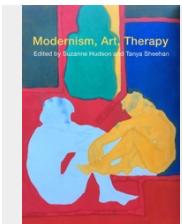


CHAPTER

10. Between Paradigms: Video and Art Therapy

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10. Between Paradigms: Video and Art Therapy

Peter Sachs Collopy

In the summer of 1968, painter Frank Gillette and philosopher-sociologist Victor Gioscia met on the streets of New York's East Village.¹ Gillette was "interviewing the locals" on St. Mark's Place for a video documentary that "focused from the inside out—these people defining themselves."² Gioscia was working at the Village Project, "a sort of anti-clinic" also on St. Mark's Place, where he "tried to use video playback to help people on dope see how they related to each other while badly stoned."³ The two men connected over their shared interest in self-discovery through videotape, and Gillette joined Gioscia in his work. "I experimented," recalled Gillette, "through the Village Project with the effects of videotape on kids with bad trips—15- to 19-year olds—burnt-out acid cases—let them use the cameras on me, themselves, as a means of expression as opposed to a means of recording their expression."⁴

These experiments were in some ways typical of the uses of moving images in psychotherapy and in others exceptional. As therapists sought to understand and treat a greater variety of patients and conditions in the 1950s and 1960s, many turned to film and television. In 1953 psychology graduate students Gaither Martin and Charles Over began using closed-circuit television with patients diagnosed with schizophrenia at Agnews State Hospital in California. They first screened commercial television, then films, live panel discussions, and psychodrama role-playing sessions featuring patient volunteers. Patients would also watch art lessons, then make their own art with paint, brushes, and crayons in the day hall (fig. 10.1). Those who watched closed-circuit television, Martin and Over concluded, improved their behavior and mental health compared to a control group. Television was therapy, particularly when the programming reflected the communal life of institutionalized patients.⁵

1. Davidson Gigliotti, "A Brief History of RainDance" (2003), Radical Software, accessed January 22, 2023, <http://radicalsoftware.org/e/history.html>.

2. Jud Yalkut, "Film," *East Village Other*, July 30, 1969, 16.

3. Vic Gioscia, "Notes on Videotherapy," *Radical Software* 2, no. 4 (1973): 2; and personal ad for Patty Mason, *East Village Other*, February 14, 1969, 24.

4. Yalkut, "Film," 16.

5. Gaither Lee Martin and Charles H. R. Over, "Therapy by Television," *Audio Visual Communication Review* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1956): 120–23, 126–28.



Fig. 10.1. Gaither Lee Martin and Charles H. R. Over, "Patients view an art lesson televised on closed circuit while some do creative art work," 1956. Photograph. Reproduced in "Therapy by Television," *Audio-Visual Communication Review* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1956): 124.

Later in the decade, psychiatrist Floyd Cornelison and psychologist Jean Arsenian showed sixteen Boston State Hospital patients Polaroid instant photographs and moving-image films of themselves. This "self-confrontation," they wrote, helped psychotic patients understand themselves more realistically and drew them out by providing safe external objects—their own images—in which to invest their libidos.⁶ As therapists gained access to electronic videotape recorders in the 1960s, many used Cornelison and Arsenian's research as a model for employing the new technology therapeutically. At the University of Mississippi, for example, psychiatrists Floy Jack Moore, Eugene Chernell, and Maxwell West videotaped conversations with eighty patients and found that the mental health of those who viewed tapes of their own sessions improved more rapidly than that of others who did not. Those patients saw how disordered they appeared to others, motivating them to change. This was a high modern imposition of scientific expertise and aperspectival objectivity on and against the subjectivities of patients—an attempt to make them, as Moore and others wrote, see themselves as others see them.⁷

From their origin at Agnews, television and video as mental health interventions were closely associated with the therapeutic potential of art and creativity. As therapists developed the new field of video therapy, though, they rarely interacted with the parallel

⁶. Floyd S. Cornelison Jr. and Jean Arsenian, "A Study of the Response of Psychotic Patients to Photographic Self-Image Experience," *Psychiatric Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (January 1960): 2, 7.

⁷. Floy Jack Moore, Eugene Chernell, and Maxwell J. West, "Television as a Therapeutic Tool," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 12, no. 2 (February 1965): 217-18, 220; and Peter Sachs Collopy, "Video and the Self: Closed Circuit | Feedback | Narcissism," in *Video Theories: A Transdisciplinary Reader*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Jan Thoben (New York: Bloomsbury, 2022), 109.

field of art therapy or with the concept of creative expression at its core. Video therapy mostly involved therapists and technicians recording the verbal and somatic expression of patients and therapists that was part of the routine of talk therapy (fig. 10.2). It only rarely included inviting patients to shoot their own video as, in Gillette's words, "a means of expression."⁸



Fig. 10.2. Harry A. Wilmer, "Psychiatry television studio where portable videotape equipment is used for studying interviews and groups. Open camera and cameraman are used. Often the teacher acts as cameraman," 1967. Photograph. Reproduced in "Television: Technical and Artistic Aspects of Videotape in Psychiatric Teaching," in *Videotape Techniques in Psychiatric Training and Treatment*, ed. Milton M. Berger (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1970), 213.

