

# Media Study

## Four artists playing key roles in SUNY-wide arts programs; Vasulkas have Albright-Knox show

Four artists from the Center for Media Study are playing key roles in film and video programs sponsored by the SUNY-wide Committee on the Arts this year.

Associate Professor James Blue will visit ten SUNY schools under a program called "The Moving Image/The Maker," established to enable campuses and their communities to screen works of excellence by independent film and videomakers, and to discuss them with their makers. Blue is a graduate of the Institute of Higher Education in Paris and directed "The Olive Trees of Justice," a feature made in Algeria, which won the Critics' Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1962. He has been a Ford Foundation and a Guggenheim Fellow and was formerly director of The Media Center at Rice University in Houston.

Blue will screen: "A Few Notes on Our Food Problem" which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1969, a film which authority Basil Wright has called "the best film made about the Third World;" "Kenya Boran," a feature-length study of an African tribe undergoing change because of its shift to a modern economy; "The March," which documented the 1963 civil rights march on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King, and "Who Killed the Fourth Ward?" his most recent work about inner city deterioration in Houston, shot on Super-8 Sound-Sync, and broadcast in three one-hour segments by Public Television Station KUHT there. On each campus he visits, Blue will spend two days in screening films, holding seminars with classes, and meeting with local film and videomakers. The program he is participating in is in its fifth year.

### A new venture

Films by Media Study's Associate Professor Paul Sharits and videotapes by Adjunct Professor Steina and Associate Professor Woody Vasulka are included in a second program sponsored by the SUNY-wide arts group. "The Moving Image/Statewide" Program was initiated this year so film and video curators could select groups of

films and videotapes and distribute them to campus and community audiences together with extensive written notes. The artworks and the notes are made available free-of-charge to any campus which invites one of the artists whose work is represented or an informed critic to discuss the program.

Film artists participating in this program, in addition to Sharits are such notables as Stan Brakhage, Bruce Conner, Morgan Fisher, and Ernie Gehr. Sharits is represented by three works, "Word Movie/Fluxfilm .29" (1966), "Piece Mandala/End War" (1966) and "Tails" (1976). He will speak about the entire program at State College at Potsdam on October 29. Works included were selected by Thom Andersen, film programmer for Media Study/Buffalo; the participating film critics are Noel Carroll of New York University, Jonas Mekas of Anthology Film Archives, and Amy Taubin of the *Soho Weekly News*.

Artists participating in the video portion of the program were selected by John Minkowsky, video/electronic arts curator at Media Study/Buffalo. They are Peter Campus, Cara DeVito, Joan Jonas, Andy Mann, Bill Viola, William Wegman, and the Vasulkas. That duo is represented by five tapes: "Vocabulary," "The Matter," "Heraldic View," "Solo for 3," and "Reminiscences (1973-4)." Participating video critics are Peggy Gale of Art Metropole, Toronto, Johanna Gill of the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, and Davidson Gigliotti of the *Soho Weekly News*.

Patricia Kerr Ross, director of the University-wide Committee on the Arts, has said of this new venture:

"Film and video are among the most important art forms of the 20th century, but the personal works of independent film and videomakers are hardly ever

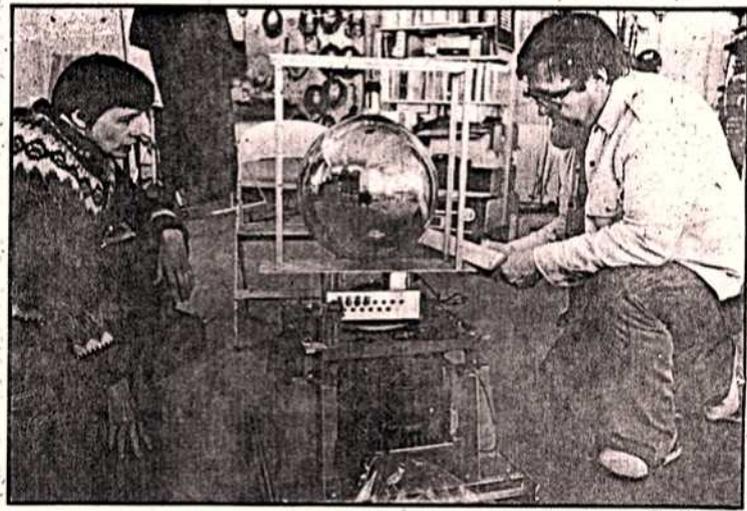
seen in most communities, even in New York State. There is also the situation that, unlike traditional art forms, there are as yet few critics and historians to lend understanding to these new works. It is therefore important ... that such screenings take place in a doubly informed context in which notes are provided by leading programmers and curators, and the artists themselves or knowledgeable critics are present to discuss and comment on them."

