

Consciousness↔Codes↔Cultures

If we acknowledge media to be all of the codes of human expression and communication (including their materials, equipment and technological systems), then a first principle, set in a context of human evolution, is that their study is absolutely necessary to the advancement of human culture. This study would involve all of the ways in which these codes interact with and influence each other in "instructing" human consciousness on its evolutionary journey. There is an analogy here to the ways in which the chemical codes of genes and chromosomes spell out the instructions that condition development and function in all living beings.

We must reimagine what the code of language or speech meant to human development. In his *Anthropological Linguistics*, Joseph Greenberg wrote: "The radically new type of adjustment that speech made possible clearly qualifies it as an evolutionary emergent of fundamental significance in that it initiated a distinctly new stage of development, comparable to the genesis of life itself and to the first appearance of intelligence." When, centuries later, this oral code was itself symbolically encoded in print, there took place the profound revolution described at length in Marshall McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Within our own century, the codes of the moving images of film and television must be recognized as cultural emergents of equal importance, components of the evolutionary phenomena of the twentieth century which has led to the vastly increased power of individuals to affect their environments and one another.

A second principle, set within the context of human freedom, is that access to the codes is a political right. Unless one has mastery or competency in using and understanding the codes of communication of his own era, one cannot adequately participate in decisions involving his life. A prime example is a child. The word "infant" literally means "unable to speak." After the establishment of the first political democracies in the late eighteenth century, there was common agreement that *literacy*, the ability to read and write, was an absolute need for human freedom. The human need and educational and cultural prerequisite of freedom in the twentieth century is *mediacy*: the ability to use, understand, and have access to the codes and modes of expression, communication and information transfer in contemporary society.

All citizens will have access to their cultures and their societies, not just by language and print, but by a variety of other codes, especially those of the moving image, which are already pervasive.

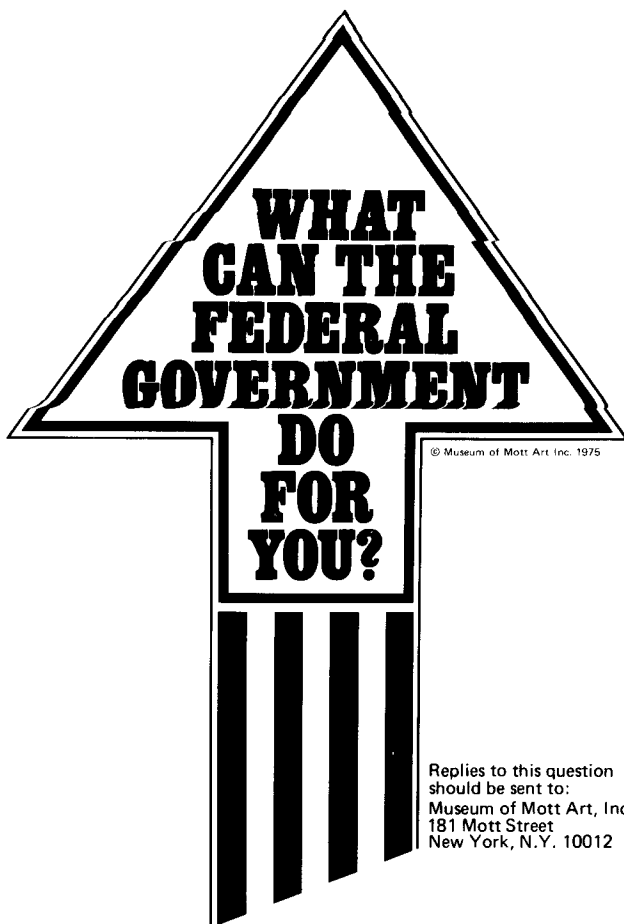
An immediate task is to bridge the gap that has developed between the culture of the media and the culture of the school. Our traditional, so-called cultural education, *literacy*, is now, at best, inadequate, and, at worst, a form of creative disenfranchisement for our students from our emergent planetary culture which already possesses the means of transmitting any event in visual and aural codes to every being on multiple planets in real time, i.e., simultaneously.

A third principle, set in the context of recent research on learning theory, is that the codes are necessary to self-growth. As Jerome Bruner and David Olson have demonstrated in a recent essay, "Learning through Experience and Learning through Media," the human brain and related sensory organization is so structured that each of us perceives and structures the world according to the media by which he or she apprehends it. It is now clear that the naive psychological concept that a human learns the same "information" about a thing irrespective of hearing it orally, reading about it, or seeing a film about it is wrong and misleading, and that one is "informed" differently by each medium. The logical implication is that we must keep the full body, all of our senses, available and open to the channels and codes of all media which we have evolved to pursue knowledge.

