

Interview with Steina and Woody Vasulka and Marita Sturken and JoAnn Hanley, July 24, 1987

Marita: Why should film be the primary reference point?

Woody: Film was the only medium that carried the cinema of moving image.

Marita: The first.

Woody: There were some, as you know, zoetropes and kinetoscopes, ^{and other} kinetic devices. But truly...

Marita: But they were recording media.

Woody: Yeah, but they're also, you know, entertainment. ^{Marrié} ~~and~~ cameras, and all those things. The others were all these cyllinders, what's the name of it?

Marita: ~~zoetropes~~ *Praxiscopes,*

Woody: There was-the phemenology was ushered, film came with its absolutely unambiguous, ~~and~~ culturally broad and intellectually lucid, eventually, concept. So it became obvious that this eventually-that this would be passed on to the general public as ^{a new} ~~a new~~ form of literacy. But this phemenology which was located in film was specific to film. And that's how it culturally, also, developed, its criticism and its language and its intellectual kind of contribution and participation was created. Now with video, suddenly some people would separate these two media. They would say video belongs to a different cultural environment and that they can't be talked about in the same language. But in fact I say sure, the phemenology that was assigned to film is the same if taken to video, and not only video, you know when I ~~thought~~ ^{saw} ~~it~~ ^{it's basically} computers, it's basically to carry on a type in parallel, ^{the same} ~~the same~~ phemenology. So we have now three major systems that carry the same phemenology. They have their own...

Marita: Different manifestations.

Woody: Yeah, different manifestations. but what I'm trying to say is that any medium in the future automatically contains the media of the past. That means video in fact contains the language, of whatever, these are terms that are still being debated, but I mean the syntactic devices-- fade in, fade out, dissolve ...

Marita: The cut, *various kinds of interjection,*

Woody: And then syntax ~~is just~~ in context of the story, or how to tell things. It's true, we don't think of them as disrelated because we see them on television and we see them on films. Sometimes we see them on television less than we see them on film because television is designated to a different populous, a much larger populous and also uses different types of stories. It's not as cultural to the degree that film is, sort of avant-garde over narrative exploration. But, and computers the same, now computer isn't scientific or industrial environment, as you know, computers mostly produce scientific images or commercial images, but eventually we may also count them into the main cultural stream of expression. Unfortunately, it's not very practiced. But the phemenology, you know how images are conveyed through this train of frames into our kind of mind is the same phemenology. That's why I pose the ideas.

Marita: How we perceive them or how they're conveyed? *- they are constructed as framed systems.*

Woody: They deliver phases of movement.

Marita: So when you say phemenology you mean as a process that goes through to the actual ~~reception~~ reception of the viewer.

Woody: Yeah, what I call this ~~axis~~ ^{axis} of perception which is when you construct the image, it is the light space as they call it, which is formed by a pinhole and it's registered into a frame. So there are these three elements and when you project them then it's the light that goes to the frame on screen and it's registered in your visual cortex. All these three elements have to be in ~~axis~~ ^{axis} - horizontal and vertical ~~sense~~ ^{if they are out of axis in the sense} the perception of the movement, ~~it~~ ^{it} can't be unambiguous, it becomes redundant. So film and video for me construct the frame. Film constructs the frame sort of physically and locates the frame mechanically through the sprocket holes and video or computer constructs the frame electronically by time and reference, the line drawing and ~~field~~ ^{field} drawing, it's just different way of constructing the image, in one case it's the parallel ~~delivery of the whole~~ ^{delivery of the whole} frame at one time through the opening of the blade in the projector and in the second it's a line by line ~~construction~~ ^{construction} which is memorized in your visual cortex and held until the next cognitive unit comes and it's compared. But the cinematic interpretation, what's between the first and the second phase, the first ~~and~~ ^{and} the second frame is the extract of that change which some people I guess call the ~~change~~ ^{change} kine change between the first and the second, which then results in the interpretation of movement. And computers ~~have to~~ ^{have to} construct the frame the same way. So we're talking about frames and the delivery of frames it seems to be very effective because various magnificent stories have been constructed by this means. What I'm trying to do is take it away from academic confinement because as you know a lot of departments or even a lot of tribalists, you know, like film tribe, insist that there is specificity of images which is much greater than specificity of the media, see. I say that the medium has its own fluidity and relates to each other phenomenologically, perfect. Of course socially, all the groups are dislocated ~~and~~ ^{and} have their own... agenda. It doesn't matter. It's perfect. It should be like that. Just for the cohesiveness of this aesthetic language eventually, I like to deal with all these media as something accumulative in the sense of aesthetic languages, experiences. ~~They~~ ^{They} can pass on the past to the future in much less...

Marita: You mean so that video doesn't have to go through the same, can draw on that discussion instead of having to reinvent it?

Woody: It's one way, we all have to ~~get~~ ^{get} educated in video. Very few of us consider film as that ~~essential~~ ^{essential}. But I think film is so essential, in fact I go further, the photography is completely essential. And film and photography is completely essential to video and all three of them, photography, film, video are very essential to computer in construction of images mathematically. So I go to this by necessity through the back door instead of through the front. But on the other hand, the cultural differentiation of the tribal or various agendas, academic interests, aesthetic ones, even social and political of the discourse, which is outside the medium, is as essential. That's where the ideologies are formed ~~and~~ ^{and} so ideologies are not truly formulated within the medium. They are usually formulated outside. I do not want to eliminate that, I would just like to find not even a compromise, but some kind of ~~alignment~~ ^{alignment} by going around this sociopolitical and ~~tribal~~ ^{tribal} agendas to more kind of a clear talk about the performance of the media.

Steina: But why do you want to?

Woody: I don't know.

Steina: Why is it essential to link those?

Woody: It's essential in a ^{the} construction ^{of} language. I think ^{the} construction ^{of} language can come from two sources: one intuitive, the other rational. When I look into the past, how languages ^{were} constructed in the nineteenth century, including my own native, which is gone basically, it was reconstructed by guilty Jesuits. And that gives me an idea that language is not in fact an accident. Language could be precise construction. And it is basically uncritical about this society, Americans, who truly give themselves to the pragmatic notion that things develop anyway. You don't have to sit down and think about it. And it's true. You make the ~~cat~~, [?] ~~you don't have to think about it, it just comes to you anyway.~~ There are other societies ^{that say like the French} ~~that are differentiated~~, but I don't want to differentiate in that vulgar sense, but other cultural groups that insist that intellectual leadership is essential. So this dialogue between the populists or autonomists [?] would like to ~~be~~ confronted with something that is more confined.

Steina: But isn't that anti-creative?

Woody: Sure, every confinement is anti-creative. On the other hand, every creativity can only be made in confinement. So I think it's a dialogue about freedom, you're right.

Steina: ~~It was eventually confined. Very.~~ ^{(?) Because the French are very confined. Very low-volume artists.}

Woody: Well, how do you know that?

Steina: In video, in music, in everything. As I'm saying this, I realize I have no background in film, in photography. I am a complete primitive. And you know I ^{can make} ~~make~~ images and I am very ^{interested} ~~interested~~ in music and theory, I know those things, and I'm completely paralyzed. And you're not as well versed in music, and you can make music. So what is this all about?

Woody: What I'm talking about has nothing to bear to results. It's basically, it's very hard to confess if it's game of life, or what kind of--if it's a competition with some ideal, but it goes back to my background. I was brought up in an environment called socialism which was highly interested in symbolic language, because it couldn't speak directly. That kind of taking you away from any practical use of thought ^{to a completely} ~~esoteric~~ use of thought--I could never stop practicing, and I like that. So ^{in a way we all create our own} ~~anyway, the old credo on~~ innocence and ^{we all} ~~sophistication~~. So I can ^{create on my own} ~~have~~ an area of music ^{in which I can be} ~~entirely~~ innocent and still have an area ^{called video in which} ~~of which~~ I can be speculative. But I mean it's nothing to do--it's a purely personal set of values. I would never try to project that on my students, in the past. That's why I had to stop teaching because there's no real method in which one explains one's way of life or living or making, or whatever you do so I don't think these questions are extremely impractical.

Steina: No, I just noticed the attempt to put yourself into a historical context. There is something that was before, and something coming up.

Woody: No, I'm always amazed that one knows nothing about the future but one always sees the past. I mean if you look back, you look at your own work, or anybody's work and you see ~~that~~ it has some consistency, and strangely enough, in many cases it does have a consistency to the past. And in some cases maybe to the future in a kind of visionary sense. But we have already two mouths, one is ~~already~~, one is now, which is basically the future, because you make something that's going to be finished in the future. So as

? moments?

Woody: an artist or as a creative person, as a writer or whatever, a poet, anytime you start working on something you enter this futuristic mode anyway but then when you evaluate what you've done on a longer period then it starts fitting into these completely trivial pigeon-holes. And if you look at history, it's even more devastating. There are whole periods of two hundred years in which the style of painters fit so neatly. And they seemed to be so radical in their own time. Of course some of them never fit, and then on the other hand, they also fit. So it's also this kind of idea of historicification of one's life which is the result of this Marxist ideology.

Marita: You mean kind of a self-conscious historicization.

Woody: Yeah, that you...

Marita: One always has an eye towards one's position?

Woody: It's the inevitability of progress...that it will come, it must come, it can't come by accident, that it's predestined to be here like science fiction ^{has} accomplished, in fact. Everything, the reality of everyday progress just fills those missing holes. But that's of course a ridiculous idea, but it's very comfortable. The other one that the world in the opposite direction is also true. You see, socialism was equated with modernism when I grew up. But suddenly there is a whole different tendency in the world in which modernism is being replaced by theocracy and something so absurd, that would be against all the rules of the logic of progress. I don't take these things seriously, but I think about them because they give you some kind of a play of mind, of whatever you want to.

Steina: ~~Don't~~ ^{see} you ~~think~~ there was a kind of anger when video came by certain people. We all were like appalled by those people who didn't know history. They didn't know film had done it all before, like it was important. And we would have this kind of ~~same~~ ^{whole} stand. Then also that people were reinventing, rediscovering like ~~that~~ ^{that seemed to be bad}. The other thing is people like Bill Viola who starts out being pretty unknowing about things but then he finds out everything then he places himself very carefully. I'm just mentioning him. Most people do this; they say my reference is through Picasso and Fellini and my inspiration comes directly from Leonardo and people always put themselves in some sort of historical context. They know what line they are following, what is the lineage ~~and~~ and who influenced them and I just don't understand the wisdom of this.

Marita: I think there is a tremendous self-consciousness about history and placing oneself in history in this particular medium. ~~That's~~ the topic of this essay that I just wrote for the catalogue and I think a lot of that self-consciousness comes from the kind of ambiguous relationship of the medium to those particular social institutions like museums that eventually began to define it. But I also think that a lot of it has to do with the way in which everything got very accelerated so quickly so that after ten years something you had done ten years before was all of a sudden like an historical document. Not only that, but it was like a lot of those tapes, people had lost them and they became these sort of very nostalgic things. And the fact that the formats changed, and everything got so accelerated that people ~~are~~ ^{became} very concerned about history in an accelerated sense.

As a capture of modernist periods,

Steina: It has nothing to do with it. They try to ^{ignore it} ~~acknowledge~~ totally. Americans try to grapple with it ~~and~~, this is how I see it, ~~and then come~~ ^{and offer up with} this funny conclusion that you either are a technologist or a humanist, and never the two shall meet.

Marita: Or if you're an artist and you're going to humanize technology.

Steina: Yeah, some kind of an agenda.

Marita: I think that part of this whole argument that's been going on about inherent ~~and~~ properties and how the discussion should get situated, at the root of that is the fact that basically, culturally we don't perceive of it being possible to create with machines. I mean, culturally, I think that we have leftover kind of misconceptions.

Woody: But European idea about machines you know is very old and if you take, let's say, Hoffman, you know, what's the first two names? The German that did all the short stories that became operas. What's his name? He did, you know, this famous story about a man that falls in love with automat ~~and~~, you know it became also an opera, this idea and then you have Impressions of Africa by, what's his name, by Ramon ~~and~~ in which the automatic drawing and painting machine is exhibited. So then you have Von Braun which sends man to the moon. You may think it's an American achievement, but it goes well back to Ziolkovsky (?) who calculated the possibility and Von Braun that ~~he~~ had the means to accomplish the task. As you see, without this European impulse, American idea of being in space does not exist. Americans are so pragmatic, it's this kind of split between highly technocratic thought, or not technocratic. You know all ^{the} inventors, like of synthesizers or specific kind of aesthetic machines are usually Americans and now as we know the ^{split between the} ~~and~~ Japanese, who apply all the technology to make tools for the western world. See that gives you the paradox, on the other hand the nations still here seem to be ~~interested in~~ driving a pick-up truck and, you know, be interested in boats, and be interested in not paying taxes. See these kind of dominant trends in this society overwhelm the concern of technology, but the technology is a European dream. I think Americans would be still woodworkers if it were not for Europe.

Steina: ~~That's~~ ^{As} a formalist concern, but at the moment it's pretty dead in Europe, isn't it?

Woody: I don't know Europe enough to make these statements, but

Steina: I mean Europeans like Joseph ^{Beuys} ~~Beuys~~, who was actually quite technological.

Woody: It could become in twenty years, this discussion completely ridiculous because I don't think we understand the world.

Steina: No. Much less myself.

Woody: All these statements may become bizarre because there may be some thoughts in Arabia ~~(that we don't know)~~, which will be unbelievable and we don't know them.

Steina: But the reason I broke into the conversation is this, that I have never felt I belonged anywhere. And for a time I felt guilty about it. I said this is like being either completely arrogant or completely stupid, because everybody talks about the historical connection and the historical progression of images from stills to moving and this and that, and I have nothing to do with it...

Marita: You're not interested in situating yourself.

Steina: No, but I swim in the whole ocean you know, but every drop is on the recall in that sense. There are not those ^{outstanding} drops that I can say this is my ~~mother~~, this is my ~~idea~~, it's just there as a cultural context. And then secondly my orientation stops somewhere in the sixties or seventies. It stopped somewhere there, I mean I was profoundly touched with the flower power revolution and that whole thing and I haven't been touched with the things that have happened since. So when people say postmodern, and they will say I am postmodern, and I guess I am by the mere fact of living in this period, that's ^{so-called} ~~somebody~~ postmodern, means nothing to me. I don't even understand the word much less the...

Marits: I'm not sure I would situate you in the postmodern, either one of you actually.

Woody: Look at it this way: musically she's completely nineteenth century, she's not eighteen or seventeen, she's really nineteenth century.

Steina: Absolutely.

Woody: And by lifestyle she was ^{pre}destined to be a spinster. There was a room upstairs in her house and that was a profession.

Steina: Don't lets get this in the conversation. My mother's going to turn around in the grave.

Woody: She's not ^{fitted into} ~~fitting~~ her own life either, you see, she's got this odd way of looking at things. Her pictures actually look contemporary, but her sounds don't. And what happened to me, since a tender age I was predestined to do this kind of work, like art, not really visual art--that was something I was never gifted for--but I had some gift of writing and some other things, so I kind of was conscious of it since I grew up to some kind of thinking that I don't want to go to the factory, even if I ended there briefly, see I didn't want to go that direction. I wanted to be free through the means of some kind of creative work, which actually happened. It's that kind of a trap one finds himself or herself in. In my case it was entrapment, in her case maybe it was enlightenment. But since you have this particular way of seeing, your way of seeing has something to do with laws of images, you can actually practice it. You are lucky.

Steina: Yeah. I also make my own laws, and then I find out a lot of other people have made the same laws, so it's not being lonely or an innovator or anything stupid like that, it's just that the laws of what moves images, and what is smooth and what is mechanical ways of seeing.

Marita: But I see in this issue of phemenology of the medium, I see you both doing a different kind of take on that. And in Woody's case it's very clear to me why you would make that connection to cinema.

Steina: Yeah, that is his orientation.

Marita: And in your case it's the way that the elements of the image, the camera movement and the sort of selective versus machine-selected way of recording doesn't refer as directly to that legacy. I mean I suppose it could, if you chose for it to refer that way. It doesn't seem to be as central, it's just not the same kind of relationship.

Woody: But you see it's very hard to stay outside of cinema if you use a camera

Woody: and a lens. The cinema has experimented with virtually everything also.

Marita: I think it's very easy not to deal with it. A lot of people don't. You have to make a conscious effort.

Woody: Yes, once you put ^{your interest} into the medium then of course that has its own source, it its own kind of structural or pictorial or compositional source. If you look outside, if you want to make your medium transparent, which many people do, they don't care for the medium, they want to deliver some sort of urgent message. Then they ^{step away from the medium and they} look for a different source. But once you look into the medium, it defines basically what you do, how it looks like, what is it and what kind of time it's going to be constructed in, what kind of tools, so in some ways we're just selecting the mode, looking either sociologically into ^{the} Society ^{itself} ~~defining~~ structures there or looking just into the system itself. In fact, most surprising about her to me is that she can work on a level beyond the optical and mechanical. But she got stuck with it because...

Steina: Because you were supposed to do it, and you didn't do it, *so I had to,*

Woody: Even if I constructed a machine for different purpose, still she used them for that and she could start modifying them and actually drilling the holes ~~in~~. I don't know if it's a group dynamic, or a couple dynamic or if it's truly aesthetic choice, because sometimes we have...you can't live together and do the same, it just doesn't work. So you have to separate yourself from each other. At times you can work together on something that is new to both of us, but once you work on your own work, you must differentiate. So you might have been pushed into it, and I might have been pushed into it, the same position or the opposite position or complementary position or whatever it is, I don't know. And that's why I say one should always live alone. There's no way you know who you are. Who are you, we don't know.

