

art: 'Allvision' A Kinetic Sculpture With Circular Viewpoint

By Mary Pat Flaherty

The video exhibit now at the Museum of Art is an answer to a paranoid's prayer.

Front, rear, sides: The cameras in the installation pan the gallery, capturing everything and everybody from every angle. No need for worry or suspicion about what's going on behind your back — the cameras catch it all and project it onto the screens you're watching.

Aptly titled "Allvision," the piece in the museum's Entrance Gallery is by Steina Vasulka, a leading video artist and the co-founder (with her husband, Woody) of The Kitchen, a contemporary performance center in New York.

"Allvision" celebrates the process as well as the products of video art.

Instead of devoting all her energies to the look of a videotape, Mrs. Vasulka spent time planning how best to show off some of the machinery that makes those tapes. What results from the planning is an installation whose parts are as engaging as the whole.

While in town recently to oversee placement of the work, Mrs. Vasulka admitted, "I am passionate about the camera."

Even the most casual viewer should pick that up after one look at "Allvision." The cameras are the centerpiece of the work and taken alone they can be regarded as an elegant kinetic sculpture.

"Allvision" consists of two cameras mounted on either end of a slowly revolving arm. At the center of the arm is a reflective sphere. As the crossbar rotates, one camera focuses on the scene reflected in the sphere while the other shoots the activity going on in the gallery.

What shows up on the monitors is a layered image that superimposes the circle in the foreground (from the camera homed in on the sphere) on top of the fuzziest background picture shot by the second camera.

Because the crossbar moves con-



Press Photos by Robert J. Pavuchak

Steina Vasulka, a video artist and founder of The Kitchen in New York, explains how "Allvision" works. Two cameras secured to a rotating arm focus on a reflective sphere; the images are recorded on monitors at the far end of the Museum of Art's Entrance Gallery.

tinuously, the images on the monitors shift so that people in the gallery seem to flit from one dimension to another with an ease that Alice in Wonderland would envy.

The effect of seeing both the back and front of an object in a single field of vision is akin to the sensation a driver has when he glances to the rear-view mirror.

In simultaneously presenting several different perspectives on the

same object, Mrs. Vasulka invokes techniques pioneered by the cubists. But she doesn't see herself as a cubist with a camera.

"I was not trained as an image maker," and so "I don't mind that the image I present often is totally arbitrary," dictated as much by the decoration and people in the room as by her machine. The Carnegie Institute showing, for instance, is the first time "Allvision" has been

presented in color. That wasn't the result of an artistic judgment by Mrs. Vasulka. It just happens that the museum cameras used in the setup are color cameras.

She was trained as a classical violinist and that background makes her interested in the process of creating, she says. "Music always has to move in time. You follow the notes but you're always on your way to something else."

There is that same sense of evolu-

tion in "Allvision." It has a hypnotic pace that only slowly reveals the activity going on in the gallery.

"Allvision" originally was done in 1975, "put into my basement, so to speak, for a while" and now has been resurrected and is providing a catalyst for Mrs. Vasulka's current work.

Her newest work expands on her "Allvision" concept in a similar way, but with a similar pace.

and stones and earth near her home in Santa Fe, N. M. "But I haven't shown any of that, yet."

The show continues through Feb. 28 in the Entrance Gallery of the Museum of Art in Oakland. During that same time, several videotapes by the artist will be shown in the museum's Video Exhibition Room.