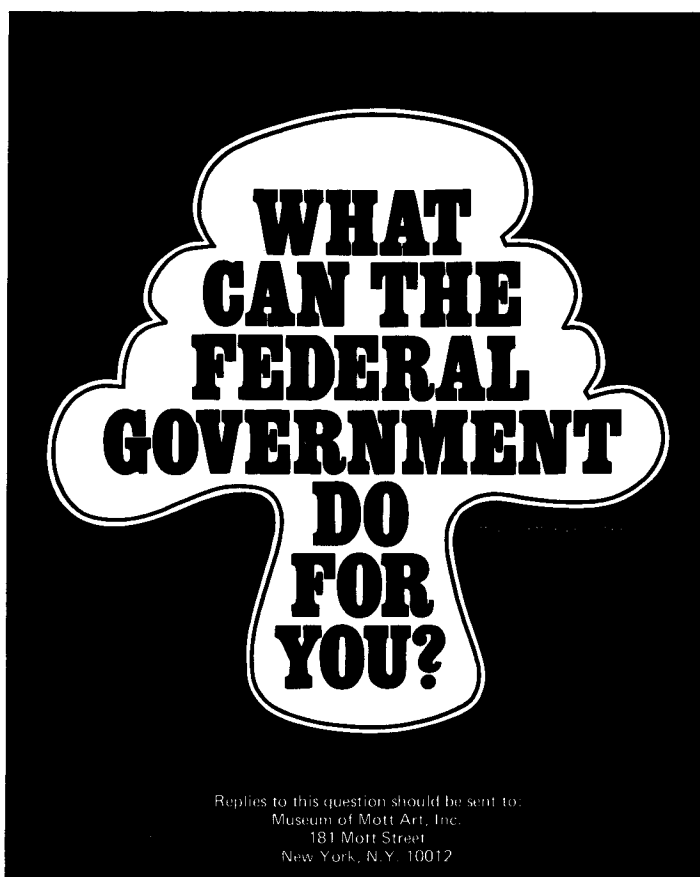
The human brain is the only thing in the universe that makes an effort to understand itself. The progress of this understanding is absolutely dependent upon competency in all of the media codes which we have devised to instruct the brain through the various senses. In the sense that every member of a society communicates information to other members of that society, every member is both a teacher and a learner, and in order that teaching and learning, those processes absolutely central to our humanity, take place, it is essential that every member be able to use and understand *all of the codes* which we have evolved for this purpose. For a major university, a center dedicated to teaching and learning, to neglect developing an area of serious scholarly activity in the codes of the moving images would be not only illogical but totally irresponsible.

**Les
Levine**

Les Levine
"What Can the Federal
Government Do for
You?", 1975, symbols.



Replies to this question
should be sent to:
Museum of Mott Art, Inc.
181 Mott Street
New York, N.Y. 10012



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A Stipulation of Terms from Maternal Hopi

Nearly a year has elapsed since the discovery, at Oaxaca and Tehuantepec, of three caches of proto-American artifacts of a wholly unpre-
visioned nature; so that some sort of provisional report on them is long overdue. I must apologize at the outset for what must seem, to colleagues unacquainted with the unprecedented difficulties posed by the material, an excess of scholarly caution. In fact, I have proceeded with all possible haste in dealing with a body of data that has proved, to date, resistant to study by canonical methods.

I am bound to acknowledge that whatever little understanding I have achieved, has come largely through the perseverance and generosity of Dr. Raj Chatterjee, who heads the Project in Artificial Intelligence at Alleghany University; I owe him an insight that he first expressed with characteristic tersity: "We are obliged to assume that this stuff means *something!*"

My readers will recall that the archaeological finds in question were at once uncomplicated and singularly copious. All three sites included large silver mirrors, figured to remarkable flatness, and scores of transparent bottles, lenticular in shape and of varying curvature. But the bulk of the contents of those granite vaults (immediately dubbed "archives" by the sensational press) consisted of some 75,000 identical copper solar emblems, in the form of reels, each of which was wound with about 300 meters of a transparent substance, uniformly 32 millimeters wide, that proved, upon microscopic examination, to be made of dried and flattened dog intestine.

These strips are divided along their entire length into square cellular modules each 32 millimeters high. Each such square bears a hand-painted pictogram or glyph. The colors black (lampblack in a vehicle derived from the leaves of *Aloe vera*) and red (expressed from cochineal insects) predominate. There is seldom any obvious resemblance between consecutive pictograms. The draftsmanship is everywhere meticulous.

