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VOICE WINDOWS

work for interactive voice & video (1986)

The collaborative work between video artist Steina and I (Joan La Barbara) began early this year when Steina and her husband and partner, Woody Vasulka, developed an interactive system that allowed my voice to intercut and pass secondary video images into a primary one. The specific sounds made by my voice affect the shapes and patterns of the bleed-through. This work will eventually be extended and performed in real time, i.e., live.

Joan La Barbara, dubbed "the reigning vocal wizard of the avant-garde," is a composer, performer, media artist, writer and pioneer in experimental and extended vocal techniques. She has won numerous awards and honors for her work including four National Endowment for the Arts fellowships (in Visual Arts, Music Composition, Solo Recitalist, and Inter-Arts programs), radio commissions in Europe and America, and a composer-in-residency from the DAAD Berliner Künstler program. Her career began in the early 70s as the vocalist of choice for major contemporary composers, including John Cage, Philip Glass and Steve Reich. She has premiered numerous works especially composed for her unique vocal qualities. La Barbara has produced five albums with her own compositions: Voice is the Original Instrument, Tapesongs, Reluctant Gypsy, as lightning comes, in flashes and The Art of Joan La Barbara. In recent years, she has appeared with the Houston Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic's New Music Group, on the San Francisco Symphony's New and Unusual Music series and the New York Philharmonic's Horizons '84 Festival.

Woody Vasulka was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia and studied metal technologies and hydraulic mechanics at the School of Industrial Engineering there. He then entered the Academy of Performing Arts, Faculty of Film and Television in Prague, where he began to direct and produce short films. He emigrated to the United States in 1965, and freelanced in New York City as a film editor for the next few years.

In 1967, he began experiments with electronic sounds, stroboscopic lights and (two years later) with video. In 1974 he became a faculty member of the Center for Media Study at State University of New York, Buffalo and began his investigations into computer controlled video, building "The Vasulka Imaging System", a personal imaging facility.

With Steina, he founded "The Kitchen", a New York Media Theater, and has participated in many major video shows in the States and abroad, given lectures, published articles, composed music and made numerous video tapes. He is a 1979 Suggenheim fellow currently residing in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Since his move, he has produced two video tapes, "Artifacts" and "The Commission", an operatic work based on the legend of Papanini and Hector Berlioz.

Steina Vasulka was born in Iceland, attended the Music Conservatory in Prague from 1959 to 1963, and joined the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra in 1964. The following year she moved to the U.S. and has since been a seminal force in the development of the electronic arts 1970, both as co-founder of The Kitchen (a major exhibition center in New York City), and as a continuing explorer of the possibilities for the generation and manipulation of the electronic image through a broad range of technological tools and aesthetic concerns. Her videos have been exhibited and broadcast extensively in the U.S. and Europe. In 1978, she had an exhibit Machine Vision at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, N.Y. Since moving to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1980, she has produced a series of video tapes relating to the land, and an installation entitled The West. Named a Guggenheim Fellow in 1976, Vasulka is the recipient of numerous grants.