

INFERMENTAL

1988



A Travelling Exhibition
of World Video

BUFFALO, NEW YORK EDITION

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of World Video*

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**A R S
ELECTRONICA**

Festival of Art, Technology and Society
LINZ/AUSTRIA
LIVA, Brucknerhaus, Postfach 57, A-4010 LINZ

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Infermental 7, compiled this year in Buffalo, New York, is a 5 hour travelling video exhibition, presenting the work of 58 artists, selected from a field of over 400 submissions from 30 countries. It has been a privilege for myself and the other editors to review such a diverse field of work and to participate in the ongoing **Infermental** videomagazine project, initiated by Gabor and Vera Bódy in 1980 in Berlin. I wish to thank Vera Bódy for her invitation to organize **Infermental 7**, and for her generous advice and help on this project. I also want to thank Tony Conrad, Peter Weibel, and Rotraut Pape for their work and many contributions to this project as editors, producers, and writers.

Infermental 7 was made possible with support from Ars Electronica - Linz, Austria, the New York State Council on the Arts, Goethe House New York, Tops Friendly Markets of Western New York, Delaware Camera Mart, Parkside Press, and Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center.

Additional thanks to Robert O' Kane, Paul Minni, and Louis Lok for the production of video graphics, to Paul Szpakowski for the design and production of this catalogue, to Barbara Lattanzi for photographs and good ideas, to Chris Tebes for encouragement, to Dawn Dumpert, Armin Heurich and Judy Naylor for their help with many tasks, and to the Educational Communications Center and Center For Media Studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Lockport Public Access TV, and International Image Conversions in Toronto for production support.

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Buffalo, New York

ISBN No. 0-936739-11-8

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Catalogue design: **Paul Szpakowski**

Photos: **Barbara Lattanzi**

Cover Photo: **Mark Wilcox - Celebrities**

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LANDSCAPES OF ADDRESS

Chris Hill



Margaret Ahwesh - *I Ride a Pony Named Flame*

This ninth edition of *Infermental*, issued first in 1980 as a videomagazine by Gabor and Vera Bódy from Berlin, presents in 1988 the videotapes of 58 artists, collected and edited in Buffalo, New York. As an internationally solicited project, *Infermental* affords its editors the opportunity to review at one time an unusually broad range of work. As a juror encountering such a field, I found myself caught up with issues concerning the tapes' various modes of address. I was curious as to whether we would find a broad menu of video "dialects" or rather be impressed by some predictable and legible gestures, suggesting perhaps a widespread engagement with a particular art discourse or a desire for visibility to a specific audience. Perhaps modes of address is presently an American cultural preoccupation, with the clamor of the many markets aggressively demanding our attentions within our commodity-driven lives. But more and more it seems that video artists do have to gamble the inspiration, production, and reception of their work in a field that demands their weighing of the resources (tools and audiences) offered by a confidently established television industry against a less centralized art and/or alternative cultural or informational scene.

Included in this show is work which claims for itself the gesture (or responsibility) of critiquing the center - with its intense commitments of resources and capital, its most distanced and calculated manipulations and ironies, and its considerable audience. Other work participates in or aspires to a decentralized intimacy with its place of operations - that place affording the artist an option to manage his/her own tools and/or to perform to more specific audiences. Well-tempered critiques as well as fits of frustration are offered in this exhibition. Deconstructed (re)presentations of popular and "good" taste

(Foreman & Harper, Coerper) as well as the assertive voices of the marginal, the child, the humiliated, and the dispossessed (Hahnemann, Würzer, Dursler, Grupo Chaski) are projected. Other work chooses to present a shifting voice - as Margaret Ahwesh in *I Ride a Pony Named Flame* alternates the gestures of "Margie's" apparently autobiographical performance with a script of postures from a generic blue jeans advertisement.

Much of the artists' work in this show reflects or directly concerns itself in some way with the cultural co-presence of commercial television. At a time, at least in the U.S., when almost anything that finds itself in the mainstream media is first intentionally considered or "read" as entertainment, how are other modes of address established or coded? How are subtexts identified? And what role do the tools of address themselves play in delivering to a video or TV audience a subtext about entertainment, comfort, and who's in charge? Volker Anding's *Kelvin* references the generic Philistine TV watcher, beer can in hand - legible self-mocking emblems for any regular TV viewer. The comfortable and sublime state which the caveman achieves upon accessing his heavenly monitor is underscored by Anding's own use of high-end production tools, for they too signal or offer to an artist the potential security of reaching a large audience - of which Anding's protagonist is a caricatured member. Rob Danielson's *Opposite Effects*, produced for public access television (first come, first served access to TV production tools) forswears the promise of a wide audience in documenting a performance which remains closely tied to a decentralized or intimate articulation of place - Milwaukee, Wisconsin's West Side neighborhoods. Danielson selects to both expose and explore the security of TV watching directly with the local cable TV audience. Simple access to media tools in order



Mako Idemitsu - *Yoji, What's Wrong With You?*

to address a large or specific audience remains an issue for many independents and minority mediamakers, such as those working through Britain's Channel 4 Workshops (Lopez & Potter), as a collective in Peru (*Grupo Chaski*) and then through a North American curator/distributor (Karen Ranucci), or in a theater group working simply on VHS in a Moscow apartment (*Teatr & Teatr*), also with distribution assistance from outside (*Vera Body*).

In an international forum issues surrounding language emerge, whether the focus is on the spoken language of address (e.g. English, German, Spanish), or the reigning art discourse ringing in the heads of the jurors during the selection process. Additionally, the cognitive modality of address conjures up issues of legibility - through what attentional territory does the artist provide the audience with the most activity or invention? Does the viewer find him/herself in a visually articulated image terrain, where language serves primarily as a subtext (*Oursler*)? Is the tape engaged with sound instead of language (*Steina*)? Or, as in the case of most music videos, is attention finally shifted from the sound (music) to an illustrative visual "sub" text, which serves essentially to iconize the sounds as (music) commodity (Foreman & Harper. *Vrana*)?