The dry climate has kept everything in a state of exquisite preservation; it is expected that lamination in polyester, nowadays a standard curatorial procedure, will offset a slight tendency to brittleness in the picture rolls. Oxygen dating places their fabrication during the 8th and 9th centuries before the present era, with a margin of error of only four per cent.

Complete cataloguing and analysis of this treasure will require many years; therefore, what follows is of necessity conjectural.

Of the culture of the artificers very little is apparent. They were men of the Cro-Magnon type of *Homo sapiens*, organized in a stable agrarian matriarchy, and calling themselves]N[. Their food consisted of cultivars of maize, and a variety of vegetables and fruits; dogs of medium size were bred as a source of edible protein and textile fiber, but were not used for work. The]N[worked stone and the native metals (copper, silver and gold), and were particularly adept in the technology of glass. A partly subterranean dome about 10 meters in diameter, similar to the *hogan* of the Navajo, was the uniform shelter.

What took place within these domes distinguishes the civilization of the]N[from all other known societies. They seem to have spent most of their time and energy in making and using the pictogram rolls, which were *optically projected* upon the walls. Sunlight, led indoors by an intricate system of mirrors, served as the illuminant. Images were brought to focus by lenses of water contained in glass bottles. At what rate the projected images succeeded one another is unknown.

What function this activity may have had is matter for speculation. The pictogram- offer internal evidence that the projections served both educational and religious ends. Images of deities (if that is indeed what they are) occur with some frequency: they are depicted as human in scale, differing from the]N[themselves only in that their faces are without mouths, and their eyes, always open, are extremely large.

The pictograms clearly constitute a language. The semantic unit, however, is not the single glyph, but a cluster of two or more pictures which denote the *limits* of a significance; where there are three or more, the images serve as points defining a "curve" of meaning.

The connection between this visible language and speech is remote, and recalls the tenuous relationship between the ideograms of literary Chinese and their corresponding vernacular. Nevertheless, it has been my good fortune to decipher a few fragments, in privileged communication with a living female respondent in Hopi, and to establish clearly that the language of the ancient reels is ancestral to the secret languages, ritually forbidden to men and initiated male adolescents, that are to this very day spoken, *only by women among themselves*, throughout the remnant of the Mixto-Athapascan psycholinguistic community.

The parent tongue exhibits a number of unique traits. To begin with, it was a *speech-and-stance* language, with each component modifying the other. Since the picture rolls identify meaningful postures numbering in the thousands, it is doubtful that a one-to-one dictionary between English and]N[]T[can ever be constructed.

Secondly, the language was made up entirely of *verbs*, all other 'parts of speech' deriving from verbal states. A 'noun' is seen merely as an instantaneous cross-section through an action or process.

The inflexional structure of the language was vast, exceeding in size that of Sanskrit by at least an order of magnitude, to which was added an array of proclitic and enclitic particles, of uncertain usage, seemingly derived by onomatopoeia from the sounds of the breath, as inspired and expired during different sorts of effort.

The verb stem consisted of one or more invariable consonants, or clusters of consonants. The grammar varied, according to intricate rules of euphony as well as meaning, the vowels and diphthongs in the initial, medial and final positions that I have indicated with square brackets in the glossary that follows.

I append the few terms that I have thus far managed to decode. The reader is warned that multiple ambiguities of the sort found under]K[]SK[,]V[]TR[,]Y[]X[,]N[]T[, and]L[]L[]X[are the rule. Apparent exceptions are simply illustrative of defects in my own comprehension.

1. [] = The radiance.
2.]D[]Y[= Containers to be opened in total darkness.
3.]PS[]L[= A drug used by women to dilate the iris of the eye.
4.]H[]H[]L[= Epithet of the star]S[]S[]N[*], used while succulents are in bloom.
5.]PT[]Y[= Last light seen by one dying in the fifth duodecad of life.
6.]XN[= Heliotrope.
7.]TL[]D[= Rotating phosphenes of 6 or 8 arms.
8.]BN[]T[= Shadow cast by light of lesser density upon light of greater.
9.]V[]TR[= The pineal body; time.
10.]XR[= The sensation of sadness at having slept through a shower of meteors.
11.]MR[] = The luster of resin from the shrub]R[]R[, which fascinates male babies.
12.]NX[]KT[= The light that congeals about vaguely imagined objects.
13.]DR[]KL[= Phosphorescence of one's father, exposed after death.
14.]SM[]N[= Fireworks in celebration of a firstborn daughter.
15.]GN[]T[]N[= Translucence of human flesh.
16.]TM[]X[]T[= Delight at sensing that one is about to awaken.

