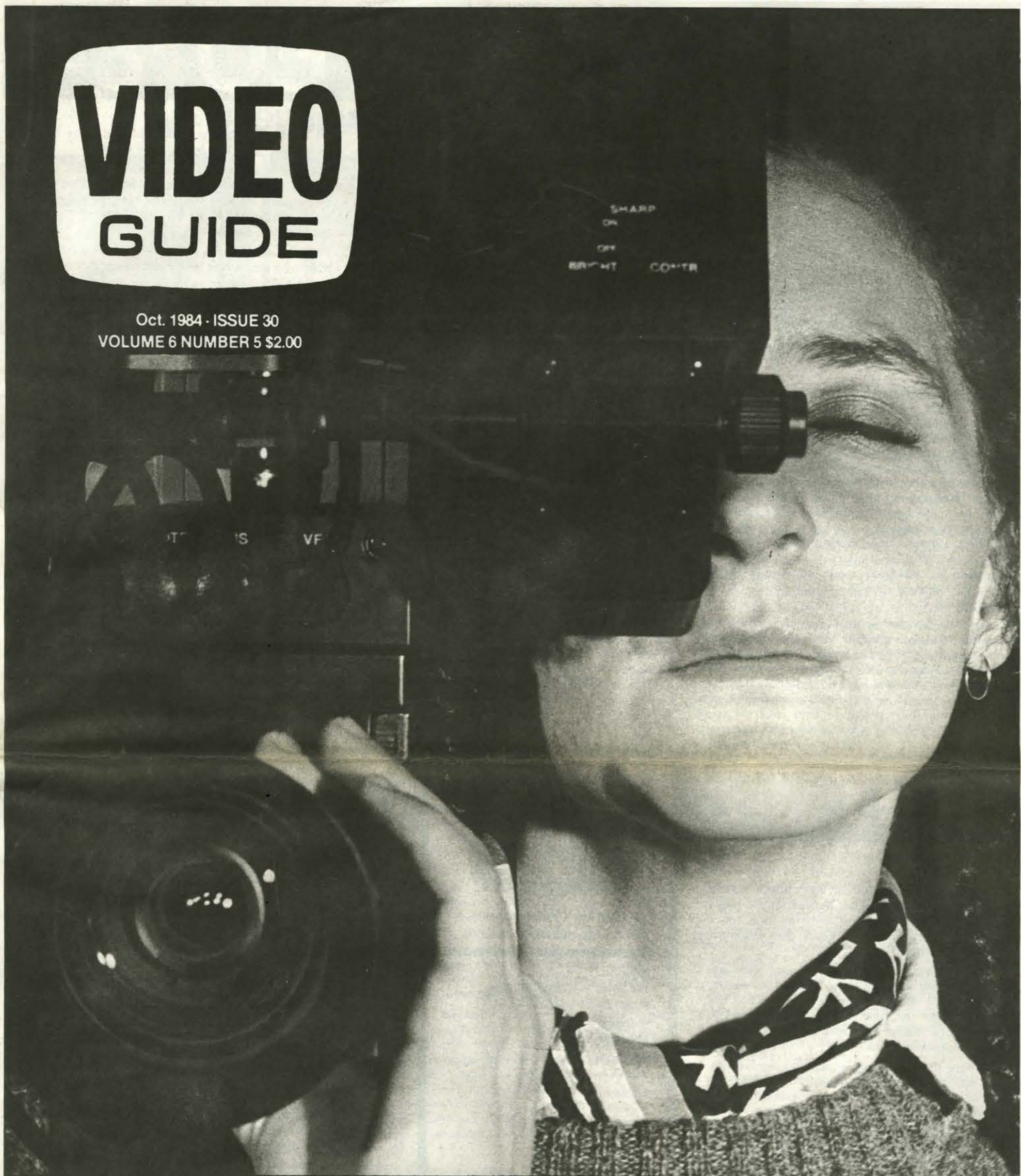


VIDEO GUIDE

Oct. 1984 · ISSUE 30
VOLUME 6 NUMBER 5 \$2.00



MODERN TIMES a review
UNDER 5
ULRIKE ROSENBACH
FEMINIST VIDEO IN TORONTO AND QUEBEC
VIDEO PIONEER
FUJIKO NAKAYA/SCAN

A REPORT VIDEO '84

by Shawn Preus

Video 84 was an International Video Conference which took place in Montreal, September 27 to October 4, 1984. Video 84 can be broken down into three main parts: 1) the conference, 2) the installations, and 3) the festival. Up to the point of the event, Video 84 was well organized and was exactly what was needed in the video field. The idea itself, of course, was problematic. For Canada, it was a welcomed event, having such a wide international perspective.

The Conference/Symposium

The conference/symposium was a three day event from October 2 to 4, held at the University of Quebec. It included 20 speakers (professors, theorists, and critics) from 11 different countries. The theme of the conference was "The Problems of Description in Video." The original idea was for the speakers to instigate debate, but at the conference there was very little time for debates. In addition, there seemed to be a lack of interest. (It was hard to say at the time if lack of time influenced lack of interest.) The translation was so bad that one often went away from a lecture having heard only half of it — and even then not knowing if what you heard was what had been talked about. Whether or not I agreed with what was being said, I thought every speaker said things that were worth listening to.

There were times when addressing the issue of "video description" meant actually hearing people describe certain videotapes. If you have ever had to sit down and write a tape description for a catalogue or for promotional purposes, you have realized that it is easier said than done. Peggy Gale (Canada) deserves mention for her job done

well. She showed a tape, read two short catalogue descriptions (each quite different) and then read her own lengthy description, which was different again.

One question that came to my mind after hearing too many lengthy tape descriptions was who were we describing tapes for? and why? These questions came up, but generally with vague answers. Jeremy Welsh (England) did a good job of trying to answer these questions. Fujiko Nakaya (Japan) did a very good job of bridging gaps when she threw in the cultural differences we all have, Japanese technology, aesthetics, etc.

Description, history (or rather non-history), the state of theory, and criticism in video were covered by many of the speakers, but not in a way that elicited responses from the listener. My response was to conclude that many of the speakers seemed to base their papers on the assumption that we were all looking for a way to make a history — a history that is to be credible and have commercial appeal?? Yet many of the reasons for some of the early forms of video were opposite to those being talked about at Video 84. Except now we call ourselves artists and we look to museums to be our broadcasters. One speaker pointed out that the problem of calling ourselves artists is that video is so young that not many of us have died off yet.

The last day had an uplifting end to it. Martha Rosler put things into a nice perspective, and although she mentioned Nam June Paik, she referred to him as a myth.

The Installations

The Installations were for me the highlight of Video 84. For years I have wanted to see that many installations in one city — 18 different installations in eight different locations, with over 200 TV's used. Barbara Steinman's (Canada) installation was, for me, the most impressive, even though it was one of her older pieces revamped.

All of the installations were good, but some bordered on technology O.D. in an aggressive way.

I have to admit I did not see Nam June Paik's installations — yet another version of TV Buddha. I did not have an invitation to the opening, and I left the following day. It was not realistic to see this installation at the opening, because there were so many people there.

There were a few problems with the installations. The major one was lack of local publicity and lack of coverage in the festival catalogue. Although the festival catalogue was meant for the tapes, there should have been more information on the installations and artists involved. Generally, I don't sit down and watch tapes in an installation from beginning to end, but I did with Muriel Lucier (U.S.). All pieces deserve mention, but I don't have the room here. In the next issue of *Video Guide* we hope to have photos of each installation along with descriptions and information about the artist. As well, Video 84 is putting out a book which will reproduce the papers from the symposium and cover the installations and the tapes. There is also the catalogue from the festival.

The Festival

The Festival had about 140 tapes from 11 different countries. There were some good tapes from each country along with some really bad tapes. On the whole, the Japanese selection hung together the best. Over all, there were too many tapes using slow mode and special effects just for show. Along with slow mode, I got sick of seeing off air broadcast TV re-edited into people's work.

Having seen a lot of videoworks on a regular basis, I was surprised at the poor selection of tapes from several countries, including the U.S. and Canada. Japan and England had much better represented selection.

VIDEO

EDIT

This issue brings to you an international look at what women are doing in video. We are happy to take a closer look, and we hope you enjoy this issue, too. I would like to thank the guest editor, Sara Diamond, for a job well done.

Although we are still having to deal with late arrivals from our writers, we have managed to keep our publishing date within acceptable time. We had one very late writer this issue. We would like writers to know that now that we have raised our writer fee again, we will be expecting more.

We hope all goes well and we get this issue out without a mail strike. If a mail strike does come around, we will put off the next deadline. As it stands now, the next deadline will be November 23, 1984.

We hope to see an increase of technical information. Those interested in writing as well as reading more about technical information, please drop us a line. One of the next articles we will run in Hardware Notes will be about taking stills of a videowork off the monitor. Anybody who wishes to add any information to our article should please write us soon.

VIDEO GUIDE is looking for people interested in becoming contributing editors. You don't have to be a writer, you just have to be interested in getting people to write about video and videotapes in your area. Please write to The Editorial Board, Video Guide, 261 Powell Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1G3.

Our next DEADLINES are November 23, 1984, January 30, 1985, April 15, 1985, June 15, 1985, and September 15, 1985.

Shawn Preus for the
Satellite Video Exchange Society

VIDEO GUIDE

Vancouver's Video Magazine
Volume 6, Number 5 Issue 30

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The Satellite Video Exchange
(a non-profit society, est. 1973)

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ISSN # 0228 6726

Subscriptions to VIDEO GUIDE are available at \$10.00 for 5 issues, \$10.00 U.S. funds in U.S., overseas \$15.00 Cdn. Send cheque or money order to VIDEO GUIDE, Satellite Video Exchange Society, 261 Powell Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6A 1G3.

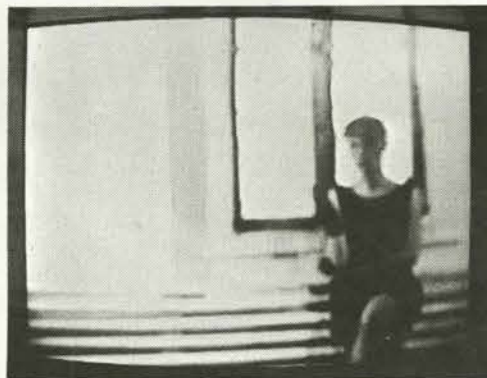
VANCOUVER GUIDE

An Overview

by Sara Diamond



Semiotics of the Kitchen



Granny and Me



Sugardaddy



Starling Man

This issue of *Video Guide* will examine some of the efforts of women working in the video medium. Articles include overviews of feminist documentary production in Quebec and Toronto, upcoming events at Women In Focus, a review of Max Almy's *Modern Times*, an interview with German artist Ulrike Rosenbach, and an article on Fujiko Nayaka's Multimedia artwork in Japan.

The titles of video productions by women are too numerous to list. They provide a stark contrast to the number of female producers, directors and technicians employed by video's big brother, television. With the emergence of portable, relatively inexpensive equipment, women entered the video scene in numbers, not only as independent producers, but as curators and administrators of the many video cooperatives and parallel galleries in Canada, Quebec, the United States, England, and Europe.

Why such enthusiasm when women have experienced exclusion from most technologies? Video is relatively new (some 15 years old as an art form), was initially cheap and remains fairly accessible. The availability of video occurred simultaneously with the growth of the newest wave of feminism. Women were concerned with regaining control over their image, as well as asserting their capacity to operate complex equipment.

There was no video establishment with vested interests to defend against women's incursion, as has been true with other visual art media, theatre, and music.

There is an analogy to be made with women's role in early photography, where, at the turn of the century, women made great strides in a new art form. Women have established their capacity to understand video, redefining its parameters, as the technology itself evolves.

Video has been a central medium for women because of its relationship to television. Women are the major advertising audience of television, our distorted image fills the screen. Because video inevitably refers to the almost unconscious imagery of TV, it is a perfect medium with which to feedback and critique that imagery. Work such as *Delicate Issue* by Kate Craig, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* and *The East is Red, the West is Bending* by Martha Rosler challenge the language of television and the relationship of viewer to image.

Other artists have explored the rhythms and structure of the video medium, searching for more personal, democratic and interactive uses than that which television has allowed. Artists such as Joan Jonas, Elizabeth Van der Zaag, Ulrike Rosenbach and Dara Birnbaum have restructured the way that the image arrives to such an extent that the viewer's assumptions about the medium are revealed and undermined. While male video artists have also engaged in this quest for redefinition, women artists have tended to use personalized imagery which further challenges the mass media quality of dominant imagery.

Women video artists have played a critical role in re-inventing narrative structures. Some artists have used video to explore personal fantasy, memory, and emotion. The ability to work solo with portable equipment has

permitted video to act as a diary, a literary form that women have long embraced. Video narrative is often subjective, multi-layered, moving between unconscious and conscious imagery, both aural and visual. *Granny and Me* and other works by Nora Hutchinson, *Birthday Suit* by Lisa Steele, *Sugardaddy* by Ardele Lister are all examples of this approach. This feminist concept of validating and exploring the politics of personal experience also extends to third person narrative structures used by women artists. The *Gloria* tapes by Lisa Steele, *Starling Man* by Corry Wyngaarden, *Losing, A Conversation with the Parents* by Martha Rosler achieve this end in varying ways.

A new body of work is emerging as women grapple with the impact of pornographic and advertising images on our sensibilities. Some tapes have taken a documentary approach to sexist imagery, such as those by Marion Barling of Women in Focus. These tapes "deconstruct" the media to show the ways that it manipulates our hearts and minds. Others, like *Hormone Warzone*, *Escape* by Phyllis Waugh, and *Erotica Text* by Madeline Duff explore sexual issues and personal sexuality with humour, lush imagery, anger, and vision.

