

Box 391
Pacific Grove, CA 93950

June 4, 1999

Dear Woody and Steina.

Over the past several weeks I've been reading the material and studying the videos you so generously provided me. But now that it's time to respond, I have to admit that I feel a bit frustrated. This is not from lack of things to say, but the means to say it. The vocabulary I normally use to discuss works of art now seem inadequate; and even when I stretch words and meanings, what comes out still seems to miss the mark. So please forgive my awkwardness.

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It seems to me that in our society the television is both ubiquitous and invisible. Programming assures the invisibility of the medium by stressing content. Whether it is an advertisement for an automobile or the latest episode in a mini-series, the Networks want us to pay attention only to what that is taking place in front of our eyes and nothing else.

In your video work, contrary to our expectations, the magnetic allure of content is purposefully undermined. You deconstruct the image electronically, so that what is before us seems to flip-flop between what it purports to be (simulacrum of real people, objects and events) and what it truly is (electronic color, light and form). You have replaced linear story development with something more intuitive and plastic. Your soundtracks, too, seems to go against convention with their unadulterated (and sometimes jarring) sound, rather than upbeat, but inoffensive music. By consciously subverting expectations, you divert attention away from what it is we have grown to expect; to what, heretofore, had been invisible. The video images that emerge from this paradigm seem to me to be far more potent and interesting than what we have grown accustomed to expect from television. Without the usual constraints and conventions, the possibilities seem limitless.

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To cast machines in new roles is, somehow, to remove some of their implicit threat. This is especially so when you bring devices so closely associated with this nation's destructive technology into the aesthetic arena. The Brotherhood seems to me to be a ballet where grace has been replaced by precision. The over-riding aesthetic is not the one so often seen in ballet, that is, one of transcendence. To me, The Brotherhood seems to be about *uncertainty*. This, of course, is contrary to what most of us have come

to expect from machines. Machines seem to epitomize both purpose and certainty. But by utilizing an operating program that mirrors our own human frailties, you have imbued these technological marvels with human attributes. No longer do they seem quite so dominant and powerful. Instead, they seem uncertain; at times awkward; and like the rest of us, searching.

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I have taken the liberty of enclosing a number of my own video works. Find enclosed a demo reel from a work-in-progress entitled, *Subterranean Man*, a documentary that focuses on several individuals who chose to live in the crawl spaces beneath their homes. *The Coletta Chronicles (Part 1)* is the first part in a multi-part series that will follow a friend through his life. In Part 2 (also a work-in-progress), Bob has found the love of his life, and married. Unfortunately, he and his new spouse (Margaret) are unable to conceive. After much soul-searching, they decide to travel to Russia where they adopt three Russian orphans.

Also find enclosed: a short story I used in a performance/installation at the Sesnon Gallery at University of California, Santa Cruz; and some slides of my most recent work. Again, thanks very much for the material you so kindly provided me.

Best regards,



Mel Edelman