17.]TS[]H[= Shadow cast by the comet]XT[upon the surface of the sun.
18.]R[]D[= An afterimage. **
19.]D[]DR[= A white supernova reported by alien traveller.
20.]K[]SK[= A cloud; *mons Veneris*.
21.]Z[]S[= Ceremonial lenses, made of ice brought down from the high mountains.
22.]KD[]X[= Winter moonlight, refracted by a glass vessel filled with the beverage]NK[]T[.
23.]P[]M[]R[= Changes in daylight initiated by the arrival of a beloved person unrelated to one.
24.]G[]S[= Gridded lightning seen by those born blind.
25.]W[]N[]T[= An otherwise unexplained fire in a dwelling inhabited only by women.
26.]G[]GN[= The sensation of desiring to see the color of one's own urine.
27.]M[]K[= Snowblindness.
28.]H[]R[= Unexpected delight at seeing something formerly displeasing.
29.]H[]ST[= The arc of a rainbow defective in a single hue.
30.]L[]L[]X[= The fovea of the retina; amnesia.
31.]R[] = The sensation of satisfaction at having outstared a baby.
32.]ST[= Improvised couplets honoring St. Elmo's Fire.
33.]V[]D[= The sensation of indifference to transparency.
34.]Z[]TS[= Either of the colors brought to mind by the fragrance of plucked]TR[ferns.
35.]X[]H[= Royal expedition in search of a display of Aurora Borealis.
36.]T[]K[]N[= Changes in daylight that frighten dogs.
37.]Y[]X[= The optic chiasmus (*Colloq.*); abysmal; testicles.
38.]N[]T[]T[= The twenty-four heartbeats before the first heartbeat of sunrise.
39.]F[]X[= A memory of the color violet, reported by those blinded in early infancy.
40.]T[]Y[]Y[= The sensation of being scrutinized by a reptile.
41.]B[]NM[= Mute. ***
42.]N[]T[]N[= The sound of air in a cave; a reverie lasting less than a lunar month; long dark hair.
43.]S[]TY[= The light that moves against the wind.
44.]B[] = Changes in one's shadow, after one's lover has departed in anger.
45.]N[]GR[= The fish *Anableps*, that sees in two worlds.
46.]RZ[]R[= The sensation of longing for an eclipse of the Moon.
47.]H[]F[= *Stropharia cubensis*.
48.]S[]LR[= Familiar objects within the vitreous humor.
49.]W[]X[] = A copper mirror that reflects only one's own face.
50.]MN[]X[= Temporary visions consequent upon trephining.
51.]G[]KR[= Cataract.
52.]RN[]W[= Hypnagogues incorporating unfamiliar birds.
53.]M[]D[= A dream of seeing through one eye only.

*Probably Fomalhaut (*alpha Piscis Australis*).

**Also used as a classifier of seeds.

***Standing epithet of ancestral deities.

This text is for Stan and Jane Brakhage.

Juan Downey

The Travelogues of Video Trans Americas

Spring of 1973, New York.

Before the expeditions.

Many of the cultures of the Americas exist today in total isolation, unaware of their overall variety and commonly shared myths. This automobile trip designed to develop an encompassing perspective among the various populations which today inhabit the American Continents.

A videotaped account from the northern cold forests to the southern tip of the Americas. A form of evolution in space while infolding time. Playing back a culture in the context of another, the culture itself in its own context and finally editing all the interactions of space, time and context into a work of art.

Cultural information will be exchanged mainly by means of videotape shot along the way and played back in villages for people to see others and themselves.

The role of the artist is here conceived as a cultural communicant, as an activating anthropologist with visual means of expression: videotape.

New York, May 1975.

The Video Trans Americas black and white expeditions have been completed.

Like a chemical catalyst I expected to remain identical after my video exchange would enlighten many American peoples by the cross references of their cultures. I proved to be a false catalyst when I was devoured by the effervescence of myths, nature and language structures. Pretentious asshole leveled off! Only then I grew creative and on manifold directions. Me, the agent of change, manipulating video to decode my own roots, I was forever deciphered and became a true offspring of my soil, less intellectual and more poetic.

An unexpected level had been reached among the strange roads of the heart!

Matehuala, Mexico, July 23, 1975.

