

Americans in Florence: Europeans in Florence

Videotapes produced by Art/Tapes/22
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Exhibition organized by the Long Beach
Museum of Art

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Longobardi, Gianni Melotti

Americans in Florence: Europeans in Florence
Notes on the exhibition

At the outset, I would like to explain the title of the exhibition, which might be misconstrued. 'Americans in Florence: Europeans in Florence' is not merely about the set of similarities and differences that can be drawn from a comparative study of videotapes produced by a group of Europeans and Americans. And though, as we will see, there is a great deal to be learned from this international anthology, the value of the exhibition has more to do with the range of ideas that are explored than any specific comparative investigation. The tapes produced at the Art/Tapes/22 studio are generally signified by a particular ambiance which seems to impart an intensity of mood and purpose to the work; an ambiance that is just beginning to develop at video production centers in America characterized by an over-reliance upon technological innovation and technical perfection. For this reason, the works produced at Art/Tapes/22 provide an important example of the exploration of ideational concerns, a workable context for the study of the potential of video as a medium for conceptual art.

Video allows the artist the opportunity to address a number of vital concerns in relation to the viewer. First of all, an essentially personal statement can be related (in a very direct way) in a mode that is as singular and personal (in scale and intensity) as face to face communication. Further, the time-based nature of the statement adds a captivating element to the message which the artist can either exploit (by extension over a long period of time, creating a resultant boredom/tension/release cycle) or bypass (by creating work that is immediately gratifying.) In other words, the real-time consciousness of the viewer becomes the blank canvas, which can obviously be dealt with in a variety of ways. On a socio-political level, video is an effective and nonprecious activity aimed, primarily, at extending the range and breadth of the artists' commitment to, and relations

with the audience. The notions of a de-materialized art that united a highly diverse group of sculptors, dancers, poets, painters, and documentarians in eclectic multi-media investigations into the nature of art, seem to have jelled into a set of activities called (fairly ineffectively) video art.

Within this set, the creation of videotapes accounts for a great deal of the activity, although it is important to note that many important video works involve the sculptural manipulation of video tools themselves, live performances, or, in some instances, the manipulation of complete television systems from production to broadcasting.) As co-equals, working with a medium that has little traditional grounding, video artists (a term some consider derisive) find themselves involved in a generalized exploration of the nature of communication rather than the nature of the medium itself. Some artists may explore the relative qualities of illusion drawn between video and other forms of documentation, while others may work with the kind of light emitted by a television tube, or the similarities between video systems and neurological processes.

Regardless, when working with videotape, the artist cannot ignore either the presence of the display monitor or the potential of indiscriminate, anarchitectural delivery of the work to an isolated, yet comfortable and secure audience. Video works created with an understanding of the audience, often seem out of place in the context of an art gallery — the works become filmic (in delivery) and their original intention is easily perverted. This is a problem that will persist until museum advocacy for this kind of artist-public communion reaches the point where it will be as commonplace for museums to have their own television channels as it is for them to house and maintain gallery spaces. Nam June Paik, the Korean-born composer and video pioneer, summed up the basis for this

kind of thinking in a 1972 collage «Do You Know», (dedicated to Ray Johnson, one of the first correspondence artists.) Paik added a few lines to an early forties magazine ad which queried «how soon after the war will television be available for the average home?» His response becomes a leading question for the seventies, «how soon will artists have their own TV channels?» The point to be made here is that in the midst of a deepening economic and ecological crisis, we are witnessing a very real revolution in areas of communications and control—a revolution as powerful as that which followed the introduction of movable type. Communications systems have out-grown the need for mediating institutions; museums must stop translating and start transmitting.

What else is there about video, as an artistic medium, that we can see in videotape? Hopefully, the technical mystery that has been the central power base of the television industry, will start to disappear as it becomes more evident that video is merely a neutral conveyance for ideas. Video can be seen as a medium whose neutrality is supported by the comfortable context in which people are used to viewing it, and whose potential is every bit as serendipitous as that of the pencil. The political implications, it should be remembered, are implications assigned to the process, and are very rarely broached directly as content.

In quite a formal way, it is possible to discuss one aspect of video (either taped or live) that has become the basis for a great deal of confusion and is, actually, one of the truly distinctive features of video. Prior to the invention of television, all mass imagery was the product of a mechanical process involving the creation of an etched or masked field through which first ink and later light was forced to construct either a print or a projected image. Advances in technology lead to the ability to reproduce finer detail and color in both. Purely mechanical processes adopted

photographic eyes in order to produce incredible illusions of reality. Perhaps the process can be traced from the first wood block prints all the way to the Cinerama film. Video, and the other telecommunication processes involving image transportation and reproduction, can be seen, as the first effort to electronically encode, and reproduce, (in a continuous stream consisting of discreet bits of information,) the images taken from the visual world. The key to the process, which is in some ways inferior to the filmic process of image reproduction, is that it is instantaneous and completely harmonious with a display system. It is this instantaneous nature that allows video artists to produce credible versions of real-time processes — an activity of far greater power than the mere ability to reproduce illusory images of the past. In actuality, it is this element that allows the video artist to so intimately engage an audience; for it is this aspect of the medium that has provided us (after twenty-five years of conditioning) with faith in the television image as a credible representation of the visual world in real-time. Practically applied, it is this element that allows the artist working with video to approach the exigencies of art-making today by drawing allusions between neurological, technological and sociological systems.

