

(See also **Steina, Woody Vasulka**)

Steina and Woody Vasulka are major figures in video history, technical pioneers who have contributed enormously to the evolution of the medium and who continue to be important practitioners of video as art. The Vasulkas' technological investigations into analog and digital processes and their development of electronic imaging tools, which began in the early 1970s, place them among the primary architects of an expressive electronic vocabulary of image-making. Applying an informal, real-time spontaneity to their formalist, often didactic technical research, they chart the evolving formulation of a grammar and syntax of electronic imaging as they articulate a processual dialogue between artist and technology. The Vasulkas' early collaborative efforts, produced from 1970 to 1974, include phenomenological explorations that deconstruct the materiality of the electronic signal and analyze the imaging capabilities of video tools. Central to these increasingly complex exercises are explorations of the malleability of the image, the manipulation of electronic energy, and the interrelation of sound and image. In the mid-1970s, working with such engineer/designers as Eric Siegel, George Brown, Steve Rutt and Bill Etra, the Vasulkas developed electronic tools specifically for use by artists. With Jeffrey Schier they developed the Digital Image Articulator, a device that allows the digital processing of video imagery in real time. Steina's training as a violinist, and Woody Vasulka's background as an engineer and filmmaker, informed their convention of electronic devices to transform sound, image, space and time — themes that they have pursued independently in their later works. Though the Vasulkas continue to collaborate, since 1975 they have produced much of their work individually.

The Vasulkas emigrated to the United States in 1965, and began their collaborative exploration of electronic media in 1969. In 1971, they co-founded The Kitchen, a major alternative exhibition and media arts center in New York. From 1973 to 1979, the Vasulkas lived and worked in Buffalo, New York, where they were faculty members at the Center for Media Study, State University of New York. The Vasulkas have received numerous awards for their work in the media arts, including grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. In 1989, they received a United States/Japan Exchange Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Vasulkas have broadcast and exhibited their collaborative works extensively throughout the United States, Europe and Japan, at institutions including The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, among many others. Steina and Woody Vasulka live in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Home

by Steina and Woody Vasulka. *Dual Colorizer*: Eric Siegel. *Video Sequencer/Video Keyer*: George Brown. *Line-locked Strobe*: Steve Rutt. 1973. 16:47 min. color. sound.

Home is an early experiment in which the Vasulkas transform ordinary household objects through analog imaging devices. With humor and a sense of spontaneous discovery, they animate everyday objects through the application of electronic effects which serve as a primer of early imaging techniques: horizontal drift of layered image planes, colorizing, keying. Apples, shoes, bottles, teapots come to life in surreal tableaux that suggest psychedelic Magritte paintings, as the Vasulkas transform still lifes through the inner dynamic of electronic image processing.

Golden Voyage

by Steina and Woody Vasulka. *6 Input Keyer-Mixer/Gen-Lock System*: George Brown. *Dual Colorizer*: Eric Siegel. 1973. 27:36 min. color. sound.

In this early work, an electronic homage to Magritte, the Vasulkas demonstrate fundamental imaging techniques. Inspired by Magritte's painting *The Golden Legend*, this exercise employs a three-camera set-up, with images layered through a multikeyer, to create the illusion of objects moving through spatial planes. Loaves of French bread embark on a surreal video journey through electronic landscapes, finally arriving in an abstract space. The spectacle of the animated loaves adds a playful spontaneity to this early articulation of illusory space and three-dimensionality in video.

(See also **Steina, Woody Vasulka**)

Steina and Woody Vasulka: Selected Works I
by Steina and Woody Vasulka.

Solo For 3

4:15 min. Programmer/Multikeyer/H.D.
Variable Clock: George Brown. Dual
Colorizer: Eric Siegel.

Reminiscence

4:48 min. Scan Processor: Rutt/Etra. Col-
orizer: Eric Siegel.

Soundgated Images

9:22 min. Programmer/Multikeyer/H.D.
Variable Clock: George Brown. Wave-
form Generators: Steven Rutt. Scan Pro-
cessor: Rutt/Etra. Dual Colorizer: Eric
Siegel.

Noisefields

12:05 min. Sequencer/Multikeyer:
George Brown. Dual Colorizer: Eric
Siegel.

Total program: 1974, 30:30 min. color, sound.