Threatened by dark clouds we pulled off the highway and asked the first people in miles for a place to camp. Four generations of a family received us with an open hearted hospitality. They are totally illiterate and dwell poorly in a few adobe rooms. They run a small chapel dedicated to the first black Saint, Martin de Porres, for very mixed purposes. We were helped

generously to set-up the tent, get well water, etc. The desert is dusty, shrubby and dry. No agriculture: only savage herbs, goats and turkey.

That night we invited them to our tent to watch on two video channels the Monterrey Market tapes I shot the previous day. Since there was no electricity, we powered with batteries the blueish glow of two monitors in the dark. They were marveled by the sophistication of a place that although nearby they had never visited. We agreed that I would shoot tape of them next morning in spite of their fear: "Do you mean we will be in two places at the same time?" Since early, V.T.A. has examined the manifold implications of binary systems in the belief that understanding bi-polar schemes would transcend them. A clear example is the use of two video-channels as a means of developing further our twofold manner of perceiving and the crystalizing into a single notion in the mind.

San Luis Potosi, Mexico, July 25, 1973.

The Spanish utilized the traditional indigenous craft of stonecarving in imposing their religion. Indians were enslaved in giving permanence to the two-sided economics of the Judeo-Christian dogma. In this case, Architecture is Media; and the Conquest controlled the dominant communication network; Mysticism.

Highly sophisticated Inca craftsmen carved and assembled stone walls that were to resist centuries of earth-quakes. Those same hands were bent by the gold-craved Conquistadores to carve a different geometry based on 90 degrees in the name of an abstract God whose churches did not stand through an earth-quake. In this case, Architecture is divorced from Mass-Media Communications and it is divorced from the energy right there and from God. European fragmentation!

It is not a set of political ideas that we wish to express via art. The esthetic experience, because it is nothing but enjoying the unthinkable, sometimes manipulates social systems as if they were sculptural material.

Although Art grows from the unconscious, deciphers symbols and generates inner light; it is chiefly erotic in nature since it inputs to the bloody survival of our species; and this beautiful plight for life is political and deeply rooted in everybody's guts.

Yucatan, Mexico, August 7, 1973.

It seems hard to get road directions from the Indians. The difficulty is not linguistic. There is no significance for them in having anywhere to go.

Their interaction with localized natural forces resulted in beneficial attachment to a Place.

Brain signals interweave with the magnetic fields of a specific geography.

Belong to one place: view it in constant change. Each occasion is essentially identical, but formed by circumstances.

A place is a cycle of places.

Thus,

other environments are irrelevant,

distance does not exist

and the Western sense of Direction in Space is uncalled for.

*During the summer of 1962, every morning I circulated through the different galleries of The Prado Museum. There is one painting I paid a visit to every single day, even if it were for a short time: *The Maidens of Honor* by Velazquez. Across the gallery in a small mirror you can also perceive its reflection, along with the magic atmosphere of the whole room. The natural light entering from a side-window, enveloped me many times in the illusion that I was actually in the baroque space of the painting, as if it were possible for me to walk around the fuzzy-edged figures of "The Maidens." I could feel my body disappearing behind the Infanta's bright silk torso. My skin becoming brown-ochre and painterly.

The magic rituals that I performed in this place of Velazquez, were body and mind enlightenments only similar to facing God: the Great Totality, The White Light, the Radiant Unknown.

Charged with fire many times after these total art experiences I would have to rush to the men's room in the Museum and quickly revitalize my face with cold water.

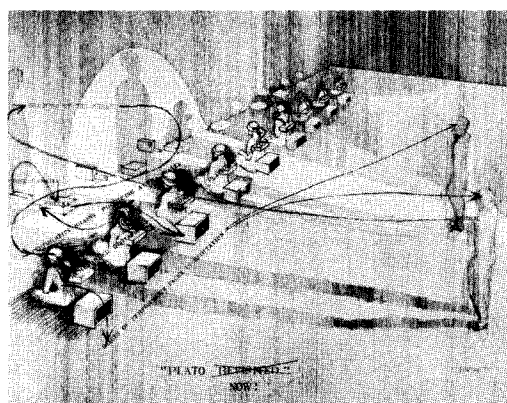
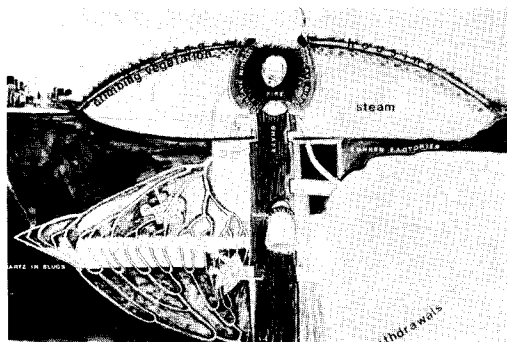
Heart beating fast. Blood rushing to my head. An orgasm during which I would visualize the voluptuousness of the Italian paintings on the second floor. I was then 22.

