

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

Ward



August 16, 1978

Professor Gerald O'Grady
Center for Media Study
State University of New York
Buffalo, New York 14214

Dear Professor O'Grady:

Thank you for your letter of July 14, which came while I was on leave. I have restudied Professor Vasulka's application carefully and have just written him today.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Coder".

David Coder
Program Officer
Division of Fellowships

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506



July 5, 1978

Professor Bohuslav Vasulka
257 Franklin Street
Buffalo, New York 14202

Dear Professor Vasulka:

We have studied your application for a 1979-80 Fellowship for Independent Study and Research carefully and have decided regretfully that it falls outside the Endowment's purview. The basic theory involved in your proposed study is mathematical, else a computer would be of no use in the study, and this takes it too far afield from the humanities. We regularly consider applications in art criticism and history, and also in the philosophical aspects of theoretical linguistics and the theory of language, but we come no closer to the kind of study you have in mind. It would be much more at home in the National Science Foundation. The fields that the Endowment does support are listed on page 1 of the enclosed Program Announcement.

I am sure you will understand that we mean no reflection on the merits of your proposal.

Your application is enclosed.

Sincerely yours,

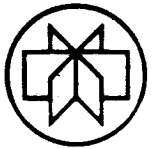
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Coder/dm".

David Coder
Program Officer
Division of Fellowships

DC:jc

Enclosures

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mr. Joseph Nivella".



August 1, 1978

Mr. David Coder
Program Officer
Division of Fellowships
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES
Washington, D. C. 20506

Dear Mr. Coder:

I am deeply disturbed about the treatment of the proposal of Professor Bohuslav Vasulka by the National Endowment for the Humanities. It would seem that the attitude of the N.E.H. is that Humanists can ignore the presence of technology.

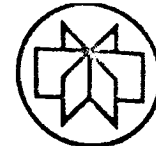
In addition, you seem to feel that support for any technically related subjects belong to the National Science Foundation. Both of these viewpoints contribute to our dehumanization.

I believe that Professor Vasulka's Vita clearly indicates his dedication to the arts and humanities. The subject of his proposal seems central to the interests of the N.E.H; an investigation into the "relationship between technology and the humanities, the interpretation of culture through codes...."

Sincerely yours,

Jay A. Leavitt
Director of Academic Computing

JAL:lh
cc: Prof. B. Vasulka ✓
Prof. G. O'Grady



July 14, 1978

Mr. David Coder
Program Officer
Division of Fellowships
National Endowment for the Humanities
Washington, D.C. 20506

Dear Mr. Coder:

I am writing in reference to your recent letter to my colleague, Professor Bohuslav Vasulka (7/5/78). Since he is a member of my department, I was familiar with his application. I might add, if it is at all relevant, that my own doctoral work was done in medieval literature.

I am hoping that you will reconsider your statement that the basic theory involved in Professor Vasulka's proposed study is "mathematical, else a computer would be of no use to the study." It is simply not true. His study is philosophical and involves the semiotics of culture. I believe that the referees, themselves distinguished humanists, will also make this clear.

We are fortunate here in that Jay Leavitt has recently been appointed Director of Academic Computing at our University Computing Services. You may know that Dr. Leavitt was the Co-organizer of the First International Conference on "Computers in the Humanities", and that his wife, Ruth Leavitt, is the author of Artist and the Computer.

I have asked Dr. Leavitt to read Professor Vasulka's proposal and to give you his expert opinion concerning the issue you raised to disqualify Professor Vasulka's proposal before it could be judged by the NEH panelists.

Sincerely,

Gerald O'Grady
Director

cc: Professor Vasulka
Dr. J. Leavitt

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506



August 16, 1978

Professor Bohuslav Vasulka
257 Franklin Street
Buffalo, New York 14202

Dear Professor Vasulka:

I have restudied your fellowship application and read the letters that were sent in your behalf to convince us that your proposal belongs to the humanities, and I am sorry to say that I am still unable to see that it does. This is something that needs to be explained, not simply asserted.

