

Sparks to fly as video artist Vasulka sets computers afire

By James Hathaway

Sparks are going to fly and smoke will billow as flames rage and roar at ASU's Computing Commons, but there's no cause to worry about arson.

It will be an electrical fire of course, but there will not be any heat, water or smoke damage.

In fact, it will be unlike any fire you've ever seen, as ASU's Institute for Studies in the Arts and ASU Information Technology present nationally known video artist Steina Vasulka's "Pyroglyphs," a multi-channel, multisensory video installation at the Computing Commons Gallery through Oct. 24.

Beginning with an initial taping of a blacksmith at work, Vasulka choreographed a dance between camera and blow torch, using video artistry to create abstracted images of smoke, fire, steel and sparks accompanied by digitally processed sound.

The resulting multichannel work uses video to enhance and amplify the sensory impression of fire, while also abstracting the effect so as to deconstruct the experience in the viewer's mind.

There is a strong element of play-

fulness to the piece.

"The creative process for me is a tremendous pleasure, even when it is painful, like when I feel inadequate to the task," Vasulka said. "People perceive this pleasure in my work and often object, 'But you are just playing,' a comment that in turn gives me a tremendous pleasure."

A professional musician by training, Vasulka was a pioneer in the electronic arts. In 1971, she co-founded New York City's The Kitchen—Live Audience Test Laboratory, a major video exhibition center.

Since then, she has remained one of the foremost artistic innovators working in electronic image generation and manipulation.

Vasulka has had exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Denver Art Museum. She is a Guggenheim Fellow and has received grants from the National Endowment of the Arts and the Maya Derea Award from the American Film Institute in 1992.

For more information on "Pyroglyphs" and Vasulka, call 965-8563.

PICK

Sparks, Fire and Video-
tape: Steina Vasulka has

been experimenting with video as an art form since the '60s, and her recent displays in Santa Fe have been electrifying additions to the rather static scene of installation art. Now she has modified her last show and brought it to Albuquerque. Shot entirely in a local blacksmith's shop, the multichannel installation *Pyroglyphs* is a mesmerizing meditation on the alchemical powers of fire, portraying the splash of sparks and the glow of molten metal with a heat you can practically feel. Opens Nov. 1 at Alphaville Video and runs through Nov. 31. Call 242-2463 for information.

