

**INSTEAD OF AN INTRODUCTION** When we encounter art video today we are in no need of any great prior visual training in order to be able to understand and accept the message. The reason for this is on the whole the ease of the visual perception of the video image, an electronic moving picture, originally a television picture, and it has become a language that is close and intelligible to most of the world's population, irrespective of all differences in geography, race, culture, politics and economics. Nobody needs teaching how to watch television, the most popular medium of the present age, nor how to uncover its specific features, as had to be done in the early phase, the 1950s and 1960s. We are no longer enthralled by its technology, its abilities to transmit information of real events from one end of the world to the other. But still we are fascinated by the performative possibilities that the television medium or video as its offshoot provides. Hence many people today use electronic or digital video images with fairly similar results, whether they are tourists or nature-lovers, scientists and researchers, family and social chroniclers, news reporters or documentarists, or artists. Television became a challenge to artists the moment when, on account of the wide coverage and the mass consumption involved, it became socially relevant and increasingly influential creator of public opinion.

The article that follows endeavours to throw light on the essential points in the development of video art in Croatia, attempting to contextualise this development by reference to similar movements in Europe and elsewhere.

**TELEVISION AND VIDEO, THE GENESIS** In the circle of similar and yet nevertheless different media, most quandaries as well as inspirations have been caused by the similarity of television and video. In the twentieth century, television was the first electronic mass medium to have a visual message, and it can be called the origin of video. The first divide between the two media started when the tape recorder began its development, allowing the use of the new technology of visual recording on magnetic tape. Magnetic tape appeared in the experimental research of the new television technology of the late 1930s, in 1939, to be exact; and when portable equipment appeared in the mid-1960s, video became more markedly separate from television. From then on, the two media can be considered similar but not the same, although for art the differences are almost insignificant. Television broadcasts or television channels in general, when they are not being transmitted live, are usually in the form of a recording on some recording medium, recorded in digital or analogue technique on a video tape or disc. A television chan-

nel is broadcast every day, often directly, and is composed of numbers of broadcasts of different, heterogeneous genres. Video is however a formally separate and autonomous work, which can appear in different contexts and is accordingly similar to other medium of expression. A video, as work of art, publicly presented in the context of a gallery/exhibition activity, has extra characteristics and because of its structure and purpose differs from video works meant for mass-market television distribution<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See: Hrvoje Turković, *Video djelo naspram televizijskog i filmskog djela*, Zapisi, Bilten Hrvatskog filmskog saveza, HFS, Zagreb 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Die Kunst des Fernsehens, Hamburg 1953.

<sup>3</sup> From the very beginnings of its appearance in the area of art, video has been compared with film. Although video is really technically different from film, there are compelling points of contact that make many theorists put film and video typologically in the same media area. Practice, however, splits film and video art. Not so much the film and video works created as highly profitable creations in the shape of feature films or serials as those created in the area of artistic production and meant for galleries, festivals or in general any form of non-mass presentation and distribution.

The importance of television as medium for the rapid distribution of visual information was recognised at the beginning of the 1950s as an advance in civilisation that was important in the processes of education, the development of industry, for its commercial potential and for its potential in the domain of art. As early as 1953 the Germany media theorist Thomas Eckhart in his book *The Art of Television*<sup>2</sup> wrote that television was an art form and that it would become *the* art form of the future. In the early sixties, television was already the dominant mass medium of the time. Although other media such as radio, film<sup>3</sup> and the press were also characterised as mass media, it was television that had come to dominate the communications space, and it has not yet abandoned this position to other media. Not even the great acceptance and popularity of the internet since the nineties has been a significant threat to television's mass appeal.

#### TELEVISION AND ART

From the very beginnings, television developed differently in Europe and America. In the fifties in America, private, commercial TV stations were established, the primary purpose of which was the distribution of advertisements. In Europe the founders of TV stations were governments, and their programme policy could be described in principle as cultural and public service. Hence European television services, like many others worldwide, were generated primarily as media at the service of the public, and long resisted the American model of programming policy in which everything was subordinated to advertisements, ratings and profit. It is still a fact, though, that American TV stations had an important cultural role, particularly in the pioneering period of the media in the 1960s. Then, along the lines of modernist utopianism, came the first initiatives in which there was a wish to use the potential of TV as medium of mass communication, and to recast it into a mass medium of art. TV station WGBH-TV of Boston, with the financial assistance of the Rockefeller Foundation, started in 1967 to broadcast a programme entitled *Artists-in-Television*, gathering together heterogeneous artists and experimenting with the contents of the programmes. In 1969 the same station issued a more highly profiled programme entitled *The Media is the Media*.

These were the art videos of Allan Kaprow, Nam June Paik, Otto Piene, Thomas Tadlock, Aldo Tambellini and others, who problematised the TV medium itself and tested out its expressive boundaries. In New York, a similar thing was done by *Television Laboratory* at WNET/13, and in San Francisco by KQED. In Germany, art programmes were broadcast by WDR of Cologne. In the early seventies there were similar programmes being broadcast in Sweden, the UK and Italy. They were on the whole experiments with the nature of the medium, seeming today fairly naïve in their attempt to turn television into a space for artistic expression, particularly with the admixture

<sup>4</sup> *Guerrilla Television* is an example of politically engaged independent channel that in underground conditions worked diametrically opposite to the laws of the mainstream channels.

of political commitment, as done in for example *Guerrilla Television*<sup>4</sup>. Also in America there was Open Channel, a cable TV that without any selection showed anything offered to it, thus attempting to weaken the industrialisation of the big networks and their visual contamination. Theoretically, this was a radical idea, but in practice proved to be short-lived. The artists on the whole criticised the proliferation of the media space and the use of TV for the ideologisation of society with hyper-consumerism of all kinds. This fight, for the medium of TV as an exclusively art medium, which western artists were then waging, was not won, and video art, or the production of video tapes, as it was called in the beginning, entered the domain of contemporary avant-garde art and from the seventies appeared, almost exclusively, in galleries and museums, and to this day has shared the fate of all other art media.

An important contribution was made to the development of TV as medium of art communication in 1969, with the formation of Global Village<sup>5</sup>, an association of activists and independent producers of video tapes, who were engaged in the production and distribution as well as the study of video, so as to expand ethical issues, for example of the environment, and who accepted video as a possibility for the implementation of a global link-up among people. We can recognise the idea today as a very early ethically-charged idea about the need for a global communication system. German TV station WDR of Cologne was as early as 1969 working with Garry Schum, film and television enthusiast, who shot films about artists, with the intention of showing them to the public in the framework of his independent TV gallery that we know as the *TV Gallery of Garry Schum (Fernsehgalerie Garry*

*Schum)*<sup>6</sup>. Schum made several films and videos about the work of several contemporary artists and brought them together in two cycles, *Land Art and Identification*<sup>7</sup>. However, the influence of capital was too strong for such stations to remain for long in their original intention. Quite the opposite. In time they were all more and more commercialised, and when, during the 1980s, European states, Germany first of all, abandoned the model of the

<sup>5</sup> Ira Schneider, Rudi Stern, John Reilly, Beryl Korot, Frank Gillette, Juan Downey

<sup>6</sup> See: *Ready to Shoot*, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2004, a publication accompanying the travelling show with films and video prepared by Garry Schum for his *Fernsehgalerie* between 1968 and 1973 when he died prematurely; edited by Ulrike Groos, Barbara Hess, Ursula Wevers.

<sup>7</sup> Films and videos about the artists: Richard Long, Jan Dibbets, Walter De Maria, Barry Flanagan, Daniel Buren, John Baldessari, Gino de Dominicis, Mario Merz, Joseph Beuys, Klaus Rinke et al.

state funding of big television stations, an essential change took place, and television started to be ruled by the law of profit, which in its very nature was quite opposite to the aspirations of artists.

The differences in the development of American and European TV systems and their perception in public are visible in the figures. At the beginning of the sixties, America already had a dozen television stations in every region, and the average American family watched five hours of TV daily. In Europe, things did not develop at such a speed, and by the end of the fifties, in Germany, Austria and Italy, for instance, one or two black and white channels were broadcast, gradually increasing over the next few years, so that in the sixties TV had swamped the whole of Europe. Croatia was not essentially behind the trend, at least as far as the first initiatives were concerned. Television Zagreb, the first TV station in Yugoslavia, with its one channel, started broadcasting a black and white programme very early, in 1956, carrying on from the pioneering role that Radio Zagreb had had in the 1930s in radio broadcasting in the area of SE Europe. These were short evening news programmes and music and entertainment programmes broadcast live. Two years later two more TV stations were founded in the republican centres of Ljubljana and Belgrade, and this was the beginning of its mass spreading. The character of television was far from that of an art medium, although in regular broadcasting, especially after the beginning of the sixties, culture did have an importance, place, particularly in the form of various educational programmes, in line with the government policy of mass education. The first appearance of art video in Croatia, as was the case with other culture and art centres in the former Yugoslavia, occurred outside television. It was not investigated and articulated either by television people or cineastes, but by visual artists, in their search for a new means of expression, television appearing as an ideal solution because of its media particularities.

The changes that happened after rebellious 1968 affected the continuation of the opening up of Croatian (or Yugoslav) society to western experiences. Although at that time there was a technological lag behind the west, this was not the crucial reason why there were not attempts to set up independent television channels in Croatia. Croatian society worked at the time in circumstances of communist single-party political system, and it could not have been expected that the state apparatus would support something that by its very nature meant the undermining of the system, or the destabilisation of its functioning in any area of public action, particularly not in the area of television, the strongest and most influential mass medium. But there were places, of a very local character with no mass impact such as galleries and other art spaces like Student Centre Gallery, Nova Gallery or the

→ Ekipa FAVIT-a u Beogradu, 1973. na Aprilskim susretima / FAVIT team in Belgrade at the April Meeting: Zvonko Vađon, Marijan Hodak, Darja Dupelj, Vladimir Petek, Jasminka Kalinić, Mladen Stilinović



Gallery of Contemporary Art where artists called into question the current value judgements by using very radical artistic and social procedures.

