

## Interview of Teresa Wennberg

The interview took place on September 2023. The questions were asked by Lorella Scacco (LS).

The interview was conducted in English.

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*Teresa Wennberg is a multimedia artist with a pioneering career in video art and computer art. Born in 1944 in Sweden, she studied in Stockholm, Paris, New York, and Tokyo. In 1978, during her studies in painting, she started to make videos at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. She has received numerous awards, and she has been represented, among others, in Biennale de Paris, Ars Electronica Linz, ELECTRA Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Hara Museum Tokyo, Gulbenkian Foundation Lisbon, Liljevalchs Konsthall Stockholm, Kulturhuset Stockholm and ICC Tokyo.*

LS: When and how did you first start using video? What type of equipment did you use at the time?

TW: I went to the Whitney Museum in NYC to see the new video media that sounded very interesting. Coming back to Paris, where I lived at the time, I presented a project to the newly opened Centre Pompidou and it was accepted. I was allowed to work in the brand-new television studio there. For my following video projects, the cameras were less sophisticated.

LS: Why was video as a device particularly attractive for you at the time?

TW: I wanted to go beyond the silent rectangle of a painting experimenting with slide /installations-performances, adding sound to my work, and then I started to employ 8 mm films. Video was a wonderful discovery, where the linear experience of time was abolished, and you could go back and forth in the story. In addition, all the various manipulations you were able to do were very attractive. Being analogue, obviously, it demanded a lot of work and time – later it became digital and even more attractive, and easier to handle.

LS: Where did you have your educational background? How important was it for you to study and practice video in France in those years?

TW: I studied classical painting in Paris, but at that time video did not exist there, so as soon as I heard about it, I travelled to the US. When I went back to France, I was in the avant-garde foreground with my very first project at the Pompidou, which opened up a lot of doors in France and internationally. However, you could not "study" video at that time because there were no schools. The artists had to experiment on their own, which made the result more interesting, creative and funny.

In the Pompidou studio I invented a lot of special effects and this approach continued in the next years. All my early videos were experimental.

LS: How important was the Moderna Museet as a reference point for video production for you?

TW: Moderna Museet was a rather sleepy institution, although updated by Pontus Hultén. I could borrow from them a b/w open reel video recorder, but the quality was lamentable. Now, those video works are almost unreadable. Moderna Museet was not interested in showing our works at the time. The first show in Sweden was with Galleri Paloma in Stockholm in 1978. It took a little longer for the museum to wake up. In 1985, there was finally a large international show at the Kulturhuset "Video Art Video".

LS: How did you produce, show, distribute, and promote your earlier videos?

TW: I mainly worked in an underground way, late at night in humid cellars (true!) but I was also lucky to be supported by Moderna Museet, Filmverkstan Stockholm (now Filmform), Video NU and, of course, Centre Pompidou. Since I began so early, I was able to dive right into the international circulation. I was invited everywhere and so my research was automatically promoted. I was contacted directly by the quoted institutions and showed my video pieces all over the planet.

LS: Could you talk to us about how you developed with Ture Sjölander the association Video Nu? When and how did it start exactly? Who did participate to the members' association?

TW: In Sweden, when I started my video practice, there were very few artists (critics, institutions) interested in video. Ture Sjölander was one of the predecessors with his experiments with film and TV. In 1980, he contacted me to be a founding member of Video Nu. Then, other artists appeared, such as Hans and Dasha Esselius, Fredrik Ceson, Måns and Pål Wrange, Marie and Karin Grönlund, Kjartan Slettemark. It was an open organisation. In the beginning, we were poor but enthusiastic, and later we got some financial support from the city of Stockholm to set up a basic VHS video studio where to edit analogue tapes. Today few documents exist about this early period. I lived between France and Japan at that time, and curated the exhibition "Sweden Now–Japan Now" with the support of VideoNu and Kulturhuset in Stockholm, where it was also shown (1982). I published several articles about video in Sweden and in France too. In the meanwhile, Ture Sjölander left the video scene to live in Tasmania.

LS: In your view, what results did achieve the association Video Nu?

TW: VideoNu was an organisation created by artists and for artists with very little support. It never really managed to realize something substantial, but it was very important that it started to exist at all. I believe that VideoNu was more or less involved in the following exhibitions (but there were others that were not initiated by the association):

"Monitor -88", Frölunda Kulturhus, Gothenburg 1988

"Monitor -87", Frölunda Kulturhus, Gothenburg 1987

"Videokonst", Konstforum, Norrköping 1987

"Stockholm Video Open", Stockholm 1985

"Video", Sodertalje Konsthall, Södertälje 1984

"MEDIA -82" Stockholm 1982

"Internationell Videokonst", Kulturhuset Stockholm 1982

LS: How were your videos received by the Swedish critics and audience in the 1970s and 1980s?

TW: Just looked through what I could find from that time. This was long ago and the critics were different. I started with Centre George Pompidou in Paris and was therefore integrated in the French video scene. In Sweden I curated a few video manifestations, and I also realized some personal works. I was treated like a recognized video artist and a pioneer in France, but I was hardly noticed in Sweden. "Never a prophet in our own country perhaps".

