

9/00

The Vasulkas: S T U D I O S

...I am a believer in six inches of space, the distant between cathode ray Tube and the Camera*. The rest of the space, I have always preached, is inside of the machine. I should not really need a physical space for my work, but...I do, I can't help it.

Woody: I discovered New York studios. It was a loft on 128 Front Street, the first of my life. Steina was in Paris. I lived there with Alphonse Schilling. I learned about a new lifestyle, which was basically to freelance. I discovered Wall Street. On Sunday it was beautiful, it was empty. And also Canal Street, which meant surplus. Canal Street discovered me. Alphonse got into 3-D there. I started to build the machines. All sorts of projectors, stroboscopic recordings, a lot of machines, sounds....This was the summer of 1967. In the fall of 1967 when Steina returned, we moved into 111. E. 14th Street, NY. NY. We still had two years before VIDEO.

Steina: We had 2 years, gorgeous years, in an 1200 square feet loft. Woody got deeply into working with strobes, he had a projector and mirrors, that needed a certain throw distance. For instance, he borrowed a *Bolex* camera from a friend, and built a miniature spaceship environment which needed a lot of space. Woody also built an animation stand for a friend's project that I inherited to make my first and only film. I had always thought that an animation stand was only possible in a gigantic industrial environment.

Woody: Our space not only expanded, but it initiated, in fact, told us what to do. The same with the tools, if you have a volume of tools, they make sense as a system. As an example, an Electro-Mechanical Bombing Computer I found on Canal Street has been adopted 5 times for different purposes. With a concentration of tools that are somehow intelligent, they will cross reference.

Woody: The idea of a space for working, a so-called studio, was known to us in a different context. It was known to me as an essential thing for painting or sculpture. In the States, especially in New York, suddenly all media became important. The instruments of media became so personalized that you could utilize them in a private space. To use light and projection in space, or sound in space involved the idea of defining space as a media environment. It was, I think, a completely new idea, about a whole class of tools to individuals as well. The need for space was synchronous to our need and interests.

Steina: Our encounter with video changed everything - our social lives, our language. We had been speaking Czech and socializing with the immigrant crowd, but how are you going to say "Raster Scan" or "Interlace" in Czech?

Steina: In 1971, when we started the Kitchen, we were hired for a job that would support fixing up and running the Kitchen. It was a public access advocacy place on Bleeker Street, called the Alternate Media Center. We were hired as "techies", which meant, we had access to all their equipment. I remember we made a tape titled "Keysnow" there. We pointed the camera at the wall that had sound insulating tiles. The image is the texture of the tiles. In the Kitchen, we also pointed at a texture on the wall, a tape called "Spaces I", and in 1972 we went to the Center for Experimental Television in California affiliated with KQED, and did a series of space inspired tapes.

Steina: Then, in 1973 we went to Buffalo for 6 weeks and stayed for 6 years. Part of the reason for staying was that we found a gorgeous studio on Franklin Street. It was 3,000 square feet with high ceilings. Very well suited for multipurpose. Perhaps that is also why Woody and I started going our own ways. We had enough tools and space to work separately, especially after the computer arrived. Woody could be sitting in one corner at the computer and I could have a large space to do all kinds of rotating machines and mirrors, and we would never be in each other's way. That loft space really shaped the images we got.

Woody: We had one more temporary studio, an open studio, when in 1971 we took a trip from the West to the East coast. Before we started, we had constructed an outdoor set-up with three black and white cameras, a little patch programmer and two keys. It was in the back of our station wagon and ran off a large stand-alone 12 volt car battery. We shot landscapes in what became the first version of "The West". We started from San Francisco and we stopped shooting in New Mexico at the Quarrai ruins.

Woody: Now, in Santa Fe we don't have a large space, it forced me to think about narrative. I thought before that space was an autonomous state of mind. It is the physicality which shapes you more than you shape it. It almost sounds like a paradox that we work with as much space as we are given. With less space we actually work with less variations.

Steina: From the time that we moved here in 1980 the whole of New Mexico has become my studio. For the indoor scenes of "The Commission" we rented a big gym space.

Woody: And New Mexico otherwise? It has great surplus possibilities, great weather for an outdoor shoot. Almost no chance to show work, or get support. So, there is no basis for us to be here at all, there is nothing we can do for our neighbors here, and nothing they can do for us, it is an ideal place...

Studios:

Spring 1967: 128 Front St. NY, NY

Fall 1967: 111. E. 14 St. NY, NY

Fall 1973: 257 Franklin St. Buffalo, NY

Winter 1980 : 1600 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe, NM

Fall 1983 : Villa Real de Agua Fria, NM

?? Reference to the Rutt/Etra Scan Processor

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