Material notions of scale are no longer applicable, when, for instance, it is possible to reach ten million people with a message at the same time. Arbitrary designations of artists as poets, painters, etc, no longer make sense. The expectation that artists should only decorate and entertain cannot support the role of the artist as post-cybernetic philosopher.

In considering the work in this exhibition, all drawn from the same source — isolated from the pre-mature critical standards already developing in America — it becomes apparent that what is important is certainly not the newness of the form, nor the lack of critical

bias, but rather the medium's unique and thoroughly transparent nature (understandable in terms of the structures it has created.) As Joseph Kosuth stated in his essay «Art After Philosophy,» the strongest objection one can raise against a morphological justification for traditional art is that morphological notions of art. Embodiment an implied, a priori concept of art's possibilities. And such a priori concept of the nature of art... makes it, indeed, a priori: impossible to question the nature of art. And this questioning of the nature of art is a very important concept in understanding the function of art.» Videotape, as a tool used in this generalized questioning, can be quite effective. Whether the approach comes from investigations of space, time or motion, the crucial issues involve the resolution of attitudes that would limit the scope and, quite directly, the value of artistic investigation.

David A. Ross
Deputy Director for
Program Development and Television,
Long Beach Museum of Art

I would like to thank the entire staff of Art/Tapes/22, and especially its Director Maria Gloria Bicocchi, for their invaluable assistance in preparing this exhibition and for their selfless dedication to the activities of this singularly important video production center.
D.A.R.

Art/Tapes/22 began its operational activities in September 1973 after one year of preparation. We have been building up an archive of videotapes produced by artists and have initiated a large-scale distribution system for them. In addition we have participated in the majority of video exhibitions in Europe, and continue to provide tapes and organizational assistance to museums and galleries instituting video programs.

We at Art/Tapes/22 feel that video is at the forefront of artistic concerns and its profound structural immediacy will undoubtedly launch it to a vital position in the future (in terms of a reorganization of both the art activity and communication about it). To bring our efforts to full fruition, dissemination must extend beyond the existing circuit of galleries and museums to create an open-ended system of cross-cultural exchange. This is the impetus behind our present expansion to include educational/informational programs integrating ideas from many disciplines. We view broadcasting as an ideal solution, so that people are not obliged to go to museums, galleries, universities, and other institutions to collect information but can benefit from having it in their homes.

It is very important to stress that video is a distribution of ideas and is not an object — the very nature of it being unlimited is a victory over speculation in art. It has already begun to blur the distinctions between the various branches of art as it is doing to the culture on the whole. By its nature, the medium of video coalesces art with several other disciplines, and functions as a catalyst for the current transformation of ideas and energies into more generalistic forms of expression.

The Art/Tape/22 Staff

Vito Acconci

Born 1940 in New York, lives in New York

1. If TV is too small for landscape, then I have to come close-up to you. 2. But, if I'm face-to-face with you, you'll find it too easy to face me, discount me. 3. So I have to be under-handed, I'll approach you from below: I'll bring my legs around, off the screen and into your area, when you aren't looking: I'll bring you down to my level.

1. If I'm so close to you, you can't see me clearly, I'm out of shape, so I'd better talk to you. 2. But, if I talk straight to you, I'd give you a chance to out-argue me. 3. So I'll play you records, lull you with a song; you couldn't mind if I sang along, if I played the song out in my mind.

1. Since I can't see you there, in front of me, I have to build you up. 2. But, once you've taken shape, there's nowhere for us to go: I haven't advanced my technology, you can't respond to me. 3. So I have to let you go, end our relationship — who can stop me if I say it's you who's ending it? — after all, I'm alone, I'm back where I started in the first place.

This tape is presented in collaboration with Castelli-Sonnabend videofilms, Corp.

Vito Acconci

Theme Song, 1973, b/w, sound, 30 minutes



Daniel Buren

Born 1938 in Paris, lives in Berlin

1 Video Souvenir: 'covering/effacing',
Düsseldorf, 45×10 seconds, b/w, sound,
September 1971, produced by Videogalerie,
Gerry Schum.

2 Video Souvenir: 'covering/effacing',
Venice, 13×10 seconds, b/w, sound,
June 1973, produced by Videogalerie.

3 Video Souvenir: 'covering/effacing',
Florence, 12×10 seconds, b/w, sound,
November 1974, produced by Art/Tapes/22,
Florence.

Shooting system: fixed camera - gradually
covering a wall in the field of view until it
is completely covered with sheets of striped
paper (75 by 55 cm each).

