

The Museum of Modern Art

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SELECTIONS FROM THE VIDEO STUDY COLLECTION: 1968-87

June 25 - September 15, 1987

Surveying recent and early innovative videotapes, SELECTIONS FROM THE VIDEO STUDY COLLECTION: 1968-87 opens at The Museum of Modern Art on Thursday, June 25. The exhibition includes experimental, performance, and documentary works by more than forty artists from nine countries.

Among the experimental videomakers in this program are Michael Klier, Ian Breakwell, Woody and Steina Vasulka, and the performance and multimedia collective Ant Farm. In the 1983 Der Riese (The Giant), Mr. Klier uses surveillance cameras installed in various urban locations to capture a chillingly dehumanized vision of postmodern times. The British artist Mr. Breakwell provides social commentary and personal insight in his Continuous Diary (1984), revealing the absurdity, sadness, and wonder of urban life. In Media Burn (1975) the San Francisco-based Ant Farm parodies television's coverage of political events and one-way communication. The Vasulkas, who are based in Santa Fe, wittily apply electronic technology to a desert landscape in their 1981 In Search of a Castle.

The performance videos in the exhibition include Joan Jonas's Vertical Roll (1974), Joseph Beuys's I Like Amerika, Amerika Likes Me (1977), James Byrne's One Way (1979), and Klaus vom Bruch's Der Westen lebt (1983). In the seminal Vertical Roll, Ms. Jonas explores an intrinsic element of the television image--the vertical roll caused by a desynchronization of the electronic signal between camera and monitor.

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Susan and Alan Raymond's Police Tapes (1976), Skip Sweeney's My Father Sold Studebakers (1983), and Stuart Marshall's Bright Eyes (1986) are some of the documentary videos in the exhibition. In Police Tapes, a brutal portrait of the violence suffered by families in the South Bronx, the videomakers use special light-sensitive cameras to shoot apartments and streets in the ghetto at night. My Father Sold Studebakers combines old photographs, home movies, interviews, and personal narration to create a portrait of the artist's father and an autobiographical search for Sweeney's own identity. Bright Eyes traces society's changing attitudes toward homosexuality and AIDS.

Issues regarding the mass media are addressed by a number of works in the exhibition, including Korean-born video pioneer Nam June Paik's Global Groove (1973); sculptor, filmmaker, and video artist Richard Serra's Television Delivers People (1973); and videomaker Dara Birnbaum's Pop Pop Video: Kojak/Wang (1978-82). In Global Groove Paik dynamically juxtaposes images of Korean and western dancers. He presents similar and contrasting notions of East and West and of high and popular culture. A pivotal work in demonstrating the potential of video, Global Groove is nothing less than a manifesto for universal television.

The Museum of Modern Art has documented the art of video from its inception. Today the Department of Film's Video Program has a collection of more than 450 videotapes, a permanent gallery, a Study Center, and a Circulating Videotape Library.

SELECTIONS FROM THE VIDEO STUDY COLLECTION: 1968-87 continues in the Video Gallery, first floor, through September 15 (complete schedule enclosed). The exhibition has been organized by Barbara London, assistant curator of Video in the Department of Film.

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For further press information and photographic materials, contact Howard Feinstein, film press representative, The Museum of Modern Art, 212/708-9752.