The sense of poetry found in form played a larger role in this week’s exhibitions.

Four Video Installations, Steina Vasulka, Center for Contemporary Arts, 291 E. Barcelona Road, through Feb. 24.

Steina Vasulka is able to distance herself from autobiography, and the usual emotional ploys and expressions we tend to look for in art. Yet at the same time, this position allows her to uncover unsuspected layers of mystery and beauty, even in the most mundane or taken-for-granted activities.

Joseph Campbell says this has to do with the artist taking him/herself out of the limitations of time or re-hashing historical territory and into the demands of the present moment — the here and now. By analogy it’s the point or circle rather than the line.

If you’re tired of posturing masquerading as real art and artists, go see this show. Vasulka is a master because she creatively responds to life, not to the demands of the market place, art historians and curators.

Vasulka is working from her own responses to the material and situations at hand. Pyroglyphs, the collaboration with metalsmith Tom Joyce is an obvious example. Alchemical notions derived from using fire and other techniques to manipulate metal are ingrained in the video presentation itself. The imagery of transformation is further enhanced by the way Vasulka introduces this nuance into the rhythm and pacing of the installation.

The viewer is taken into a fantastical realm through Vasulka’s multi-screen, projected image approach with a processed soundtrack originating with Tom Joyce’s work in the foundry.

This same economy of vision, where none of the artistic strengths of the material are wasted, also characterizes two other pieces, Borealis and Drifts. Architecture not only plays an important role in the hardware used to create these works, but also provides a metaphoric cast.

This is especially seen in Drifts, the most obviously autobiographical work, where elements from pieces over a 20-year period are shown in a bridge-like arrangement of monitors. The opening remarks about distance and perspective also are given impetus here.

Though apparently unrelated images are involved, attentive viewers will sense an underlying intimacy about the presentation.


Although it’s been several years since Santa Fe viewers have been treated to Michael Nakoneczny’s intensely strange visual musings, it’s safe to say he’s lost none of his edge.

The mark-making is as raw as ever. Some viewers will call it juvenile. After all, it does conjur up the ballpoint pen scribblings of genitals that adolescent boys often do on their binders during class.

The analogy works up to a point. Nakoneczny does use this kind of energy to drive his work, but this impression quickly fades upon closer examination.

While it may look like Nakoneczny suffers from arrested development or is, at the very least, aesthetically challenged, serious viewers can feel there’s a method to his apparent madness.

The fact is, Nakoneczny recontextualizes the energy we equate with this kind of drawing. He’s not depicting schoolyard concerns, he’s a mad anthropologist rifling the rubble heap of collective urban culture.

Forget about the painstaking removal the academic is trained to use. Nakoneczny is too busy throwing his discoveries out of the dig, stream-of-consciousness style.

Is it only an artistic ploy or does art and Nakoneczny’s life really collide like this? Who cares? It works. There’s a feeling of an authentic, if skewed (and often funny) vision.

Look at the piece with Tylenol, Motrin IB and Advil combined with his rendering of a woodblock print taken from a book on Japanese art.

It’s a strange vision. But isn’t vision one of those qualities most of us long to see and feel in an artist’s work? Yes, there’s something manic about his vision, but it’s hard to imagine him having trouble getting up each day. There’s just too much for this contemporary scribe to record.

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Video art is a knotty conundrum, an oxymoron nearly, that has yet to be resolved!

notes in his excellent essay that accompanies Ms. Vassulka’s work here: “For Steina, a concert violinist, the images and sounds of a multiscreen composition are equivalent to musical polyphony, functioning like voices and instruments in an ensemble. The multiscreen works in this exhibition...are audiovisual equivalents of the trio, the quartet, the sextet...image and sound is edited to integrate with the others in an audiovisual point-counterpoint organized around duration, interval, rhythm, repetition, and series.”

In the old days, Home was where the Heart was. Odysseus, Homer’s (no pun intended) hero, couldn’t wait to get back. And there was no place like it for Dorothy. (She got that right, but for all the wrong reasons.) In the modern experience, Home was where the Hurt was. Twain’s Tom Sawyer couldn’t get away fast enough, and Thomas Wolfe’s anti-hero could never go back there again, even if he’d wanted to.

It is this modern, less cheery, dysfunctional (excuse the expression) aspect of the psychological and emotional terrain around Home that Nancy Sutor and Richard Hooker survey in their two-person exhibit at Eidolon, Home: The

HOME: The Topography of Place Richard Hooker, Nancy Sutor now through March 3 Eidolon 2071 Palace Ave.