Ithaca Video Festival: New Landmark

By S.K. LIST

Local landmarks are often seen last, if at all, by the people who live closest to them. Everybody knows that no New Yorker would be caught dead at the Empire State Building or the Statue of Liberty. Personally, I let years go by before I stood in awe on the gorge rim above Taughannock Falls. The same unreasonable situation may prevail, I fear, in regard to local appreciation of the Annual Ithaca Video Festival, organized by Ithaca Video Projects, opening its sixth installment this week at Cornell's Johnson Museum.

Growing from a single evening's presentation five years ago of seven selected tapes, the festival has gained national status. This year, 372 tapes, from all over the country, were submitted, an increase of nearly 150 over last year. Pat Faust, head of programming at WXXI-TV in Rochester and a festival judge this year (along with Anne Volkes, curator of Manhattan's Anthology Film Archives and the Video Projects' Philip and Gunilla Mallory Jones), confirmed that "it's the largest video festival."

As in previous years, the festival will tour through next January to 24 museums, libraries and art and video centers coast to coast. This figure too has increased; last year the festival made 16 stops.

Electronic Wizardry

This year's 20 selected tapes are fascinating, diverse and unusual. The subject matter ranges from political to expressionistic, the treatments from frivolous, the effects from the ridiculous to the sublime. While many outstanding features of the works included stem from the arcane directives of video sophistication—what amounts to electronic wizardry involving computerized alignments, "digital/analog" equipment and so on—there is nothing exclusive about their appeal. A viewer needs nothing but an attitude of inquiry and time to find rewards in the festival entries.

Of all the tapes shown, the one that evokes the most unqualified and delighted response is "Instant This-Instant That," a four-minute hop through the world of modern convenience starring Nancy and Susie Twinart. They eat, spray, spread and wear a jumble of "fast" items, all to the infectious beat of the band Taste Test singing the tape's title song. Up-to-the-minute influences of punk, new wave, Fifties graphics and so on are all apparent and used to great advantage. Nancy and Susie are actually Ellen and Lynda Kahn, twins and the founders of Twin Art, and they live in New York City.

Sassy Skill

Similar in tone but much more elaborately communicated is Anita Thatcher's "The Breakfast Table," a "live-action video cartoon," which opens the show. A man and wife, hopelessly trapped in their traditional roles, go about the morning's business in a world that's mostly not real, but drawn on the walls. Pretty soon, while she's hastily step-and-fetching, the wife starts giving in to elaborate daydreams starring herself as a vamp, baseball ace, cloud and so on. Hubby barely notices but it all works out in the end. This piece is effective, mostly thanks to the appeal of the knowing wife, played with sassy skill by Karen Weeden.

A number of what might be called "video toys" are scattered—with a good feel for the importance of pacing—among the more involved tapes in the festival.

"Electronic Masks," for example, by Barbara Sykes, is very attractive and surprisingly humorous, given its abstract nature. Its place, after a semi-documentary on South American Indians, benefits both pieces. However, Sykes' second tape, "By the Crimson Bands of Cyttorak," though kaleidoscopic, is less interesting.

"Apple(s)" by Peer Bode of the Experimental Television Center in Owego uses altered overlays in motion of an extremely simple image—a single large apple—to create what he calls "a speculation about seeing and imaging." "Video," he adds, "is seeing the seeing." In contrast to Bode's formal examination is "Jazz Dance" by Doris Chase, a exuberant depiction of a dancer (or is she three?) like a chalk drawing who sprouts rainbow contrails, all to the music of Jelly Roll Morton.

Two long tapes, in a sense, make a bridge between these shorter pieces, which essentially concern vision as molded by the medium itself, and the more familiar examples of straight visual record. One is the South American "documentary" mentioned above, "The Laughing Alligator," by Juan Downey, a riveting inquiry into the lives of the Yanomomey Indians. First impressions of idyllic primitives deep in the jungle give way to realizations of a foreign way of life in which dead loved ones are eaten to make them immortal, outsiders are suddenly threatened with no explanation and witch doctors prevail. By mixing altered images with more straightforward scenes, Downey conveys both disparity and likeness between the Indians' ways and our own, as well as suggestions of savagery, amorality and drug-induced revelations.

The other bridging tape, "Chott el-Djerid," does not rely upon artificially altered images but rather examines what WXXI's Faust called "the persistence of vision," wherein attention is paid to how we live based on our perception. Bill Viola, whose masterful "Sweet Light" graced the Fourth Video Festival, made this tape about mirages in Tunisia and the wildness of vision naturally distorted. It is an extremely beautiful piece of work.

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All the remaining pieces are worthwhile. Significant among them is "Tapes" by Pier Marton, a bizarre group that presents a rather racked vision of existence. If Marton wasn't so obviously battered by his entire experience and all his thoughts, you'd want to smack him—which may be how he got this way. Fortunately, his self-indulgence is redeemed by being so excessive it becomes funny.

Once more then, the Ithaca Video Festival offers another sample of challenging, superior work in the visual medium we may think we know best, but which, in fact, most people comprehend least of all. It is important to remember that, as festival judge Faust stressed, "not all video is television. Much of the work in the festival belongs in a gallery, belongs in a museum, on exhibition."

While some well-crafted pieces span the demands of both "marketplaces," the festival, Faust pointed out, "has a strong concern to support good gallery pieces." The audience for such works is increasing, she noted.

That's a promising development. Hopefully, Ithaca itself will embrace this excellent festival, grown on home ground, with the audience it deserves.

The Ithaca Video Festival, four hours long, may be seen at Cornell's Johnson Museum through April 16.
Philip and Gunilla Mallory Jones have done it again. Organized their sixth annual touring video festival, that is. Out of 375 entries (there were 225 last year), they, with two other judges, selected the four hours of material that will travel to twenty-four prestigious museums and libraries throughout the U.S. this year.

There are twenty pieces by video artists in the show, ranging from documentaries to computer-manipulated electronic-image works; with humor, pop culture, subjective realities, and new video techniques well-represented in between.

The emergence of video as an art during the last decade is a positive effect of human evolution through technology. Video points to the art of the future with a beam of hope. Now if only some of the high-quality artistic effort demonstrated each year in the Ithaca Video Festival could find its way to network television. Don't hold your breath waiting for that, but by all means, attend the Video Festival at Cornell's Johnson Museum between April 2 and 16. Museum hours are Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The tapes will run continuously, and while four hours may be a long time to sit still, one can always attend in bits and pieces. This is recommended, for second viewings of any of the pieces will always provide additional insights.

Some of them, one might never grow tired of. It's a shame we only have the option of viewing these innovative and thought-provoking images for two weeks out of the year. A permanent collection would be gratefully received, but until we get one, don't miss the chance to expand your knowledge of modern art. Attend the show and make your feelings known. It's a grey old world, and the Video Festival casts some rarified light upon it and us.