Marita: Why do you need to know who you are?

Woody: That's a good idea, I like that.

Marita: There's a limitation, I think, on how much you can know.

Woody: Or should know, you're right.

Marita: Or you'll never be able to do anything.

Woody: May be tortuous. I think to live together is tortuous, but to live alone must be also tortuous. It's very hard to choose.

Steina: But you see, the discussion is endless and we all engage in it continuously. What is the history? What is the context of it all? Why do we do it? And now being 1987 are we contemporary or are we dying dinosaurs? Or what's happening out there, and to relate. But in the end in your weak hours, morning hours of pure making, you are not any of those things anyhow. You are not any of your relationship ~~to~~ to the world. You're just struggling with how to ~~sometimes think~~ — Sync.

Woody: I think that if we had the choice, like if you do something that you can immediately exchange, some people make money through art, money meaning that someone is interested in it, someone requested it, someone is waiting for your six paintings or something, you are under social pressure in which you immediately kind of feel that you are useful, there's destination

Woody: to your work instantly. In our case, in video in general, it's not that kind of urgency, maybe at times. But that means we can't work for ^{the} a reason of being appreciated by, being requested, or being paid for something. We work in a different way. We have to think of time and history because if our work doesn't survive another hundred years, nobody's going to see it anyway. As it's all on the shelf now, not only in our case, ~~we~~ work for this completely esoteric god. Only some works become mildly known, but they're not usually interesting. So everybody's work--I like video in these very different contexts, different relationships to now, now is a demand, but the work has importance on its own. On its own work can only be supported by historical contexts. That schizophrenia, that split, which I think is very good, take art from the practicality, something that Americans insist on or to be practical it should serve some public. I that the opposite which is to have ^{art with} no audience, no purpose, but just by its existence--you have to discover that existence, that purpose--I think it's close to religion. That's why I think it has its own quality.

Steina: I think it's just an endeavor. It's not geared toward some end, I mean with some people it certainly is, but it's not necessarily because when we looked at the Zargon² tape yesterday which is a historical relic and not shown anywhere anymore, it's gone. I was interested in telling you something about it because I trusted you to read it on the artistic level. There is that woman ^{and} ~~who is~~ the poem and that message is clear. And I was concerned you wouldn't always be able to follow the carrier (?) because it's very multi-coded, it's a very coded tape. The chapters always came as a whole thing, but every chapter has to be planned because you have to run it real time so it had to be rehearsed. When he takes the camera, he splits it so the images go up and down, and then he knows his rage. ?

Marita: But a lot of that code has been lost. If you hadn't explained that to us ~~if you hadn't explained it~~, we would have assumed he'd used more sophisticated equipment.

Steina: But at the same time this poem is nothing without the [?] (carrier) It is just another poem by Joanne K~~o~~nger, you know, but it's so important. You will of course figure this tape out, I think you should have it. It took me a long time. I was not particularly impressed with this tape the first time I saw it. I thought it was gorgeous black and white and that's about it. But you slowly peel off layer by layer and you see the artistic struggle and the artistic victory in the tape and that's what's important, that these things are revealed to you slowly. That's exactly why time is...this is part of art and timing.

Woody: It releases its power slowly. This is a term that--who uses the term, E.T. Hall. You can talk about time because it's an interesting subject.

Steina: No, I'm just saying that in the moment that these people were creating this particular tape they were too immersed in just pulling it off and going through several takes before they had a tape they could live with and it was just bread and butter and blue collar. They were in that studio, ^{measurable} and just trying to pull it off.

Woody: To please the sponsor.

Steina: Well, for whom? Because ^{Brice (Howard)} ~~Brice~~ made it very clear it was for nobody.

Woody: That's right.

Steina: So it's just a little time capsule that was propelled into the future

Steina: and maybe to be lost and maybe to be rediscovered.

Woody: But of course there's also another question in this case of group art and personal art, but that's a whole different story.

Marita: And there's the question of what remains and what doesn't remain. Do you think of yourself as a structuralist? Do you have an affinity with ~~Frankton~~ ^{Frankton} and what those guys were doing?

Woody: No. When I was trying to practice literature I had a sense of overall form. I was interested in a traditional form and making kind of a critique in format possibilities ~~(S)~~ which I'm returning to somehow now. But I was much more fascinated by what I call raw phenomenology something that has no direct artistic link. It was this possibility of playing with this new material that defined completely the formal manifestation. But you have to understand that when video came it was at a time when other art forms were developed enough to reject the form, ~~5~~ painting could have no picture, and silences were also part of music. This kind of sophistication was unheard of in video because we were all struggling to make something out of this ambiguous material, into some symbol of the world. So ~~everybody in his~~ ^{we make it} opposite, very intellectual, backward position, because you didn't have material that you could control. Take music. You have notation system in which you can control every note, not only in pitch and duration but the dynamics, the crescendo and so forth. Film is a fine language by editing, so we didn't have that at all. So this rawness, but its complete uniqueness of the material, this rash of discovery is completely overpowering.

Marita: You can look on the whole process as one of control.

Woody: Yes, it was a struggle for control.

Marita: It still is obviously.

Woody: And the guys that construct it, those tools, they struggle with how to slowly control one event to the other. Steve Beck, these painstaking compositions in which nothing moves much, but it was control. It was completely obsessive. Others like Siegel were much more free, they were just discovering psychedelic images.

Steina: What is structuralism? What does it mean?

Woody: How would you define structuralism?

Marita: Now I've got myself in a quagmire. I would define it personally as a study of the structure of the image-making. I would think of like Snow and Frankton as being not unlike what you're doing. Obviously in somewhat of a different form, but basically their intent was to take certain aspects of the phenomenology of film and bring them forward, and in ~~Halle Mohr's~~ ^{Halle Mohr's} case sort of comically make you aware of them or to comically explore them.

Steina: Well, how far is that from formalism?

Marita: That's what I'm not sure I could actually define for you--the difference between formalism and structuralism. It's a component of formalism.

Steina: See, I'm a formalist by default, I think, because I trust the content and I'm not that interested in narrative content, but I always believe it is there. It is encoded in the images. And that's the part that I have

Steina: and all I have to now do is ^{to it} put in some kind of a form. I'm just discovering ^{this} recently, that ~~that~~ that's what it is. Because I do give ~~purpose~~ ^{purpose} to that whole dialogue between form and content, which seems to be so important.

Marita: But you don't perceive one as being more important than the other, do you?

Steina: No. I think there's some kind of a celestial balance between the two. When a work is of interest it is because it has both, like ~~John Keiller~~ ^{Joanne Kyger} piece yesterday, it has both things in it.

Woody: That's just giving the creative process, ^{divinity} plays a role. Each of us who are less divine have to define the term. I think that a formalist is that one who believes that the form dominates the content and by creating perfect form you create perfect content. Structuralists would say the structure is above the genre of form. In fact, structure can contain many forms. It's like a high structuring. You don't struggle for form because you know what it is, but you structure the forms. It's like a more superior form of composition. But then some people refer to structure as an internal material. In video also we would refer sometimes to structural work. But in fact in our case it was ^{extraordinary} much lower. We had to teach the same class with Frampton, and I know how his mind works. His mind was completely removed from the electronic process yet at the end of his life he ended by constructing a computer language. That was his ambition, because he was a linguist to begin with.

Steina: And was involved with construction also.

Woody: But he was also, underneath his intellectual kind of being there was a hardworking practitioner from Ohio, ^a blue collar ^{man} who constructed his own scope. He was able probably to construct anything. But he would go into putting together his computer. In that way we were very much related, but he always put his face--wrote his articles--he was very much appreciated by his esoteric qualities. He would not even confess to many people that he ^{was able} ~~liked~~ to work with hardware. Tony Conrad ~~was~~ was also something like that because Tony was also a whizkid with computers, yet he completely denied that in public. Now he's more free, but in the beginning he would never admit that. So there's this kind of interesting intellectual position.

Marita: They ^{see the two roles as being} ~~say that Ferrell has this thing~~ oppositional somehow.)

Woody: I don't think there's clarity in it, except that when you look at structuralist films you like them because they're really good. So why do you like them? Because they're formalist or structuralist? They discovered another dimension beyond the film.

--break--

(missing question)

Marita: I don't want to say the medium, maybe it's for the tools.

Woody: For the matter. Of course, I am bringing in my own idea about it, which is again this latent Marxism. The matter itself has something to say. The universe speaks, we always speak, it doesn't matter. The universe was here before us. There's undeniable materiality here, and that contains part of the truth, or maybe for some people the whole truth. It's encoded in the world, the truth, and we are only trying to interpret it. And that's why I'm trying to de-psychologize what I'm doing. That's also my interest now in

Woody: opposition to film, which is^a highly psychological medium by its tradition. Doesn't mean it has not been broken. I'm trying to find a different way in which psychology is not the only vehicle or pseudo-vehicle, that there's something that steps away from the everyday psychology into some kind of symbolic representation or interpretation. But these are all not new ideas either. It's just that certain art forms have that urge. So I can't place that into--now what was the question?

Steina: Structuralists...What's interesting about the form/content dialogue is people can claim to be one or the other and it's never true. They are always false.

--break--

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Woody: Understanding of the control modes was enough for us to work with this medium. Regardless of whether it belongs to the galleries. Because I always admired people that wanted to be artists, who just wanted to do art. It became my personal curse, because I thought I was much too sophisticated to become an artist. It was such an old fashioned idea. Now I use the term artist for my own life because that's the way I make money. I think the urge of specifying this new material is lower, it's primal and I think it's much more kind of essential to art if it emerges as art later, Oh, that's nice. But if it doesn't one should not live in this terror of being an artist.

Steina: This is where the surrealists succeeded. See, the surrealists were going to denounce art and do something completely outside that whole context and of course they failed. Because in the end the surrealists are the prime of every ~~new form~~^{Museum}, exactly the environment they renounced the hardest. But where they succeeded was in the next generations --the next two generations after --to feel very ambivalent about art, at least the ones in Europe. Like, you don't want to be an artist, do you? And dumb like a painter, which was a Czech saying, things like that.

Woody: ~~That~~^{that} could be a house painter, I don't know.

Steina: Of course, being a musician also meant to be dumb. It was like a curse to be a musician. And if you were really sophisticated you would be a scholar or a philosopher.

Woody: That was the top.

Steina: So the Surrealists left this residue of the^r thinking on Europe.

Marita: But the art world is crafty. The art world absorbs all those anti-art establishment movements. All the ones in their sixties. ~~It~~^{Accorner} says something very interesting about how while they were doing all this stuff that they thought couldn't be coopted, these performances and things, that couldn't be sold, what they really couldn't account for was the role of the art magazines in creating art stars out of them, regardless of if their work was saleable or not. That there was this machine operating that had as its goal to --like Artforum had this goal to appear to represent the cutting edge--which meant taking all these things that were anti-everything that Artforum represented, and absorbing them.

Steina: That's interesting. But this is our environment, whereas the environment now of the young people who are coming up in the art schools is by all means to join the galleries, so there is a very different viewpoint there.

← me: Woody's
manuscript

Marita: There was one thing here I didn't quite understand. On this page where you have file name 4. "All moving image media rely on frames according to original and still unchallenged concept of perceptual process originated in film language. It is only change in content of the frame itself that is the subject of a phenomenological evolution." I don't understand that.

Woody: What I'm saying there is that the principle of delivery of a frame, in film it is the 24 units per second and it's a static frame, it's stable. It has been stabilized since the invention of film. It ^{just} changes by its format; it gets larger or smaller. But that is perceptually fixed. What television or video and computer does they also located themselves into thirty frames, which is sixty ~~fields~~ and that unit, the concept of the delivery of that medium to your perception is stable, it's not changing. What's changing is how you originate it, how you organize the pictures. If you organize it ^{with} a camera by light, space or if you organize it by calculating it. And if you organize it by cutting it. Suddenly the whole kind of development of the medium concentrates on the changes outside, what I call outside the frame. So that doesn't mean that it's forever because --I should say I code it because it doesn't say-- but if the next medium counts, let's say the 3-dimensional medium, then suddenly the frame will change. It will become perceptually different. If 3-dimensional, which has already been invented, if that's going to change the language, which I do believe it will, of course there will be both: the medium will change structurally. I don't know what the next medium will be, directly transmitted. There will always be evolution of the medium. But what I'm saying is that the most space for investigation of a change or kind of a creative process is in the way that images are constructed or generated or processed or organized. "There's no other system, just the train of frames", that's what I'm trying to say.

Marita: Well, how do you perceive of, I'm not sure I understand how you perceive the video frame--we talked last time about frame-bound --

Woody: And ~~frame~~ ^{un}bound.

Marita: Because I feel like it's not a lack of frame that you're talking about in video. But it's a different kind of frame. I'm not clear on that.

Woody: You see, this bound and unbound is something that--film has a very specific place for the frame, it always shows and locates the frame on the screen. There is no behind, it's just a window. We accept it. And that makes it very real. We don't doubt this image of the world, even if it's made in Hollywood. It still gives us the security. Once it's located and you don't see any tricks it's just there and you see through the window. What you do in front of it, that's a different story. But you know the space, you are friendly with the space, because it comes from photography, of course you know there's nothing behind it. As long as you look at the frame of the picture you know this was taken by a camera. Now if you take this new class of tools and you take the frame suddenly out of the frame, you shrink it, then there's trouble here. Why is that? The small ^{er} frame which is the large frame, but it's still part, it's carried on the large frame. Let me just rephrase it. The medium that delivers the image is the same frame, even if it shows black. And suddenly within it there is this object called a frame, that was the true window but it now became what--a thin or thick or some form of object that carries that image. But its truth has been taken away because the truth of image is only

Woody: when you believe that this is the window, or representation of some fixed idea. So that ideology--when the new frame leaves the old frame-- or is flexible to trouble, construct here, give spaces, by objects that are frames in various positions. That is the first moment of departure for the cinematic truth. And you're entering this speculative language, suddenly there is no kind of true representation, but a whole context, the space or territory of a frame becomes a new canvas. I mean I ~~may not be~~ ^{may not be} formulating it correctly, but I believe ⁱⁿ it. It's what I call movement of frame ~~to~~ ^{through} object, ~~that~~ ^{that} eventually with 3-dimensions, ~~and~~ ^{and} suggestion of space, also you will change the narrative system.

Marita: So what happens when it becomes an object.

Woody: It's a different psychology.

Joann: So like in the Art of Memory piece do you see that like when you use the film do you see that as putting frames inside of frames? You're putting film frames inside the video frames?

Woody: That's right. The Art of Memory was the exercise of exactly what I was trying to tell to myself. What is the process in which cinematic frame leaves its true representation. If you put it in another space, another context and what I say actually you create an object, either by representing the film as part of some construction within a frame, or mapping it on the surface of some imaginary, or synthetic or whatever, object. So this transformation of the frame into an object, that is the basis of ~~these~~ ^{these} exercises. All these works I do now I count as exercises. Also I'm practicing something called poly-topic, poly-chronic time, that there are more kinds of time involved, usually two or three, within the frame. There is this time of film which is very different, let's say some landscape or ^{or} protagonist, see these all have a different timing possibilities.

Marita: Polytopic?

Woody: Polytopic means they contain more...

Steina: More topics.

Woody: More subjects.

Steina: But doesn't it bother you, those cuts.

Woody: In film? ~~they are devastating.~~ ^{they are devastating.}

Steina: But I mean you accepted them into your medium.

Marita: What cuts do you mean?

Steina: When he has a tube construction on the landscape and the images inside are continuously cutting. And they do it sometimes rhythmically and sometimes arhythmically.

Woody: It just is boggling my mind how film can operate on that level as a full frame. Once you take it out of the full frame, it becomes completely meaningless flickering of images. You see that's also the experiment. And people immediately notice it, because it bothers people tremendously.

Steina: Bothers me.

Woody: And I said to myself, I'm going to take the newsreel as some kind of representation of truth and let's criticize it. What kind of truth is it?

← (meaning the edits in the film segments in A of M)

Woody: It's constructed out of glimpses, like little thoughts. Or big thoughts, whatever. I'm not underestimating film at all. I think that film is the most elegant delivery of images, thoughts, I think it's fantastic. I think it's a foolish idea to attack it. It's even foolish idea to believe that it could be replaced by something else. (Thunder in background!)

Woody: It would be regretful if film were to disappear as a language because it's so effective.

Marita: But you don't think that putting it in the context of say within this landscape, it's not static or still, but certainly it has this timeless aspect to it. Those cuts in the film, it just gives it this sort of accelerated kind of condensed. *selections historical kind of...*

Woody: If you have a full frame documentary material as I'm using, you don't actually perceive edits anymore. Audience has now reached a stage where it doesn't separate one stage from the other. You just look at a movie. But once you take it, put it in a different context, like ~~enclosed~~ *enclosed in an* object, suddenly you see it's not coherent thing, you see it's chopped out of small sequences. Compared to this kind of broad, timeless landscape. So that was, I didn't know that would be the result. I thought I'm still going to have an image object. But if it carries the same syntax with it, it's still an image, it's not an object, but it tells you how it's constructed. Just gives you the idea that you can't fuse that kind of--if you take the image from its normal function, its normal language, put it in a different context, it's no longer that kind of a continuous perception.

Joann: When you look at these pictures, you see the frame line.

Woody: Right. Exactly.

