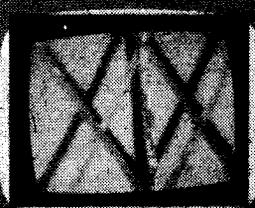
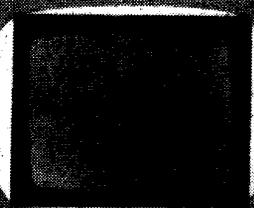


no. 7

ART-RITE video



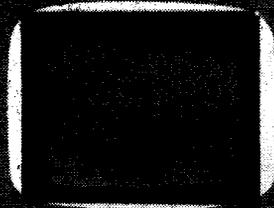
ZANG!



Can
help it!



ZOOMM



Zan
Kum up!



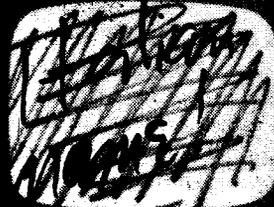
HSS,
America!



American
moon!



TUK-
TUK-
TUK!



I'm
un-
American!



SHOOT
(KÖLN, 1974)



Art-Rite

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SOME NOTES ON MY USE OF VIDEO

Vito Acconci

1. Face-to-face contact: person on-screen faces person in front of screen. (The video-viewer is met by a screen approximately face-size — whereas, in film, the viewer encounters a screen twenty feet high.)

2. Film = landscape, silence (the sound comes from something too large to be a person — talk functions as background music, myth-making 'titles'). Video = close-up, sound.

3. Video-viewer sits close to the screen — the distance Edward Hall calls 'personal distance,' where three-dimensionality is emphasized. But the image on video is flat, grainy — video, then, serves to decrease distance, to approach Hall's 'intimate distance,' where vision is blurred and distorted (appropriately, the video image presents itself in dots).

4. Since sharp focus is lost, there's a dependence on sound. But it might be difficult to talk about something (Martin Joes: 'An utterance in intimate distance avoids giving the addressee information from outside the speaker's skin. . . The point is simply to remind — hardly 'inform' — the addressee of some feeling inside the speaker's skin').

5. If both the image and the sound in video are only 'basic,' only 'outlines,' there might be two approaches: either avoid habitual senses altogether, and concentrate on 'pure-energy' transmission — or, on the other hand, be humanly 'pushy': I can push up against the screen, as if to throw myself on the viewer, as if to fight the neutrality of the situation, push myself through.

6. Video, then, as a place to keep moving, keep talking — improvise — take it back and start again — cling to my position in front of the viewer, don't give it up, don't lose his or her attention.

7. Paraphrasing Godard: video might be the fear of dots, of grayness, of neutrality, of flatness, of interference, of the viewer in an armchair. . .

8. Charlie Chaplin (talking about the necessity for long shots in film com-

edy): 'There's nothing comic about a face twenty feet tall.' In contrast, the face on video can be handled — with a little effort, you can bounce it around like a ball. (Possibly video makes it hard to work in a single key — no tragedy, no horror, no spectacle, nothing sacred; it thickens, or muddies, the plot.)

9. Earlier pieces of mine played on the notions of the monitor, the video box: either I was alone, working with myself in feedback, or I worked with another person, either in physical 'combat' or in a kind of ESP test. The viewer was placed outside a private chamber, watching a goal being reached (cf. the living-room situations of TV soap-opera, talk-shows).

10. The more recent pieces might be said to play on the notion of video 'dots': the monitor is a point in a space that includes the viewer, a circle that's completed by the viewer — my point points to the viewer, jabs at the viewer (cf. TV newscasts, commercials).

11. My first question is: where am I in relation to the viewer — above, below, to the side, hidden. Once this is established, then I can figure out the reason for my physical position, I can decide what I have to do, what I should say.

12. Problem: it's hard for me to take a videotape as seriously as an installation piece (the installation can, of course, include video — but, in that case, the tape is part of the whole situation, and not a videotape in itself — e.g. *Command Performance* at 112 Green Street). At the same time, I probably think of certain video pieces of mine as more 'perfect,' more 'complete,' than most of my installation pieces.

13. The problem is that it's too easy to have a 'complete' videotape because the terms — as they seem to exist now, in the normal 'artist's tape' — are limited, isolated: there's no real viewing context that can be considered as part of the terms of the piece. (E.g., if the context were a public broadcast,



~~I can't see your face~~
~~in my mind~~
... I don't know who
you are yet... but I know someone's there...
~~you are there~~



~~I have a dream~~
~~we'll have a dream~~
love... but there'll be problems... I'd hurt you...
~~like a bird~~
~~eat the water~~



Then you'd be gone... so I'd have to
remember the times we could have had...
~~for a~~
~~time~~
~~to live~~

THEME SONG (1973) -- LIKE A QUIET, PRIVATE NIGHT -- PILLOWS ON A LIVING-ROOM FLOOR -- THERE'S A TAPE RECORDER, JUST OFF-SCREEN: I'M LYING ON THE FLOOR, FACING YOU; I'M PLAYING SONGS -- THEY SET THE MOOD, THEY START MY PITCH -- THESE ARE THE FIRST NOTES OF OUR RELATIONSHIP -- I CAN BRING MY LEGS AROUND, AS IF I'M WRAPPING YOU UP, I WANT TO BRING YOU DOWN TO MY LEVEL -- I'M PLAYING OUR RELATIONSHIP, PLAYING IT OUT, TO THE FINISH -- IT'S AS IF I'VE BUILT YOU UP, IN REAL SPACE, SO THAT, FINALLY, I CAN LET YOU GO, I CAN TALK TO YOU IN MY MIND (I'M BACK WHERE I STARTED IN THE FIRST PLACE).

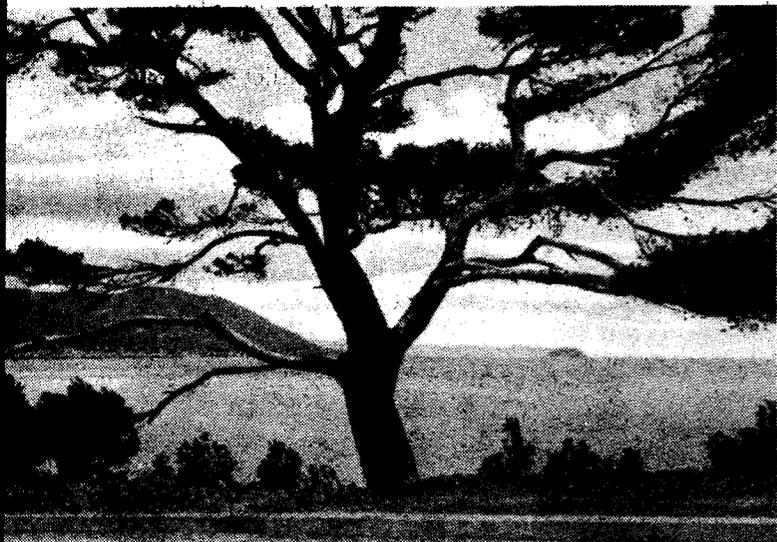
then a piece would require considerations of dispersal, various geographical areas, particular viewing times, etc., in the same way that I would consider particular quirks of a room for an installation.)

14. The problem is that a videotape is 'thrown into' a gallery. The room is usually darkened, probably with fixed seating — the tape, then, becomes a

spectacle and loses its quality of 'home companion'; there's a crowd of people in front of a monitor — too many faces to come face to face with; there might be more than one monitor showing the same tape — so that I can't have a definite point to stand in.

15. Possibilities for a viewing situation: two walls, each about eight feet square, facing each other, about three feet

between them — the video monitor is placed in the middle of one wall, at eye-level — the sound is adjusted to normal speaking volume (the viewer, then, has to actively meet the image: he can stand outside and catch only glimpses, only mumblings: or he can squeeze in between the walls and edge up to it: or he can step right up and put his face against the screen.



a tree



picking narcissi in the wind



AUGUST 1974 FAWN GROVE, PA.



Joan Jonas

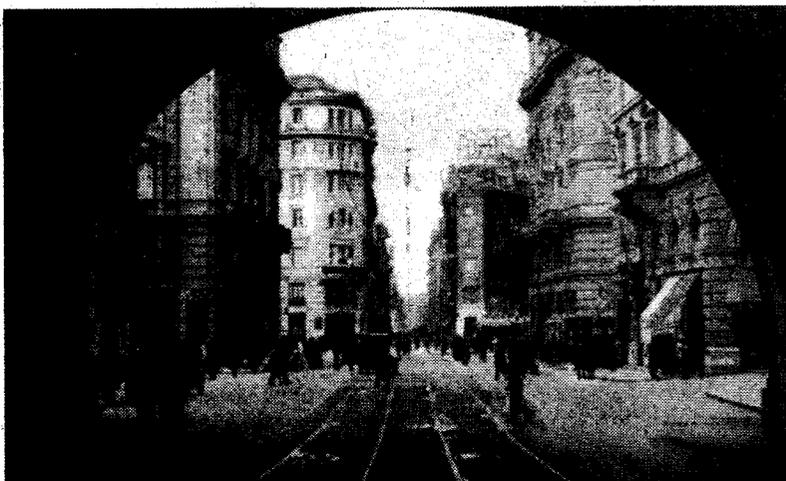
August 1974 Fawn Grove, Pa.

Took a beautiful walk today — started out down my favorite road that goes by the pines, and the cornfield below the hidden meadow. I was not planning to go to the meadow and as I walked by I thought I didn't want to — instead to branch down by the stream. Further on down the road there was an inviting green sunlit field. I turned and started walking up the hill. All of a sudden I found myself in the field behind the corn below the meadow so I found the path through the woods (cool and dark and damp). Sappho joined me just as I was having thoughts of being alone in "nature." "My familiar" I thought. Persona more unified. The dog representing an instinct that leads.

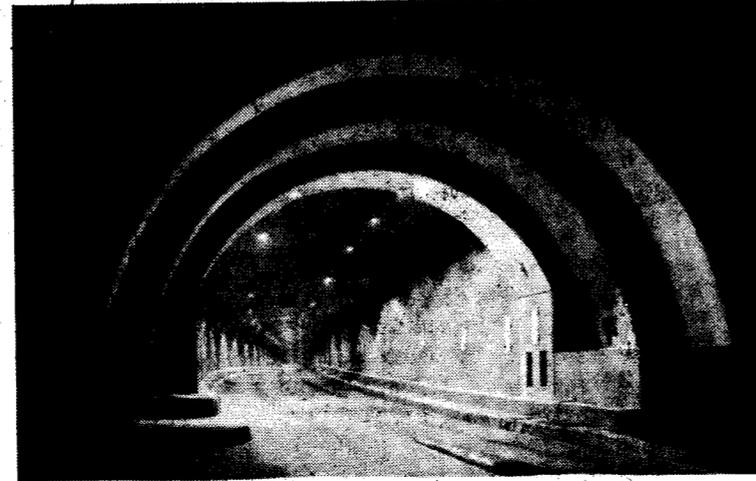
Today I thought of the nun back there somewhere as again I find myself on a retreat — isolated, thinking.

So we entered the hidden meadow. It was green and yellow bright with high goldenrod and Queen Anne's Lace (have to know my flowers). Silent. Bugs. Crickets very loud here. After some time I started walking toward where I thought I had entered. The trees are thick around the field. I noticed that they surrounded me. We walked directly toward a small opening through the trees — turned out to be a path in a different direction through the woods, parallel to the road I would walk back to my brother's. So by following the path through the woods the walk became a huge circle. It formed it's self and I followed it. Lately remember being a child in the woods. I noticed that my brother's 4 year old son understands magic.

These cards are on my wall. The tree, the women picking narcissi in the wind, the tunnel, the arch of the city.



an arch



Pennsylvania Turnpike: America's Superhighway

TEXT: TELEVISION DELIVERS PEOPLE

Richard Serra

The product of television, commercial television, is the audience.

3

Television delivers people to an advertiser.

3

There is no such thing as mass media in the United States except for television.

3

Mass media means that a medium can deliver masses of people.

2

Commercial television delivers 20 million people a minute.

2

In commercial broadcasting the viewer pays for the privilege of having himself sold.

