

Ithaca Video Festival: New Landmark

By S.K. LIST

Local landmarks are often seen last, if at all, by the people who live closest to them. Everybody knows that no New Yorker would be caught dead at the Empire State Building or the Statue of Liberty. Personally, I let years go by before I stood in awe on the gorge rim above Taughannock Falls. The same unreasonable situation may prevail, I fear, in regard to local appreciation of the Annual Ithaca Video Festival (organized by Ithaca Video Projects), opening its sixth installment this week at Cornell's Johnson Museum.

Growing from a single evening's presentation five years ago of seven selected tapes, the festival has gained national status.

This year, 372 tapes, from all over the country, were submitted, an increase of nearly 150 over last year. Pat Faust, head of programming at WXXI-TV in Rochester and a festival judge this year (along with Anne Volkes, curator of Manhattan's Anthology Film Archives and the Video Projects' Philip and Gunilla Mallory Jones), confirmed that "it's the largest video festival."

As in previous years, the festival will tour through next January to 24 museums, libraries and art and video centers coast to coast. This figure too has increased; last year the festival made 16 stops.

Electronic Wizardry

This year's 20 selected tapes are fascinating, diverse and unusual. The subject matter ranges from political to expressionistic, the treatments from insistent to frivolous, the effects from the ridiculous to the sublime. While many outstanding features of the works included stem from the arcane directives of video sophistication—what amounts to electronic wizardry involving computerized alignments, "digital/analog" equipment and so on—there is nothing exclusive about their appeal. A viewer needs nothing but an attitude of inquiry and time to find rewards in the festival entries.

Of all the tapes shown, the one that evokes the most unqualified and delighted response is "Instant This-Instant That," a four-minute bop through the world of modern convenience starring Nancy and Susie Twinart. They eat, spray, spread and wear a jumble of "fast" items, all to the infectious beat of the band Taste Test singing the tape's title song. Up-to-the-minute influences of punk, new wave, Fifties graphics and so on are all apparent and used to great advantage. Nancy and Susie are actually Ellen and Lynda Kahn, twins and the founders of Twin Art, and they live in New York City.

Sassy Skill

Similar in tone but much more elaborately communicated is Anita Thatcher's "The Breakfast Table," a "live-action video cartoon," which opens the show. A man and wife, hopelessly trapped in their traditional roles, go about the morning's business in a world that's mostly not real, but drawn on the walls. Pretty soon, while she's hastily step-and-fetching, the wife starts giving in to elaborate daydreams starring herself as a vamp, baseball ace, cloud and so on. Hubby barely notices but it all works out in the end. This piece is effective, mostly thanks to the appeal of the knowing wife, played with sassy skill by Karen Weeden.

A number of what might be called "video toys" are scattered—with a good feel for the importance of pacing—among the more involved tapes in the festival.

"Electronic Masks," for example, by Barbara Sykes, is very attractive and surprisingly humorous, given its abstract nature. Its place, after a semi-documentary on South American Indians, benefits both pieces. However, Sykes' second tape, "By the Crimson Bands of Cyttorak," though kaleidoscopic, is less interesting.

"Apple(s)" by Peer Bode of the Experimental Television Center in Owego uses altered overlays in motion of an extremely simple image—a single large apple—to create what he calls "a speculation about seeing and imaging." "Video," he adds, "is seeing the seeing." In contrast to Bode's formal examination is "Jazz Dance" by Doris Chase, an exuberant depiction of a dancer (or is she three?) like a chalk drawing who sprouts rainbow contrails, all to the music of Jelly Roll Morton.

Two long tapes, in a sense, make a bridge between these shorter pieces, which essentially concern vision as molded by the medium itself, and the more familiar examples of straight visual record. One is the South American "documentary" mentioned above, "The Laughing Alligator" by Juan Downey, a riveting inquiry into the lives of the Yanomomey Indians. First impressions of idyllic primitives deep in the jungle give way to realizations of a foreign way of life in which dead loved ones are eaten to make them immortal, outsiders are suddenly threatened with no explanation and witch doctors prevail. By mixing altered images with more straightforward scenes, Downey conveys both disparity and likeness between the Indians' ways and our own, as well as suggestions of savagery, amorality and drug-induced revelations.

The other bridging tape, "Chott el-Djerid," does *not* rely upon artificially altered images but rather examines what WXXI's Faust called "the persistence of vision" wherein attention is paid to how we live based on our perception. Bill Viola, whose masterful "Sweet Light" graced the Fourth Video Festival, made this tape about mirages in Tunisia and the wildness of vision naturally distorted. It is an extremely beautiful piece of work.



photo/Nancy Carrey

BOPPING THROUGH THE WORLD OF CONVENIENCE: A scene from "Instant This-Instant That," starring New York video makers Ellen and Linda Kahn, twins and founders of Twin Art.

All the remaining pieces are worthwhile. Significant among them is "Tapes" by Pier Marton, a bizarre group that presents a rather racked vision of existence. If Marton wasn't so obviously battered by his entire experience and all his thoughts, you'd want to smack him—which may be how he got this way. Fortunately, his self-indulgence is redeemed by being so excessive it becomes funny.

Once more then, the Ithaca Video Festival offers another sample of challenging, superior work in the visual medium we may think we know best, but which, in fact, most people comprehend least of all. It is important to remember that, as festival judge Faust stressed, "not all video is

television. Much of the work in the festival belongs in a gallery, belongs in a museum, on exhibition."

While some well-crafted pieces span the demands of both "marketplaces," the festival, Faust pointed out, "has a strong concern to support good gallery pieces." The audience for such works is increasing, she noted.

That's a promising development. Hopefully, Ithaca itself will embrace this excellent festival, grown on home ground, with the audience it deserves. □

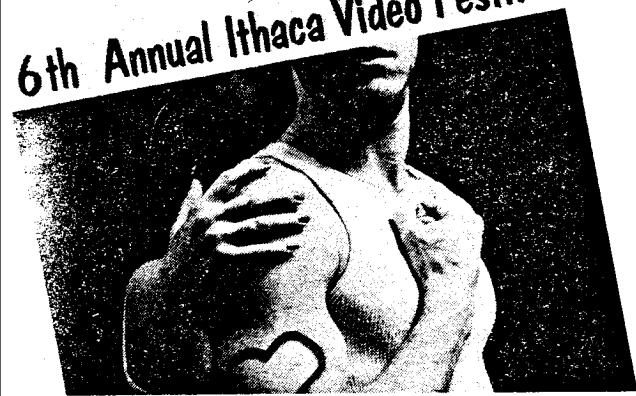
The Ithaca Video Festival, four hours long, may be seen at Cornell's Johnson Museum through April 16.

Ithaca Video Festival 1980

by Danny Speer

Ithaca Video Projects Presents

6th Annual Ithaca Video Festival



Philip and Gunilla Mallory Jones have done it again. Organized their sixth annual touring video festival, that is. Out of 375 entries (there were 225 last year), they, with two other judges, selected the four hours of material that will travel to twenty-four prestigious museums and libraries throughout the U.S. this year.

There are twenty pieces by video artists in the show, ranging from documentaries to computer-manipulated electronic-image works; with humor, pop culture, subjective realities, and new video techniques well-represented in between.

The emergence of video as art during the last decade is a positive effect of human evolution through technology. Video points to the art of the future with a beam of hope. Now if only some of the high-quality artistic effort demonstrated each year in the Ithaca Video Festival could find its way to network television. Don't hold your breath waiting for that, but by all means, attend the Video Festival at Cornell's Johnson Museum between April 2 and 16. Museum hours are Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The tapes will run continuously, and while four hours may be a long time to sit still, one can always attend in bits and pieces. This is recommended, for second viewings of any of the pieces will always provide additional insights.

Some of them, one might never grow tired of. It's a shame we only have the option of viewing these innovative and thought-provoking images for two weeks out of the year. A permanent collection would be gratefully received, but until we get one, don't miss the chance to expand

your knowledge of modern art. Attend the show and make your feelings known. It's a grey old world, and the Video Festival casts some rarified light upon it and us.

Among the works which had a profound effect on this writer's first viewing were: "The Exquisite Corpse" by Ernest Gusella, a *tour-de-force* of state-of-the-art video editing techniques.

"Chott el-Djerid," by Bill Viola; a study of mirages in heat and cold is breathtakingly beautiful. This piece would run continuously in my house if I had a choice. I'd like to put a frame around the video monitor and call this piece a painting in motion. "Chott el-Djerid" is in the Sahara, and the camera captures some astounding and outstanding effects. Mirages are recordable, it's now proven.

The whimsies of "The Breakfast Table," by Anita Thacher, and "Instant This, Instant That" by Lynda and Ellen Kahn, stay with one and don't decay the way less artistic humor does. Both of these could be viewed many times without attrition of interest. The latter features a new-wave soundtrack that will rattle around in the head for some time, and the former skillfully edits and illuminates the Walter Mitty-like fantasies of a browbeaten *hausfrau*.

"As a Public Service," by Collectivision, is the only straight documentary, a study of the confrontation over the Seabrook, N.H. nuclear plant in October 1979. One wants to see more than is shown, but the effect is still quite unnerving. Those interested in the No-Nukes movement should definitely catch this piece.

"The Laughing Alligator" by [continued on page 22]

VIDEO

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Juan Downey is a less-straight documentary on the Yanomami Indians of the Amazonian jungle. Fifteen thousand Yanomami live in 150 villages and qualify as some of the most primitive people to be found on our globe. The piece is a reminder of some of the responsibilities civilization has to these people, mainly, to let them alone.

No Ithaca artists are in the show this year, but Peer Bode of the Experimental Television Center in Owego is included with a piece called "Apple(s)," which was rendered and edited on equipment at that center. The Experimental Television Center of Owego has an on-going series which features a

different artist each week, and is highly recommended to Ithaca video fans as a place to visit and support. An artist recently featured there is Doris Chase, who has a piece in this Festival entitled "Jazz Dance," a combination of animation, a dancer in triplicate, and some great editing.

