M Could we get into some specific material, how and why you got into video?

St I just got into video because Woody got into video, so this is a question for him.

W I was swept away! So romantic, so desperate to believe in what I was doing. I was trying to believe in my writing, I was trying to believe in film, which I was educated in. And suddenly, there was this primitive medium, video, and saw this totally primitive material called feedback. I was lucky, too, through my job having around a place that had small format video, and so I could start taking it home. That's when Steina took it over. "It's mine."

She's a woman. She threw away her violin, in which ¾ her life was invested, and picked up the video. (Laughter)

St Boy, was I glad to get rid of that violin.

W The first day I came home, she had already produced a ½ hour of tape.

ST We got so involved that Woody decided, very rationally, that he had to quit work. So, I agreed to it. There was no way he could be bogged down with some stupid job when all this was going on.

W She sent a letter to her father in Iceland who had never heard the term video, "I'm involved in video now, Daddy, send me some money." And he did! It wasn't much, but it brought us a porta-pack or something.

ST My parents always believed in me, totally. They only time they didn't was when I was going to marry a foreigner (Laughter). My mother was alarmed at that, but a friend came in and said, "Why are you so alarmed? Don't you believe in Steina?" My mother calmed down, and realized it had to be a good one for me, because I wouldn't get anything else. My father saw video once when I was asked to give a lecture at the American Cultural Exchange in Iceland. And he was quite disgusted with it. He thought it was pretty silly. That didn't matter. "I cannot spend a minute on this. It gives me a headache." So we laughed and that was it.

M Do you still play violin?

ST I haven't unpacked it since moving here. But I should. I'd like to play in a quartet.
JM: Have you been doing any of the synthesizer music?
ST: No, that is a natural for Woody. I wasn't free. I could do nothing with it, I was so trained in music. He's somewhat trained, but he doesn't read music fluently. He could go straight in there and turn out symphonies and operas.
W: I have a secret background which is called music composition which I have no preconditions or hang ups about, so I can be free. It's the only area I could make use of old-fashioned, traditional structures. I've been secretly doing it for years, but now I have to come out of my closet because now we're producing this operatic form called Pagannini—at least that's the working title. Anyway, . . . what's the question?

JM: About music, but just keep talking.
W: One of my motivations to play around with video and audio instruments was I very early recognized that it's the same material. There's no division in the material sense. It's energy, in a particular arrangement in time, it's only a frequency or organizational difference. The material is identical. Do you understand?

E: Yes
W: Good. That unity of material inspired us to exchange all video events into audio, interfacing, all sorts of video events into control for audio synthesizers, or vice versa. It became a mutually systemic complementary inspiration. That taught us the most dramatic lessons about the material. what it is, how you move it around, change it. That became the basis of our understanding of video in its primary level. We don't use it like television. We're pointed toward the materiality of it. It's very close to what a sculptor would do with other materials. For us, it's tangible. We can actually touch it through the tube. You can, with the computer, plot certain events in time, because everything screen is equal to particular location in particular time, so once you know how to plot certain events on the screen, you can change it, program it, to actually structure images. So working with time becomes part of the craft, and that is what was inspired by the basic investigation of the material.
M: You do all the programming?
W: Yes, though sometimes I have to get help, because I'm not naturally gifted in mathematics.

AL: This is still very esoteric mathematics stuff for most people. Do you the feeling that, like the gothic masons had to keep their ability secret, this stype of technology should stay unavailable?
W: No. If creative people instead of utilitarianists get into the development of languages, then the languages will carry the significance of the culture, rather than the significance of utility, which it is now.

M: Language isn't made by poets?
W: Should be. Unfortunately, though, its been mathematicians. We have to understand that these code organizations into language is the duty of the citizen, an artist or the creative part of the society. These things should be taken from the hands of computer scientists and they should become general property.

JH: So that people's creativeness can come out through this vehicle; using it as a means of expression, not just a scientific thing off in the corner.

W: Yes.

M: You didn't always use computers in your work, did you?
W: No. First you buy one, then you learn how to use it.