Joann: You start to see how it's constructed.

Marita: Yeah, it's like a deconstruction.

Woody: It's just putting a different language into a different context.

Steina: Deconstruction--wow. So you have a hidden collaborator there who is the film editor, or the film editors, who are formalists, in a way, because every editor is. Every editor has very definite rules about how he can construct.

Marita: Would-be realists..

Steina: And this hidden collaborator of yours, who edited World at War, some kind of British fellow.

Marita: It probably could have been several. It was a compilation of already edited newsreels; right?

Woody: Yes.

Steina: Well, some of them are edited, some are reedited, and you can see it, because if you go into the rhythm of the images inside you see that some people edit rhythmically, other people edit in context, information-wise. And you see all those things. And as long as the narrative is honored, that you hear through, it comes through the audio channel, you can say they were fighting palm tree by palm tree and street by street, but once you take that away and you just see this relentless rhythm, you are into deconstruction.

Marita: So what does it mean to make it an object?

Woody: That's a very interesting question. First of all, it is to negate the psychology of the image. That was my fantasy about it.

Marita: The psychology of the image in that we want to read it as a window?

Woody: There are two aspects of it. One is the true window and secondly, I have a problem, because as you can see in this place there is no single picture. I don't know if you noticed it. It's my imposition. I can only put ^{around} ~~on~~ objects, because I don't see any representation of any of my thought in actual two-dimensional image. I'm just illiterate in reading such an image. I like to look at it briefly in a book I'm very much ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ or in the slideshow that Mr. Bell is giving us, I love to see ^{it} contemporaneously, just for a moment. But if I should put it on the wall and believe that this is art or actual representation of my way of thinking, I can't do it. But I can believe any ~~thing~~ ^{thing} object you see in this room. I can trust it, I can collect it. I can sort of share my life with it. So the same idea I have about image. I love esoteric images because they're not there. It's just a shadow and light. I can't associate them as some sort of experience. That's why I like to make photographs.

Marita: Is it a tangible quality?

Woody: It is a certain conviction of a thought located in an object. For me a photograph is an object because -- as a sequence. I can't have just a single photograph, it doesn't make sense. But once I can locate conceptual relationship to it, some relationship between it, that relationship becomes convincing and I can have it. I can't explain it but anyway I believe that. For me to truly believe again in film or legacy of film the new medium has to be constructed because the film as constructed right now in a mass-cultural way has betrayed me. Because at one time I believed in films. It was a second betrayal. First I was betrayed by politics, because at one time I did believe in new political possibility. And secondly I was betrayed by film because I see now the hidden agenda. I see now it's mass cultural product. And even the best authors, like Bunuel in his last six films, it's always the populist agenda. Because it's for people. And he has to overcome this idea of an artist and become a man that sells a film. And I think it invalidates the film completely for me. That's why I like the independent filmmakers that do film as a personal expression, because they do not have that ~~personal~~ agenda. And if they do, they destroy themselves by it because the personal work has those dimensions. It's an ethical stand, but it's also kind of a personal interpretation of the world. So I believe that by constructing objects this window of innocence will be opened. As with a new system, like when the opera came it was ~~accepted~~ ^{well} accepted as innovative. The better idea is when film has reached the intellectual community in Europe, American film, regardless of what it was, the medium opened itself the possibility of a poetic language. People I respect in my kind of mental way, could believe in film for a while. They thought every western, even most trivial story, was beautiful because the dust and the sunlight was real, it was there, it had the poetic power of movement and place. It doesn't matter that it was cowboys, who cares. So the persuasion, the innocence of a new medium gives you this possibility to create endless amount of new works. That I think is the opportunity that I would like to live through. I can't live through a medium that's so well specified. I can't compete with film. It's been well done, well explored. But I still have some chance in a

Woody: medium that's not explored fully, to somehow feel free. So there are a number of reasons why I would speak about this. The urgency or interest in taking an image into an object. The innocence of the object. The obvious presence of an object is indisputable. So anyway, it is just to create the space for a new genre.

Marita: Do you perceive of the object of the images there on the left as their place within that environment. Do you connect that to the object of the photograph as you hold it?

Woody: It's an interesting question, because yes, I thought I could integrate those objects into the landscape. But it was the first error or misunderstanding on my part. *(in front of memory)*

Marita: What's so striking about it is that they stand ~~apart~~ *outside of the landscape.*
the landscape refuses to accept them.

Woody: First I try to map them on the surface but then I find the futility so it's the oddity now on the landscape that makes it interesting. The tension between these two. The second misunderstanding or misconception on my part was that I'm now trying to avoid edit, which is the most elegant way of conveying story, previous and succeeding shot, I think it's a magnificent way of doing it. I'm in my personal rebellion against it. So I'm confining all work into continuous wipes. The idea was that I could connect those images in non-edited and no cutting way. It was a pure error, because I found that each image that is not fused by edit is separated. I tried to fuse them by continuity, but in fact I separated them by the syntax I used. So all these conclusions are opposite...

Marita: A dissolve would be an edit to you too.

Woody: It's a syntactic device which at times it would fuse two images but at times it would separate them. They would unite the time, and ~~it's~~ *filmic* cliché, but they would separate the space. Or sometime with the same space and they would dissolve from one but in a different time. The different uses of the dissolve. You see again, my ideology about object, if I could continue to transform an object from one to the other or see one to the other under *cinema* strategy that I would call a new syntactic relationship which would not depend upon these vulgar primitives, like edit, which again are the most elegant way of conveying information. It's a *fictional* ~~fictional~~ dialogue which I plan consciously, but the results are not usually those that I predict. So this gives me the form of my personal dialogue, and then I impose it on some kind of audience, and some people accept the dialogue and some people reject it.

Marita: Well, is this distrust of linearity that you have, is that political too?

Woody: Yeah, I admire people like Joan Logue. She came to the same conclusion not really kind of rationally. I know she fears edit. I see it in every piece. She has no way of making an edit, which pushes her into a very extreme position of just doing what I'm trying to explain which is bring those images into the frame. Or if she leaves the cinematic frame and she uses those frames as objects. Sometimes she brings them out, makes them real. Sometimes she takes them away, which makes them some different time. So she makes it very clear what I'm talking about. So if anybody would want to look into this, what I'm saying, he or she should see *me* Pina Bausch movie, which is just avoiding the edit in such an elegant way, perfect way.

in this piece (ASB M)

Marita: I see film, especially in this context, as--the way it begins to read after a while as this artifact. It really begins to look like the death of cinema. And that you're defining it as a historical record, in a way that you're defining electronic media as not. In the context of this tape, film's purpose is to record, select, portray history. But you're presenting the electronic media within which you're situating that film as being very different.

Woody: In this particular sense, the film is the only reality that I can bring from that era. It's a piece of truth, carrying with me through this work, because one time the reality of that event was the model of this light/space, ~~was a light space~~ ^{was a light space}, or whatever. One time that true presence, ~~that the~~ ^{that the} structure was taken to film and I take that with me to this context, in different historical or media context. It still carries for me that reality. In this context, it becomes kind of nostalgic. It is by design kind of a sentimental work, but that is undisputable. The same with sounds, eventually will improve. There will be these sounds that will be these remnants of cinema reality. Again, going to video, and our own interest in the video, you can organize, you can use those wave forms as sort of symbols. You can encode some code. We had a great discussion about the code, what the code is, but it went nowhere. Even E.T. Hall, the philosopher of our time, couldn't break that. But anyway, there are certain remnants of that reality that are encoded in sounds and in these pictures that are bringing into...

Marita: Intertextual kind of...

Woody: Right. And some of it is, as I said, charged with memories, because I went through the war as a child. Some of it refers to--I call them texts because each of these images, not each, maybe fifty percent, have actual pictorial text. They mean something. ^{like the USA logo} I went to the movies every Saturday and saw these German victories on the Russian front, wooden statues, or some reminder, or Spanish Civil War and Durut(?) and all those. Some exact texts. Others are mere accidents, some others are just exercises. So it's wise reasons for those images. I can't interpret them all, but I can read some of them, or encode them. For some people they could be read on those levels, which again is one of my interests. The possibility that you can make the polytopic image which contains sort of a mini-code of history or event. It's the longest thing I have ever done in the sense of thinking about it and trying to construct it and trying to confine it in some form. So I have no idea if it's going to be--it's only important I guess in my own context, it may be interesting to the others, it may not be interesting because I just got the feedback from some panel. People can be also profoundly bored by it. It's also possible.

Marita: Does he stand in for you, the man with the glasses?

Woody: The man with the glasses, it's an interesting story because he's a dancer in New York--he was a dancer, now he lives in Arizona--his name is Daniel ^{Nagrin} ~~W...~~. I don't know if you know him.

Marita: Yes, we saw him yesterday, in 1967.

Woody: There's a sketch of him?

Steina: In the Sketches.

Woody: We made a tape of the Peleponesian War that you should actually look at

Woody: for your own benefit. But he was an American, nice Jewish American, but he was the closest to what I would say the expression of an American social and political opinion of this kind of uncompromising leftist. There was a kinship, a political kinship.

Steina: When he danced in the Peloponesian War, he danced a whole long thing in suit with a tie, white shirt and a hat. And in that personification he became this civil man, this kind of citizen.

Joann: A bureaucrat?

Steina: Well, just a person there.

Woody: An American citizen which contrasted very much with Robbins--what's his name? Who died just recently? Bennett. I have such a bad memory of...

Steina: A Chorus Line. This is exactly the Americanism that we hate.

Woody: Also, this nice woman who does...Agnes DeMille. I can't stand that.

Steina: Appalachian Spring.

Woody: You see, this horrifying American art. He was outside of it completely. And he represented something, it was of course linked with the Old World. He wasn't European, ~~actually~~ he was purely American. But I kind of made this psychological bond with him, or aesthetically American. He was the only actor I would desire to work with, which was not really an actor, he was a dancer. I despise normal dance, but there was some code in him that helped me to crystallize certain ideas.

Steina: But not only that. There was a little bit more background here. We worked with him--it was just around end of 1969, early seventies--when he was dancing in The Peloponesian War, which he danced every evening for a long time, free of charge, in WBAI, because that's what was done in those days. Then we got a little artists-in-residency grant from Channel 13 and we brought him in to make a sketch. This is now 1973, and Watergate had just sprung open in all its glory. But we just wanted to do some sketch with him, and I think the only thing you said was you were interested in his portrayal of a citizen. And he came up with--he was so full of Watergate--and he ~~talked~~ ^{talked} about the man who puts the gun, ~~the~~ about the man who takes the poison, the man who strings the wires around, and these are all sketches that we have. We did one afternoon up at channel 13. And suddenly, ~~well you we~~ never know what to do with them. It was meant against the chroma-key ~~but~~ but it was lousy, the quality, and suddenly they found a home in this piece here.

Marita: So it's footage from then.

Woody: No this is contemporary, just one day's shooting. ^{The man in the} ~~the~~ Box, you know.

Steina: The ...Dancing Box, that's him.

Woody: I still don't know if I'm going to be able to use him more.

Marita: But he's acting as your protagonist.

Woody: Yeah, you know these are such sketches of possibilities. I had a whole script for myself, included spacecrafts and all kind of bullshit. But eventually when you start working, you're not working with these unlimited budgets so you eventually compromise into just--I like that in a way. You sketch it, and it may be or it may not be. This kind of limitation...

² simply

--Break--

(reading letter to Daniel Nagrin)

Steina: You arrive at the rim of a canyon, it's a casual affair. You are returning to a place you have been before.

Woody: Anyway, I ~~admit~~ ^{have my} dreams, I don't mind writing it just the way I wanted to. But I eventually compromised to a set of suggestions. And so the narrative is not performed in this work. It's only kind of hidden, like the mythical being that was a whole network of communication, more mythical beings. Eventually, I'll purge it and make it into this undefined. You know I have many problems with it, because politically I'm using certain figures like Stalin. I should use and even criticize some of them, but I can't do that in this context.

Marita: You're using him as a symbol.

Woody: Yeah, as a picture. Because he had this kind of authenticity. And many of these pictorial protagonists have not been politically analyzed. I also use ~~the~~ ^{phalangist} song ~~and~~ anarchist footage, which is a complete no-no in Spain. They would kill me for that. So there are a number of problems with it. But I don't want to get involved in the actual nitty gritty because I read about it for three years. I get depressed any time I read about it.

Marita: It seems to me that that kind of accuracy is exactly what you're trying not to do. On the other hand I can't be apolitical because if someone

Woody: I know knows or I know he knows or she knows and they find this and say wait a minute, I can't do that...

Marita: Why not? Doesn't it make a statement?

Joann: You're not going for accuracy, right, it's a personal...

Marita: Yes, but to mix it is to show it as an archetype. Come on, Woody, get your argument together now.

Woody: I'm in agony over this one because political clarity used to be one of the important things of the left ethics, ^{you} could not...now I can, but I'm still uneasy.

Steina: No, but it's multi-coded like a lot of works. People are going to understand it differently, because those who know the phalangist sign when it comes in there say I didn't know it, it means nothing to me, but Spanish people are going to say that's that. And some people recognize the Stalin pictures, others don't. But ~~they just understand it as a picture, as well. But you are~~ ^{it has to stand up as} ~~the first one~~ ^{the writer came} to ask about the man. Everybody got into ~~that~~ ^{that}, and it was interpreted anything from the angel, Icarus, the devil, the nonhuman, the superhuman, the caretaker, the overseer, it is unbelievable how it triggers people's fantasies for whatever they are ready to interpret it as. Because a winged creature represents something different to everyone. Talk to Joseph Campbell about it.

Marita: In all cultures.

Steina: Nobody has asked about your alter ego, Woody.

Woody: Yeah, but I'm also aware of the banality of using an ancient or primal symbol. I mean there are two great ~~problems~~ ^{problems}. I could never see an atomic blast beyond documentary. I could ~~accept~~ ^{accept} that. But to use atomic blasts in the work, it was

Woody: always extraordinarily impossible for me.

Joann: All these people read it one way.

Steina: But you fell in love with this one picture of the atomic blast next to the cactus.

Woody: Once I took it away from the reality of the frame and put it there, I think it creates a different context. So the banality is postponed. The same with the winged creature. I can't assign that. I have my own interpretation and I wanted to plant it there to create this evocation but if I accept this metaphysical existence, then I don't truly believe there is a metaphysical world, and yet I can't explain this world physically to myself. So it's a kind of personal code and again it borders on banality. *but it is there*

Marita: But you know what I like about it is this man who's taunting it, he's angry, it scares him. He doesn't accept it as a symbol.

Steina: He's a prototype western man. He represents this...

Marita: Ambivalence.

Woody: He's in rebellion against everything metaphysical. Original script. He might have committed suicide in that landscape. There are many codes which I didn't express for various reasons, mostly financial. If I had two million dollars I would go through the whole drag --I had these monkeys dressed in man's clothing...

Marita: What I think, and I'd like to talk about this, I think you have a very ambivalent relationship to narrative structure, to narrative. You might set yourself out a script like that, but it doesn't surprise me at all to hear that you rejected it half way through your project.

Steina: You remember the episode about the Indian children running after the winged creature naked there in the gorge, stoning him...

Woody: It was the original...there was this pack of kids that did breakdance, and I wanted to take it into the landscape...

Steina: Indians, like pueblo kids dancing a breakdance.

Woody: But anyway, it doesn't matter. See that's where I come from, the narrative is embedded into every child.

Marita: Narrative is the establishment.

Woody: Absolutely. It's professed so heavily.

Marita: And it's linear.

Woody: And if you go through all the writers--Kafka, Schultz, these are our heroes, Musil. So you had to know the narrative. We all knew about narrativities, how they are constructed, what is the symbolic, *language*. And in communism you must disguise everything in symbolic language, there's no way of speaking openly. So that form of expression is fluid and if you look at Czech movies, writings, that's what the essence is. I wanted to purge it, I didn't want to do that. *its part* I think it just belongs to that land and that era. I came here to be free of that and that's why I say it's a continuous temptation I have with narrativity or narratives but I can't accept them and practice them. But also I don't like this actual work, the physical work, you have to persuade the actor to do something. It's disgusting, but it's essential. You have to have passion for

Woody: people expressing your thought. I find all this immoral that you can convince someone to express your thought, because I thought of them as autonomous beings, but by now the actors are willing, very willing, they desire to be inseminated with a different character, they enjoy that, so I lost ~~my~~ inhibition. It's possible that I could make a narrative, pseudo-narrative work. But I'll always be uncomfortable, I'll always destroy it on some level, I guess.

Marita: Does perceiving it as an electronic narrative, does perceiving it as being part of a syntax or elements in a syntactical code, does that relieve you of that burden?

Woody: I'll tell you what it does, at one time I thought I understood edit, it was my passion in film school that I would edit for people. Because many people like to direct, but they don't like to edit. So they get stuck with this footage. And my interest was to make stories out of it. I pride myself in salvaging those failed projects, and making exciting projects out of them. So I learned a lot about film edit. But that I understood was a trap, ~~to~~ think that way. And you can bring two or three people on the screen and make stories. It's always a problem, because I never believed there is a drama on the screen. See the most constructed way of movie is to bring the drama in. Because the rest--atmosphere, the streets, the time, people's faces, the way they speak, that's all fine--but once you bring yourself in and violate this kind of human conditions by your own condition--I could never accept that step. And anytime I worked with actors, I had to look elsewhere.

--End First Tape--

Marita: Is this a trilogy? I read in a piece by your friend ^{Roy Arfee} ~~that~~ that this is a trilogy. I'd never heard that before.

