“Borealis,” an installation by Steina Vasulka, is part of “Machine Media” at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Of media and men

Woody and Steina Vasulka use video art and war technology to explore the environment

By Jolene Thym

INCE artists Woody and Steina Vasulka discovered the video camera three decades ago, the two have strapped it to their waists and done gymnastics, bolted it to the hood of a car, attached it to a robot and stationed it over a bridge.

But capturing some of the most bizarre video images in the world was only the beginning.

Combining their technical expertise, ingenuity and love of adventure, the two have created dozens of unique installations that reinterprets the environment and question the meaning of war, the parameters of space, and the impact of media on memory and perception.

Last week, the two plugged in eight of their installations, creating a heaping, bustling, rotating, pulsating display of video motion and sound at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art for the exhibition “Steina and Woody Vasulka: Machine Media,” on display through March 31.

Curated by Bob Bylye, the installations fill a removes configuration of small patterns on the third floor. The two artists work independently, using...
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The Vasukses, who met in Prague in the early 1960s, have been at the forefront of video art exploration since 1971, when they founded "The Kitchen," an electronic laboratory for artists in New York. In 1980, the Vasukses moved to Santa Fe, N.M., where they currently live and work. Their work has been shown all over the world and has been funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Guggenheim Foundation.