

captures the beauty and richness of Siouland in this lyric view of an American writer and his native land.

Nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature, Manfred is like his fictional characters, larger than life and twice as romantic. His deep, sonorous voice—whether reading from his stories or commenting on the relationship of the Indian *wakon* to quantum mechanics—weaves a spell over his listeners, presenting a heroic, masculine view of pioneering and adventure. Poet Robert Bly concludes the tape by reading a passage from Manfred's *Lord Grizzly*, which seems to sum up the achievements of an exceptional literary man.

Mike Hazard has been experimenting with novel ways of introducing poetry and prose in his series of literary portraits, which includes Minnesota poets Meridel Le Sueur, Robert Bly (see *A MAN WRITES TO A PART OF HIMSELF*), and Tom McGrath. His successful efforts at sharing both the life and work of these regional—and national—treasures are well worth our attention.

## Artifacts

by Woody Vasulka

1980 (©1981). 21 min. b/w & color.

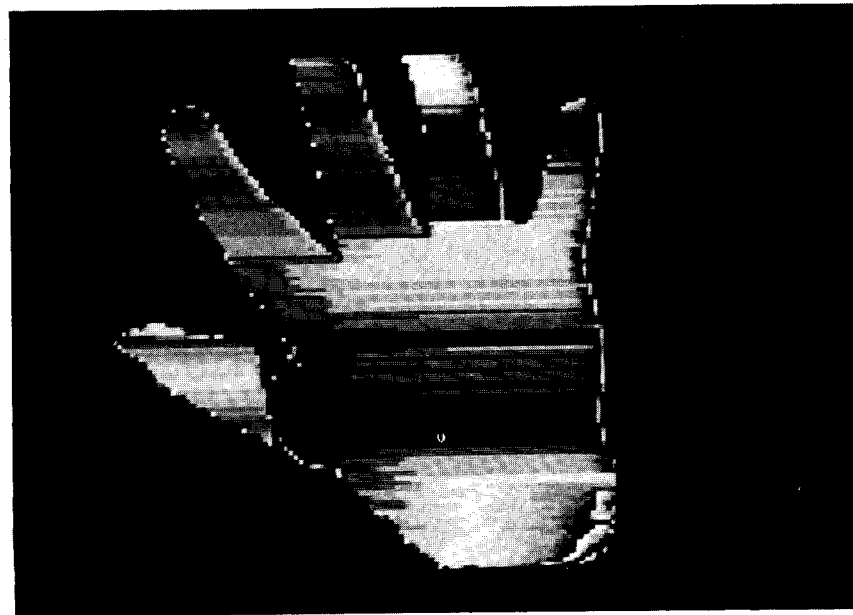
Distributor: EAI. Formats: ¾", VHS, Beta.

Woody Vasulka, in collaboration with his wife, Steina, has been in the vanguard of the electronic arts since the early Seventies. With the help of designer Jeff Schier, they pioneered the Digital Image Articulator, or Imager. Their tool converts a video picture to digital numbers that a computer can understand; once a video image is digitized, it can be stored in computer memory—the framebuffer—and manipulated in countless ways. The Imager can perform continuous zooms, multiply a frame so that the picture becomes magnified to the point where the entire frame is only one-picture-element (pixel) big, or combine several frames to produce extraordinary images of common objects.

ARTIFACTS opens with Vasulka, dressed casually in overalls, standing in front of his kitchen stove, peering into the camera and bemusedly stroking his beard. He takes his own image and manipulates it through the Imager, multiplying it into numerous postage-stamp likenesses that zoom in and out in rhythmical pulse. This gridlike mosaic is further manipulated by flattening and elongating it, accompanied by the amplified sounds produced by the video synch signal. The artifacts consist of both Woody's camera-generated image and unanticipated experimental images arrived at by the Imager. In another sequence, Woody's hand reaches out for a ball in which a feedback image—an infinite number of hands and balls—can be seen. Like an electronic crystal ball, the images within this magic circle transmute, reverse left-right polarities, and alternate from black-

and-white to color. The image of his own hand is transformed into a ghostly, surreal vision.