Velazquez identified the monarchs with their subjects; infolding space and centuries in a video manner.

Bestialism,
colonialism,
gesticulation,
stupidity,
right-wing,
decadence,
crumbling,
animalization,
the wife of the cop,
super-imposed,
anti-human,
International Corporations,
extortion,
bloodshed,
oppression,
repression,
death

and rebirth!*

*Part of the text of the videotape *The Maidens of Honor*



Proposal, Roosevelt Island Housing Competition, architectural drawing, 1975: Juan Downey, project director, and Pablo Gutierrez are founders of CANAL, a Communication Arts Company.

"Plato Now", drawing, 1973.

Douglas
Davis



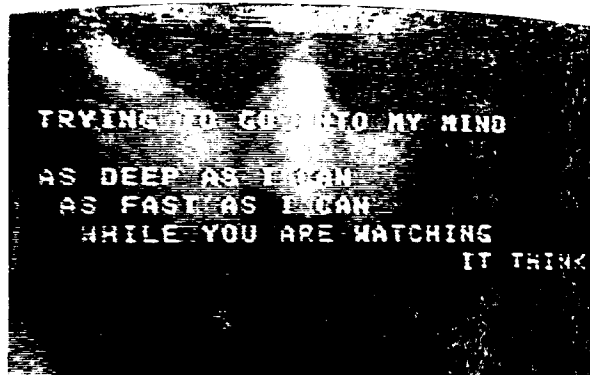
"Reaching" (*The Santa Clara Tapes*), still from videotape, 1973, color.

1
At party last night...very late...host
wheeled in his TV set to middle of room.
..I happened to be on the floor, behind
it...the back made the most beautiful i-
mage i can remember...the lights humming,
glinting through the slats, yellow in
the dark, the faces in front of the
screen...bathed in blue.
—Letter to a friend, 1967

2
Art is common, rather than in-
dividual property.
—Statement for Give-
away, 1969, event

3
EXPAND SIGHT AND SITE
—Manifesto for a
New Television, 1971

OK, but they are far from the way i am feeling and working now. perhaps this xeroxed image from
studies in myself (1973), which i will place a bit below this line, to the left, will explain that
better than anything i can say. it was somewhere between the completion of the first fully two-way
telecast in 1971 and this piece that i decided on two ideas that still seem valuable to me: (1) that
video should be made as though it weren't video, forget all about it, do anything with it that you
wish, pretend as though it is a piece of paper—i had some conversations with john baldessari about
this—all first declared in the everson museum manifesto, below; (2), that only one person (or two,
or three) is watching me—this is obviously so for broadcast, but i think also for cctv in galleries.



Video is political in the deepest personal sense.
"Video Obscura," *Artforum*, 1972

BURN THE MANUALS STOP THE NAMES The
Camera is a pencil. Everson
manifesto, 1972

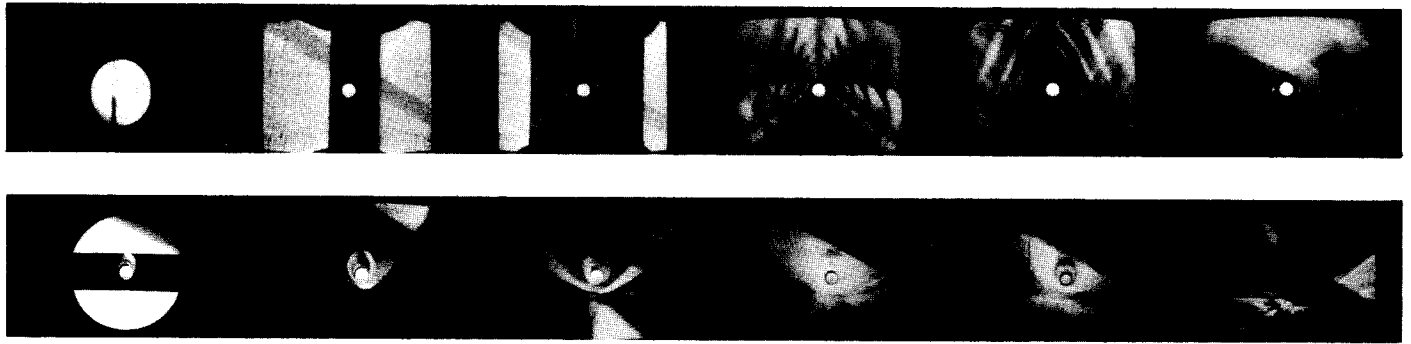
Live video is a heightened state of working.
"Time! Time! Time!" MOMA paper, 1973

