance is challenging. It has the power to transport the viewer to a place in-between what is said to be true and what is felt to be true. That

in-between place allows for discovery. And the primary method by which this is achieved is through the video.⁴

Frenkel combines documentary/narrative footage with text, animation, and an audio track. This composition follows the intention of the overall installation by inciting a state of heightened viewer concentration and possible viewer disorientation. It is through these altered states (which suspend reality as one perceives it), that Frenkel's art-making manages to enter one's consciousness in a profound way. A situation is set up where there are simultaneous visuals, audio, and text on the monitor. The text is a delayed partial version of the audio. So at the same time as the narrative/documentary unfolds, it also repeats itself.

A tension arises as a result of the desire to watch, read, and listen at the same time. The video requires enormous concentration, making it necessary to block out everything else. It inspires a process of honing down, or of pulling inwards in order to grow and expand. Conversely, the rest of the installation is expansive. It incites less an encompassing intellectual and psychic response, more a physical and emotional one.

This is an ordered work. Frenkel arranges a multitude of seemingly disparate objects⁵ in such a way that their similarities are heightened while their differences are exaggerated. These contradictions result in a concise and humorous statement captured succinctly in the text, "Experts were in charge. There was no need to worry."

The trappings of "experts", be they conference tables, white lab coats, or explorers' luggage, may differ in appearance but not in intent. The artist has clearly pointed out the symbols of one type of power which pervades many situations: power accorded one person or group of people over, yet by others.

Lost Art: A Cargo Cult Romance offers a web of information that can be understood and appreciated on many levels. Because of the attention to detail and presence of a strong theme developed throughout, Frenkel communicates to the viewer, any viewer, her ideas

around truth, personal responsibility, authority, art, science, and social organization. She includes in her analysis both the general and the specific. She predetermines not a particular response from the viewer or even an assumption of who that viewer is. Rather Vera Frenkel speaks in a vernacular which goes beyond divisions of group, class, or orientation and enters the realm of human experience generally.

Lost Art: A Cargo Cult Romance stands as a complete resonant moment, and I can still hear its echoes.

FOOTNOTES:

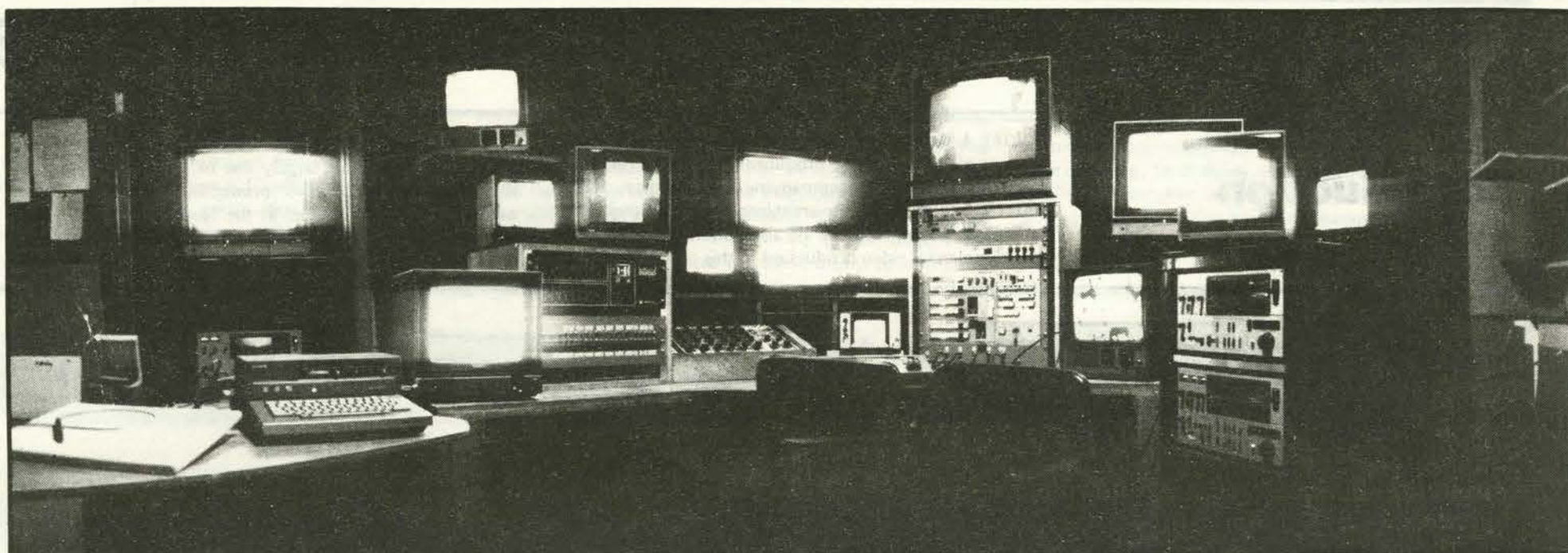
¹Artist Cheryl Sourkes uses the phrase, "a complete resonant moment" to denote a work of art which achieves a synthesized excellence on emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic levels. It refers to pieces which incite a holistic and joyful response. My synonym for this concept is "sings".

²Note the references to Dadaism, Genet, and Duchamp.

³This statement alludes to the open-ended number of possible configurations which can and do define the powerful and the powerless. It also implies an ever present division between the self and others. Thus there is an assumption that power dynamics are at play in every interaction. In relation to this installation, I feel that Frenkel's thesis is appropriate beyond the specifics she is discussing.

⁴This is not to suggest that the rest of the installation is not also concerned with the above themes. Quite the contrary. There is a direct and strong relationship between the video and the tableaux.

⁵The disparity is presented in many ways: through the incorporation of high and low technologies; by the inclusion of palm leaves next to pine trees; from the juxtapositioning of icons from different cultures; and because of the representation of both real and unreal situations, among other methods.



The Center for New Television in Chicago

by Jamirte Trott

The Chicagoan video experience has been developing from the early seventies when video was really hot. Today, Chicago is highly videotized. It has a sizeable video community of highly pledged and enthusiastic independent video makers.

This video community gathers strength from continuous and significant contributions from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Video Data Bank, and Image Union. But the nucleus of Chicago's independent video is, no doubt, the Center for New Television — CNTV. While other organizations attend to specific needs of video making, the CNTV tries to comprise all phases of video development.

The Center originated in 1976 when a group of independent video makers joined efforts so as to establish a desperately needed communal tape-editing facility. After much hardship and determination, this facility materialized under the name of Chicago Editing Center. As the organization expanded into all phases of video making, it changed its denomination to Center for New Television. To foster a sense of "new" television is the Center's main goal: seeking the "new" not for novelty sake, but for the sake of a culturally and socially relevant mode of television. By self-definition: "The Center for New Television is a not-for-profit media arts facility serving community, social service, arts, and cultural organizations in the Midwest".

Today, under the direction of Joyce Bolinger, with the assistance of Jeanine Mellinger, Karla Berry, Mark McKernin, and a faculty of teachers, the Center organizes a panoply of activities especially designed for the independent video producer, whether a beginner or a seasoned professional. These activities include production and post-production facilities at a fraction of the rates demanded by commercial organizations; a variety of courses and seminars attending to all phases of video making; grants; and a continuous coordination of video events.

Counting on the support and recognition of a sizeable number of paying members, the Center tries to build a video space within an art world which tends to ignore and undermine the video contribution. For this, the Center organizes programs where independents can show their work, and where they can witness what is happening outside Chicago, and outside the U.S. as well. That is, it brings together both national and international video and filmmakers with different approaches and modes of creativity, thus allaying to some extent perceptual gaps among them. While topical concerns does not represent a criterion for exhibition consideration, seriousness and professionalism do. The contribution of such program is invaluable to the video community in that it offers exposure to the video maker while reinforcing and disseminating video's cultural input.

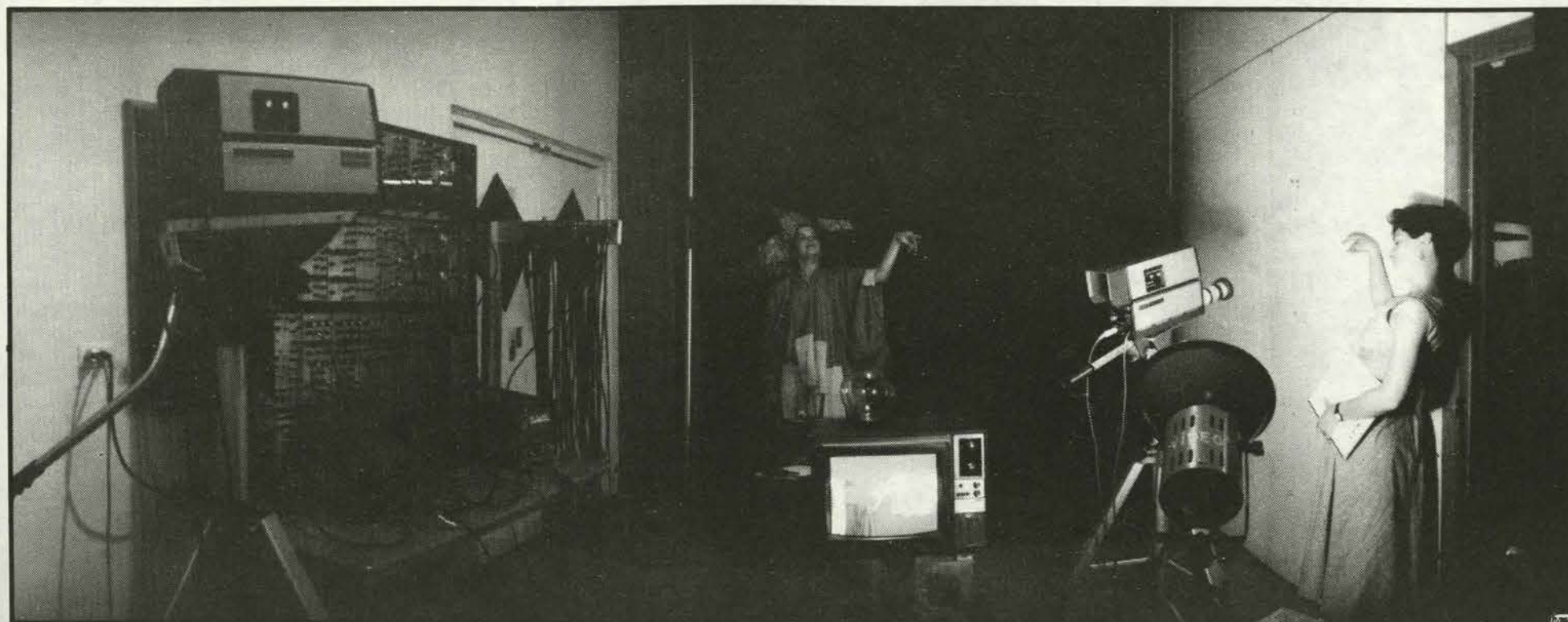
To mention a few local and national contributors to the exhibiting program, the Center has screened works of such renowned artists as Annette Barbier, John Manning, Deedee Halleck, Martha Rossler, Bill Viola, Steina Vasulka, and many others. If not all, most significant video artists in this country have come to the CNTV to show their work, and to share their knowledge and experience with the locals. Yet, the Center's effort to implement video awareness does not limit itself to showing individual artists within the Center's own premises. Recently, for example, the CNTV presented, in collaboration with the Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a reprise of the American Film Institute's Video Festival. This reprise marked an unprecedented film/video event in Chicago by showing selections of national and international productions. Among these were videos and films by Goddard/Mieville and by Laura Mulvey/Peter Wollen.

In April of this year, the Center co-sponsored with the Goethe Institute the visit of a most auspicious German video/filmmaker: Egon Monk. Monk brought to Chicago a context of analytical filmmaking: a vivid awareness of Brechtian thinking and a historical, political, and social vision rarely captured in video and film anywhere. Also in April, the Center joined the Blacklight Film Organization and presented a program for black filmmakers, playwrights, and musicians.

