The Temporal and Spatial Design of Video and Film-based Installation Art in the 60s and 70s: Their Inherent Perception Processes and Effects on the Perceivers' Actions
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I. New Territories and Transitory Places

The shaping of temporal and spatial *topoi* of installation media works of the late 1960s and 1970s was accompanied by the occupation of new spatial and contextual territories. The search for new spaces and different publics for art characterized this period. This resulted from a fundamentally new determination of the function and formats of artistic production. Many artists working with video and computers in a performative and installative way did not inevitably define their creations as artworks. More often their method of production and the way their works were conveyed was based on the principle of experiment and was connected to a utopian concept of their respective medium. Video in particular was viewed as a democratising medium, which theoretically enabled everyone to produce something creative. It was also seen as a medium of the expression and the mediation for a new type of experiential culture, the central point of which was the broadening of perception and consciousness—a culture of experience, which was influenced by the drug culture of the time.

In accordance with this image of an avant-garde experiential culture; computer and other electronic media were artistically utilized for the creation of new, immersive experiential spaces and compositions. Already before the video and computer era, dynamic environments had been created, which had been orientated by a bodily and sensory experience of space. An important example in relation of this was the legendary *Philips Pavilion* (1958) for the World Exhibition in Brussels that was created by Iannis Xenakis and Le Corbusier. In following years, Xenakis created a series of *Polytopes*, buildings which were similar to pavilions and which were conceived of as dynamic systems and time-based art. The *Poème Electronique* in the *Philips Pavilion* already used the newest technologies developed by Philips in order to cause an immersive sensory experience in the interior by using moving image, projections of colour images and spatial tones [Sterken, 262-273]. A large number of temporary architectural works were created in this tradition, in the

framework of the following world exhibitions, such as the Pepsi-Cola Pavilion, which was carried out by the group Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) for the World Exhibition of 1970 in Osaka.

The close co-operation of artists and engineers from Bell Laboratories in the context of E.A.T. resulted in a spectacular building, which stimulated every sense. Its futuristic conception was mediated from a distance by artificial clouds of fog, which continuously covered the hemisphere. In the interior, visitors experienced a spectacle of light and images, which were transformed many times by projections, mirrors and lasers, as well as stationary and mobile sources of sound.

The concept of an immersive, multimedia utilization of large interiors like the World Exhibition pavilions is found again in some video festivals of the early 1970s. With the flowering of video art and video culture came a desire to reach a wide audience. On the one hand, the practical motives for the organization of festivals lay in the lack of a distribution network; this was only created bit-by-bit through the establishment of initiatives like Electronic Art Intermix and art video libraries at the beginning of the 1970s. On the other hand, festivals with their independence from an institutional, spatial framework offered an ideal opportunity to capture the innovative, experimental character of video culture in their scenography. They were by no means inevitably and wholly conceived of as pure art festivals, but, at least partly, as a platform for information with a widespread socio-political impact.

"The intended audience is anyone with an interest in the future of society—the public, media people, and industry can all learn from this interchange. The festival proposed here is an attempt to explain the new video technology by showing what it can do."[1]

The planned *Video Festival, an exposition for understanding the medium* (which was not actually carried out, but was supposed to have taken place from the 25th-29th of May 1972 in two inflatable indoor tennis halls in New York City) was in its conception one of the largest and most inclusive video festivals of its time. The festival concept came into being in the collaborative development work of the *Alternative Media Project*, where Steina and Woody Vasulka were also consultants. The concept, which runs to 30 pages, is a rare document of its kind, as it describes all the elements of the festival and the organization of the content in detail. The *Video Festival* was conceived of as a transitory space for experience, where it was planned that the visitor would be integrated into a totality of picture and sound

[1] Media Project. Video Festival. Proposal. New York City, April 20, 1971. 8. VAS B22-C9.

