

# THE VASULKAS

Bill Etra  
640 Jones Rd.  
Englewood, N.J.  
07631

Dear William,

In order to employ your vast knowledge of the field and all personnel involved, I will try to provide the context of our needs to populate the virgin territories of the East by a new generation of tools and a creative team of artists, technologists and educators. The idea here is to form an independent society of people, with a capacity, passion or any other personal reason to extend their long or short time interest in all forms of computer assisted art forms, systems and instruments. Traditionally, my interest and that of my closest associates is strictly in non-mercantile areas of human activities, those strategies, so clear and cherished in recent time, before the mindless hysteria of commerce engulfed the world.

By now the "virgin" territories of the globe are not so virgin anymore. In Czech Republic for example, Silicon Graphic has made an unprecedented push to seduce the Government to uneasy collaborative schemes, latest the Silicon Studios, an rather crude attempt to "franchise" the instructional centers for a corporate benefit. It would interest me greatly who is behind the original scheme and what flexibility lays behind the predatory character of this concept.

My association With Brno Polytechnic has open a good view of the needs and shortcomings of hard and software offers and purchases by the new jungle of free enterprise initiatives. Just to reflect on the situation, I need to bring an advisory group to the Czech Republic simply to prevent unnecessary waste of money. Take the Alias Corporation polices in Czech Lands for example: The basic package of the 3D graphics is offered there for free, but additional maintenance fee is set to about \$3600. This definitely throws a monkey range into the lean artistic institutional budgets of all three or four Art Academic institutions of the Czech Republic. This all on the condition that Silicon Graphics provides Indigo or Indi generation of platforms, which they usually do, of course without sufficient provision for peripheral equipment, animation and video features. It seems very easy for Silicon Graphic to sell basic platform without any options, the prestige and fashion makes a good sale, but then the systems mostly sit around with not much use, or fall into the hand of a few heros, slaying the multi-headed dragon each and every night...

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# THE VASULKAS

We know by now, that this generation of equipment is no longer on the frontline of our creative interests. For example, the program I have established in Brno involves all media interactive program, centered around the computer. The graphic part of the performance is barely possible by the newest generation of the SG machinery. And here is the paradox: in this new world of possibilities, the Art department I am associated with has applied to the Czech Ministry of Education to purchase a Onyx machine for the real time experimental work, something to be shared with the rest of the Polytechnic Institute. There is a chance the Art department will get this animal and take care of its needs. On the other hand, the access to the most advance software, pioneered by Soft Image of Canada for example, is out of our reach. There are probably several other sources of important software we would want to obtain.

But the most difficult problem lays in the social mundane affair of daily operation. Everything from apartments, car rentals, the resources of daily life is excessively complex. Here the need for cash to create the human infrastructure is essential. There are certain fantastic aspects to it, the relatively inexpensive ways one could live having been initiated, on the other hand insurmountable logistical nightmares when one is left at the mercy of the institution or the good will of the volunteers. Having been born in Brno myself, I would rather throw money at the problems than attempt to live the politically correct lifestyle there.

So far, dear William, this chat has just served to pay a lip service to the social dues of our generation. My personal case is much more severe. My interest as you know lays in the re-definition of the dramatic space, something between theater, film and virtual reality. My new computer and all-media installations deal with the synthesis of all disciplines, optics, mechanics, computer images, robotics, sensorial environment, speech recognition, control of light and sound in space, through various communication protocols. Arriving in Brno, I was hopeful that at least a physical space for my imaginary Laboratory would be easy.

How wrong I was. For some very peculiar reason, the prices of real estate over there are about the same as in Santa Fe. This throws me back to the institutional hands to find a support, especially since I do not plan to live there all year around and maybe not even each year.

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So this letter should give you some flavor of my involvement and some information to the possible prospective sponsor. As you also know, under the auspices of the Soros foundation, I travelled and lectured last fall in East Europe (Hungary, Roumania, Slovakia, Russia and Ukraine) on the topic of history of video and introduction to computer assisted art. The situation there was quite similar to the Czech one, except for Roumania, where Soros Foundation is paying for a excellent production and post-production facility in Bucharest.

Against all evidence, I somehow believe there always is a possibility lurking out there somewhere, maybe a sponsor looking for a good humanist investment, and I would be grateful if you could direct me in a straight and infallible line towards finding those rare targets.

Always yours

Woody

In Santa Fe, August 24, 1994

April 1, 1971

Stan Mason  
Charles F. Andrew  
James Eng  
Robert J. Fast  
American Can Company  
American Lane  
Greenwich, Connecticut 06830

Gentlemen:

On March 1, 1971 Videosphere approached American Can Company with a proposal for the use of the Video Matrix. The proposal stressed first of all - mobility - use of the Matrix within the society - in churches, satellite street showings, community centers, etc. That so-called dynamic part of the use of the Matrix, that part with a social attachment was what we felt to be most important.

In order to obtain particular securities we suggested Automation House take a certain patronage over the equipment insofar as housing, protection, and general support. At that time we believed there would be great advantages in such an arrangement.