Augmenting a sense of video history, the CNTV organized a salute to the memorable Ernie Kovacs. Rather than a pretext for mere nostalgia, Kovacs' festival meant to revive the work of an entertainer who used the television medium in a highly creative and socially relevant way. The festival, as Bolinger said, represented an opportunity to look into the past as "a way to set an agenda for the future." In this sense, the festival examined historical aspects of television with a lecture on the 'Chicago School' of television, and a panel of media critics discussing different trends of television.

Further contributing towards the foundation of a new television that is mindfully critical of the conventional, market-oriented mode, the CNTV's meeting of the minds has originated the Image Union — a PBS half-hour broadcasting for independents produced by the CNTV pioneer, Tom Weinberg. Validating its contribution to the video community, the CNTV has been granted the Indy award in 1985. It stands now as the first institution of its kind to receive an award of such merit.

Albeit already standing as a major pillar of the video community, the CNTV continues to grow as it updates its facilities, revises its priorities, and implements its goals. This way, like a haven for a new mode of television, independents can gather strength and move on with a firm belief in the values of its contribution to the cultural and social arena.



Introduction

LIFE LIKE IT: Some Halifax Video is the first touring package of independently produced videotapes to originate from Halifax. The accompanying performance, HALI-FACTS, will introduce the artist/producers and their work as well as point to some of the conditions that affect non-commercial video production in this city.

While there has been a definite increase in video production in Halifax, largely due to the development of the Centre for Art Tapes' production facilities and an expanded video curriculum at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, there has yet to emerge a cohesive community of video producers.

HALI-FACTS

A performance by Cathy Quinn

Excerpt from HALI-FACTS, performance by Cathy Quinn

- 1st English town in Canada — birthplace of English Canada — 1749
- 1st Board of Trade in North America — 1750
- 1st Postal service in North America — Halifax to New York City — 1752
- 1st Newspaper in Canada — The Halifax Gazette — 1752
- 1st Representative government in the British Colonies — 1758
- 1st Naval dockyard in North America — HMC Dockyard — 1758
- 1st University in the British Colonies — The University of Kings College — 1789
- 1st Government House in Canada — One of the most luxurious ever built and the oldest consecutively lived in executive mansion in North America due to the burning of the White House during the War of 1812 — 1807
- 1st Parliament building — Province House — in the British Colonies. One of the finest examples of Georgian architecture in North America — 1819
- 1st Ice Hockey in the world — 1825
- 1st Savings bank in Canada — Collins Bank — 1825
- 1st Yacht Squadron in North America — The Royal Nova Scotian — 1837
- 1st Founding of the Cunard Shipping Line by Haligonian Sam Cunard with the arrival of the Britannia on its maiden voyage from Halifax to New York City — 1837

Source: Metro (tourist) Guide



Katie

Dean Brousseau

The tape is one of two tapes. The tapes that I made were Mothers' Days and Katie, and the tapes have to do with three generations of women in one family. What I wanted to do was be able to trace the change in moral outlook of women in one family through generations to see how their ideas on things, on family life, on being a woman, and on working within a family situation changed over the years. The subjects I actually focused on were

women in my family. It allowed me to get closer to these women really quickly, so that I could give the viewer more insights readily. The people I used were my mother, my sister, and my grandmother. One tape, Mothers' Days, deals with my mother and my sister, and the main focus in the tape seems to be the mediation of their relationship by my sister's child. She had her first child, and everything is referenced off of that one child, her first

child, and my mother's first grandchild. In the case of Katie — that's my grandmother — that tape specifically deals with that woman in her own home living environment. I thought that if I was able to approximate this closeness with people, that people (the viewing audience) would be able to cross-reference or transpose that to their own personal histories, to their own background. That was the impetus for both of the tapes.



In *Katie* the audience has a one-on-one encounter with another human being, seemingly without the intervention of the medium used. The person we spend time with is a woman in her mid-seventies who the viewer meets at home (recorded over a period of two days). Ka'trine (Katie) elucidates on numerous aspects of her life in a disarmingly unabashed manner, relating many events of her past and present life which total a portrait of one who has survived hard times with grace and dignity. This video is presented in the most straightforward manner possible remaining true to the personality of the subject and the barest of tools with which it was made.

The aim of the artist was to produce document portraits valuable as social anthropology by examining three generations of women/mothers in one family. Two tapes have so far resulted, the other is *Mothers' Days*: a mother/daughter relationship mediated by the daughter's young child (first grandchild). Both tapes were produced through the Centre for Arts Tapes and with assistance from the Canada Council.

Dean Brousseau, a video artist living in Halifax, is a member of both the board of the Centre for Art Tapes as well as the Independent Film and Video Alliance. His portrait tapes are currently showing in numerous national and international exhibitions. Previous to the portraits, his most recent video *Dinner* premiered at the Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and Video in 1984.

me Halifax Video

A combination of a dismal job market, the lack of affordable housing, and precious few possibilities for funding video, makes for one difficult working environment. It is no wonder that many video producers head to other more economically supportive communities.

As an artist with administrative skills and some extra

time, I took the initiative to organize this project. The other artist/producers had input throughout the process and have therefore maintained more control over the way in which they/we are represented. The undertaking of such a co-operative venture points to possibilities for artist/producers of limited economic means to invent and

control the conditions for their work beyond the act of its production. In so doing, we also provide ourselves with a collective mandate to broaden the visibility of independent video from Halifax while celebrating its diversities.

Cathy Quinn

Survival: Still the Issue

Melodie Calvert Nancy Davis
Caroline Murray-Crick

Survival: Still the Issue focuses on the 1986 theme of International Women's Week in Halifax: Shelter, Health, and Employment. This tape specifically examines the current housing crisis through a series of interviews, personal stories, as well as speeches from the International Women's Day rally.

This year's International Women's Week organizers chose to incorporate the issue of housing into the theme in an attempt to build on the momentum of activity already growing around this issue. Over the past three years groups such as the Halifax Housing Coalition and the Mothers United for Metro Shelter (MUMS) have demonstrated and lobbied in opposition to the lack of decent, affordable housing in the Halifax/Dartmouth area.

This lack impairs the existence of women and families on low and fixed incomes. Some mother-led families spend as much as 70% of their incomes on shelter.

The reality that "survival is still the issue" has not changed. Women must fight for basic needs and rights such as decent, affordable housing, the right to a job with good wages and working conditions, and control over our health.

Survival: Still the Issue was produced by Melodie Calvert, Nancy Davis, and Caroline Murray-Crick, with the support of the International Women's Week Committee. Funded in part by the Secretary of State. Many thanks to the Centre for Art Tapes for its generous support and the use of its production facilities.



Wallace + Theresa

I've always had a pretty poetic way of working. I'm interested in language. It used to be a lot drier than it is now. I always wrote my own material. I'd been looking for a way in which to do an homage piece to a woman named Theresa Hak Kyung Cha who was somebody that I met shortly after I started teaching in Halifax, who very shortly after that, died a violent death back in New York City. Some friends of hers who run a press in New York City asked me to produce an artist page for a commemorative book, and I sat in front of a blank piece of paper for about four months and wasn't able to

produce anything for her. And then Audio by Artists commissioned an audiotape from me in 1985 and it just seemed to be the right moment, and I had no particular idea when I started to make the audiotape, and it turned into a videotape. I asked the person who was organizing the commissions if I could make a videotape, and he said 'yes, we'll commission the score for it', and the mesh of Theresa's poetic text, which is from her autobiographical epic poem called "Dictee", and Wallace Stevens text really just happens because structurally their work is similar. It is also similarly evocative, I think. I also think that there is

Jan Peacock

something about their lives as poets that I hoped would feed into a reading of the work, or would come out of a reading of the work, that somehow you could walk away from seeing this tape with a sense of having inhabited the life of a poet, or lives of poets, or having even been inside a poem.

"Since narration is an event like any other . . . it can entertain various temporal relations to the events of the story."

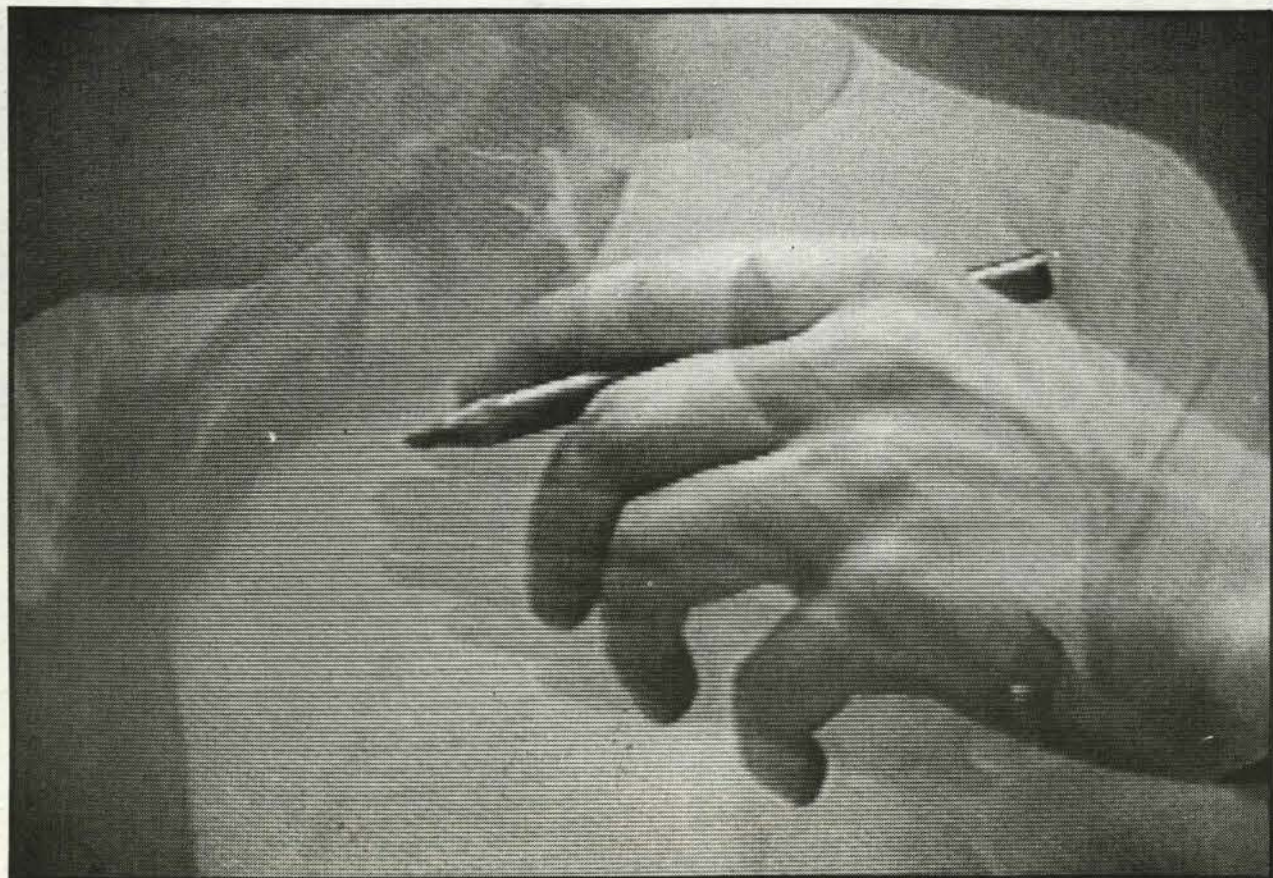
—S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*

In *Wallace + Theresa*, the narrative event is the event of narration itself. In its layered and fugue-like structure, sound narrates and is answered by emblematic visual movement which is answered by printed and written texts which are answered by male and female voices speaking and whispering in syncopation and in unison, in French, English, and Korean. The temporality of the narration flickers, and the flicker is located somewhere between unfixed memory (reminiscence of distant events that are all but lost to memory) and a reverie of the present moment. Language is seen to recede from us. Loss and ineffable absence pervade the text of this work as they necessarily pervade the act of reading and the consequent search for meaning.