Feminist documentary imagery has broken new ground in its choice of subject material and its reworking of story-telling modes. Tapes such as *Concerned Aboriginal Women* by Amelia Productions and others by Video Femmes and the Women's Media Alliance give voice to those traditionally ignored by television news as authoritative sources. Rather than impose an external narrative, women are allowed, through careful interviewing and editing, to let the experience unfold in their own words.

A strong women's documentary tradition has emerged. Women have looked to rank and file sources for spokespeople, affirming the importance of democratic process and demonstrating the ways that labour, community, and women's issues effect individuals on an immediate and emotional level. Feminist video has given space to contradictory opinions within movements for change, as well as highlights and achievements.

Women have worked in production collectives, proving that group creation is possible. Video lends itself to such a format: several people are needed for a video shoot, as well as to fundraise effectively for a project. Video equipment rental, tape and editing costs remain lower than those of film, but it is still costly. Group productions have encouraged skill-sharing and the demystification of technology: many women producers are capable camera and sound technicians as well as script-writers and directors.

Video artists have shared their skills in other ways, through intensive consultation with documentary subjects and through training community members to use equipment. Process, as well as the finished product, can enable a group to develop a holistic view of its strength, not just relive isolated moments within a campaign or project. Video allows for immediate feedback; it can be replayed on the spot, critiqued and developed. Tape can be re-

cycled, thus many different ways of documenting situations can be tried.

Feminist documentary provides a vital resource through which to see recent women's history. There is a series of tapes, for example, on violence against women. The tapes reflect the developing understanding of the issue, strategies for dealing with violence through transition houses, attempts to work with government authorities, self-defence training and so on.

Women in Vancouver have explored these varied aspects of feminist documentary, working within an array of collectives. The first women's media group was Reel Feelings, which used video, together with film, slide-tape, sound and photography. Because of their production, there is an effective video archive of this city's early women's movement. A women's media collective emerged after Reel Feelings, with many of its members linked to Video Inn. Women's Media Nights, an ongoing feature at Video Inn, was begun, screening works by local and international producers and providing special training for women producers and would-be producers. Women in Focus, a video production and video/film distribution centre and gallery/performance space, began in 1974 and continues to the present day.

A new women's production group formed in 1978, providing support for women working in a variety of media and producing several tapes on battered women. Amelia Productions, a feminist video collective, produced 14 tapes between 1980-82, working with unions, native women, and feminist groups. Media Watch has monitored the mass media and produced video tapes for use in educational work. Speak Out Productions has formed recently, initially as an offshoot of Women Against the Budget, and now as an independent group. They are conducting a video study of the impact of provincial government cutbacks policies on women's and children's lives. They have just completed their first tape, about the privatization of Vancouver Transition House.

The Vancouver experience is interesting because of, on the one hand, the fluidity of organizations, but on the other, the consistency of feminist documentary production in the city. An extensive record of women's struggles exists in tape form, beginning in the early 1970's and continuing into the present.

Video art is emerging into the mainstream. As it becomes increasingly recognized, women will be challenged to maintain an innovative, critical, and central role. Institutionalization of art forms usually results in attempts to relegate women to support roles. While not all women producers are feminists in either their political orientation or their work, the proliferation of video work by women has benefitted both their own sex and the video audience in general. The existence of work in which women, those most often represented by others in this culture, create an image of their own lives and imaginations, has enriched our cultural vision.

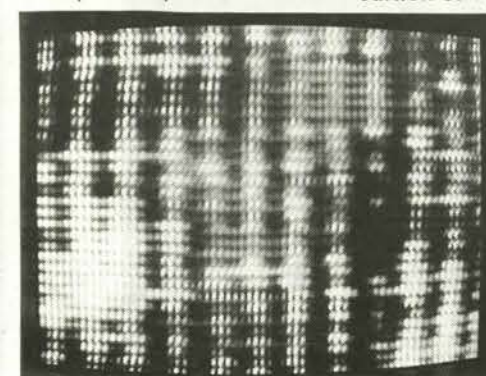
It is with this in mind that we present this special edition of *Video Guide*.



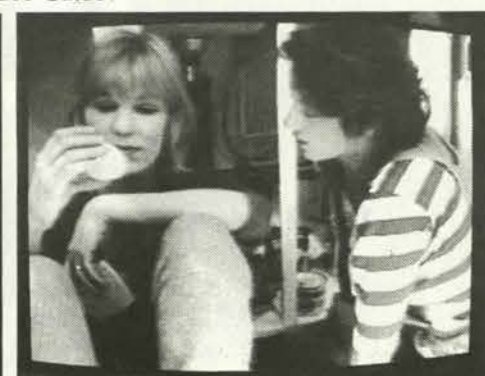
Female Energy Change



Concerned Aboriginal Women



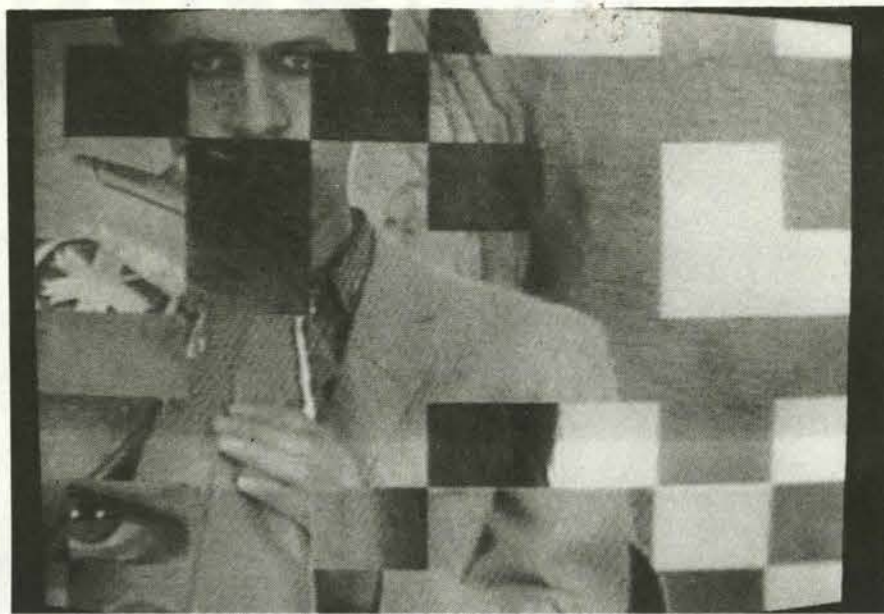
Potatoes



Hormone Warzone



Distance by Luc Bourdon and Francois Girard



Elephants by Noel Harding

UNDER 5

"Under 5" was a national video competition jointly sponsored by Video Inn and Firehall Theatre of Vancouver. All entries had to have been completed in this year and be no longer than five minutes in length. Documentaries, music, and art videos were all judged together. Each had to stand on its own without the benefit of categorization. The sponsors felt the competition could serve as an impetus to the video community to finish projects in progress or start something new. Whether this was accomplished or not is debatable, but it did provide artists with another forum for their work—especially for the finalists, whose videos will be shown as a package in both telecasts and exhibitions.

The adjudication of "Under 5" was impeccably hosted by competition co-ordinator Julie Poskitt of Firehall Theatre and Paul Wong of Video Inn. Originally a jury of five had been selected, but one failed to show, leaving four: an awkward number for judging. But the final panel worked well together, despite the occasional need for a tie breaker. Eric Metcalfe, artist, director of Western Front, and perpetual critic, was outspoken in his viewpoint, as was (although in a more diplomatic manner) Liz Vander Zagg, another local video artist. The exuberance of these two was nicely balanced by the studied calm of both Michelle Gibson, a broadcaster with CKVU, and Martin Truax, program director at Vancouver's Roger's Cable 10.

It is difficult to relate the process that occurs when one watches 46 videos over five hours. It is much easier to be tolerant with the first ten than with the last ten, and several tapes become completely lost from your memory in that fifth hour. Yet in spite of this, the videos which merited consideration for the finals inevitably arrived there. I am not saying the decisions were unanimous, but the good tapes were fairly obvious, keeping in mind disagreement resulting from the judges' personal opinions regarding video art.

The overall quality of the entries was quite high. There were very few really 'bad' tapes, which I found surprising considering almost anyone can get it together to produce five minutes of video. Perhaps the biggest

surprise was that there weren't more tapes submitted, especially from the west coast. Paul Wong observed: "Everyone talks art but nobody makes it." Perhaps the lack of entries from this side of the Rockies is indicative of that laid-back west coast lifestyle the east is always referring to. Whatever the reason, the result was that the eastern entries, particularly from Montreal, dominated the finals.

[Editor's note: Many producers, including myself, did not agree to the rights given when one agreed to submit to the festival. Also, the jury was not publicized in advance and publicity was not out in time to allow new works to be produced.]

The Grand Award winner was *Distance*, one of two entries by Luc Bourdon of Montreal. *Distance* is an extremely sensuous expression of that gap between the point of departure and destination. We come into a journey already in progress in the midst of a city core. The entire experience is recorded in slow motion, emphasizing the poignancy of our passage through space. The viewer becomes the traveller, brought into a vivid recreation of a common experience. The images are deceptively simple: a shot of the car's tire creeping over the white line on the highway is strangely dramatic, evoking a sense of impending tragedy or freedom. In the city the people trapped between the moving wall of cars and the towering walls of concrete seem softer, rounder, more vulnerable than they are. Telephoto shots create Cezanne-like landscapes: separate planes flattened and stacked. As motion breaks down the foreground image of a small hill into one distorted pattern, the trees behind—right behind—remain intact, solid. Speeding by in our cocoon we are isolated by that world—we lose its context and begin to experience it sensually.

Reverse Letter, Bourdon's other entry, was also a finalist. It has a much rougher feel to it than *Distance*, yet it too is sensual: its atmosphere is created through different textures of light, sound, and image. It expands on Bourdon's interest in the urban environment. The languid sensuousness of *Distance* is replaced by high contrast and oversaturation: images which never allow a complete

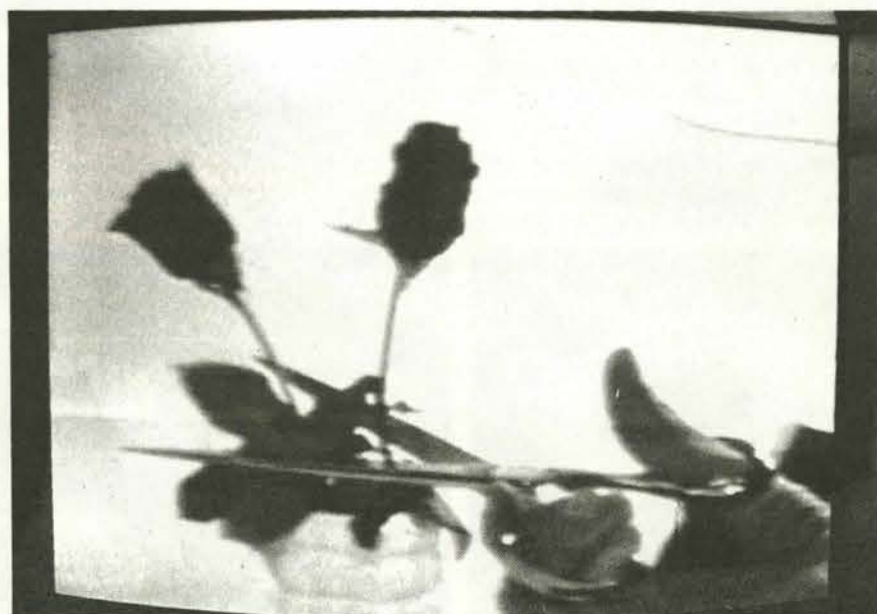
reading of the environment. Bourdon concentrates on steel bridges, fences, and other symbols of imprisonment. A man, seated in a dark corner, shadows obscuring any detail in a cinema verite style, discusses his view of television and its control by those with power: psychological imprisonment perhaps much worse than the physical kind. The rest of the dialogue is in French with some English repeated over and over: "What now? What next?", leaving the viewer with a sense of entrapment and hopelessness. It was frustrating to miss a large portion of the artist's work because of language problems. Perhaps next time a national video competition is staged here there could be one bilingual member of the committee who could translate.

Another video which suffered because of our ignorance but still made it to the finals was *Spaghetti: Une Obsession*—again from Montreal. *Spaghetti* is especially poignant for those of us who have known the horrors which lurk beneath the outward civility of a family dinner. "Boredom, boredom," was translated for us by Julie Poskitt, but it was unnecessary because we could see it before us. The soundtrack was dominated by closely miked chewing, jaw clicking, and saliva slopping: an agony for those neurotically sensitized to each annoying habit of their cohabitants. "It began as a meal—ended as an obsession," summarizes the video's content. *Spaghetti* is extremely stylish, clever, and nicely produced—another addition to visual media's own obsession with dining as a psychodrama.

Also from Montreal and part of the "clever and stylish" club, is *The Dog of Luis and Salvador*, a 1984 interpretation of the classic surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou*, a Louis Bunuel/Salvador Dali collaboration. *The Dog of Luis and Salvador* mimics the original script, substitutes new symbols for old, but retains the theatrical juxtaposition of images which typified the original's in its lack of concern for traditional narrative. In *Dog*, Bernar Hebert has completely reversed the visual aesthetic of the original. The stench, decay, and violence of *Un Chien* is replaced by super clean, super slick production. The infamous slitting of a woman's eyeball which horrified viewers of



Reverse Letter by Luc Bourdon



The Dog of Luis and Salvador by Bernar Hebert



Boob Tube by Eva Everything



Because I Know....and you don't by Paul Landon

by Karen Knights

Un Chien is replaced by a bright streak of red paint against a glossy stylization of an eye, which in turn is replaced by mutating computer graphics of the same. The hand crawling with ants gives way to the crank of a meter dial and electric sparks flying from fingers. Is technology inspiring the new terror that needs exorcising from the bourgeois soul? The video was created for the original composition by Richard Edsor.