Both the concepts that you use to frame your proposal and the methods that you propose to use in following out your ideas seem to me mathematical in character, and therefore to lie outside the domain of the humanities.

It is true that your study has links to linguistics, but to all appearance the links are to mathematical linguistics, i.e., to the kind that would come under the purview of National Science Foundation, rather than to philosophical linguistics.

I am sorry that I have not been able to change my decision on this matter, and I hope that you will be able to find support for your study elsewhere.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Coder".

David Coder
Program Officer
Division of Fellowships

His "idea" →
"Work by" →
Good luck!
and best to both
of you!
J

Vasulka's proposal is aimed at dealing with one of the greatest problems facing artists who ~~work~~ work with technology, which is that of finding new syntactical bases for continuity between events. It is an extremely basic communication and linguistic problem. Many composers and video artists are now making increasing investments in time and energy to invent "languages", systems of thought, in terms of which to better conceptualize the act of composition as relating different sound or video events in movement from one point in time to another.

I know Vasulka's work very well, and I think he is one of the most interesting, talented and intelligent artists in the field of video. He is also sensitive enough to realize that theories enable us to perceive and to act, and that, consequently, we need to develop useful theories in order to fully realize the potential of the new technologies available to us.

I think Vasulka's proposal promises a powerful contribution to the field, and I think its conception and plan are elegant and interesting. I think Vasulka is just the man to do it, and I have no doubt that it would be finished in the best and most useful way, and that it would be of considerable value to all of us.

July 1, 1978

Joel Chadabe, Director, Electronic Music Studio, Assoc Prof, Music

Music Department

VITA

B. WOODY VASULKA

Born: Brno, Czechoslovakia January 20, 1937

Current Permanent Address: 257 Franklin Street, Buffalo, N.Y. 14202

Telephone: 716-856-3385 Social Security Number:

Married: Steina Vasulka

EDUCATION: School of Engineering, Brno - Graduated 1958

Film Academy of Prague - Graduated 1965

EMPLOYMENT: 1964-65 Studio of Documentary Films in Prague -
included production in Iceland, Algeria,
Czechoslovakia

1966-69 Woods and Ramirez, Architects - Multiscreen
Exhibit for Expo '67, Montreal - Film Editor

Film Editor with Francis Thompson

Harvey Lloyd Productions - Industrial
Exhibits - Multimedia Designer-Editor

1971 Founder/Director of "The Kitchen," an
electronic media theatre, Mercer Art Center,
New York City

Technical Advisor to the Alternate Media
Center, New York City

Association with Electronic Arts Intermix,
Inc., New York City

1974 Associate Professor, Center for Media Study,
State University of New York at Buffalo

WORKS: 100 hours of video materials including:

Evolution
Black Sunrise
Key Snow
Elements
Spaces I
Spaces II

The West
Golden Voyage
Home
Vocabulary
Sound-Gated Images
Explanation

12 hours of audio materials including 4 channel environments:

The West
Magic Mushroom
Seascapes
Mother and Child

Circle
Schizo
D-Track
Trivia

ENVIRONMENTS AND INSTALLATIONS:

Three Nights of Different Video - at Max's Kansas City Steak House

Live Video Performances - for a year at The Kitchen in New York City

Circle Environment - at New York Avant Garde Festival, 69th Street Armory

Horizontal Matrix - at New York Avant Garde Festival, New York Harbor

The Row - for WBAI, Judson Memorial Church, New York City

Transmitted Environment - Experimental Television Center, Binghamton, New York

Street Show - Academy Theatre, New Paltz, New York

Continuous Environment - Vancouver Gallery of Art

The West - Video Free America, San Francisco

Video Environment - University Union Activities Board and ACT V, Buffalo

Video - University-wide Celebration on the Arts, SUNY System, Fredonia, New York

GROUP SHOWS:

