

National Gallery of Canada / Musée des beaux-arts du Canada / 380 Sussex Drive / Ottawa / Ontario / Canada / K1N 9N5 / Tel: (613) 967-8888 / Fax: (613) 967-8889 / www.gallery.ca

22 November 1993

Stena and Woody Valsulka
Route 6, Box 100,
Santa Fe, 87501, New Mexico,
U.S.A.

Dear Stena and Woody Vasulka;

I am preparing an exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada for the fall of 1994, which will deal partly with the works of video pioneers who developed and worked with early video synthesizer. Of course your work would be featured. As you may know, the National Gallery of Canada has some of your work in its collection and I intend to include more works of yours.

For the moment, I am writing because I recently met with Jean-Pierre Boyer who mentioned to me that you had sent him a catalogue or a publication that presented video pioneers works. I was wondering if you could provide me with a copy of this publication or indicate where to find it. If you want to sell it to us, please join an invoice and we will pay soon after its reception.

Concerning your own early works, you may want to give me information. Otherwise, I will go through the regular channel, such as Electronic Arts Intermix in New York.

I thank you in advance for the attention you will give to my request.

Sincerely,



Jean Gagnon
Associate Curator
Media Arts.



Message from the Director

Another busy summer season has begun, and we welcome all our visitors from Ottawa, Canada, the U.S., and abroad. The National Capital Region — the Ottawa-Hull area — last year attracted some 4,000,000 tourists. This year we hope for even more guests, especially now that the new Museum of Civilization has opened. Here at the Gallery the dramatic and moving exhibition of photographs *Karsh: The Art of the Portrait* has just opened. The artist will give a public lecture in our Auditorium on Sunday 9 July at 3 pm. I hope you will all be able to visit this exhibition and *The Cherished Image: Portraits from 150 Years of Photography*, a complementary history of portrait photography from the early daguerreotypes to contemporary works drawn from our collections.

This year during July, August, and September all six national museums (including the War Museum and the Aviation Museum) will take part in a "passport" pilot project. The passports are to be sold at the museums and will contain one adult admission to each museum for \$15, a 25 percent discount for the whole package.

To help visitors tour the capital's attractions, "Visibus," a daily bus service from 9 am to 6 pm, makes a number of stops at key locations at ten-minute intervals. It runs until 4 September (except on Canada Day) and is a bargain at \$2 per adult pass or \$5 for the whole family. Passes are available on board or at the Visitor Centre at 14 Metcalfe Street near Parliament Hill. The museums will also take part in an "exit survey" of visitors, to help us find out how we can better serve them. So if you are approached by a personable young student with a clipboard and a few questions as you leave the Gallery, I hope you will spare a few moments to help us in this survey.

For many of you, July and August are holiday months. I wish you a happy and safe summer — and I look forward to seeing you at the National Gallery.

Dr. Shirley L. Thomson



Yousuf Karsh
Pierre Elliott
Trudeau
4 November 1968

The Video and Film by Artists Series

Electronic Landscapes

6 July – 4 September

Video Gallery

Electronic Landscapes seems at first to be a contradiction in terms. But in this late twentieth century, where hydro pylons and telephone poles have replaced trees and sky as major elements in the visible world, the phrase implies an altered spectrum of our surroundings.

In spite of or perhaps because of this, nature holds renewed fascination for us. For artists working with electronic tools, turning to nature for reflection and inspiration is a deliberate decision: to establish links with a personal and cultural "otherwise" or to salvage the sites and icons of an earlier day.



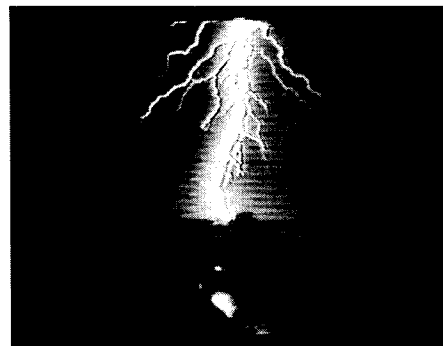
Mica-TV, Cascade

The exhibition brings together multi-screen video installations by Tomiyo Sasaki (*The Dreams of Christopher Columbus*, 1987) and Tom Sherman

(*Equidistant Relationships*, 1989) with single channel tapes by fourteen artists from Canada and the United States, including Kate Craig (*Mary Lou*, 1989), Luc Bourdon (*Distance*, 1984), Bill Viola (*Hatsu-Yume* "First Dream," 1981) and Gary Hill (*Incidence of Catastrophe*, 1988).

