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HOME STREET
WOMEN & VIDEO
EXPLORATION

Video Out—Halifax



EM/MEDIA



Satellite Video Exchange Society



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Video Guide 1102 Homer Street Vancouver, B.C. V6B 2X6

EDIT

The maple leaf and stars and stripes forgotten. . . We didn't forget, though. This issue, over a year since its original conception, is finally here and we hope you enjoy it. This issue even survived our move. Yes, it's true. Video Guide and the rest of the Satellite Video Exchange Society moved to 1102 Homer Street. See page 4 for details.

We are a little behind schedule now, but we hope to make it up to you in the new year. The new year will bring us to our 10th year of publishing, and we invite you to contribute to make each issue bigger and better.

Coming up in the new year we have a Video/Performance issue, co-edited by Elspeth Sage and Projects UK (Newcastle); then we have Feature Length Video issue, edited by Karen Knights. Other themes for 1989 will include Documentary Video, Feminist issue, Quebec issue. . . the list could go on and on, but we would like to hear what you want! Drop us a line or better yet an article with a photo or two.

Make your New Year's resolution a subscription to Video Guide. It's worth it.

Shawn Preus
for the Satellite Video Exchange Society

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SEGUE WAYS or EVERYTHING IN ITS TIME AND IN ITS PLACE

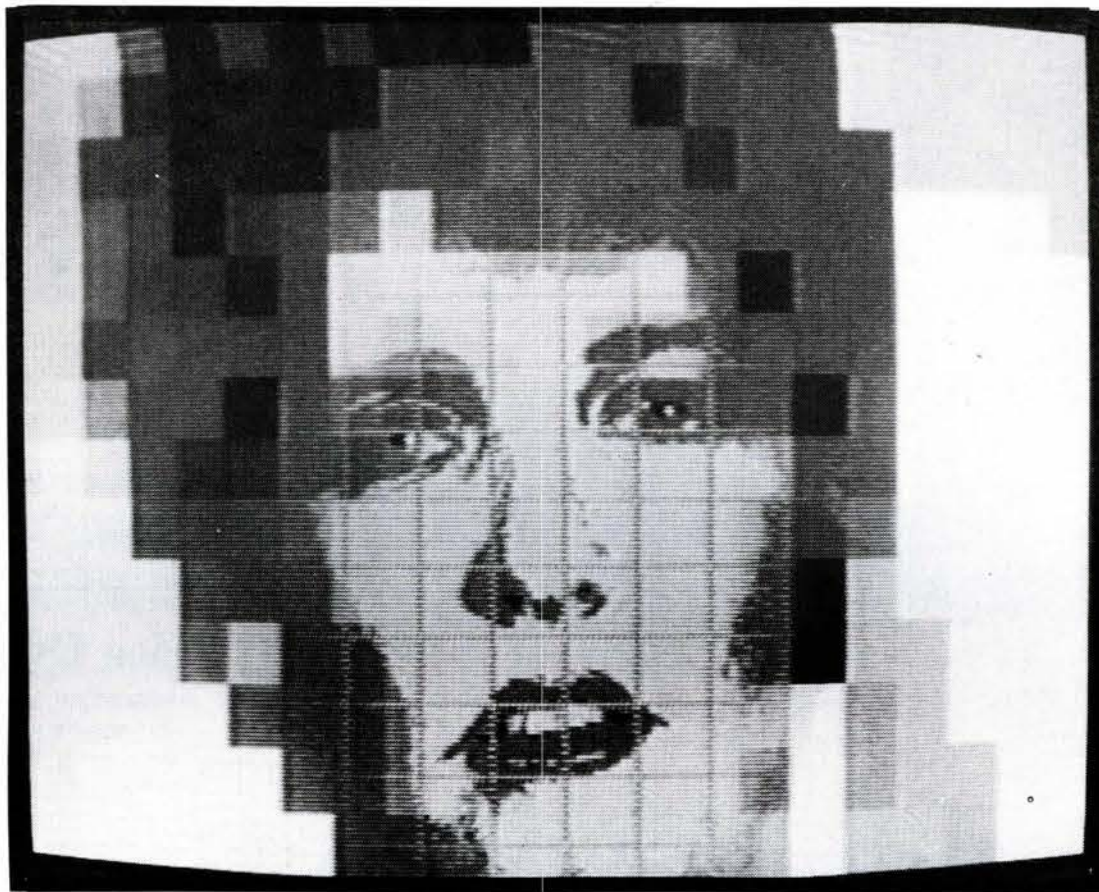


photo courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery

from The Science of Fiction

by Jill Pollack

When I told them about it, they all laughed. Snickered really, because what I told them was so fantastic. But I know it happened. All of it. After a while I stopped stopping people to tell them about it. It started to matter less, but it did not become a memory. It stayed as my newly-found reality.

"The Science of Fiction" is half of an exhibition of videos that was at the Vancouver Art Gallery (July 30 to August 29), from the Video Data Bank, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and brought to Vancouver by curator Lorna Farrell-Ward.

This portion of the program includes, among others, David Byrne's *Once in a Lifetime*, Max Almy's *Leaving the 20th Century*, Sid Caesar's *A Date in Manhattan*, Bill Viola's *Anthem*, and commercial clips for Kleenex and Chevrolet. Either through context or content, each segment combines the guise of technological manipulations within a subjective framework.

There are layers within this framework of subjectivity, curatorial intervention being one which is crucial to the definition of the exhibition. Individual tapes and TV-sourced clips have been spliced together in a set order and presented under one title. Unlike a group exhibition of other forms of visual art, the entire viewing and viewer-selection processes are pre-determined by the curators. They in fact created an entity unto itself which changed and enlarged the original context of each tape and each clip. They subjectively manipulated each inclusion, not by tampering with it, but through the structure into which it was inserted, in order to illuminate aspects of the overall theme. Compositionally, this bears a close relationship to the curating of any group show. In terms of viewing, however, the audience is subject to a very different and more controlled set of circumstances.

It is not possible to see each component of the program at the same time, as happens in other types of exhibitions. Traffic-flow patterns and individual viewing choices are eliminated, as is prolonged or repeated viewing within the time frame of one visit. Thus, there is a rigidity and imposed structure that is inherent in viewing this work. This structure has been set up in part by the curators and in part because of the nature of video exhibitions.

Rather than evoke a sense of rebellion, however, this situation enhances the exhibition's cumulative statement. Clearly subjective and subjectively clear, the composition of "The Science of Fiction" exposes the guise of non-fiction and de-invests any tone of authority — thus situating each element within the arena of opinion and sensibility. In this way, it is the curatorial imposition of a structure and of a sequence that provides for a meaning or grammar, to be evident in the exhibition.

It is with absolute clarity that I can re-live everything that went on. I often think that that is why I have so much difficulty telling people about it. Nouns and verbs and adjectives strung together just can't quite seem to convey the sense of totality, of wholeness, that I felt and still feel about it all.

The sequencing is an innate apparatus which equally articulates the theme and allows for individual selections to retain their integrity. If there is a break between segments, it is through indicators such as titles or credits. At once isolated and fixed, each is also blurred and fleeting. This dichotomy is a very successful strategy by which both likenesses and differences can co-exist and enrich each other. What began as a collection of individual items is transformed through progressive layering into a dis-unified, but discrete whole.

I decided at some point that while it is useless to try to speak of it to anyone else, what I might do is talk about how and why it is so hard to convey the experience as both a Once and a Now. You know, forget the specifics and deal with the dilemma of trying to find a common vocabulary.

Each selection employs a different tactic, (obviously) determined by the individual producer. One motif that is explored in a number of selections, from a variety of viewpoints, is the presence of an ambiguous reality. This is visible either as a referent or as a re-creation. Branda Miller combines a discordant soundtrack with street scenes to create a fractured sense of reality in *L.A. Nickel*. *Arcade* is a collaborative tape by Lyn Blumenthal and Carol Ann Klondarides. In it, they blend a pastiche of images, taken from such diverse sources as television, home movies, high school yearbooks, and the circus. These are interrupted at times by colour bars and overlaid with a voice repeating words or encouragement. Bill Viola anchors *Anthem* with a repeating image of a young Asian girl standing at attention in an entryway. He then intersperses the tape with a plethora of seemingly disparate scenes. The tape sees these scenes sharing a similar physical movement where images vary but the flow of each is reflected in the next. In this piece, as in others, the soundtrack disrupts the visuals. Here are ambiguous animal sounds, culminating in a sustained howling.

Voice-overs in other selections are used in a manner common to a usage seen in popular media. There are instances where the soundtrack is a single phrase, repeated incessantly. Or there is promotion of a particular point of view, heard again and again.

In Arturo Cucacub's *Ahluvalike*, there is a mantra-like repeating of "I love you like", both orally and through text-as-image. *Pi Piece* by Mark McKennin augments visual distortions with a frequent, equivocal voice-over: "We followed him down the street. I liked his scent. I wondered why I felt uneasy. We all walked faster."

I was advised by a close friend that if I didn't give up this search (he actually said crazy mania), people would begin to avoid me. Most already believed that I had not in fact lived what I said, but just wanted attention. There were differing views, but there was a loose kind of general agreement that when it came down to it, I probably had not had a loving relationship with my mother. You think I'd find this upsetting, but I thought it endearing.

Other tapes exhibit spare visual settings and concentrate on creating a schism between visuals and soundtrack. In Bruce Nauman's *Lip Sync*, it is the disparity between visual and aural which carries the work's intentions. Mirosław Rogala interrupts recognizable images and the flow of the narrative in his tape *Speech* in order to achieve a sense of contradiction. *Rap It Up* by Bob Hollman approaches synchronicity between visuals and sound, but does not reach it. Instead, Hollman contorts the visuals with a subtly discordant voice-over.

I finally started to use what I fondly call incentives. First there was the chain letter. Pass the information on to five of your friends and eventually, you, too, may have a similar experience. But no one seemed to be willing to put out the cost of five stamps and five envelopes. Then I tried a telephone tree. Once again, there was too much effort involved. I even rented a computer and tried to access as many bulletin boards as possible. Nothing worked, but I remained stubborn.

It becomes apparent that each selection has as its theme, on some level, the promotion of a viewpoint which is altogether subjective and yet can be made to appear as a shared, agreed-upon truth by some constituency of people, somewhere. This is an important aspect because it has the cumulative effect of analyzing the subjective nature of "truth" and the basis of social organization. There is an awareness of the attempt to manipulate, both in the overall order of the program and in the individual selections. Yet since the manipulation is at times ludicrous, at times overwhelming, sometimes even imminently subtle, it is effective. "The Science of Fiction" is a beautifully choreographed, articulate and disturbing exhibition.

In the end, the only method that worked was to make a piece of art. I was told by patient onlookers who declared they only had my best interests at heart that I had, at last, found the proper way to get my point across. But I still don't really know how many saw it or if they understood. As a way to assuage my insecurities, I was told again and again, "Everything in its time and in its place." The words sound empty, but I find myself still clinging to them.

Satellite Video Exchange Society

Since its inception in 1973, the Satellite Video Exchange Society (Video In) continues to integrate and facilitate non-commercial productions from around the world. A non-profit organization dedicated to presenting and furthering the alternative usages of video, the Satellite Video Exchange Society serves as an umbrella organization for a variety of services and special projects, including Video In, Video Guide, and Video Out. The Satellite Video Exchange Society also maintains a public in-house library, services for independent producers, a program of special showings and events, an active publications wing, and a consultative service.

SPACE

Approximately 4000 sq. ft. housing a Print Library and a Video Archive of over 2000 tapes and three viewing stations, two post-production suites, multi-purpose studio, office space, and a graphics area.

Personnel

Howard Bearham, Sara Diamond, Crista Haukedal, Sue Jenkins, Karen Knights, Kellie Marlowe, Shawn Preus, Jeanette Reinhardt, Elspeth Sage, Joe Sarahan, Ruby Truly, Paul Wong, Cornelia Wyngaarden.

Equipment

3/4" NTSC playback and recording equipment. PAL/SECAM playback equipment; 1/2" VHS, Beta, and open reel playback; two DXC1800, one M2, and one DXC1640 cameras; four 4800 portapaks; editing A/B roll, five type 5 Sony decks; SEC 2000 switcher, two TBC's; wipe pattern extender, chroma keyer; character generator; TEAC 6 channel mixer; Korg digital delay; Fostex compressor limiter; TEAC cassette recorder; TEAC 1/2" track recorder; Sony VO2600's - cut in only; IBM XT-compatible computer.

Archives

The international tape library and print library related to video and media is open to the public, offering material on artists and lifestyles, dance, drama, ecology, health, social minorities, art tapes, and computerized video.

Hours

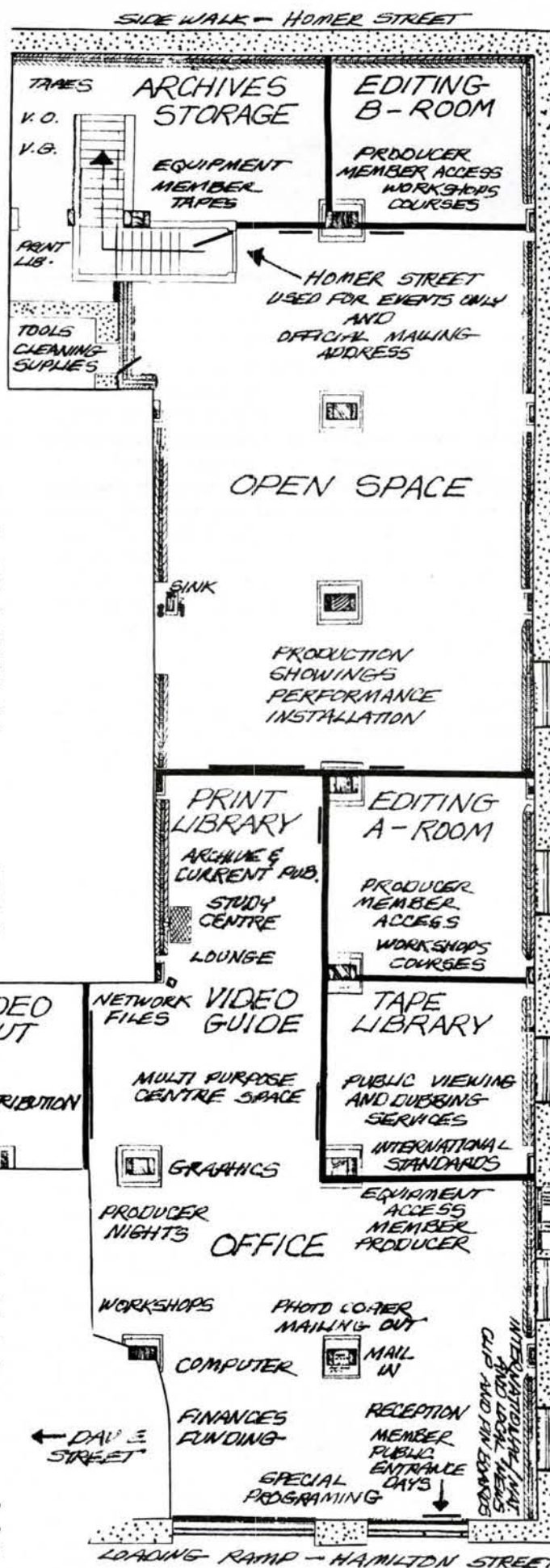
Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 11 am to 6 pm. Tuesday and Thursday (Producers' Night): 11 am to 10 pm.