"The reader by the window has finished his book and tells the hour by the lateness of the sounds . . . Imagine for him the speech he cannot speak."
(Wallace Stevens)

Jan Peacock studied visual arts at the University of Western Ontario where she received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1978, and at the University of California in San Diego where she received a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1981.

Since 1982 she has worked as an Assistant Professor in video production and theory/criticism at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. She has exhibited her video and installation work in Canada, United States, and Europe.



Commercial Culture

Popular Projects provides a unique opportunity for non-professionals in the community to participate.

My interest in Popular Projects is because of its teaching aspects. The self-education process that goes on within ourselves as a group is just as important as any of the finished products.

What is important for me about the Popular Projects Society is that we've been able to take issues and world events that can seem like they are very far away, and through the process of doing research and doing a play about these issues, we've come to realize how close those issues really are and what part they play in our daily lives and how we're connected to those things.

Popular Projects is a collective where everyone works towards a common goal as opposed to individual creative work. I have written as an individual playwright, but I find that when you work collectively on scripts such as ones that we've done through Popular Projects, such as Thank God for Canada or Popular Pastimes, that the work is much more exciting and less alienating than working individually, sort of in a vacuum almost. I think that when you work on these kinds of scripts, which are to help other community groups in some way or another, that the creative energy is much higher than working as an individual.

It is not always a breeze working collectively, especially when we're encouraged to be competitive individuals, but I figure it's worth the effort.

Popular Projects Society is a non-profit group dedicated to using theatre and performance for social change. To date, we have written and performed popular theatre work related to local, national, and international issues.

Commercial Culture is the first video project produced by our collective which includes both professionals and non-professionals in the visual arts. This tape was created to be shown at the Halifax Conference, a National Forum on Canadian Cultural Policy, September 21 and 22 at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. *Commercial Culture* was screened at this conference as part of a sequence of entertainment designed to protest changes in policy at the Federal level regarding the funding of Arts in Canada. *Commercial Culture* is a package of three short

Popular Projects

video commercials: "U Can Rail", "ART-KIK Power", and "Artist Touch". We hope that the distribution of these tapes will contribute to the dialogue and mobilization of the Canadian Cultural Community to challenge proposed changes in cultural policy which seek to erode the foundations and principles of national cultural policy which are addressed in these commercials.

These tapes were produced by Popular Projects Society with the assistance of the Centre for Art Tapes, Halifax, Nova Scotia.



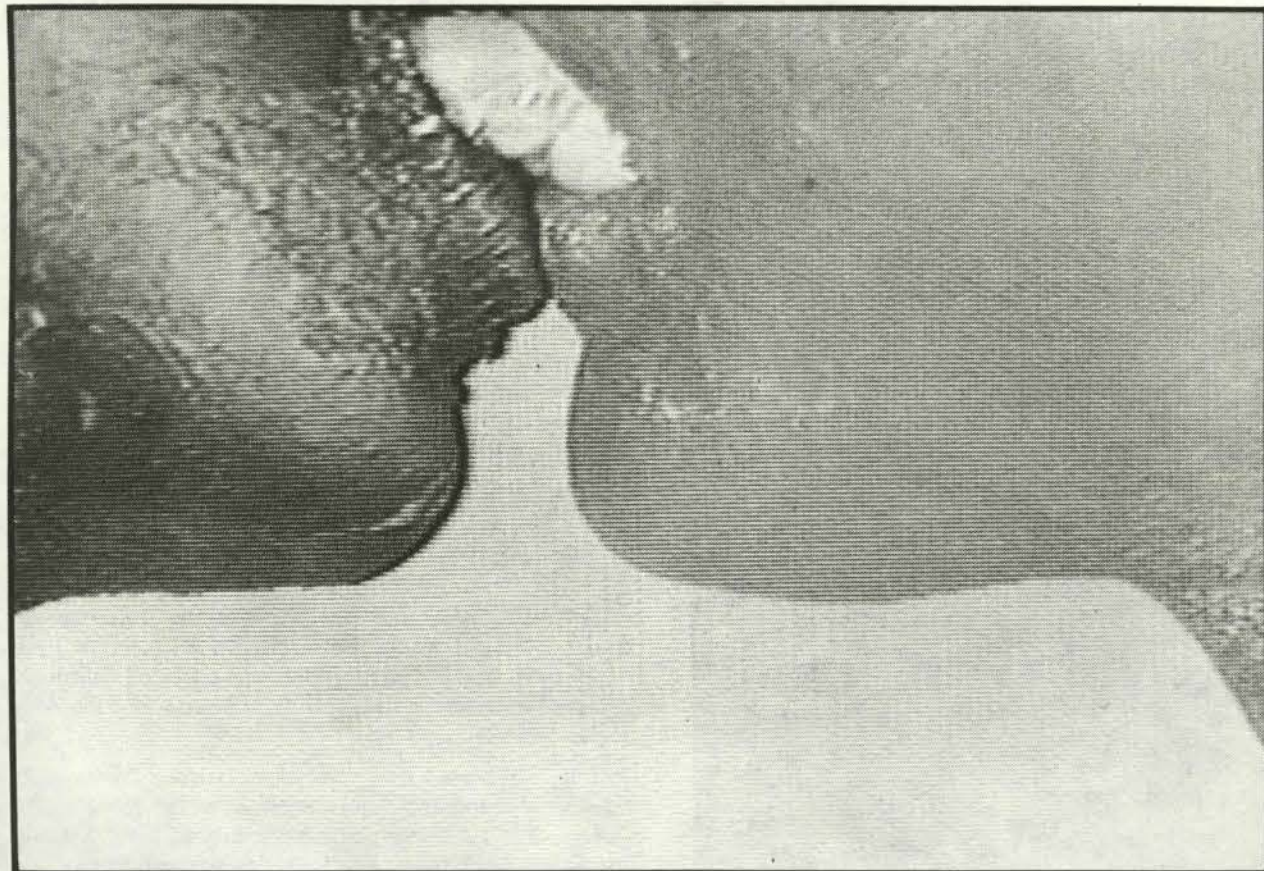
Crossing the 49th

Mark Verabioff

First of all, I started making the tape in my last semester at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. One of my last goals, while I was at the school, before I graduated, was at least to have one more work under my belt — so I

would have a body of work to send out via self-submission once I left the College, cause I knew that I wasn't immediately going to have access to equipment, and also I wanted to try out some different things that I had not yet

done in my past work, in the studio. And also too, I started thinking about, not necessarily producing the videotape, but working on this one factual statistic that is transmitted at the beginning of the tape, which explains the differences of these populations in Canada with populations of all the homosexuals in the United States. When I found this out I thought, Oh my God, well if we changed, or transferred, or swapped both these populations, the inevitable would be that Canada would be this total gay nation. So I found that really hysterical. I guess that's the foundation connector with the piece and past work.



A narrative fantasy that incorporates emblematic codes in the representation of 'red' Canadian and 'blue' American gay lips, along with 'red-blue' bilateral/bisexuals. Keyed text scanned in the form of clauses and airport codes, isolates all performers in distributed geographic location. A disjunctive audio track connected with seductive visual effects, creates this dream of a desired nation. A Canadian lip broadcasts: . . . "it has been arranged by the Intermale and Underdykes of the United States of America and Canada, to unite in the union of the world's first totally gay nation . . . come on now . . . cross the 49th."

The dual conquest for nationalism within their own sub-culture is the fantasy.

Mark Verabioff is a 1985 graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. He is currently residing in New York City and working at the Museum of Modern Art as an assistant in the video department. He has exhibited his video work in Canada, the United States, and Europe.

LIFE LIKE IT Some Halifax Video

reviewed by Robin Metcalfe

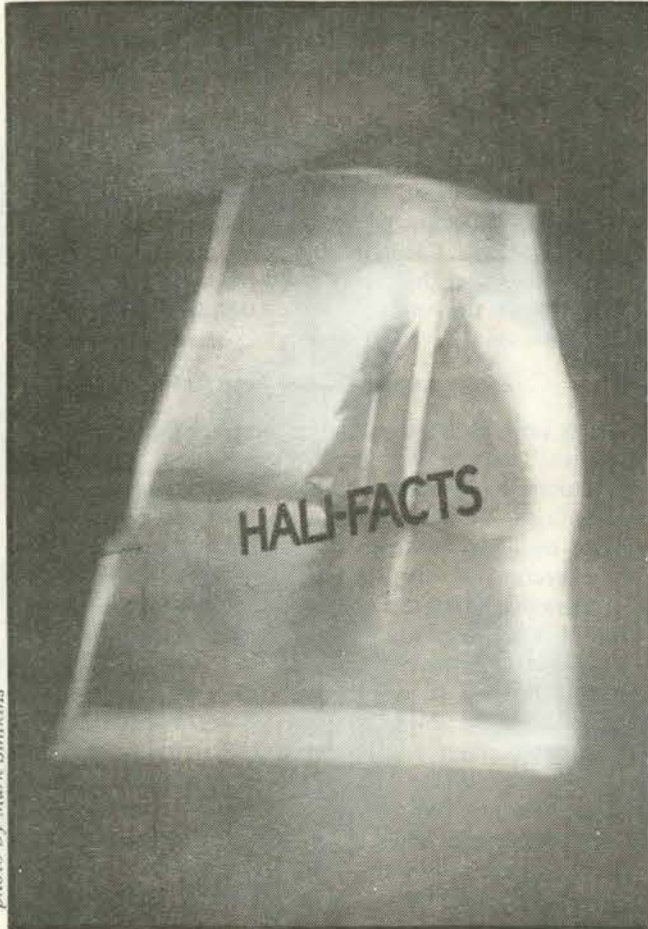
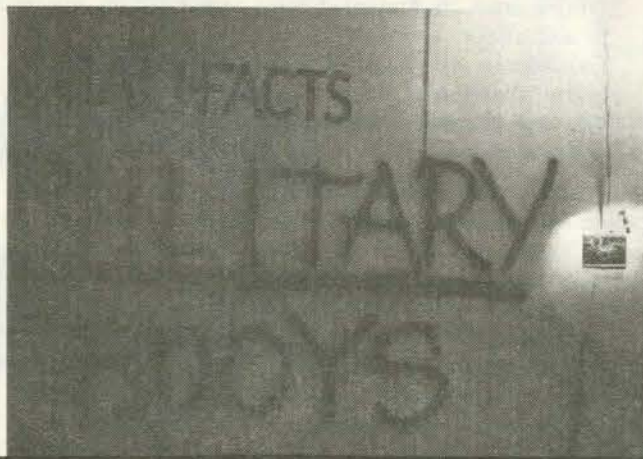
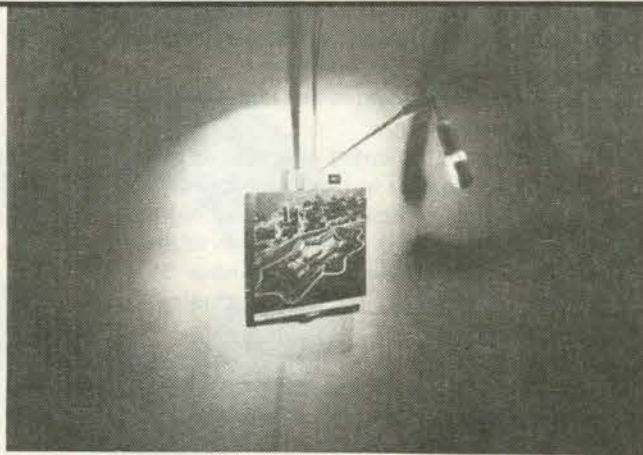
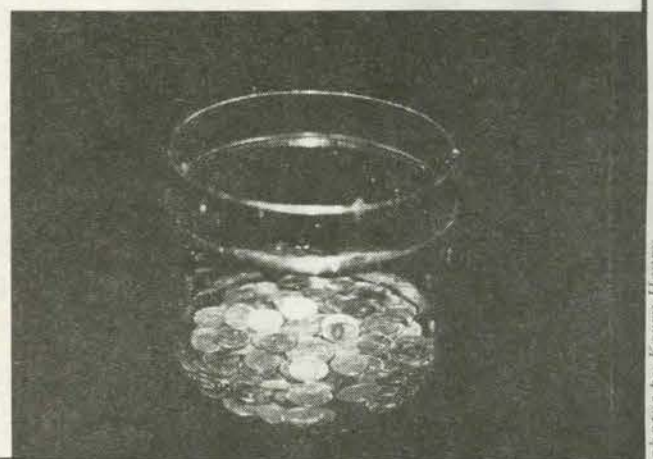
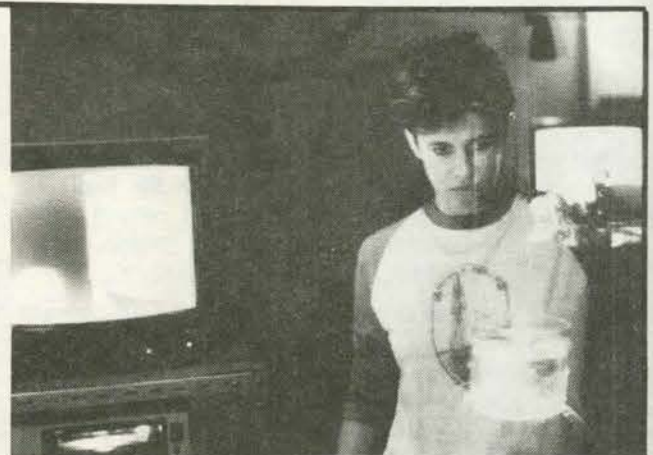


