BEHIND THE SCREEN

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FIVE VIDEO ARTISTS ▷ **EDIN VELEZ** ▷ **MARY LUCIER**
▷ **GEORGE KUCHAR** ▷ **SHALOM GOREWITZ** ▷ **CAROL ANNE KLONARIDES**

▶ BEHIND THE SCREEN: FIVE VIDEO ARTISTS

Given television's proven power to captivate its audience, it seems natural that visual artists would want to employ video as a means of transmitting their ideas, messages and visions. For video artists and their audiences, however, many difficulties have arisen from this assumption. While many artists were aware of the earliest video equipment and the technology behind it, its populist application has always existed in the commercial sphere. It is easy for video artists to say that theirs is "just another medium" of expression, and yet it is not always easy for the uninitiated viewer to accept video as just another art form. The television establishment sees contemporary video as too artsy, topical and subversive. The artworld, purposefully maintaining a distinction between high and low forms, sees video art as a somewhat *retardaire* medium. Video art always runs the risk of becoming over-identified with the electronic gadetry and gimmickry that shapes it, and with commercial television, which has co-opted the innovations of video artists for many years. Although there is a growing interest in and acceptance of the medium, contemporary video artists find themselves struggling against the public's misconceptions of their chosen art form, and against high production and editing costs as well. Despite these and other difficulties, more and more artists are attracted to video because of its fluidity, which is demonstrated by its ability to approximate other visual art mediums and by the way it so naturally incorporates sound, narrative, and movement. Together, Shalom Gorewitz, Carole Ann Klonarides, George Kuchar, Mary Lucier and Edin Velez provide an almost ideal model for the divergent formal and ideological concerns found in contemporary video.

Video art's essential material supports—television cameras and monitors—have been in existence for over fifty years, and yet the medium continues to resist a comfortable, agreed-upon definition or a consistent and workable critical vocabulary. Unlike commercial television, the forms and conventions of which have become all too familiar, predictable, and repeatable, similar conventions have never been able to gel and stick to the medium one writer recently described as a "fabulous chameleon."[1] This definitional slipperiness stems from the art form's dependence on rapidly changing technologies and from the unwieldy range of its subject matter. In addition, a great hindrance to both critical discourse and public acceptance of video is the almost irresistable tendency to compare it to its commercial Siamese twin, from which it has never been successfully disengaged. Video art finds it necessary to resist definition as *television*, in order to continue as *art*, while the "art" of video lies in the mastery of a medium all of us have seen, but most of us are extremely ignorant about. In analyzing a painting or a sculpture, it is relatively easy to see just how the artist has manipulated certain materials in order to produce an effect. In video, those manipulations remain mysteriously "behind the screen" unless one is familiar with such technical procedures. For these five artists, technical approaches to video range from the relatively simple in-camera editing of George Kuchar to the complex computer and image-processing procedures of Shalom Gorewitz. Our appreciation of this art form is greatly enhanced when we begin to recognize the complex layering of its elements. Unlike those in painting or drawing, video images can be duplicated, altered and positioned anywhere on the screen, and unlike paper, canvas or wood, this "support" consists of 8 million dots, or pixels, which transmit visual information "line by line." Video images can be speeded up, slowed down, or stilled. The fader can take images from different cameras and blend them together on the screen, and the chroma key projects fragments of images onto an existing picture without interrupting the characteristic transparency of video. A process known as "wiping" takes two or more images and merges them together into one picture, actualizing the early experiments in simultaneity proposed by Cubist and Futurist painters. Video synthesizers modify images electronically, dispensing with the necessity of multiple camera images and opening up new levels of experimentation with color, light and texture. Sound, both natural and synthesized, adds yet another element to video art, one that its practitioners see as equally important to the visual elements in their finished products. Given the small amount of space I can devote to it here, suffice it to say that the technical procedures of video have to do with the simultaneous manipulation of its elements—with a unique blending of sound, color, shape, movement, narrative, texture and space.

Far from being only a formalist language, contemporary video art is also layered with many different levels and types of content. Shalom Gorewitz explores issues of political conflict, cultural diversity and racial heritage; Carole Ann Klonarides exploits the familiar forms of TV to discuss public perceptions of artists, and also uses video to explore aspects of other artists' work; George Kuchar's "video diaries" flesh the serio-comic out of the everyday; Mary Lucier develops relationships between video and painting or video and dance, creating statements about our relationship with the natural landscape, or about relationships between individuals and groups; Edin Velez extends

the form of cultural documentary to experiment with the capacities of sensory perception. Having distinguished themselves as five of the most innovative and effective practitioners of contemporary video art, it is obvious that such respect has not been given them for their technical skills alone, but rather for their use of those skills to create a multi-disciplinary form through which poetry, metaphor and social commentary alike can be transmitted.

Like that of any other medium, the technical and conceptual formulation of video art can be traced to influences which become more obscure but no less important the farther back one goes: Cubist and Futurist painting, photo-collage, and kinetic art; Dada and Surrealist theatre, photography and film (Duchamp, Man Ray, Bunuel) of the 1920s and 1930s; the experimental films of Len Lye, Jordan Belson, Stan Brakhage, and later those of Bruce Conner, Jonas Mekas, Robert Breer and Gregory Markopoulos; Alan Kaprow's Happenings, the Fluxus group, and John Cage's ideas about chance; collaborative ventures like Nine Evenings: Theatre and Engineering (New York Armory, 1966) and Experiments in Art and Technology (1967-70); the desire for community accesss to communications technology spurred on by the Civil Rights and Vietnam war protests; the anti-commodity ideology of Conceptual Art; the development of the image-processing synthesizer by Nam June Paik and Shuya Abe (1970); the use of computer-generated and programmed images and sounds; and finally, the slow but steady acceptance of video in museums and galleries and on broadcast television. The historical development of this "chameleon" is, to a great degree, the story of how artists have appropriated, subverted and altered the technology of television to meet their aesthetic and ideological needs. Conversely, it is a story of how the world of advertising and commercial television has coopted the stylistic and technical development of video by artists. One could, of course, limit the art form's history to its technology—to that of the television monitor (1930), the availability of easily portable cameras (SONY, 1965), or the Paik/Abe synthesizer (1970). But given video art's consistent relationship to the personal, social and political worlds around it, its history is first and foremost a matter of how artists have coaxed poetry and humanistic statements from machines.