Unlike video artists and art therapists, almost all video therapists were men in the late 1960s and early 1970s—and so, too, are the actors in this chapter.⁹ Self-confrontation was also a gendered relation, as video therapists used it to train women patients to see themselves through the eyes of male psychotherapists rather than through their own subjectivities.¹⁰ In this context, Goscia and Gillette's effort to give patients control over the means of video production was also a challenge to the patriarchal model of video therapy, if not an explicitly feminist one. In the decade that followed their work, feminist

⁸. Yalkut, "Film," 16.

⁹. All contributors to Milton M. Berger, ed., *Videotape Techniques in Psychiatric Training and Treatment* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1970) were men, for example.

¹⁰. Peter Sachs Collopy, "Infolding the Self: System and Narcissism from Video Therapy to Video Art," work in progress.

artists did produce works that challenged the objectifying gaze of the scientist and camera—including Joan Jonas's 1972 *Vertical Roll* and especially Martha Rosler's 1977 *Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained*—but, in another disconnect between these social worlds, without explicitly referencing video therapy.¹¹

In only a few places did the psychotherapeutic use of video become something like art therapy, a practice in which patients themselves made art to process their own experiences. This chapter traces how that resemblance developed at the Village Project and elsewhere in the United States from about 1967 to 1975. It considers how Gillette and Gioscia in particular drew from both modernist and emerging postmodernist intellectual currents, particularly the boundary-crossing work of media theorist Marshall McLuhan, to navigate the intersections of disciplines.

VICTOR GIOSCIA: LSD AND VIDEOTAPE AS POSTMODERN TECHNOLOGIES

"What I'm doing with my life," wrote Victor Gioscia in the hip video magazine *Radical Software* in 1970, "is building a set of generalizations comprehending how time works."¹² Around 1960 he was a graduate student in both philosophy and sociology at Fordham University, writing a dissertation on Plato's philosophy of time.¹³ A bookstore owner introduced him to Beat writer Jack Kerouac, already famous for his 1957 novel *On the Road*, and they became close friends. Kerouac introduced Gioscia to Buddhism and the underground culture of New York City, and Gioscia gave Kerouac a new connection to the Catholicism from which he was alienated.¹⁴

Kerouac, argues Beat scholar Ronna Johnson, was "a pre-postmodernist whose work evinces the turn from modes and ideologies of late high modernism to those of a nascent postmodern." In his work and life, he combined jazz-inspired improvisation, mass media celebrity, and an awareness of how media and celebrity transformed life into iconography that would become characteristic of postmodernist culture.¹⁵ "Jack's greatest influence upon Gioscia," writes Kerouac biographer Gerald Nicosia, "was to switch him, *gently*, from the conceptual mode enforced by massive erudition to an experiential mode." Gioscia brought Kerouac's improvisation, experience in the moment,

^{11.} JoAnn Hanley, "The First Generation: Women and Video, 1970–1975," in *The First Generation: Women and Video, 1970–1975*, ed. JoAnn Hanley (New York: Independent Curators, 1993), 14; and Collopy, "Video and the Self," 113–14.

^{12.} Vic Gioscia, "Frequency and Form," *Radical Software* 1, no. 2 (1970): 7.

^{13.} Victor J. Gioscia, "Plato's Image of Time (An Essay in Philosophical Sociology)" (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1963).

^{14.} Gerald Nicosia, *Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac* (New York: Grove, 1983), 595–97.

^{15.} Ronna C. Johnson, "'You're Putting Me On': Jack Kerouac and the Postmodern Emergence," *College Literature* 27, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 22–23.

and sense of process to his teaching and his efforts to introduce video into psychotherapy.¹⁶ He and Gillette followed Kerouac to the precipice of postmodernism, seeking to bring heightened participation, flow, and fluidity into their own fields of philosophy, sociology, psychotherapy, and visual art, to complicate agency and fracture perspective.