2

It is the consumer who is consumed.

2

You are the product of TV.

3

You are delivered to the advertiser who is the customer.

1

He consumes you.

3

The viewer is not responsible for programming.

1

You are the end product.

1

You are the end product delivered en masse to the advertiser.

6

You are the product of TV.

6

Everything on television is educational in the sense that it teaches something.

2

What television teaches through commercialism is materialistic consumption.

2

The *New Media State* is predicated on media control.

2

Media asserts an influence over an

entire cultural spectrum without effort or qualification.

2

We are persuaded daily by a corporate oligarchy.

3

Corporate control advocates materialistic propaganda.

3

Television establishments are committed to economic survival.

2

Propaganda for profit.

3

Television is the prime instrument for management of consumer demands.

2

Commercial television defines the world in specific terms.

1

Commercial television defines the world so as not to threaten the status quo.

2

Television defines the world so as not to threaten you.

1

Soft propaganda is considered entertainment.

2

Popular entertainment is basically propaganda for the status quo.

3

Control over broadcasting is an exercise in controlling society.

3

Seventy-five percent of news is received by you from television.

2

What goes on over the news is what you know.

2

It is the basis by which you make judgements. By which you think.

2

You are the controlled product of news programming.

3

Television programming dominates

the exposure of ideas and information.

3

There is inherent conflict between:

2

Commerce,

2

Information,

2

Entertainment.

3

There is a mass media compulsion to reinforce the status quo. To reinforce the distribution of power.

3

The *New Media State* is dependent on television for its existence.

6

The *New Media State* is dependent on propaganda for its existence.

6

Corporations that own networks control them.

6

Corporations are not responsible.

2

Corporations are not responsible to government.

2

Corporations are not responsible to their employees.

2

Corporations are not responsible to their shareholders.

3

Shareholders do not organize and enforce their will. Shareholders buy stock in companies and don't even know what the companies do.

3

Corporations mitigate information.

3

Every dollar spent by the television industry in physical equipment needed to send a message to you is matched by forty dollars spent by you to receive it.

3

You pay the money to allow someone else to make the choice.

4

You are consumed.

4

You are the product of television.

4

Television delivers people.

"Television Delivers People"

3

1



The Art Critic as Media Star, Bruce Kurtz

Photo David Spahr



SHOOTING STAR

By Bruce Kurtz

Reflections are irresistible. Its impossible to resist the temptation to look in a mirror, or any reflective surface: store windows, shiny surfaces, diner facades, mobile homes, still water, etc. Why bother to resist? Narcissus knew what he was doing. Vanity is a virtue. The image is a corroboration.

She does her beauty preparations assiduously each day. Now she's in mourning so a subtle scent is proper, nothing too strong or sweet. Good taste must prevail. A simple suit is always right: you can dress it up or dress it down. When in mourning gay colors must not be worn, nor jewels. Nothing too flashy, just quiet elegance.

When a camera is on me I am more than myself: I am myself and my compliment. I always look better in video-tapes, films, and photographs than in real life. One knows that it has to be perfect because it will be seen again. The more the image is proliferated the greater the affirmation of self, or whatever is being projected. Projection is the key.

Self-assurance is required for performance. That is one area where extra-

aesthetic issues intervene. But one must always be beautiful, especially for images. The beauty of the tape is that the performance is evidence of self-assurance about beauty and about sexual identity. It is pan-sexual chic. It is more than male or female. It is a new gender. A new genre?

I love to have cameras on me or to have a captive audience, any audience. It draws me out. For the tape I had three cameras on me, with live feedback from the video camera. The function is to capture and captivate, to amaze and enthrall, to hypnotize and stun, to knock out the audience. When it succeeds it is exhilarating, fabulous. The flowers, congratulations, and telegrams pour in. The telephone and doorbell ring constantly. You can't eat a meal in a restaurant without someone asking for an autograph. Those flashcubes always going off in your face. Believe me, its not easy being a star. You never know when you're going to be immortalized so you always have to be fabulous. Its not like painting in your garret. But I love it.

There is never enough glamour, especially now that Candy Darling is

dead. *Interview* reported an anecdote recalled by Sylvia Miles: Sylvia gave Candy a string of pearls for her birthday and although Candy was already wearing pearls she put the new ones on too, saying, "There can never be enough pearls."

W reported what everyone wore to Ann Klein's funeral. *W* said this year that denim furniture and unmatched glassware are in. Three years ago I had a blue denim couch and I've been mixing glassware for years. *Savoir faire*.

Now the jet-set will give their sets of dozens of matched Waterford crystal glasses to the Salvation Army and in a few years all the hippies will be drinking out of crystal. Maybe next year jelly glasses will be in. One must have an instinct for these things, like how to act in front of a camera.

Near death from a bee sting allergy I kept failing in my efforts to give myself a shot. I said to my two friends present, "Help me!" One of them started taking photographs. Then I knew it had to be perfect and I accomplished the injection immediately. The camera gave me just the right amount of emotional detachment. It wasn't me, it was the role I was playing. The Stanislavsky method.

I think of my life as an epic drama of which I am the star. Everyone is the star of their own epic drama, but the

BRUCE KURTZ SPECIAL



AT HOME NOW, RECOVERING FOR SIX WEEKS MORE AT 32 BROOK STREET, APT. 3, ONEONTA, N.Y. 10025. OPERATION COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL. STILL SOME AND STIFF, BUT GETTING MUCH BETTER. HOPEFULLY, WHEN THIS IS OVER I WILL BE COMPLETELY HEALTHY. WILL RETURN. I HOPE. TO NYC FOR A FEW DAYS IN MID JUNE. WILL I SEE YOU THEN? THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORTIVE THOUGHTS AND PHONE CALLS. THEY MEANT SO MUCH, AS IT WAS A REALLY DIFFICULT AND PAINFUL OPERATION. BUT, WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT, I AM MAKING A VIDEO TAPE ABOUT IT AND IT IS HYSTERICAL AS WELL AS TOUCHING. TAKE CARE. LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE LOVE

difference between me and a lot of other people is that I know it.

Taste has nothing to do with quality in art but in glamour it is everything. I think everything should be glamorous. I've always wanted a diamond bracelet to wear to the laundromat. Everyone would think they were rhinestones and think "how trashy" and only I would know they were real. That's true glamour. I've always wanted a Guggenheim grant so I could buy a diamond bracelet. When I appeared before the committee to report what I accomplished with the grant I'd just hold out my arm and say, "Eat your little hearts out!" Which one of you readers are going to shower me with diamonds?

I'm really very smart but its not glamorous to be smart. All that dull conversation at those chic and

glamorous parties! You have to be simple and clever. Its *too* easy.

So I'm making tapes that are formally substantial but which are also high camp entertainment. That's my forte. My dears you have no idea how hard it is, I mean its crushing, the responsibility I have to all my fans. You can never let them down. You always have to be perfect because they require perfection. You have to be better than life. They forget so soon. But you won't forget me, will you? And while you're at it, don't forget the diamonds.

Only diamonds match my brilliance. Joining friends poolside at the Holiday Inn a cloud covered the sun, causing my friends to remark, "You scared away the sun." I replied, "I didn't scare it away, I just took away its brilliance!"



VIDEO AND THE MUSEUM

The following is excerpted from the forthcoming MIT Press book based on the Open Circuits conference held at the Museum of Modern Art in January, 1974.

David A. Ross

... Art works produced with video are not about the future of television or the future of anything else. One might try to approach video in the context of the future of the television industry itself, though it would be a grievous mistake in logical typing. Video still exists clearly apart from the television industry, despite the television industry's repeated efforts to use video as a kind of programming in their linear, tightly packed structure. Further, art work in video and television seem to have mutually exclusive descriptions in the first place, in much the same way that the print scene relates to the magazine publishing industry. The only way that I can actually relate video to the future of television is by taking a speculative look at the application of video in the reformation

of one of our culture's more anachronistic institutions, the art museum. . . .

When cable TV is considered, the field for the museum educator broadens considerably. . . . In a strange way, video marks the return of a primary visual art experience to the individual, at the same time that it creates a real public art. . . .

The museum could be in a position to use television channel time in the same way it utilizes gallery space within the museum's building. Hours, weeks, or even months may be offered to the artist in addition to, or instead of, the physical spaces that would traditionally be used in the presentation of an artist's work. It actually would not matter whether or not an artist wanted merely to repeat a short work for a great deal of time, to present a wide variety of works over a period of time, or present empty airtime as a frame for a short statement; the museum has, in each case, managed to forge a new forum for artistic interchange.

In addition, the development of open channels of communication between the museum and the public at home will also provide for the transmission of purely informational programming not produced by an outside agency, but by the museum's curators, and

scholars themselves. As surely as it is the responsibility of the curator and scholar to publish, it is equally contingent upon them to develop a capacity to produce television statements about their particular areas of interest or expertise. . . .

In all other forms of television, whether commercial or educational, the television station serves as a central translating operation, essentially taking many aspects of the culture and transforming them into a language that it feels will not extend beyond the mean educational level of its audience. Although this method of programming assures the broadcaster of a large potential audience, it does something quite destructive to the information it is dealing with. By translating information to a mean comprehension level, the television broadcaster continually extracts the nutritive value from the information it processes. All parties to the television interchange deserve better. The model established by museum interaction with television is base primarily upon the notion that institutions dealing with information have the responsibility and should have the capacity to make the results of their activity accessible to their entire community. For the artist, the relationship is inevitable; for the museum it is imperative.

The critic:



DOUGLAS DAVIS

In the mid sixties, Douglas Davis was a little-known artist and writer living in Washington, DC. He survived — barely — by contributing articles and essays to a wide variety of periodicals, from the *American Scholar*, *Art in America*, and the *Saturday Review* to the *Evergreen Review* and the *National Observer*, a brand-new newspaper — aimed at a “national” audience — and edited in Washington. Though little-read, his articles and essays on art in the *National Observer* brought him finally to the attention of several New York-based periodicals. *Art in America* made him a Contributing Editor in 1968, *Arts Magazine* named him Washington Correspondent in the same year. And then, out of the blue, came the call that set him on the road to national fame.

“If you’re seriously involved in art I don’t see how you can be completely satisfied about any of the ways to earn a living within it. . .”

Jack Kroll, a senior editor at *Newsweek*, apparently read something Davis had written, and telephoned him in Washinton. The two had lunches in New York in “a desultory fashion over a period of years,” until finally, late in 1969, Davis received a definite offer from the magazine’s editor. Meanwhile, Davis had broken up with his first wife and, surprisingly, won custody of his two small daughters. Although he worried that New York would be too expensive for a bachelor father, and he had reservations about the compression necessary in writing for *Newsweek*, Davis went to New York late in 1969. Early in 1970, he became the magazine’s art critic.

Writing for *Newsweek*, Davis says, turned out to be much more comfortable than he had expected. Their art department is essentially a one-horse operation, although Davis can tap the magazine’s international bureau system for information. He has an excellent working relationship with Kroll, and the assistance of researcher Mary Rourke. And though he is edited for simplicity and length (“Art jargon must be kept to a minimum for a lay audience,” Davis concedes), Kroll never vetoes his choice of subject, or opinions.

Newsweek readers, like all general readers, are uneasy about contem-

porary art. Davis’s article on the international avant-garde (*Newsweek*, December, 1973) resulted in a great many critical letters. But there were many positive reactions as well. “The mail is always about 50-50,” he says, “and evidences a great deal of involved interest in art. More than many of us might expect.”

Davis does not feel it necessary to tone down his writing for the philistines in the audience, though he is required to keep his writing condensed and topical. The goal becomes to get around the compression in other ways — “to imply the complexity of the subject matter by inference and metaphor.” He finds as much satisfaction in succeeding in this as he does in writing longer more “philosophic” articles for the art magazines. Davis maintains that 90% of the issues he deals with in *Newsweek* are synchronized with the interests of the art community. Although verbosity pays off at the universities, length is incidental to the points he tries to make.