Please come to your television set...place
your hands against mine....
The Austrian Tapes, 1974

Walk with me on your television screen...
Who is Up and who is Down?
The Florence Tapes, 1974

(detail)

there is a lot more i wish i could say, but there is no space. a lot of it got into a little book/
videotape i typed out this spring, once on typewriter, once on character-generator (for the v.t.).
it is called fragments for a new art (for the 70's) and talks about content issues, not about medium,
which is non-human and limited. my work is not about video; it uses video as a means to an end hope-
fully beyond video. i think the same is true of virtually everyone in this book. the work i admire
(many). the movement is about content, not form: form is content, and time.



Ron Hays

"A Visualization of an Experience within Music: the Prelude and Liebestod from Tristan und Isolde by Richard Wagner", stills from videotape, 1974.

Through music I have access to experiences I have never lived through in physical-material reality. I believe that music can stir universal feelings and imagery that are common to the emotive life of the music and to the mind. My visualization of Wagner's PRELUDE AND LIEBESTOD started me on a journey of gleaning meaningful archetypes and symbols which can be used to communicate.

After several weeks of daily experience within the music, I made a choice around which the evolution of the visualization occurred; the visualization would be a place in which and through which the experience would occur. It would be a place/places of archetypes (as image) and symbols revealed to me through feelings and intuitive knowledge more than from thought and reason.

The libretto for the opera of TRISTAN UND ISOLDE became my guide for the realization of the visual symbols occurring throughout my work. Within the libretto I found a view that included a story of two people in love as well as revelations of the universe.

Within the experience of the music, the revelations become clearer. Within the abstraction of archetype and symbol, they can be seen and or felt.

Mircea Eliade has made a statement which I find appropriate:

The man who understands a symbol not only opens himself to the objective world, but at the same time succeeds in emerging from his personal situation and reaches a comprehension of the universal . . . thanks to the symbol, the individual experience is awakened and transmuted into a spiritual act.*

*Mandala by Jose and Miriam Arguelle

I created a technical structure through which the imagery would flow. Taking what I knew of television and film techniques, I developed image-sequence transitions and chose the means of image-generation accessible within the confines of time and money.

To communicate the image-flow, I wrote a script which described the character, action and duration of the imagery. Then I created a visual image-script or storyboard which illustrated in pictures the entire work from beginning to end.

Many of the images I produced myself and others I created with individual visual artists throughout the United States. With the technical and artistic assistance of David Atwood, Con Pederson, Richard Taylor and Bob Abel, John Whitney, Jr., Marc Lewis and Richard Froman, the videotape was realized.