Video Inn Library and Study Centre

A collection of print material and independent videotapes including documentaries, narratives, and video art. It is the largest collection of international, independently produced videotapes anywhere. The library is open for public viewing from Sunday to Wednesday or by appointment.

Location/Information

The Satellite Video Exchange Society - Video In, Video Out, Video Guide - is located at 1102 Homer St., Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6B 2X6. For information on the above, write the Video In or phone 688-4336.



Video Out Distribution

Video Out Distribution, operated by Jeanette Reinhardt, promotes a collection of independently produced tapes from all over the world. A catalogue and update is available. Artist fees must be paid for all rentals.

Video Guide

Video Guide is published six times a year as a venue to promote and discuss independent video production. Writers are encouraged to submit articles from their area. Fees for publication will be paid. Subscriptions are \$10 per year (5 issues). Editor: Shawn Preus.



Workshops and Courses

Educating people in video production is an important function of the Video In. Regular introductory workshops in production and editing are offered at a minimum fee. Twice a year an extensive 10-week course is offered. Education is co-ordinated by Sara Diamond.

Producers' Night

Tuesdays and Thursdays are regularly open in the evenings (3 - 10 pm) to facilitate producer access and dialogue. At this time, use of free membership hours on equipment and consultation with skilled operators is available.

Special Programming

Screenings and presentations by video producers are presented throughout the year. Artist fees are paid. Co-ordinated by Karen Knights.

Exhibition Proposals

In planning programming for the coming year, we are interested in your proposals. If you are interested in screening your tapes or have an exhibition involving video, please send a description of the project and a dub of the video material to Karen Knights, 1102 Homer St., Vancouver, B.C. V6B 2X6. Artist fees will be paid for material screened.

HOME STREET

by Andrea Philp

As its title insinuates, *Home Street* holds up for examination the family and domestic relationships. Like Kisel's earlier tapes, *Ballistics* and *Dating and Mate Selection*, this new work expresses his interest, and even fascination, with the individual's place in and response to society. *Home Street* however reflects a more personal treatment of the subject than evidenced in the other tapes, although through well-developed structure he expresses the same sensitivity to the medium.

Home Street is in fact the west-end Winnipeg residential street of Kisel's youth. Within the video realm, however, *Home Street* is also the locale of an idealized TV nuclear family and of the somewhat more brutal domestic life of the central characters, a couple whose marriage has obviously deteriorated past the point of civility. The contrast between these two domestic descriptions forms the framework for Kisel's explorations of the failures of human relationships.

The home life on *Home Street* is from the beginning volatile. The first scene defines the alienation between the central characters (played by Gilles Hebert and Carolyn Bradshaw) as it opens with the husband pounding on the locked door of the house, demanding to be let in to get the clothes he needs for work. This leads into a slight back-track to the second scene where, against the background of the "hurting tunes" of a country western singer, the couple drives down a residential street, conversing with barely controlled hostility. As the two exchange barbs about each other's futile use of leisure time, the viewer begins to sense the sinking of this marriage into a malaise of tension and basic concerns over income and expenditures.

Once the tape re-enters the home, the pressure builds as Kisel contrasts the failing marriage of the central characters with insipid scenes of a TV family. Kisel cuts from the husband's entrance into the kitchen, sporting hard-hat, case of beer, and a look that could kill, to a long-shot of a cozy bungalow perched on a manicured suburban lawn. The transition is made complete by canned music and laughter.

Kisel's TV family bears little resemblance to his central characters. This is true also of the TV home which is characterized by spotless arborite surfaces drenched in sunlight. This is where a well-groomed mom serves up a wholesome lunch to her school-age son, who enters with an expression of intense preoccupation. Warren is in love, and though the mother meets this news with glowing maternal warmth, the boy's unrelenting expression belies his own concern over his initiation into human relationships.

The viewer is given no chance to reflect on the possibly wholesome scenarios that could ensue. Kisel cuts back to the central couple's kitchen and the husband's late arrival home to a spoiled supper. He meets his wife's remarks about his drinking and irresponsibility at first with indifference. Then, picking up an egg from the table, he first cradles it momentarily in his hand and then hurls it to the floor in an explosion which epitomizes the contained violence of this relationship.

It is at this time that the point of view of the tape changes. From here, a happy marriage is beyond retrieval. The wife goes on to a new lover who may be warmer or more compassionate than the displaced husband. The next scenes, often shot from exaggerated low angles, invite the viewer to assume the vantage point of a child. Just as the child has witnessed the degeneration of the marriage, he must now watch this further evolution of the family and with it the dissolution of the myths of "mother" and "father".

It is also at this mid-point in the tape that Kisel offers an alternative to the volatile relationship of the central characters and the wholesome package presented by the TV family. A voice-over segment explains the "Reiss' Wheel Theory of Love", a sociological theory which describes relationships as a means to address the human need for companionship and affection. In these rational

Videotape by Gerry Kisel



Home Street, by Gerry Kisel

terms, the break-up of a relationship is seen to result from gradual changes which make the satisfaction of needs impossible. The tone of this monologue does not acknowledge the violent symptoms generated, as evidenced in the early scenes, suggesting the impotence of rational or objective study as an influence on behaviour in situations of dramatic human emotions. In practise, we learn to deal with people by being with people, and are influenced most by our available role models. To underline this point, Kisel takes the viewer once more into the home of the TV family to witness Dad proudly associate Warren's crush with his own initiation into manhood, remarking, "... chip off the old block!"

So, although the tape presents three possible models for human relationships, not one suggests a comfortable solution to the viewer. The cyclical structure of the tape enhances the discomfort produced, by suggesting that resolution means a path back to the beginning. The Reiss' Theory depends upon the ongoing pursuit of

satisfaction through relationships, replacing one with another as appropriate. The TV family suggests the perpetuation of unreal and unlivable roles which fit into niches in the structure of the media information which contain them. Kisel's central characters, however, are no freer from the tyranny of cycles despite the explosive human emotions that seem to motivate their behaviour. In fact, the tape's ending is its beginning. The husband bangs on a locked door ignoring his wife's pleas to adhere to the lawyer's orders. Although the relationship ends, the tension continues and may become a pattern which will involve new partners.

This tape, like earlier works, doesn't present clear resolutions to the viewer. It is instead a complex document of the many subtle influences that we witness and respond to in human relationships. The tape is necessarily layered — the contrast of families, and homes, and the similar juxtaposition of "real life" drama, the TV sitcom, and documentation of scientific study are its components.

Continued on page 15



Home Street, by Gerry Kisel

AT THE LIMIT OF NARRATIVE:

Interrupted Attempt, by Grant Poier, 4 min., B&W, 1986;
Vacation/Vacance, by Vern Hume and Leila Sujir, 12:30
min., Colour, 1986.

While very different, both in intent and content, these two new tapes produced at the EM/Media centre in Calgary work with image to show both the limits and limitations of language. *Interrupted Attempt*, the shorter and ostensibly simpler of the two, works (and plays) in that area where language is no longer articulate, or better, perhaps, articulated, in one root meaning of the word, something that has joints, articulations, where individual words work (up down back and forth around and around, there are so many different kinds of joints) to build meaning, or possible meaning, through syntax; but where language has become lumps, clots, even stones, something with a surface, and a purpose, but one that cannot be penetrated, pulled back apart; where language is simplified, has become gesture again, a shell or shield: of intimidation or disguise.

Because what the tape does is to build up, through sentence fragments, the effect of a terrible obsession. And the means it uses are quite simple, both linguistically and visually. The words are those we use to mark time while getting ready to answer a question, or to refuse its answer; or just to mark time, to stall, while we gather our thoughts, our justifications, our excuses, to make ourselves sound better, more sophisticated perhaps, or more knowledgeable. The way we all learn the vocabulary of the moment, and try to get it right, until each phrase becomes a lump that signifies our place in the world and the individual words no longer matter. The way two engineers I watched once over breakfast in a hotel restaurant discussed what they were going to do 'in lieu of the circumstances'. Meanwhile, the image goes back to the oldest materials of artists' video: the face speaking the words, the black and white tape, the camera moving in and out, the superimposition of a fine black cross, like the hairtrigger sights of rifle or surveying equipment. And the voice repeating and repeating

*my reasoning, well
life style not for me
capitalize
depressed desire
missing the point
inappropriate criteria*

with little intonation those half cliches that will neither begin nor end

*uncoopted attitude
have gut doubts
societal influence
seemed like a good*

the movement of the camera and of the hair trigger sight showing us both an aim that is never exact as the cliches make it impossible to hit the non-moving target, and a motion that resembles all too much the way an aggressive parrot will ruffle its feathers and move its head in and out, a young executive will move forward in his chair and lean back (the two engineers in the restaurant, in/out, in/out), a toad will puff and unpuft itself, going from aggression to the attempt at disappearance; while we are dizzied by this same effect, achieved mechanically, that adds to, or perhaps multiplies with, the lumpy impenetrable automatic sense of voice and phrasing, as the words go on:

*self-defense for activity overload
animal embarrassment
social influence
don't have middle class
necessary unaffordables*

with some juxtapositional humour in such combinations as:

*uncommon breaks
current valour*

Just enough in fact to make us listen more closely to try to put it together, to crack it open, to make it more than the clotted language it seems, until we are finally pulled into it. And we no longer know if the voice is just the voice of someone using all the little necessary phrases to get through a job interview or if it's pieces of a taped confession that justifies mass murder, or if it all just forms a part of the wear and tear and wear and tear and wear and tear of the daily noise of radio and traffic and elevator and electric lights and blenders and word processors and TV sets and VCRs and recorded messages on anonymous phones and voices in cafeterias and trains and buses that drive us too to that uncomprehending edge of repetition

*I think it all makes
my reasoning, well...*

Until, while we look on, between mesmerized and irritated the tape ends as it began, to make, all told, a very interesting, sharp, and well thought out piece on the effects of language as white noise, words as filler.

Vacation/Vacance, the longer and arguably more complex of the two tapes, also balances itself on the edge of language, though a very different edge, whether it is cliff or shore is hard to distinguish,

au bord de la mort et de la vie

but definitely in the space between which is the need out of which language arises.

On its most obvious level, which is in itself a most beautiful one, *Vacation/Vacance* is just what its title implies: a tape about vacations. About one particular vacation around Vancouver Island by car ("our little Hertz Horizon," one of the narrators says), but also about that parenthesis that vacations represent in our lives, that travelling represents, a moment, a movement, set aside, outside the ordinary, at least for us. Which makes us continue to indulge ourselves in tourism, and to attempt to see, to feel, the new place newly (outside the borders of our usual syntax), to make ourselves anew within it. In an act which leads us, interestingly enough, and no matter how mildly, to question our identities, the identities we have made through work and daily life (this theme keeps repeating in the tape, like a snatch of melody: *working and not working/vacations/who am I when I'm not working*); which causes us to think of what or who we would be in another place, another time, as an other. So that we undergo a process of examination which most travel guides and documentaries attempt to cancel out by making the new, the 'other', picturesque and thereby safe. It is precisely this process that *Vacation/Vacance* lays bare to us, in both its beauty, complexity and difficulty.

To do this, in contrast to the earlier tape, which uses the bare minimum of resources, *Vacation/Vacance* uses the full range of special effects now available through the equipment at the EM/Media production co-op. These effects enter early, in the first few frames in fact, as the numbers of the usual 'ten, nine, eight, seven...' dance

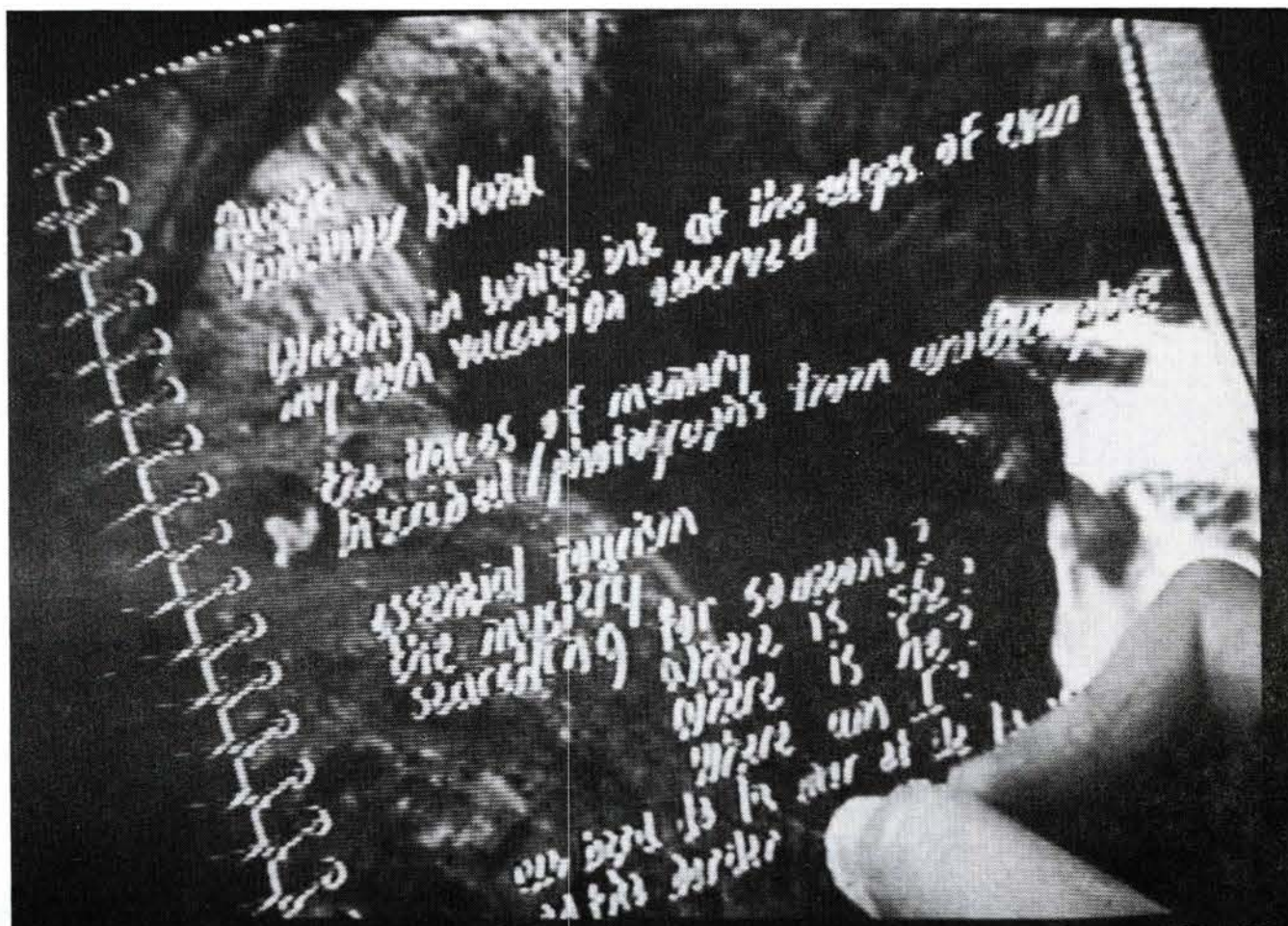


photo by Heather Elton

Vacation/Vacance, by Leila Sujir & Vern Hume

Two tapes from EM/MEDIA, Calgary

by Sarah Murphy

in three dimensions in a square in the upper left hand corner of the screen, the sky contained inside them. And the effects stay for the duration. There are fades and freeze frames and slow motion and images shrunk to boxes or to stripes across the screen, movement from black to white to colour and back, a page being written across a waterfall. With all of it escaping what occurs so often when a centre gets new equipment or a producer for the first time gets access to it. There is no sense of 'hey guys, look at what we can do, wow, let's throw in one of those and one of those and one of those', but instead a sense of economy and necessity of use, with the effects used increasing our understanding of the material that is being presented. Because it is through these effects, the framing of the shots themselves, that the observing subject (always made to disappear in travel documentary even when there is a first person narrator) is made present. Giving us not only a sense of place, but a sense of place in memory. With the shots (one of a log boom viewed from up high and framed as a stripe across the screen, comes to mind) often having the compositional precision and emotional poignancy of certain styles in abstract painting. This shows not only the subject's way of seeing within a certain cultural context, but also attests to the background in experimental film of one of the tapes authors, Leila Sujir.