Since the late 1950s, artists, sociologists and market analysts have been researching and questioning the power of television images over human behavior, for obviously different reasons. Whether cast in commercial, educational or artistic garb, video images are essentially about human beings perceiving other human beings and their environments. The nature of this perception is of particular interest to Edin Velez, whose *Meaning of the Interval* (1987) and *Dance of Darkness* (1989) use cultural documentaries as a subtext for the presentation of simultaneous images, sounds, text and movement. Even prior to Impressionism, artists had been consciously experimenting with such departures from normative modes of visual perception, yet Velez's case for an alternative level of perception is far more convincing, since painting can only refer to, and never be, real-time. Video artists have a long history of interest in simultaneity as it relates to human perception:

> "As an outgrowth of a 1969 work called *Iris*, Les Levine constructed, in 1969, *Contact*, a video matrix which also engaged the spectator. The piece was an eight-foot sculpture bank of nine monitors on either side, and eight TV cameras with different lenses set at different angles. . . . Since the closed circuit systems in these works are multi-channeled, the viewer is forced to perceive many events simultaneously. The complexity of the information presented counteracts any tendency toward a single reading. It compels the viewer to focus and refocus on a constantly changing field. It has often been suggested that this kind of perception parallels the scanning and focusing process that takes place in normal vision which operates at the 'process level': 'A process level analysis of the art experience is concerned with art as a process of perception, a way of experiencing, how one sees rather than what one sees. The process level affirms direct sensory perception'."[2]

The documentary films we are used to seeing are formatted and edited to deliver alternate doses of visual, then musical, then spoken or textual information, all the while directing us to pay particular attention to one over the other. Velez successfully undermines this historically educational function of the documentary video image by presenting information to us in a kind of perceptual entirety. He produces a variety of moving images, sounds and oral and textual information together on one screen at any given moment, rather than using a series of monitors. In asking us to accept this simultaneity in his art, Velez stresses the fact that "out there in the real world", we instinctively select stimuli in order of their importance to our immediate survival, rejecting and thus never fully perceiving a great deal of what goes on around us. For once we are given a chance to experience a plethora of real-world, real-time images and sounds before our mind has a chance to recommend a hierarchy of importance

‖► EDIN VELEZ

● **PETER SPOONER** *Could you relate your educational background and how you got started in video?*
► **EDIN VELEZ:** I was born and raised in a very small town in the mountains of Puerto Rico. It was a very bucolic existence. No media, and entertainment usually consisted of sitting on one's porch. It was only when I was in my teens and was in larger cities, still in Puerto Rico, that I began to get along with the art world at large. After spending a year at the University of Puerto Rico, I enrolled in something much more appropriate, the School of Fine Arts of Puerto Rico. The faculty were Puerto Rico's best artists. It was a very political place and these people were there out of their love for art. I got a solid background in all the fine arts—sculpture, painting, stained glass, music. It was a time when I felt very much in the shadow of art history. I was concentrating on painting, and felt it would be difficult to break out of that tradition, and I started to look around to see what alternatives there were. At the time Marshall McLuhan's books were somehow making their way to Puerto Rico. His oft quoted statement "art is one technology behind" is what did it for me. I decided at the time that television seemed to be the most retrograde medium for art, and therefore, it was ripe for use. Basically what McLuhan said is that any media that is used as a medium of communication cannot be construed as art. And only when that medium is replaced by a more efficient medium can it be liberated to be used as art, as opposed to simply communication. The most modern medium was, and still seems to be, television. Therefore he thought this medium was the most difficult to be construed as any sort of art form, so I figured it would be a good enough challenge. Of course, I had no way of figuring out how to go about using the medium.
● *Were there any facilities at the University of Puerto Rico?*
► None whatsoever. This was 1968 and there was nothing. Television was just the klunky two inch machines, with technicians who had been army communications personnel. I really had no clue, and it was only later that I picked up, of all things in Puerto Rico, *The Village Voice,* which mentioned groups of artists in New York that were into closed circuit, trying to establish alternative types of television. Once I read that, I decided I should come to the States. Around that time SONY had come out with the first portable video recorder and that's what was being used in the arts at the time. I started apprenticing at a place called Global Village. In 1969 I found New York a little too overwhelming, so I would spend a few months, then go back to Puerto Rico to use up the experience. I didn't settle in New York until 1972.
● *What was the political situation like when you were going to school in Puerto Rico? You mentioned that some of your professors were very politically aware.*
► In Puerto Rico, the most developed medium was printmaking. Printmaking in Puerto Rico is extremely strong work and its major proponents are very political artists, basically pro-independence artists. Most of my teachers, as with most artists in Puerto Rico, were left-leaning, pro-independence people. When I was at the University of Puerto Rico in the late 60s, Puerto Rico was a reflection of what was going on in the United States and in Europe. The University was closed down every school year, for at least a few weeks, due to demonstrations and rioting against things like the ROTC. There was the usual tear gas and picketing that was happening in the U.S.
● *Is there still a very volatile political situation going on there in terms of independence issues?*
► Not in the universities. It has very much quieted down. It doesn't seem to have that edge any more in

