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2/12/78 1 Robert, Woody, Steina, Jon. Polidori REVIEW SESSION

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WOODY: So you were trying to object or say something that television... Did you speak about television?

ROBERT: I 'm speaking I guess of digital art.

WOODY: Then we're at the beginning again, see. I know what I was trying to defend. In fact, Jon was asking me the question. I'm just trying to destroy the perceptual mechanism as the only possibility of perceiving let's say reality. Polidori brought me to a certain kind of objection...Do you remember what objection?

ROBERT: Yes, it would be exactly the opposite of what you say here. It would be how "I'm trying to destroy the perceptual mechanism as the only possibility of perceiving let's say reality..." I'm saying...

WOODY:...it is the only possibility...

ROBERT: Right, right. If you don't have that, how can you do it?

WOODY: I guess my answer was that it is a hierarchichal decision. That you don't say that what you really perceive is the utmost information or utmost content you can get. That there is another level in which you can take that as referential, image becomes referential, and then you start looking into the other principle behind it which . . . That's what I probably wanted to say since I...the slogan I have is that the control is the message...control of the image...

ROBERT: Okay. But then I would say if the control is not exhibited on any object, you can't get to the control. It completely bypasses any perceiver and you're left with nothing is transferred.

JON: You're talking about communication now.

WOODY: But then I can object and say since this rule has been established, as a status quo, then there is so much escaping let's say to the new audience from electronic imaging. Because people just look at it the way you said, if it's not perceptually immediately obvious, there's no reason even to try to look beyond that. So if you make it into perceptional imperialism, then there's no hope that we can ever encode additional messages just beyond what the surface says. Of course that may be the duty, to be clear, or the clarity should maybe be the first demand, but then I'm interested in these other things which is going beyond the simplicity of obvious image understanding.

JON: One of the problems with this is that you're speaking in a tautology of perceiving. The perceptual mechanism is perceiving. You mean not perceiving but conceptualizing, rationalizing, categorizing.

LET ME SUGGEST A SEVERE PARADOX:

HAS A BLIND PERSON RIGH TO THE

PROCESS OF IMAGING?

IT SEEM DIFFICULT TO BASE THE

SUGGESTION ON A WORK WITH A CAMERA (OBSC)

BUT AS SOON, AS WE SPEAK ABOUT

CANVAS ~~LANDSCAPE~~ OR ELECTRONIC IMAGING

INVOLVING ~~COSE~~ DATA STRUCTURES, THE OBVIOUS

UNAMBIGUITY (DOES NEED ~~THAT~~ DISAPEARS THE PHOTOGRAP-

HIC (FILMIC) PROCESS OF IMAGE ADAPTATION)

EVENTUALLY, IT IS A LOGIC STEP TO

ROTATE THE IMAGE AND IN THAT STATE

THE POWER OF ~~HA~~ AN IMAGE BECOMES

LIGHT-SPACE UNBOUND. IT IS EVIDENT,

THAT NUMBER OF DEAF ~~THEM~~ MUSIC COMPO-

SERS WITH A HELP OF DEVELOPED ROTATIONAL

SYSTEM PRODUCED MASTERPIECES.

This word is somehow wrong.

WOODY: Let me see what I really mean. In the sense of traditional syntax going even through a vocabulary like fade-in of an image or a dissolve between two images which has been celebrated topically of cinematic esthetics. I have found out much more not only interesting or powerfull transitions in electronic imaging, but most, more poetic. In a substance of even appreciation of such an effect which I call kind of contribution or new syntactic expression, I've found these in electronic imaging extremely powerful and persuasive - poetic source of poetic appreciation. But looking at the image and decoding it on this perception - because perception... that's when it becomes challenging. When the electronic transition or syntax become extremely relevant to the recognition of the perceptional event, or mechanism of decoding, I think that's where the point is. Where the electronic processing is in fact very close to perceptional decoding...I think these two systems recognize it even if you don't rationalize it. At least that was my personal mythology. I believe there's a meeting of two great qualities regardless of our slavish contemporary ego, The traditional sense of image recognition. There's a conspiracy within us which is much greater than we understand.

ROBERT: I think of say, John Cage. I felt that his ideas, what he has to say has always been more interesting to pay attention to than his actual music, which bores me. But I've read his books. His books are interesting, they make me think about stuff. But when I listen to his works, his music really leaves me flat. Then I go and I can think about it a little bit, it may raise certain thoughts, but I think esthetic perception of it is like nowhere. I have always had a problem trying to reconcile how I judge such work.

JON: So where are you preconceptions of your criteria, of judging these things.

ROBERT: Right. Well I guess it has a perceptual primacy, I guess.

JON: But what is the perceptual primacy? You're asking for rhythm and melody and harmony perhaps?

And so if it doesn't make you sing along maybe? or dance along? or doesn't provide you with consonance or dissonance that you find it perhaps meaningless? This is a probleme. for a lot of people.

ROBERT: I would say just that the experience of it is not immediately self-explanatory.

JON: So what you might see here, and one way of looking at it is that you have in Western music and ~~in~~ narrative and so forth - you have a system that is self-enclosed. And it's self-enclosed in a system of tonality to thoose that one, and of meter. The basic unit is the measure. The measure. That's pretty, speaking well of itself. And so within this system you have various exercises which because of the pervasiveness of this system, you have assumed that you know how to listen to these things, read these things, derive meaning from these various forms that occur within that system. And what you have in Cage is what you have in a lot of new work in music and other things, is that you've found that the references that are almost inherently internal - references are ~~inhere~~ ~~inherently~~ always internal - when you're dealing with a predilection for style or a substance of making - no longer are obvious to you, let's say. Because you have not subsumed them by growing up listening to the radio when you were twelve. And so when CAGE speaks and tells you interesting thoughts - perhaps, ~~thought~~ and this is not to advocate Cage - he's giving you the internalization of his own context. He's telling you the context within which ~~w~~t this should be listened to. So you have not managed to internalize this into your esthetic. And so you find the music boring but the ideas interesting, whereas in fact what - this isn't the case - but what you might perhaps be missing or what might also be operative is that in all the other musics which gives you esthetic enjoyment, you have just subsumed this because it's been in your tradition. The tradition of western music for six hundred years.