The selection is framed by language, but natural forces and raw landscape play crucial roles in these works, acting as both foil to human action and balance to human thought.

Peggy Gale is the guest curator of *Electronic Landscapes*, part of the *Video and Film by Artists Series* organized by Susan Ditta, the National Gallery's Assistant Curator of Video and Film.



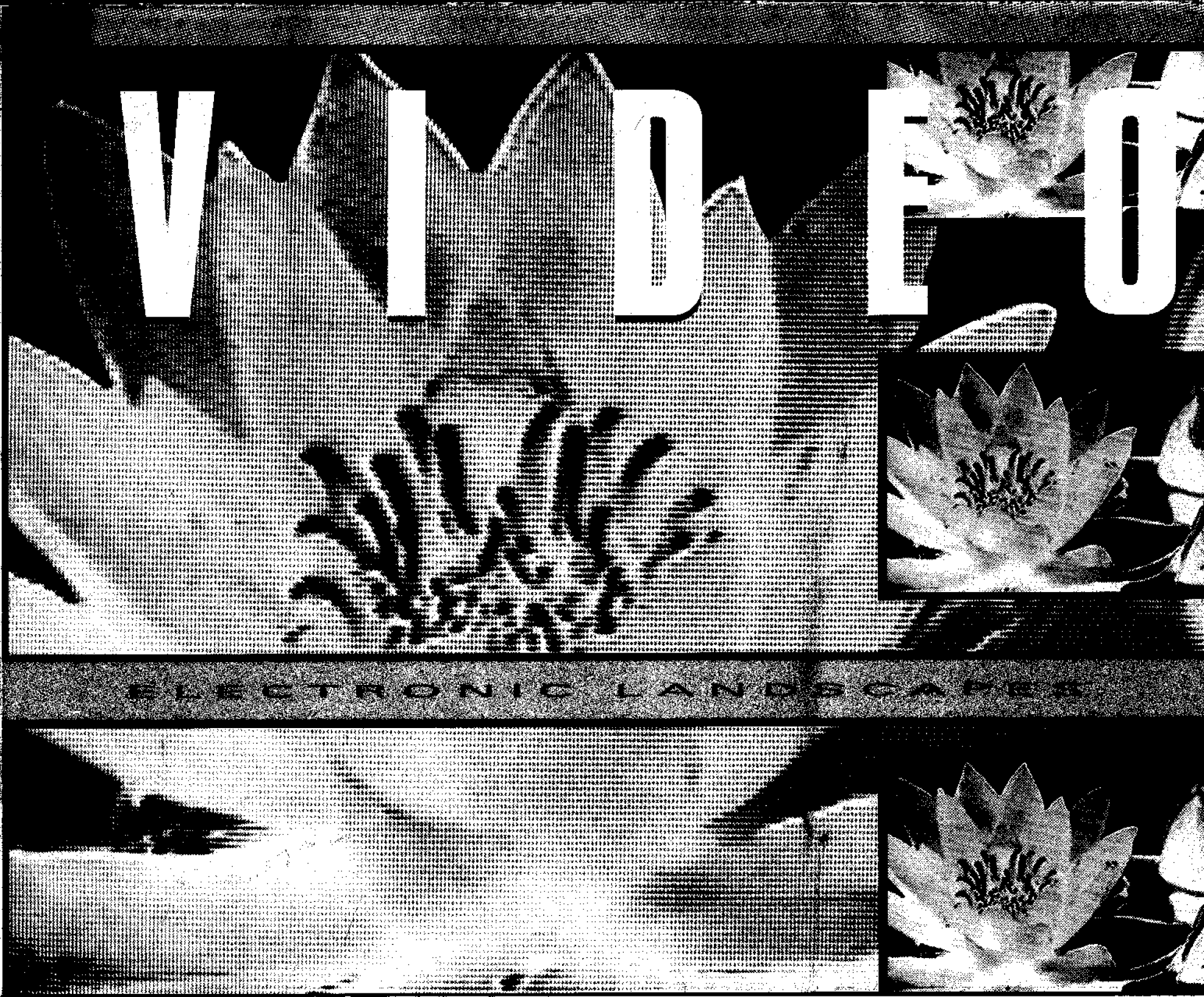
Doug Hall
Storm & Stress

OHIO TO GIBERTY: MEMORY OF LIGHT, Mary Loner, Photo, Mary Loner

W M D E O

**ELECTRONIC
LANDSCAPES**
6 JULY -
4 SEPTEMBER
1 9 8 9

THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA
PRESENTS
THE VIDEO AND FILM BY ARTISTS SERIES
AN ONGOING PROGRAM
OF SCREENINGS, INSTALLATIONS,
LECTURES, AND SPECIAL EVENTS
IN THE MEDIA ARTS



“AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS CITIZENS WE
ARE ROOTED IN THIS WIDE LAND, THIS
LARGELY OPEN SPACE, THIS STILL-NEW
COLLECTION OF FARMS AND CITIES.
THE LAND IS OUR HISTORY AND
BACKDROP TO OUR PRESENT. BUT FOR
ARTISTS WORKING WITH ELECTRONIC
TOOLS, A TURNING TO NATURE FOR
REFLECTION AND INSPIRATION IS A
DELIBERATE DECISION — TO ESTABLISH
PERSONAL AND CULTURAL

The phrase electronic landscapes seems a contradiction in terms — or implies an altered spectrum in this late twentieth century, where hydro pylons, technology, and the “information revolution” have replaced trees and sky as major elements in the visible world.

In fact, Nature has a renewed fascination for us. As individuals and as citizens we are rooted in this wide land, this largely open space, this still-new collection of farms and cities. The land is our history and backdrop to our present. But for artists working with electronic tools, a turning to Nature for reflection and inspiration is a deliberate decision — to establish links with a personal and cultural “otherwise,” or salvage the sites and icons of an earlier day.

The natural landscape is separate from a cultural milieu, from urban pressures and speed. Outdoors seems open, undefended; and rural peace seems finer than the dense and human-choked urban environment that is home to most of us. But real wilderness, or the Far North, is almost exotic for city-dwellers, and even a small garden seems a treasure. Buffered against Nature and the Elements by our housing, our occupations, the stresses and comforts of our cities, we are hardly tuned to see Nature now as adversary or simply exploitable. Surrounded by reports of ecological disaster and human mismanagement, we are far more likely to conceive this Nature in romantic terms, revising Goethe and Wordsworth for today. We acknowledge its fragility and ephemerality, know it can no longer be taken for granted.

How to represent this Nature? The small screen is made for closeups rather than vast panoramas. Its intimacy permits a kind of personal contact, though we see almost any sort of programming on commercial television. Where regular television emphasizes talking heads, rapid edits, and frequent interruptions or contrasts to maintain viewer-interest, video will tend to an opposite approach in recording the “long take,” in using slower camera movements or dissolves to achieve its intended viewer-identification. Too much detail leads to a shutdown of response; hence, an emphasis on the central characteristics of scene or story. But when the man-made world is slowed down, reduced to a play of light, colour, and form, is that scape seen as a new Nature? Nature as Culture — a tamed and comforting ideal.

The enclosed garden has long offered a premonition or taste of Heaven.

Video in a museum context operates as a similar metaphor. We are familiar enough with images of Nature in paint and in print; electronic representation is only the most recent attempt to embody and hold on to this lost Eden, to meditate on its place in our lives. But these landscape images are bracketed by narrative or language in some form, and imply (through their electronic appearance) human presence, either positive or negative. States of memory are a common evocation. The character and effects of light are central motifs.

ELECTRONIC LANDSCAPES brings multi-channel video installation pieces by Tomiyo Sasaki and Tom Sherman together with fourteen single-screen tapes by artists from Canada and the USA. The selection is framed by language, as represented by two remarkable conceptualizations: *Incidence of Catastrophe* by Gary Hill and *Art of Memory* by Woody Vasulka. Natural forces and raw landscape play crucial — if opposing — roles in these two works, acting as foil to human action and counterbalance to human thought.

Incidence of Catastrophe begins with rushing water, sand crumbling at the borders of a stream that tumbles to the sea. This flow and the collapsing banks are quietly inexorable, establishing natural landscape as locus for action and indicating its controlling role. In the main body of the work we follow the (unspoken) reading of a book, a journey both textual and textural; as the protagonist pursues the words, he fingers the grain of the paper surface, feels the form of letters, heft of binding, crispness of pages. Wind riffling through the volume, a tangle of branches and falling shadows disrupt the reader's progress: natural elements act on physical as well as intellectual perception. Events proceed through hallucination to surrender; then we are returned in the end to the flowing water, crumbling sandbanks. Inspired by the novel *Thomas l'obscur* by Maurice Blanchot, *Incidence of Catastrophe* uses metaphors of Nature to indicate psychological turmoil leading to physical distress. The tape shifts subtly from real-time recording to impossible replacements of substance and location, achieved through masterful editing, and leaves the viewer prey to anxiety; the viewer cannot control response to the story any more than the protagonist can manage fate or even his own body.