media as he moved through the different environments and temporarily lingered in them: large-format video projections were planned to be shown in different parts of both indoor tennis centres, projected on screens or on objects like a 20-foot high cube and accompanied by regular electronic sound.[2] This video and acoustic environment was supposed to create an all-encompassing impression. The so-called "Video Environments," in their various forms (and partly situated in an interior with furniture and objects) were conceived of for the presentation of videotapes. A matrix of monitors was also supposed to be used in this spatial context, either as a giant wall of monitors or grouped in smaller units.[3]

A closed-circuit video sculpture, recorded the visitors in real time from different perspectives and relays. Its recording on monitors was supposed to stimulate the visitor to interact with their own image. In a second version of this installation, a time delay in the relaying of the recording was planned. In addition to the so-called "Controlled Interaction situations," it was planned that the video recordings from further closed-circuit cameras would furnish the whole projection and monitor environment with "Free Organic Interactions," by the visitors, camera operators and technicians who were in the space. Other areas in the interconnecting halls were to serve as places to demonstrate video technology and future television technology: places for acting out or for relaxing.

The plan to hold the festival in two indoor tennis centres was undoubtedly a product of a conscious decision in favour of a place which was publicly effective and which was not associated with art. Like the Vasulkas, the majority of the artists, curators and organizers were interested in finding the most "uncontaminated,"[4] new and temporary places. The creators of the *Annual Avant Garde Festival* worked in this way, the festival being innovative and experimental in terms of form and content, and which started in 1963, and began presenting video works in 1967. The festival introduced contemporary artistic works, which overlapped in terms of genre and media in new spatial contexts. The decision to use mobile venues like ships (1967 and 1972) or freight cars (1973) and the festival event in the form of a parade (1968) was in accordance with the process-related, mobile and transitory character of the festival.

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[2] These data as well as the descriptions and quotations occurring in this section are from Media Project. Video Festival. Proposal. New York City, April 20, 1971. VAS B22-C9.

[3] It refers to the Video-Matrix of the American Can Company, which is discussed at length later in this section.

[4] "We showed in churches, we showed in state houses, so we had our own policies to forget the official word that was very corrupt, you see. (…) So we had it uncontaminated." Woody Vasulka in the interview, which the author conducted on July 28, 2005. In this interview, Steina and Woody Vasulka participated.

E.A.T. organized a series of media performances as early as 1966, the *9 Evenings* in the Armory, a building which served as a military institution, as the clubhouse of the National Guard, and where the legendary Armoury Show took place in 1913. In *9 Evenings*, the audience in the performance space was completely surrounded by image and sound media and was part of a series of multi-media performances.

Television as a space of experience was fascinating for artists, primarily because of its capability of reaching a mass-audience. In a similar manner to the festivals, where artistic production was presented in non-artistic spatial contexts, artists created artistic works for television, a non-artistic context, and hoped by broadcasting them to create a lasting effect on the viewers. The break in the perception habits and the undermining of expectations were the main intention of artists like Douglas Davis who worked with the medium of television. In a number of videotapes created especially for broadcasting on the television networks, he presented television as an object and released the viewer from his passive role by challenging him to participate in an active way.

There was a strong belief that video was an important part of a newly formed Cable-TV landscape and it was reinforced by the initial openness of the broadcasting stations. The video pioneers saw the role of the cable stations as being that of educators of consciousness and the supporters of local culture [Ryan 12]. Moreover, cable television was moving towards the dream of a two-way-communication between broadcasting stations and receivers, the latter likewise becoming a station:

> "Its two-way capability can revitalize the democratic process in heavily populated areas. For example, multiple input video dialogues on subjects of local concern could prove to be a revival of the town meeting in areas where such gatherings are no longer possible."[5]

One of the many professed utopias was for the decentralization that would come at long last from the older channel networks which had been inaccessible to the public, by building up a computer-based programme archive, where it was possible for everyone to submit their video productions. Even if this dream remained unattainable, the utopia of cable television which offered public access to groups and individuals did in fact become reality for a relatively short time at the beginning of the 1970s.

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[5] Alternative Media Project. Video Festival. Proposal. New York City, April 20, 1971. 5. VAS B22-C9.