Toronto had three finalists in the competition. *Elephants* by Noel Harding received Honourable Mention. Inspired by the Korean Airlines shooting, it uses the elephant as a metaphor for the mentality and resulting products which create such situations. Harding addresses the issue of co-operation with such mentality. A lone man is going through the process of blowing up an inflatable jet liner. The eye of the man, squinting in his effort, becomes the eye of an elephant, wrinkled and grey. Harding moves back and forth between the two images, showing the implication of his action. As the plane becomes firmer, the man's skin becomes rougher, darker. When the plane is fully inflated he pretends to fly it through the background of superimposed swirling clouds like an overgrown child playing make believe. The almost surreal imagery emphasizes the absurdity of such a situation, where infantile fantasy begins to be policy in world affairs. The images are uncomplicated, direct, and effectively overlaid.

Eva Everything, Toronto pop artist seeking rock video fame, submitted two tapes: *Pills Are Painless* and *Boob Tube*. *Boob Tube* made it into the finals and is, for me, one of the questionable choices. Everything's dissertation on boob tube bliss is inane, and the production suffers from the same problem. It is, however, very cute, upbeat, and catchy. Watch for it.

My personal favourite from the Toronto entries was John Greyson's *Perils of Pedagogy*, a work concerned with gay stereotyping from within the community. Greyson relates the domination of young gays by old to the teacher/pupil relationship. Greyson has slowed down the title track from *To Sir With Love* until Lulu's voice takes on a man's timbre, and it is then mouthed by a

young man, the victim, as he dons, in turn, a white shirt and bow tie, a greek toga, and finally knickers for the boarding school look, all at the urging of his 'mentor.' He coyly carries on with the song, swaying provocatively on the disorienting horizontal axis of the screen — all the while seeming to loath, yet obey, the man who controls him. This image is cut with several out takes from films about boys schools, as well as a variety of static images (two apples touching, a boy's hand playing with a toy), all with simple sentences (proclamations, demands?) beneath them like "Whose fantasy?" "This is a boy?" "Fuck pedagogy." The young man's voice dubbed over the soundtrack says, "The history books never taught me how to buy back my own territory," while the screen shows a close-up of masturbation. Greyson constantly balances the humour with militant posturing resulting in a genuine sense of pathos.

All the videos discussed so far were good productions: slick and professional looking. For an artist with no budget and only the most basic equipment this could intimidate him/her enough as to discourage him/her from entering other competitions. Thankfully, Paul Landon from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design submitted *BECAUSE I KNOW... and you don't*, a satire on religious television programming and its manipulation of the media. This video is shot with minimal equipment and budget with a few people in what looks like a deserted room at the college. It's an exciting video because it reminds us of how liberating the medium can be when it is used creatively and simply. One young man stands above the rest on a platform, black book in hand, directing the camera and audience in their response to his preaching. The actual lecture is replaced by a description of it ("I've just said a great truth," "I've just said something funny.") and his mimicking of the appropriate gestures. The audience laughs when it is told, looks awed at his command, just as the camera makes it 'look' like a big crowd or moves in for a close-up on cue.

K-137-20 by Anthony Cordi and Chris Blades from Vancouver also made it to the finals, perhaps more as one of a type than as a strong individual video. Seen as part of

the package with the rest of the winners it manages to hold its own if only because it is the only work of its type in the finals. It is an abstracted look at a human face through coloured lights and patterned screens. The sound track is largely percussion: cymbals, congas, bells that sound vaguely oriental at times and a little spacey at others. The complete effect is very seventies, and I can't figure out why the artist feels it is necessary to redo something already overdone. This one is obviously not a favourite of mine.

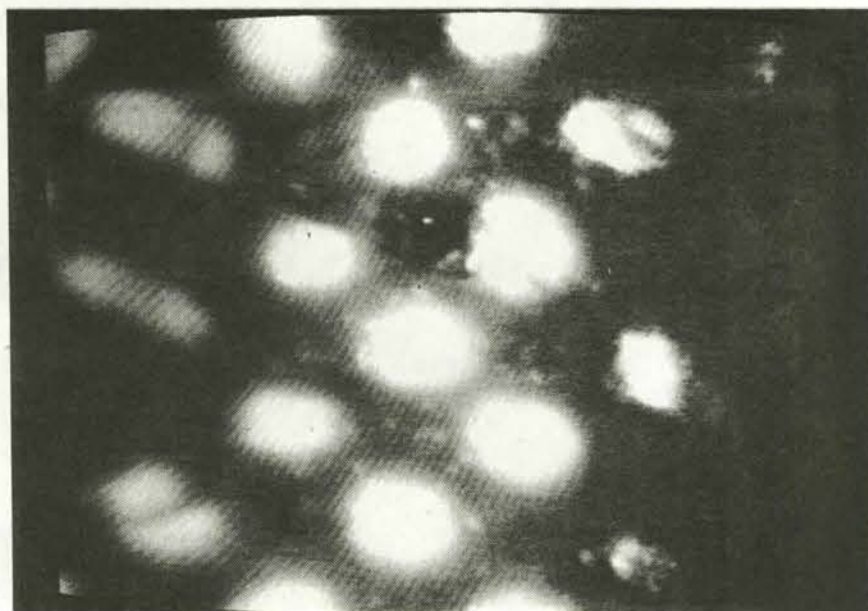
Believe it or not the suburbs made a showing in the finals as well, with a typically suburban fantasy from Port Coquitlam called *I Want a New Drug*, an apparently accurate recreation of Huey Lewis and the News' rock video of the same title. It is another 'cute' video. The entire cast is too young to drive, but dying to be rock stars. The production is super professional, leading the judges to believe it could not have been the work of students like the ones acting in it. I mean, where would these brats get the money to rent a helicopter? Why did a rehash of a prime time rock video make it to the finals? I don't know. Probably because it was the 44th video of the evening and bursting with an overabundance of high energy. It woke everybody up.

It would be unfair to make sweeping statements about what these entries indicate regarding the state of video production in this country. However, it is disconcerting to see how internalized the majority of west coast entries were. Most suffered from an inability to communicate to an audience. There was virtually no response by the artists to the conditions they live under: the results of 'new right' politics, increased censorship in the arts being two examples. Any attempt to confront current issues was done from a tortured, intensely personal viewpoint impossible to share with anyone else. Perhaps the next competition will contradict this trend.

The "Under 5" finalists are a very diverse group of videos. The resulting package is a relatively accessible and very entertaining one. The "Under 5" exhibition was August 29 to September 14, and the cablecast was September 2.



The Perils of Pedagogy by John Greyson



K-137-20 by Anthony Cordi/Chris Blades

ULRIKE ROSENBACH

an interview by Karen Henry

Ulrike Rosenbach's explorations of womanhood and spirituality from an experiential, sensual place and her uncanny contact with the power of precognitive symbol and ritual have earned her continuing recognition in the community of video and performing arts. She continues to develop an ever more sophisticated imagery and technical control in articulating her rapport with her own female energy and value systems. Her new tape, *Inner Landscape, Insight Image*, produced at the Western Front in Vancouver, is a delicate portrait of her struggle to subdue her energies.

The following conversational interview took place in September in Vancouver. In it she talks about her work, the art context in Germany, and her personal transition from feminism to that of a disciple of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

KH: How does it work in Germany? Do you live in Berlin?

UR: No, in Koln. Berlin is nicer because it has the video school and you can do some technique work there.

KH: Do you get government sponsorship for your productions?

UR: Never. There is a possibility but not for video productions. I have had a grant for my book, and you could get grants for living which you then put into your work, but this only happens once in your lifetime — you could never apply again.

KH: Your work has to be in demand then... or are there other philanthropic supports for the arts?

UR: What I did was teach school, and then I gave that up because it was too much to do it along with my own work. So I then did a lot of workshops and classes in my school, The Creative School for Feminist Art, for eight years, and in addition to that I did workshops all over Europe — wherever they wanted me to come.

I was a feminist up to my Rajneesh days.

KH: You don't find that a conflict for your principles or your philosophy?

UR: It didn't change my opinions about feminist art at all. It just effects an outer level — the definition of your output. Now I put the master's name on the video tape. It is going beyond ego. Before I called my work feminist art on every videotape, everything I did for about six to eight years. I founded the school and that was a hard political and radical statement. Nobody else imposed this on their work as a stamp.

KH: So there wasn't a strong feminist movement within the arts community in Germany at that time?

UR: No. Of course there are different kinds of structures. There is art work in the feminist community but that is far apart from the official art scene. That's two different areas. I was a recognized professional artist working in the gallery context, and inside these institutions I called myself a feminist artist which was quite a step. It is very well to be one or the other privately, but putting a feminist label on the professional art work was quite

difficult to do. It seems so easy, but it was not simple at all. Now it's a new thing with Rajneesh.

KH: Yet your identity as a woman is still very prominent in your work.

UR: My work hasn't changed very much in all these years. I don't work on the clichés of women anymore — not after 1975-76. And then the whole work sort of changed in that I wanted to widen my scale of expression. It is still very personal, but it doesn't relate to the clichés of the feminist movement. It might come up again.

KH: Are you still moved by the issues in the feminist movement, then?

UR: No. The last thing I did was a big congress I did in Koln last autumn, because that had been prepared for a long time. It was about feminist art — spirituality and feminism.

KH: So now even though being a woman is very much a part of your tapes, you don't particularly want to relate to the feminist context.

UR: I can't. Not only from the standpoint of my Rajneesh work but also because the feminist movement doesn't accept it. I am represented by a man, and they have that prejudged. For me it is putting too much energy into a negative way. I can't do it anymore.

KH: Now your concepts are more influenced by the context of your spiritual life?

UR: These are not new concepts for me. I have been involved in these ideals for a long time. It was very much involved in my work in the feminist movement because I always related to spiritual work in feminism, experimenting with alchemy and magic as a practice. It was a natural evolution to go into esoteric work. I had to have more information about that.

KH: How did you become involved in video?

UR: It was a very practical choice because that was at the time when video was established in Europe (1964). I was fascinated by it. It enabled me to do my own work without any help from others. That is one reason why the first tapes are so simple. They have a steady camera, etc. That's the way I like my work to be. I like to be in control like a painter. I am a visual artist, not a filmer/director. It is simple personal art work.

One reason why European video was much simpler for years than North American video was because we didn't have access to open studios as you do have here. We worked for a long time in black and white because we didn't have the money for a colour camera.

KH: So now having access to more equipment, you have a much freer range, even conceptually, of what you want to try to work with.

UR: True, but in one way you know it didn't change very much, because when I was shooting the black and white, I used dissolving mixing a lot. Actually, it was quite similar to what I am doing now, but it was in black and white. I still keep up with the same idea of how to do it even though it changes a little bit. I must tell you

that the production I did here at the Western Front — I loved it in black and white on the monitor. It is so much more abstract. It involves more shadow and light. Video is about light: that is what fascinates me — light. That is why I really love the video screen, because it is a light bulb emitting light. That is the nature of the medium. I hate these video screens — I think they are so much out of the medium. It changes the whole thing. I have been educated as a sculptor — the box and the proportions, the glass and the light are all fascinating structures for me.

KH: Would you characterize the elements you work with conceptually in making a tape?

UR: I do it totally intuitively. That is my real element. In performance I work with that all the time and I do a lot of performance because it makes money. Selling videotapes is limited. (laughter) I use intuition when I am editing my videotapes. That is the nice thing about working with video rather than film, because in film you have to involve more people. With video you still can really treat it as a sheet of paper, you can be much more spontaneous, and you can tape it over. You don't lose the material. It is a lot more economical.

I have my own studio and I can work whenever I want to. This autonomy is one of the things that has really influenced my style. I can just play around for eight hours and do it the next day again if I want — an immense amount of freedom.

KH: You use a lot of symbolic elements in your work — I'm thinking of a recent tape of a performance using glass and sticks — and these have very esoteric references. Do you feel that people understand the meaning, even if they are not familiar with the particular language?

UR: This is always a question in art — whether all the levels hit the audience. As an artist I have learned you cannot bother with that. Otherwise you would be involved in something more like advertising (calculated). I depend very much on an educated audience. If you write a book, it's the same thing. There are people who understand the words and not the meaning too. I can't bother with that. That's one of the diseases of television, anyhow. Because they want to make it simple and common to all — because they care about the commercial ratings and that is what they are interested in. But that is not a matter of art. It is just using the same media in a totally different way. Video is only a medium.

KH: What is the dynamic between your video and your performance work? Does one take priority over the other? Are your performances specifically for video, or a separate context?

UR: I was first interested in video. I was doing only private video performances in my studio because, quite frankly, I didn't dare go out before an audience. I started slowly, and once I became more sophisticated about what I was doing, I started to do live performances. I usually shot the video piece during the performance in my own way — not as a documentation, but as a whole different view from what the audience saw. The video gave a new level of the meaning to the performance by concentrating on angles and details. I became involved in video performance art in 1973-74, and the first big show I did was with Willoughby Sharp in New York. I think he got that idea from me because the first time I had done anything like that was at the Koln Art Fair, together with an electronic musician who was a friend of mine, Conrad Schnitzler, and he did incredible music on the stage live, all the time, and I said I would bring the video equipment along, and we could do it together. Willoughby saw that and loved it, and that's how I got into this show. It was great fun. So I did video performance for a few years, but I realized that it was limiting in my process of how to perform in a way because I could not use all the possibilities I would like to in my performance. So after a time I switched over to preproduced videotapes to show inside the performance space. I also switched over to working with the sculptural, environmental space more. I included the video monitor along with a lot of other materials which I liked to involve, and that is what I still do. Except now I have started to do mainly improvisations — I do not work from a plan. I just have an idea and think about the elements I want to involve, and it is usually pretty complicated. Then I do this environment with all the materials, including video, sound, photographs, and organic materials, and then I form the work from that. I put myself in the context of the topic that I chose before. But the event itself is totally done on intuition.