Video Exchange - Merce Cunningham Studio, Westbeth Bldg., New York City

Video Free America - Berkeley Art Museum, California

Video - Witney Museum of American Art, New York City

Open Circuits - Museum of Modern Art, New York City

Video - Everson Museum, Syracuse, New York

INTERNATIONAL SHOWS: Paris, Guelph, Toronto, Tokyo, Munich, Berlin, Bucharest, Caracas, Reykjavik

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE:

National Center for Experiments in Television, KQED, San Francisco
The Television Laboratory, WNET, New York City

Vita - B. Woody Vasulka
Page 3

GRANTS:

Creative Artists Public Service	1974
National Endowment for the Arts	1975
New York State Council on the Arts	1972
Corporation of Public Broadcasting	1976

My work in the past five years has concentrated on the structure of electronic images. As a practitioner I developed a need to specify these processes theoretically as well, and I started to assemble meaningful image tables, containing a system of codes in the sense of a raw alphabet (vocabulary) of electronic images.

As the subject of my theory emerged, and as I tried to apply for sponsorship to my previous sources of funding (video, electronic arts), it became obvious to me (and to the sponsors) that the subject is not a product of art, that its substance is more universal, more akin to structural linguistics in the sense that someone like Zellig Harris used that term, and is in fact central to the investigation of the relationship between technology (computer and other electronic print and image systems) and the humanities, the interpretation of culture through codes, the "thick description" defined by someone like Clifford Geertz. Thus, I find myself facing this new set of responsibilities.

In essence, my theoretical work deals with concepts of time/energy as cognitive vocabularies, and span the first attempt to define the TV display as analog waveform organization (Afterimage, October, 1975, Title: "Didactic Video") to digitally specified images (Afterimage, Summer, 1978, Title: "A Syntax of Binary Images").

Fortunately, I have established unusually excellent conditions for the research, since I have my own computer and graphic controlled devices with alphanumerical, visual (graphic)

and aural inputs. Now I am in a constant struggle to find the time needed for this tedious and complicated work. In my teaching position, I am able to take a leave of absence beginning in January, 1979 and could start then to carry out intensive work on the project.

This project is an ongoing work growing out of a practical interaction with imaging tools. It emerged as a discipline in my terms in 1974 and is very likely to go on for another decade, at least. It takes account of work by Abraham Moles and Jean Piaget but its claim is to move exact, binary specified parameters, providing base-level direct and practical cross-referential utility of codes.

I recognize my work to be within an evolutionary pathway of the human attempt to give meaningful structure to the moving image, as introduced by cinema which was later joined by television. It is that concern - the transition of electronic codes and their transformation, a process by which radically new codes can be set out for various compositional possibilities, that motivates my work.

I would spend the first four months in intensive exploratory work related to gravitational, electronic and human motion. The next two months would be given over to the collection of information at Ohio State University, the New York Institute of Technology, Montreal and elsewhere. In the last six months, I would assemble the data for the publication of these motion studies.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES
806 15TH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

FELLOWSHIPS FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY AND RESEARCH

READ APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM.

1. NAME <u>VASULKA, BOHUSLAV W.</u> SURNAME, FIRST NAME, INITIAL		4. APPLICANT'S FIELD <u>Art: Electronic Imaging</u>	FIELD OF PROPOSED STUDY <u>Art</u>
2. POSITION <u>Associate Professor/Video</u> TITLE: DEPARTMENT: <u>Center for Media Study</u> INSTITUTION: <u>State University of New York</u> CITY, STATE, ZIP: <u>at Buffalo / 14214</u>		5. TOPIC OF PROPOSED STUDY <u>"Art and Binary Literacy"</u>	
3. PROFESSIONAL TRAINING DATE OF COMPLETION: <u>July 1964</u> MONTH/YEAR TYPE OF DEGREE RECEIVED: <u>Diploma: Film Academy of Prague</u>		6. LOCATION(S) WHERE STUDY WILL BE CONDUCTED <u>Buffalo, New York</u>	
		7. PERIOD OF TENURE REQUESTED NUMBER OF MONTHS (Circle one): <u>6</u> 12 FROM: <u>Jan. 1, '79</u> TO: <u>Dec. 31, 1979</u> MONTH/DAY/YEAR MONTH/DAY/YEAR	