Among the works which had a profound effect on this writer's first viewing were: "The Exquisite Corpse" by Ernest Gusella, a tour-de-force of state-of-the-art video editing techniques. The whimsies of "The Breakfast Table," by Anita Thacher, and "Instant This, Instant That" by Lynda and Ellen Kahn, stay with one and don't decay the way less artistic humor does. Both of these could be viewed many times without attrition of interest. The latter features a new-wave soundtrack that will rattle around in the head for some time, and the former skillfully edits and illuminates the Walter Mitty-like fantasies of a browbeaten hausfrau.

"As a Public Service," by Collectivision, is the only straight documentary, a study of the confrontation over the Seabrook, N.H. nuclear plant in October 1979. One wants to see more than is shown, but the effect is still quite unnerving. Those interested in the No-Nukes movement should definitely catch this piece.

"The Laughing Alligator" by [continued on page 22]
start a nationwide 25-city tour carries a lot of weight. Winning hopes soon will.

Despite its rural location, the Hocho Video Festival

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This whole business rests on the shoulders of the Hausho Video Festival's organizers. It also has the unique advantage of being located in a rural area, which means that it can attract a large audience from surrounding towns and cities. The festival features a variety of video art, from experimental shorts to full-length features, and provides a platform for artists from all over the country to showcase their work. It is held in a beautiful setting, with a view of the surrounding mountains, and attracts both local and international participants. The festival also includes workshops and seminars on video production, which attract artists and enthusiasts from all over the world. It is a testament to the power of video art to bring people together and foster creativity.
that is not exactly high on the agenda of any city's priorities. Finally, the St. Paul Port Authority decided the system could be best financed by industrial revenue bonds — an idea New York might consider.

All of these options deserve careful consideration by the Board of Estimate and the city's consultant, the Washington law firm of Arnold & Porter. At the moment Arnold & Porter seems to be approaching the franchising with a set of blinders that allows it to see only the obvious — traditional private ownership of the cable system, with the city thrown a bare bone in the form of minimal franchise fees. The cable companies through their lobbyists and in some cases their close personal contacts with Gov. Carey are already trying to whistle the city's existing 5 percent franchise fee down to 3 percent. Carey, whose campaign funds are lavishly financed by Steve Ross, chairman of Warner Communications (half owner of Warner-Amex Cable Co., a strong contender for city franchising), has become an apostle of deregulation for the cable TV industry over the last few months. If Carey's deregulation bill does pass the Legislature, New York might end up getting almost nothing from its cable TV franchises while a few hundred miles to the north, Boston, which is in the same business with the same companies likely to end up with a franchise here, will be raking in the cash. We don't have to settle for scraps.

Despite its rural location, the Ithaca Video Festival carries a lot of winning weight. Tapes soon will start a nationwide 25-city tour.

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ROAD
Continued from previous page
will be aired over the duration of the festival, but isn't bad for a nonprofit grant-funded organization; many of the arts are approached through a prospective business relationship, providing healthy resumefattening for the beginning video artist.

One of the festival's most interesting aspects, and one the tape that contains much of the way in which tapes are chosen. Jones and a committee, this year's consisting of Barbara Langer (Video Workshop of Memphis Art), Arthur Tsuchiu (Visual Studies Work shop in Rochester) and Curvin Eisen (Atlantic Video, Rochester), screened the practically 300 entries in three days, working day and night, and engaged in open-ended discussion about most of them. No such thing as a democracy here — each winning entry had to be chosen unanimously, meaning panels often had to agree to stubborn colleagues as to a particular tape's more subtle virtues, historically and esthetically.

The screening marathon of Jones, claims, also forces the committee to sift through the "really-grabber tapes," the ones that excite from start to finish. I'm sure this tape the festival is top-heavy with image-processed tapes (six out of 19). Its two performance tapes, A Visual Diary (a performance by Blondell Cummings taped by Shirley Clarke) and Flowers (a performance, sort of, by R'os Barron), are self-consciously idiosyncratic to the point of silliness. One tape, Um Laico de Inspiracao e Morte, a narrative/performance allegory completely incomprehensible to non-Portuguese listeners.

However, the festival redeems itself with the local favorite Body Count (a sort of narrative, with some image processing), made by Ithaca artist Dan Robert. Robert, composer of the tape, Body Count is supposedly an experimental study for a larger narrative work concerning violence, childhood, and Vietnam, but it can only be shown on PBS, but its nine-minute version, orchestrating visual and aural images of kids playing at war with real footage of the Vietnam battlefields of Saigon, is very provocative. At the tape's end, the kids lie bloodied, and Lyndon Johnson's statement "We do not want to flower our youth into battle," seems all the more absurd.

Another two of the best entries are more or less narrative tapes: New Yorkers Kit Ferone and John Santar are tenants to represent their Simlar Nature (which has been shown at Anthology Archives), which divides the accepted screen sections (under which can be discerned a moving background); each division peaks into the daily life of two men, two women, two little alligators and, though very separate in style and look, quite similar. When the four sections then come together, a circle forms, the four coincide and never consciously become aware of their similarities. Not only is this tape absorb ing on TV watch — it looks good, really, within each frame.

Live From Lunds, a comedic tape by Tom Adair and Kenneth Robinson of Minneapolis, deals with the day-to-day genius that could happen in a supermarket at night. At Lunds, a bizarre group of night workers skulk around the racks in semi-nudity, while Bette Midler clones in drag improve upon his/her bustline with some of the riper melons, then bursts into song while bearded shoppers look on. It succeeds because the supermarket is America's favorite icon to camp-with; it posed to be.

The Vasulka's, Woody and Steina, once founders of the Kitchen, now of New Mexico, are well represented by their short image-processing tape, The Urban Episodes, which presents her "machine vision," an almost 360 degree street scene of downtown Minneapolis, which uses two revolving cameras plus mirrors to create a beautiful two-in-one circling view of a city's bustle. Woody's Artificial Reality is another vision to be the dean of computer-manipulated imagery. One ball becomes myriad; a hand holds one ball — within it is seen the mirror image of the scene when the large ball moves. Vasulka continues to invent computer tools, this one a Digital Image Processor.

New York artist and ace image processor Shalom Gorewitz is represented by two tapes, the best of which is the sixminute El Corandero. It has colorizers, synthesizers and other electronic instruments to swathe an Andalusian village with exceedingly unnatural movement and a pulse that beats harder than the noon sun.

Gary Hill's Around and About provides healthy use of a text generating images which move to its rhythm. Hill addresses the viewer as if involved in a relationship with him: "Mayhem in the city is not ready to be complex," and assails us with quickly changing unprocessed images that do not represent, as he says, the words he's saying, "I certainly don't want to threaten your time," he claims, but he manipulates five minutes of it perfectly.

There are two self-consciously "video" selections — Peter D'Agostino's Quarks, a strange tape in which a person is looking at a set of still images, relationships while snippets of TV program audio are played back. Viewer is moving across the screen, Double Identities, ridiculous to look at (limura's face in and out of a monitor, repeating "I am Taka limura," while "You are Taka limura," and "You are not Taka limura," relentless). It conjures up images of the early Chevy Chase show, "Hey Chasse, and you're not." When there are two negatives, a positive ("I am"") is created. This tape seemed least funny, so it didn't make it look as much. And it has valuable "hard-core video" historical relevance.