This program presents the Vasulkas' early formal experimentations with analog image processing and their investigations of multiple camera set-ups and keys to articulate spatial, temporal and sound/image manipulation. *Solo For 3* is a didactic yet playful exercise in which three cameras were trained on three different images of the number three. Image planes are layered, arranged and sequenced; the result is a multifaceted choreography of numbers. *Reminiscence* is an otherworldly record of a Portapak walk through a farmhouse in Moravia, the site of Woody Vasulka's youth, as seen through the transformative effects of the Rutt/Etra Scan Processor. Images become eerily sculptural, fading in and out of abstraction, as if in evocation of memory. *Soundgated Images* is an early example of the Vasulkas' ongoing explorations of interfacing modes of simultaneously generated sound and image, in which abstract, processed images are transposed as electronic sounds. *Noisefields* is an important example of these early experiments, a visualization of the materiality of the electronic signal and its energy. Colorized video noise (or snow) is keyed through a circle, producing a rich static sound that is modulated by the energy content of the video.



In the Land of the Elevator Girls

Steina and Woody Vasulka: Selected Works II

by Steina and Woody Vasulka.

Heraldic View

4:21 min. Multikeyer: George Brown.
Waveform Generators: Steven Rutt. Dual
Colorizer: Eric Siegel.

1-2-3-4

7:46 min. Programmer/Multikeyer/H.D.
Variable Clock: George Brown. Dual
Colorizer: Eric Siegel.

Soundsize

4:40 min. Scan Processor: Rutt/Etra.

Telc

5:10 min. Scan Processor: Rutt/Etra.
Colorizer: Eric Siegel.

Total program: 1974, 21:57 min. color, sound.

Here the Vasulkas continue to develop the imaging potential of artist-designed electronic devices, as they formally analyze and deconstruct the inherent materiality of video. In *Heraldic View*, an oscillator-generated pattern drifts over a camera image of bricks and stone, the patterns modulated by sharp bursts of voltage generated by an audio synthesizer.

1-2-3-4 is an exercise in animating numbers, using four cameras and a multikeyer to re-order and layer the image planes. *Soundsize* continues the Vasulkas' investigation into the relationship of sound and image. Here a pattern of dots is modulated by sounds generated from a synthesizer, changing size and shape in a visual manifestation of electronic sound. In *Telc*, a Rutt/Etra Scan Processor is used to transform portapak images from a trip to a town in Southern Bohemia. Like faded memories, images of the landscape and people are sculpted and abstracted, as the energy of the image is translated into electronic scan lines.

Progeny and In Search of the Castle
by Steina and Woody Vasulka.

Progeny

18:28 min. In collaboration with Brad-
ford Smith.

In Search of the Castle

9:29 min.

Total program: 1981, 27:57 min. color, sound.

In these two works, the Vasulkas employ imaging tools to transform physical space and alter perception. *Progeny* is a collaboration with sculptor Bradford Smith. Smith's organic and sensual sculptural forms are transformed by the merging of one of Steina's *Machine Vision* devices — a rotating, mirrored sphere with pre-programmed camera movements and

(See also **Steina, Steina and Woody Vasulka**)

Since the mid-1970s, Woody Vasulka's work has focused on a rich articulation of the syntactical potential of electronic imaging. After producing a pioneering body of tapes in collaboration with Steina in the early 1970s, he has since undertaken a sophisticated exploration of the narrative and metaphorical meaning of technological images. Vasulka's development of an expressive image-language has evolved from a rigorous deconstruction of the materiality of the electronic signal, through experiments with new technologies of digital manipulation, to the application of these imaging codes to narrative strategies. The remarkable culmination of this investigation, *Art of Memory* (1987), is one of the major works in video. In this lushly textured, haunting essay, Vasulka applies a highly evolved imaging grammar to a metaphorical discourse of collective memory, history, and the meaning of recorded images — envisioned as a spectacular memory-theater inscribed upon the landscape of the American Southwest. In his early investigations of the vocabulary of such devices as the Digital Image Articulator, Vasulka emphasized the dialogue between artist and machine, as manifested in real-time creativity and process-oriented experimentation. Through digital manipulation, he continues to explore the malleability and objectification of the electronic image as a means of rendering a complex inventory of rhetorical devices. With the fantastical "electronic opera" *The Commission* (1983), Vasulka began to apply these codes to the development of narrative and metaphorical strategies, an inquiry that has dominated his later work.

Vasulka was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1937. He studied at the School of Industrial Engineering in Brno and the Academy of Performing Arts Faculty of Film and Television in Prague. With Steina, he has won numerous awards and grants; their collaborative works have been exhibited internationally (see *Steina and Woody Vasulka*). His individual works have been shown in numerous exhibitions, at festivals and institutions including the International Center of Photography, New York; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; and the Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial, New York. He lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



The Commission

Woody Vasulka: Selected Works
by Woody Vasulka.

Vocabulary

1973, 4:17 min. stereo sound. Multikeyer: George Brown. Scan Processor: Rutt/Etra. Dual Colorizer: Eric Siegel.

The Matter

1974, 3:56 min. sound. Scan Processor: Rutt/Etra. Multikeyer: George Brown.

