

GARRY HILL--1979

You see in this case I don't want you to say anything specific in this interview. This is all a summary so there's absolutely nothing you should be witty about or inventive.

What do you mean specific?

Because the question I'm going to give you . . .

I don't want to be witty. I want to try and find out something about essentially . . . I want to be able to clarify things for myself. You know, you have your own concerns but I want something that shows me some clarification.

Right. That would be nice if you would also accept some general needs. For instance, questions that everybody asks like what constitutes a craft of video or what is specific in video to you, what is the material we are working with and those questions. So maybe you could address those unless they are extremely opposite to your needs to talk about.

Well, okay. Already it presents complications when I think of how I relate to the craft of video or what I need in video specifically because I can't put video in a framework and say this is for this. In other words, this is where it begins and this is where it ends and this is how a certain craft relates to video. In other words there be a process that I've been involved in video that affects something that in the end has nothing to do with videomaking in terms of the hardware and the final product. It may have to do with making a drawing or thinking of doing a space in some way that only has to do with sound or something. If that's what you call video then it's too specific.

What I call video is what you do since I've looked at your work and I recognize it as video.

Right. Okay, in that sense, you see, I did sculpture for a long time and then for a number of reasons I started making video and dropped the making of sculpture, using materials to construct things. And I felt that I got swept up in the craft of video and finding out what it is, a certain phenomenological aspect of it, just how incredible it is. Electronics. Almost, in a certain way electronics in general. Sound, computers, whatever. That kind of, I guess, cybernetics in a way, the possibilities of that and in that period of time I would say there's even two or three years where I produced tapes which I feel show craftsmanship and the beginnings of a knowledge of those systems but don't speak to certain concerns I realize that I had and I left and now I'm only beginning to return but through having the experiences with cybernetics and electronics and now I want to refocus that into sculpture which may include video, may include monitors, may include computers, may include cybernetics.

What you're saying is that looking back you would say that your involvement in video was in fact part of a larger involvement which is with electronics.

What you say large?

Larger involvement. It's not a single discipline to you. At least, you would try to avoid that issue by specifying that for you video was part of a larger knowledge or material or craft in which you label it electronics which video was part of. What you're saying now is that now you're going to re-enter into a broader area with the knowledge of electronics which video helped you to map. Is that what you're saying?

Exactly. It's a definition or a description of my involvement with video. In other words, I think there's a certain way of looking at video and I think that in a general sense of how people in general view video. . . It's a moving, image-making device. Even within the confines of image-making that

you and I may know of it and very few other people in relationship to how many people use video. Okay? Now, I've gone through different pockets of belief. One is that there is something inherent to video, like there's something inherent in other mediums, that something only comes through that medium out and one can dialogue with that and make something that is specifically video. Okay? Now I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure that video is an isolated medium. That possibly it is a frame of mind that really is electronics and not video. And also what I've come to realize which I used to totally reject and always wanted to really see that separation between television and video. Television is so pervasive that . . . it's just that it's in that box and you can't escape it on a certain level. You can escape in how you make images but on the total structure of making something and putting it out into the world, you can't escape that structure of television. Even outside of broadcasting. Forgetting broadcasting altogether.

Good. So now then let's forget video and speak about what you define as electronics or this frame of mind . . .

Okay. Well, I think that it's what has kept me searching is that broadened process that allows for thinking. In other words, setting up loops between a machine and a person. There is a trap of that sort of dual, what's the word, sort of dualistic thing where it will oscillate forever. What you could call . . . or analogize with video feedback. I think one has to put three or more elements within that loop to keep it clear or expanding rather than entropic or something that eats itself up. And I think that's what interests me about it the most. In terms of thinking about anything, is setting up situations where new information comes from the outside and you can set up another block of information from the inside. In other words, a concept in your mind and then set up trackings and things that connect those things together with machines and then another box will develop and so on and so forth. It's hard to explain.

In every development of craft, say you work with stone, there's an internal structure that you come to your external structure or your structure plus you're confronted with an external work. That's closer to it. What is it actually when you really go on the level of working with it . . .

But I still think the difference between when you say stone is that when an element or a particle of that process takes place with a stone I think it's more pinpointed. It's also a smaller period of time whereas with electronics it can encase a larger spectrum all at once and that's why I think new ideas come from it. It's not a repeat of . . . that's why I don't think video is a medium within itself. It's not going to repeat itself like stone, like painting, like film. That's what's different about it. Because of that, it's like, it just puts it all at once, a bunch of time, a bunch of space all at one time. You don't get that with stone.