What, can I say in conclusion, is important or necessary about video festivals in general? The people in Columbia, South Carolina, don't go to the Kitchen and don't watch Soho Television on cable. The Ithaca Video Festival, with its short programs, could be the largest vehicle attempting a nationalization of the acceptance and awakening of video as Art. It won't be traveling lightly.
floor at Plavin's.

"I'm looking forward to a big increase in video because I believe VCRs will grow to be a necessity in the same way a dishwasher becomes a necessity once you start using one," he notes.

Like many other merchants—particularly some department stores—Barney Miller's is selling prerecorded along with blank audio tape in its record department, an area surrounded by video and audio hardware.

Miller does not usually promote video programming, relying on the traffic generated by VCR hardware ads. "They bring people in, and then they see what's available in software," says Zimmerman.

Prerecorded videotape is providing an important new merchandising opportunity for today's retailer. And for those who lamented what they felt was a lack of exciting new product at the summer CES, perhaps they'd best reconsider.

Review, particularly, the area of voice synthesis and voice recognition, portable computers and interactive learning aids. If you're still blase about video technology, you might ponder that the complete set of the Encyclopedia Britannica can be placed on one videodisc.

Still unimpressed? Well, maybe you are, but consumers won't be.

VIDEO FESTIVALS:
A Review of Ithaca's Sixth.

Tapes comprising the sixth annual Ithaca Video Festival were selected on the basis of the "creative use of the medium, craftsmanship/execution, and inventiveness." Entries must have originated on videotape, be on half-inch open reel or 1/2-inch U-matic format, and not exceed 30 minutes. There is no entry fee, and a one-time rental fee of $100 is paid for each tape selected. The festival is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA).

This year's festival selections were made by Pat Faust, head of programming, WXXI-TV, Rochester, N.Y.; Ann Eugenia Volkes, curator, Anthology Film Archives Video Program and editor, Electronic Arts Intermix, New York City; and Gunilla Mallory Jones and Philip Mallory Jones, co-directors, Ithaca Video Projects, Inc., sponsors of the festival from its inception.

The panel of judges chose 19 "programs" from 372 entries, creating a three-hour, 42-minute and 13-second show touring 24 cities. Eight tapes were the work of New York City artists, three from California, and one each from Towanda, Pa., Chicago, Ill., Enfield, Conn., Santa Fe, N.M., Philadelphia, Pa., Owego, N.Y., Lynn, Mass., and Houston, Texas.

The festival has already played in libraries, museums, schools, colleges, media centers and galleries in 13 cities. The upcoming places and dates for this...
month are as follows: Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, La.—September 15-21; InterArtWorks, Austin, Texas—September 22-30; M.I.T. Educational Video Resources, Cambridge, Mass.—September 22-30.

Even though I reviewed the tapes privately, I treated the entries as if I were seeing them in the company of festival audiences in any of the scheduled exhibition spaces. I did not stop a tape to reflect upon it, nor play a tape a second or third time seeking deeper meaning. Before I had a chance to forget or store information from a tape just seen, I went on to the next one as scheduled in the program. I viewed the complete festival package in two sessions. Hereewith are my comments. If I were to view each tape again separately and in a different order, my perceptions might well be altered.

Anita Thacher: The Breakfast Table.

The production depicts an ebullient wife's unsuccessful attempts at pleasing her oblivious husband at breakfast time. Her fantasies at being an old woman, vamp, glamor girl, baseball player, operatic star, or even a heavenly body do not entice her husband from his newspaper. Chuckles are engendered by this frothy fizzle set in the 1940's—even though I detect a strong contemporary message residing in the husband's idiotic behavior.

The stylistically-painted sets, furniture and props are ingenious, the direction and acting professional. As much care went into the sound portion of the production as the visuals. Anita Thacher's artistry was aided by a group of talented people who worked together to create a divertissement of a high order.

Mimi Martin: At the Dump.

A two-minute gem whose source material came from a scrap yard. Through the wizardry of electronic processing, mundane discarded materials, set in motion by a magnetic lift, are transformed into colorful moving crystals of celestial beauty. Natural sounds and synthesized music blend to choreograph this short videotape jewel. Produced at the Experimental Television Center Ltd., Owego, N.Y.

Juan Downey: The Laughing Alligator.

Chilean-born Downey uses video's feedback characteristics to communicate with primitive people. In 1977 he spent nearly eight months living with the Yanomami Indians who occupy a vast territory in the Amazonian rainforest on the southern tip of Venezuela. Downey believes that his approach to the documentary genre is "a fresh aesthetic where art is the document of a process and not the manipulation of passive materials, and the role of the artist is understood as that of a cultural communicant." This concept has great merit.

According to Downey, he is editing "all the interactions of time, space and context into a work of art," however, just as we begin to comprehend a particular segment, the maker intrudes with voice-over commentary detailing some obvious action while ignoring unexplained rituals. Frequent on-camera appearances of people visiting the Indians, plus voice-over commentary interspersed with silent, unexplained passages result in an ineffective confusion of styles. This impressionistic portrait of the remote Yanomami Indians juxtaposed with the artist's own world, impedes rather than enhances comprehension.

The separate yarns of poetry, anthro-
active, electronically generated masks. Poles are tame in comparison with the ceremonial drums. Poles slowly at first, then with an accelerated pace, the masks come to themselves into recognizable primitive tape, colorful abstract images transform of the viewer. In this short seven minutes of this synthesized of the viewer. In this short seven minutes of this synthesized intent of the maker and the perception considerations, depending on the or attract, involve or exclude emotional creative imagery, has the power to repel and add mystery. Vibrating, abstract parabolic shapes unravel and reform to the rhythm of an outer-space synthesized musical score.

Despite its beauty, this tape did not grab me as Electronic Masks did. Perhaps it should have been placed elsewhere on the program. For greatest effect, this tape should be projected on a large screen in an appropriate environment so that it may be glanced at and enjoyed from time to time rather than having one’s eyes continuously fixed on it. Abstractions bereft of emotional memories are not as easily sustained.

Collectivism: As a Public Service.

Seeing their role as “witnesses to events” are Bob Berquist, Leland Johnston, E. D. Dorsey, Bruce Teed, Joe Piazzo, Eric Teed, and Sherry Zitter. They collectively produced this dramatic, 18-minute color tape of the October 6, 1979 confrontation in Seabrook, New Hampshire. The videotape presents the Public Service Company’s interest vs The People and Social Consequences vs Personal Gain regarding the use of nuclear energy for power generation.

