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A Visual Symphony

By: Penelope Place

Low tones vibrate throughout the C.G. Rein Gallery, drawing one toward a small room at the back. Inside, six video monitors hang at eye-level in a circle around a single seat. Within these boxes the universe turns. With their move to New Mexico, Woody and Steina Vasulka's work has expanded to include the whole world: the stones of Chaco Canyon intertwine with sky;

Acoma dwellings blend with Quarai ruins; cold white radio telescope discs float by (rotating within the rotation), technology within nature within technology. The imagery is more deliberate than previous Vasulka work, yet the basic vision remains the same. The Vasulkas art is uniquely video. In their January Rein Gallery installation, *The West*, one sees the results of years of experimentation.

Video, like film, is concerned with moving pictures. Unlike film, light and time are recorded electronically, resulting in such particular characteristics as horizontal drift. This television viewer's problem becomes an aesthetic technique as images float from right to left and from screen to screen.

In the creation of *The West*, the human influence was held to a minimum. The camera was placed, without the benefit of a viewfinder, on a revolving turntable facing a highly reflective sphere. The whole world was gathered by this unblinking eye.

Images overlap and electronic colors mix naturally with landscape through a "soft-keyer." The machine "identifies" the foreground by comparing light values, and the result is a painterly style. Mechanical manipulation may seem to leave the Vasulkas as observers rather than creators of this rotating world. One senses that their involvement is that of conductors of a visual symphony. The lush weavings of landscape are left open to interpretation. At one moment one is sitting within a technological kiva, then floating along a moonscape, now wrapped in an electric landscape - all the time enveloped by pulsating sound. The only drawback to this installation is that it could not continue indefinitely, as its timelessness would indicate.

Thanks to the Rein Gallery for embracing this artform, relatively unseen in Santa Fe.

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