As far as this writer is concerned, if the tape only went this far (essentially what it did in its first version, one without a narrated voiceover, screened at EM/Media in the summer of '86), it already would have gone far enough. I love the poignancy and search implicit in the best of home movies and snapshots, and anything that can make that part of us close and intimate and personal, ours even without Uncle John waving his can of beer and talking too fast while Aunt Mary tries to fix the projector or tune in the VCR, seems to me well worth its while. But what the newer version of *Vacation/Vacance* has done by adopting a narrative soundtrack, spoken in two voices (already a dialogue, a doubling of the subject), is to take that one step further. To make apparent what is in the glances that pass between Peter and Susan, Marta and Joan, Nguyen and Pau, while they

point out the pictures in the book, the where and why they were taken: what is hidden in the parenthesis of travel.

Because what we see and hear, from the first text written across the waterfall

August

Vancouver Island

writing in white ink at the edges of even my own vacation observed

the traces of memory inscribed in photographs from another place

essential tourism

the mystery

searching for someone

where is she?

where is he?

where am I?

is not only the search for our identity in newness, the re-encounter with both the other and the self, but the painful contrast between eidetic memory, memory as hypnagogic hallucination, the memory brought on accidentally by smell or by texture or by sound (that's our song, Aunt Winnie says, you remember, Bill, Niagara Falls?), that memory that will always be acutely personally ours, and only ours; and the ability of narrative to tell it, of even the snaps to make it real (God, you shoulda been there, Uncle Bill says, and doesn't know why, anymore than our narrator does: *We were bored. It was raining. I find it amazing that I want to go back there now.*) With some of this contrast achieved through the way the visual material is used: a slow motion picture of trees in which a vehicle seems to take forever to pass by, and then moves so quickly, as if the subject is gathering this, trying to make it real again in order to speak. Or the use of black and white for the section in which we hear the doubled narrative, giving us just that sense we have when we are trying to see something we have found particularly impressive, trying, perhaps, to explain it to someone, to describe it, but we can't quite pull it out of black and white, pull it over the retina: we know what it was, the image is there, but not quite vivid enough somehow. We just can't quite see it; we must

wait until we dream.

So that in its centre the tape does speak not only to the limit of narrative, but to its failure, and maybe a little bit, to its reason for being. Because we do land squarely in that space where language as we know it has not yet arisen, in which whatever relation we have allowed there to grow between signifier and signified, did not yet exist, had not yet pushed memory into the black and white of concept. In which there was just the seen and the felt, the thing, its movement, its stillness, its image, its smell, its texture, very close and open to any number of possibilities, a constant newness, like a gasp and a reaching out (the famous open mouthed 'oh' of all vacationers) without words. A space as far from the syntactic congestion of *Interrupted Attempt* as it would be possible to get, but one which also cannot communicate itself. Because, although there might have been a system, a way of seeing or perceiving, in that primordial place, there was no way of saying or of telling.

Which is what places us again within our essential loneliness, the one out of which we present our travel pics when we get home (from whatever trip it was, to B.C. or to the hospital or to the moon) and say wow, you shoulda been there, or not, as the case may be, and we squeeze a hand and hope somehow it is enough for our friends to understand. So that this short tape on our small vacations takes up and examines that terrible paradox that has been with us throughout history and will be with us throughout our lives, that goes beyond the fact that we may always feel, whether in as small a thing as a vacation or as momentous a one as a birth or a war, that in the telling we lose the texture; to encompass our knowledge that there is a reality that exists prior to and will exist after what can be said out of our perception of it: a private knowledge of being, perhaps, beyond our ability to tell. While we will always know at the same time, often at the exact moment, as our mouths hang open, that if we do not attempt speech, attempt a telling, we do not enter the stream of human consciousness, our world, as acting subjects. Which is what situates this tape, beyond the realm of our small travels, at that edge of that larger trip between birth and death: *au bord de la mort et de la vie.*

Interrupted Attempt, by Grant Poier

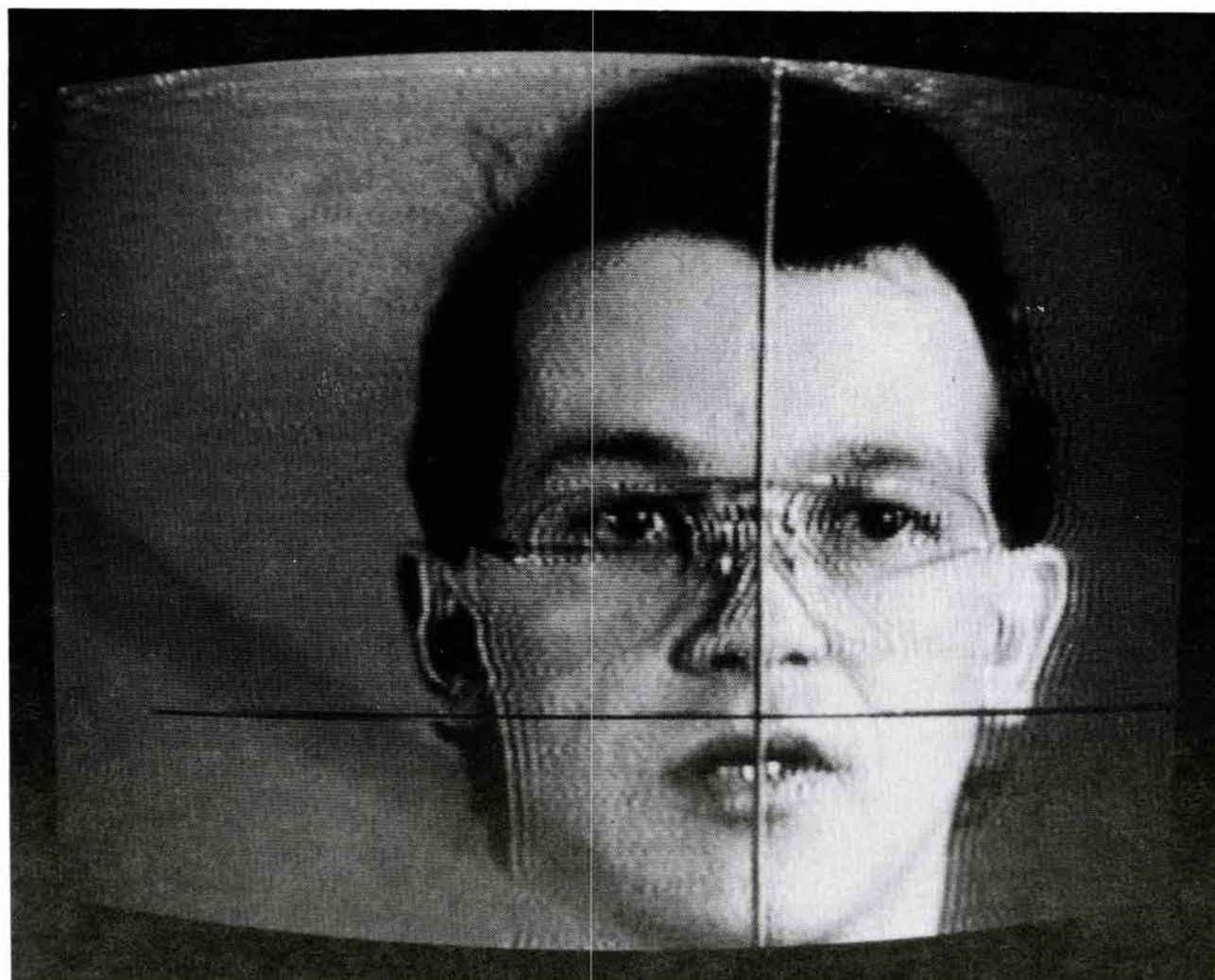
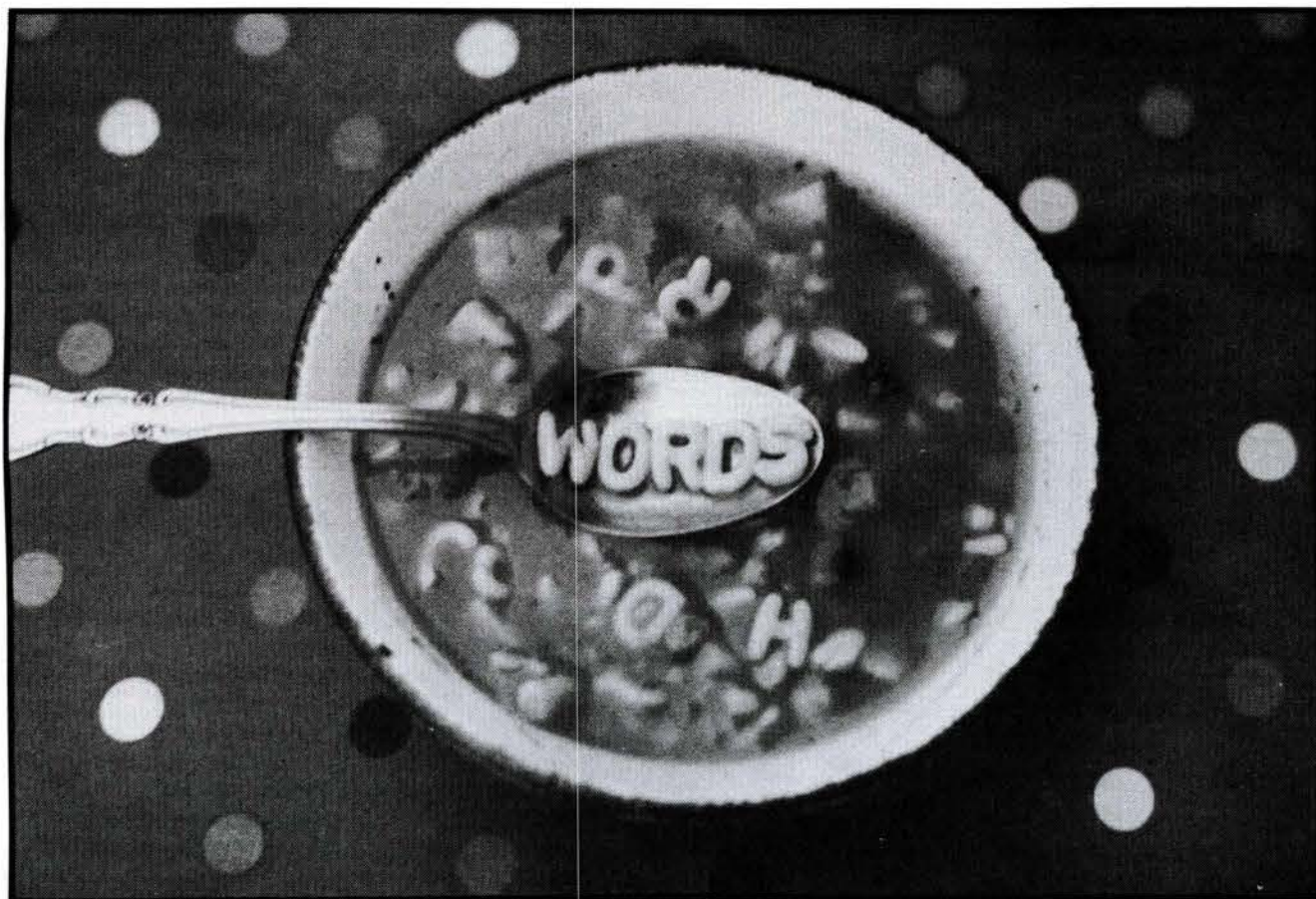


photo courtesy of the artist

WOMEN & VIDEO EXPLORATION:



A Word In Edgewise, by Heather MacLeod

The Women and Video Exploration collective, Halifax's most recent experiment in the use of video as a tool of social change, has succeeded in developing basic technical competency among a group of women concerned with issues of gender, class, and race. While there is a discernable difference in quality between the three individual WAVE videos, this is less instructive than the differences between the strategies they employ.

A Word In Edgewise, produced and directed by Heather MacLeod, displays the highest production values of the three. This "documentary about sexism in language" presents a large amount of quite interesting, even startling information about the chequered history of gender-based language, including a cogent argument for the acceptance of the third person plural pronoun "they" as a gender-free alternative to "he" and "she".

In a cultural environment where critical material is easily dismissed as "biased" while work that supports the status quo masquerades as "objective", MacLeod establishes credibility by replicating the conventions of documentary television, succeeding quite well in those terms. The anonymous voice-of-God narrator offers background information in the reasoned, "objective" tones of authority, while talking heads with university degrees in the fields of literature, history, and law provide detailed arguments. The program is enlivened by well-chosen visual inserts to illustrate points. At times, however, the contrast between the matter-of-fact presentation and the provocative subject matter borders on hilarity: such as when the narrator enunciates the terms "slut" and "tart" with all the cheery precision of laundry detergent brand names.

Through careful attention to audio quality, tone of voice, and the visual backgrounds against which her subjects are shown, MacLeod has produced a video of broadcast quality. She bends the conventions of mainstream television to her own ends, in effect donning the enemy's uniform to infiltrate his citadel. The mode of presentation persuades the audience to invest these female speakers with the same authority normally accorded to male "experts". In so doing, MacLeod avoids the most common tactical error of oppositional voices in the mainstream media: that of presenting oneself as marginal. The shortcoming of this approach is that it does not allow one to question the means by which credibility invests in "experts", leaving intact the mechanisms of class privilege.