Davis’s first book, *Art and the Future*, was a departure from mainstream criticism, dealing as it did with new philosophical, scientific, and technological developments and how they are being used by artists. Davis hope the new — and considerably shorter — book he is working on now will do the same. He previewed some of the concerns of his book in *Artforum* (“What is Content? Notes Toward an Answer”), in which he dealt with the non-formalist return of content to the visual arts. In the new book, Davis plans to deal through a series of related

“Criticism and artmaking are not dissimilar ideas.”

essays with alternatives to formalist criticism, art-politics and metaphysics, scale as a cultural bias, content, and the relationship between art and the media, “all subjects we were not trained to think about in the formalist terms we grew up with.” Davis’s thoughts on these things are “very much in process,” and he expects that the book will take a few years to cycle itself out. “I hope conceptual art will be seen as the first step out of the art-about-itself tautology, and let us realize we do deal with content.” As part of this, Davis sees his own writing growing more personal and less “objective,” or overtly critical.

Davis calls himself “a first genera-

tion intellectual;” he went to college against the advice of his family, on scholarships and odd jobs. Even now they appreciate his success at *Newsweek* mostly as a steady job. Davis began at American University in Washington as a painting major (he had attended art school in his teens, studying painting and drawing), in those days when the Washington school of color painting was going strong. Davis soon grew disinterested, and switched to English literature, laying down his writing background. His later work at Rutgers pointed toward a Ph.D. and the teaching route.

At Rutgers though, Davis stumbled onto New Jersey’s main claim to artworld fame; in the early sixties the school was a hotbed of Fluxus, Happening, and Pop activity. Kaprow was teaching there, George Segal lived nearby, and Lucas Samaras, Robert Whitman and Robert Watts were either students or visitors. Kaprow managed to bring in almost all of the Happening People from New York and Europe for big events; Claes Oldenburg, LaMonte Young, Wolf Vostell, George Brecht, and many others showed up at one time or another. For Davis the student, this activity was an introduction to a non-formalist art that embraced both excitement and non-conventional thinking. His doctoral thesis (on Jonathan Swift) went out the window; art, after all, appeared to have the intellectual provocation he was after. Davis marks his real beginnings from this time.

After college he returned to Washington, where he started writing and doing performances. Though he wasn’t too chummy with the color painters, he did form a friendship with Gene Davis. In 1969, they and Ed McGowin joined in a giveaway of 50 identical Gene Davis paintings — each one painstakingly copied on life size (6’ x 6’) from the original by Davis, McGowin, and friends — in the Grand Ballroom of the Mayflower Hotel in Washinton. Each painting is signed on the back by Davis, Davis, and McGowin, with a reference to the event. The repercussions of the event (entitled “Giveaway”) are still being felt; at least one of the paintings has confused a collector, who thought he had brought a “real” Gene Davis, and wasn’t sure if the replica were a replica, an original, a print, or what. With this event, and many others,

Davis worked to confound the meanings of art in Washington and elsewhere — to extend it beyond its select audience. He collaborated with a number of other people including his new wife Jane Bell in more than 30 events and video pieces between 1967

“In one way or another, we’re all working for the man. . .”

and 1972. In the past two years, his work has become less collaborative and necessarily personal, in drawings, prints, and paintings, as well as in videotape.

Davis is an advocate of “the expanding arts.” He insists that art activists, such as Toche, Hendricks, and Shafrazzi, deserve our considered attention. These few have carried on the political activism that had the artworld in uproar in the late ‘60’s. One of the things that makes the art system so strong, Davis says, is its ability to adjust quickly to strategies, which demands even quicker shifts from art activists. Few, he says, can maintain this pace; whatever changes will occur, will result from slow and cumulative work. The artist/collector contract is the first of these, and even though it applies in principle to most other arts, it is not finding ready acceptance.

Davis believes that art can have an influence, though it may be imperceptible, on society. The art system is part of the larger system, and those within it have only limited choices. But art is a free medium of expression precisely because it does not appear to act directly on anyone. It cannot be translated into the ballot box. Art as an agency of social change remains an article of faith. It will never be publicized the way mass media fans sweep through our culture. “But,” Davis says, “the arts do contain some of the really hard thinking about man and his relationships, and the dissemination of this on a personal level.” Though work in any discipline can be creative, the arts encapsulate the integrity of expression and the inner sources of belief that are essential to progress. “There is an area beyond how you survive economically and politically which is the mind and the imagination — that can function beyond all that shit. And that is why most people end up in the arts.”

“The reason for being an artist and working in the arts is to deal as directly

as you can with yourself — no compromises. As soon as you start to modulate the message,” Davis maintains, “you might as well be in commercial art.” If you go deeply into yourself, there is no way you’re going to be received by everybody. This has to do with the diversity of man. Artists, like scientists, always have small audiences at first.

Davis found first events, and then video, particularly suited to the kind of communication and expression he sought. His interest in video turns on “direct dialogue” with another mind. Video allows him to work on a natural level of “formless thinking,” to get into himself and communicate out of himself. “Video is a private mode. I am really interested in one person, the individual watching the monitor.” The physical characteristics of video are the least important thing to him — “they will change under our feet too rapidly to keep up with — what counts is the content, the visual (rather than the literary or verbal) meaning. Occasionally, Davis uses one of the early commercial systems of large scale video in which the image is projected on a 4’ x 6’ screen. Although the equipment is likely to be appreciated for its novelty (\$2300 from Advent, Inc. of Cambridge, Mass.), Davis values it only as a device to make the video message available to a large roomful of people.

“The artworld in general has a good eye, but a bad ear. It can’t sense differences in prose styles and tends to be suspect of good writing.”

Though Davis is an accomplished critic and artist, he has never considered himself either a career critic or a career video artist. For Davis, it is a matter of following one’s thoughts, beliefs, and obsessions wherever they lead — always conditioned, of course, by financial necessity — and not practicing a profession, whatever that is. “Art is an area where you can be free — or freer than the norm — in terms of thinking or working. This is not to say that freedom is always maintained; lots of people conform to the pressures of the market. But there are certainly better ways to make a living, and the freedom inherent in art is the only real reason to remain a member of the art community.”

Davis’s main problem with video is

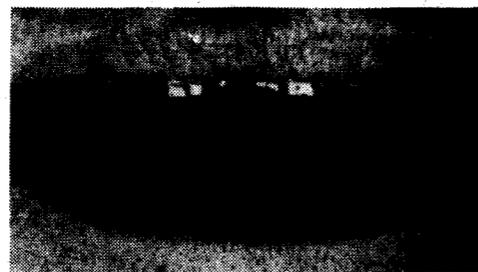
his worry that it is the latest, newest thing. Since he was urging its use almost ten years ago, he now feels a little like Dr. Frankenstein. The possibility exists that video will become a pet of museums and will be exposed in an over-kill situation, through a rapid series of grant anthology exhibitions, lacking in point or focus. "It will always be an area for artists to work in," Davis says, "but one shot museum recognition tends to be smothering, leaving the medium or artist 'leftover.' I much prefer a continuing and serious series of small one-man events to the pretentious extravaganzas. Their annuals always signal the ends of eras."



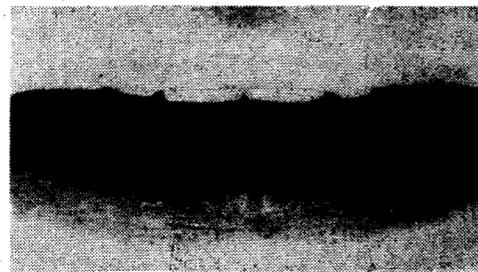
BULLETIN

The Bulletin for Film and Video Information is a bi-monthly newsletter edited by Callie Angell and Hollis Melton and published through Anthology Film Archives. It is designed to provide information for independent film- and video-makers and their users, and is organized around the general areas of film- and video-making, distribution, exhibition and programming, study, and preservation. Issue #2 included a list of Video Distributors, Video Showcases, and a bibliography. Issue #3 had sections on Video-Making in Europe; Television Stations Assisting Artists in Video; Video Distribution; Video Programming; Galleries That Show Video in New York City, and more bibliography. Each issue contains Film- and Video-Makers' Travel Information, listings of schedules and travel plans for those artists who are available for lectures and showings. Issue #4 will list upcoming exhibitions at home and abroad and other fall news; it will be published September 15th. The deadline for news for Issue #5 is October 15th.

Subscriptions are \$2.00 a year domestic; \$6.50 foreign airmail and \$4.50 foreign surfacemail. Back issues are available for \$.50 each. Video artists and others interested, involved persons are encouraged to send their news, ideas, and other matters to the attention of Callie Angell, Video Editor, Bulletin for Film and Video Information; 80 Wooster Street, New York, N.Y. 10012 (212) 226-0010.



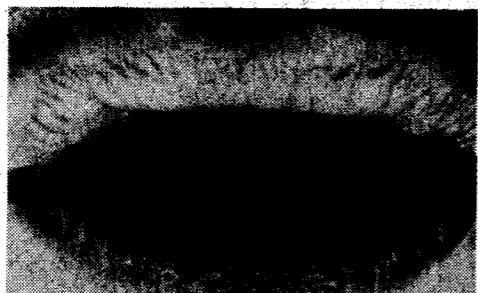
a



e



i



o



u

THE DIPHTHONG I

Jean Dupuy

In English, the vowel "i" is a diphthong (that is, to pronounce the letter, the mouth must make two movements and two sounds: "ah-ee"), and consequently cannot be

shown directly in a still photograph. So I decided to show it in an indirect way.

Here is an example showing how a videotape, used as a *mirror*, becomes a necessary too. It would have been impractical to film such a situation with a movie camera, since the presence of a cameraman would have been embarrassing.



THE QUESTION

Art-Rite asked video artists to respond to the following question: *What is it that distinguishes your video from that of other artists working in the medium?*

RON CLARK

The present self-involved and solipsistic phase notwithstanding, television as a form of art-making may be ultimately understood as simply an extension of the great traditions of film and theatre of the 20th century. In which case people like Brecht, Artaud, Eisenstein, Jarry, Beckett, and Hitchcock would constitute the competition. A sobering thought.



ALAN SUICIDE

- a) because I am bored.
- b) because I have nothing better to do.
- c) that's plenty good for video.

THE BLACK TARANTULA

My video art differs from the video art of others in that I don't make video art. I'm a writer. More seriously: originality as a value is a New York commodity value. Re my art, I do what I have to do; i.e. I do what most interests me. But then I send out my work free, I live in San Francisco, am poor: I can do what most interests me. Not that I object to any way anyone can hustle food shelter love in this horror-ridden society.

ERNEST GUSELLA

My video is not:

- Accompanied by a "pink sludge" rock and roll soundtrack.
- Documentation of a conceptual performance in which I jump out a 13th story window to test the laws of chance.
- Synthetic images created with rebuilt surplus World War I airplane parts.
- Shot with two cameras attached under each armpit and one between my legs.
- A group therapy encounter between the Neo-Nazi Anarchists and the Bowery Satanists.
- An underground sex-opera starring all my beautiful friends.
- A presentation about the 3rd coming of the Punjab of Mysore to bless his freebies in America.
- Product with future marketing potential.



Photo Yuri

HANNAH WILKE

Me! Or the way I wear my hat, the way I sip my tea, the memory of all that, Oh no you can't take that away

from me — The way my smile just gleams, the way I sing off key, the way I'll haunt your dreams, Oh no you can't take that away from me.

TAKA HIMURA

I have been using video lately as a tool of self-communication and two-way communication for myself and for people.

For myself I have a series of videotapes *Self Identity* in which I talk to myself in video.

For people, a series of video in-

stallations *Project Yourself, Register Yourself, Face/ings*, etc., in which people are asked to participate for their own identity.

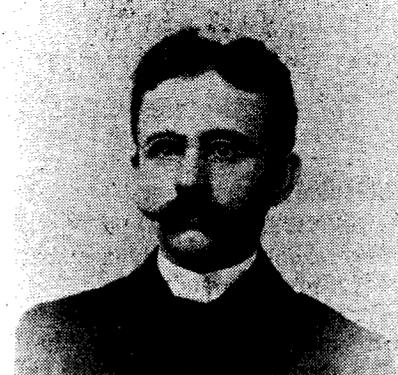
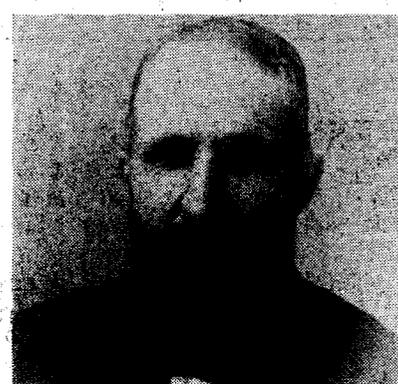
The pieces were performed at *Project '74* in Cologne and I am amazed that people are so inventive.