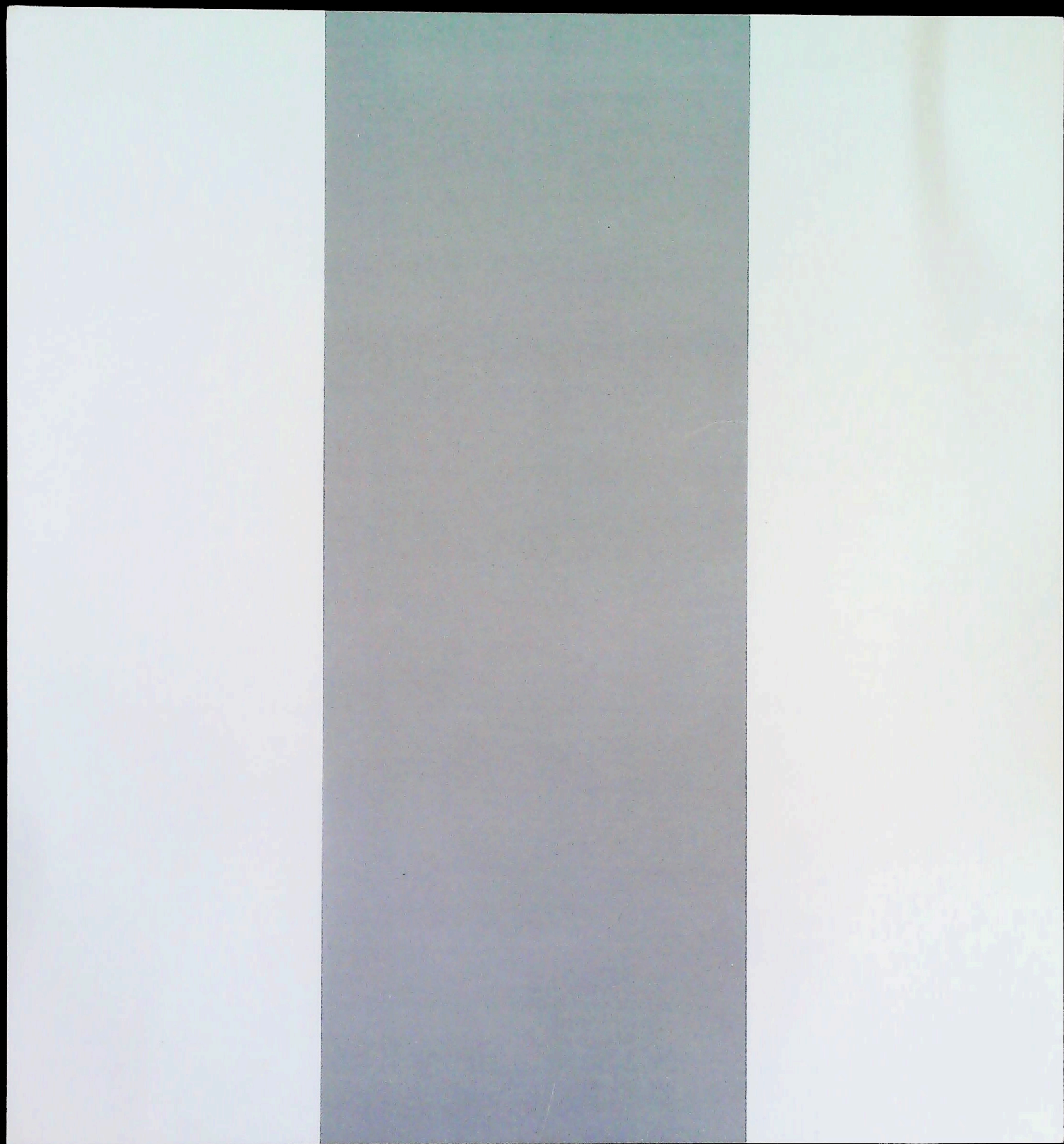
Process: Attach the first paper on a surface
in front of the camera. Record the whole for
10 seconds. Attach the second paper, again
record the whole for 10 seconds - etc.
At the end — the complete covering of the
mentioned surface.

For the Düsseldorf videotape 45
papers were necessary. For 45 times of 10
seconds each — the duration of the
videotape.

The videotape made in Düsseldorf is the
first in a series based on the principle
described above, and has to be considered
an extension of two years work. All of the
video works realized in this way will become
the definitive form of the piece, as each may
be effaced, transferred, or annulled during
the whole period of the operation.

As this work had to be interrupted by the
death of Gerry Schum (Videogalerie,
Düsseldorf), it will be completed by
Art/Tapes/22, Florence.

The three video tapes are now in
production and could be modified or
annulled at any moment.