All the elements of war between authority and the people bent on change are used effectively as ingredients in making this emotionally-charged videotape including hovering
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19 seconds (which is the exact length of the tape). For sound I selected the two most active output channels, translated through a digital/analog converter to voltage-controlled oscillators. I then added a blue on the darkest gray (black) and red on a middle gray, leaving the rest of the image black and white. "I'm sure technicians will know exactly what I saw. I salute Steina's creative technical achievements. Her tapes often stretch the frontiers of video technology and are sure to have historical significance.

Alan Powell/Connie Coleman: Advance Riding Boats.

North Philadelphia teenagers, demonstrating their highly-developed skate board skills on a homemade track, are transformed into superstar performers by means of creative camera work and an interplay of real-time interspersed with split-second editing. The five-minute tape ends with one wishing to see more.

Bill Viola: Chott El-Djerid (A Portrait to Light and Heat).

Chott El-Djerid takes us to the winter snowfields of Central Illinois and Saskatchewan, Canada, and to a vast, salt lake bed in the Sahara Desert in Tunisia. The 28-minute tape is made up of short sequences of the cold, vibrant light of the north country with its hazy, gray, silhouetted minimal landscapes contrasted with the torrid atmospheric conditions of the Sahara which often produce mirages of incredible beauty. We see vast surreal landscapes seemingly bathed in luscious, soft, rippling, shimmering, luminous colors. Viola invokes a sense of mystery, then surprise and joyful discovery as we contemplate one ethereal, dream-like scene after another.

Bill Viola is preoccupied with time, light and atmospheric conditions. His deliberately slow, meditative, almost religious view forces us to see with a deeper intensity, to contemplate an environment with a new awareness. He and his video camera leisurely record a space without tiring, not unlike an investigative reporter ferreting hidden sensory clues for our enjoyment. What passes us undetected, becomes a central force through Viola's deep, limitless concerns. Even though most of his tapes concentrate on the "seeing" and the "hearing", what ultimately evolves is the "thinking" we do through his intense sensory perception. Bill Viola show us the world like we've never seen it before.

This concludes the first half of the Ithaca Video Festival review. Look for the conclusion in the October issue of Videography.
The Long Beach Museum of Art provided a comfortable, living room atmosphere for the four-hour screening of the Sixth Annual Ithaca Video Festival, which ran November 30 through January 11. The festival, organized by Philip and Gunilla Mailory Jonas, is dedicated to promoting independent video artists and their work throughout the United States. Growing from a single evening's presentation of seven selected tapes, in 1974, the festival has gained national status. This year, 26 tapes were selected from 372 entries, offering examples of the various directions of video art. The works presented included documentary, electronic, performance, and narrative styles. Two Southern California video artists were included: Kathryn Kane and of Santa Monica (Shutter I and II) and Peter Bartolet of the Angeles (Cypri).

Art video has come a long way since Nan June Pack's mid-sixties experiments. Video Art, like other contemporary expressions, seems to be reaching higher technical levels in direct proportion to the lack of meaningful content. However, several of the artists in this show demonstrate that there is a core of individuals dedicated to the perpetuation of thought-provoking video art.

Ellen and Lynda Kahn's Instant This - Instant That is a case in point. Starving Nancy and Claude Twinart as a "demo duo," the Kahn's present a fast-moving, entertaining, four-minute parody of commercialism and consumerism in America. The piece is so well-done it almost becomes a Sales pitch for the American way of plastic satisfaction.

Anita Thatcher uses surrealistic effects in The Breakfast Table, a live-action video-cartoon. This vignette of a common domestic scene is presented with the utmost care of still-life arrangement and lighting reminiscent of a painting by Chardin. The 1960's styled couple and their perfect life is a two-dimensional world. The wife中午 keeps her husband at trying to please an oblivious husband by spontaneous flights of fancy transformations.

The most powerful dramatic imagery in the festival was Pound Feet, A Performance by Winston Tong.
The tape has a masterful use of black and white composition, East-West synthesis, and androgynous imagery. Tong pulls the viewer into his intimate space. Working with two stuffed cloth, naked dolls about the size of small midgets, Tong's performance has the tension of Bunraku. This was an emotionally moving statement. The film that went with the performance was also a powerful statement. Tong's performance included a chorus of women wearing red shoes, photographs of Chinese footbinding, a tape of an elderly woman talking about her bunions, video artists have been so busy playing with new media, especially video and video artists' use of the medium, that it is hard to keep track of what is going on. "My Mother's Wedding" by Lyn Tiefenbacher and Dave Drew and "Walked and Wild" by Paul and Jean, are two recent video art performances that are worth seeing. Tong's performance was a pretentious arrangement of totemic images, vertical and horizontal changes of color accelerated in rhythm with the percussion and vocal score, generating a most powerful Disneyland effect in this viewer. Tong's performance was a pretentious arrangement of totemic images, vertical and horizontal changes of color accelerated in rhythm with the percussion and vocal score, generating a most powerful Disneyland effect in this viewer.

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ART REVIEW

BEST FOR THE EYES AT
LONG BEACH MUSEUM

Suzanne Muchnic

When the Ithaca Video Festival began six years ago, assorted video aficionados piled into one room and watched a few tapes by contemporary artists. It was a small-time event destined to gain thousands of fans and develop the same growing pains as the avant-garde art form it championed.

Now the festival is a nationwide competition and traveling show, noted in galleries and museums in U.S. cities. This year, project directors screened 32 tapes from 37 entries, "in an effort to present samples of the various directions of "schools" of video art." Results can be seen in a four-hour program at the Long Beach Museum of Art through Jan. 11.

Watching four hours of artists' video at one sitting is a bit much for the most bleary-eyed tube fan and the artists' mothers. In a mixture of clear vision, good humor and measured judgment, I lasted for tapes 3 and 4, the last half of the program. The package is assembled as an album of varied pace and personality, so the last half presumably reflects the whole's character.

True to festival directors' plans, the program is a varied sampler of something to entertain, bore, amuse and offend nearly everyone. On the light side are Doris Chase's "Dance" with outlined figures dancing to music, Ellen and Lynda Kahn's "Instant This-Instant That," a lively New Wave parody of push-button consumerism, and Dale Charette's "Mixed Bag," a spotty batch of short tapes that has a bizarre time with joggers, apple eaters and a jack-o'-lantern carver.

For something depressingly different, there's Ernest Gwenn's ghoulish "The Enquisite Corpse" and Peer Marton's tiresome tapes that switch from self-indulgence to masochism, finally ending in a blood bath.

The show has arty effects in Chase's dancers and Peer Bode's overlapping images of apples that parade for only four minutes but seem to go on forever. And there are tapes that depend on words. Laurie McDonald's "Water, Wind and the Record of Rocks," for example, makes good use of printed text running across silent landscapes. "California I," a richly affecting piece, features the work of 10 poets. At 23 1/2 minutes, it is the next to the longest tape in the show, but it seems like one of the shortest.

The issue of finite size repeatedly reared its head in the festival. Works that fail seem to do so because artists don't know when to quit or they lack a sense of timing. One can look at a painting or a sculpture for as long as it takes to come to grips with it, but video exists in a set period and its length is crucial.