The invention of the Porta-Pak, the first manageable video system which was freely available on the open market, was the basis for a concept of society which produces moving images and which uses video as a natural medium of information and communication. Even if today, in times of digital video on mobile phones and cameras, the beginnings of this movement seem comparatively modest; the effect of amateur recordings of everyday and unusual situations, in contrast to the professional and mostly conservative products of official forms of media, must have had a massive effect on the public.

The *Video Festival*, which in the end was not carried out, reflected in its planning stages all the claims and hopes which were linked to the Porta-Pak. Large-screen projections would have shown videos of unusual sights such as heart transplants. It was planned that many hundred video productions, ranging from interviews to feature films on video, would be shown on monitors. Thus, new territories in terms of content, which were until that point either the preserve of professional media producers or were not covered by the contemporary media, went hand in hand with the utilization of new spaces, which to date had not been used for cultural purposes.

Many new spaces, places for exhibiting and producing were created, which were above all dedicated to creative work in video. One of these centres, and definitely one of the most effective ones, was *The Kitchen* in New York, which was founded by Steina and Woody Vasulka in 1967 in order to give the video community, who frequented their apartment and studio, a new refuge. The development of *The Kitchen* is representative for a series of such initiatives, mostly by artists, which sought to furnish artistic experiments with new media. Alongside these artist initiatives, the communal libraries played an important role in the propagation of video, as a place of distribution of video works on cassette and as a place to rent video equipment [Hill 27-36]. Without doubt, the special feature of *The Kitchen* was the openness towards a wide spectrum of activities, which took place without curatorial and administrative authority in the spaces of the former kitchen of the Hotel Central in New York City. In this, *The Kitchen* differed substantially from traditional art institutions like galleries and museums, which had devoted themselves to a much narrower definition of art. In including bland urban spaces on the map of art, a mostly critical, and, at the very least, a distanced position was expressed with regard to institutional venues and their programmes:

"The art gallery was something neither of us knew anything about. Coming from music and film, it seemed quite a distant possibility, to feel at home there and additionally, we understood video to be an activity, not art a priori. At that time, video was not "above" ground so to speak. The only serious exhibit that I had seen until then, was the "television as a creative medium" at Howard Wise's

gallery, so for me, instead of trying to establish myself and my activity within the art galleries, it became obvious, that I could simply bypass the art scene altogether. The conditions were correct for that. Everyone was trying to bypass whatever establishment channels there existed in all directions, from politics to art."[6]

The establishment of video initiatives, video centres, groups like E.A.T. or platforms like *The Kitchen* served a mainly pragmatic purpose: to emancipate the artists and make them self-sufficient by offering unhindered access to equipment and exhibition spaces. In view of the experimental and performative quality of most of the artistic works, there was a great need for presentations with short-term programming and technical infrastructure. One result of this policy of establishing their own platforms for artistic creation and presentation was that a new, parallel scene came into being, which had only a limited exchange with other art and culture scenes. It would nevertheless be wrong to assume that the traditional art institutions had not begun working with this new media art. Already as early as the mid to late 1960s, some museums and galleries became involved and exhibited this new art themselves or supported the many video festivals, which were mostly organized by artist and co-operative initiatives.

Public space as a place of production and exhibition also came into the artists' focus due to the growing manageability and mobility of the equipment. While video productions were possible in the public sphere due to the mobility and convenience of the video camera, and were often carried out, the public sphere as a platform for the presentation of artistic media works came with practical problems of its own. Witness Steina on this point in an interview with Russell Connor:

"I would like very much to do those kinds of things—installations—in a public. It is very difficult … it is hard to put it there, in a public space. It is hard to maintain. It is an investment, but what is interesting to me is to interact with it, to walk around and be part of the whole thing. But in the meantime I have no other means to do it but here at home."[7]