Yes, but then stone belongs to a system called nature and so it would say that video is part of this other branch called electronics.

Steina: You already disagree that you think that video is a medium like any other medium, like stone or painting whereas Garry is saying that it's not.

Woody: No, I'm not saying anything. My idea about video is even much vaguer than this.

Steina: Yes, but if it is not a medium what is it?

Garry: It's a medium in the sense of it involving tools and part of it comes down to . . . I'm talking about . . . When I say medium, I guess, something that generates an area of working and then it generates areas to work within that. It becomes evident, almost in a collective consciousness from the medium and from individuals and other mediums.

But let's try to define it because so far you have been quite general. There still must be something

which you call electronics which you could put your finger on. You describe some systems for example. The interaction between the systems.

When I say electronics I don't mean circuits, that's not important, that's not the important part of it which may be what you call the craft of it. That's not what's important. That's part of it but it's not what is the most important part about it. When I say electronics I mean the process, I mean that system which you call, which I describe, and you call it a system. Okay? First of all, there's probably a difference right there in the sense of . . . if I were to set up one of these systems I find that it is usually not a closed system and it usually incorporates something that is very unelectronic so it creates a dialectic between something that is electronic and not and there's not really a separation between a nature, or a natural thing or whatever you referred to as stone and electronics. I almost see that a social problem.

I look at it from the viewpoint of the craft. Stone has its own craft of making. Electronics may have the craft of making as well.

I've had conversations with people that you may call electronic designers or . . . they have different names but they may think of craft as the design and the blockings and the systems of the control of electricity which is a microcosm of what you eventually end up with in the image.

This is craft of making tools but it is not the craft of working with what you define as electronics.

Okay. We agree on that. That's what I mean. There is a separate craft and it's kind of a thinking craft because that's what it allows you do. It allows you to think without necessarily interacting with a tool or something you may touch.

We could agree that since you take already made tools and you can position yourself at any level of process of working with it. You don't have to be at the primary level all the time, making the circuits that make it. You can also take boxes, let's say like oscillators or whatever and work with those. And they are already packaged by people who know how to make those tools. You don't have to be in the definition that close to it but maybe you could be and maybe you should be and maybe you shouldn't be.

That's true. Whether you should be or shouldn't be, I think becomes an individual question. It's not a question that's important to the whole as defining it or not defining it or thinking that it is or it isn't. I think that's an individual question of priorities, of individual involvement.

Enough about craft now what about the phenomena of it. What is it for you? You already described a few metaphysical remarks about what it is.

What did I say that was metaphysical?

You know, about a frame of mind. You said it's a part of a larger consciousness. So could you be more specific in defining what is the phenomena of electronics especially in the making of video since you have done that quite extensively besides the other things.

Well, that question almost seems more appropriate for someone who's into physics. In other words, I'm not interested in grasping the metaphysical aspects of electricity. That's doesn't interest me. I accept it in that sense as an energy tool. It's interesting that people don't really know what electricity is at some level but there are other things that are of more interest to me.

So, you don't perceive it as a phenomena. Working with electricity. There's nothing that would be surprising to you or unusual.

Oh, well, it's definitely full of surprises that's why I said that looking back that's always can be, can have a certain amount of falsehood in it, of being swept into which may be part of its phenomena. I find that I still, and it's becoming stronger, I just have this preoccupation with a certain kind of physicalness of things which that did not have. Even conceptually, when you think of sculpting with oscillators, you're forming conceptual spaces. It just isn't . . . you can't touch it. I'm interested in that area that's between those two.

You know, like photographic image you project that image, you cannot touch it either. That's kind of the dilemma of not untouchable.

Well, I agree. I probably feel the same way then if I was into photography.

All the media are basically untouchable. You can't touch sound really.

No, but you experience sound much more in relationship to space.

You usually experience it in earphones or in a speaker.

But if there are several speakers in a space, you experience it . . .

Of course, space is always there but I guess you cannot say that you can . . .

What I'm talking about is not directly related to the mediums per se. It's just a personal feeling. At this point, there's a certain synapse in myself that . . .

Steina: Yes, but you asked Bill this question "Why do you use film?" and I guess he might answer you mostly because he wanted a large screen.