(continued on next page)



Ulrike Rosenbach

photo by Karen Henry



FILM AND VIDEO SCREENING

NOVEMBER 16-18, 1984

Organized by Women In Focus

Women In Focus is organizing towards a three-day weekend of film and video by Canadian and International women to be presented from November 16-18, 1984. This event will take place at Robson Square Media Centre here in Vancouver. Entitled "A Different Face," the Film Event intends to showcase the very diverse and often unacknowledged talents that women bring to video and film production. The content of the program will include drama, documentary, experimental, and animation work.

The overall thematic structure of the program is multi-cultural, issues-oriented and exploratory. We are trying to present as many facets of women's imagery, techniques, and conscious explorations as possible.

We have recently arrived at our official deadline for entries. Because we are under-staffed, we were not able to jury entries to this Film Event. We found it sufficient to approach filmmakers and video artists through the Independent Film Alliance (IFACI) and to contact various media organizations across North America for advice and suggestions. We gave preference to independent media artists working in Quebec, the Atlantic provinces, prairie film co-ops, and in British Columbia, including Vancouver. The focus is upon works that have not premiered previously in Vancouver or films and videos which have not premiered at all in Canada. We insist upon the first requirement more than upon the latter. About 50% of our program of 26 films and videos is Canadian — although

Canadian content represents far less than of 50% of program time. The presence of women in feature-length productions in this country is still miniscule.

The Film Event will feature workshops with both Canadian and international media artists. From Quebec will be Iolande Rossignol, an independent with considerable reputation, Nicole Giguere and Helen Doyle, both associated predominantly with Video Femmes. These women will be discussing "The Problems and Perspectives of Women Video and Film Makers in Quebec" . . . not the least problem being the absence of funding for translation within Canadian cultural agencies for media resources across the French-English language barriers. The second Canadian workshop is to feature Marla Dufour, a native Indian from Regina, Saskatchewan, who has been involved in the production of Cree legends for a video series on native Indian religion and culture. Two of the videotapes in this series will also be presented as part of her workshop. We are hopeful that Marla will be able to address the almost total invisibility of native Indian women in the technical aspects of media production.

Our international workshop is entitled "Black Women Filmmakers: The Work Still To Be Done," featuring Julie Dash and Michelle Parkerson. Other featured filmmakers are Sally Potter from Britain, who will be available to answer questions at the premiere of her new film *The Gold Diggers*, and Patricia Gruben, who will accom-

pany her latest production *Low Visibility*. Gruben is a graduate of the University of Texas who is currently teaching film production at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Burnaby.

Potter will also be conducting several other workshops while she is in Canada, through SFU and Cineworks, an independent film co-op here in Vancouver. These workshops will be in co-sponsorship with Women In Focus, since we are paying her transportation costs to Vancouver and back to England.

"A Different Face" is unique in the cultural diversity and the national significance of the program. It is being funded by the Department of Communications, Canada Council Film Department, and Secretary of State Women's Program. Canadian Images in Peterborough and the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation are also supporting the program.

Women In Focus is pleased to be featuring such a multi-cultural event, with films and videotapes on El Salvador, Chile, Lebanon, and the Israeli-Palestinian situation. We intend to give visibility to a diversity of cultural material and formats, whether dramatic, experimental, animation, or documentary. We would hope that some centres within the ANNPAC/RACA network will be able to attend, to give truly national exposure to these talented women media artists, Canadian and international.

VIDEO

(continued from previous page)

KH: *The element of ritual is very strong in your tapes, even in the movements of the improvised material and especially in the early work. (Frau and Changes)*

UR: I think that every piece is a ritual. I can't distinguish between non-ritual and ritual. Art work is so much related to culture as a whole, that every work is a ritual. I have always been very much interested in the relationship of spirit and culture. Modern culture tries to separate it, but older cultures were more holistic. I like to interrelate human behaviours — it is more or less a very narrative way of thinking/visualizing that I do.

KH: *One of your newer tapes is based on a narrative reading from a book about an expedition of Japanese women on Mt. Everest. The style of the tape and the objective reference to an outside event seemed to be different from your other work in that it is less personal. Do you see that as a new direction?*

UR: I don't know yet. This is one of my most recent tapes. It is easier to do it that way, I can tell you. Because it doesn't relate so deeply to what you are and your personal research, it is not that hard. In most of the work I do where I am the subject, I must be totally aware of myself because I am working with my own condition, and that is effort. It can be very playful, though. In the performance, it takes so much energy because you are very vulnerable. In my last big performance before a museum audience, I felt that people were fascinated, but they didn't know why. So I am thinking about how much energy it takes and whether it is worth it.

KH: *Do you have a sense of the direction you would like to move in?*

UR: I am not certain. It will depend. I find I am often influenced by the kinds of requests that I get. I have to make a living with my art, and so it is interrelated with what the society wants within the context I have defined and with certain artistic limits. This has always been true of artists even in the old days when wealthy families took care of the artists. Their work was influenced by the desires of their patrons. I think this relationship between art and society — economic necessity — is very realistic. Few people can afford to live the ideal of creating only from one's own inspiration. Only a few wealthy women and all those male artists who are supported by their wives. The statistics on that are phenomenal!



Ulrike Rosenbach in performance

VIDEO

COMMUNITY-BASED FEMINIST VIDEO PRODUCTION

Feminist video production in Toronto is, to some extent, paradigmatic of the women's movement itself. There are many different approaches, ranging from celebratory to critical ('womynspirit' to unions); a bit of a star system, but also more collectivity and community awareness than ever before (the stars guarantee visibility outside of the women's movement; the collectives are more often ignored — both by critics and funding bodies); and, as always, never enough money.

With less of an historical burden to bear than more traditional media — like sculpture and painting — video, film, and performance seem to be the most viable forms for feminist cultural production. While feminist art originated within painting, sculpture and mixed media, or with a valorization of crafts by women, media art seemed better suited to the complicated needs of rapidly growing movement and to its ever-expanding theoretical base. The critical apparatus provided by feminist film theory (Laura Mulvey, Claire Johnston, Ruby Rich, Julia Lesage) helped to push film and video forward towards areas into which no painter had gone before. It became clear to many cultural producers that certain social situations cannot be understood simply by looking at images. Without a verbal text of some sort, it is difficult, if not impossible, to build or initiate an analysis. Textual analysis can serve to explore the methods by which meaning is produced within the larger context of social meanings. It can then begin to create gaps and fissures within that language and to create new or alternative meanings.

Another factor is distribution. Though available distribution networks are full of shortcomings that particularly affect progressive video, the very fact that video *could* be fairly widely seen (and, to be frank, was easier to show: a gallery can have a feminist videotape in and out of its space within 24 hours, and at a loss of only a \$50 fee, while a painting show bespeaks a larger commitment of time and money for the not-so-progressive-gallery. . .) made it a more tempting medium for women who wanted to be heard. While it is certainly not impossible to add to the feminist discourse through painting and other traditional media, here in Toronto these media have proven largely to be concerned with rather abstract notions of an essential femininity or with vaginal or matriarchal imagery. Feminist video here has certainly not taken over the galleries, nor is it yet a well-known and widely used resource for feminists outside of the art world. Toronto being the dumping place for cast-off New York aesthetics, obscure experimental forms still have a strong tradition. While innovative reworkings of the narrative form have been in use for some time (e.g., Lisa Steele, the Hummer Sisters), feminist video here has only recently begun to make use of social documentary and accord it some respect as a medium worthy of artists.

With some recent tapes, it is heartening to see the pragmatic nature of their methodology: tapes that are made to be used by schools, community groups, and unions, as well as by artists. And they are tapes which demand of their viewers a certain amount of active intellectual engagement. (The fact that all but one of the tapes I surveyed are collective or collaborative projects does indicate my own bias, as well as being indicative of a growing trend. It is hoped that they will provide helpful examples of different production models.)

With no feminist production facility or distribution network in the city, it is difficult to get a sense of, or write about, any sort of cohesive movement or body of work. Production is still largely the work of individuals for whom circumstances, hard work, and/or an ability to obtain grants has made a certain visibility possible. Collective work and a tangible network of sisterly support has only become visible in the last few years. A major factor in this development has been the formation of the Women's Media Alliance. Formed in 1981, it is a loosely-organized collective of about twenty women: film and video makers, performance artists, writers, and a number of women who simply want to learn media skills. In its three years of existence it has helped to maintain a presence of feminist media production within what is still an extremely male-dominated area plagued by technical machismo and occasional stylistic bouts of retro-chic imagery. WMA has organized screenings of members' work, panel discussions, and workshops. Perhaps its most exciting project to date has been its first collective production, *Our Choice: A Tape About Teenage Mothers*, produced in collaboration with Jessie's Centre for Teenage Mothers by Madeliene Duff, Nancy Nicol, Phylliss Waugh, Jane Wright, and myself, with the assistance of Caroline Murray.

From pre-production to the final edit, the project took about a year, beginning with several meetings with the staff and teen women of Jessie's. An agreement was



photo by Phylliss Waugh

Our Choice: A Tape About Teenage Mothers

made to produce a tape which Jessie's could use in its orientation for women dropping into the centre for the first time. It would also break down for others some of the illusions about, and prejudices against, teenage mothers by allowing the women to speak at length about their own lives. A budget of \$5,000 was obtained from the Ontario Arts Council and Secretary of State, which besides paying the bills allowed the collective to pay itself a meagre fee. Production began with some well-intentioned workshops meant to involve the staff and teen mothers with the process, but distraction and a layperson's fear of equipment mitigated against this. This initial presence did, however, serve to acquaint the collective with several of the women, air their stories, and get a sense of their concerns. Shooting was loosely structured around a series of individual and group interviews. The collective, in the interests of democracy, or perhaps because of inexperience, never divided up into specific roles, and so learnt what it is like to have five people scramble for equipment with no specific duties assigned. A lengthy and most democratic paper-edit, lasting all summer, formed the basis for a tape edited according to, and not despite of, the teen women's concerns. The collective's hidden feminist agenda had to be tempered by the evident conservatism of most of the women interviewed. Only one woman could be found who would talk about abortion as a positive choice. Most, not surprisingly, had no awareness of how our culture gives the illusion of option, while constantly providing us with imagery and ideology which in fact points otherwise. Thus, childless women or the difficulties of sole-support motherhood are rarely heard about and motherhood as a primary occupation for women is tirelessly promoted.

The resulting videotape, while using many of the conventions of social documentary, is constructed with a feminist methodology: the women are given ample time to tell their stories and a helpful, omniscient narration is avoided. Instead, careful but not manipulative editing divides the interviews into themes (housing, welfare, birth control, friendships, plans for the future) and allows each woman's personality to come through whether or not what she is saying is 'politically correct.' When 17-year-old Trish complains about having to pay her own postage for correspondence courses ("... That's \$.32 per lesson, and it's one lesson per envelope!"), or when 16-year-old Kim impassively says she'd rather not have cockroaches crawling in her daughter's crib, the otherwise positive and cheerful responses to the interviewer's questions are cast into relief. An economic analysis of single women under 19 is not explicitly presented in the tape but is made powerfully implicit. A sequence in which one of the crew tells the women about a recent legislation in Nova Scotia whereby single teenage mothers have been cut off of all government assistance arouses disbelief and then (and for the only moment in the tape) anger among the women. One of them says, "It'll never happen here. . ." and the viewer is left to consider right-wing governments apropos of these women: their economic vulnerability becomes

disturbingly evident.

Our Choice is being distributed by Video Inn (Vancouver) and DEC films (Toronto). DEC in particular is concentrating on distribution within the education system.

For WMA and Jessie's, collaboration proved to be an extremely rich experience and one which helped to break down the traditional notion of artist as separate from the larger community. As times get tougher and conservative elements become more powerful, it is crucial that feminist artists seek more opportunities to collaborate with women of backgrounds different from their own, acknowledging shared struggle and contributing skills. Another example of this sort of collaboration is a tape currently in production by another collective of five women (Margaret Moores, Consuelo Rubio, Almerinda Travassos, Phylliss Waugh, and Monica) working out of the "Centre for Spanish Speaking People," a local community agency that works mostly with immigrants.

The tape got its impetus from a women's discussion group on labour that the Centre had organized. The topic of one of the sessions was sexual harassment in the workplace. None of the women were familiar with the notion until someone, who had herself been harassed at work, came to talk to them and made the women realize that each one of them had been sexually harassed at some time in her life. It was at that point that some women decided they needed a videotape that would explain the concept of sexual harassment.

The speaker at the discussion group was one of five women who had filed a complaint against their foreman at Commodore factory in Toronto. One of the women who worked on the case explained: "The foreman had harassed every single woman who went through that factory. They had a very high turn-over of workers. Instead of doing something about it (because most women didn't know what to do) they simply left the factory — until one particular woman got sick of it, particularly because she'd lost her job. (She said that if she'd continued working, she wouldn't have done anything about it.) She and some other women from the factory got together and filed a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission. And five years later they got \$75,000 in damages."

The case set a precedent: it was the first time in Ontario that sexually harassed women had been awarded damages. Moreover, the women who complained did so against incredible odds: they did not speak English and endured an incredible amount of resistance from family and community, as well as biased media coverage. But all agreed that the outcome was worth it. "The story made other women file complaints . . . we hadn't handled any complaints before. Even the concept of sexual harassment did not exist. Now it does."

The videotape will tell the story of the Commodore case through interviews with the women involved. It will also attempt to analyze sexual harassment and violence

IN TORONTO

by Marusia Bociurkin

towards women by taping group discussions on the topic. Finally, it will detail how to file a complaint with the Human Rights Commission. The collective is working on a \$30,000 budget obtained from Ontario Arts Council, Canada Council, and Secretary of State Women's Bureau which allows the crew to pay themselves a wage as well as honoraria and babysitting costs to the women being interviewed. The tape will be released in December, but some of the rewards are already being felt by the women involved. One of the collective members talks about the production process: "This project represents for me a bringing together of video artists and community groups. That's always been of interest to me. As an artist I've never actually done anything like this. Everything's been individualized and art-related. . . . To combine our feminist politics and skills as video artists has been really exciting. I hope it continues. I hope it encourages others."