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[6] This quotation originates from an original document of the Vasulkas, which was written in several versions. It seems to be a draft for a statement of the Vasulkas on the beginnings and goals of The Kitchen, which was published by The Kitchen in 1978. The published statement no longer contains this passage. VAS B 34-C6-2 dll433/1 to 2

[7] Connor, Russell. Vasulka. Manuscript. Interview report. VAS B32-C10-01

In retrospect, Steina also expressed criticism about the public sphere as a place of exhibition and thus put her position of that time into perspective:

"I never wanted to convert anybody. The idea of the innocent passer-by by chance looking at my work and loving it, I never bought into that. I was more into that concept having it somewhere, where people would come for the purpose. In that sense, gallery is nice that people come for the purpose of knowing and learning. But it has a lot of other problems."[8]

Characteristic of the conception of the public sphere as an ideal platform for art and agitation is the argument over the presentation of the *Modular Video Matrix* in that public sphere. Originally produced for the American Can Company in collaboration with Woody Vasulka,[9] the *Modular Video Matrix* was composed of a closed-circuit system of 56 television monitors, seven live cameras and seven video recorders, encased in a modular system of steel and plexiglass. In its original form, which was created by Ira Schneider, Frank Gillette, Paul Ryan and John Riley, it was used for presentation purposes for the products of the American Can Company at trade fairs, even if that was not in line with the intentions of the four creators.[10] Characteristically, an argument flared up later over the use of the matrix between Videosphere, a charitable foundation which had supported experimental video work and *Automation House*, a project of the American Foundation on Automation and Employment, which had renovated an old building in New York City into an highly-technological building, into which E.A.T, among others, had moved and was actively giving it an artistic form. While *Automation House* saw the matrix as a permanent installation used for artistic experimentation in the house, in Videosphere's eyes, the matrix, due to its mobile character, should primarily be utilized in different places: "in churches, satellite street showings, community centers, etc."[11] According to

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[8] Steina in the interview with the author on July 28, 2005.

[9] This responsible contribution by Woody Vasulka to this project is taken from a confidential appraisal that Harvey Lloyd wrote on December 28,1970. The appraisal served in support of Woody Vasulkas application for a scholarship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. VAS B21-C2.

[10] This quotation originates from an original document of the Vasulkas, which was written in several versions. It seems to be a draft for a statement of the Vasulkas on the beginnings and goals of The Kitchen, which was published by The Kitchen in 1978. The published statement no longer contains this passage. VAS B 34-C6-2 dll433/1 de 2

[11] The artists expressed themselves as follows: "This Matrix was designed for The American Can Corporation and contrary to the desire of the designers the software was assembled by Harvey Lloyd Productions. Software for the Matrix presented at Industrial Trade Shows consisted mainly of bald-headed men touting American Can products intermixed with men (live camera) gawking as cheesecake hostesses." Radical Software. Volume II. Number Video and Environment. Winter 1973. 18-19. <http://www.radicalsoftware.org/volume2nr5/pdf/VOLUME2NR5_art05.pdf>

Videosphere's plans, the matrix should have been used for the distribution of video productions:

> "We are aware that there is a multitude of software shelved with no chance of distribution. There is no tool of distribution. By design the *American Can Video Matrix* is organically the perfect system to fill this void. The responsibility of the artist today is not only to experiment but to communicate."[12]

There were many reasons behind the numerous attempts to bring artistic video works into the public sphere. As well as the new understanding of the artists' role as communicators and distributors of their work, and the utopian idea of an art which had the power to change society through enlightenment and direct confrontation, there was another goal: to escape the dark, fictional space of the cinema and to set it against these open and real spaces. The use of television monitors enabled public and semi-public space to be captured in installations, since television monitors, in contrast to projections, are independent of the light conditions; moreover they are an off-the-shelf-product and were substantially cheaper, easier to manage and more mobile than the projectors of the time. Surely this fact was another reason behind the video artists' predominant use of the television monitor in the 1960s and 1970s.[13]

II. Spatial and perceptive immersion
> *"In the early days of video, everything was an installation or an "environment," as we used to call it."* [14]

In the initial phase of working with video, the artists did not make any specific differentiation between various formats and forms of expression such as installation, performance or environmental. Indeed, rigid categorization was to be overcome and replaced by new concepts of presentation and interaction. In this way, new terms like "environment" were welcomed and used as a description for various spatial formats and sizes. However, this investigation differentiates between the terms sculpture, installation and environment, in order to highlight the different spatial

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[12] This quotation is taken from a letter, which Videosphere addressed to the American Can Company on April 1, 1971, in order to clarify their intended purpose for the matrix and distance themselves from their former co-operation partner Automation House. VAS B22-C9.