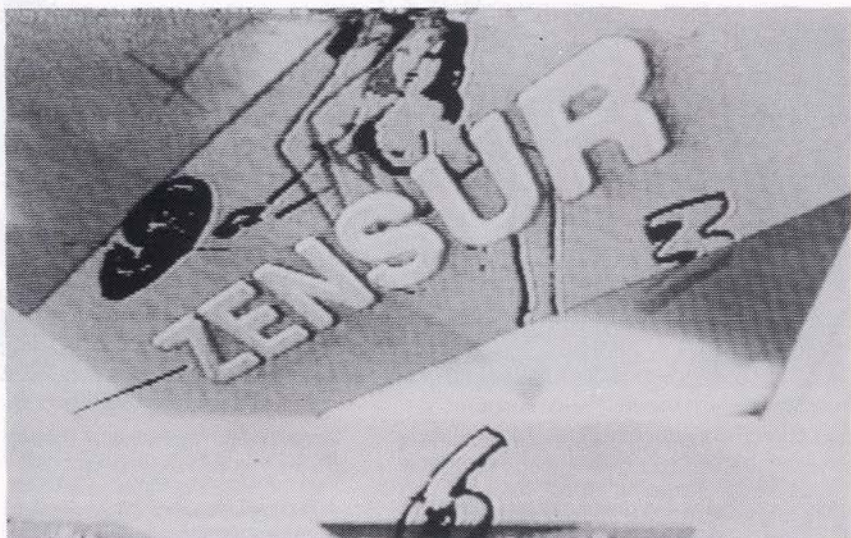
Mako Idemitsu's *Yoji, What's Wrong With You?* examines the Japanese "salaryman's" family within the current economic climate, and especially the woman in her roles of mother and mother-in-law. Idemitsu's intimations of sexual encounters between mothers and sons may find a Western audience interested but not shocked - as incest (though more likely father-daughter) as well as women's issues are presented on TV and in art in the West, and Japanese social problems are not pressing on other national media agendas. However, it was suggested that within

Japan these observations, critical of the social fabric, would be received by most audiences as "spiritual pornography," a strong indictment. Julie Zando's *Hey, Bud* can be seen as dealing with a re-appropriation of gender-specific codes around voyeurism, violence, and pornography. The two women in party dresses may be immediately legible as models - individuals, but especially women, who play to the cultural (male) gaze. But the women's gestures of intimacy - holding hands, touching - turn out to be sincere and sexual gestures between the two women. Zando's plaintive address "love me" can be startling as a viewer finds that the constructed meaning of the tape changes dramatically depending on how he/she reads the sexual "object" of the performers, thereby delivering shifting perspectives on what might be considered pornographic. Both Zando and Idemitsu address the labile construction of pornography, speaking through fragile representational systems which threaten to be illegible to distant and/or mainstream audiences.

Legibility of address is an inevitable concern of both artists and curators in an international forum such as *Infermental*. Certain work may be so particular as to jeopardize some aspect of its visibility when examined from some distant cultural scene or when played to some remote audience. But paradoxically, while this exhibition contacts many places by way of artist or audience, it also inevitably samples and reflects the resource-intense center. There, the promise of certain visibility and legibility develops into a subtext on comfort, entertainment, and predictability, as well as the expression of a common landscape of media images, epidemics, and public agendas.

PUBLIC IMAGES AND IMAGES OF POWER

Peter Weibel



Petr Vrána - Medienpornesie

Contrary to public belief, public images are no longer produced by the art world or by individuals. Public images have become the domain of media: print media, street signs, posters, film- and TV-images, covers, billboards, logos, etc. Most of the time public images are media images produced by corporations, agencies, and political institutions. The goal of the public image is propaganda for commodities and ideologies. Therefore public images have not only become the promotional support for *commodities and ideologies*, but the very structure of commodity and ideology itself. Advertising images have become an essential part of the production process. Advertising a product, which means to establish an exchange value and a need for a product through a campaign of public images, is sometimes more cost-intensive than the production of the product itself. Therefore public images have become a glamorous commodity in themselves.

Images produced by painters rarely enter the public domain at all. Traditional pictures like paintings only invade public space if transformed into media images. Traditional images like paintings have lost their historical quality of being an image at all. They have become pure commodities.

The subversion of the commodity structure of the image is only possible within media images, since media images are the core of public images. Media images by artists can play the art of noise in the music of plutocracy. One of the

strategies of subversion is to acknowledge that the three classical categories of sign have lost their function. We do not live any longer with signs which relate directly to objects in our environment; we don't act any more according to icons, indices, or symbols which relate to objects through visual analogy, physical dependence, arbitrariness, or conventional coding. Since all objects are replaced by commodities, we have a new category of signs which relate to commodities instead of objects. This new class of signs is called logos. We are living in a logo-culture, a substitution for the historical iconographic and symbolic culture. In this logo-culture, the institutions producing the public images, and the products and logos for products, have become the frame of reference. In former times inner experience or visions functioned as the point of departure.

Modern image making therefore deals with the social, institutional and political elements which are constructing the image. In that sense the visual artist can subvert the framing and representation of the image by deconstructing the constitutive elements of the image. Are the social and institutional powers constructing the world and are they using artists as well-paid slaves to represent the world as they have constructed it? One of the few strategies of a powerless class, to which artists belong, is to deconstruct and reconstruct images. Between representation and construction of the world — the classic dichotomy between powerlessness and



Sara Hornbacher - *Anti-Scenes in Panama (A Tropical Movie)*

power, between art and politics — between scylla and charybdis there is another way: deconstructing and reconstructing. Instead of representation, which is always a form of adaptation, which is always a form of affirmation, the aesthetic system and the social system can be a coupling system for deconstruction and reconstruction. The contemporary artist therefore has to reconstruct and deconstruct above all public images, the images of power, in an effort to remake history, to reinvent the present, and to restock the real. Have the media turned reality into a club — the reality club owned by lawyers, politicians, companies, corporations, the military? The artist and each individual has the chance to reinvent reality through deconstructing media images. Most people experience real life only through media controlled by power. Mediated life is the fate of most people. Mediated life as a substitution for real life has become a private club only for members, the members of the power class. Paintings are a kind of ticket to this club. Media images can turn into dirty tickets, false tickets, and therefore subvert the logic of the membership. Public images are media images. Media images are images of power. Public images are therefore also images of power. To deconstruct power is the true intention of deconstruction: to make the system inconsistent with what is represented in media images.

Instead of an ontology of the image built on the triple relation of object-sign-truth, we need an epistemology of the image built on the triple relation of sign-power-truth. In this new relation

and foundation of artwork we have the chance to uncover the power, to discover the truth by reconstructing, deconstructing, recoding, and decoding the chain of signs, and by redefining the signs. This shift from ontology to epistemology is already announced by the shift from production to post-production typical of the electronic image, the media image. The ontology of the image is based on the myths of old production modes. The epistemology of the image is based on the new modes of production which are post-productive and tele-devised. Local topological production modes are replaced through spatially and temporally diversified post-production modes. This shift from production to post-production, which characterizes fully the transition from the cinematographic image to the electronic image, happened essentially in the seventies, and was naturally experienced in the beginning as a devaluation of the image. Since then any bad image could be saved in post-production, and the constructive elements of the image have become the subjective of the image itself. The most technically constructive elements of the image have become the subject and the content of the image itself.