Though without any intention of having any major impact on public or artistic life, in 1971 Vladimir Petek<sup>8</sup>, then a proven experimenter in the area of film art, launched FAVIT (Film, audiovisual investigation, television), an association that was concerned with the investigation of the area of multi-

vision, as a phenomenon of enlarged perception, the work of which

was then closest to the coinage of Gene Youngblood "expanded cinema"<sup>9</sup>. There were, of course, no independent art television channels. Still, there was one case when TV and video enthusiasts getting together ad hoc<sup>10</sup> in Koprivnica in 1975 showed during a single day a model of the working of community television

that would in programming terms, mainly with a culture programme, be able to compete with state-run television. Only in the second half of the eighties did the media and political space open up for the first TV programmes about radical form of visual art, and the Belgrade TV broadcast *TV Gallery*, edited by Dunja Blažević<sup>11</sup>, importantly opened the television space up to visual arts and artists<sup>12</sup>.

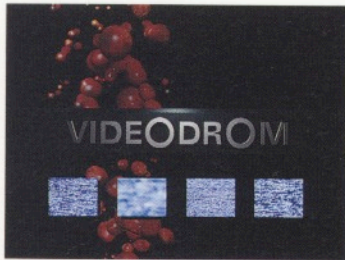
<sup>8</sup> In 1974, as part of Zagreb Film Days (Zagfida) he publicly demonstrated video equipment. In the next three and a half decades, Petek prepared and shot in film and video technique a large number of original works and multivision actions inspired by the works of other visual artists and dance and theatre performances in which he was frequently involved. He also created a large video archive of cultural events.

<sup>9</sup> In 1970, Gene Youngblood published the book *Expanded Cinema*.

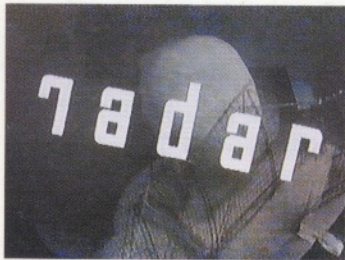
<sup>10</sup> Ratko Aleksa, Vladimir Kostjuk, Radovan Lauš, Vjekoslav Prvčić i Marijan Špoljar.

<sup>11</sup> Dunja Blažević made her breakthrough into big TV in 1983, showing a broadcast on Belgrade TV about the relationship between TV and video.

<sup>12</sup> Among the many films about artists we might select a video film about the Zagreb group Gorgona, produced for broadcasting in 1987. In *TV Gallery*, Sanja Iveković and Dalibor Martinis produced a number of video works.



† Videodrom, TV Zagreb, 2002.—2004.



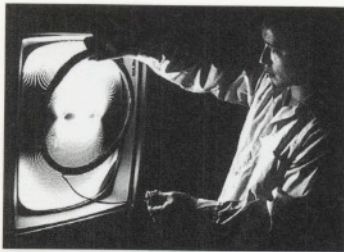
† Radar, TV Zagreb 1988.—1990.

In the second half of the eighties in Zagreb a festival was launched that was called *Video Mix*. It was created primarily out of the need to record the then very important phenomenon of music video clips, and the festival helped in the overall endorsement of video art. Television and music firms were then producing music clips for pop and rock groups, and video technology enabled a faster and cheaper production, with very effective results. This form of video art became globally independent as a separate genre, and today the music scene is inconceivable without such videos.

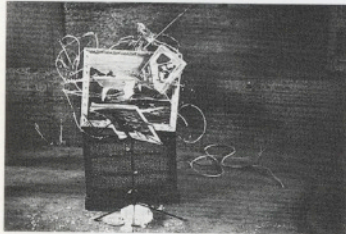
At the end of the 80s, in 1987, Zagreb Z3 was founded, the first independent television company in the whole of ex-Yugoslavia. In 1988 RT Zagreb launched the programme called *Radar*, and then *Fluid*, which kept up with goings on in popular culture and art. After 1990, at the time of the Homeland War, television programming was focused on things essentially related to the events of the war and day-to-day politics, and it was only in 1995 that a new programme called *Transfer* was launched, which is even today the only one systematically to keep up with and promote various activities in the visual arts, and, importantly, video art too. In the period from 2002 to 2004 the artists Simon Bogojević Narath and Vladislav Knežević were the editors of the newly launched show called *Videodrom*, dedicated to creative work in video and the promotion of the video medium.

Television, equally so in the West and the East, very soon after it appeared in public in a big way, became a tool of in the hands of power for the purposes of indoctrination, a new and hardly comprehensible phenomenon that irreversibly changed the existing concept of sociality. Soon it became a commercial medium as well, harnessed to the consumer-society system. Although many phenomenologists and theorists of culture and art saw television as an art medium or predicted it would become so, this did not come true, at least not in the way in which television was thought of then. Not even the more temperate predictions that saw television as a tool for artists came true optimistic form. It is only possible to talk of the important role of television in the "scheme of the culture industry", as Adorno described American experience as early as 1953, or television as a mass communication medium, as during the sixties and seventies there were attempts to define television theoretically in the spirit of Marshall McLuhan, thus toning down its growing aggressiveness. Still, television was always a challenge to artists, and still is. It proved itself as a medium via which some message, even an artistic message, could and can still very easily penetrate practically to everyman<sup>13</sup>. Today not a single analysis deals systematically with the medium of television, nor are any new ideas about the new dimensions of the medium and its potential roles in society being developed. It can be said that societies have accepted it, or alternatively, as critics once said of the medium, that they have knuckled under in front of its aggressiveness and total coverage of the public media space. Contemporary phenomenologists and

<sup>13</sup> There were various commentaries and critiques of Marshall McLuhan's thesis from the early days of TV that "the medium is the message", for it was against the dominant proposition that the "message is the medium". After McLuhan, an analysis was started not only of the content of the message but, above all, of the manner in which it was transmitted, and it was then that the analysis of the language of the TV medium started.



† Nam June Paik: Video – Synthesizer, 1969.



† Wolf Vostell: Dé-college, sredina 1950-tih / mid 1950's

sociologists have no powerful arguments, of the kind they once deployed in the criticism or defence of television. The internet, the medium of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has taken upon itself all the positive and even negative criticism that was once showered upon television<sup>14</sup>. As against the internet, television is today in a fairly passive position. The technology of broadcasting and the quality of the TV image have advanced a great deal, but the nature of the medium, in essence, has remained unchanged. This is still a medium of one-way communication, authoritarian, with an insignificant amount of direct influence from the viewer. Still, today there is hardly a human being that does not consume television and it is impossible to imagine contemporary civilisation without the electronic image in every corner of the world.

**FONTANA, PAIK AND VOSTEL** The first artist to accept television as a possible art medium, although in the form of ideal ideas, was Lucio Fontana, Italian painter, who between 1946 and 1952 wrote several texts setting forth his painting manifesto – *Spatial Concept (Concetto Spaziale)*, and, in the text *Television Manifesto of the Spatial Movement* spoke about the media of radio, television, neon, radar and X-rays enabling artists to discover new aspects of time and space<sup>15</sup>.

But a decade had to pass before artists were to appear who were able to concretise Fontana's ideas, as far as the TV medium was concerned. Although apart from Fontana, John Cage and Guy Debord also in the fifties spoke enthusiastically and even radically about television, radio and film, the first work actually produced was signed by the Korean artist Nam June Paik, exhibited in 1963, entitled *Exposition of Music-Electronic Television* in Wuppertal, Germany<sup>16</sup>. As musician and student of John Cage, Paik used the experience of avant-garde, experimental electronic music and transferred them to the area of the electronic image, and thus started the era of

<sup>14</sup> For many years TV was stigmatised as an anti-social medium that encouraged the process of alienation and had a negative effect on the moral development of young people and their cognitive capacities. This thesis proved ungrounded, in practice, although there was an essential difference in the generations of television children and those were not.

<sup>15</sup> After: Van Broeckhoven: *On the introduction of a New Media, Retrospective of Belgian Video Installation*, MUHKA, Antwerp, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Paik filled the gallery with televisions, scattering them at random, so that they were placed on their sides, backs or upside down. The boxes, as described in the work by Jahn G. Hanhardt in the text *The Discourse of Landscape, Video Art: From Fluxus to Post-Modernism*, were scratched and defaced, and the screens were filled with variously generated images from the TV programme that Paik achieved by radically changing the electronics in the sets. The exhibition was open ten days, and could be visited only from 19 to 21 hours, for this was the time when the only Germany TV channel was broadcasting.

the new art of television and video. In the same year, just three months later, Wolf Vostell, taking his own *Dé-Collage* of the mid-fifties, produced his *TV Dé-Collage* with several television sets as one of the sections of his one-man show. Although in these works artist did not use video recordings, and did not use video equipment (camera and recorder), using only a television and a broadcast image or even television sets only, we can say that 1963 is the starting point for the history of video art, and that everything after that year was derived from the procedures of these two Fluxus artists. For this pioneering year, it was the attitude of the artists for the commercial side of television that was crucial. Artists were the ones who felt the outstanding power of the medium

and for this reason their first reactions were criticism of the ideologisation of the television medium and its use for the purpose of development an uncritical and indoctrinated consumer society. The first possible manifestation of this way of thinking was the iconoclastic destruction of the television image, which the artists did. In this Paik was in the lead, and his experiments with CR tubes are well known; in 1969 he invented the video-synthesizer (Paik/Abe *Video synthesizer*), capable of deforming and generating an electronic image, legitimating the procedure of the accidental or deliberate mistake as an equal partner in the creation of the work of art and a new aesthetic fact. With this procedure, Paik opened up the way to the coming generations of experimenters with the electronic image.

