

6/7/85

Dear Steina,

I would love to swap tapes with you. I hope you enjoy the selection on this one. Enclosed are program descriptions.

Hope you had a good trip. You can send 3/4" or VHS, whichever is easier for you.

Looking forward to hearing from you -

Van

VAN McELWEE

EARTH SCRIBBLES

1982

EARTH SCRIBBLES is a portrait of the planet, which is made up of many layers or concentric spheres: its core, its rocky crust, the layer of organic life, the atmosphere and a layer of electronic communication and thought. For this piece, hundreds of satellite weather photos were drawn on, colored and processed electronically, and animated into a four-dimensional map. 2 minutes. Color, stereo

MOBIUS FILM LOOP PROPELLERS

1982

A film loop spliced into a Mobius strip would, with each repetition, repeat time and reverse a scene to its mirror image. The propellers in this piece act as indicators of this reversing-space dynamic, reinforcing it with their movements. The hypothetical Mobius Film Loop effortlessly creates a movement of the propellers corresponding to: 1) Two infinite lines of propellers moving through one another, or 2) an ascending spiral of propellers, or 3) one propeller travelling a sideways figure-8 pattern back and forth through the frame. MOBIUS FILM LOOP PROPELLERS structures time as an endless replay for home or gallery, or as a three minute excerpt. Color, stereo, soft audio.

WATER, LIGHTBULBS, DYING BUGS AND DOORBELLS

1982

A doorbell is played, insects are electrocuted, lightbulbs turn on and off, and water spirals continuously. Musically, these events seem to trigger one another, but the cause and effect relationship between them constantly changes. 2:40 minutes or continuous replay, color, stereo.

LEAF MOSAIC

1984

LEAF MOSAIC is a study of natural form and a fantasy of digital space. Falling leaves were filmed, rotoscoped into line drawings, digitized into squares, rotated, processed and superimposed on a grid. 6:40 minutes. Color, stereo, soft audio.

VAN MCELWEE

Brief Statements by the Artist

My goal is to create objects of contemplation that focus mental and emotional energy; that resonate in the viewer's mind like a tuning fork.

I'd rather create experiences than illusions. The work should *be* something, not just be about something.

In the work, the observer, instead of being reduced to a voyeur, becomes the subject. The line of action is between the viewer and the screen.

Video is a nervous system, and as such is ideal for externalizing the artist's imagination.

Art has value above and beyond specific political issues, and in that sense it addresses all issues on a fundamental level.

I don't preach to people. I'd rather create situations in which they can see in new ways and have ideas of their own.

My work is based on the idea that form and awareness arise together. So the emphasis on form is demanded by the content, which is awareness. In this sense, form and content are the same.

Sometimes people forget that art can have multiple meanings, like a dream, or a thought that makes connections. Meaning can refer to significance as well as to explanation.

I believe that art is strongest when it integrates conscious and unconscious elements. Life is a mystery, why should art be anything less?

The work is a vehicle for awareness. It's not about specific meanings; it's about experience.

I allow for improvisation at every stage of production, and the viewer is invited to play as well. In this sense I make toys.

Self-indulgence is an artistic goal of mine. It's the only way that I can make anything of value to other people.

Altering space and time in video alters both my mind and the viewer's mind. The value of this is that openings are created in our model of reality that allow us to see out. This restructuring of experience creates opportunities for new perspectives, new connections and new energy. In other words, growth.

7/17/94

Dear Steina,

I've been meaning to write for some time & thank you for the tape & the booklets on your & Woody's work. I had not seen Borealis and Tokyo Four. Your work & words are inspiring & enlightening.

I didn't receive the Asian Cultural Council grant to Japan, but I will be applying next year. Your letter of reference has been saved & will re-used.

I wanted to ask if you could be a Guggenheim reference for me again this year. Since the project description has changed, they may require a new letter. The proposal will be for the Japan piece. It's the same as the A.C.C., so perhaps you can use the same letter.

I write letters of reference myself, so I know that it can be time-consuming. If you don't have time - just drop me a postcard & I'll understand.

I thought you might find this particular issue of the New Art Examiner, on beauty, interesting.

Please give my regards to Woody.

Best wishes

Van

Van McElwee Career Summary

Van McElwee has been producing and exhibiting experimental video since 1976. He has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including The American Film Institute Independent Filmmaker Award, The National Endowment for the Arts Independent Production Fund (six-time recipient), and a travel grant from the Government of India. Van McElwee's work has been twice nominated for the German Award for Video Art, sponsored by the Zentrum fur Kunst und Medientechnologie. He was recently Artist-in-Residence at the Experimental Television Center in New York.