Time is not a problem in "Bound Feet," a chilling, gorgeous and deeply uncomfortable expose of female submission by Tom Yocum and Stanton Tong. Dolls and a human performer enact the凄性 washing, binding and clipping, once delivered in China in the name of love and tradition. Haunt images, children whispers and a sense of artistic alienation combine to deliver a strong impact.

Downstairs at the museum, also through Jan. 11, Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz show a 20-minute tape from their recent "Hole in Space" project. In November they set up a two-way live satellite connection between New York's Lincoln Center and City's Broadway department store. It was noted that group telephone connection with pictures. Passersby could see, hear and talk to people on the opposite side of the country.

Through "Hole in Space," L.A. shoppers and "Mom" and played characters with New York counterparts. Dates were made, family business was done and participants on both sides attended good-natured ribbing. At each receiving end, video projectors aimed satellite-transported images to the 9 by 12-foot re- projection screens, producing life-size pictures. "Hole in Space" continues at the museum through Jan. 11.

Please see VIDEO ART, Page 2
San Francisco / Mary Stofflet

This is the kind of festival I like — one location, one time slot, no frills. The Sixth Annual Ithaca Video Festival, which occupied three recent Sunday evenings at Video Free America, gave viewers a chance to see documentaries, electronic video, taped performance, and much that lies between or overlaps those descriptions. None of it was truly dreadful, notwithstanding an irritating inability on the part of the audience to keep still during the less kinetic moments. I was relieved when the disgruntled departed, as they did in droves during Bill Viola’s Chott el-Djerid (A Portrait in Light and Heat). More on that later.

The festival tapes (twenty in all) were chosen from a plethora of submissions (372) which originated, to the surprise of no one, almost exclusively from New York or California. California One by Barbara Wright, Gordon C.A. Craig, Martha Olsen and Lewis MacAdams (ARTWEEK, October 4, 1980) and Instant This - Instant That by Ellen Kahn/Lynda Kahn (ARTWEEK, November 8, 1980) have been mentioned in these pages as entries in previous festivals or video reviews. Since video is repeatable and multiple, one escapes the type of anxiety attacks brought on by the current Marsden Hartley retro at UC Berkeley, for example, where in one or two desperate afternoons you attempt to absorb everything about each painting, both individually and as part of an oeuvre, knowing you may never see it, or them, again. Relax and welcome to eternal video.

In no particular order of appearance, I found four tapes which inspire me to comment. Among the less remarkable were some of slight meaning and all those dependent on electronic image generation. I have no objection to the latter, but feel qualified to talk only of image effectiveness and not of technical titillation. Further adventures of Juan Downey among the Yanomami Indians of Venezuela, this time The Laughing Alligator (1978), engrossed me beyond note-taking capacity — it’s the perfect blend of exotic setting, scientific observation and artistic sensibility.

Back to the four: As A Public Service by Collectivision documents an antinuke rally at Seabrook, New Hampshire, in 1979. It was the standard scenario — good guys, bad guys and an attorney general making insincere comments to the effect that covered badges and unidentified police are nonissues. For a
Ithaca film festival’s a feast for video fans

Saturday afternoon shouldn’t be spent sitting at home watching TV. Tomorrow, for a little change of pace, you should consider driving to Broward Community College’s central campus so you can sit there and watch TV.

You will not, however, be watching the standard Saturday diet of Sports Spectacular and Rodan Meets Mothra at Bon Soir. You’ll be seeing an “inside” view of pumpkin-carving, three-dimensional poetry on such topics as liver, air bags and Smokey Robinson; a wedding in which the bride drives down the “aisle” on a motorcycle; a pair of twins who subsist solely on instant food; and a lot, lot more.

The occasion is the Sixth Annual Ithaca Video Festival, sort of a film festival for video enthusiasts. BCC instructor Steve Elioth has, for the first time, coerced Ithaca festival officials to unveil their four-hour program south of New Orleans. BCC will premiere the Ithaca show Saturday at 3 p.m., in the art building directly opposite the main entrance of Bailey Hall on BCC’s main campus in Davie. The video art exhibition will be presented in that building’s theater, projected on a large screen, with live music, dance and “vegetarian refreshments” served up between every hour of tape. The program is scheduled to end at 9 p.m., admission is free, and visitors are welcome to come and go.

This news is not expected to send most people salivating. In anticipation “Video art” is a dangerous, somewhat unsettling catch-all phrase, like avant garde or “new wave.” It encompasses so much that it remains an undefined puzzle — no one knows what to expect from a “video art” show because one is correct to expect anything. “Video art” includes the purely technical, the totally visual, and the more familiar meldings of sight and sound. Judging from the Ithaca clips, which were themselves judged from a field of 372 submissions, video art is everything from comic fantasy to straight documentary, from one man’s “suicide” to another man’s visual juggling act with apples.

It is, in short, anything done by anyone with a camera. Most of it is better than the stuff shown on “regular” television; some of it is the stuff shown on regular television (on local public TV stations, at least); all of it is undeniably different.

The question is unavoidable... “But is it ART?” Art, like beauty and the cornea, is in the eye of the beholder.

But that’s only the beginning. Exquisite Corpse is a bizarre — but funny and fascinating — experiment in which two views of a man, in close-up and long shot, are interspersed in rapid-fire sequence.

Some of the entries, like California 1, provide intentionally integrated uses of poetry and visuals. Others are just straight-out strange. For example, California 1, provides intentionally integrated uses of poetry and visuals. Others are just straight-out strange. But that’s part of the excitement of this new “art” form. No one but a beady-eyed TV freak will like everything the Ithaca festival has to offer. A few segments may shock, a few may confuse, a few may simply bore.

Cameras, recorders, editors, switchers, electronic image generators — these are the new toys. The artists playing with them, regardless of age, are the new kids. And video art, like it or not, is the new wave.
Winston Tong in "Bound Feet."

while I wondered where the 1970s had gone because it seemed as though a whole decade had just dropped from history, but then I realized we were eleven days into the Reagan-elect era and I knew that the 1970s were not gone, only forgotten for a while. EINSTEIN WOULD SHIT was the perfect placard for this demonstration, and the slogan stayed with me as nuclear power plant workers shouted at the demonstrators that they needed their jobs. Collectivist-documenting public events for use on public TV, and it seems unlikely that they will be out of a job.

Chott el-Djerid by Bill Viola drove restless viewers to the door and beyond. Lethargy held me initially, but soon I was unable to leave shimmering desert images that resembled so much manipulated still photography. A windlike sound with this scenery made the mountains of the moon seem like La Jolla by comparison. A single figure walked through the white wasteland and stopped later to plunk an object into a brown pool. Green cloudlike blobs rose above the landscape in a lavender-tinted sky. Anonymous figures spun like dervishes in the wind. Bikers, a camel and other recognizable travelers approached a boxy desert town. Viola's pale green and pale lavender mirage world could be a series of paintings — or it could be a prophetic vision. When the world is a desert once more, surely there will be such skies, such sands. Different living through chemistry.