What I must emphasize is to demystify video and to show simple enough to be with and in video.

WILLIAM GWIN

Sweet Verticality

the Image William Gwin	Associate Directors Ernest Baxter Merrily Mossman
the Word Joe Ribar	Supervising Engineer John J. Godfrey
Voices Catherine Gwin	Videotape Editor Chuck De Jan
Steve Kushner	Film Camerawork Mark Obenhaus
Lyn Lifshin	Audio Engineer Philip Falcone
Joe Ribar	Videophont Operators Roger Dang Frank Hanley Tom Polis
Howls & Hums Ann-Elizabeth Aleinikoff	Assistant Videotape Editors Arne Bjerke Peter Dziedzic Bill Lombardi Knut Olberg Raphael Gonzales
T. Alexander Aleinikoff	
John Aleinikoff	
Catherine Gwin	
William Gwin	
Steve Kushner	
Lyn Lifshin	
Joe Ribar	
William Schenck	
Vicki Lindner	
Production Manager Darlene Mastro	



AKIRA KOKUBO

Question 1.

Kite is a kite
Sparrow is a sparrow
Heron is a heron
Swallow is a swallow
Any question?

Question 2

It is the space in which
you can include everything,
but it is a container
in which nothing can be put in.
Video is the parody of the world.

* The above answers are followed
Zen's questions and answers.



Lynda Benglis, *Female Sensibility*

LYNDA BENGLIS

My video is personal to me and I hope it might be personal to someone else. Video is one way in which I began to study an image, my image, and often those closest to me. In the beginning, I was more involved with the spatial aspects (pictorial and

time) and the limitations (definition) of half-inch black and white. Video was for me a way of presenting certain ideas that had occurred in films, but presenting these ideas in a more immediate self-revealing way. The video image psychologically differs from film, however, and this area has interested me a great deal.

Photo Gwyn Thomas



Shigeo Kubota, *Video Girls and Video Songs for Navajo Sky*

SHIGEO KUBOTA

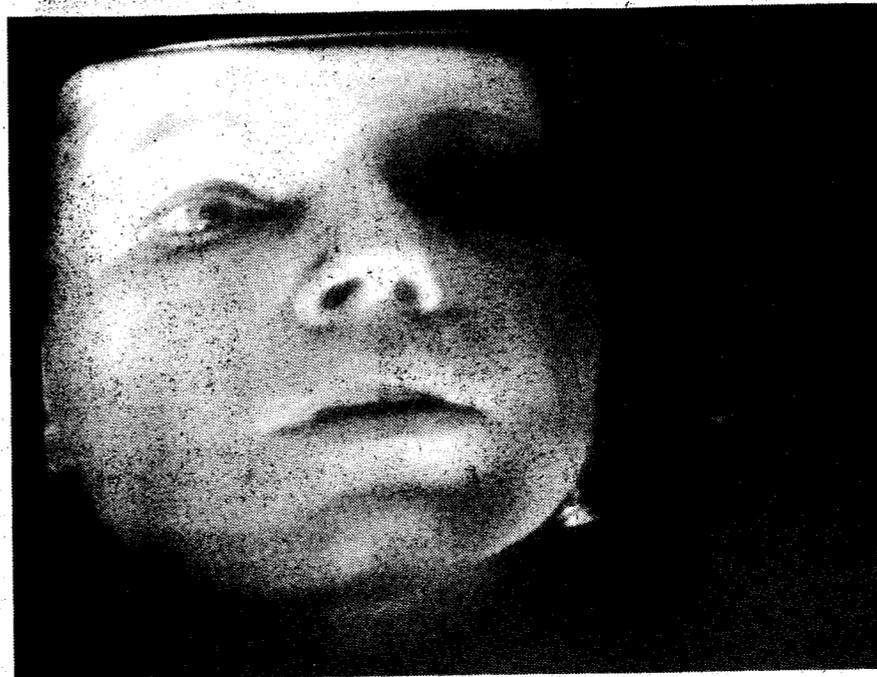
Video is Vengeance of Vagina.
Video is Victory of Vagina.
Viva Video. . .

Photo Lin Ehrlich

ULRIKE ROSENBACH

I must say that it is really difficult for me to answer this question. The word "separation" to me has a rather

ideological meaning. So I would answer: nothing separates me or my videowork from the videos of other artists, because I am not a separatist. But in the sense of being an individual in community with other in-



dividuals there is of course a difference between my work and the work of other video artists. Being both a person and a woman, I try to develop my female personality. I think about the lives, the social and the historical conditions women had to live with in the past and I try to find out how to improve their positions and their self-consciousness. I try to show in my activities the historical and psychological sources and contexts of the standard a woman has.

I don't know whether other women work on adequate themes and how many video artists there are doing this sort of work in their ways — but I hope there are a lot.



DONALD MUNROE & JOAN SCHWARTZ

There is nothing to say; its all been said.



Andy Mann, *One Eyed Bum*

ANDY MANN

My work in videotape differs from that of other artists in that I tend to have less control over the places in which I work. I am much more at home on the street with a portable

videotape system than I would be in a videotape studio. As long as I can use my camera to find my way through a situation, I don't have to think up the situation which is more a job for novelists, film makers, and politicians. Says me.

PAUL TSCHINKEL

My work in video makes aesthetic gestures. It is based on controlled experiments, which the casual and immediate aspects of video permit me to do. I use simple notions of visual as well as oral progressions, dealing with a sequential organization of planned ideas. I examine actions that are either staged or discovered, with the intent of creating an unusual and revelatory experience. In one tape, a sequence I did described, in visual and sonic terms, the action of opening and closing a spring activated door. The door was opened and shut with degrees of force that varied as the tape progressed. I made the appearance, the sound, and the duration of this action an aesthetic event. Because I was able to get into these moments that elapse in the midst of a seemingly ordinary and mundane event, I captured the extraordinary and elusive kinetic aspects of that action.

DOUGLAS HUEBLER

I have used various media . . . video, film, photography . . . in a manner that I would describe as "natural." The medium becomes an extension of the eye(s) scanning undifferentiated phenomena. What gets fixed as an image for a work is that which falls across one of the parameters of the construct that forms the design of the work.

So far I have suspended the "time" factor in video by using only single instants (still photographs made from a monitor); so far I have not been interested in the technologically expressive character of the medium.

Inasmuch as there is nothing more interesting about the appearance of one incidentally obtained image from that of another I am not including a photograph with this comment.



Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik

NAM JUNE PAIK

I wrote in 1965, that someday cathode ray tube would replace the canvas.

Now I love canvas. . . I made about 200 drawings in the past year. Most of them are titled *Paper TV*, whose relationship to the real TV is that of TV dinner to the real dinner.

paper TV - real TV
TV dinner - real dinner

My paper TV finances my Real TV. Look at Miss Moorman's TV eyes look at you. TV used to be "watched," too, not a long time ago.



Richard Landry, *Terri Split*, 1974

Photo copyright Richard Landry 1974

RICHARD LANDRY

The tapes all concentrate on sound, the visual images augment the sound track. The earliest tape, *1,2,3,4* ©1969 is two pairs of hands clapping, the strobe light serves to separate the hand positions and emphasize the rhythm. The successive tapes all use *static close up images of the source of the sound* on a variety of instruments, including flute (soprano

& alto), bamboo flute, indian gourd flute, soprano and tenor saxophone, and guitar. In *Divided Alto* ©1974, a multi-track recording was used so that there are two sound tracks and two corresponding sets of images. The first quadrant is a close up of the mouth playing the first track, the second is the fingers, the third and fourth quadrants are the mouth and fingers playing the sound track. . .

WILLOUGHBY SHARP

The content of my video art is the analysis of certain specific ego states. I take graduated doses of LSD and other derivatives of lysergic acid with hallucinogenic properties to examine the quality of my thought and feeling. Some of the basic concerns of my video performances are various forms of insanity, sexuality, brutality, greed, hate, fear, sentimentality, love, birth trauma, childishness, escapism, death and transcendence.

I use the actual experience of each video performance to isolate aspects of my ego; I use the accumulation of resultant video works to reconstitute my developing personality. (Change is the only constant in this growing videography.)

While particulars of place, public and presentation are crucial to the character of each individual performance, the primary aim of my work is to attain the most intense expression of psychological truth.



Willoughby Sharp, *Saskia*, 1974

Photo Kristen Blake

PETER CAMPUS

I use video as a tool, as my material. I think video art is a misnomer. Video becomes a qualifier, video art is a genre. What makes my work unique — certainly not its separate components, but perhaps their arrangement: my interest in durational space and the accumulation of perspective, the transformation and displacement of light and electricity, the retroreflection of one's projected image and its accompanying sensations, and the balance and fusion of disparities whose unified origins cannot be perceived directly.



HAJNI TENKACS †

Hajni Tankacs, *Hair Transformation Commercial*, (Before and After)

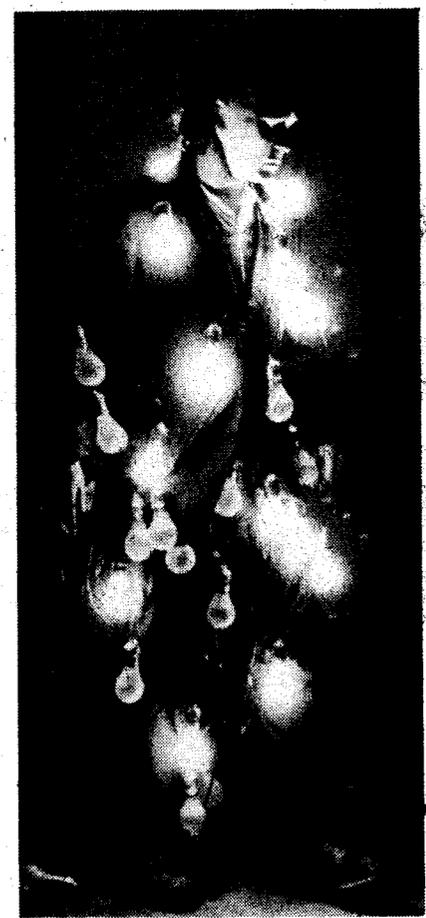


Underscan, 1974
This is a newsprint photo of a photograph of a videotape of an underscanned videotape of a photograph of a painting of a photograph of a garden

NANCY HOLT

In video, "distancing" is one of my involvements. In *Locating #2*, *Zeroing In*, *Going Around in Circles*, and *Points of View* a prop was placed between camera and view, which cut off certain sections of the camera view, and physically set up new patterns in the flat video space. In my latest tape, *Underscan*, time and visual image are compressed. A series of photographs of my Aunt's home in New Bedford, Mass. have been videotaped, and re-

videotaped from the underscanning monitor screen, which is framed within the final tape making a visual distancing at 3 removes. Underscanning changes each static photo image, as it appears, from regular to elongated to compressed or visa versa. Excerpts from letters from my Aunt spanning 10 years are condensed into 9 minutes of my voice-over audio. Certain yearly occurrences repeat, making an auditory rhythm, which coincides with the cycle of visual changes.

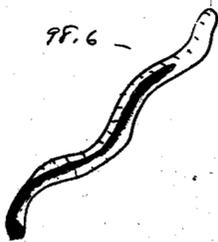


Jared Bark, *Lights: On/Off*, 1974
Produced by Carlotta Schoolman

JARED BARK

I have been most interested in using video as an element of live performance. I use it primarily as a tool. The technology is still a mystery to me. Until I understand the hardware, I doubt that I'll try to use video as a form.