#### PORTABLE EQUIPMENT, THE SONY PORTAPAK

Video split off from television and became a distinct medium in 1965 when the Sony Portapak appeared on the market, a small-format portable video device that was financially accessible to many people, including artists. They now were able to fulfil their ambitions for new electronic art by going outside the television studio, comparable in terms of revolutionariness with the move of the Impressionists outside the studio into the landscape. Video works were then created that, in fact, were a form of documentation of some other artistic procedures, of various land-art actions, happenings or performances done for the camera. But at that time already it was possible to separate this kind of recorded material from the documentary approach to film. Video shots were long static frames with real time action and there was no need for post-production montage effects<sup>17</sup>. The camera was treated as the extended eye of the imaginary viewer. This was a new form of objectivity that was going to be an important characteristic of video art for a long time, although artists brought in subjectivity very soon after the pioneering seventies, and today, on the whole, we should talk mainly about subjectivity in video discourse. Braco Dimitrijević recorded his first video in 1971 at the St Martins School of Art in London, and although it is not extant<sup>18</sup>, it can be considered the first video to be made by an artist from Croatia. This was a two-part video performance that Dimitrijević did himself and called *Metabolism as Physical Sculpture* and *Process of Thinking as Physical Sculpture*. In both cases Dimitrijević positioned himself in front of the camera in order to be recorded in an identical way, his intention being to subject the objectivity of the video image or video recording to irony. The camera did not record the differences of his physiological or mental states, his metabolism and thinking, leading Dimitrijević to conclude that the video medium was not appropriate for plumbing the profound subjective states of the artist, characteristic of it being only the recording

<sup>17</sup> A considerably longer uninterrupted recording was enabled by the new technology of recording, at first with the magnetic tape, today with the digital disk.

<sup>18</sup> Only photos of the frames are available today of this video. It is not at all unusual that in these years the video was lost or erased by being recorded over. Many artists had no clear idea just how unstable a medium video was. Paik, for example, without thinking much about it, recorded over his first video work, but later, influenced by the market, signed the box of the original tape, on which only the inscription of the non-existent work remained. Many video works were lost in collections of museums, since primary protection of tapes was for a long time not properly carried out, and the tapes were not re-recorded on new, high quality and longer lasting media.



of the objective, superficial image of reality. The first Portapak equipment was brought to Zagreb in 1972 by the artist Van Schley and Willoughby Sharp, then editor of the well-known New York magazine *Avalanche*. As guests of the artists Sanja Iveković and Dalibor Martinis, they met other Zagreb artists and critics as well. With this equipment, Goran Trbuljak shot his first video work *Perimeter Test of the Field of View of the Artist*. But since no one, not even the artist, kept the tape, it is possible that the owners of the equipment recorded over it, which was common enough at the time, since video was not thought of as a lasting and stable art form.

#### THE DEMATERIALISATION OF THE ART OBJECT, FLUXUS AND GORGONA

There were essential differences in the way the process of forming video art went in Europe and that in North America. This process can on the whole be paralleled with the degree of the technological development of the medium of television and the development of the networks. Europe, although technologically with a slight time lag, accepted television essentially differently from America. American artists moved into video at the moment that television was a suddenly popularising medium, making use of its technological advantages over film. Most of their video works in these pioneering days can be understood as a form of the documentation of other art activities, while European artists accepted television and later video as continuations of the practice of post-war art movements and phenomena, before all of the anti-movement Fluxus, but also American Pop, Minimal and Land Art. With the use of the new forms of expression and artistic behaviour such as actions, happenings, performances, ambiances, films, visual poetry, the new art practices opened up the way for video art to be profiled as the most radical form of the procedure of dematerialising the art object<sup>19</sup>. Video proved to be the ideal medium to unify all these experiences on the way of changing the notion of a work of art. Its *paradox of invisibility*, a media and technological phenomenon of the image's inconstancy, but also a discursive force brought by this new medium into art space, proved to be essential in the process of re-defining the notion of the work of art and the field of its influence.

Just as the Fluxus artists, and other groups and movements in the western art scene, such as Nouveau Realisme and Zero, contributed to the dematerialisation of the art object, so this role was taken over in Croatia by the artists of the Gorgona group<sup>20</sup>, which worked at the same time. The premises of Fluxus and Gorgona artists, as against the dominant trends in art in the fifties, were the changed roles of the artist in the process of creating the work of art and the advocacy of a change in the definition of the concept of the work of art that came about in the

<sup>19</sup> David Hall: *A Look at a Controversial History, A Critical Read on British Video Art*, 1996.

<sup>20</sup> Members: Josip Vaništa, Julije Knifer, Ivan Kožarić, Đuro Seder, Marijan Jevšovar, Miljenko Horvat, Dimitrije Bašičević, Matko Meštrović, Radoslav Putar. The group was at work from 1961 to 1966; after that Josip Vaništa occasionally enlivened the spiritual and communication space with some of the members, and for this the term Post-Gorgona was used.



† Nam June Paik: Candle TV, 1960-te / 1960's

atmosphere of the anti-art idea. While in Fluxus, which was an international art grouping with many members, several artists experimented with the television medium<sup>21</sup>, Gorgona group members, although inclined to change on the whole, put their intentions into practice in traditional media of art, in painting and sculpting, in combination with the new practice of the use of photography, happening and action. That, however, there was thinking about the new medium of television can be seen in one work of Ivan Kožarić. In 1960 Kožarić made a negative bas relief of irregular shape and called it *Screen*. Known to be a sculptor with "intuition", Kožarić was even then ironically interpreting the lack of conviction that radiated out of the television screen. There were numbers of similar works in the world that literally took in and included in themselves television, or television sets, as vehicles of the concept of the TV medium, indirectly thus dealing with the medium itself. Long ago in 1956 Richard Hamilton in his celebrated collage *Just what is it that makes today's home so different, so appealing* showed a television set, fitting it into the depiction of the typical American home filled with devices that were in fashion at the time, acting as indicators of a high standard of living and consumer culture. In 1958 Wolf Vostel used six television sets that he placed behind a slashed canvas so that the screens could be glimpsed through the rents in the material. In 1963, Günther Uecker, also a German artist, in the work *TV 1963*, studded a television cabinet with nails and painted it white, while French artist César, in 1962, exhibited a stripped television cathode ray tube in a transparent Perspex box, placing it on a cube made of crushed car bodies. It is known that Paik was a great master in recycling television set boxes and used them in various ways, literally as equipment in video installations, as well as poetic commentaries on modern technology (*Candle TV*). Croatian video art knows this kind of form of the appropriate and recycling of television sets in consonance with the classical visual media in just a few instances. In her video work *Sweet Violence* of 1974, Sanja Iveković wrapped black tape around a television screen, turning it into a prison window. The scenes that we look at, taking place on the other side of the bars, are a number of then current local commercials, which, modelled on the western ads of the same years, started to fill the media space of television. Games with the surface of the monitor can also be seen in Ivan Ladislav Galeta at the "Telegraphic" exhibition in Nova Gallery in 1978<sup>22</sup>. He made interventions on the screens of television sets with simple graphic forms, seeking fortuitous similarities between the graphic drawing and the broadcast image. He produced a similar though much more conceptual intervention in the work *TV Sniper*, when he intervened on the TV screen with a precisely drawn graphic of a sniper sight, turning television into a symbol of a deadly weapon aimed at the protagonists of the programme broad-

<sup>21</sup> Apart from N. J. Paik and W. Vostell there were other Fluxus artists who tried their hands at the creation of TV and video works: Joseph Beuys, Wolf Kahlen, Günther Uecker, Georg Brecht, Yoko Ono...

<sup>22</sup> *Galerija Nova* was one of the cult gallery venues for the launching of the most interesting phenomena and artists in the seventies. It regained its importance in the grid of Zagreb galleries after 2002, when the running of the gallery was taken over by the WHW group / What, How and for Whom.

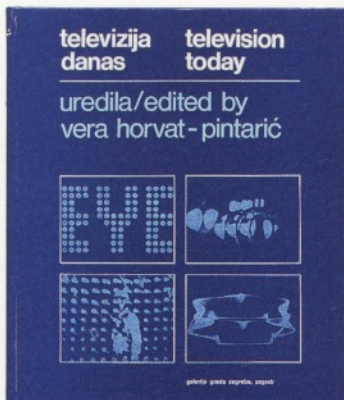
→ Ivan Ladislav Galeta: TV Snajper / TV Sniper, 1976.



↑ Ivan Marušić Klif: TV set, 1992.—1995.

cast. This work was one of the few works of the period that turned round the communicational direction of television and like a psychological mirror turned the viewer into someone who, at least symbolically, hit back at the powerful medium. However, the metaphorical dimension of the work was essentially changed, particularly in the context of the last decades of the twentieth century, filled with belligerencies and the growing phenomenon of terrorism. From today's perspective, this metalinguistic game and the innocent intervention has symbolically become a sign for the real physical threat of our age. Around 1980, Martinis produced a series of works called *Telephoto*, the particularity of which lay in the exposure of photosensitive paper directly onto the TV screen. At the beginning of the 90s, the then very young multimedia artist Ivan Marušić Klif played with television set boxes. In the stripped interior of the boxes, he made out of children's toys and various kinds of recycled technical junk, interactive Pop Art lumino-kinetic scenes, which overturned the viewer's expectation of the electronic image.

**NT AND THE NEW ARTISTIC PRACTICE** The sixties in Croatian visual art were marked by the international art movement called New Tendencies (NT) based on the introduction of experiments into visual art, preferring the while constructivist, geometrical, optical, kinetic and cybernetic research.



† BIT International 8/9: Televizija danas / Television Today (ed. Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb / Gallery of Contemporary Art, Zagreb), 1972.

New Tendencies was organised by the Zagreb Gallery of Contemporary Art, as it then was, and it lasted until the beginning of the seventies, when it left the original orientation of experimentation within the concepts of the traditional formal arts and dedicated itself to entirely new phenomena in the area of cybernetics, and then to the New Artistic Practice<sup>23</sup>, as a number of similar artistic practices that started synchronously in almost all the major cultural centres of the former Yugoslavia were jointly called. For this reason the beginnings of video art in Croatia have to be looked at in the context of the important events during the sixties, particularly in the context of the creation of a specific experimental and investigative climate alongside the NT movement, which in its fifth version (NT-5) in 1973 was dedicated to the endorsement of the new artistic practice and video art as well. On this occasion video performances of the Montenegrin artist Ilija Šošković were shown in the Gallery of Contemporary Art, and this can be considered the first public presentation of art video in the country.

The New Artistic Practice was an artistic and revolutionary movement that brought in completely new elements, strategies and procedures, from which the art of the seventies was to be generated; because of its closeness to the strategies of conceptualism, and because of its diversity, it might more accurately be called "polymorphic conceptualism". In this country, video started to be explored precisely by those artists who were inclined to this kind of expressive practice, one part of which was conceptualism. If we accept the explanation that "conceptualism is the message without the medium, at the very least the message without the medium in the tradition-

<sup>23</sup> See the catalogue: Nova umjetnička praksa u Jugoslaviji 1966-1978, Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb 1978.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Gillette: *McLuhan and Recent Art History*, NYC, 1998.