Woody: There's no way for me to make another one like these unless I commit myself, unless I boss myself. This is a job. It is something I never did before. This is like a job. I like these beautiful electronic things because you can play with them. But it's kind of a job. So I said first yeah I'll make this Commission and see if that's the direction I want to go at all. And in some ways it was interesting. First I was completely depressed about it, because it wasn't at all what I wanted to do. But this was the second one. I said you can only prove yourself by making three of those. But I still had the idea of going to more free play or audio ~~and~~ video that's much more free. Anyway, I'll go back to, hopefully, a much more free environment.

Steina: Once you selected Paganini, you knew you didn't like the composer, you knew he was completely trivial. You just took a look at Ernie Gosselle ~~(S)~~ and said that's a joke. And, listen, you be Paganini and I'll be Berlioz, wasn't that the joke?

Woody: That was the original joke, yeah.

Steina: We ^{had} just heard that ^{story} ~~was~~ on the radio.

Woody: All these things are exercises. I was looking for banal stories of 19th century, to pay tribute to 19th century, ^{with} incoherent text, so it's not really a narrative in the sense of a text, with some kind of free treatment of panels, constructed ~~as~~ ^{no} real-time panels. They're all kind of real-time performances as you noticed. And then I wanted to take that kind of ~~one~~ ^{there}

because once you know the language, then you can do anything

Woody: and put texture on it. Electronic picture and also text ~~and~~ sound.
This was the deliberate ~~design~~ *design*.

Steina: You really set out to do that.

Marita: Well, my impression before was that the impetus was to take this kind of electronic syntax and give it narrative meaning. Give specific kind of imaging.

Steina: To make a meaningful image.

Woody: I knew, I always claimed, and yes I knew, ^{that} There was a specific language to electronic... Again, is the language within the picture or is the language within the syntax? I still haven't--these things I have to ^{justify} figure out myself. But this was a deliberate way of ~~objectifying~~ that there is certain expression. There's an expression in electronic means. That means by texture, by certain movement, or by certain color or process you can in fact take a dramatic scene and de-dramatize it. That was my theory--again, I failed in a very basic premise. I took this trivial ~~story~~ ^{story} so ~~people don't~~ ^{people don't} have to ^{bother} with it ~~it~~. And I said I'll take the most simple thing like death. It's always the most meta, meta. Everybody knows ~~that~~ *that*.

Marita: But it's also the most dramatic moment..

Woody: That was my problem. ^{I boxed myself into, in fact,} ~~I~~ a story, ^{and} people look for the drama. They don't look at the surface. I wanted them to observe the surface of the image. And I think this is going to be for my colleagues, it is a test work and if they say this doesn't work, this works. This was like a planned ^{acceptance} ~~and rejection~~. But then when I made it of course people fuse it all, they don't care what you thought. They're going to look at it their own way.

Steina: But how did the morgue scene come in?

Woody: That was ^{the Ruth/Eva} ~~the Ruth/Eva~~. I was deliberately designing things that were in the possibility ~~range~~ ^{range} of my tools, ~~it~~. I said that's crude. I said that this scene of raised--it's typical for a corpse. It's that shrewd, surely. And that's how it works on that level.

Steina: But how did you know--because from my memory I didn't know anything about the morgue scene. I only knew that you wanted to make a scene about the corpus humanus and you wanted it to be in Italian because that was the old textbook you learned from about the testo, corpo e...

Woody: La reste consiste de tre parte--testa, ^{etc} ~~tranca~~,... It was the first lesson in Italian.

Steina: And then you wanted to go from that you wanted to go to the split brains. To the left and right brains.

Woody: That's right. What they call new ^{scientific mythology} ~~scientific mythology~~.

Steina: Yeah, the new ^{mythology} ~~mythology~~. And you gave your Italian friend the book on the left and right brain and then you were going to split a cantelope, take that out of Paganini's head, split the cantelope and he was going to give this lecture on the functions of the left and the right and that was also going to be about the cosmos and the stars.

Woody: Yes, yes, yes.

Steina: This is what I remember.

Brad Smith

Steina: But I don't remember anything about a morgue until ~~Brad Smith~~ was constructing ~~it~~ inside that space.

Woody: I commissioned him to do the morgue. *the antelope brain was a lecture during the autopsy.* ~~Because the autopsy, you can't, tell the brain.~~ but the man of course ~~who wrote it (??)~~ made this flagellation of the body. Actually it's a shame I have a nice scene in which he actually flagellates the body with a stick, this dead body. But it was a little outside the ~~concept~~ *concept.*

Steina: They all ~~subverted~~ *subverted* it. ~~Brad~~ *Brad* came in with his idea of what the morgue was. And he brought in his rubber floor, which you actually wanted very much. And then he brought in ^{most} statues that you see out there. And that ~~subverted~~ *already* restricted you in a way in what you were going to do. And then Cosimo arrived a little late without any costume and without any text. And Woody gave him his black coat. And he ~~ran~~ *ran* out this Italian ~~chart~~ *chart* of measurements or whatever. So in that sense, how much is it then your work and how much isn't it?

Woody: It's interesting. Of course I don't fight for ^{work} --if things go this way-- I abandon my ambition, because to insist on your ambition you have to put people through impossible hardship.

Steina: You have to believe that your idea is better than theirs.

Woody: Even that is not important.

Marita: You have to be willing to take the energy *to convince them.*

Woody: ~~My assignment at all times~~ *I assigned Ashley a role* to combat the nightmares in the landscape. He was not interested in combatting nightmares in the landscape. He was half drunk. All he was interested in ~~working~~ *and I asked him to beat the stick* because he was supposed to evoke those creatures--he just liked the sound of the stick. So he started to play like ~~a musical instrument~~ *a musical*. Why would my idea be better? So I conformed.

~~Woody:~~ Again, you have two ways, if you perceive your ideas through a script, or you make yourself a complete storyboard and then you had a team of people to execute it. That's one way of making work, in Hollywood. The other way is you negotiate everything. And then I only kept this ^{very} faint line of my thought in it, and when I looked at it at the end it was nothing I wanted. On the other hand, they were just the techniques that I wanted that were exercised. The story--the whole narrative system--I had to throw out the window. But then I did it for the purpose of the exercise. I had ^{my} scene design, because I knew it was going to be a pseudo ^{-expensive} pointillistic. I knew I had some switching there from ~~my~~ Artifacts. So I had reason for concluding the piece. But its narrativity went pragmatically according to the situation.

Steina: According to what you had.

Woody: That's right.

Steina: See I don't remember you wanting that scene, or that you were ~~not~~ ^{that} interested in ~~my~~ ^{my} ~~scene~~ ^{scene}, but that comes out of it, it's the strongest scene in a way is the morgue scene. Because it's a depiction of death that's a little jolting. Like you say I have never seen it interpreted this way. There is a body there, but it's not really a ^{body} body, it just decomposed, but then maybe it ~~isn't~~. So if you want to you can go on your own trip and think about life and death.

Ruth Erica

Marita: Also, if you're at all familiar with the ~~scene~~, it seems like the quintessential ~~scene~~ scene.

Ruth Erica

Steina: Yeah, but did you know when the scene was already constructed in the...

Marita: You shot it and then you put it ~~in~~ through the scan processor -

Woody: Yeah, I knew I would put it through that.

Steina: See, I didn't know that, but I insisted on the most interesting scene.

this wagon to roll around

We had this wheel. Whose was it? Anyhow, I insisted we take it and roll it around the outside and then since I couldn't do it smoothly I asked Brad to help me because he was a strong man, ~~who could help~~. And he did the successful rolling around. But ~~even if~~ we were ^{interior} looking at the pictures, we were just rolling it around. And you gave us permission. ^{you said} If you really think of this as interesting, *you can do it, and you walked away.*

~~Steina~~: I just thought it was a ~~waste~~ ^{damn} waste to have put up this plastic and those figures and not to have one shot of them. I'm a stingy woman. I want to use everything.

Woody: Also ~~the~~ ^{the} funding, *the whole idea of this false commission was interesting to me.*

Marita: Also it seems to me that what you were really getting at--this whole role of the artist. Your ^{personal} relationship to it or your ~~view~~ view of it.

Woody: Life, legend, it's all there. ^I kept it there just for the public.

Steina: ~~They~~ ^{Robert Ashley} responded very much to that part about the commission. We didn't know while we were shooting that he was ^{not} going to accept the envelope. He didn't tell us that, and maybe he didn't even know it himself. Maybe it was just too revolting. The moment you have that envelope and you know the envelope has National Endowment of the Arts on the outside...

Woody: He was just writing a grant.

Steina: So he had a very personal relationship to not wanting to accept the brown envelope.

Marita: But I also think that that, like the other scene, when you are using that flip-flop of the two, going back and forth, is very effective. It's another of the scenes that really stand out. But the impetus for starting to work within this kind of pseudonarrative structure was what exactly?

Woody: As I say, you still see the angles of the shooting ^{and} ~~the~~ filming, and that's what I inherited. And she faithfully executed it. ^{as the camera film.} In a dramatic space, which was the error, because that's what draws you in to the story. So the camera has language, kind of filmic language. But then the edits are not essential anymore. It's constructed for me as ~~a~~ flat kind of panel. They conclude a kind of mini-story. *What was the question?*

Marita: What was the impetus to go from, say for instance what you were doing? I ~~realize~~ ^{realize} what you were doing before then, ~~but it was~~ ^{was it really} tied into the machine.

Woody: I must confess ~~that~~ ^{already in Buffalo} I made what I call five evenings of explorations ^{in narrativity} -

Steina: You called them operas or something.

towards what I call electronic stage or if I should stay with the tube (?)

Woody: Yeah, I was trying to figure out if I should go ~~to recording stage~~ see that was my choice. ~~And I found out those things to do~~ projection, video, *So I staged these things in which we used*

Media/Study Buffalo

Woody: some people, some dancers, some ~~protagonists~~, so I made these exercises in a large, beautiful space in the ~~A~~ Hotel ~~there~~ had a ~~beautiful~~ soundstage that was ideal for that. So I used these media to see. So I realized immediately ^{YN} I could control the space for sound, which is unlimited in its amplification, ^{YN} I can use light projection, but video is still in a way the least powerful in the space. But my [?] at that time was between the electronic stage ^{and} the electronic space that is created within the tube. So ^{now} this was one of the resulting questions, because the phemenological¹--which was the most interesting to me--I was trying to see if there is a dichotomy, there is a meaning between saying that you make images outside of the world, so to speak. You make images within ^{its} ~~the~~ own world, which is within the media. And you look at artifacts, or phemenologies, which are true to the medium in its own context. What will happen when you take the context and apply it to general culture. Take it away and use it the way the other media use it. ^{it gives a} utility. It's just completely immoral to us to use video for storytelling, or use ~~video~~ ^{video} for news. It's ridiculous, so the vehicle idea is completely unacceptable. But this was the time I started to question maybe it ~~was~~ ^{is} possible. Maybe I should not be kind of bigoted about it. I should just treat it as ideology, again. That's where I came from. Making pictures from ideology, ^{they are not made from grains & stones.}

Marita: You represented ideas.

Woody: So it was the first attempt at trying to transform myself from this phemenology, kind of observing person, to taking that and applying some of these techniques onto broader possibilities. In some ways it happened to her also, but in a different way. Like landscapes--she found that possible.

Steina: I didn't find landscapes, they were always there. I used cityscapes, studio space, landscapes. It's ~~always~~ ^{always} the same space.

Woody: But remember, we started to work a lot with the internal material, as we used to call it, with video. With oscillators and feedback and all that stuff. Which I thought were truly exciting. This is a job; and ~~it is~~ ^{it is} enormously ~~being~~ kind of logistically demanding and this goes back to composition-- ^{and stuff} I wanted always to avoid that because if you start thinking about composition, then you have to go back to history and conformity. Most successful composition is ^{the most} ~~the most~~ banal. Most common, because that's how people relate to work. And its relationship to other traditions, so it's most traditional. Once you try to create something unique, you are outside the tradition, you make works that are not comprehensive, they are not useful, you see. So there's a problem in the actual composition. If you don't contain previous compositions then you will repeat yourself anyway. There's a number of dilemmas here.

Steina: But every artist ^{repeats himself but every artist} wants to do completely new work every time and a lot of artists are challenged to do something they don't know if they can do. I saw that you wanted just to see if you could do something, because you were getting so secure to do the other things.

Joann: ^{Do you want to move from that to} ~~the~~ mastery of it. Because that's why you repeated.

Woody: That's true. There's two reasons. You are really lonely if you do your own phemenology. Only a few people--in a way there are many people who appreciate it on a general level as kind of a new image, people always like to look at new images--but then the true appreciation of ~~your~~ art is not only with the audience, it's with your colleagues. But of course you are challenged by the old masters--for music mostly--and then you ~~had of your attention~~ ^{are tempted.} That's what

Marita: Does the Third have a theme?

Woody: I call the vanity of ~~the~~ age. You become vain, and you try to see if there is something beyond what you can do, what you know you can do and your friends know you can do. Maybe that's ^{the only} part ~~that will survive from our work~~ work--the innocence of the play. Now this Commission and there's two more may be the most ridiculous legacies.

Steina: See, ^{the little man} Woody is always surrounded by sisterhood. If you notice the traffic in and ^{out of Paris} ~~the~~ place...

Marita: Mostly female. Except for Lenny, ~~the~~ But was there a limit to the other works, by which I mean the work in which you worked exclusively with the electronic material?

Woody: If there was a limit?

Marita: Was there a limit to you?

Woody: Yes, there was. The computer program, I hit my ceiling with it, because I spent like one and a half years of intensive programming, and only three or four programs from that time I really could use or like to use. I learned everything about computers in the sense of microprogramming on many levels. I ~~lost~~ the feel of computers because I can understand it, but the amount of work to create new structures or new languages is immense. I don't have that particular talent. There will be someone coming, or there already is someone we don't know, who probably is able to formulate new languages, but it's a Cartesian ~~work~~ work, it's a scale of work. So I did that and I realized either I go that way, that means I have to go to even more confined environment, computers is a lonely place and you are laboring at it continuously struggling with this unbelievable amount of detail. So I said I'm not going to do it. If you ^{would insist on} ~~would insist on~~ your personal ethics, that's the way you should go. You should sacrifice your life. Altruistic idea. But I kind of took the easy way, the way to relate to the world, so to speak, and do these pictures that people can read. What duty one wants is just duty one imposes on oneself. There's no preference. Because ~~Fagier~~ Fagier was the first who brought the idea that art can only exist in its theme. I understand that's the theme of his article. (article on Vasulka)

Marita: You mean its larger cultural theme?

Woody: ^{you} ~~we~~ can actually attach those codes of technology and actually perform them. So many people I guess share this.

Marita: Well his whole piece on you, ^{as} I read it, ~~the~~ ~~with narrative,~~ ~~la nouvelle fiction,~~ and he was just so happy that you were finally on board. That's really what I read in that article. Now you had finally come to the ^{great realm of narrative.}

Woody: It's true. We are aware, both of us, maybe there is a subconscious pressure which we don't admit to openly because it's not that clear.

Steina: It's like you have to fight it because everybody's trying to push you there. In the seventies we would always hear, well when are you going to start making the meaningful images, and things like that, so you really are pushed further out there than you really want to go. And I realized like with Shirley Clark when she did The Connection she had no interest in the narrativity. She was interested in the form.

Marita: That was a commercial project, wasn't it?

* If we experience it more broadly, we can eventually come to some sort of narrative works, or evolution

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Woody: That's right.

Steina: She used it. She used the commercial ^{budget} to exercise all her problems and concerns. You should get her, you should actually nail her down and talk to her because I have and it's a very interesting thesis she has on that. It was not something about scoring heroin that she was the least bit interested in.

Woody: It may be the whole summary of the reasons that we are here where we are ^{in the work.} On the other hand, there are people who do work in that purist idea like ^{at Calarts} Scrogan, ~~me~~, I don't know if you know his work. He still does very basic video. Chops the image by light form, but I think he's also cheating now.

Steina: No people in it. No faces. No camera.

Woody: It has this great ^{integrity} ~~integrity~~. I admire the work because it's ^{logged} ~~logged~~ traditional video. And probably there are other people we don't see, that are submerged that might have worked for twenty years with imagery which will come up later. The medium has its own genre and will be carried on by particular people.
* ~~But the experience is much broader so that we can eventually~~ (more thunder) ~~be done~~ I don't know what you'd call it, conformity?

Steina: Greediness ^{vs security} ~~vs security~~. I ^{thought} ~~thought~~ about it like in certain vocabulary. I want to use the whole vocabulary. If there are words then I want to use them. And I thought about it in music, because you can see the evolution of music, how it was polyphonic, ^{and then} harmonic. You can see the evolution of violins from discovering vibrato, tremolo, all those things and eventually there's a whole vocabulary of violin playing, including banging on the string with a stick, ^{not} using a hair ~~brush~~, and all those things. That was discovered in this century. So very slowly but surely there is being added on, and the new composers have it at their disposal, and they are able to use all those things. ^{Joan} ~~Joan~~ ^{LaBarbara} ~~LaBarbara~~ talks about it, because the way vocals now have taken a giant step because you can do double stops, ^{you can} be singing in one and have ^{the} harmonics go above. It has completely changed singing techniques for the rest of eternity. Because now they have to learn it at Julliard or wherever they go. It's a part of the ~~the~~ vocabulary. So our thing has always been, the camera is there as one image gathering tool, then there are other ways of gathering images. I'm not interested in the restriction, in that sense. I always restrict myself anyhow, we all do, but that's not one of them. So as much as I admire the purists, who stick to something very defined, it's not my garbage bag.