One of the most fascinating ideas within the recent Lizzie Borden film *Born In Flames* (about a radical feminist revolution of the future) was the manner in which feminist groups were depicted as taking communications — and, in particular, broadcast media — into their own hands with their own underground radio stations and pirate videotapes. The inclusion of these examples showed a recognition that women are oppressed not only economically and politically, but also within the forms of symbolical and significant exchange of our culture. Film, television, and radio are, of course, part of this exchange within which oppressive ideologies are deeply inscribed. They work together with other forms of ideological production — electoral politics, organized religion, the family — to produce a cohesive, hegemonic construction of beliefs to which most people subscribe. As we lose ground on a number of feminist issues (choice, employment, the widening wage gap), it becomes important to devise new strategies, new ways of subverting the hegemonic order, and to have cultural production included within these strategies. It is, therefore, encouraging to see women's groups and services beginning to produce their own media resources. Two such groups here are Toronto Rape Crisis Centre and the Rexdale Women's Centre.

Rexdale Women's Centre produced the videotape *No More Strangers* in 1983 with the help of a local cable station. They wanted a tape which would raise issues vital to immigrant women in the suburbs and which could be produced by the immigrant women themselves. Weekly discussion meetings were combined with production workshops — the women wanted to do the camera work themselves in order to have full control of the end

results. This process helped them to come up with a tape that is accessible and entertaining but subtly critical as well. They began with a strictly interview format but decided to use the anecdotes thus obtained and to act them out. The stories become 'flashbacks' within a group discussion covering memories of the immigrant women's experience: in the home, looking for a job and being asked for "Canadian work experience," coping with children who are more acclimatized than the parents to the "Canadian" way. One of the most engaging sequences, in which a woman tries to cope with a pill-pushing doctor, draws hoots of recognition from both Canadian and immigrant women and helps to form a sense of shared concern. The scenes are simple enough to be entertaining in a TV-like manner, but embedded within them are subtle indictments of structures which affect all women.

No More Strangers is being self-distributed by Rexdale Women's Centre and has been shown, with the help of a discussion guide, to a wide variety of groups including teachers, social workers, and groups of immigrant women. The Centre has recently received funding for a second tape which will be a sequel to the first.

Toronto Rape Crisis Centre is in the process of producing a tape in response to what workers there perceive to be a serious lack of educational media resources, both for women who have been assaulted and for the 15-20 groups with whom they meet each month. Says one of the organizers: "We always use films in speaking engagements, but there hasn't been one made yet that we haven't had to criticize afterwards. The films just don't deal with the myths that give men permission to rape. Some of them even create more myths. We thought it would be great if we could make a film or a video of our own that could, if necessary, be used without any speaker at all."

The videotape, being co-produced with a local cable company, will address the misconceptions surrounding violence towards women (for example: that women asked to be raped or that rapists are mentally ill). "These myths keep women isolated. We want to start breaking them down and get people thinking about the dynamics behind violence towards women."

The tape will, for the most part, be in an interview format and will include many women. Two of the women have been raped and battered. One of these women is "Courtney," who achieved national notoriety for refusing to testify in Ottawa last year after reporting being raped. (She was charged with contempt of court and incarcerated for a week.) Women's service workers, a feminist lawyer, and a man from an anti-sexist men's group will also be

interviewed. The videotape will attempt to include analyses of class and race which affect who gets convicted, whose story gets listened to and whose doesn't. Discrepancies in the legal system will also be discussed: rape has one of the lowest conviction rates of all crimes — two percent. The average sentence is 15 months, with the rapist being eligible for parole after two-thirds of his time is served.

The tape will be finished by November. Toronto Rape Crisis will self-distribute it along with a leaflet that can be used as a workshop guide.

Collective production is, of course, not the only method for producing social documentary. There are also individuals who work in community situations. One of these is Nancy Nicol who last spring premiered a new tape, *Mini Skools Pays Mini Wages*, at a Women's Media Alliance screening. The tape is a documentary about the eight-month strike of daycare workers against a Toronto franchise of the American-owned daycare business, Mini-Skools. The strike initially received a great deal of support both from the parents, who put their children in an alternate daycare organized by the striking workers, and from the women's community. The tape documents the struggles the workers faced when Mini Skools offered a half-price sale and many of the parents took their children back, or when police began to harass the striking women. Their union, while initially supporting the strikers, finally made an agreement with Mini Skools which to the women was unsatisfactory. Fourteen of the 22 women lost their jobs after the agreement was made.

The tape suffers somewhat from a lack of connection between its political analysis and the personal experience of the workers. One is left feeling that the political significance of the strike is separate from the lived experience of the women themselves. A more integrated approach might have produced a somewhat more accessible tape. It is, however, an important documentation of a strike which, like much of women's labour history, might otherwise have been forgotten.

All of these tapes give strength to the notion of artists and communities working together and challenge art-video notions of what video could, or should, be doing. They will all have to struggle with a certain lack of support for their social and political orientation, but their increasing visibility will change this. Moreover, feminist video, by its own process of changing the place of women within a dominant representational mode, helps to demonstrate that most important feminist concept — that social reality is a changeable construct.



photo by Phyllis Waugh

(Untitled) About Sexual Harassment

MODERN TIMES

a review by Kim Tomczak

This tape is divided into seven areas with titles: (1) Modern Life, (2) Modern Marriage, (3) Modern Romance, (4) Modern Communication, (5) Modern Sexuality, (6) Modern Politics, (7) Modern Love.

Everything in this tape is modern, or so the title would have us believe. But when looking at the tape, it is important to bear in mind that it was made in 1979, the end of the seventies. In the movie by Charlie Chaplin he explored the effects of the industrial revolution on society by projecting a future. In Max Almy's *Modern Times* the future is upon us and not a projection through time.

Throughout the tape Almy uses a sort of shorthand, both in terms of the language and of the visual representations. The tape is highly critical and even cynical at times, but because of the extreme specificity and care Almy has taken to construct it, it is actually exciting. We are watching and hearing the most vacuous and banal conversations and interactions taking place, yet we walk away with a world ordered in such a way as to become useful in terms of political (by this I include sexual politics) analysis.

The other thing Almy does to help provide an environment where an analysis of our society might take place is to create narratives. (She subtitles the tape "a series of seven narratives.") These use the common language of social interactions (with all the implications of that phrase) without any of the tensions which might exist in these situations. Everyone is understanding, everything is understood.

I will attempt to describe these seven narratives to give an idea of the tape and the structure Almy has used.

1. Modern Life

Modern Life is about objects, people as objects, and locations as objects as it applies to our language. This section of the tape locates us in terms of class and in terms of a physical environment. The interesting thing about this section is the transformation from object to subject. On the screen we see a picture of a middle class house: the voice over and text indicate 'nice home.' The next picture we see is a woman, 'nice woman,' next a man, 'nice man,' next we see a man waving in front of the house, 'nice feeling.' (This is the point of transformation.) The next image is the same shot but from further away, 'nice gesture,' the next image is the same shot except the man is absent from the picture, 'nice idea.' The final image in this section is the exact same shot with the voice over and titles indicating 'nice concept.' Now we know we are looking 'at' the video screen, and we are listening to the 'meaning of the words' and not necessarily to their effect.

The use of the words 'nice' flattens the objects it describes. Language then becomes a commodity just like the 'nice house' in the tape.

2. Modern Marriage

Here we see close up shot of a man, relaxing, perhaps sunbathing. The voice over states "He's perfect. He's rich, handsome, well built, intelligent, sophisticated, witty, charming, masculine, athletic, well dressed, exciting, sexy, romantic, warm, loving, thoughtful, kind, considerate, appreciative, supportive, creative, fun, adventurous, independent, mature, strong, solid, secure, serious, dependable, hardworking, aggressive, dynamic, successful, ambitious, driving, overworked, preoccupied, nervous, demanding, critical, self-centred, arrogant, egotistical, pretentious, bossy, nagging, possessive, jealous, unfaithful, neurotic, manic, childish, petty, insensitive, mean, loud, crude, stubborn, narrow minded, conservative, bourgeois, politically apathetic and boring, totally boring."

Putting aside the obvious meaning in a narrative sense, it is very interesting to see the use of commonly used descriptions being used in a cross gender manner. Words that might imply negative attributes of women are used to describe this man. Positive adjectives are used in the same way. What is happening here is an attempt to examine the use of pre-gendered adjectives, see if they have a meaning and a usage which manipulates us.

3. Modern Romance

Modern Romance has to do with time, with the way in which time can also manipulate language. Words have meaning, and whether they are used to express 'fact' or 'fiction' is often not that important to their inherent meaning. Maybe if I describe this section it will help to make some sense of what I mean. I have greatly condensed the dialogue here, and I should mention that a transformation from day to night to day again is indicated by changes in the view out of the window.

We see a pair of lips superimposed on the scene. The scene is of a view out of a living room window which faces a street. Cars on the street are visible. The lips which are superimposed move, and we hear, "That's not his car," and then a voice over states, "He's with her. . . They're talking. . . She's talking, she's listening. . . They're touching. . . He's kissing her. . . They're making love. . . They're lying together. . . They're quiet." During the voice over, the lips repeat the words, "That's not his car."

I think Almy wants us to see the way in which a dialogue is constructed within us — the spoken words are in a dialogue with the 'thought words.' These words each have their inherent meaning, but when they are used in two different ways we notice the distinct differences in application.

4. Modern Communications

It is hard to ignore the cynicism of this section. Lack of communication should be the title, but there is something else happening here. A head and shoulders shot of a woman is shown with superimposed lips on the screen for short 'inserts of dialogue.' The 'lips' speak first, "Claudine, I'm so glad you're here, I need your help. I need your advice."

The woman on the screen then speaks. "I'm glad you're here. I need your help. I need your advice. . ." This sort of dialogue continues. The interesting thing here is the absolute avoidance of the issue to which so much concern is being directed. The woman and, periodically, the 'lips' address each other about the problem without ever actually stating what it is. They talk around the issue and finally congratulate each other (themselves?) on their 'talk' stating "I needed this. I needed an objective viewpoint. . ."

I think what Almy wants us to do here is examine the differences in form which communication might take and the function it might serve. Again, the language is common, the expressions are those we use daily; but the structure of this section allows the viewer to dissect the meaning by removing the 'emotionality' of the situation. We are the objective viewpoint referred to in the tape.

5. Modern Sexuality

The first shot is of a person from the shoulders up to the chin; no clothes are visible. The voice over states, "I know what I want. I know what I'm attracted to. I know what I like. I know exactly what I like. I like strong shoulders." Here we see a close-up shot of a person assuming a muscular pose, flexing, as it were. The dialogue continues, "I like a strong body. I like a strong, beautiful body." At this point we see the person turning to reveal their gender. In fact this person who has been described in "masculine" terms is a woman. The voice over continues, "I like a smooth, sensuous, sexual body, a sexual look, a sexual look, a sexual attitude. I like an agile, elegant, graceful body, beautiful to look at, exciting to touch. I love shining hair." Now we see the woman on the screen run her fingers through her hair. The dialogue is still distanced, but we see a visible relation to what is being said, "I love strong hands. I love long, delicate fingers. I love my long beautiful nails." The woman on the screen is going from object to subject. "I know what I like, what I'm attracted to. I know what I want. I know exactly what I want." This last line is delivered live on the screen by the woman. She is putting makeup on in a mirror, and her reflection in the mirror directly confronts the camera. Her reflection stares directly into the lens. What Almy has done is trick us. We know how to describe men, and we know how to describe women. We know some of these descriptions are sexist, but we also know

they exist in the vocabulary of everyday conversations. The person who we are looking at on the video screen forces a change in our perspective, and, as she moves from the object, the viewer is confronted. The camera has been very carefully acknowledged, but the viewer is left to deal with this confrontation. This seems to me to be a really effective way of addressing the concept of an inherent sexism in language. Of course, it's really more complex than that because Almy is also addressing the subject of visual representation and its link to language.

6. Modern Politics

If we continue the presupposition that by 'modern' Almy means the present, what is meant by this section? This section is made up entirely of cause and effect type questions. That is, if I do this will you do that?" presented in voice-over. These questions are linked with black and white still images of a woman (head and shoulders shot) looking either to the right, to the left, down, at the camera, or at the camera with glasses on. I will list a few examples: (1) "If I have my hair cut at Sassoon's, will you buy me a new Mercedes?" Here the woman is looking to the right. (2) "If I lose 10 pounds, will I be Beautiful?" — looking to the right. (3) "If I see my psychiatrist, will I finally be happy?" Here the woman is looking at the camera with glasses on. (4) "If I love you forever, will you love me forever?" — looking at the camera without glasses.

On the eleventh question we notice it is a combination of two, of the previous questions. The first part of question 1 with the second part of question 6, and so on. This structure continues to the 31st question. Again, the visual representation of the woman alters according to the question. By the structural reordering of these questions, the viewer is challenged to question this 'relationship' of the female subject and the spectator. Of course women that are represented on the screen wearing glasses have been analyzed to be 'intelligent' or, in vulgar cinematic terms, not sexually attractive as far as the narrative is concerned. A representation of a woman who is not wearing glasses and perhaps looking to the side or looking down is said to be 'available' for the (always male) spectator. It's these 'devices' that cinema uses that Almy wishes to illustrate. We gain information through strict codes, codes which are among other things representative of the sexist industry which is cinema and television. Like a good structuralist, Almy lays bare the arbitrary nature of these codes and allows us to see the manipulation upon which these 'meanings' are dependent.