<sup>25</sup> This was primarily manifested by the arrival of Želimir Košćević as manager of the gallery; he stayed in the post from 1968 to 1981, when the running was taken over by Vladimir Gudac.

<sup>26</sup> Curator and catalogue editor: Davor Matičević. Artists: Boris Bučan, Braco Dimitrijević, Sanja Iveković, Jagoda Kaloper, Dalibor Martinis, Davor Tomičić, Goran Trbuljak, Gorki Žuvela. Exhibition organiser and catalogue publisher: Galerija suvremene umjetnosti, Zagreb 1971.

al sense"<sup>24</sup> then it is understandable that video was as if made for completely new and different art messages. From 1968 a big promoter of changes in art practice, with its extraordinary activities, was the Student Centre Gallery<sup>25</sup>. Alongside the gallery activities, within the workings of the Multimedia Centre, the Theatre ITD and the Music Salon, new ways of thinking about the form of the art work and changes in behaviour in the artistic space were being developed by the artists who at the beginning of the seventies were oriented towards the expansion of the known definitions of the concept of art. The exhibition *Possibilities for 71*<sup>26</sup>, organised by the Student Centre Gallery can be seen as a paradigm of such a changed way of thinking. And although at this exhibition there was no video art, almost all the artists of the exhibition, two years later, did their first video works in Graz, part of the traditional regional art event Trigon, which started to be held from 1973 on under the title *Audiovisuelle Botschaften (AV Message)*. Trigon 73 was the key exhibition with which, in this part of Europe, video art was placed squarely equally to other art media in the exhibition scene.



† Goran Trbuljak: *Bez naziva / Untitled*, (Trigon '73), 1973.

**BIT INTERNATIONAL, TRIGON '73, MOTOVUN, MARTINIS, IVEKOVIĆ, TRBULJAK, BOŽANIĆ** In 1972, the Zagreb Gallery of Contemporary Art, today the Museum of Contemporary Art, organised an exhibition and symposium on the topic of new visual investigations. The symposium held that year was attended by a number of important TV medium theorists<sup>27</sup>, and after it a thematic number of the magazine *Bit International* came out with the title *Television Today* (Television and Culture, Language of Television, Experiments) in which the texts of the participants were published. The magazine was the first, and not just in Croatia, theoretical guide through the then inadequately explored space of the new electronic medium. The editor of the publication, Dr Vera Horvat-Pintarić, was invited to select, for *Trigon 73*, artists from Yugoslavia (as it then was) who showed an interest in the artistic exploration of the media of television and video. They included Boris Bučan, Sanja Iveković, Dalibor Martinis and Goran Trbuljak from Croatia and the Slovene artistic couple Nuša and Srečo Dragan<sup>28</sup>. The first production conditions were used by the then very young artists in different ways, but all of them were outstandingly creative in their explorations of the medium itself. Boris Bučan, in his only video work, produced at the time, shot a large banner on which the word LIE was written, to which was appended a signature showing a clearly untruthful date, 1977. Then he wrote that he had "done

<sup>27</sup> Editor: Vera Horvat Pintarić, written by: Pierre Schaeffer, Umberto Eco, Abraham Moles, Gilo Dorfles and others.

<sup>28</sup> Nuša and Srečo Dragan working in the Ljubljana conceptualist movement called OHO 1969 shot the video *Bijelo mlijeko bijelih prsa / The White Milk of White Breasts*, which is considered the first video created in the former Yugoslavia.

It was a static black and white recording with replaceable texts over the image. They used Akai and Ikegami equipment (Open Reel 2").

Also taking part were the following artists: Valie Export, Peter Wiebel, Gottfried Bechtold, Richard Kriesche, František Lesák, Ilija Šoškić, Franco Vaccari, Gianni Colombo, and video works were shown by Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, Trisha Brown, Frank Cavestani, Herman Freed, Joan Jonas, Richard Landry, Andy Mann, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Nam June Paik. The activity of some independent TV stations in New York was presented: WNET/13-The Television Laboratory, Survival Arts Media, Global Village, Access – Public Channel Newsletter. See: *Trigon '73*, Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz 1973.

<sup>29</sup> In these pioneering years several video artists explored and problematised TV as medium of manipulation, and a particularly important action was that of a young and then unknown American artist, Chris Burden, who used the television advertising system and promoted his name, placing it alongside art classics, by which, manipulating the truth, he produced the unexpected effect of his own rapid acknowledgement in the media and society.

the work shown on the video tape deliberately showing that it was a "forgery" and hence placed the medium of video in the context of the truth and falsehood of the media discourse. Sanja Iveković and Dalibor Martinis

produced an actionist video work called *TV Timer*, problematising, with a real-time example, the power of media manipulation, in the concrete case, of Austrian TV station ORF. The first part of the action consisted of short video sequences shot in advance

of the artists endeavouring to persuade passers-by on the streets of Graz that the time was actually another time,

more precisely, the time of the evening news. The second part was produced at the very time of the showing of the

evening news, when with the use of a specially constructed timer, recorded scenes several times broke into the

TV news being shown, and interrupting it precisely at the time and minute the recorded sequence was

talking of<sup>29</sup>. Originally conceived as an action that was supposed really to interrupt the showing of the main news of the

evening, it was produced in gallery form, interrupting the regular programme on the TV set exhibited in the venue of the

*Trigon '73* show. Goran Trbuljak explored the media and the



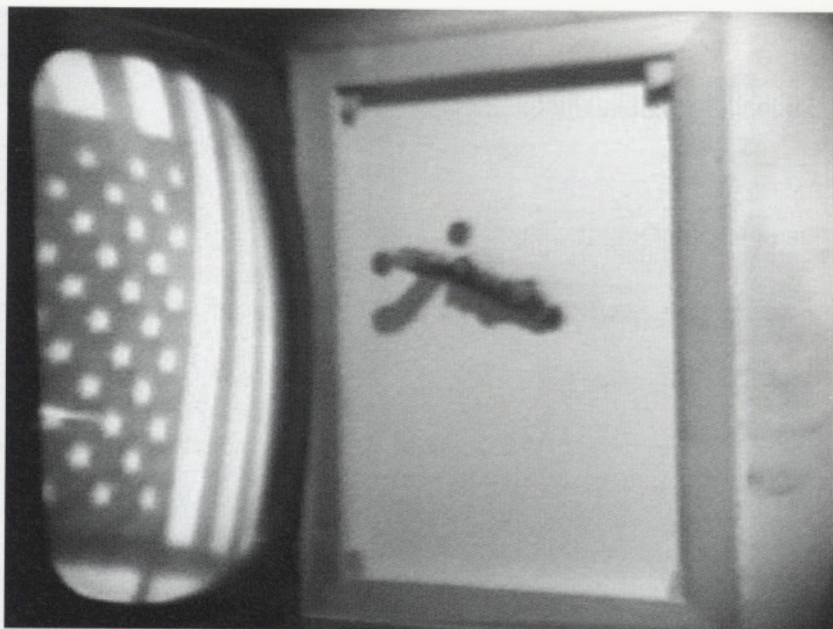
11 Sanja Iveković: Instrukcije br. 1 /  
Instructions no. 1, 1976.



physical limits of video. With one camera, he shot another, which was turning on a tripod and at the same time recording the geometrical structure of the ceiling. Limited by the length of the cable, the camera could revolve once one way, once backwards. Trbuljak dealt very persuasively in these first video works with the constraints of the technology of the time, or perhaps with the most elementary processes deriving from the nature of the video medium, predicting that in the future too this would be an equally direct and witty playing with our perception and the real function of the medium as it was at the time of its creation. In later video works, Trbuljak as a rule dealt with the medium, its features that stemmed from the technical characteristics, its advantages and disadvantages, resulting in remarkable works of metamedia expression. This was the case with the video works created at the 4<sup>th</sup> Motovun Meetings in 1976, where under the title *Identity-Identità* a workshop with portable video equipment was arranged for the first time ever in Croatia.<sup>30</sup> At that time Trbuljak created four short videos: *Untitled* (subtitled *Cut, Race, Discotheque, Mirror*), among which the most significant was one in which the camera recorded the recorder on which the recording was being registered, and then the artist cut the tape with scissors, thus interrupting the recording. In the reproduction, this act is manifested by the disappearance of the image and the appearance of video interference (snow) telling of the interruption of the recording procedure.

<sup>30</sup> Workshop organisers were Marijan Susovski, curator of the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, and gallerist and video equipment provider Paolo Cardazzo, Galleria del Cavallino, Venice. These artists took part: Claudio Ambrosini, Sanja Iveković, Živa Kraus, Dalibor Martinis, Zdravko Milić, Michele Sambin, Goran Trbuljak, Luigi Viola.

→ Ante Božanić: *Behind the Canvas*, 1974.



<sup>31</sup> This phrase was most often used to describe video that was a combination of video and performance. On the world video scene, video performance was much in evidence in all phases of the development of video art.

In Motovun Martiniš produced a work, often referred to subsequently, known as *Open Reel*, according to the type of video tape then used for shooting. The camera shot Martiniš turning on a rotating chair winding around his head video tape that had just a moment before gone through the tape recorder head and registered the whole action. In this video performance<sup>31</sup> done for the video camera, of course, Martiniš became a part of the video equipment, indicating through this transformation of live creature into machine, a powerful artistic dedication to the new mechanical medium as well as the possibility of synergy between human being and machine. The same thing holds for the video performance *Video Immunity*, which he shot in a shower enclosure, replacing the shower with a live camera in order to take a pretend shower in the video image, which the real time recording shows us. At Motovun too Sanja Iveković shot the video performance *Instructions No. 1* and *Make up-Make down* the first video work to take issue with the feminist question in the context of the role of media and ads in the life of woman, and the phenomenon of beauty, youth and eroticism, which still today so vigorously absorb consumer societies. In both works, she used a video camera as a mirror, and the face or hand of the artist appears in close up on the screen. In *Instructions* she gives instructions about how to treat the face during a beauty treatment, and draws arrows on her face showing the place and the direction of application of the care and beauty preparation, which is shown in the second part of the video. In the work *Make up-Make down*, the artist, in front of the camera, in close up, shows lipstick and other make up tools, pulling the lipstick up and down in a manner that irresistibly eroticises the whole scene.