photo by Mark Simkins



Hali-Facts performance



photos by Karen Henry

"Life Like It", an exhibition of Halifax videos, toured seven Canadian cities this spring. At each location, organizer Cathy Quinn opened with her performance piece, "HALI-FACTS". Using projections and graffiti, she provided a background suggesting reasons for both the city's leadership role in the fight against funding cutbacks and the peculiar urgency of much recent Halifax independent art work.

Quinn correctly stresses the importance of the military economy. (The exhibition's title echoes an Armed Forces recruitment slogan.) The only North American city devastated by war in this century, Halifax harbours Canada's largest concentration of armed forces. Militarism is the central concern of much recent art here.

Perhaps more than any other Canadian city, Halifax benefited from the blossoming of independent artist-run spaces in the 1970s, and was an early leader in video. The prestigious Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), meanwhile, has been a mixed blessing — promoting standards of the imperial centre, removed from local realities, thus hindering the creation of art which is both popular and critical.

The funding recession hastened the growing politicization of independent artists, who are caught in a curious dialectic. Via NSCAD, they are heirs to the avant-garde tradition of alienation from a popular audience. Stranded between the mass and elite cultures, they are faced with the challenge of creating a genuine popular culture that will enable them to break out of the art ghetto. Meanwhile, with a marginalized regional economy, nuclear subs in the harbour, and the worst chronic housing shortage in Canada, Halifax feels the general crisis of our society with a particular urgency. This exhibition demonstrates the range of responses by local video artists.

Jan Peacock's video *Wallace + Theresa* hews closest to the avant-garde stance of splendid isolation. An homage

to a late personal friend, poet Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, the tape is built around semi-audible passages from her work and that of Wallace Stevens, whispered in English, French, and Korean. A pencil is placed in a hand; fragments of text appear on the screen; a person whose face is not shown interprets in American Sign Language. According to the exhibition flyer, "the temporality of the narration flickers". Indeed. Concentrating on the "signs" so beloved of French semiotics theorists, this formalism, while elegant, distances us from both personal grief and the possible meaning of the poetry, declaring the latter's "muteness" all too well.

In *Crossing the 49th*, Mark Verabioff's satirical sexual-political sci-fi fantasy, Canada swaps its entire heterosexual population for 23 million American homosexuals. Red and blue face paint are used here as a code for sexuality/nationality. Through truncated and strangely-angled shots, disconnected faces are made alien, suggesting masks, or in one memorable kissing scene, rather repulsive fish. The call letters of international airports float in a cold white void that suggests both the sterility of a pressurized cabin and the desolation of Northern snows. With graphic economy and wit, Verabioff here appeals to an avant-garde aesthetic while remaining more broadly intelligible.

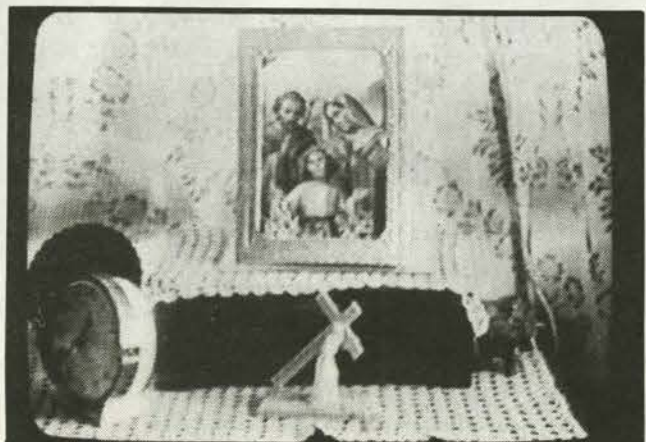
Commercial Culture is the collective name for three thirty-second spots produced by Popular Projects, "a non-profit society dedicated to using theatre and performance for social change." *Artist Touch*, *U Can Rail*, and *Art-Kik Power* were a direct intervention in a specific political context: the Halifax Conference on the Arts, where these "ads" could be expected to work fairly well. Tackling the giant of commercial advertising, however, this David encounters the difficulties of attempting mass culture aesthetics on a minuscule budget.

The most direct approach to social issues is taken by

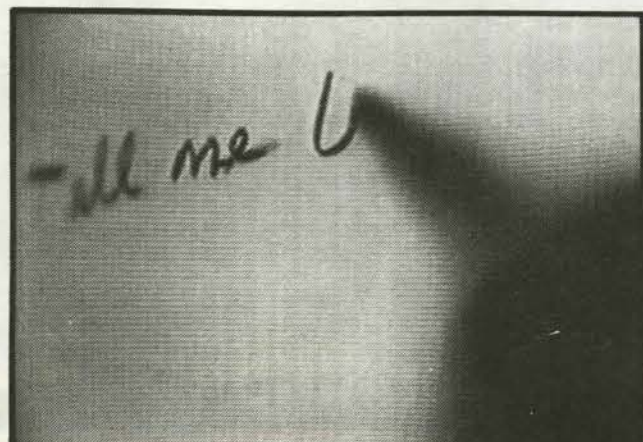
Melodie Calvert, Nancy Davis, and Caroline Murray-Crick in *Survival: Still the Issue*, produced for International Women's Week. This standard documentary-style video, in a 25-minute format suitable for broadcast or community use, is most effective in its footage of demonstrations by the MUMS (Mothers United for Metro Shelter), but tends to slacken during talking head interviews and excerpts from speeches. A certain awkwardness may result from the gap between videomakers and their subjects. This problem was directly addressed in a recent Halifax video on a related topic, *Women and Video Explorations' Our Two Cents Worth*, which engaged its subjects in the production process, thus enlivening the interviews.

The most successful example of engagement in this brief survey is Dean Brousseau's portrait of his grandmother, *Katie*. Brousseau's technique is deceptively simple, following his subject about her home as she sings popular songs, describes incidents in her life, tells foolish jokes, copies a recipe for tomato soup cake, and generally charms her audience. The videomaker is unobtrusive even as his identity is established by the comments Katie addresses toward the camera. "I wish I knew why I love you like I do," she sings as the video opens. Brousseau's bemused affection for his subject never strays into condescension. His witty portrait, refreshingly free of "attitude", is a glance of recognition across the gulf that recent social changes have wrought, illuminating those changes and their impact on particular human lives.

The glance backward whence we came, with affection but without sentimentality, as well as the critical examination of present reality, are, for Atlantic Canadians, essential to knowing who we are now, to locating ourselves in history. This representative program of recent videos, intelligently selected and perceptively introduced by Cathy Quinn, helps locate Halifax on the cultural map.



Katie



Wallace + Theresa



Crossing the 49th

Political Equations For The Porn Wars

by Karen Knights

The Porn Wars have reached the West Coast. The Socreds, so impressed by Ontario's Censor Board, have decided to introduce videotape censorship and classification, too.

B.C. artists, also impressed by the Board, immediately joined their eastern brothers and sisters in raising arms against such legislation. The Coalition for the Right To View, composed primarily of artists, art centres, independent video distributors, and gay and lesbian organizations, was formed to oppose the legislation.

Not surprisingly, Ontario artists showed little concern for video censorship until it was evenly dealt to all videos, art or not. It was difficult to get too excited about *Spit On Your Grave* being banned by the state watchdogs, but when the works of John Greyson or Kim Tomczak and Lisa Steele were affected it was another matter. I applauded the artists' decision not to submit tapes to the Board and their refusal to license. However, I was apprehensive of early press statements by Toronto artists and galleries which indicated their opposition to the legislation focused on the lack of exemptions for artists. The perhaps inevitable result of the ensuing press battle was Mary Brown's retort:

"We've had a lot of problems with this particular community. Perhaps they should be dealt with through exemption rather than attacking the whole act."

The implication of this statement is that she perceives, rightly or wrongly, opposition to be directed solely at the lack of exemption for the arts, not towards the content and structure of the act itself as it relates to all visual material, commercial or art, pornographic or not.

As a result of Ontario's high profile squabble between the arts community and the censor board, there have been hints by the B.C. Film Classification Board that the proposed video legislation will include an exemption for "works of artistic merit." Like Brown, B.C. censors feel it will pacify a potentially vocal minority, leaving the board free to exercise their prerogative without interference.

Although there would be unquestionable benefit to a significant proportion of artists if such an exemption were to be implemented, it may also create new problems for independent producers, distributors, and galleries. It is necessary to analyze the total effect of video censorship legislation if we are to effectively lobby for modification or elimination of it.

What must be examined is whether such an exemption will protect video art, will protect the much broader sphere of alternate video which includes feminist, gay, lesbian, and politically critical work, and if such an exemption will affect the distribution and screening of such work.

Feminist + Fundamentalists = Anti-Porn Lobby

The call for greater censorship comes not just from right wing activists representing motherhood and all that is good, but from many feminists as well. Recent feminist work, like the film *Not a Love Story*, has informed women about the most offensive and vile images in pornography. Their understandable anger has inspired a number of tactics for approaching the problem of misogynist imagery. Legislative work in this country has revolved around the implementation of a Canadianized version of the now legendary Amendments to the Minneapolis Ordinance.

In those amendments Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon define pornography as "a form of discrimination on the basis of sex", thus aligning it with hate literature, an argument used by B.C.'s opposition party the New Democratic Party (N.D.P.) in justifying their support for some form of video censorship. The correlation between hate literature and the most violent and sexist pornography has validity. However, Dworkin and MacKinnon's descriptions of imagery they wish to see cut as a result address a much broader range than that which is blatantly misogynist. It is interesting to look at their criteria for defining a work as pornographic and then apply it, as it will be interpreted by the current power structures, to current video work on sexual issues.