Through post-production both the availability of the history of the image and the dispossession of the image have become an awareness. The inflation of images has been a second wave, generated by the emphasis on post-production. The first wave, the logical antecedent, was the debunking of the image, the extinction of the historical qualities of image making, which now,



Ardele Lister - *Zoe's Car*

in a third restorative wave, are again simulated — as a drive, a hunger for the image, in painting as a nostalgia for a lost cause.

The process of image making is historically definitive and finally separated from (local) production and related concepts like ownership, etc. The traditional parameters of time, space, and socialization linked with production are equally transformed by post-productive tendencies. In post-production images tend to show new social, temporal and spatial modes, and utopias of dispossession, etc. Appropriation is the catch-word which tries to describe the productive and social consequences following the shift from production to post-production in image making, repeating the general tendency in economics of the production of products. The discourse of appropriation is therefore not only one of using foreign-found images, image banks, or dispossessing images — which often does not avoid the danger of historicizing the present and neohistoricizing history — which happens in the cases of the new art movements (from neo-expressionism to neogeo). The real appropriation would be to disown, dispossess the apparatus in power — the apparatus of representation as we know it. Dislocation or teleproducing in post-production does not mean distancing history or diachronic approaches but rather distancing the history of power, the history written by power. Dispossession means only to disown power.

Becoming ahistorical and apolitical are the results of a superficial capitalist adaptation of

appropriation as revealed in the neo-movements of art, where rather appropriation, understood as disappropriation, could mean rewriting history, remaking the world by historical and social deconstruction of the constituents of the image, the image making process, the representation mode of the image.

The image in its frame and configuration of representation is suppressing the real. This suppression is linked to a specific function, which comes from the neglected fact that the stable image (e.g. painting) is not the last value, has not its real value in itself. The image needs its support from other values — from history, from social acceptance and from money. The value of money is the real value of the image. Money is the last denominational value. Without this support an image has no value and does not exist. Public images therefore are images which support money, which support this constitution of society, this empire of values, where money is the last value, the founding value. Public images are therefore propaganda images for these values. Public images don't generally tell the truth; they are strategies of seduction, glamorizing commodities. Like money, so also the image, above all the public image, tends to suppress the real.

On this basis we can see that art cannot incorporate the last degree of freedom as it is proclaimed. Just the opposite is true. Free trade and free media have not become free exchange of information, but transformed information into



Axel Klepsch - Augen Zu

an exchange value on the free market. By commodifying information, information itself has become obscured to such a measure that revealing the truth about important social facts and events has become nearly impossible, as we all know. It is a ridiculous lie that there is a free press or that there are free media in any country. The news value of information is not important, but rather its abstract free exchange value.

Everything has become liberated, has been set free — the arts, the media, the signs — at the very moment of history and only under the condition that freedom has no meaning anymore, at least not in its historical meaning. Freedom today means freedom of abstraction, abstraction of anything in to an exchange value, into an abstract free exchange value. Money is an abstract exchange value. It is the telepresence of objects and values. The image as the telepresence of the object repeats this logic of the capital.

This freedom of art representing the abstraction of the free exchange value is another reason why art is not dealing with the real, especially not with the third world which only can be immune to our arts or colonized by our arts. Epidemics are detractors, showing our culture as black holes, as implosion.

Media have become a way to colonize not only other nations but also one's own nation. The empire of colonization, in the sense of colonizing continents and peoples, is finally broken down. Evidence in culture for the vanishing of spatial colonization is the nostalgic discovery of

colonial splendor or misery in the commercial film, the colonial exploitation film. After the breakdown of spatial or racial colonization, the people in power started to colonize their own or foreign countries temporally and mentally. Television is the way to colonize one's own nation. Print and public media mastermind, colonize, exploit, and subordinate one's own nation. The mental colonization of one's own country, this brutal prolongation of a historical mode of exploitation and suppression, is the colonization of desire, of consciousness, of needs and values, of styles and minds, of attitudes and goals. A weak form of awareness of this problem, a weak form of protest and opposition, is the contemporary practice of appropriating and deconstructing images of mass media, the media of colonization. Decolonizing media is the task of a contemporary artist. Built on the power of representation, the institutions of power colonize the people with representational images which follow the morphology of desire. After ruining representation, the next step is decolonizing media, reappropriating media images and reclaiming reality. Decolonizing media is a way to deconstruct and destroy the empire of power.

Tony Conrad



Julie Zando - Hey, Bud

CALCULATING EXPOSURE: VECTOR PRODUCTS.

Technology has been mutating so fast that our "software" is always playing catch-up — Gilles Deleuze says that technology is *de-territorialization*. Paul Virilio comments that

"All current technologies...produce shorter and shorter distances...The field of freedom shrinks with speed. And freedom needs a field. When there is no more field...there will be nothing left but absolute control, an immediacy which will be the worst kind of concentration."¹