C-Trend

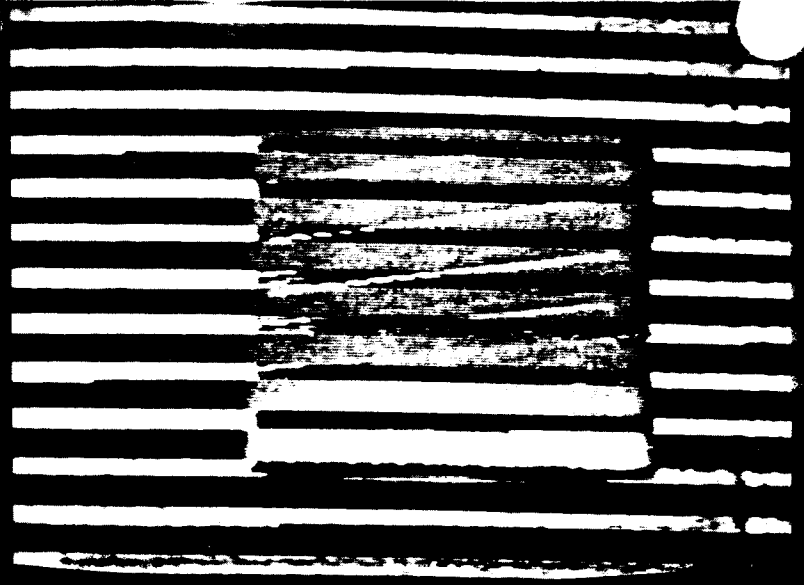
1974, 9:03 min. stereo sound. Multikeyer/H.D. Variable Clock: George Brown. Scan Processor: Rutt/Etra. Dual Colorizer: Eric Siegel.

Explanation

1974, 11:45 min. sound. Multikeyer: George Brown. Dual Colorizer: Eric Siegel. Scan Processor: Rutt/Etra.

Total program: 1973-74, 29:01 min. color. mono and stereo sound.

This program of early works includes didactic explanations of Vasulka's image-making tools, and also charts his development of a grammar of these imaging techniques. *Vocabulary* is "designed to convey in a didactic form the basic energy laws in electronic imaging." Here a hand, as a metaphor for expression and gesture, and a sphere that symbolizes form, are processed with a keyer, colorizer and scan processor. *The Matter*, *C-Trend*, and *Explanation* are methodical, didactic works that deconstruct the essential elements of electronic imaging and then attempt to construct a syntax from those elements. In *The Matter*, a generated dot pattern is re-sculpted into myriad three dimensional forms and shapes by waveforms, which also generate sound. In *C-Trend*, a view of traffic shot from a window is transformed and sculpted into permutations of abstract, three-dimensional forms. *Explanation* is a computer-generated cross-hatch of lines that becomes three-dimensional, defining shapes in a synthetic landscape of gradually shifting image position and size.



Steina and Woody Vasulka

Steina Vasulka Born in Reykjavik, Iceland. Studied violin at Music School in Reykjavik and The Conservatory of Music in Prague. Played in Icelandic Symphony Orchestra and free-lanced in New York.
Woody Vasulka Born in Czechoslovakia. Studied at Film Academy, Prague. Made documentary films in Algeria, Iceland, and Czechoslovakia. 1970 Woody and Steina began collaborating in experimental video. 1971 Founded The Kitchen, New York. 1972 Artists in Residence KQED-TV San Francisco. 1973 Artists in Residence WNET-TV New York. The Vasulkas live in New York. **Selected Individual Exhibitions** 1973 *Circuit: A Video Invitational* Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York. 1974 *Project '74*, Cologne; *EXPRMNTL5, Fifth International Experimental Film Competition* (video department) The Royal Film Archive of Belgium, Knokke-Heist, Belgium. 1975 *Video Art* Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.

Bill Viola Born 1951 in Flushing, New York. Installed and operated 1972-73 Synapse Cable TV System, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. BFA 1973 Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. Technical Consultant 1973-74 Video Installations, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York. Technical Director 1974 to the present *Art/Tapes 22*, Florence. Lives in Florence. **Selected Individual Exhibitions** 1973 Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York. 1974 The Kitchen, New York; de Saisset Art Gallery and Museum, University of Santa Clara, Santa Clara, California. **Selected Group Exhibition** 1972 *St. Jude Video Invitational* de Saisset Art Gallery and Museum, University of Santa Clara, Santa Clara, California. 1973 *Circuit: A Video Invitational* Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York; *Chocorua 73* Chocorua, New Hampshire; *Avant-Garde Festival* New York. 1974 *Art Now '74* John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.; *Video Art/Impact* Galerie Impact, Lausanne, Switzerland; *Art/Video Confrontation 74* Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris. 1975 *Biennial* Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

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VIDEO ART

Institute of Contemporary Art
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

January 17 to February 28, 1975