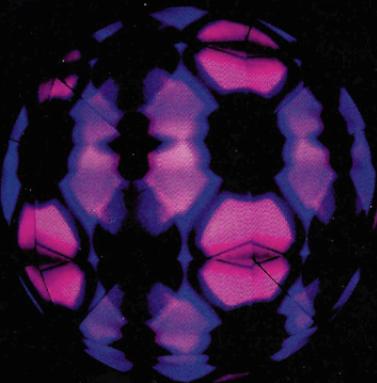
The background of the poster features a dense, abstract pattern of vertical color bands. These bands transition through various colors including red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Interspersed among these bands are several glowing, translucent shapes that resemble celestial bodies or abstract art pieces. One large, bright white shape is positioned in the center-left, while other smaller, colorful shapes are scattered across the composition.

VIDEOSPACE

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR EXPERIMENTS IN TELEVISION, 1967-1975

University of California Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive



Screenings and Gallery Exhibition September 13 - November 12, 2000

We are nearly blind to the real, human implications



Passage...A Life Drawing by William Roarty

of television in its many forms.

Television which serves the worst in us has come rather easily. Hopefully, there is a new television which awaits us—one that maturely expresses our complex sense of things. Because images influence personal reality and social structure, the task of evolving this new television is an urgent and very practical matter.

NCET, informational brochure, 1971

Entering Videospace

CURATORS' FOREWORD

In late 1997, news arrived that Brice Howard had died. With his sad demise perished an untapped story we had hoped to record. Most would ask, Who was Brice Howard? And what was it we had hoped to gain from hearing his story though we had never met the man?

Brice Howard was the galvanizing and visionary force behind the National Center for Experiments in Television, a crazy, impractical attempt to make something better with the tools of television. Howard had directed the San Francisco-based lab from 1967 to 1974, publishing during that time the two-volume *Videospace*, a poetic meditation on the raw materials of television. He saw the ineffable substance of the electron flow as the place to begin "the making."

If the National Center for Experiments in Television was very much Brice Howard, it was also much more, being a collaborative effort of like-minded artists charged by the belief that the conventions of television could be discarded in favor of something unbridled, free ranging, unexpected. In the turbulent realm known as "videospace," serendipity and surprise would be

the operative traits, abstraction of texture and time the guiding aesthetic.

No Brice Howard for our project, then, but still there were the affiliated artists, the ephemera, and, of course, the tapes. What ensued was a three-year process of locating the NCET resident artists, many of whom had ceased to make media; amassing documentation, and, above all, finding and preserving dozens of videotapes.

In the fall of 2000, a screening series and gallery exhibition at the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive became the penultimate expression of the NCET project, one born of curiosity and a desire to resurrect a critical moment from media history.

What you now hold in your hands, the *Videospace* monograph, is a further attempt to resuscitate this past. The general essay, tape descriptions, and excerpt from Brice Howard's book illustrate how the forgotten labors of a wildly hopeful institution like the National Center for Experiments in Television could perhaps revive an even greater aspiration, the possibility for change.