Photo Babette Mangolte



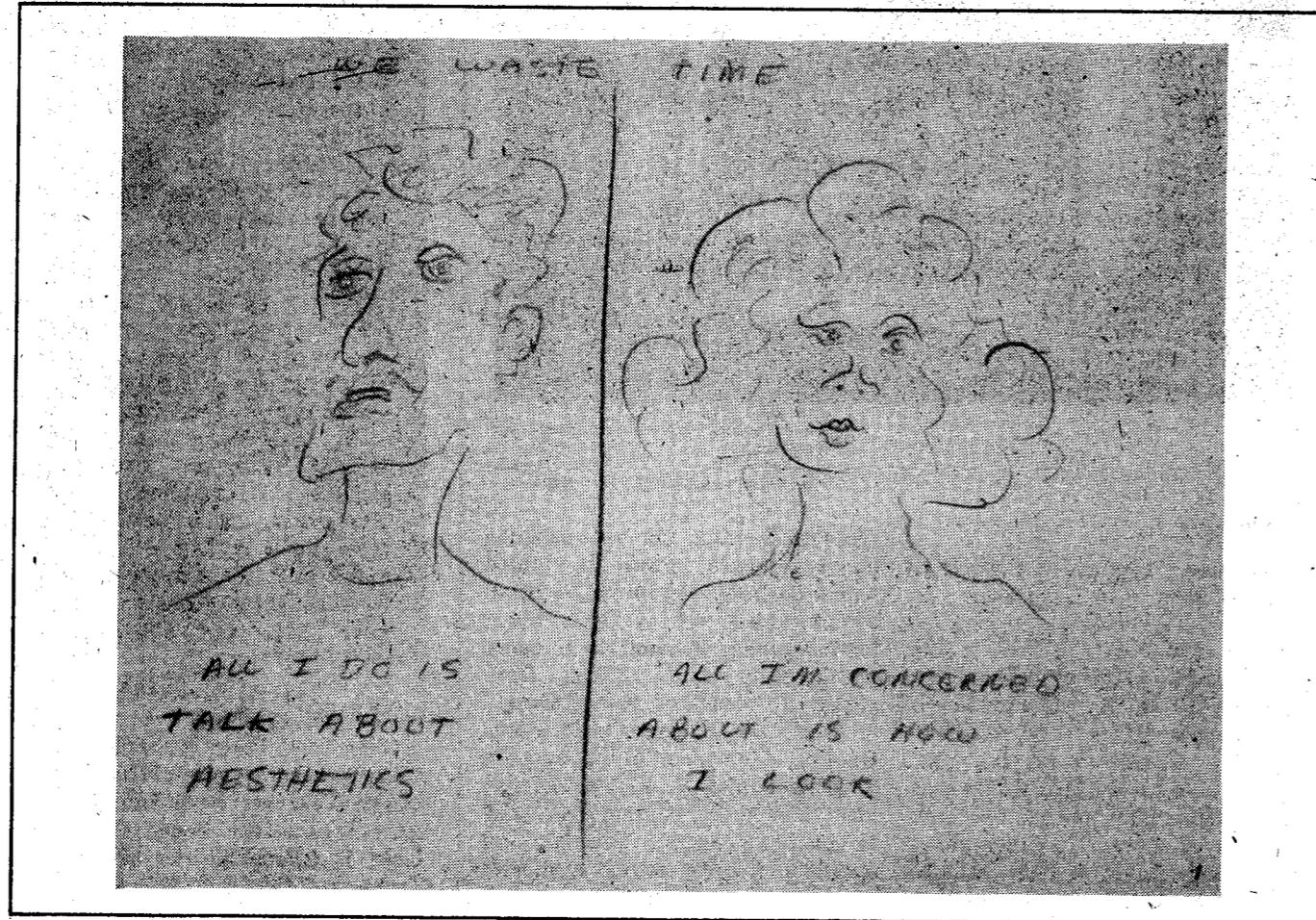
normal

WILLIAM WEGMAN

What's the difference between video tape and audio tape live and prerecorded? Well . . . in the case of audio and video tape live, the possible presence of an audience, unless one is trained to cope with it, can be upsetting to the artist and the outcome of the work unpredictable, whereas with pre-recorded works the artist's presence is unnecessary, and the excitement of seeing the artist is absent. In many live performances the artist is hidden behind a partition.

What makes my video tapes different from others?

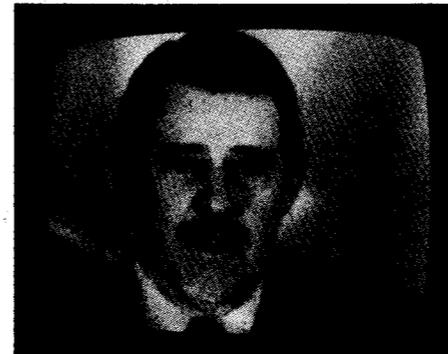
It has a lot to do with touch. Some artists have a heavy touch, others a light one. Subject matter plays a strong role in identifying one video artist from another as does length of the work itself. Some are heavy and short, others long and light. They talk about their past. They show us the world we live in. There are those that fantasize whose works involve fantasy. Big or small cute or mean they're all pretty boring.



ROGER WELCH

An interesting aspect of video is that it has become a principal medium for recording historical events such as the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby, the landing on the moon, and most recently, the resignation of Richard Nixon.

I made a video tape with my father a couple of years ago. I asked him to describe the town of Westfield, New Jersey as he remembered it from his childhood. After the first playback, I was a little surprised at how the voice and image projected like a Walter Conkrite newscast. Such a notion would have never occurred to me if the work had been done in another medium and I liked the accidental connection.



Roger Welch, *The Disintegration of East Broad Street*, 1972.
Herbert R. Welch, Jr., recalling the business area of Westfield, New Jersey as he remembered it from his childhood around 1915-20.

Many ideas which would work very well in video do not extend into film and vice-versa. I have often been disappointed with video tapes that were made from Super-8 and 16mm films. When the films were projected wall size in a gallery or theatre, they were very strong but when they appeared on video monitors, the images did not carry with the same strength. Anyone who has seen a film put onto video knows that there is a decrease in resolution quality. This is a drawback of video.

Generally however, the malleability of video makes it a desirable form for the artist's ideas. The danger, I think, is for an artist to assume that any idea put on video will be interesting because of the nature of the material. Usually, I will investigate many possible forms that a project could take and I will only use video if it seems the best way to present the idea. William Wegman and Peter Campus are two artists whose ideas function particularly well in video.



HELLO: PLAN AND EXECUTION

Alan Kaprow

A global network of simultaneously transmitting and receiving "TV Arcades." Open to the public twenty-four hours a day, like any washerette. An arcade in every big city of the world. Each equipped with a hundred or more monitors of different sizes from a few inches to wall-scale, in planar and irregular surfaces. A dozen automatically moving cameras (like those secreted in banks and airports, but now prominently displayed) will pan and fix anyone or anything that happens to come along or be in view. Including cameras and monitors if no one is present. A person will be free to do whatever he wants, and will see himself on the monitors in different ways. A crowd of people may multiply their images into a throng.

But the cameras will send the same images to all *other* arcades, at the same time or after a programmed delay. Thus what happens in one arcade may be happening in a thousand, generated a thousand times. But the built-in program for distributing the signals, visible and audible, random and fixed, could also be manually altered at any arcade. A woman might want to make electronic love to a particular man she saw on a monitor. Controls would permit her to localize (freeze) the communication within a few TV tubes. Other visitors to the same arcade may feel free to enjoy and even enhance the mad and surprising scramble by turning their dials accordingly. The world could make up its own social relations as it went along! Everybody in and out of touch all at once!

Hello in original form has never been done for obvious technical, financial and social reasons. If it ever is approximated in our lifetime, it probably will be locked into the exhibition atmosphere of a world fair and thus will be denied the casual accessibility it really needs. I rarely

indulge in futuristic dreams, preferring the practicable, but this exception arose out of a fanciful conversation with Nam June Paik who likes predicting the future and did very well at it.

At the same time (the fall of 1968) I knew from Paik that I would have a chance to do a small model experiment of *Hello* at WGBH-TV in Boston, for a video program of works by artists, under a grant from the Public Broadcast Laboratory. This station, directed by Fred Barzyk was, and is, the most open and adventurous in the country. Thus I wasn't entirely dreaming.

Barzyk made it possible to set up four separate sites of video, including two at WBBH, one (I believe) at MIT, and one at a children's school in Cambridge. Five cameras and twenty-seven monitors were involved. This modified program for *Hello* went as follows:

Each of the four sites were linked together sending and receiving simultaneously, like an open conference call on the telephone. There was about an hour of time available. A group of participants at each place watched their monitors and when anyone saw someone they knew they called out Hello! (speaking the name of the person) I see you!

The engineers in the control room at WGBH, which was also one of the sites, had the additional job of randomly switching the sound and picture signals to all four sites. Thus one of the monitors at site A might get audio but no video image, two monitors at site B might have video but no audio, while C and D got normal transmission for a few minutes on all monitors. Audio and video might be divided between sites so that friends might hear but not see each other and vice-versa.

Because of this switching system which was arranged in advance, people in all four places were only in partial and brief contact with one another. It was a strange, straining yet often

hilarious scramble of efforts to reach out. Surprise nearly balanced personal need.

Most of the participants were friends or their children at the school. A few didn't know everybody and tried to become acquainted by this curious means. We called out, often in vain, Hello! Hello! Bob! I see you! I hear you but I don't see you now. Bob! Bob? The people gestured wildly as if this would bring their friends to them.

A father cried out deplorably to his child to take notice and like everyone else who was able to connect for a moment was overjoyed when the girl's thin voice called out Daddy. The child seemed more interested in the blocks she was playing with. One woman tried to tell her friend she liked her own face on TV. It was all very human and very silly. At the end when the equipment was shut off one by one, a lone participant kept speaking out to no one, finally drifted into monologue and said goodbye to himself.

In a certain modern electronic way we were all in touch, yet ever so fragilely. Looking back on the experience it was a metaphor that was just a bit too close to daily frustrations. If it were to be done again, the controls would have to be put at the disposal of the participants. This was considered to be technically too difficult at the time, but as it was planned in the original program, I would insist on its importance as a liberating device (not to speak of its structural enrichment).

A video tape digest was made of the activity which was aired in the spring of 1969 as part of the program "The Medium is the Medium." Although it was proposed in the WGBH model plan that the tape could be fed as a memory trace into other hoped-for real time enactments of *Hello* that year, the idea never materialized. The main purpose of the tape was to give the public an insight into what really happened among a small group of people.

It is doubtful that the tape did what it was supposed to do because TV audiences are always audiences. They are sent messages in one direction and that is what they are used to. *Hello* approached the medium of video as if it were a picture telephone. The telephone is so common it no longer makes any claim as "technology" and acts therefore as a personal and social medium. We may be a long way from video with this kind of access.



Robert Stefanotty

value to the most unlikely artistic droppings and constantly reduces me to fits of laughter at the most inconvenient times (at the Scull auction I kept on waiting for Garland's "red slippers" to come up on the block). Of course there still are many of these objects around — that is not the problem — but in terms of videotapes in a highly object oriented market, the mentality of what art is needs one hell of a lot of rethinking and re-educating.

KISSING THE UNIQUE OBJECT GOOD-BYE

By Rob Stefanotty

It is truly amazing how retarded the art market has been in its approach to videotapes. When one considers the mercantile fervor which has given "real" monetary value to such unlikely candidates as posthumous Duchamp readymades and Hundertwasser silkscreens in editions signed-and-limited-to-10,000, it is confounding to say the least that some of the most creative work of the last eight or nine years has been relegated to unsaleable status.

Perhaps the main deterrent to serious progress has been the notion of the unique, rare and consequently ever more valuable object — a notion which plagues almost as many artists as clients and which many merchants have been riding into the ground for quite some time. It often gives undue

One of the supreme joys of videotapes is that they self-destruct. They wear down gracefully; and, the very nature of the media is such that they cannot be limited. I say "cannot" realizing full well that some merchants have tried to structure videotapes so that they are metamorphized into "rare objects." The impossibility and sheer perversity of this notion is self-evident.

Now I should go slowly here because I do not want to offend anyone whose "life is videotape." First of all let me explain that I am a passionate, circles-under-the-eyes video freak, the sort of person who can listen to Taka Iimura telling me for forty minutes (full face, profile, and back of head) that he is "Taka Iimura" and not slip into a state of catatonia. I can also see the same artistic merit in an excellent

videotape as in a first rate bronze, but there the similarity ends.