(2) WOODY: You're using him as a very easy target. Basically it's the schism - which I think we've referred to ~~that~~ before - between anything called contemporary art which is totally divorced from the traditional appreciation of art. But I would put it in different terms. You admitted that you had a certain intellectual guilt which forced you to think about his work after, even if it was totally boring to you when you perceived it. And since you had to deal with it intellectually, you had to somehow accept it eventually to

your life. And that's why you say of course the work did not hit me on this first - how did you say it? - primal level. But of course by being intellectually guilty you eventually integrate it as it must have... as a contribution to your...even justify it by reading his book. This is what we are continuously talking about. I thought that the way I would perceive the image or a specific event within an image which is the electronic process, I would find that primal. It is the animalistic appreciation of the visual change. I would not lay into intellectualization and justification of this as a necessity of progress. Describe a classical encounter of a person who likes music and says "but I cannot listen to the modern music because it destroys everything I stand for in a traditional or classical sense."

JON: But he didn't say that. He said it bores him.

ROBERT: Like Berlioz. I love Berlioz and he's modern.

STEINA: It's just this that traditionally we accepted that art is correllated to what? Either the right or the left side of the brain. That it's an emotional activity first. And we have this prejudice that it cannot be intellect, or that art couldn't be intellect only because in that sense Cage is a very good example...

ROBERT...OF intellect only.

STEINA: I think. I think it was a very good impersonation of the whole thing. But why shouldn't that be?

ROBERT: I think of Cage as the root of a certain evil...

WOODY: So we didn't get close to this question. I would try to rephrase it again. Maybe I just cannot hit it. But I think it is probably linked to understanding of system. I would go to as primitive level as input, input and output of a system in which I would observe the input and appreciate the output in some sense in which the process is in fact a part of this.

JON: So you were talking then about the level of appearance which is a

concretization of all these elements. There is a possibility to descend from the surface appreciation - perceptional appreciation - to step behind. Which is then you're referring to the elements of organization. The elements that are the things that make up the display, such as the electron beams, such as the scanning mechanism, such as the energy across time. You're referring to those as stepping behind.

WOODY: That's right. The organizing principles - again, we probably used that term before - the organizing principles or certain processes which reveal the structure by being dynamically re-evaluated. It's a transition.

JON: All right. So why is it that the structure is not perceived as two states, not two states, two qualities, ~~two~~ or quantitites - one of which is the process, the dynamic element; and the other of which are the elements that are organized and used within that. Why do you have this particular formulation of it?

WOODY: I can explain it this way. If you take a logic image, like what I'm dealing with now which has very few elements, there are only maybe two elements - horizontal and vertical density - transition between one image ~~and~~ to the other is minimal. It's just the rearrangement of certain position let's say of the bar. Yet the system behind, like logic expression behind, is drastically different. And then you have to weight these two products, which one, is the visual representation in any means powerful or strong or persuasive or interesting or important enough compared to the visual...

ALU EXPLANATION

JON:...to the organizational...

WOODY:...to the organizational. Now that means I'm actually measuring the strength of the code itself and questioning if the visual is still visual or if the visual has been made equal ~~to~~ to the function or the change or the control.

ROBERT: This objection here is similar to a lot of things I said. Say this is the maker and this is his head. He gets an idea and the idea goes to the thing that he makes. His brain...here. I'll make a sphere for Woody. And then other people see this and it's radiating to all those other people's heads. And the idea is how close from his head to those other people's heads - how close is his original conception,

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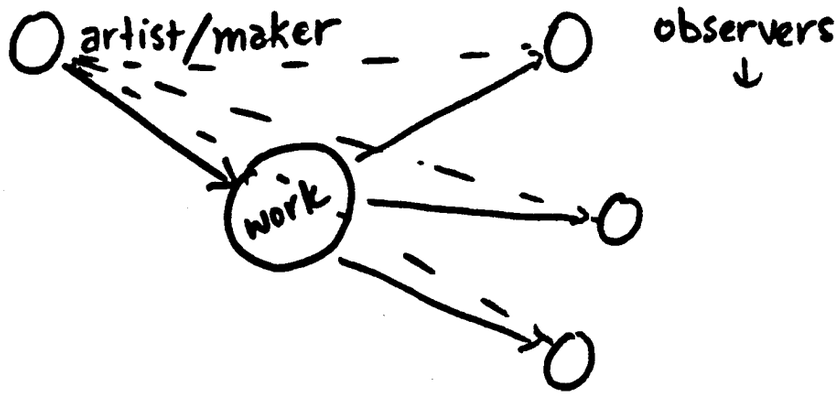
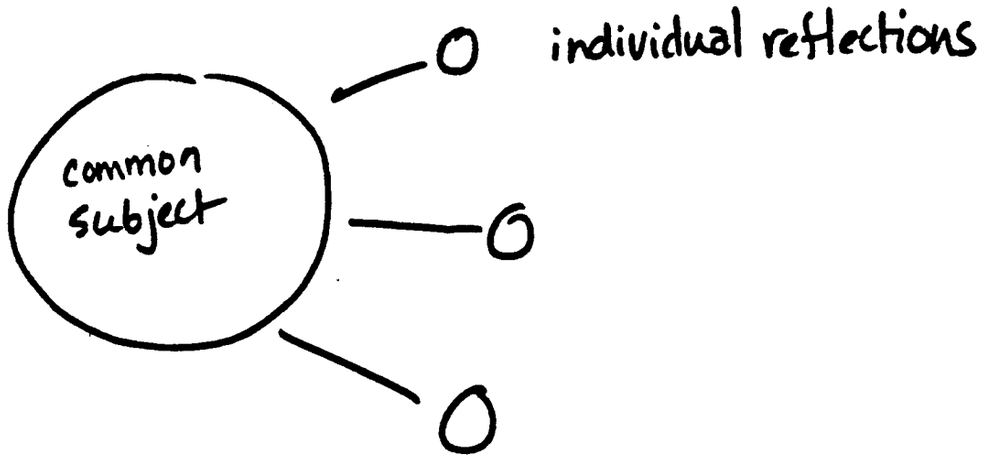
Roberts' Illustration



Woody's Illustration



lust, wish - whatever it was to make this thing, though incorporating it in this physical medium and the kinds of controls that he has to put on this to shape it. Okay. How close from observing this thing to these individuals get to this original thing here?