Woody: That brings you to ^{or} totally free ~~the~~ way of thinking, it brings you to polygomy, it brings you to embracement of all those quack religions and all the accupuncture and new age.

Steina: When you talk to any artist about their work, if you get really to them they will tell you about the restrictions and this is very interesting phenomenon. I had this once in a conference with Shirley and Ashley where Shirley talked about the ground ^{rules} ~~rules~~ and Ashley talked about the templates and both of them were so ^{obsessed} ~~obsessed~~, Ashley was ^{obsessed with} ~~obsessed with~~ the 28 minutes, that was his template and that in one of them there was diagonal ^{and the other...}

Marita: ~~They~~ feel obligated to create these restrictions.

Joann: Is it an obligation so much?

Steina: Well, he is just a guy who realizes them, and there are then other people who don't. I usually realize them afterwards, when people say why didn't

*I am horrified. Outdoors.
that was it in the scheme
of things. But I might
not have thought it at
the time.*

Steina: you make this outdoors? But if you ask ~~any~~^{silly} questions, the ~~ones~~^{artist} will always say, you can't do that! It's a violation of my work. So we all work in this kind of confinement.

Woody: Also, historically, if you were painting religious painting, there were tabs. You couldn't make Mary with short...

Joann: Blonde hair.

Woody: But in this case, I also came to the same conclusion. One gets desperate when one experiments with a form of confinement. Eventually I imposed on this also external forms. And musicians do it routinely, they even ^{have} structure notational systems ~~that~~^{that} repeat and codas and whatever they have. So Ashley's idea of 28 minutes is legitimate, because you get a handle on it. Desperation. Because if you try to confine something formally, you're facing this unbelievable dilemma. There are many ways of doing it, like she's talking like she's free but I see she's agonizing ^{now} more and more. She's beginning to compose also.

Steina: I still think one day we have to make a conference on the 28 minutes, because that was a code that was handed to us by PBS and I adamantly think it's a wrong code and a wrong message. And I want to put together Nam June, ~~and~~^{Juan} Downy, ~~and~~ Ashley and all those...

Joann: And even like the New Works thing out of Boston, ^{what} happened to people like that? Because they had to work in this format.

Marita: Well ~~that~~^{Juan} feels very specifically he wants to be on PBS.

Woody: ~~They are out into~~^{In this work I came to} four minute and six minute segments, pragmatically, and also you must eventually have some control. That's the whole idea. Of course since the editing became a numerical affair--I had to translate everything into numbers--so I understood certainly that machines could be redundant. Also the new machines make you horizontal and vertical. Remember this whole gadgetry that's coming up is still linear in the sense that it's still hard to do ^{and a whole} many problems. You eventually come--you are not free either. You can't really make soft or disgusting images, you have to somehow make them acceptable to the habit. So here, once you had the flexibility of stretching or combining the time, you can eventually make works that are non-linear in time. They will be continuously changing dynamics. That's another dimension we can talk about here, that there's a slow-mo and so on, is the continuity of the dynamic representation. Actually Viola ~~did~~ did some early work on that, certain codes in his Long Island tape. He stumbled over some important things that had narrative consequences. But writing the scores, which looks mechanical, once you build in this machine system the flexibility ^{of time} ~~is apparent~~. You can stretch the time by building or repeating time, unperceivably altering time. Then there's another dimension in it. So what I'm saying is I had to mechanically confine myself because that's the level of the tool I could organize. Otherwise I would have to make every edit or transition unique. And in the whole work, ~~and the~~ 200 transitions, it will become just another three years of my life. So one builds these limitations because one wants to get a handle on, on a basic level, how to control. So some of it becomes what they call late beautiful, most of them become what they call ridiculous or mechanical or crude or whatever. But that's again the fusion of the viewer. The viewer eventually fuses it and says this is what it is. Regardless what the elements are, the scheme or templates or whatever. But that's a whole different discussion.

Marita: Well here you've eliminated the lack of control you had over your actors.

Woody: Right. No, my dream really is to have synthetic actors. To truly carry--the ~~act~~ is not personal, it's really on a level of media. And you can create full-bodied protagonists that could carry through your idea. Or your misconceptions, that would be freeing. On the other hand, there's a whole world that is physical. People like to interact. But I'm just not that kind. I cannot stand people.

Marita: You mean people on camera?

Woody: No, Protagonists ~~of your politics~~ ^{of your politics}, because I grew up with a system that used people to accomplish real ends. Wars and killings, people are carrying on ideologies to the degree of crime and fascism. Mistrust these things. Computer gives you such a possibility that you can create worlds, that you don't have to manipulate men to men or whatever.

Marita: But a computer in its very design is not free of ideology. *Who is designing it?*

Woody: There's an interesting category of computers.

Steina: You are opening up a ~~large Pandora box!~~ *large Pandora box!*

Woody: In this age of innocence I think ~~we still~~ ^{we still} see computers as apolitical, because they run the banks.

Marita: But to me the fact that they run the banks means that they're political.

Woody: No. When ~~you~~ ^{they} stop ~~creating their own strategies~~ ^{creating their own strategies} for their own replications, then you can speak about ideology. But if they are in service of systems that ~~create~~ ^{create}, they're still tools. *people*

Marita: But what about the fact that when the military and the commercial market govern ~~the machine~~ ^{the machine}--the initial design of the machine--then the attitude of the machine toward the user and the application of the machine is very different than, ~~for instance~~ ^{for instance} the machine that you chose to design, that you had to design because your needs were different than say of the military or the commercial market ~~place~~.

Woody: We always believed that once the machines are designed, they contain all the possibilities. That was a misconception.

Marita: But there's a limit in every design.

Woody: In some ways, you see computers used to be completely unlimited, they were limited only by the software. It's still true. Once you have the know how, you need a basic system to work with. We're talking about something like software or interface between the machine, there's always the struggle for control, and which people will be confronted with the machine not only on the financial level or time level, but on the creative kind of equation. Today the talent that should be suited for the computer is eliminated ~~from the participation~~ ^{from the participation} because the access to the tools is in the particular environment, and the knowledge of organizing the tools and the programs and images are exclusive domain. It's not like a cultural domain like film in which you can possess the actual means of production. And also the programming, maybe the genius of the future is to contain the language ability, to create the language, to create images and to create the genre or the ~~structures~~ ^{structures} or compositions. But that is, it seems to be Superman...

Steina: The big question now is the engineer coming and saying I can make you a flower, here is my selection, I have ten kinds of flowers. And the artist says I choose number three and that's my art. And then suddenly there is open ~~discussion~~ ^{are long} discussion

versus the artist coming to the engineer and saying "I want you to make me a flower"

Steina: which actually happened very much when we had George Brown ~~to do the keyer~~ for us. We had a very exact requirement. We wanted to layer images so that there would be a man in front of a hill which was in front of a sunset. But each item would be picked up by a different ~~camera~~ ^{camera} in a different location, and then they would be put together. And George said yes, yes, I understand, that's great. And he came with the prototype. ^{And it} ~~was~~ beautiful, it was the smallest box we had ever seen and all those ~~things~~ ^{knobs} on it and everything. It didn't do that. ^{it did} a lot of other interesting things. We never really figured it out. It's still our favorite box because you flip knots and things like that and the image jumps in front or behind or becomes negative. But we never really figured out exactly how or why. And he would always look at us and say, you don't understand that, this is simple. But in all of this, it had only one ~~keyer~~ ^{keyer} so you would always have to make a compromise of either the man behind the hill or the hill behind the man or the sun behind the hill and the man. But we could never really do all three. So this was not the device. And he immediately understood that and said now I'll go home and make the device and he came back with this six layers of keying that did exactly that. And we tried and finally made the tape called ~~1-2-3-4~~ ¹⁻²⁻³⁻⁴. And nobody understands it and nobody thinks it's any victory or anything. Nobody sees that we are using four cameras, one pointed at each number, and we can jump them. And people just look and say oh that's One, two, three, four. But anyhow, then that became our compositional tool for a long time. It was The Golden Voyage and Home and a lot of other things. That was us ^{having to} send ~~him~~ back because we had to do it because we had a certain recording.

Marita: But the concept was preceding the execution.

Woody: We like to work with people who can execute these weird ideas.

Steina: But then in the end we didn't have the knowledge, because we asked him to do this and suddenly it had external key on it and all those things which we didn't know the name of. But apparently what we have finally come now to realize is that external key is really our compositional tool. That's ^{how the West was done} ~~and~~ how this piece is done. And most of our recent work is basically done on external key. And we ^{really} only run them three inputs, the ABC. So we were too ambitious, we never ^{really} used all six inputs at one time, except as fun. The image was too complex. And we didn't know that the solution to what we were looking for was that simple, that cheap, actually.

Woody: So the Golden Voyage is done on the machine, is it?

Steina: ~~Yes~~ Yes.

Woody: I'm talking here about the dilemma of the computer which I reduce to an archetype. You see the struggle of the scientific and other communities ^{around the computer} is to contain the world. They want a library of trees, weather, ~~all possible~~ ^{all possible} so eventually it will be contained by computers. Then the access to the world will be through that, ^{you don't have to initiate...}

Marita: Is it possible for it to all be contained?

Woody: Yes. If you work on it for 10,000 years, you'll get it.

Marita: But then you think, well what's the point?

Woody: Maybe even in a 1,000 years. Once you have contained the world algorithmically you can create other worlds with it. First by mere modality ~~you~~ you can invert

Woody: this world. It's just a mathematical algorithm. Or you can complement this world. You can modulate this world. So you can make different...

Marita: Modulate representation^{s?}

Woody: That's right. And then you have access to some kind of a handle, a control mode. And you can invent other worlds, maybe on the basic logic of this world or take off.

Steina: To keep in the parallel, the engineer doesn't say I have these ten flowers, select one. When you have 100,000 flowers that you can recompose or decompose any way you want to. Take one leaf of one and the color of the next one and the leaf shape of the third one, then you can enter into the world of creativity. ~~Yeah, but...~~

Woody: Yeah, but you see that in the ancient world of poetry. Inventing words every afternoon or evening. Or music.

Marita: The master draftsman.

Woody: It just never reached the pictorial level of photography.

Steina: It comes back to vocabulary. That the poet has the whole vocabulary available. If you have the whole vocabulary of images available, you become a poet.

Woody: So we're not talking about anything really new to the culture. We're talking about something new to the picture making which resembles film.

Marita: It's only the culture in the sense of what the photographic image means in our society. What it means legally and what it means in terms of consumer culture.

Woody: I would never divorce these things from each other. There's so much linked. Photography is the meta-image to this whole discussion, and the dialogue I'm always describing about the camera obscura and non-camera obscura. It is essential because that's where the dominance of the camera came. And that's how it formulated our idea of reality and narrativity. So I think these all should be challenged.

Marita: But your concept of this syntax doesn't have that kind of direct relationship to representation.

Woody: So you see the syntax is just ~~the~~ rebellion against edit. First of all there is a dialogue between the camera image and non-camera form. Even if it's contained in the image, it's a form, which is also an image, ^{which is non-}representational in a sense. So there's this kind of dialogue between camera and non-camera. Or camera image and image that's derived from a different source which I always refer to. I understand the dilemma and it's so compressed that it's unclear.

Marita: It's not unclear at all. It's just compressed. *(talking about manuscript)*

Woody: It's compressed, and I should really make myself be more free.

Marita: It's not unclear. It's very lucid. It's just that you feel that there's much much more.

Steina: ~~It's an addition.~~ *Maybe there isn't.*

Woody: It contains certain idea of the world but I read it now in the third person because I haven't seen it in a while, it's true it could be much more accessible.

referring to previous discussion of Woody, Steina,
Peter Weibel and Gene Youngblood -

Marita: Well also here you quote these filmmakers.

Woody: Is that clear?

Marita: Yeah. What I ~~wondered~~^{wanted} was for you to say okay you're talking about the film frame now talk about video. You go off on this trajectory about film and you don't relate it back.

Woody: The only point I'm making is the definition of ~~the~~^a point ~~in~~^{instead of} the frame. which I find the most essential to the dialogue. Because the filmmakers are talking about the event between the frames. They all make that clear.

Marita: But you never make your relationship to video here.

Woody: I'm talking about the control, ~~the~~^a point now becomes the smallest syntactic device. But I don't explain it. It's a hypothesis. I've only one piece in which I can demonstrate it which is the ~~structure~~^{Artifacts}, you know that moving structure.

--End Tape 2, side 1--

... (home video)

Woody: Again that might mean something completely different, I'm just using it for some kind of personal use, but it may fall under a different category.

Marita: Well where do you think this whole--I know we've talked about this before and gotten nowhere--where do you think this whole subject of syntax, where's the point of departure? Have you and the boys made any progress on this?

Woody: No. Peter's ^(Weibel) in his ~~plural~~^{plural} ~~work~~. He tries to create multiple worlds, it is so much linked to the tools, how they perform. Because ^{the} film ^{cut} actually performs as a tool. You didn't need to invent it, because it's so inherited. Because these primitives ~~invented~~^{developed} it, like Edison had no idea about a syntactic language. But the idea that... Sex differences could only exist on a creative level, because physiologically it is a nuisance. These two organs, different voices and hair, what a stupid idea.

(lots of joking about boys + girls)

Steina: In that discussion we did go into ^{it} coupage and montage.

Woody: Let me put it this way, I think the most interesting way to look at it is the--what's it called?

Steina: Man is ~~just~~^{but} a guest in the house of language. (Heidegger)

Woody: Every system of creating and delivering images, for example, like film or video or computer, have inherited amount of --there's a volume of possibilities, which are usually systemic, ~~the~~ First they could be categorized ~~through~~^{through a system}. They could be as primitive as film can be cut or video could delivered some distance. And then from that you can create cosmic networks Whatever. Each system is complete. It's up to us to ^{via} estimate, name, fit into it. Because we are human beings working with media. They didn't invent film. Film invented us as much, or the language of film was invented by film itself as we invented the film language. So it's not true that people sat down and thought about it. It was given to you by a system. Once you understand a system you can in fact understand a language, or discover or develop. You find out that the modern systems are very ~~complex~~^{complex}. They already do contain new syntax or new image. They contain all the modalities of transmission, communication. So to talk about us ~~inventing~~^{are inventing} the system is as foolish as to ~~invent~~^{invent} the system invented us. Once the system has contained that modality, we will try to find it. Who is we? All the people?

I say it is all there, I just have

Woody: Those that want to build it and look at other things? So in a sense if you ask me what is the language and the syntax, to find it. I want to make a priority out of it. And I believe it because I know that computers can do anything with the image if you have the know how. So the know how becomes the centerpiece of this.

Marita: But there's a difference between finding it and understanding it and being able to have a kind of discourse.

Woody: That's right. To elect that to be a cultural artifact or cultural tool, that's a different--that has to be negotiated and people have to be convinced by the artist or by the creative deed of its legality. That's in every art form.

Marita: My feeling is --and I got bogged down in this in the last piece that I wrote--is that what happens is you get bogged down in this whole issue of modernism. And it's two parallel kinds of issues at hand, because there is the whole thing about modernism and in modernism defining a medium by its properties, an institutional kind of means--it's used by institutions for specific purposes. It's part of that establishment. But ~~really~~ the properties and the syntax has nothing to do with that. That's the way it's manifested in the culture within that particular discussion. So that's why it's become such an issue lately that people have been talking about it and getting nowhere on.

Woody: Syntax and syntactic devices are actually initiated by ^{the author} ~~some~~, by someone who tries to convince you that this is the legitimate way of doing

Marita: Of telling you the story.

Woody: Of telling you the story, right. It's he or she convincing you that it's the only way it should be said. And it's your personal way, so you know it's a signature. Some people say no, we have the common tools to convey that to you. But in a way it is the urge or necessity of the initiator. To interpret it or to accept it. That's the cultural negotiation that you're talking about, criticism and so forth. But what I'm saying here is that in fact today with the invention of languages the language can take a lead over the cultural acceptance, you can impose things on people, which is done daily. Look at the new computer ^{stuff} -regardless of whether people like it or not--they'll make it and try to sell a product through it. So people still accept or willingly accept things, but also people are imposed upon, things that they don't want. What bothers me about it is that the cultural discourse is so minimal, because you could take any ^{kind of} interpretive ^{as} ~~as~~ ^{semiotic} did or in fact initiative, which is to create languages, that means ~~you~~ ^{you} people to turn into computer programmers. It's a question again, is creativity making the artifacts or symbols or is it interpreting or making systems out of them and locating them? The translation between the artifact and ^{the} culture is not complete, is not ^{in the culture} practiced well, but I guess it needs more general knowledge.

--Break--

(back to article)

Woody: Now tell me, this filmic intervention by Addis, is it clear? It's not clear what it is ~~posed~~ ^{posed} against.

Marita: You make a point.

Woody: I have to make the information clear. It's important.

Marita: It's clear, but then you don't connect it back to video. There's no point in raising it unless you're going to connect it back... I don't know, I still ^{do} agree a little with it. Well, I understand the importance of cinema, I also ^{do} really wonder if after the computer electronic imaging reaches a more advanced state, that the legacy of cinema is going to seem a lot less important. I just think that's a danger in using that ^{kind of} pre-established system as a reference point after a certain point.

Woody: There are two levels. One is the accumulated literacy, you can't imagine twentieth century novel without...