Joseph Beuys

Born 1921 in Kleve, lives in Düsseldorf

.. Beuys made an action in June 1972 at the Modern Art Agency in Naples. Lying supine on the floor of the gallery, with a plant, whose alchemic name is Vitex Agnus Castus, tied on his head, Beuys for almost three hours, passed his right hand smeared with oil, over the slabs of copper of the sculpture (the conductor), until his body vibrated loaded with energy like a body charged with electric current.

The most recurrent sentence is: 'I am a transmitter, I emit!'

Lucio Amelio for Beuys
from Lea Vergine, 'Il corpo come linguaggio'.

Vitex Agnus Castus is presented in collaboration with the Modern Art Agency, and was originally a film of Beuys' performance 'Arena'. Cameraman Nino Longobardi.

Joseph Beuys

Vitex Angus Castus, 1972, color, no sound, 15
minutes



John Baldessari

Born 1931 in National City, lives in San Diego

T.V. Like 1. A Pencil and 2. won't bite your leg.

... I believe that there is a growing disenchantment among a group of artists that have been using video. In its infancy, TV was truly magical and full of promise. One went to see artists' tapes with excitement. But looking backward, I think we went to witness the medium, and not what the artist had done with it. Now the infatuation period is over. The tail is beginning to cease wagging the dog. If one is to proceed, really interesting works must be accomplished, because TV is more and more there as it really is, a thing, a box with grey light, with dancing electric impulses. And what was once said of painting, can now be said of video—from ten feet, all video looks the same. That is, all you see is the box, the confining rectangle, and the grey light. At least with painting, the size could be infinitely varied, but not so TV. It's all pretty much the same, even with the possibility of video projection. Audiences watch the screen with as much interest after a tape has run off as when it was on. Watching something, I guess, is better than watching nothing.

... I think to have progress in TV, the medium must be as neutral as a pencil. Just one more tool in the artists' toolbox. Another tool to have around, like a pencil, by which we can implement our ideas, our visions, our concerns.

But consider this: with TV we don't have to face the real world when we can be on tape or watch the world on tape. We can get all of our models for behavior from that world and give them too. TV won't hurt us; won't bite our leg. With enough disillusionment perhaps more artists will consider doing works using the real world. Consider real experiences, rather than hiding behind the screen. And this may be

the real payoff and what we have all been heading toward. The real world may not be so bad.

January 1974

Postscript

The Entertainment Road

It may be that the only use for t.v. in the art context is as entertainment. I was at a party recently at a collector's home and in the course of the evening, artists' video tapes were 'put on' much like the latest pop records. Those tapes that the guests liked were those that were most entertaining. Other works of art in the home, such as painting and drawing, were dumb and mute, like dull guests at a party. Collectors like to show off what they own, and to continue with the pop record metaphor, it is unlikely that Schoenberg would have been played at this party. It is unlikely that a collector would play a heavy and serious tape at such a gathering. A guest can stroll around and look at heavy and light art at will. When a record or video tape is put on, it is for everyone present and it is chosen to be light and amusing since it must be appealing to the greatest number of people. A Schoenberg might offend. Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops Orchestra doesn't play Webern. Also one of the few reasons for me to watch commercial t.v. is to see movies. Now that they are available without interruption, I am even more an addict.

Cheap Entertainment

I am more and more convinced lately that one should be able to buy tapes as cheaply as records and soft cover novels. There should be a list of thousands of tapes to choose from. Perhaps with so many tapes to choose from, we will eventually arrive at discrimination and not just be satisfied with entertainment. With the birth of printing,

mostly important books were produced. But the best way to learn to read is by reading lots of 'trash'. I will venture that more people have learned to read this way—from ten-cent novels—than from Guttenberg bibles. Maybe what we need now is ten-cent trash tapes. Then within that broad base there can exist tapes of limited edition with a high price tag. Video tapes, like print, should not just exist for the privileged few. What have I said? Entertainment at cheap prices. After that, perhaps we will want something better.

7 November 1974

This tape is presented in collaboration with Castelli-Sonnabend videofilms, Corp.

