



THE CARNEGIE  
MUSEUM OF ART

4400 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
412 622-3200  
Writer's Direct Dial 412 622-

September 25, 1987

Patty Kerr Ross  
University - Wide Programming in the Arts  
State University of New York  
SUNY Plaza  
Albany, New York 12246

Dear Patty:

This is to confirm that I have arranged with Steina Vasulka to have her work "The West" shipped directly from you to us after the completion of her contract period with you. We will be contacting Donna Lamb of the Gallery Association of New York to begin to make shipping arrangements. If the Gallery Association cannot make the shipment, our registrar, Cheryl Saunders, will contact you to make arrangements for our fine arts shipper.

Please remember to send me the text material for the panel label and for the catalog credits, so that we can properly acknowledge your role in this work. The exhibition is scheduled from May 7 to July 10, 1988, and is a group exhibition with six other artists and we'll have a catalog accompanying the exhibition.

Many thanks for your sound advice concerning the installation of this work. We look forward to having it, and will keep you posted on our progress.

Sincerely yours,

Bill Judson  
Curator of Film and Video

cc: Steina Vasulka

BJ/ju



THE CARNEGIE  
MUSEUM OF ART

4400 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
412 622-3200  
Writer's Direct Dial 412 622-

September 25, 1987

Steina Vasulka  
Route #6, Box 100  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Steina:

Enclosed is a copy of our letter to Patty Kerr Ross, with whom I spoke, and who is extremely helpful and enthusiastic about shipping the work on to us.

She made the excellent suggestion that we borrow from you a second synchronizer as a back-up, since, with you and Woody out of the country, we would have no back-up if something went wrong with the synchronizer. Also, I would certainly appreciate at least one set of back-up tapes. Patty will keep one of her sets of tapes for their records, so she will probably send only one set of tapes on to me here. I would sleep easier if we had one more set of back-up tapes, that is to say, two sets from you. We could pay for the reproduction of a second set of tapes. Who has the masters, and what is the process by which one goes about having another back-up set made? If you give me the information, I will make it happen, and will pay all the costs involved.

Please remember to send me the black and white glossy photographs of the work, with images both from the monitors and of installation situations if you have those as well.

I think everything is under control, and we're looking forward to the show. I will talk with you again before you leave for Japan, and if I have not gotten in touch, please give me a ring before you leave. Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Bill Judson  
Curator of Film and Video

BJ/ju



**State University of New York**

State University Plaza  
Albany, New York 12246

Office of the Vice Chancellor for  
Academic Programs, Policy and Planning

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Office of Programs in the Arts  
518/443-5329

September 30, 1987

Ms. Cheryl Saunders  
Carnegie Museum of Art  
4400 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA. 15213

Dear Ms. Saunders:

I am pleased that Carnegie Museum of Art will be showing Steina Vasulka's piece "The West" that was produced under the auspices of the State University of New York. As you requested, I am sending you and Mr. Judson information on the piece to assist with shipping, installing, and giving appropriate credit in the exhibition catalog and wall label. I've also enclosed the basic press release that we developed to help exhibitors with publicity; a valuation list for insurance purposes; and the installation manual.

Our box list and condition report shows you how many pieces the shipment will contain. We don't have box dimensions because the Gallery Association of New York State has handled all the shipping for us these past three years, and never needed that information. I've written my estimates of the sizes in red on that sheet to help you to plan; they're pretty close, I think.

The credit should read:

The West  
Created by: Steina  
Instrumentation and production assistance: Woody Vasulka  
Four-channel audio environment: Woody Vasulka

Produced by Programs in the Arts of  
State University of New York for SUNY/The Arts on Television  
With funds from the Rockefeller Foundation and  
the National Endowment for the Arts

You should make arrangements to have "The West" picked up from Rhonda Cooper, Gallery Director at State University at Stony Brook. As we discussed, you will call her directly at 516/632-0566 to set a date. As soon as the installation is picked up by your transporter, State University of New York's responsibility for "The West" ceases; all matters are then between your institution and the Vasulkas. I will, of course, be most happy to be on call to answer any questions that may arise. We really love the piece and are proud of our association with the Vasulkas and their work.