Marita: You can't go back and *understand something* -

Woody: And you can't understand film without watching Bunuel. I don't think it's possible. So that way we are stuck. There's nothing I can do about it, and there's nothing you can do about it. Look how film is eagerly looking for video and how video is eagerly trying to learn film. You haven't seen this unbelievable experience like students from ~~Paris~~ ^{CalArts, here brought me tapes} one case in particular, which is ~~Paris~~ ^{paying homage completely to a Belgian landscape} it's all California or Oregon. This painstaking recreation of filmic reality, a man and woman and a triangle of some sort, innocent and flashbacks, so video can't live without film. And it's intellectual. ~~It~~ ^{It} can live in kind of a vulgar way, you know like *Almy* ~~it~~ ^{who} does also good work at times, but it's obviously brought out as a new medium that's not related to film. I'm so glad it exists, really, and at times ~~it~~ ^{she} does ~~it~~ ^{it} so well. But it's just one aspect that--the culture's so broad, you can't eliminate ninety percent or ninety nine point nine percent of other relationships. And cinema I think is such an important contribution, to a mind, that not to reflect back on it from any point, even from music, it's just beyond reality. It would not be real.

Marita: I don't mean to say that we should ignore it.

Woody: I know, but you think it will not be dominant in forming the next...

Marita: I think ^{that at one point} we may perceive its dominance as being very different. ~~It~~ ^{As} electronic media becomes less linear in its design...

Woody: But again what is electronic media, is it a system of communication as presented here, or is ^{it} an expression of art? If you take culture, how big a role does video play in it? I think it's completely miniscule, virtually nonexistent. You must understand the perspective I'm looking from is very dismal. I find video challenging only as ^a conceptual ~~one~~. It makes all other art forms very nervous, like imaginary power. The threat is to the tradition, but what does it execute? Very little. If I didn't have a few friends in video, I would be desperate about the medium. So in that respect film is still a giant--even parallel to media. It's hard for me to say. Look at the sixties and now the seventies also. It's still this guy, what's his name, a French filmmaker, Godard, he's still there, you know. So who knows. And also ^{high} definition... I have a suspicion that's what's going to happen.

JoAnn: The student film awards at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences ^{which} does the student film awards, is receiving video this year. And we talked about video that's made to look like film--the most traditional-- ^{it will be shown like film}

Woody: Absolutely... ^{that is what I saw in this CalArts work - swampy filmic.} the rejection of video.

JoAnn: It's just a different way to make the same ~~thing~~ ^{thing}.

* Take me in out consciousness and transplant it to another era -

Woody and Steina Vasulka
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Woody: So that the drive to eliminate ^{the} medium is great, to make the medium transparent, make it only a vehicle. As you remember ~~the 1960s were~~ ^{the 1960s were} looking at the medium, the viewer actually looking into the video but there's a whole opposite tendency, the humanitarian or humanistic way of thinking, which is to transcend the reality into the fiction. So ~~we~~ we don't know. It's very much possible that the idea of physicality of the medium will disappear completely, ~~we will~~ ^{we will} translate ^{it} into languages, ideas, ^{we all thought} strategies. Because we are quite bigoted in the sense of computers. This requires new literacy, ~~binary~~ ^{binary} code ^{is the new} expression of a cultural code, and all these very determinist statements. I still believe partly that it is part of the culture to know ~~binary~~ ^{binary} code. It's not very practical in talking about high culture, it's highly coded, it operates on so many higher levels, but that is the desire of ~~many~~ many people that only few ~~are~~ ^{are} It's a ^{paradox} of time that all the ^{master} ~~pieces~~ pieces that contain meaning may be meaningless and all the primitives--what I call American primitives in video--maybe that's going to be the centerpiece of the legacy. We have to be very careful about looking at--

Marita: Who are the American primitives?

Woody: ~~___~~, the Siegels, the ^{Etra's} ~~___~~, the ^{toolmakers} ~~___~~, and there would be some people who function on non-artistic level and will be aesthetically essential. But on the other hand I would not admit that because the European legacy of art is transferrable. Like in Renaissance, you know the revival of the Greek ideal was so potent so there was nothing primitive about it. I would not like to deprive anybody of that.

Marita: I guess I see it as this sort of dilemma. There will always be the dilemma of this whole issue.

Woody: Artificial ~~dilemma~~ ^{dilemma}?

Marita: No, just unresolved.

Woody: But again, all that's in this dialogue is this: things will come anyway. The whole idea of media and practicality or how media interacts with people. They will be doing that by their own existence. It's a ~~legitimate~~ ^{legitimate} way, because language wasn't thought out.

Marita: But what is the process of discovering that syntax?

Woody: Syntax is as ^{Husserl} ~~___~~ defined it. For example, manifested by numerical range, one two three four. That means it contains some kind of logic, some kind of code that is unambiguous or contains a certain amount of ambiguity. The syntax is how to translate or how to ^{indicate} ~~___~~ previous and succeeding states. Now in media sense, in filmic sense, it is relationship between one frame and the other frame, others say it's between one scene and the other scene. ^{Eisenstein} ~~___~~ says syntax can only exist between two shots. But Kubelka ~~___~~ drew him up and ~~___~~ ^{decided that} it's between each frame.

--Break--

Steina: Montage was when you took two images that were juxtaposed, and you made an edit, it goes from this to this either in time or in space.

Marita: ^{where the} Edit is the point.

Steina: Decoupage is the opposite. You want the edit not to be seen.

Marita: Like in television, the person walks into the room and you cut to a different angle.

Steina: But I thought it was even more, ^{Peter was trying to explain that if you are a film director and} ~~if you are a film director and~~ and you really know what you want to do with the film, you place the cameraman always ~~with~~ with the idea that you are going to montage ~~this~~ this to this. Whereas montage is...you ^{take} ~~make~~ ~~the~~ ~~material~~ out from the raw material and you compose it. ^{1st}...Woody, is that true? ^{basically pre-production vs post production}

Woody: ...what constitutes the syntax, syntax is not only the cut, it's also thought in space, decoupage, that means you have to ^{select in space the directions, sizes of the} ~~to~~ this kind of work, to edit in the director's head, is usually scripted, but could also be improvised. To decoupage a space you cut it into little pieces and then you get this material, and then you put it in an editing table and that's where the montage takes place. Decoupage and montage could be integral processes. ~~Eventually~~ Eventually, you kind of edit together. Syntax in a sense ^{has two meanings -} one is the primitive one, it's the juncture between two, it's a mechanical device, and then the syntax also has a higher meaning. One shot follows the other and eliminates the succeeding by the preceding. Or eliminates the preceding by the succeeding. You can invert: A, B, B, C, C, D. But then you can also make higher syntax--that's what I'm talking about--once you make a way of transmitting from one scene to the other, ^{nonlinear} by edit or ^{disrupt} you start ~~by~~ ^{transforming images} by certain strategies. The strategy you use to transform one image to ^{the} another. Is it a light ^{and's} ~~transition~~, is it ^{the} ~~an~~ edge, is it a movement? You see all these things contain that possibility. It's not shown. ~~but the system in thought and the tools contain it all -~~

Steina: Could you then say that ~~the~~ Commission is more a decoupage and ^{art of memory} ~~is~~ ¹ is more a montage?

Woody: This is a design. It's leading the cinema. In some ways it's more cinematic, in some ways it's less cinematic. I don't know, you just have to judge it. I approach it more as a design, because the configuration of these things will be more important than what I call the internal drama. Each shot, ^{in the old school} contains certain dramatic content. Sometimes it ceases to be dramatic. These are all arbitrary thoughts. ^{2 that can be exhausted by time.}

Steina: Would you say that decoupage is more like early video ^{was,} ~~which~~ which was a pre-production, you had to pre-conceive the action from beginning to end? Because there was no way to interfere with it later?

Woody: There could be one scene decoupage. In fact, ^{in the Wajda movie} in the opening of the movie, which one was it, the long pan, 15 minute...and Hitchcock and others did very much.

Steina: Is that decoupage?

Woody: If you think ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ the space ^{of} a camera in that sense that you've arrived at a certain point and certain angle and certain sides, then yes, it's decoupage.

Joann: ~~It's not decoupage.~~ ^{Tarkovsky does that a lot.}

Woody: Right. There are a number of filmmakers who pride themselves in this.

Steina: I do that too. Every time I ^{set} ~~stop~~ out to do the perfect one shot ^{that does not have} ~~to~~ to be edited and every time I make a compromise. That sentiment is very much real time.

Marita: What was it ^{we} ~~we~~ were saying, I can't remember ^{this morning} ~~the~~ along, we were talking about

Marita: time. Somehow we related it back to what you were doing. Woody, I think you were talking about the chrono-

Woody: ~~Chronology~~ Chronocracy?

Marita: I see that as being such an important element of what you were doing, and what's so different is your concept of time.

Steina: It is about time. We started to talk about accelerated time.

Marita: And you wanted to deaccelerate it.

Woody: Contemplative time. Artistic time, creative time can only be in a period of contemplation, not in acceleration. ~~It's~~ Accelerated time is a technological or social phenomenon, it's not a creative one or artistic one.

Steina: It is ~~coming~~ ^{coming} to more and more ~~clash~~ ^{clash}. Modern time is on a natural speed-up. Peter goes into this. The fact that you can get on an airplane and be in ~~another~~ ^{another} place in some time ^{and get all the news} and everything is getting very accelerated and synchronized. And he didn't say that, but I concluded that this was all anti-art. Anti-creative, anti-contemplative ~~space~~.

Woody: ~~The~~ Poverty is really time-based now. The people who don't have time are the poor. The financial ~~aristocracy~~ ^{aristocracy} doesn't exist as long as it does not own time. You can buy time. It's not a new thought, ~~but~~ ^{Peter is} very much aware of the European kind of thought, and there's a lot of capitalism that's based on purchase of time. And in America of course it's been practiced for years. But in the personal sense, an aesthetic sense ^{it is the same} ~~we have been~~ ^{with our own} in some ways subconsciously practicing it by being here, ~~around~~ ^{we} tools. All ~~we~~ ^{we} gained was time. And having time is a tremendous commodity.

Joann: Saving time, the way you can store up time. You can collect time.

Woody: You can accumulate time, all these concepts which are practiced today everywhere.

Steina: The most devastating sentence in the whole world is "Time is money." It's that kind of a value.

Woody: But also we were kidding with Gene because he became the victim of this Los Angeles concept that he just doesn't have time. Anytime I call him I always kid him because he doesn't have time for what? ...But it's a self defence, socially, you don't want to be approached at certain moments, you say you don't have time. I used to say it also, because now it became reality but I should make a personal policy to always have time. And that's what I actually live. All my life I actually have time. There are certain times like deadlines that I really hate but the only time I accept is no time. I have no time. But it's wonderful to live in this idea of having time. It's wonderful and you disarm people. Can I come? Sure.

Steina: People are very strange to me. People have time for us, personally, to hang around, to just be around, they don't have time to see our tapes. And I always thought that that's interesting because ^{with you people always} you are condensing time. You are sending out a message where you have condensed your thought and in all ^{this administration} ~~this~~ two way ~~communication~~ ^{communication} --I adore one way communication, I like it one way. To read a book ~~you~~ ^{you} talk to the author because the author is not going to be that efficient as a person as the book is. Or listening to a record. But in case of ~~video~~ ^{video}, generally, the hardest obstacle is the time and mostly ~~of~~ the time ~~is~~ ^{is} sense of patience. People don't want to give ~~you~~ ^{their} time to ^{in the}

Steina: watch a tape, to donate the time. They don't have the generosity, because they feel that it is--

Marita: a commitment.

Steina: Well they feel that they are entitled to an entertainment. Now they are sitting in front of a box so they better not--

Joann: ~~Don't waste~~ ^{Don't waste} my time.

Steina: Exactly.

Marita: You mean we as viewers feel a certain kind of behavior is expected of us when we're looking at a work.

Steina: No, I thought I was imposing upon you my time, ^{yesterday} when I was watching those Buffalo tapes. I thought it was interesting from my point of view because my time has sped up. I realized those Buffalo tapes are very slow.

^{JoAnn +} Marita: They didn't feel slow to me.

Steina: That's the whole thing. That this is all cultural. It's the idea of wasting people's time, because I take those tapes to certain places in Europe and in Iceland where time is not so valuable and I feel much more at ease imposing it on people. But here you are really taking people's time from something very important and valuable that they would otherwise be doing, like wasting it somehow. But I think that all time based artists are in this ^{dilemma} ~~dilemma~~, including us and everybody else we know. To what point are we indulging or wasting somebody's time? Because if you can get people into contemplative time you have gotten them into some space.

Marita: Also phenomenological time, which we were talking about yesterday, which is basically the time of say the Snow ^{ed} tapes, where you're going through each ^{stage} ~~stage~~ just going further and further. That's really contemplative time.

Steina: And I could have cut this very fast: this is one ^{layer} ~~stage~~, this is two, three...

Marita: But that's not the way you thought it out as you were doing it.

Steina: No.

Woody: Also there's the idea of phenomenological time ^{the time to observe and understand} which is different from dramatic time or whatever we call it. Again my theory is that once you look at ^{the phenomenon} you translate it from image to object, it becomes objectified by time. You can only accept symbolic or iconic reading for certain time, it then becomes a still, like a picture on the wall. Cinema is very quick, because it presents you continuous strategy of iconic presentation. You know that it's going to change, you're very comfortable with it. You read it on a different level, but once someone ^{plunks on the} ~~plunks on the~~ a picture that is ^{not} ~~is~~ cyclical then you have to kind of look at it, what is it, it's ~~the~~ position in space. What is the relationship? What moves it? Why is it moving this way. So you get from the presentation of some kind of condensed meaning or some kind of a drama into the observation. It becomes a testimony. I think that was our first interest in ^{what we} ~~observing~~ it, how it behaved, ~~how~~ is it changing, what is the transition ^{between} ~~between~~ one state and the other. So this kind of observation is again a different time because you have to continuously disclose a new secret. You're not given the secret, you just have to disclose it yourself.

Steina: Like when Gene was talking about how our timing was different to his he referred to ~~the~~ Artifacts, that the disc just goes on and on. But that's

Steina: what it is. It's not about ^{a disc} being there in space. It's about how it goes on and on and there were all those permutations and it is basically the way you look at the ocean. It is always the same and always different. It's the time commitment that you give to the piece. Are you going to watch all those phenomena or just see one or two or see somebody go through them fast, Now you've seen it, Or are you going to let the perception really play, because the longer you look at ~~the~~ Artifacts, the more it starts moving and making those glitches which you know ~~about~~ ^{at} the brain functions. But see this is the difference. When you go to the cinema, to the movie house, to see a feature film, you a priori make a time commitment because you buy the ticket and the room goes dark.

Marita: And you have to sit there for two hours.

Steina: Yes. And at that point you are defenceless ~~about~~ ^{against} what is going to come at you. And because of that I have always thought that fast movies are equal to slow movies. I have never thought that boring movies were any less interesting than non-boring movies, because you have committed your time and now you're going to sit and watch it and make the best of it. Because it's your time now. So this whole idea of when people say it ^{was} cut too slowly or it moved too slowly, this endless working down, was too much of it. I always really get a little confused about the value system. Maybe that working down was the only interesting part of the movie. And when they finally cut the end of it--

Marita: What you're talking about is this preconceived notion of narrative time. We go to the movie like that where the whole point is narrative structure. Anything that gets in the way of that ~~takes up too much time~~.

Joann: You get annoyed with the filmmaker because they're not telling the story the way you think the story should be told. So that's why people say that kind of thing, because wait a minute that's not how you tell the story.

Marita: Also, in your standard film, a scene or a particular plot element is never introduced unless it has ~~the role~~ ^{a role} in the narrative or the plot or the suspense.

Steina: ~~My mind you,~~ ^{Mind you,} Hollywood is under the biggest time pressure of them all. I mean they have producers cutting out twenty minutes. They have people interfering on every level because of the time concern. It becomes a form of slavery and most of television is a slavery to time. And we are fighting the same thing, for some strange reason. We do fight the same thing. And I just envy other media that don't have it, because you look at that big book and you say it will take me a long time to read it, but you never conceive I'm not going to read it, because once you start reading it you can read it in a week or a month.

Joann: It's up to you. You have control over the time.

Marita: Well, I'm sure that's why you're more inclined to do installations than to do single channel ~~pieces~~ ^{pieces}.

