

The Vasulkas at The Albright

The everyday use of television as a way to relax and escape is not very interesting to internationally acclaimed video artists Woody and Steina Vasulka, who share a definitely different notion of the uses and pleasures of that medium. Rotating cameras and unusual video tapes of dancing discs and self-transforming squares are just some of the visual delights currently on display in the Albright-Knox exhibit entitled The Vasulkas/ Steina: Machine Vision/ Woody: Descriptions.

The Vasulkas, who moved from New York to Buffalo in 1973, have been active explorers in the field of video arts as teachers, technical designers, and art organizers. While living in New York, they co-founded the Kitchen, a major showplace for experimental work in electronic sound and image making. Woody presently teaches at SUNY-Buffalo's Center for Media Study.

Steina's "Machine Vision," a collection of individual tapes and sculptural installation-displays, explores the ways that the television camera can represent and define space, whether it be the open space of urban expressways, the space of an exhibition room in the Albright, or the space that electronic signals occupy on magnetic tape. Her work reveals that video representations are not always exact copies. For instance, "From Cheektowaga to Tonawanda," a three part tape, is a subtly humorous exercise in transformations. By changing the coloring, the order of images, and the shape of individual scan lines (the picture is composed of rapidly spun lines of electron beams), those familiar roadways and wooden frame houses, such familiar sights to most of us, suddenly emerge as strange but amusing objects.

This single-most interesting piece in this exhibit presents the viewer with two television cameras, mounted on a steel carriage, which rotate around a large glass ball. Echoing certain Renaissance paintings, this installation, stately and elegant in its revolving motion, is at once a portrait of the cameras themselves and a magnetic center of power, pulling into itself and altering the very space of the exhibit room.

Woody's "Descriptions," a sparser showing, utilizes photos, diagrams, stereo-grams, and video tape to illustrate the theoretical approach that he takes in constructing video images. By using digital computers and other sophisticated electronic tools, Woody is trying to establish a new vocabulary for picture-making.

The Vasulka exhibit will be on display through this Friday, Nov. 26.