

(new version)

Vasulka Catalogue, program notes, 9

Digital Language

Vocabulary, 1973, by Steina and Woody Vasulka, 6 min., color

Cantaloup, 1980, by Steina, 28 min., color

Artifacts, 1980, by Woody Vasulka, 22 min., color

Total: 56 min.

Throughout the late 1970s, the Vasulkas were occupied with designing and building the Digital Image Articulator, or Imager, with Jeffrey Schier; the didactic nature of many of their videotapes from the 1970s reveals the immensity of their undertaking to comprehend the elements of the electronic image and digital imaging technology. This step from analog (in which the image is manipulated through the regulation of voltage changes) to digital (in which an image is divided into picture elements, or pixels, which are mathematically coded) was a crucial development in their work. These tapes exemplify the project undertaken by the Vasulkas to define the phenomenology of the digital image as a kind of vocabulary. Working with basic forms, such as a sphere (or cantaloup) and a hand (symbolizing gesture and expression), the Vasulkas examine the basic elements of digital language. Vocabulary, a work that is a hybrid of analog and digital, precedes the Vasulkas' construction of the Imager. Here, they examine the "basic energy laws in electronic imaging" with a digital delay (which produces a deliberate timing error to give the image a kind of visual echo), a scan processor (which reduces the analog image to its scan lines), a keyer (which allows one image to be inserted within another), and a colorizer, to explore the malleability of basic forms. Both Cantaloup and Artifacts are documentary works in which Steina and

⑤ VIOLIN POWER

This concept of the irrevocable tie of electronic sound and image is playfully pursued by Steina in Violin Power, her "demo tape on how to play video on the violin." The tape begins with a straightforward black-and-white image of Steina playing the violin and progresses over time toward her increasing use of the violin in conjunction with video tools. Steina's eventual replacement of the violin with the video camera as her primary instrument, results in the violin becoming an image-generating machine. Rigged up to imaging devices, the violin transforms the camera image, rendering it a surface on which "music" moves as a kinetic force.

MARITA STURKEN

Vasulka Catalogue, Installations, 1

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Works in the Exhibition

Matrix, 1970-72
Steina and Woody Vasulka

16 loops of Horizontal movement 11

Matrix is a series of multi-monitor works that explores the relationship of sound and image in electronic signals: sound as generated by the electronic image; sound that creates an image; and sound and image created simultaneously. As phenomenological exercises on the construction of electronic image and sound, this series is also a playful study of movement, in which abstract forms travel across multiple screens to symbolize the kinetics of electronic signals.

2 Allvision, 1976
Steina

One of the first works of Steina's Machine Vision project, Allvision is a rotating spherical device that mediates the viewer's experience of the viewing space. Steina's concept of "allvision" involves exploring a way of seeing that is not restricted to the human eye, but which is instead an all-encompassing, machine-derived vision. In Allvision, the all-seeing mirrored sphere transcends spatial limits such as up/down and inner/outer by situating the viewer within abstract electronic space.

Steina's *Lilith* (USA, 1987) uses focalplane shifts and frame-grabbing to enthrall our gaze, to transfix and hypnotize us; then her protagonist, cobra-like, darts across the paradoxical landscape (that has become Steina's signature), with a sibilant and ambiguous voice; her image inscribes, indelibly, the *fact* of presence, but — ironically and impossibly — without the *content or context* of presence.

Woody offer informal explanations of the Digital Image Articulator and the process of digital imaging in real time. In Cantaloup, Steina casually documents the designing and building of the Digital Image Articulator and explains the size of pixels, the layers (or slices) of color and tone used to create form, and techniques such as grabbing (freezing) the image and multiplying it. Artifacts is Woody's explanatory tape of the Imager and his system of binary syntax--an examination of digital image transformation based on mathematical principles. Artifacts demonstrates Woody's symbiotic relationship with imaging machines and tools: he says in the tape, "I have to share the creative process with the machine; it is responsible for too many elements in this work. These images come to you as they came to me--in a spirit of exploration."