

STEINA AND WOODY VASULKA

July 28 - September 4, 1994

IN THE EXHIBITION GALLERY

BOREALIS by Steina

1993, color, sound, 10 minute loops
2 channels on videodiscs

In BOREALIS, Steina uses projectors, translucent screens and split beam mirrors to create a magical environment of free-standing self-illuminated moving imagery. Taking astonishingly beautiful images of the natural landscape of her native Iceland as the base for the visual material, she has manipulated images and layered sound to construct dense layers and multiple perspectives that fuse the natural world and technology in space and time.

BROTHERHOOD, TABLE III by Woody Vasulka

1994, interactive computer/video installation
video disc, slides, audio

NOTE: Visitors to the gallery are invited to interact with this installation. Speaking into the microphone or striking the electronic drum will affect the video images.

The central theme of Woody's BROTHERHOOD project revolves around the dilemma of male identity in relation to the general compulsion of mankind to re-organize Nature itself. It presents the male in the context of warfare and explores the link between male violence and technology. Primarily constructed from surplus materials from Los Alamos - the detritus of war culture - the entire project consists of

six Tables. Each table contains instruments able to produce, compose and display varied acoustic and visual structures. Woody has said of the project, "As of yet, it is the most complex work I have attempted with requisite knowledge of various crafts: electronics, optics, engineering and computer programming."

TABLE III holds two picture delivery arrangements: a specialized slide projector and a video projector. Each occupies a specific projection environment consisting of multiple screens sharing the identical pathway of a six-way beam splitter. The Table also contains elements of sound and interactivity.

IN THE VIDEO VIEWING ROOM:

LILITH

by Steina in collaboration with Doris Cross.
1987, 9:12 mins., color, stereo sound.

In LILITH - a name that evokes biblical and mystical references - Steina alters and manipulates the face of a woman (painter Doris Cross) so that it is submerged within a natural and technological landscape. Employing the imaging techniques of focal plane shift (altering the depth of field) and frame "grabbing" (a succession of frozen images), she created a constantly shifting visual field in which an image appears to exist in a constant flux of temporal and spatial planes. The woman's electronically distorted speech adds a further haunting dimension to this almost sculptural fusion of human figure and landscape. (from "Electronic Arts Intermix: Video", A Catalogue of the Artists' Videotape Distribution Service of EAI)

THE COMMISSION

by Woody Vasulka. Camera: Steina. With: Robert Ashley, Ernest Gusella, Cosimo Corsano, Ben Harris, Andrea Harris, David Ossman. Set Design: Bradford Smith. Editor: Peter Kirby. Audio Mix: Baird Banner. Vocoder: Harald Bode. Scan Processor: Rutt/Etra. Digital Articulator: Jeffrey Schier.
1983, 44:55 mins., color, stereo sound.

Applying his electronic imaging codes to narrative in THE COMMISSION,

Vasulka develops a metaphorical image language to envision an epic electronic opera. The text, which is based on the relationship of violinist Niccolò Paganini (played by video artist Ernest Gusella) and composer Hector Berlioz (composer/performer Robert Ashley), confronts myths of Romanticism, history and art-making. Constructing a fantastic video theater, Vasulka stages a narrative of transformation, an intricately crafted blend of figuration and abstraction, in which imaging techniques serve as expressive visual syntax. Specific video effects are assigned interpretive meaning: reframed images proliferate within images in recompositions that propel the narrative progression. *THE COMMISSION* is a pivotal work in the articulation of narrative strategies through an electronic image language. (from "Electronic Arts Intermix: Video", A Catalogue of the Artists' Videotape Distribution Service of EAI)

ABOUT THE VASULKAS

It would be difficult to imagine the development of the electronic arts, especially with regard to the moving image, without the contributions of Steina and Woody Vasulka. Steina was born in Iceland and attended the Music Conservatory in Prague. Woody, born in Czechoslovakia, studied at the School of Industrial Engineering in Brno and the Academy of Performing Arts Faculty of Film and Television in Prague. They met in the early sixties while students in Prague and emigrated to the United States in 1965. They began their collaborative exploration of electronic media in 1969 and in 1971 they co-founded *The Kitchen*, a major alternative exhibition and media arts center in New York City.

They have devoted the last twenty-five years of their lives to, as they put it, "dialoguing with the tool and the image". Steina has said of their work, "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."

Over these many years the Vasulkas have come to be among the three or four most experienced and accomplished practitioners of the electronic arts in the world - Nam June Paik and Bill Viola being others from that first generation of artists to work

with video. The Vasulkas have each developed a signature style rich in content and ideas as well as visual appeal. The Vasulkas have won numerous awards and their collaborative and individual works have been widely exhibited internationally. They presently reside in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

This exhibition was organized by JoAnn Hanley.

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