Bound Feet by Winston Tong was once a live performance, and since then it has achieved legendary status in that curious theater-performance, art-music overlap milieu of San Francisco. As I have only seen Tong's live work in the past year, I welcomed this tape and emerged nearly as puzzled as before. It had style and angst, yet it seemed too brief.

Tong's work is the tale of an ancient Chinese empress. There were scenes of foot wrapping while more than one voice spoke in Chinese. The tape was shot in color, though the costumes, sets and faces were in black, white or neutral tones. The music was Satie (I can't wait for the '90s when the two major dissertation topics will be the use of Satie music and images of regurgitation in "fin de decade" videotapes). The familiar Tong puppets arrived on the scene. The female puppet was embraced at the feet. She then arched her back and slumped over. The puppets were wrapped up, and a hand covered the camera as though we had seen too much. I know it was a more modest century, but we had not seen enough.

Once upon a time The Exquisite Corpse was a game played by the surrealists. Now it is a videotape by Ernest Gusella in which two faces, one each in black and white and in color, jumped about the screen in a changing relationship of focus. There was no sound until some aaas and aachs accompanied winglike images made by fingers pulling mouths into various distortions. I stayed throughout this curiosity because the memory of another Gusella piece, Arrows, gave me hope. But alas. Arrows was saved by incomparable chanting, analogous to the visual contortions, which made me wonder whether I was hearing arrows, a rose or Eros. The Exquisite Corpse should go back to the morgue at once.
Innovative Video Featured
In Ithaca Presentation

By BRETT BAYNE

After prolonged exposure to the publicity poster of the same name, BCC is finally getting ready to see what Ithaca, N.Y. has in store for some 24 colleges, museums and libraries from coast to coast.

It's the Sixth Annual Ithaca Video Festival. Not an "art exhibit" as would be immediately imagined, but a collected four-hour string of various entries that make the show an opportunity to further one's experience with modern art.

This year's tapes have been described by The Ithaca Times as "fascinating, diverse, and unusual." Some of them are expressionistic, surreal, and political; others a product of sophisticated new video computers.

Central video art instructor Steve Elliot arranged the showing for a $10 fee as an alternative to broadcast TV.

"There's such a total range of different types of alternative video. There's a lot of satire at commercially produced material," Elliot said.

Among the presented works are "The Exquisite Corpse" by Ernest Gisella, "The Breakfast Table" by Anita Thacher, and "Obert el-Djerd" by Bill Viola.

"We have an overdose of middle-of-the-road entertainment," Elliot says of shows on local airwaves. "There is very little creative expression of any new forms, whether it's poetry, painting, sculpture, or performance art."

Elliot describes current video art as, "Well, everything! Some are abstract computer imagery. Some of them are very controversial."

Prior to its BCC run, the festival first appeared at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art in Ithaca during April, and will end in December at Oregon's Northwest Film Study Center.

It will begin here on Saturday, Nov. 22, in building 35, room 100, and will also run in the art gallery November 24-26.

The festival promises a program with innovation and humor; imaginatively conceived pieces ranging from a documentary on the Iroquois Indians called "The Laughing Alligator" to "Instant This Instant That," a satire on the world of modern convenience, will be shown.

"My responsibility as a teacher is to help bring some of these forms down here, not only for BCC, but for the community," Elliot said.

Unfortunately, Elliot's Video Art class is limited to 15 people. The course is an introduction to video as an art form; students produce their own tapes. Interested students may contact Elliot in the Art Department by calling 45-6465.
Taped Time on the Side
Of Video’s Unblinking Eye

By HELEN L. KOHEN
Special to The Herald

At 15, video art is old enough to have a history, its own artists’ hall of fame, and a complex of support systems, but it is still too young to have a broad-based, knowledgeable following. Access continues to be the video artists’ main problem, access to the latest high (and expensive) technology and access to the public through broadcasting facilities and channels. Nonetheless, art will out, and video artists, having recognized the expressive potential of the medium well before the rest of us, have tackled the technology to create a multi-affectual art form.

Though watching the tube is, in fact, a novel occasion in our daily lives, video art demands our attention and commands that we experience it the way we experience film or theater or paintings.

Happily, and at last, that compound experience will be available for the next week for any who will seek it out. Through the cooperative efforts of Broward Community College and Burtin’s, “The Sixth Annual Ithaca Video Festival,” among the most prestigious video events in the country, will be replayed in our area.

The current festival is comprised of 20 tapes, picked from a field of 326 entries from video artists, and takes four hours to view completely. Time, you will learn, is the given in the video art experience. Those sufficiently intrigued to take the time will find video art to be as varied as any other art, and this particular selection to be a fine introduction to the various directions video artists are now exploring.

Since the field lacks a descriptive vocabulary specific to its variations, we fall back on the terminology of other forms to speak of its "schools." Video art can be autobiographical, can run the course of straight narration, can be documentary, didactic, comedic or involve electronic wizardy. It can incorporate poetry, or be a poem. As for critical criteria, creative use of the medium would have to be a prime factor in evaluating the worth of any tape, but otherwise the usual art considerations apply.

To select from the festival selection, this critic would confer honors on the following:

• MOST FUN: Instant This — Instant That by Ellen and Lynda Kahn, cofounders of Twin Art. A bit of funky commentary paced to our dependence on immediate products and timed conveniences. In this delightful mont-to-night sequence, the Kahns caricature themselves. They also poke fun at anyone who, first thing, reaches for the Tang, 4 minutes.

• MOST BEAUTIFUL: Cholt El-Djerid (A Portrait in Light and Heat) by Bill Viola. Master of the long shot with a lens usually held to be insufficient to the task, Viola records mirages rising from the play of natural light upon snow fields and deserts. The imagery is extraordinary. 28 minutes.

• MOST INGENIOUS: The Breakfast Table by Anita Thacher. The sound track here is very special, setting up a rhythm that underscores a 1940s breakfast-time vignette between a wife hungering for life and a husband hungering for toast. Thacher uses painted effects on the set, making this, at times, a two-dimensional world. The transitions are masterful. 14 minutes.

There are three documentaries worthy of special note. Collectivism, a group of video artists, uses video to witness a political event. As a Public Service document, it confronts the confrontation between the power company and the people of Seabrook, N.H., without editorial comment and without losing a word said on either side (16 minutes).

Juan Downey, the creator of the Laughing Alligator, is a brilliant editor of the video images he captured among the Yanomami Indians of the Amazon. The tape is interspersed with sounds and images from our more civilized world, a gimmick that does not work terribly well, but it also has moments of real terror and real beauty (30 minutes).

The most upbeat documentary is Biflor’s Wedding by Lyn Tiefenbacher and Dave Pentecost, an on-the-scene street affair, complete with a solemn, inuring minister, double rings and the most outlandish and wonderful tribal costumes yet recorded (6½ minutes).