ST: You buy one, you read, you wonder, and, for a long time, you're very intimidated by this powerful tool in your living room. We would get our friends to come in and make it conversant. They would say things like, "Oh, you need a bootstrap." Then we'd have to find someone else to tell us what a bootstrap was and where we could buy one of those. We had to learn everything the hard way.

JH: Would you give us a little history about the Kitchen?
First we had the space, and because we had the space, all those things could start happening. It was a beautiful space. Others would say otherwise - a rat hole.

That's what it was - totally gutted. But it had this feeling! We cleaned it up, and asked everybody we knew to come and do something there, and we filled up the schedule that way. That's what we need in Santa Fe - a space with the rent paid. The income from the gate is enough to run the rest of it.

The thing in New York was, in the early 70s there was no place to show video. Special groups had little theaters, but there was no open space. We decided that since we had so many people coming to our place to show video, it was time to take it out.

The success of the Kitchen was not by design. We didn't know about alternative spaces for performance and all those things, we didn't know the space was going to be in the heart of what was later SoHo. In 1971 it was a burned-out shell. The whole thing was totally innocent. Suddenly we found we had this Kitchen and suddenly we found out about all this unbelievable creative energy going on.

We started out with a general policy that we would present electronic arts there - music, video, but people eventually found everything experimental there. Any thing that would fit better there than somewhere else. When we started, we had jobs to pay the rent. When we left it was a 540,000 operation. Now, it's 250,000, an institution. But there was a difference between the old Kitchen, which symbolically collapsed - the building actually collapsed killing two people. But just before that, the Kitchen had been transplanted into another location and changed hands and become more established.

It's become a myth.

Yes, but that was due to the particular vacuum that existed. There was nothing else. So it became . . . it took life on its own. We gave it an openness. It doesn't have that anymore.
ST: That's the way to run this kind of place. Let anybody who wants to take it over, and just let people keep taking it over. People know what to do with a space.

W: But it was a little disappointing to us that a tradition of video was never established there. I would still like to participate in something devoted just to electronic arts. That's something we have passion for.

M: And after you left the Kitchen and New York, you went to Buffalo?

ST: Yes, and there we had our own lab in our own home. Our creative work space was also our living space. We worked with the university there, helped them get their lab together, but it was separate from our own.

W: And now we have to think about how to directly live off what we do. But I must confess that the most free support I ever got was from the government. In teaching, there was always a pay off, it was less honest, and the direct work, for business, was the least honest.

ST: The New York State ARTS Council was quite radical in the beginning. They made New York just jump ahead of the rest of the country. They used to come down into SoHo, go into the loft's, look at the work, talk to the people, and when they found work they thought should be funded, they told the people, "You ought to apply," and then they told them how to do it. So it's interesting to think how art flourishes where the money is. I saw it there. The money came there, and the creativity exploded. It's probably the same thing that happened with the Medicis.

W: We basically interested in only supported art. We are not interested in art that actually makes it commercially. That's different. I'm interested in imperfections, ambiguous products, the dying, the weak. For me, the strong, established things eventually become oppressive and boring.

ST: My idea of art is that art-making is a lifestyle. It is a certain recklessness. Most artists are people who don't fit into society. They
don't become wage earners.

AL I don't quite follow the idea about fragile art?
W I think much of art is fragile, unstable. If an art form has no place to be performed, for example, it might not appear. Jeff Hendricks (sp?), a brilliant performer, did frozen frame theater. He would move over a period of maybe three hours, about the stage, and you had to be there to track all the movements. He had profound performing concepts, but who emerged from that movement but Robert Wilson, who does opera, the most bombastic, brutal, banal sort of thing. But the most fragile, unperformable, unspecific work was so endangered. Andy Warhol is there like a giant, but underneath is this intricate web of useless pieces. new experiments with film and performance, very intellectual strands, that maybe one day will come out, but maybe they're gone forever.

ST Sometimes the artists so overblow an artist that he becomes so famous that he can't work anymore. Once too much is expected of you. . . . What do you do?

M Do you feel any of that burden yourselves?
W We were famous for 20 minutes, after an article in the New York Times. But we were known in a small group of video people, not in the mainstream. Sometimes what we do is synchronous to the art stream, sometimes its anachronistic. But not one serious critic has analyzed our work.