John Baldessari

The Florence Tape, 1974, b/w, no sound, 30
minutes



Urs Lüthi

Born 1947 in Luzern, lives in Zürich

Urs Lüthi

Self Portrait, 1974, b/w, sound, 7 minutes

Morir d'Amore, 1974, b/w, sound, 9 minutes



Allan Kaprow

Born 1927 in Atlantic City, lives in Pasadena

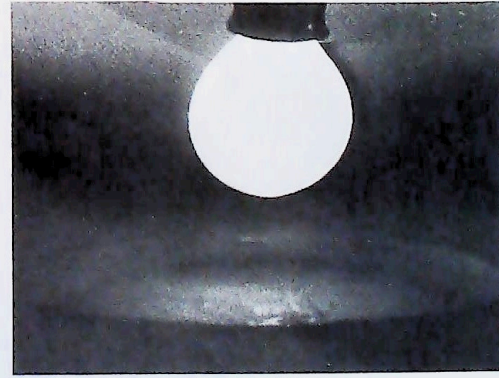
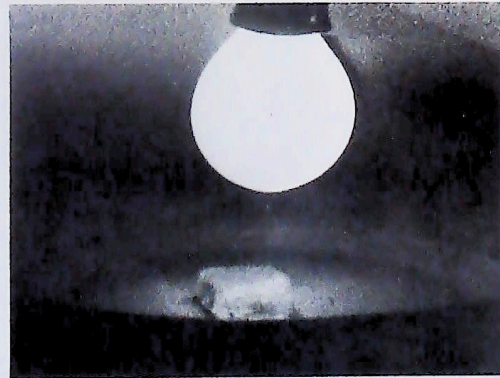
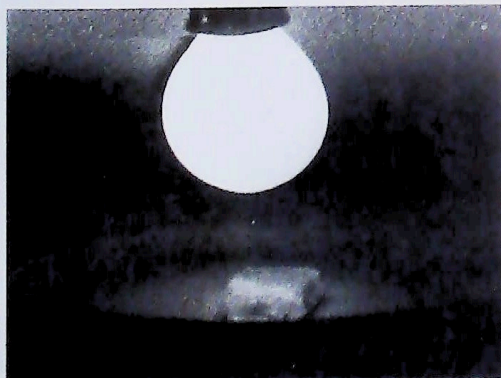
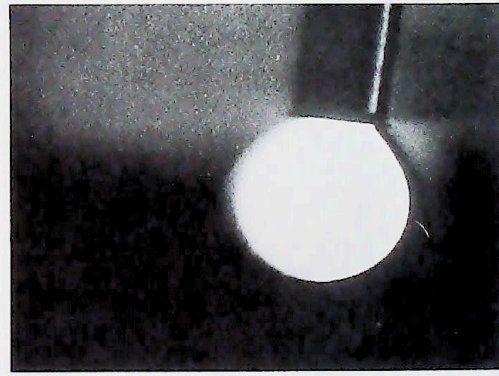
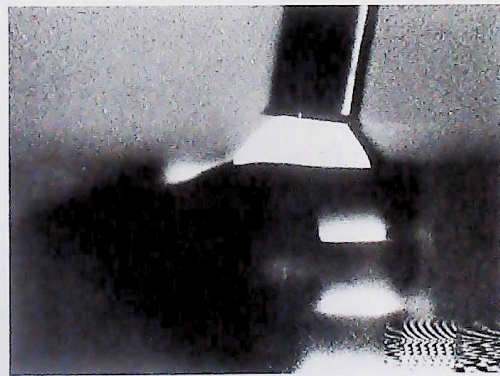
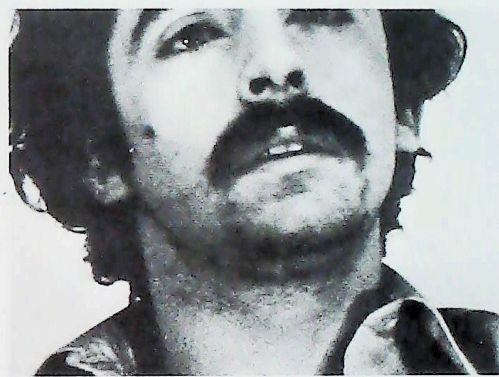
'Then' is concerned with the passage of time. One watches something that changes rather slowly such as an ice cube melting in the mouth or from the heat of an electric bulb. It is concerned, as well, with the possible relations that the experience of heat, cold, light, and spoken words may have to our qualitative sense of time. Does it feel slow or fast, for example?

The words in the form of simple questions and answers about what is in any case, visually self-evident, — are purposely redundant, to refer in one medium to what is happening in another medium.

Such questions and answers sometimes sound like nonsequiturs: for example, 'Is it hot?' 'No it's wet'. But these are only shifts in emphasis to another aspect of what is happening. Finally, there is play upon the conventional male-female symbolism of 'ice', 'warmth' and 'light'. These symbols are also bound up with time.

Allan Kaprow

Then, 1974, b/w, sound, 20 minutes



Pierpaolo Calzolari
Born 1943 in Bològna, lives in Bologna

Excerpt from a letter, Berlin, April 1973

Yes... I send you a film so that you can watch it. You are, in fact, one of the few to whom I feel obliged to account to periodically. It is a piece that I made here in Berlin, in this house, one of the many houses that you know, with the garden just outside the kitchen, the blackbirds in the morning and the cold light in part of the studio.

Describing the film is only an impression of the work: how to do it? We should rely on the same reciprocal 'entendu' as a semi-school in Lyonne. I have to give you a descriptive list: research of an organic structure, stratified that can affirm a continuous reality, where every intention should be as important as the things themselves; a reality without interval. A list of the times of a cuckoo or of the times the glass reflects — the glass is reflecting — I walk strongly — I give him my belt — my belt walks—that which interests me in the end we know — a structure, an internally complex history, a European notion, Central European?, and the compromising fascination like arts in family.

