Video Viewpoints

Five independent videomakers talk about and show their work
Monday Evenings, 7:30 p.m. Founders Room, sixth floor
The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019
Tickets are free and are available at the Lobby Information Desk

March 13

Steina Vasulka
The Craft of Electronic Imagery

March 27

Vito Acconci
FACE/FIGHT/FLASH (Video as a Ground for Non-Video)

April 24

Bill Viola
Subjective Elements in Videotape Recordings

May 8

Beryl Korot
Video and the Loom: An Explanation of Ancient and Modern
Technologies (Illustrated by Two Multi-Channel Works)

May 22

Jon Alpert
The Work of the Downtown Community Television Center

The series is partially supported with public funds from the
New York State Council on the Arts

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-inspired by the pioneer French balloonists the Montgolfier brothers. After Montgollier follows the flight of a modern-day balloon over Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. The beauty of the balloon drifting across the landscape is enhanced through a camera pan done in tandem with each turn of the balloon and through dolly effects created by the wind. The dramatic effect is heighten by the ambient sound of the slow release of helium that regulates the flight.


This is one of eight videotapes or “chapters” that examine aspects of the art world in the United States and Europe. Each chapter focuses separately on all the workshops and artist’s condominiums, but together the series explore the institutionalized structures that separate artists and their work from their audiences. In The Docents we observe the individuals who conduct tours of visitors through art museums, here the Long Beach Museum of Art and the Newport Harbor Art Museum. The guides describe their work, revealing their dedication and motivations. We intercut with scenes from crossovers of traffic moving rapidly along the Los Angeles freeway. The highway, a dominant feature of the documentary, is used to question the docents’ seemingly straightforward flow of information.


In The Commission Woody Vasulka utilizes image and audio processing to develop and enhance a narrative structure. The title refers to the commission to write a piece of music that nineteenth-century composer Hector Berlioz received from the great Italian violinist Niccolò Paganini. The electronically distorted narration describes the lives and the relationship of the two men, interpreted and played by two well-known video-makers, Ernest Gusella as Paganini and Robert Ashley as Berlioz. Gusella’s gaunt face is rendered appallingly by the image processor, eliciting a mystical quality. With a sequence of Berlioz playing the harmonica and Robert Ashley humming a Vietnamese folk tune, this work reveals an unpredictability, hum, and inventiveness that are characteristic of Vasulka’s work.


Selected works by this artist who came out of the West Coast collaborative art movement the Ant Farm and T. R. Uthco in the 1970s. His work contains much of those groups’ acute media awareness and spirit of social satire. 1. Freeway, 1983. Satirizes the postures and attitudes of a political speechmaker. 2. Songs of the 80’s (1983). A series of five enigmatic pieces that project a sense of precariousness and disaster. Continuity is established through the repeated use of images such as a hammering fist and objects bursting into flames. The segments are titled: “Phoenix,” “I Am Falling,” “Sounds of Glass,” “The Through The Room,” “Leaning Forward Gracefully,” and “These Are the Rules.”

3. Almost Like a Dance (1984). Directed by Doug Hall and Jules Backus. An intense look at the Olympics champion weight lifter, Mario Martinez, at the Sports Palace in Aldo, France. Parts are shot in slow motion and extreme close-up.

4. This is the Truth (1982). A parody of a public speaker, a preacher, or politician, in which the performer extorts his audience with a series of platitudes such as “Only the strong survive.”


Gotta Make This Journey is a portrait of six radical women who are the present members of Sweet Honey in the Rock. The group’s music is as varied as its members, ranging from spirituals to calypso, African chants to American blues; but in their commitment to social change and racial equality, the group stands united. The focal point of the videotape is their ninth-anniversary concert. Interweaves are interviews with members of the group and commentary by Alice Walker, Holly Near, Angela Davis, and others.