ST How would they do it?
W We're known as the strange couple, a sociological phenomenon. Others have very identifiable work. We've always gone a little bit beyond the technological, the easy interpretation, because we go into the basics of the operation, of the material. No one's been able to describe that, so no one's tried, and that suits us fine as long as we can keep working. And so we act as promoters of the medium, ambassadors,
You mentioned the connection between art-making and lifestyle. Was it a big change when you moved to Santa Fe?

I could be anywhere. The reality of my struggle is that machine, and these pictures that come out. The rest, the trees, the hills, are very beautiful and if I can go out for 2 or 3 minutes, I get refreshed. But the work is unrelated.

ST: We need a larger space, which maybe we could find in Taos, but Woody, you say you want to be here in Santa Fe! Yet you say the outside is just decoration?

M: All the contradictions in Woody are true. (Laughter)

It's beautiful, but the uninterrupted volume of time we get here is that's important.

JM: What about the low-power television station that you're involved with? Is that going to happen? How's that going to effect your time?

ST: I'll do whatever I can to make it happen, but I don't have the time to actually do it. It's an incredible challenge to set up a low power station for Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Taos, and make it a total culture station.

M: A response station?

ST: Run it like the Kitchen, where anyone can schedule a time and isn't asked what he or she is going to do. Let it go out, let it fail when it must. So, in that sense it's two-way.

M: Would the community have full control of the programming?

ST: No. That's not possible. The Kitchen wasn't a democratic system. Creation isn't democratic, it's a skill. People who are not creating will not ask for time.

M: There won't be a production studio. Artists will provide tapes...

ST: It could do lectures live, and there's a lot of backup programming available as needed to meet the FCC minimum time requirements. But the more people saw it, the more they'd begin using it.
3H: How much has been done?
3L: The engineering study, the application has been submitted, and we've put out feelers for funding. If we're on the air a year from now, I would consider that a miracle.
Mr. Could we get into some specific instead, how's my golf not video.

As I just got into video because wood got me video, so this is a question for him. I was swept away! So urgent, so desperate to believe in what I was doing — I was trying to believe in my writing, that trying to believe in film, which I was educated in. And I thought there was this picture medium video and then printed material called feedback, and it was like. The phenomenon itself was what caught me. That somehow what?

But this was very much complementary to it. It might be more urgent. So this particular staging of the material turned metal around, and was lucky to the job, being around a place that had small format video, so I could start taking it home. That's when steve took it over. "I'm going. It's a woman. She then and her video. It was picked up the video.

At 7:57am. I had to get rid of that video, he said, I came home, she had already produced a 1-hour tape. It's a very national place for work. House
at a place where he was earning more so we could pay the rent and buy groceries if we were already doing a lot of tasks and the place provided him in all the camping we needed. We could get it off any time we needed.

You can't take it in the evening or all over. A draft sort of thing. Get it back in the morning. We set ourselves that Woody decided he wasn't going to quit work. So we refused to it. There was no way he could be begged down in some stupid job when all this was going on.

She sent a letter to her partner in Peoria who had never heard the news and the involved in radio. sexy. Shady sent me some more. "And besides! It wasn't much but it bought us a porto. pack or something.

My parents always believed in me. totally. The only time they didn't was when I was going to marry a foreigner. My mother was ashamed of that. And a priest came in and said, "why are you so ashamed? Don't you believe in Stein? My mother calmed down and realized it had to be a good man, because wouldn't to..."
have a secret background which is called music composition. And I have a friend who is a musician. He has been composing music for years. He used to play in a band. I remember we used to jam a lot.

I have heard that you play the trumpet. I'm really interested in music composition. I've been trying to learn how to compose music. I've been practicing a lot.

We should go to a concert together. The music composer who I heard about is coming to town. I'm really excited to hear his music. He's been composing some really beautiful compositions.

Do you still play the flute? I used to play the flute when I was a kid. It was a really fun instrument. I wish I could play it again. It's one of the few things I miss from my childhood.

I also heard that there was a music festival coming up. I think we should go to that too. It would be a great opportunity to hear some music we haven't heard before.