No, I also asked him . . . because he said that but also in relationship to knowing something about the two a little bit . . . that it seemed like he could have done it in film. In other words, I didn't really see something which seemed to have that electronic resonance to it where I felt like it was part of the thing whereas he did. In fact, he said that to the question that he felt something working with it but for him it seemed more having to do with when it actually happened in relationship to himself, something that he liked to go through but as far as putting that into what came out to me, that wasn't there. I think that's okay.

Steina: Yes, but one of the definitions of video is the immediate, like sounds, you monitor sounds while you are making it.

Right. But in other words, in the elements of those tapes which I asked the question afterwards there was no necessity, or it didn't seem to reflect that feedback of being able to, for instance, monitor what was happening at the time. It seemed to be an idea and then he . . .

But they were all assembled at different times. They had nothing to do with the real time. They were reconstructions basically. That's what they were.

Steina: Yes, but this is some kind of definition I think always about video. Why certain people have to work in that medium and certain other people can work in film or have to work in film. There is this immediacy. It's the same thing as about sound. You don't collect sounds in order to hear them two weeks later without ever knowing how you got it in the first place.

Right. But that would just be a kind of impatience. Does that necessarily have something to do with the definition of the video medium. That's just impatience.

In other words the mystique of real time.

No, not specifically in those tapes since they were constructed . . . in other words I mean he could have shot them and if he did them in film he would have had to have waited a week. If he did wait the week and got it, it's not really going to affect it in that way. The thing itself. But there was one thing that he did say which because I don't find that . . . when he said about the light of the image, you know, that video had this sort of different quality. He mentioned that. It has different quality and that's one of the reasons I do it. That's a very visual thing to say. Although it does, that's another thing that I don't think is the big thing of video even though that's how you experience it.

That's what filmmakers say, they know how film smells. That's why it's film. Anyway, as I understand this dialogue we are having you rather prefer polemical mode.

What's that mean?

You are in a much more immediate mode. You would not theorize with passion.

I don't follow. I don't know what you mean: theorize with passion. The two words almost seem antithetical.

So it's like you have forgotten willingly whatever you have achieved in your definitions previously. It's a kind of conscious denial.

But I haven't forgotten. It's in relationship to those things. I'm the kind of person that I really do change my mind a lot.

You're defiant basically.

Steina: Yes, but the original definition . . .

But that's included in my definition is the change of mind.

Steina: . . . of the human being one of the boxes and the other boxes are in relating. Isn't that sort of what you meant? That you have those various boxes, those various tools and then you, as a human, are another tool.

Yes, I mean that's a specific image that produces that process that is special. Now, there may be more but that is a specific one.

Let me ask you a different question. Since you have defined to some degree video or electronics, let's speak about what you are doing or what have been doing for ten years or what. . .

I haven't been making video for ten years.

What are you gonna do? Or is there any utility in this or is it it.

Utility?

What are you going to do with this knowledge? Do you have plans for the future?

Well, I can tell you some ideas I have for installations. I know what you want me to do but I can't.
..

I just wanted to know. . .

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No, in other words I guess . . .

What have we gained in fact in going through this?

For me, I've gained a very specific way of thinking abstractly.

Okay, so you have insights. What I'm say is this: Is this knowledge to be used?

Is this knowledge to be used? Well, . . .

Or do you have go through another phenomena like video, that you progress . . .

Do you mean in terms of, used by ourselves or used in general?

I don't know.

I don't know. That question that can be answered on so many senses. To be used. I take information and it's all in there and I think certain things and then it's passed on in different ways and then it happens to everybody and then there's little darts of information and knowledge and insights and non-insights flowing all over the place and there's television waves and radio waves and it's all a bunch of vibrations.

So you would not specify that maybe you would not actually plan your work at all.

I guess it ends up being planned six months to a year ahead but in that sense I don't have a general overall strategy. I have specific things that I want to do which I can look at and see how they relate and where they're coming from. Sometimes I'll drop them for reasons that I see . . . In other words, I have only so much time, so much energy and this one doesn't seem to fall into the primary thing of what I want to get at. Now to define that is . . . because I don't necessarily know because . . . I hate to be so intuitive about the whole thing but . . . I have three or four ideas in my mind for specific things I want to do that are very . . .

I'm asking you about something else. With this attitude, can you teach?

You're going to bring up the teaching. I find the teaching . . . I guess I have to look at it almost theoretically on a certain level because I have to assume that, what if there was enough equipment to go around. First of all, there's so many questions before I can even question myself whether I can teach that I wouldn't even know right now whether I could. Okay. But if I try and push that ahead and assume that . . . I think teaching would be very difficult for me. It's so funny to think that it would be and I've been teaching for a semester.