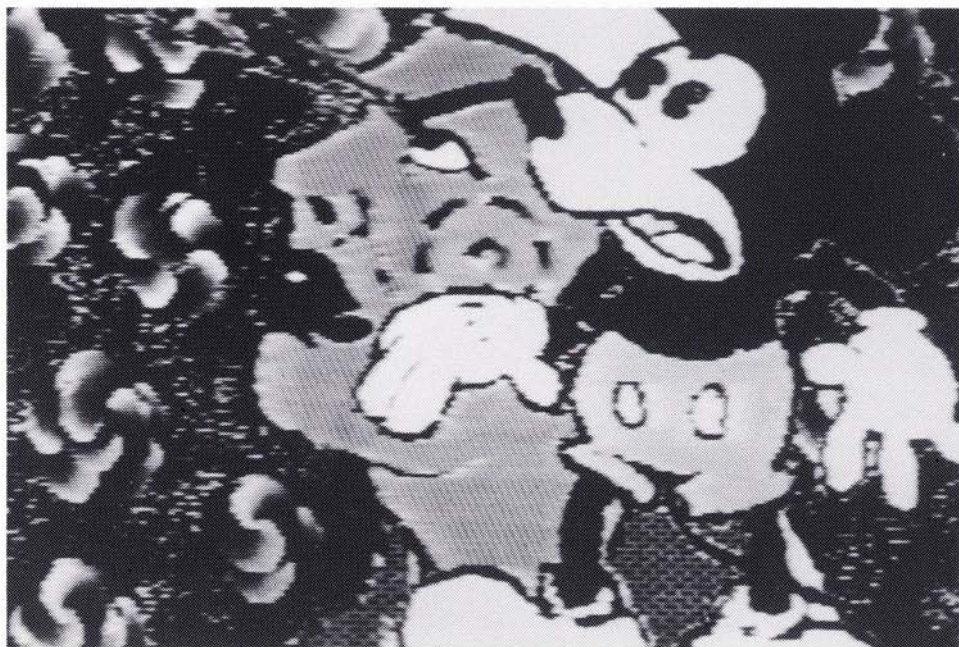
Four works bear upon distance and transportation in competing ways: **Peter Callas's** *Kinema No Yoru (Film Night)* (Australia, 1986), **Daniel Minahan's** *Aesthetics and/or Transportation* (USA, 1987), **Karl-Heinz Hahnemann's** *Kaspar Hauser Stirb (Kaspar Hauser Dies)* (GDR), and **Olhar Eletrônico's** *Varela In Xingu* (Brazil, 1985).

Peter Callas' work was created during a residency in Tokyo at Marui Department Store. Its visual material is from 1930's Japanese cartoon figures; they have implications, for Japanese, of imperialist fantasy. When this work appeared on the huge screens in the square outside, facing one of Tokyo's busiest districts, the imperialist themes were muted only by the formalization and decontextualization of the images. This presentational strategy *in turn* functioned to emphasize the space of the screen and the formal energy of the video medium itself — and in

consequence, Callas' topic of address became, legibly, the *endo*-colonization (by imperial Japan) of the space of the TV screen.

He had observed how "television in Tokyo was earnestly engaged in the process of constructing an expansive mental terrain for a city [with]...rigorously cramped living conditions and intolerably long and impossibly crowded commuting distances," and saw Japanese society responding *in turn* by implementing "[t]he idea of technology, particularly image-transmitting technology, as territory (in the sense of something to be traversed, lived in or off, colonised...)"²

"Aesthetics and/or Transportation" is a prescient essay by Gregory Battcock which appeared in *Arts* in April, 1974. In **Daniel Minahan's** videotape with the same name, an intertitle explains how "Vicky Aliata" appeared as Battcock's surrogate (or other?) at the Museum of Modern Art; in the tape, we see "Vicky" reading the essay while Gregory lounges about his hotel room in Puerto Rico with his juicily muscular young traveling companion. The source text emanates a hauntingly post-modern aura; the tape is replete with structural figures that foreground Battcock's thoughts while doubling his (writerly) voice. Overall, Minahan's tape functions as a demonstration of radically diminished distance — not shrunk by technological means, but by shifting the means of measuring: the distance between text and utterance, between idea and culture, between death and life, the mental



Peter Callas - Kinema No Yoru

and the physical, representation and narration — all are telescoped onto collapsing atomic equivalences by the measuring rod of the distance between Battcock's text and Minahan's tape.

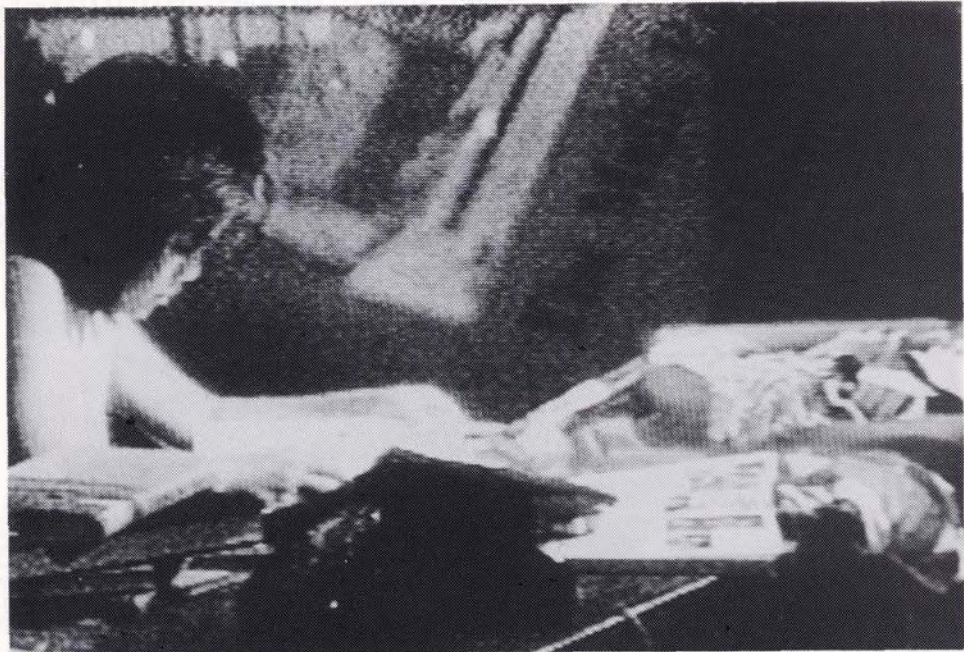
The other two tapes, from the German Democratic Republic and Brazil, respectively, both span cultural and political terrain which expands with the viewer's distance. The *Finis Kaspar Hauser Dies* is a mock-heroic tableau of the three principals congratulating one another; we know from this gesture how impossibly distant these artists find themselves from making a "real" movie. By contrast, "Varela," the parody Brazilian newscaster, is superficially so convincing that we (who speak no Portuguese) (and who expect to find Brazilian TV alien anyhow) are prepared to *take this as television*, so that the encounter which ensues is doubled for us in its otherness. As we discover that our Indian interviewee sports what may be the most extreme and curious adornment on earth — and as we ponder whether everyone watches the lips as people speak — our point-of-view as spectators is swept up in widening oscillation.

Kaspar Hauser Dies also oscillates before us, but for other reasons. The costuming accoutrements, stylised poses and costumes, and an unstudied faltering realism (as when the sheet is put down for the assault scene to play on) snicker to us that this thing is all pretense; yet the childish *naughtiness* of these guys going without pants in the country does not mesh with their patent

dedication to the portrayal... What it adds up to is a painfully sweet and insouciant jadedness; a strident contradiction that plays havoc with our sympathies, and leaves us at a loss: what did their audience in Berlin *look like*? How did they understand this? *Our* suspended ambiguity is surely as fulfilling as was *their* self-absorption.