STEVE SEID, Video Curator, Pacific Film Archive

MARIA TROY, Associate Curator, Wexner Center for the Arts



Descartes by Joanne Kyger



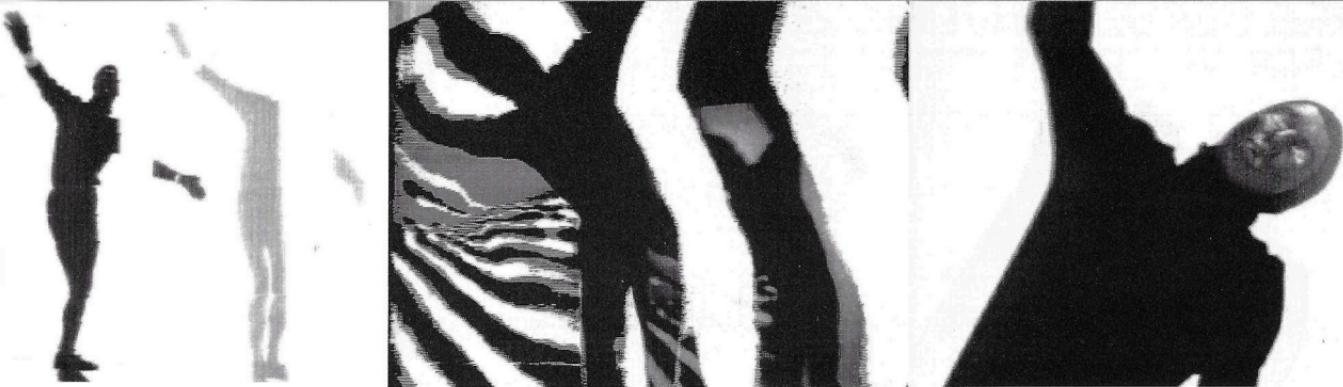
Go with the Flow

(re)Introducing the NCET

Lost to the white noise of media history, the National Center for Experiments in Television (NCET) was an unusual artists' research center tenuously aligned with San Francisco's public television station, KQED. Initiated in 1967, the NCET sought an answer to a simple but hitherto overlooked question: Can artists work with the medium of television?

It began with a bigger question. Dismayed by the sorry state of broadcast television, The Rockefeller Foundation challenged several free-thinking administrators at KQED to consider new possibilities for the medium. The initial discussion asked what public television—then in its infancy—could do to "strengthen other cultural institutions in the community." After several months of inquiry it was determined—in strikingly lucid terms—that "culture could only be strengthened by giving opportunities to those who create culture." But their reasoning went further; concluding that television attracts few creative artists because it was not treated as a medium of expression in its own right, but merely as an apish conduit for other forms.

A Rockefeller grant was secured to plumb the creative depths of the television medium. By August 1967, Brice Howard, Executive Producer of Cultural Programs with National Educational Television, had accepted the directorship of the then-called Experimental Project at KQED. Five cross-disciplinary artists were selected for a yearlong residency housed in a garage near the station. With regular access to the studio facilities at KQED, the Experimental Project artists set to work in an atmosphere of pure invention. Unlike later television labs at public stations WNET and WGBH, there was no mandate to



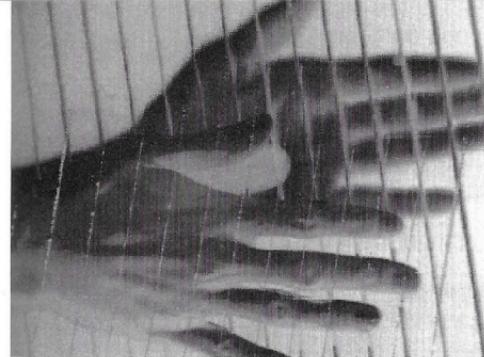
Graham Tape Delay by William Stewart Jones



transform research into televised programming, not that this didn't occur.

Aided by talented personnel from the station, the resident artists—painter William Allan, novelist William Brown, composer Richard Felciano, poet Joanne Kyger, and filmmaker Loren Sears—set about exploring the inherent properties of the medium in pursuit of an alternative visual language. The circumstance alone could have been deemed radical—never had a station provided this kind of access to its studio facilities, much less allowed improvisational use.

Prior to any actual tape roll, the artists and director Howard conducted several months of "rap sessions" in which the gathered group discussed in refracted detail every philosophical, political, and aesthetic variation the medium might bear. These sessions survive as a stack of free-form transcriptions, the product of 160 hours of audiotape. Between this rambling record and Brice Howard's personal chronicling of those early days, a manuscript was developed, later to be titled *Videospace*, and formally published in 1972. This book was a poetic condensation of the intense questioning that characterized the Experimental Project's initial inquiry. It still stands as a provocative, uncompromising, and utopian view of television as a creative medium.