7. Modern Love

Modern Love is the last section. It is made up of four black and white television screens which are seen simultaneously. The screens come on one at a time, and each contains a close up of a mouth speaking. The first screen states, "I love you. I've never loved anyone as much as I love you. . . I want you to live with me. . . I know this is frightening. . ." The second screen starts, "I love you, that's the one thing I do know. . . But I need a lot of space. . . I think you should move out for your own good. What I really need is a close friend. . ." Meanwhile the first screen has looped and is repeating. The third screen begins, "I love you. God, I missed you. . . The past is dead. . . I know it has been back and forth. . ." Screen one and two continue to loop as does three. Four begins, "I love you. But I know now that I can't really relate to anyone. . . You are important to me, but I must be free." And four also loops.

There is no emotion portrayed here. The people speaking are visually reduced to their moving mouths, and the dialogue is flat and dry and, above all, reasonable.

What happens by this time is that all four screens are running, and the viewer has the choice to listen to any one or all or any combination of these 'messages' he or she chooses and in any order. If there is so much understanding, so much rational behaviour, why then is there 'crisis.' Almy makes her point very clear.

The tape lasts 25 minutes, and in that short time we have relived the seventies, a decade that began as a good 'idea' and might have ended as a better reality.

Portrait of the Practice and Trends Among Feminist Videomakers, in Quebec.

by Diane Poitras



photo Video Femmes

Tourage: Tous Les Jours: 1981

For women in Quebec, and particularly for feminists, video has traditionally been a prioritized form of expression. This article provided me the opportunity to find out how this curious relationship between women and video has evolved over the years. Working mainly through interviews, I have tried to trace a representative — if non-exhaustive — portrait of the practice and trends among feminist videomakers. I talked with women from three different collectives, two of which are pioneers: *Video-Femmes* and the *G.I.V.* as well as a new collective, *Les productions actions feministes par l'image*. I also questioned women working independently: Francoise Dugre, Ann Ramsden, an anglophone artist, and Lynda Pierce, a member of the new generation of women videomakers. In all cases, I tried to cover three main areas of concern: attitudes towards the technical side of the medium, changes and developments in content, evolution in form.

Technique and Technology

In a nutshell, women are no longer intimidated by technology. Increasing numbers of women have mastered lighting, sound, and camera techniques as well as all the other hardware associated with production. Some recent newcomers to the field have even gone straight into production without full knowledge of the intricacies of their equipment. They are evidently well armed with that type of self-assurance which has always enabled men to confront technical difficulties . . . and to overcome them!

Les productions feministes par l'image, for example, started off life as a student group working on an anthropology project. They typify, very candidly, this new relationship to technology: "... our initial goal was to do a written document on the effects of micro-technology on women in the workplace. We then decided that an audio-visual treatment would be appropriate, and we began looking around for funding. You know, when I wrote up the first funding request, I had never even seen a video camera in my life!" All three of them burst out laughing, and so did I. One of them concluded: "We really learned all about video while we were making that first tape."

Whereas women today are much more at ease with the hardware, their attitude becomes more ambiguous when confronted with the never ending and often unpredictable advances in state-of-the-art production technology. These developments require not only an ongoing apprenticeship with the new tools and techniques, they also bring home the harsh reality of the financial cost factor.

The introduction of 3/4 inch colour equipment was an evident challenge to those women who had been working for a long time in 1/2 inch b&w. They had to adapt to a hardware that was heavier, costlier, and more complex to operate. But the changes were not restricted to the hardware alone, and women's groups themselves often had to modify their way of working. Nicole Giguere describes the evolution of *Video-Femmes* in this respect: "We no longer rush out with the camera every time someone calls

us to cover an event. In the past, that was part of our mandate. Today, we don't feel obliged to answer all requests. If, for instance, we are asked to tape a conference with the goal of making an internal reference document, we will suggest to the organizers that they find someone else to do it, using 1/2 inch VHS or BETAMAX equipment. It will cost them much less because our time, our way of working, and our equipment are all much more expensive.

The GIV opted for a different course. Having fewer women members with production experience, and confronted with limited funding and thus unable to acquire 3/4 inch equipment, the group decided to concentrate on distribution. Nevertheless, as Albanie Morin points out, they still maintain an interest in the production side of things: "We are always on the lookout for new tapes, and we'll always be involved to some extent in their production. We encourage women to get together in order to produce, and we'll often act as go-betweens, helping with funding, trying to open up certain doors. At the same time we are also aware that to do our job well, we have to organize and carry on the distribution."

Content: the language expands . . .

Ten years ago, feminists felt that it was urgent to stimulate debate around the major questions on the agenda of the women's movement. Tapes on such issues as abortion, contraception, and sexual violence were a reflection of their determined efforts to force public discussion of subjects otherwise considered taboo.

Today, even if many of these and other demands of the women's movement remain incomplete or unsatisfied, many feminists working in video have felt the need to expand the content and the vocabulary of their work. Fortunately, women have been able to avoid repeating themselves, and the tapes produced over the last decade have been marked by a steady evolution. Whereas issues such as sexism and the role and place of women in the labour force still remain important preoccupations, feminists have also been taking up other questions. Women and culture (art, rock music, the phenomenon of creativity. . .); women and aging; relationships within the couple; and tapes addressing the reality of lesbianism reflect some of these new directions.

Evidently, these developments cannot be isolated from the overall evolution of the feminist movement and of society in general. But there is also another important explanation of this tendency towards diversification, i.e., the necessity to avoid being restricted to the ghetto of traditional "women-only" issues: daycare, abortion, childbearing, etc. Such restrictions coincide only too well with the patriarchal vision of society which is so quick to react negatively to any attempt by women to meddle in discussions on nuclear energy or on the organization of work in the office!

Finally, among the different women interviewed, Ann Ramsden was the only anglophone as well as the only

woman who would define herself first and foremost as an artist. Her personal background and experience have given her a different perspective.

Yet, there are some similarities with the orientations adopted by the francophones: "I would say that right now, my work is evolving. Instead of looking at specific social situations (which was my starting point a long time ago), I'm looking more at those undercurrents that operate in society and that are very hard to identify . . . and all the kinds of myths and codes that are going on, but are very hard to point to."

Changes in form

Most of the women interviewed do not want their videotapes to be perceived as propaganda instruments. On the contrary, they are seeking to develop more daring forms of language that will be innovative and more interesting. Due to escalating production costs, however, few tapes exist which reflect these intentions concretely. But nearly all of the women spoke of their desire to explore new forms of expression, and some are already involved in creative research along these lines. Others, like Francois Dugre, have been organizing regional festivals in order that the public as well as those working in video have the opportunity to see video art productions. One thing is becoming clear: never, outside of the anglophone video community in Quebec, has there been so much ongoing discussion on the topic of video art!

Ann Ramsden again: "... I am concerned and interested in how women's issues relate to other issues and to art issues. Within art, those things are manifested in a specific way. . . and that's probably why, for example, I'm not really interested at this point in doing documentaries. Although I did do one a long time ago, I ended up by thinking that the use of media tends to transform those situations so much that they do become kind of fictional."

And yet, the documentary on microtechnology and women, produced recently by *Les productions feministes par l'image*, has had an enormous impact. In spite of the fact that the collective is a novice to the field and that their tape contains some flaws, the video has been circulating widely in the unions and among women's groups. The weaknesses of the tape due to the lack of experience of its authors have not prevented people from watching and using it.

This fact becomes important in the sense that it reflects the requirements, habits, and demands of the viewing public. Both the GIV and *Video-Femmes* have noted that their clientele are becoming more and more demanding with regards to technical standards. It does not automatically follow, however, that this clientele will use tapes of a more highly developed artistic language if these same tapes do not meet certain precise needs on the level of education, information, and reflection. GIV, for example, listed technically excellent and artistically developed tapes in its catalogue which were considered pertinent from a feminist viewpoint, on the level of both form and content. Subsequent evaluation showed, however, that these productions had not really circulated or penetrated the distribution network.

Some tentative conclusions . . .

What are we permitted to conclude from this mini-investigation? For one thing, the technical side of production and the continuing technological advances no longer bowl us over. But technology still causes certain real problems. For instance, newcomers (and even long-time independents) often have to fall back on the "new" 1/2 inch standard if they are going to be able to produce at all, even if they are fully aware that distribution possibilities will be sharply reduced. At one point, the economic factor is decisive!

The vocabulary of feminist video productions has changed appreciably. It is less urgent and less demanding than in the past: it has become more interrogative, more reflective, going beyond immediate concerns. Is there a danger that it will become diluted??

Finally, many feminists feel less pressure today, due to the existence of an important bank of videotapes on a variety of women's issues and preoccupations. We have more time to explore the visual language. Current research tends to be bringing video art and social action video* closer together, and this prospect is both appealing and full of promise. The question is, will we be able to convince our audience to come along with us? It is to be hoped so. At the same time, we can also hope that more and more women will shoot and produce tapes on a wide spectrum of issues. The more this happens, the greater our chances will be of attaining higher levels of aesthetic quality.

* In french: "Video d'intervention".



SCANNING VIDEO SCANNING

EVENTS

POETRY FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

December 1 & 2. Ninth event seeks works wherein "images and words interact synergistically." 34 of 86 works were screened last year. Top two winners were Canadian: *Tales of the Vienna Woods* by Veronica Soul and *Waterworks* by Rick Hancox. Six selected prints will be focus of college-circuit poetry workshops. No screening fees paid, but there is a "purchasing prize," i.e., the festival pays to make a copy of your work which it keeps in a public archive after the workshops. Still, no dollars for you. Entries in S-8, 16 mm, and ¾" accepted until November 29. Entry fee: \$5.00; filmmaker pays all postage and insurance. Contact: The Poetry Workshop, Fort Mason Cultural Center, San Francisco, CA 94123, telephone: (415) 621-3073.

WOMEN'S MID-ATLANTIC FILM & VIDEO SHOWCASE

March. Non-competitive event is part of larger, mostly invitational, Women in Film and Video Festival. First year for this component, focusing on works under 60 minutes from "local" women in DE, MD, NJ, NY, PA, VA, WV and the District of Columbia. All genres welcome in ¾", 16 and 35 mm. Screening panel of filmmakers, AFI staffers, museum folks. Festival hopes to bring in at least one rep from each state. No entry fee; you pay all postage and insurance. November 1 entry deadline has been extended to November 15. Send films and tapes to: The American Film Institute, Attn: Susan Ivers, Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, Washington, DC 20566. For more information, contact Marian Oster at (202) 737-2400.

WORKSHOP FOR FEMINIST JOURNALISTS

If you know women's writing is more than literature and poetry, then come to Vancouver Status of Women (V.S.W.), 400A West 5th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 1J8, on Sunday, November 25, 1984 at 1:30 pm. Co-sponsored by Kinesis and Co-op Radio Women's Caucus.

TO ALL MEDIA-RELATED PROFESSIONALS:

The call is out. November 28 to December 2 in Montreal are very significant dates for anyone whose work is linked to the video/film domain. These five days comprise a concerted response to an international problem: technological advances have catapulted the industry into a new era, and not all of us are equipped to follow it.

CONVERGENCE: A FORUM ON THE NEW VIDEO/FILM TECHNOLOGY has been designed by video and film professionals to ease our community through this period of transition. It is a moment rife with questions on every aspect of the new "moving picture technology," and CONVERGENCE will address them all by offering the community a chance to exchange with the experts and experience the technology first-hand. It even means a close-up look at Sony's High Definition Video System, which will have its Canadian premiere at the CONVERGENCE exhibit.

Write for flyer:
Le Forum Video de Montreal inc.
Complexe Guy-Favreau
Tour est, Bureau 102
Montreal, Quebec H2Z 1X4
(514) 283-8309

QUEBEC: VIDEO DES FEMMES

La Video Fameuse Fete is an annual Canadian film and Video festival in Quebec City featuring works by and about women. 1984 was its eighth season and the tenth anniversary of its sponsoring organization, Video Femmes, a feminist video production/distribution collective. Their works are recognized throughout Canada and abroad. Some of its tapes are distributed by the Centre Simone de Beauvoir in France and by Circle in London.

The festival is seeking 16mm and ¾" videotapes for 1985. The deadline is December, although the details have not yet been finalized. New works of any length will be accepted for selection. If you are interested in submitting your work, contact:
Video Femmes
10, Rue McMahon
Quebec, Quebec G1R 3S1
(418) 692-3090

ITVA Videotape Festival is now considering entries in ¾" NTSC U-matic. Tapes must be produced by the professional video user or by a production company on behalf of a client organization. Categories include: Training, Information, Sales/Marketing, Public Service/Public Relations, Organizational News, and Interactive Video. Entry deadline is December 14. For guidelines and entry forms, contact:

ITVA Videotape Festival
International Television Assn.
6311 N. O'Connor Rd., Suite 110
Irving, TX 75039
(214) 869-1112

Nightflight seeks short tapes and films by students and young artists for "New Filmmakers" segment on USA cable. Those selected will receive \$10/minute for use. Contact:
Carrie Franklin
ATI Video Ent.
888 7th Avenue
New York, N.Y.
(212) 977-2300

DISTRIBUTE

ATTENTION VIDEOMAKERS!!

LO STUDIO IMMAGINARIO is a service organization which programmes videos by well-known and new independent videomakers.

LO STUDIO IMMAGINARIO is inviting all videomakers interested in presenting their video in Italy to send their videotapes together with a profile of presentation.

LO STUDIO IMMAGINARIO will take care of presenting the works in video festivals and video clubs as well as to the press. Afterwards, the tapes will be returned.

LO STUDIO IMMAGINARIO hopes that will be a public platform for a wide base of work produced both nationally and internationally, and that this will encourage a greater production, discussion, and promotion of video materials.

Tapes should be sent to:
LO STUDIO IMMAGINARIO
via Malta, 168
47023 Cesena - Italy
phone (0547) 331803



The Kitchen centre for video, music, dance, and performance seeks videotapes of all genres for exhibition and distribution. Send ¾" copies with name, address, phone number, and any supplementary information to: The Kitchen
59 Wooster Street
New York, N.Y. 10012
(212) 925-3615

SCAN-RETRACE VIDEO AUSTRALIAN VIDEO FILM DISTRIBUTOR

urgently requires material. Anything considered, good royalties, write for details.