For *me*, not only does *Kaspar Hauser Dies* falter continuously in its maintenance of narrative distance, but it does not even establish any clear relation to the Kaspar Hauser story. In this absence, another certainty appears: these guys have left the city far behind, and are out in some unlocatable place, far from... Like Xingu, we don't really know *where* this is, or where *we* came from. Both works rest on their material representations of the actual procinematic space; each team of makers has traveled to this place according to an alien plan.

This says nothing to address the crisis of Brazil's Indians, whose welfare is as imperiled as it has been for five hundred years. *Ruby Truly's "...And The Word Was God"* (Canada) is looking for this address, starting from an iconic pose, in *which* her role is balanced and ambiguous: part teacher, part pupil, but perhaps more and more a voice over the viewer's shoulder, "Is this real?" "Did they really do this kind of teaching? (brain-washing?)" "What right does this person have to make up a text like this, if it's made up? What right does this person have to use this text like this, if it's not made up?" Self-answering questions.



Ruby Truly - ...And the Word Was God

Truly's vocabulary of technical devices is sophisticated without being glitzy; articulate without being overbearing. The need for a media palette which is pervasively Native American is very great; this need is measured by the urgency of the message which requires it. "The sickening fact of the United States of America hunting down and murdering our women, children, and warriors is still fresh in our minds."³

II

EPIDEMIOLOGY: VOICING OTHERNESS

The independent individual voice is fascinated by the voice of Otherness (witness the contrasting reflections of physical alterity in *Paula Levine's Mirror Mirror* (USA, 1987) and *Paul Sharits' Rapture* (USA, 1986)); our technological colonization of Death "can itself be divided into three different subjects: *first*, the difficulty of expressing physical pain; *second*, the political and perceptual complications that arise as a result of that difficulty; and *third*, the nature of both material and verbal expressibility or, more simply, the nature of human creation."⁴

In *Mark Wilcox's Celebrities* (England, 1985) the three of these "subjects" are articulately and intricately interwoven — in a tapestry whose warp is life in the public eye (television), and whose woof is disease and death. Wilcox exploits completely the structural functions of alterity, of the *double* — his key stitch, with which the viewer finally unravels this thanatopsis. Also remarking on (or in) pain, otherness and loss, *Carl*

Wiedemann's Illiteracy (USA, 1987) and *Helge Leibel's Ferne Gegenden (Distant Adversaries)* (GDR, 1984) foreground anxieties in different but distinctive ways.

The most microscopic Death is the one which insinuates itself into the understanding of narrative gesture — which television has learned to capture. In *Dennis Day's Oh, Nothing* (Canada, 1987), synecdochic and apostrophic constructions accentuate fixations of attention, fluctuations in social ritual, and lost moments of arbitrary reflectiveness; and the "plastic" colors and the simple, "set-up" look of the shots meanwhile pretend to a moderno-postmoderno-modishness...

To invoke a more essential figure, the tape engages in a logic of trance: fixation; manipulability of the sensorium to serve attentiveness. *Julie Zanda's* elegantly original *Hey, Bud* (USA, 1987) discovers and opens out an unexpectedly gravid conjunction, among sexuality, audience manipulability, and the viewer's (resultant?) conception of self. *Michaela Buescher's Flirting TV* (Germany, 1987) is an inadvertent inversion of *Hey, Bud*; it is implicitly, albeit humorously, asking us to experience the manipulative effect of the viewer on the medium. Advertising, it might be said, has forced (like a backstage mother) the sophistication of media devices which manipulate our attention; if any epidemic can bring us to the point of a microscopic Death, it could be driven by advertising. A sunnier side of the advertising "pathogen" is to be seen in *Ardele Lister's*



Boris Jochananov - Afrika as Gagarin

Zoe's Car (USA, 1986), which delicately pivots the viewer back and forth between disgust and delighted complicity.

The descriptive mechanics of *Shawn Usha* and *Ilana Scherl's Brasil — External Debt* (USA, 1987); the germane colonial reminders (of U.S. TV imperialism) which spring unbidden from *Karen Ranucci's Cross Section One Afternoon Of Mexican TV* (USA, 1985) (along with the echoing stains of passion and loss which comprise the forgetfully effusive balance of its content); and the insistent logic of *Grupo Chaski's Miss Universe In Peru* (Peru, 1984) — all display how the politically damaged tissue of South American culture has annealed itself tensely to each of the functioning organs of the social order; their shared surface a single tautly featureless cicatrix.

AIDS, whose course seems to us unusually decisive, is in the balance numbingly familiar; for most of recent time, many millions of humans have "fought" uncomprehendingly against devastating odds...like the North African hunger epidemics, AIDS has struck the defenseless. On the other hand, the peculiar etiology and communicability of AIDS do yoke the problem of its defeat together with the project of media-ated civic behavior control. The collectively produced *Testing The Limits* (USA, 1987) is an independent effort in this modality.

III.

EXPOSURE. CONTAGION. MUTABILITY.

This year *Intermental 7* will engage a gamut of challenging expectations — from its viewers, its producers, and its makers — as world political conditions and *Infermental's* own ontogeny have conspired, at a stroke, to secure *Infermental's* function as a major global cultural pipeline. With this year's edition, *Infermental* is for the first time both AT HOME in the U.S. and an expected guest in the Soviet Union.

The youth culture in today's USSR is vividly animated; however, "despite the similarities in fashion and their interests in American music and the latest Western films, young Soviet people today are more reminiscent of the Western generation of the sixties than of their contemporaries in Italy or the United States."⁵ A technological aspect of this generational asynchrony is a comparatively greater engagement with independent film (rather than video) by comparison with western Europeans. Valie Export's appraisal is "that the Americans...still do experimental film work while the Germans and Austrians stopped it. There is hardly any German experimental film existing."⁶ German and Austrian video art is in abundant evidence; its vitality and strength are clear from the limpidly sarcastic conceptualism of *Paula Coerper's Die FFF Show (The FFF Show)*



Armin Heurich - Last Rites

(West Germany, 1986) and in Ursula Pürner and Angela Hans Scheirl's technological inventiveness and crisp composition (*Im Original Farbig (Colored in the Original)* (Austria, 1986)).