In 1962 Gioscia was teaching sociology at Queens College in New York when his student Louis Jacobson invited him to visit the campus video studio. Jacobson recorded a conversation between them using two cameras, then played back the recording, switching between the two tapes in real time. “I realized then and there that I was watching the director’s experience of me,” recalled Gioscia, “not my experience of me. . . . It was not till a couple of years later that I got into the clinical significance of such happenings.”¹⁷ Video could document a particular individual’s perspective on someone else, showing that there are multiple ways to look at a person. With that insight, the question of whose perception of oneself to observe is at the heart of video therapy and Gioscia’s subversion of it. Those who administered self-confrontation compelled patients to adopt a therapist’s supposedly objective perspective, while patients using cameras themselves could foster and refine their own subjective experiences of self.

Around the same time, Gioscia found his way into the field of family therapy as a sociologist studying family dynamics.¹⁸ In 1967 he and therapists at Jewish Family Service of New York started the Village Project as an experiment in therapy outside of psychiatric wards, serving, in the words of JFS’s official history, “young people, usually runaways, who showed serious social and emotional problems.”¹⁹ At the Village Project, Gioscia interviewed patients about why they used drugs. Merging his sociological research on therapeutic communities and his philosophical research on time, Gioscia concluded that “a drug subculture” emerged in the 1960s because social and economic change accelerated beyond the capacity of sober humans to comprehend it. Citing McLuhan, Gioscia argued that a new “electric environment” demanded cultural accommodation. According to East Village drug users themselves, he wrote, psychedelic drugs were tools for adapting to accelerating technological and social change.²⁰

16. Nicosia, *Memory Babe*, 596–97.

17. Gioscia, “Notes on Videotherapy,” 1.

18. Gioscia, “Notes on Videotherapy,” 1.

19. Victor Gioscia, “Groovin’ on Time: Fragments of a Sociology of the Psychedelic Experience,” in *Psychedelic Drugs: Proceedings of a Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital Symposium Sponsored by the Department of Psychiatry*, ed. Richard E. Hicks and Paul Jay Rink (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1969), 170; and Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services, *Celebrating a Century of Caring* (New York: Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services, 1992), 47.

Intellectually, McLuhan offered Gioscia and Gillette a crucial model for tracking the epistemic and social shift from modernity, in which print conveyed both scientific authority and individualism, to the participatory and multivocal community fostered by electronic media. Himself deeply influenced by the fiction and poetry of modernist writers Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and James Joyce, by his personal relationships with Pound and Lewis, and by his own conversion to Catholicism, McLuhan analyzed this emerging postmodernity using the most modernist of intellectual frameworks: formalism.²¹

McLuhan's "media formalism," summarized in his aphorism "The medium is the message," was, argues literature scholar Glenn Willmott, "continuous with the formalist aims of traditional aesthetic modernism, except that this modernism is, in McLuhan's hands, *reversed* from an alienated form of aesthetic experience into the totalizing form of cultural experience which grounds it."²² With this reversal, writes philosopher Grant Havers, McLuhan produced a "right-wing postmodernism" in which he argued that new electronic technologies were eradicating the liberal individualism fostered by print culture, and people were adapting to accelerating social change by developing a communalist, but also patriarchal and moralistic, "Global Village."²³ People were also adapting, McLuhan himself wrote, by using psychedelic drugs.²⁴ To anachronistically rephrase McLuhan and Gioscia's analysis in terminology not yet established in the 1960s, psychedelics are tools for adapting to the uncertainty and rapid change of postmodernity, and thus are paradigmatically postmodern technologies.

In this context, Gioscia also reevaluated the sociological significance of videotape. If rapid change is bewildering, he wrote, "are there ways to accelerate the formation of generalizations which can stave off this despair? Does acid do it? Will videotape?" "Experimental video," wrote philosopher Fredric Jameson, "is rigorously coterminous with postmodernism itself as a historical period."²⁵ Gioscia explored one reason why: like LSD, at least some of its users experienced video as a postmodern technology, a tool for

20. Gioscia, "Groovin' on Time," 167, 170–71; and Peter Sachs Collopy, "Video Is as Powerful as LSD": Electronics and Psychedelics as Technologies of Consciousness," in *Expanding Mindscapes: A Global History of Psychedelics*, ed. Erika Dyck and Chris Elcock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2023), 337–38.

21. Philip Marchand, *Marshall McLuhan: The Medium and the Messenger* (1989; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 51, 60, 79, 83, 103–5.

22. Glenn Willmott, *McLuhan, or Modernism in Reverse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 206–7.

23. Grant Havers, "The Right-Wing Postmodernism of Marshall McLuhan," *Media, Culture and Society* 25 (2003): 511–25.

24. Collopy, "Video Is as Powerful as LSD," 337.

25. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 73.

manipulating the experience of time to cope with the pace of change that he, borrowing from futurists Alvin and Heidi Toffler, referred to as “future shock.”²⁶

The youth at the Village Project, Gillette recalled, “were alienated from their shrinks who came in periodically to extract information from them on the St. Mark’s scene. Videotape was a new, favorable means of feedback for them, they dug it.”²⁷ Unlike conventional psychotherapy, he suggested, using video put patients in control of their own expression and gave them more agency over processing and understanding their own experiences.