↳ Kata Mijatović: Markitin san / Markita's Dream, 2005.

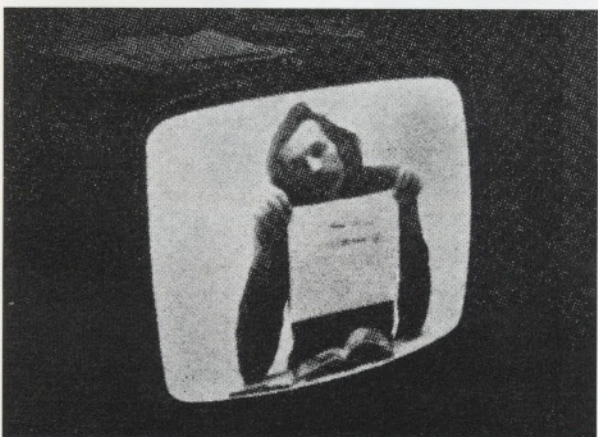


Living from 1968 in America, Ante Božanić<sup>32</sup> worked outside Croatia; he was an artist who at this pioneering time of video art made his first video in 1974. He shot short self-referential sequences (*Return*, 1974, *I am the Light* 1976, *Susan in the Window*, 1976, *Bands*, 1977) in which he did performances for the camera, on the whole with very expressive gestures and in various forms of violence, self-destruction, the torture of his own face (pulling rubber over his face, distorting it with light effects, voice distortions). This kind of self-shooting or performance for the camera was characteristic of the video works of the seventies, on both the international (Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, Joan Jonas) and Croatian scenes (Dalibor Martinis, Sanja Iveković, Braco Dimitrijević, Ivan Ladislav Galeta) and remained a part of the scene in the later decades, and is in various self-referential variants to be met with today in the young generation of video artists (Marijan Crtalić, Vlatko Vinček, Sandra Sterle, Renata Poljak, Vlatka Horvat, Vlasta Žanić, Ana Hušman, Lala Raščić, Kata Mijatović, Zoran Pavelić, Tanja Dabo).

<sup>32</sup> Ante Božanić remained unknown to the Croatian professional public until the mid-nineties, when he made vigorous contacts with the leaders of the Split art scene. The video work of this artist is even today not well known enough and valorised, and although the artist did not take an active part in the formation of the Croatian art scene, his frequent references to the local Dalmatian colour certainly puts him right in the Croatian cultural sphere.

**GALETA, BRDO** Important for the video work of Ivan Ladislav Galeta was his experience in film and photography, their objectivity of presentation, the ease of media stratification and collage. Galeta did his first video works at the moment when the technical conditions for the electronic montage and generation of video images had been attained. His TV *Ping-Pong* of 1975-1979, a game studio-shot with two cameras, was given final shape on an image mixer where shots from various





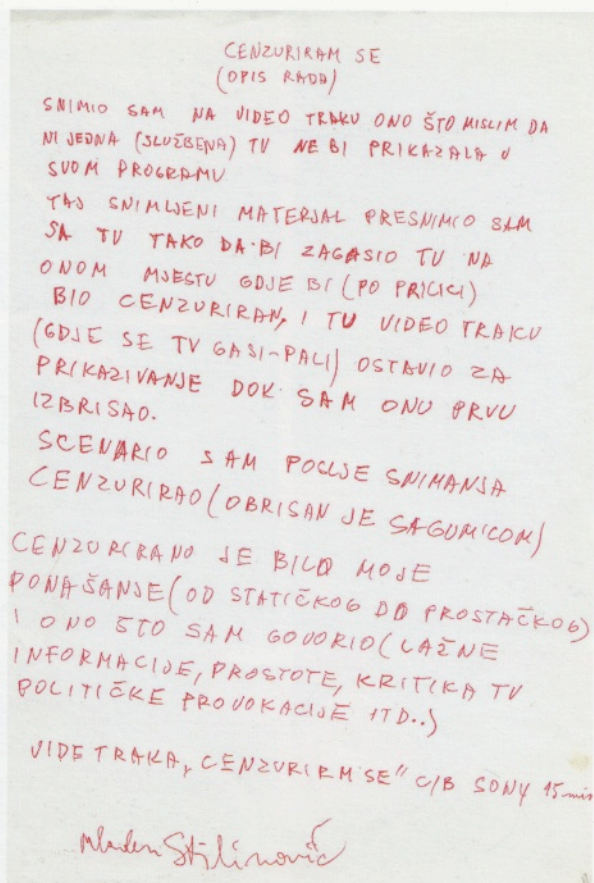
↑↑ Mladen Stiljnović: *Cenzuriram se / I Censoring Myself*, 1976.

33 Davor Matičević: *Zagrebački Krug, Inovacije u hrvatskoj umjetnosti*, GSU 1981, Zagreb

34 *ENDART* is the continuation of the project *V.I.R.đ* a work in progress based on the eighteen letters of the first sentence spoken in the novel *Ulysses* by Joyce: "Introibo ad altare Dei". Galeta puts the sentence in a circuit linking the phenomenon of the closed circuit with the structure of Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, creating from eighteen small videos a fractal structure for the whole of the video.

angles were joined with a symmetrical vertical splice thus deconstructing the image of the real space and creating a meta-spatial image. His video works (*Media Game*, 1978; *Drop*, 1979; *Video 7*; 8; 9; 10) are meta-media experiments, but are "not an illusion, on the contrary, are the realisation of illusion and the materialisation of the imagined"<sup>33</sup> and go outside the usual definitions of time and space. In his recent video works Galeta has gone on with the metalinguistic game. In the video *ENDART*, which has been being produced as work in progress since 2000, Galeta is creating a weird abstract and fractal composition assembled from scenes from reality, transforming them, on the model suggested by the writings of Joyce<sup>34</sup>, into automatic actions and endless streams of consciousness. According to this principle *ENDART* is not yet completed, and the artist designs every representation as a one-off.

An important date for the development of Croatian video art was the holding of the video workshop in the little Istrian village of Brdo near Buje, where in the autumn of 1976 the Vienna gallerist Urusla Krinz-



inger brought together several artists from the Yugoslavia of the day and Austria in order for them to produce video works<sup>35</sup>. At that time Mladen Stilinović did his video *I Censure Myself*, in which he took issue with censorship and self-censorship, an important matter in the social and political system of the day and its attitude towards freedom of speech and thought in public and private. Stilinović put this important ethical issue into visible form in two phases. He censored a previously recorded video tape on which had had recorded personal declarations relating to the reality of the time by wiping out bits that he could imagine being cut out if the video had been shown in state-run TV. After the erasure of the contentious parts, the original was wiped and only the edited or censored version was preserved.

**35** Mladen Stilinović, Boris Demur, Goran Trbuljak (all from Zagreb), Neša Paripović, Raša Todosijević and Slobodan Šijan (all from Belgrade), Ernst Caramelle from Vienna, and others.

**CLOSED CIRCUIT VIDEO, MM CENTRE** At the beginning of the 1970s, the totally natural reaction of an open discussion about the difference between television and video occurred. A typologically sub-form of television, which has an important role in the history of video art, is closed circuit or CC video, which, however, complicates the relations of television and video, for like parts of television programming, it counts on real time in which the event takes place and does not use recording but transmits onto the

**36** The first art video installation using closed circuit and entitled *Iris* was produced by American artist Les Levin in 1968.

screen, or projects, the image of an event in real time<sup>36</sup>. In Croatia, CC video with directly transmitted image was put on for the first time in 1976 at a theatre performance of 1984 by Nenad Puhovski after the novel of George Orwell in the ITD Theatre. On monitors, the audience was able to watch the transmission of events on the stage, on the whole with close ups of actors and scenes that were broadcast on several large TV screens. The equipment bought for the occasion was, along with a number of other reasons, one of the considerations behind the founding in 1976, as part of the cultural activities of the Student Centre, of the MM or Multimedia Centre<sup>37</sup>, an institution that played an important role in the formation of the Zagreb media scene. Soon after the founding the centre was taken over by Ivan Ladislav Galeta<sup>38</sup> who with his production helped in the realisation of the

**37** At the time of its founding, this was called Institute for Multimedia Research; its first manager was Hrvoje Turković.

**38** After Galeta, in the mid-eighties, the MMC was run by Ivan Paić and during the years to come he organised an outstanding programme presenting film and video works by Croatian and foreign artists.

first CC works. In 1977 in the MM Centre Dalibor Martinis put on the action *Video in Video out*, in which he used a CCTV system. This was one of the early Martinis interactions with the audience, a "performance without a performer"<sup>39</sup>, in which apart from the audience, two moving cameras on wheels with cameraman took part and the author behind the control panel. The cameras shot the entry of the audience (video in) and then the procedure of pushing the audience out of the room, which the cameramen did with the use of the cameras. Then in 1978 the MM Centre produced another CCTV action. This time it was Sanja Iveković, who produced her performance *Inter nos*. In this, CCTV was used to create an intangi-

**39** Nada Beroš, *Brainstorm*, foreword to the catalogue of the exhibition *Brainstorm*, MSU, Zagreb 1998.

ble virtual relationship with the visitors, making use of the direct transmission of their live image from another room. The installation consisted of two rooms linked by two CCTVs and an audio link, and the lobby where there was a direct transmission for the audience. During the whole of the action the camera shot the artist, who was in a separate room, and invisible to the public. The visitors occasionally individually went into the separate room and started a private conversation, while the artist touched the screen holding her image in front of her, and they did the same thing with the screen in front of them. At the same time the audience saw just one, their own image.

CC video was recognised as an important phenomenon of video art that, in fact, did use the TV strategy, but unlike the literal transmission of the live image of an event, which is characteristic of the TV medium, it is really a matter of the subjectivisation and above all of the personalisation of the medium, the appropriation of the medium for the artist's own personal purposes. In most CC works the actor was the audience, and the artist was the one who conceptually created the premises for the subjectivisation of the space and the time.