Afrika (in Boris Jochananov's *Afrika As Gagarin* (USSR, 1987)) is the assumed of Sergei Bugaev, a Moscow artist who has become sensationally visible; his paintings share the primitive sexy splashiness of the other Moscow "New Painters," who often work with collage and on temporary surfaces. The New Painters are young; they play in rock groups, do acting; they have made magic marker films. "This movement has coincided with the new possibilities for Soviet rock-culture in the last two years. The resulting phenomenon is not unlike that of the East Village, and has produced a...younger generation the likes of which Russia has never seen..."

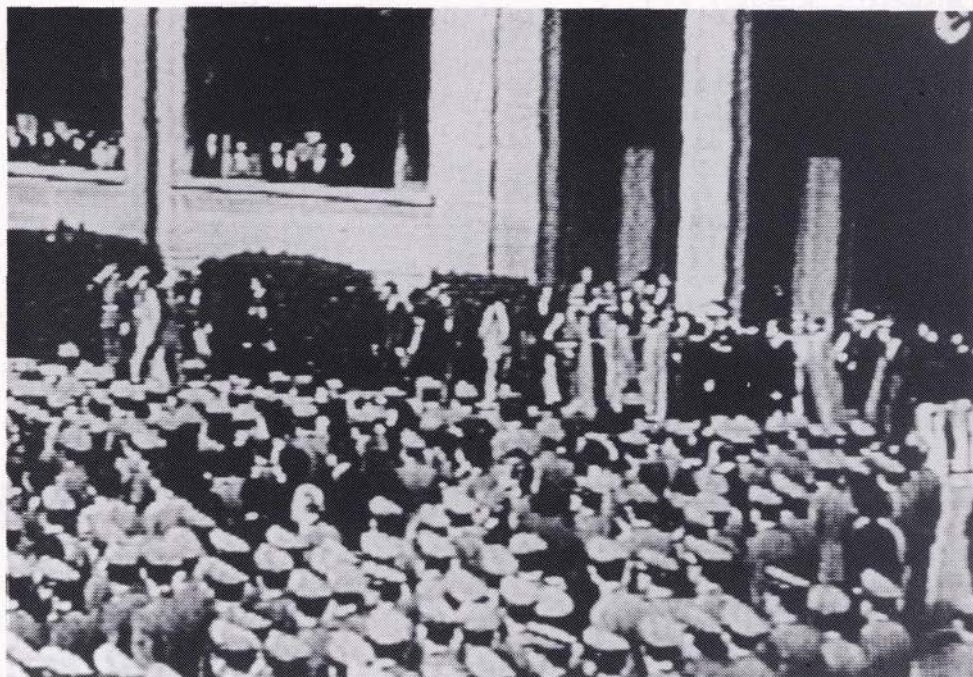
"The New Painters and Popular Mechanics function more or less as the pop stars of the Soviet Union."⁷ Sara Hornbacher's *Anti-scenes in Panama (A Tropical Movie)* (USA, 1985) might help us to remember what New York's art world is like, by comparison. Are these tapes translations of one another? "Peter Nagy as Alan Shepard," and "Land-Skates in Karelia (a Figure-Eightive Film)," as it were?

IV.

CONVERSATION AS COMMUNICABILITY

What is new in the West is the unprecedented counterpressure that has been built up in late years by the companies that manufacture production equipment for consumers. This sector happens to include some of the most aggressive and unregularly novel industries of recent times, whose (independent) consumers are involved in things like computer self-publishing, video production, home music studio production, and interfacing via telephone lines.

The *front* of this wave of energy is hardware anxiety. Imagine the video makers — beset by unfulfillable production ambitions, incomprehensible technological complexities, equipment frustrations, simplistic audience expectations. Like lovers' jokes about sex, and soldiers' jokes about guns, their ironic tapes twist the world on the spit of the makers' preoccupations. Manfred Neuwirth's *Experten (Experts)* (Austria, 1986) takes revenge for the power of knowledge, Volker Anding's *Kelvin* (West Germany, 1987) lets itself lance the viewer. Gary Hill's *Mediations* (USA, 1979/86) assaults and obliterates the hardware directly, and Axel Klepsch, the Tati of tech, in *Augen Zu! (Eyes Closed!)* (West Germany, 1986), puts us side by side with the maker.



Juan Downey - *La Madre Patria*

In describing Pre-Columbian America, Tzvetan Todorov concludes that "the necessary memorization of laws and traditions imposed by the absence of writing determines, as we have seen, the predominance of ritual over improvisation."⁸ Television, of course, dispenses with writing, requires eidetic interpretive sophistication, and achieves audience empathy through devices of recognition, of ritual. Perhaps this is to say that writing (reading) is technologically superior to television — though the praxes of each entail parallel trances, analogous social traces. Some works (e.g. David Smith and Lee Murray's *Continuous Entertainment* (USA), Petr Vrána's *Mediopornesie* (Media Pornetics) (West Germany, 1987), City Group's *Valvegrind* (New Zealand, 1985/6)) incorporate specific ritual, performance, or quasi-shamanistic elements, which serve to emphasize the works' distance from social norms, or more specifically from text, from writing. Steina's *Lilith* (USA, 1987) uses focalplane shifts and frame-grabbing to enthrall our gaze, to transfix and hypnotize us; then her protagonist, cobra-like, darts across the paradoxical landscape (that has become Steina's signature), with a sibilant and ambiguous voice; her image inscribes, indelibly, the *fact* of presence, but — ironically and impossibly — without the *content* or *context* of presence.

Woody Vasulka's *The Art of Memory* (USA, 1987) is strikingly analogous in its aims, if not whatever in its strategies. The linchpin of the work is his title's invocation of *Ad Herennium* (Anon., ca. 86 BC) — the founding text for the memory techniques of Roman rhetoric — and (more particularly) of Robert Fludd's *Ars Memoria* (1619), which introduced the "Memory Theater."⁹

Juan Downey's *La Madrepatria* (*The Motherland*) (USA, 1987) is an intimately personal yet "traditionally" artistic (balanced, elegant, judiciously articulate) echo of his Chilean homeland. Here, the interplay between surrealist/psychological elements and formal design rhythms is translated into a reciprocal but immiscible flow between the intimacy of home and family relationships, on the one hand, and formal societal contexts, on the other.