It logically follows from the nature of video that a large clientel should be sought out; the following steps could be taken:

- 1.) Drastically reduce the selling price of videotapes and present them in at least half hour programs or groupings. (What would you as a prospective client think of paying \$300 for an eight minute tape? Pretty ludicrous — no matter whose eight minutes they are.)
- 2.) Now that there is no longer a problem with European/American standards, to set up an international network of video distribution and to always make sure that permanent monitor rooms are set up in every representative city so that the work is readily available for everyone to see.
- 3.) Arrange a reasonable percentage scale with artists so that secondary distribution and consequently mass markets can become a reality. A middle road between the notions of marketing a painting and a book should be worked out.
- 4.) Work with major hardware corporations, cable television stations, educational institutions and even airlines to heighten the awareness of how diverse artists have used and are using the media in diverse ways, and how beautifully they have been and are succeeding.

When my clients — and we have several private people who are building excellent video collections — ask me whether video prices will go up, my usual response is "God forbid. We have enough inflation." If we are all lucky, in a short time videotape prices will go down and the market will expand accordingly. As it expands, even if the artist's net goes down to 30% — which I maintain will be necessary to give distributors outside the New York gallery a fair 4% discount, so as to keep all selling prices uniformly the same — there will be increasingly more money coming back to the artists and the gallery which in turn can be used to back more projects and to pay our respective rents.

Stefanotty video distribution, a separate department of the gallery and a separate company as well (The Video Distribution, Inc.), now has affiliates in Paris, Cologne, Milan, Florence, San Francisco, Philadelphia and Kansas City. The New York Gallery has a video viewing room; the tapes all have the same prices, varying by length and color or black and white, with a few exceptions.

LOVE AFFAIR

Anna Canepa

It was at 'Open Circuits' that we realized the time to be a video-freak was over. Anyway M.O.M.A. was not the right place for freaks. We looked at each other's faces trying to guess what we would do next.

Personally I felt disappointed and in a bad mood, as if after a night of love and romance I had to accept that my lover was both young and naive. But being romantic I started to think how to help it (video-tape I mean).

I started considering what do people think of video. Answer: 'video is art' or 'Video is my TV set' or 'Video is like a movie.' Generally speaking people see video-tape, in its newness, as an extension or derivation of established medium, which is a natural process of perception. Therefore let's try the experiment of considering video-tape as a book.

Books are communication and a source of information in any possible field. Categories such as art, science, education function in order to classify a book, but essentially a book is a message from mind to mind. So is video, with the important, substantial difference that video is a massive concentrated visual message that can communicate information on any subject.

'Video-field' (using Peter Campus's definition) is open to every possibility. Experimenting with time, space, human behavior, or technology, why not? That's still video-field. We won't know the potential until we try to reach through distribution a larger audience. In order to do so, it's necessary to abandon the Nineteen Century idea of art-object: Video has shown the contradiction.

A contemporary artist can use



Anna Canepa

Photo Les Levine

technology to deliver his art message and feed-back will provide him with new information and further work: it's a full system of concepts and ideas.

Between ideas and reality stands our consumeristic society. In a consumeristic society distribution seems to be the key of any successful operation. Therefore, after 'Open Circuits' I stopped flirting with video-tape. I started projecting it as a large highly organized operation called tape distribution (getting myself involved in such an operational game I might well make me rich and unhappy).

Still, large video-tape distribution will provide large, diverse audiences. Technology will provide better quality. The artist in response to the above will be experimenting with his/her work in a different context — and have a feeling we all might live happily ever after.

John Baldessari

The use of T.V. today is in crisis. I think this became clear at the Open Circuits Conference. Running throughout seemed to be the idea that T.V. would/could save the world in some fashion. The title, "Video-Freak" is well chosen in the sense that it is akin to "Jesus-Freak." One doesn't become a Jesus-freak rationally. It takes a leap of faith. And what troubled me at the conference was that I felt like an outsider at a religious convention. I hadn't jumped over to the other side. Had I, everything would have become clear. I would have been in another orbit, another world (read Village), with another vocabulary, where all would be understood. When actions of some group seem baffling,

an attempt can be made to understand their values. Then usually the once erratic actions make complete sense. I neither had the hope nor the vision.

I use the word crisis, for I believe that there is a growing disenchantment among a group of artists that have been using video. In its infancy, TV was truly magical and full of promise. One went to see artists' tapes with excitement. But looking backward, I think we went to witness the medium, and not what the artist had done with it. Now the infatuation period is over. The tail is beginning to cease wagging the dog. If one is to proceed, really interesting works must be accomplished, because TV is more and more there as it really is, a thing, a box with grey light, with dancing electric

impulses. And what was once said of painting, can now be said of video — from ten feet, all video looks the same. That is, all you see is the box, the confining rectangle, and the grey light. At least with painting, the size could be infinitely varied, but not so TV. It's all pretty much the same, even with the possibility of video projection. Audiences watch the screen with as much interest after a tape has run off as when it was on. Watching something, I guess, is better than watching nothing.

So, the point I wish to make is this: To have a three day conference on video is akin to having a conference on *The Pencil*. That is, I think to have progress in TV, the medium must be as neutral as a pencil. Just one more tool

in the artists' toolbox. Another tool to have around, like a pencil, by which we can implement our ideas, our visions, our concerns. To have a conference on any device implies that it has too much importance, too much power, and that we are serving it. The case should not be, "I'm going to make a video piece" but, "What I want to do can best be done with video."

TV is in crisis. Can and will artists, who are not believers, push on? There is much doubt now. There are, of course, areas where more work is necessary, such as exploring the audio part of TV, that is, maybe tele-audio rather than television. Or maybe we should have a silent era of TV where there is only image and no sound, a kind of pin-hole camera age, a reductive, minimalist approach. Perhaps, with too much we do nothing. And maybe it would be fun to really read TV rather than see and hear it. Words rather than pictures.

But consider this: with TV we don't have to face the real world when we can be on tape or watch the world on tape. We can get all of our models for behavior from that world and give them too. TV won't hurt us; won't bite our leg. With enough disillusionment perhaps more artists will consider doing works using the real world. Consider real experiences, rather than hiding behind the screen. And this may be the real payoff and what we have all been heading toward. The real world may not be so bad.



DIALOGUE WITH A MEDIUM



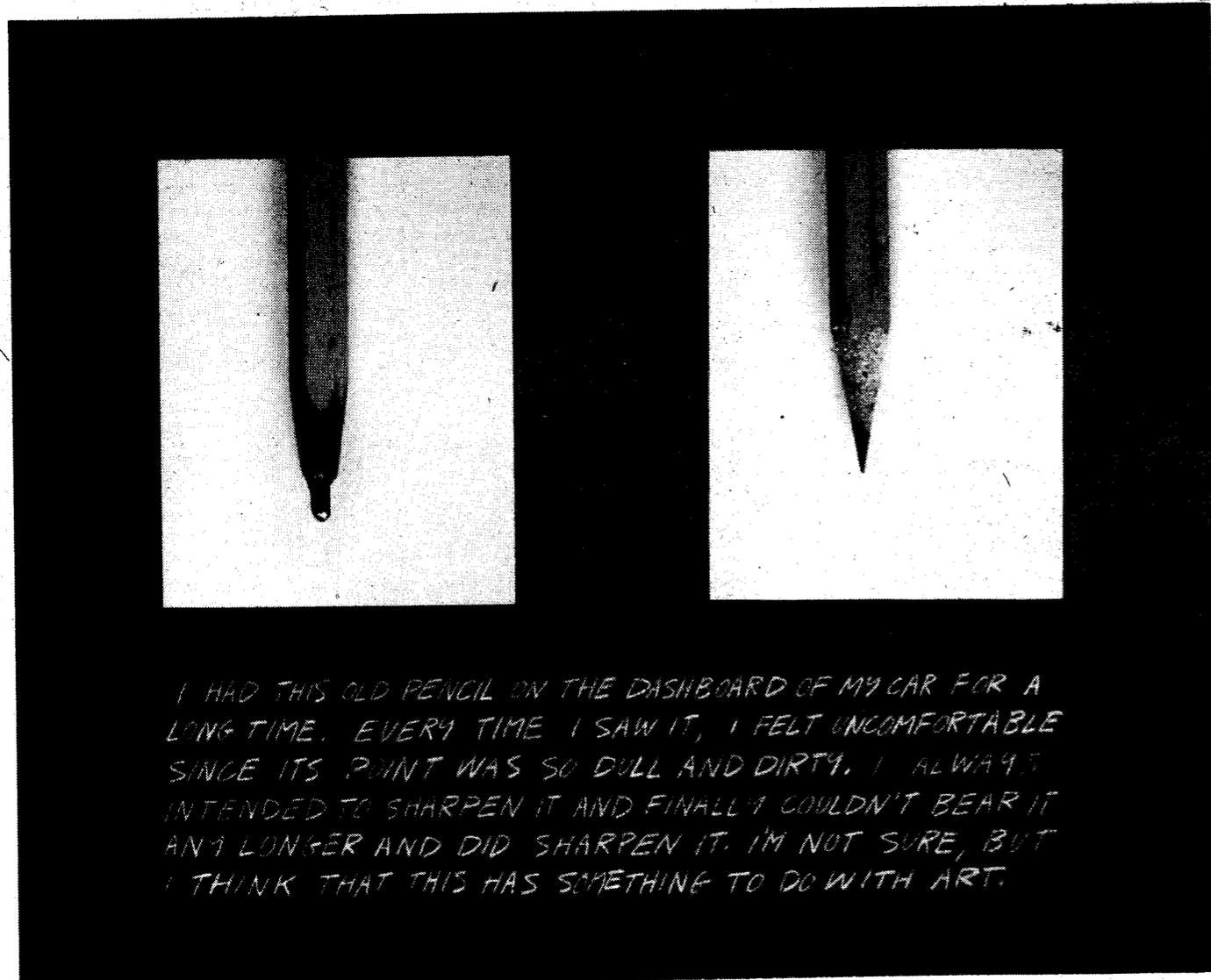
Eleanor Antin

A couple of months ago Eduard Roditi, the Surrealist poet, feeling put up against the wall by a group of us attacking the psychoanalytic mythology he took to be the underlying structure of the self, exploded in exasperation — "Well, look, all of you women have had the nightmare of mice running into your mouth!" Since troops of little white mice tripping into our mouths had never occurred to any of us, we cracked up. But I could understand his distress. His generation, less distrustful of experts than we were, as well as inheritors of a fin-de-siecle, repressive Bourgeois culture, had found the Freudian system useful as a model for a consistent, and as they saw it, interesting and mysterious image of the self. But he was confusing the value of a conceptual model with the quaint, absurd content Freud happened to fill it up with. As an artist attracted to working with my own skin, I also needed a mythological machine; but one capable of calling up and defining *my* self. I finally settled upon a quadripolar system, sort of a magnetic field of 4 polar charged images — the Ballerina, the King, the Black Movie Star and the Nurse. The psychoanalytic method of

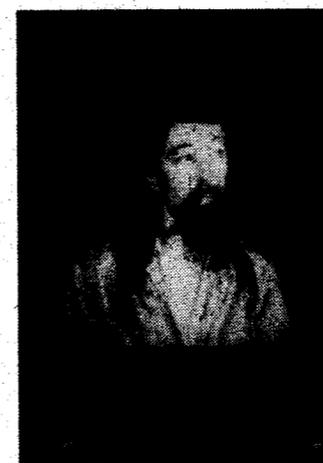
mythological exploration is a conversational one, a dialogue in which 2 people over a period of time share a history which they can then hold each other responsible for. A certain narrative constancy lies out there in the world between them into which they can place new material and to which they can always refer. Since my dialogue is with myself, my method is to use video, still photography, painting, drawings, writing, performing as mediums between me and myself so we can talk to each other. It is a shamanist theatre which remains out there as proof of itself after the seance is over.