There's a lot more, and all of it well worth experiencing. Philip and Gunilla Mallory Jones, who themselves recently produced "Black, White, and Married," an excellent videotape whose title is self-explanatory, have again spent hundreds of hours on their Festival brainchild, and the audiences around the country will be much the richer for it. Ithaca gets first crack, though. This is a must-attend event. •

ARTS & LEISURE

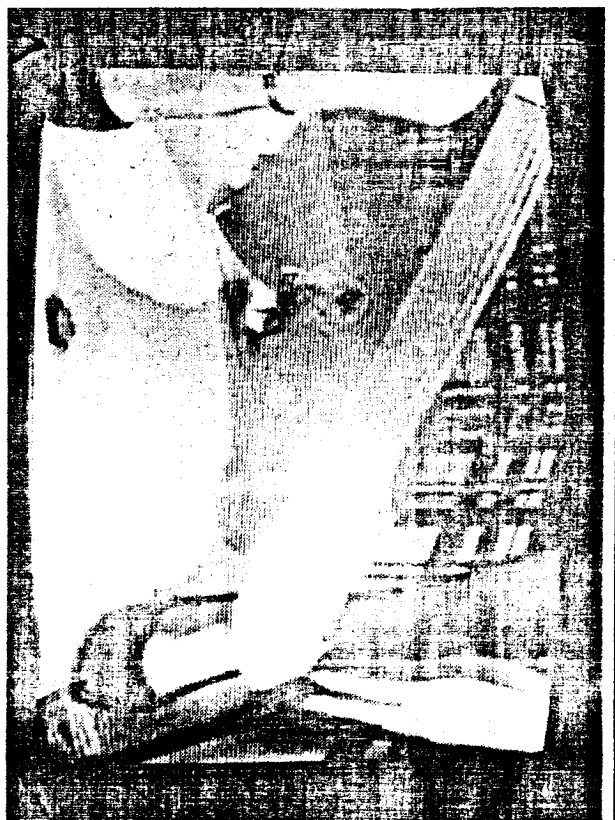
ONE FOR THE ROAD

Merle Ginsberg

Ithaca Video Festival
April 21-May 3
Cornell University's Johnson Museum,
National Tour through
January 8, 1982

High above Cayuga's waters, the Seventh Annual Ithaca Video Festival opened inside of Cornell's Johnson Museum, its panoramic glass windows (it was designed by I.M. Pei) overlooking campus, lake, mountains and sky. Ithaca, N.Y., seems an unlikely place for one of the country's largest video festivals (the other, the newly born San Francisco Festival, doesn't travel as yet). At the official opening, a lone monitor was placed conspicuously near the pastoral view, making me wonder how anyone who inhabits this environment could choose machine over nature, even for a few hours.

However, there is a great deal of enthusiasm for video, particularly video art, in Ithaca, most of it generated by the efforts of Philip Mallory Jones. Jones is director of Ithaca Video Projects, which started as a collective in the late '60s and is now partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council. Although the festival is a focal point of the Project's activities,



Marcio Resnick

Jones also rents out editing facilities, equipment and himself, for very reasonable fees, to local video talent and nearby institutions. He himself makes videotapes, shrugging off the term "video artist" and coining "portraiture" for the semi-subjective documentary style he is presently working in. It all started when he tried creative writing; it didn't work out,

so he thought he'd make films. Film was too expensive. Someone lent him a Portapak and . . . you know the rest.

The Ithaca Video Festival was born seven years ago as a local thing. This year, its 19 tapes were selected from 290 entries, which came in from all over the country—not through advertising, but just by way of a mailed announcement. Its three hours worth of tape will travel to 25 cities nationally, from neighboring Syracuse, Elmira, Rochester and Buffalo to as far away as Fort Lauderdale and Portland, Oregon.

However, it will not be shown in New York because places like the Kitchen (which has shown it in the past), the Museum of Modern Art and Anthology Film Archives simply didn't book it. This may be because a number of the festival's New York representatives have shown work at all these places and because Jones and his committee seem more concerned with a historical overview of video than with what's newest and brightest and best.

Then why does this festival carry so much weight? The most obvious reason is how accessible it makes the artists to a national audience (even if it is mostly a museum/university audience). It pays each artist \$100 per tape, which may seem minimal in view of the number of times a

Continued on next page

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tape will be aired over the duration of the festival, but isn't bad for a nonprofit grant-funded organization; many of the artists are approached by prospective buyers and showers. Plus, it provides healthy resume-fattening for the beginning video artist.

One of the festival's most interesting aspects, and again, one that contributes to its status, is the way in which tapes are chosen. Jones and a committee, this year's consisting of Barbara London (Video Curator, Museum of Modern Art), Arthur Tsuchiya (Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester) and Carvin Elson (Artists Workshop, WXXX-TV, Rochester), screened the practically 300 entries in three days, working day and night, and engaged in open-ended discussion about most of them. No such thing as a democracy here — each winning entry had to be chosen unanimously, meaning panel members often had to enlighten stubborn colleagues as to a particular tape's more subtle virtues, historically and esthetically.

The long marathon of viewing, Jones claims, also forces the committee to sight the "really-grabber tapes," the ones that excite from start to finish. I'm not sure this was achieved; the festival is top-heavy with image-processed tapes (six out of 19). Its two performance tapes, *A Visual Diary* (a performance by Blondell Cummings taped by Shirley Clarke) and *Flowers* (a performance, sort of, by Ros Barron), are self-consciously idiosyncratic to the point of silliness. One tape, *Um Laco de Inspiracao e Morte*, a narrative/performance allegory completely in Portuguese, is far too long (28 minutes) to be comprehended by non-Portuguese listeners.

However, the festival redeems itself with the local favorite *Body Count* (a sort of narrative, with some image-processing), made by Ithaca artist Dan Reeves and Ithaca composer Jon Hilton. *Body Count* is supposedly an experimental study for a larger narrative work concerning violence, childhood and Vietnam, to be shown on PBS, but its nine-minute version, orchestrating visual and aural images of kids playing at war with real footage of the blasted battlefields of Vietnam, is very provocative. At the tape's end, the kids lie bloodied, and Lyndon Johnson's assertion, "I do not find it easy to send the flower of our youth into battle," seems all the more absurd.

Another two of the best entries are more or less narrative tapes: New Yorkers Kit Fitzgerald and John Sanborn are represented by their *Similar Nature* (which has been shown at Anthology Archives), which divides the screen into four sections (under which can be discerned a moving background); each division peeks into the daily life of two men and two women, all relatively young and, though very separate in life-style and look, quite similar. When the four sections melt into the background, a city street corner, the four coincide and never consciously become aware of their similarities. Not only is this tape absorbing to watch — it *looks* good because it looks real, within each frame.

Live From Lunds, a comedic tape by Tom Adair and Kenneth Robins of Minneapolis, depicts a fantasy of what could happen in a supermarket at night. At Lund's, a bizarre group of night people skulk around the racks in semi-tuxedos, while a Bette Midler clone in drag imitates upon his/her bustline with some of the riper melons, then bursts into song while amazed shoppers look on. It succeeds because the supermarket is America's favorite icon to campily; with

its surreal fluorescent environment and prepackaged goodies, it's the perfect place for these punky antics. *Live From Lunds* is also well made; the fine-honed editing makes its comic timing come to life.

This year's token "new wave" selection (many new-waveish tapes were entered, but only one was chosen) was the star of the festival, mostly for shock value. Ex-Californian-now-New-Yorker Neely Twinem's *Best Friend* combines choppy visual images with an interesting sound track, a rock song which is talked rather than sung ("She jerked — let of a bloody scream — and ran into the bathroom — giggling herself — to death"), practically narrating the scenes of bubbling blood, knives on toilet seats, knives between legs and lipstick written across bare breasts. It's about backstabbing, and it carries that off because the images are as alienated from each other as the sensibility is supposed to be.

The Vasulka's, Woody and Steina, once founders of the Kitchen, now of New Mexico, are well represented by their short image-processed tapes. Best is Steina's *Urban Episodes*, which presents her "machine vision," an almost 360 degree street scene of downtown Minneapolis, which uses two revolving cameras plus mirrors to create a beautiful two-in-one circling view of a city's bustle. Woody's *Artifacts II* once again proves him to be the dean of computer-manipulated imagery. One ball becomes myriad; a hand holds one ball — within it can be seen the myriad balls, which move when the large ball moves. Vasulka continues to invent computer tools, this one a "Digital Image Articulator."

New York artist and ace image-processor Shalom Gorewitz is represented by two tapes, the best of which is the six-minute *El Corandero*, utilizing colorizers, synthesizers and other electronic instruments to swathe an Andalusian village with exceedingly unnatural movement and a pulse that beats harder than the moon sun.

Gary Hill's *Around and About* provides a healthy use of a text generating images which move to its rhythm. Hill addresses the viewer as if involved in a relationship with him; "Maybe it's my fault; I'm not ready to be complex," and assaults us with quickly changing unprocessed images that do not represent, at least obviously, the words he's saying. "I certainly don't want to threaten your time," he claims, but he manipulates five minutes of it perfectly.

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What, can I say in conclusion, is important or necessary about video festivals in general? The people in Columbia, South Carolina, don't go to the Kitchen, and don't watch Soho Television on cable. The Ithaca Video Festival, with its shortcomings, may be the largest vehicle attempting a nationalization of the acceptance of and awakening to video as Art. It won't be traveling lightly. ●

that is not exactly high on the agenda of any city's priorities. Finally, the St. Paul Port Authority decided the system could be best financed by industrial revenue bonds — an idea New York might consider.

All of these options deserve careful consideration by the Board of Estimate and the city's consultant, the Washington law firm of Arnold & Porter. At the moment Arnold & Porter seems to be approaching the franchising with a set of blinders that allows it to see only the obvious — traditional private ownership of the cable system, with the city thrown a bare bone in the form of minimal franchise fees. The cable companies through their lobbyists and in some cases their close personal contacts with Gov. Carey are already trying to whittle the city's existing 5 percent franchise fee down to 3 percent. Carey, whose campaigns are lavishly financed by Steve Ross, chairman of Warner Communications (half owner of Warner-Amex Cable Co., a strong contender for city franchises), has become an apostle of deregulation for the cable TV industry over the last few months. If Carey's deregulation bill does pass the Legislature, New York might end up getting almost nothing from its cable TV franchises while a few hundred miles to the north Boston, which will be doing business with the same companies likely to end up with a franchise here, will be raking in the cash. We don't have to settle for scraps.

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floor at Plavin's.

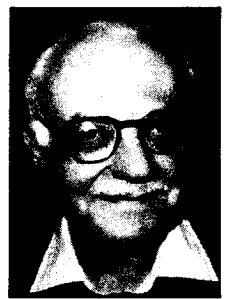
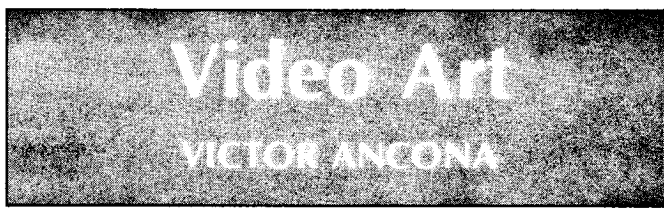
"I'm looking forward to a big increase in video because I believe VCRs will grow to be a necessity in the same way a dishwasher becomes a necessity once you start using one," he notes.

Like many other merchants—particularly some department stores—Barney Miller's is selling prerecorded along with blank audio tape in its record department, an area surrounded by video and audio hardware.

Miller does not usually promote video programming, relying on the traffic generated by VCR hardware ads. "They bring people in, and then they see what's available in software," says Zimmerman.