Woody Vasulka's *Art of Memory* privileges language and (spoken) text as well, placing both against geography and natural forces. With Czech-born Vasulka, however, landscape provides salvation rather than confrontation or resistance. The tape takes the eroded hills and canyons of New Mexico as background to personal and cultural history, reviewing the wars of Europe with references to Germany, Japan, Spain, and Russia, with repeated quoting of Robert Oppenheimer, responsible for production of the first atomic bomb. Human history is played out against geological history, and we wonder if the elemental hills, like the human brain, record every event forever. Do the hills remember? And with Vasulka's avenging angel at their peak, do they forgive? The remarkable complexity of *Art of Memory* is visual as well as conceptual, with its interlaced “wipe” sequences, multiplication of layers and textures, colourizing and digitizing of forms and figures. This tape is a masterwork by one of the medium's most senior artists; the arid land blooms.

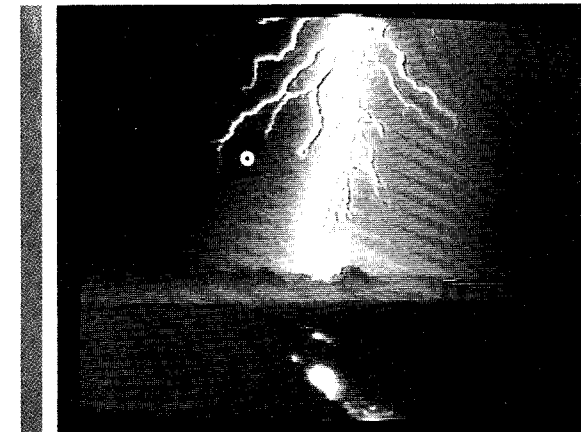
Between these two parentheses — damnation, redemption — lies a broad range of landscape-inspired works. Tom Sherman's two-channel *Equidistant Relationships* revels in

Doug Hall is fascinated by raw power, and *Storm and Stress* gathers together rolling cloud-formations, heaving seas, bolts of lightning, and the genesis of tornadoes. The majesty of these natural systems is offset by heavy man-made forms, massive turbines and power plants and smelters, lumbering earth-moving devices, laboratories for collecting scientific data; tension and comparison between the natural and the man-made is maintained through editing — juxtaposition, intercutting — and through alteration of pace. We track tornadoes with awe, anticipation.

Entirely different in mood is Tom Dean's *Fear of Blue*, a lyrical fifty-four-minute study of sensations and perceptions around the colour and sound of blue(s). Gently gliding through Vancouver suburbs, along the Pacific coast, or through Prairie landscapes, Dean muses on the *verticality* of blue, its extension into heaven or into the depths of the sea. He considers its ethereal or inspirational qualities, and its aura of despair.



CHOTT EL-DJERID: Bill Viola
Photo: Kira Perov



STORM AND STRESS: Doug Hall
Photo: Kira Perov

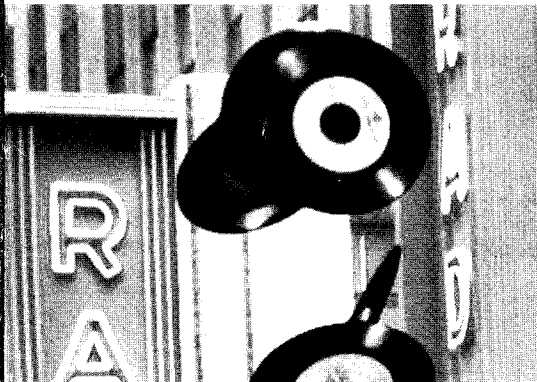
LINKS WITH A PERSONAL
 'OTHERWISE,' OR SALVAGE THE SITES
 AND ICONS OF AN EARLIER DAY."