Well, I should get back to practicing. I have a lot of homework this week. I hope you have a good day too.
- at least that's the working title, anyway ... what was the question?

Walls: alt music, but just keep talking.

Walls: my motivation? My musical motivation was very easily recognized that it's the same material — there's no difference in the material sense. It's energy, in particular arrangement in time. It's only a frequency or organizational difference. The material is identical. Do you understand?

Walls: Yes.

Walls: because it's important that it comes across. That most of material is inspired by collage all sorts of events into a single interface, and vice versa. In other words, we could control for audio synthesisers, or vice versa. We used loops, i.e. the smallest video synths, we could find to generate video.

At least one of the more complete, systematic, inspiration, that taught us the most dramatic lessons of the material that it is how you move it around, change it. That becomes the basic function of understanding video. That's why we take the word 'working' in video at its primary level. We don't use it like television sound. We're pointed toward the materiality of the controllability of it as a material. And if we close truth...
a sculptor would do with the materials. For us it is tangible. We can actually touch it through the tubes. You can write the computer code to plot certain events in time, because every time screen is equal to particular location in particular time. So once you know how to plot certain events on the screen, you can change it to program it to actual structure images. Only at time becomes part of the craft, and that's what's inspired by the basic investigation of the material.

W. You do all the programming?

W. Yes, though sometimes I get help because I'm not naturally gifted in mathematics.

I. So many terms from the electronic sphere have gotten into the language. It makes me think that children of this generation will have a closer more natural relationship to all the technology of the generation before.

W. An incident happened here. Brad Smith bought his son's robot. His son wants to make a robot and he wants to tell the robot to go to the bathroom. Dad didn't understand that first the robot has to know where the bathroom was. He has to teach him.
This is true still - use it.

But it's necessary to see it in a sense that there's a functional relation to the cultural norm. If you're going to change the culture, you have to change its underlying culture. It's not just a matter of putting new things in; it's the basic structure of the culture that needs to be changed.

In terms of education, the technique means have to be developed. The new technology can be used to create new educational techniques.
These things should be taken from the hands of computerscientists, they should become general property.

Just as comput. science was as common as reading and writing, a majority in our life, the people should create new words and come out in that vehicle. It's a means of expression, not just a scientific thing.

We decide a culture, though, because everybody can find his or her way of expressing certain programs. There are new phonetic syllabaries which allow you to talk to computers. Smart kids use everyday human language as inefficient. They may communicate in a voice, not in human speech pattern - very efficient, very fast. But it's got to be one-to-one, machine and communicant. This digitalized society as a cultural unity as letter, conversation, also needs to disappear. Some people will be talking to machines, tell them computers. Some people are developing a common language that they can all use to talk to their computers and all the computers are compatible - they can all talk to all computers. We're just interested in that.
We're interested in very special computers that can talk, maybe, to us, or people who take the same pains as we to get that out of the computer. And I think that's the way it's going to go, that people are going to shape computers to their needs.

What does that kind of antagonism come from, well, thought or from circumstances, from the tools?

Well, you didn't always use the computer in your work?

No, you try one, then you learn how to use it.

Yes, we had to buy the tool, then lean. You read, you wonder, and for a long time, you're very intimidated. You have a powerful tool in your living room, but you don't know anything about it. We would get our friends to come in and make it conversant, and they would say, "Do you need a bootstrap?" and we would say, "What's a bootstrap?" Then someone else would tell us what it was, and where we could buy one. We had to learn everything the hard way.
I'm incapable of learning from classes. It's always taught as an abstract, somehow useless application. You hardly buy it... That's the first act of commitment.

Ladies, would you give us a little history of the kitchen?

At first we had the space, because we had the space all those things could start happening. Because of what happened, the space would have been empty. We found the place, fell in love of it... a beautiful space, in a barn building.

Writers would say otherwise - a rat hole.