Prerecorded videotape is providing an important new merchandising opportunity for today's retailer. And for those who lamented what they felt was a lack of exciting new product at the summer CES, perhaps they'd best reconsider. Review, particularly, the area of voice synthesis and voice recognition, portable computers and interactive learning aids. If you're still blase about video technology, you might ponder that the complete set of the Encyclopedia Britannica can be placed on one videodisc.

Still unimpressed? Well, maybe you are, but consumers won't be.



VIDEO FESTIVALS: A Review of Ithaca's Sixth.

Tapes comprising the sixth annual Ithaca Video Festival were selected on the basis of the "creative use of the medium, craftsmanship/execution, and inventiveness." Entries must have originated on videotape, be on half-inch open reel or 3/4-inch U-matic format, and not exceed 30 minutes. There is no entry fee, and a one-time rental fee of \$100 is paid for each tape selected. The festival is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA).

This year's festival selections were made by Pat Faust, head of programming, WXXI-TV, Rochester, N.Y.; Ann Eugenia Volkes, curator, Anthology Film Archives Video Program and editor,

Electronic Arts Intermix, New York City; and Gunilla Mallory Jones and Philip Mallory Jones, co-directors, Ithaca Video Projects, Inc., sponsors of the festival from its inception.

The panel of judges chose 19 "programs" from 372 entries, creating a three-hour, 42-minute and 13-second show touring 24 cities. Eight tapes were the work of New York City artists, three from California, and one each from Towanda, Pa., Chicago, Ill., Enfield, Conn., Santa Fe, N.M., Philadelphia, Pa., Owego, N.Y., Lynn, Mass., and Houston, Texas.

The festival has already played in libraries, museums, schools, colleges, media centers and galleries in 13 cities. The upcoming places and dates for this

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month are as follows: Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, La.—September 15-21; Inter Art Works, Austin, Texas—September 22-30; M.I.T. Educational Video Resources, Cambridge, Mass.—September 22-30.

Even though I reviewed the tapes privately, I treated the entries as if I were seeing them in the company of festival audiences in any of the scheduled exhibition spaces. I did not stop a tape to reflect upon it, nor play a tape a second or third time seeking deeper meaning. Before I had a chance to forget or store information from a tape just seen, I went on to the next one as scheduled in the program. I viewed the complete festival package in two sessions. Herewith are my comments. If I were to view each tape again separately and in a different order, my perceptions might well be altered.

Anita Thacher: *The Breakfast Table.*

The first few musical bars of this 14-minute tape made by an accomplished videographer and filmmaker puts one in a pleasant and receptive frame of mind to watch the sixth annual Ithaca Video Festival. Dubbed "a live-action video-cartoon designed for the small viewing format of the tv screen" I would have also enjoyed it projected on a Panavision screen.

The production depicts an ebullient wife's unsuccessful attempts at pleasing her oblivious husband at breakfast time. Her fantasies at being an old woman, vamp, glamor girl, baseball player, operatic star, or even a heavenly body do not entice her husband from his newspaper. Chuckles are engendered by this frothy fillip set in the 1940's—even though I detect a strong contemporary message residing in the husband's idiotic behavior.

The stylistically-painted sets, furniture and props are ingenious, the direction and acting professional. As much care went into the sound portion of the production as the visuals. Anita Thacher's artistry was aided by a group of talented people who worked together to create a divertissement of a high order.

Mimi Martin: *At the Dump.*

A two-minute gem whose source material came from a scrap yard. Through the wizardry of electronic processing, mundane discarded materials, set in motion by a magnetic lift, are transformed into colorful moving crystals of celestial beauty. Natural sounds and synthesized music blend to choreograph this short videotape jewel. Produced at the Experimental Television Center Ltd., Owego, N.Y.

Juan Downey: *The Laughing Alligator.*

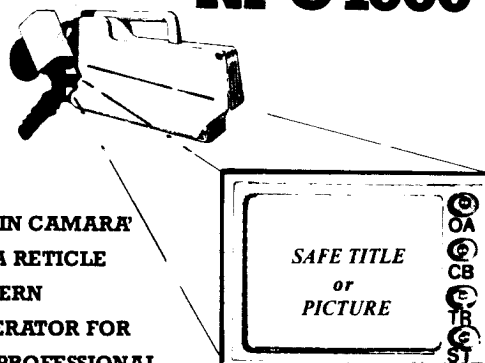
Chilean-born Downey uses video's feedback characteristics to communicate with primitive people. In 1977 he spent nearly eight months living with the Yanomami Indians who occupy a vast territory in the Amazonian rainforest on the southern tip of Venezuela. Downey believes that his approach to the documentary genre is "a fresh aesthetic where art is the document of a process and not the manipulation of passive materials, and the role of the artist is understood as that of a cultural communicant." This concept has great merit.

According to Downey, he is editing "all the interactions of time, space and context into a work of art" however, just as we begin to comprehend a particular segment, the maker intrudes with voice-over commentary detailing some obvious action while ignoring unexplained rituals. Frequent on-camera appearances of people visiting the Indians, plus voice-over commentary interspersed with silent, unexplained passages result in an ineffective confusion of styles. This impressionistic portrait of the remote Yanomami Indians juxtaposed with the artist's own world, impedes rather than enhances comprehension.

The separate yarns of poetry, anthro-

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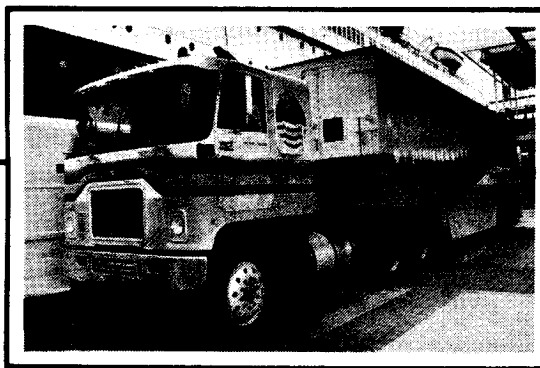
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pology, reciting myths, evoking personal emotions, depicting symbols, and posing philosophical questions are all too loosely woven to create the cross-cultural tapestry the maker intended. Downey's sensitive eye usually transforms environments into visual poetry, and much of *The Laughing Alligator* is under the spell of his keen sensibility. The artist's experiences are so intense and personal that a more objective editor might have improved the transmission of facts and feelings to viewers. As the 30-minute tape came to a close, my involvement rested more with Downey than with the culture of the Indians.

Barbara Sykes: *Electronic Masks*.

Video synthesis, like other means of creative imagery, has the power to repel or attract, involve or exclude emotional considerations, depending on the intent of the maker and the perception of the viewer. In this short five-minute tape, colorful abstract images transform themselves into recognizable primitive masks. Slowly at first, then with an accelerated pace, the masks come to life, talking and chanting as they frenetically move to the rhythmic beat of ceremonial drums.

Ordinary Indian masks and totem poles are tame in comparison with the active, electronically generated masks

caged in Barbara Syke's fertile brain and then unleashed to roam, via colorizers, analog and digital computers, in exciting audio/visual compositions. I have visions of seeing this tape in an outdoor installation using a tight circle of monitors surrounding an audience—an electronic tribe protecting itself from outer and inner forces.

Electronic Masks is an excellent example of the creative taming of technology for human need—in this case, fun with a slight touch of the irreverent. No, I can't imagine what a Pacific Northwest Indian would make of it, but here is a video synthesis tape that could be seen again and again just because it is not tediously technical.

Barbara Sykes/Tom Defanti: *By the Crimson Bands of Cyttorak*.

There is enough color and movement to keep one's interest going for the short seven minutes of this synthesized tape. It begins with poetic, slow-moving circles in space, reminders of the old Palmer method of penmanship, vibrating in electronic greens and purples. An ever-present sense of process pegs the production as shapes are created within shapes, slowly moving and evolving, meshing, coming forward and receding into vast celestial voids creating depth and adding mystery. Vibrating, abstract

parabolic shapes unravel and reform to the rhythm of an outer-space synthesized musical score.

Despite its beauty, this tape did not grab me as *Electronic Masks* did. Perhaps it should have been placed elsewhere on the program. For greatest effect, this tape should be projected on a large screen in an appropriate environment so that it may be glanced at and enjoyed from time to time rather than having one's eyes continuously fixed on it. Abstractions bereft of emotional memories are not as easily sustained.

Collectivision: *As a Public Service*.

Seeing their role as "witnesses to events" are Bob Berquist, Leland Johnston, E. D. Dorsey, Bruce Teed, Joe Piazzi, Eric Teed, and Sherry Zitter. They collectively produced this dramatic, 18-minute color tape of the October 6, 1979 confrontation in Seabrook, New Hampshire. The videotape presents the Public Service Company's Interest vs The People and Social Consequences vs Personal Gain regarding the use of nuclear energy for power generation.

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helicopters, rallies, law-enforcement personnel pitted against quietly-militant groups, guards, spokesmen, walki-talkies, speeches, human blockades, shouting, mace, dogs, clubs, singing, shouting, denials, hoses. As pandemonium reigns, mounting tensions are vividly recorded in pictures and sound. Through it all, Collectivision's close, involved reporting makes the "you are there" theme a reality. It is a powerful tape depicting a power struggle but I wish the tape had another title for this one has been used by others to couch biased opinions.

Steina: BAD.

Steina's tape suffered from the residual feeling I had from watching the previous emotion-packed tape, but that cannot be helped in a festival presenting a potpourri of style and content. Rather than describe or share its effect upon me, I quote from the program notes prepared by the maker: "BAD is the mnemonic command for the B-address register of our buffer oriented digital device. The functions of this register are up/down, left/right, x/y maps and stretching/squeezing. The tape starts with the register at zero and adds one at a preprogrammed speed, until the register is full, which takes three minutes and 19 seconds (which is the exact length of

the tape). For sound I selected the two most active output channels, translated through a digital/analog converter to voltage-controlled oscillators. I then added a blue on the darkest gray (black) and red on a middle gray, leaving the rest of the image black and white." I'm sure technicians will know exactly what I saw. I salute Steina's creative technical achievements. Her tapes often stretch the frontiers of video technology and are sure to have historical significance.

Alan Powell/Connie Coleman: Advance Riding Bowls.

North Philadelphia teenagers, demonstrating their highly-developed skate board skills on a homemade track, are transformed into superstar performers by means of creative camera work and an interplay of real-time interspersed with split-second editing. The five-minute tape ends with one wishing to see more.

Bill Viola: Chott El-Djerid (A Portrait of Light and Heat).

