

The West. Created by Steina; instrumentation, production assistance, and 4 Channel audio environment by Woody Vasulka. Copyright: The Vasulkas, 1984.

The West is a video environment which generates a phenomenological experience of the vast Southwestern landscape, a landscape so arid and clear that any human notation on the land is preserved for a very long time.

The Vasulkas' installation employs a circle of monitors suspended at eye level in a darkened room. The viewer sits in the center of the circle, surrounded by imagery panning in constant, stately motion, enveloped in the eerie tones of the audio track. This 2-channel video/4-channel audio piece depicts not just the landscape, but also manifestations of human expression on that landscape: ceremonial Indian dwellings, earthworks and installations of scientific equipment. The primary structural element of the circle is invoked in the Vasulkas' mirrored, rotating globe, the circular structure of the Anasazi ruin, Casa Rinconada in Chaco Canyon, and the giant silver discs of the VLA (Very Large Array) - a radio telescope system which turns slowly to scan the sky. The natural red and blue tones of the earth and sky are manipulated to produce highly saturated colors which hardly seem out of place in the dramatic landscape.

The West is an elegant demonstration of how image and sound can constitute a complex mapping of the presence of the individual in a vast landscape of space and time.