STEINA

&

WOODY

VASULKA

January 25-
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Denver Art Museum
Steina lived in Japan from November 1987 to May 1988 on a fellowship from the US/Japan Friendship Commission. There she recorded sixty hours of video with a camcorder. She let the tapes sit for a year, then began working on them in May 1989. Not long after, there is Tokyo Four, her sixth multiscreen composition. It is organized around five categories of imagery: Shinto priests meticulously grooming their Zen garden on New Year’s Eve; train conductors monitoring rush hour crowds, reminding passengers to watch their umbrellas and not to forget their children; elevator girls bringing a superfluous, but charming, High Touch to the high tech world of the shopping malls; a segment about food, beginning with the vertiginous fish eye lens in a supermarket; and an emotionally charged meta-choreography of a dance troupe’s performance and curtain call.

No form of moving-image art comes as close to musical composition as multiscreen video, where the different channels of image and sound are equivalent to musical polyphony, each functioning like a voice in a musical ensemble. And no multiscreen work is as spectacularly musical as Steina’s. She works as a composer would, playing around duration, interval, rhythm, repetition, and the others are accompaniment, then another string quartet. Sometimes one screen is the melody, or what she calls the “melody,” or what she calls the “ground track.” She makes three segments are organized into six major segments are organized into six major...

It is a layering and stripping approach. The images as one performs notes in a musical composition. The resulting visual drama is one of discontinuity rather than causal linearity. The patterns are molecules of counterpoint organized around duration, interval, rhythm, repetition, and series. In one compositional strategy, Steina begins by assembling a long single channel segment which represents the “melody,” or what she calls the “ground track.” She makes three copies of it and inserts new images into each channel as accompaniment. Sometimes she records the ground track in reverse motion, which, in her musical
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For nearly a quarter of a century, Steina and Woody Vasulka have remained at the forefront of exploration into the formal and interactive possibilities of the electronic moving image. Founders of the Kitchen in New York in 1971, they were among the first to establish multiscreen video as an art form. As a concert violinist who was the first to integrate live interactive video into her musical performances, Steina has inspired a generation of high-tech performance artists. Woody is world renowned as a visionary pioneer of electronic image processing, and today, having moved into digital image synthesis and interactive multimedia, he remains on the leading edge.

—Gene Youngblood

Internationally known critic and theorist Gene Youngblood is the author of Expanded Cinema (1970), the first book about video as an art medium. He teaches in the Department of Moving Image Arts at the College of Santa Fe in New Mexico.

Close Range Gallery exhibitions are devoted entirely to the representation of works by artists living in Colorado and neighboring states.

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