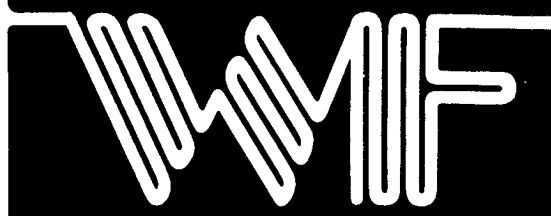
Chott El-Djerid takes us to the winter snowfields of Central Illinois and Saskatchewan, Canada, and to a vast, dry salt lake bed in the Sahara Desert in Tunisia. The 28-minute tape is made up of short sequences of the cold, vibrant light of the north country with its hazy, gray, silhouetted minimal landscapes

contrasted with the torrid atmospheric conditions of the Sahara which often produce mirages of incredible beauty. We see vast surreal landscapes seemingly bathed in luscious, soft, rippling, shimmering, luminous colors. Viola invokes a sense of mystery, then surprise and joyful discovery as we contemplate one ethereal, dream-like scene after another.

Bill Viola is preoccupied with time, light and atmospheric conditions. His deliberately slow, meditative, almost religious view forces us to see with a deeper intensity, to contemplate an environment with a new awareness. He and his video camera leisurely record a space without tiring, not unlike an investigative reporter ferreting hidden sensory clues for our enjoyment. What passes us undetected, becomes a central force through Viola's deep, limitless concerns. Even though most of his tapes concentrate on the "seeing" and the "hearing" what ultimately evolves is the "thinking" we do through his intense sensory perception. Bill Viola show us the world like we've never seen it before.

This concludes the first half of the Ithaca Video Festival review. Look for the conclusion in the October issue of **Videography**.

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Video audiences in L.A. and N.Y amuse one another via satellite connection in Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz's bi-coastal Hole in Space.

ITHACA VIDEO FESTIVAL

The Long Beach Museum of Art provided a comfortable, living room atmosphere for the four hour screening of the Sixth Annual Ithaca Video Festival, which ran November 30 through January 11. The festival, organized by Philip and Gunilla Mallory Jones, is dedicated to promoting independent video artists and their work throughout the United States. Growing from a single evening's presentation of seven selected tapes, in 1974, the festival has gained national status. This year, 20 tapes were selected from 372 entrees, offering examples of the various directions of video art. The works presented included documentary, electronic, performance and narrative styles. Two Southern California video artists were included: Kathryn Kanchiro of Santa Monica (Shutter I and II) and Pier Burton of Los Angeles (Types).

Art video has come a long way since Nam June Paik's mid-sixties experiments. Video Art, like other contemporary expressions, seems to be reaching higher technical levels in direct proportion to the lack of meaningful content. However, several

of the artists in this show demonstrate that there is a core of individuals dedicated to the perpetuation of thought-provoking video art.

Ellen and Lynda Kahn's Instant This - Instant That is a case in point. Starring Nancy and Susie Twinart as a "demo duo", the Kahn's present a fast-moving, entertaining, four minute parody of commercialism and consumerism in America. The piece is so well-done it almost becomes a sales pitch for the American way of plastic satisfaction.

Anita Thatcher uses surrealistic effects in The Breakfast Table, a live-action video-cartoon. This vignette of a common domestic scene is presented with the utmost care of still-life arrangement and lighting reminiscent of a painting by Thomas The 1940's stylized couple and their parrot live in a two-dimensional world. The wife escapes her boredom at trying to please an oblivious husband by spontaneous flights of fancy transformations.

The most powerful dramatic imagery in the festival was Round Feet, A Performance by Winston Tong.

The tape has a masterful use of black and white composition, East-West synthesis, and androgynous imagery. Tong pulls the viewer into his intimate space. Working with two stuffed cloth, naked dolls about the size of small midgets, Tong's performance has the tension of Bunraku. This was an emotionally moving statement of the pain that women have traditionally endured for a moment of pleasure.

Three tapes stand out in my memory for their skillful sense of design in motion. The Exquisite Corpse by Ernest Gusella was created by clock controlled switching between color and black and white cameras. Each camera was set at a different focal length. The resulting effect was that of a three-dimensional kaleidoscope. Peer Bode, in Apples, worked with double exposures of horizontal and vertical scanning, to produce a grid-pattern still life in synthetic color. I'd give it an A for formal design. In Jazz Danco, Doris Chase plays graphically with the lines of a jazz dance. This is a videodance film of technical innovation to rank with the experiments of Twyla Tharp and Merce Cunningham. At the Dump was a light, color reversal painting in motion. The artist's joy in the subject matter was depicted in this tumbling of found objects, sans odor, sans noise. Of the tapes in this genre, the one I most disliked was Electronic Masks & By the Crimson Bands of Cyttorak, which was a pretentious arrangement of totemic images. Vertical and horizontal changes of color accelerated in rhythm with the percussion and vocal score, generating a most powerful Disneyland effect in this viewer.

Video artists have been so busy playing with knobs in recent years, that it was good to see some of the interesting documentary work that is going on. Bikers' Wedding by Lyn Tiefenbacher and Dave Pentecost, stars Wicked and Wicked's Stuff in the primitive rites of a folk hero. Members of the cult are shining with rhinestones and gold satin. For those people who think poetry is boring and poets are pretentious, California I is the perfect confirmation. Eleven different treatments in twenty-eight minutes was a bit much. To this viewer, it added up to nothing. Especially disappointing, since I like poetry and poets. The Laughing Alligator was interesting for its subject matter and the style of presentation. Juan Downey documented his stay of eight months with the Yononami people of the Amazonian Rain Forest. Downey sees the artist as a time traveler. The tape showed the life style of the Yononamis, the use of the video camera in communication, and the exchange of learning between two cultures - that of the Indians and that of the artist.

The intimate scale of video viewing generally creates difficulties for landscape as subject matter. The two tapes shown both made their points, both seemed too long, and both were boring. Viewers registered their disinterest by talking, leaving, returning with the question "it isn't over yet?" Water, Wind and the Record of the Rocks used a crawl narrative over images of giant sand dunes in West Texas and rain falling on old buildings. Chatt El-Djerid (A Portrait in Light and Heat) haunts me like a bad melody. The interminable twenty-eight minutes of over-exposed tape of an out of focus vehicle traversing a dry salt lake in the Sahara desert has burned indelible images of heat waves into my dulled brain.

I staggered down the stairs, through the Hole in Space, a bi-coastal, video amusement created by Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz. New Yorkers were playing charades for shoppers in Century City via satellite. The museum was presenting twenty minutes of a six hour documentation of three nights in November 1980. An accompanying exhibit of photographs from the tape showed people looking at people looking at people.

Walking outside, everything was still out of focus. The palm trees loomed grey in the fog. I found my car. Back on the freeway, my windshield wiper, rock 'n' radio, provided the score for my own highway video.

The Berlin Los Angeles Festival brought two events of interest to visual artists. The Sinking of the Titanic, an opera, was an immense environmental performance, utilizing the outside front and back of Royce Hall, the entire auditorium, the stage, backstage, and backstage exits with stunning visual effects. The entire audience was used as part of the performance which was an experience reminiscent of the happenings of the sixties. Oskar Schlemmer Das Triadische Ballett was a revival of Schlemmer's 1922 combination of art and dance. It was a magnificent display of inventive costumes by an artist who had a good idea but no sense of movement. Unfortunately, Gerhard Bohner, who is credited with reconstruction, new production and choreography, didn't see fit to make any kinetic improvements.

The Craft and Folk Art Museum expanded the fifth annual Festival of Masks to include a contemporary artists' invitational, The Mask As Metaphor, exploring current uses of the mask in visual art. Eighty artists were presented in this inaugural exhibition for Museum Gallery 3 at Santa Monica Place. As part of the exhibition, three artists presented performance artworks: Sue Dorman, Magnetism; Cheri Gaulke, Broken Shoes, previously performed last May as part of Public Spirit at L.A.C.E.; and John White's Falsehoods, one of the most witty and intelligent art performances I have seen. Broken Shoes was an entertaining compendium of personal and cultural anecdotes on the subject of masking with shoes. The performance included a chorus of women wearing red shoe masks, photographs of Chinese footbinding, a tape of an elderly woman talking about her bunions, a wonderful brief pixillated film, Gaulke on a high puppet stage struggling to fit her big feet into little shoes, and the chorus singing Waller's "Your Feet Too Big." John White brilliantly used his familiar materials (words, paper, markers, wood, and sounds) and techniques (puns, word transformations, chance choices, references to his home life, and free association) to present art ideas with the persona of an elementary school teacher. John's white painting became white light as he took logical steps to arrive at a nonsensical semantic solution to the problem (a rhyming struggle). "A bus stucco future performance situation." It was a superb demonstration of the use of language as a mask for feeling and meaning.

The Century City Cultural Commission benefited when 500 arts supporters paid \$50 to see Armand Hammer give an award to Robert O. Anderson for his contributions to culture and the arts. Appropriately, the award was a plastic resin abstraction of the twin towers of Century City specially designed by Frederick J. Eversley. The Century City Cultural Commission is committed to bringing art into Century City. They have sponsored many art exhibitions and several mural projects as well as performance and performing arts.

Frederick Eversley with his sculpture designed for the First Armand Hammer Award. Eversley recently completed a three-year tenure as "Artist-in-Residence" at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C.



ART REVIEW

BEST FOR THE EYES AT LONG BEACH MUSEUM

By SUZANNE MUCHNIC
Times Staff Writer

When the Ithaca Video Festival began six years ago, assorted video aficionados crowded into one room and watched a few tapes by contemporary artists. It was a small-time event destined to gain thousands of fans and develop the same growing pains as the young art form it championed.

Now the festival is a nationwide competition and traveling show booked into galleries and museums in 24 U.S. cities. This year, project directors selected 20 tapes from 372 submissions, "in an effort to present samples of the various directions or 'schools' of video art." Results can be seen in a four-hour program at the Long Beach Museum of Art through Jan. 11.

Watching four hours of artists' video at one sitting is a bit much for all but the most bleary-eyed tube addicts and the artists' mothers. In the interests of clear vision, good humor and measured judgment, I opted for tapes 3 and 4, the last half of the program. The package is assembled as an album of varied pace and personality, so the last half presumably reflects the whole's character.

True to festival directors' plans, the program is a varied sampler with something to entertain, bore, amuse and offend nearly everyone. On the light side are Doris Chase's "Jazz Dance" with outlined figures moving to music, Ellen and Lynda

Kahn's "Instant This-Instant That," a lively New Wave parody of push-button consumerism, and Bill Charette's "Mixed Bag," a sprightly batch of short tapes that has a terrific time with joggers, apple eaters and a jack-o'-lantern carver. For something depressingly different, there's Ernest Gusella's ghoulish "The Exquisite Corpse" and Pier Marton's tiresome tapes that switch from self-indulgence to masochism, finally ending in a blood bath.

The show has arty effects in Chase's dancers and Peer Bode's overlapping images of apples that parade for only four minutes but seem to go on forever. And there are tapes that depend on words. Laurie McDonald's "Water, Wind and the Record of Rocks," for example, makes good use of printed text running across silent landscapes. "California I," a richly affecting piece, features the work of 10 poets. At 23½ minutes, it is the next to the longest tape in the show, but it seems like one of the shortest.