FRANK GILLETTE: VIDEO BETWEEN ART AND POLITICS

The East Village itself, and particularly St. Mark’s Place, Gillette’s documentary subject, had long been a center of modernist political and artistic experimentation. In 1911 Emma Goldman, literature scholar Bayard Boyesen, and other anarchists founded the Ferrer School on St. Mark’s Place, modeled on the recently assassinated Francisco Ferrer’s Escuela Moderna in Barcelona.²⁸ In her magazine *Mother Earth*, Goldman united revolutionary politics with avant-garde art and literature, and so too did the school.²⁹ Boyesen, pushed out of Columbia University for his anarchism around the time of the Ferrer School’s founding, lectured on Henri Ibsen and other modernist writers.³⁰ Ashcan School painter Robert Henri taught an art seminar to students who included fellow realists George Bellows and Rockwell Kent, but also dadaist and Surrealist Man Ray and Cubist Max Weber.³¹ In early 1917, on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, Leon Trotsky and Nikolai Bukharin worked down the street, editing the newspaper *Novy Mir*. Over the next fifty years poet W. H. Auden, Abstract Expressionist painter Joan Mitchell, and Beat instigator Carl Solomon lived on St. Mark’s Place.³²

By the late 1960s the street had become an almost literal battleground. On New Year’s Eve 1967, Abbie and Anita Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Nancy Kurshan, and Paul Krassner founded the Youth International Party, or Yippies, in the Hoffmans’ apartment there. “Yippie,” writes historian David Farber, “began as a dope joke, as a half-cocked

26. Gioscia, “Frequency and Form,” 7; and Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970).

27. Yalkut, “Film,” 16.

28. Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (1980; Edinburgh, UK: AK Press, 2006), 75–76.

29. Andrew Cornell, *Unruly Equality: U.S. Anarchism in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 39.

30. Avrich, *Modern School Movement*, 76–77.

31. Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 47.

32. Ada Calhoun, *St. Marks Is Dead: The Many Lives of America’s Hippest Street* (New York: Norton, 2016), 48–49, 80–81, 93–95.

combination of hippie ethos and New Left activism, only the real joke was that the inventors meant it.³³ Ten days later Black Mask, an anarchist, Surrealist artist collective turned “street gang with an analysis,” combined the playfulness and politics of the time more ominously when they shot—with blanks—avowedly apolitical poet Kenneth Koch, a friend of the Abstract Expressionists, in St. Mark’s Church.³⁴ On St. Mark’s Place artist-activists drew on the modernist practice of Surrealism to develop postmodernist tactics of nesting serious messages inside absurd acts, communicating at once playfulness and joy, revolutionary ambitions, and a refusal to adopt the ordinary self-serious language of liberalism.

When Gillette and his collaborator Harvey Simmons made this landscape their documentary subject, Gillette was a newcomer to video.³⁵ He had studied philosophy and art history at Columbia University and painting at Pratt Institute, dropping out of each after two years.³⁶ At Pratt, Gillette’s teachers included Abstract Expressionists Milton Resnick, George McNeil, and Robert Tiemann, as well as Walter Murch, who infused still-life paintings with abstract texture. In 1964 Gillette had his first solo exhibition of paintings and drawings at Granite Gallery in Midtown Manhattan.³⁷

By around 1966 Gillette was living and painting in a loft in the East Village. “He was involved,” wrote his close friend Marco Vassi, “in an effort to paint, abstractly, the AHA! experience described in gestalt psychology. His canvases emerged as dense swirling drifts of subtle pigment, absolutely monochromatic, which kept enticing the eye, challenging it to discern shapes. His technique involved getting very stoned, climbing to the top of a twelve-foot ladder, and leaning down into the canvas, painting precariously, while Mozart played for twelve or fourteen hours.”³⁸ Already, then, before meeting Gioscia and contributing to the Village Project, Gillette had taken the process of psychotherapy as his artistic subject.

In an era in which some artists managed increasingly collaborative and even industrial operations—Warhol’s Factory was a mile away—Gillette maintained the romantic, individualist identity of the Abstract Expressionist painter. If the transformation of artists

33. David Farber, *Chicago '68* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 3.

34. Gavin Grindon, “Poetry Written in Gasoline: Black Mask and Up Against the Wall Motherfucker,” *Art History* 38, no. 1 (February 2015): 191–92.

35. Judson Rosebush, ed., *Frank Gillette: Video; Process and Meta-Process* (Syracuse, NY: Everson Museum of Art, 1973), 18.