The situation as it now stands is that Automation House has taken a very different view by ignoring the philosophy of Videosphere. Theodore Kheel's actual expression is that the Matrix be "enclosed in-house for the experiments of artists." It is our feeling that such experimentation is not the aesthetics of art at all. That time has long since past. We feel that the experiments of artists should be immediately exposed to the society, especially in the case of video. Exposure of the input, the approach to the society and not the production itself is what is important. We are aware that there is a multitude of software shelved with no chance of distribution. There is no tool of distribution. By design the American Can Video Matrix is organically the perfect system to fill this void. The responsibility of the artist today is not only to experiment but to communicate. Videosphere outlines and stresses this in their Video Humanities Satellite Street Program.

Since Automation House has a concept that is diametrically opposed to that of Videosphere's for the use of the Matrix, we can no longer identify with that part of the proposal that connects us. We are therefore approaching American Can Company again with the original proposal, but this time disassociated from Automation House.

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There is readily available another institution that will house the equipment and provide proper security, insurance, maintenance, updating, etc. The Matrix will produce income to pay for itself and to also provide American Can with financial profit.

Enthusiastically, we look forward to the launching of Videosphere's program in connection with the Video Matrix in the near future. We are encouraged by feelings, based on its past performances in the Arts, that American Can Company shares our faith, good will and courage.

Very truly yours,

For Videosphere:

Sandra Devlin

Woody Vasulka

Rubin L. Gorewitz

cc: Theodore Kheel

SANDRA DEVLIN  
55 West 55 Street  
New York, N.Y. 10019  
(212) 582-5572

April 22, 1971

Mr. Stan Mason  
c/o American Can Company  
American Lane  
Greenwich, Connecticut 06830

Dear Mr. Mason:

Since the letter of April 1, 1971, a series of recent developments have placed Videosphere, Inc. in a position of autonomy.

The Videosphere staff has been appointed the official directors of the Mercer Media Repertory Theatre, one of the nine theatres of the impressive theatre complex at Mercer Playhouse. This will be the permanent home of Videosphere and will serve as its base of operation.

When outside assistance is needed for maintenance and updating, it will be supplied by M.P.C.S. (experts in video modification and servicing). Funds have been made available by "Street Heaven" (church project) for the shipping, insurance, software, and all other expenses needed for the immediate setting up of equipment.

In view of these fateful circumstances, Videosphere would now like to suggest a proposal to American Can Company for the leasing of the Video Matrix with an option to buy:

1. Videosphere would lease the Video Matrix for a period of one (1) year for the sum of ten (\$10) dollars. The date of the transferral of equipment will serve as the starting date of the contract. The date of the transferral of equipment will also be considered the launching of Videosphere's program.
2. American Can Company has the right to use Videosphere's display of the Matrix as a showcase for potential buyers. In such case, Videosphere must be given first refusal to bid for the purchase of the Matrix. If, however, the Matrix is sold to an outside party, American Can Company must give Videosphere three (3) months written notice.

Mr. Stan Mason  
April 22, 1971  
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3. American Can Company may use the Matrix (in its up-dated, improved condition) for any of its own future projects upon receipt of a three (3) month written notice.
4. Videosphere will give American Can Company continuing credit under any and all circumstances in regard to the Video Matrix.
5. If at the end of the year the Matrix has not been sold, Videosphere has the option to purchase it for no less than \$5,000 and no more than \$70,000, the purchase price is to be determined at five percent (5%) of Videosphere's receipts at that time.
6. All records and books will be made available to American Can Company or its duly authorized agent during normal business hours upon thirty (30) days written notice.
7. Total responsibility for maintenance, insurance, up-dating, will be assumed by Videosphere without any cost to American Can Company.

Any adjustment or qualification of this proposal is entirely possible upon receipt of request.

Again, we at Videosphere look forward to an exciting and productive future with the inclusion of the American Can Company Video Matrix in our program.

Very truly yours,

VIDEOSPHERE, INC.

Sandra Devlin

SD:br

cc: Mr. Charles F. Andrew  
Mr. James Eng  
Mr. Robert J. Fast

VIDEOSPHERE

1971

Founder and president of " Video Humanities Satellite Program ".

Sensorium

1972

Video environment-entertainment room. Designed to replace old - fashioned nightclub, hotel-resort, Great Gorge, N.J.

ANDRIA DORIA

1971

Video tape and film of salvaging event. Takes place next June off coast of Nantucket, 240 feet below sea.

ALEC RUBIN'S " THEATRE OF ENCOUNTER "

1970

Program of edited tapes. Taped at Humanist Convention during summer of 1970.

PLAYBOY BUNNY OF THE YEAR

1970

First multi-media beauty contest.

" EVENTS MAY TAKE A DIFFERENT COURSE NEXT WEEK "

1968

Satirical review created for " upstairs at the Downstairs ". The symbolic representation of a series of demonstrations translated into sardonic entertainment.

DOCPATCH, USA

1968

Al Capp comic strip "Li'L Abner", brought to life on a 2800 acre Theme Park.

" FREAK OUT "

1968

First live-entertainment multi-media touring package.

" FLOOR OF FUN "

1968

Converted Penthouse floor of N.Y.'s Playboy Club into the body of a woman.