3 WOODY: I can _____ the nature of our conversation which is you believe the central idea exists within you for example as an author, as a creator. And then you produce a secondary art object whether a frame... a beam of light...

ROBERT:...there's an interaction between both...

WOODY:...and then this object represents in some way your message...

ROBERT...externalization of an internalization...

WOODY: Because I have a totally opposite philosophy. I think there is a common subject in which we are all are in a way surrounding that... we are a certain distance, rather equal - maybe not equal or distance to the subject. And we can in a way reflect this particular subject. And then influence the rest of the people. Instead of being outside of this, I think this is inside. This is the subject. We don't create a subject.

STEINA: So all you would do would be to take this circle here and put it all around. And we are all inside the...

WOODY: No, I would say...there are two ways. There are two vectors. One is it is in the middle of us and simply mediate between it somehow...

ROBERT: But just look at what we're doing now with the words. Like what you do with words now. You have to explain to me a certain thing. And you have to use these words which have basically pre-established meaning and sets of control which you're supposed to use - how shall I say it? - it's culturally agreed to. And you have to use those basic constituent bits to transfer what you're thinking to all of us. So Here's your idea. Like it might be that culturally we're all within these shared things. That when we're going from one person to another we don't just throw it out in open space, there's very precise and discreet channels that we send things over.

STEINA: Yes, but there's nothing that you can throw into open space. You always need a medium. There is no direct connection from your head to anything. It always has to involve...

ROBERT: Something else in between.

JON: I think what he's trying to say is that Woody is as much a (politer ?) of this as are the other people. It's just that.

WOODY: Anything, art or discipline or anything you touch is not a unique event. It is basically participatory and you find out there are many people that have the same ideas, of course they are personalized by the apparant state of each particular individual which does not interpret, or does in a way. If you look at art of the past like cubism is interpreted surprisingly similar compared to the rest of the arts style. Within a style it's so unified that it's almost indistinguishable in many cases from personality to personality. Of course there always is - I wouldn't _____ (distribute) personal imprints, of course it is imprinted. But the impersonalization is not as great, is not as diverse as it is similar.

ROBERT: Okay. That may be true but I think that the unity was one of the goals of that movement. They wanted - especially when they got the so-called synthetic cubist period, at the end, there the works are the most similar. Because they wanted to get at a principle that was so abstract that you could plug it into anything and they would automatically have its display mode. I would agree that like all these people share in this. Like we all after a certain age know or should know the value and valences of certain words. But we're not always saying the same thing. So we all have to take. So we take from this pool of the words, you know and it goes in, like this. Then you get an urge to say something. You say "I want coffee." So you go from this.....

WOODY: Let me just say I don't believe in those drawings. I think it's the biggest deception of mankind to be able to plot out the communications charts. I think it is just impossible. I think it's actually much simpler. In reality. There are not so many models as we fantasize them to be. And I cannot accept this theory and you should not....

ROBERT: One time I read here that statement about unanism which you said you were totally against. That example of unanism I guess would be the only example or condition which I would accept what you say. Then I would say that what you say would work, under that system. We wouldn't need to go through this intercession any more, what you call these triadic systems

It would no longer be triadic, it would be diadic or maybe monadic. But that condition of nature does not exist.

WOODY: Of course, but we have to break all the conditions of the nature.

STEINA: But if the condition did exist in nature we would be fast to ~~make~~ break it, to artificially make it because we don't want the reality. We don't want anything like that. # 3-D images they are closest maybe to some kind of reality and people don't want them when it comes to ~~i~~ image-making. They want the abstraction of two-dimensional space, that it is not the thing, it is not like that we see with our eyes. So if ~~it~~ there was any kind of a natural way to communicate directly we would artificially establish all kinds of media to communicate through.

4) WOODY: What I think that people are still looking at art, more than ever they're looking at art to represent some set of answers, like become a book of psychological relationships, like maybe the nineteenth century novel became ~~the~~ a textbook for psychiatry of the twentieth century. *

JON: So what kind of answers did it give to the folks who were looking at it? reading it?

WOODY: Let's say by reading Dostoevski's Idiot suddenly epilepsy has become a cultural property. Or other things like Dostoevski's Crime and Punishment became the understanding of criminal youth syndrome ~~in~~ of the twentieth century. And it goes much further. Tolstoy's Death of Ivan Illych which has become the stigma of ~~twentieth century~~ medicine ~~in~~ of the 20th century in which the pseudo-scientific understanding of medical sciences or practices. Especially ~~Bala~~ Flaubert has become ~~subub~~ a suburbian housewife phenomena interpretation. And that goes on and on.

JON: So I understand what you're saying. I guess what's unclear to me is - the whole point of this is to use art media or art materials or the exercise of art to answer certain questions.

WOODY: But I ~~had~~ have a theory why this already is impossible. I think why the art cannot answer those questions is that art does not any more in my perception, shares the common problems. Even let's say if you take

~~IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE~~, I COME FROM

* SOCIETY, WHICH ~~REJECTS~~ REGARDS PSYCHIATRY

AS NOT ~~PRACTICAL GOOD~~ QUITE IMMORAL. ~~IT WERE~~

3) THE WRITERS OR POETS ~~THAT~~ THROUGH EVERYBODY

I KNEW WAS CONSULTING WITH. ~~HE~~ THEIR BOOKS.

