

Peter Weibel
Institut für Neue Medien
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received
MARCH 4 - 92

Frankfurt, 4.3.1992

Dear Stephen Beck,

as artistic director of the Festival Ars Electronica I allow myself to turn to you with a specific request. As you know there is a show prepared by the Vasulkas on the early pioneers of electronic art at the OÖ. Landesmuseum in Linz. Naturally your two early machines, the direct-video-synthesizer and the video-loom, are an important part of this project and if they could not be shown it would cast a shadow of a doubt of the show itself. Therefore I ask you as historian and a colleague who admires your work to give us the permission to include these machines in our show according to the negotiations with the Vasulkas.

On the other hand I know from the visit of Katharina Gsöllpointner that you are very interested to show your actual work in Linz. For the understanding of my difficult position in respect to your legitimate desire I have to give you some background information. I am the artistic director of the festival, that means I decide the subject which this year is endophysics and nanotechnology. But I do not have control about the financial side of the festival. The financial side of the festival is this year extremely bad. The city of Linz always wants to make a very popular festival, and I always have to fight to keep its avantgarde character. Especially the a show of the early pioneers is not liked by anybody. I am the only one in Linz who is convinced, that the period between 1965 and 1967 was heroic and important and that the show itself will be a pivotal success. It took all my power to put the show through. And therefore I ask your for your support to make this show successful by lending us your machines.

On the other hand, the financial situation does not allow me to realize at the moment one of your newer or actual projects. But I see a possibility to show it at an other time. Therefore I would like to invite you to come to Linz during the festival from 22.-27. June, maybe even some days before, that you can control the installation of your machines. We would pay your trip, hotel, accomodation and your daily expenses. At this opportunity we can discuss precisely the possibilities to show your actual work on another Ars Electronica. If you want, I would be pleased to hear a lecture of you during the festival about your actual work.

I would also be extremely glad and honored, if you would give after Linz a lecture at my institute in Frankfurt about your recent work, naturally you would get some extra money (travel expenses and fee) for this lecture.

I hope to see you as our guest at the festival and ask you again to support us by lending us your early machines, because they are extremely important for us.

With my best regards Peter Weibel

THE VASULKAS, INC.
100 ROUTE 6
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501
TEL. (505) 471-7181/FAX. (505) 473-0614

February 25, 1992

FAXED
2.25.92

Stephen Beck
Fax: 510/748-1645

Dear Steve,

Finally, after difficult to comprehend delays, we have confirmed our pre-production duties with ARS ELECTRONICA and have been sobered by their budget. My worst predictions came true. All of the preparations must come from a reduced budget contracted to us, which hardly covers our original commitment to present live machines, documentation, and a tape show.

After Katharina's visit we learned that she made commitments that we can not honor. Nevertheless we are primarily concerned with the selection and restoration of significant machines, and both your devices - the Direct Video Synthesizer and the Video Loom - are on the top of our list.

We need to reconfirm your offer to restore a suitable part of the DVS and the Video Loom and ask you to estimate the purely necessary expenses for such restoration. In the spirit of avoiding untoward expense, could we ask you to note if there are parts that need replacing such as a video encoder or synch generator. I have an inventory of such good old parts that I could provide to you. We will also need to rely for a suitable interface for the museum public. ARS ELECTRONICA is insisting on interactive presentations. Please include this in your estimate of expenses.

We are also wondering about your interest in being present at the festival. Katharina invited more people than their budget allows. Of course, we will make a great effort to have ARS ELECTRONICA sponsor your visit - as I indicated you are at the top of the list.

We realize that we are relying on your generosity, but we consider this exhibition a first step in long-overdue recognition of important contributions like yours.

Also, attached please find a list of details we ask you to address. We think we have found the laserdisc technology that is perfectly suited to the installation that can carry all of the documentation and video - a Pioneer LaserBarcode System.

Thank you. Talk to you soon.



LAPIS Technologies, Inc.

1100 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 100 Alameda, CA 94501

Phone: 510-748-1600

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Fri, May 8, 1992

page 1

from Stephen Beck

TO: Woody Vasulka, Malin

RE: Color Slides of Beck Synthesizers for Ars Electronica

Enclosed please find 42 color slides documenting the synthesizers.

I will FAX you on Monday a copy of captions based on the slide numbers.

The best shot of the video weaver is in slide # W1-W3 where it is atop the synthesizer.

Give me a ring when you get back, if you would please. We need to discuss my getting the unit to you before you depart. As I am not going to be attending now, we will have to coordinate things. Perhaps I will come to Santa Fe and hand deliver it to you.

Regards,



Steve Beck

P.S. LARGE TRANSPARENCY IS FIRST
DIAMOND VISION AT SHEA STADIUM.

Slides W1
W3 to Michael

HELLO WOODY & STEINA

Nice to talk with you recently & looking forward to your visit of Jan 23. Shall we plan to have a dinner together? And if you would like to stay overnight in my guest room you are invited to do so.