[13] Ibid.

[14] A further, relevant reason was naturally the television culture, which unfolded a substantial social effect in this time, on which artist such as Nam June Paik in its work reported. See for this the paragraph "The audiovisual presence of the equipment."

complexities of the individual works. In the following, the term *environment* describes a complex, three-dimensional form of artwork that generally can be walked into and that can fill a whole space.

"In contrast to an *installation*, an *environment* means the creation of a self-contained construction, which fits into a larger spatial context, but is experienced primarily as a spatial unity with more or less open boundaries. The term *installation* describes a spatial design, which has a relation to the surrounding space without creating the space itself. This spatial relation can be specific, in that the installation is created for a specific space and relates to the characteristics of that space, or it can be unspecific, in the case of a work which could theoretically be presented in different spaces and does not inevitably rely on the characteristics of a particular space.

The term *sculpture*, furthermore, is related to a three-dimensional creation, which, relative to the *installation* and e*nvironment*, only has a limited spatial extension, which in this sense does not extensively utilize space or determine that space. A *sculpture* can also be created for a specific spatial context, but usually this is not the case. Therefore, a *sculpture* in most cases does not have any specific relation to the space it occupies. Obviously, these terms only serve as practical simplifications for these spatial-temporal constructions, which are in part extremely complex, especially when the artwork is spatially and temporally extended by e.g. projections, light or sound."[15]

László Moholy-Nagy's *Light-Space Modulator* (1923-30) was an early spatial media composition due to the use of light and shadow projections, or rather, it was a "light prop" (*Lichtrequisit*)[16] which worked on the one hand as a sculpture and on the other hand also as an installation, when the back of the box was removed and the movable light and shadow play could extend into the room. This work of Moholy-Nagy's was a temporal composition too, as the lights were activated at intervals and the other elements, such as the stencils, were in continual motion over a period of time, due to the mechanical construction, and thus over the course of time ever new coloured light and shadow plays were created. This work also had a strong performative character due to this special temporal construction; in fact the "light prop" was presented to an audience. In this respect, Jean Tinguely's performative

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[15] Vasulka, Steina. "Artist's Note. My Love Affair with Art: Video and Installation Work." Leonardo, Vol. 28, pp. 15-18, 1995. VAS B2-C9-15; Dossier d18944;
[16] László Moholy-Nagy, quoted from: Medien Kunst Netz/ Media Art Net. <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/licht-raum-modulator/>

machine-sculptures of the 1960s, seen in their most radical form in the self-destructive machine *Homage to New York* (1960), were clearly related to Maholy-Nagy's light apparatus. Although these kind of machine-based works can be called the definite forerunners of kinetic video and computer-based installations, a vast paradigm shift took place in the early film and video installations and environments: the recipients were given new roles, the performative element was freed from it's temporal rigidity by the use of loops and by the individualisation of the experiential processes, and the spatial creation aimed at immerse and include the recipient completely.

One of the most interesting phenomena connected with this, and in relation to the current emergence of dynamic image walls in public or semi-public spaces is the *Video Matrix Display* (1974), which the Vasulkas designed for the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York, but which was not, in the end, executed. The source of the design lies in Woody's work on the *Video Matrix* of the American Can Company four years previously. A matrix of at least 40 television monitors was planned, which would make up a kind of passageway; whereby the walls, ceiling and floor would consist of monitors. The sound from the speakers, which were built into at least four places of the construction, would have surrounded them acoustically in the same way as the moving pictures on the monitors.