terms of activism. The feelings are still there for pro-independence, but it is really a minority within the country and, of course, within the students. What you have is what you have in many places, which is a very vocal intellectual minority, and a larger majority of people who want to preserve the status quo.
● *I notice you have been in several exhibitions of book art. Is this something you were doing at the University or is it something you've developed along the way?*
► Well, my making of books has developed given the fact that I've been working practically all my adult life in video. I feel limited by just working in video and I am much interested in re-discovering the fine arts again. I don't feel the weight of art history any more. By working in video for two decades I feel liberated from it and I don't feel any responsibility with a capital "R" to art history. The books began simply as therapy, they were busy work I was doing while I was editing. While a tape was rewinding I would start to draw or clip something for collage. It is very pure, since I never made these books to be shown to anybody. They were very immediate. When you make a tape, it takes a long time and no matter what you are making it assumes a degree of collaboration. The books were simply mine, they were done with a minimum of technology. They usually involved some adhesive, paper, pencil, perhaps some clippings. So they were very immediate, very personal and very low-tech, and I wanted that. As I made more and more I wanted to show them to people. I didn't care whether they were accepted by people, they were simply things I was making. What happened was that I sent some slides out to some book art shows and, to my surprise, they were accepted. Now I am much more serious about it. I am expanding and I am now working in painting and sculpture and I am beginning to think of larger pieces which involve photography and painting.
● *I was going to ask if you had any ongoing interest in those other media.*
► Yes, but I just don't think of them as separate any more. What will happen now is that as I am working on a video piece, certain aspects of the piece will seem to be better suited for other media. Before, I would just disregard those aspects or somehow try to incorporate them into the video, but now if there is an aspect that is better suited for sculpture, that will just be another aspect of the research, as it were. Before I'd say, "No, you're a video artist, concentrate on that—don't dilute the work." Now I feel strong enough that I keep trying to expand to these other media.
● *Would you say that the content spills over from one media to the next?*
► Well, I've been keeping photographic collage journals for a few years. There was never any conscious thought in it—I just happened to be traveling and many places have one-hour photo processing. All over the world in the oddest places, even in Tunisia there was a one-hour photo developing place. So I found in each place I would be always taking photographs just as a record, and I ended up collaging them into journals. It was only after a while that I realized I've been to all these places, I have these journals and when I really looked at them, as opposed to simply doing them, I discovered that I had been working out certain concepts that would eventually show up in videos. I'd simply thought I was killing a little bit of time in the evenings before going to sleep and what I realized afterward was I was really working out all these ideas on paper before translating them into video. Once I realized that, the process became a two-way process and now as I work on a book, I think about video and as I work on a video I think about the books.

Ohio at Giverney (1983)
photo: Mary Lucier

◗▶ MARY LUCIER

● **PETER SPOONER:** *Could you describe your educational background?*

▶ **MARY LUCIER:** I went to Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts and graduated with a B.A. in 1965.

● *Was your degree in the visual arts?*

▶ No, it wasn't. I got a degree in English and American Literature, but studied sculpture there during my last year of college. During the next year, when I was no longer enrolled as a student, I came back to the sculpture studios and continued to work there while I also instructed beginning students in welding.

● *What was it that made you go from literature to visual art?*

▶ I think there is a continuum. I had always been interested in art. I had always made things. I had always drawn but I didn't have the courage to take an art class until late in my college career. When I did—when I went into the sculpure studios and started working I was completely changed. I was totally taken over by this activity and the desire to pursue it. It focused me in a way that I had been waiting to be focused. I think there is a continuum from literature through sculpture, through the other interests I had explored in the 60s and early 70s, right into video. That includes everything from the studies of literature, the studies of sculpture, through performance activities, and an interest in music and dance and theatre, arriving at video which, for me, happened around 1973. I felt that I had found the medium in which I could engage all those interests. Until then, I had been a multimedia artist and I went from one discipline to another. After I graduated from college, I went evenings at the Boston Museum School, working in photography and drawing. All of those interests were steppingstones along the way toward my involvement in video installations.

● *When you were studying literature, who were some of the authors you were most interested in?*

▶ Well, appropriately, I was extremely interested in the Romantic poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Blake. My senior year I did an honors paper on Coleridge. That interest remains, that particular humanistic view of the landscape. It didn't necessarily originate at that point, but was shaped by that experience of literature, and this, I think, has appeared in my video work.

● *Some of your works deal directly with the landscape in that Romantic vein, of the American ideal of landscape as an almost religious or spiritual refuge.*

▶ Well, that is not exactly what I am saying. When I talk about the Romantic poets, it isn't so much the landscape as a refuge, but as a sort of repository of limitless energy. The venerable imagery and ultimate power, the power that ultimately challenges our own. The human race is so engaged in trying to dominate nature, precisely because it is so fierce and so awe inspiring. But, one of the recurrent messages is that no matter what we do to try and chain the forces of nature we are ultimately at its mercy. That sense of awe and power, and at the same time, beauty but a certain amount of terror, is the definition of the sublime.

● *The terriblita.*

▶ Yes. The idea of refuge to me—well, in American imagery, you end up with Yellowstone National Park.

What we have now are tracts of land that we have turned into natural museums. We no longer have real nature in this country. One has to go very far in the world to find nature any longer. In fact, it can almost be said not to exist.

● *That idea of the American landscape as a museum is a very fitting one. When combined with the notion about national parks, the whole idea of a museum is that it is a controlling factor.*

▶ For preservation and for education. I guess what we've found is that we have done with nature what we do with antiquities because mankind is so rapacious, with all the industry and commerce, that the instinct is to overwhelm the natural elements of the planet in order to establish these beachheads of industry and homosapien accomplishment. These preserves have been carved out in places that are laughingly called "wilderness areas." The whole idea of refuge is more a part of memory now. Originally the natural world was perceived by the Christians who first came to this country as extremely terrifying, the dwelling place of the devil.

● *It needed to be conquered.*

▶ Exactly. So my piece *Wilderness* refers to the notion of having to contain and cleanse the evil powers, the devils, and the wild beasts that supposedly lived in the landscape. They believed that man, if left alone in nature, reverted to beastiality. It wasn't until right around the time of Thoreau and the Transcendentalists that that whole idea began to change. That's when they began to perceive that the landscape, in fact, was being lost. Thoreau and Emerson were the first spokespersons for the supposed good of nature and the fact that its natural condition was a desirable condition. My interest in it, in my art, is certainly not as a refuge, except in the way in which that becomes part of this new structure of captured scenery, but more as this sort of power. We are almost engaged in battle with something which is a source of beauty and terror at the same time.