Who Says?, produced by Janet Thomson, was collectively directed by seven people (Thomson, Lyn MacKinlay, Angela Mombourquette, Jocelyn Mombourquette, Erica

Munn, Anne Penney, and Wendy Pruves), and it shows. The video seems to have a split personality. A large proportion is devoted to talking head interviews, although the range of women represented is broader, including,

besides academics, a social worker, a filmmaker, a fashion model, a corrections officer, and a coach. Those who are critical of the mainstream are still not used to seeing themselves presented as credible witnesses, and at screen-

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Who Says?
THE DE-PROGRAM

Three Halifax Videos

by Robin Metcalfe



Photo by Pam Murphy

Our Two Cents Worth, by Pam Murphy and Sara Newman

ings in Halifax, the audience response was perceptibly one of pleasant surprise — "Oh look, there's Brenda! There's Toni!" — when members of the women's community (many of them physically present in the auditorium)

appeared on screen.

Besides the parade of talking heads, the video included a number of dramatic, interpretative scenes, many involving mime artists who acted out a variety of responses

to feminine stereotypes. Most of these scenes were both poorly performed, often reduced to mere mugging without any dramatic or emotional depth, and poorly edited, with the shot lingering long past the point at which the scene itself had died. The more effective material, such as a conversation between two women wearing TV screens as masks, would have been stronger had some tougher editing decisions been made to give the video a clearer overall form. The final clumsy portrait of the directorial collective leapfrogging over one another captured the flavour of many such productions: more enthusiasm than good judgement. In this case, many hands make uneven work.

The approach taken in Pam Murphy and Sara Newman's *Our Two Cents Worth* could hardly be more different than that of *A Word In Edgewise*. The speakers are working class women, with a focus on black women in particular, through the central figure of activist Toni Goree. Goree is interviewed in her kitchen, where her interviewers are visible on camera, and where the camera equipment itself is shown in one scene. Goree also appears in a recurring dramatic tableau, which opens the video, showing Goree climbing up a downward escalator, in a somewhat laboured metaphor for the struggle for economic justice. The first kitchen scene has Goree discussing that scene, and the video itself, with the video-makers. This self-examining, reflexive quality is the video's most remarkable achievement, and more than compensates for its occasional unevenness. The women interviewed are lively and articulate, and one feels the sort of engagement that a productive community meeting might generate.

To contrast the method of *A Word In Edgewise* with that of *Our Two Cents Worth* is not necessarily to favour one over the other. Each is a valid approach for the purpose in mind. The former would function effectively in the broadcast medium to inform and challenge the audience's assumptions about language. The latter does not even attempt to emulate the tone and texture of mainstream television, although it might work on community cable, but its real value is as a direct organizing tool, to be shown on a home video set-up in a living room or community hall, and accompanied by discussion. The work of WAVE has produced some valuable resources for the Halifax women's community, but its lasting contribution will hopefully be in the skills it has developed and in the articulation of alternative models for community video production.

Who Says?

CERTAIN ATTITUDES AND CHARACTERISTICS -- THINGS LIKE CARING, SHARING AND COOPERATION -- HAVE COME TO BE CALLED FEMININE BECAUSE THEY'VE BEEN ASSIGNED TO WOMEN SINCE WOMEN ARE NOT VALUED, THESE CHARACTERISTICS HAVE BEEN DE-VALUED WITH RESPECT TO THEIR "MASCULINE" OPPOSITES: COMPETITION AND AGGRESSION THROUGH INTERVIEWS AND MIME **WHO SAYS?** EXPLORES THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF OUR OWN ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT FEMININITY, IT URGES WOMEN TO REJECT THESE ASSUMPTIONS AND TO CREATE NEW PROGRAMS OF THEIR OWN

CREATORS

LYNN MACKINLAY
ANGELA MOMBOURQUETTE
JOCELYN MOMBOURQUETTE
ERICA MUNN
ANNE PENNEY
WENDY PURVES
JANET THOMSON

COLOR
SCREENING TIME: 26 MINUTES

PRODUCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE
OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

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W.A.V.E.

WOMEN AND VIDEO EXPLORATION

VIDEO

JOYAN SAUNDERS INTERVIEW



photo Video Out

Here In The Southwest, by Joyan Saunders

Joyan Saunders is a video artist who, at the time of this interview, was teaching at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Born in Newfoundland, Saunders left at seventeen to join her brothers in the mining towns of Northern Ontario. She studied photography and video at the University of Western Ontario and Concordia in Montreal. From there she moved to the University of California at San Diego.

Unlike the heroine of Cathy Jones' *Wedding in Texas*, Saunders is no "outport lesbian". A slender, elegant, pale woman with a reserved manner, Saunders runs warm and cool in conversation. Precise and rigorous in her reasoning, she can nevertheless surprise you with a wild ear-to-ear grin.

Last Spring, Halifax's Centre of Art Tapes showed a program of videos from UCSD. "Choices: The California Connection" includes Paul Best's three-minute "lifestyle" ads making fun of gay consumerism. Winnipeg native Wendy Geller's *Six and Learning About Feminine Sexuality* parody classic Hollywood films and Freudian psychiatry respectively. The two longest works in the exhibition result from Saunders' collaboration with Suzie Silver. In Silver's eight-minute tape *You Know Something*, scenes from the dissolution of a lesbian relationship are punctuated with scenes from the bar cruising that initiated the relationship. The two narratives merge when the ex-lovers meet again in the bar.

Joyan Saunders describes her 29-minute video *Prospect Place* as a "Disjunctive story". A young lesbian searches for meaningful life options among a profusion of mere commodities, considering everything from kitchen gadgets to tattoos. Finding a set of keys, she tells her friends stories about a mysterious apartment. In a separate but parallel narrative, she pursues a woman to whom she is attracted, initially with little success. The prevailing tone, of indecision and ambivalence in the face of trivial options, is reflected in the non-linear, non-climatic development of the video. In Saunders' words, "the conclusion remains open-ended. The point is to give the audience some critical distance and let them become active participants in the interpretive process."

Robin Metcalfe interviewed Joyan Saunders in her

NSCAD office.

Robin Metcalfe: There is a strong representation of lesbian and gay themes in the work that you selected to show in Halifax. Is there a viable community of lesbian and gay video artists in San Diego?

Joyan Saunders: I don't think I would describe it as a community. There are very few communities of any kind in Southern California. The artists in the "California Connection" show knew one another because we were all affiliated with UCSD at the same time. I know of no other producers who are currently making gay video in San Diego.

RM: Some artists resist such terms as "gay video" or "gay art" as a form of ghettoization.

JS: That label, "gay art", unfortunately leads to marginalization, as does the term "women's art". A curator might think, "Oh, I had a show of women's art and gay art last year, so I don't need to do that again this year." If you're a lesbian feminist, you can get ghettoized right off the map. So I can understand the reluctance to have one's work classified as such.

Prospect Place is about "contemporary existential angst", and it is particular to a character who is a gay Southern California woman, but that's a pretty broad base. There is more to life than sexual preference. There is gender and social class, for instance. I am most interested in work that takes on those additional concerns: for instance, a film like *My Beautiful Launderette*.

RM: Consumerism is a central theme in *Prospect Place*: the idea of shopping for products or services that will change one or make one's life more meaningful.

JS: That is true. It's a journey of self-discovery. She tries a number of things to make her life more interesting, and ends up rejecting most of them, and moves toward this more focused existence with the female love interest. There are a number of risque, somewhat taboo things that she considers.

RM: Like the tattoos.

JS: Like something as trivial but as symbolic as getting a tattoo.

RM: At the end of the video, she stops the series of stories she has told about the "key place". She has considered a number of options and rejected them, because they're peripheral, superficial. She's pursuing the love interest, and there's an indication that for the first time it's being reciprocated — but I'm not sure why. What has she chosen that has made it easier for her to reject those superficial things?

JS: She realizes that this woman leads a more meaningful existence than the other people she has encountered on this journey, a less superficial existence. That is not specifically defined, because it means different things to different people.

RM: Several times in *Prospect Place* you place the main character in "masculine space", such as a pool hall and a peep show. She watches a gay male porn film containing a story about a Peeping Tom — an inversion of "the male gaze" which strongly recalls Bette Gordon's film *Variety*. Unlike in Gordon's film, however, there is nothing to signal that this is unusual. Are we to read this as a transgression? What is your motive in putting her there?

JS: She is, after all, trying to make her life more interesting, more exciting, and masculine space is interesting space, exciting space, dangerous space. It goes without saying that a woman in that terrain is transgressing. But this particular character feels perfectly at ease, she's unconstrained by the boundaries, and in the end we have the sense that she's resolved that for herself. She's no longer intrigued by it. She didn't find what she was looking for.

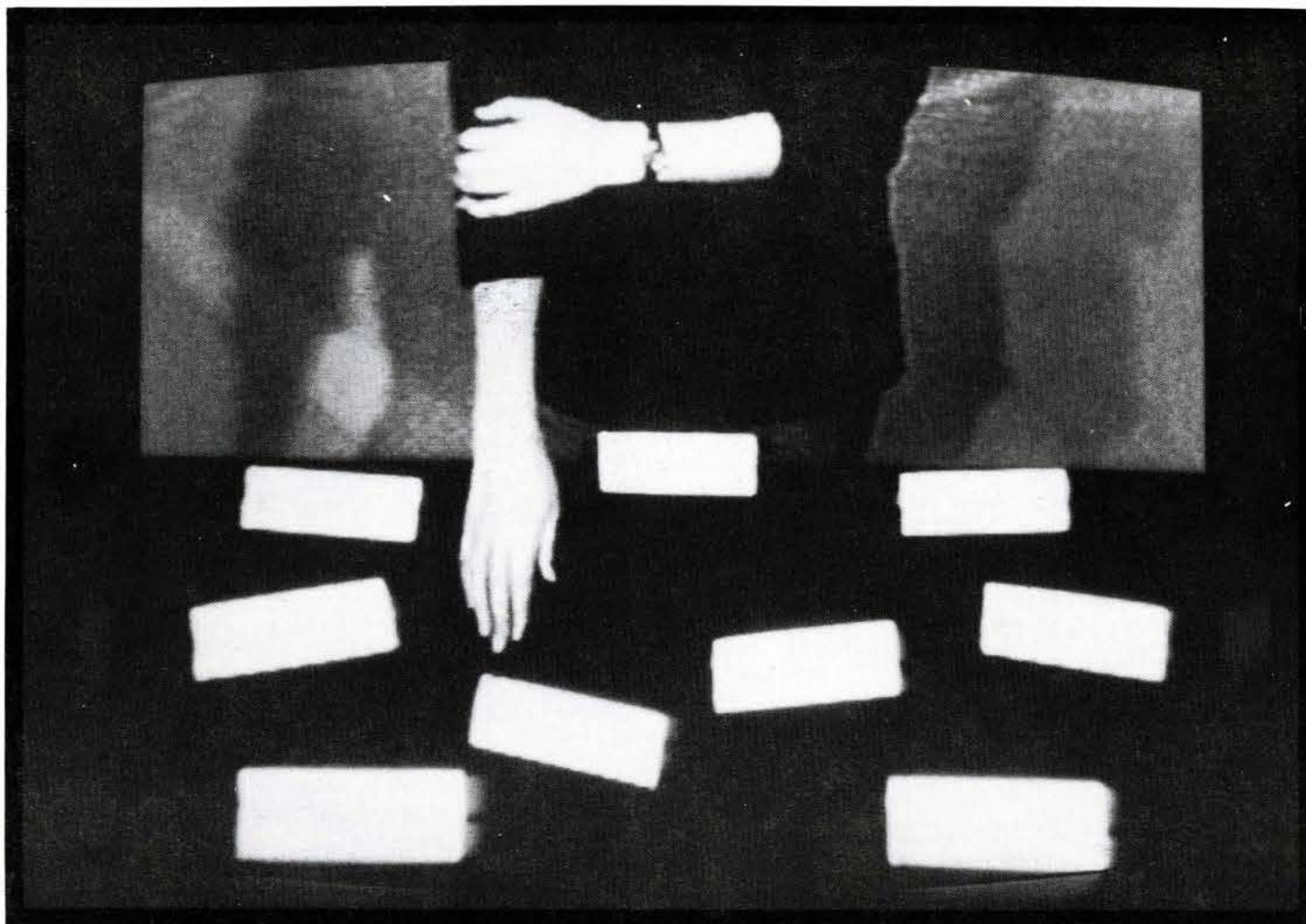
RM: Do you consider San Diego home?

JS: The work I have been producing is very much a product of the place. I couldn't make this work elsewhere, so in a sense it's necessary for me to go back there.

RM: What aspects of the place give it that quality?

JS: The never-ending sense of presentness. (laughs) There's very little sense of history, of a past, and very little concern for a future. I would think this is why certain things are possible in California that are less possible elsewhere.

by Robin Metcalfe



Video Tableaux, by Joyan Saunders

RM: *Does that attract you?*

JS: I like it. It's socially very progressive. There's a political animal in California that is socially progressive and economically conservative. On the one hand, these people could vote for Reagan's economic policies and nevertheless endorse gay rights.

RM: *Would you vote for Reagan's economic policies?*

JS: (laughs) No, certainly not.

RM: *You were born in Newfoundland.*

JS: I grew up on the northeast coast, in a town called La Scie. It had about a thousand people. My family now lives in Baie Verte. San Diego is certainly as far away as I could get without leaving the continent.

RM: *Is that part of its attraction?*

JS: I do believe so. Newfoundland is very austere, and California is anything but. There are certain aspects of my being that are a product of Newfoundland. A need to simplify my life. I find urban life a bit too complicated.

RM: *Do you plan to stay in San Diego?*

JS: I don't think I will stay there. I think I've about used it up. While being here recently I have conceived a tape about living in Halifax, and I've begun working on a script. So San Diego is not the only place that could be inspirational in that way.

RM: *What attracted you to San Diego?*

JS: The aesthetic. I knew about the people that were teaching there. Their concerns, their subject matter coincided with what was of interest to me.

RM: *Who were those people?*

JS: Eleanor Antin — she's a performance artist who, among other things, makes video tapes. Allan Kaprow. [Ed. note: Kaprow is a seminal performance artist, known as the originator of the "happening", presently working in "non-theatrical performance".] Primarily Eleanor and Allan. Of course, critic David Antin also teaches there. Moira Roth, the art historian and critic was at UCSD at the time.

California has a strong history of performance activity. It began with Judy Chicago's feminist art program at

Fresno in 1970. The work coming out of there had a communicative intent that made narrative an appropriate form. It was often autobiographical or indirectly derived from one's own experience, and those elements carried over into video production. There's a de-emphasis on slick production. The medium is treated more in functional terms, as a vehicle for content, so there's not much image processing or special effects. There's a tendency toward non-literal narrative using metaphor and symbolism, and that too stems from the performance tradition.

RM: *You explore the structure of narrative in your work with Suzie Silver. What is the significance of challenging conventional narrative?*

JS: Conventional narrative structure unfolds seamlessly through exposition, conflict, climax, and resolution. Life just isn't like that. Narrative reflects and perpetuates a desire for mastery and control over people, places, and events. This is, of course, a male preoccupation.