I BELIEVE, THE POETS WERE THE

MOST INFLUENTIAL.

poetry of the thirties ~~or~~ and twenties, they were very much related to group thinking like revolution, or other image people would in fact still ~~prohl~~ ~~fro~~ profess an external model of some kind. What happens now, the content of literature and imaging has become so private that it's even hard to make a distinction between the subject or the subject's becoming, in many cases, just one's own psyche, one's own personality. And that becomes an object to the creator or the artist himself or herself. Just To analyze that very same subject which supports this intelligence of the ego.

JON: That would seem to me to have extension. What seems not to me to have extension in the ways that you're referring to it here ~~are~~ ~~as~~ is art that talks about ~~whether~~ rather its own conventions, or art that speaks about its own mechanisms ~~or~~ and so forth and so~~r~~ on.

END OF TAPE ONE SIDE ONE

JON: So that when It deals with the psyche seems to me to inherently put itself into these traditional modes of appreciation and communication between the reader or the viewer and the maker, as in Bolidori's diagram. In which case the maker externalizes himself into this arena that looks like the circus ring and then the lions here will try to approach it but then with his artful ambiguity he fights them back.

WOODY: That's a very interesting thing that you've said.

JON: So the exclusivity seems to me not to be arising ~~not~~ ~~from~~ there.. this is a pretty refined point though...

WOODY: Just to answer your sphere of interpretation, that in your interpretation we could still deal with form or formalism. But in this particular...in my interpretation, in fact the form or appreciation of the form cannot be practiced as it used to. Suddenly we are, or each individual becomes ~~is~~ repponsible, ~~for~~ not only for the content, but also for the form. But you cannot formalize yourself. That's why we may look at contemporary art... becomes very bare.

ROBERT: I want to say this, I don't remember which tape this is, but you said that you classified as communication just the person playing with his machine. You said that in itself, and I said "unh unh (laughs), there's no way

I would consider that being communication." But you held on saying it...

JON: May I ask Woody a question now, which is related to this, which is you have stopped communicating in your works, you have only moved into the mode of presentation and codification as well. And so now that we have, for the moment only, accepted communication as maybe the one essential paradigm of art, can we say this, right now?

ROBERT: I would vote for that. I don't know if you all would.

JON: For this moment, I would vote for it. Let's hold it as a critical paradigm. So where are you now?

3 WOODY: It's embarassing to admit it, but I see it in a way as a form of worship. Because you see a communication is a very agressive act in which someone stands at the pulpit and tells you what is the moral implications of this... particular story.

ROBERT: But you don't have to agree or believe. Nobody says that you have to agree or believe, but if you just sit and think it, then you can believe anything by yourself.

WOODY: I believe there is this quiet - not quiet - there is this subconscious communication in which you don't have to profess...You just have to share in your mind a common area. It's not even a goal. It's just an area. And you know that people are concerned with this area because you get hints from everywhere: from literature, from talking to people. There's an overwhelming presence of the subject and it's beyond formulating it formally. Sometimes if it's formulated, then you object to it of course because it suddenly becomes too clumsy or too defined or too much against your own personal...

JON: It beoomes directed to the other.

WOODY: That's right. That means if I could only indicate. Of course there are always something surfaces out of it, but it's not because you want it - it's because it does escape the control that you have over it, eventually of course. And there are other reasons why you do things that actually other people see. I'm not against not showing what I'm doing, but I'm just against these direct modes. I don't want to address directly and communicate directly. And that comes over all to my appreciation of art. I don't think there should be art policies. There

* I CANNOT CALL A CREATIVE PROCESS OR A WORK OF ART AS COMMUNICATION, TO THE REST OF THE WORK. IN MANY CASES ART DOES NO COMMUNICATE IN ITS OWN TIME. ~~IT CAN BE~~ LATER IT CAN CAUSE A SUFFERING REVOLT, BUT THAT IS AN ALLIGMENT OF TIME AND CERTAIN AGREEMENT TO THE NEEDS OF THE PUBLIC. THE WHOLE COMMUNICATION IS TO INDIRECT TO CALL THIS WAY, IT IS THE PROCESS OF AN INDIVIDUAL MEDIATION BETWEEN THE SUBJECT AND AN INDIVIDUAL, THAT CAN BE THAT CLOSE

should not be art organizations. Because art as I see in fact communicates very much indirectly. And it just spreads. It's a very different form of communication.

STEINA: Are you against art organizations per se or just against the politics of how they are run? I mean, don't you think there has to be some kind of a medium? That society has to have some sort of a carrier? See, they are meant to be a communication carrier. They pay you (?) /. So are you against them per se or against the failure?

WOODY: What I mean by art organization is also the esthetic proclamation of an art like let's say structuralist cinema, or other. Even video to me was important as long as it wasn't specified. Because video was everything as we recall. It wasn't video art, it was video. Which was exactly what overwhelmed me totally. That it was undefined area which was practiced. You can call it worship of electricity, like Jonas Mekas very precisely labelled this. It was a worship of electricity. I value his judgment. Because you see also that He consciously subtracted the esthetic part of it from the statement, but it was just enough, because the esthetic part was in it for all practicing. And in fact it eventually emerged as an art form.

JON: May I ask you a different question? So as I understand it, what you are saying is that to exercise esthetics as we understand them, which is to say you have a germ of an idea or an emotion and you present it as an image which is in a construct which you seek essentially to communicate, it to externalize it. You put it out into the world and the world will then relate to it and through it to your mind. This is what you're saying. And then what you're saying after that is that I do not see art as being exclusive within this particular framework but that it represents broad cultural currents that will occur no matter whether I'm only doing logic manifestations of my computer, and equally part of this is the scientists investigating a certain phenomenon and the sociologists investigating this and a writer somewhere else doing something else and so forth. That the kind of qualities that you have no patience with this traditional externalization and yet have faith that my contribution to it will be realized if not in this direct "my mind to the viewer", in a broad kind of cultural manifestation or current. Is

this what you're sahing? Because I have some questions about this.