How to Fly presents the richness of a random series of daily lives through fragmented scenes that life that is a combination of mimesis and the joy of movement. The segments range from a young woman practing yoga to a group of construction workers who are the present members of Sweet Honey in the Rock. The group’s music is as varied as its members, ranging from spirituals to calypso, African chants to American blues; but in their commitment to social change and racial equality, the group stands united. The focal point of the videotape is their ninth-anniversary concert. Interweaves are interviews with members of the group and commentary by Alice Walker, Holly Near, Angela Davis, and others.


Twenty-seven young people between the ages of six and eighteen, from different backgrounds, express their feelings about the threat of nuclear war. Sharing their insights into the pressures on them is a moving experience. Contrasting with the youthful statements are scenes of actual nuclear testing and paintings by children of their impressions. In a personal testimony a Japanese dentist, at fifteen a survivor of the Hiroshima bomb, recounts how the August 1945 routine was broken by a blast that in a few seconds turned a modern city into a desert of the dead. His memories are illustrated by footage of the aftermath of the bomb showing the injured victims, many of them children.


Modern dancer Gay Delanghe, transformed through synthesized video images, interprets the joyful mood and bouncing rhythm of the Dixieland jazz music of Jelly Roll Morton. Delineated in white silhouette, her moving figure is double-then triple-exposed, and as the music progresses, the three forms become abstract, break up and reform. Earthbound movement is transformed into a flowing, gravity-free experience. Richard Gorber, writing in Arts Magazine, describes Chase’s video work as “the intensely visual tradition of Dooku Fuller. Chase continues to break ground in her media explorations.”


Kikiriki Labat weaves together a series of tales through fragmented narrative. The narrative is used to question the docents’ seemingly straightforward flow of information.


In The Pursuit of Happiness Julie Gustafson and John Reilly question the “inalienable right” mentioned in the Declaration of Independence to pursue happiness. Shot with a video camera, the documentary focuses on Molly Rush of the Plowshares 8. A member of this group of Catholic activists, she was sentenced to two years in prison for smashing the nose cone of a nuclear weapon. Interracial are interviews with Molly Rush’s husband, Bill, and with the war and two inmates of the prison where she was held. Each
responds to the question of how one can live according to one's own values and, at the same time, pursue the American Dream.


This is a collection of five independent works that together describe the stages of personal journey, utilizing images of transition—for example day to night, motion to stillness. Each work explores specific video techniques and technologies, in combination with the spatial potentials of stereo sound. In Reflecting Pool (1977-79) movement and change in an otherwise still scene are limited to the reflections and ripples on the surface of a pond in the woods. Moonblood (1977-79) is a series of images relating to a principal character, a cynical, unemployed young man, who has given this work the look and grittiness of truth and fabricated reality. Officers gradually breaks down her ability to differentiate between truth and fabricated reality. Steele, who has given this work the look and grittiness of a documentary, emigrated from the United States to Canada in 1968.


In both tapes the artist presents himself in a series of performances that explore aspects of the self and at the same time expand the creative potentials of video. Moonblood (1977-79) is a series of images relating to a principal character, a cynical, unemployed young man, who has given this work the look and grittiness of truth and fabricated reality. Officers gradually breaks down her ability to differentiate between truth and fabricated reality. Steele, who has given this work the look and grittiness of a documentary, emigrated from the United States to Canada in 1968.

In Some Call it Bad Luck, Lisa Steele portrays a single parent, an American immigrant to Canada who is down on her luck. She is questioned by the police as a witness to a crime and as a result is accused of manslaughter. Although at first she is certain of her innocence, the relentless bullying by the interrogating officers gradually breaks down her ability to differentiate between truth and fabricated reality. Steele, who has given this work the look and grittiness of a documentary, emigrated from the United States to Canada in 1968.

Voyage of Dreams documents the efforts of the Haitian boat people to escape from the political and economic strife of their homeland and build a new life in America. They face incarceration and deportation. Narrated by Ossie Davis and Raymond Caouette, this video documentary features exclusive footage from Haiti and interviews with those who survived the perilous journey across the ocean, recreated by the Haitian artist Nemo through the use of computer graphics.


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