EXCERPT FROM THE MINNEAPOLIS ORDINANCE

(1) Pornography is the sexually explicit subordination of women, graphically depicted, whether in pictures or

in words, that also includes one or more of the following:

- (i) women are presented as dehumanized sexual objects, things, or commodities; or
- (ii) women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or
- (iii) women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped; or
- (iv) women are represented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt; or
- (v) women are presented in postures of sexual submission; [or sexual servility, including by inviting penetration;]¹ or
- (vi) women's body parts — including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, and buttocks — are exhibited, such that women are reduced to those parts; or
- (vii) women are presented as whores by nature; or
- (viii) women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals; or
- (ix) women are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, abasement, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual.²

A quick reading of this list evokes graphic images of abuse and violence against women which can be found in some hardcore porn. It also makes reference to sexual imagery prevalent in video art. In the hands of a censor this legislation would attack them both, severely limiting or completely banning lesbian power erotica, videos exposing the horror of actual rape, scenes of consensual bondage, all intercourse, masturbation and critical work which uses any of that imagery. The actual structure of a video is also dictated by the banning of fragmented imagery, commonly used to recreate the process of memory (including dreams and fantasy) and sight. The wording is typically vague: "subordination", "dehumanized", and "degradation" mean different things to feminists and fundamentalists, let alone everyone else. The Neo-Right in the U.S. finds the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) degrading.

What also seems to be lacking in the legislation is any awareness of the role of imagery in sexual fantasizing for women as well as men. What we fantasize may be the antithesis of our politics. Are we seriously supposed to modify our fantasies to match those politics?

Pro-censorship women insist that in this instance the state is genuinely interested in the protection of women and children, a position which ignores the history of human resource funding in B.C. and the history of censorship in Canada and the rest of the world. Knowing the record of the Social Credit government, I can only assume they are proposing such legislation in the hopes of gaining political ground with feminists in the least costly manner. The N.D.P. is also in favour of censorship legislation, but arguably for the right (in feminist terms) reasons. The problem is that their understanding of its potential impact on the visual arts is no more enlightened than the Socreds'.

For image makers the issue is also one of the restriction of, and denial of access to, certain visual images. The pluralist nature of alternate video makes it difficult to strictly delineate between it and commercial video.

Politicians, censors, and proponents of censorship all argue that they "know pornography when they see it." They very rarely, however, admit to knowing art when they see it.

If we support exemptions for works of "artistic merit" we are actually supporting exemptions for works deemed to have artistic merit by those who exercise the will of a conservative, politically ambitious, capitalist patriarchy and its ideology. Can feminists, gays, lesbians, or artists really believe that this ruling body has their best interests at heart when they propose state surveillance and censorship of all video?

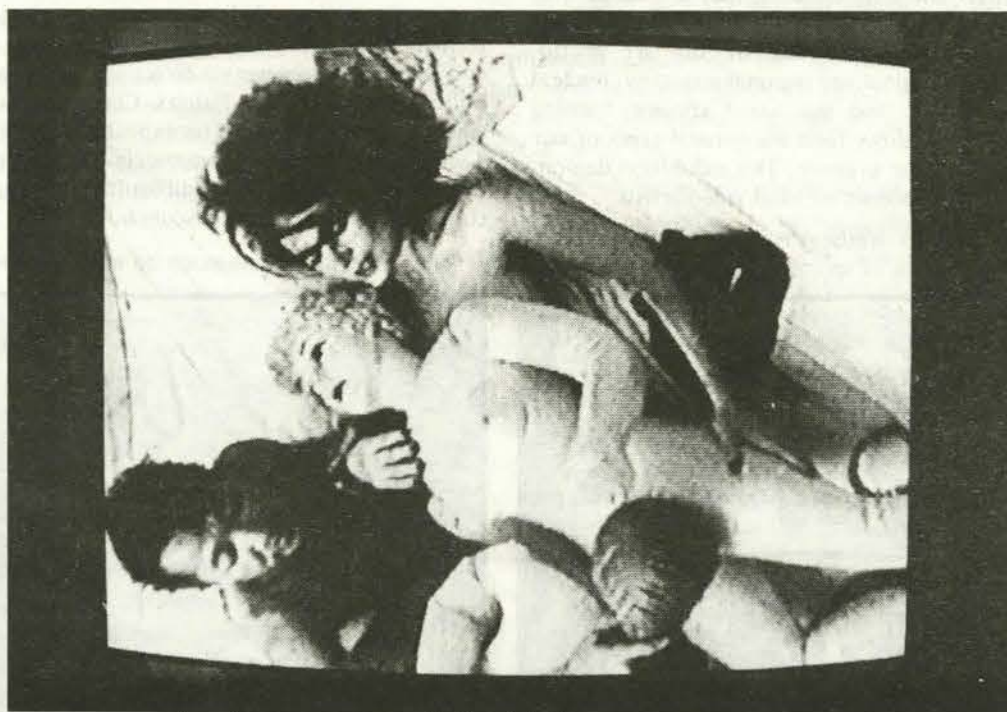
Art + Legislation = Not Art

It is obvious from analyzing the MacKinnon/Dworkin argument that art is soon not art when appropriate legislation is instituted. When questioned about art exemptions, B.C. Censor Mary Lou McCausland (a liberal censor by national standards) replied that pornographers were becoming very "artistic" in their rendering of pornographic images. For her the distinction is not as clear as it used to be. In a province where the Vancouver Art Gallery Director declared the *Confused* video, directed by Paul Wong, "not art" because he personally did not have the ability to justify it as such, primarily for its sexual content and his limited understanding of the medium, we must be wary of relying on fragile semantics for exemptions from prosecution. Art is not art when it is not understood, when it offends some members of the public, when politicians find it dangerous, or when censors are pressured by lobby groups for action against sexual material.

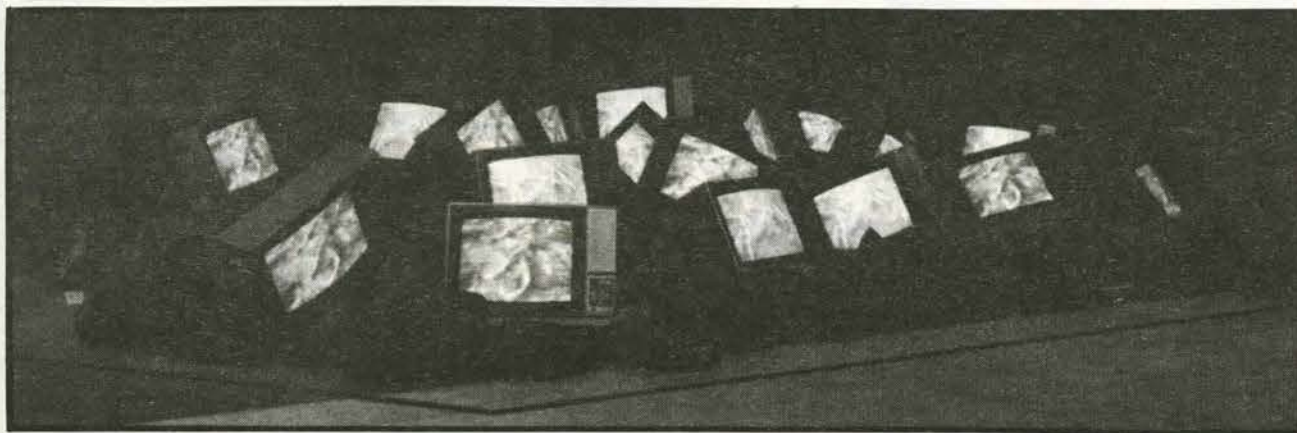
Politics + Sex = Censored Images

British Columbia's history pertaining to censorship is not particularly comforting. Malcolm Dean in his book *Censored, Only In Canada*, recounts the story of the banning of the film *A Woman God Forgot* in 1918. "Apparently the suggestion that God was capable of forgetting anyone was too much for the censors, because those who saw a private screening of the film were mystified by the decision. 'It is really too bad that a great number of other things are not subject to the whims of the censor board,' commented one observer, 'because if more people know how inconsistent a film censor can be, the result would be the abolition of all censorship.'"³ He points out that the legislation was used again in the twenties to ban Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* and *October*, and in the thirties against trade unionism and other "seditious political philosophies."

When we look back at these examples of the use of censorship in the past, and at those occurring in Ontario and at Canada Customs today, we realize that although it is easy to feel they are inconsistent (i.e., they ban some political or sexual work but not others), they are in fact completely consistent: they direct their power against images which question the status quo. It is obvious that feminist, gay and lesbian tapes, and others which challenge the economic, social, and sexual values of the ruling ideologies will be subject to scrutiny and censorship by this act.



Confused



Spawning Salmon by Tomiyo Sasaki

The powers that be, who are not artists, art critics, or art historians, will rarely accept the argument that works about sex or politics have artistic merit. Such video art will be denied exemption and may be judged pornographic by legislation similar to the MacKinnon/Dworkin amendments.

Exemption = Elitism - Power

The most important benefit for censors in allowing exemptions for artistic merit will be its effect on the art community's ability to lobby against state censorship of imagery in general. Each artist brought before the board for producing what it deems pornographic material will have to fight as an individual, not as part of the artistic community as a whole: he/she will be isolated, demoted from the "privileged" rank of artist, and labeled pornographer. We will have given the power to define who is an artist and who is not, what is art and what is not, to the government.

Another potential by-product of art exemptions will be the ghettoization of the medium through its imprisonment within gallery walls, and, most likely, only within galleries officially recognized by the censor board. Any exhibits in public spaces (which in the recent "Luminous Sites" project included the 31st floor of an office tower, a parkade, and a store front window) or at art centres where the public has access, will make the work subject to classification and censorship.

For video, the dialectic of the viewer/site relationship is one which elicits ongoing experimentation and study. Some of the most successful interaction between video art and the public has occurred outside of the gallery context.

Video is a new art form not readily understood, even by those familiar with traditional art mediums. Its physical and visual affinity to television interferes with the viewer's response to it: a response never without reference to the other.

An interesting example of the video/gallery dilemma was the recent cohabitation of the *Berlin Notes* video program and the Tomiyo Sasaki installation, *Spawning Salmon*, at the Vancouver Art Gallery during March of this year. Gallery strollers, after wandering past the Emily Carr, the Robert Rauschenberg, and the early hard-edge paintings of Michael Morris were confronted with the *Berlin Notes* program. The installation was typical of the V.A.G.: the monitor was enclosed in a white box and strict rows of chairs were lined up in front of it. The audio was too low to hear over the clicking of heels on the gallery floors. The patrons seemed to feel there was too much commitment demanded from them. Because of their lack of knowledge regarding the medium and the barrier of their personal relationship to television, they saw it as a medium without validity, and therefore an intruder in the sanctity of the art space. The installation was usually hastily dismissed.

Spawning Salmon, however, installed in the lobby of the Art Gallery as part of "Luminous Sites", attracted the very same audience who shunned the *Berlin Notes* tapes. Placed between the coat racks and the reception desk, outside of the inner sanctum of true art, the art/not art confrontation did not take place. People would slow down as they approached, and after the inevitable slight hesitation which seems natural to the post-television generation, they inevitably succumbed to the work's beauty, accepting, perhaps for the first time, a piece of video as art.

There is an important role for this kind of creative seduction in the area of public education. The limitation

of video to the art gallery context will jeopardize its ability to reach the masses in a non-threatening, non-institutional way. By accepting the gallery context as the only appropriate one in which video art may exist, we help reinforce the notion that art is an elitist activity and that the patron of the arts (upper class, educated) is somehow immune to the "evils" of sexual imagery in art while the rest of the public (middle and lower class, uneducated, unsophisticated) is not; an entirely classist argument.

Classification - Money = Classification

An exemption for art is one way to appease the art community; the other is through financial exemptions. The fee charged for work to be classified, licensed, and potentially censored is, at almost any figure, too much for an artist or art distributor. If this cost is presented as the primary concern of artists, we will be easily silenced by financial exemption, and the more important concern of censorship as a potential threat against the integrity of video content will be effectively dissipated. It removes our voice from the mainstream press and the realm of public debate. It was the non-licensing and refusal to submit tapes by A Space and the subsequent seizure of equipment and tapes by authorities which generated the voluminous press. Acquiescing on these matters in return for special privileges dilutes the ability of the art world to respond when artists are hit, as they will be, by actual censorship of content. I am not saying that the financial aspect of censorship is unimportant, merely that it can be used by the censors as a bribe, allowing a potentially more harmful weapon to be used: that of state censorship of images.