I mean if you don't have the ideal equipment then don't you . . . theorize. Because you have teach something so you must have come to some curriculum, some personal curriculum. You must have some way of talking to people.

For instance, in a semester if I take my undergraduate class and . . . you see, I have nothing really to compare it to so I get six students in this class that know essentially nothing about video . . . So I could either approach it . . . First of all, I came into this about a week before I was going to start so I had no way of sitting down and preparing something. But I don't whether I would have anyway. I find that I didn't want to approach it in a linear matter. Like I was going to start here and progress to here. I just went in and whatever accumulated that day, where it seemed right to start, I started. In a linear thing it could have been a 60% into the knowledge and then gone back to here and it depended on who came, on what tapes there were to show, what worked. In other words, what it really came out more to be was how to connect things together for that specific day. It was

almost like a survival of making anything work at all in terms of dialoging with these people.

You make it sound traumatic. Like the Vietnam war.

Video apocalypse.

So you see, that since I've come to so many of your lectures or shows, I got pieces and bits of insight about you at a particular time you had a particular thought. Sometimes you defend something, sometimes you would attack something. As I understand that these things you don't particularly stabilize in your world view, you just don't bring them back. At least you're not doing it now. Is there any time when you've assembled this in notes or articles or speech on videotape or audiotape that would possibly constitute some sort of insight into this process.

I haven't but I'm faced with the issue right now because I'm supposed to do video viewpoints at the end of February.

What is that?

It's a kind of combination of lecture and tape at MoMA. It's a series they have every year. Didn't you do it?

No.

I guess in a sense I am defiant in a way because I start thinking about it and I start thinking of writing about it but I almost want to do something that communicates it without being about it but does it. Not by showing tapes which say this is an example of, or talking about it, but doing something there that will get it through. It's just gets . . . there's just too many ifs.

You see the Voice speaking about people not being able to describe video. In fact, the best writing of people doing video is not really about video at all. In fact, there's not even a sketch that considers the craft of video. I've been inaugurating these dialogues with other people on this basis. Some of them even didn't accept these terms. Some of them gave a thought to it like Beck has gotten as far as tried aesthetically to define the medium but then of course it borrowed a lot from the established aesthetic language. So anyway maybe it is just impossible to want it, then I don't think we should be surprised that nobody does it anyway since we don't do it. There must be some reason for it. I guess we just have to look at it as you said, maybe it's a total large discipline in my mind in linkage usually to the development of moving image with consideration of this new material. I don't think it's that specific once you put it into the frame. If you treated sculpture in the arts you'd suggest it. Then of course, it has a different dimension to it but then I'm not a sculptor either. So I have my own dilemmas. We could map those dilemmas and many people in fact just drop video. Like (?) Kappus (?) allegedly dropped it because he couldn't find any proper way of exploring it further or . . .

Steina: His statement was that it was (?).

Woody: From his area? From this point and so forth and now you see the new generation of video which is represented by Fitzgerald and Sanborn. They basically go through the same pathway of finding, filming, the equivalent of film extended through some editing or electronic editing. Very similar to what (?) which is another pathway which . . . in your case as well. I don't think you considered that as . . .

You know, it's really strange but today I called up Channel 13 to ask them what were the capabilities of whatever device they have that squeezes stuff, locates to a limited degree because it was full color and today John Godfrey calls me up and I was explaining to him some basic things

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I wanted to do to see if it was possible and he said, "Well, I just want to let you know that John Sanborn is already doing this kind of shit." It was so bizarre. I was really taken aback.

Steina: He always says that.

In other words, if one person is using a machine then the archetype of it is gone.

Steina: But he's done it so many times. Oh, that's been done four years ago, he'll tell you if you want to do something.

Woody: I guess this is a typical remark about somebody who looks at electronic image or video as tricks or special effects.

I was talking to him about . . . I basically got off on using the (?) but I want to see what it would be like in color and just having the raster moving completely off the screen one way and completely off the screen the other way and then having the camera watching that while using the camera and trying to readjust it so that it's not moving. So it's like opposite. He said, "Well, you can get that by doing a wipe." In other words, which would have a similarity of course but . . . see this is an interesting question because . . . would the tension between the movement of the synch, to move the frame, and the camera trying to negate that essentially, would that come through video or would just doing a wipe one way and then wipe the other way do the same thing. To me, of course, knowing the process and the difference, to me it's very different but that's an interesting question right there in terms of what . . . is that transmitted?