The festival, having begun with hilarity, ends with Tapes by Peter Marton, eight separate heavy messages finishing with a suicide (18 minutes).
In the hands of the artist, video offers a medium substantially different from the plastic arts of painting, drawing and sculpture. Aside from the introduction of movement and sound, video allows the artist to deal with real time, a point of fascination for many 20th century artists. Concern with the sequential passage of time probably began with Duchamp's Large Glass, a work he spurratically labored over for 30 years. If the relationship is not quite so direct, it was at least Duchamp and other dadaist's that spurred the Happenings of the 50's and early 60's, which was the closest art had ever come to theatrics. Today, real time manifests itself, not only in video, but also in performance, kinetic sculpture, sound sculpture, and numerous environmental works, set to weather against the ravages of time.

Video has the advantages of time, movement, sound and color, it also has the disadvantage of forging art into a medium stereotyped by film and television. Too often video looks like a film clip or television pilot, or bows to the other extreme of repetitive, meaningless special-effects. Someplace between these extremes of the common and the strange, resides the illusive domain of video art.

The 6th Annual Ithaca Video Festival, currently on display at McKissick Museums on the USC campus, exemplifies both the simplistic escape into extremes, and the potential power inherent in the medium. The festival is a result of the Ithaca Video Competition, with the 20 tapes featured here selected from nearly 400 entries. The 20 individual tapes are grouped into four major cassettes, each lasting approximately 45-minutes, with continuous showings daily.

Unlike last year's festival, those works that rely on special-effects and repetition have been thankfully kept to a minimum. Water, Wind and the Records of the Rocks, by Houston artist Laurie McDonald, is the worst of the lot. The visual imagery is washed-out and unprovocative, and the written text that crosses the image rapidly becomes nauseating.

There are two works in this collection that transcend simple entertainment and image-making, and reinforce the unique power of serious video work. The first is Bound Feet, A Performance by Winston Tong, by Tom Freebairn and Winston Tong. The second is Tapes by Pier Marton. Bound Feet exposes the Japanese tradition of binding the feet of their women to retard their growth. The tape opens with Tong in a black kimono and white-face, in a stark white room. He is looking through a photo album, declaring "that such a thing should never be forgotten." He begins to bind his own feet in this traditional manner, bowing his toes under the arch of each foot, saying, "What pain is born in the name of love." The scene switches to two cloth dolls, as the male doll embraces the deformed feet of his wife. Through a series of switches from the doll's back to Tong's performance, the work attains a chilling tone that could make even Bergman shutter.

Tapes features a lone male figure talking directly into the camera. There is a strange psychotic feeling to the narration, that increases with each passing minute. Scenes fade, situations change, yet the figure continues his discussion towards the viewer. Suddenly he asks, "are you still looking at me? After this, he becomes self-conscious, almost making the viewer feel guilty for participating in his confessional. The work has a climatic, shocking ending, which I won't reveal.

The 6th Annual Ithaca Video Festival will continue through Oct. 25.
PART II:
A Review of the Festival

The sixth annual Ithaca Video Festival comprising 19 tapes is currently touring the country. I reviewed the tapes privately, but treated them as if I were seeing them as part of a festival audience. Here are my comments on the second half of the festival.

Doris Chase: Jazz Dance
A four-minute jazz-dance piece is created with the maker's keen sense of design plus her ability to harness technology for art with a sense of humor. Doris Chase outlines the dancer's body to create a multiple melange of white calligraphic lines prancing furtively against a black background. Horizontal bands of thin, vivid colors appear in perfect juxtaposition to the energetic movements of the now multiplied human form dancing to the nostalgic music of the Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band. The Radio City Music Hall Rockettes were never as precise as Chase's electronic dancer whose original energy was supplied by Gae Delaghe. A delightful tape!

Kathryn Kanehiro: Shutter: Morning I and II
A realistic landscape with cumulus clouds against a deep blue sky and a tree in the lower right hand corner of the frame, opens two short segments of this four-minute impressionist tape containing half-blurred images and sounds we experience during the period between sleeping and waking. A warm morning sun floods through shuttered windows as our subject awakens to later hand-cares fleeting images seen through the window. Out of focus, layered images and quick pans add to the illusive character, the dream-like essence of this tape. While the visuals overpower the audio (despite the creative use of both), this feelings-involved work awakens the romantic in us. The video presentation of illusion and reality by Kathryn Kanehiro is what poems are made of.

Tom Freebairn/Winston Tong: Bound Feet, A Performance by Winston Tong
When an award-winning writer-producer-director in film and television combines his talents with an award-winning performer supported by a professional crew, the result is likely to be excellent. Winston Tong's formal Oriental sensibility delivers a superb performance for the video camera while retelling the story of the old Chinese custom of binding women's feet.

"In China, you know, the Empress is Chinese, and so are all her subjects," we are told. "This happened many years ago. For that reason, the story must be told. It would be a pity if it were forgotten." So begins a tale enacted with appropriate nuances and gestures that automatically move the audience back to a near-faded time. The ritual of binding women's feet and its consequences are

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vividly portrayed and acted by Tong with the aid and manipulation of male-female dolls. The significance and symbolism depicted are a strong inducement to study the old custom further since its effects are profound and still seem to linger in the Chinese psyche.

Peer Bode: Apples.

Take a black and white image of an apple. Add imagination, electronic wizardry and synthetic color. Mix thoroughly with large doses of altered time references from one camera image horizontally and a second camera vertically. Add a pinch of cutouts from a gray level comparing and switching. The result is a four-minute exciting visual treat concocted with the aid of a master chef, Peer Bode. Apple(s), from the series entitled Process Tape, is a significant example of the creative work being produced by artists at the Experimental Television Center, Owego, N.Y.

Barbara Wright, Gordon C.A. Craign, Martha Olsen, Lewis MacAdams: California.

This half-hour program by the Bay Area Video Coalition features the work of ten California poets and was produced through the Poetry Center of San Francisco State University. Through the successful blending of experimental literary and video treatments, where the videographers let the language of each poem direct them, they succeeded in creating a work of consumate literacy with heightened emotional overtones. The result is a ten-fold celebration of poetry and video. Each poem received a unique treatment, culminating in the grand and magestic Sylvester Saint Elmo Hope by poet Curtis Lyle.

The other poets featured in this spirited paean to California are Jose Montoya, Bobbie Louise Hawkins, Judy Grahn, Dale Herd, Reginald Lockett, Ed Dorn, William Dickey, Jessica Hagedorn and the West Coast Ganser Choir, and Jack Marshall. The inspired makers of this tape will continue to share their enthusiasm with audiences everywhere.

Ellen Kahn/Lynda Kahn: Instant This—Instant That.

A hilarious, fast-moving piece poking fun at commercialism and our obsession with products is depicted by Nancy and Susie Twinart to the music of the same title recorded by the Taste Test band. The charm and fun of this tape begins with the main title and is enhanced by the dual vitality of the producers/performers.