So that's what it was - totally gutted. But it had this feeling. A contractor friend found it for us, and we talked the landlord into giving it to us for a cheap rent. Eventually he threw us out, realizing it was a most beautiful room. In the meantime, we couldn't fill it up. We had no money to equip it. Just became a performance space. We asked anybody around to come and do something there, so we filled up the schedule that way. That's what we need in Santa Fe, in a space like this performance space. A space where the rent paid.
The income from the site is enough to run the rest of it. We had happened in this vacuum of possibilities, because we had virtually no place to stand. There were few theatriques owned by special groups, dedicated groups. But they wouldn’t show your stuff, only their own.

We decided that since we had so many people coming to our place to show videos, it’s time to take it out.

So it wasn’t about by design. We didn’t even plan alternate spaces for performances, and all those things that were going on, it was just I knew that the space would be in the heart of what was late 80’s, which in 90’s was just a burnt out shell. It was told informal. We’d live in it for 8 or 9, but mostly among foreigners. Suddenly, we had this kitchen and we found out about all this unbelievably creative energy.

M: Were you able to keep doing your own work?
S: Yes. We then everybody and at midnight, started working until 7 or 8 in the morning.

W: The only policy we had... We presented electronica arts and traditional music. We opened our door, let people in, and from that everything happened. People started joining, and everything happened.
In its heart, that was the problem. It was a whole, complete, whole thing that is the way.

In this, I'm just trying to sort of get it right. I'm not sure. I'm not sure if it's right. It's a long, long, long, long way.

But, when we look at some of the circumstances, it begins to make sense. It becomes clear what's happening. It begins to make sense. It becomes clear what's happening.

We're so close. The difference is, we never knew that. We never knew that. We never knew that.
down, the People knew what to do in a space idea that, initially, got one off the ground, but difficult, it was that a tradition always was never established or carried out here, because there was no other space. 

- So after you left the kitchen, you went to Buffalo? St. Helens, and then we had our own lab, now our home, our creative space was also our living space. We helped the university get their lab together, but it was separate.

- Now we have to think about how to design life of what we do. But I must confess that the most freeing part I ever got was from the government. Real jobs, I never thought it was honest, and the least work was the least honest. I worked for the American Can Company to make a living and sold of equipment, machinery, so on this front.

- The U.S. State Council was quite radical in the beginning. It made us think years ahead of the rest of the country. The mood came down to get the leader, look at the work, talk to the people, and tell them how to do it.
At its interest to think how art flourishes when the money is gone if there. The money can do the creation exploded. It's probably the same thing that happened at the Medicine. Wherever people gave support... That lasts there.

We are basically interested in art supporting art. We are not interested in art that makes it commercial. That's different. Non-sellable art is our interest. It lives in its own domain. An interest in imperfect, ambiguous productivity, the dying, the weak, the strong, established things in me eventually became oppressive and sobering.

At my idea is that art-making is a lifestyle. It is a certain restlessness. Most artists are those people who can't fit in society. They don't become wage earners. The art of the product can't be separated.

I didn't follow what you said about being fragile. I think I just as fragile, unstable. If art for art's sake has no place to be performed it might not exist. Bill Hendricks, a brilliant performer, he did program to be a theatre. He would move over a period of time, make 8 shows, about the situation you had to be there to track all the programs. That goes into performing concepts, but who emerged
from that movement, but Bob Wilson, who does opera, the most bombastic, freakish, and band-like band. The most fragile, unperformable suspension was so underused.

But that’s the level creativity to me the most interesting. The least defensible, that’s what’s most useful to me. The homosexual trend in gay, for example, was unbelievable to me, coming from Vermont, not so radical. It took me totally by surprise. They fought off the garbage of the 60’s off them or stage with these elegant cultural things — they made a theater. You think they survived? Did they didn’t survive. They didn’t survive culturally, not physically, it was too fragile.

Magazines can create a very strong illusion of certain individuals, critics can formulate things, but underneath you find the is very fragile. And weird is them like a giant, but underneath there are intricate webs of useless pieces, arguments, pettiness, veiled intellectual standards, maybe one day it will come out, maybe such things are gone forever.

If something the magazine sounds if though and overblown so the artist forever so famous
he can't work anymore because the 'we became too famous' + that's equal said. 'I see too much in expected' you... what do you do.

We change your name or start again.

Mel - Do you feel any of that pressure yourself?