ART OF MEMORY: Woody Vasulka
 Photo: Marita Sturken



HATSU-YUME (FIRST DREAM): Bill Viola
 Photo: Kira Perov



CASCADE: VERTICAL LANDSCAPES: MICA-TV

narrative, exposing a media environment that has fundamentally changed our response to events and other people; against windswept beaches and lines of passing trees and fields is juxtaposed the interior of a media laboratory with automated camera-eye sweeping the room and its inhabitants. Sherman proposes that "Most of our life experience stems from relationships we have with media and the machines we use for reading media." With this in mind we listen to his stories, see his happy family groupings, consider that the sixty-two-minute monologue is itself being mediated by both its form (two simultaneous and interlocking prerecorded videotapes) and its location (in a museum exhibition). For Sherman, the natural landscape incorporates media now, making virtually all experience second- or third-hand: "It's hard to see anything for just what it is. If you look at the media and the media machines for long enough, they'll give you the feeling of being everywhere and nowhere at the same time. You will be equally distant and painfully aware of the state you're in. Lost without dimension, you'll find yourself moving in many directions, remembering everything you've never been, and more."

This bleak pragmatism is in strong contrast to the innocence and visual splendour of Tomiyo Sasaki. *The Dreams of Christopher Columbus* includes ten separate channels in all, multiplied further on the display monitors (planned originally for up to 300 screens). Recorded in India in 1987, the work has been edited densely and rhythmically to isolate and emphasize significant formal relationships, movements, and colours. Guided by Sasaki's framing and repetition we see places and actions differently than would be possible on the spot. The configuration of the monitors in lotus-flower or mandala form emphasizes both natural and cultural overlays for these "dreams": that we see this brilliant landscape through the eyes of an artist — not primarily as ethnography, geography, history — is to have Columbus's vision of the magical Indies as he, man of action, might have imagined.

How to characterize the remaining dozen tapes? There is a unity in a wellspring response to landscape; but for attitude, intention, location, form, and quality and quantity of mediation (especially montage and post-production strategies), the variety is striking. Bill Viola studies tranquillity itself in *Hatsu Yume (First Dream)*, shot in Japan, with gentle transitions through mists and water, a thoroughly cultured Nature where man has been gardener for centuries. Viola's *Chott el-Djerid (A Study in Light and Heat)* is similarly a meditation on vision and atmospheric effects, but juxtaposes Saskatchewan snowstorm and Sahara's blinding glare. These whited-out images are harsh indeed, yet haunting in their abstraction and simplicity. Steina Vasulka's *Summer Salt*, by contrast, is all action: willful and inventive, Vasulka puts the camera itself into play, intervening dramatically in her visual environment.

Michèle Waquant, in her study of a pond in the heart of Paris, probes the comforts of enclosure and seeming aimlessness. Lilies and leaves drift on the pond's glassy surface, droplets dimple its reflections of the clouds, and fishermen sit patiently as if the fish need never bite. *L'Étang* is the image of peace and quiet pleasure.

Watery images and movement appear over and over again in video studies, perhaps because the medium itself is flow rather than stasis or single frames. The glass surface of the video screen seems another kind of window and mirror, reflecting both through and upon the camera's gatherings. Sequence seems seamless, constantly in flux. Even in the striking edits of *Cascade: Vertical Landscapes*, by MICA-TV, transitions between urban structures, buildings, and malls, trees framed by glass roofs — all flow together in a free-fall effect. When the editing is infinitely slower, the mood contemplative and dreamy, as in Mary Lucier's *Ohio to Giverny: Memory of Light*, such flow adds qualities of softness and interiority, suggesting the very workings of recollection. And in *Distance* by Luc Bourdon and François Girard, flow is combined with slow-motion recording to evoke speed, transition: displacement in time and space.

Deployment of computers for dramatic post-production provides a key to the final trio of tapes in **ELECTRONIC LANDSCAPES**. Elizabeth Vander Zaag's *Farm Fantasy* uses playful humour and digitized-colour effects in honouring the rich earth; Dara Birnbaum, in contrast, underlines the irony of her title — and the importance of her subject — in her portrayal of a trashed inner-city playground in that *Charming Landscape*. And Kate Craig's *Mary Lou* assembles images-within-images of water, roof-tiles, fences, other passing surfaces in flowing abstract patterns, the framing image-field receding or advancing with alterations in colour, direction of movement, or simple shifts of attention.

These are sixteen works, selected from the many recent examples of landscape in artists' video. The approach here is less a review of nineteenth-century painterly strategies, or the updating of the grand "landscape machine," than a project far more personal. An interior source or spring. We see ourselves easily as a TV generation, and video-as-diary is not so unlikely after all: for evocation of memory, recording of favourite locations and motifs, or for sending messages to an anticipated future. These works suggest a certain urgency, a need to fix ideas and images in time. And video — ephemeral, sequential, always flowing on — is like writing on water. But electronic recording offers an international language of utmost currency and diffusion: TV as new *Urtext*, as a new Esperanto, with a message we can all understand. There is much beauty here.