The issue of time rises repeatedly in the festival. Works that fail seem to do so because artists don't know when to quit or they lack a sense of timing. One can look at a painting or a sculpture for as long as it takes to come to grips with it, but video exists in a set period and its length is crucial.

Time is not a problem in "Bound

Please see VIDEO ART, Page 2

VIDEO ART

Continued from First Page

Feet," a chilling, poignant and deeply memorable expose of female subjugation by Tom Freebairn and Winston Tong. Dolls and a human performer enact ritualistic foot washing, binding and crippling, once common in China in the name of love and tradition. Haunting images, childish whimpers and a sense of strict alienation combine to deliver a strong impact.

Downstairs at the museum, also through Jan. 11, Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz show a 20-minute tape from their recent "Hole in Space" project. In mid-November they set up a two-way live satellite connection between New York's Lincoln Center and Century City's Broadway department store. It was rather like a group telephone connection with pictures. Passers-by could see, hear and talk to people on the opposite side of the country.

Through "Hole in Space," L.A. shoppers saw "Mom" and played charades with New York consumers. Dates were made, family business was done and participants on both sides endured good-natured cribbing. At each receiving end, video projectors channeled satellite-transported images to fill 9 by 12-foot rear projection screens, producing life-size pictures. Judging from the edited tape at Long Beach, "Hole in Space" accomplished nothing aesthetically, but people had a fine time playing with a technological phenomenon.

VIDEO

QUICK STOP FESTIVAL

San Francisco / Mary Stofflet

This is the kind of festival I like — one location, one time slot, no frills. The *Sixth Annual Ithaca Video Festival*, which occupied three recent Sunday evenings at Video Free America, gave viewers a chance to see documentaries, electronic video, taped performance, and much that lies between or overlaps those descriptions. None of it was truly dreadful, notwithstanding an irritating inability on the part of the audience to keep still during the less kinetic moments. I was relieved when the disgruntled departed, as they did in droves during Bill Viola's *Chott el-Djerid (A Portrait in Light and Heat)*. More on that later.

The festival tapes (twenty in all) were chosen from a plethora of submissions (372) which originated, to the surprise of no one, almost exclusively from New York or California. *California One* by Barbara Wright, Gordon C.A. Craig, Martha Olsen and Lewis MacAdams (ARTWEEK, October 4, 1980) and *Instant This — Instant That* by Ellen Kahn/Lynda Kahn (ARTWEEK, November 8, 1980) have been mentioned in these pages as entries in previous festivals or video reviews. Since video is repeatable and multiple, one escapes the type of anxiety attacks brought on by the

current Marsden Hartley retro at UC Berkeley, for example, where in one or two desperate afternoons you attempt to absorb everything about each painting, both individually and as part of an *oeuvre*, knowing you may never see it, or them, again. Relax and welcome to eternal video.

In no particular order of appearance, I found four tapes which inspire me to comment. Among the less remarkable were some of slight meaning and all those dependent on electronic image generation. I have no objection to the latter, but feel qualified to talk only of image effectiveness and not of technical titillation. Further adventures of Juan Downey among the Yanomami Indians of Venezuela, this time *The Laughing Alligator* (1978), engrossed me beyond note-taking capacity — it's the perfect blend of exotic setting, scientific observation and artistic sensibility.

Back to the four: *As A Public Service* by Collectivision documents an antinuke rally at Seabrook, New Hampshire, in 1979. It was the standard scenario — good guys, bad guys and an attorney general making insincere comments to the effect that covered badges and unidentified police are nonissues. For a

Ithaca film festival's a feast for video fans

Saturday afternoon shouldn't be spent sitting at home watching TV. Tomorrow, for a little change of pace, you should consider driving to Broward Community College's central campus so you can sit *there* and watch TV.

You will not, however, be watching the standard Saturday diet of *Sports Spectacular* and *Rodan Meets Mothra at Bon Soir*. You'll be seeing an "inside" view of pumpkin-carving; three-dimensional poetry on such topics as liver, air bags and Smokey Robinson; a wedding in which the bride drives down the "aisle" on a motorcycle; a pair of twins who subsist solely on instant food; and a lot, lot more.

The occasion is the *Sixth Annual Ithaca Video Festival*, sort of a film festival for video enthusiasts. BCC instructor Steve Eliot has, for the first time, coerced Ithaca festival officials to unveil their four-hour program south of New Orleans.

BCC will premiere the Ithaca show Saturday at 3 p.m., in the art building directly opposite the main entrance of Bailey Hall on BCC's main campus in Davie. The video art exhibition will be presented in that building's theater, projected on a large screen, with live music, dance and "vegetarian refreshments" served up between every hour of tape. The program is scheduled to end at 9 p.m., admission is free, and visitors are welcome to come and go.

This news is not expected to send most people salivating in anticipation. "Video art" is a dangerous, somewhat unsettling catch-all phrase, like *avant garde* or "new wave." It encompasses so much that it remains an undefined puzzle — no one knows what to expect from a "video art" show because one is correct to expect anything.

"Video art" includes the purely technical, the totally visual, and the more familiar meldings of sight and sound. Judging from the Ithaca clips, which were themselves



David Bianculli

TELEVISION EDITOR

judged from a field of 372 submissions, video art is everything from comic fantasy to straight documentary, from one man's "suicide" to another man's visual juggling act with apples.

It is, in short, anything done by anyone with a camera. Most of it is better than the stuff shown on "regular" television; some of it is the stuff shown on regular television (on local public TV stations, at least); all of it is undeniably different.

The question is unavoidable... "But is it ART?" Art, like beauty and the cornea, is in the eye of the beholder.

Sampling little more than half of the festival's 240 minutes of video is like visiting a cafeteria and eating a mouthful of every available offering. Some of it goes down pretty well, some of it is a little bland, and all of it lingers long after it has been ingested.

The Breakfast Table, the festival's opener, is 14 minutes of pure sketch comedy, a well-written farce about an uncommunicative couple at breakfast. As video art, it's about as imposing as *The Ernie Kovacs Show*. (No one admits it, but Kovacs was undoubtedly the first video artist. All these "pioneers" of the TV-conscious '70s are eating Kovacs' 20-year-old dust.)

Other seemingly harmless segments include Bill Charette's *Mixed Bag* pieces, culled from his feature segments for WGBH's news reports. Charette's features on "Happy Feet," the carving of a jack-o'-lantern and an apple-picking party are similar to, if a good deal better

than, locally produced feature segments for South Florida TV news shows.

The difference is that news departments call them "fillers." Ithaca calls them "art." And in Charette's case, Ithaca is more correct. Outside of the occasional nature reports on *CBS Morning news*, they're the best current example of imaginative camerawork and editing.

But that's only the beginning. *Exquisite Corpse* is a bizarre — but funny and fascinating — experiment in which two views of a man, in close-up and long shot, are interspersed in rapid-fire sequence.

Some of the entries, like *California 1*, provide intentionally integrated uses of poetry and visuals. Others are just straight-out strange.

But that's part of the excitement of this new "art" form. No one but a beady-eyed TV freak will like *everything* the Ithaca festival has to offer. A few segments may shock, a few may confuse, a few may simply bore.

Cameras, recorders, editors, switchers, electronic image generators — these are the new toys. The artists playing with them, regardless of age, are the new kids. And video art, like it or not, is the new wave.



Winston Tong in "Bound Feet."

while I wondered where the 1970s had gone because it seemed as though a whole decade had just dropped from history, but then I realized we were eleven days into the Reagan-elect era and I knew that the 1970s were not gone, only forgotten for a while. EINSTEIN WOULD SHIT was the perfect placard for this demonstration, and the slogan stayed with me as nuclear power plant workers shouted at the demonstrators that they need their jobs. Collectivision documents public events for use on public TV, and it seems unlikely that they will be out of a job.

Chott el-Djerid by Bill Viola drove restless viewers to the door and beyond. Lethargy held me initially, but soon I was unable to leave shimmering desert images that resembled so much manipulated still photography. A windlike sound with this scenery made the mountains of the moon seem like La Jolla by comparison. A single figure walked through the white wasteland and stopped later to plunk an object into a brown pool. Green cloudlike blobs rose above the landscape in a lavender-tinted sky. Anonymous figures spun like dervishes in the wind. Bikers, a camel and other recognizable travelers approached a boxy desert town. Viola's pale green and pale lavender mirage world could be a series of paintings — or it could be a prophetic

vision. When the world is a desert once more, surely there will be such skies, such sands. Different living through chemistry.

Bound Feet by Winston Tong was once a live performance, and since then it has achieved legendary status in that curious theater-performance, art-music overlap milieu of San Francisco. As I have only seen Tong's live work in the past year, I welcomed this tape and emerged nearly as puzzled as before. It had style and angst, yet it seemed too brief.

Tong's work is the tale of an ancient Chinese empress. There were scenes of foot wrapping while more than one voice spoke in Chinese. The tape was shot in color, though the costumes, sets and faces were in black, white or neutral tones. The music was Satie (I can't wait for the '90s when the two major dissertation topics will be the use of Satie music and images of regurgitation in "fin de decade" videotapes). The familiar Tong puppets arrived on the scene. The female puppet was embraced at the feet. She then arched her back and slumped over. The puppets were wrapped up, and a hand covered the camera as though we had seen too much. I know it was a more modest century, but we had not seen enough.

Once upon a time *The Exquisite Corpse* was a game played by the surrealists. Now it is a videotape by Ernest Gusella in which two faces, one each in black and white and in color, jumped about the screen in a changing relationship of focus. There was no sound until some aaas and aachs accompanied winglike images made by fingers pulling mouths into various distortions. I stayed throughout this curiosity because the memory of another Gusella piece, *Arrows*, gave me hope. But alas. *Arrows* was saved by incomparable chanting, analogous to the visual contortions, which made me wonder whether I was hearing arrows, a rose or Eros. *The Exquisite Corpse* should go back to the morgue at once. □

4 Entertainment

Innovative Video Featured In Ithaca Presentation

By BRETT BAYNE

After prolonged exposure to the publicity poster of the same name, BCC is finally getting ready to see what Ithaca, N.Y. has in store for some 24 colleges, museums and libraries from coast to coast.

It's the Sixth Annual Ithaca Video Festival. Not an "art exhibit" as would be immediately imagined, but a collected four-hour string of various entries that make the show an opportunity to further one's experience with modern art.

This year's tapes have been described by The Ithaca Times as "fascinating, diverse, and unusual." Some of them are expressionistic, surreal, and political; others a product of sophisticated new video computers.

Central video art instructor Steve Eliot arranged the showing for a \$50 fee as "an alternative to broadcast TV."

"There's such a total range of different types of alternative video. There's a lot of satire at commercially-produced material," Eliot said.