Steina: Well I feel often uncomfortable sitting in the audience with people and then I start doubting my own timing but then I remember when I did it I ~~had~~ to trust what I did when I did it. And if the piece is long and boring, so be it. There's nothing wrong with long and boring in the first place. So there are all those rationalizations, which you don't have to do in installations

- Steina: I don't mind going to them anymore. I used to suffer a lot more. Now I just know that it is like that. Then comes this whole idea that you sit down in St. Louis or in New York or in Paris and the timing is different in ~~each~~ ^{each} place, just geographical timing, in addition to the time of day. If you have an evening show--
- Marita: Who else is there with you. But it seems to me that the way--the relationship that the viewer has say, for instance, to The West, as opposed to The Commission is different in the sense that there isn't that specified temporal structure so the viewer still has more freedom, *you can sit through it a couple of times.*
- Steina: I like to watch people when they watch The West because it is also about time commitment. There are people, they look at this piece and they say very pretty, and they walk out. It's most interesting--some people of course sit and they go further and further into the room. Then they finally see a chair and they sit down. And, then they ~~lock~~ ^{lock}, most people have a certain ~~lock~~ ^{lock}, it's like two ^{free-art-time} oscillators and then suddenly they beat together. But to me it's fun to watch it with an audience, like if I show it in an auditorium or something. And it usually happens five minutes in, sometimes more or less, and you see the people. Especially in Texas, they all sat on the floor. They were uncomfortable and they were looking at each other and getting space, and suddenly you know it, at this moment. It must be the same moment that performers on the stage, and I'm not looking at the screen, I'm looking at them. And suddenly I know they are all going ^(equally). They have synchronized themselves. So that's funny, because it's the only piece that it happens in, of my pieces. And that's probably why I want to go further into it because it's most related to music in that sense. That's what musical audiences do.
- Marita: There's a moment when they get the rhythm.
- Steina: They fall in with the performer.
- Marita: It seems to me that your take on the form^{al} vs. content is so radically different from Woody's, and I would attribute a lot of that to you^{being} a musician, that the whole issue of content in music is really--
- Steina: Well, it's not really a question.
- Marita: It's not an issue. It's just there. Except in opera, I guess a little more. Even though the plot is really secondary. So whether be it your studio or be it the landscape or whatever, it's secondary to, it's just there.
- Steina: ^{Yes} No, obviously I like images. I like certain images. I like the moment, I like timing very much. But I don't deal with it. And then people talk about images like ~~visual artists~~ ^{visual artists} I feel in awe because I don't or ^{only} very peripherally know what they are talking. And people who specialize in symbolic images, symbolic languages, there's this whole thing about symbols, I am nowhere. Because I never interpret the world that way. It doesn't mean that to me. In this kind of moments I always get this kind of confirmation that I'm not a visual artist, whatever that means. I just am not, because I don't share that with them. I don't share that passion.
- Marita: I hadn't thought of that. So you must be a temporal artist.
- Steina: Peter is very into symbolism and he understands it. He's so excited, he *A time based artist..*

(a Sony ad)

Steina: brings us--this ~~thing~~, see this, Sony. Sony is the world, but it's larger than the world. It includes everything. And they have built this world and everything into it, and ~~44~~ Sony is the whole world, the globe. And I think it's great to read it that way, but it would never have occurred to me. I would have looked at the sign a thousand times.

~~Woody:~~
Woody: My trouble is that it would always have occurred to me -

- End tape 2 -

Tape 3, Side 1:

Woody: Well, some of the commercials, by accident or by design, use various codes.

JoAnn: Commercials I think by design 99 percent of the time know exactly what they're doing.

Woody: Sure.

Steina: But they are into very instant understanding.

Woody: There's so much money in it and various talent that sometimes even higher codes are performed, sometimes all of them, I don't know, I don't study it. I'm sure Peter would defend this.

Marita: So does that mean that what Steina does doesn't have a symbolic level?

Woody: You see, what Steina does is truly amazing because ~~because~~ she puts the camera on a tripod and goes away and makes art. And she sells it all over the world. It's truly amazing.

Steina: Con artist#.

Woody: There's a kind of conceptual thinking you do that is always hidden. I never actually knew how much you spent thinking about it. But you do probably think more about it than I do, because you really think about how to do things. So I find she's making a fire and she prepares for making the fire like a month ahead. So she thinks about it and that makes it conceptually involved. So you're involved conceptually. You may not execute symbolic language, but you choose your image, so it's a form of symbol.

Marita: Whether or not you choose it, it's still there too. When you take Iceland and you put it together with ~~the~~ ^{the} West, there's a whole level of, I guess you could call it symbolic, but there's a whole other level of meaning.

Woody: It's coded. There's nothing simple about it.

Marita: All that ~~geological~~ ^{geological} time.

Woody: She's close to innocence, but inside she's speculating much more than Peter ~~was~~. In fact, he may be the primitive.

Marita: That's your privilege, and it's wonderful that you can just let it go.

Steina: Yes, I stick my tongue out at the lord. No, it is a joke, and I know that. This little tape of Dora's ~~that~~ that I showed you yesterday, I saw her face in the cactuses, so I found my cactus tape and stuck her face in it. But then suddenly these silly little trees, leaves that go by that was interesting. So what I'm saying is you see some picture and you'll know or you'll know that this and that is together, but you are so glad to be proven wrong that you do something completely different.

Marita: When did you start doing the mechanical stuff? Was it '74, '75?

Steina: Yeah, I think the one I call Signifying Nothing, that super wide angle where Woody is sitting there, that was the first time, the turntable had a wooden table on the top of it. So I put the camera on to that... So the first one was putting the instruments on the table and that came all out of the thinking of what moves images, how images move.

Marita: You mean what governs camera movement?

Steina: Yeah. Either you move the camera or you move something in front of the camera. If you move neither, you have a still.

Marita: Isn't it a response to the selectivity of the camera movement or to the expansiveness of it?

Woody: It's the music, I think.

Steina: Yeah, it's the silence that stops music.

Woody: She's got ^{involved in the} ~~instrument~~ instrument because she plays the violin, it's really obvious to me that she would take the camera as an instrument.

Steina: But that I did first. I really took the portapak camera as an instrument. Then you have to hold it out. It's a physical endurance, as well.

Chick's mag to Anamika
And I did the same, because we were all struggling with the camera. That's why we did ~~it~~ ^{David Nagin}. We went up to WBAI Music Store to practice. And you find out how long you can hold it and when your attention drifts. I went through that whole thing with the instrument, and then I rejected the instrument. And I guess I first mounted them on cars. When I was doing ~~it~~ which was about the same time as Signifying Nothing. I was strapping the camera on the car, ^{upside down} right, left, all those things, not looking in the viewfinder, which was also very wonderful. See this was Shirley Clarke's idea, you were not allowed to look into the viewfinder. And she wanted to eliminate the viewfinder. She's never found the engineer who will do it for her, but that was the whole idea.

Marita: She couldn't just cover it up?

Steina: She did. And we had the whole rhetoric on that, remember?

Woody: But this idea of movement is one of the most basic so if that would be the only contribution you made to the world of video I don't think you would make a dent. It was more in it because the signal, the movements that we stumbled over, that you can produce movement by time drift, which was our first matrix work. It was essential, because suddenly there was a movement that was not originated in the front of the camera or by moving the camera.

Steina: Oh, because they haven't seen Switch Monitor Drift.

Marita: We're going to see that today.

Steina: That's the one I ^{more both} ~~love~~.

Woody: It's basically essential ^{because} there is a multiplicity of movements, which is a poly--not polytopic, polychronic--

Steina: poly-spacic.

Marita: polymobile.

Woody: Yeah, right. So I think that was the first thing you discovered about the movement. It wasn't camera movement. It was actually the ~~drifts~~ ^{like music} drifts. Because for you it was already like tone, in progress. Because she could never deal with the still image, that's for sure. It always had to be sort of a more spatial change. Sometimes she would do internal change like processing. But the gross movements--that's her kind of interest anyway--

Steina: Like I'm always amazed when I see stills of my tapes. It's like going into another space because I don't see them that way.

Marita: You don't perceive them. Aren't you lucky you didn't come from film. See that's the legacy.

Woody: ^{She is always trying} to categorize them also, to catalogue them. ~~See that system~~ ^{She indexes them, you} ~~see~~ have to look at the sketches, they're actually like investigations so it's not a freak, she also has a system. So she just projects to be intuitive. It's rationalized to a great degree. Each strategy has to be shielded because when the question comes you must answer it.

Marita: Or you must have a way of not answering it.

Woody: That's right. You must hide. Yes, it's a strategy. It's not a virtue.

Marita: Makes the critics work harder.

--Break--

Steina: It's very interesting also how first I was interested in moving the camera on the turntable. I put the camera on the turntable, I put the machines on there. But what we had done before, what we had done all over, in Golden Voyage--the ~~bread~~ flying breads ~~are~~ are flying on that turntable. It is that very turntable. So we used to create movements because we had to have the breads flying. So the way we had them flying was either to put a black cloth on the floor--you put those good french breads that we ate later in the evening across and pointed the camera at them, and ~~held the camera~~ ^{held the horizontal sync} ~~it~~. Or we put it on the turntable and moved them that way. ₁₀₀₀₀

Marita: They floated around like celestial objects?

Steina: Right. If you remember Home, there's a lot of movement on the turntable. That tape that you saw yesterday.

Marita: There's also a lot of horizontal drift ^{in Home}

Woody: That's right, there's a lot of drift.

Steina: So these were very early concerns about how to move the images. They coincided sort of right from the beginning. I mean as soon as we found out about this turntable. As soon as Alphonse returned to us our turntable it became one of our most active actors, right? So that was for me a breakthrough to turn it around because I really remember the moment when I said of course, you don't point a camera at the turntable, you put the camera on the turntable.

Woody: But you see again, where do you get movement from? If you are a filmmaker you go outside and capture the movement, but if you are in a studio you have to generate movement. It becomes like one of the materials. See you generate color, you generate movement, so it becomes that kind of material for you, or element that you want to have on hand, as they say off shelf.

Steina: Available.

Woody: Available. So she was so pragmatic about it, but she would use those inputs ~~or~~ ~~from~~ the movement of the turntable or whatever. This is another way of using movement as a utility. Expressing something but using it as a tool, like any other, like an object.

Steina: What was different about this ^{time} ~~time~~ was, what we always did before was when we were creating movements, it was an element in a larger context. See the bread
 (golden voyage)

- Steina: moving there was one element of three, over the landscape and so forth. And suddenly in this Machine Vision it became the primary, it became just a raw, straight, with no mixing and with no secondary in it.
- Woody: It's like the basic music and then there's variations. When people come in, it's a variation. It's rather, it's again, it's simplistic, but it's the same, the ~~movement~~^{movement} is the utility. It initiates the piece. It starts the music. It is a matter of control or not.
- Marita: But in the same way that I see you as doing this thing where you pull out the stills and create this sort of progressive structure. In Steina's case I see it as being this ~~pulling~~^{pull} out this one element, and of course it can't be reduced to a still, it's in opposition to that. But it's, in taking that element--be it the pan or the tilt or in and out of focus, that's a movement, or be it zooming in and out--that creates this kind of choreography that's very complex. In all those early tapes you're taking one step further and further and further.
- Woody: Yes, she's much closer to the resources of the medium. She's in a way personal or autonomous about it. When she needs a movement, she just has the movement on her hand. In this case I step into a different coding system, when I take movement from cinema for example, from film. So it's a different type of movement, or progressions or composed movement that is deliberate. It's just wherever you put your focus to. I would like to use primary sources of medium always.
- Steina: But you see it was always obvious to you, that's the thing. It's just like Woody can make music because it's ^{not so} obvious to him, and he's still discovering things. Because I think it's really funny, looking at those tapes, I was basically discovering the camera movements, like when I decided to mount the camera on the side and put this L-shaped thing on it, which I had to actually manufacture. So the camera could be on it, so I could rotate it. You know it is so primitive and as you see the cable is slowly wrapping and then it's unravelling.
- Marita: That's your primary problem is these cables.
- Steina: I'm so bread and butter that I'm still thinking I can move the camera this way as a pan, in and out as a ~~zoom~~^{zoom}, up and down as a tilt, and lastly the rotation.
- Marita: You don't take it for granted.
- Steina: No, I don't take it for granted. So I go and do all those exercises--
- Woody: That's the funny thing, she was doing all those exercises and they ^{all} contained all in the filmic language. You have the dolly and the pan, tilt, she had to learn those terms, and had no faintest idea that it's already coded in the cinema.
- Steina: So there was never a challenge for you to mount a camera and rotate it this way. Even later when I finally realized I could put a prism there--we found a prism in the store and we gave it to our friend to put the motor on it. Then you just put the whole assembly on it and you move the prism and that way the world rotates--
- Woody: You see Michael Snow has done a lot of these mechanical interfaces with film. It's really contextual meaning. Like Gary Hill is constructing this kind of rotating in two directions which Michael did with ~~?~~ and the Central Region. But again it's the context in which it is used which becomes

Woody: important. The concept again is itself so simple and so many times reinvented that it would not have a contextual innovation, then they would mean nothing also. And every time^{again} in a period of time, kind of a style of time, gives you the permission to do something that becomes essential.

Marita: But with Steina it's not cinematic, because then you take it--I can't remember which one it is now, Snow^{ed} Tapes--you take it and you go from one generation back and back.

Woody: That's what I mean, you put it in the context of video. Film couldn't do. It was just a region, center region, that's what it was. You don't use feedback or reiteration, because these are all vocabularies of electronic processes.

Steina: Yeah, something like the Snow^{ed} tapes becomes very important because I can demonstrate that the picture in the slanted mirror is me walking which you cannot see in the monitor that I am walking and the only way you can do it--if I had been just standing there and there had been a still image, you would never have figured it out--but by seeing this working and by seeing it go on in the lower image, this real time and immediate time. I take that image and rotate it like a next layer, and it's still real time, and then I go into the unreal time. And I'm playing back and adding on, and I always expect people to read this but they don't.

JoAnn: Because they don't even think that way.

Woody: But she used the term demonstrate. She wanted to demonstrate things. See that's also one of the early video obsessions to demonstrate viability or innovation or share in the discovery.

Steina: Yeah, share the excitement. I don't mind that all those people discovered it before me. When I discovered it I was just as excited as any other asshole (!).

JoAnn: But every person that discovers it uses it in their own way.

Woody: Contextualizes it in a way.

Steina: I knew I wasn't discovering something that hadn't been done before, and I have no interest in being that kind of discoverer. But it's every bit as exciting.

Marita: But what comes out is we have in this exploration of movement first of all, ironically, there's this whole portrayal of^{the} mechanical, right? Like when it gets to the stage of Ptolemy you feel this presence^{of the device} and its sounds, the way it's just swallowing up that space. And the other[^] thing that I see starting in the Snow^{ed} Tapes is the extension of that space. You go back and back and back. Or else[^] if you take that sphere and so I see that as being a real subtext and one that moves away from the frame, totally.

Woody: Sure. They're kind of pure installations, even on the tape, they're ~~pure~~ ^{pure} installations, because of their physicality in a way. Because they are not leading to us reading the picture in some kind of a narrative progression.

Marita: There's the physicality of ~~the device~~ ^{the device}, right, which really plays against your notion of the video frame.

Woody: Yeah, that kind of obviousness of the device is always there, which makes it interesting.

Steina: But you know what it reminds me of, this ^{sent} ~~artist~~ artist in the studio, kind of an exploration, it reminds me of ~~the~~, his very early tapes.
 Campers,

Woody: Oh, yeah. Same kind...

Steina: He was playing ^{and superimposition.} around and demonstrating if you walk from this camera to that camera. And that's why I really appreciate those tapes the most. He could have a little better image quality.

Marita: Like ~~the~~ ^{the dynamic} Fields series. Double Vision.

Steina: And he wasn't then the only one doing that kind of stuff. And I thought there was going to be an onslaught of that kind of explorations, but there wasn't. It stopped right there and then.

Woody: Yeah, it just shows you, each era has its own confinement, it doesn't usually go beyond, or it becomes unique in its time and then you ~~can't~~ even try to return to it. ^{but you can't} That's also interesting about ^{with} that looks normal or unimportant when you do it, because it's part of the process. But eventually it becomes unique. There's no point of return because that thought has been conquered or found or not challenging anymore. That's why video will never look the same way as it did look. And you look at these tapes they're all aged. Time has worked on it. We always thought it was a new medium, almost with no sense of historical time attached to it, but now when you look at it...

Steina: But I'm really glad they're ^{all in} ~~black~~ black and white.

Woody: You had no choice.

Steina: I had no choice. But I can't see them in color.

JoAnn: It would be distracting in color.

Marita: Yeah. Somehow with the black and white and the checkerboard...

Steina: So, give me another question. I'll give you an answer.

Marita: Do you think that putting it on a turntable, putting it on a device like that, allowing the device to select the imagery, is that like rebelling against the subjectivity, the human eye selection?

Steina: I went through that whole thing. I really did feel that rebellion. And I even went to thinking that all conferences, round tables should be done that way. And not stuck necessarily at the speaker, but just keep going at a certain speed, with mikes there passively and the camera just passively going around. Yeah, it all came out of the fact that I really love to do camera. I did a lot of camera, I'm a passionate camera person. I still am. And then you get into this whole hoax of what it is. How many scenes you miss.

Marita: The whole power thing.

Steina: Yeah, and the things you take. Like I always find it so interesting that most camera people if they are pointed at somebody and that person picks their nose, they point the camera away. Because as a person you wouldn't do it. As a person you are flesh enough that you say I'll just look at this person pick their nose. But you feel this weight of holding millions

Steina: of people who are watching this with you because now you have become the eye.

Marita: Well, as people too, we're skittish visually. We look around at a lot of different things.

Steina: And suddenly when we are doing it for other people we get into this unbelievable academia of how to frame the images and stuff. And also in the early days we went ~~to~~^{through} a lot of psychology of camera, like we knew those people were using it for therapy who understood that if you gave the camera to a person and asked them to tape their family, that they would maybe tape the feet of one member only and the nose of another and so on. And discovering ~~what~~^{how} people perceive, and what they think of other people through this medium. So that was all very vibrant and very wonderful, but what drove me ~~and~~^{to} the mechanical things, it was not my vision, my lies. The way I was interested in lying to the world through my eyes, that was important.

Marita: But it creates a radically different kind of relationship to the viewer. It really sort of depersonalizes the relationship to the viewer, where you're not saying, this is my vision that I present to you, you're just saying this is what the camera sees. It's funny how it works. I mean when you think of doing this robotics in Japan, how is it that you perceive of that. Much more sophisticated?

