

August 31, 1979

My dear Friends:

I have time only for a brief note to say again how much I enjoyed your company this summer. Your kindness, generosity, intelligence and friendship are very important to me. I enjoyed you more, and felt closer to you, each time we were together. Each of you individually, and your relationship as a couple, is inspiring to me. I get so much out of being with you -- I wish I were in a position to give more in return.

Curiously, I feel I should apologize for my distraction with Kittie, but that's just my binary nature. On the one hand I wanted to be with you to talk in the way we talk, to grow closer in understanding and affection, without the modifications Kittie's presence made necessary. On the other hand I needed to be with her for reasons that are not entirely clear to me yet. Let us say I was lonely in more ways than one and, at this moment in my life, I needed the experiences she made possible. It was a healing, nourishing affair in spite of the difficulties, in spite of the impossibility of communication such as that which I share with you. I learned, I grew.

I feel deeply kindred with you both, that you reflect my true self back to me. You reminded me who I am at a time when I was rather confused and lost, and helped me regain my optimism, courage and self-respect. You made me realize how isolated I am from my true community, from those with whom I can "commune-icate." To live without community is to live without self-knowledge. Thanks to you I feel stronger, healthier and more positive than I have in a very long time. Good thing, too, because I'm completely broke, can pay rent for only one more month, and don't really know what to do about it. But I feel fine anyway...

Enclosed is a check for the videotape, for which I am very grateful. There is also the LSD, two tabs for each of you. They say it's the same as the other but a bit stronger. Hope you're ready to do some serious negotiating with the Great Instructor...I also bought a gram of opium, which I've never experienced before. Soon I shall become acquainted with this legendary character...the dreamer of dreams.

I intend to maintain a steady correspondence with you; there is much that I haven't the time to say right now, and experiences ahead which I will want to share with you. So please let me know where you are in the Land of Enchantment.

Erwin Schrodinger, discoverer of that enigmatic reality known as wave mechanics, said: "The fact that anything is experienced and encountered at all is the most profound occasion for astonishment. Yet this astonishment is itself very astonishing. Surely astonishment and wonder are what we feel on encountering something that differs from what is normal or expected. But we encounter this world only once. We have nothing with which to compare it; how can we approach it with any expectation? Yet we are astonished, puzzled by what we find, even though we're unable to say what we should have found in order not to be astonished, or how the world would have to be constructed in order not to constitute a riddle."

Love,  
Gene

# THE VIDEOSPHERE

8485 Brier Drive, Los Angeles, Ca. 90046

Tel: 213-656-7527

July 22, 1978

Dear Woody & Steinna:

Thanks very much for sending the excellent AFTERIMAGE interview and photo layout. It's beautiful and your thoughts are compelling.

My book THE FUTURE OF DESIRE will be done by the end of September, published next spring.

My current thoughts on the significance of video tools: the extreme case would be, through their use, (1) de-reification of the culture, and (2) re-socialization of autonomous individuals. This would represent a transition from the logic of heteronomy (I'm governed by others: the industrial model) to the logic of autonomy (I govern myself: the post-industrial model).

John Minkowski was just here & said he'll bring me to Buffalo this fall for a lecture. The subject of that talk will be: THE THEORY OF THE OBSERVER -- THE NEW EPISTEMOLOGY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR MEDIA STUDY.

Hope you both are healthy, happy and satisfied.

Love,  
Gene

A VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH PROJECT SPONSORED BY:

The National Endowment For the Arts • The Rockefeller Foundation • The Rockefeller Brothers Fund

January 22, 1978

Dear Steina & Woody:

Just a note to thank you both for your kindness and generosity -- and the splendid dinner in Ft. Erie. I always enjoy your company and conversation and I wish we could spend more time together. I feel kinship with you.

Also, your interest in my work and your attention at the lecture meant a great deal to me. I'm so isolated from my true "reality community" that I often lose sight of my accomplishments and grow melancholy.