### The Vasulkas

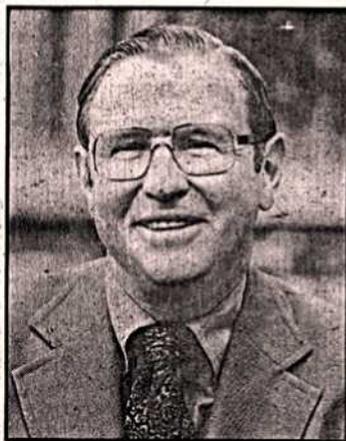
The Vasulkas will each have a month-long exhibition at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, opening October 20 and running through November 26. Steina's exhibition is called "Machine Vision;" she will speak in the Gallery Auditorium on November 7 at 8 p.m. Woody's exhibit is entitled "Descriptions;" he will speak in the Gallery Auditorium, November 14 at 8. The exhibits are curated by Linda Cathcart and an illustrated catalogue of the Vasulkas' work, supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, will be on sale at the Gallery Bookshop.

Born in 1940 in Reykjavik, Iceland, Steina was trained as a musician and was a violinist with the Icelandic Symphony. Woody was born in 1937 in Brno, Czechoslovakia, and studied metal technology and hydraulic mechanics at the School of Engineering there. They were married in Prague in 1964 and came to the U.S. in 1965. In 1971, they co-founded The Kitchen in New York City, an electronic media theater forum for new video, film, and music. Since then, they have collaborated on videotapes and environments and have shown their projects throughout the U.S., South America and Europe. Steina has been a Guggenheim Fellow in video, and Woody Vasulka has held individual artist's grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Vasulkas are also just finishing six half-hour videotapes which they produced in their home-studio for WNET, Channel 17, under a \$40,000 grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Arts. Steina, in collaboration with Jeffy Schier, a 1978 U/B graduate in electrical engineering and a student at the Center for Media Study, is presenting videotapes on the new art forms of digital video and computers at a series of local community centers under the regrant program of Arts Development Services.



The Vasulkas



O'Grady



Minkowsky



Blue



Sharits



Blue



Sharits

The first event was at the Polish Community Center, October 16.

Both Steina and Woody Vasulka will show and discuss their most recent work at the 42nd Annual Meeting of the Mid-America College Art Association at the Renaissance Center in Detroit, October 25.

Dr. Gerald O'Grady, director of the Center for Media Study, will moderate the studio session in "Video Media" which will include, beside the Vasulkas, artists Diane Spoderek and Jim Hart of Detroit, and video critic John Minkowsky.

### A traveling critic

Minkowsky, who took his degree in media study and English *summa cum laude* and was a Phi Beta Kappa in 1975, also took an MAH degree from the Center for Media Study in 1978. He is currently completing editing a book on the Design/Electronic Arts Conference held in Buffalo in 1977 and has just returned from a 10,000 mile trip which crisscrossed major U.S. centers. A \$2500 grant from the Media Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts supported his three months of research. He saw new work, selected programming for Media Study/Buffalo, interviewed video artists and makers of new music for a book, and studied the structure of video and electronic arts exhibition in the U.S. In November, he will report on the trip in a special evening event at Hallwalls.

### Micro-macro

O'Grady, who is also director of the Educational Communications Center

and president of Media Study/Buffalo as well as director of the campus Center for Media Study, commented that the involvement of his colleagues and the Center's former students in both local and national projects is typical of the agency's "micro-macro" orientation:

"We are committed to encouraging the making and understanding of media in Buffalo and throughout New York State, but that is a worthy mission only because we are recognized in the national and international arenas."

He pointed out that, last summer, James Blue was invited to lead sessions at an international conference on ethnographic film in Australia and to present his own work at the Grierson Documentary Festival in Canada. Blue also began a new film in Mexico.

"Blue, Woody Vasulka and O'Grady himself each taught one-week from 8:00 - 10:00 p.m. each night, establishing the first summer institute in film and video at the University of Alaska in Juneau this past June. "Just as the Center for the Creative and Performing Arts has June in Buffalo," the Center for Media Study initiated June in Juneau," O'Grady said.

"The arts in the University are continually making contributions in both directions. For example, Saul Elkin's Center for Theatre Research sponsors Shakespeare in the Park here in Buffalo every summer, while Norman Holland's Center for the Psychological Study of the Arts has an annual spring conference which brings us all of the leading national practitioners in that field."