● *Did you grow up in a rural environment?*

▶ Moderately rural. I grew up in a small town in the Midwest where I spent a good eighty percent of my life outdoors, so it was rural in its surroundings. I didn't grow up on a farm, or in the woods, or in any situation like that, but the town was very small and I did spend most of my time outside.

● *I think that makes a big difference in people's attitudes towards nature, in terms of having an inner understanding and a sense of reverence for nature.*

▶ It is an essential part of my childhood imagery. From my early readings of the *Jungle Book,* I used to imagine myself being wild and free in the jungle, living with animals. That was one of my recurrent fantasies. On the other hand, I don't want to go and reside in those places, I want to live in New York City. This notion that there is a dichotomy between the city and the country is true in a way and in a way not true because in the minds of people like me, there is a way in which you carry one into the other. Some people who grow up in the city and never leave it actually have a fear of the country. I know New Yorkers who think anything west of the Hudson River is all dark, and that people run around carrying rifles and shooting strangers. Which, of course, does happen, but it happens in New York City more than it happens anywhere
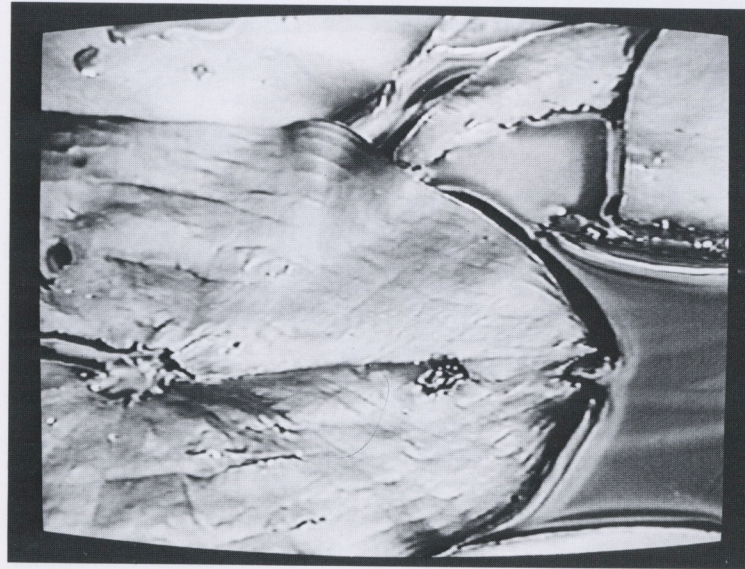
500 Millibars To Ecstasy (1989)

Precious Products (1988)

Precious Products (1988)

Precious Products (1988)

‖▶ GEORGE KUCHAR

● **PETER SPOONER:** *You've been making films since the fifties. How did you get started?*

▶ **GEORGE KUCHAR:** Well, I started in 8mm movies, and I always went to movies and enjoyed them. I used to always borrow my aunt's movie camera, my brother and I did, and our mother decided to get us one so we didn't have to go to my aunt's house to get it. So she got us that and we started making movies in 8mm. And we did that until about 1960. In 1965 we went on to 16mm, and made pictures in 16mm until around 1985. In 1985, I started making videos.

● *What kind of equipment are you using now?*

▶ Well, the last movie I made was *Ascension of the Demonoids,* and that was 16mm. A friend of mine had a sync-sound camera, and I used his whenever we needed sync-sound. The rest of the time I used a Bolex. And then I bought an 8mm camera. Also a Sony camcorder, when they came out, about five years ago—those little recorders—everything built in. So, I started making videos. I kept making movies in school for a while until our budgets got too low, and everybody started making video.

● *Have you worked in any other media?*

▶ Yes, painting. I originally went to school as an artist, a painter and illustrator. I went to the High School of Industrial Arts in New York, which has changed to Art and Design. And then I went into advertising, art illustration. Also I painted on my own, oil painting.

● *What were your paintings like?*

▶ They pretty much depicted scenes. Scenes and situations. You know, scenery and characters. Things like that.

● *Haven't you done some comic book illustrations?*

▶ That's right, I did that in the 70s, because I lived next door to Art Spiegelman. He would watch my movies—he knew about my movies, and he asked me if I would make a cartoon. So I did.

● *Do you ever work in those other media now, or do you do strictly film work?*

▶ Well, sometimes I would do a painting if I needed a set for a picture. The last painting I did was in 1980, years ago, but I would like to come back to painting.

● *Really?*

▶ I got that craving.

● *What is it about film that kept you intrigued?*

▶ Well, I like making stars, you know. I turned my friends into stars, and I always had a dream about running a movie company. So I decided rather than sit around waiting for opportunities, for someone to give me an opportunity, or go around and knock on doors, I decided to get my own equipment and make my own version of a movie studio. And then manufacture my own stars and make up stories, and keep it as an ongoing activity.

● *Your work has often been described as diaristic, a journal of your activities. How do you feel about being pegged that way as a filmmaker?*

▶ Not bad. My movies were always blown up versions of things of interest to me that were happening, but then they were all decorated. But the videos are now more like diaries. I did a couple of movies in diary format. They were big stories, blown up to a big scale, for the big screen.

● *You might take an ordinary event, even a non-event and then enlarge it through the movie?*

▶ Yes. Anything to get a plot or make a picture.

● *Do you think movies do that anyway, make everything larger than life?*

▶ Yeah, unless you're making a realistic movie—a documentary. Like those brothers that make those documentaries. They try to make it look as real as possible. But most of the time such equipment is kind of big, and the screen is big. Sometimes you can make it, like, dress it up.

● *How would you characterize the humor in your work?*

▶ I just make something, and if I get a kick out of it, then I just send it out. But I usually never make anything that is, in my mind, a comedy. To me, it's never approached that way.

