

NOTEWORTHY



BULGARIA: Peter Popzlatev's "The Countess" (1989)

ART

TUBE TIED

Once long ago in a forgotten age of innocence and naivete, television was thought to be a neutral eye on the world, placidly recording events large and small. Now it is abundantly clear that television — along with its insolent offspring, citizen video — dramatically shapes society in a multitude of ways. Nowhere is this more evident than in Eastern Europe, where in recent years politics and media have collided with momentous results. Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center will examine the impact of media information on the politics in this part of the world in a four-part series, "Eastern Europe TV & Politics." The tapes are by citizens groups, independent artists and TV producers from Hungary, Romania, the former Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Germany. Hallwalls begins the series in dramatic fashion Thursday night at 7 with Steina Vasulka's "Tokyo 4," a four-channel video and music installation. Vasulka, trained in Prague as a violinist and now living in the Southwestern United States, creates complicated multiscreen installations that envelop the viewer — if that's any longer the right word — in image and sound. Her immense array of images — shots of Shinto priests, Tokyo elevator girls, train conductors, New Year's celebrations — mimics musical polyphony in a visual and audio point-counterpoint. As in a great fugue, images are inverted and flopped as they march at varying tempos from screen to screen. The Eastern European programming will begin at 7:30 with Gusztac Hamos' (Hungary) "1989 — the Real Power of TV." This rather old-fashioned montage of disturbing televised events and scenes of the artist's grandmother as she makes soup and watches TV is an artful analysis of news coverage in Hungary, Romania, China and East Germany. On the same program is "Bunker TV in Lithuania," by Judit Kopper and Fritz Productions, a look into underground radio and TV in Lithuania's 1991 struggle for independence from the former USSR. That will be followed by "Regular Funerals 1924-92," also by Kopper and Fritz, a compilation of 70 years of Soviet TV ceremonial film and television, including the funerals of Lenin and Brezhnev. Program 2, next Friday at 7:30 p.m., features "Citizens' Movement Video, Part 1," curated by Keiko Sei, tapes by the Romanian citizens' Group of Social Dialogue, which played a major role in the reform of 1989. Also on the program is "Videogrammes — A Revolution" by Harum Farocki and Andrei Ujica, a camcorder documentation shot by local participants in the December 1989 uprising in Timisoara, Romania.

The June 24 program features "Citizens' Movement Media, Part 2" and "Mihaly Kornis' Video Universe" (Kopper and Fritz). Kornis is one of Hungary's leading writers and has compiled a video archive of the country's recent history. The series will conclude on June 29 with "Art and Politics in the East" (Keiko Sei) and "The Countess" by Bulgarian artist Peter Popzlatev. Popzlatev's film, done under constant censorship threats, is the bleak story of a young woman, living through the events of 1968, who asserts her freedom, only to be sent to an isolated village for "re-education," a prison camp for discipline and finally a mental hospital for drug rehabilitation.

The series is part of a month-long presentation of films, video and jazz given by Hallwalls as part of the International Cultural Festival of the World University Games. In addition to films from China, Mexico, Japan, Austria, South Korea and other countries, the festival's "Global Media" (scheduled for July) will present video from three vastly different corners of the world. On that program will be, among others, "Northern Visions," including Zachariah Kunuk's saga of Inuit life in the 1930s and recent video work by Inuit producers; and "Crossing the Continent," tapes dealing with social issues in contemporary African society.

— Richard Huntington