WOODY: I would say it is what I'm saying now, that I can summarize based on what I'm doing as a rational activity. It's justification. Because I have to admit the rest of ~~it~~ which this is undescribable, un~~classifiable~~-specified divinity which strikes regardless of anybody being able to rationalize it. Art Being still produced ~~beyond~~ in a very powerful means beyond all of these evaluations. Being synchronous, and asynchronous ~~with~~ to the times. Like if you take Robett (Woody picks up Extended Images), Bart Robbett, and if you look at it carefully, you see how old Robbett is. It's like ancient. If you take these pictures you can go really to the end of the nineteenth century. Every image here is of course a nineteenth century image. There is no escape from it. But it doesn't mean that again, if you look at the surface, you identify it as a historical document.

JON: These are only artifacts from that work.

WOODY: Right. But that's what I'm talking about. Behind every of these images is a concept which is extremely contemporary...

STEINA: You can't say artifacts, because you look at the picture and there's nothing accidental about it.

JON:

~~WOODY~~: But the work does not exist within these photographs, ~~it~~ the work exists within its own experience.

WOODY: That's what I'm trying also to get at. That I can abstract the common abortion from it which is the light structuring camera obscura burns on the retina on the viticen, it's time-sequential...

JON: So what are you saying?

WOODY: What I'm saying is that none of what I said can be formulated as a principle. I only do this kind of interpretation in order to justify to myself ~~what I'm~~ or trying to trace in my own work, its common meaning. Because I cannot find a direct meaning for what I'm doing or justify it ~~in~~ on any social, economic, or any other basis.

STEINA: Why can't you?

WOODY: Because it would rationalize it to the degree that I cannot communicate this work directly and instantly. I'm working on something which is long-term. It has a long duration between the time it's made and eventually ~~years~~ appears, and even it doesn't appear. Because most of our work has never been shown truly more than ~~two~~ three or ~~three~~ four times.

It's only sketches that leak out by strange coincidence that become kind of known.

STEINA: So why don't you believe in that?

WOODY: I do believe. Again, this is not a doctrine.

STEINA: I don't find anything very sublime or holy about that, it's just a fact. But you're sort of worshipping it as something good.

WOODY: I must confess to it. It's a primitive way of believing in the common subject.

STEINA: You struck against all art organizations or like organized art, but everything you know about the other people arts comes to you through some kind of organization. Like publishing of a book, the existence of a museum. That's somehow you through this records, which is a business, a multi-million dollar business. Any communication you have from mind to mind, with people you have never seen or met...is essentially you have though some kind of business or organization.

WOODY: No, no. I can give you an exact summary of how art strikes me - contemporary art. Let's say if you take Nam June Paik, most of the work I really was directly important to me was what we saw accidently in Binghamton, just walking through the place.

STEINA: Why was it so accidental? The man worked there for a long time.

WOODY: Because it wasn't performed. It was stored there, it was a storage room. What I know about Polidori's work was its automatic spasmodic recordings of muscles ,...it was in a strange place. It was at a friend of Jonas Mekas' or part of the film community. Work I know like of Schilling, because we're personal friends. Work of anybody is always, is leaked through very obscure personal channels. And it's never put directly in front of anybody today. And what we know of each other's works...it's very ambiguous.

STEINA: But it is an organization.

WOODY: Of course. But it is not what we are referring to as art organizations. Of course its somehow institutionalized in a way because Media Study for example where I saw your work (Polidori's) happened to be an institution, but not of the calibre of any Albright-Knox or any of that stature.

STEINA: In one instance, Gertrude Stein became the institution, I mean there are many forms, there are many ways.for minds to communicate. You just dismissed that whole thing, just like that.

WOODY: Yes, because I think that would be even more powerful if that didn't exist.

JON: (to Robert) What's elocution?

ROBERT: Style of delivery. How something's packaged.

JON: But then what I guess I don't understand....Because I think that there's a distinction here between elocution as you put it which seems to me to be delivery style, packaging - that is, that seems to me very simply to be _____ quality which has to do with whether you are bombastic or gentle, whether you are pleading, traditional classical forms of rhetoric. And things which my "micro-cultural bias" as you put it, which is ways of looking at style is certainly one of them, and all the things that come within that, but are also much broader and much less founded area having to do with like the selection of your thoughts, the sequencing of your thoughts,...? (looking up elocution in the dictionary) So it's only _____ specifically to someone who speaks speech. Speaking out loud.

ROBERT: "What is important and significant in this is not whether the process by which the guy in the story ends up getting the girl at the end, but the fact that there are aspects of that exercise - both in the fact that it is done and the way that it is done, the way it's presented and very very subtle things and gross things,..."

JON: Is that me or you?

ROBERT: You. That's what I call elocution.

JON: Everything. Everything but the content.

ROBERT: Yes.

JON: Well, if that's how you mean it, that's how I'll accept it. What I would call elocution is as it's defined here - which is a style of public speaking.

~~WOODY: What would be the area? Because I'm interested in defining it closer.~~

JON: (Transcript date) 12/21 page four. You speak of this frequently through September and you make it very specific in the last conversations. So on the conversation from December 21st on page four you say: "The computer is in fact everything." Okay. So what are its limitations?

WOODY: First of all if I say everything, that means in front of my view. I see it as significant as in order to cross - I mean I see it as an obstacle, maybe I mentioned that before - and in order to cross that particular barrier we have to go one by one through this hole, through this gate or whatever. In a way rationalizing this as a new freedom. Basically what I see is that it is a struggle for a new definition of holography.

JON: Because when I read this I thought something very different. You speak frequently of, and ~~perhaps~~ in fact we've come to this perhaps significant point that - to bounce off this - an analog system designs its tools for a very specific function, but the computer ~~is only~~ has no specific function. Its function exists within the minds of its control, and not within its materiality as you put it.