Peggy Gale
 Guest Curator
 April 1989

ELECTRONIC LANDSCAPES

Daily: beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Running time (min.)

10:00 a.m. Steina Vasulka Bill Viola	SUMMER SALT CHOTT EL-DJERID	18:45 28:00
11:00 a.m. Dara Birnbaum Doug Hall Bourdon/Girard	CHARMING LANDSCAPE STORM AND STRESS DISTANCE	6:30 47:52 4:30
12:00 noon Woody Vasulka Michèle Waquant	ART OF MEMORY L'ÉTANG	36:25 22:00
1:00 p.m. MICA-TV Mary Lucier Kate Craig	CASCADE OHIO TO GIVERNY MARY LOU	6:28 18:25 28:00
2:00 p.m. Bill Viola	HATSU YUME	56:00
3:00 p.m. Tom Dean Elizabeth Vander Zaag	FEAR OF BLUE FARM FANTASY	54:00 4:30
4:00 p.m. Gary Hill	INCIDENCE OF CATASTROPHE	43:57

T A P E D E S C R I P T I O N S

Installation: Gallery B-201

THE DREAMS OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

1987

Tomio Sasaki

Ten channels of 13 total, presented on 20 monitors (28:00 min.)

Source: *The Artist*

A mosaic of images videotaped in India, originally planned for presentation on up to 300 monitors in mandala configuration. Sasaki is fascinated by the multiplication of these images from a world so distant: their repetition emphasizes both difference and substance, while her careful framing and juxtaposition of scenes and actions comment on formal and graphic qualities of the image. Her veils over the monitor surface, and her linear floor designs, underline the sculptural nature of the work overall, and its exotic source.

Installation: Gallery B-207

EQUIDISTANT RELATIONSHIPS

1989

Tom Sherman

Two channels, presented on two monitors (62:00 min.)

Source: *V/Tape*

"I'm struck by the fact that everyone seems equally distant from just about everything that happens these days.

Most of our life experience stems from relationships we have with media and the machines we use for reading media." Sherman continues his study of human interaction with machines, with the possibly distressing conclusion that man is inferior to machines save for his Unconscious and the unpredictable nature of his memory/response patterns. The natural landscape, the family grouping, the media laboratory are all put under observation, as backdrop to the artist's narrative and commentary. *Equidistant Relationships* ends with a sly test, which asks the viewer to select whichever of three recounted stories has the extra dose of "mediated, distanced reality." How can we lose?

Single-Channel Works: Video Gallery B-209

DAMNATION OF FAUST: CHARMING LANDSCAPE

1987

Dara Birnbaum

(6:30 min.)

Source: *Electronic Arts Intermix*

This is the final piece in Birnbaum's *Damnation of Faust* trilogy, extending the whole into a present relevance. Her fragmentary editing and multiple-image composites convey both dislocation and a consciousness of the past, while pointing to the futility of generalizing and contradiction. Over reprocessed footage of sixties racial strife and political demonstrations in the USA, a young woman's voice comments quietly, "I can see how much it was still the same." The images move forward to recent student protests in Asia, ending with a soldier pushing away the camera, and a dedication to two women born in 1968 and 1969. As Michael Nash has indicated, "In her complex, occasionally oblique meditation, Birnbaum proposes that as history (via media immortality) anaesthetizes against the loss inevitable to individual memory, cultural amnesia sets in." This thoughtful and poetic work is a strong comment on an inner-city landscape, its past and present.

STORM AND STRESS

1986

Doug Hall

(47:52 min.)

Source: *Electronic Arts Intermix*

This ambitious work completes Hall's study of representations of power in our culture, with the relationship of man, nature, and technology as central theme. He presents startling images of thunderstorms, tornadoes, floods, and fires as manifestations of natural power, in juxtaposition with such man-made works as hydroelectric plants, steel foundries, and wind-tunnels. Hall addresses the economic subtext for man's harnessing of natural forces, our precarious relationship to nature, the central role of technology in our society, and, through referring to *Sturm und Drang*, the aesthetics of the irrational and the sublime.

CASCADE: VERTICAL LANDSCAPES

1988

MICA-TV

(6:30 min.)

