

The First Generation

Women and Video, 1970-75

Independent Curators Incorporated, New York

Steina

Born: 1940, Reykjavik, Iceland
Resides: Santa Fe, New Mexico

Steina is a major figure in video history, a pioneer who has contributed enormously to the evolution of the medium and who continues to be an important practitioner of video as art. She began working with video in 1969 and (with her husband Woody Vasulka) vigorously investigated the nature of the video signal and the materiality of the medium. Her work inquires into the electronic interrelation of sound and image, using mechanized, pre-programmed image devices which she devises to explore perception, space, and modes of seeing. The textural fusion of digital and "real" imagery and sound in her tapes and installations create layered spatial and temporal systems. In 1971 the Vasulkas co-founded the Kitchen, an alternative exhibition and media arts center in New York City.

Violin Power, 1969–78
Black-and-white, 10:00 minutes, sound
Courtesy the artist

Steina terms this procedural work "a demo tape on how to play video on the violin." Her background as a violinist and her evolution from musician to visual artist is referenced through an analogy of video camera to musical instrument. The violin itself ultimately becomes an image generating tool, as she connects it to imaging devices, creating abstract visual transpositions of sound and vibrations.

Orbital Obsessions, 1974–78
Black-and-white, 24:00 minutes, sound
Courtesy the artist

This tape contains segments from a number of earlier tapes in Steina's *Machine Vision* project which involved the creation of a machine-derived way of seeing uninfluenced by the idiosyncrasies of the human eye. These experiments involved constructing mechanical devices to program the camera to move by itself. Steina has said of these works, "We were absolutely in love with what we call the signal which is the voltage and frequency part of video. It could be translated from one property into another. You could affect the image, the content of the image itself. We were interested also in processing the images and in moving them in unconventional ways.... What I really was interested in was this self observing system in which whatever was observing was also affecting the image" (Steina, phone interview, 6 June 1993).

