Video pioneers Woody and Steina Vasulka have been at the forefront of video from the very beginning: having moved to New York City from Prague in the 1960s, they documented Living Theater performances and the counter-cultural. They were part of the sexual revolution on 12th Street and are known for their work with the Digital Image Articulator and video tooldesigner. In the modern architectural form, globes sit atop the museum's atrium and work tend to hover around landscape and horizonal drift. She has made a series of works entitled Machine Venvion which include landscapes and cityscapes reflected in a mirrored globe and recorded by two small video cameras orbiting the globe. Here, in a piece entitled Alivation, the cameras and globe sit atop the museum's atrium and treat viewers to a meditation on postmodern architectural form.

Strongly influenced by early cybernetic communications system theory, Woody Vasulka has been an inventor and video tool designer. In the 1970s, he designed and built the Digital Image Articulator with Jeffrey Schier. His tape Artifacts demonstrates the aesthetic capabilities of the Digital Image Articulator and gives a short history of its development. Woody's newer work involves the construction of matrixes of machines which interact with each other. These "optical-sensory intelligence matrixes" have an ominous tone when one realizes that much of this research-and-development technology is borrowed from military surplus à la Los Alamos. It is apparent that these are the tools of postmodern war, science and business. One of the most breathtakingly beautiful of the Vasulkas' work; even when not physically present, the body is always implied, always there as a reference point. The idea of the body that comes across is a body fused with technology, a body that mirrors technology: like Woody's mechanical bodies, our bodies are composed of levers and hydraulic fluids, processors and sensors, and tiny on-off switches. That mechanical and corporeal bodies have become indistinguishable is evident in the videotape Illiblith, where the processes of degeneration and drift are drawn across the aged face of painter Doris Cross with an image synthesizer that reenacts the passage of time (biological life). Cross' face is raked by peaks and valleys, transformed into a landscape rocked by seismic change. A performance by Steina demonstrating a violin-controlled, pre-recorded laser disk further illustrates the merger of man and machine. Performing the violin live in front of a video projection screen, Steina explains that positions (and the images at those positions) on a lazer disk are key to positioning on the strings of the violin: i.e. a note struck at a certain location, for example, on the E string, locates and plays a particular image and sound on the disk, or goes fast forward or reverse at another location. The laser disk is a storage device, like the brain, and the violin picks and chooses its way through it, recalling this, skipping that. This machine-mind interface is Proust's madeleine: tickle that nerve and you remember that day in the park, etc.

It is not only that the representations of bodies undergo digital processes, but the very way we understand our bodies. namely Western medical practice, espouses a technological explanation of the microcosmic exchanges which keep the body running. The same computer-generated graphics in Woody's The Brotherhood, Table III. are picked up by medicine to image our bodies back to us; we have all seen on the evening news the twin strands of DNA that spiral like a perpetual carousel in an ink black vacuum. There is no dividing line between man and machine: our bodies are fully technologized. And while this vision may be disturbing to some, I think it is safe to say the Vasulkas are right at home with their technology.

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Maria Troy lives in Oakland and is the project coordinator of the forthcoming Surveying the First Decade: Video Art and Alternative Media in the US.