Alternate Video - 'Artistic Merit' ≠ Exemption

As anyone knows who has seen the volume and variety of work in residence at non-profit video centres, there is a large portion of video which can only be termed alternate video. It is not video art, but it is not commercial video either. Most of it is produced for the immediate community and includes highly political social documentaries, educational tools, and entertainment for groups, such as the gay and lesbian communities, who are denied access to mass media. Will the censors place them under an educational exemption if not an art one? Will purely erotic tapes, meant for the entertainment of these groups, be exempted? Tapes which include sodomy and consensual S/M fantasies for gays have been heavily censored at Canada Customs and elsewhere while heterosexual work of the same type has not. The answer obviously is that all material of this type will be affected.

Aside from the above work, which most artists would agree they would not like to see come under the censors' scissors, there is the issue of commercial work which is being cut or banned for the same reasons video art would be, and with the same lack of concern for context or intent, and for which the art exemption would be of no help.

When Mary Brown spoke of allowing art exemptions "rather than attacking the whole act", she was saying she is willing to pacify artists so they will shut up and allow her to go on with her real work of censoring films like *Pretty Baby* and *Tin Drum*. These films and many others face the same problems art does: if they are politically incorrect according to the censors, or if they discuss issues the censors are uncomfortable with, they will be banned or cut. To say that art which makes money and appeals to a large audience is somehow less important than art that doesn't do either is extremely suspect. In Vancouver, such a double standard may mean the end of

the most progressive video retailer in the city. The large body of art and foreign films which they alone import — and are legal distributors of — will be hit with classification charges which they are unable to absorb. As a result American movies will be the mainstay of the video retailer, and our options as interested viewers will be severely limited once again.

At this point British Columbian artists are active in fighting the legislation not knowing whether they will be exempt or not. They are raising issues with politicians which have never been raised before: the importance of alternate erotica, the need for sexual imagery for the gay and lesbian communities, and the importance of critical feminist work. Important practical and theoretical discussions are beginning to take place in the political and public forum.

The chances are we will be offered some form of exemption from this legislation which, considering the alternatives, will be a victory of sorts. But we cannot stop fighting for video on the fringe of art exemptions, educational exemptions, and for images of our sexuality. For women, the time has come for an open exploration of our desires and fantasies and their relevance to the rest of our lives. The dialogue is just beginning. Regressive legislation regarding sexual imagery, alternate or commercial, will seriously harm that process.

As image makers, distributors, and viewers, we must be wary of any attempt to deny us the freedom to view or create images of our choice. If they were such simple things that could be unanimously defined and categorized they would not hold the fascination for us that they do. If they were not so influential, seductive, and desirable, the government would not be interested. But if we succumb to the dangling carrot of "art exemptions" we must be aware of the dire consequences for critical video production around sexual and political issues.

FOOTNOTES

¹The bracketed portion of this phrase is a highly contentious one: it was removed from the bill before it went to city council. It has been reinstated in subsequent defences.

²Appendix II, Excerpts from the Minneapolis Ordinance was taken from *Women Against Censorship*, edited by Varda Burstyn. Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver and Toronto, 1985.

³*Censored, Only In Canada* Malcolm Dean, Virgo Press, Toronto, 1981.

The views expressed are those of the author and are not the official position of the Coalition for the Right to View.

Bill 30

Bill 30, a new Motion Pictures Act which includes the censorship of video, was introduced into the B.C. Legislature May 20th.

ALL video material now comes under government scrutiny and is subject to both classification and censorship. The Director of Film Classification has the power to decide what may or may not be banned through her/his own definitions of "artistic, educational, political, or scientific." Non-profit cultural societies may be exempt from submitting to the board, but only if approved by the Director — again, the Director sets all criteria for this decision. Even if a society is "successful", non-members (the public) may not attend screenings and the society is subject to the most extreme form of classification possible: no person under 18 years of age may view any material, no matter what its content.

The Regulations of the act may, at any time, be altered by the Lieutenant-Governor in council without the approval of the legislature. These regulations include the definitions of "sexually explicit" (the criterion for the adult motion picture category) or "sexually suggestive" (criterion for banning images of youth under 14, even if only depicted as being under 14) and where retailers of adult motion pictures may have their businesses.

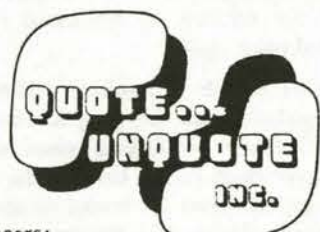
Under Bill 30, all premises housing video may be inspected by anyone authorized by the Board without notice, equipment demanded for viewing tapes, and tapes seized and potentially destroyed.

Attorney-General Brian Smith calls this "a classification, NOT censorship, measure".

If you would like to know more about Bill 30 and how it will affect you as an artist or art centre, you can contact the C.R.T.C. at P.O. Box 69376, Station K, Vancouver, B.C. V5K 4W6. If you would like to help us fight this legislation you can contact us through the same address.



DISTRIBUTE



Dear Producers:

The Community Cable Channel here in Albuquerque has established late night programming on Monday evenings for new video art, dance, computer graphics, and music. . . through *Parallel-gramme* magazine I've been aware of the existence of Canadian videowork for some time, and I'd like to start running as much as I can get on our channel. We will broadcast all ¾" and VHS tapes we receive in this venue. CCC25 lines out to 58,000 Albuquerque cable television subscribers, and through the show our submissions will be broadcast twice every few months. "25 live" runs for two hours every Monday night. We can dub copies here and return your source tape, or send ¾" tape (30 to 60 min.) to dub onto from your masters. Although by being non-profit and volunteer we cannot pay for video content, we can provide receipts for material and affidavits of play upon request.

Remember that you have ideas on videotape that need to be seen!

25live

Attn: Alan Yates / Bob Bottomley
115 Veranda N.W.
Albuquerque, N.M. 87107
(505) 345-4900



A Non-Profit Center for Video Arts and Education
425 Ontario Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 376-3333

DOUBLE VISIONS

UCVideo announces the debut of "Double Visions", a monthly half-hour cable television series focusing on Minnesota artists. Co-produced by the Cable Arts Consortium and the Minneapolis Television Network, "Double Visions" offers a chance for local video producers to express their distinctive styles, as each monthly program will be the work of a different video artist, who is responsible for a creative treatment of art and artists. Programs will be aired first in Minneapolis, then subsequently on other cable systems and arts distribution markets beginning September 1986.

"Double Visions" takes advantage of the opportunity cable television offers its subscribers to receive a wider range of styles and subjects than with conventional broadcast television. The series encourages experimentation with the television medium, and so in addition to seeing artists that would otherwise not appear on television, viewers will also see art in new ways.

UCVideo is a non-profit organization whose mission is to foster and advocate appreciation, understanding, and creation of video and related media arts as forms of individual and community expression. UCVideo provides educational opportunities, facilitates production, sponsors exhibitions, and distributes video work.

THE RAINDANCE FOUNDATION is looking for video works up to 56 minutes, 30 seconds (¾" format) by artists, documentarists, and independent producers for presentation of "Night Light TV" which airs on Manhattan CATV and Group-W late Friday night. A small honorarium will be paid. Please include return postage and label the submission tapes with address and telephone number.

Raindance Foundation
51 Fifth Avenue, 11D
New York, NY 10013

CINDY

Deadline is November 15. Presented by the Association of Visual Communicators, "informational" works should be submitted in 16mm film or ¾" video. Competition is in 18 non-theatrical categories, including Music Video and Interactive Video-disc. Fee is \$70 for film and \$95 for video. Students may enter for half the fee.

AVC - CINDY Competition
900 Palm Avenue, Ste. B
South Pasadena, California, 91030
(818) 441-2274.

THEATRE TAPE FESTIVAL

The Netherlands Theatre Institute is organizing in March 1986 the fourth successive THEATRE TAPE FESTIVAL. The aim of this festival is to offer audiences a chance to keep up with contemporary developments in theatre and video.

Each festival is organized around a central theme which in 1986 will be VIDEO THEATRE.

We interpret this to mean: theatre productions specially developed for video (dance, drama, mime, music theatre) and using the medium and its specific characteristics as the point of departure.

This is a new genre which is developing rapidly abroad and of which there are at present precious few examples in Holland. That is the main reason why this first Dutch festival for original video theatre productions will have a very international character.

Awards will be presented at the festival. The video theatre productions will be judged by an expert jury consisting of:

Ruud / Krijn ter Braak (VPRO TV, Hilversum)
Rene Coelho (MonteVideo, Amsterdam)
Chris Dercon (BRT TV, Brussels)
Titus Muizelaar (actor, Amsterdam)
Moniek Toebosch (video artist/dramatist, Amsterdam)
Roberto Cimetta (Polverigi Festival, Italy)

If the quality is high enough, one or more of the tapes selected by the jury will be 'rewarded' with a broadcast by the VPRO Television in Holland.

If you wish to submit one or more productions for the THEATRE TAPE FESTIVAL 1986, please contact Marc Noyons or Linda Bouws (tel. 020 - 23 51 04). We will send you an entry form as soon as possible.

NETWORK

The Canadian Women's Movement Archives is an organization of the Canadian Women's Movement. This is not an obvious statement when one thinks about how archives generally operate as institutions. Collective members and volunteers at the CWMA are feminist activists creating a community-based archives, resource, and research centre.

Our autonomy from the usual institutions upon which most archives are politically and financially dependent is important, because such reliance would almost certainly place us outside the women's movement. The price of this independence, though, is precarious financing and relentless fundraising.

The Archives contain

- Material on over 1,500 women's groups, coalitions, conferences, demonstrations, and cultural events from across Canada.
- Over 600 periodicals, newsletters, newspapers, and magazines ranging from the 1960's to the present.
- A large selection of lesbian newsletters, periodicals and group files.
- Collections of buttons, posters, t-shirts, photographs, slides, tapes, and other ephemera.
- A library of Canadian books, both fiction and non-fiction, by and about Canadian women.

Canadian Women's Movement Archives
P.O. Box 128, Station P
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S7

EVENTS

NAME: 17th Annual National Educational Film and Video Festival.

DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES: December 15, 1986.

FESTIVAL DATES: May 7 to 10, 1987.

LOCATIONS: Various San Francisco, Berkeley, and Oakland, California locations.

ELIGIBILITY: 16mm films with optical sound track, ½" VHS (standard play) video cassettes and filmstrips. (Note: ¾" U-matic videocassettes will be accepted in the Video As Art category). Entries must be available for non-theatrical distribution and must be released after January 1, 1985. English language sound tracks or subtitles required for all entries except those designed to teach a foreign language.

CATEGORIES: Over 80 categories in the following subject areas: science, history, government, business, careers, fine arts, film/video as art, life sciences, ecology, mathematics, computers, social studies, anthropology, language arts, children's features, health, safety, human relations, recreation, travel, sports, teacher education, video reportage, how-to videos. Separate competition for student films and videos - fiction and non-fiction accepted.

ENTRY FEES: Film and videocassettes: 15 min. or less - \$55; 15:01 to 30 min. - \$65; 30:01 to 45 min. - \$80; 45:01 to 60 min. - \$95; 60:01 to 90 min. - \$125; 90:01 min. or more - add \$2 per running minute. Filmstrips: first strip in a set, or single strip - \$35; second strip in a set - \$25; each additional strip in a set - \$15. Student fees: from \$5 to \$25.

CONTACT: Sue Davies, Executive Director, National Educational Film & Video Festival
314 East 10th Street
Oakland, CA 94606
Tel: (415) 465-6885 / 6878 / 6891.

NATIONAL VIDEO FESTIVAL

Held December 4 to 7 in Los Angeles at the American Film Institute. For more information contact: AFI, 2021 North Western Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90021.

THE YONEMOTO'S - Video Screening
Wednesday, September 24, 1986
Video Inn
261 Powell St., Vancouver, Canada

Under the seamy shadows of Hollywood, the myth-making american celluloid dream, and Los Angeles, the mecca of the southern california lifestyle, come along the unconventional art/film/writing/video collaborative of BRUCE and NORMAN YONEMOTO.