"These monitors would be connected to a synchronous program selector which would carry a programme designed by the artist and which would distribute simultaneously to the monitors up to three different video programmes from loop-cassette playback desks. Because this exhibiting system is modular and therefore can be rearranged for any number of different programmes once it is set up, many video artists would be able to present their existing and future works, and original works could be commissioned by the gallery. The creation of this video matrix display would provide, in effect, "wall space" for video art, gallery space for changing exhibitions of electronic environments."[17]

The Vasulkas planned a programme for the first recording for the environment, which was to convey two phenomena they had explored: the "image flow experience," which was the result of the continual flow of images over the matrix in one direction, and the "colour and textural saturation." The horizontal movement of the image, that is to say, a frame, which had been made possible by video—a phenomenon that had been discovered by the Vasulkas—was explored in a whole

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[17] Vasulka, Steina and Woody. Proposal for a Video Matrix Display (1974). VAS BI-C5-I; Dossier d19303.

series of installations. The sound in these works was generated by the image or, conversely, the sound generated the image:

"Shapes and forms skid, roll, and metamorphose across multiple screens like sound travelling through geometric space to our ear. In these matrices, the Vasulkas reduce the image and sound to their bare essentials in order to examine the essence of the electronic image and sound——the signal."[18]

The experiencing of the *Video Matrix Display*, constructed chiefly as a physical space, is closely linked to the body's physical movement in and through the space. The horizontal movement of the images, for example, from the entrance of the space in the direction of the exit could be synchronous to the perceiver's bodily movements in the same direction and so enhance his perception of his own movements. The designing of the matrix as an image space in which the individual pictures move from one display to the next and the abstract aesthetics of the video pictures chosen, as well as the close processual association of sound and image, demonstrates the relationship with yet another completely different, contemporary and immersive environment: the multimedia club environment in which video has become the "mirror ball of the electronic era"[19] and sound and image reciprocally transform. The contemporary club environment usually consists of a row of screens that are arranged to form a space onto which moving digital images are projected in a synesthetic relation, of varying intensity to electronic music, which is typically produced live or at least mixed live. Images multiply themselves on the screens surrounding the visitors and merge together with the sound into a total spatial, temporal and physical experience. Jan Rohlf writes about this:

"Decisive is the momentary, the unforeseeable, the experience of the instant in which the terror and the inconsequence of chronological time collapses." [Rohlf 54]

Interestingly enough, the concepts of the *Video Matrix Display* and the matrix of the American Can Company are already aimed at the creation of a system that was as open as possible and accessible to artists, who could work with established parameters such as the technological and architectonical design of the system—— just as is done today within the context of the electronic clubs. The Vasulkas were

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[18] Spielmann, Yvonne. Video and Computer: The Aesthetics of Steina and Woody Vasulka. Acrobat (PDF) file. English and French text. Text written in 2003. Date of reference: June 7, 2004. 4. <http://www.fondation-langlois.org/media/activites/vasulka/Spielmann_EN.pdf>
[19] Ibid.

unable to carry out the *Video Matrix Display* in the Albright-Knox Gallery; however, the concept of a highly immersive image space was apparently common among the artists of the time:

"Some of the dreams of Frank Gillette, thinking about the first news of flexible flat TV screens, were being able to construct a tunnel that you could crawl through and have your image all around you."[20]

The Vasulkas made use of their multi-screens at the beginning of the 70s to fashion installations that were less immersive, yet still space-forming, in which the impression of motion through space was evoked by horizontal drift:

"Our concern right from the beginning was how you put pictures in space. We worked with the monitor only as a reference, but our major medium was the matrix…we were always interested, how things work in space."[21]

As part of the eighth Annual Avant-Garde Festival of New York (1971), the Vasulkas presented the installation *Video Kinetic Environment*, which consisted of a number of television monitors arranged in a circle with the picture horizontally drifting from one monitor to the other during the 12 hours the festival lasted. The festival took place in the Armory building, which E.A.T. had already used for their performance evenings in 1966. The installation adapted to the open space there and was visually limited only by the circle formed by the monitors. The work was only one of many in the hall-like space, so that visual and acoustic isolation would only have been made possible through the construction of an enclosed inner space. As it was, the installation was rather permeable and because of its being embedded in the whole audio-visual structure, was unable to develop the immersive effect that the matrix installations normally had.