SCAN - RETRACE VIDEO PRODUCTIONS & DISTRIBUTION, 3 Franklin Ave., Chelsea, Victoria, 3196, Australia.



BRAVE NEW WAVES/RADIO VARIETY

Our show, CBC's new all night new music and conversation show, is also in need of more material from Canadian artists. We're looking for demo tapes, performance pieces, sound works, and the like.

Contact:
Sophia Hadzipetros
Producer
Brave New Waves
Box 6000
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3A8



Art Music, Inc. seeks video works in ¾" format for a 13-part series to be cablecast on WNYC. Documentaries, video art, and other works shorter than 60 minutes are preferred. Selected works will receive \$400 for two plays. Contact: Paul Nichols (212) 982-0322 or Wendy Chambers (212) 624-3506.

THE DANISH · VIDEO · ART · DATA · BANK is a distribution agency established to document, collect, publish and disseminate information on the activities of the Danish artists working with video.

THE DANISH · VIDEO · ART · DATA · BANK will be an intermediary of Danish video art: tapes, installations, performances, by offering tapes of Danish video artists for rental or sale and by helping to negotiate staging of installations and live performances of Danish video artists.



A catalogue will be published in November.

THE DANISH · VIDEO · ART · DATA · BANK videoværksted/HASLEV, Søndergade 12, DK-4690 Haslev, Denmark.

Campus Network, a television network that broadcasts exclusively to colleges and universities, is now accepting 3/4" videos for programming. If accepted, producers will receive \$17 per minute for a one week exhibition period. Contact:

Campus Network
c/o Steve Amateau
114 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10011
(212) 206-1953

CULTURE SHOCK

We are currently developing CULTURE SHOCK as an eclectic television "almanac" for cable broadcast. This new series will showcase the original and the outrageous in film and video shorts. CULTURE SHOCK will present the widest and wildest mix of styles and topics. We are looking for new techniques and approaches — new visions. We need faster, shorter, power packed videos that present an alternative to the milk toast of "sell-a-vision."

CULTURE SHOCK producers will be reviewing programming throughout this summer and fall. Send us your best upbeat/offbeat programming in any format. From ten seconds to ten minutes, anything goes — comedy, satire, music, dance, narratives, art and performing pieces, experimentals.

All submissions will be taken seriously and returned promptly. Don't worry about "broadcast quality" or technical specs. We're looking more for originality than production polish. For those works that are selected, producers will be notified immediately and a fair, competitive non-exclusive price negotiated.

Our production team comes from the independent filmmaking community. We appreciate creative talent and recognize the love and sacrifice it takes to make innovative programming. We respect the efforts and rights of independents and hope to offer a haven for their creativity. CULTURE SHOCK offers a video outlet for producers with vision and commitment.

Interested? Send us your videos now. If you know anybody whose work should be seen on CULTURE SHOCK, send us their names.

We are very excited about CULTURE SHOCK and hope you will be too. Join us — from Wasteland to Wonderland!

Cultural Communications
Box 2040
Middleburg, Virginia 22117
(703) 687-6400

PERIODICALS

INDEPENDENT VIDEO

INDEPENDENT VIDEO is a monthly magazine carrying news, views, reviews and interviews about the British and European alternative video scene.

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Magazine

The Spring 1985 issue of EAR MAGAZINE will be on "The Composer and The Moving Image." We are writing to invite you to submit your work and ideas for publication. The deadline for this issue is December 1, 1984.

We are especially concerned with graphically interesting work: scores, performance notation, work notes, black and white stills, and documents of ways in which composers use or respond to the moving image. How do visuals and music interact and support each other?

Although there are certain limitations of space, if you wish to send more than one work, we will be happy to consider everything we receive. Excerpts of complete works or works in progress are also acceptable.

All submissions should include a title of the article as well as a three to five sentence biographical statement with your name, address, and phone number. Any stills should be represented by one or more black and white prints numbered in sequence and accompanied by photo credits, captions, and/or a statement about the work.

Copy should be typed, double space, on white paper with at least 1 inch margins on all four sides. We prefer to limit articles to not more than five pages, but exceptions can be considered for special works.

Individuals whose works are accepted for publication receive a \$10 honorarium and a one year subscription to EAR.

If you wish to have your work returned, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

EAR MAGAZINE
New Wilderness Foundation, Inc.
325 Spring Street Room 208
New York, N.Y. 10013
(212) 807-7944

RESOURCE

VIDEO GUIDE

Satellite Video Exchange Society

is completing a study on videotape. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

- What kind (brand name) do you use?
- Does any brand seem better than another?
- What problems, if any, do you have with the tape brands you have used?
- What size tape do you use or have you used?

We would like to hear from people with recorded tape which is over 8 years old:

- What shape is it in?
- How was it stored?

If any of the information you supply is used in our report on Videotapes you will receive a year's subscription to Video Guide in exchange. So please include your name and address with postal code. Thanks for your assistance.

VANCOUVER ARTISTS LEAGUE

The committee serving as the ad hoc board of directors of the Vancouver Artists' League is pleased to inform you that application for society status is now under way.

The society is an umbrella organization formed by a coalition of various institutions (CAG, Unit/Pitt, Video Inn, Western Front) and independents to promote and activate artistic activity.

The VAL will encourage a livelier interchange of ideas and energy than is now the case in Vancouver. For example, a shared mailing list will provide for wider dissemination of information than is currently available.

You are invited to join this organization as a charter member, which entitles you to a year's worth of quarterly mailings. If you care to become a part of the VAL, please send three dollars to the Contemporary Art Gallery, 555 Hamilton, Vancouver V6B 2R1.

BOOKS

THE VIDEO PRODUCTION GUIDE

Helps you professionally handle all or any part of the video production process. Contains user-friendly, real-world coverage of pre-production planning, creativity and organization, people handling, single- and multicamera studio or on-location production, direction techniques, editing, special effects, and distribution of the finished production. Ideal for use by working or aspiring producer/directors, and by schools, broadcasters, CATV, and general industry. By Lon McQuillin, edited by Charles Bensinger. 352 pages, 8 1/2 x 11, soft. ISBN 0-672-22053-9, 1982. Ask for No. 22053 \$28.95

CABLE FOR TELEVISION (2nd Edition)

Designed for the engineer or technician who wants to improve her/his knowledge of cable television. Helps you examine each component in a cable system separately and in relation to the system as a whole. Discusses component testing, troubleshooting, noise reduction, and system failure. Contains valuable information concerning fibre optics and communications satellites. By John Cunningham. 392 pages, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, soft. ISBN 0-672-21755-4, 1980. Ask for No. 21755 \$13.95

For a free catalogue of all Sams Books available, write P.O. Box 7092, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

FUJIKO NAKAYA

by Michael Goldberg



Direct public criticism is frowned upon in Japan. As a result, independent social documentary video is rare. Women are still in a more inferior social position than in the West. Compared to Canada, there are few women making video, fewer still who are avowed feminists, and almost no tapes on women's issues. In the first generation of video artists, there is only one woman who was and still is in a leadership position — Fujiko Nakaya.

It is difficult to evaluate the part Fujiko has played in the context of women's video. Partly this is because she does not formally have a feminist stance. However, only women have been on staff at SCAN, the video gallery and distribution service she began in 1980. Several have gone on to establish their own careers. SCAN gives equal opportunity to women and men, and in the generation of artists emerging there now, the percentage of women has risen to about 25%.

Most video artists in Japan owe a debt of gratitude to Fujiko Nakaya for the work she has done on their behalf, directly or indirectly. For younger women she is an important role model, a pioneer who has initiated numerous projects and video art services, one who has also managed to create her own artwork all along.

This article will dwell on three aspects of Fujiko's activities: SCAN, personal video pieces, and her cloud sculptures. In a way all three are similar, in that she works with an instinctive feel for whatever system it is. If something is not working somewhere, Fujiko has a tendency to move in that direction and do something about it. Quite Japanese in this regard, her energy flows with circumstances which arise in the environment in which she moves, like her fog. More about that a bit later.

Fujiko got involved with video (in 1971) "because it wasn't working." At that time, mostly it wasn't. She dedicated herself to the task of gaining authenticity for video art. SCAN was not dreamed of exclusively as an "alternative" space, isolated from the mainstream. Indeed, Fujiko disagreed with some of her peers who seemed to

want to replace the "establishment" with another dominating ideology. Communication between alternative centres, where people agree wholeheartedly with one another, held no attraction. "Two people can relate to each other easily; even disagreement is a form of communication. If there's a third person, this becomes a social system. An objective view has been added, and discommunication becomes real, impersonal." Bridging these gaps through video is what interests Fujiko, working with those elements which constitute a society. Through the actions of artists, she would bring society closer to the ideal of what it could be. "Ask any individual about war or nuclear testing; they'd likely be against it. If two cities get together to ban nuclear weapons within their boundaries, it becomes viable in a real social context — global, in fact."

For example, SCAN has taken on the project of Japanese distribution of "The Second Link" (an international video show which originated in Banff, Canada). Nakaya-san secured funding from the Japan Foundation (no easy feat) to put out an edition of 500 catalogues with translated texts. She does not want to have it seen as vanity press, so Fujiko is trying hard to interest a book publisher. If the validation of the publishing world can be secured as well, she'll feel the effort was more than worthwhile. Bringing together such disparate fields is intrinsic to her vision of art.

Among its numerous ventures, SCAN has a semi-annual competition for new Japanese video art. Judges are alternated, so I had the pleasure of serving as jurist once with Fujiko, then once with Keigo Yamamoto, and then passed my baton to Gary Hill. If an artist is picked three times in the competition, SCAN gives a solo show and makes a promo pamphlet, distributing the work from then on with the more recognized artists it represents. Should anyone be interested in showing Japanese video, SCAN is the first place to turn, as all visitors to Tokyo will attest. Please keep in mind that the centre has no core-funding, only occasional contributions for specific projects. The physical space of the gallery is a personal donation of Fujiko's mother, who gave permission to use a one-room apartment which previously was rented out. Each and every project taken on by SCAN must pay for itself. Enquiries about renting tapes for exhibitions abroad are most welcome. Occasionally, showings by visiting foreign video artists can be arranged, if enough lead time is given.

One of Fujiko Nakaya's earliest tapes is now a classic. In "Columbus Story" she carefully balances hard-boiled eggs so that they stand upright on a flat, smooth surface. Try it sometime. It's challenging and requires delicacy and patience. The surface of an egg shell is apparently comprised of tiny triangles, like a geodesic dome. The title of the tape comes from historic gossip about Christopher Columbus, who got so frustrated when he couldn't get it to work that he smashed the bottom of the egg on the table to make it stand.

In a more recent tape, a writer's hands are shown close up, using a sharp blade to whittle a pencil to a fine point. The movement is organic and complex. Shots of the hands are sensual, with erotic suggestion at times. The



Scan

action of the right hand, which holds the knife, is mechanical; it could be replaced by a machine. The left hand is receptive, constantly turning the pencil and controlling the pressure. It adapts to changes so closely; it in fact controls the interaction. The direct implication of the tape is the artist's view of male-female relationships.

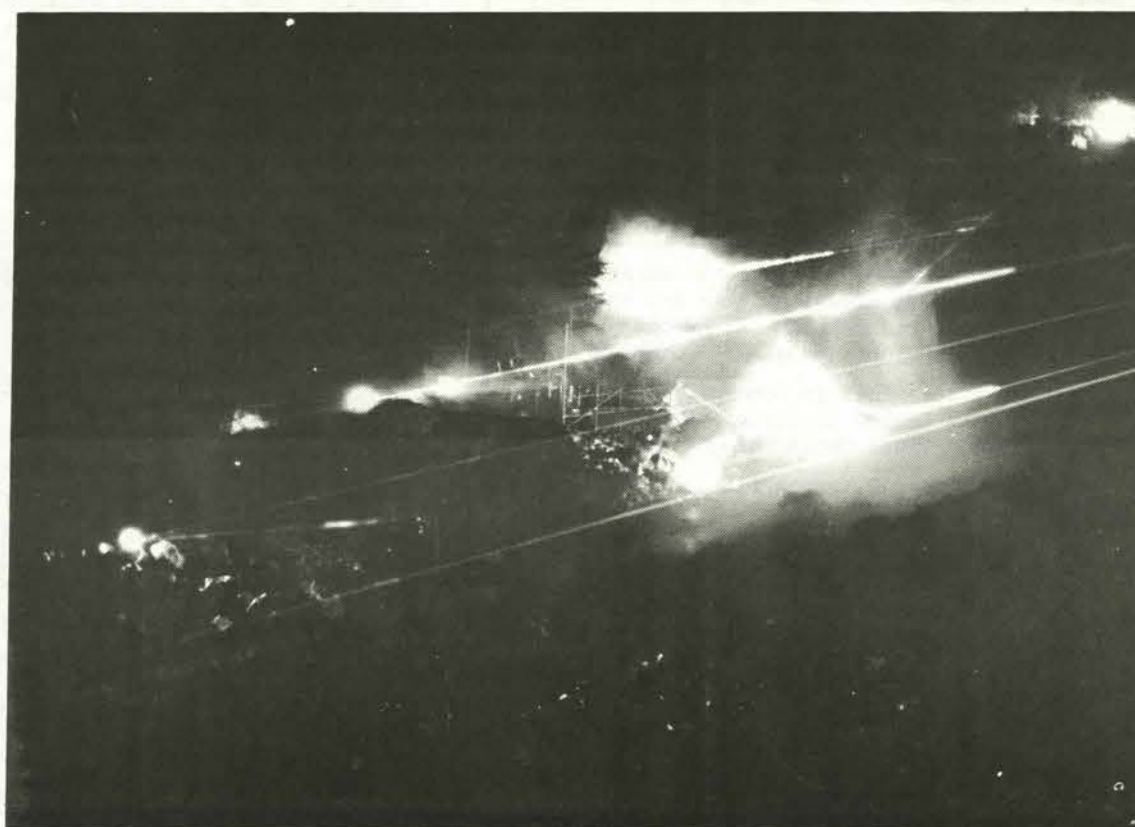
Cultural and political overtones of the piece are more subtle, and equally important to Fujiko. In most cultures, the right hand is just that — right. The left is "sinister." A Japanese expression to denote someone crazy is "turning to the left," a reference to the whorl at the back of one's head. From the point of view of the establishment, anyone "left-leaning" is sinister. In fact, the "right" is rigid, unresponsive to change. Like many Japanese videotapes, such layers of meaning are not obvious at first glance. Nor does the tape seem to progress, with a resolution at the end. It creates a mood for contemplation in which the theme slowly gains depth.