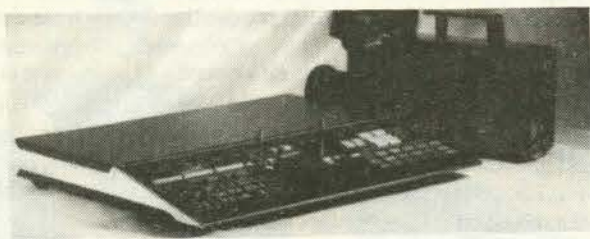
The american born third generation japanese brothers have been producing videotapes since the mid-70s when their first work *Garage Sale*, a 70 min. 16mm film, became a cult classic. Since then they have produced numerous videotapes on the themes of love, romance, and the 'american way'. *Vault*, the most recent in their ongoing series of soap-operaderived narratives, is a stunningly compressed 12 minutes of cliched and often lavishly rich advertising imagery presented in a story of a love affair between a male 'abstract expressionist' artist and a female pole vaulter. Shot in Lubbock, Texas, *Vault* is extremely dense - they cram as much meaning as one would see throughout an entire feature length film.

The Yonemoto's flirt with popular media culture, they manipulate and critique. It is a love/hate inspiration in the realization, examination, and deconstruction of the classic devices of film formula and the mid-afternoon TV soap conventions they employ in their narratives.

"I want to believe in our love, but in the end we all end up believing in the reality of our fantasies. I want a world where people realize that we transform our lies into truths." B. & N.

Bruce Yonemoto will be present to introduce and discuss his work. We are pleased to present for the first time in Canada, Bruce Yonemoto and the Canadian premieres of *Vault* and *Green Card: An American Romance*!

HARDWARE



V.I.P. Video of Taylor, Michigan, has announced plans to market a new video special effects generator called "Camcorder Companion FX-1". The product is designed especially for use with the camcorder, but can also be used with any VCR or with any professional equipment. When used with a camcorder, the FX-1 permits the addition of theatre-like special effects during playback, editing, or duplicating.

The FX-1 allows the user to switch from one non-synchronized source to another glitch-free by way of V.I.P.'s new circuitry called "Phaser Switching". This feature was previously unavailable in any S.E.G.

The FX-1 is also equipped with two Black Burst Outputs for use with character generators or genlock equipment.

The Camcorder Companion offers a wide range of special effects including up to 120 digital wipe and fade patterns: soft, sharp, or waved edge on each pattern. Video art effects are also available plus many other features.

The FX-1 is priced at \$589.00 for the basic unit, and \$1171.00 for the full-featured product.

The Camcorder Companion FX-1 will be available in September. For additional information or dealer information, call V.I.P. Video at 1-800-792-2489.

VIDEO INTERFACE PRODUCTS
20516 LORNE, TAYLOR, MI 48180

PERIODICALS

Micro Electronics in Culture and the Arts (MECA) announces its comprehensive survey on Arts and Technology.

The purpose of the survey is to collect information necessary for the publication of a Canadian Directory of sources for collaboration between Artists and Technologists. Artists will find that the Directory provides access to technological resources and contacts. The directory will make it possible for Technologists to explore creative applications of technological tools.

Creative interfaces between Arts and Technology have definite effects on state-of-the-art research in a multitude of fields such as robotics, hydraulics, and optics. These are a few of the fields of activity that will be represented in the Directory through the MECA survey: Engineering, Science, Film/Video, Electronics, Dance, Theatre, Visual Arts, Photography, Holography, Computers, Broadcast Media, Music.

The publication date for the directory is early 1987. MECA invites your input in this survey between August 4 and October 3, 1986. To contact us please write requesting a copy of our survey: Micro Electronics in Culture and the Arts Inc.
70 Berwick Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M5P 1H1 Canada
(416) 368-2561 Andrea Ott
(416) 487-4210 Janet Sadel

MECA is a multi-disciplinary arts organization working collaboratively with Artists, Technologists, Performers, Arts Organizations, and the general public toward a culturally enriched future.

mediamatic

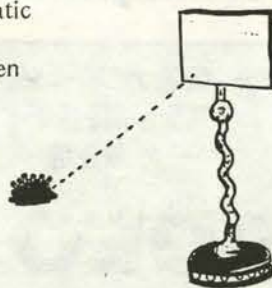


Announcing a new video Art Magazine published in the Netherlands! MEDIAMATIC is printed bilingually in Dutch and English and presents articles written by artists and art historians on media art and hardware design reflecting individual meditations and contemporary strategies both in Europe and North America.

MEDIAMATIC is published quarterly, number one being the second issue (the initial "zero" issue sold out in Europe within weeks) and retails in Canada for 13 Gulden (\$8.00) per number. Subscription rates are 60 Gulden (\$36.00) per year for Institutions and 50 Gulden (\$30.00) per year for Individuals — postage included. Commercial outlets and distributors receive the standard 30% discount.

MEDIAMATIC welcomes your comments and contributions.

All orders and inquiries should be addressed to:
Stichting Mediamatic
Zuiderdiep 35
9711 HB Groningen
Nederland
Tel: 50 140241



CC

NEW INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT FUND STARTS UP August 1, 1986

The Canada Council board, at its June 1986 meeting, approved and allotted \$1 million for an Interdisciplinary Project Fund (IPF). This new fund will permit the Canada Council to respond more generously to projects proposed by professional artists, groups, or non-profit organizations which request assessment and funding from two or more sections of Council. The Council's sections are Dance, Theatre, Music, Touring Office, Writing and Publication, Visual Arts, Art Bank, Media Arts, Arts Awards, and Explorations.

The IPF is based on one-time-only funds transferred to the Council by the Minister of Communications, Mr. Marcel Masse, in March 1986. It is a project fund to be used this fiscal year, which ends on March 31, 1987.

Although the Fund will have a short life, the Canada Council wishes to realize two objectives through it: to begin to respond more adequately to project proposals requesting support for professional interdisciplinary arts activity; and to use the process of assessing and funding interdisciplinary projects to establish new patterns and methods of cooperation between sections.

The IPF will begin on August 1, 1986. Applications must be for one-time projects only. No forms are required: in a letter, applicants should set out their proposed project as completely as possible. They should describe the project, list participants, establish a time-frame and a budget, and outline the project's expected results. Applications will be evaluated according to existing assessment criteria in the sections involved.

From the date an application is received, the estimated time required to assess an application to the IPF is eight weeks. Since the Fund will lapse on March 31, 1987, applications to the IPF will not be accepted later than February 1, 1987.

Contact each Section directly, or, in cases where a project does not seem to fit any of these sections, or if the applicant is unsure which sections are best suited to the project, the application may be sent to the IPF, care of the Director's Office, the Canada Council.

The Canada Council, Media Arts section would like to offer a clarification on their press release describing the assessment procedure for Integrated Media projects (Video Guide, Vol. 8, No. 2).

The applications are in fact assessed by jury, not a selection committee. This is a regular jury and it reviews, acts, and decides on grants in exactly the same fashion as a video jury does. The actual technical aspects of projects submitted are probed intelligently but are never the deciding factors (unless they are totally impractical). Decisions are made on the basis of artistic quality and innovation which are often inextricably tied with various technological processes.

Video guide hopes that this has not inconvenienced anyone.

BOOKS

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN TELEVISION, CABLE, AND VIDEO Maxine K. and Robert M. Reed

WHERE THE JOBS ARE IN TELEVISION, CABLE, AND VIDEO

- * How much can a TV Director expect to earn?
- * What educational background does a cable television Video Installer need?
- * What does a Videotape Engineer do?
- * What are the employment prospects for an Instructional Designer?
- * What careers are available in home video?

The answers to these and many other questions can be found in CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN TELEVISION, CABLE, AND VIDEO: Second Edition, by Maxine K. and Robert M. Reed (Publication date: July 20, 1986; Price \$19.95, hard-bound), the most authoritative guide available to exciting employment opportunities in communications and broadcasting.

This revised and expanded edition profiles 100 distinct careers: 70 in Television Broadcasting and 30 in Cable, Video, and Government/Health/Education/Private Industry. Each section begins with an in-depth introduction giving important employment statistics and trends, as well as pertinent technological definitions.

Areas of employment in the Television Broadcasting section include: Management and administration; Programming; Production; News; Engineering; Advertising Sales; Advertising Agency; and Performance/Arts/Crafts.

GLOBAL

AMSTERDAM, June 6, 1986

Dear artist, dear friend:

As you probably know, the circumstances for artists in the field of electronic media in Holland — production facilities — were not too bad. Just recently the Minister of Culture, not convinced of the importance of this art field, decided to cut the subvention of state-aided institutions like MonteVideo. This could have excessive consequences for production facilities for both Dutch and international artists.

Therefore, we ask you to support our campaign in the form of sending telegrams with a short, but clear, request to our Minister to convince him of the need of artistic electronic production facilities.

Your contribution in the form of a telegram or a letter could be of great help to stop the Dutch government continuing her short-sighted policy in this area.

On behalf of the artists of MonteVideo, with fraternal greetings,

Servas

P.S. Send your wire please as soon as possible to:
Mr. Drs. L.C. Brinkman,
Minister of Culture
Postbox 5406
2280 HK Rijswijk
Holland

THE MARKET IS THE MEDIUM:

What separates the worldly concerns of the visual artist from that of the video/media artist is accessibility to the G.P. (General Public). The visual artist is straddled with the history of painting whereas the video artist/producer is burdened with working on the fringe of the most powerful propaganda medium in history — 20th Century television. A medium that to date has been controlled in both the production of hard and software by multinational corporations and government.

In the past decade we have been part of the birth and development of the 'new face of television'. This new face in town appears to have a complex personality: it can be sophisticated, fun, charming, intelligent, witty, helpful, and ever-so-concerned. Gorgeously styled, it is available in VHS, Beta, Video 8, $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 1", and 2", on laser disc and microchip — it is positively everywhere — at work and at play via broadcast, cable, pay TV, in the home and cabaret.

This decentralization of television as we once knew it is no more than a diversification of marketing possibilities of the same old song and dance. Independent producers' constant flirtation with the latest new face, the allure of mass-appeal, is a dance that has more pause than effect.

The shotgun wedding of rock 'n' roll and network mainstream, a marriage of convenience, has produced the unwanted child 'rock video', a spoiled, pampered, seductive, rude boy/girl. The proliferation of rock videos has helped create the 'all looks but don't touch me' generation. Frustrated and pent up with false illusion of grandeur and instant stardom in high stress economic times, a generation weaned on the understanding the language of the video clip dances to low-resolution digital effects. Life cannot imitate television?

The current rock video market is already saturated. The writing is on the disc.

Media artists are caught in a dilemma — caught in an uncomfortable relationship with both the staid art world and the crassness of mass media. A favourite subject matter for the independent video artist has been in the production of works that critique, parody, and/or appropriate from mass-media. In Richard Serra's *Television Delivers People* (1973), he uses video to criticize the industry of commercial television. Muntadas' current video-in-progress *Between The Frames* uses video to unravel the inner workings/thoughts of art world intelligentsia. In an attempt to analyse this relationship, a number of national and international exhibitions and

festivals such as "Television Interference"¹ and "Talking Back to the Media"² have been organized in recent years with 'media' as the central theme.

Also in recent years there has been a concerted effort by producers, distributors, and exhibitors to meet broadcast television at least half way with more marketable packages. As evidenced by much of the work of the 'new generation' of successful video productions, they have the look, the feel, the gloss and face of commercial television. The 'video clip' has been taken to new highs with respectful exhibitions at the M.O.M.A. in New York and the I. C.A. in London. If the key for putting together populist packages appears to be 'shorter the better' or 'variety is the spice of life', then festivals such as "Under 5"³ and "Video Shorts"⁴ are relevant competitions. More recently a number of competitions, largely out of Japan, have actually solicited producers to create new works to fit into specific themes and lengths. Enticed by perhaps lack of their own ideas and for short term gain of monetary/hardware prizes, airfares, and recognition, producers appear to be more than willing to produce for 'specified contexts' such as "Miniatures"⁵.