It's nice to be included in the plans for ARS Electronica, and for your curation of the event. By the way, I have two refernces for CRT based artworks in the early 1950's - perhaps late 1040's. One is a film by a artist named Mary Ellen Bute who worked with oscilloscope images, mainly Lissajous patterns, making at least one known film recording dated 1954 entitled "Abstronics" (nice title!). She may have made more. Also I found a reference to a CRT film by Hi Hirsch of an unknown date in the early 1950's. There may be a record of these in the NY MOMA files. I could try to contact Barbara London at the MOMA to inquire about it....

Otherwise I just received a FAX from Katherina asking me for a budget and schedule for me to create "ATMOSPHERES II". I showed her some of the video and music from the piece which was my installation in Japan. So I am unclear if they want me to create a new installation piece or just the videos. I think they want the installation piece.

I'm also very interested in finding a home for my original Direct Video Synthesizer, and also for the Video Weaver, and perhaps for the original DVI #0 machine. Perhaps this is it. I had forgotten about the outliner I had built for you - hope it is still working well!

So call me with you exact travel times to SFO so we can schedule our time. See you then!

Best Regards to both of you.... eager to see your latest works.....

Steve Beck

VIDEOGRAPHICS

Reflections on the art of video.

We live in the electronic age. Thus it is appropriate that artists turn to electronic techniques in expressing the consciousness prevalent in this Yuga.

Television has a history based largely on the objective, photographic image. Experimental television is for me a process of exploring and portraying images of an opposite polarity. This type of image communicates with the viewer via a process of induction rather than through a logical or didactic method. In any event, the exchange is of a relative nature, depending upon both what the video work and the viewer bring to the situation.

Personally I have been interested in the symbolic, ideographic, and nonobjective modes of images, those which originate internally within the mind's eye. Affected by images of color and movement, I was lead to invent the Direct Video Synthesizer instrument. Conceiving of it as a compositional instrument rather than a distortion device, I incorporated a theory of visual "ingredients" of color, form, motion, and texture into electronic circuit modules which generate these building-block elements on a television display. The images that appear are due to the interplay of electronic vibrations, established by the artist, which create them.

At first I worked with "standard" electronic waves such as sine, triangle, and square. However, I have been less interested in the fact that a given image is produced with a sine wave or whatever, and more interested in the possibilities that a sine wave could suggest, say, a womb or a double helix DNA molecule, as in my tape *Conception*, or that it possessed a subjective quality distinctly different from a square wave.

Later in my work I learned how to expand electronic control into more complex contour and movement areas; so now I have such things as fire-, air-, and water-molecules. Flexibility in image control is the result of being able to design and construct working video



circuits to realize artistic needs, coupled with developing the visualization of images mentally.

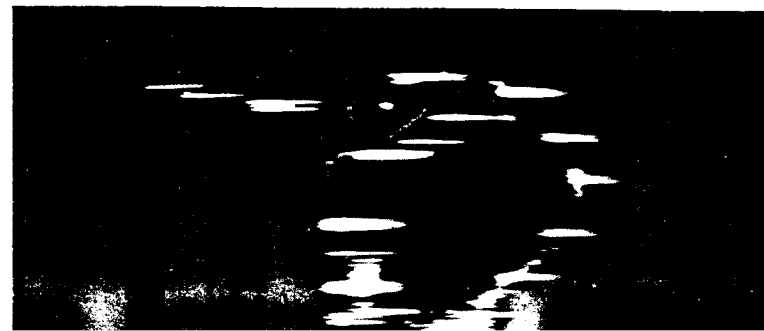
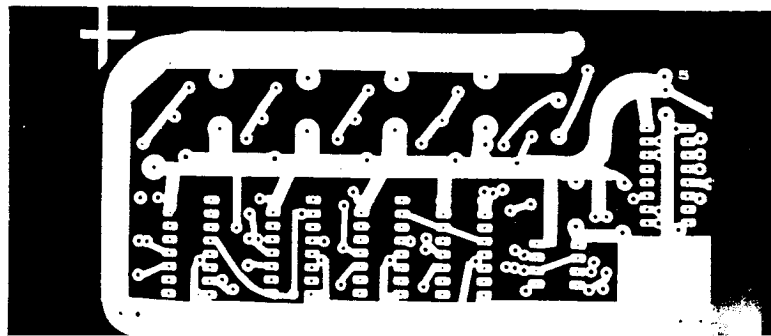
One comes to be aware of a visual language at work, that is, a grammar, syntax, and order in the arrangement and sequence of images. Video works can best be understood in terms of dialects of the basic visual language. In any case, the work cannot fail to express the Force which underlies it all.

Stephen Beck

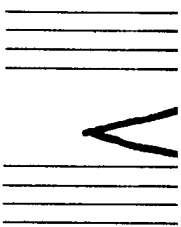
Below left: Circuit pattern, Direct Video Synthesizer, chroma modulator, etched copper on glass epoxy

Below right: Still frame from *Anima*, a video light dance by Stephen Beck and Katie McGuire, 1974

Above: Stephen Beck playing Direct Video Synthesizer, Berkeley, California, 1975



VIDEO (3/27, '76



Visual score from

For me the direct artificial, as the t compositional de hands of an artis they can churn ou from their own case lies in the cir Another aspect of composer to sub