Generally speaking, people looked with suspicion at this new art form which was simply compared to the Chain Saw Massacre and not considered "art".

LS: What years did you work with Nam June Paik and John Cage?

TW: I met Nam June Paik in Paris in 1978 when I was working with my first video. I became friend with him and his wife Shigeko Kubota, who was also an artist. Shigeko and I kept in touch until

she died. I met John Cage in 1978 and did several performances and workshops with him in the following years in Paris, La Set Baume and Santa Fé.

LS: Which are the most relevant film festivals or video screenings in Europe you took part between the 1970 and '80s?

TW: In 1986, I began to work with computer and 2D, but these are the most important video shows I participated, since the first one at Centre Pompidou, they were all important to me (and often the very first ones):

"Encontro Internacional de Intervencao e Performance" Lisbon 1988

VI Festival Video, Estavar 1988

"Female Video Art", Consejeria de Cultura, Valencia 1988

"Festival des Arts Electroniques", Rennes 1988

"Vice Versa", Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 1987

"Dix Ans Deja", Institut Francais London 1987

"Rencontre Franco-Chilienne", Santiago de Chile 1987

University of Gothenburg 1987

"Aarhus Festival", Museum of Aarhus 1987

"Angle de Vision", Lyon 1987

"International Music & Video Competition", Tokyo 1987

"Monitor -87", Frolunda Kulturhus, Gothenburg 1987

"Videokonst", Konstforum, Norrkoping 1987

I Festival Video de Barcelona 1987

I Festival Video de Madrid, Circulo de Bellas Artes Madrid 1986

Group exhibition, Hara Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo 1986

"Art New Vision", Seibu-Shibuya Tokyo 1986

"Japon Art Vivant", Vielle Charite Marseille 1986

Uppsala Museum of Art 1986

V Festival Video de Montpellier France (Special Award of the Jury) 1986

"Golden Door", White Columns Gallery, New York 1986

"Kunst mit Eigensinn", Museum des 20 Jahrhunderts Vienna 1985

"Art-Media", University of Salerno 1985

Musee Ziem, Martigues 1985

"Nouvelles Fictions en France", Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris 1985

I International Video Festival" Vienna 1985

"Nouvelles Tendences en France", Kulturhuset Stockholm 1985

"Stockholm Video Open", Stockholm 1985

"Video Art Video", Kulturhuset, Stockholm 1985

"Video Sculpture", A.R.C.A., Marseille 1985

"Art-Com", Tel Aviv 1984

"Video", Sodertalje Konsthall, Sodertalje 1984

I Video Festival of Taiwan 1984

"Videografia", Barcelona 1984

"French Video", Tate Gallery London 1984

"Art et Nouvelles Technologies", Faches Thumesnil 1984

Kijkhuis World Vide Video Festival, The Hague 1984

"Art et Technologie", Maison de la Culture, Albi 1984

"Festival de Cinema et Video de Femmes", Montreal 1984

"Rencontre Franco-Chilienne", Santiago de Chile 1983  
"Art Video Francais", the French Institute, New York, Travelling exhibition in the US and in Canada 1983  
I Festival Video de Ljubljana Czech Republic 1983  
Kijkhuis World Wide Video Festival The Hague 1983  
"Cinema du Reel", Centre Georges Pompidou Paris 1983  
"Art Video: Retrospectives et perspectives", Charleroi Belgium (Special Award RTBF) 1983  
"ELECTRA", Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris 1983  
I Festival Video de San Sebastian 1982  
V Tokyo Video Festival 1982  
I Festival Video de Montbeliard France (Special Award of the Jury) 1982  
ELAC, Lyon 1982  
"Semaine de la Creation Video", Forum des Halles Paris 1982  
"La Creation Video", FNAC Paris 1982  
"Swedish Video", The Bank Amsterdam 1982  
IV Tokyo Video Festival 1981  
Chicago Art Institute USA 1981  
Sara Hildén Museum, Tampere 1981  
Special selection Biennale, Fondation Gulbenkian Lisbon 1981  
"Ars et Machina", Maison de la Culture, Rennes 1981  
"Une Autre Photographie" Maison de la Culture, Creteil 1981  
Moderna Museet, Stockholm 1981  
Fylkingen, Stockholm 1980  
The Kitchen Center, New York 1980  
"French Video Art", travelling exhibition in the US, Canada and Latin America (2 years) 1980  
"French Video Art", American Center, Paris  
Special selection Biennale, Nice 1980  
XI Biennale de Paris, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris 1980  
"L'Art en France", Serpentine Gallery, London 1979  
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1979  
Biennale de Sao Paolo 1979  
Anthology Film Archives, New York 1979  
Video -79", Rome 1979  
Galerie Paloma, Stockholm 1978  
Centre Georges Pompidou/MNAM, Paris 1978

LS: Unfortunately, several early video pieces are lost today. Have you lost any of your videos from the first period? Do you still protect the original masters and where are they stored today?

TW: I just found some original 8 mm and 16 mm films from early 80's. I still have most original video tapes. Tapes made with open reel from the Moderna Museet in Stockholm are lost, but others are in the Centre Pompidou's collection in Paris, and some Beta and U-Matic in my private collection.