WOODY: That's a second level. The first level is that I think it's a total cultural necessity, the computer. Just to overcome the computer as a myth, as a danger, whatever. A lot of concepts of computer should be kind of analyzed in a broad social sense because after all it's a tool that can be understood and could be demythified. And in a sense of craft I think it has to be analyzed since it contains all the media as I know them, all the scores of the past, in music and others. It contains, in fact, summarizes all the notational systems and identifies these processes in very tangible so to speak of course numerical way. Since we have not emerged from this numerical confinement yet in ~~our~~ relationship to the computer. That means there's this problem of the new myth of the ~~dan~~ craft and of the organizing principles and of which we can re-synthesize into our own culture. That means I see it as a - especially the analog based - because the old notation, like musical notation of the nineteenth century or eighteenth century I found extremely unambiguous of course. It is something very precise. And in that confinement

it produced staggering volume of musical culture. Absolutely unambiguous with prolific output...

JON: Except that it seems, interestingly enough, that those scoring mechanisms are those that were contained within it an amount of ambiguity that is just staggering to us.today. They were performance arts for instance, so what would happen is that Beethoven would write, Bach, or Telemann would write a score and then you have these range of embellishments that the performer had to put in. And that's on the _____ level. There it's almost a compositional function for the performer. But more to the point, these are extremely imprecise modes if they were not to be performed, if there was not an instrumentalist who would control timbre and phrasing, dynamics, the soul of the music, the realization of it, then these set of codes would have no currency. They were designed to be ambiguous. They could only be ambiguous.

WOODY: But then take another extreme in which certain stages of Italian opera were written only for certain singers. That coding structure doesn't mean a confined state of art, but it locates eventually in time a particular unambiguous style.

STEINA: You're trying to compare the computer to this scoring in the last two centuries of music as being as precise, but of course it's much more precise because it doesn't leave any ambiguity. Supposedly. Or the ambiguity you leave in there stays there forever.

WOODY: Yes, it could be replayed, so to speak.

STEINA: No.

WOODY: I mean the ambiguity.

STEINA: I don't think so.

JON: Every temporal art until the twentieth century has been a performance art. There has been no temporal art previous to this that has not been performed. That has not been theatre, that has not been music- temporal arts specifically. So we are now confronted with something which maybe this is even relevant - something which occurs over time.

So that we are finally confronted with these temporal arts which find their crystallization of intention let's say in a kind of objectification. I mean that they have reached their point and there is no ambiguity as to its rendition. There may be ambiguity in its meaning.

That's another level of ambiguity.

ROBERT: Scoring becomes the matrix of performance.

JON: Well that's the old system...

(Section of tape is slightly garbled - couldn't understand easily)

STEINA: This is a typical algorithm, that ~~eventually~~ took art execution ambiguity on, that it could be slower or faster or could be random-access and things like that - this is a code that the computer can cope with very well.

WOODY: It contains the modes I would say, ~~of~~ inversion of the written, inversion of the direction, it can run something backwards suddenly.

STEINA: But he killed your argument anyhow, Because what you started out saying about the computer compared to the scores is just gone now.

5 WOODY: I would start from a fresh table and say we have to descend into a binary state, ~~(XXXXXX)~~ If we want to understand computers we have to say there is no state and there is a state. That's the material from which we build every discipline. And in this way we have accepted united in a holistic approach to every activity. Not only activity of art, of course it's the technological activities, it is the biological activities, it's even the code systems, you know - systems of lettering, alphabet, and DNA. We have some holistic base of common material which is a binary code. From that surprisingly within two decades have already been synthesized systems of codes which do contain all the perceptional analog changes because they can be performed fast enough to ~~assimilate~~ simulate in some cases. In other cases they develop their own disciplines like organization of data structures, and others. So it is independent within its own science but it's also related to all other disciplines. Art has been deadlocked into this contemporary idea in which computers are maybe technological instruments ~~that should~~ and should not be related as freely to living or independent or individualistic processes of art. It's kind of a sharing of the establishment in a sense of a code access and organization and knowledge, and it becomes antagonistic in the relationship between the acquisition of knowledge and the utility of that knowledge.

So I see it as a necessity. At the same time of course I would defend other modes, but I have no justification for the defense of those any more. I cannot justify, the pathetic rejection of such a system seemed to be a rather easy way out.

JON: I found that a lot of reason for my being involved in video is involved with the fact of observation. And this is not only to observe the video system...

END OF TAPE ONE SIDE TWO

JON: So this was to me, it is still to me critically important, this medium. And it is that which justifies it to me. And yet what I see, perhaps that which is limiting within the computer system is that instead of observation which is a justification that we have posited all through these talks, we find ourselves no longer in observation but only in realization from immaterial and abstract structures.

WOODY: But if you use the term observation you also have to add a phenomenon - you observe a phenomenon.

JON: But it needn't be that which is - let's say that in that sense - in the observation of phenomena, that is where the two diverge. You are able then to observe fairly certain abstractive processes of the system and that is where there might be this correspondence between the two.

WOODY: There is one difference, of course. I'm still observing the phenomenon - like image phenomenon in the sense of the computer. But at the same time the inevitable factor of binary code is laid in front of me in such a way that I have to deal with this not as a phenomenon any more but as a question of literacy. See? That means phenomena as we know it in video contains a lot of free thinking, free creations, free structuring, permutations... it's an enormous freedom compared to any phenomenon observed through the computer. Because inevitably almost everything becomes a score.

JON: Becomes a question of language.

WOODY: Language, literacy, ability of manipulating the code, composing... All the intuitive processes towards these articulations...Again, this is not for example where my personal talents are at all. But I find them so challenging in a way that I very stubbornly deal with them. But I

found other people which commute between code systems with such a freedom and creativity that ~~just~~ staggers me. Some people are just very good on numbers, even lingual expressions of codes - these people will be very much at ease with binary systems of computers. But I'm not one of them. But I see the necessity of dealing with it. Because otherwise I would find myself avoiding the issue in fact.

STEINA: What ~~Where~~ did you define ~~find~~ temporal art?

JON: That which occurs in time.

STEINA: And what's the other?

