

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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ART AND TECHNOLOGY: "CHICAGO VIDEO" AT MoMA

Since the late 1960s, Chicago has become a major center of independent video production, with particular trends and qualities which can almost be considered a school of its own. Unique about Chicago is the pervasive interest in the use of analog computers in creating video imagery and sound.

The emphasis in CHICAGO VIDEO, on view in the new Video Gallery on MoMA's second floor from May 13 through June 29, is on "image processing" with computers and the lively interaction between Chicago's video artists. Other trends represented include both personal and formal approaches to the medium as well as the exploration of the documentary, montage effects, and abstraction.

In the mid-seventies, Dan Sandin, whose Wadowega Waters will be on view, created his Image Processor, a computer system which he continues to sell to other artists as a low-cost "kit." About the same time Tom DeFanti developed "ZGrass," the first computer language which enabled artists to use Sandin's system in constructing their own computer graphics. A community of artists intrigued with the use of computer imagery arose, and several, such as Phil Morton, Jane Veeder, Tom DeFanti and Copper Giloth, have formed their own design companies, applying the technology to their own as well as to commercial projects.

The manipulation of strong symbols and clear graphic images is a common factor. Copper Giloth's Popcorn and Skippy Peanut Butter Jars are witty stories based on simple graphic designs, while Jane Veeder's Montana is based upon one of America's symbolic animals, the buffalo. Spiral 5, by Sandin, DeFanti and Mimi Shevitz, is an unedited composition based on a Y-shape, which was made with a PTL 11 mini-computer. Jeanine Mellinger's Nightmare metaphorically explores the connection between the etymological origin and the psychoanalytical interpretation of the title word. Wayne Fielding's Motion Sickness is a three-part work using image-processing "about being preoccupied with life and sanity."

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Dan Sandin's Wadowega Waters takes off from childhood vacation memories, and Bob Snyder's Trim Subdivisions is a formal evocation of edges as "the symbol for the passage of time in commercial television, and the separation of architectural units in pre-fab housing." Janice Tanaka's Ontogenesis consists of highly edited footage from old newsreels and television programs. Electronically "colorizing" and editing the material to produce jarring effects, she examines the power of the broadcast medium to mystify its content. Close editing also infuses AlienNATION, by Edward Rankus, John Manning and Barbara Latham with irony. The tape is a collage torn from pop culture, exploring the relationship of image and sound.

Documentary work in Chicago is active as well. Tom Finerty's Hobo is a sensitive look at the increasingly difficult lives of rootless people. Chicago politicians are the subjects of two other works: Jane Byrne, by Cindy Neal and Lily Ollinger, follows the mayor during election night returns, and Tom Weinberg's Vito shows old-timer Vito Marzullo discussing his life and career.

Central to the development of video activity in Chicago has been the availability of strong video courses. The University of Illinois offers video/computer courses, initiated in 1973 by Dan Sandin and Tom Defanti and formalized as the Electronic Visualization Program in 1978. Video classes were established in 1974 at the School of the Art Institute, largely through the efforts of Phil Morton, and video and sound are important programs today.

Many of the artists who graduated from these programs have remained in Chicago to establish alternative video centers, with encouragement from local commercial companies such as Roscor. Anda Korsts began Videopolis in 1972 as a small production facility. The Video Data Bank at the School of the Art Institute is a video archive that was begun in 1976 by Lyn Blumenthal and Kate Horsfield, who together have produced 110 interview videotapes with artists for distribution to educational organizations. Several other members of the Chicago video-art community have established research and production facilities. The Editing Center, a non-profit media arts center, was instrumental in bringing "Image Union" to PBS station WTTW. "Image Union" is produced by Tom Weinberg as a weekly, half-hour survey of local independent film and video. This cross-pollination of ideas and technology have helped make Chicago a vital center of independent video production.

CHICAGO VIDEO: SCHEDULE
May 13 through June 29, 1982

Programs run continuously on the specified days during Museum hours.

PROGRAM ONE
May, Fridays & Saturdays
June, Mondays & Saturdays
Copper Giloth, Popcorn. 1980. 4 mins. Skippy Peanut Butter Jars. 1980. 4 mins.
Tom DeFanti, Dan Sandin, & Mimi Shevitz, Spiral 5. 1980. 8 mins.
Jane Veeder, Montana. 1982. 8 mins.
Janice Tanaka, Ontogenesis. 1981. 5½ mins.
Dan Sandin, Wadowega Waters. 1979. 10 mins.

PROGRAM TWO
May, Thursdays
June, Tuesdays & Sundays
Bob Snyder, Trim Subdivisions. 1981. 6 mins.
Wayne Fielding, Motion Sickness. 1981. 6 mins.
Jeanine Mellinger, Nightmare. 1981. 8 mins.
Edward Rankus, John Manning, Barbara Latham, AlienNATION. 1980. 27 mins.

PROGRAM THREE
May, Tues. (11 am - 2 pm)
June, Fri.s (2 pm - 5:45)
Cynthia Neal & Lily Ollinger, Jane Byrne. 1979. 20 mins.
Tom Weinberg, Vito. 1978. 20 mins.

PROGRAM FOUR
May, Tues. (2 pm - 5:45)
June, Fri.s (11 am - 2 pm)
Tom Finerty, Hobo. 1981. 28 mins.

PROGRAM FIVE
May, Saturdays & Mondays
June, Thursdays
Phil Morton and Jane Veeder, Program 7. 1979. 29 mins.

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