Linearity by Richard Felciano

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A primary objective for many of these first experiments was the integration of acknowledged art disciplines—dance, music, poetry, etc.—and the video medium. Cross-disciplinary explorations seemed like a logical direction because there was no indigenous video language as yet, no sense that video could offer its own specificity. Thus the union of art forms—typically given short shrift in their avant-garde manifestations—offered an immediately comprehensible direction.

Much-prized studio time was not an unregulated resource at the station; rather, it was doled out in shares to the artists who were asked to produce one representative work by residency's end. An immediate limitation was the lack of available image-processing equipment. The KQED studios had basic mixers, keyers, and colorizers, but little else. Under the artistic guidance of studio staff, primarily Robert Zagone, technical protocols were abandoned, allowing for experimental colorization, feedback, and tape delay techniques. Seminal examples from those first efforts are Joanne Kyger's feminist-inflected *Descartes* (1968), a rousing poem illustrated with brilliant feedback flourishes; William Stewart Jones's high-contrast *Graham Tape Delay* (1968), in which John Graham dances with his electronically cloned likeness; and Richard Felciano's impeccable *Linearity* (1968), an innovative composition for harp, live electronics, and multiple-pass video.

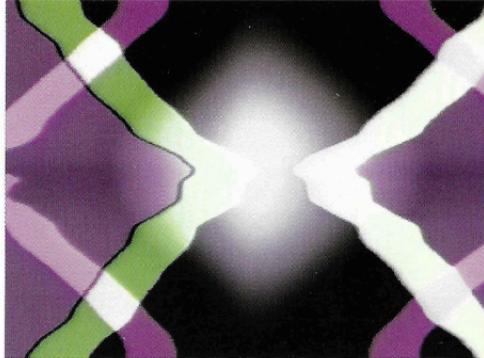
With the Experimental Project nearing its one-year termination, additional funds were sought to continue the residencies.

A medium is available... It is dumb, inarticulate, contains no magic.

It is available and manageable and probably stunningly beautiful when managed by graceful people who are bent on acts of expression... This newer medium is swift in nature. It demands a new kind of perception. It moves like light sparked into life as through a nervous prism. It is another paint, another dance, another music of sound. Another message meant to catch the quick vision of the inner eye.

Brice Howard, *Videospace*, 1972



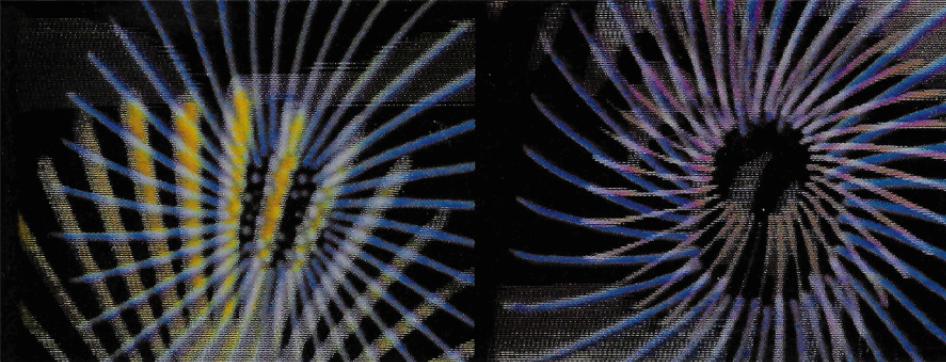


On April 1st, 1969, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting announced a grant to KQED for the establishment of a program to be known thereafter as the National Center for Experiments in Television. An emphasis on training and research was added to artistic production through initiatives designed to provide internships to public television employees, develop university programs, construct original video tools, and publish papers on the social, psychological, and ethical impact of television imagery. Of the resident artists only composer Richard Felciano remained. But soon those pioneering ranks would be replenished by the company of Stephen Beck, William Gwin, Don Hallock, Willard Rosenquist, and, in time, David Dowe, Warner Jepson, and William Roarty.