Armin Heurich's *Last Rites* (USA, 1987) "colonizes" technology — demanding "my tools," over and over, in an overbearing and theatrically authoritative tone — a gesture focused more pointedly by the decontextualizing device of his continuous swish-pan — an invasive gesture that makes of "tools" an Other. This fascination with *claiming the terrain* of tools functions as a decentralizing mechanism, since it implies *ownership*, either personal or collective. Heurich has



Olhar Eletrônico - Varela in Xingu

written on the "democratization of the distribution of art tools," with particular (and enthusiastic) attention to the recently-introduced Pixelvision system by Fisher Price (of East Aurora, NY). This complete portable video system, which records on audiocassettes at very low resolution, sells as a children's toy for about \$230., monitor included.¹⁰

John Cage once advised, "Don't write music that you can't have performed." Given the choice of a select but tiny **audience** or "getting on TV," there are reasons to go the Pixelvision route. Valie Export again: "The taboos are increasing. There is always the question if you change it or not. I don't have to change it, but then they wouldn't have broadcasted it or there would have been problems with the contract. On the other hand they can simply cut it out since they own the rights."¹¹

1. Virilio, Paul, and Sylvère Lotringer, *Pure War*, tr. Mark Polizotti. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983. Pp. 68-9.

2. Callas, Peter, "Technology as Territory/Video and Desire in Japan." Fremantle, Western Australia; Praxis: 1987. Exhibition catalog. Emphasis added.

3. Heap of Birds, Edgar. "Sharp Rocks," in Wallis, Brian, ed. *Blasted Allegories: An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists*. New York, Cambridge Massachusetts, London: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, MIT; 1987. Pp. 170-3.

4. Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University, 1985. P. 3.

5. Kagarlitsky, Boris. "The Intelligentsia and the Changes," tr. Brian Pearce. *New Left Review* 164, 1987. Pp. 5-16.

6. Sommer, Ines. "Valie Export Interview." Chicago: *Experimental Film Coalition Newsletter* 4:2, June 1987. P. 3.

7. Caley, Shaun. "To Russia with Love," *Flash Art* 137, 1987. Pp. 86-8.

8. Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, tr. Richard Howard. Harper & Row, 1987. Pp. 156-8.

9. See also Yates, Frances A. *The Art of Memory*, 1966.

10. See Heurich, Armin. "Quakervision." Buffalo: *The Squealer*. Dec 87/Jan 88 P. 6.

11. Sommer, Ines. Op. cit., P. 4.





Paula Coerper - Die FFF Show

Volker Anding

Kelvin
1987 4:00
Wuppertal, West Germany

Peter Callas

Kinema No Yoru/Film Night
1986 2:30
Sydney, Australia

Paula Coerper

Die FFF Show
1986 5:00 (excerpt)
Hamburg, West Germany

Sara Hornbacher

Anti-Scenes in Panama (A Tropical Movie)
1986 3:00
New York, USA

Peter Weibel & Henry Jesionka

Logo Culture
1987 5:00 (excerpt)
Buffalo, USA

Ursula Pürner & Angela Hans Scheirl

Im Original Farbig
1986 5:00 (excerpt)
Vienna, Austria

Tony Conrad

Ipso Facto
1986 5:00 (excerpt)
Buffalo, USA

Rob Danielson

Opposite Effects
1987 4:00 (excerpt)
Milwaukee, USA



Richard Foreman & Jessica Harper - *Top of the Pop*

Juha Levenon

Cocktails

1986 4:00

Turku, Finland

Petr Vřāna

Medienpornesie

1987 4:00

Kassel, West Germany

Richard Foreman & Jessica Harper

Top of the Pop

1987 4:30

New York, USA

Hubert Taczanowski & Tadeusz Ciesielski

Kult

1986 2:30

Warsaw, Poland

Carl Wiedemann

Illiteracy

1986 1:30 (excerpt)

Rochester, USA

Michaela Buescher

Flirting TV

1987 5:00 (excerpt)

Berlin, West Germany

2 DE-COLONIZED MEDIA



Karen Ranucci - *Cross Section One Afternoon of Mexican TV*

Shawn Usha & Ilana Scherl
Brasil - External Debt
1987 7:00
San Francisco, USA

Karen Ranucci
Cross Section One Afternoon of Mexican TV
1985 3:00 (excerpt)
New York, USA

Olhar Eletronico
Varela in Xingu
1985 5:00 (excerpt)
Sao Paulo, Brazil

Ruby Truly
...And the Word Was God
1987 5:00 (excerpt)
Vancouver, Canada

Julie Zando
Hey, Bud
1987 7:00
Buffalo, USA

Mitch Geller
P-372-87-ADC-24637
1987 6:00
Syracuse, USA



Teatr & Teatr - Nightmare in a Moscow Apartment

Rabotnik TV
 Selections From Programming
 1987 2:00 (excerpt)
 Amsterdam, Netherlands

Helge Leiberg
 Ferne Gegenden
 1984 2:30 (excerpt)
 Dresden, GDR

Boris Jochananov
 Afrika as Gargarin
 1987 3:00 (excerpt)
 Moscow, USSR

Teatr & Teatr
 Nightmare in a Moscow Apartment
 1987 3:00 (excerpt)
 Moscow, USSR

Juan Downey
 La Madre Patria
 1987 8:00
 New York, USA

Grupo Chaski
 Miss Universe in Peru
 1985 5:00 (excerpt)
 Lima, Peru

3 SEXUALITY OR GENDER



Susannah Lopez & Janet Potter - *Making the Breaks*

Mako Idemitsu

Yoji, What's Wrong With You?

1987 9:00 (excerpt)

Tokyo, Japan

Armin Heurich

Last Rites

1987 3:00

Buffalo, USA

Susannah Lopez & Janet Potter

Making the Breaks

1987 5:00 (excerpt)

London, England

Margaret Ahwesh

I Ride a Pony Named Flame

1987 5:00

New York, USA

Paula Levine

Mirror, Mirror

1987 2:30

San Francisco, USA

Daniel Minahan

Aesthetics and/or Transportation

1987 4:00 (excerpt)

New York, USA





Paula Levine - Mirror, Mirror

Emjay Wilson

Values in a Near Perfect World

1987 3:00 (excerpt)

San Francisco, USA

Paul Sharits

Rapture

1986 4:00 (excerpt)

Buffalo, USA

Wilhelm & Birgit Hein

Kali-Film

1987 4:00 (excerpt)