The predictable patterns of conventional narrative also lull the viewer into a passive state, engaging only the emotions, in a kind of non-thinking, knee-jerk response. In terms of content, conventional narratives misrepresent and marginalize women. For instance, in *Blue Velvet*, there are two female archetypes: the girl-next-door and the femme fatale. They aren't subjects: they are merely catalysts in the young man's journey of self-discovery. Even when men make films with women as principal characters, the women are used as a tabula rasa onto which the male filmmaker projects his own fears and fantasies: for instance, Bergman and Woody Allen. I think women are in a better position to make films about the opposite sex than are men, because women live in a world that turns on a phallic axis.

RM: *Conventional narrative is very deeply embedded in our culture. It's a language that people know how to read, because it's what they know from fairy tales and movies. If you don't use conventional narrative, how do you communicate with people?*

JS: I think people are capable of understanding something more complex than conventional narrative structure. It can get to a point where the alternative form ceases to

communicate, but there's a middle ground.

RM: *Whom do you see as your audience?*

JS: My audience is an art world audience. It's a self-flattering deception to see that audience as one that's already converted. There's a great deal to be learned by this particular audience. They can go on to make those concerns part of their own production and expand the circle outwards.

I'm addressing my peers. I think it's presumptuous to address anyone other than one's peers, to talk down to people.

RM: *Surely one has more than one set of peers with whom one might wish to communicate. For example, there are the other people who grew up in La Scie, or the people with whom you worked in Sudbury.*

JS: They aren't my peers anymore, though. I am not their peer anymore.

RM: *Is that by virtue of having entered the art world, or by virtue of having gone to California?*

JS: By virtue of having gone to university. (laughs)

RM: *I see an essential problem, that if one wants to gain fluency, to become articulate through those tools, one goes to university, one acquires them, and then one can't use them any more to speak with the people who were your peers because they no longer are. Where does that get broken? How do we constitute a discourse that does involve the people in La Scie or Sudbury?*

JS: Maybe it's illusory to think that we can, except in the terribly indirect way, with this rarefied discourse seeping into the public domain.

It's out of respect for such people that I don't presume to come back with my expertise and try to "get down". I find that a little obscene, because I do remember having lived in those places and having people come in from the outside, so-called experts, and try to clarify the meaning of our lives for us, and we didn't appreciate it in the least.

I'm seen as an outsider now. You're suspect for having left — you deserted. You can come back, but you're never embraced fully.



Video Out—Halifax

by David Craig

One of the most interesting video installations to have occurred in Halifax lately took place on a movie set this past Fall. Four naked 'performers' encased in large, flexible plastic tubes engaged in a free association encounter in partnership with an equal number of (clothed) musicians. Their combined activities were played back live and in slow-motion across a bank of about 30 large colour monitors stacked to resemble a video wall. It was the last night of a 30 day shooting schedule, and when 'wrap' was announced around 6 a.m. the crew broke out in a spontaneous cheer.

The story being filmed was about 'Mary', a small town girl from Cape Breton who comes to Halifax to raise her illegitimate child. While working at a department store part time, she befriends a fellow employee who is a student at the 'art college'. Through this connection, Mary starts modelling for life classes to make some extra money. This leads to the episode where Mary is hired to be a performer for the event described above, staged by a 'New York video artist'. The story ends with Mary's first one person show, an indication that she is well on the way to her own artistic self discovery. The film, entitled *Life Classes*, should be seen at the Vancouver Film Festival in October.

I mention this scene because it seems to describe something about the current state of production in Halifax. Not only because the story takes a poke at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and its history of experimental video, but also because the majority of the crew on the film were people who had gone to the art college themselves. Many continue to be prominent in organizations such as the Atlantic Filmmakers Co-operative (AFCOOP) and the Centre for Art Tapes (CFAT). The director and executive producer of the film was a founding member of AFCOOP, for example. I must mention as well that I was employed on this film as a member of the production staff. It was my own first experience working in production after many years of working for artist run centres in the region.

The fact that so many artists work in the film business is in itself nothing new, although it is rather new in these parts. The history of 'professional' scale media production in the region is a short one. The infrastructure as we now know it goes back maybe twenty years, and things haven't really gotten off the ground except in the last ten. There has been little independent or industrial media production up to then, and there still is no intensive post-secondary education in the media arts offered anywhere east of Quebec. Encouragement and training for artists working in media production has come primarily through the artist co-ops which have worked mostly in a void except for the Atlantic Studio of the National Film Board (NFB). If artists are currently being engaged in the motion picture 'business', it is because they have been instrumental in its development on the local level.

The film I worked on was a low budget (\$600,000) feature, and it was one of the largest projects to be produced entirely within the province. It was part of a 'mini-boom' which took place here over the Fall and early Winter. The other features produced included a Dutch production and a Swiss/French/Canadian production directed by Robert Frank, the legendary photographer and filmmaker. The presence of Frank on the scene is slightly ironic. He has been a part time resident of Nova Scotia since 1969 and he has had significant impact on the local filmmaking community. His film course offered at NSCAD in 1973 was important because members of the class became the founders of AFCOOP, and Frank's own expressionistic and anarchistic film aesthetic has been influential to filmmakers here. He himself has been quoted as saying that he doubted he would ever make a film in Nova Scotia because it would be "too difficult". This year he returned to direct a \$3 million feature in Cape Breton. By all accounts it was indeed difficult but it still serves as another example of an artist-initiated project getting off the ground. Another big event of the past year was the theatrical debut of *The Adventures of*

Faustus Bidgood. This film is a result of the combined forces of NIFCO (the Newfoundland Independent Filmmakers Co-operative) and CODCO, the infamous performance/theatre/comedy co-operative, both based in St. John's. The fact that this film took ten years to produce in itself says something about the conditions of production in the region. Although flawed, this film is possibly one of the best Canadian comedies yet to be produced. Both NIFCO and CODCO have been essential elements of contemporary culture in Eastern Canada, and CODCO has been enormously popular across the country. The release of *Faustus* has been significant as it has become a touchstone of the new 'autonomous' film industry in the region. It has also provided important credibility for other projects. Following on the heels of the release of 'Faustus', CODCO came to Halifax to do a series of television half hours, part of a series produced by yet another independent production house based in Halifax. This project, co-produced with the CBC, had an estimated budget of \$1 million. (My observation of the one program I saw of this series was that CODCO comes close to being an unintentional parody of itself, but then TV is only one of their activities. After taping this production several CODCO members were off to Labrador to work with native people doing community theatre projects dealing with presence of low flying NATO jets which have been disrupting the ecology and the traditional lifestyle.)

It seems clear from all this activity that the aspirations of the serious resident filmmakers are currently geared towards larger and more mainstream productions. Likewise the goal of the co-operatives is to facilitate such ambitions. But how does this bear upon more 'artistic' experimental or political media work? And what about local production in video? After all, the Halifax art community has contributed an unique and important chapter to the history of video art in Canada. Programming at NSCAD's Mezzanine Gallery followed by that of the Centre for Art Tapes was at the critical edge of new developments in video and audio art during the early to mid-Seventies. What has happened to this once strong tradition of radical and unorthodox approaches to the formal and conceptual problems of media?

It is fairly obvious that the conditions that surrounded the early experiments in video have changed. Halifax is a transient community, and gradually the number of artists doing such work has dwindled to a handful. The new generation of artists emerging is only vaguely aware of the work that has preceded them. At NSCAD, video art like conceptual art mutated back into more conventional forms as artists turned to narrative concerns. Although the College has maintained a strong video program, it has never invested in media arts education as an end in itself. The A/V department has always been an adjunct to the studio and design faculties. Only more recently have students demanded courses that provide more comprehensive (and marketable) skills in production. In the artist run organizations such as the Centre for Art Tapes and AFCOOP, there is evident a diminished sense of artistic direction both in programming and production. It is also increasingly difficult to be aware of what is going on in other communities as exchanges and screenings of new work seem few and far between. Bureaucratic demands and endemic exhaustion has also seemingly led to a dissipation of the urgency that initially fostered the creation of these organizations. This has led to a brain-drain as former producer/members realized that perhaps the better way to keep on producing was to go into business for themselves. On the other hand, the artists working in media during the Seventies who have stayed in Halifax are now producing, directing and working as craftspeople on films that they, often enough, have initiated.

A major carrot that has drawn many artists into the media mainstream has been the 'funding windows' that have recently opened up to encourage independent production. Ever since Applebaum/Hebert, both the cultural bureaucrats and the politicians have tended to view the motion picture business as an engine of both cultural

and economic activity. The enormous demands of the international image markets and the opening up of the new video cassette market gives some temporary credibility to their perception. The policies affecting the Canada Council, the NFB, and Telefilm Canada are intended to give impetus to a viable 'independent' industry. Provincial cultural bureaucracies have contributed to the trend. On the local level there has been some very determined and shrewd lobbying to get a more sensible and equitably disbursed outlay of federal cultural funding. Funding for indigenous production from Telefilm Canada has gone up dramatically since a regional office was opened in Halifax a few years ago at the insistence of a new generation of artist/producers. While there is a great deal of well deserved cynicism surrounding state controlled cultural engineering, the motives of a great many of the writers, producers, and directors working here remain surprisingly idealistic. Many artists want to take advantage of the current state of affairs in order to produce at a level of attainment previously unimaginable. They see their film work as contributing more to culture than to the profit margin. Many are criticized by agencies such as Telefilm or the CBC for wanting to produce projects that have a regional point of view. Many times directors have had to fight persistently to retain control over their output. Whatever the price of control, it has been worth it. In just over a decade the media community has evolved from a few inexperienced artists working together co-operatively into a professional milieu that demands to be taken seriously.

Is the move into the mainstream a good thing? I doubt there is an unequivocal answer. My own 'crossover' obviously will effect my judgement even while it may grant me a legitimate claim to be knowledgeable enough to comment. My own opinion is that the situation that I have tried to describe can have some positive results. The relative scale of what is happening here is tiny in relation to the media industry overall and it cannot just be simply lumped together under the same critique. Motion picture production in the Atlantic has probably more in common with that of Argentina than with that of 'Hollywood North'. The community is too small for there not to be an impact on artists when the projects and money of independent films offer even just a few more opportunities. The training and experience provided by working on larger productions has allowed growth in the depth and familiarity with which artists can approach media. AFCOOP and the Centre are showing signs of resuscitation as their artist clients make stronger demands of them. Hopefully a renewed enthusiasm for rigorous aesthetic experiment will be an additional offshoot from a community of engaged producers. In August a seminar that I have organized along with colleagues from the Halifax community was held to draw together film and video makers, writers, visual artists and other interested parties specifically to discuss the aesthetic nature of recently made films from the region. Called the 7th Wave Seminar, it is intended to provide a critical forum for all types of people involved in media on the East Coast to discuss local production both on its own terms and in relation to work being done elsewhere. The time seems right for such a meeting.

Post-script: I have referred to two cities in this report: Halifax, N.S., and St. John's Nfld. These cities more than any other in the region, in my experience, emit discernable identities as art communities. It would be irresponsible, however, if the efforts and production of Francophone artists working in the region were not acknowledged here, meaning specifically the Acadian Francophones. Although I am not well informed about their activities, I am at least aware of their efforts to produce culturally rich and meaningful material. A director such as Phil Comeau, originally from Nova Scotia, the group *Femmes en Focus* from Petit Rivier, New Brunswick, and the strong community of artists working in Moncton, N.B. are part of a network of Acadian producers that hopefully will become more conspicuous to the Anglo community.

PLAYBACK CABARET

VIDEO AS DIARY
by John Morgan

My initial rationale to look at the video we'd be previewing for this selection in the context of diary was entirely idiosyncratic — no apologies — however, having a specific theme to work from when we arrived at Video Pool's screening room and were confronted by a sizeable archive was, to say the least, reassuring. This is not meant to imply a single reading of the work (far from it), but rather a means to assessing quality in a medium which, because of its relative newness, diverse purpose, and very technical requirements can otherwise be unassailable.

So, if quality equals diaristic reference, what is the quality in diary? The quality is personal, that of relevance, of giving meaning to, and a way to solve problems and make decisions. (In short, a sort of epistemological distilling). The diaristic act is also one of individuality and freedom; it becomes an artistic expression when the emotive force diverges into language/sound, image and pacing/rhythm. Drawing and sketchbooks, poetry and video, because of their intimacy and the ease of the relationship between text and pictorial metaphor, seem to readily lend themselves to the diaristic referent.¹

Technical quality is perhaps best approached through a quantitative comparison: after a video immersion of, say, fifty tapes, any clumsiness can usually be gauged as a worthwhile risk, a deliberate misuse of equipment or norms, or indeed, technical incompetence. For example, Wendy Geller's *The Miss Teen Canada Pageant 1983*, a compellingly funny look at the not too distant past, is almost entirely lifted from TV. Its editing, while awkward in places, is secondary in importance to the parody of the bizarre media spectacular staged for the continued richness of mankind. The image resolution is, of course, fuzzy, but this reinforces the tape's spontaneity and inverted humour (just switch on the VCR!). Although the parameters of our themes excluded that work, *Six* and *Seven* are still spontaneous and very compulsive; however, their starting point is film rather than TV. These as well as Rob Milthorp's *Time To Time* show ways in which the present and past media environment can influence work.

So what else about diary? Diary entries are often brief, condensed, something that maybe takes a daily half hour. Not surprisingly, all the tapes here are under fifteen minutes. There are no long aggravating linear narratives — the narrative is broken or in vignette like *Dream Voices*, *Day Voices* by John Galloway.

Colleen Kerr's *A Pack of Lies* is the closest tape to being a literal child-like chronicle of the daily diary entry. And, like all good diaries her entrees are totally subjective and therefore true. While perhaps simple enough conceptually, *A Pack of Lies* does employ suitable special effects, beginning with the colour bars, to create one mood of the diarist.

The problem with Kerr's tape is a certain reliance on narcissism. It is evident in all the tapes in varying degrees except for *Time To Time*. This is a condition which seems to plague much video art in general, not to mention performance work. But, given the relationship that has

always existed between video and performance — witness Nelson Henrick's *White Studio Tapes* — it does seem explainable enough.² As well as being amusing, works of unfettered narcissism show or reveal things (likely something neurotic) about our culture — so relax and enjoy...

The oldest tapes, Doherty's *father/the tension between us* and *33/Release*, and Poier's *Rejuvenation* are obsessive enough to be more than narcissistic. They are memorable for a well presented aloof aesthetic, although some might argue "ingenue". Given the limited history of video production on the prairies, these works already appear to be of note historically.

The over-riding difficulty with all things diaristic is the egocentricity or how to keep the work accessible and from becoming too marginalized. The videotapes chosen here are those from within the prairie region which best meet or exceed these inherent limitations. The positive aspects of diaristic work, on the other hand, provide a means to access the beauty of the efflorescent dialogue between language and pictorial metaphor.

Footnotes

- 1 For a readable diary of poems see Kroetsch, Robert. (1986) *Excerpts from the Real World*. Lantzville, B.C.: Oolichan Books.
- 2 Henricks' other tape, *Stupid Video*, is interesting because (as sardonically entitled) it has little text and is really of a different genre, that whose language is the human experience of "tripping".

RECENT WORKS

by Clark Henderson

Look Edna . . . it's video it's art. . . it's . . . video art!