In its purest expression, the work at the NCET was guided by the concept of "videospace," a term coined by Center director Brice Howard. This was a conceptual space, free from the conventions of theater, radio, and film that dominated mainstream television. Videospace was an electronic realm of pulses and waves, a dimension of electron flows and voltage amplitudes. More an indigenous domain than a constructed proscenium, videospace finally was the medium itself.

Illuminated Music #3 by Stephen Beck (left)

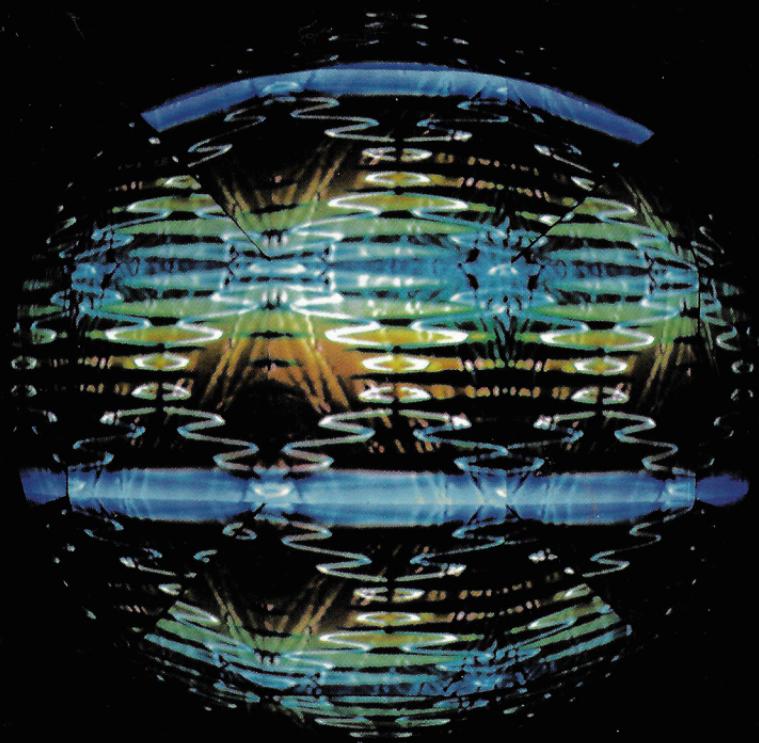
Illuminated Music #4 by Stephen Beck

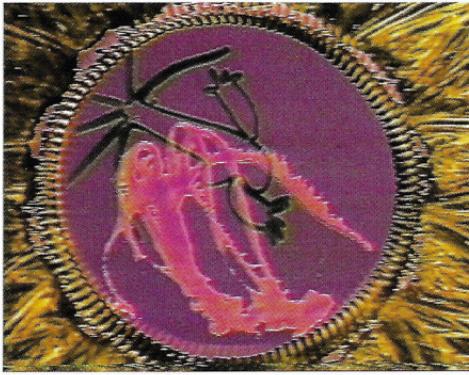
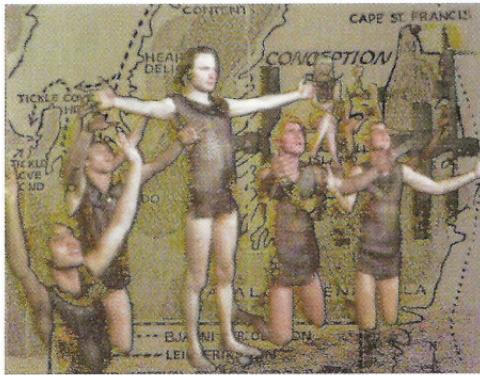


To the concept of videospace was added a second creative notion, that of "the mix," an aesthetic notion linked to a political initiative. The mix favored real-time, improvisational creation that captured the intensity of the moment. Disruptive edits would be replaced by seamless dissolves, overlays, and long takes. Rather than montage, the mix supported the continuity of video flow. In its unalloyed form, the mix also altered the hierarchical style of television production. The director and crew were replaced by a cooperative assembly of artists, much like a jazz band, extemporizing with image sources.