8. ABSTRACT OF DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED STUDY. (PLEASE CONFINE ABSTRACT TO THIS SPACE.)

The process of analyzing and synthesizing of Binary Structures into significant and interpretive cultural codes of expression and communication through a digital computer has been my work for some time. While engaged in this process I have come to the realization that there exists a great consistency between traditional expressive grammars and the newly emerging organizing principles inherent in technological tools. The relevance of this study is not directed towards creating a composition as such, such as a film or a book on some subject; rather, the products will be a set of notational, alphanumerical, aural and behavioral schemes suggesting syntactic possibilities that is, meanings. This work will contain a summary and guide to organized binary codes. This is primary material notating structure and process: the foundations of a "language" or a code through which compositions can be created.

9. A. HOME ADDRESS

257 Franklin Street
Buffalo, New York 14202

B. PHONE NUMBER (Please include area code.)

HOME: 716/856-3385

OFFICE: 716/831-5520

10. PRESENT ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER
(if different from 9)

11. REFERENCES (List three to whom you are sending reference forms.)

NAME	POSITION	ADDRESS
Joel Chadabe,	Director, Electronic Music Studio	State University at Albany 1400 Washington Avenue Albany, New York 12222
Theodore Conant	Director Schroder Technology	J. Henry Schroder Banking Corporation One State Street New York- New York 10015
Ronald Gottesman	Director	Center for the Humanities Doheny Memorial Library 303 University Park University of Southern California Los Angeles, California 90007

12. CHECKLIST of Application Materials (PLEASE SUBMIT ALL MATERIALS IN ONE PACKAGE.)

 Two page application form Curriculum vitae Expanded proposal description

} Submit original and
eight copies of each.

 Index cards Cards A and B Strip of labels

13. DATE OF BIRTH

1/20/37

14. PLACE OF BIRTH

(City and state or city and country)

Brno, Czechoslovakia

15. CITIZENSHIP

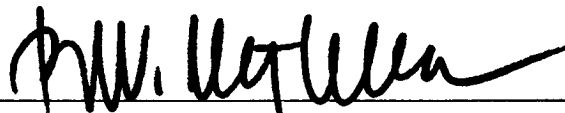
 U.S. Citizen Native Resident of U.S. Territorial Possession Foreign National who has lived in the United States or its territories since June 1, 1975

16. CERTIFICATION

I CERTIFY THAT THE STATEMENTS IN THIS APPLICATION ARE TRUE AND COMPLETE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.
IF I RECEIVE AN AWARD, I AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE PERTINENT NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES POLICIES.

DATE

MAY 29. 1978

SIGNATURE
OF APPLICANT


My work in the past five years has concentrated on the structure of electronic images. As a practitioner I developed a need to specify these processes theoretically as well, and I started to assemble meaningful image tables, containing a system of codes in the sense of a raw alphabet (vocabulary) of electronic images.

As the subject of my theory emerged, and as I tried to apply for sponsorship to my previous sources of funding (video, electronic arts), it became obvious to me (and to the sponsors) that the subject is not a product of art, that its substance is more universal, more akin to structural linguistics in the sense that someone like Zellig Harris used that term, and is in fact central to the investigation of the relationship between technology (computer and other electronic print and image systems) and the humanities, the interpretation of culture through codes, the "thick description" defined by someone like Clifford Geertz. Thus, I find myself facing this new set of responsibilities.