36. “Biography,” Frank Gillette: Evolving Catalogue Raisonné and Selected Archives, accessed September 4, 2022, <https://www.frankgillette.com/biography>; and Roy Skodnick, “Frank Gillette and the Ineluctable Modality of the Visible,” in *Axis of Observation I: Frank Gillette*, ed. Suzanne Anker and Sabine Flach (Bern: Peter Lang, 2018), 28.

37. Skodnick, “Frank Gillette,” 33–35.

38. Marco Vassi, *The Stoned Apocalypse* (New York: Trident, 1972), 236.

into managers marked, as art historian Caroline Jones writes, "a still-valid boundary between modernism and postmodernism in American art," Gillette held on to modernism. If the individualism of artistic modernism also meant a rejection of explicit politics, though, Gillette did not entirely fit the mold.³⁹

"In 1966 I did a series of large severe paintings that were reactions to other paintings," Gillette said eleven years later. "And then I went through a crisis. I began reading a lot of what is popularly known as science, scientific thinking; [cyberneticians Norbert] Wiener, [Arturo] Rosenbluth, [Warren] McCulloch and [Gregory] Bateson and I was trying to connect those ideas with art and I couldn't reconcile those ideas in relationship to art, to the art I was making."⁴⁰ Gillette also "began jotting down aphoristic remarks on index cards," he later recalled. "The initial musings were generally responses to an evolving critical atmosphere of (for me) newly savant and emergent core concepts: cybernetics, ecology, media theory, post-modernism, semiotics, geodesic architecture, and a steady thrum of neo-radical politics engaged the mind."⁴¹

Perhaps in an attempt to reconcile art and science, in 1967 Gillette began teaching at the Free University of New York, a sort of successor to the Ferrer School that also offered adult education as an experimental and unaccredited institution. Although it was founded by Marxists led by social psychologist Allen Krebs in 1965, "ideologically," wrote psychiatrist and FUNY cofounder Joseph Berke, "FUNY was split down the middle between the politicos and the culture wizards."⁴² In this blend, and in the specific work of its faculty, such as filmmaker Hollis Frampton, artist Carolee Schneemann, and sociologist Stanley Aronowitz, FUNY served as another nursery of countercultural postmodernism.⁴³

Gillette was both artist and activist. He and Krebs burned General William Westmoreland in effigy at an antiwar demonstration outside the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York.⁴⁴ Gillette coedited the school's revolutionary magazine *Treason!* and

39. Caroline A. Jones, *The Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1-2, 20-24.

40. Frank Gillette, interview by Nina ffrench-frazier, in *Frank Gillette: Aransas; Axis of Observation* (Houston: Points of View, 1978), 35.

41. Frank Gillette, "On Between Paradigms," in Anker and Flach, *Axis of Observation I*, 123.

42. Toru Umezaki, "The Free University of New York: The New Left's Self-Education and Transborder Activism" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013), 55; and Joseph Berke, "The Free University of New York," in *Counter Culture*, ed. Joseph Berke (London: Peter Owen, 1969), 222.

43. Umezaki, "Free University of New York," 245, 247, 255.

44. Skodnick, "Frank Gillette," 26.

contributed a supportive article—almost a manifesto—on the militantly anti-imperialist Revolutionary Contingent.⁴⁵ He also taught two courses that were distinctly about culture rather than politics: Post-War American Painting, and Communication and Environment. The latter course description promised that students would study visual culture, the relationship between “chosen motif” and audience, “folk, mass, pop, and high culture,” contemporary art as communication, “the artist’s role in a doomed society,” and “McLuhanism: its assumptions, evidence and relevance.”⁴⁶

It was the last of these subjects that brought Gillette to video. McLuhan was himself a visiting professor at Fordham in 1967 and 1968, and stockbroker Walker Buckner donated two Sony portable video recorders for him to use.⁴⁷ Because McLuhan was fond of quoting poet Ezra Pound to the effect that “artists are the antennae of the race,” when his research assistant Paul Ryan met Gillette, Ryan loaned him equipment for the summer to see what a painter could do with it.⁴⁸ This was the context in which Gillette began shooting a documentary on St. Mark’s Place and met Gioscia.

Gillette’s encounter with video therapy soon informed his art, and he turned from documentary to self-portraiture. “I also used videotape like a canvas,” he recalled, recording a recursive self-portrait. Gillette pointed cameras at their own monitors to produce video feedback, introducing noise and kaleidoscopic effects into video of himself. Watching and manipulating this image, Gillette said, produced “the gradual alienation from one’s previously considered image into an entirely redefined image of oneself.”⁴⁹ He came to understand himself and his motion differently through watching his body, both live and recorded, and through using video feedback to create spectral doppelgangers.