Looking at all the numerous tapes to select for this year's Playback Cabaret was fairly difficult. Nevertheless we did manage to select some for your viewing pleasure and interest. So I'll go through a few of them for you.

Six and *Seven* are both by Wendy Geller. They are related to each other in that in both tapes the artist is acting out scenes from old movies. Both these works have the feel about them that they were done in the middle of the night with the camera on a tripod all alone in her apartment. This creates a type of energy that is quite interesting to watch. I quite admire her as a performer and a clown. I wish I had her nerve!

Dream Voices, *Day Voices* is by John Galloway. This tape is probably my favourite in the program. It works on many levels, so I recommend that you watch it a few times. As a videomaker, what I admire is that it manages to be abstract and at the same time communicate its message very well. It's also quite entertaining and funny. To do all these things at once is very difficult and this video does it quite well.

PLAYBACK CABARET

selected by :

John Morgan (Video as diary),
& Clark Henderson (Recent works)

EXHIBITION OF VIDEOTAPES

Single screening at the
U. of S. Art Dept. Rm. 299
Murray Memorial Building
Wednesday, Feb. 3rd, 7pm.

Supported by the
U.S.S.U and A.K.A.
Artist-run Centre

AKA is supported by THE CANADA COUNCIL,
THE SASKATCHEWAN ARTS BOARD, THE DEPARTMENT
OF PARKS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, and
THE CITY OF SASKATOON. AKA gratefully acknowledges
volunteer contribution as well.

There are two tapes in this program by Nelson Hendricks: *The White Studio Tapes* and *Stupid Video*. Both represent different aspects of this artist. I found that *Stupid Video* was a nice balance to the other more conceptual pieces because it was mainly (or only) visual. The title starts you off right, so that you aren't looking for a meaning behind it and you can appreciate it for what it is.

The White Studio Tapes is a collection of vignettes based however loosely on New Year's Eve on which something major happened in the emotional life of the artist. I really like this video. It reminds me a bit of the performance pieces that Laurie Anderson does. Maybe I shouldn't be making comparisons but that similarity is something I noticed. By themselves, these vignettes show an interesting way of using the video medium to create entertaining musical performances and of showing what can be done in an interior location when one doesn't have access to portable equipment. (I don't really have mottos, but I always say, use whatever you got; don't wait for the perfect tools to show up because they won't ever unless you use what's already here.)

One of the nifty things about Playback Cabaret is that the tapes are available for two weeks and a person can come back many times and see them over again if they want. This is good for certain tapes which require a few screenings to entirely understand and appreciate. Some tapes are in an unconventional style so that the first viewing is often spent figuring out the style if it's one the viewer is not familiar with. (Even the most traditional Hollywood filmstyle has to be learned, although most people in this part of the world learn it very young.) The second viewing usually brings out more of what is being communicated to the audience and is usually better appreciated. So, having said that, I recommend viewing the tapes, thinking about them and then viewing them again later.

My theme of "Recent Works" allows one to see what is happening in video art in Western Canada. If one is at all familiar with the past, then obviously there has been quite an evolution going on in this field. The high technical quality is one of the most obvious changes due to the increased availability and quality of equipment. Also the formation of video production centres in Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver has increased the availability of equipment and provided individuals with colleagues to help further their development through collaboration and feedback as well as through workshops to hone their skills. These things are very important to an artist (indeed anyone) for her/his feeling of accomplishment and development.

This brings me to another point about the recent work from this part of the world: the high level of artistic skill. By this I mean the way a person tells a story or presents it, quite separate from the technical side of it. This is obviously quite a subjective thing, has parallels in other media, and is very important to the craft. I'm finding many video artists are developing to a more advanced stage than earlier. New artists starting to get involved in video are inheriting this artistic commitment from them. This is good because it shows that video art is growing up from being the trendy new thing of several years back to one of the many choices that a person has when wanting to express her/himself, say something, or even just make something that's interesting to look at.

I'd like to mention a bit about the situation here in Saskatchewan as far as video goes. So far there are no video groups but there are several people producing video art tapes, mainly with much difficulty. There are people at universities and community cable channels producing as well as those who normally make films. Now too, there are also people with consumer video production equipment who are experimenting.

There is a research committee of the Saskatchewan Filmpool (a filmmakers' service co-op) which is studying the interest of its members and others regarding video production. There is also the ad hoc committee which organized this year's Playback Cabaret, consisting of people interested in the possibilities of forming a video group or of obtaining some access to production equipment. There are most probably others with similar interests around the province. We're still "homesteading", which can be exciting and can also be a drag, but I and many others feel the need for something.

I hope you enjoy these tapes. I've found it interesting to be involved in this "Cabaret" and I hope things will continue in the medium — it certainly isn't going to go away.



AKA

VIDEO



CANNES, CAPITALISM & COMMERCIALS

by Mark Harris

*"Money is human happiness in abstracto; consequently he who is no longer capable of happiness in concreto sets his whole heart on money."*¹

Of the 122 prize-winning commercials culled from the 34th International Advertising Film Festival at Cannes and distributed throughout North America as an "entertainment" package, 23 were listed as American, 22 as British, 20 as French, 11 as Japanese, 8 as Brazilian, 7 as German, 6 as Italian, 6 as Spanish, 4 as Danish, 4 as Norwegian, 3 as Swedish, and 3 as Australian, while individual "winners" came from Belgium, Holland, Argentina, Israel, and New Zealand. These Gold, Silver, and Bronze Lion winners ostensibly won their manes on the grounds of artistic merit; their ability to sell the commodities they promoted was treated as a secondary — not the primary — justification for their existence.

*"In the name of the consumer, the manipulators suppress everything in culture which enables it to go beyond the total immanence in the existing society and allow only that to remain which serves society's unequivocal purpose. Hence, 'consumer culture' can boast of being not a luxury but rather the simple extension of production."*²

A commercial's country of origin, naturally, does not always reflect the nationality of the product it serves. One of the Spanish commercials, for instance, barkers for Johnson's Wax while even the traditionally protectionist Japanese mount the stump for Smith, Klein & French.

The selection of winners was clearly a compromise between a number of mutually exclusive factors, including economic strength, talent, national temperament, cultural chauvinism and technical expertise. The artisan-like nature of most American commercials argued against them despite their incomparable production values. The hometown French benefited enormously from the stylistic licence granted "les pubs", advertisements aimed primarily at motion picture screens. Great Britain's success was triple-tiered, stemming equally from an unusual preponderance of public interest spots, the traditionally high standards of public and private TV craftsmen, and the munificent after-effects of a somewhat bullish economy. If the powerhouse Japanese did only half so well in terms of winning numbers, part of the reason for this must be attributed to economic hostility (conscious or unconscious) as well as cultural incomprehension. On the other hand, the Japanese did cop the Grand Prize as well as four Gold Lions, so the qualitative compensation was fairly handsome. Some readers will doubtless be surprised to find Brazil fifth in line, but this can be explained both by the religious viewing habits of South America's most populous nation and by the fact that the country constitutes at least 70% of the potential Portuguese language market (a fact that does not pass unnoticed among the multi-nationals). Italian TV's relatively poor showing reflects the fact that the film industry still enjoys an almost total monopoly on quality in that country. West Germany's contribution is about what you'd expect.

It's interesting to note that while 3% of the commercials are of Anzac origin, not one comes from Canada. The colonization of network programming, it seems, is nothing compared to American advertising control of Canadian television.

None of the commercials shown came from the Eastern Bloc. There are two reasons for this:

- 1) The members of the Warsaw Pact don't broadcast commercials;
- 2) The members of the Warsaw Pact broadcast nothing but commercials.

"This explains the inadequacy of most socialist contributions to cultural criticism: they lack the

*experience of that with which they deal. . . The blanket rejection of culture provides a pretext for promoting what is crudest, 'healthiest', even repressive. . . . From there it is only a short step to the official reinstatement of culture."*³

The standard reaction to this as to most previous batches of prize-winning Cannes commercials is, "Wow! This stuff is a lot better than the programs they show on TV." Indeed it is, but why should this be surprising? Commercials are the heart and soul of Western television while programs are just the padding.

Most of the commercials were dubbed into either French or English, the remainder relying primarily on visual and auditory special effects for propagandist impact. This built-in bias results in the commercials of certain nations — most notably those of Italy and Spain — playing country cousins to those of their culturally favoured rivals. To speak in Finnish or Greek is to be effectively mute, to rely on sign language when everyone else is communicating through more complicated skeins of symbols.

*"The population is so accustomed to the drivel it gets that it cannot renounce it, even when it sees through it halfway."*⁴

When viewers remark on the "difference" and "daring" of non-American commercials, they are usually mesmerized by slight variations in social customs. The Japanese, for instance, have no qualms about placing a groaning middle-aged man on top of a toilet when it comes to advertising pile medicine. "Ekstrabladet", a Danish newspaper, thinks nothing of photographing full frontal nudes in a sauna to up the periodical's circulation. Far from being liberal, progressive or avant garde, this visual content reflects nothing more significant than slightly different attitudes towards plumbing and hygiene. So far as economic outlook on the world is concerned, they are indistinguishable from, say, the Michael J. Fox Pepsi Cola commercial.

Seeing so many acts of calculated manipulation back to back (even at 32 f.p.s., a much less tiring format than TV, with its dancing pixels and wavering lines of resolution), one is more likely to be struck by the chilling homogenization of capitalist culture than by its obverse.

Tap Dancer, an implicitly racist advertisement for Samsonite luggage, looked as if it had been shot in Brazil. *First Brassiere*, a Brazilian flirtation with David Hamilton style kiddie porn financed by the Valisere clothing company, had French prurience written all over it. *Broken Bottle*, an extremely well-made black and white Canadian Club commercial rivetting audience attention with Prohibition Era gunplay, seems very American. The aesthetic wildness of so many of the Japanese advertising spots (A Shuzu sake ad mixes the style of late Kurosawa with the sounds of Italian Grand Opera) is rooted in Japan's unique blend of opposition and openness to foreign influences.

*"Among the symptoms of the disintegration of culture and education, not the least is the fact that the distinction between autonomous 'high' and commercial 'light' art, however questionable it may be, is neither critically reflected not even noticed any more."*⁵

Commercials aren't art, neither high nor low. Only people exposed to the aesthetic battering of network television on a regular basis can see them as such. If the commercials in toto seem different from what you're used to on the tube, it is because, without exception, they are exercises in the soft sell. The overwhelming majority were produced by large corporations with money to burn. The most obvious, most stupid commercials are

most often produced by relatively impoverished advertisers with very narrow markets in mind. The majority of Canadian commercials fall into this category; cities or at most provinces are their target areas, not worlds.

*"A man who tries to live on the generosity of the Muses, I mean on his poetic gifts, seems to me somewhat to resemble a girl who lives on her charms. Both profane for base profit what ought to be the free gift of their inmost being. Both are liable to become exhausted and both usually come to a shameful end. So do not degrade your Muse to a whore."*⁶

The whoredom in commercialmaking is so ubiquitous, one scarcely knows where to begin when discussing it. Is it more reprehensible to be an American artisan who clearly regards himself as a sort of animated draughtsman, the talented if not quite respected underling of marketing directors everywhere? Or is it worse to be a frustrated artist in the French manner, a filmmaker manque who dreams of being the next Jean-Jacques Beineix while cranking out arty fluff for lingerie companies? The "serious professional" approach of the British seems to be the happiest compromise (*Points of View*, a promotion for the Guardian newspaper, is the only commercial in the series that respects its audience enough to show it the mechanics of its own manipulation), but even it does not escape the taint.

If commercial makers are prostitutes, commercial watchers are johns. While the most obvious exploitation in TV — indeed, of all advertisements — is that of women's bodies, the stringpulling neither begins nor ends there. The melange of new cars, exotic locations, new drinks, new smokes, new clothes, creamy colours, and soft focus turns the viewer's mind into a mush of passive desire, a polymorphous acceptance of every titillation that rolls down the pike. What do you do with a new Fiat anyway? Do you drive it, smoke it, drink it, wear it, or fuck it? Who knows? Who cares? The main thing is that you buy it and spend every working hour earning money to pay for it. The impression that most commercials are aimed at men is false; they're aimed at wallets with cocks.

*"The materialistic transparency of culture has not made it more honest, only more vulgar. By relinquishing its own particularity, culture has also relinquished the salt of truth."*⁷

The commercial is, in a sense, the perfect paradigm of Western unfreedom. The most cherished of all bourgeois liberties is the right to make as much money as possible with the least amount of interference from the host society. Indeed, we are often told that all other freedoms depend on this particular liberty which is the capstone of liberal democracy. It is the only thing that keeps us safe from Soviet style tyranny.

There are indeed many things about the Soviet Union that the thinking citizen — even in an age of *glasnost* — has cause to abhor. The invasion of Afghanistan, the abuse of psychiatric hospitals, the oppression of national minorities, the continued existence of labour camps: these are the inevitable results of monolithic power coupled to centralized authority.

On the other hand, the defenders of unrestricted mercantile freedom seldom bother to ask why ten million Russians have a chess rating or why poetry is still one of the vital arts in the Soviet Union long after its eclipse in the West. Although they might have to wait years for cars, live in sub-standard housing and even — horror of horrors — occasionally have to survive without the solace of TV sets, these deprived people do seem to feel deeply, think clearly, and have something to say.

By trying to break their spirit, the Soviet regime

indirectly reminds its opponents that they have inner selves worth defending. In the West, the situation is exactly the opposite. With the exception of the slum-bred underclass and the most isolated pockets of the rural poor, the people of North America are physically coddled while their spiritual lives are systematically deprived of food, water, light and air. The economies founded on the principles of Social Darwinism and *laissez faire* capitalism (high tech descendents of the Industrial Revolution) are aided and abetted by governments predicated on utilitarianism and logical positivism (the pragmatic heirs of Jeremy Bentham and Auguste Comte). Between them, they finance scientific disciplines that demonstrate a deterministic bias (sociobiology; behaviourism) at the expense of humanistic schools of thought.

Societal choices are seldom random. The larger the institution, the greater the need to nullify the x factor in individual response.

When it comes to the manipulation of large numbers of people, Western media are incomparably more successful than their Eastern counterparts. A Soviet citizen doubts what he reads in the press because he knows who controls it. Although such skepticism is equally appropriate to the West, it is much harder to come by. Most people don't realize how small a coterie actually controls the media, and even if they do, they are dazzled by the seeming diversity of "liberal" and "conservative" thought. Our so-called "freedom of the press", alas, is more apparent than real, the result of fewer specific taboos adhering to the class interests of the newspaper owners. Within the limits of "good taste" (i.e., within the parameters of debate which are decided by media controllers and not by media consumers), an editor may say what he pleases so long as he is "responsible" enough to not suggest that society might be economically restructured for the social

and moral betterment of most of its members. One can talk (tastefully) about cunnilingus, but not about that.