Pierpaolo Calzolari

No title, 1973, color, no sound, 14 minutes



Giuseppe Chiari

Born 1926 in Florence, lives in Florence

In 'Il suono' Chiari *playes* the camera using
the real combinations;

sound-recording; off/on

image-recording; off/on

right direction

wrong direction

We have 8 situations/ in these 8 situations
the performance is free and played
personally by the author.

Giuseppe Chiari

Il suono, 1974, b/w, sound, 20 minutes



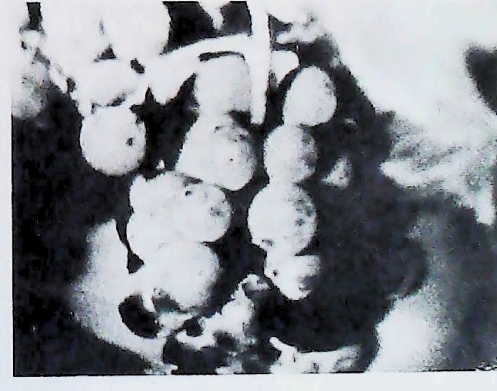
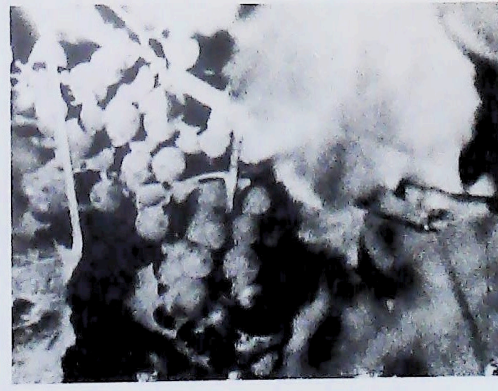
Frank Gillette

Born 1941 in Jersey City, lives in New York

This tape is presented in collaboration with
Castelli-Sonnabend videofilms, Corp.

Frank Gillette

Three Tuscan Fields and the Birds of
Madagascar, 1974, b/w, sound, 30 minutes



Joan Jonas

Born and lives in New York

The first scene is morning, the second midday, the third afternoon, and during the last one the sun is setting. The time between sunset and darkness is sometimes called twilight. I am watching this transition from day to night.

This tape is presented in collaboration with Castelli-Sonnabend videofilms, Corp.

Joan Jonas

Merlo, 1974, b/w, sound, 20 minutes



Jannis Kounellis

Born in Pireo, lives in Rome

It is necessary to have a medium to make a videotape, or the videotape is a medium. Everything transmitted is a compressed image, (a painting by Mondrian.)

Our imagination creates images, or images represent common interests.

For the creative man, morality is a scandal.

The moral image (for always) is a scandal.

I myself however, have no wish to hide from you my jacobean past, despite the fact that today, after extensive travel and knowledge, I have understood the significance of that which Rimbaud intended for free liberty.

The revolutionary vitality of an imaginary image.

Jannis Kounellis

No title, 1973, b/w, no sound, 25 minutes



Alvin Lucier

Born 1931 in Nashua, lives in Middletown

Queen of the South — commissioned in 1972 by Gerald Shapiro for New Music Ensemble, Providence, R.I. as a performance piece for several players with various sound generating devices, voices, and closed circuit television systems. Realized expressly for videotape in October 1974.

Excerpts from an interview with Douglas Simon

'The Queen of the South' uses the Chladni principle of sound in vibrating media: if you can excite any responsive material with sound, by sprinkling sand, iron filings, or other similiar substances on it, you can see the vibrations. In this piece, the players can either decide beforehand to try to produce certain visual images or play freely and see what collective imagery emerges. I use closed circuit television so that the audience can see what's going on. A technician once suggested that I make a videotape and play it back during the performance. He didn't understand that the players use the images as a continually evolving score. They change the 'score' by playing and the 'score' in turn changes what they play. They're in a real-time feedback loop. Of course, a videotape is a score after the fact.

...If only one person is playing, the situation is simple because there is only one set of sounds going in. You can see right away what your sounds are doing and you work until you hit a resonant frequency that makes the strewn material move; then it's just a matter of experimenting with changes in amplitude and pitch to produce specific patterns. It's quite simple. Laxmi Tewari, a North Indian singer, was playing it one evening and I said to him: 'Forget the plate, just sing your own music'. Only a few pitches had any effect. He produced a symmetrical pattern that looked like the grillwork you see on Indian architecture.

... [I've thought of] practicing 'The Queen of the South' until you could visualize images without them actually being there. I dream that electronic technology will disappear and become incorporated into human activity such as ESP, meditation and other disciplines. We'll be able to count faster than a computer and daily life will be spiritual. Even now, those composers who do the best with electronics are the ones who see the spirituality of the medium...

