

Film: Videotape Program at Whitney

9 Items to Be Shown Through Thursday

By ROGER GREENSPUN

The second of the Whitney Museum's videotape programs is much like the first, but with the difference, for me, that the medium begins to seem more familiar and freer, less a collection of special effects and more a continuity of gestures and responses. Thus, I found the parti-colored facial mugging in this week's segment from Nam June Paik's "Video Commune" a considerably more relaxed and pleasant experience than last week's. And the new work by Woody and Steina Vasulka, a gorgeous flux of macrocosmic and microcosmic images called "Elements," suggested a compacted power that may have been missing or that I may simply have missed in a previous tape of the Vasulkas.

Like "Elements," most of the Whitney tapes are purely abstract, their images in one way or another programmed into the tape rather than photographed or pasted up

The Program

VIDEO PROGRAM II: NAM JUNE PAIK, VIDEO COMMUNE, 6 minutes; ERIC SIEGEL PLAYS THE SIEGEL VIDEO SYNTHESIZER, 15 minutes; VIDEO TUNNEL by Dimitri Doyvatkin, 7 minutes; LONG SOUNDS by Richard Felciano, 8 minutes; ALEPH-NUL by Shridhar Bapat and Charles Phillips, 12 minutes; FEED FIELDS BACK by Richard Lowenberg, 12 minutes; POINT OF INFLECTION by Stephen C. Beck and Richard Felciano, 8 minutes; DESCARTES by Joanne Kyger, 11 minutes; ELEMENTS by Woody and Steina Vasulka, 12 minutes. At the Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Avenue and 75th Street. Film showings every day at noon (except Thursday) 2 and 4 P.M., Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 6 and 8. The program runs through Dec. 16.

or even drawn. Some of these tapes, for example "Aleph-Nul" by Shridhar Bapat and Charles Phillips and "Point of Inflection" by Stephen Beck and Richard Felciano, are visually stunning. But none of them escape the tendency toward trivia that characteristically haunts attempts to confer actual movement upon forms that, if still, would suggest nothing so much as the potential for movement. The result is not realization but limitation. And for all their vigorous ingenuity, the tapes seem to channel rather than to free ways of seeing.

I am somewhat more interested by what happens to ways of seeing in Richard

Gestures and Responses Provide a Focus

Lowenberg's "Feed Fields Back", a movie reminiscence, in which a W. C. Fields comment about a wonderful experience he once had with a rattlesnake so upsets the lady he is speaking to that her face begins to distort and then to dissolve along the airwaves (or closed-circuit cable waves, or whatever). It seems a moment of considerably more interesting risk-taking than the wildest of abstract patternings, however they may be made to pulsate against your brain.

Out of the brain comes "Descartes" by Joanne Kyger and Robert Zagone, not only because it is brainy but also because it means to visualize thoughts—Cartesian thoughts, naturally, such as "I think; hence I am. Get the picture?" or "To doubt is a drag." This is the kind of game-playing in the midst of the general gloom that closed circuit television could use more of, and I liked it even when I didn't know what was going on.

Entertainment Events

Theater

LAST NIGHT

NIGHTRIDE opened at the Vandam Theater. A review will appear in later editions and will be reprinted tomorrow in the edition for which it was not available this morning.

Film

TODAY

NUPTIAE, a film by James Broughton and THE FILMS OF GUNVAR NELSON, at the Film Forum.

Operas

TONIGHT

METROPOLITAN OPERA, Saint-Saens' "Samson et Dalila," with Bumory, Tucker, Bacquier, Macurdy and Plishko, Baudou conducting, 8.

VILLAGE LIGHT OPERA GROUP, Fashion Institute Theater, 227 West 27th Street, Gilbert and Sullivan's "Trial by Jury" and "The Sorcerer," 8.

STUYVESANT COMMUNITY OPERA, Stuyvesant Auditorium, 15th Street between First and Second Avenues, Offenbach's "Tales of Hoffman," 8.

AMATO OPERA, 319 Bowery, Mozart's "The Magic Flute," 8:15.

Concerts

TODAY

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC, Leonard Bernstein conducting, with Martina Arroyo, soprano, Philharmonic Hall, 2.

JOHN FRUSCIANTE, piano, Lincoln Center Library-Museum, 6:30.

MASTERWORK CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA, David Randolph, conducting, Carnegie Hall, 7:30.