"Flood" starts with a shot of a dry riverbed. Once a month a dam built upstream is opened, flushing water down the old path. At first it progresses very slowly, trickling into each little nook in the earth. It eventually builds into a treacherous river. Water can be calm and peaceful, yet it also contains violence. With an excellent stereo soundtrack, the tape works best on a large-screen video projector. On a small monitor it is reduced to a Bonsai of the river.

Ms. Nakaya has done several river pieces meant for multi-monitor installations. Shot from a bridge looking straight down, one tape is played on three or more monitors on the floor facing up. Even though the images are all the same, we have the impression that the stream is flowing from one screen to another. My favourite rendition of that piece was an installation with the TV's imbedded in the floor, with thick plexiglass covers. It really felt as if the building was set above a river. In another version, there are also monitors stacked one above another, which looks like a waterfall cascading into the river.



Fog Sculpture 1980 Kawaji



Fog Sculpture 1980 Kawaji

photos by Kira Perov

Opal Loop/Cloud Installation 1980



dance by Trisha Brown Company

cloud by Fujiko Nakaya

videotaped by Paul Tschinkel

Nowhere is Fujiko's concern with nature more evident than in her "Fog sculptures." Her father was a world-renowned scientist who was the first to succeed in creating true snow crystals. Through her early involvement with E.A.T. (Experiments in Art & Technology — Fujiko was co-ordinator in Japan), she worked with technicians to develop a unique nozzle which sprays out water in a very fine mist. Elaborate piping designs allow this natural fog to fill large areas, and Nakaya-san has had major commissions to do installations in Australia, the U.S., and all around Japan.

One delightful fog sculpture collaboration was with Trishia Brown and her dancers, performing in a New York studio. Adjusting the pressure, the fog was scored to be a backdrop, move out and envelop the performers, then

recede again. It puts TV fog machines to shame. Fujiko discovered a lot about air flow in a contained space. It's easier indoors though, as the direction the mist moves when you push on it is predictable, choreographable in this case. Research for outdoor pieces is complicated, involving topology and heat (evaporation involves principles of thermodynamics). Instead of a ceiling, she must depend on the air's inversion layer for convection. I don't understand it well, but the results certainly can be awe-inspiring. An outdoor performance with lasers (sound by video artist and good friend Bill Viola) was so impressive that the park officials tried to steal the idea for a watered-down repeat the following year (forgive the pun), until Fujiko caught wind of it. The nozzle design has patents pending.

Though it appears that Fujiko is working with water, she is in fact working with air. As a long range project, Fujiko's goal is to deal with weather. Great strides have been made with meteorological satellites, but the subject has been the reserve of professionals. There's always been talk of controlling the weather — hurricanes, typhoons, etc. If seeded clouds drop rain in one area, another part of the country which used to get the rain loses it. It's a very dangerous subject, Fujiko insists; if you hit a typhoon the energy doesn't disappear. Artists must become involved, to contribute knowledge from the human feel of the weather. This environmental consciousness is a natural extension of Fujiko Nakaya's concern with global peace — through all weather.

There was so much else I wanted to write about this more-than-video artist. There are numerous tapes, projects, and collaborations Fujiko has done which I left out only by accident, in an attempt to get some flow into this article. I'll leave it up to others to weave webs with it, and I hope you get to read it. The address of SCAN Video Gallery is: 1-21-1, Jingu-Mae; Shibuya-ku; Tokyo; Japan. ATTN: Keiko Sei, Programme Director. Tel: 03-470-2664.

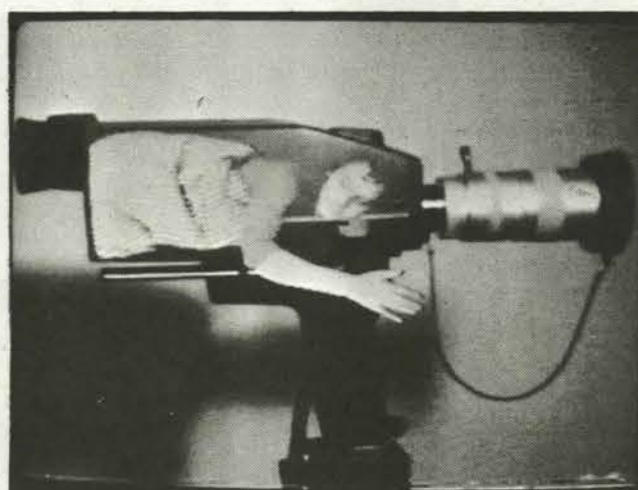
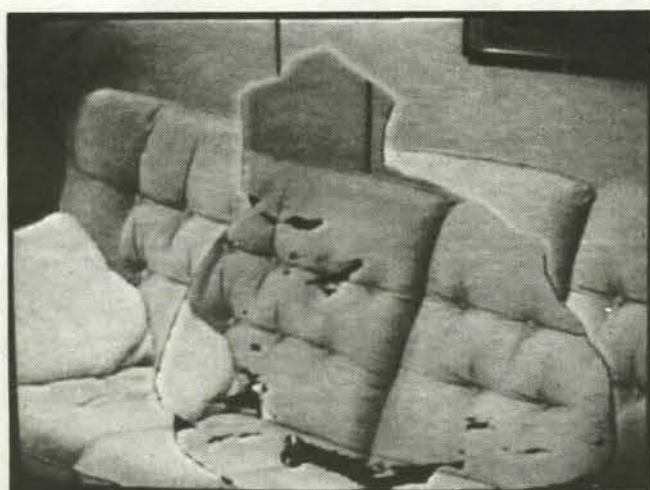


Fujiko Nakaya at Scan

photo by Michael Goldberg

THE VIDEOPIIONEER

by Michaela-Elisabeth Buscher



THE VIDEOPIIONEER, 1983, producer Gerd Conradt

This video film presents six stories from an area in Berlin (Charlottenburg) which underwent urban renewal. Six individuals are portrayed: an old woman, an architect, an experimental video filmmaker, a sales-clerk, a politician, and the spokesman of the renters' initiative and his wife. The involvement and the struggles of these individuals at the beginning of the renewal project in 1973 is shown in black & white footage shot at that time. In 1983 the same persons were confronted with the old black & white material. The videomontage of the pictures from the past and present works to interpret the historical material and make the position of each (the political position regarding urban renewal, the technical use of video, and the social/personal opinions) visible.

The Videopioneer: at every moment he tries something new

The videopioneer of 1973 hit the streets. The experiment is the act of filmmaking itself. The people that he

films are in action. He observes the political process with curiosity. He collects documentation and proof and tries to use the material to actively influence the political process. He separates himself from the mass media, wants to be "anti" mass-media. Out of this experience grew the hope and idea that the "instant picture" could have an instant political effect.

By 1983 the work of the pioneer had changed. His interest had become precise montages and the composition of pictures. The scenes which were filmed in 1983 (the colour material) are no longer only documentarily observed events but also ideas, fiction, and directed scenes. Those involved in 1973 have become the actors of 1983. The camera is no longer "seeking a happening," but is thoughtfully installed to take certain pictures.

Montage of new and old material

In the early phase of 1973 the old material (in amateur film style) is presented exactly as it was filmed. All the

footage had a moral value as documentation and remained unedited. In retrospect, the importance has changed: from "moral proof" has grown historical documents. Combining this older material with the newer colour footage serves to make the historical material more precise.

The new colour footage is also experimental in another way. The "take" was so composed that the picture was at the same time, in a sense, "edited." The completed "trick picture" was first electronically composed by mixing. The original film ideas were often first translated into the finished product in the studio. The use of old and new material in one tape made it possible to perceive the newer pictures historically. New and old, colour and black & white pictures, television technique and amateur film are assembled to make the film into a moving "still" picture. The reciprocal action creates the tension: it permits a subjective and precise example of both the history of urban renewal and the history of video. The description of a process of personal and social change has been imaginatively combined in this film.



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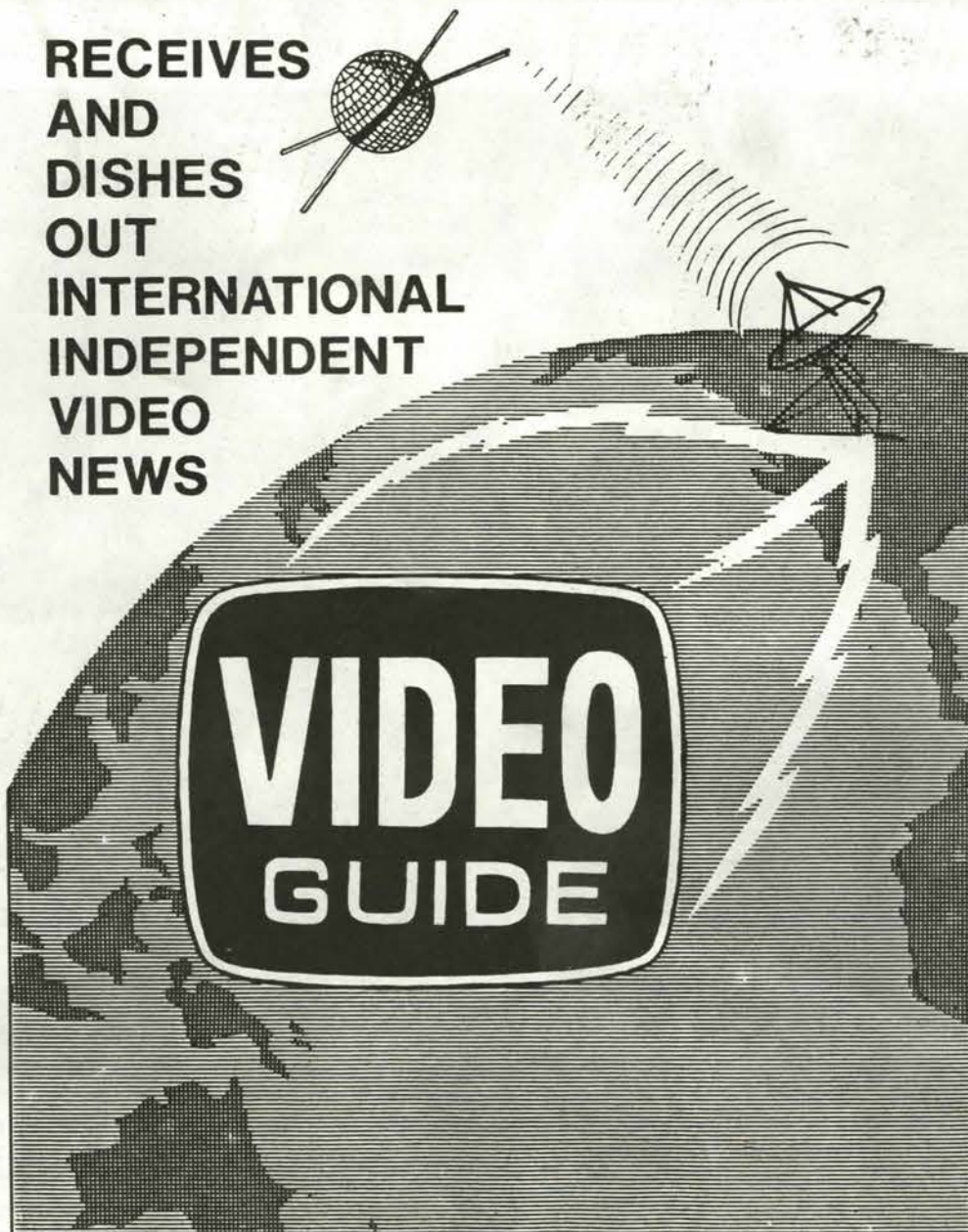
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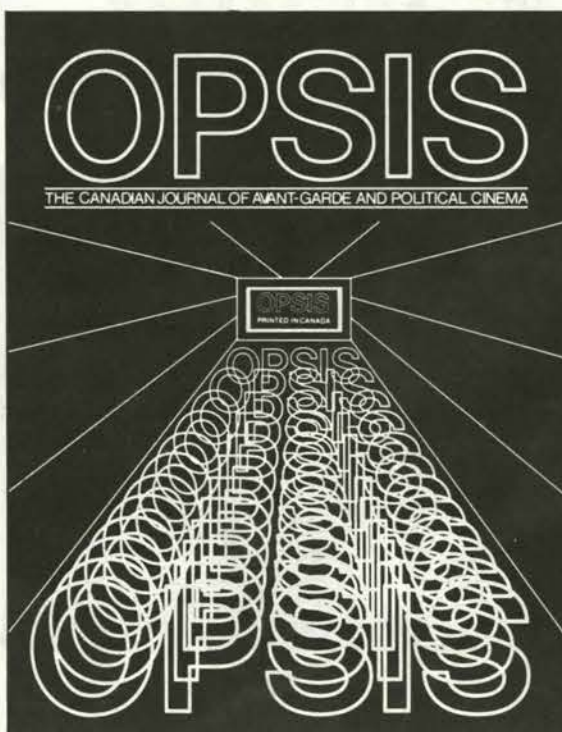
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