It is because I find that the most trivial details once they become conceptual are slightly different and can make the most profound differences.

I believe that too.

Everything is in the detail anyway.

Right. But does it make a difference more in the sense of like, detail like this and this are different. More than a detail that becomes important.

Steina: It reminds me of the commercials because they have gotten very far in those things. Everybody who doesn't understand the language of the moving image would just say, "This is a wipe." They will not know the difference but the picture just comes in on the screen of being tiny and it spreads over the screen. They don't know the differential between a wipe because the picture underneath goes out or I saw another one. I saw guy and he was talking and there came a line down through the middle of the face and split the screen. There was another image underneath. Now this is just a trivia to a normal viewer because he has seen it all and he doesn't even know that this is different technique that's being used and he will call it a wipe, I'm sure. But to me it was very important because I had never seen this before that you could take an image split in the middle and in the same proportion have it go out on both sides. So, it was interesting that there is a whole vocabulary there and if it is expressed as a vocabulary, as some kind of intelligence I think that people will perceive it. When in comes in a commercial, that way, then it is totally trivialized and are not noticed either.

Woody: What's interesting about these things is that you take them out as artifacts and they are so artificial and disconnected from the rest of the story that you can actually examine them and see them. If you can't integrate it into the story, so you look at them as something else, they are not artifacts, they are syntax. So I am interested in bringing them out as artifacts but again . . .

Garry: So it's interesting you say that because I found recently that I have this string of interests

in somehow trying to relate that to text slash possibly some form of narration but in kind of an oppy way. I really don't know how to explain it . . . but in the sense of making the detail come out more but that may be ridiculous. That may be false.

We work in this medium which tends to be so convincing as a narrative meaning and now as you notice everybody of the new generation is trying to integrate it himself or herself into some sort of social context.

But I don't mean the social context.

That is a profound impact on what people do. You didn't see (?), did you? That was an interesting show because he used (?). He used squares, he made masks. (?) Like an external key. But it was generated through oring two squares (?) and there he put, by its looks (?) printed between A and B image. The function he achieved was only or (?) but he changed the time constant, that means sometimes it looked like a dissolve between two images and he used in a syntactic way. Three people talking here and people there, classical shot. He brought it in and out by frequency of oring so in a way it was so new to (?) that I (?) on the other hand it was exercised on a story in a bar, contemporary some of them, punkish, some of them intellectual, so basically he lost me in that sense. I would rather bring (?) to it.

In other words, I'm on more like on the level of, I mean you mentioned (?) and stuff like that where just as an example, say whether people are in the image or not, but people are having a conversation and instead of having, say for instance, a narrative and it's at a bar and has all these other things to it, people are talking essentially circular in referring to what they are doing and what maybe they come in is in there questioning or answering or dialogue is . . . or do you want to this or do you want to this or ifs, if you want to this then I'll do this and have that relationship also happen electronically. Will stuff like that be able to be transmitted? In other words, one would have to know what oring is but maybe how people will know how oring is (side one of tape ends).

You have to realize that (?) and in the process he's making he realized that he created a tool. He was told to experiment with or (?) centers between two pieces of film and so in that way it was precise but it was only one function. I see many, many other functions and like (?) who was sitting there, is extended into his own thinking about what he has done in those areas. So there was some sort of dialogue. See that's what interests me about the whole schtick anyway. I'm not interested in video or computers in that pure a way. I'm interested in it as a tool but I'm interested in those little interactions right now. That will change, of course. I think this is the experience that I came through video has been surely founded in the computer but there are many other things that both fascinated me as they have everybody working with video. Are we going to spread, are we going to write it down or not or are we not going to write it down.

I'm trying right now. You know, it's frustrating but I really want somehow to do it. It's a real war.

Like Sherry and Ralph are supposed to write it, their book. We got the book, all I could write tools and maybe six, twelve or ten interviews. That's how far I could get and now you're supposed to write it and I just noticed that Phil also has got finally to pose a definition. Someone called Vernon (?) . I looked through his long article. I could only allocate maybe thirty lines of text (?) So it's virtually not done. I don't think that we can do anything about it. Just not being write (right?).

Steina: Let me ask you how you came into the (?), like maybe through the tools, what was the first tool you encountered.