Steina: I'm also very interested in low angles because they are the kind of visions we can never have. We can never put our eyes quite that low.

JoAnn: That's the Japanese sort of--Ozu, his camera was always at the same position.

Steina: Yeah, but that's because they have what we call benches. When ~~Whiteman~~^{Whiteman} (?) came to Japan, they talked about all those benches in their houses, which is the reason--

JoAnn: That's very interesting. He built like a special tripod and everything. He shot whole films just from that point of view. But I never thought of the fact that they sit on the floor all the time.

Steina: No, but when you have that low ~~mounted~~^{mounted} camera that's ~~mounted~~[?] and I also intend to do things where you have all those remotes, those little toys where you can send the camera out.

Marita: You could put it on one of those little transformers.

Steina: You could fly them. Cameras are getting so lightweight. You can fly them around. And you come back and the camera gives you the picture, this is what I saw. The Japanese are doing that too. They actually have that whole industry locked up. You can buy them here in town, made by Futapa.

Marita: You mean one that flies.

Steina: No, that was actually like a big firetruck. And you realize you can put those little cameras that my little tape recorder's inside of that they're autonomous, you don't have cable problems, you put them on several of those trucks or ambulances or whatever kids play around with and you have a single remote control for all of them. So you sent the same signals, they are usually in a joystick you know, to all of them and you have them in various spaces and

Steina: they will all get the signal at the same time. So it's actually a big playground, and that's actually what we are accused of, you're just playing around.

Marita: But you get to the point where it's really like you can do anything. You can make it fly or ~~like~~^{go around} on the floor, when it stops to interest you, too, at that point when it becomes everything. Like where you can see everything from every angle.

Steina: Yeah, I can see that.

Marita: I don't know, it's interesting, the way you perceive of the machine, it's very different, it's very un-western in a certain sense, because it doesn't--

JoAnn: What's interesting to me is how you choose to work as you sort of relinquish control ^{of} choosing the images.

Steina: Not really, *because in the end I choose them all.*

JoAnn: You choose out of what you shoot, but you leave it, to me it seems like leaving it to chance in a way. So if you have these things flying around, you're controlling it, right, you don't set it up on a system where it automatically, you could do that too I guess, but then you just sort of take what you get.

Steina: No, that's what I don't do. That's the big cop-out. I don't really accept them as they come. I select them, I become the super editor.

JoAnn: In the editing, not in the shooting. In the shooting, it's like you send the camera out--

Steina: ~~And~~^I relinquish control. But that's interesting because Woody does that too. He does it in a completely different sense because actually when he's shooting, Ashley will come up and say how do you want me to do this scene, I'm just the director, Woody says, and he just walks away. And he is just happy to work with the images that are given to him.

Marita: ~~What about~~^{But then} later?

JoAnn: But when you shoot things outside, like for The West and that sort of thing, do you just go and shoot?

Steina: No, I knew exactly what I was ~~doing~~^{shooting}. I had the monitor right under--it's under the turntable usually. And I watch it and I set it up like sometimes when the globe was very close to the wall, I get a close view and a very far view every time it comes around, or when the yellow stones are there I saw exactly what it looked like. I watch it. I set it up as an installation in nature, and then at a certain point I press the button and say I want to record this. But at the moment I press the button, I walk away. I don't want to be in the space. And then I just let it roll and then I come back and stop it, so that's how it's done.

Marita: But I think what I was trying to say before is that the way that most people perceive of working with machines is this kind of power struggle of control over the machine, and even a little here, but I see that you may select later, but you're not engaging in that kind of struggle.

Steina: I have a very friendly relationship to my machines. There is no competition

Steina: or conquering or master-slave relationship. It's very friendly. And I think it comes through the taping that we are sort of on equal terms. What can you give me, what can I give you. It's true because usually it's always set into some kind of evil and good or this and that. I don't have that at all. I in a way am so grateful to have been given this because there is nothing in my background, I was brought up so humanistically. Neither of my parents could nail a picture to the walls and we had books lined up and you would go to the concerts and operas and stuff like that. And now I am doing this bread and butter, you know, going over and drilling holes and mounting things together physically. I'm very bad at it, but I have to because Woody refuses to do it for me. So, I feel very grateful to have become that sort of a person.

Marita: It's something that I really love doing.

Steina: But you've always been able to do it.

Marita: Well, as a child, my father's an engineer, and I was the smartest child and the best in mathematics, so when he fixed something he would say, this is how you fix the light. So when something breaks down my sister and brother are on the phone and it doesn't work, whereas I've like taken it apart. It doesn't always mean I can put it back together. Sometimes I can't. And sometimes I'll get stuck, I'll take something apart that I can't fix. But that's just the way I think.

Steina: Yeah, I think so now, but just after I started doing video, not before. And Woody has always thought that way. If you see anything, the first thing you do is take it apart, see how it works.

Marita: For me, it's much easier when something is mechanical. I don't have even the slightest idea of how to fix something that's electronic. When I recently installed something that was electrical, which was my big moment, because the mechanics are so visual and that's the thing about those devices too. We have a certain association with mechanical devices- gears moving and clocks. This is the way we perceive of 19th century industry, progress, and all that. The way it works, its whole function, its whole materiality is all there in front of you, which is why we have so many problems trying to think of something like electronics that are invisible. So for me once it gets beyond the point of parts that you can see and take apart, then I'm a total basketcase. Even electricity is not clear to me.

JoAnn: It's funny, because after I learned just the basics of video and even simple troubleshooting, it changed my whole attitude. I wasn't afraid of it, it demystified it.

Steina: I'm forever grateful to Woody because he refused to do anything for me. You always said, "Fetch it yourself, woman." That's what he said.

Woody: I have great experience in the women's world, I know how it works.

Marita: Are you a woman in disguise?

Woody: This woman that came here, the tall one,

Marita: Is that Penelope?

Woody: She can beat me any time on any system.

Steina: She's much quicker. She took this computer that we'd gotten out of a junk store

Steina: and immediately figured out how it worked. Also when Woody explained how he was doing A,B,A,B, she said "Oh, yeah." She was much quicker. It took you a long time to figure that out.

Woody: It took me two or three years. There are certain women who are great competition. They always pull things ~~to me~~ ^{to me}, make me this thing. I can't believe that this is asked for, it's a different psychology. But still it comes to nitty gritty, like when the computer breaks down, ~~it's too much~~ ^{that is for the boys, it's too much.}

Steina: So this is typical. I put this motor in here, it is badly done, I botched the job. (showing parts)
motor

Marita: There's a gear in here.

Steina: It came all geared, and all I had to do was add the motor, and this comes out of one of those zoom lenses. So this moves. This moves another one. It's so simple. I can use more of course, obviously. This is just one speed. You can have more or less. And this is a C-mount, it's all ready to go.

Marita: Oh, it's great, I can see my shoes from far, far away. There's four or five of them. Held together with a rubber band.

JoAnn: That's what I like best, held together with a rubber band.

Steina: No, it's fun. You have to figure out that there are all those battery holes. I didn't know they existed. You can buy them in Radio Shack.

Marita: It's funny. JoAnn had this catalogue, it was a show at the Goethe House.

JoAnn: Wasn't it ICP?

Marita: Anyway, they did this little catalogue, it was about video from the Federal Republic of Germany, and this one guy, Helmut something, he was talking about the Germans and Americans, it's so funny, because we thought he must be talking about you and Woody. Who else would he use?

Break--Restaurant (can only hear Woody--these video artists need to work on audio!):

Woody: So let me ask you this question then. ^{Did} ~~the~~ film was still born with this image that was invented by film. I'm talking about invented. Photography existed but moving photography, moving image really did not exist as you noted this afternoon, in that context. It existed rather like public entertainment and all that stuff. So ^{in order for film} ~~it had~~ to be strong and accomplish its mission ^{to} ~~to~~ invent the whole image. Also ^{to} ~~to~~ invent its language. Now is that image enough for us to speak about contemporary image or future image....We want extended image? How do we ^{extend} ~~we~~ an idea begin?

Marita: ^{you free it from the frame and then} ~~when~~ you ^{free} ~~see~~ it from the camera, and you ^{free} ~~see~~ it from the surface.

Woody: That's two conditions, in fact two conditions of new image. The image that you would put into space maybe by shaking it outside of the frame. What's the new image?

Marita: You're looking for a term here?

Woody: No, what's it going to look like, describe the new image.

Marita: Well, I don't buy into this whole ~~whole~~...photo-realist. To me that's like...

notion of wanting a 3-dimensional image that is

Woody: The image does not have to be photo-realist.

Marita: I know, but I know there is an attitude about the ultimate image. ...three-dimensional. In essence, the ultimate image.

JoAnn: ...recreate reality.

Woody: That's an industrial drive.

Marita: It's recreating reality. I mean that's what computer does. It takes what's really a human process and speeds it up.

Woody: Computer simplifies certain images, but complicates others. I don't think computer has invented new image, except mathematical image.

Marita: But it's invented control over image.

Woody: Oh no. Every generation structurally, like if you take certain algorithimical imaging like the ~~system~~ (?) system, of course it's used to simulate a nature but on its own it has its own source, imaging source. I break down the source of an image into those that come from the right space, by camera which are organized by camera, those that are internally obtained ^{known} a system, like Feedback, ~~is~~ a systemic ^{performance}. Or by other organizing disciplines or models, which could be mathematical, could be organic, like ^{used to be} taken from nature. But the new image is not going to be initiated by artists. It's going to be initiated by industry. It's a different era we live in.

~~--Couldn't hear rest of side one, tape three--~~

** see inset, next page*

~~Steina: How can the industry... The rules have been broken completely, of everything. Everybody understands that nobody's going to buy it anymore, and they have done it anyhow and this was so clumsy - everybody in the audience by now knows.~~

you are looking at reality and deceiving

~~Woody: The other thing, establishing utility, the syntax of course is more~~

~~Marita: What the question really is though is what is the role of syntax?~~

Woody: No, it is to present new way of saying things. The whole literature has been under evolution for a couple of centuries. Every art form is in a state of evolution, so it would be difficult to say that film would not go through the evolution. Once it goes over its ^{own} ~~own~~ convention, it becomes outside, the popular culture. So my dilemma here is this. The syntactic demand is to communicate with the majority or deliver message or influence the majority, then its development is not the intellectual one, it is a commercial one. It is the mercantilism of this sort of ~~being~~ ^{sign} language, or ~~being~~, whatever. Now at what point would any intellectual influence this process? At no point. It's only the individual who decides it's time to do something else. So it's that kind of relationship because the syntax that only communicates to single person cannot be called language. So it has to be something that's agreed on by a certain group of people. But you see we are running into social dilemma here also. It's a very broad.

In the old days, all written word was literature.

Steina: In our day, everything we read was literature, it was written with love and care, and it had a message beyond its mundane message. And it's not

** insert, p.53

Marita: But that has always been the case.

Steina: No.

Woody: Not in photography.

Marita: You mean the initial...

Steina: The electronic industry is the first where the industry preceded the artist.

(side 2)

Steina: (role of industry) Before it had to do with syntax and aesthetics, and now it has to do with utility. You look at the Iran hearings and you see that they sandwich together the inquirer and the witness into a split screen. And you know that the inquirer is up there and the witness down there. They never really necessarily show the space; it is unimportant. The rules have been broken completely, of everything. You don't anymore need to... in the old days they had to lead you, the viewer wouldn't understand that it was still the same space. They used to have more cutaways. They don't have that any more. Everyone understand that it is fake. Everybody in the audience by now knows.

Woody: You are looking at utility and describing utility. The syntax, of course, is more.

Marita: The question then really is what is the role of syntax?

- Steina: the case, ^{after} ~~the~~ English and Japanese manuals there's an English that's beyond even utilitarian English, that's so... It is understood. In image it's not understood. The French semiologists will take a sign like the Sony ^{logo} that's the part of a globe and talk about the signifier and the signified, and they will take it into an incredible visual philosophy that they really believe. And we all know this is industrial crap. So whereas the written word seems to be clear about the difference between utility and art, the image doesn't have it, ^{the} distinction. It's like everybody's confused because people really take commercials and analyze them for syntax. What's the syntax of the Coors commercial?
- Marita: Roland Barthes. But that was a political, ^{intent too} ...just because it's a commercial doesn't mean we shouldn't analyze it.
- Steina: But I think it's horrible. I think it's complete trash ~~to~~ to do that.
- JoAnn: Don't you think you learn about the culture by doing that?
- Steina: Yeah, but what I learn about the culture is not what I even want to know about the culture. It's just in order to sell a product you do it this and that way. You know it anyway in the first place, and I find it not sophisticated and not at all interesting and not creative. So I have a great problem with it.
- Woody: You have a good point, but the point is ^{completely} ineffective. You can't be interested in mercantile value systems.
- JoAnn: What I'm talking about, maybe it's a different thing, but if you look at a commercial, or a group of commercials, and you look at how it depicts reality or how it reflects what life is really like in that in commercials you'll see men doing laundry or what kind of actor they choose to represent who uses this kind of product and the kind of house they put them in, and what the kitchen looks like. That kind of thing.
- Steina: But isn't there cause for alarm. That they are engineering our society?
- JoAnn: In a way, I think they also reflect because they say this is how these people live so we're going to show them themselves in these commercials so they'll identify with them...so it gets back to the chicken or the egg thing.
- Woody: But can that be art?...
- Steina: When you talk about syntax, you are not going to talk about ^{syntax} syntax, you are going to talk about the commercial. How they make the syntax, ^{which is so class.}
- Woody: First of all, in its own context it has its own integrity. If you agree on the context of that work, then you can say yes it's innovative. But the mercantile interests are not broad enough to cover ^{a branch of} humanism, for example. At times you can say yes, mercantilism is a branch of humanism. It's very far fetched. So it does not give you independent range of investigation like art does or even academic interests are much more independent of the others. If we don't define the position of culture as superior, then we can't speak about these things. There's no mechanism over which anything that's intellectualized is going to be reflected as an important contribution. So if you can't speak of a significance of that position, then we can't talk about invention of the syntax, because who's inventing the ^{new} syntax? The commercial--but they're inventing it for its own sake. As an increment of their intake of money.

JoAnn: What I don't understand is syntax, do you mean a purely aesthetic thing, or do you mean communication?

Woody: How you put things together, how they fuse. ^{there are many hierarchies - there is the hierarchy of} ~~the~~ syntactic interpretation. How you put one scene together with another scene. But then we say how to put one meaning with another meaning. It still has to go through some kind of a fusion of these two scenes in order to create some sort of syntax, syntactic relationship. Or we can talk about what I would refer to as the new tools, the new ways of putting together new images. Electronic images can be put through certain processes through which filmic images can be put through as they are translated to the state of energy. So as I said these are hypotheses.

Marita: So if you think of syntax in a larger cultural--you think of the development of language. Or you think of a child's first acquisition of language. ~~So where do you position yourself in that acquisition process. You're past the point of just having words.~~ ^{first you have words, sentences, and then paragraphs}

Woody: What I would associate myself is a person that takes technology as a poetic system. And ^{at least} once you admit that there's a value that goes beyond industrial, and you say there's a genuine poetic source that is in competition with any other poetic source, then you legitimize that process. And hoping that this process which is not proven, you can reformulate the steps. On one side history is on your side because evolution is always somehow true and it brings a different concept maybe. So in that sense there is a place for us.

Marita: But are you making phrases?

Woody: There was a time we believed we could make alphabets, ^{and a vocabulary, and we tried} eventually surely there wasn't that kind of vocabulary. There is certain linguistic extension ~~is~~ associated with this technology and process and yes there was an image like feedback that was a new image, but it was just A, there was no B. [?] image might have been B, colorizing might be C, and something else was D but that's it, there was no dictionary or vocabulary. Not even alphabet. And commercials, legitimate television eliminated most of the inventive syntaxes. ^{of film.} All exploration of time...

Steina: I disagree. I think they brought it to the utmost trivial. They reduced it because they say use this perfume and the next thing is you get the girl. Perfume, girl, love, whatever, wedding, babies. This is the syntax commercials make. So they trivialized this whole--because there is something very interesting about ^{that} jumping, you can follow this image and then it's cut to another image and you know what ^{was} in between. The space or the time. And commercials have in a way--not only commercials but Irangate or whatever--have ruined and trivialized this art form completely and taken it away from us. And it's not available anymore.

Woody: ~~It's true. That's what I'm saying. But you can discover a new aesthetic only in pursuit of the absolute, in pursuit of God, pursuit of ^{purpose}, pursuit of love, whatever they call it. There's also kind of a purpose, and the purpose must be of the highest ~~order~~.... That's the downfall of the new criticism because it doesn't admit that there's a strive for ideal. It doesn't say that. There's no difference between striving for absolutes. It's the same absolutes as there have always been. If you look at art in its historical context--~~

End of Interview

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Woody: It's true. That's what I'm saying. But you can discover a new aesthetic only in pursuit of the absolute, in pursuit of God, pursuit of purpose, pursuit of love, whatever they call it. There's also a kind of purpose, and the purpose must be of the highest order. That's the downfall of the new criticism because it doesn't admit that there's a striving for ideal. It doesn't say that the striving for justice is a left-wing oriented...

Marita: Who is striving for ideals?

Steina: The artist!

Marita: In a different way than before?

Woody: There's no difference between striving for absolutes. It's the same absolutes as there have always been, if you look at art in its historical context.

The End.