I'm transcribing the lecture tapes now. However, I won't send the raw transcript by itself; rather, I'm going to integrate new material into it which will make it much more complete, understandable, and useful. That should be finished by early January, and I'll send a copy to John Minkowsky. I'm eager for your response.

Steina, the Schubert quintet is exquisite, heartbreaking, utterly beautiful. I've been listening to it constantly, morning and night. It clears my head. What a lovely gift! Thank you so much...someday I'll use it in a movie or videotape.

I hope you both have a very warm and memorable holiday season. Hope to see you again in the spring under more leisurely conditions.

Love,  
Gene

December 25, 1977

Dear Steina and Woody:

I want to thank you most sincerely for the generous letter of recommendation you wrote in support of my application for the position of Curator of Film and Video at the Long Beach Museum of Art. However, I've decided to withdraw my application, and I want to explain why.

First, the only reason I considered the job at all was fear of being broke and unemployed -- a circumstance I've endured several times in the seven years I've been working on my new book, and which appears to be imminent once again. However, to take this job would mean to delay indefinitely the completion of my book at a time when I'm very close to finishing. At the very least it would have meant a delay of one full year in getting the book published.

Second, I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the 30 letters of recommendation I received, about a third of them from persons I've never met. I wasn't expecting the enthusiastic response I got. The sincere appreciation of my work as expressed in these letters touched me profoundly and caused me to reconsider my priorities. In fact, the letters have given me the courage to continue working on my book till it's done without compromise. I'm very pleased with this decision and I thank you for helping me make it.

I've enclosed an essay which appears in the current issue of CoEvolution Quarterly. It represents the barest skeleton of ideas in the book. The final text will include about 300 pages of biology and evolutionary theory, and another 100 pages of technological analyses. I've decided to change the title of the book. It will be called The Future of Desire.

Gratefully yours,

Gene

November 22, 1977

Steinna and Woody Vasulka  
257 Franklin Street  
Buffalo, New York 14202

Dear Friends:

Greetings, and I hope all is well with you both. I'm applying for David Ross's job as Curator of Film and Video at the Long Beach Museum of Art, and I'm wondering if you'd be willing to write a letter of reference in support of my application.

Since I have none of the formal requirements being sought -- no education, no curatorial experience, no video production experience -- I believe my only chance of getting the job (which I desperately want and need) rests exclusively on my reputation and the support of peers and colleagues who can testify regarding my knowledge of the field and whatever reputation and/or respect you think I have in the video/film/art/foundation community.

Since this is a Civil Service job, I don't know to whom such a letter should be addressed; therefore, if you're willing to do so, could you please send it to me, addressed to "To Whom It May Concern, Long Beach Civil Service Board."

Even though I'm not yet finished with my book (soon! soon!) I'm out of funds again and so I must seek further support for my work, which the Long Beach job represents, and which I think I can serve well.

Many thanks for anything you can do.

Love,  
Gene

19 October 1986

Dear Woody and Steina:

Here's your Spanish Civil War tape and a set of the pictures I took at your place. I am gradually searching through the tapes you gave me and will return them within the next month or so.

By the way, I discovered that the digital sampling tape called "Zoolook" is in fact by Jean-Michel Jarre. Amazing: he usually isn't that good. And the female voice on that tape is Laurie Anderson.

In any case, I'm slowly editing together some new tapes for you, which I'll send in a few weeks.

Every morning I spend an hour transcribing the tapes of our discussion with Peter. It is a tedious process. Because of the difficulty of understanding both Woody and Peter, it's taking about four hours for every hour of tape. But it's worth it, I think. I'm also editing a bit as I go along. The transcript will be useful for the next round of discussions, which should occur in Rome, and then perhaps in Los Angeles, or in Santa Fe again?

Anyway, I should have the complete transcript in about two weeks. I'll send it to you with some music.

Gene

GENE COMES TO SANTA FE:

I'd like to spend about ten days there in the middle of October, from the 9th to the 19th. This will only be possible if I get a gig from Bob Gaylor and if Mort lets me use his house, which he offered to do. Also, I would need that car you said you could loan me. So there are a lot of "ifs" but I'm working on it.