ART AND PARTICIPATION IN INSTITUTIONAL VIDEO THERAPY

If to Gillette videotape became a new artistic medium, to most video therapists it was a scientific instrument. “It may be no exaggeration,” wrote New York family therapists Ian Alger and Peter Hogan, “to say that videotape recording represents a technological

^{45.} *Treason!* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1967): 4; and Frank Gillette, “On the Revolutionary Contingent,” *Treason!* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1967): 15–17.

^{46.} *Free School Catalog Fall 1967*, Free School of New York file, Printed Ephemera Collection on Organizations (PE.036), Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University; *Treason!* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1967): 63.

^{47.} John Culkin, “Marshall’s New York Adventure,” *Antigonish Review*, no. 74–75 (Summer–Fall 1988): 113; and Paul Ryan, “Cybernetic Guerrilla Warfare Revisited: From Klein Worms to Relational Circuits,” interview by Felicity D. Scott and Mark Wasiuta, *Grey Room*, no. 44 (Summer 2011): 117.

^{48.} Ryan, “Cybernetic Guerrilla Warfare Revisited,” 117; and Ezra Pound, “In Explanation,” *Little Review* 5, no. 4 (August 1918): 8.

^{49.} Yalkut, “Film,” 16.

breakthrough with the kind of significance for psychiatry that the microscope has had for biology.”⁵⁰ They imagined it as a tool for seeing more clearly, precisely, and objectively, and accordingly as a tool to be placed in the hands of scientists and technicians.

Nonetheless, Alger and Hogan did sometimes hand cameras over to patients. Having a family member shoot video, they wrote, allowed them to literally see a situation differently, to think about it differently as well, and to express their concerns and emotions through the focus of their camera, informing the other participants in the therapy session.⁵¹

San Francisco psychiatrist Harry Wilmer departed further from the video therapy conventions of talk therapy and self-confrontation. Like Gioscia, Wilmer founded a new experimental center for treating youth in 1967. The Youth Drug Ward at the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute was, he wrote, “a mix between a far-out school, a free-floating multi-media center, and an electronic therapeutic community.” Staff taught each patient to use eight- and sixteen-millimeter film cameras and asked each to make a short film “as a personal metaphor,” drawing on the tradition of art therapy.⁵²

Video played a different role from film. When each patient arrived, they recorded a video monologue with a live monitor. This was the technology of self-confrontation, but liveness made a difference. “Because the image was simultaneously played back,” media historian Carmine Grimaldi observes, “any dismissal of the process, or refusal to participate, was reflected back onto the subject—and nonparticipation would be nonparticipation with oneself; it would, put simply, be boring.” Rather than recording a therapy session to play as a future therapeutic intervention, each patient engaged directly and intimately with their own image. Even those who resisted “treatment” through silence or through what Wilmer termed “regressive behavior,” such as making faces, engaged in it.⁵³

Unlike video therapists who picked one, Wilmer intentionally engineered experiences of both objectivity and subjectivity. To push a patient to see themselves how others saw them, he adopted a technique from broadcast television and shot over the shoulder of a

50. Ian Alger and Peter Hogan, “The Use of Videotape Recordings in Conjoint Marital Therapy,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 123, no. 11 (May 1967): 1425.

51. Ian Alger and Peter Hogan, “Enduring Effects of Videotape Playback Experience on Family and Marital Relationships,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 39, no. 1 (January 1969): 88.

52. Carmine Grimaldi, “Televising Psyche: Therapy, Play, and the Seduction of Video,” *Representations* 139 (Summer 2017): 95–96, 100.

53. Grimaldi, “Televising Psyche,” 101, 108.

literal other person. In contrast, to better represent individual experience, Wilmer manipulated video to change the sizes of participants, used electronic techniques such as split screen and slow motion, and brought a jazz musician into the clinic to accompany a recording group therapy. Even as Wilmer directed patients to make films formulaically, he presented video as a flexible and open-ended toy. When a professional cameraman criticized a patient's technique during a group therapy session, Wilmer scolded him. "Let them do their own thing," he said, "and what we're interested in is how they do it. . . . Everyone should have a camera to play with on their own." The purpose of this play was not objective documentation but exploration of subjectivity and wide-ranging self-expression. Both the therapist's clinical observation of patient behavior and the patients' observations of themselves, Wilmer suggested, benefited from a variety of approaches to the new technology.⁵⁴

