

VASULKA LAB 1969 – 2005

PART 1 / VIDEO PROGRAMME

Available to tour from April 2006.

'Visionary electronic abstractions' The Village Voice

Vasulka Lab 1969-2005 provides the first comprehensive introduction to the Vasulkas' major works in the UK and offers a survey of the technical developments and aesthetic approaches that underpin their role in the evolution of media art. Lauded internationally as two of the most significant and prolific electronic media artists in the world, the Vasulkas' body of work spans the entire range of formats and configurations of electronic media: single and multiple screen video, live performance, installation and interactive technology.

To celebrate this dynamic history, VIVID presents a two-part survey of moving image and interactive works. Part 1 covers the key video works developed by the Vasulkas' between 1969-1987 - questioning the boundaries between art and technology. Transforming the traditional genres of narrative and performance in the moving image, these works created a unique aesthetic through innovative use of emerging video technology.

Vasulka Lab 1969-2005 / Part 1 / Video is available to tour.

Vasulka Lab 1969-2005 is a VIVID touring exhibition curated by Yasmeeen Baig-Clifford and is supported by Arts Council England and Czech Centre.

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Part 1 / VIDEO PROGRAMME

PARTICIPATION 1969-71, 62 mins, b/w

35 years ago, the Vasulkas landed in New York. After seeing the ground-breaking TV as a Creative Medium exhibition at the Howard Wise Gallery in 1969, they began early experiments with sound and video. The Vasulkas quickly became central to the burgeoning underground scene in Soho, with Steina documenting rock concerts and underground events alike using the first Sony Portapak camera. In 1971 they founded The Kitchen, an electronic arts and sound "test laboratory" which became a haven for the new video artists. The Kitchen soon became a NYC legend, presenting screenings, performances and concerts ranging from the new music of La Monte Young to Talking Heads, and it continues today as one of the city's most interesting multi-media spaces.

Participation pioneering video-document made with the early Sony Portapak video system opens the exhibition. Featuring Don Cherry performing in Washington Square, Warhol Superstars on stage and Jimi Hendrix in concert, Participation captures the Vasulkas' early engagement with the American artistic counter-culture.

ARTIFACTS (1970-80)

The Vasulkas were the first of a generation to "open the box": literally to rip apart pre-set commercial, manufactured media systems. In this way, they pioneered the development of low cost video 'tools', working with engineers to build highly specialised devices. Throughout the 1970s, the artists developed the Vasulka Imaging System, a range of audiovisual tools or 'machines' built in collaboration with electronic engineers and technicians, including the Rutt/Etra Scan Processor, George Brown's Multikeyer and Eric Siegel's Colorizer.

The Artifacts section is concerned with the formal vocabulary developed in the process of intervention and manipulation of these legendary tools. The machines allowed analysis of electronic image frames and time sequences and employed spatial, temporal and sound/image manipulation, setting a particular vocabulary for image making and creating a unique new media aesthetic.

An important early example of this can be seen in **Noisefields (1974)**, where colorized video noise is keyed through a circle, the static sound then modulated by the energy content of the video. In **Reminiscence (1974)**, the Rutt/Etra Scan Processor is evocatively applied to Portapak footage of a walk taken by Woody through a farmhouse in Moravia, the artist's childhood home.

In 1976, the Vasulkas embarked on a major period of digital experimentation to generate electronic images without camera support. With Jeffrey Schier, then a student at the State of New York at Buffalo, Woody designed and built a complex system called the Digital Image Articulator, a device which processed digital images in real time and generated a number of key works. **Artifacts (1980)** documents the Vasulkas' analogy of their work as dialogue with a tool.

Woody explains, "By artifacts, I mean that I have to share the creative process with the machine. These images come to you as they came to me-in a spirit of exploration."

In **Violin Power (1970-8)**, a chronological progression of the artist's evolution from musician to media artist, image and time is layered. Steina plays the violin to directly produce image effects through feeding the sound to devices such as the

Scan Processor, ultimately becoming an image generating tool as she modulates sound waves to build spatial images. In **Orbital Obsessions (1975-8)**, Steina focuses on the electronic interrelation and manipulation of sound and image within a closed circuit environment. Steina demonstrates a type of performability within the medium of video, which focuses on time, space and movement, and the means by which the mechanical can inform and engage with electronic media. Image sources are altered using processing, keying and sequencing devices.

ARTIFACTS	Year	Original Format / Duration
C-Trend (Woody Vasulka)	1974	Video / 9 m
Reminiscence (Woody Vasulka)	1974	Video / 5 m
Telc (Vasulkas)	1974	Video / 5 m
Noisefields (Vasulkas)	1974	Video / 12 m
Soundsize (Vasulkas)	1974	Video / 4m
no 25 (Woody Vasulka)	1976	Video
Orbital Obsessions	1975-78	Video /24 m
Violin Power (Steina)	1970-8	Video / 10 m
Land of Timoteus (Steina)	1977	Video / 15m
Artifacts (Woody Vasulka)	1980	Video / 22m

MACHINE VISION 1980 -

Steina's work from the latter part of the 1970s to the 1980s is a striking exercise. In the redefinition of vision, space and landscape. Her interest in what she has termed "machine vision" foregrounds a structural departure from other lens based recording media, and bridges the way to a performative generation of images.

Urban Episodes (1980) is also part of the Machine Vision (1975-) series and reproduces elements of the installation work, Allvision (1976-), to be shown in Vasulka Lab / Part 2. Filmed in Minneapolis, the work was produced using a camera equipped with mirrors and lenses, rearranging the urban landscape by showing both the space that the contraption revolves around and the images reflected by the mirrors or deflected by the lenses.

MACHINE VISION	Year	Original Format / Duration
Cantaloup (Vasulkas)	1980	Video/24m
Urban Episodes (Steina)	1980	Video / 9m
Summer Salt Series (Steina)	1982	Video /3/ 3/ 5/ 2.5/5

THE ART OF MEMORY (1987) is Woody Vasulka's last major single screen work of the decade, and is a poignant articulation of filmic memory, history and time. This personal work sees Woody articulate a concern which was to become of core relevance to his work through the 1990s to date: a sense of loss of collective memory, and the place of the image making machine in the construction of histories both personal, collective and artificial.