Ms. Saunders  
September 30, 1987  
Page 2

As I told Mr. Judson, the parts of the installation that are the most vulnerable to mal-function are the monitors, two of which had to be repaired during our tour; the synchronizer, because it is the unique piece--Woody should give you a back-up if he can; and the decks, which can stick or jam but which can be repaired by video technicians. You should also request a pair of back-up tapes from Steina, just to allow for any problems.

I hope I've covered everything in this letter. If not, just give me a call. I'm pleased the piece will be part of your important exhibition.

Sincerely,

Patricia Kerr Ross  
Director  
Programs in the Arts

PKR:cr

Enc.

cc: William Judson  
Rhonda Cooper  
The Vasulkas ✓

We agree to the above arrangements  
regarding SUNY's responsibility for  
"The West."

---

Steina or Woody Vasulka



**State University of New York**

State University Plaza  
Albany, New York 12246

Office of the Vice Chancellor for  
Academic Programs, Policy and Planning

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Office of Programs in the Arts  
518/443-5329

September 30, 1987

Woody and Steina Vasulka  
Route 6  
Box 100  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Woody and Steina:

I'm so pleased about "The West" being shown at the Carnegie Museum--that's a wonderful booking. I've enclosed two copies of my letter to Bill Judson's registrar so you'll have a record of our arrangements. I've added a signature line for you on one of the copies. Please sign it and return it to me to show that 1) we may send the show to Carnegie, and 2) our responsibility for the piece ends as of that pick-up.

Please do this right away so I can feel easy about the future of the piece and our part in it. Once you're off to Japan, it becomes difficult to settle details.

I hope all is well with you. It has been such a delight to have "The West", and it is with reluctance that I see it leave our care. So let's not lose touch!

Fond regards,

Patricia Kerr Ross  
Director  
Programs in the Arts

PKR:cr  
Enc.

THE/VASULKAS//RT/6//BOX/100//SANTA/FE//NEW/MEXICO//87501//USA//\*/THE/VASULKAS//RT/6//BOX/100//SANTA/FE//NEW/MEXICO//87501//USA//\*/TH  
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rec'd 4/84

Woody B. Vasulka  
Route 6, Box 100  
Santa Fe, N.M. 87501  
Phone: 505-473-0614  
Soc. Sec. 097-42-3611

Woody Vasulka was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia and studied metal technologies and hydraulic mechanics at the School of Industrial Engineering there. He then entered the Academy of Performing Arts, Faculty of Film and Television in Prague, where he began to direct and produce short films. He emigrated to the United States in 1965, and freelanced in New York City as a film editor for the next few years.

In 1967, he began experiments with electronic sounds, stroboscopic lights and (two years later) with video. In 1974 he became a faculty member of the Center for Media Study at State University of New York, Buffalo and began his investigations into computer controlled video, building "The Vasulka Imaging System", a personal imaging facility.

With Steina, he founded "The Kitchen", a New York Media Theater, and has participated in many major video shows in the States and abroad, given lectures, published articles, composed music and made numerous video tapes. He is a 1979 Guggenheim fellow currently residing in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Since his move, he has produced two video tapes, "Artifacts" and "The Commission", an operatic work based on the legend of Paganini and Hector Berlioz.

STEINA VASULKA  
Biography

Born: 1940 January 20 in Reykjavik, Iceland

Education: 1959-'62 Music Conservatory, Prague

Fellowships & Grants

- 1971 New York State Council on the Arts
- 1972 National Endowment for the Arts
- 1976 Guggenheim Fellowship
- 1977 The Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Selected Artist's Tapes

- 1971 Black Sunrise (with Woody)
- 1973 Golden Voyage (with Woody)
- 1976 Switch: Monitor: Drift:
- 1977 Flux

Selected Artist Exhibitions/Installations.