On the flip side of the coin is the trend to anthologies — the packaging of video magazines such as *Infermental*⁶

Ko Nakajima TAPE

各巻カラー45分
ステレオHI-FI
¥10,800

秘 MOUNTビデオの最高峰 群

CGA (INTERIOR) VIDEO

Mt. Fuji

PART I HI-RAN PART II GUN-SHIN

秘 乱 群 起

Ko Nakajima is an accomplished, well known, and respected producer/director of videotapes, film, installations and is closely involved with the development of a number of digital video processing tools, notably the ANIMAKER and the ANIPUTER. He is heavily in demand on the international video, computer graphic, and media art circuits. In between his hectic and irregular out-of-Tokyo schedule, he manages to continue production of videotapes, be available as a consultant, and oversee the operation of two non-profit based video organizations: Video Earth and Chikyo Club.

Released earlier this year by CGA (Interior) VIDEO, the production *Mt. Fuji* was directed by Ko Nakajima. The ultra-slick looking work was produced specifically as a home video release for the Japanese domestic market. Available mainly in VHS and Beta, it retails for 10,800 Yen, or about \$100 CDN, depending on the rise and never the fall of the strong Japanese currency. The feature length production, 90 min., is also available in professional formats ($\frac{3}{4}$ " and 1") in, of course, appropriately edited lengths suitable for a variety of other contexts: 5 minutes for the broadcast 'video clip' markets, 10 and 20 min. edits for festivals and video art exhibits, and in 30 and 60 min. versions.

Well conceived and neatly packaged, *Mt. Fuji* was geared and produced for the consumer. *Mt. Fuji* is a successful collaboration of content and new technologies — the extended postcard-cum-wallpaper is a fusion of the talents of its producers, its artists, musicians, engineers, corporate venture capital, and marketing executives. Very much a part of the Japanese-thinking business machine. The video is in two parts — Part I: HI-RAN and Part II: GUN-SHIN.

HI — a secret, a mystery, hidden.
Fuji Yama is a secret mountain. It contains hidden mysteries.

RAN — war, rebellion, turbulence.
Fuji Yama is a stormy mountain, as turbulent as the heart of man.

GUN — to crowd, flock, swarm.
On Fuji Yama the clouds crowd together, as people flock together. It is a mountain which invites people.

SHIN — heart, soul, spirit.
To gaze at Fuji Yama is to see yourself. It is a mountain that reflects, like a mirror.

The videotape is based upon decades of black and white and colour photographs of Kozan Saito — Mt. Fuji has been photographed from every conceivable angle and throughout the shifting seasons. Nakajima's video treatment set to the music of Tsutomu is mesmerizing. Controlled meshing of the photographic still with the endless flow and layering of digital effects maintains a careful distance, a respect of the mountain, of the photographic image — the awe of Mt. Fuji and sacred symbol that is embedded into the culture. High-tech and Zen, simple and dramatic.

Ko Nakajima is distributed through Video Out, Vancouver.

Introduction

by Paul Wong

in which excerpts from longer tapes and short works are edited into thematic packages — the most common thematic curatorial base is the geographic. Some current packages on the touring circuit include: "Habits", "Life Like It: Some Halifax Video", "SFIVF 86", and "Vintage Video".⁷

Not normally associated with video art is the concept of the hit single or as the old saying goes, 'you're only as good as your last work' which has spawned a number of broadcast and cable attempts to populism. Mega pop stars collaborate with the avant-garde video artist, or better yet to collaborate with a famous film director??? Minor pop star to collaborate with major film maker ??? Yet another route is involvement with a regional or national cable show, as in the case of OFF CENTRE to be broadcast nationally on PBS, or in England on Channel 4. With the much touted Off Centre, a number of the segments were specifically produced or re-edited for inclusion. Through the years a number of 'broadcast experiments' with video art have resulted in commissioned projects: Canada's General Idea has produced for three such ventures: *Pilot* (1977) for TV Ontario, *Test Tube* (1979) for De Appel, and *de Loco* as part of the Prime Time Video Series.⁸ Although produced for specific

broadcast situations, these tapes have also been extensively aired and circulated on the art and video circuits. These are just some examples of the types of forays into the art and mass-media marketplaces.

Equally enticing has been the great unknown, the 'home video market' — an avenue to the real people, the general public — 'on the shelf competition'. Canada's foremost video art distributor, Art Metropole, has recently announced their about-shift marketing strategy to enter into the home video market. The home market is not completely uncharted waters. Individual attempts by artists have included private sales to collectors on VHS and Beta; a number of packages have surfaced out of the United States. Japanese 'entrepreneurs' and Pioneer Laser Disc has just released a number of works for their domestic market.

FOOTNOTES

¹ "Television Interference", Curator: Renee Baert, Catalogue: March 1984, Presentation House, North Vancouver, Canada.

² "Talking Back To The Media", Organizer: Aart Van Barneveld, Time Based Arts, Catalogue: November 1985,

Amsterdam, Holland.

³ "Under 5", September 1984, Firehall Theatre/Video Inn, *The Best of Under 5* available from Video Out Distribution, Vancouver.

⁴ "Video Shorts 6", 932-12th Avenue, Seattle, Washington, 98122.

⁵ "Miniatures", The Media Centre, South Hill Park, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 4PA

⁶ "Infermental VII", Editor: Hank Bull, Western Front, 303 East 8th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C.

⁷ *Habits*, V/Tape Distribution, Toronto, Ontario.

Life Like It: Some Halifax Video, Centre for Art Tapes, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

SFIVF 1986, San Francisco International Video Festival, 650 Missouri Street, San Francisco, CA 94107.

Vintage Video, Art Culture Resource Centre, 658 Queen Street, Toronto, Ontario.

⁸ "Prime Time Video", Catalogue: Spring 1984, Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, Sask.

General Idea is distributed by Art Metropole, Toronto.

John Sanborn DISC

New Yorker John Sanborn has always been a fast talker, a video shaker and image mover. As a producer, director, and collaborator, he has been involved with leading performers, dancers, musicians, artists, and computers: from Robert Ashley to Tywla Tharp to Phillip Glass to Kit Fitzgerald to Nam June Paik. He's certainly no newcomer and ain't no dummy when it comes to marketing the marketplace. Access and accessibility has been his key to wide exposure. He has been exhibited throughout the United States and internation-

ally. His works have been featured on broadcast, cable, pay TV, nightclubs, galleries, and museums. He has received considerable financial support from granting agencies, foundations, and commissions, including Channel 4 in England, the CBC and Expo 86 Corporation here in Canada.

The much fabled and awaited Laser Video Disc market aborted before it got off the ground in the late 70's. Forgotten but not dead, it has only recently started a

come back as the VHS and Beta formats have become part of daily life. Although the 'laser disc market' is only marginal in the U.S. and almost non-existent here in Canada, some 400,000 units have been sold in Japan. Laser disc is a more expensive, technically advanced, and quality conscious medium. It is still a small but commercially viable consumer market — a select but probably a more selective and discerning cultured demographic???

With that being the case, several video disc labels have started to compete and to develop the market by making available 'alternative programming' not readily available on VHS and Beta. 'LaserDisc' a division of the Pioneer Group, has developed a number of series including Videographics that features the works of non-pop musicians and film animators such as Norman McLaren. This past spring they released the first of the 'New Visual Artists' Series, *John Sanborn*. The 12 inch, 60 minute disc is packaged like a record album and retails for 7,800 Yen. The 'compilation album' is divided into two 'chapters'. Side one chapter contains *Sanborn Time Line* 1985, *Spray-on Video* 1976, *Ear to the Ground* produced with David Van Tieghem in 1982, excerpts from *The Lesson* in 1981, and *And Now This...* produced with Kit Fitzgerald in 1982, and an excerpt from *Perfect Lives* produced with Robert Ashley in 1983. The side two chapter contains *Big Electric Cat* with music and lyrics by Adrian Belew 1982, two works with Dean Winkler, *Renaissance*, 1984, and *Luminaire*, 1985. *Ear/responsibility*, 1985 and an excerpt from *Sister Suzie Cinema*, 1985.

It is a compilation album that is a jagged sampling that provides insight into the working realm of John Sanborn. It is a constant motion of ideas, images, and sounds from the simple single camera recording of *Ear to the Ground* to the lyrical unhurried landscape of *And Now This...* to the pulsating pop of *Big Electric Cat* and overdrive ADO effects of swirling flying grids in *Renaissance* and *Luminaire*. Fortunately there is a connectedness in the selection of the pieces that hints at development and progression in this packed-paced disc. Almost all the pieces are stereo and musically based, making it suitable for socials, parties, and non-English speaking viewers and listeners.

The disc sold less than 500 copies during the first month of sales despite extensive promotion. A disappointment I'm sure for Pioneer LaserDisc, but I suspect not completely disappointing to the video artist. It is still a Pioneer first and the closest thing yet to a video art hit single.

John Sanborn videotapes are available through Electronics Arts Intermix in New York City.



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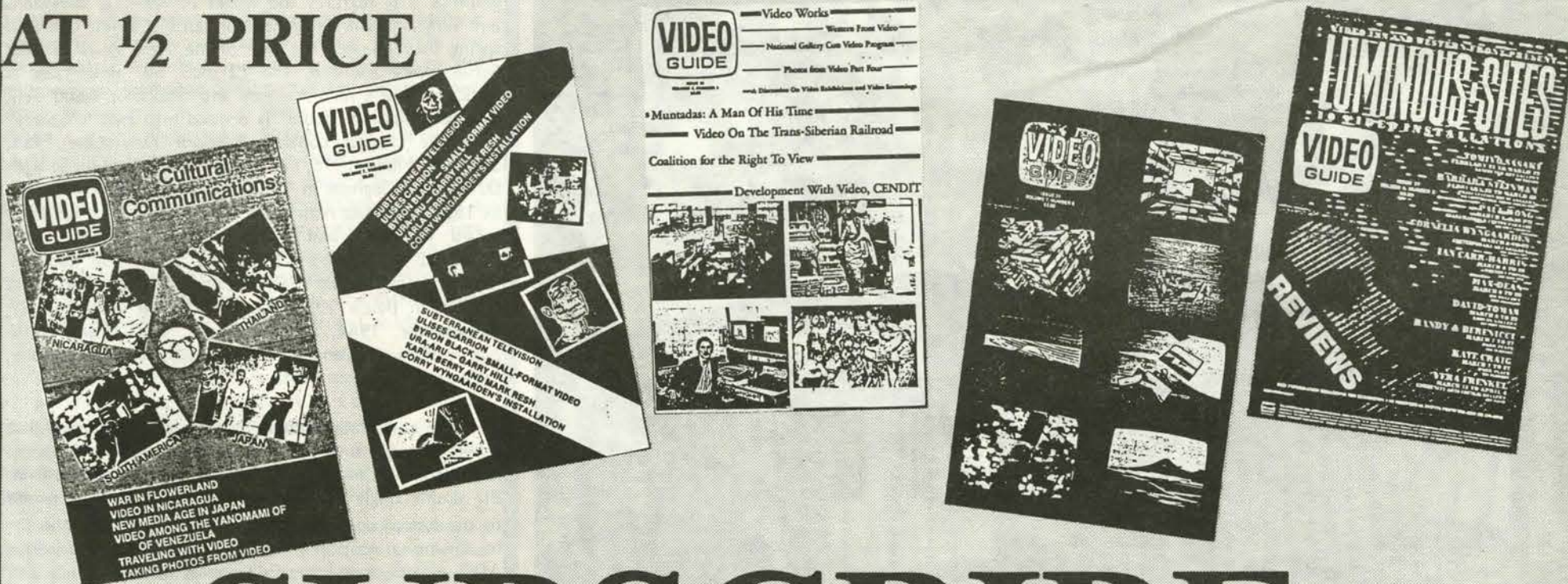
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