JON: Static. That which the realization of the art is viewed in time, it's realization occurs in time. No that's not right.

STEINA: What is a static art then?

JON: Painting.

STEINA: No.

JON: One views it in time, of course, but there is a flat-out picture...right there.

STEINA: It could be argued. So painting's the only one that's not.

ROBERT: ~~XXXXXX~~ Sculpture.

STEINA: That's very temporal. Video is temporal, right? Of course. I was wondering where to put computer into this thing. That's why I ~~was~~ 'm asking. Is it temporal, is it static, what is it?

JON: Well it's realization, it's printed out in time. That which is displayed on a monitor or heard through speakers, if it's to be audio generation, are temporal.

WOODY: That's an interesting possibility. It probably has to be...temporal.

JON: ~~Unless~~ Plus there's a clock...

WOODY: Yes, there's a clock...

STEINA: See you were putting up like that - you talked about the interpretive and ~~the~~ temporal like interchangeably in a way.

JON: Prior to mechanized or electronicized materials all the temporal arts were in some sense improvisatory. In one way or another. *

WOODY: But listen. It's an interesting dilemma ~~that~~ which you're bringing because is this - can argue about this image - it's temporal...

JON: But I saw this being made in time (Bart Robbett's Extended Images).

WOODY: Indeed. You saw a sequence. ~~Twill~~ We would say the whole structure was a table of functions performed in time. But as a single element or a single sequence, it still is of course ~~is~~ scanned. When you look

*STEINA: So now it has been frozen.

at it on the screen it is stable. But if we understand the process, then it is temporal. But I guess if you say that light propagates, and we see because of the changes ——————— .

So I don't think it is a sensible definition to that. But there are obviously temporal arts like music is, image, it does not exist in this form. Image which is dynamic but by its existence is suddenly translated to a pictorial static form of a photographic image in which we in fact... and that is in fact the whole content of that presentation. But in music, of course you cannot suspend sound. It just doesn't exist in the same form. We can suspend the image somehow.

STEINA: But not only the image, we can suspend everything, we can like freeze everything permanently, just like deep freezing. Because once you have a score, that's absolute. It's different from this interpretive, as you were saying. Scoring and scoring become totally in this case two different things bccause computers have absolute scoring.

WOODY: How different? I don't think there is much clarity.

JON: You mean how different is the punched tape than the musical score?

WOODY: Again, it probably depends on binary literacy.

STEINA: Because the punched tape is being interpreted by a machine whereas the score is being interpreted by a live being.

WOODY: But some people can read binary numbers.

STEINA: There are also some musicians that can read absolutely mechanistically a score - totally like a computer. But we know it's different things.

WOODY: Everybody has a different approach to a computer. It's interesting because everybody brings the strongest discipline of his background to it and then interprets this ambiguous or unambiguous instrument from that very precise viewpoint. And it works because it really accommodates vast possibilities of concepts. As I said, I see no discipline that cannot be expressed through - or assimilated through a computer.

JON: Because quote Woody Vasulka: "You have to bring your data structure, let's say you bring your camera obscura with you on a piece of paper puhch tape." That's not the same thing.

WOODY: Why not?

JON: But It's not. You see, you speak of the computer as everything. That there is now no longer any need for analog specific devices and yet to use the computer in the various ways you may use it is inevitably going

to change your world-view immensely. I mean you speak of it as that which through its binary resolution, can resolve a simile - everything - off and on.

WOODY: As long as it contained the ability, your ability to organize data structures or whatever, in order to model the particular instrument you want to perform, or the particular concept you want to perform through this system. You have to be equipped or it has to be given to you - through software for example. You have the software program to create for that time through which you realize this particular model. You have to bring it to the machine, or you have to construct it with in the machine as a program.

WOODY: In a way, the computer I think (can?) can't escape this finite account. Again, it's because I'm trying not to nail myself down into serious statements which I would have to eat all the rest of my life. But I found out reading Nekes' article in Afterimage that he still founds this discipline of film camera extremely challenging and he brings certain new observations which should have been done many decades before. And that interests me as well, but I think computers are a different animal - totally different systems so I think I'm totally sold on the possibility of this being permanent. Not being a tool for one century. I think it will survive, but I may be wrong. It's an interesting dilemma.

Since I cannot forsee what the next tool would be, that's a problem. In video I could still understand there was a computer at the end somewhere. Because I was born into that era of the computers somehow became sort of a term. This common mythology that there is something after the knowledge you have. And now I don't see through any instrument - I don't see next medium at all.

STEINA: Do you see computer being able to write their own algorithms?

WOODY: That's all kind of automatic of course. It's all the modes - how it's behaving, how it's progressing - I think it's self-evident.

STEINA: What? That they can?

WOODY: Systems can eventually acquire a lot of possibilities, design certain parts of it by its own accumulated experience. Which, Of course

~~it~~ has to be organized, reorganized. It's a total dialogue between us and the machine. But I don't see ~~the~~ this machine, I don't see it being replaced by anything greater. Even if the technology advances it's still the concept of a code as being superior to let's say a certain value located in material or value located in experience. I think it's inevitably the most permanent...it can assemble itself into infinite libraries. It can actually exist as man-made contribution to the universe.

JON: So this may be the technological ~~status~~ stasis of our culture then. You are suggested to us.

WOODY: But it is not technological any more. It only resides in technology, but the problem I think is just cross-cultural. Which many people still don't separate. They think computers are technological systems which they are by their physical existence - but by the content ~~that~~ they handle or ~~that~~ they can handle I think they just escape this narrow definition of technology.

JAN: Do you have any specific reasons why you think that people can't accept the computer?

WOODY: I have only one simple idea about it. It is very difficult. It's very frustrating in the sense of acquisition of that particular craft...

JAN: Because at the level it ~~is at~~ is now it's only accessible to people who know the technology, but what about the home computers?