Source: *Electronic Arts Intermix*

In this new work from Michael Owen and Carole Ann Klonarides, humour and astute observation inform a vertical parade of office buildings, shopping malls, fast-food chains, and suburban houses that constitute the contemporary American landscape. Collaborating with painter Dike Blair, media artist and critic Dan Graham, and composer Christian Marclay, MICA-TV lifts images and sounds from pop culture to create a seamless work that comments affectionately on the American way of life. Marclay's original soundtrack emphasizes the vertical read of the tape, and mirrors the continuous flow of musical debris surrounding us.

OHIO TO GIVERNY: MEMORY OF LIGHT

1983

Mary Lucier

(18:25 min.)

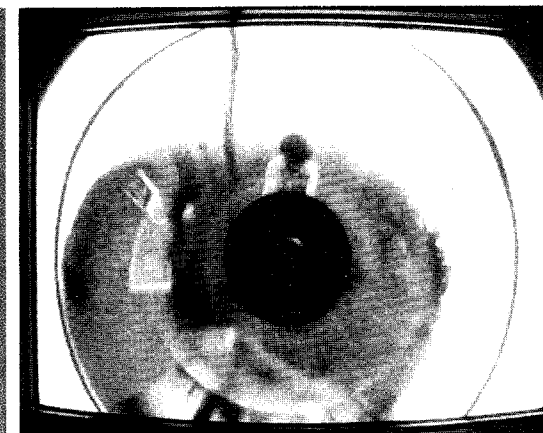
Source: *Electronic Arts Intermix*

Opening with a quote from Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way* (*Du côté de chez Swann*), Lucier explores light and its relationship to memory, evoking the work of Impressionist painter Claude Monet and touching on America's relationship to its European heritage. Lucier writes: "This work is an investigation of light in landscape and its function as an agent of memory both personal and mythic. It deals with the convergence of disparate entities — geographies, epochs, sensibilities — with transitions from one state of being to another, and how within the frame of imagination and collective memory, these 'dissolves' take place." The tape juxtaposes and correlates Lucier's native Ohio, through the play of light on the artifacts of a Midwestern Victorian home, with the French countryside, centring on the ancient structures of the fading aristocracy and the lush beauty of Monet's garden at Giverny.

MARY LOU

fantasy

FARM FANTASY: Elizabeth Vander Zaag
Photo: Elizabeth Vander Zaag



SUMMER SALT: Steina Vasulka
Photo: Marita Sturken

FEAR OF BLUE

1982

Tom Dean

(54:00 min.)

Source: *Video Out*

A metaphorical text on reverberations for the colour blue, voice-over against images of sea and sky. The soundtrack includes original recordings of Hank Williams songs, with a *capella* voices, yodelling, and solo piano and guitar.

FARM FANTASY

1988

Elizabeth Vander Zaag

(4:30 min.)

Source: *Video Out*

R E W

A changing selection of works from the permanent collection: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.

- Luc Bourdon THE STORY OF FENIKS AND ABDULLAH 1988 18:00
- François Girard LE TRAIN 1985 5:45
- Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak WHITE DAWN 1988 18:00
- Camille Maheux and Ewa Turska DEUX 1984 11:00

SUMMER SALT

1982
Steina Vasulka
(18:45 min.)

Source: *Electronic Arts Intermix*
This piece is a compilation of five short studies — *Sky High, Low Ride, Somersault, Rest, and Photographic Memory* — which manipulate both space and time, and use striking recording techniques to explore the qualities and textures of landscape near Vasulka's home in New Mexico. She experiments with effects using video camera, microphone, and mirrored ball as a curved lens, with results both comical and formally intriguing, poetic and dance-like. An entirely new perception of space is created through her handling of the familiar video equipment, so that traditional figure/ground relationships and laws of perspective vanish. This virtuoso "re-presentation" of the usually rectangular video field is both a visual and conceptual leap into space.

CHOTT EL-DJERID (A STUDY IN LIGHT AND HEAT)

1979
Bill Viola
(28:00 min)

Source: *Electronic Arts Intermix*
"Chott el-Djerid is the name of a vast dry salt lake in the Tunisian Sahara desert where mirages are most likely to form in the midday sun. Here, the intense desert heat manipulates, bends, and distorts the light rays to such an extent that you actually see things which are not there. Trees and sand dunes float off the ground, the edges of mountains and buildings ripple and vibrate, colour and form blend into one shimmering dance. In this piece, the desert mirages are set against images of the bleak winter prairies of Illinois and Saskatchewan where the opposite climatic conditions induce a similar aura of uncertainty, disorientation and unfamiliarity" (Bill Viola).