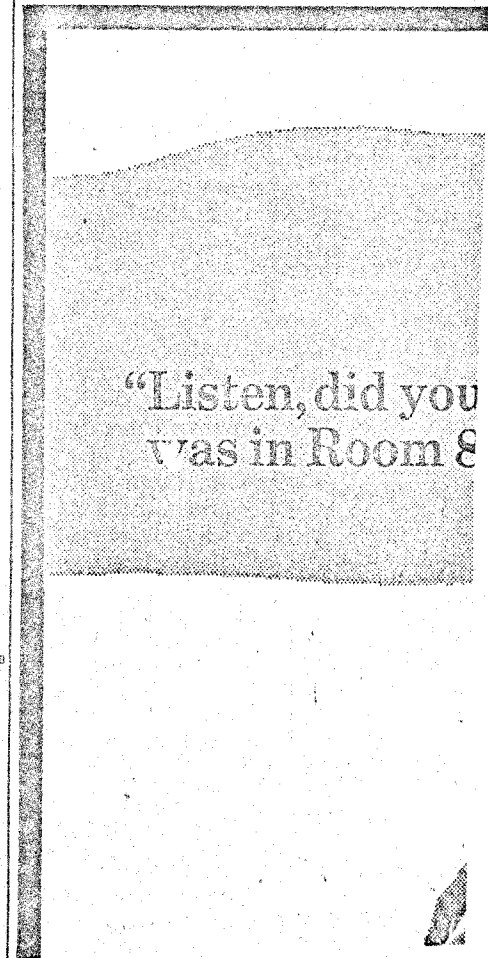
JUILLARD STRING QUARTET, with William Masselos, piano, Hunter College Playhouse, 8.

ALEXIS WEISSENBERG, piano, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 8.

C. W. POST COLLEGE MUSIC FACULTY CONCERT, Carnegie Recital Hall, 8.

HIGH SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS CONCERTO CONCERT, 120 West 46th Street, 8.

LARENCE WATERS, organ, Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, 8.



TV: The Whitney Shows New 'Projected Video'

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR

The Whitney Museum's New American Filmmakers Series is presenting through June 18 something called "Projected Video." For the general public, video means television, a product spewing forth from a piece of furniture in one or more rooms of the home. But, of course, television is a combination of video and film, two distinctly different forms. And, like film, video can be found outside the home, in artists' lofts or, for purposes of surveillance, in police stations.

Video is not new to museum exhibitions, but the Whitney is displaying a new form of presentation, a form that may represent the next major change of process for the video mass market. The vehicle is a projector, in this case the Advent VideoBeam Projection System. The system projects a video picture, supplied either directly from a TV screen or from a tape cassette, onto a special rectangular screen measuring 6

feet by 4 feet. The picture is enlarged to more than 10 times the size of a 25-inch television screen.

The Advent VideoBeam is not the only projection system in circulation. Sony, among other companies, is also in the market. And smaller groups of technicians and artists have been working on low-cost models. The Advent system, however, is considered the best to date in terms of clarity of image and the ability to operate in ordinary light, with no need to darken the room. The Advent units are being manufactured on a relatively limited basis and cost between \$2,500 and \$3,000, a price obviously beyond the pocket-books of the mass market.

The Whitney exhibition superbly demonstrates the potential of projected video. The programs, four in all, are being run daily at 12, 2 and 4 P.M., and also at 6:15 and 8 P.M. on Tuesdays. The material is varied, ranging from the computerized abstrac-

tions of Richard Serra (who owns the Advent projector being used by the museum) to the sophisticated and very funny compilations of Nam June Paik.

One of the more interesting pieces, in terms of both content and process, is "Richard Nixon: 1968-1974," made by Billy Adler and John Margolies. Running 60 minutes, it is also one of the longest. The form is historical biography, pieced together from television material taken off the air (the legal ramifications are doubtlessly complicated). There is no narration. The portrait opens with Richard Nixon preparing to say good-bye to his staff the morning after his resignation. It ends with a helicopter carrying him from the White House.

In between, the arrangement of materials and the juxtaposition of images constitute a fascinating essay not only on Mr. Nixon and the Presidency but also on American television and the

Presidency. If Mr. Nixon sought certain "production values" in the coverage of his tenure, it is astonishing to realize to what extent he got them. TV's coverage of the event called "Inauguration '73" is especially revealing on this score. The Nixon piece is part of the program being shown next Thursday through Sunday.