The CC video works of Sanja Iveković are also video performances, for the artist in principle performed actions that activated the relationship among artist-TV-audience. Variants of the CC video technique with live transmission of an image and interaction with the audience are also present later in the following works: Dalibor Martinis's *On Your Own* (1990), in which the visitor is faced with an image of his own visage projected onto the floor; Darko Fritz's *End of the Message* of 1995, in which the artist used the existing installation of security camera in a bank; Sandro Đukić, *Journey around the world in 100 days*, of 1995-1998 in which a CC video with a time delay was active; Kristina Leko, who worked on the transmission of an image with a video link from one location to another, on the whole linking religious spaces and symbols with public and secular signs, including *Three days for...* of 1997, *Views* of 1998, *To Our Lady with Fish* of 2000.

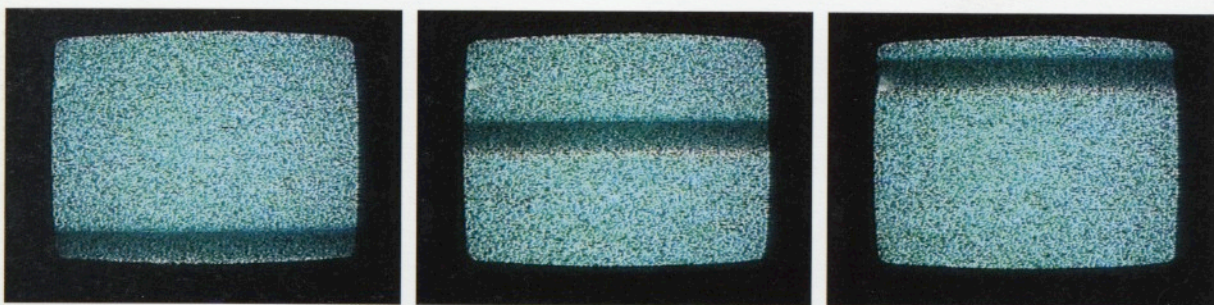
The procedure of the transmission of ongoing information that is used by CC video is still used today by artists as tool for criticising the omnipresent system of video surveillance as phenomenon reduced to the absurd of the "Big Brother is watching you" effect, the globally popular reality show that manipulates the depiction of the privacy of an individual and shows it to the general public. In the action of Ana Šerić and Ana Belošević, *Theory in Practice 02*, of 2004, CC video is used to achieve the Big Brother effect, since the 72-hour direct transmission of the companionship of these two artists, located in a side room of the Museum of Contemporary Art, was publicly available to the audience in the exhibition venue and on its internet domain<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> In 1994, Wulf Herzogenerath summing

up events from the early nineties drew attention to the fact that from the seventies CC video installations had become a dominating feature of everyday life, whether as surveillance systems in banks and public life or as an important product in the electronics industry. Unity of time and space, reality and electronic image contributed to the metamorphosis of observer into doppelgänger and thus demonstrated that direct involvement could take him to interesting existential issues about his own image and true reality.

CC video in more recent times, with the advances in computer technology, has developed into interactive video installations in which the public takes part not only ambientally but also actively creates the work. According to Bredekamp the CC video movement together with the happening and Fluxus, developed a fluid link between accident and artistic form, between artist and non-artist and hence contributed to the powerful about-turn towards an artistic self-neutralisation that occurred in art in the sixties and seventies, and which in many things determined the events and the position of the artist in the later decades. Many theorists and artists think that CC video is in fact the most interesting part of video art<sup>41</sup>. Gene Youngblood calls CC video a "teledynamic environment", to describe the way in which artists worked directly with the dynamics of information in movement inside the physical and temporal parameters.

<sup>41</sup> E.g.: Alan Kaprow in 1973 in a critical evaluation of video-tapes described CC video as the "only interesting video art".



<sup>†</sup> Ivan Faktor: Prvi program / Channel One, 1978.

**NEW PARADIGMS** What happened in Croatian video art at the turn of the seventies and eighties? In fact, no new generation appeared to change the attitude to the medium, but on the whole it was the seventies artists that set off on a new road. Common to them was that their video works were no longer experiments with the new technology and new medium, but on the whole a summation of the experience of the media investigations of the previous years. Video at the end of the seventies became a legitimate artistic means of expression, and was completely incorporated into the art-history evaluation system<sup>42</sup>. This coincided, at the turn of the decade, with it no longer being enough for artists to explore the medium; the new work, now, had to be a reflection of artistic sensitivity. This is why in the eighties video became markedly impacted by the methods of film design, and instead of endless shots of activities in real time and space, as in the seventies, we find narrative film models applied to video. It should not be forgotten that in these years artists were also

<sup>42</sup> In 1977 in the journal SPOT (no. 10), there was a review of video art in Yugoslavia with textual surveys from Marijan Susovski and Ješa Denegri, with guests Richard Kriesche and Maria Gloria Bicocci. Published by the Gallery of Contemporary Art, Zagreb.

stimulated by the new ideology of post-modernism, and that the concepts of deconstruction, recycling and the renovation of existing models and patterns occupied a central position in the world of art. This period gave video art some very unexpected results. Video became a medium that with ease took over the cohesion function in the joining of heterogeneous artistic expressions and ideologies. For video, qua still relatively new technological medium, easily linked the experiences of the traditional art media, painting and sculpture, which were then once again, in their traditional form and after a lull of almost two decades, coming spectacularly back onto the scene. For this reason, then, the eighties were the period of the flourishing of the video installation, which included other art media, primarily sculpture, architecture but also painting. On the international video scene, the number of artists multiplied. Along with video installations in which single channel video was used on TV monitor, the form of multi-channel monitor and projection presentations developed (Dara Birnbaum, Fabrizio Plessi, Marie Jo Lafontaine, Studio Azzuro, Nam Jun Paik, Bill Viola, Dan Graham). In Croatia, apart from the works of Dalibor Martinis, *Still Life* of 1974 and *Cold Kiss* of 1978, there were no other video installations in Croatia in the seven-

43 Martinis used the then rare opportunity to produce a video work in Zagreb. This was in an elementary school that had purchased video equipment for its curriculum.

ties<sup>43</sup>. It was in the eighties that Martinis produced very important video installations.

Although he was to devote himself to video only in the nineties, as early as 1978/80 Ivan Faktor was already radically experimenting with the endurance of video equipment (camera and monitor), making a film of empty TV screen in *Channel One*, of 1978 or exposing the equipment to the effect of light from a 1000 W lamp. Later on, in the nineties, Faktor started using video more vigorously, and then a number of subtle and complex single channel videos and video installations were produced. His most important works were inspired by the films of Fritz Lang, German film director of the first half of the twentieth century. In his video works and installations, Faktor merged the historical time, characters and events from Lang's films with personal conditions and contemporary events in an extremely vivid way, particularly in connection with the war that was at the beginning of the nineties rampaging in Faktor's Osijek and in Croatia generally (*Fritz Lang und ich*, 1994, *Das müde Tod 1931-1998*, 1998, *15 minutes for Nada Lang*, 2000, *Das Lied ist aus*, 2002).

Still, in the Croatia of the 1980s, not many artists were dealing with video. Martinis and Iveković created international names for themselves and spent the seventies in Canada, New York, the Netherlands and Japan, working and gathering experience and inspiration that were to result in a number of new video works in the eighties. Their video works from that time have filmic structure, but still with visible features and media possibilities that only video can afford, above all in the various forms in which an image can

be generated, slow-motion, chroma-key procedure and so on. As well as the formal media features, their joint and individually-produced films (*Chanoyu*, 1983; *Black and White*, 1985; *Zirk (Dhirk)*, 1990) brought new departures in content, above all through the procedure of analytical narration. In this Martinis went still further and in 1986 in the Netherlands made his "feature" video film *Dutch Moves*, which enjoyed production conditions that were

44 Producers of this 53 minutes video film were Meatball,

The Hague and ZDF TV.

exceptionally good for this time<sup>44</sup>. Only 20 years later in the video *Oxygen 4* by Dan Oki shot in 2004, also with Dutch funding, were equally good production conditions attained, and it is possible to find similarities too in the manner of the use of film genres in order to tell the tale, since in both cases the genre borders between film species are almost invisible (a thriller and spy film in the case of Martinis, SF and love film in Oki). Both also did a gallery presentation, laying bare the structure of the film, Martinis in 1986 in photographs and video, and Oki in 2004 with multiperceptual architecture video image. In both cases, the audience, to the extent of their own willingness to take part, participated in the unravelling (Martinis) or creation of the story (Oki).

In 1983 Martinis produced the one-channel video *Image is Virus*, given shape in an iconoclastic hyperproduction of images, in which he raised the issue of the endurance of the electronic image, its values in information,



↑ Dalibor Martinis: *Slika je virus / Image is Virus*, 1983.



→ Sanja Iveković / Dalibor Martinis: *Chanoyu*, 1983.

iconography, symbolism and above all communication, in the context of the hyper-production and distribution of images that the television medium itself facilitates. An important watershed for Martinis as well as for Croatian video art at the end of the eighties was his first one-man show of video installations put on in 1990 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, when twelve video installations were shown retrospectively, including anthology piece works such as *Stone Garden* (1986), *View of another View* (1986) and *Tavola Calda* (1987), installations from which in the 1990-1992 period the work *Supper at Last* was to be generated, a metaphorical farewell by the artist to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the nineties, Martinis went on with a number of installations, producing in 1994 *Line of Fire*, a triple projection of monumental dimensions locating the visitors in a narrow passage. Making use of the paradigm of the artistic awareness of the absence of any space of interpersonal communication, Martinis exposed the viewers to faces of the everyday environment that in a given moment, instead of speech, spewed out fire. For the exhibition at the Venice Biennale of 1997 Martinis produced a number of new installations (*Coma*, 1997; *Eclipse of the Moon*, 1997) and in 1998 started off the cycle *Binary Series* in which, in a number of different works, he thematised the issue of communication and understanding (*Parken Verboden*, 2000, *Inside the Maltese Falcon*, 2001, *King Kong to America I Say*, 2002).

In 1982 Sanja Iveković produced her *Personal Cuts*, a one-channel video composed of a part in which the artist cut openings into a stocking pulled over her face, and documentary presentations of the history of Yugoslavia



† Dalibor Martinis: *Tavola Calda*, 1987.