WOODY: There are at least two basic levels. One is that you accept computer as a social utility and you incorporate knowledge that exists - languages or whatever - and you never examined the system as a machine. You only examine it as a response, culturally responsive apparatus. The other level is that you really examine analytically how the code is assembled and how it's moved within the machine - how it's translated from one function to another, how it's in fact rationalized on its primary level. That is today practiced only by technologists ~~who~~ that design the system or improve, but it's being rapidly obscured by packaging this lower level into higher systems. Already on the level

of industries. Like ~~buy~~ structural sets which become property of a particular chip, particular enclosed system - black box. I think that the obstacle is to translate ~~the~~ this necessity of dealing with this from the industrial domain which is the competitive progress, into a cultural - like synthesis of art for example, or analysis of art. That transition is fascinating to me because as I observe it this transition is natural only to certain people or to a certain generation. Let's say within my own generation it has assumed rather the role of a necessity and a duty. Different people react differently. Some people would probably choose to work with computer on the primary level of appreciation. But I found out if you work on the basic level that the punishment you have to take in order to learn about the system is greater than the esthetic satisfaction you get. So I think this proportion has to be dealt with or may never appear again. It's possible that the industries, and computer sciences will remove that necessity from the general public forever by piling together systems that are purely cultural utilities with no relevance to the organizing principles within the machine. Maybe I mentioned that before, I think it's the only period in which people like we can be concerned with the workings of the machine of that kind for two reasons: One, it's still visible, we can still understand it because it's not complex. Secondly it has to us some level of meaning. Next periods it may never become relevant if we understand it or not because it may already be transferred into a whole different cultural level. The Bible existed throughout the centuries and it was first - as you know in Europe during Medieval time was forbidden to read for the general public...

JON: It was forbidden to translate it.

WOODY: Even read. I think in a certain period it was a forbidden book, period. It was only for the establishment to perpetuate the unity of doctrine. Because people could always interpret Bibles in very ambiguous ways and that could even lead to heresy, as it did. Then the Reformation brought this new demand on the subject. So suddenly the book which was already packaged as a doctrine has become source of analytic thinking. So maybe I'm wrong. Maybe the computers, after being packaged and institutionalized or status quo...it suddenly

became revised. I see in kind of a strange way that kind of system.

STEINA: or to quote somebody else, (?) The printing press was invented to print the Bible and then eventually also it printed other things. The computer was intented to do one thing and eventually...

STEINA: Isn't the algorithm just the thing that says "is it done, is it done, is it done, yes, no, go back, go this way"?

WOODY: I guess we all somehow understand it, but we understand it in different ways. I think the algorithm is a particular sequence of events which on their own signify let's say some development.

JON: A formal structure.

WOODY: Yeah, or it could be formula, or it could be a loop, cyclical... or it could be simply a mathematical equation.

JON: I thought it was the formal structure of the steps necessary to perform the operation the operator had in mind.

WOODY: I think it comes from the mathematical sciences in which certain formulas are actually algorithmical. But algo is a sign, is that so?

As I understand, Algorithm and program differ from...let's say program is the specification of the whole operation from the beginning to the end. And algorithm is usually a function, or it is a sub-program which contains a particular arrangement which makes a unit, unified statement on it's own.

JON: It's one portion of that program.

WOODY: Like increment certain kind of number is expressed by a certain algorithm but it could be sub-part of a program which then doesn't have such a clear...

JON: All right. So if I were to ask the computer to count from one to ten...

WOODY: If you would construct an algorithm which is like increment and test...

JON: What happens is that you would say "computer, count one" and then it will say "check if this is ten" and then if it is not go back and

increment to two...

WOODY: Exactly. What You just described is a loop.

STEINA: A typical algorithm is if I want to go and pick up this cup. You have to make a program for it so the program is "move to this cup" and then it is "have you done it" "no", "have you done it?" "No", "have you done it?" "No"...And now it's "yes". Program ended unless there is a comment and to me to take a jump, or branch. When I have reach this the I go in some way like that. And the branch goes to another program that says "this way" or whatever.

As I was telling Woody yesterday that's the difference between the computer and us, that we are in a continuous state of writing algorithms, everything we do - whenever we finish one function we go to the next one and we create them. Whereas in the computer they all have to be specified ahead of time.

JON: So that there seem to be a finite number of instructions that an algorithm may have.

WOODY: Oh? Then there are algorithms that are continuously being found. Like I'll give you an example. This _____ algorithm ....

JON: Hold it. So you speak now of algorithms as being something in some sense natural.

WOODY: Evolutionary to computers, yes, very much. But suddenly let's say, algorithm which has no meaning to the other systems or in other contexts - came into existence in the context of a computer special-task performance. Like what we call hidden line removal, that means if you specify an object for the computer to program, there has to be specific instructions, what lays in the proper what, the hierarchichal depth structure. And then there's a program which takes care of these priorities and removes lines which are not supposed to be seen. And there is a special algorithm to do that which is developed only for this particular purpose.

JON: Why is it that it seems that the processes that are acquired here are very simple processes? You see if something is at such and such a state, for instance. Correct?

WOODY: Say it again?

~~JON:~~

JON: That what the computer does it — say a if this line is at this state, and if it says it's not, to drop it out completely. Why is this considered to be a special distinguished algorithm?

WOODY: Because no other task needs it.

JON: The principles of the algorithm are common, seemingly, to ~~other~~ many algorithms, if not all of them.

WOODY: Not necessarily. Because it acquires a name. They Usually name these algorithms by the nemes of the inventors of the algorithms. If you open any graphic languages book, you'll find ~~this~~ a very evolutionary perpetuation of ~~the~~ this tradition of a human contribution to the bank of knowledge through assignment of algorithms to particular persons ~~who~~ they maintain ~~them.~~ that That's also, compared to learning and teaching, the contribution to the bank of algorithmical expressions of culture may be the culture ~~critics~~ credits of the future, or near future. People suddenly would establish themselves as artists or.... _____. That's correct. Which means a bizarre kind of twist from purely the biological manifestations of art to binary-specified or algorithmically specified art.

END OF TAPE