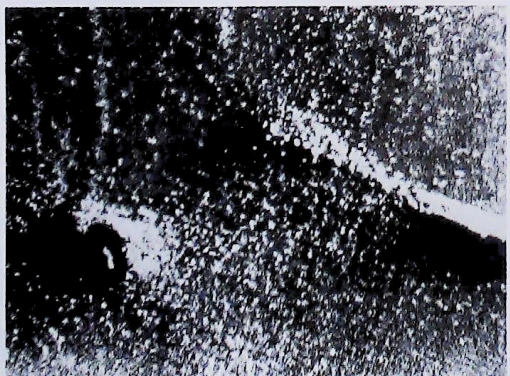
... The only thing that distinguishes ESP from a telephone call is that the phone uses wires. But it doesn't seem to me to be a very big jump to eliminate the wires. Of course, telepathy is an ancient art, you know, the American Indians used it. When the men went out to kill buffalo, the woman could always tell when the deed had been accomplished and they would prepare the fires for cooking. When asked how they knew, they'd say: 'Oh, a voice came to us'. It's got to be true, they couldn't not be right about that. And I think that telephones and electronics are preparing us for the entry again into that means of communication.

«The personification of Sapientia in the Wisdom of Solomon evidently caused the author of 'Aurora' to identify her with the 'Queen of the South'. In alchemy she always appears as 'Sapientia Dei', and in the writing of the Church Fathers the south wind is an allegory of the Holy Ghost, presumably because it is hot and dry. For the same reason, the process of sublimation is known in Arabic alchemy as 'the great south wind', referring to the heating of the retort».

From Jung, 'Psychology and Alchemy', Pgs. 386, 387.

Alvin Lucier

The Queen of the South, 1974, b/w, sound,
30 minutes



Jean Otth

Born 1940 in Lausanne, lives in Lausanne

The Limits. (Interrogation on 'realities' of the image.)

The 'limit' is a theme on which I have been working for the past two years. It is an extremely simple operation in which the primary gesture consisting in the separation of two forms, is essential for me; at the origin, it is one of creation's first acts.

By breaking the dialogue into two surfaces, the 'parasite' which I insert, signals or even signifies an image.

Being an element of a dialectics between an outline which isolates and a passage which 'opens', the limit in itself is an exciting problem which was suffocated by a seeming banality.

To fix a limit graphically in the actions and the video tapes belonging to this series, becomes, paradoxically, a pretext for an interrogation on the modalities of the 'realities' of an image. In a strip like 'Limit A' I intervene on the image of my shadow, with white chalk on a blackboard.

The interest of this experience rests on the level of magnetoscopic documentation, on the simultaneous presentation of three types of reality: my shadow, its graphic fixing, and the back of my image. Curiously enough, the highest degree of reality moves incessantly from one to the other modality of the subject. These are different readings of the very video image which will give rise to the problems of 'reality'. Pursuing this work, I made a certain number of magnetoscopic actions, in which I no longer intervene on my shadow but on my own image, both diapositive and cinematographic. This ambiguous dialectics, by disturbing our perception habits, should incite us to an interrogation on the various statutes of iconic 'reality'.

From Lea Vergine, 'Il corpo come linguaggio'.

Jean Otth

Limite E, 1973, b/w, sound, 10 minutes

Limite B, 1973, b/w, sound, 15 minutes



Charlemagne Palestine

Born 1945 in New York, lives in New York

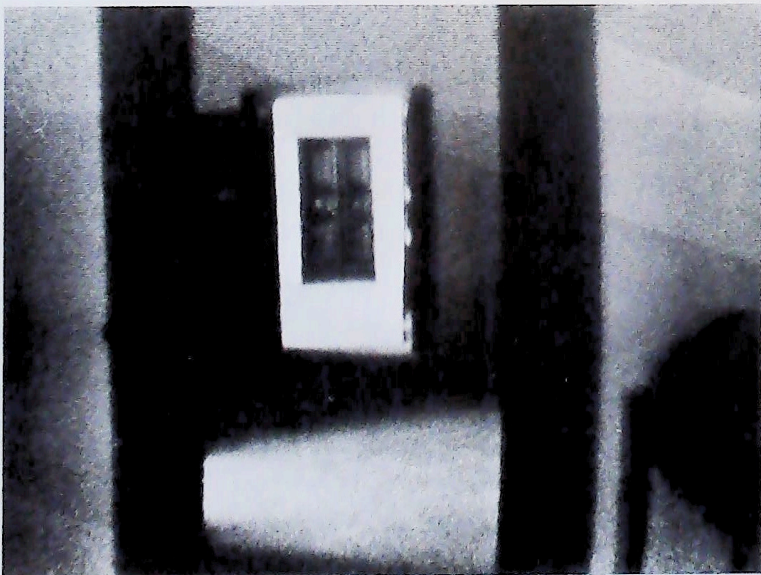
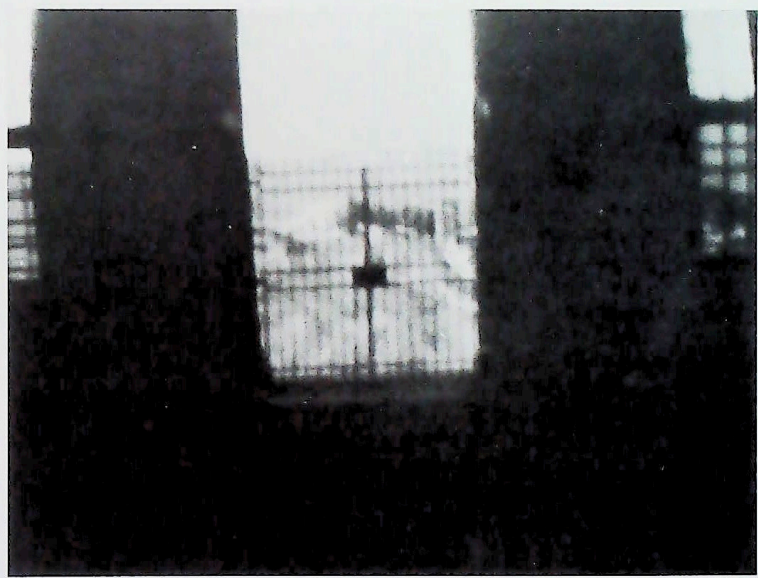
These works (Body music 1 and 2) show the relationship between the body and the human voice in their relation to the psychological and physiological elements in the man and the outside environment. Body music 1 is an objective look at the subjective species; Body music 2 is a subjective look at the objective environment.