DISTANCE

1984
Luc Bourdon and François Girard
(4:30 min.)

Source: *Le Vidéographe*
Images of downtown and the highway, speeds altered and blurred, light and colour fusing: "As I was leaving... the image of the last telephone conversation... creating a new distance... was taking form."

First prize, UNDER 5 Festival, Vancouver, 1984.

ART OF MEMORY

1987
Woody Vasulka
(36:25 min.)

Source: *Electronic Arts Intermix*
As Vasulka has affirmed, "Ours is a century of experiment with political and religious forms — and with death, which was almost as devastating as the Black Plague. [But] history is secondary — the information is common knowledge. This is an exploration of method and interpretation. [A possible example is] taking two-dimensional documentary images and leaving the frame, putting them in three-dimensional, object-like forms. The image is no longer truth-in-a-window." Through computer manipulations of old newsreels and photographic imagery, Vasulka distorts shapes, colours, textures, even meanings. His juxtapositions of images from the past with present-day landscape were intended "to produce not a construction of events but a panorama of associations." The result is optically dazzling and conceptually challenging, a perfect union of recollection and timelessness on a cosmic plane.

L'ÉTANG

1985
Michèle Waquant
(22:00 min)

Source: *Le Vidéographe*
This pond and garden have their own rhythm in the heart of the city, with strollers dreaming along among trees, children, and birds. Fishermen sit silently with their rods, as if they too were being dreamed. The tape was shot in Paris, in the Parc de Saint-Mandé, with inserted images recorded at the Aquarium du Trocadéro, also in Paris.

MARY LOU

1989
Kate Craig
(28:00 min.)

Source: *Video Out*
Recorded in Japan and in the Pacific Northwest, *Mary Lou* is a study of camera-framed surfaces. The title recalls Marie-Louise, empress of France and second wife of Napoleon Bonaparte, whose name had purportedly been given to a framing mat or passe-partout. So this "Mary Lou" is the frame personified, given full and proper credit at last. It interacts with the central image on-screen to alter its emphasis and flow, provide contrast or juxtaposition, advance or recede in the viewer's perception. In short, *Mary Lou* is the perfectly articulated surround, subtle but significant, accentuating the centre while maintaining its own presence: hardly a mere formal device.

Sound design and construction by Iain Macanulty.

HATSU-YUME (FIRST DREAM)

1981
Bill Viola
(56:00 min.)

Source: *Electronic Arts Intermix*
Unfolding in a dream-like trance, *Hatsu-Yume* operates on many interrelated levels: a personal interpretation of Japanese culture, a contemplation of the natural elements as realms of life and death, and a formal exploration of the ways in which video processes light and reflection. Viola's language of images describes an enigmatic rock on a mountainside, a rock that sits immobile on the screen and yet appears to change dramatically in size with the passage of time — and it records fishing at night on a black ocean, where mechanized trawlers haul in luminous squid using light as bait. Viola writes: "Video treats light like water — it becomes fluid on the video tube. Water supports the fish like light supports man. Land is the death of the fish — darkness is the death of man."

Source: Video Out

A portrait of the fertile farm, its magical fields and skies colorized and glowing, its fruits bountiful, its masters strong and smiling.

INCIDENCE OF CATASTROPHE

1988
Gary Hill
(43:51 min.)

Source: *Electronic Arts Intermix*
A deeply moving meta-narrative of the act of reading, in which Hill casts himself as a reader submerged in the book's text like a body in water. In a corporeal portrayal of the acquisition of language as a cumulative process of erosion, Hill gives way to the pressure of Blanchot's text, exhibiting himself in the end as a physical manifestation of the word made flesh. At the same time, the natural world surrounding this struggle maintains its structure and flow, reminding us always of its primacy and strength.

Included in the Whitney Biennial of 1989, New York.

DISTRIBUTION INFORMATION

LE VIDÉOGAPHE
4550 Garnier Street
Montreal, Quebec
Canada H2J 3S7
(514) 521-2116

VIDEO OUT
1102 Homer Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada V6B 2X6
(604) 688-4336

V/TAPE
183 Bathurst Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5T 2R7
(416) 863-9897

ELECTRONIC ARTS INTERMIX
536 Broadway Ave,
9th Floor
New York, NY 10012
USA
(212) 966-4605

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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Susan Ditta, Assistant
Curator, Video & Film.

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