"We would set up a lot of monitors, 10-15, (…) and then let the images drift from one to the other, these kinds of things. We used all audio synthesized music.

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[20] Frank Gilette and Ira Schneider were probably the first who publicly displayed multi-screen installations. Their closed-circuit installation Wipe Cycle, which was shown in the exhibition TV as a creative medium, consisted of a wall of new monitors on which four cycles of moving images drifted from one monitor to another.

[21] Jud Yalkut in: Yalkut, Jud. Part Three. Open Circuits: The New Video Abstractionists. THE KITCHEN: An Image and Sound Laboratory: A Rap with Woody and Steina Vasulka, Shridhar Bapat and Dimitri Devyatkin. Radio interview. <http://www.vasulka.org/Kitchen/K_Audio.html>

Because of the time, people just sat there for 3 or 4 hours. They didn't care; they would sit or lie on the floor. There would be a fair amount of marijuana smoke in the air. Some people would be cross-legged and rolling back and forth. It was casual." [22]

The idea of an immersive space in which pictures and sounds more or less timelessly flow such that the perceiver (in a relaxed manner) could absorb them over a longer period of time, represents a reoccurring concept of the ideal *space of experience*, which is also considered a further development of theatre and cinema. Stan Vanderbeek realised his utopia of the ideal theatre in 1966 with *Movie-Drome,* in which the audience was meant to perceive the flow of images and sounds whilst lying on their backs in a domed building. A worldwide series of such constructions and the development of a universal, international pictorial language were planned. Many artists of this period made use of the possibility of creating new spaces through the medium of pictures. The breaking down of spatial and temporal linearity was the focus of these works, which also suggest a distant relationship to the panoramas of the 19th century.[23]

III. An Almost Kinetic Mobility

The inclusion of the third dimension in artistic design demands a form of reception that goes beyond the act of seeing (or/and hearing): spatial exploration. In the early period of civilization, with the creation of large sculptures and cult sites and their structuring for viewing from multiple perspectives, the mobility of the recipient was taken into consideration or even provoked through their design. The perceiver either moved around the sculpture or cult site or cultural site. In contrast to this exploratory and free mobility of the perceiver, most of the early installations and environments based on timed-based media set a relative rigid, spatially restricted boundary for the movement of the perceiver through the space, and so aimed at an intensive bodily awareness. The *Live Taped Video Corridor* (1969/70) by Bruce Nauman is an early, and the probably the most discussed, example of this type of work [Jaschko 32-35]. Only one of a total of five corridors of varying widths is passable due to its dimensions. The observer experiences this space by entering it, squeezing his way through it, and thereby approaches two monitors at the end of the corridor. The observer sees his own image in real-time on one of the monitors

[22] Woody Vasulka in an interview with the author on July, 28, 2005.
[23] STEINA-May, 1995. Interview by Chris Hill. Transcription by Julia Dzwonkoski. Edited by Chris Hill. Acrobat (PDF) file. <http://vasulka.net.zkm.de/archive/Contributors/ChrisHill/InterviewSteina.pdf> 3.

recorded by a video camera above the entrance, allowing merely a rear-view of himself when he is facing the monitor.

In this work, in comparison with other art forms, some fundamental changes in recipient mobility in time-based media are implied in the relation between art work and perceiver; that is, the interaction through perception and the alterations in the state of the art work elicited by that (inter) action. The movement of the perceiver in relationship to the physical components of the artwork is a spatial and temporal dimensioned, individually executed, and subjective process of reception. The play with spatial perception, the breaking down of habits of perception and behaviour, and the offering of new ways to experience reality were the goals of the designers of such perception processes.