● *Maybe if it was approached that way, like, "I'm going to make a funny picture . . ."*

▶ It wouldn't be funny.

● *It seems to me that one of the crucial factors in your work is its informal quality. Do you do a lot of editing or very little editing?*

▶ I do a lot of editing, I like that process. Because, the hard work is shooting, especially in the movies, working with all the people. But then it's fun when you are alone with this thing. You can combine what you shot already. That's kind of hard labor too. You've got to scrape the film, cut it, process it. But I like that editing process—the picking and choosing and the combining of things. Usually my stuff is heavily edited.

● *In a way, it almost seems like you're an artist using found objects to put a work together.*

▶ Yes, sometimes we shoot scenes and we don't even know why we are shooting them, but in the editing we figure out, "Oh, I see, we can go here." So then we combine it that way. Sometimes we even take scenes from movies that have been abandoned and see if we can incorporate them in new products.

● *You started out with very basic camera equipment. How would you say the technical side of your work has evolved over the years?*

▶ Well, its easy now with the automatic light meters and stuff, but I always had fun judging light meter things, and after a while when you work with the same kind of stock film, you get to know your light meter quirks, and then the processing—you always had nice color reversal. But now everyone keeps shooting negative film. It's more expensive, and I was still hanging on to reversal as long as I could, so the quality dipped down real low because everyone was trying to unload their outdated stock. The colors were real weird, but I just incorporated it into the picture.
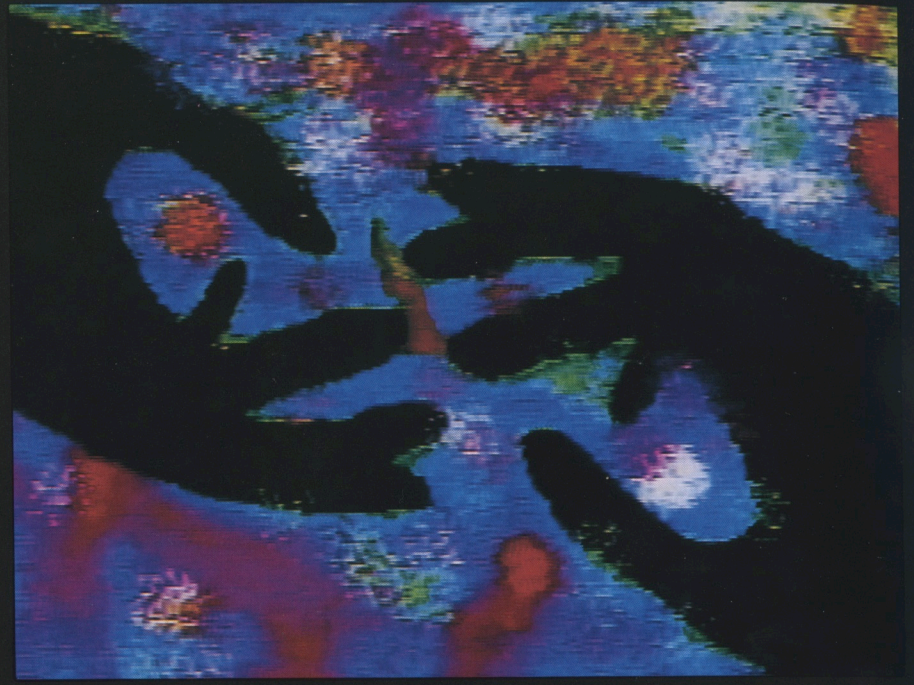
● *Could you explain negative and reversal film?*

▶ You shoot the film and you get back a positive image of the movie. Then you just cut that and use it as
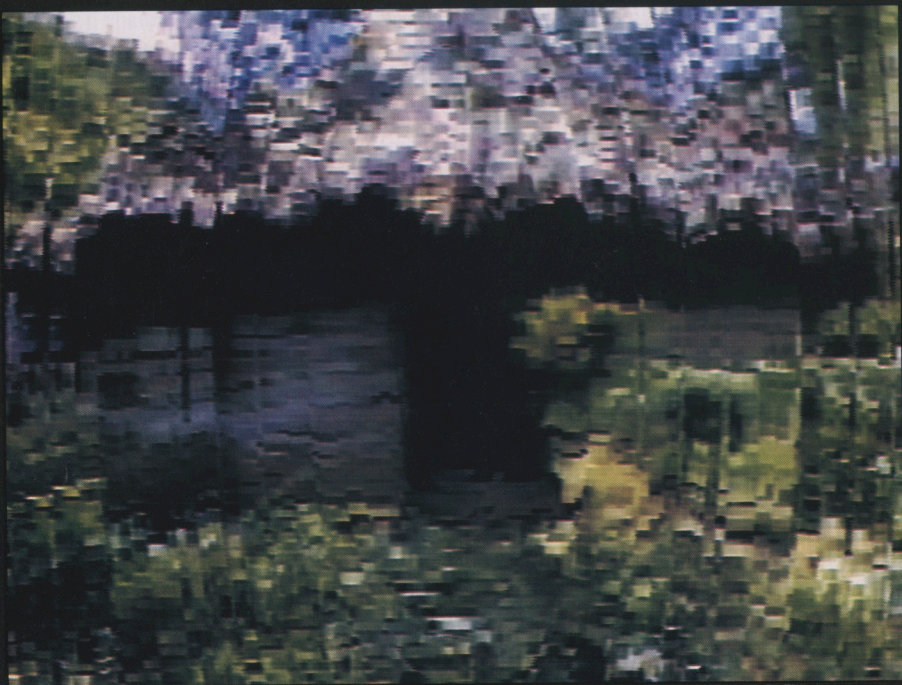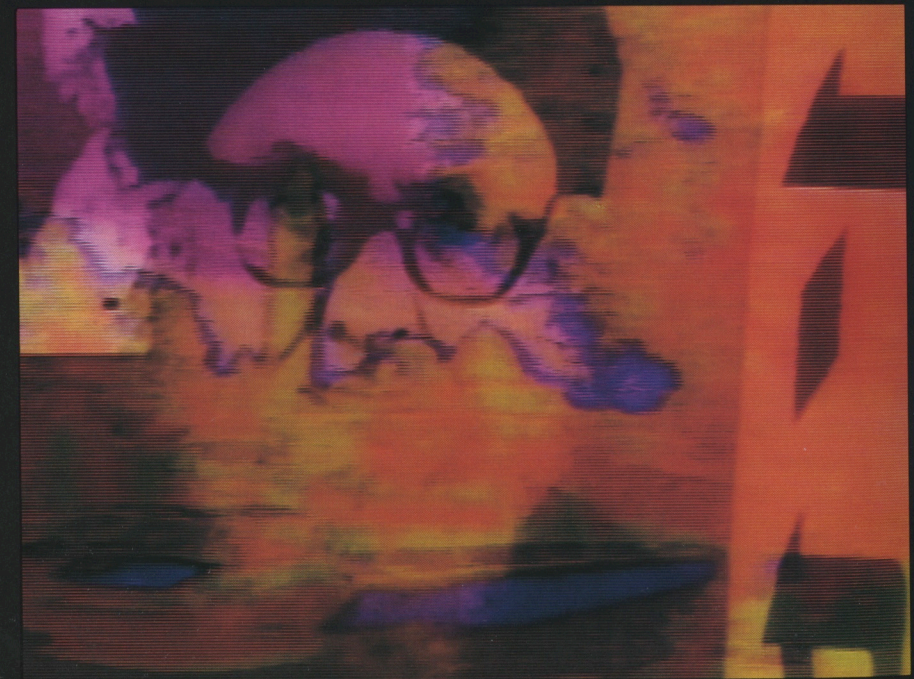
Promised Land (1990)