Well, the first . . . actually it was very just kind of haphazardly. I was walking around Woodstock and just kind of that day I thought I'd like to try out using a video camera. Woodstock (?) Video

was there right. Ken Marsh and stuff. So I just went up there and asked them if I could go out and use it. In fact the first thing that I did which was really to find out how to use it was . . . I had just done a thing with a friend, a painting, these little colored squares all over the town for about four days in a row at night so that they would appear gradually and we got caught after four days. Anyway, we documented that and asked people what they thought and it was just to check it out and I loved it. There was just something about at that point, this is interesting about just the electronic thing and the phenomena of it, that looking through the viewfinder was really intense for me. I just loved it. It was just that you could peek around the camera and there would be what it was but there was this super-reality of anything. It didn't have to be abstract, just looking at paint cracking off a wall or anything. It just had this very super-real thing about it and this interconnectedness of the image and you thinking together. Kind of like a Zen sort of thing of just exploring reality. I think the first thing that I did was asked him if he had a couple more decks. This is interesting because I didn't know anything about it. It was something that happened naturally where I recorded someone for some tape just talking and then I played that back on the monitor and then they sat in front of the monitor as if they were talking about what they were talking about and just kept doing that. But it's interesting that you just sort of do that automatically. The feedback thing. After that he had gotten this little Shintron special effects thing. Real bad. Bad synch and everything. The keyer was terrible. It was the black and white Genlock kind where you had positive/neg.

There was a tuner in those.

Yes, that one. L-375 or something.

You got to use the synch off the air.

Right. That's how it worked best actually. Then he got somebody to make a little keyer for it and I got totally into it. I was exchanging with him, like taping town board meetings and stuff for time to use the stuff and I would go in there and stay up till four or five in the morning. No one else was using it. He wasn't even using it. I guess that's when I did "Rock City Road." I found this interconnectedness with the material of asphalt in relationship to the pixels of an image. Playing between those two things. It was very physical and very intuitive for me. In a certain way, it was so much more open than I am now. In terms of dealing with that kind of dialogue: what will happen if I do this, what will happen if I put it in reverse, tear the tape, roll the snow, retape, retape, retape, have monitors on the screen. It was very expressionistic, anything goes. I had no knowledge of what was going on or anything so it was especially interesting to me when I began to see what people like you two had done.

What you are describing is us.

Right. Then he got a Segal Colorizer and then Toby Carey went to the Experimental Television Center and he did that banjo tape, feedback and stuff. At that time I wanted every tool possible and I went up there.

That's like '74?

I went up there in '75 or very end of '74.

The first tape I saw of yours was of that dancer, colorized. Like moving on stones on the water. That was when?

That was even later.

You did that at the Experimental TV Center or in Woodstock?

Well, I did both. It was colorized on David's four-channel machine. I did a series of feedback tapes which I think are well crafted in terms of having control. And I did these dance tapes with this dancer but they don't interest me at all right now. At times, I've even wanted to destroy them. It was a situation of seeing how much control I could have, putting things together. It was another challenge to have a person in it. Those first things I did have a rawness about them. "Rock City Road" They're just raw tapes. It starts out with spots that are just like snow, very slowly there's more and more and the decks go in fast forward and one's positive and one's negative, one's horizontal and one's vertical and then they stop and then I run them like that, stopping and starting. In a certain way, there's a very filmic rhythm to it.

Do we have that?

No, I don't think so.

Steina: No, we don't have it. We have an interesting tape of . . . it was just oscillator, oscillator tape, that I think was made around that time too. When did you realize the relationship between sound and image? How much video had you done before you realized . . .

You mean in terms of generating the image and the same thing doing the sound?

Yes.

I think the first tape that I did that was specific to that was "Earth Pulse." It was a very distorted image of myself. But that had a very specific relationship to a human interacting but really put that on the screen. That sort of fisheye, circular thing of my hands, like this, and then my arms were hitting my body and I was going "Uh, uh, uh" like that and there was a certain rhythm to that moving in and out. Oscillators went through it. But I was very conscious of having the sound, like, say the filter of the sound follow the oscillation. They weren't generated together. They weren't generated specifically together but I did this oscilloscope tape which is just totally that. Before or around the same time.

I think that's the tape we have.

It's just an oscilloscope tape.

Yes, that's what we have.

Are you sure? How would you have that?

I think I stole it from you.

Is it on with "Suns and Differences"? Is it on one of those tapes?

No, it was on one of those tapes and I just liked it. You could look at them all and then you could tell . . .