- 1973 Golden Voyage: New Video by The Vasulkas, The Kitchen, New York
- 1976 Switch: Monitor: Drift:, Collective for Living Cinema,  
New York
- 1982 Allivision, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

Bibliography

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Foundation] Illustrated(New York),vol.2,no.4, March 1976,p.9
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(New York), March 18,1971,p.22
- Mekas, Jonas. "Movie Journal." The Village Voice(New York),  
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The New York Times(New York), April 29,1977, Section C,  
p.32.
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The New York Times(New York), July 4,1972, page unknown.
- Stoney, George C. "The Mirror Machine." Sight and Sound(London),  
vol. 41, n0. 1, winter 1971/2, pp. 9-11.
- Zemel, Carol. "Women & Video: An Introduction to the  
Community of Video." Artscanade(Toronto), vol.30, n0.4,  
Oct.1973, pp.30-40.

### Steina and Woody Vasulka

Steina, born in Iceland, 1940, attended the Music Conservatory in Prague from 1959 to 1963, and joined the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra in 1964. She came to the United States the following year and has been a seminal force in the development of the electronic arts since 1970, both as co-founder of "The Kitchen", a major exhibition center in New York City, and as a continuing explorer of the possibilities for the generation and manipulation of the electronic image through a broad range of technological tools and aesthetic concerns. Her tapes have been exhibited and broadcast extensively in the United States and Europe. In 1978, she had an exhibit, "Machine Vision", at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York. She was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1976 and has received various other grants.

Since moving to Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1980, she has produced a series of videotapes relating to that region, and an installation title, "the West", which premiered at University Art Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico, in May of 1983, and repeated in an expanded version at the C. G. Rein Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico, in January of 1984.

Woody Vasulka was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia, on January 20, 1937. He studied metal technologies and hydraulic mechanics at the School of Industrial Engineering there. He then entered the Academy of Performing Arts, Faculty of Film and Television in Prague, where he began to direct and produce short films. He emigrated to the United States in 1965, and freelanced in New York City as a film editor for the next few years.

In 1967, he began experiments with electronic sounds, stroboscopic lights and, in 1969, with video. In 1974, he became a faculty member of the Center for Media Study at State University of New York, Buffalo, and began his investigations into computer controlled video, building his "Vasulka Imaging System", a personal imaging facility.

With Steina, whom he married in 1964, he founded "The Kitchen," and has participated in many major video shows in the United States and abroad, given lectures, published articles, composed music and made numerous videotapes. He is a 1979 Guggenheim Fellow currently residing in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Since his move, he has produced two videotapes, "Artifacts" and "The Commission", an operatic work based on the legend of Paganini and Hector Berlioz.

**Biographies obtained through the Carnegie Institute Film Section Office as submitted by the artists.**

Selected Exhibitions/Installations:

- 1971 Max's Kansas City, New York  
"The Vasulkas"  
February 8-10
- Global Village, New York  
"Jackie Curtis' First and Second Television Special"  
February 28
- The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
"A Special Video Tape Show"  
December 3-15
- 1972 Video Free America, San Francisco, CA  
"Video Presentation"  
September 14
- 1973 Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY  
"Circuit: A Video Invitation"  
April 17-May 18
- 1974 La Cinematheque Royale de Belgique,  
Knokke Heist, Belgium  
Knokke Heist Film Festival  
December 25-January 2, 1975
- 1975 Serpentine Gallery, London, England  
"The Video Show"  
May 1-25
- XIII International Biennial, Sao Paulo, Brazil  
"Video Art USA"  
October 17-December 15
- 1976 The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
"Projects: Video IX"  
July 12-September 30
- 1978 Video Free America, San Francisco, CA  
"Digital Images"  
April 1
- 1982 Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, PA  
"Allvision"  
December 18-February 27, 1983
- 1983 Albuquerque Museum of Fine Arts, Albuquerque, NM  
"Video as Attitude"  
May 13-June 26

**Grants/Awards:**

- 1971 Creative Artists Public Service Grant (Woody)  
New York State Council on the Arts S/W
- 1972 National Endowment on the Arts and NCET at KQED  
Television Stations S/W
- 1976 Guggenheim Fellowship (Steina)  
National Endowment on the Arts (Woody)
- 1977 Corporation for Public Broadcasting and NEA as  
Artists-in-Residence, PBS, Channel 17, Buffalo, NY S/W
- 1979 Guggenheim Fellowship (Woody)
- 1983 National Endowment on the Arts S/W