The camera is an objectification device unlike my drawings, paintings, or journals. Whereas these are interiorizations of myself, the photographic image, whether moving or still, provides me with a certain recognizable facticity. "I know what you look like" I can always say to myself. "I saw you in black and white" and I can then interrogate the image for the information it contains. Everyone has the experience of trying to sneak up on themselves in mirrors, I don't mean when performing a more or less formal set of preparations before a bathroom mirror, but in those one comes up against unexpectedly, in subways or the lobbies of apartment buildings. You search your approach in the mirror for some truth about how you appear in the world. I had been studying and practising ballet technique for several months and I wanted to know what kind of ballerina I was becoming. So I had myself photographed by the still camera in a set of classical ballet positions. The set of 14 glamorous stills presents a believable and accurate image of a ballerina of the old Russian School, that is not only credible but true for 1/125 of a second. For a less proscribed view, that is the view of the unexpected mirror, I videotaped the photographic session and "Caught in the Act" is the video camera's version of the event. By extending the temporal frame, what was now represented included the difficulty I had getting into many of these positions and introduces "Help" who, along with his broomstick, assisted me in maintaining

TV LIKE 1. A PENCIL 2. WON'T BITE YOUR LEG



I HAD THIS OLD PENCIL ON THE DASHBOARD OF MY CAR FOR A LONG TIME. EVERY TIME I SAW IT, I FELT UNCOMFORTABLE SINCE ITS POINT WAS SO DULL AND DIRTY. I ALWAYS INTENDED TO SHARPEN IT AND FINALLY COULDN'T BEAR IT ANY LONGER AND DID SHARPEN IT. I'M NOT SURE, BUT I THINK THAT THIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH ART.



Eleanor Antin during two of the stages of transformation in *The King*.

both my balance and form in the more difficult poses such as Attitude Croisee. He never appeared in the still pictures. But this is an oversimplification; I shot the still pictures and made the tape at precisely that point in my ballet career when "Help" would be necessary. It's much later in my "ballet history" now, my technique has improved and I could no longer structure the piece in this way without deliberate falsification, or "acting."

My use of video as an interrogation medium is clearer in "The King," a videotape made with the intention of transforming myself into a man by adding hair to my face. But what man? The monitor gave back to me a succession of alternative images, other and not quite the same as my original expectations — medieval alchemist, 19th century American patriarch (Smith Bros. patent medicine man), dwarf, Jesus — interactive gambits with a monitor, each of which I tentatively accepted, refined, held in abeyance, rejected, to finally accept the one I found most appropriate to my facial structure and satisfying to my aspirations — the Cavalier King. The tape offered me a male role, a self, the king, the cavalier king, whose nature would emerge as the implications of his style and historical

that last image away with me after the tape was over. Its similarity to the Van Dyke portrait of Charles I was noticed by everybody. My subsequent research into the "martyr king" who lost his head on Jan. 20, 1649, netted a lot of personal and political biography, some of which was irrelevant and too particularized, but which has a center, a kind of phenomenological core stunningly and intensely related to me, of a small, Hamlet-like, absurd man, alternately power mad and depressed, alienated from the world by a stubborn romanticism — the romantic ruler of an absolute void. Without the videotape I would never have known he was there and, in turn, his presence on tape led me to find him in me.

I make use of video, as I do the other mediums I work with, as a participant in a dialogue. It is essentially a dialectical operation between me and the camera. A decision made by the camera is given back to the monitor which acts as mediator between us. The monitor offers me the opinion of the medium, its suggestion for further dialogue, but the message isn't always so clear. One of my tapes "Black is Beautiful" was especially ambiguous. I had thought I was a black movie star but I didn't yet know what that meant. The nature of blackness was unclear so

position interacted with mine. I carried how could I hope to attain it? What could I offer the camera that could then return to me as an answer? It occurred to me it would be more useful, as well as more honest, to divest myself of blackness, hoping in this paradoxical manner to find out what it meant. To find blackness, by losing it. I unintentionally blundered with the make-up, made it too dark, my costume was far from perfect, this also unintentional, and when I saw the result on the studio monitor I thought I looked more like Little Black Sambo than a black movie star. I was left, one might say, holding a bag of ambiguities about the nature of blackness. But when the tape was shown at the University of California at Irvine everything became clear. A black woman reading white literature, a white woman reading black literature, obviously means something. But what? Black students, white students, they all knew what it meant but nobody could agree. My black self was surrounded on all sides by people with conflicting and strongly held opinions. The medium showed me that what makes her a movie star is not a superficial idea of glamour but a talent for attracting crowds of interested parties, creating a sensation wherever she goes.

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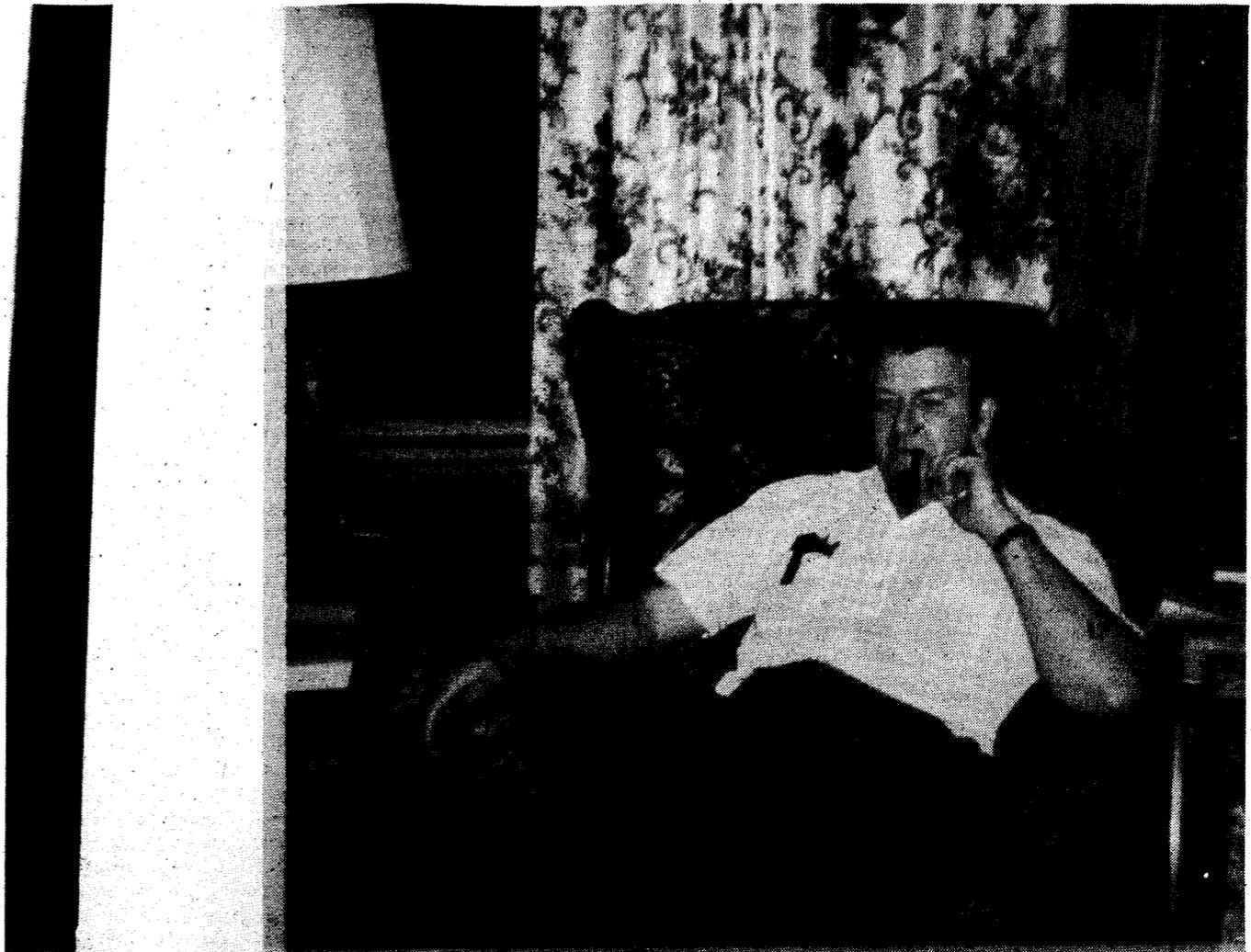


Photo Nancy Kitchell

MR. KITCHELL WATCHES WHILE MS. KITCHELL WRITES

Nancy Kitchell

- 1.) 6 years ago when I last saw my uncle, he told me that in his spare time, he had been working on holographic television, or televised holograms. "Someday," he said, "I will be sitting and talking to you in this room, but I'll really be in California." Like a time machine.
- 2.) I remember *Wide, Wide World, Omnibus, You Are There*, and the first time I actually saw my radio hero, Lash LaRue... Uganda in my living room... the Kennedy assassination... seeing is believing... the world in a box.
- 3.) I walked 14 blocks and missed the first half of the late show to stand in a hot crowd of babbling people and

- watch 5 minutes of Chris Burden getting push pins stuck in his stomach.
- 4.) You don't have to think twice. It's so easy to do, it seems like it has no limitations. It has them.
 - 5.) Shorthand for familiar forms... reconstructing a film image in my mind (*The Late Show*).
 - 6.) Augmentation of familiar forms... talk shows, the news, soap opera, from radio... video from an audiotape tradition.
 - 7.) Expanse: It's in a box... containing is different from framing, implies that there is real space inside (disorienting if different from space implied by the picture)... film as a hole in the wall, through which we can

- see outside.
- 8.) Size (about as big as my head).
 - 9.) Flattening: Video so flattens out identifying facial characteristics that I could make myself look like someone else by shifting points at which tension is centered in my face... much more effectively than I could with photography (*Exorcism*, 10 min. 1973).
 - 10.) It appears to be all there. I do not expect to fill-in, imagine the rest, infer... I think if I leave something out in a videotape, no one will even notice. I am accustomed to creating gaps, expecting viewer fill-in, anticipating it, using it to go beyond the material.



POLITICAL CONTROVERSY



(Note: Leon Golub's response to our request to "make a political statement" was accidentally left out of the last issue's mosaic page. His statement follows:)

LEON GOLUB

Art viewed in action, the information art releases, is more than disinterested aesthetic contemplation and must be viewed for what is said about possibility. The freedom of the artist must be seen in relation to politics (sometimes called the art of the possible), to free movement.

Today's art exists inside/outside corporate structures. Artists shove against American systems, yet glide and strut in corporate rhythms.

The politics of government today says that artists are, at worst, incomprehensible, but, at best, are fun and good exports. This is the freedom of affluence and proves that the system

works for us (while we work for the system). The coercion of oppressive government is a real fact, not hard on art now, but at what future point? Will our government one day look to Brazil or Chile for information on how to handle artists and intellectuals?

LETTER & REPLY

To the Editor:

With regard to the political statements made by artists in *Art-Rite* Number 6, Summer, 1974: More boring than the perennial question of the relation between art and politics is the perennial answer of some artists. "Oh, not again." There must be some reason why the question keeps coming up — and that is interesting to think about.

To respond to the question of art and politics with boredom (being above it all, too fine for such mundane

things) is a kind of adolescent attempt at sophistication. To think that art and the political are opposites or that the personal and the political are opposed is to refuse to, or to be unable to, think beyond obvious and coarse categories. The modulations and interpenetrations of systems imposed for convenient and practical reasons, that is where sensitive and new perceptions lie. The artist claims insight; otherwise she or he would not give answers. She or he should spit on easy answers and the cheapest of roles: the artist as frill-seeker and cornball entertainer.

Yours truly,
May Stevens

Re Miss? May Stevens letter to Editor Art-Rite: An Atom-Bomb Maggot and Parasite Community (atom-bomb and parasite being concomitant statements) with that much lack of respect to its ever queer future (physically, mentally, spiritually, materially, and individually) should (perhaps?) be more careful about deliberate neglect to that very same future.
A.M. Fine

EXCERPTS FROM A TAPE: "ARTISTIC"

By Les Levine

What the audience expects from the artist is that you be some heroic figure, which they can look up to. They want you to say, "I'm the greatest God Damned artist you have ever seen. I'm the greatest." But as soon as you've said it, the very instant you say it, they say, "Look at that artist saying such awful, pretentious, ugly things about himself." But they still have to have the satisfaction of you presenting yourself as some hero.