I think of you both very often and I miss you a lot. I feel a close spiritual connection with you. It would be good to spend time together in the autumnal days of October. I'd bring my reading/writing with me and work a lot at Mort's place.

I'm writing well, producing real pages at last. I'm feeling strong and positive and inspired by life, change and the mystery of everything. Hope to see you soon.

Love,  
Gene

11 August 1986

Dear Woody and Steina:

Here's some music for you. It was difficult to decide, since I'm not sure about your tastes. So I just went with what currently interests me. In general it tends to be ethnic (or electro-ethnic) and rather moody. A few comments:

"Moods of the World" (Side A)

1. The Goldberg aria is from a transcription for string trio of the entire "variations," by a Russian violinist. I can send the whole thing if you like it.
2. "Diva" is the title of a movie from which this piece was taken. It's an aria from an opera called "La Wally" by Vladimir Cosma. The soprano is Wilhelmina Fernandez.
3. Clannad is a contemporary group from Ireland.
4. The Icelandic hymn is by a composer in Reykjavik whose name is Thorkell Sigurbjornsson. It was arranged and recorded by an American folk quintet who call themselves Fiddle Fever.
5. Arvo Part is Lithuanian. Mort S. knows him. The piece I'm sending you is from a long suite called "Tabula Rasa." I can send it if you want to hear more.
6. I'm crazy about Bulgarian singing. There are four songs from three different albums on the two tapes I've sent to you. The harmonies are beautiful, both ancient and very modern.
7. Norman Salant is a jazz musician/composer. This is his arrangement of a traditional Turkish hymn, "Molih Ta."
8. I'm sure you're familiar with Jon Hassell. This is something he did with David Sylvian.

(Side B)

1. Japan is a contemporary British rock group. This is their gamelan piece.
2. Kate Bush is an avant-pop singer.
3. Popol Vuh is a german "new age" group that does all of Werner Herzog's films.
4. Another amazing Bulgarian chant...
5. Djur-Djura is a popular Algerian female trio.
6. Sukay is a Peruvian folk group
7. Likewise for Kasha Paya
8. from the film "El Norte."
9. Inti Illimani is probably the best-known political/folk group in South America.
10. More from "El Norte"
11. Carl Stone is a Los Angeles composer. This is tape loops.

"Penguin Cafe Orchestra"

This is one of my favorite groups: minimal but whimsical, lyric, sometimes elegiac, always surprising. The selections here are from five different albums.

"West to East"

1. Jon Hassell's "Chor Moire," a tape-loop masterpiece.
2. Hiroshi Yoshimura is Japan's Steve Reich...
3. John Surman is from Germany
4. Wim Mertens is Dutch.
5. and 6. Bulgaria is heaven.
7. Muslim Gauze is an American electro-ethnic group.
8. A fragment from Jon Hassell to end it all...

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23 DECEMBER 1986

DEAR FRIENDS:

THE C. G. BELL TAPES ARRIVED THIS MORNING. IT WILL TAKE A WHILE, OF COURSE, TO LOOK AT ALL OF THEM. I'LL CALL YOU WHEN I HAVE.

MEANWHILE, HERE ARE SOME PICTURES FROM ROME, AND SOME NINO ROTA MUSIC FOR FELLINI AND VISCONTI ("ROCCO") — THE BEST OF ROTA, I THINK, EDITED FROM MANY ALBUMS. IT'S MY CHRISTMAS GIFT TO YOU.

I'M HARD AT WORK ON "VIRTUAL SPACE," MY CHAPTER FOR KIT AND SHERRIE'S BOOK. IT'LL TAKE A COUPLE OF MONTHS. MEANWHILE, I'LL TRY TO WORK ON THE "SANTA FE TRANSCRIPT" AN HOUR A DAY.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I'LL BE IN TOUCH AGAIN SOON.

-Gene