But what difference, you may well ask, does the enlarged picture make in the perception of objects or events? One good example can be found in the Nixon piece. On television, the President's farewell meeting with his staff was perhaps more pathetic than anything else. Blown up to giant size, dominated by lip perspiration and red eyes, it becomes almost painfully embarrassing.

The entire question of scale can be crucial for television content. Film makers have always resented the smallness of the TV pictures. Films, particularly "epics," created for a large screen have looked ridiculous on TV. The projection screen, which in a normal living room can take on Cinerama-like dimensions, will end that problem.

The tapes at the Whitney look very good indeed. Also represented in the show are works by Woody and Steina Vasulka, Douglas Davis, Lynda Benglis, William Wegman, Peter Campus, Keith Sonnier, John Baldessari, Hermine Freed and Shigeo Kubota.

CORRECTION

In John J. O'Connor's report on the New American Filmmakers series at the Whitney Museum in The New York Times yesterday, the name of the owner of the projector used by the museum for its "Projected Video" was given incorrectly. The owner is William Eira.

the kitchen

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Film: Videotape Show

10 Experimental Shorts in Whitney Program

By ROGER GREENSPUN

The film programs for the next two weeks at the Whitney Museum will consist not of films but of experimental videotapes broadcast by closed circuit to color TV monitors set in partitioned spaces arranged for intimate viewing. The audience will for the most part be asked to lounge on cushions on the floor.

There are 10 pieces in Program I. They range from 3 to 18 minutes in length and some are excerpts from longer works. A few were made on the standard commercial videotape two inches wide, but for this program they have been reduced to one-half inch tape with, I am told, an inevitable loss in color and image quality. Nevertheless, several of them managed to look pretty good.

What they do like varies considerably, with abstract images and movement patterns ranging from what you see when something is wrong with your TV set to more or less formal designs of great vigor and exuberance. Everything is always changing, and the magical mutation of forms, which seems so often to be the end product of experimental film, is virtually a first principle of experimental videotape. The Whitney program notes discuss "mandalic feedback patterns" and a tape "made in black and white and then colorized" (Richard Lowenberg's "See Mudra Gulp"), and you realize that in comparison with film you really are dealing with a new medium and the potentials of a radically new technology.

Having said that much I had better add that no one of the Whitney's abstract tapes struck me as terribly exciting, though some were pleasant and handsome, and two—Douglas Davis's black

The Program

A SPECIAL VIDEOTAPE SHOW, VIDEO PROGRAM I, VIDEO COMMUNE, by Nam June Paik, 3 minutes; KEY SHOW, by Woody and Steina Vasulka, 6 minutes; LET IT BE, by Steina Vasulka, 3 minutes; SEQUENCES/NIGHT VIDEO, by Douglas Davis (excerpt), 3 minutes; SEE MUDRA GULP, by Richard Lowenberg, 6 minutes; COSMIC PORTAL 2 (short version), by Stephen C. Beck, 13 minutes; PLEASE SUPERIMPOSE, PLEASE?, by John Randolph Carter, 16 minutes; SKIP PRESENTLY FEEDBACK, by Sid Sweeney, 5 minutes; BLACK VIDEO NO. 3 (excerpt), by Andy Tombellini, 6 minutes; WEST POLE I, by Robert A. Zagone (excerpt), 7 minutes. At the Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Avenue and 75th Street, through Dec 9. Film showings early days at 12 (except Thursday), 2 and 4 (Friday) and Wednesday evenings at 5 and 8.

and white "Sequences/Night Video" and Stephen Beck's subtly colored "Cosmic Portal"—were witty and mysterious enough to make me want to see them again.

Four of the tapes feature the human face and/or form divine—but with a difference. In his "West Pole I" Robert Zagone surrounds a pleasant West Coast female vocal group, the Ace of Cups, with a kind of light show of semidetached color. Nam June Paik parades the flexible contours of happy faces in "Video Commune." And in "Let It Be" Steina Vasulka isolates ears, eyes, forehead and especially tongue, teeth and lips mouthing the title song—ever so slightly out of synch.

But I especially liked "Please Superimpose, Please?" in which John Randolph Carter places a graceful young girl in one room and a graceful young man in another and then, by means of split screen and superimposition, monitors them as they become acquainted and begin to make ghostly love by television proxy. The sequence is funny and genuinely erotic and ultimately rather moving in its adjustments between the human couple and the freedoms and restrictions of the medium.