After The Storm (1988)

A Small Jubilee (1987)

Jerusalem Road (1989)

▶ SHALOM GOREWITZ

● **PETER SPOONER:** *How did you get involved in video art? What was your background, and what inspired you to pursue this as a medium?*

▶ **SHALOM GOREWITZ:** My mother was an opera singer in Europe before World War II, and she was in the Belgian underground during World War II. I'm the child of a survivor, which has been a very important influence in my life. My father was an acountant for a lot of artists. I grew up in the New York art scene. Through him I saw the "Living Theater" and a lot of experimental art in New York City during the early 60s, also the "Nine Evenings in Art and Technology" at the New York Armory where artists and engineers were working together on various scales of technological art.

● *Who were some of the artists that were involved in that?*

▶ Robert Rauschenberg, and there were lots of musicians like David Tudor and John Cage. There were dancers, Trisha Brown, quite a few people. I remember Robert Breer, the filmmaker. Seeing people like Cage, reading his books in high school and being influenced by that work, I felt a desire to study art and to work in that field. I felt that what could be said in painting had pretty much been said, and that it would be very exciting to work with computers and other electronic equipment, to see where that would lead. Video first became available when I went to college. I thought about studying film because that would synthesize all the different media, but film can be a very painful process—waiting for the film to be developed, never really knowing what you were going to get from shooting. Video just seemed so user-friendly and accessible. I started experimenting with video in 1968 when I was at college. Then in 1970-71, I was in the first class at the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles. Nam June Paik was there and I saw him building his first video synthesizer. I studied with him and with Alan Kaprow, who was doing video-tapes of the Happenings. Many people were into multi-media experimentation. Those were some of the things in my background that lead me to devote myself to the technological arts.

● *You were really in on the ground floor then—studying with Nam June Paik and Alan Kaprow. Would you agree that Paik is pretty much the father of video art as we know it now?*

▶ Yes. I think that his importance is in uncovering the maleability of the electronic signal, that you can control electronics the same way you can control pigment. Once that happened, you could see the medium of television as an elastic substance.

● *Rather then a mysterious device, which is inacessible to the average person?*

▶ Right, but Paik showed that you can take and manipulate the signal in interesting ways. Through that you can change all the visual elements. Basically what he built was an audio synthesizer that ran at high frequencies. There were other people working experimentally with video through the late 60s and early 70s pretty much simultaneously, but they were not working so much with the structural elements of the medium. It was more just alternative approaches to programing.

● *Do you think there a lot more people now, whether they are artists or engineers, who are capable of manipulating the materials of television or video? Is there still a difference between the artist and engineer in the same sense that there is a difference between someone who designs furniture and someone who executes it?*

▶ I think there have always been elements of collaboration between artists and engineers in technological

media. Often there is a symbiosis were you can merge a vision of what you would like to be able to see, or be able to express with some of the equipment, and use the abilities of technical engineer to actually execute it. Some people say that video art or computer art is all in the software or the way things are wired. Software is written and computers are wired so that someone can do something with it, so it's a really interesting flow between artists and the people who work on those problems. Some people are able to do a lot of the work themselves on a fairly small scale, but I don't think there are too many.

● *How do you fit into that in terms of your own abilities and what you've learned? Are you able to pretty much create your own work, or do you collaborate with engineers and computer software designers?*

▶ I've been working at the Experimental Television Center which is the main research center for artists working with image processing equipment. That's where Paik's first synthesizer is, and there have been quite a few engineers over the years who have come there and worked with artists. I've had a very close relationship with an engineer named David Jones. Through many conversations we've tried to understand what my personal needs were in terms of the aesthetic I've been developing. Together we've come up with personalized equipment for my work. When I'm manipulating the images I'm alone in the studio and I do all of the engineering and cabling myself. I'm the one who handles all of the systems. For the final postproduction I do have to work with a technical editor, as this is a more specialized procedure.