When you present yourself in such a way that you say, "Here I am trying to sing before you. I can't sing, but I'm trying to sing. And it's totally obvious that I can't sing," then you're no better than they are. That's the way they are. They know they can't sing. Here you are doing what they can do, doing exactly what they do, and you're not being any better than them. You're not allowing yourself to be any better for them. They're embarrassed you're not any better than them. They're also irritated you're not any better than they are. They've relegated everything to professionals. They assume that if you can't sing, you're not supposed to sing. Only doctors are supposed to know about medicine; only newspapermen know anything about newspapers. The system knows only about itself. Nobody else knows about it. So a person who's not a singer, couldn't sing. That's out of the question. They have this sort of middle-class conception about specialists. And they want the artist to be a specialist. That's what they want from him — that he not fall down on his job. So when they're embarrassed by him being not better than they are, they don't just assume that indeed maybe he is no better than they are. They won't accept that. They won't accept the artist saying, "I'm not better than you. I'm just as fucked-up as you are."

What they will say is: "He's gone mad." Because being no better than they are, is a state of madness. As far as they can see, being no better than them is totally mad. "He is an absolute psychological case. That man needs treatment." Because they all need treatment. They need the treatment and now you've given them something which is a serious problem. Now you've given them a model of yourself as themselves. They have some understanding of that model and they start to see that model. So at that point they just automatically assume that something has gone wrong. That they are not witnessing what they are supposed to witness. Their mind will not allow them to authenticate the experience they're having at that time.

It's being dissatisfied with their situation, and the reason they got themselves into that situation in the first place, was being dissatisfied with whatever they were doing before.

So the artist is going to straighten it out for us. The artist will show us how to see. The artist will see for us. But the artist tells you he can't see any better than you can.

It's the condition of being alive. The relationship between the artist and whoever is more a universal relationship between everybody and their condition. So the state of dissatisfaction is a universal state for both the artist and the audience, only its the artist who's pointing it out.

The artist in that situation has got to do something absolute. An absolute form in itself. It can't be questionable. I mean it can't be interesting or boring, or randomly exciting, or new or fresh, or dramatic or undramatic. It can be all of those things, but it's got to be them spontaneously. It can't be made to be them. It has got to be those things because that's what it is; that's the nature of it to be that way. Because when you have decided you will absorb the energy of the audience, and permit the audience to come towards you in such a way that you absorb the audience's anxiety and present the audience back with that anxiety, that has to be a totally genuine thing.

If it's not a totally genuine thing, if you're attempting to conjure it in any way. I think it would be a mess. In that kind of a situation you have got to act as a kind of open screen or open vessel for their vibrations at that given moment. And that's what you've got to feed back. It can't be anything you've essentially created.

It's so far-out, the idea that creativity itself is the most negative aspect of art. That's really beautiful. In, that the artist creating or attempting to create, is like the destruction of creation. By attempting to create something, or creating something, he totally destroys the creative process because the creative process is not to create anything, but to allow what is happening to be absorbed by you in such a way that you can express it and clarify it and make it clear. So that when you're making it clear, people might say that what you've done is creative.

The only thing that is creative is to allow whatever is happening to be re-absorbed into itself, which is what the artist does on his highest level. He mirrors it back. Or it is just the making available of that information however it manifests itself. That is essentially art. Anything other than that is blockage.

I was thinking about how there is a difference between exposing the complete process of how you do something and all the anxieties that go along with it. There's a very crucial point at which it cannot become an experience which people can deal with, because it's just your own personal sickness or anxiety. People just look at you and say, "You have these problems

and these problems need attention." So what I think it has to do with, when it really activates, has something to do with anxieties that are real. The realization that when the audience realizes that you have these problems that you have to deal with, it's that moment when those problems are their problems. That's what a performance is rather than becoming separated from each of them. First of all, you've got to relate to other people's anxieties. You've got to be their anxieties. You've got to become their anxieties in some way, and therefore it can't be the kind of anxiety that merely comes out of your own ego, which would destroy the structure and would make it meaningless. It would make people just think, "Well, that's an ego trip." So it's got to be something which is really a pivotal anxiety of anybody, of any person, not just your own problem.

It has to be an underlying cultural anxiety. And somehow it has also to shed light on that anxiety. It has to expose that anxiety in such a way that people can see it as an anxiety, and not take it to be part of their equilibrium, but see it's not part of their equilibrium, that it's a negative force that's trying to upset them. Trying to pull the rug out from underneath them.

Besides that, the only thing people have to do is feel it. What generally happens with anxiety is that you try to anesthetize it so that you don't feel the pain. You know the anxiety is there because you feel anxiety and you try to rid of it as quickly as possible, like with American pills, drugs, etc. The whole point is to feel anxiety because when you totally feel anxiety and begin to understand the nature of it, then it doesn't exist. It just fades away.

Actually it's more complicated than that. Because the first thing to do is to feel the anxiety. Let it all of a sudden out in the open, let it overwhelm you, let it get out of control, let it annihilate you. Then second is becoming more aware of that anxiety. Where it arises from. What is the cause that's producing this effect. What is the whole relationship other than simple neurotic self-centeredness. Once you get into the cause and effect and see the whole landscape, everything changes.

The idea is to center one in one's space. At least demand that amount of reality. That you are here now. If someone is talking to you in a space or having a conversation with you in a space, that you should feel the presence of that person, and the communication is based on what is possible to communicate at that moment, and not on some secondary notice. I mean if you're in a place and you make some kind of verbal exchange with a person, even though you've made a verbal exchange with that person, there's not necessarily any communication. Nothing has been communicated. Because what you've done really is express the sort of surface level facade of how society says you must talk to one another, or how you must get along. If you're in a space or a room with a person, and you demand that they absolutely

respond to you, that they be themselves in this situation, and because they are themselves, you automatically would have to be more of yourself. And so that would be very direct communication. It's very difficult for people. They don't want to do that or they can't do it.

There's the milk. The container of milk on the table there has to do with the idea that all ideas in that kind of space are external ideas. What I meant when I said, "There's the milk," is that all things you have in any given situation are external concepts. They're not your concepts. You don't know how you feel about them. The world has these things and you're in the world so you take these things that the world has at that moment. You go to a supermarket and buy everything that everybody else buys. Not all the things. But you don't think about whether that stuff should be in the supermarket in the first place. That never occurred to you. That's what I mean about your own communication with yourself. All these things that you think you're thinking, or anybody thinks they're thinking. They're not thinking. They went into the supermarket, which is a pre-set kind of situation, and the supermarket said to them, "you should eat the stuff that is here." And they do it. Then they think, they thought they should do it. But they didn't think they should do it. When they talk to somebody, what they're saying to that person is the same thing. All the words that are coming out came out of another supermarket. Not a food supermarket, but another supermarket — a word bank. They deal with it the same way. They think it's all their own words and all their own way of thinking, but it's not. The very least one should demand of life is that you're actually saying what you're saying, and you're actually thinking what you're saying. That's not a very big demand.

Space Walk. Well, the camera is on a dolly which is a thing that moves around a room and it holds a camera nice and steady, but it also makes it mobile. So I'm walking around the room with the camera, with my eye to the camera, looking at everything that is in the room. I go through the room very slowly, looking at everything. Then I come back round the other side and go back out again. It takes about a half an hour to do that. What I'm talking about in that situation is about being lost in the space. About being completely lost in the space that you're in. Just simply the space that you're in. The fact I live in. Not any psychological version of space, but just that particular space. Of not understanding what it means to me that the space is there at that particular point. And that relationship to my mind or body is not there. That I could sense that space in any way that I might understand what it means to me. Or what difference does it make to me if I'm standing on the floor, whether the ceiling is up or down. Does it make anything at all to me? Is there any way I can sense that way of thinking about

ceiling or floor?

One of the points that comes up is that the space which is inside, is my space, and the space which is outside the space, is not my space. So the space which is inside the space, is the context for my life. But it's not a context for my life, because I'm in the space and I don't understand the space and I don't understand what being in the space has to do with my life. I can understand, for instance, that the things that are in the space are things that I brought in, because I liked them or wanted them or any combination of reasons. But I don't understand why I brought them into the space that way, and made that space, and whether this particular space would be ideal for the way I think or not. Is there anything about this space that I can really sense? I try to think about the things that are in the space, that are in everybody else's space. That's a way of thinking about how much it's not my space, because the things that are in this space are what are in everybody else's space. So it's everybody else's space. And so everybody else's space is coming into my space. At that point, I get sort of very irate at the idea that everybody else's space is coming into my space, because I can't understand my space. Because they're making everybody else come into my space. To the point where I can't see what is in the space that is my space. I continue that way and at a certain point I start to think about the audience, and the way they would see what I'm doing. I've gone through 15 minutes of it, right. 15 minutes of this kind of Television is not the most exciting thing you've ever seen. It's a slow moving camera. It sounds incredibly boring. It's like being lost. When you're lost, you're just totally bored with the situation and wish it would end. You're dissatisfied being where you are. Someplace else will give me what I really want.

It is boring if you demand that it be something else. If you demand that it be itself then it is not boring. So at that point, I start realizing or thinking about the audience's anxiety, and trying to change from my own anxiety. The idea that I'm showing them the same thing, again and again. How they would be upset by seeing the same thing again and again. Then I get upset with the audience for coming to see something which they didn't care about, which they didn't want to see in the first place. Coming into my space, when they would never let me into their space. But they were willing to come into my space and look at what's happening in my space and be bored with what's happening in my space when they never gave me an inch for their space.

It goes on in that kind of way, building up to the point where the process of doing it becomes part of the experience as to why you continue doing it. It's an idea originally of a way to see if I could sense the space. But after you're into it 15 or 20 minutes, that idea is not important anymore. What

is important is that the experience of having gone that far into your own space takes you into something else. At that point you want to see what you can do with that, or what of that can become real for you. It's almost to some degree like some kind of self-induced psychodrama. Although psychodrama is too complicated a word for it. It's like you're at a place where you are not able to sense anything, but you go through the motions of doing what you do, and you don't sense anything of what you do, and you don't not sense it either. You just do it. But then you get into a situation which is a sort of a hypothetical, artificial situation, because it is a performance. You get into that situation and you create an exaggerated sense of feeling, in order to see what you can actually feel. So after a certain amount of time, which is not very long, if you're really doing it well, you begin to realize that you really can feel things. That it's not an either-or situation, that you didn't pass that way or go through that thing without knowing whether you felt it or not. That time you felt it. If you feel it once, and you feel that you can feel it, then you want to go on to see what other level you can get to.

It also has to do with the idea that one is feeling all the time, as a natural condition, and what happens in just living, is that one gets anesthetized by the situation, or one creates a condition where one doesn't have to feel; a protective insulation, padding, because if one doesn't feel it's just not too horrible. Everything gets padded, like your loft.

I got involved in the idea, too, that I hadn't chosen this space, that this space had chosen me. That this space had made a decision at some point that I should come into that space. Of course I realize when you start to think about things that way, people would assume you've gone a little crazy. It tends to be insanity if there's not a full understanding. If your understanding is incomplete or if you make one mistake, it's insanity. The actuality is both insane and sane at the same time. Then in your case, it's not insanity because it's a performance.

I think that's what makes it work. It's like if you see Jason Robards or somebody like that, and they go into a made rage, on television or wherever you see them. The more convincing that they are totally mad at that given moment, the more satisfying the performance is. But after it is over, then presumably the person is not mad, but maybe they are.

I find that the main difficulty with theater or performances is that the structure or very nature of performances convinces you that somebody is just performing, acting, playing a role, faking it. When in actuality they should not be performing, but releasing a very immediate mental state or consciousness, cutting through into their reality. It's the problem of not understanding what you're doing, in terms of showing people something. It's just making it another trip.

**HENRY
PEARSON**
OPENS OCT. 22 AT
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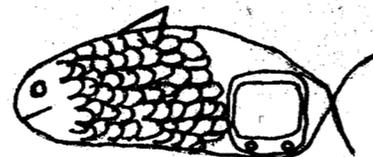
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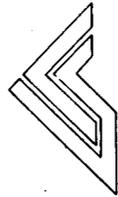


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