**Positions:**

- 1974 Associate Professor, Center for Media Study, SUNY,  
Buffalo, NY (Woody)
- 1971-85 Numerous Artists-in-Residencies S/W

## THE VASULKAS SHOW & TELL:

### PART ONE:

THREE 2 CHANNEL TAPES WITH  
INTRODUCTION BY STEINA

- |                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| 1. THE WEST          | 30 MIN |
| 2. GEOMANIA          | 15 MIN |
| 3. THE GENTLE PEOPLE | 15 MIN |

### PART TWO:

THE THEATER OF HYBRID AUTOMATA  
(SEE FLYER)

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DESCRIPTION OF #1 and #2 on  
SEPARATE SHEETS.

DESCRIPTION OF #3:

JAPAN - YET ANOTHER LOOK...

## Artist's Statement

I have always seen the video camera as a tool, as an instrument, not so different from a musical instrument. On a violin you have to practice, you have to bow, you have to know how to get musical effects. If I wanted to get a visual effect, and I was using a camera, I needed to practice. . . . It was my rebellion to put motors to the camera, to devise a moving platform, or use a car or any other way to get moving images that were in a continuous motion. . . .

For both Woody and me the magic of video was (and still is) the electronic signal. The first video we looked at was a feedback, a phenomenon of the medium itself. Woody has always stayed very close to the signal and the philosophy of the signal, whereas I ventured out into using machines and motors, and then I became very interested in optics. . . . My work with optical and motorized devices actually occurred in space. My *Machine Vision* installations were performing systems, and they occur in the studio, or out in the landscape or an exhibition. . . .

To me, living in the 20th century, nature not altered by man is romantic. It is mostly romantic in the sense that landscape can never be ugly. I have spent a lot of time thinking about what is beautiful art and what is ugly art, and why people engineer certain ugliness into their images, often very successfully—Picasso probably the most successfully. If you are working with the landscape you basically eliminate ugliness, because there is no such thing as an ugly landscape. That is, in a certain way, intimidating. It is very romantic. It was what a lot of Romantic painters painted. I have no defense, but it is hard to find ugly images through the lens of the camera. The camera does not want to render ugly images the way painters can—by distorting reality. . . .

I moved to Santa Fe from Buffalo, New York in 1980 because I wanted to experience what it is to live in the

beauty. I did not want to think that it was going to affect my images as much as it did. For the first two years I resisted it, first of all, because the beauty of the West is so seductive. And, secondly, I didn't feel up to it. I mean, are you going to take on God?

Also I lost my studio. I had always had large interiors in which to work. Suddenly, we were restricted to a small house. I just went outside one morning and said, "Well, my studio doesn't have any walls and the ceiling is very high, and it's blue." I just adopted the whole Southwest as my studio. So that's when I made my peace with the idea that the landscape of the Southwest was going to be my image material.<sup>1</sup>

Any action of man on land stays recorded for long in the Southwest. In no other region of this country does the presence of the sun play such a significant role in the ecology of land—arid and eroded. The exceptional clarity of the night skies forms notions of extra terrestrial importance in the minds of its inhabitants. The landscape, by its dimension and by its geometric and textural variety, inspires man to create harmonious structures, dwellings and other earth works. Significantly, the Very Large Array (VLA) radio telescope system utilizes these conditions and has also inspired profoundly meditative pieces of land art based upon geo-observations and other events related to the position of stars.

*The West* is a video environment involving situations where human expression results in the marking of earth by building dwellings and ceremonial structures—creating works of art and developing scientific instruments of landscape proportions.

<sup>1</sup> These remarks are all excerpted from an interview with Steina Vasulka by Malin Wilson on 7 August 1986 and published by The Jonson Gallery, The University Art Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

*Steina*

# THIS IS A STATEMENT ON "THE WEST" BUT IT DESCRIBES "GEOMANIA" AS WELL

Born in Iceland in 1940, Steina Vasulka attended the Music Conservatory in Prague from 1959 to 1963, and joined the Iceland Symphony Orchestra in 1964. The following year she moved to New York to work as a freelance musician, where she was joined by her husband Woody Vasulka, the Czechoslovakian filmmaker whom she had met in 1962 and married in 1964.

