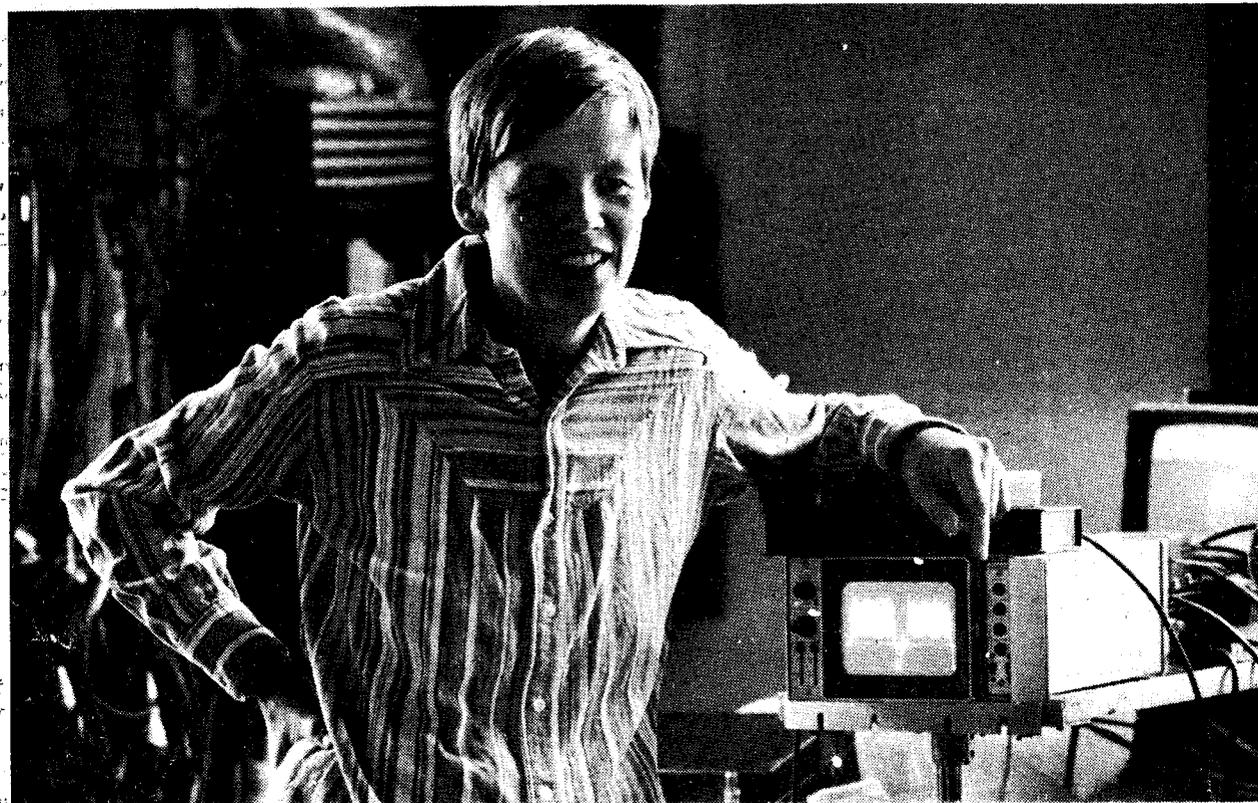


Area artists enhance talent with NEA fellowships



NEA FELLOWSHIP ARTISTS — Area artists receiving National Endowment for the Arts monetary awards are, above, Steina Vasulka, below, Oliver Ortiz, and below, right, David Anderson.

An Icelander who moved to the United State 17 years ago, Steina is impressed by NEA's openness to foreigners. "What's amazing to me as a foreigner, you just have to be a resident to apply (for the fellowship). There is amazing generosity in this country," she said, noting most European grants are available to citizens only.

She's also pleased with the recognition her art form, video, has received here. "In Europe, they wouldn't even have a category."

A relatively new art form, video is "a manipulation of real time by interfering with the electronic signal," Steina said. "You can alter the voltage and frequency and thereby alter the image in color, in proportion and in height and width. That was the first fascination I had with video." Later, she developed an interest in optical aspects, like lenses, mirrors and turntables.

One piece she submitted to NEA demonstrated the optical abilities of video. Titled "Urban Episodes," the tape shows slices of a Minneapolis street corner taken by a camera on an automatic turntable with an automatic zoom focusing on a motor-driven prisim.

Other tapes focus on themes as varied as a waterfall in Iceland, a violin player and industrial city scapes in Buffalo, N.Y. Using a micro-processor, she alters the signal by freezing the image to create a flat, mosaic-like pattern, stretching the image or changing it in other ways.

"The computer can organize the signal, store it, alter it, re-assemble it, re-possess it. It allows you a more advanced form of signal processing."

Her color and black-and-white tapes run anywhere from two minutes to 60 minutes, and she produces two or three hours of tapes a year. "The taping is the easiest part, but all the preparation can take a long, long time."

She's been working on a Southwestern landscape for about two months, and anticipates she'll be finished taping in about a year. "I'm picking up on the earth here and how the people relate to it."

Born in Iceland in 1940, Steina attended the Music Conservatory in Prague and joined the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra as a violinist in 1964.

She and her husband, Woody, moved to New York in 1965, and she worked as a freelance violinist until they both became interested in video. "It immediately

clicked," Steina recalled. "I never had any training as a visual artist. I'm a musician. I always pay more attention to sound." Many of her pieces incorporate sounds, which are electronic signals.

Starting with "new, cheap black-and-white Sony equipment," Steina increased her instruments to the tune of \$10,000 a year, until she now has a studio lined with signal equipment, computers, tapes, wires, plugs and other machines.

She is working with other artists to put together a video show in conjunction with the Santa Fe Festival of the Arts. The camera and play-back monitor will be in Sears Roebuck and Co. during store hours, and in the window after-hours.

Steina will use her \$12,500 fellowship to continue her work here. "I feel I haven't done anything yet. So far the scale is quite small."

When asked if she uses video to convey a message, she said, "The message is the signal or magic of the electronic signal. I fell in love with it and I would like to show it to other people. It's a combination of me and the media. I have to give a lot of credit to video. The medium is incredibly rich."