Starting in 1973, Shaun McNiff, a painter and psychologist, and Christopher Cook, another painter who directed the Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, Massachusetts, explicitly integrated video and art therapy in a different way. Cook formed partnerships between the museum and neighboring institutions, including Danvers State Hospital's psychiatric ward, therapeutic schools, and counseling centers for youth and adults. Unlike Wilmer's practice, McNiff and Cook's "video art therapy" was mostly video of art therapy, not video art as therapy. They recorded patients making art with other media and playing these recordings back to provoke self-observation, substituting talk therapy with art therapy in front of the camera but keeping video on the edge of the therapeutic process rather than at its center.⁵⁵

VIDEO THERAPY PRACTICES IN VIDEO ART

In May and June 1969 the Howard Wise Gallery in New York, two blocks from Gillette's first solo show five years earlier, hosted the pioneering exhibition *TV as a Creative Medium*. There, Paul Ryan, McLuhan's research assistant and a former Catholic monk, presented the installation *Everyman's Moebius Strip*. This was perhaps the most direct translation into the art world of video therapy, which Ryan had encountered through meeting Gioscia and reading Wilmer.⁵⁶ A gallery visitor would enter a curtained booth to

54. Grimaldi, "Televising Psyche," 100, 105–6.

55. Shaun A. McNiff and Christopher C. Cook, "Video Art Therapy," *Art Psychotherapy* 2, no. 1 (1975): 55.

56. Ryan, "Cybernetic Guerrilla Warfare Revisited," 128; and Grimaldi, "Televising Psyche," 112.

find a video camera, a blank monitor, and an audio recording directing their behavior (fig. 10.3). After two minutes of recording, an attendant would play back a videotape of the viewer's face, providing a unique, private experience of communing with the self.⁵⁷



Fig. 10.3. Still from Ira Schneider, *TV as a Creative Medium*, 1969. Video, 11:44, Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/tvascreativemedium/>.

Like the Youth Drug Ward's intake videos, *Everyman's Moebius Strip* staged self-confrontation without the original context of a psychotherapy session. In a step further from its origins, Ryan also removed the surveillance of a therapist, a point he made explicit in his unrealized design for a similar installation, *Ego Me Absolvo*, a confessional without a priest.⁵⁸ Like its topological namesake, explained Ryan, *Everyman's Moebius Strip* "is used to take in our own outside," providing the viewer "one continuous (sur)face with nothing to hide."⁵⁹ Rather than describing the outside as how others see a person or through the language of objectivity, Ryan suggested that, equipped with self-awareness by videotape, a self, like a Möbius strip, could become a single undifferentiated surface that only presented the illusion of inside and outside. For Ryan, Gillette, and Gioscia, *Everyman's Moebius Strip* also represented the end of the individual self as the subject of video art. As many psychotherapists, including video therapists, came to understand mental illness as a social dynamic and shifted to treating it with group and family

57. "Paul Ryan: Video Pioneer," interview by Willoughby Sharp, *Video 81* 2, no. 1 (1981): 14.

58. Peter Sachs Collropy, "Ego Me Absolvo: Catholicism as Prototype in Paul Ryan's Experimental Video," *Archée*, 2016, <https://archee.uqam.ca/juillet-2016-ego-me-absolvo-catholicism-as-prototype-in-paul-ryans-experimental-video/>.

59. Paul Ryan, "Everyman's Moebius Strip," in Howard Wise Gallery, *TV as a Creative Medium* (New York: Howard Wise Gallery, 1969), n.p.

therapy, so too did this group at the boundary of art and therapy shift their focus from individuals to relationships.⁶⁰

In one experiment, Ryan and Gioscia imitated each other's videotaped movements. First they sat across from each other with two cameras that recorded their full bodies as a single split-screen tape. A week later they watched the recording in slow motion, mimicked motions, and teasingly spoke the thoughts each imagined the other having. The next morning, Ryan wrote, "I felt like I was wearing his body." When he described his embodied experience to Gioscia, the relations he felt between his body parts, Gioscia agreed it was his own.⁶¹ Rather than a more objective understanding of the self, in this experience Ryan and Gioscia found a subjective experience of the other.

At *TV as a Creative Medium*, Gillette and filmmaker Ira Schneider built an installation that also modified the technique of self-confrontation to provide a more social and relational experience. *Wipe Cycle* was an array of nine television monitors playing what Gillette referred to as "live and delayed feedback," cutting between live images of the viewers, images from several seconds before, broadcast television, and pretaped footage of cows, Earth from space, and the exhibition itself being constructed (fig. 10.4). "It was an attempt to demonstrate that you're as much a piece of information as tomorrow morning's headlines," said Gillette. If broadcast television both conveyed and established the values of American society, editing visitors into it suggested that they were not insignificant or excluded but part of the same society, the same network of information. It was a visual incarnation of participatory democracy. "Somehow," added Schneider, "there's a juxtaposition between the now of the person, the individual, with other elements of information about the Universe and America, and so the general reaction seems to have been a somewhat objectifying experience, and also a somewhat integrating experience in terms of one's place in the Universe." If *Everyman's Moebius Strip* was designed to integrate internal and external aspects of the self, breaking down barriers between objectivity and subjectivity, *Wipe Cycle* was built to integrate the individual into society and the cosmos, to depict the self as part of a system that visitors could monitor objectively, from the outside, on a grid of monitors.⁶²

60. Deborah Weinstein, *The Pathological Family: Postwar America and the Rise of Family Therapy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

61. Paul Ryan, *Birth and Death and Cybernation: Cybernetics of the Sacred* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1973), 39.