In 1969, Steina Vasulka became interested in video, as did Woody. A performing musician, Steina approached video quite differently from Woody, who was trained as an engineer and had worked as a writer and filmmaker. In 1971 the Vasulkas co-founded The Kitchen, still an important center for experimental video, music and the performing arts in New York City, and during the years 1970-74, they collaborated on several video tapes. Since then, they have maintained clearly defined roles in their work, and although one may assist the other on a project, the conception and control remains with one or the other. In 1973 they moved to Buffalo, New York, where they taught at the Center for Media Study at the State University of New York, Buffalo. In 1980 the Vasulkas moved to Sante Fe, where they continue to live and work.

In 1975 Steina Vasulka began a series of tapes and installations based on what she termed "machine vision." Using a variety of devices to rotate video cameras in front of mirrors, monitors, and other cameras, she began creating tapes and installations that depicted extraordinarily complex spaces. For her *Allvision* installation, exhibited at The Carnegie Museum of Art in 1982, there were no pre-recorded videotape images. Instead two closed circuit cameras were mounted on a machine that rotated them around a spherical mirror; the resulting live images of activities in the gallery were seen on two pairs of monitors. Upon entering the gallery, one encountered three kinds of spaces: the three-dimensional gallery itself, which housed the rotating machine and monitors as sculptural objects; the distorted space seen reflected in the spherical mirror; and the whole space taken in by the cameras and visible on the monitors. Each of the cameras could "see" 180 degrees of the gallery reflected in the spherical mirror; the resulting set of images covering 360 degrees were seen on each of the pair of monitors.

Steina Vasulka's three versions of space corresponded to three different ways of understanding reality: 1) as a

physical, material presence, with objects verifiable by touch; 2) as a visual perception, in which the material world is rearranged or distorted (as in the curved mirror) but which is nevertheless comprehensible as an optical entity, seen like a painting or a photograph, but not touchable; and 3) as a concept, in which an abstract system, (that is, transmission of the 180-degree images of the three-dimensional space from the cameras to the flat screens of the monitors) must be taken into account, like a mathematical system, before the reality it presents is understood.

In the case of *Allvision* the esthetic experience of the piece was shaped by the particular movement of the machine's rhythmic revolutions—a sort of mechanical dance. The sense of the machine itself, and of the video process, was central to this work. *Allvision*, with its emphasis on the material properties of the medium as the subject as well as the vehicle for expression, was characteristic of most of Vasulka's work prior to *The West*. In *The West* (1983),

## Curator's Statement

Vasulka has once again engaged the complex space of earlier works like *Allvision*, and indeed many of the images were shot using that piece's revolving mechanism. However, the pre-recorded, processed and edited imagery of the videotapes so important to *The West* presents a new departure in her work. When landscape had appeared in her earlier work, as in *The Golden Loaves*, a videotape in which the landscape of her native Iceland is discernible beneath the distorting manipulations of the video signal, one's experience of the work was still very much centered on the video medium. In *The West*, however, attention to the video process has been subsumed by what is represented—panoramas of the New Mexican desert, views of the ancient, earth-colored adobe-brick walls, and vistas dominated by immense telescope dishes which echo the shape of Vasulka's spherical mirror.

*The West* revels in the vastness of the western spaces, the primeval quality of the landscape and ancient architecture, the rich colors of the earth and sky, and the all-encompassing light and warmth of the sun. The complex layering of spaces and the electronic manipulation of image, color and form so central in Vasulka's earlier work is still an important aspect of this installation. But *The West* is emphatically a tribute to the grandeur of nature.

**BILL JUDSON  
CURATOR,  
THE CARNEGIE  
MUSEUM OF ART,  
PITTSBURGH, PA**

MAY 3, 1977

DEAR WOODY AND STEINA:

IT WUZ' GOOD...!

Dan is off to the Lake (Wisconsin) to work on the DIP (digital image processor);

Tom is 'speeding' wonderfully as usual...!

CBS just dropped off LOGO yesterday for ~~CROSSEYE~~ to process into graphic-wonder for their 10:00 and 6:00 NEWS trips here in Chicago...that interfacing with the commercial-world is very weird; ...a 3 second spot to be used repeatedly? Now eye ask you: "IS THAT ART or FART?"

