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Crosswinds

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Santa Fe Video Workers

By Tonya Turner

Perhaps the most prominent video artists living and working in Santa Fe are Woody and Steina Vasulka. The Vasulkas were instrumental in the emergence of video as an art form in the '60s and consider video the "most nonmaterial, ideological medium, ...the alter ego to the official media". Some of these early video pioneers were already established artists who broke into New York galleries such as Leo Castelli and Sonnabend. But for those who worked purely in video like the Vasulkas, there were no avenues until they founded their own gallery, **The Kitchen**, in New York City.

By the 1970s video had established itself as an independent art form, and museums like the Guggenheim began to accept video art. According to the Vasulkas, however, first generation video artists were "always waiting for a second generation and a third." The Vasulkas are disappointed that strong new voices have failed to materialize.

"Video was a child of the 1960s," says Woody, "and since that time this generational invention has conformed to a mercantile culture." Woody attributes part of the transformation to the lack of political activity in the current generation. "This generation does not have the activism which united us. They no longer believe that ethics and aesthetics are the same matter".

A recent Vasulka video, *Art of Memory*, received the **Sony Prize for Best Video** at the Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and Video this fall. The work was judged by an international jury to be "a deeply moving work conveying an apocalyptic wonder and a longing for a sense of place."

Art of Memory took Woody three years to complete, during which time he and Steina shot landscapes and collected sounds. Woody explains he sometimes works conceptually, sometimes pictorially. Here the title itself, *Art of Memory* stands for description of the "old craft of mnemonic associations" and the Western landscapes play a significant role. Woody chooses the subjects from his own memory, which he defines as newsreels of the War he remembers, as pictorial objects inserted into an ancient, indifferent alien places".

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