



Mediated Presence: Three Decades of Artists' Video from Electronic Arts Intermix

[Checklist of Works](#) | [Program Notes](#)

Program One.

Left Side Right Side by Joan Jonas. 1972, 3:32 minutes, b&w.
Three Transitions by Peter Campus. 1973, 4:53 minutes, color.
Theme Song by Vito Acconci. 1973, 33 minutes, b&w.
Art must be beautiful, Artist must be beautiful by Marina Abramovic. 1975, 13 minutes, b&w. From *A Performance Anthology 1975-80*.
Painting Face Down-White Line by Paul McCarthy. 1972, 2:39 minutes, b&w. From *Black & White Tapes, 1970-75, 33:41 minutes*.
The Meaning of Various News Photographs to Ed Henderson by John Baldessari. 1973, 13 min, b&w.
Through the Large Glass by Hannah Wilke. 1976, 4:39 minutes, color. Courtesy of the estate of Hannah Wilke.

Program Two.

Videotape Study No. 3 by Nam June Paik and Jud Yalkut. 1967-69, 4 minutes, b&w.
Violin Power by Steina. 1978, 10:04 minutes, b&w.
The Space Between the Teeth by Bill Viola. 1976, 9:10 minutes, color.
Kiss the Girls: Make Them Cry by Dara Birnbaum. 1979, 6:50 minutes, color.
Around & About by Gary Hill. 1980, 5 minutes, color.
The West is Alive by Klaus vom Bruch. 1984, 5 minutes, color.
The Weak Bullet by Tony Oursler. 1980, 12:41 minutes, color.
Now I'm Turning to Face You by Rea Tajiri. 1982, 6:50 minutes, color.
The A Ha! Experience by Julie Zando. 1988, 4:32 minutes, color.

Program Three.

Splash by Thomas Allen Harris. 1991, 7 minutes, color.
Line by Cheryl Donegan. 1996, 14:20 minutes, color.
Cosmetic/Not Cosmetic by Phyllis Baldino. 1994, 12:32 minutes, color. From *The Gray Area Series, 1994, 5 tapes, 25 minutes each*.
Still by Alix Pearlstein. 1997, 8:30 minute, color.
Virtual Reality Check by Dan Asher. 1997, 1 minute, color.
Host by Kristin Lucas. 1997, 7:36 minutes, color.
Dan Graham: Video/Architecture/Performance by Dan Graham. 1995, 11:45 minutes, color and b&w. Directed by Michael Shamberg.

Program Notes

Program One focuses on conceptual, body-based performances of the 1970s, and includes several seminal works of this period. Here the artist is seen as performer, in an often startlingly direct address of the camera. "Face to face" and up close to the viewer, the artists typically perform a single action or a monologue in real time before a fixed camera. Often crudely executed and harrowingly raw, these works -- as exemplified by Vito Acconci's *Theme Song* -- examine the self and subjectivity via the body, and initiate a dialogue on the relationship of the artist and the viewer, public and private, subject and object, and the acts of viewing and making art.

These works share an awareness and manipulation of the mediating effects of video technology, wherein video functions paradoxically as both an intimate mirror and a distancing device. Exercises that explore video's immediacy and mediation reveal sophisticated and often intense psychological layers of subjectivity. In Peter Campus' *Three Transitions*, the artist performs concise technical "tricks" -- cutting into or eradicating his own image -- to construct elegant metaphors for the transformation of the self.

Many of these works present conceptual strategies that are echoed in recent performance tapes, from the introduction of ironic and disjunctive pop cultural references in John Baldessari's *The Meaning of Various News Photographs to Ed Henderson*, to the gestural use of the body as a tool for drawing or painting, as in the works of Joan Jonas and Paul McCarthy.

Often the camera becomes a looking glass in which the artist's body is a site for examinations of gender, power and representation, as when Marina Abramovic brushes her hair and face with increasingly violent gestures. In *Through the Large Glass*, in which Hannah Wilke poses like a model and performs a striptease behind Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass*, the artist uses her own image to confront the erotic representation of the female body in art history and popular culture.

In the tapes in *Program Two*, the artist's presence is more deeply immersed within technology, media, and popular culture. Here the artist's gesture functions as a catalyst for diverse inquiries, from explorations of new imaging strategies and the development of expressive vocabularies of technology, to the deconstruction of media icons and the cultural construction of identity. The tapes here illustrate an eclectic range: For Bill Viola, the artist's physical presence within a rigorous technical structure is a vehicle for a metaphorical examination of self. Tony Oursler uses body parts, readymade props, and voiceover to devise a psychodramatic theater.

Often the artist's gesture directly activates the imaging strategies. In *Violin Power*, Steina's mesmerizing lip-synch performance of the Beatles' *Let it Be* spins off into a violin solo in which her bowing movements directly drive the increasingly abstract electronic imaging processes. In Gary Hill's *Around and About*, the artist's speech propels the rhythmic editing and image progression.

This program also includes works that confront the position the self and identity in relation to the language and meaning of pop culture, particularly television and cinema. Dara Birnbaum's gestural presence pervades her charged deconstruction of images appropriated from a 70's television show and the lyrics of a disco song. Although *Kiss the Girls: Make Them Cry* foregrounds the gestures of the women on screen and the imbedded cultural gesture of gender politics, the manipulating gesture of the artist is always present.

Other tapes further this inquiry into the self and culture. Propulsively switching between two recorded sources, Klaus vom Bruch devises a self-portrait within the representation of cultural mythology. Rea Tajiri constructs a discourse on identity through surrogate cinematic images and on-screen text that serves as the artist's voice, while Julie Zando enacts a performance that confronts issues of power, desire and control in the act of viewing and recording.

Program Three features recent works by artists who are merging elements of direct performance with ironic references to pop culture, mass media, and technology. Many of these artists engage in an art practice that integrates the time-based and gestural forms of video and performance with static forms such as painting, installation, sculpture, and photography.

Their focus is up-close yet distanced; the aesthetic is at once low-tech and media-savvy. Role-playing, masquerade, costuming, and artifice are devices through which they "sample" codes of gender, sexuality, art-making and art history from a vast collective lexicon of media iconography and pop culture.

Many of these works are steeped in ironic references to art-making. In Phyllis Baldino's witty real-time performance actions, she devises unexpected juxtapositions that subvert the function and meaning of everyday objects and question the process of making art. Through role-playing and references to the gestures of Modernist painting, Cheryl Donegan re-imagines Jean-Luc Godard's film *Contempt* as a catalyst for an inquiry into the creative process. Employing minimalist sets and postured performances, Alex Pearlstein invents a theatrical space that refers to Modernism, gender difference, and the pictorial space of video.

Other works envision the self submerged within a media- and technology-saturated reality. In *Virtual Reality Check*, Dan Asher immerses himself and the viewer in the numbing spectacle of computer game imagery. In *Host*, Kristin Lucas' performance considers her positioning as a woman as she initiates a self-confession within a hostile landscape of electronic devices, surveillance and media.

The program concludes with *Video/Architecture/Performance*, a work that documents Dan Graham's performances, architectural installations, and video viewing spaces from the past two decades. Graham's works confront many of the themes that thread throughout the tapes in this program -- performance and technology, the relationship of artist and viewer, public and private. Beginning with the artist performing in front of the camera, Graham widens his inquiry to consider the acts of viewing and performing within a temporal, psychological, and cultural space. In Graham's constructions, he privileges the presence of both the artist and the viewer.