● *Could you explain a little bit about the whole idea of image processing? When did this all come about, and how do you use it in your work?*

▶ Well, I guess Nam June Paik really started image processing and other artists who worked with it right from the beginning were Woody and Steina Vasulka, Stephen Beck and Tom Dewitt. They were all working with computer software and electronic devices to manipulate electronic signals. When I got out of college the first thing I did was to buy a small Sony special effects generator. I was trying to see how I could push some of the equipment and come out with images that you wouldn't be able to produce in any other way. There are two kinds of computer processes, one is an analog process and the other is a digital process. With the analog process the artist, who is operating the systems, can use what are called potentiometers, which are the knobs on the synthesizing equipment which control all of the different visual elements, the light, the color, the form, the movement, the timing. With the digital system you use a computer more mathematically, to sequence or change pixels. The digital system uses software that is more of a keyboard operation, as well as using a mouse or palette to do the drawing. So one is much more of a physical operation with lots of different buttons and knobs, and the other is more of a computer-oriented one where you program things in.

● *Can these two processes be combined?*

▶ In the work that I am going to be showing there is a combination of both analog and digital processes.

● *Your work also has a combination of what one could call real filmic images, and a very highly abstracted set of images introduced into that. What are you trying to accomplish in this synthesis? Is your interest more in the visual qualities or is there a conceptual basis that you're operating from? Or is it more a matter of exploring the possiblities of these processes?*

▶ All of the above. It's not easily put into few words, my reasons for making these very complex pieces. It

CASCADE/Vertical Landscapes (1988)
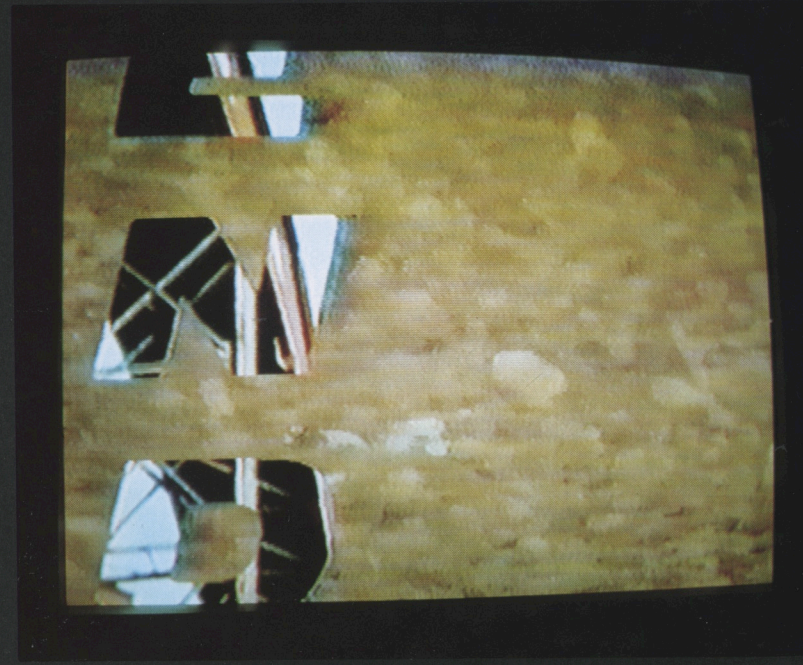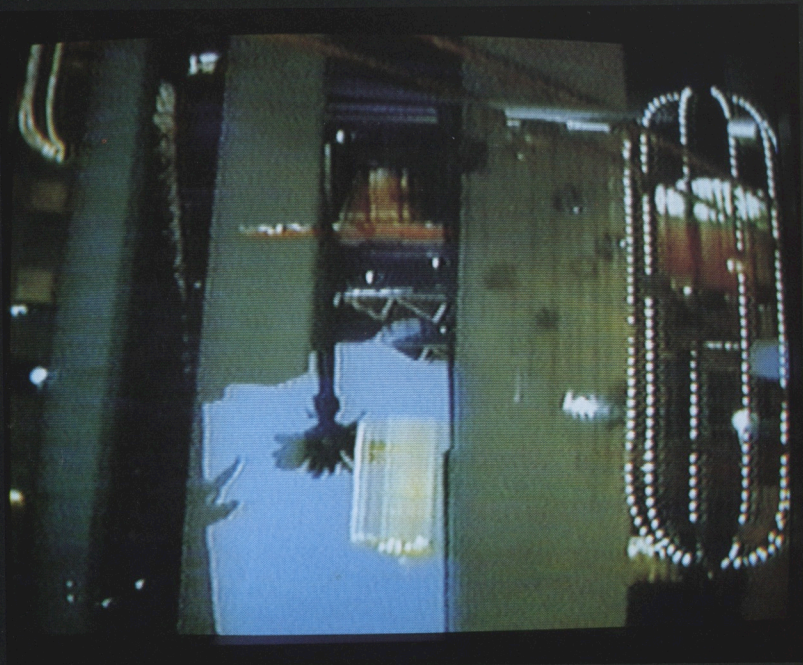
▶ CAROLE ANN KLONARIDES

● **PETER SPOONER:** *You were involved in a variety of art media early on. How did you get started in video?*

▶ **CAROLE ANN KLONARIDES:** Very early on, I went to undergraduate art school and majored in painting and printmaking. As a Junior I applied for the Whitney Museum Program, where you come and have a studio in New York through the Whitney Museum of Art. They have seminars with artists and it brings you to New York City. I was entering my senior year when I came to New York.

● *You were at Virginia Commonwealth?*

▶ Yes, then I moved to New York and found I had to get a job. I worked at the Brooklyn Museum and that's where I was introduced to video.

● *You did a Media Studies program at the New School For Social Research. Was that what made you want to stick with video art?*

▶ Yes, I had already done some when I was at the Brooklyn Museum in 1974. The portapack was fairly new—it had only been accessible for about three or four years. They had one there and we would video tape artists that came to visit the Brooklyn Museum, I began to see that I had always had jobs were I worked with people. I liked to collaborate with people, even when I was a printmaker and a painter. I just found video to be the medium that I enjoyed working with and so I worked my way through graduate school, mainly to get access to equipment, because in those days it was very difficult for an artist to get access, and I thought I had to go back to school. As it turned out the Media Studies program wasn't really about hands-on working with equipment. It was more about theory— it was a multi-disciplinary program.