ARTIFACTS is a sampler of some of the exercises an artist can devise to demonstrate, in Vasulka's words, "rather simple arithmetic operations." This gloss belies the wit, humanity, intellectual play, and exhilaration Vasulka's challenging inventions present. (See also *SELECTED TREECUTS* by Steina.)



Vasulka came to the United States in 1965 from his native Czechoslovakia, where he had studied film and engineering. After producing several films here, he began to explore electronic sounds and images and invent new video tools. In 1971, in collaboration with Steina, he founded The Kitchen, one of the first exhibition centers in the country for experimental video. Since then, the Vasulkas have achieved exceptional acclaim for their technical innovations in the international world of video art.

## Ballet Classes: A Celebration

by Jack Churchill

1985. 60 min. color.

Distributor: VFC Productions. Formats: ¾", VHS, Beta.

Visual images of elephants, tigers, leopards, water buffalo, and birds weave through the tape, powerful metaphors for states of being in life and death and the hereafter. Throughout, Reeves questions what is real, what is lasting, what is meaningful. What can a poor man do? SABDA is his answer.

Dan Reeves came to international prominence with his award-winning autobiographical tape, *SMOTHERING DREAMS*. Eager to separate from his searing memories of the Vietnam war, Reeves's recent tapes, such as *Haiku* and *Amida*, have been more poetic, revealing the profound influence of Eastern philosophy, religion, and art on his work.

## Selected Treecuts

by Steina

1981. 6 min. color & b/w.  
Distributor: The Vasulkas. Format: 3/4".

**Awards:** Ithaca Video Festival

*SELECTED TREECUTS* rhythmically alternates between black-and-white images of trees blowing in the wind, a computer memory of those trees rendered as a digital, gray-and-white mosaic, and "real" trees, seen in shimmering color. While drawing relationships between these three levels of visual abstraction, Steina also creates a composition for the ear. With audio modulated by the video signal, an om-like sound reverberates, building in intensity as the various visual images cut in and out and the camera zooms in and out on them. The increasing speed of alternation between scenes and their sounds climaxes and subsides like the dying wind in the sunstroked trees. Mathematically balanced in its formal composition, the tape stirs a metaphysical reverie: Steina's images seem to peel away the surface of the natural world and reveal, in all its nakedness and primal energy, the life force at work.

Born in Iceland, Steina trained as a violinist before marrying Woody Vasulka and embarking on an internationally renowned career as a video artist. She is noted for exploring the aesthetics of "machine vision." Although she frequently collaborates with her husband, Steina uses only her first name when producing individual tapes.

*SELECTED TREECUTS* was made using the Digital Image Articulator, or Imager, a unique instrument the Vasulkas developed with designer Jeff Schier to explore real-time video and image performance. During the 18 months they spent designing the Imager, Steina produced a tape about its design, construction, and use for the Television Lab at WNET/13. Titled *Cantaloup*—the fruit is used as a model to demonstrate how the system works—this tape offers a fairly



simple introduction to what happens and why. Steina's explanations of pixels (picture elements), slices (or layers) of colors and tone, and the advantages of "grabbing" (storing) images in the computer memory are lucid and amusing. Woody's occasional difficulty in understanding Schier happily takes the edge off the viewer's own confusion. Seeing *Cantaloup* is bound to enhance anyone's appreciation of Woody's ARTIFACTS or Steina's SELECTED TREECUTS.

## **Shopping Bag Ladies**

*by Joan Giummo and Elizabeth Sweetnam*

1977. 45 min. b/w.

Distributor: Ann St. Productions. Formats: 3/4", VHS, Beta.

**Credits:** *Producer/Director/Camera* Joan Giummo *Sound* Elizabeth Sweetnam.

This arresting study of five women who live on New York City streets shatters stereotypes about those anonymous ragtag figures. One woman longs to take a bath; another complains her legs hurt from standing 18 hours; all of them shun shelters because of theft, distance, and their own mental confusion. An attractive young black woman