No, it's fine with me. I just don't remember . . . That tape transcended the oscilloscope in a certain way. It really got out of that, well, this was made on the oscilloscope.

Do you have an anthology of your work? You should make a "Best of Garry" so we could have some access to that. Maybe the only meaningful thing about these things is to put together a pictorial.

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Steina: Maybe you should have that for your show at MoMA. Just a summary of all your things.

I had to give them a title for the whole thing and I said, "Well, call it 'Processual Video'." I guess the reason is, is that it is totally undefined. It's in process but I wanted to make it different because I notice people are starting to use the word "Process Video" and I wanted to differentiate between that. That seems to point to using a process in images. Whereas I wanted it to be a mental thing.

You said chose the slides of (?) figure out those two oscillators, working together. The only contribution we have is the moving frame. I'm talking about substantial insight, is that you realize it had something to do with time, the position in time which was kind of a problem to me. In film they're locked into the same position so that was unlike film for me and others have, you must have something specific. I think you are, in a way, you are electronic linguistics.

I'm really getting interested in that area more and more. I think that there might be some connection between . . . and not on a scientific level, I mean, maybe it's only on a personal thing, but of how words are formed, how one develops syntax when they think and how one works with electronics. There may be some way of putting that out.

Steina: Yes, meaning the action is first and then once you know the action you have to name it. Every phenomena or action or whatever it is called has to be pinpointed by some kind of label.

Woody: Or reacted to. Which really means interacted to. You define how it behaves and how you behave with it. Is that what you mean?

It's more like thinking about the source of words and it just seems like it's the same thing as . . . and also I think living in Berrytown and talking with George a lot and experiencing what he's involved in as something that's very different from poetry in the same sense that I don't look at video as a specific medium. He may refer to poetry and stuff, I mean I haven't talked to him about it specifically but it may be a similar situation and the way that he works with language seems similar and I think that that is part of it. I think there's an incredible analogy now in the sense of someone working on a sophisticated typesetting machine and working with language through that. It's the difference between writing and typewriter but just multiply that by a lot. It's more sophisticated like video tools. I think it's very similar. It's almost identical and yet it has to do with words. One has to do with images and one has to do with words which are miles apart and yet that process which I think can be put out there is the same.

Except moving image has been around only for 70 or 80 years and spoken language has been around for much longer. So it's interesting.

Woody: It's less exclusive in its treatment of this . . .

Steina: There's nothing special you want to say about tools? Like, I mean, the first tool was the Shintron, I mean the camera first and then the Shintron and you got the Segal Colorizer . . .

And delay and stuff like that I guess. Using a lot of decks. I did a lot of rescanning, of mixing, being able to mix pre-recorded stuff and then I used the (?) at the center. I became sort of known up there for coming up there and hooking up everything that was there on a bank. All the (?).

Now when did you get the idea that you would like to understand what you were using?

Actually, I must have only been at the Experimental Television Center six times. Six, seven, maybe even five. It wasn't that many times and it just became . . . I always had to rigamarole with Ken. You always had to rigamarole or do the whole thing or get a job or do this or do that to work, to go to Binghamton, to be able to organize your life to go there at a specific time. You had to have

an idea by that time or decide that something will come up. All these things. All of sudden there became this opportunity of being able to partially support David to build me a mainframe and start plugging stuff into it.

Did you own the surge by then, didn't you?

I owned a Synthi first and I traded it directly to Ken for the surge.

Was it a good choice?

In terms of a trade?

To me, one's a toy, a useful toy and I would like to have them both. In terms of programmability of control, the surge, first of all you have as many outlets as you want. In the Synthi you have two. Not only that in the surge there are modules that are programmable to do different things.

It's like an analog computer in a way.

Exactly.

So you had that and you had your own rig, your own portapak.

I never had my own portapak. I never had my own camera. I went from not having anything to having a sound modular machine, or a Synthi first and then that and then I welded that rack which sat around for about a year because I was going to do it with Walter. Me and Walter used to dialog a lot. In fact the first time I was at the TV Center I would ask him what he thought and for advice. I didn't know in relationship to what, anything. As far as I was concerned he seemed to have been doing it for a while. We became friends and we both dreamed of getting our own machines and at that time it was like a four channel David Jones Colorizer. So we'd spend days at my house at Woodstock and we'd start drawing and all of sudden we ended up with A-D Converters, ALUs, giant electronic switching matrix. We spend days, you know, how much it would cost, bank of tiers. Everything you could think of. It was funny because I don't have a Dave Jones Colorizer to this day and yet I have everything else. I guess now even for my class I'm almost tempted to turn one of the courses into people who really want to do it, to start building a main frame, a power supply, an output amplifier and an input amplifier. So I can plug into. Because that's what I found out personally and whoever finds that out . . . if you're going to do it, you gotta do that.

