The Museum of Modern Art

WORK BY FOUR DISTINCTIVE VIDEO DIRECTORS SHOWCASED IN SUMMER NEW ACQUISITIONS SHOW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

New Video Acquisitions: Four Voices
June 25-September 20, 1998
Garden Hall Video Gallery

Recent acquisitions of work by four distinctive and respected video artists—Juan Downey (Chile/US), Ed Emshwiller (United States), Péter Forgács (Hungary), and Mako Idemitsu (Japan)—will be presented in The Museum of Modern Art's Garden Hall Video Gallery beginning June 25, 1998. Spanning the period of 1972 to 1992, the eight works cover a range of topics, from a rumination on the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein to the role of women in Japanese society and the act of making art.

Ed Emshwiller, an abstract expressionist painter and science fiction illustrator, developed an expressive grammar for computer video animation that has influenced generations of video artists. Thermogenesis (1972) is one of his first explorations into video; it features original black-and-white drawings to which Emshwiller added movement, color, and sound scored with Moog synthesizers. Pilobolus and Joan (1973) is based on his wife Carol Emshwiller's short story "Metamorphosed," an adaptation of Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis. In it, dancers from the Pilobolus dance troupe become one massive centipede that seeks friendship on the streets of New York.

Originally from Santiago, Chile, Juan Downey came to the United States in his mid-twenties. His work merges subjective viewpoints with dominant cultural discourses, investigating his heritage by means of historical texts in Western art and culture. Las Meninas (Maids of Honor, 1975), one of Downey's first videotapes, is an essay on illusion and perception in art, life, and history, based on the director's interpretation of Velazquez's eponymous Baroque masterpiece and with additional text by Michel Foucault and George Kubler. The Looking Glass (1981) explores further Downey's fascination with the use of the mirror in painting.

Japanese video artist Mako Idemitsu is renowned for her short dramatic narrative essays that explore the relationships and tensions among Japanese family members. The Marriage of Yasushi (1986) tells the story of a young man so devoted to his mother that his own marriage falls apart. Kiyoko's Situation (1989) explores the cultural roles of Japanese women. It reveals the price a woman pays when, in the face of vicious familial and societal criticism, she sacrifices an artistic vocation for motherhood.

Hungarian director Péter Forgács deploys found home-movie footage and keen analysis to investigate received histories. Wittgenstein Tractatus (1992) is a visual essay on the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein that fuses the philosopher's concepts with old black-and-white amateur films. It features a lyrical musical score by Forgács's frequent collaborator Tibor Szemző. Private Hungary Part I: Father and His Three Sons – The
Bartos Family (1988) is the first in a series of eight videotapes about the private lives of individuals in Hungary. This work follows the well-to-do Bartos family from the 1920s to the mid 1950s using footage shot by the eldest son, Zoltan Bartos, and capturing a lost epoch that ended with Stalin's death.

New Video Acquisitions: Four Voices is organized by Barbara London and Sally Berger. Acquisition funds for work in the exhibition were received from Agnes Gund, Margot Ernst, Barbara Sahlman, and Barbara Wise. The Emshwiller videos were a gift from the Emshwiller Family.

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Program I: Juan Downey
Total running time: 50 min.

Program II: Péter Forgács
Total running time: 60 min.

Program III: Ed Emshwiller and Péter Forgács
Musical score by Tibor Szemző.
Total running time: 45 min.

Program IV: Ed Emshwiller
Total Running time: 57 min.

Program V: Mako Idemitsu
Total Running time: 49 min.

Screening Schedule

Thursday to Tuesday
(Museum closed Wednesdays)

11:00 Program I - 50 min.
11:50 Program II - 60 min.
1:00 Program III - 45 min.

Additional Friday Screenings
5:00 Program II - 60 min.
6:00 Program III - 45 min.
6:45 Program IV - 57 min.
1:45 Program IV - 57 min.
3:15 Program V - 49 min.
4:05 Program I - 50 min.