W - We were famous for 20 minutes, an act in the AR Times. 'But we were known in a small group.' People were watching in the mainstream. 'We didn't even care. Sometimes it's synchronous to the art scene; sometimes it's antagonistic.' We have gotten serious criticism over the analysis on work.

St - How would you do it?

W - We're known as a strange couple a sociological phenomenon, but there's no criti u/o would ask us. For work... the work... we know how do we know. Others have we

Peter - Self-internally work has describable. We've always gone beyond the technological, the easy interpretation. Because we go into the basics of the operation of the material. We had to struggle to
decode it, and even the next person would have to try to describe it, and it would be misleading, so nobody does and that suits nothing. Pears as long as we can operate and do it, it's all right. So we act as promoters of the media, as sort ambassadors, or judges.

Yet we sit on a lot of panels. I've done that a lot lately, and the best work I've seen in the country actually was in the U.S., in Houston, of the work from Texas. It was very individualistic, very weird.

(Stuff about grants, kids, etc.)

Jackie, why did you come to Santa Fe?

We expected it was going to be much warmer here (laughs). This is the desert! We first came there.

But when we first came there, in '72, we had liked it when we decided to leave Buffalo, we just said Santa Fe. So from the time we arrived in all the rental a car drove up here the people we met, I said “Yes, yes, yes.”
so we never stopped up where we're supposed to when you make a drastic move in your life. Make - you were taken all lifestyle. There wasn't many here a big change

We could be anywhere. The goal of my struggle is that machine, and then picture that comes out. I have to examine them very carefully. The rest, the trees, the hills, are very beautiful in fall. I can go out for 20-3 minutes. I get refreshed. But the work is unrelated.

But you were the one who insisted on staying. But we need a larger space which perhaps we could get in 7003. But Woody, you want to be here? Not you see the outside is just advertisement.

Well, all the contradictions are true at Woody! It's beautiful, but there's an intermittent volume of time we get here is what's important. It's a rush, a madness, though it works for us. But here, it's the first time I've achieved anything that you can face and yourself. Otherwise, you get involved, inspired. Here, there's the privilege of unprogrammed time.

Jackie, what about the TV station being talked about? How will that affect the time unprogrammed time? Is it gonna happen?
It I want to do whatever needs I can to make it happen, but I don't have time to actually do it. It's an overwhelming challenge to set up a low-power station. How do you see it? Make it a total community station?

Sid - A station is a one-way street, but if you run it like the kitchen, where anyone can schedule a time, and isn't obligated anyone he or she is going to present. Yet it's not, but it fails when it must. In that sense it is 2-way. No buying of low-power. How do you see it structured? How many hours programming?

Sid - I see it growing, organized. We would be lucky to do this a day or a week to begin. I think there's a FCC minimum we'd have to meet. But there's a lot of backing programming we could use. At first we'd be lucky just to be on the air, but as people saw it, they would hopefully begin using it.

Ww - Would the community have full control of the station? Programming?

Sid - No, that's not possible. The kitchen wasn't a democratic system, because the person who performed
would have to be a performing artist. It's a skill. People who are not creating will not ask for more. So
the town will try to have a studio in the station. People will rent recording tapes. Hopefully, it will make
individual videos where artists' studios more active. Under it's non-profit, what has been done
at the engineering school, the application has been
put in, and we've put out feelers for funding. If we're on the air in a year from now
I would consider that a miracle, though it
could happen.

I stuff on video staff available - now
things for programming
more enthusiastic
so we could do lectures, live, and the rare,
best available programming that's already
available.

We'll total dedication, someone, the economic
thing has to be figured out. That's where
distinctive.

The funding will determine the programming. Too, if
the funding is local, not if the program will be
local.
I can't be totally enthusiastic about the station because it's not that interested in transacting original. It's a limited channel. It's the after you can get music from a lot of other sources.

It's very easy. When people go shopping on television to see what's on they're going to see this station. People will start watching it, maybe just while there are commercials on the other one. After a year you can start to measure its impact.

I think PBS probably started the same way. People turned to it just because they didn't like what was on commercial TV.

But so many people in Santa Rosa have cable now.