† Dalibor Martinis: *Dutch Moves*, 1986.

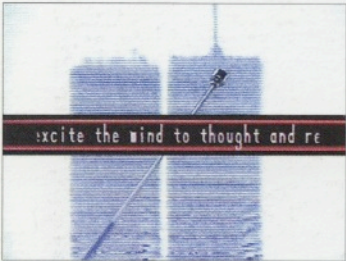
→ Breda Beban: *I Can't Make You Love Me*, 2003.



from 1945 to 1991, which appeared as response to the action of cutting. In the form of a Flash clip, Sanja Iveković also produced the video installation *Lighthouse*, which she started in 1989 and regularly brought up to date with recent details from her personal and social life. During the eighties and in particular in the nineties, Iveković stepped up her work as an activist, with her commitment in the issues of minority human rights (particularly women's rights) and her art work in video is often an expression of this (*Frozen Image*, 1992, *Resnik*, 1994, *Mind Over Matter*, 1994)

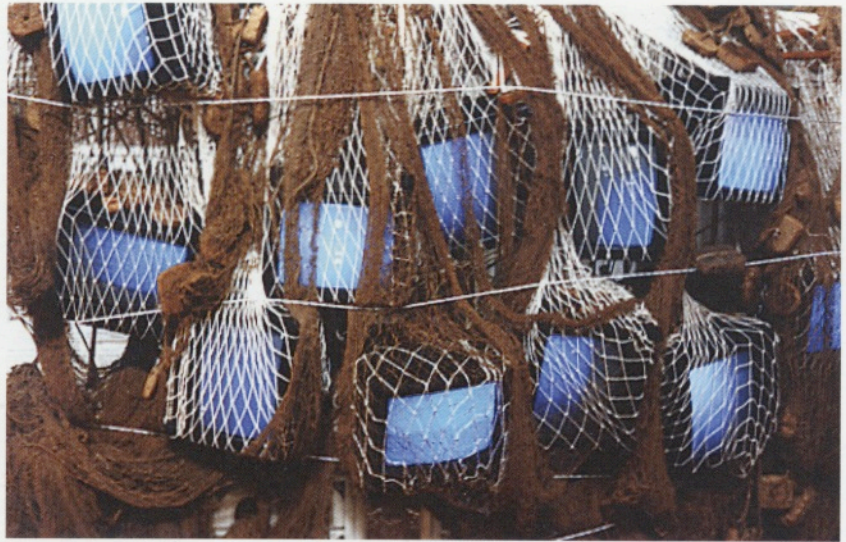
In the eighties, Breda Beban and Hrvoje Horvatić appeared on the video scene; their video works are paradigmatic of this period. In terms of expression, they are close to film, but in sensibility to painting, and it is clear that they set off into video as a symbiosis of experience in these two fields. Their video works are almost always iconically structured, compositely, with a powerful symbolic, metaphorical and mystical component, and through their video works they deal with questions of identity in a psychological, political or ethical sense (*Icons of Invisible Things*, 1985; *Kiss My Hands*, 1986; *Target* 1986; *Geography*, 1988; *Terirem*, 1988). In the nineties, these artists lived in England, and in 1997, after the death of Hrvoje Horvatić, Breda Beban worked alone. *Beautiful Exile*, one of her multi-channel video works created in 2003, through an objective presentation of five female faces and the minimal changes upon them, tests out the area of intimacy, sexuality and desire, and the borders between reality and art.





† Ivo Deković: *Tesla*, 1990.

♣ Ivo Deković: *Mowar*, 1993.

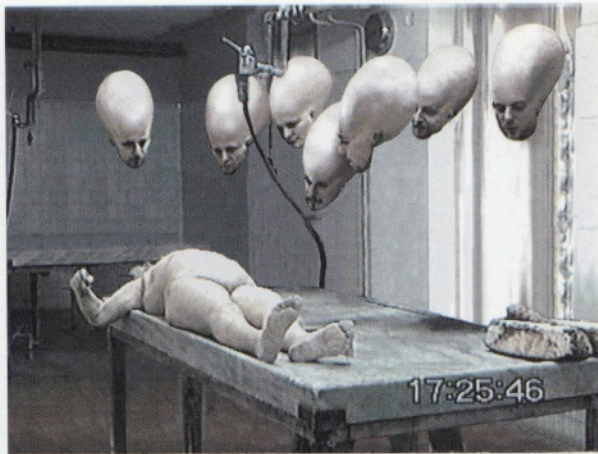
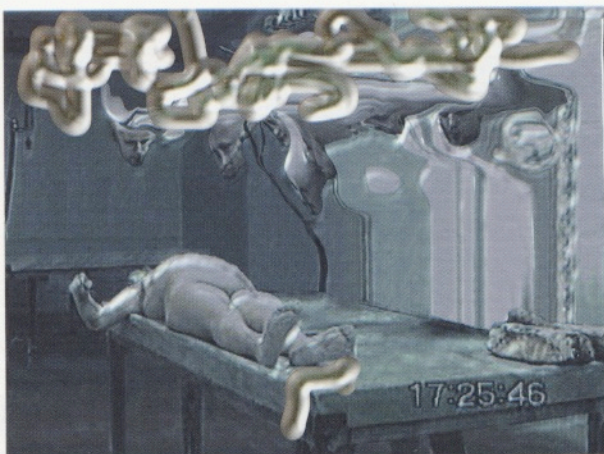


‡ Toni Meštrović: *Bez naziva (Meštrović vs. Meštrović) / Untitled (Meštrović vs. Meštrović)*, 2005.



In the mid-seventies, Ivo Deković went to study in Dusseldorf, and at the state art academy learned his craft from Klaus Rinke and Nam June Paik (Staatlichen Kunstakademie Düsseldorf). After his course and several years sailing on board ship, Deković devoted himself to film and video practice and from the mid-eighties created a series of videos and video installations. In Deković's works, as in many works actually of artists from Dalmatia (Toni Meštrović, Renata Poljak, Luko Piplica, Marko Ercegović, Dan Oki, Sandra Sterle, Pasko Burdželez, Ivana Jelavić, Nikša Rušić) there is a great influence of this region, which gives them a special character and sets them apart, particularly in the last few years, in the corpus of Croatian contemporary art, particularly video art. Deković's video installations as a whole reflect the artist's poetic world inspired by the sea, the underwater world and ships, in a fantastic combination with the medium of television and video (*Sailor*, 1989, *Iva's Dream*, 1985, *Titanic*, 1991, *Leroy*, 1992, *White City*, 1992, *Snales*, 1992, *Tele-Visionen*, 1993, *Mowar*, 1993). In the mid-nineties in Šibenik, Deković set up a video workshop called *Sub-art*, in which he brought together young video artists ready to explore this uncommon blend of media and the culture of the sea and underwater.

**MASS APPEAL, INTERACTIVITY** The basic characteristic of the period after 1990 is an enormous growth in the production of video works and of the number of artists who have taken up this medium. This boom is a global characteristic, but is nevertheless most in evidence in the countries of the



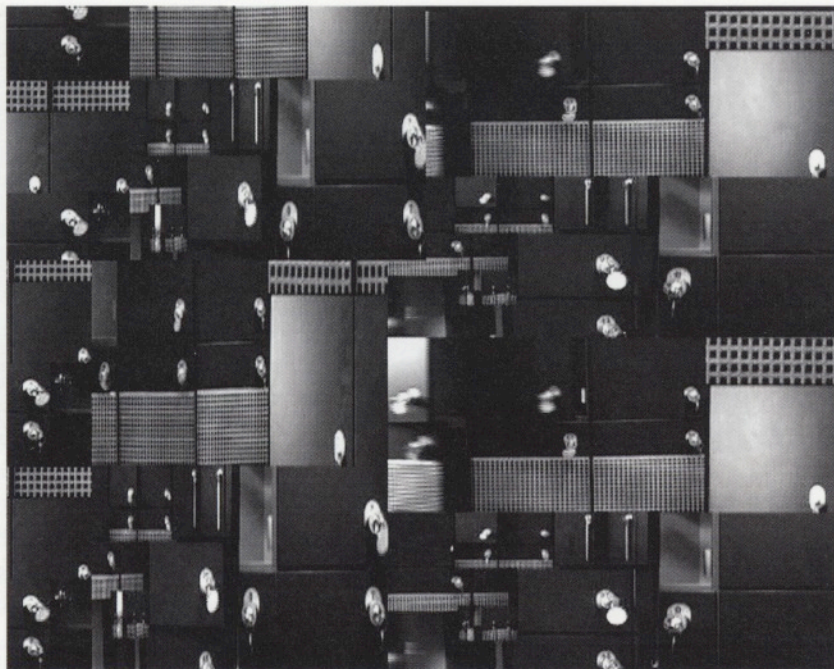
↑ Danko Frišičić / Davor Mezak / Frane Rogić: Pogreb grofa Orgaza / Funeral of Count Orgaz, 2003.

<sup>45</sup> In Croatia, satellite programmes could be viewed from the end of the eighties, and with the democratic changes in 1991 became an ordinary phenomenon soon many household having a satellite receiver or receiving the programmes via local cable networks.