McElwee's body of work encompasses over twenty tapes. These have been screened widely in the United States, as well as in France, Germany, England, Italy, Spain, Austria, Brazil and Australia. Exhibitions include The Kitchen, New York; The Berlin Film Festival; The London Film Festival; The New York Expo (Jury Award); Film + Arc, Austria (Honorable Mention); Artmedia, Italy; Videonale, Bonn; a six-month broadcast of "Inside" on CANAL PLUS in France and Monaco; and broadcasts on German television and on over 280 PBS stations in the United States. Installations include a sixteen-monitor videowall at the Dallas Museum of Art for the 93 Dallas Video Festival, and a nine-monitor installation as part of "Van McElwee: A Retrospective" at the Forum for Contemporary Art in St. Louis.

Van McElwee's video work is distributed worldwide by The Kitchen in New York, Heure Exquise! in France, and London Video Access in Great Britain.

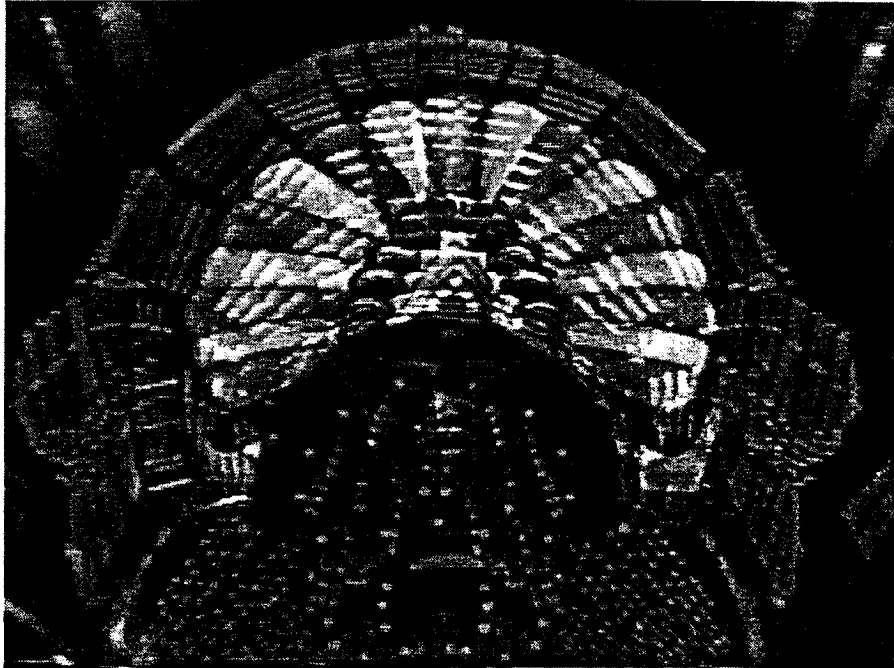
McElwee received an MFA in Multimedia from Washington University in St. Louis, and a BFA in Printmaking from Memphis Academy of Arts. He is currently Associate Professor of Media at Webster University in St. Louis.

"My work explores areas where space and time, order and disorder become artificial categories. In the tapes, images and sound are two aspects of one composition. The result is a form of experimental music. There are no stories being told; the only subject is the viewer. Rather than make a point, I prefer to cast a spell. In this sense, the work is a kind of architecture, an environment to be inhabited by the viewer."

Van McElwee

LUXOR

A
MOMENT IN HYPERREALITY



BY
VAN McELWEE

Luxor (Egypt) meets Luxor (Las Vegas) calling into question the nature of reality through a folding, blending and meltdown of the real and the replica. Each world is suspended and then reborn in the realm of video as past, present, and future merge into one pulsing electronic moment. Luxor begins as an investigation into culture and reality, and ends as a contemplation of the infinite. 18:00 minutes, stereo.

Van McElwee has been producing and exhibiting experimental video since 1976. He has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including the American Film Institute Independent Production Fund (seven time recipient), and a travel grant from the Government of India. McElwee's videotapes have been screened widely in the United States, as well as in Europe, and are distributed worldwide by The Kitchen in New York, Heure Exquise! in France, and London Electronic Arts in Britain. McElwee is currently Associate Professor of Media at Webster University in St. Louis.

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October 6, 1998

Dear Steina and Woody,

Here is a copy of *Luxor*, I hope you enjoy it. Art can give pleasure, right?

As usual, I would love to see anything you have on tape or in print. Congratulations, Woody, on the NY Times article.

Steina, enclosed is the list of festivals you requested, in label form with the mail list on floppy in *Claris Works* (in case you want to modify it). I've extracted this list from the IDEA/CHAOS site at <http://nunc.com/index.phtml>, e-mail: bureau@altern.org.

Thank you again, Steina, for agreeing to write a letter to the Guggenheim Foundation for me. Obviously it will strengthen my application tremendously.

Best Wishes,



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