In many of the media, large-scale works that were created in the first decade of video art, the movement of the perceiver and the resulting change in the state of the art work was an essential element. The movements of the perceiver: that could range from walking through the space to simple bodily movements in place, are performative actions that make the perceiver part of the artwork and usually lead to performative immersion. It can be said of this first decade of video installations and environments, although the spatial qualities and the forms of movement offered the perceiver were of a variable nature, that the movement of the perceiver was an elementary component of many works. In comparison with current mobile art projects, however, their spatial and temporal ambition was of a relative minor degree.

Two Sides to Every Story by Michael Snow for instance is concerned with the construction of a space and the action that takes place in it. The installation's picture material is a kind of performance, which, on the basis of the dramaturgy, possesses the hybrid character of a theatrical play and an experiment. Two cameras positioned opposite each other recorded a performer standing in front of a screen, which she works on in various ways over a period of time [Iles 254]. The installation consists of an aluminium-coated screen placed in the centre of the room upon which one recording of the performance is projected on one side and the second on the other. The perceiver must walk around the screen in order to be able to experience the performance from both camera perspectives. The common audio plane of both projectors reunites the spatial area divided by the screen. The directions to the performer given by Michael Snow, who acts as a director and who is also visible in one camera perspective, describe the actions of the performer, who, depending on

the position of the observer, *cannot* be seen, and so indirectly have the effect of an incitement to move to a position from whence the particular action *can* be seen.[24]

On the basis of the relative minor variance, the limited measure and the repetition of physical movements offered the perceiver, one could speak in the context of these early media installations of a "kinetic mobility" of the perceiver. In many cases there actually exists an obvious connection between the forms of motion of the machines used and the movements of the perceivers within the installation or in the environment. What is more, artists have performed the kinetic motion of mechanic tools in video works. In Steina's video experiments of the 70s, the kinetic movement of the perceivers as well as Steina's own, almost kinetic motions in interplay with the tools, is a central subject. In the complex (experimental) arrangements of *Orbital Obsession* (1975-77) and *Switch! Monitor! Drift!* (1976), a permanent, circular motion is performed one time by Steina (*Orbital Obsession*), and another time (*Switch! Monitor! Drift!*) by use of a rotating camera. In *Allvision* two cameras circle around a mirror ball, whereupon the perceiver instinctively moves likewise in a circle around the kinetic sculpture. The same motions around one's own axis, or in a circular motion, are a feature of the *Finch College Project* and the linear video work related to it, *Mirror* (1969). Bruce Nauman made the motions around one's own axis as a destabilising, disturbing factor in spatial perception, the conceptual focus of his film installation *Spinning Spheres* (1970).

In a similar manner the linear movements of the perceiver towards a projection or monitor resemble those set out in many installation video works, a kinetic backwards and forwards motion comparable to a zoom. Thus the perceiver in the closed-circuit installation *Mem* (1975) by Peter Campus finds himself facing a projection, which is showing him. The picture captured by the camera is projected at a sharp angle on the wall. If the perceiver moves in the direction of the projection and so into the camera's field, his picture drifts across the wall at an angle, though unexpected, yet logical to his movement. If the perceiver approaches the camera, his image, contrary to his expectations, becomes smaller.

It should be noted that the artists were in no case concerned with emulating kinetic motion. Rather the installations and environments and the "kinetic mobility" of the perceiver set forth in them are playful explorations of their given technological possibilities. The mobility of the artist, machine and perceiver appears limited against the backdrop of the urban and spatial experience of the Situationists in the 50s and 60s and today's degree of mobility in recording and communications

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[24] The complex work consists of several action phases. A complete description of the work and an interactive simulation of the installation can be found on the DVD *Digital Snow*.

technology and the works created with it. A reason why exterior space was rarely examined is that this wasn't a focus of interest as its own subject, but rather the physical and cognitive experience of space, which was precipitated through the media.

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