



One Way,
by James Byrne
1979.

LANDSCAPE VIDEO : WORKS FROM THE SEVENTIES

CURATED BY PETER KIRBY

October 16-November 20, 1987
Opening: Friday October 16, 7-10pm.

When portable black and white 1/2" video equipment became available in 1965, artists who used this new tool began by exploring the properties of video as embodied in the equipment. And in these explorations they turned to the areas that they as artists had been exploring before. One of these was the natural, and man made, landscape, both as subject of work and as a base for exploring other ideas.

The works chosen were created between 1972 and 1980, and are short works that illustrate several approaches to the representation and interpretation of landscape. They represent a part of the history of the development of video art and video equipment, and the relationship between the work and the equipment. The work can be seen as a response to questions posed by the equipment: "How can I use this equipment as it was designed to be used to make something interesting?", and "How can this equipment be modified to work in ways that I want it to work to explore the questions that interest me?"

None of the work attempts to simply represent "reality". Instead, the work deals with the ways that the camera stands between the artist, with his or her ideas about the world and its representation, and the viewer, who must commit the time it takes to experience the completed work.

In the early days of 1/2" video, editing was not easy. Many early works were edited "in the camera" and essentially reflect the choices of the artist at the moment of working. Action paintings in time, with sound. Many of these works exhibit the artist learning about the limitations of this equipment, and the difficulty of having a succession of images and sounds convey an idea, and hold the attention of the viewer.

Other works were crudely edited, and other strategies were evolved to realize an idea. For example, at Cal Arts in 1971, I dragged the cameras out of the studio as far as the cables would reach to do a live, three camera landscape piece improvised by the entire production class. This was in response to the frustration of having the "good" color cameras only available in the studio.

As editing equipment for 1/2" tape was developed and became more widely available, many artists began to construct works that were edited, but were still focused on the camera's unique way of seeing the

world, and the ability to inexpensively shoot hours of footage. As cameras improved, what one could portray with them changed. Color became available as an element in the work. In the mid seventies, editing equipment became available to artists that was both precise and of high quality. It also became possible to transfer tape to broadcast equipment for editing. This allowed more complex issues to be portrayed, and longer works to be created with more density.

One premise of this exhibition is that equipment limits and directs the kinds of works that are produced. As equipment evolves, the technical quality of the work of video artists improves, and it often becomes impossible to distinguish "video art" from "television" merely by the quality of the image. Artists no longer represent the world as a crude black and white camera portrays it. The content and the context of the work become important. A sense of the "artist's hand" in the work lessens, and the artist's thoughts come more to the fore. The works in this exhibition demonstrate the direction of this change.

Lauren Ewing 1972	<u>Ophelia</u>	6:20	b&w
Paul Kos 1973	<u>Search Olga-Gold</u>	6:00	b&w
Lauren Ewing 1974	<u>Backwalk: Upper Birch Forest</u>	9:00	b&w
Paul Kos 1975	<u>Riley, Rolly River</u>	1:30	b&w
Paul Kos 1976	<u>Lightning</u>	1:10	b&w
Bill Viola 1977-79	<u>Moonblood</u>	12:30	color
Mary Lucier 1978	<u>Bird's Eye</u>	12:00	b&w
Shalom Gorewitz 1979	<u>El Corandero</u>	5:30	color
James Byrne 1979	<u>One Way</u>	8:10	b&w
Bill Viola 1979	<u>Ancient of Days</u>	12:00	color
Steina Vasulka 1980	<u>Urban Episodes</u>	8:30	color
Davidson Gigliotti 1980	<u>After Montgolfier</u>	9:00	color

Total running time 1:32:00