The manipulative potential of the press, of course, pales in comparison with the vast propagandist power of the "idiot box". If the history of art and entertainment has gradually shifted from the active (tribal dance; oral poetry) to the passive (reading; theatregoing) principle, television is unquestionably the most successful manifestation of this devolution yet. In most people's lives, only working and sleeping are serious competitors for its time. From cinema to conversation, all the arts have waned as it continues to wax. All the other media put together have not been as successful as TV in convincing us that we're nothing but consumer machines. Even the televangelists — who in every other respect insist upon the literal truth of the Old and New Testaments — somehow manage to ignore, subvert, or sneakily sidestep every one of the numerous Biblical admonitions against greed. When push comes to shove, their saviour is subservient to Mammon. Even the prospect of heaven isn't worth the price of supercharged automobiles.

In the East they try to break your spirit; in the West they act as if you never had one and never will.

*"Against all fetishism of the productive forces, against the continued enslavement of individuals by the objective conditions (which remain those of domination), art represents the ultimate goal of all revolutions: the freedom and happiness of the individual."*⁸

In Canada, the ubiquity of commercials has recently spread from television to cinema screens. Just because this is already commonplace in many European countries doesn't make it any less objectionable. To see a movie is

to exercise choice and pay for the right to do so. The imposition of a commercial under those circumstances, therefore, is not a freely contracted liaison but an act of rape; one neither wants nor deserves it; one is obliged to submit to a superior force.

While a letter writing campaign conducted by enough people who are willing to back their protests with boycotts might help to stop the cinematic proliferation of this cancer, there's not much to be done about television. Unless society changes more radically in the next few years than seems credible, TV commercials are here to stay for the foreseeable future.

Under such circumstances, the cultivation of inner life becomes an act of liberation and defiance. Our inability to eliminate commercials on a global scale in no way removes our responsibility to switch them off in our own house. To do otherwise is to collaborate in the trivialization of the human race.

Footnotes

¹Arthur Schopenhauer, "On Psychology", *Essays and Aphorisms* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), p. 170.

²Theodore W. Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society", *Prisms* (Letchworth: Neville Spearman, 1967), p. 26.

³Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 32.

⁴Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 126.

⁵Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 127.

⁶Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms*, p. 162.

⁷Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 34.

⁸Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 69.



Continued from page 5

Each setting and group of characters is given equal importance in the tape and therefore Kisil lets personal experience and popular media information exist on parallel levels. On first viewing the tape, it was this quality which was most intriguing. Although the segments depicting the TV family employ humour and satire, their role in the tape demonstrates clearly that Kisil recognizes the potency of the TV medium to communicate models for behaviour.

Also important to the tape's success is Kisil's choice of characters and cast selection. The central characters are

not-quite-stereotypes; they are at once very easily identifiable, however they are not caricatures in their roles. The TV family is played by non-professional actors who nonetheless satisfy our expectations of TV players. While the characters are not completely believable, they are very ordinary, and this ultimately provokes the viewers' empathy more than trained performances could. The result is the tape's sub-text of presumed and failed gender roles. Gilles Hebert's workman-like husband character is a flawed provider and father figure. Likewise, Carolyn Bradshaw in the role of the wife presents the imperfect image of nurturer turned shrew.

Home Street has followed Kisil's earlier tapes which dealt with male cultural rituals, male-female relationships, and the quest for partners. It precedes his current work-in-progress entitled *Men's Love*. The progress in Kisil's work has been towards closer examination of human behaviour in the context of relationships, and seen this way, *Home Street* is a serial installment in a larger body of work. Kisil is comfortable in the non-judgemental position of observer. As viewers we are invited to adopt this role and, without the intrusion of the artist's dogma, to likewise observe behaviour as it appears to us on and beyond the television screen.



photo by James Lam

Home Street, by Gerry Kisil

GLOBAL

AWARDS WORLD WIDE VIDEO FESTIVAL 1988

The members of the jury represented a diverse spectrum of opinion about video. Hopefully, the rewards presented suggest the many different sides of the medium.

The three jury prizes for tapes selected for the competition by the World Wide Video Festival are awarded to:

George Kuchar: *Video Album 5: the Thursday People* for sensitive and sensuous celebration of life and death of a friend. A video diary where experience and production fuse through the use of portable video technologies.

Gary Hill: *Incidence of catastrophe* for ingenious and dynamic use of video language for personal expression. This is a work of bravado and imagination.

Licinio Azevedo & Brigitte Bagnol: *La Pluie* for dramatic form in issues of social conflict, as the people involved represent the conditions of their own lives. This is an elegant revelation of the effects of fear and warfare on mankind.

The jury prize for the installation is awarded to:

Alexander Hahn: *Arthur*
The jury could not come to a unanimous decision regarding the installation. But we agreed to give the prize to Alexander Hahn who is less well known in Europe, to encourage him with new video installation work.

The members of the jury were: Christine van Assche, Rick Feist, and Nan Hoover.
World Wide Video Festival
Kijkhuis
noordeinde 140
2514 GP den haag
Netherlands 070.644805

EVENTS



Women in Focus



National Film Board of Canada

Office national du film du Canada

WOMEN OF COLOUR Film & Video Festival and Symposium

The National Film Board of Canada and Women In Focus are pleased to announce that a Women of Colour Film and Video Festival and Symposium will be held in Vancouver, B.C. in 1989.

This event will celebrate works by women of colour, both nationally and internationally, and also explore critical issues such as production, distribution, aesthetics and funding.

We are interested in making connections with women of colour filmmakers and video artists.

We welcome inquiries and suggestions about the deliberations of this festival and symposium.

For information please write or call:

Zainub Verjee
Distribution Manager
Women In Focus
204 - 456 West Broadway
Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1R3
Phone: 604-872-2250

Lorraine Chan
Distribution, Women's Programs
National Film Board
300 - 1045 Howe Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 2B1
Phone: 604-666-7761

WOMEN ARTISTS

Westcoast Women Artists

Westcoast Women Artists is a multicultural women artists society based in New Westminster, B.C. Some of our objectives are to:

- * promote original artwork
- * organize shows and workshops
- * provide studio and gallery space
- * develop a resource library & slide registry
- * encourage involvement of arts and culture in community development.

We want your participation! For more information, call us at (604) 520-3078, or write to us at Suite 2, 30 Begbie Street, New Westminster, B.C. V3L 5B2.

WESTERN FRONT VIDEO PERFORMANCE POETRY Music EXHIBITION Computer

303 East 8th Avenue
Vancouver V5T 1S1
Canada
tel: (604)876-9343

NABET 800

Local 800 NABET-AFC is a labour union of specialists embracing all categories of film and video tape work and meeting the highest standards of professional experience and ability. To the independent producer, agency, and client, NABET-AFC brings more than a source of high-skill labour. It brings an arresting new attitude towards the problems of production — one that offers the producer distinct advantages:

- Tailoring to Requirement. NABET-800 provides motion picture crews on the basis of need alone. No payroll padding. No "automatically required" personnel, no featherbedding. You control the size of your crew.
- One-call Hiring. The NABET-800 office satisfies the complete labour need in one co-ordinating operation. The entire crew, all categories competently filled, is alerted and dispatched from ONE headquarters. One phone call does it.
- Vertical Structure. NABET-800 can offer certain multiple-craft categories and avoids rigid over-specialisation. It thus gives the producer a labour apparatus of greatly increased range and flexibility.
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- Your NABET agreement is tailored to your specific production requirements.

NABET-AFC
923 West 8th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C.
V5Z 1E4
Tel: (604) 736-0300

The Canada Council Conseil des Arts du Canada

99 Metcalfe Street
Post Office Box 1047
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V8
(613) 237-3400
Telex: 053-4573

99, rue Metcalfe
Case postale 1047
Ottawa (Ontario) K1P 5V8
(613) 237-3400
Télex: 053-4573

NOTICE

Suspension of the National Museum of Science and Technology Artists-in-Residence program

The Canada Council Media Arts Section has announced the suspension of the Artists-in-Residence program due to major renovations at the National Museum of Science and Technology. The Media Arts Section is planning to replace it with a more broadly based program for artists-in-residence at high technology centres. Details will be announced after negotiations have been completed.

NOTICE

Temporary Suspension of the Videotape Fund Program in Canada Council Media Arts Section

The Media Arts Section has temporarily suspended its Videotape Fund Program due to the present budgetary situation and the priorities set by the Section. Effective immediately, the Section will not be able to respond to requests for videotape. The Media Arts Section's production programs and support to organizations will not be affected by this change.

For further information contact Jean Gagnon, Media Arts Officer, at (613) 598-4356. The Canada Council accepts station-to-station collect calls.

The publishers of Video Guide invite independent producers to make a written response to these cutbacks. This cut of the Videotape Fund affects the new producers and experimental producers most severely.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Video Pool Workshop Programme

Video Pool is accepting proposals from video makers, artists, and producers working in video, audio, and other related technologies. Persons interested in instructing a workshop designed around their area of expertise are invited to submit the following information:

- resume
- outline of proposed workshop
- equipment requirements

Video Pool will pay for travel and provide an honorarium for all accepted proposals. Please direct your proposals or inquiries to:

Michael Drabot, Production co-ordinator
Video Pool
P.O. Box 2702
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4B3
(204) 949-9134

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DISTRIBUTE

CALL FOR PROPOSALS SAW Video Workshop Programme

SAW Video is accepting proposals from artists/producers working in video, audio, film, and related technologies. Persons interested in instructing a workshop designed around their area of expertise are invited to submit the following information:

- description of proposed workshop
- detailed budget of expenses
- C.V.

Proposals for workshops are being sought under the following general areas:

- practical skills (camera, editing, directing, grant writing, etc.)
- production (i.e., where the participants create a work or works)
- critical/aesthetic (i.e., where an artist presents works within some kind of critical/aesthetic framework)
- cross-media involving video or film (which could be practical skills, production, or critical/aesthetic oriented).

SAW Video will pay travel and accommodation, screening fees as per distributor, and standard workshop fees for accepted proposals. Please direct your proposals or inquiries to:

Victor Dyke, Co-ordinator
SAW Video Co-op
130 Sparks Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5B6
(613) 238-7648

YYZ Artists' Outlet

YYZ is committed to showing contemporary work in all media by local, national, and international artists.

YYZ Time Based Arts will review submissions by artists and proposals by independent curators in Video, Performance, and Film. Please send videotapes or documentation on videotape, as well as a written proposal and resume to Time Based Arts, YYZ, 1987 Queen St. West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6J 1H3.

Deadline for submissions is March 31, 1989.

FILM AND VIDEO ARTS SOCIETY

FAVA is a registered non-profit society based in Edmonton, Alberta. Its mandate is to encourage and facilitate the exhibition and production of independent film and video and to promote the understanding and appreciation of these media as both craft and art forms.

FAVA
9722 - 102 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0X4
(TEL: (403) 429-1671

AIDS AND THE MEDIA SPECIAL ISSUE

CALL FOR TAPES

In Fall 1989, Video In and the Alternate Shelter Society will be hosting a screening of video tapes made about AIDS. The focus will be on tapes that educate the viewer about AIDS, rather than tapes that focus on AIDS victims.

Deadline for submissions for the screening will be August 30, 1989.

In collaboration with the screening, VIDEO GUIDE will do a special issue on The Media and AIDS. We will be looking for tapes to review, articles, profiles, etc. Deadline for this issue of VIDEO GUIDE will be August 15, 1989.

Send information and tapes to:

**Shawn Preus
Video In
1102 Homer Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 2X6
(604) 688-4336**

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS New Videotapes by Women

Groupe Intervention Video (G.I.V.) is a non-profit women-run centre for the production and distribution of video by women. Since 1975 G.I.V. has been dedicated to distributing and producing videos that touch and reflect women's lives: art/experimental, health, employment, sexuality, body, racism, violence, social issues, cultural politics, etc.

Distribution facilities at G.I.V. have been expanding and we are looking for new tapes for promotion and distribution in the Winter 1988-89 season. Our selection committee will view work throughout this period.

Groupe Intervention Video
3575 boul. St-Laurent,
bureau 421,
Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2X 2T7
(514) 499-9840



IFVA/AVCI
Independent Film and Video Alliance
1-397, boul. St-Joseph ouest
C.P. Box 545, Succursale Desjardins
Montreal, Quebec H5B 1B6
(514) 277-0328

THE ALLIANCE is a national organization of more than 30 groups engaged in the production, distribution, and exhibition of independent film and video. Incorporated in 1980, and representing over 3,000 individuals, the Alliance is the only national film and video organization with membership in every province in Canada. The Alliance has many objectives. One is to provide a national network linking independent film and video producers, distributors and exhibitors from all parts of Canada. This network is coordinated through our office in Montreal and has as its focus an Annual General Meeting. This meeting is held in a different province each year and provides an opportunity for members to exchange information and discuss issues of mutual concern. Membership criteria: Membership is open to any organization in Canada whose mandate is to encourage, promote and facilitate the production, distribution, and exhibition of independent films and videos over which the film or video maker retains complete creative and editorial control.

CENTRE FOR ART TAPES
Alexandra Centre, 3rd Floor
2156 Brunswick Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 4N1
(902) 429-7299

THE CENTRE FOR ART TAPES is a registered non-profit community access organization committed to the production and exhibition of independently produced audio and video tapes and performances. The Centre provides equipment, information and services to individuals and organizations whose needs are not met by existing regional resources. The Centre for Art Tapes accepts solicited and unsolicited ideas for exhibitions based on an audio and/or video component. The fee is \$1000 per exhibition in any media. For more information, please write, call or drop by.

TRINITY SQUARE VIDEO
172 John Street, 4th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5T 1X5
(416) 593-6443

TRINITY SQUARE VIDEO is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to providing public access to the tools of video and audio production. As well as regular services, the organization offers and extensive workshop program, technical services and a video collection available for in-house viewing. Membership is open to individuals and organizations.

V TAPE
183 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario M5T 2R7
(416) 863-9897

V TAPE is Canada's only information and Distribution Service for videotapes by Artists and Independents. Our range of services include an in-house library of 600 titles, extensive files on each video producer, print library including magazines, catalogues, posters, newspaper reviews etc, promotional mailing lists, and consultation services for curators and programmers.

CANADIAN FILMMAKERS DISTRIBUTION CENTRE

67A Portland Street
Toronto, Ontario M5V 2M9
(416) 593-1808

THE CFMDC is a non-profit, artist-run organization which promotes and distributes the work of Canadian Independent Filmmakers. Formed in 1967, CFMDC now handles the work of some 400 filmmaker/members representing approximately 1,000 titles. Members' films are listed in our catalogue. CFMDC has a small screening room for previewing purposes (by appointment).

ART METROPOLE
788 King St. West
Toronto, Ontario M5V 1N6
(416) 367-2304

ART METROPOLE'S collection, bookstore and publications programme specialize in media-related and multiple format work since 1960, including video and audio, artists' bookworks, audio works, performance and installation: primary documents, critical works and anthologies.

SAW VIDEO CO-OP
130 Sparks Street, 2nd Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5B6
(613) 238-7648

GALERIE SAW VIDÉO not only exhibits, but stimulates and develops challenging programmes in diverse & multi-disciplinary media. As a complement to these programmes, the gallery also provides information, education and production facilities. SAW sponsors a variety of art-related activities in an attempt to facilitate communication between artists and the public. The SAW Vidéo Production Co-operative offers its services in both French and English. Individual introductory workshops on shooting and editing are offered to all those who join the co-op as a member, more specialized workshops are given by guest artists.