In essence, my theoretical work deals with concepts of time/energy as cognitive vocabularies, and span the first attempt to define the TV display as analog waveform organization (Afterimage, October, 1975, Title: "Didactic Video") to digitally specified images (Afterimage, Summer, 1978, Title: "A Syntax of Binary Images").

Fortunately, I have established unusually excellent conditions for the research, since I have my own computer and graphic controlled devices with alphanumerical, visual (graphic)

and aural inputs. Now I am in a constant struggle to find the time needed for this tedious and complicated work. In my teaching position, I am able to take a leave of absence beginning in January, 1979 and could start then to carry out intensive work on the project.

This project is an ongoing work growing out of a practical interaction with imaging tools. It emerged as a discipline in my terms in 1974 and is very likely to go on for another decade, at least. It takes account of work by Abraham Moles and Jean Piaget but its claim is to move exact, binary specified parameters, providing base-level direct and practical cross-referential utility of codes.

I recognize my work to be within an evolutionary pathway of the human attempt to give meaningful structure to the moving image, as introduced by cinema which was later joined by television. It is that concern - the transition of electronic codes and their transformation, a process by which radically new codes can be set out for various compositional possibilities, that motivates my work.

I would spend the first four months in intensive exploratory work related to gravitational, electronic and human motion. The next two months would be given over to the collection of information at Ohio State University, the New York Institute of Technology, Montreal and elsewhere. In the last six months, I would assemble the data for the publication of these motion studies.

Requested:
B U D G E T

GRANTED

SALARIES 10,044
 SUPPLIES/MATERIALS 1,150
 OTHER EXPENSES 16,700
 TOTAL 27,894
 13,400
 14,494

~~05,022~~
~~00,575~~
 08,350

 13,947

034
625
~~14959~~

15,009

SALARIES

 747 *12*
 PROJECT DIRECTORS 5,976
 TECHNICIAN 2,988
 ADMINISTRATOR 1,080 *570 EA*
 SUBTOTAL 10,044

4,000
~~02,988~~
 01,494
 00,540

 05,022

5
 15,009

SUPPLIES/MATERIALS

 OFFICE EXPENSES 50
 ARTISTS' SUPPLIES 500
 TECHNICAL SUPPLIES 600
 SUBTOTAL 1,150

6,034

~~45~~ 45

250

300

 575

625

OTHER

 ARTISTS' HONORARIA 5,800
 RENT (2 MO X 1,200) 2,400
 CO-ORDINATORS (8 X 500) 4,000
 EQUIP. RENT (2 MO X 1500) 3,000
 PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION 300
 POSTERS/ADVERTIZING 1,200
 SUBTOTAL 16,700

2,900
 1,200
 2,000
 2,000
 1,500
 600

 8,350

MATCH

 DONATIONS 4,000
 RENT 2,400
 EQUIPMENT RENTAL 3,000
 GRANTS 3,000
 ADMISSIONS 3,000
 13,400

~~2,000~~
~~1,200~~
~~1,500~~
~~1,500~~
~~1,500~~
 7,500

~~2,000~~
~~1,200~~
~~1,500~~
~~500~~
~~1,500~~
 6,700

~~2000~~
~~1200~~
~~3000~~
~~8000~~
 2000

75
67

7,500
 800

I AM SEEKING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO CONTINUE THE SERIES OF MY EXPLORATIONS INTO OPTO-ELECTRO-MECHANIC VISION, AS REPRESENTED IN THE VIDEO TAPES SUBMITTED. FOR THIS NEW TAPE, I NEED TO HAVE DESIGNED AND CONSTRUCTED A PROGRAMMABLE ZOOMLENS AND PROGRAMMABLE PAN/TILT HEAD. BOTH WOULD USE STEPPERMOTORS WITH A BATTERY OPERATED DIGITAL PROGRAMMER. THE PLANNED LENGTH OF THIS TAPE, TENTATIVELY TITLED "OPTO", WOULD BE CA. 30-45 MIN. LONG.