Among the presented works are "The Exquisite Corpse" by Ernest Gusella, "The Breakfast Table" by Anita Thacher, and "Chott el-Djerid" by Bill Viola.

"We have an overdose of middle-of-the-road entertainment," Eliot says of shows on local

airwaves. "There is very little creative expression of any new forms, whether it's poetry, painting, sculpture, or performance art."

Eliot describes current video art as, "Well, everything! Some are abstract computer imagery. Some of them are very controversial."

Prior to its BCC run, the festival first appeared at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art in Ithaca during April, and will end in December at Oregon's Northwest Film Study Center.

It will begin here on Saturday, Nov. 22, in building 35, room 100, and will also run in the art gallery November 24-26.

The festival promises a program with innovation and humor; imaginatively conceived pieces ranging from a documentary on the Yanomoney Indians called "The Laughing Alligator" to "Instant This-Instant That," a satire on the world of modern convenience, will be shown.

"My responsibility as a teacher is to help bring some of these forms down here, not only for BCC, but for the community," Eliot said.

Unfortunately, Eliot's Video Art class is limited to 15 people. The course is an introduction to video as an art form; students produce their own tapes. Interested students may contact Eliot in the Art Department by calling 475-6507.



Ithaca poster art

'Taped Time on the Side Of Video's Unblinking Eye

By HELEN L. KOHEN

Special to The Herald

At 15, video art is old enough to have a history, its own artists' hall of fame, and a complex of support systems, but it is still too young to have a broad-

based, knowledgeable following.

Access continues to be the video artists' main problem, access to the latest high (and expensive) technology and access to the public through broadcasting facilities and channels. Nonetheless, art will out, and video artists, having recognized the expressive potentials of the medium well before the rest of us, have tackled the technology to create a multi-effectual art form.

Though watching the tube is, in fact, a nonepic occasion in our daily lives, video art demands our attention and commands that we experience it the way we experience film or theater or paintings.

Happily, and at last, that compound experience will be available for the next week for any who will seek it out. Through the cooperative efforts of Broward Community College and Burdines, "The Sixth Annual Ithaca Video Festival," among the most prestigious video events in the country, will be replayed in our area.

THE CURRENT festival is comprised of 20 tapes, picked from a field of 372 entries from video artists, and takes four hours to view completely. Time, you will learn, is the given in the video art experience. Those sufficiently intrigued to take the time will find video art to be as varied as any other art, and this particular selection to be a fine introduction to the various direc-

tions video artists are now exploring.

Since the field lacks a descriptive vocabulary specific to its variations, we fall back on the terminology of other forms to speak of its "schools."

Video art can be autobiographical, can run the course of straight narration, can be documentary, didactic, comedic or involve electronic wizardry. It can incorporate poetry, or be a poem. As for critical criteria, creative use of the medium would have to be a prime factor in evaluating the worth of any tape, but otherwise the usual art considerations apply.

TO SELECT from the festival selection, this critic would confer honors on the following:

● **MOST FUN:** *Instant This — Instant That* by Ellen and Lynda Kahn, cofounders of Twin Art. A bit of funky commentary paced to our dependence on immediate products and timed conveniences. In this delightful morn-to-night sequence, the Kahns caricature themselves. They also poke fun at anyone who, first thing, reaches for the Tang. 4 minutes.

● **MOST BEAUTIFUL:** *Chott El-Djerid (A Portrait in Light and Heat)* by Bill Viola. Master of the long shot with a lens usually held to be insufficient to the task, Viola records mirages rising from the play of natural light upon snow fields and deserts. The images are extraordinary. 28 minutes.

● **MOST INGENIOUS:** *The Breakfast Table* by Anita Thacher. The sound track here is very special, setting up a rhythm that underscores a 1940s breakfast-time vignette between a wife hungering

for life and a husband hungering for toast. Thacher uses painted effects on the set, making this, at times, a two-dimensional world. The transitions are masterful. 14 minutes.

THERE ARE THREE documentaries worthy of special note.

Collectivision, a group of video artists, uses video to witness a political event. As a *Public Service* documents the confrontation between the power company and the people of Seabrook, N.H., without editorial comment and without losing a word said on either side (18 minutes).

Juan Downey, the creator of *The Laughing Alligator*, is a brilliant editor of the video images he captured among the Yanomami Indians of the Amazon. The tape is interspersed with sounds and images from our more civilized world, a gimmick that does not work terribly well, but it also has moments of real terror and real beauty (30 minutes).

The most upbeat documentary is *Biker's Wedding* by Lyn Tiefenbacher and Dave Pentecost, an on-the-scene street affair, complete with a solemn, intoning minister, double rings and the most outlandish and wonderful tribal costumes yet recorded (6½ minutes).

The festival, having begun with hilarity, ends with *Tapes* by Pier Marton, eight separate heavy messages finishing with a suicide (18 minutes). Cut.

From video tape 'A Portrait in Light and Heat' by Bill Viola

MIAMI HERALD

In the hands of the artist, video offers a medium substantially different from the plastic arts of painting, drawing and sculpture. Aside from the introduction of movement and sound, video allows the artist to deal with real time, a point of fascination for many 20th century artists. Concern with the sequential passage of time probably began with Duchamp's *Large Glass*, a work he spurratically labored over for 30 years. If the relationship is not quite so direct, it was at least Duchamp and other dadist's that spurred the Happenings of the 50's and early 60's, which was the closest art had ever come to theatrics. Today, real time manifests itself, not only in video, but also in performance, kinetic sculpture, sound sculpture, and numerous environmental works, set to weather against the ravages of time.

If video has the advantages of time, movement, sound and color, it also has the disadvantage of forging art into a medium stereotyped by film and television. Too

often video looks like a film clip or television pilot, or bows to the other extreme of repetitive, meaningless special-effects. Somewhere between these extremes of the common and the strange, resides the illusive domain of video art.

The 6th Annual Ithaca Video Festival, currently on display at McKissick Museums on the USC campus, exemplifies both the simplistic escape into extremes, and the potential power inherent in the medium. The festival is a result of the Ithaca Video Competition, with the 20 tapes featured here selected from nearly 400 entries. The 20 individual tapes are grouped into four major cassettes, each lasting approximately 45-minutes, with continuous showings daily.

Unlike last year's festival, those works that rely on special-effects and repetition have been thankfully kept to a minimum. *Water, Wind and the Records of the Rocks*, by Houston artist Laurie McDonald, is the worst of the lot. The visual imagery is washed-out and unprovocative, and the written text that crosses the

image rapidly becomes nauseating.

In great abundance are those works that fit the television/film mode. Although clearly not utilizing the medium to its most fruitful end, these works are, for the most part, entertaining. Anita Thacher's *The Breakfast Table* is a light comedy featuring the vain attempts of a wife to crack the newspaper wall to her husband. Thacher describes the work as a "video cartoon," with "the stylized couple and their pet parrot living in a 2-dimensional world."

There are two works in this collection that transcend simple entertainment and image-making, and reinforce the unique power of serious video work. The first is *Bound Feet, A Performance* by Winston Tong, by Tom Freebairn and Winston Tong, and the second is *Tapes* by Pier Marton. *Bound Feet* exposes the Japanese tradition of binding the feet of their women to retard their growth. The tape opens with Tong in a black kimono and white-face, in a stark white room. He is

looking through a photo album, declaring "that such a thing should never be forgotten." He begins to bind his own feet in this traditional manner, bowing his toes under the arch of each foot, saying, "What pain is born in the name of love." The scene switches to two cloth dolls, as the male doll embraces the disfigured feet of his wife. Through a series of switches from the doll's

back to Tong's performance, the work attains a chilling tone that could make even Bergman shutter.

Tapes features a lone male figure talking directly into the camera. There is a strange psychotic feeling to the narration, that increases with each passing minute. Scenes fade, situations change, yet the figure continues his discussion towards the

viewer. Suddenly he asks, "are you still looking at me? After this, he becomes self-conscious, almost making the viewer feel guilty for participating in his confessional. The work has a climatic, shocking ending, which I won't reveal.

The 6th Annual Ithaca Video Festival will continue through Oct. 25.

Video Gives The Artist Time

RICHLAND CHRONICLE

COLUMBIA'S NEWSWEEKLY

Video Art

VICTOR ANCONA



PART II: A Review of the Festival

The sixth annual Ithaca Video Festival comprising 19 tapes is currently touring the country. I reviewed the tapes privately, but treated them as if I were seeing them as part of a festival audience. Here are my comments on the second half of the festival.

Doris Chase: *Jazz Dance*.

A four-minute jazz-dance piece is created with the maker's keen sense of design plus her ability to harness technology for art with a sense of humor. Doris Chase outlines the dancer's body to create a multiple melange of white calligraphic lines prancing furtively against a black background. Horizontal bands of thin, vivid colors appear in perfect juxtaposition to the energetic movements of the now multiplied

human form dancing to the nostalgic music of the Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band. The Radio City Music Hall Rockettes were never as precise as Chase's electronic dancer whose original energy was supplied by Gae Delaghe. A delightful tape!

Kathryn Kanehiro: *Shutter: Morning I and II*.

A realistic landscape with cumulus clouds against a deep blue sky and a tree in the lower right hand corner of the frame, opens two short segments of this four-minute impressionist tape containing half-blurred images and sounds we experience during the period between sleeping and waking.

A warm morning sun floods through shuttered windows as our subject awak-

ens to later hand-caress fleeting images seen through the window. Out of focus, layered images and quick pans add to the illusive character, the dream-like essence of this tape. While the visuals overpower the audio (despite the creative use of both), this feelings-involved work awakens the romantic in us. The video presentation of illusion and reality by Kathryn Kanehiro is what poems are made of.

Tom Freebairn/Winston Tong: *Bound Feet, A Performance* by Winston Tong.

When an award-winning writer-producer-director in film and television combines his talents with an award-winning performer supported by a professional crew, the result is likely to be excellent. Winston Tong's formal Oriental sensibility delivers a superb performance for the video camera while retelling the story of the old Chinese custom of binding women's feet.

"In China, you know, the Empress is Chinese, and so are all her subjects," we are told. "This happened many years ago. For that reason, the story must be told. It would be a pity if it were forgotten." So begins a tale enacted with appropriate nuances and gestures that automatically moves one back to a near-faded time. The ritual of binding women's feet and its consequences are




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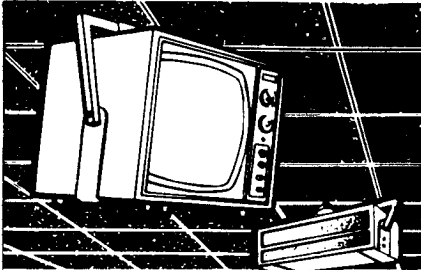
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vividly portrayed and acted by Tong with the aid and manipulation of male-female dolls. The significance and symbolism depicted are a strong inducement to study the old custom further since its effects are profound and still seem to linger in the Chinese psyche.

