

marked a transition for Webster as well, from intimacy (moss, salt, soil) to enormity (eroding water, the scale of the rocks, and the cycle of birth and regeneration). Webster's emotional content seemed rather reserved and stoic, perhaps due to the shift in the scale of her metaphors. The show nonetheless provided a varied and complex experience.

—Ellison Austen Walcott

Pittsburgh

Steina and Woody Vasulka

The Wood Street Galleries

In the late 1960s Steina and Woody Vasulka helped pioneer the use of video technology for artistic, as opposed to commercial, purposes, and in 1971, along with Andres Mannik, they founded The Kitchen in New York City. Since then the Vasulkas have continued to work with electronic media both individually and collaboratively. Each artist provided a project on one of the two floors of The Wood Street Galleries, which operate under the auspices of The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to enlivening and dressing up Pittsburgh's downtown.

Although each artist has a distinctive vision and focus, the Vasulkas share an interest in the intellectual ramifications of video as both a medium and a process, and a sensitivity to the ontological underpinnings of their medium. This distinguishes their output from that of artists who concentrate on video as it relates to popular culture, artists who use video in autobiographical or narcissistic ways, or artists for whom the performative aspects of their work are more important than the videographic records that ensue. The Vasulkas utilize subtle and technically complicated arrays of equipment and machinery to deal with questions of how information is transmitted, understood, and interpreted, and how human experience takes shape within the parameters of light, space, sound, time, and the conventions of late



20th-century technology.

In Woody Vasulka's gallery, an installation titled *The Brotherhood: Table III (Friendly Fire)* (1994) addressed the mythology of warfare and the role of technology in present-day manifestations of it. Viewers "witnessed" a chilling event: the unwitting annihilation of friendly troops in an incident that occurred during the recent Persian Gulf War. This was shown via a complex of computer monitors, screens displaying images that could be manipulated through viewer interactivity, and a central device akin to the high-tech equipment actually used to release bombs during the war. The installation's leaden walls and briskly functioning equipment (screens rose and folded, images appeared and were replaced, a sound track started and stopped) suggested a dispassionate laboratory, and the remove at which both discrete physical events and moral judgments occur, not only in situations of war, but, by extension, in other realms of life as well.

Steina Vasulka's *Borealis* (1993) began not with rituals of human culture but with the interaction between natural flows of water discovered within her native

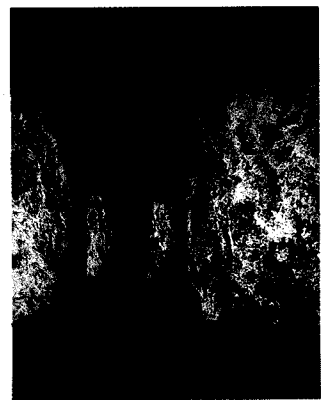
Iceland, and the sensibility she brings to those phenomena as a late-20th-century, technologically sophisticated, and musically trained artist. She beamed images of crashing, roiling, splashing, and meandering waves and waterfalls onto an array of double-faced projection screens, whose crisp, rectangular shapes provided a foil for the coloristically harsh but nevertheless persuasive play of this most basic of liquids. She altered these images by reversing or upending some of them, or by turning them sideways, orchestrating a majestic sweep of constantly changing watery vistas. A soundtrack featured the natural sounds of water, heightened at times to become insistent and drumlike. (She supplemented this environment with an interactive violin performance at the exhibition's opening.)

Many other works could have been chosen for this exhibition from the Vasulkas' 30-year career. It is perhaps ironic that these two projects derive from topics traditionally and stereotypically considered appropriate for one gender or the other. Boy's toys include war games, while girls are expected to remain "close to nature." Yet Woody Vasulka

Left: Woody Vasulka, *The Brotherhood: Table III*, 1994. Video and sound installation.

Below: Steina Vasulka, *Borealis*, 1993. Video and sound installation.

opens the lived actuality of a specific and recent war to human compassion and emotion, while also providing a cautionary warning about what can and does happen when technology dominates or malfunctions. Steina Vasulka structures and intellectualizes the primordial wash of water and the deep emotions water inevitably inspires. She adds a satisfyingly detached and analytical distance through her skilled technological intervention, while still preserving a sense of water's wild uncontrol-



lability, its elemental power. These works constituted a complementary and evocative pairing, and a memorable viewing experience. —Mary Jean Kenton

Paris

"L'Empreinte"

Centre Georges Pompidou

Whether consciously or unknowingly, we all leave traces, even with our most prosaic movements—when walking in the mud, slamming a door, or smudging the impressions of a leaky pen. Skillfully organized by Georges Didi-Huberman and Didier Semin, "L'Empreinte" ("The Imprint"), investigated the nature of molds, casts, traces, and imprints, exploring the tools, tech-