DISTRIBUTION:

I INTRODUCE MY WORKS BY ENTERING THEM IN FESTIVALS/COMPETITIONS, THEN I SELF-DISTRIBUTE AS WELL AS THRU ELECTRONIC ARTS INTERMIX, LONDON VIDEO ARTS, MONTEVIDEO (HOLLAND) AND THE PARIS FILM COOP. A PROMISING NEW AVENUE IS CABLE, THEY HOWEVER (SO FAR), OFFER VERY NOMINAL FEES.

STEINA (BORN IN ICELAND 1940) HAS BEEN A SEMINAL FORCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ELECTRONIC ARTS SINCE 1970, BOTH AS CO-FOUNDER OF "THE KITCHEN", A MAJOR EXHIBITION CENTER IN NEW YORK CITY, AND AS A CONTINUING EXPLORER OF THE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE GENERATION AND MANIPULATION OF ELECTRONIC IMAGE THROUGH A BROAD RANGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS AND AESTHETIC CONCERNS. HER TAPES HAVE BEEN EXHIBITED AND BROADCAST EXTENSIVELY IN THE STATES AND EUROPE. SHE WAS A GUGGENHEIM FELLOW IN 1976 AND HAS RECEIVED GRANTS FROM THE N.Y. STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, THE NEA AND THE CPB. SHE RECENTLY COMPLETED TWO TAPES FOR BROADCAST; A 9 MIN. SEGMENT FOR KTCA, ST. PAUL MINNESOTA AND 1/2 HOUR ON DIGITAL IMAGING FOR WNET/THIRTEEN. SHE RESIDES SINCE 1980 IN SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO.

$$\begin{array}{r} 1 \\ 15 \\ \hline 45 \\ 60 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 1 \\ 7,230 \\ 6,427 \\ 2,410 \\ \hline 16,067 \end{array}$$

THE VASULKAS

257 FRANKLIN STREET

BUFFALO, N. Y. 14202

716-856-3385

A NOTE OF INTRODUCTION

=====

TO "TIME IN BINARY IMAGES," BY ALFONS SCHILLING.

SINCE THE MID SIXTIES, THROUGH OUR FRIENDSHIP AND THROUGH OUR INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT ITSELF, WE HAVE WITNESSED A PERSONAL EVOLUTION OF BINOCULAR WORKS OF ALFONS SCHILLING.

HIS WORK - NOT REPRESENTED BY ANY SINGULAR MEDIUM, RESIDES WITHIN ITS OWN BINOCULAR (BINARY) PRINCIPLE, AND IS MEDIATED BY MANY MEANS OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION INVOLVING THE PHYSICALITY OF INSTRUMENTS: CAMERAS, VIEWERS AND MECHANICAL SCANNERS, THROUGH FILM, VIDEO, TEXT, LIGHT PROJECTION, DRAWINGS AND FINALLY THROUGH HIS PERSONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD TIME/SPACE.

THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS WORK, BUT IT HAS BEEN AN AGONIZING PROCESS TO TRY TO CATEGORIZE HIS WORK, ESPECIALLY WHEN INTRODUCED TO CHANNELS OF FUNDING, ESTABLISHED IN RECENT YEARS.

TO IDENTIFY HIS WORK FURTHER, IT WOULD BE GOOD TO POINT TO THE PHENOMENA OF STEREOSCOPY, AS IT DEVELOPED IN THE LAST CENTURY. SCHILLING IS DEALING WITH A MISSING LINK, A SOMEWHAT BROKEN LINE OF TRADITION OF STEREOSCOPY IN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY AND MODERN ART.

HE HAS TRANSFORMED THE CONCEPT OF BINOCULAR VISION INTO A MAJOR INTELLECTUAL ISSUE OF OUR TIME. THIS TRANSFORMATION IS UNIQUE IN ITS PROCESS AND ASTOUNDING IN ITS CONCLUSIONS.

BUFFALO, N.Y. FEB. 27. 1979.

THE VASULKAS