Peer Bode: *Apple(s)*.

Take a black and white image of an apple. Add imagination, electronic wizardry and synthetic color. Mix thoroughly with large doses of altered time references from one camera image horizontally and a second camera vertically. Add a pinch of cutouts from a gray level comparing and switching. The result is a four-minute exciting visual treat concocted with the aid of a master chef, Peer Bode. *Apple(s)*, from the series entitled *Process Tape*, is a significant example of the creative work being produced by artists at the Experimental Television Center, Owego, N.Y.

Barbara Wright, Gordon C.A. Craign, Martha Olsen, Lewis MacAdams: *California I*.

This half-hour program by the Bay Area Video Coalition features the work of ten California poets and was produced through the Poetry Center of San Francisco State University. Through the successful blending of experimental literary and video treatments, where the

videographers let the language of each poem direct them, they succeeded in creating a work of consummate literacy with heightened emotional overtones. The result is a ten-fold celebration of poetry and video. Each poem received a unique treatment, culminating in the grand and majestic *Sylvester Saint Elmo Hope* by poet Curtis Lyle.

The other poets featured in this spirited paean to California are Jose Montoya, Bobbie Louise Hawkins, Judy Grahn, Dale Herd, Reginald Lockett, Ed Dorn, William Dickey, Jessica Hagedorn and the West Coast Ganster Choir, and Jack Marshall. The inspired makers of this tape will continue to share their enthusiasm with audiences everywhere. **Ellen Kahn/Lynda Kahn:** *Instant This—Instant That*.

A hilarious, fast-moving piece poking fun at commercialism and our obsession with products is depicted by Nancy and Susie Twinart to the music of the same title recorded by the Taste Test band. The charm and fun of this tape begins with the main title and is enhanced by the dual vitality of the producers/performers.

The spoof on our instant society begins with the twins in bed, soon awakened by a digital countdown marking the "instants." From 7:00 a.m. until 11:30 p.m.

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The Ithaca Video Festival has already played in libraries, museums, schools, colleges and media centers in 16 cities.

we see them in a constant frenzy using an insane number of plastic gadgets and electrical appliances. They become engulfed by instant cosmetics, instant laundry, instant foods, instant music, instant work, instant photography, instant cleaning, instant eating while watching instant television. Their sixteen and a half hours of instant living are compressed into four minutes of sparkling, instant art.

Lyn Tiefenbacher/Dave Pentecost: *Bikers' Wedding.*

It isn't every day that one gets an invitation to witness an alfresco wedding

between two members of a motorcycle club. Tiefenbacher and Pentecost take us to Queens, New York, for just such an event where invitees, club members, well-wishers, curious onlookers, and the media create a mass of dazzling sights and sounds. The double-ring ceremony with all its traditional trappings is performed by a somber-sounding, gray-suited reverend to the delight of the sumptuously-dressed audience. By means of editing, the makers compress the total event into seven minutes.

Bill Charette: *Mixed Bag.*

Charette, an award-winning cameraman for WGBH-TV, Boston, produced this tape as short "back of the book" segments for the station's local news program. *Mixed Bag* consists of four fast-moving encounters with people doing what comes naturally. In *Happy Feet*, Charette interviews people as they skateboard, jog, unicycle, dog-walk, roller skate, bicycle and child-stroll. His camera flawlessly follows his subjects as he concentrates on their happy feet.

The next segment, "Sub Shot," begins and ends at the cash register of a busy, crowded, noisy luncheonette. Fast music and quick edits electrify the hectic atmosphere as hungry people demand instant service—and get it!

Apples opens with a closeup of a man

eating an apple—the first joyful "crack-crunch" and subsequent "slosh" of the running juice are captured in sound. This segment takes us through apple groves where Charette's camera choreographs men, women and children as they pick, poke, play, climb, dance, bag and carry away their ripe red prizes. The posing of some of the participants in this fall ritual is the only worm in this delicious tape.

"Giant Pumpkin" involves the viewer the moment the large orange mass fills the screen and is imaginatively transformed into a jack-o-lantern complete with a lighted candle. Charette's unique camera positions make this segment a work that will be long remembered. His art lies in taping familiar human situations from a new perspective without pretense, pomposity or profundity.

Laurie McDonald: *Water, Wind and the Record of the Rocks.*

Since art is communication and in this case video the medium, I wish that Laurie McDonald had used some other method of expression to convey the emotions she felt while traveling through West Texas. According to the maker, "the tape concerns the vulnerability of earth and humanity under the forces of water and wind, and suggests that the true history of the Earth is found in the record of the

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rocks."

I should have gleaned part of this profound statement through her nine and a half minute tape. Instead, I was subjected to a detailed personal narrative excerpted from her diary, without punctuation, in the form of a continuous horizontal crawl running the length of the tape and superimposed in the center of the frame over images I cannot possibly recall.

Ernest Gusella: *The Exquisite Corpse.*

Gusella successfully explores new ways of using his body to project his art. The clock-controlled instant switching between a color camera and a black-and-white camera, with each camera's lens set at a vastly different focal length, creates a third image in our mind's eye, altering reality. The result is another of Gusella's celebration of the body using his unique sense of humor to add spice. The simple, natural ingredients he uses to mix a surreal video broth captivates and holds the eye. Segments of the tape have primordial, mystical, shamanic properties.

Gusella is one of the few video artists creating new visual images without relying heavily on high technology. A farsighted, imaginative toy manufacturer would do well to sponsor Gusella's tapes on Saturday morning television—child-

dren's eyes would be glued to the set!

Pier Marton: *Tapes.*

Eight separate messages of varying lengths comprise the 18-minute, 10-second work that closes the sixth annual Ithaca Video Festival of 1980. It began on a note of levity; it ends with a suicide. Pier Marton's caustic commentaries on life are powerful and could hardly be erased from one's consciousness. His cautionary life sermons might scare more viewers than change their viewpoints. Marton has a constant need to unbalance, to knock us off our equilibrium. He makes it his calling to awaken us fully—to his realities.

The Ithaca Video Festival has already played in libraries, museums, schools and colleges, media centers and galleries in 16 cities. The rest of the schedule is as follows: McKissick Museum, Columbia, SC—October 5-25; Rochester Public Library, Rochester, NY—October 6-13; Castleton State College, Castleton, VT—October 6-10; Anthology Film Archives, New York, NY—October 18 and 25; Video Free America, San Francisco, CA—November 1-30; Broward College, Fort Lauderdale, FL—November 22-30; Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA—December 1—January 11; Northwest Film Study Center, Portland, OR—December 1-7.

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photo/Mike Rambo

LOOKING INTO THE BOMB'S EYE: Reeves and Hilton's study of "America's culture of war."

The 7th Annual Ithaca Video Festival opened its national tour Tuesday, April 21 at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art. Libraries and museums in twenty-five cities across the nation will be showing the nineteen-tape program between now and next January. The Johnson Museum presents the festival as a continuous gallery showing, but viewers may request changes in the sequence of three one-hour cassettes.

A program of Ithaca Video Projects—an independent media production center—the festival owes its continuing vigor to Philip Malbury Jones, IVP director. Jones, who was interviewed last week in his concrete and glass eyrie on the fourth floor of Miller's building on E. State Street, maintains that the Ithaca Video Festival may be the biggest anywhere. Tapes in this year's program were chosen by a panel of four: Barbara London from the Museum of Modern Art in New York City; Arthur Tsuchiya of Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York; Caryn Eison of WXXI-TV in Rochester; and Philip Malbury Jones. Three days and several nights were spent in viewing and selecting from the 290 entries; the wide range of choices reflects the range of tastes and interests of the judges. This year, Jones says, there has been a significant drift toward "performance pieces," as opposed to "conceptual" ones.

The three-and-a-half minute *Visual Diary* is a performance piece. Choreographed and performed by Blondell Cummings and shot by Shirley Clarke, the tape begins with realistic images of domestic stairs and curtained windows through which glows a deep yellow light. It cuts to a woman sitting at a table on a stage, nursing a bottle of wine and a glass. The camera moves in to her blank face which slowly registers a private agony: tears pour from the eyes, the face contorts, the woman howls without sound, convulses, begins to laugh hysterically but still soundlessly, then she returns to stolid blankness and her glass and bottle. Shots again of curtained windows, a narrow hallway and the hard yellow glow.

Around and About by Gary Hill, on the other hand, is conceptual. Images move staccato over the screen; prominent among them are shots of concrete block walls. Image movement is synchronized with the vocal intonations and sentence stops of a characterless voice saying things like: "You can listen but you don't have to hear me; I hear you but I don't want to listen." The viewer struggles to capture and comprehend what is being said, but the mechanical counterpoint of voice and image fuse into a single experience. It becomes impossible to focus on what is being said and, except for the remembered sensation of images suttering around the screen, punctuating the beats of the voice, little remains in the memory of the images themselves.

The Ithaca Video Festival, Jones holds, is a "very effective presentation to an often unaware public," about what video art is. Furthermore, for those who are becoming more sensitive to the medium, the festival provides "an overview of contemporary video production." Video artists profit from the exposure, press and documentation, Jones asserts. "Lots of sales and rentals come from being included in the festival."

Seeking the Inventive

Unfortunately, not all of the high quality tapes submitted to the panel could be included in the festival package. Some very competent but targeted informational tapes, for instance, were clearly intended for broadcast and didn't *push* the medium.

Jones explains, "We want to see some comprehension on the part of the artists that they understand the intrinsic properties of video and how to use them.... We have to see some intention to deal with the special properties of the video image in a creative way.... Each tape in the festival presents a well-defined artist's view of the world—

maybe just a glimpse—but still a well-developed view—not only well-made; there's got to be invention going on, too."

Even then, not all tapes meeting these criteria can be accepted; the festival package must be flexible. Although a museum like the Johnson shows the three one-hour cassettes as a continuous gallery exhibition, viewers seldom come intending to stay for the full three hours. Similarly, other museums will break the show up and show it on different days. The individual tapes must be relatively short; this year's offerings run from three to twenty-eight minutes. Thus, in the context of museum viewing, where people are walking in and out continuously, a long slow development piece would be inappropriate.

The diversity of the judging panel, however, acts to aid those video artists whose work is good but not suitable for the festival. The long slow piece might be picked up for viewing by the juror from the Museum of Modern Art, which caters to differing viewing requirements; the more targeted and informational tapes may very well be booked by jurors from broadcast television, or recommended to others. Furthermore, the heterogeneity of the judges ensures a thoroughly catholic festival package—a heterodox spread of video genres.

Popular among this year's submissions was the *new wave*. *Best Friend* by Neezy Twinnem was the most successful of these. *New wave* music rocks the background; a voice says, "She jerked, let out a bloody scream, and giggled herself to death." The words are shown being written in lipstick on bare chests and bathroom mirrors. Two large carbon steel kitchen knives are poised athwart a toilet seat. An atmosphere of brutal irrationality prevails.

