Borealis, 1994, video installation

STEINA VASULKA

BORREALIS

1993

10 MINUTE REPEATING CYCLE
STEINA VASULKA:
THE ELECTRONIC SUBLIME

Gene Youngblood

Steina Vasulka grew up in primordial Iceland surrounded by that terrible beauty which philosophers call the Sublime. The Aurora Borealis haunted the heavens above her family home. Through her window she could see erupting volcanoes. She could walk up to rivers of flowing lava. She could climb above raging cataracts, stand before sulphurous geysers, gaze into the turbulent coves of Iceland’s fractal coast. This exhibition of works in multiscreen video, an artform Steina pioneered a quarter of a century ago, is informed by her attraction to the fevered landscape, her fascination with the fearsome medium of transmutation. “Steina videotaped, mostly in the foundry of metalsmith Tom Joyce, with whom Steina shares ‘a fascination with fire—as a phenomenon and as a medium that transforms other materials. Tom and I understand fire in an alchemical way,’” she told me, “as a medium of transmutation.”

Pyroglyphs (1995) was recorded at the Santa Fe College of Santa Fe. He isthe author of Expanded Cinema (1970), the first book about video as an art form.

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