ED VIDEO
Media Arts Centre
16A Wyndham St. N.
Guelph, Ontario N1H 4E5
(519) 836-9811

ED VIDEO is an artist-run media access centre. We provide video production and post-production facilities for our members. We program a Visiting Artists Series, Canadian Music Series and an evening workshop series twice yearly. Other programming includes an Ed Video Producer's Night series, and Members' Tape Forums. Members' works are available for distribution.

VIDEO POOL
100 Arthur Street, 3rd Floor
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1H3
(204) 949-9134

VIDEO POOL INC. is a non-profit, artist-run, video production/distribution facility, for its membership and through its members to a broad sector of the community. Video Pool was established to encourage and promote the exploratory use of video and related technologies as an alternative fine art medium. Video Pool provides field production and editing equipment, computer access, computer/video interface, tape distribution, screening facilities as well as a tape library, educational workshops and technical personnel.

EM MEDIA
1014 MacLeod Trail S.E.
Calgary, Alberta T2G 2M7
(403) 263-2833

EM/MEDIA is a non-profit media centre, which encourages and facilitates alternative uses of media. The centre provides video and audio production facilities, at a reasonable cost, to the cultural community. EM/Media maintains an exhibition program of screenings, performances and intermedia works. EM/Media is committed to the principle of sexual equality in its programming and operations. Society activities are directed by an elected board of working artists and the centre is managed by a full-time coordinator.

WOMEN IN FOCUS
456 West Broadway, Suite 204
Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1R3
(604) 872-2250

Established in 1974 **WOMEN IN FOCUS** continues to be a responsive forum for Canadian women; a centre for art and media, a place for a feminist aesthetic and critique. We distribute and exhibit film, video and audio works. A catalogue of the films and videos that we distribute nationally and internationally is available on request. Production facilities are available to our members. Our exhibition space, The Floating Curatorial Gallery, features exhibitions organized by guest curators. WIF invites women artists and curators to submit proposals, accompanied by a curatorial statement or thesis. Submission guideline available upon request.

HARDWARE NOTES



audio & video patch bay

VHS Editing Room: digital video mixer to the left (black) with telop below it (white).

by Michael Goldberg

As you can see in the photos, I've slowly built up an "off-line" VHS editing room at home. Tiny as Japanese homes are, it's concentrated in a room so small, I sit in the middle and can reach just about everything. Known for its hardware (less for its software), Japan is the ideal place to "collect" equipment, especially older stuff. When new VCRs, tape types, TVs, etc. come out on the market, the previous models are discounted. Equipment which is two or three generations old can sometimes be picked up in the garbage, in working condition.

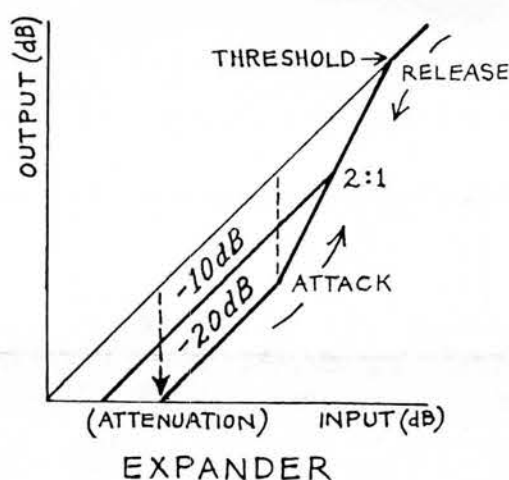
Most of my collection comes from second-hand shops, usually for less than 50% of list price. Some priceless things were given to me (e.g., vectorscope and waveform monitor). I've been on the lookout for old TBCs ever since the Vasulkas told me they were starting to appear in the US for around \$1,000. I'd been frustrated in this search, until I was promised one from NEC's demo showroom, now closed, for \$800US; it's not full-frame, though. I've gotten a PAL VHS recorder for \$225; the TV (not a monitor) was given to me. Both work fine.

My wife complained at first that I was piling up equipment and not using it. Not only did it seem like a waste of money, but of precious space. Once I got together a working "A/B Roll" VHS editing system, work suddenly came my way. Sure, I could do preliminary edits at the production companies that have hired me, on 3/4" or Betacam. . . but not with crossfades, wipes and freezes, outline titling, etc. Skeptical at first about having VHS time-code burn dubs done for me, they've all been impressed with my home-made results. Having a fax at home was a similar, worthwhile investment.

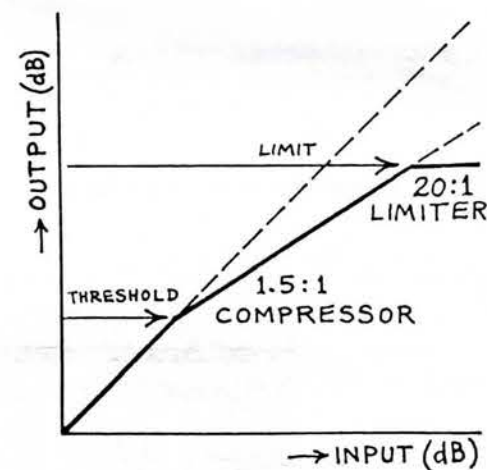
I've been able to work with a variety of specialized video tools which many video centres can't afford to buy on spec. So the focus of this article is those pieces which have proven most useful thus far. I still have a lot to learn, and things I collected which now lie fallow may prove to be invaluable in future, for different work patterns from my current ones. I've written in the form of a checklist, so you can skip over any you know about.

PATCH BAY: I was fortunate to be given two professional video patch panels, but before that I used an RCA patch panel for video as well as audio. Sure, a place with only four or five VCRs for dubbing will find an A/V selector adequate. Just about every video brand has one for instant switching from any one VTR (video and sound) into all the others. But for editing, cleaning up sound or picture, adding effects, etc., a patch bay is indispensable. There's even an all-RCA patch panel now, yellow for video, white'n'red for audio. You still should place equipment at least half a meter away from the wall, so you can get in behind to change or add wiring. Add a light back there, for minimal frustration.

EXPANDER: While investigating ways to cut down hiss noise already present in a recording (equalizer, riding levels, etc.), I ran across an expander. Less expensive than a "noise gate" (which completely eliminates sound below any volume level or "threshold" you set), expansion is also advisable when dubbing from a system with less "dynamic range" (quietest-to-loudest sounds) to a better one, such as from regular to "hi-fi"



EXPANDER



COMPLIMETER

video. As shown in the illustration, it allows you to lower the quiet sounds, then raise the louder ones, in a pre-determined ratio or slope. It's excellent for "copying up" or dubbing a good quality recording with some background noise, such as tape hiss, air-conditioner, etc. However, if there is a sudden, loud percussive sound, it will greatly amplify it. . . clicks, claps, coughs, etc. I've gotten a lot of good use out of my dBX (brand) 3BX. It separately expands bass, mid-range, and treble. So it lowers hiss even when someone is talking. You cannot totally eliminate hiss when there are other sounds, as it is random noise across the entire frequency spectrum (most noticeable in the predominance of higher frequencies in the audible spectrum). I highly recommend use of an expander, coupled with a good equalizer (preferably parametric, or graphic with a lot of pots). Though I rarely use the compressor I've got, it's advisable for "dubbing down" (e.g., from a Nagra to video). Bill Viola, who's a master of video sound, uses "compansion", a compressor for his original recording, and an expander for playback in many of his installations.

TELOP: I've been in Japan so long, I've forgotten what this is called in English. Basically, it's a gen. lock with B&W camera input, for overlaying titles on top of pre-recorded imagery. I now have three. Right after one was given to me that doesn't do outline, a home-video enthusiast listed one I wanted in the recycle column of a video mag. It outlines in any colour, image (usually lettering) in any colour, plus any background colour instead of image — all chroma and luminance variable. It has three sizes of outline or dropshadow. Then I bought an SEG (see below) that also has a built-in telop, more simple, but outline or shadow from B&W camera or tape. To top it all off, I then bought (new, for \$500) Sony's "Kanji Video Titler" that generates and stores up to 10 titles in roman lettering or Japanese, using a "mouse" instead of a keyboard. It's what I use most often these days. In theory, if I link them all together and get my third camera fired up, I can overlay four levels of colour titles on top of an image. At most I've used two, and it looks great.

A/B ROLL CONTROLLER: VHS A/B roll? Don't laugh; it's almost true. JVC puts out a unit that makes the left dial of the edit control operate deck A or B or both together. You can't separately in point the two, but they will preroll together. There's some slippage of one player (I've had up to 1/2 sec.), which I hope to reduce with a sync generator and all three VTRs on "external sync." I got it because I was tired of popping tapes in and out for cut editing, not for doing dissolves. I never dreamed of that until. . .

SEG WITHOUT TBCs: Two companies are now selling digital Special Effects Generators that can cross-fade, wipe (circle and square positioning), freeze, "strobe", mosaic, etc., without Time Base Correctors! I opted for the Panasonic WJ-MX10 Digital Mixer; for about \$500 (Cdn) in Japan, it can't be beat. It's the first piece of equipment I've ever purchased brand new. It's selling for



Edit controller and A/B Roll controller

use with home-video or 3/4". I think it's the ideal unit to combine with JVC's A/B Roll Controller. I'm not a sales rep, so I won't push further. It has a "mickey mouse" audio mixer, which I use to run the "monitor out" audio to my preview monitors.

□ **MONITOR AMP and 3-WAY SPEAKERS:** With a variety of "bells and whistles" to improve and modify my sound (including digital and spring reverbs, treble "exciter", a good mixer, Nakamichi audiocassette deck, CD, etc.), I finally latched onto a pair of JBL loudspeakers, a steal at \$800 (worth \$1600 each!), and borrowed a 300w per channel power amp. Without a strong, good power amplifier, the speakers wouldn't deliver clear transients (short sound waves), even at the low volume I have to use at home. What a difference from the TV and hi-fi speakers I'd been using (and still use, to check what it'll sound like under usual playback conditions). Now if I change the equaliser position slightly, I can feel the difference distinctly. I highly recommend it for every editing room. Otherwise it's like having a TBC without scopes — you can fine-tune the signal, but don't know what you're getting.

□ On the way. . . A BVU-110, cheap, for which I will eventually buy a time-code generator. Then I want a time-code reader that'll burn onto VHS dubs.

□ Dreams . . . a second TBC. Actually, a frame-synchroniser, that'll do freeze-frames, to bounce back and forth with the good freeze on my SEG. My very own squeeze-zoom (why not?!) A 3/4" deck to lock into my editing setup. An old Plumbicon-tube camera, no matter how heavy it is. And eventually a PAL Betacam (or MII?) unit. But I flitter from second-hand shop to hand-me-downs, so my priorities are like sifting sand. And how are you doing in the hard wear world of video?



Mini-rack with victroscope, WFM, digital reverb, proc amp, patch panel, parametric equaliser, compressor, expander, graphic equaliser, spring reverb, aural exciter.

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CHINESE SHADE

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PERFORMANCES

A survey of Canadian feminist video art — will be on view in the Video Gallery from 14 February to 21 May 1989

The National Gallery of Canada presents

The Video and Film by Artist Series

An ongoing program of screenings, installations, lectures and special events in the media arts. The series combines one-artist, group and survey shows with talks by visiting artists, curators and critics.



Elizabeth Vander Zaag, Still from video, *Hot Chicks on TV*, 1986

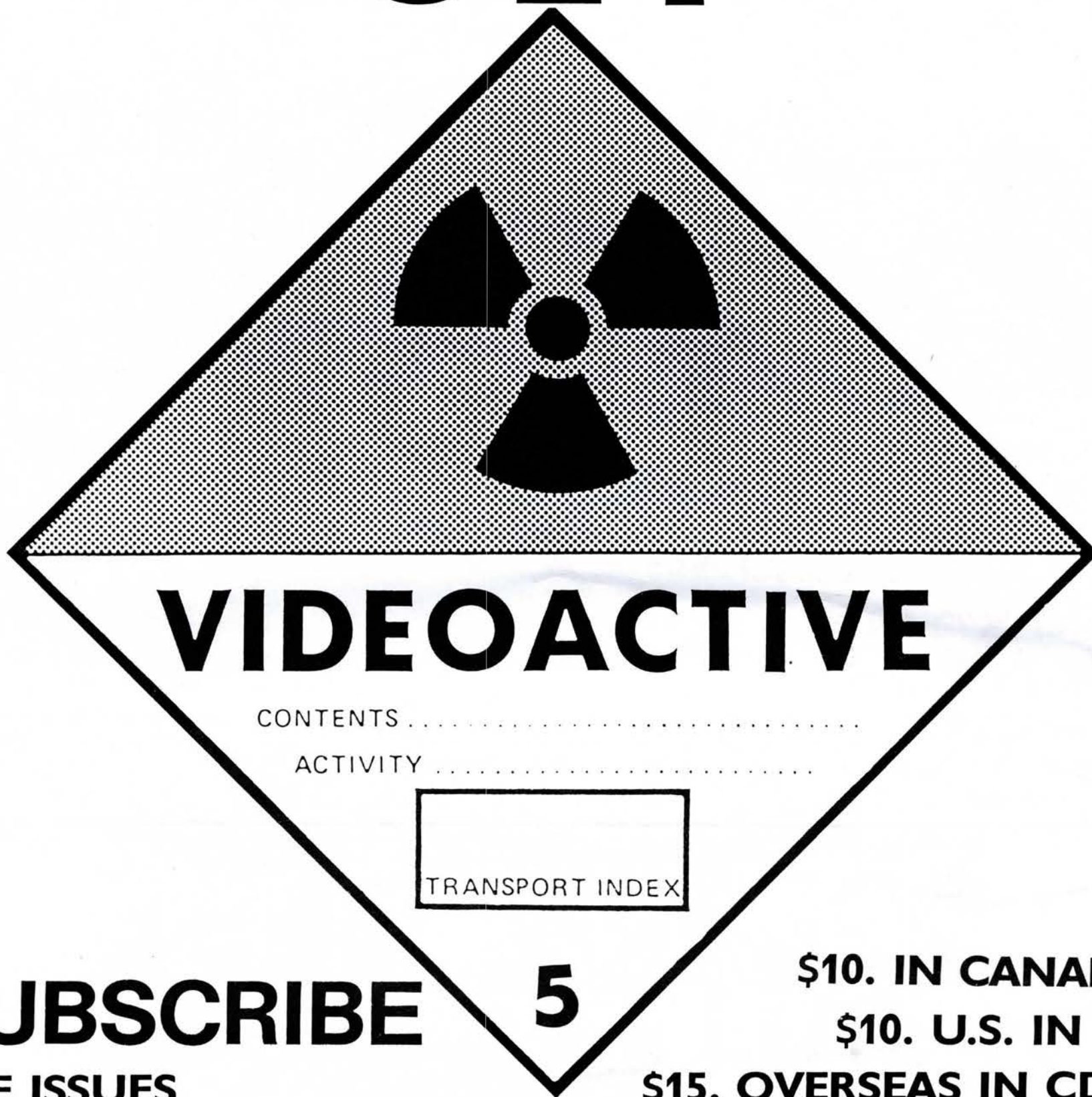
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