The spoof on our instant society begins with the twins in bed, soon awakened by a digital countdown marking the “instants.” From 7:00 a.m. until 11:30 p.m. 

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October 1980
The Ithaca Video Festival has already played in libraries, museums, schools, colleges and media centers in 16 cities.

we see them in a constant frenzy using an insane number of plastic gadgets and electrical appliances. They become engulfed by instant cosmetics, instant laundry, instant music, instant work, instant eating while watching instant television. Their sixteen and a half hours of instant living are compressed into four minutes of sparkling, instant art.

Lyn Tiefenbacher/Dave Pentecost: Bikers' Wedding.

It isn't every day that one gets an invitation to witness an alfresco wedding between two members of a motorcycle club. Tiefenbacher and Pentecost take us to Queens, New York, for just such an event where invitees, club members, well-wishers, curious onlookers, and the media create a mass of dazzling sights and sounds. The double-ring ceremony with all its traditional trappings is performed by a somber-sounding, gray-suited reverend to the delight of the sumptuously-dressed audience. By means of editing, the makers compress the total event into seven minutes.

Bill Charette: Mixed Bag.

Charette, an award-winning cameraman for WGBH-TV, Boston, produced this tape as short "back of the book" segments for the station's local news program. Mixed Bag consists of four fast-moving encounters with people doing what comes naturally. In Happy Feet, Charette interviews people as they skateboard, jog, unicycle, dog-walk, roller skate, bicycle and child-stroll. His camera flawlessly follows his subjects as he concentrates on their happy feet. The next segment, "Sub Shot," begins and ends at the cash register of a busy, crowded, noisy luncheonette. Fast music and quick edits electrify the hectic atmosphere as hungry people demand instant service—and get it!

Apples opens with a closeup of a man eating an apple—the first joyful "crack-crunch" and subsequent "slosh" of the running juice are captured in sound. This segment takes us through apple groves where Charette's camera choreographs men, women and children as they pick, poke, play, climb, dance, bag and carry away their ripe red prizes. The posing of some of the participants in this fall ritual is the only warm in this delicious tape.

"Giant Pumpkin" involves the viewer the moment the large orange mass fills the screen and is imaginatively transformed into a jack-o'-lantern complete with a lighted candle. Charette's unique camera positions make this segment a work that will be long remembered. His art lies in taping familiar human situations from a new perspective without pretense, pomposity or profundity.

Laurie McDonald: Water, Wind and the Record of the Rocks.

Since art is communication and in this case video the medium, I wish that Laurie McDonald had used some other method of expression to convey the emotions she felt while traveling through West Texas. According to the maker, "the tape concerns the vulnerability of earth and humanity under the forces of water and wind, and suggests that the true history of the Earth is found in the record of the
rocks."

I should have gleaned part of this profound statement through her nine and a half minute tape. Instead, I was subjected to a detailed personal narrative excerpted from her diary, without punctuation, in the form of a continuous horizontal crawl running the length of the tape and superimposed in the center of the frame over images I cannot possibly recall.

Ernest Gusella: *The Exquisite Corpse.*

Gusella successfully explores new ways of using his body to project his art. The clock-controlled instant switching between a color camera and a black-and-white camera, with each camera’s lens set at a vastly different focal length, creates a third image in our mind’s eye, altering reality. The result is another of Gusella’s celebration of the body using his unique sense of humor to add spice. The simple, natural ingredients he uses to mix a surreal video broth captivates and holds the eye. Segments of the tape have primordial, mystical, shamanic properties.

Gusella is one of the few video artists creating new visual images without relying heavily on high technology. A far-sighted, imaginative toy manufacturer would do well to sponsor Gusella’s tapes on Saturday morning television—children’s eyes would be glued to the set!

Pier Marton: *Tapes.*

Eight separate messages of varying lengths comprise the 18-minute, 10-second work that closes the sixth annual Ithaca Video Festival of 1980. It began on a note of levity; it ends with a suicide. Pier Marton’s caustic commentaries on life are powerful and could hardly be erased from one’s consciousness. His cautionary life sermons might scare more viewers than change their viewpoints. Marton has a constant need to unbalance, to knock us off our equilibrium. He makes it his calling to awaken us fully—to his realities.

The Ithaca Video Festival has already played in libraries, museums, schools and colleges, media centers and galleries in 16 cities. The rest of the schedule is as follows: McKissick Museum, Columbia, SC—October 5-25; Rochester Public Library, Rochester, NY—October 6-13; Castleton State College, Castleton, VT—October 6-10; Anthology Film Archives, New York, NY—October 18 and 25; Video Free America, San Francisco, CA—November 1-30; Broward College, Fort Lauderdale, FL—November 22-30; Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA—December 1-January 11; Northwest Film Study Center, Portland, OR—December 1-7.
The annual thank you breakfast

By Class Without...
**One for the Road**

Merle Ginsberg

Ithaca Video Festival
April 21-May 3
Cornell University’s Johnson Museum, National Tour through January 8, 1982

High above Cayuga’s waters, the Seventh Annual Ithaca Video Festival opened inside of Cornell’s Johnson Museum, its panoramic glass windows (it was designed by I.M. Pei) overlooking campus, lake, mountains and sky. Ithaca, N.Y., seems an unlikely place for one of the country’s largest video festivals (the newly born San Francisco Festival, doesn’t travel as yet). At the official opening, a lone monitor was placed conspicuously near the pastoral view, making me wonder how anyone who inhabits this environment could choose machine over nature, even for a few hours.

However, there is a great deal of enthusiasm for video, particularly video art, in Ithaca, most of it generated by the efforts of Philip Mallory Jones. Jones is director of Ithaca Video Projects, which started as a collective in the late ’60s and is now partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council. Although the festival is a focal point of the Project’s activities, Jones also rents out editing facilities, equipment and himself, for very reasonable fees, to local video talent and nearby institutions. He himself makes videotapes, shrugging off the term “video artist” and coining “portraiture.” For the semi-subjective documentary style he is presently working in. It all started when he tried creative writing; it didn’t work out, so he thought he’d make films. Film was too expensive. Someone lent him a Port-o-Pack and . . . you know the rest.

The Ithaca Video Festival was born seven years ago as a local thing. This year, its 19 tapes were selected from 290 entries, which came in from all over the country—not through advertising, but just by way of a mailed announcement. Its three hours worth of tape will travel to 25 cities nationally, from neighboring Syracuse, Elmira, Rochester and Buffalo to as far away as Fort Lauderdale and Portland, Oregon.

However, it will not be shown in New York because places like the Kitchen (which has shown it in the past), the Museum of Modern Art and Anthology Film Archives simply didn’t book it. This may be because a number of the festival’s New York representatives have shown work at all these places and because Jones and his committee seem more concerned with a historical overview of video than with what’s newest and brightest any more.

Then why does this festival carry so much weight? The most obvious reason is how accessible it makes the artists to a national audience (even if it is mostly a museum/university audience). It pays each artist $100 per tape, which may seem minimal in view of the number of times a