● *So the theoretical aspect didn't appeal to you as much as the technical?*

▶ No, but it enabled me to meet all the people that I work with now. I did an internship at a place called Automation House in New York City. It was one of the first satellite-linked buildings in New York where you could have interactive satellite video. Automation House was run by the Machinists' Union and they had a program called Center for Non-Broadcast Television where they did experimental television, and I was an intern. I worked on a project called the Artist's Cable Project, where The National Endowment had funded five artists to make a cable program. That's when I started working with video, and also with artists that work in mediums other than video.

● *Could we talk about the collaborative aspects of your work? For instance your involvement with Michael Owen and MICA T.V.?*

▶ Well, when I was at Automation House, Michael was hired to be the line producer for the project and he was part of an early video crew in Manhattan called Metropolis Video. They went in and taped all the rock and roll shows at CBGB's. This was before MTV and music television. He wanted to get more involved in creative art projects. Through our conversations I had become somewhat envious of his production knowledge, and I felt that we had a lot to give each other. I was very connected in the art world and the ideas inherent within it, because I lived in the community, and worked with artists, and considered myself one. For a living, he worked as a video producer and we kind of hooked up then. I was already in the process of doing a tape with Cindy Sherman, a young woman working at Artists Space. We were trying to do a video redefining the idea of documentaries about artists. Michael thought it was interesting and that's when he

came in and we started working together.

● *Was* Cindy Sherman—An Interview *one of the first tapes you did with an artist, collaborating directly with them and commenting on their work?*

▶ It was the first tape that I would say I did consciously as an art work, as something creative. I did a series of videos in the 70s called "Post-show Depression, Taking Your One-Man Show Down," where I had just taken the portapack around and video-taped artists having their first one man show and taking it down when they were over. That was when I was working at the Brooklyn Museum. I found that this was the counterpart to *Artforum* because, going to school in Virginia you basically became familiar with art through looking at magazines, unless you could travel up to New York or to another urban center. Most of the time you were a poor student working in one of these campus communities and you became familiar with ideas through magazines. I found myself in New York City seeing that these artists have an entirely different reality than one assumes from reading *Artforum.*

● *Would you say "Postshow Depression" was a counter-balance to the hype that surrounds the opening of an exhibition?*

▶ Well, yes. That's when I got very interested in the image of the artist, which is something I've carried through in all my work. I'm basically very interested in how media transforms reality. I knew the reality of the artist and the art community— that's where I started and that's where I've stayed.

● *Are you trying to reach the average member of the public, who has very little knowledge of the arts, or are you putting forth a message to artists and curators?*

▶ Well, I didn't start out to put forth a message. It was more an interest in the fact that suddenly there was this medium called television. You have to remember that in the 60s and 70s and into the early 80s, video art was primarily a reaction to television. It was talking about what television is, but in a very different way, it was offering an alternative. It was changing the idea of time. It was changing the idea of image. It was changing the idea of how we interact with television. It was changing the idea of what the content is. I found that it could be equally subversive to make it look like television but have a different content, or different information. So, I became, along with several other artists, interested in trying to appropriate television. Of course, to make that work, it's ideal to have it seen on television. So that changed the whole idea of having television in a gallery space with little gray chairs. There was a backlash to this idea because many people in the art/video community saw television as the enemy, part of the system, with the media-masters controlling it. Many artists felt they were being manipulated or supressed by television. I found it very interesting to try and interface with that. So initially Michael and I were trying to make television art and we found that we were in this weird place because the people in the television industry thought what we were doing was art, and they couldn't figure out a place to fit it into their programming. The people in the art world thought that what we were doing was too flip and commercial—that it was television and couldn't possibly be art. We couldn't apply for grants because there were two of us instead of one. Grant organizations like heroes, they like to point and say "Here's a genius and we're rewarding you." So when we were two people making this hybrid, nobody really knew how to handle it. Of course now terms have been invented like "crossover" and "collaboration,"—these are now actual catagories. But it took five to ten years. So in answer to your question, before we could even know what audience we were addressing, we

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

SHALOM GOREWITZ

A Small Jubilee
(1987) 7:00

After The Storm
(1988) 10:00

The End Of Television
(1988) 4:00

Jerusalem Road
(1989) 3:00

The Promised Land
(1990) 7:00

(All tapes from the series:
Digressions On Unity, 1987-1990)

CAROLE ANN KLONARIDES

The New Urban Landscape
(1988) 10:00

Cascade/Vertical Landscapes
(1988) 6:30

John Torreano—Art World Wizard
(1986) 4:30

Arcade
(1984) 11:00

R.M. Fischer—An Industrial
(1983) 3:30

B-52's Art Against AIDS PSA
(1989) 30 sec.

The In-Between
(1990) 11:41

Cindy Sherman—An Interview
(1981) 10:00

GEORGE KUCHAR

Precious Products
(1988) 15:00

A Rocky Interlude
(1990) 5:00

Fill Thy Crack With Whiteness
(1989) 15:00

**Weather Diary #6
(Scenes From A Vacation)**
(1990) 30:00

Migration Of The Blubberoids
(1989) 15:00

Snap "n" Snatch
(1990) 5:00

500 Millibars To Ecstasy
(1989) 20:00

Point "n" Shoot
(1989) 5:00

The Leviathan Lounge
(1990) 5:00

Terror By Twilight
(1988) 5:00

MARY LUCIER

Ohio to Giverny: Memory of Light
(1983) 19:00

**In the blink of an eye...
(amphibian dreams)
"If I could fly I would fly"**
(1987) 26:00,
Choreography by Elizabeth Streb

**Mass
between a rock and a hard place**
(1990) 11:00,
Collaboration with Elizabeth Streb

EDIN VELEZ

Meaning of the Interval
(1987) 18:40

Dance of Darkness
(1989) 55:33