I have found some stuff, Woody, as you requested that is 'personal' as compared to public-art conscious stuff; will be dubbing that-over for you in next couple of weeks and sending on...

Enclosed is check for \$25.00 to cover R/E documentation printing-duplicating etc. costs... It will be so helpful; as you know we are essentially helpless without it.

Again, I must tell you (both) how inspired, literally, eye was to see from your video tapes. Jane and eye are planning and con-figuring the I-P into the Videotime Van for trip 'cross AMURICA in order to <sup>do</sup> outside' va-did-deo as you inspired in tape, Steina...we just loved that B/W processed stuff and know now that we too should go forth...! The R/E work of yours Woody, makes me much more committed to exploring the raster-modification domain via I-P and Hewlett-Packard scope which is soon to arrive.

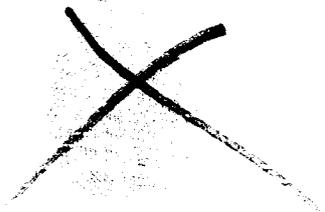
-----  
MARK FAUSNER, my partner at the 'tute' is presently dubbing/editting the tape made of your rap/presentation a couple of weeks ago. He will be sending it to you very soon. You should send the R/E documentation to him because he will be doing the work on the R/E and running our facility this summer.

MARK FAUSNER  
School of Art Institute of Chicago  
Video Area  
Columbus Dr. and Jackson St.  
Chicago, Illinois 60603

LOVE:



CROSSEYE



## Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute

January 28, 1983

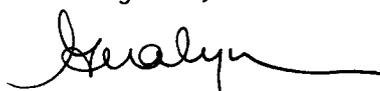
Dear Steina,

Everything is still going well here. Reaction to Allvison has been very good and everyone likes the piece very much.

I've enclosed a check which covers your expenses on equipment for Allvision and also your costs for the shuttle to your plane.

Take care & keep in touch.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Geralyn".

Geralyn Huxley

Hi to Woody!



MUSEUM OF ART

4400 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
412 622-3200  
Writer's Direct Dial 412 622- 3200

May 6, 1987

Steina and Woody Vasulka  
Route 6, Box 100  
Next to St. Isadore Church  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Vasulka:

We are now starting detailed arrangements for the landscape video show opening here in the spring of 1988. We very much look forward to your participation in this exhibition.

Bill Judson, curator of the exhibition, continues to shape and define the show but as he sees it now, the artists in the show will be: Rita Myers, The Allure of the Concentric; Mary Lucier, Wilderness; Dara Birnbaum, Damnation of Faust: will-o'-the-wisp (A Deceitful Goal). We hope to get Bill Viola's Saint John of the Cross; Frank Gillette's Aransas, and Doug Hall's Storm and Stress but arrangements for these works are not complete. We expect the exhibition to open on April 16, 1988 and close on June 25, 1988.

We plan to publish a catalogue for the show entitled American Landscape Video, 1973-1988. We hope you will write a brief statement (one-half to two pages) for the book about The West and/or your work in general. We ask that you send your statement to us by early to middle June. We must reserve the right not to print the statement.

In addition to the statements, the book will contain extensive biographical and bibliographic information on each artist. I've enclosed a copy your resumes taken from our files. We would appreciate it if you would add information up to the present.

The book will also contain three essays: one on American landscape painting reprinted from Barbara Novak's book Nature and Culture; a second by David Ross on the history of video art; and the third by John Hanhardt on landscape video installations. Bill Judson will contribute an introduction linking the three essays

Steina and Woody Vasulka

May 6, 1987  
page 2

and providing an overview of the exhibition. We also intend to publish photographs of the installation of each work as created for this exhibition in the book, though this will require some creative production scheduling. We are seeking a co-publisher for the book and will let you know the results of our efforts.

I hope this provides a brief introduction to the book for you. We will be in touch shortly with more details about the exhibition. Please feel free to call if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Reed Widom".

Mary Reed Widom  
Publications Coordinator

cc: William Judson  
Enclosures: resumes