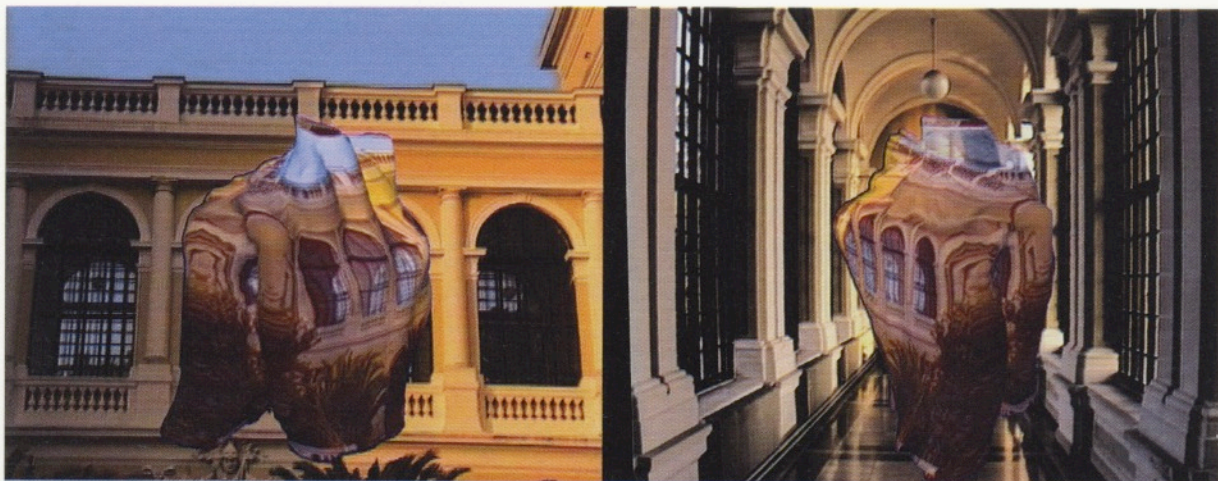
<sup>46</sup> See: Hrvatski filmski ljetopis, no. 18, Hrvoje Turković: Videografija, Hrvatski filmski savez, Zagreb, 1999.

former communist system. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, video for artists of E and SE Europe became a particularly acceptable medium with which they could produce an art work quickly and cheaply and at once get into the gallery system and art market of the West. In the nineties this generation grew up alongside a considerably freer television, with numerous earth and satellite channels, and it could be expected that they would accept television and the video image as their natural medium. Music, film and all other earth and satellite channels<sup>45</sup> were accepted by the very same generation that would make video works from the nineties until the present day. Working in favour of the global presence of the media was the big television revival with the live links of news about important events, starting with the Gulf War in 1990, the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the revolutions in Russia and Afghanistan, the terrorist attack on New York in September 2001 and all the way down to the occupation of Iraq in 2003. A large part of the television space of today consists of fast, live electronic images that bring fascinating scenes of reality, and the conviction inherent in a real event is starting to be measured against its electronic counterpart. The availability of small high-quality cameras, montage on a home computer, and economy of transportation all assisted in the development of art video production, ever since the nineties. When one looks at Croatian video production<sup>46</sup>, what is amazing is the production gap between the period of the last ten years and the pioneering days of the seventies or even eighties, in favour of the former. This is borne out by the fact that many excellent film experimenters of those days have replaced their film technology by video (Ivan Faktor, Milan Bukovac, Vlado Zrnić, Zdravko Mustač, Dan Oki, Tomislav Gotovac).

→ Haiko Daxl / Ingeborg Fülle: Avant  
– garde robe, 2003.



The new phenomena that were to bring about changes in Croatian video art in the nineties started with the gathering of several video artists on occasions of foreign appearances and presentations with the common name of *Reference to Difference – Croatian Video 1994-1996*. This brought together the following artists: Vladislav Knežević, Simon Bogojević Narath, Igor Kuduz, Davor Mezak, Vlado Znić and Milan Bukovac. All of them are video artists who essentially defined their videos by their post-production work with the computer. This particularly refers to the videos of Vladislav Knežević (*Psychogenesis*, 1988; *In the Colourbox*, 1989; *Test of the Infinite Dream*, 1992; *X Tactile Transition*, 1994/06; *Convergence*, 1997), of Milan Bukovac (*Energy of Tape*, 1992; *Multiplication*, 1994; *Distancing*, 1995) and partially of Davor Mezak who in his video installations managed to achieve unique somnambulist poetic states known primarily from painterly procedures (*Bed of Medusa*, 1994; *Landscape*, 1994; *Metamorphosis*, 1994; *Water Bed*, 2000; *Washbasin*, 2000; *Funeral of Count Orgaz*, 2003, with Frano Rogić and Danko Friščić). It is a fact that in the history of Croatian video art pure experimentation with the electronic image, its distortion and generation to the limits of abstract unidentifiability were not domesticated and for this reason these artists quickly drew attention to their work which fitted into the trends of similar currents in technologically more developed countries, like Germany and the



† Dan Oki: Kućepazitelj / Housekeeper, 1997.

USA where the tradition of the genre was strong in the experimental film. Partially, such experiments of a structuralist nature are to be found in Haiko Daxl and Ingeborg Fülle, who obtained their basic experience in the tradition of German experimental video and transferred it in the nineties, appearing in Croatia as organisers of the MediaScape exhibition of media art.

Simon Bogojević Narath directed his investigations towards a combination of video technology and animation, and since 1990 has created a number of videos and video installations (*What Happened in the Fort?* 1990; *Ziggurat*, 1992; *Viaduct*, 1992; *City*, 1993) and stop-animated videos, mainly SF-inspired, with powerful ethical messages (*Hand of the Master*, 1995; *Bardo Thodol*, 1999, *Leviathan*). Although Igor Kuduz has produced only two video works, *Perpetuummobile*, 1993 and *Welcome to the Peak of Intelligence*, 1995, he filled in an important phase in the development of the sub-species of video art that, in combination with electronic music, was in the coming years to develop into various phenomena of visual and music performance, VJing, which found a place for itself in the world of club techno music and similar musical and visual versions.

In the mid-nineties, Dan Oki was very much into the procedure of combining film, video, computer graphics and animation, and we can record his digital animation *Janitor* of 1997, which was produced in Amsterdam transformed into video image, as a pioneer of 3D animation used for artistic purposes.

Ksenija Turčić developed as an artist of ambiances, which she produced in several galleries during the first half of the nineties. These were ambiances in which the artist dealt with space as architecture and meta-

phor, then with the character of the material (glass and mirrors) and the perception of the observer. After that Turčić determined to try her hand at video installations and made the watershed work *Sunt Lacrimae Rerum*, 1998, shown in the Miroslav Kraljević Gallery in Zagreb. This was a composite video and sound installation minimalistically composed of an almost content-free projection of the dripping of water and mirrors on the floor in which the projection was reflected. Then came the video installation *Slow Motion* with two computer-synchronised video projects placed in a dynamic relationship on two floors of the HDLU exhibition venue in Zagreb, activated via visitor participation. The big steps that linked the two projections, the large frame of an eye on one and the door that led to the unknown on the other side, gave the installation, in a temporal and spatial sense, a markedly surrealist character, which was the intention of the artist. At the big independent show in the Museum of Contemporary Art in 2003, Turčić showed a new phase, which she started with the interactive video installation *The Mistress* in 2002 and with computer-generated video works (*I Love Myself*, 2003 and *SMS*, 2003).

Although it appears in the typology as a legitimate term of one of the forms that video art can take, the video ambience has not won very many adherents in the country. Only in the video works of Nika Radić (*Speech*,



† Alen Floričić: Bez naziva No. 03/04 / Untitled No. 03/04, 2004.

† Alen Floričić: Bez naziva / Untitled, 2000.

↳ Nika Radić: *Vrisak / Scream*, 2004.—  
2005.



2003; *Scream*, 2004) is it possible to find the elements of the blend of ambien-  
tal, architectural and sculptural operations and video, with a documentary  
presentation of the various actors whom the artist found in a targeted social  
setting and whom she encouraged to take part in an analysis of the phe-  
nomenon of the language of communication.

With the procedure of vibrating video images, Alen Floričić brought  
to the Croatian video scene the ease of thinking and creation in the medium  
of video that was identifiable in the early years of the medium. He succeed-  
ed in making video once again a medium of fascination, a medium of opti-  
cal, iconic and substantive intrigue of the kind it had had in its pioneering  
days. Floričić is the actor of most of his own video works, above all because  
it makes production easier, rather than indicating a direct problematisation  
of his own personality. He makes use of the body, not the person, although  
ultimately after montage-recycling, this anonymous body takes on the  
character of hybrid, the mingling of man and machine, becoming a cyborg  
of superlative dynamic capacities, but in an awkward and imperfect body.  
In other cases the body has associations with some other live beings or  
perhaps is a mere humanoid to which Floričić, repeating frames of recorded  
sequences, gives an exceptional capacity for enduring a certain action with-  
out limit and thus moves it out of the real world (in video works in which, for  
example, the author is sitting alongside a Christmas tree or stands exposed  
to a powerful wind).

Artists who trained or developed abroad announced a new paradigm of visual art in the second half of the nineties, some of them working outside the country even today. Dan Oki, Sandra Sterle, Darko Fritz, Lala Raščić, Renata Poljak, Tomislav Brajnović, Petar Brajnović, Nicole Hewitt, Nika Radić, Tina Gverović / Ben Cain, Iva Matija Bitanga, Dario Bardić, Vladimir Freljih, Ana Bilankov, and Leo Vukelić brought in new themes and what is even more important, new approaches to themes and the medium, making the Croatian video scene extremely dynamic. In addition it is very encouraging that the art academies in Zagreb, Rijeka and Split have opened up new media and video departments, taught by the generation of artists that came to maturity in the nineties.

**INSTEAD OF AN ENDING** Video is a globally youthful medium. During the last few decades Croatian video art occasionally managed to be synchronous with world trends. It can be said that in the space of video art Croatia has a numerous artist population, which, considering the technological modesty and the uneven institutional support during the last three and a half decades nevertheless managed to achieve important artistic results comparable with those produced in more developed milieus. Illustrative were the words of Goran Trbuljak of 1977, who, thinking about video and its character as democratic medium, commented that "if anyone who had never worked with video were allowed the possibility of handling it, he would soon be caught up by the charms of one of the most seductive means. Perhaps this democratic capacity to arouse creativity in people will lead in the future, when everyone is equipped with a video camera, for a time of art without artists to come into being – when everyone will produce art."<sup>47</sup> Today, in the future that Trbuljak spoke of, video has truly become a democratic medium. This means that a large number of people are producing video recordings, although there only a few who wish to create a work of art. But the fact is that video, like photography, has become a medium that has achieved mass use in the field of the visual arts and that because of the media characteristics it has contributed to the redefinition of the traditional concept of art and the work of art, above all in the sphere of the de-materialisation of the art object, which the art of the twentieth century legitimated as an important issue on the way to identifying its new nature.

<sup>47</sup>After: Marijan Susovski: Video u Jugoslaviji,

SPOT 10, Galleries of the City of Zagreb, Zagreb 1977, p., 9