This tape is presented in collaboration with Castelli-Sonnabend videofilms, Corp.

Charlemagne Palestine

Body Music 1, 1973, b/w, sound, 12 minutes

Body Music 2, 1974, b/w, sound, 8 minutes



Giulio Paolini

Born 1940 in Genova, lives in Torino

Ninety two works, dating from 1960 to 1974,
'forget' their original images and tend to
identify with, in the space of a minute, a
habitual and unfamiliar dimension: that of
a painting.

Giulio Paolini

Unisono, 1974, b/w, no sound, 2 minutes



Alberto Pirelli

Born 1953 in Torreamare, lives in Florence

Videotape is a pursuit of the banal, of a banality that is not accepted as an autonomous item, but as an uncalled for consequence of a class ideology. The false fluidity of the image (as well as the setting forth of time and movement notions referring to the media's logic), result of a reductant, linearizing process, shows up as a negative instance. From 'Stay Tuned', notes on an attempt of cultural colonization.

Alberto Pirelli

Stay Tuned, 1974, b/w, sound, 20 minutes

ALBERTO PIRELLI

שִׁבְעַת יָמֵינוּ
שִׁבְעַת יָמֵינוּ

APPUNTI SU DI UN TENTATIVO DI COLONIZZAZIONE CULTURALE

Bill Viola

Born 1951 in New York, lives in Florence

The video image is changing so rapidly — it is 'so dynamic that it becomes the most demanding thing to be perceived by our eye/brain. This overload of information is part of the reason that much video tape work consumes fairly visually static scenes, or normal-time everyday events and circumstances—received more popularly as boring. I think that this choice by artists using the medium is primarily the result (consciously or unconsciously) of trying to apprehend this high velocity data flow. It's almost too much to handle, so it becomes easier to deal with visual fixtures of low content to try to alleviate some of the momentum.

After living under the sun for so long people appreciate a source of light that they can look at directly and not have it hurt their eyes. But the appreciation soon wears thin when they realize that watching video is tough stuff; next hardest thing to reading. (And like reading, people use TV to go to sleep by.) Basic to the common complaint that a lot of this video stuff is difficult to sit through, is the fact that the act of perceiving the television image is just plain fatiguing. The hours of Watergate or the Moon shots proved that. Normal time unfolding in the pace we live it does not work on television. It's too slow.

A New York Times article, Sept. 1 1974 by Dick Adler, talks about the Neilson rating system to determine which programs are watched the most on TV. In it, he mentions the use of the C.R.O. (Continuous Receiver On) device enabling Neilson computers to detect a person deliberately trying to boost the ratings of one station (by leaving their set on all the time). 'At such time [a set is detected to be on 24 hours] the C.R.O. automatically disconnects that set from the Neilson computer and signals a local agent to pay a visit to the household. At least one dead person has been discovered that way'.

The clinical definition of death can now be expanded to include persons with their television set on for 24 hours or more. So we find that the bulk of all this video tape stuff going on is not just difficult to sit through initially, but, in the end, can prove lethal.

The only way around some of these problems, I feel, is to intercept the high velocity data flow of video and in some way (direct or indirect) learn to control it. The four parts that comprise 'A Series' are an effort in this direction.

One physically interrupts the scanning process by utilizing a common household device, a second only reveals select fields of video in isolation, another presents a concise and simple action of high definition, and the last compresses 6 durations of time into one event occurring in the same space.

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A Series, 1973-74, b/w and color, sound, 25
minutes