Who's Speaking, Please?

In dour contrast to this is Taka Jimura's *Double Identities*, which Jones labels, sardonically, *hard core* video. The video artist's face and shoulders take up one-half

"It's wonderful to be so inundated with all kinds of work...to have nothing to think about except what these artists are trying to do."

of the screen next to a television set showing the same image. The TV image says, "I am Taka Jimura." The artist repeats the statement. The TV image says, "I am not Taka Jimura." The artist repeats the statement. Together, TV and artist say, "I am not Taka Jimura." The relative positions of artist, TV and camera shift. The TV is seen from behind the artist who is facing it. The dialogue repeats. Three more times the scene shifts, the dialogue repeats in a tone as expressionless as the artist's face. Jones explains that when image and artist together make the negative statement, Jimura is making an affirmative one, i.e., two negatives make a positive! Although the tape is instructive in that it indicates part of the range of effects and preoccupations in video art, its dreary self-importance in no way characterizes the festival offerings as a whole.

In magical contrast shimmers Ed Emshwiller's *Sunstone*. Emshwiller "paints with a computer." Jones says with admiration, "Ed has always been out there on the fringe of image manipulation." The tape opens with the image of a face sculpted in low relief in luminous grey stone or metal. The eyes blink, out of the mouth extrudes a delicate, leaf-like tongue. The tongue floats free, fixes itself to the forehead, becomes a pair of lips which open to reveal another eye. Although the sequence sounds bizarre, the effect is serene and lovely with a faint breath of humor. The tape proceeds as a magical proliferation of inventive imagery.

A virtuoso display of computer-manipulated imagery is provided by Woody Vasulka in *Artifacts II*. Objects multiply. One ball becomes dozens. The massed balls speed toward the viewer, stop, and speed away. A hand appears holding a ball; within it is reflected or contained the computer itself. The ball moves forward and back in multiple distortions. According to Jones, "Woody is not interested in making the programs but in making the video-computer tools" that will

provide other artists with ever-increasing means to visual expression.

Equally inventive, but making intriguing use of real rather than computer images, is Steina whose *Urban Episodes* expresses what the artist calls "machine vision." She has rigged two cameras in conjunction with a mirror and a large reflecting ball on a street in downtown Minneapolis. Presumably the cameras are motorized. Once the apparatus is set up, it is left to get on with its own taping—no human mind or eye directs or selects the subjects. The image becomes everything, without message or intellectual intent. Pedestrians pass and are obscured by the rectangle of the mirror reflecting a storefront; buildings revolve; all is a progression of changing perspectives—revolving, moving horizontally, reflected or direct, or reflection interposed on direct image. A perplexing and provocative piece.

An Exalted Moment

Equally provocative, but more profound in effect, is Christopher Coughlan's *Um Laco de Inspiracao e Morre*; the dialogue is Portuguese, but the location is New York City. The almost otherworldly figures of a dark-skinned man and woman stride through the city purveying the sense of an intrusion of a discrete and disparate culture. The insight is reinforced by a lengthy sequence wherein the man—with the bearded face and tranquil liquid eyes of a seer—plays a marvelous instrument consisting of a long bow with one string and a bronze bell-like sounding box. The instrumentalist compels whispering, pattering, singing, sighing sounds from the device; it is an exalted, long moment of aural and visual time.

Less than half of the festival tapes can be discussed here but, finally and emphatically, mention must be made of Ithaca video artists, Dan Reeves and Jon Hilton's *Body Count*. The tape is an orchestration of images—visual and aural—of America's culture of war. Rosy-cheeked children in military fatigues play war in a field. Military academy cadets march across the screen. Cap guns in childish hands are juxtaposed against images of children in Vietnam, blasted battlefields and bodies. Lyndon Johnson is shown, asserting, "I do not find it easy to send the flower of our youth into battle." Bitterly and movingly, this tape compels us to contemplate America's deeply rooted military mystique. The images are products of the military history of video-maker Reeves.

Dan Reeves is one of six Vietnam war veterans whose portraits will make up *Soldiers of a Recent and Forgotten War*—part of a prime time PBS series that Philip Mallory Jones is presently taping for showing in the fall. Apart from putting the video festival together each year, Jones, as director of Ithaca Video Projects, is himself a tapemaker—he will not let himself be called a video artist—and a general resource person for area video tapemakers. Although IVP is funded in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts, the project's budget is more than half from earned income. Jones explains that he rents out the facilities and himself to other workers in the medium.

The Ithaca Video Festival is a focal event of the Project's year; organization for each festival begins in the preceding October. Tapes are solicited starting in January. In March, the panel of critics is convened. Jones finds this a high point of existence in the concrete and glass fastness of the Miller's building. "It's wonderful to be so inundated with all kinds of work—very good and extremely bad—it's an immersion, and it's exhilarating, too, to have nothing to do or think about except what these artists or would-be artists are attempting to do."

Ithaca residents may share that exhilaration from now through May 3 in the Johnson Museum where the Ithaca Video Festival is in continuous gallery exhibition. □

Home Theater, whose scrambled signal Manhattan Cable and Teleprompter both refuse to carry on their systems.

Together these two systems have roughly 180,000 subscribers — 120,000 in Manhattan Cable's territory south of 86th Street and 60,000 in Teleprompter's territory to the north. Say only half the subscribers take the city-offered pay TV channel. That would give you 90,000 people paying at least \$10 a month. In deals like this the owner of the channel usually keeps half the take, so the math works out like this: 90,000 subscribers times \$5 equals \$450,000 a month times 12 months a year equals \$5.4 million.

Now, before the cable companies yell "socialism" or whatever corporate en-

\$200 million for the City. Now: Full pay-TV on city channels

The contracts the city has with Manhattan Cable and Teleprompter don't have any provisos prohibiting commercial operation by the city on these channels. As far as demands for additional pay services are concerned, ask the cable companies — they think the sky is the limit on how much television people are willing to buy.

There's already been a precedent set for this kind of operation. Last Thursday two of the cable companies vying to do business here, Cablevision Systems and Warner-Amex, submitted their bids for the Boston cable TV franchise, knowing full well that some of the 20 government

commercially. Is this unfair, forcing the cable company to fund its competition? I'd say the tax money that is collected from the networks by the federal government is pumped back into federal government grants, and that is part of the process that the federal government uses for national public television."

Besides planning to use some of the 20 channels Boston will end up with for commercial programming, White has also managed to sweeten the deal even further — another idea New York should consider before it grants franchises here. White has asked that the cable companies put 5 per-

ing to pay \$10 just to see one championship fight? A lot of them and each of those one shots times 90,000 subscribers could go a way toward reducing the hole in the city budget.

The city really should be on the video gravy train in about five years if it follows the pay channel idea through in the other boroughs. If there are one million homes hooked up to the cable (a conservative number for a city of eight million people) and the city could take in just \$5 a month, that would be \$60 million a year. If two million homes are hooked up, that would be \$120 million a year and, if each of those homes took two city-owned pay cable services that figure could be doubled to

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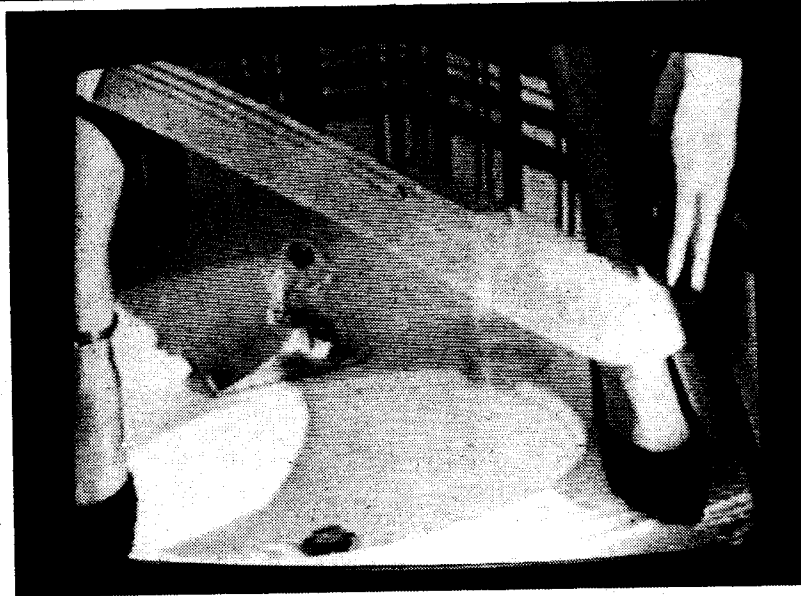
ONE FOR THE ROAD

Merle Ginsberg

Ithaca Video Festival
April 21-May 3
Cornell University's Johnson Museum,
National Tour through
January 8, 1982

High above Cayuga's waters, the Seventh Annual Ithaca Video Festival opened inside of Cornell's Johnson Museum, its panoramic glass windows (it was designed by I.M. Pei) overlooking campus, lake, mountains and sky. Ithaca, N.Y., seems an unlikely place for one of the country's largest video festivals (the other, the newly born San Francisco Festival, doesn't travel as yet). At the official opening, a lone monitor was placed conspicuously near the pastoral view, making me wonder how anyone who inhabits this environment could choose machine over nature, even for a few hours.

However, there is a great deal of en-



Marcia Renick

thusiasm for video, particularly video art, in Ithaca, most of it generated by the efforts of Philip Mallory Jones. Jones is director of Ithaca Video Projects, which started as a collective in the late '60s and is now partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council. Although the festival is a focal point of the Project's activities,

Jones also rents out editing facilities, equipment and himself, for very reasonable fees, to local video talent and nearby institutions. He himself makes videotapes, shrugging off the term "video artist" and coining "portraiture" for the semi-subjective documentary style he is presently working in. It all started when he tried creative writing; it didn't work out,

so he thought he'd make films. Film was too expensive. Someone lent him a Port-o-Pak and . . . you know the rest.

The Ithaca Video Festival was born seven years ago as a local thing. This year, its 19 tapes were selected from 290 entries, which came in from all over the country — not through advertising, but just by way of a mailed announcement. Its three hours worth of tape will travel to 25 cities nationally, from neighboring Syracuse, Elmira, Rochester and Buffalo to as far away as Fort Lauderdale and Portland, Oregon.

However, it will not be shown in New York because places like the Kitchen (which has shown it in the past), the Museum of Modern Art and Anthology Film Archives simply didn't book it. This may be because a number of the festival's New York representatives have shown work at all these places and because Jones and his committee seem more concerned with a historical overview of video than with what's newest and brightest and best.

Then why does this festival carry so much weight? The most obvious reason is how accessible it makes the artists to a national audience (even if it is mostly a museum/university audience). It pays each artist \$100 per tape, which may seem minimal in view of the number of times a

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