Koeln, West Germany

Jozsef Nandori

Magömles

1987 2:30

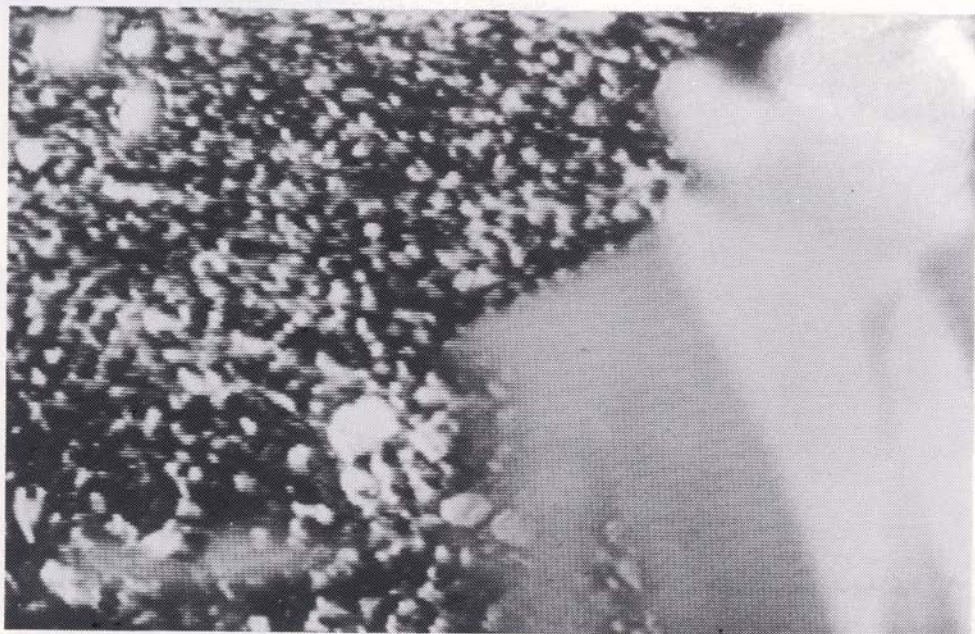
Budapest, Hungary

Dennis Day

Oh, Nothing

1987 12:00

Toronto, Canada



Mark Wilcox - Celebrities

Downtown Community Television
Hard Metals Disease Follow-up
 1987 11:00 (excerpt)
 New York, USA

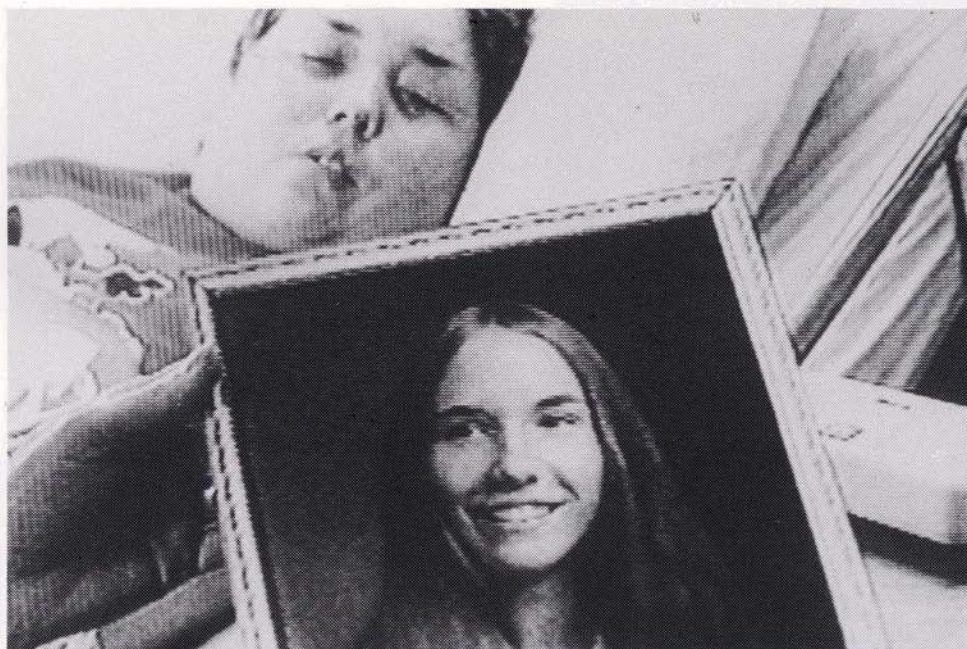
Alex Meyer
I Love NY
 1987 1:00
Irradiated Produce
 1987 1:00
 Buffalo, USA

Rainer Gehrlich
8.9/9.9.87 Trave/Lübecker Hafen, Greenpeace
gegen Atommülltransporter Sigyn
 1987 2:00 (excerpt)
 Hamburg, West Germany

Axel Klepsch
Augen Zu
 1986 8:00
 Dusseldorf, West Germany

Lynn Hershman
Jim Jones
 1987 4:00 (excerpt)
 San Francisco, USA

Tony Oursler
Sucker
 1986 5:00
 New York, USA



Downtown Community TV - *Hard Metals Disease Follow-up*

Mark Wilcox
Celebrities
1985 12:00
London, England

Idja Frez
Kalininprospekt Videowall
1987 3:00 (excerpt)
Moscow, USSR

Manfred Neuwirth
Experten
1986 1:30
Vienna, Austria

Gary Hill
Mediations
1979-1986 4:30
Seattle, USA

Testing the Limits Collective
(Gregg Bordowitz, Sandra Elgear, Robyn Hutt,
Hilery Joy Kipnis, David Meieran)
Testing the Limits
1987 6:00
New York, USA

5 IMAGE DIALECTS



Woody Vasulka - *The Art of Memory*

Steina
Lilith
1987 6:00 (excerpt)
Santa Fe, USA

Hermann Würzer
Flin
1985 5:00
Linz, Austria

Ardele Lister
Zoe's Car
1987 6:30
New York, USA

Walter Gramming
Groszgen
1987 12:00
Berlin, West Germany

Karl-Heinz Hahnemann
Kaspar Hauser Stirb
1987 5:00 (excerpt)
Berlin, GDR

David Smith & Lee Murray
Continuous Entertainment
1986 5:00 (excerpt)
Dallas, USA



Hermann Würzer - *Film*

City Group
 Valvegrind
 1985-86 4:00
 Auckland, New Zealand

Frigo
 Les Cochons Roses
 1987 6:00 (excerpt)
 Lyon, France

Ernest Gusella
 The Red Star
 1986 3:00 (excerpt)
 New York, USA

Woody Vasulka
 The Art of Memory
 1986 6:00 (excerpt)
 Santa Fe, USA

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