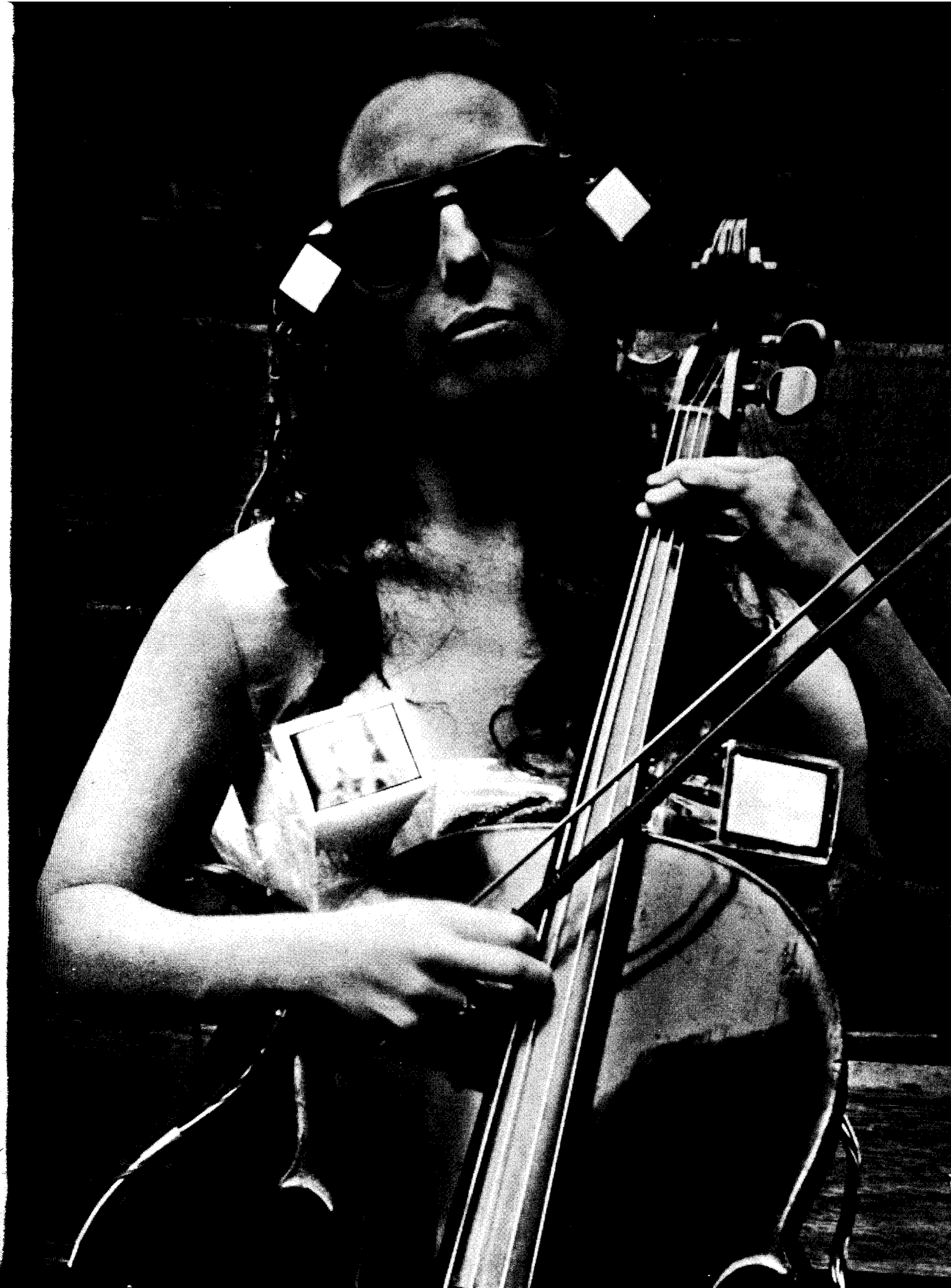
we are plants
we are animals
we are
insects
we are sperms we
are molecules
we transmit
energy
we communicate
with atoms
we are robots
which one day will
cry
forever barking
at moons
forever in eclipse
transmitting
constantly
transmitting
penetrating
a man a woman
a child dies of
hunger

as tv
scans the
surface
of a
moon
television
the extension
of
man's
totality
of
senses
television
which
sees pain
with no
comments
no feeling
no reactions
objectivity
in a phosphorous
screen
through billions
of
information
eyes

through billions
of
veins
live with
energy
live instant
live
how real is
live
how real is
instant
is it happening
now
was the
countdown
reversed
how do we
come to
zero
how instant
is
the instant

time since the advent of tv has become our fluid
creative material we can store time in videotape we
can instantly replay time we can retrieve time TV
makes us memories of time when tv & cybernetics come together
as mass media we become a many step removed model you are not
the image you are the image of an image of an image each
step removing you making you an archeological fossil during
your lifetime for you are not aware of your time existence
we are images of shadow with photography moving images of
shadow with cinema instantaneous light images in TV now with
cybernetics & artificial intelligence we are a model of a synthet
ic image which presupposes to be our collective consciousness
who are we where are we in time what do we want to become
questions of survival concern of technology to sustain life
media as a universal language creative energy as a natural
resource priority for life on the scale of global decision
the question of the growth of a grain of wheat or rice is essent
ial to biological survival if an arificial intelligence will
obsolete or inhibit growth or development of human intelligence
if our environment is doomed to decay our air & water to
become poisonous masses we will lose our essential natural
resources then those astronauts who might carry the
continuity of what potentially we all could have been will
have to begin with the question of what is the function
of creativty if left with no survival '75

→ 31A



Charlotte Moorman

Charlotte Moorman, cellist, Nam June Paik, human cello, performing *26' 1.1499"* for a *String Player* by John Cage.

Charlotte Moorman, cellist, will perform *Concerto for TV Cello and Video Tapes* by Nam June Paik for Art Transition, M.I.T., October 15, 1975. Their performance will be dedicated to Howard E. Wise.

