

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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"PERFORMANCE VIDEO" EXHIBITION AT MoMA

The development of a distinct art form over the past decade and a half is the subject of PERFORMANCE VIDEO, tapes by sixteen artists which will be on view in the second-floor Video Gallery of MoMA's West Wing from August 12 through September 21, 1982.

Performance Video is truly a hybrid art form. It evolved in the late '60s at a time of revision in traditional art and strong activity in conceptual and performance art. It differs from the simple documentation of a performance in that artists design their performances specifically for the architectural space of video, creating an interaction between artist, camera and viewer. Performance video has come to mean an action composed and limited within the shallow focal area directly in front of the video camera. This exhibition brings together several different tendencies in performance video for the first time.

The tapes in PERFORMANCE VIDEO are divided into six programs 40 to 60 minutes in length which will be played continuously on given days. For example, Vera Frankel's hour-long Stories From the Front and the Back, which makes up Program II, will run continuously during museum hours on Fridays in August and Tuesdays in September. A complete schedule is attached.

Early performance video was made with the relatively simple equipment accessible to artists at the time; a stationary black-and-white camera would record the action directly before it, usually in the artist's studio, and the tape would be unedited save for the turning on and off of the camera. The unadorned directness of this approach lends much of the earlier work its dynamism. In tapes such as Terry Fox's Children's Tapes, John Sturgeon's The Two of Triangles and 2 Aspects, Richard Serra's Surprise Attack and Eva Maier's Blue Squawk, simple actions performed on the screen demand the viewer's focused attention and convey a sense of simultaneity, of the artist observing his or her actions in the monitor as they are recorded.

The relationship between the artist, the camera and the viewer can

create an intimacy sometimes redolent of the confessional -- a situation brought to its furthest extreme in Vito Acconci's Theme Song, a trans-electronic seduction attempt in which the artist's pleas for the viewer's love run the gamut from soulfelt to smarmy. William Wegman also exploits the form's intimacy and potential for humor in his collection of brief sketches from the lives of a man and his dog, Wegman and his personable Weimaraner Man Ray. In Vera Frankel's Stories From the Front and the Back the performance is distilled to a series of frank discourses with the viewer conducted by the artist and her colleagues. Howard Fried's Sea Sell Sea Sick at Sea Sea Soar plumbs the depths of a diner's indecision when confronted with a menu.

Other artists adapt the limited frame of the video camera to new perspectives in recording their actions: in Joan Jonas' Vertical Roll the actions performed by the artist (and her dog, Sappho, another canine collaborator) are recorded through two cameras on a closed circuit and subverted by a vertical roll on the screen. In Primary Accumulation Trisha Brown performs dance movements on the floor, recorded by a camera mounted on the ceiling; the tape investigates dance arrested by the planes of the floor and the video frame. Charlemagne Palestine's Running Outburst uses a completely subjective camera and soundtrack as the artist races through a loft populated by stuffed animals; the artist might well be carrying out the imperial crusade conjured up by his name as he rampages through his personal domain, complete with subjects in thrall.

As artists have gained access to color cameras and more sophisticated editing and image processing equipment, the tapes have made use of more commercial styles in pacing and imagery, often by using these styles in an unexpected manner. Shirley Clarke's Tongues is a theater piece in a new context, a monologue written by Joseph Chaiken and Sam Shepard, performed by Chaiken and augmented by Clarke's use of image processing. Max Almy uses superimposed backgrounds and vivid color and graphics to stretch out video space in Deadline, a four-minute visualization of pure stress.

David Byrne, Laurie Anderson and Toni Basil each used a full complement of sophisticated video techniques in designing images for their music. Byrne's Once In A Lifetime, using the Talking Heads song of the same title, expands upon the song's complex interweaving of moods and images as well as Byrne's interest in African music and percussion. Laurie Anderson's O Superman and Toni Basil's Mickie also augment the styles and themes of

the songs with visual correlatives.

As distinct as the slickly produced musicians' tapes are from the deadpan simplicity of, for example, Children's Tapes by Terry Fox, the works in this show have in common not only the presentation of an artist's performance but also a shared concern for the formal qualities of the video medium.

MoMA's Video Program, directed by Barbara London, Assistant Curator in The Department of Film, is made possible by funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Rockefeller Foundation. The Video Program is grateful for the support and assistance of Peter Kirby and Video Transitions.

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For information, the public may call 708-9500.

SCHEDULE

August 12 - September 21, 1982

PROGRAM I: Thursdays, August - Mondays, September

- Terry Fox, Children's Tapes. 1974. 30 mins., B&W.
- Joan Jonas, Vertical Roll. 1972. 20 mins. B&W. Camera: Roberta Neiman.
- John Sturgeon, The Two of Triangles. 1975. 2½ mins. B&W.
- 2 Aspects. 1976. 4 mins. B&W.

PROGRAM II: Fridays, August - Tuesdays, September

- Vera Frankel, Stories From the Front and the Back. 1981. 60 mins. color. A Western Front Production. Video: Elizabeth Chitty. Sound: Patrick Ready.

PROGRAM III: Mondays, August - Saturdays, September

- William Wegman, Selected Works, 1970-78. 20 mins. B&W.
- Vito Acconci, Theme Song. 1973. 30 mins. B&W. Produced by Art/Tapes/22.

Schedule continued on verso.....

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For further information, the press may contact Alicia Springer, Film Press Representative, 708-9752, The Museum of Modern Art

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PERFORMANCE VIDEO: August 12 - September 21, 1982

SCHEDULE Continued...

PROGRAM IV: Saturdays, August - Thursdays, September

Richard Serra, Surprise Attack. 1973. 2 mins. B&W. Camera: Babette Mangolte. Sound: Kurt Munkacsi. Produced by Carlotta Schoolman (a Fifi Corday Production).

Charlemagne Palestine, Running Outburst. 1975. 7½ mins. B&W.

Trisha Brown, Primary Accumulation. 1974. 18 mins. B&W. Produced by Carlotta Schoolman (a Fifi Corday Production).

Eva Maier, Blue Squawk. 1980. 3 mins. B&W.

PROGRAM V: Tuesdays, August - Sundays, September

David Byrne, Once In A Lifetime. 1982. 4 mins. color. Produced by David Byrne. Directed by David Byrne and Toni Basil. Choreography by David Byrne. Edited by David Byrne, Joshua Alper, and Peter Kirby.

Toni Basil, Mickie. 1980. 4 mins. color. Directed and Choreographed by Toni Basil. Edited by Toni Basil, Joshua Alper and Paul Challacombe. Executive Producer: Simon Lait. Camera: Steve Hirsh.

Laurie Anderson, O Superman. 1981. 8 mins. color. Produced by Laurie Anderson. Directed by Josh White. Warner Bros. Records Inc.

Shirley Clarke, Tongues. 1982. 20 mins. color. Written by Sam Shepard and Joseph Chaiken. Produced by The Other Theater. Administration by Performing Artservices. Executive Producer: Women's Interart Center.

Max Almy, Deadline. 1981. 4 mins. color.

PROGRAM VI: Sundays, August - Fridays, September

Howard Fried, Sea Sell Sea Sick at Saw Sea Soar. 1971. 50 mins. B&W.

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