62. Yalkut, "Film," 18.



Fig. 10.4. Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider, *Wipe Cycle*, 1969. Installation photograph, <https://www.frankgillette.com/wipe-cycle>. Reproduced with permission of Frank Gillette.

FROM VIDEO THERAPY TO MEDIA ECOLOGY

In December 1969 Gioscia introduced Gillette and Ryan to anthropologist, cybernetician, and family therapy pioneer Gregory Bateson, who was developing a panpsychic theory of the self as unbounded and embedded in nature.⁶³ Partly under Bateson's influence, both artists came to critique what Ryan described as "a reinforcement of the ordinarily understood 'self,'" and adopt an understanding of the self as constructed, artificial, and continuous with larger systems.⁶⁴

In 1970 Gillette took a year away from video to edit his aphoristic index cards into a book, *Between Paradigms*, which he published as part of Gioscia's series on social change.⁶⁵ Each of 100 pages of the main text—preceded by twelve full-bleed color abstract drawings and followed by forty-six video stills, mostly of plants—paired an epigraph with a very short original essay. "Man," wrote Gillette in one, "has looked to his tools for an explanation of *self* and has discovered (more profoundly than anything else) that he is *in-between*—a creature separated from the total environment by self-

⁶³. Paul Ryan, interview by Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri, in *Two Is Not a Number / Zwei ist keine Zahl* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 12; and William Kaizen, *Against Immediacy: Video Art and Media Populism* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2016), 142–43.

⁶⁴. Paul Ryan, "Self-Processing," *Radical Software* 1, no. 2 (1970): 15.

⁶⁵. Gillette, "On *Between Paradigms*," 123; and David A. Ross, "Frank Gillette: Development of Recent Works," in Rosebush, *Frank Gillette*, 28.

conscious processes, evolving a technology with constantly diminishing ecological agency and constantly increasing toxicity.”⁶⁶

Whether or not this aptly characterized the experience of “man” at the threshold of postmodernity, it certainly described Gillette’s own turn from psychology to ecology. In efforts to use modern technology to prevent the ecological catastrophes it was generating, in the 1970s both he and Ryan used video to construct new dialogues between viewers and nature. In 1973, for example, Gillette displayed *Terraquaæ* as part of an exhibition of his work at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse. The installation consisted of five terraria, each housing different organisms—snails and crabs, iguanas and geraniums—and video cameras and monitors surveilling them (fig. 10.5). Visitors could observe captive nature through either glass or video.⁶⁷ The two experiences would be different because, the program read, “the television cameras/monitors depict these systems as information,” assimilating them from natural ecology into media ecology, a term Gillette himself used to describe his work.⁶⁸



Fig. 10.5. Robert Lorenz, installation photograph of Frank Gillette, *Terraquaæ*, 1973. Reproduced in *Frank Gillette: Video; Process and Meta-Process*, ed. Judson Rosebush (Syracuse, NY: Everson Museum of Art, 1973), 14. Reproduced with permission of Frank Gillette.

Video therapy recontextualized human behavior by putting it on television. Depending on technique, this could foster objectification or intimacy, scientific distance or intersubjectivity. At times, video therapists shared ambitions with art therapists to enhance self-knowledge through self-expression. As we have seen, Gioscia, Gillette, and

66. Frank Gillette, *Between Paradigms: The Mood and Its Purpose* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1973), 3, unpaginated.

67. “The Exhibition,” in Rosebush, *Frank Gillette*, 9.

68. “Exhibition,” in Rosebush, *Frank Gillette*, 9; and Human Distress and Rapid Social Change conference transcript, December 16, 1969, p. B-281, Princeton Conf. III, 12-16-69 file, box 80, Related Materials series, Gregory Bateson Papers, University of California, Santa Cruz.

Ryan brought video therapy techniques into the art world and used them to create new experiences of the self. While video therapy provided prototypes for artistic practices, it did not contain them. The effort to recontextualize human behavior once again, in a whole world of organisms and information, led these artists, and video art, out of modernism and out of therapy with it, into engagements with ecological and social systems and more tangled realities.