How did you get the idea to be so persistent to continue with this tool. Walter didn't.

Right now Walter's building all kinds of stuff.

Yes, but he didn't do it then. Because he had much more of a background. You were a person with no background but you got right in there and did it.

I really wanted it. That's part of it. I just connected with David at the right time to build a few things. It was perfect situation because I did know how to weld so I had this intuitive thing of putting two things together. I was really good at it in terms of that and then when you build a mainframe and you build a power supply the first soldering is big, clumpy. Big things and then it gets smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller. I was able to go like that all along and at the same time I began to be able to follow a signal, this goes into this chip and these things had to be powered. Basic things which is really as far as I am now. Right now, any design I could do would be like to plug in an exclusive (?) or something if I wanted to do that, or block TTL stuff but I couldn't design an analog amp. But all the building blocks are there. David used ICs and capacitors. Now I can use modular things within that to do other things.

Yes, Perry's going through the same thing now.

But I also find this very strange relationship. The more sophisticated possibilities get, I find myself turning to try and do something very elementary. It is that defiant thing. Not wanting to continue this linear dialogue with the development of the tools. It's like saying "No! I don't want to do that."

That has two ends always.

No, I know it has two ends because at other times I get totally involved in it. It's like working from two ends. A fuse that is lit at both ends.

Steina: I think you have to have this dialogue. I think it's impossible to live without it because then you enter the famous (?) where you can do images of where you point the camera at the screen and you point the camera again at the screen. You could have stayed doing that all those years and also gotten very fantastic at it and made masterpieces but in a way it was not possible. Things have to go on. There isn't really a choice here. There may be a choice of pace at which one continues.

Woody: (?) When I look at what other people have been doing. It's quite consistent. It's not that much different from what we did and what you did and Beck did. When you look at it from a distance, it's very similar.

I think Beck is so different, I can't imagine.

Steina: Beck didn't really go that experimental. I would say Segal. If you see old Segal tapes from '68-'69 he's doing the same thing, pointing out the monitor and getting feedback.

Woody: Beck's first tape . . . what was it called?

Steina: Yes, the first tape, it was only oscillators.

Woody: It's called "Point of Inclination" or something like that. And other sketches, they're identical. You cannot really escape that playing.

No, sure.

Woody: Of course, then he packaged it in some kind of a system and then he did the (?) instead of the digital stuff. It's all pre-digital.

Steina: But the people who are trying to have gone through this, well, Steve to a degree, Segal very much, and then Garry and Perry. Perry very much also. Gone through the feedback, through the oscillator, hooking into that or those things and we have. I don't remember that many more because in a way, like in Chicago they started out with this tool, the IP, that already had so many things in it.

I see what you mean. Barbara Buchner started with something more specific with what she wanted to do with colorizing.

Steina: She wasn't into this experimental phase as much. We had that year and a half without a keyer, before we saw our first keyed image. That's when we did all the traveling back and forth . . .

That's interesting. You know, the unlocked image. This happened much after you guys did . . .

It doesn't matter. You discovered . . .

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No. What happened was that I was at the Center and one of those Sony box cameras had a loose connection and the thing was running and I was totally excited and was asking, "Will it record? Will it record? Can you control it? David, come here. How can I make it stop?" Anything that happened differently, all of a sudden you wanted to have control and be able to . . .

Woody: Absolutely.

Steina: Because we also have the Sony camera and we had a broken cable and we plugged it into a Sony SAT and that's how it happened. And the same question: "How can we control it?" We tried everything. We unplugged it out of the AC and changed the AC and . . .

You can use a screwdriver on the horizontal crystal and get it to stop sometimes before it will start going. I have a real terrible tape I did when I was there called "Trans-Portration," like, sitting in a chair but there's a bunch of feedback which destroyed it, mixed with it. In fact I used the wheelchair that they have there and I rolled up myself to the camera and I was also using just a two-input sequencer that was sequenced inbetween feedback and my image so my image would come and then it would blow up but it would retain it for a while because the feedback would stick to it and it would flow off to the side. First, my image comes up all the way to the full face and then it goes off, until it goes really fast. Then it goes the other way or something then finally it goes back.