Only on rare occasions do the concepts of "videospace" and "the mix" exist in unadulterated form. But the informing aesthetic can be found throughout the works created by NCET artists: Philip Greene's *Golden Gate* (1968), a sly antiwar statement, reinvents the bridge as a fluid structure; *!Heimskringla!*, a videoplay combining the talents of the La Mama Theater, director Tom O'Horgan, and playwright Paul Foster, places the action in a netherworld of floating graphics and color; William Gwin's painterly landscape, *Pt. Lobos State Reserve* (1973), unfolds with subtle tonal shifts; William Roarty's equally subtle work *Awakening* (1975) transforms a body into a landscape of light and volume.







Perhaps truest to the "videospace" ethos was Willard Rosenquist, professor of design at the University of California, Berkeley. His investigations led him not into the heart of circuitry, but outward to the realm of pure light. By building tabletop mylar constructions, what he called "lightforms," Rosenquist produced multiform staging areas for the play of light. Different lighting sources were then trained on the mylar forms and their colors, intensities and angles of refraction manipulated. The effect, most beautifully achieved in *Lostine* (1973), is of an aqueous surface of rare pigment, ever-mutable, ever-impalpable. Within the parameters of tabletop and studio hardware, Rosenquist didn't direct these illuminated works so much as intercept their immaterial passage on a recording medium.

Recognizing that experimental work in television could not proceed without new tools to expand the medium's visual palette, the NCET made the development of processing instruments an integral activity. In 1971, Stephen Beck completed his groundbreaking image-processor, the Direct Video Synthesizer #1, in which the electronic circuitry generates images without the use of an

!Heimskringla! by Tom O'Horgan, Brice Howard and Robert Zagone (left)
Video Ecotopia by Stephen Beck

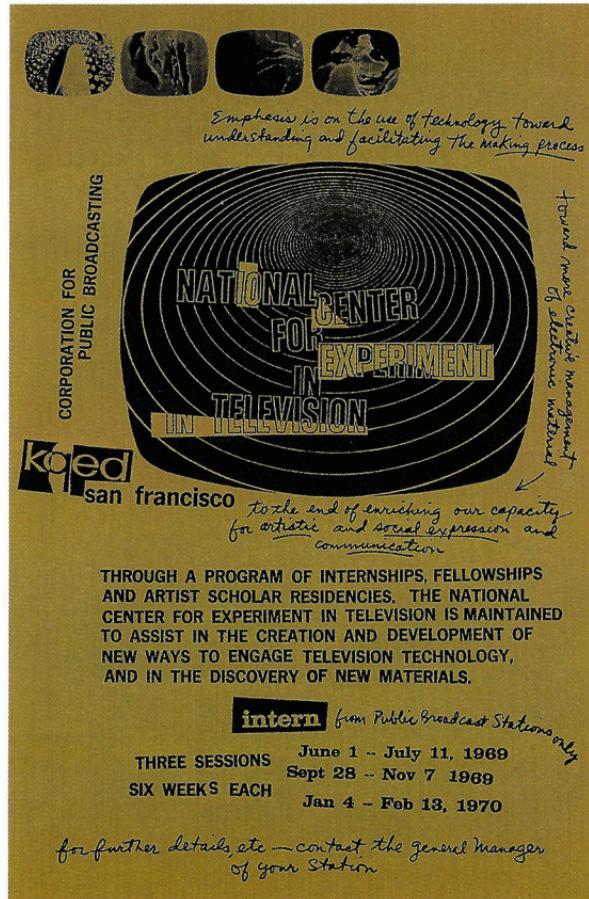


Lostine by Willard Rosenquist

external camera or tape source. By plumbing the chaos of random voltages, the Beck Direct could compose intricately plotted geometries, hues, and patterns that sinuously unfold in time. Beck's synthesizer was very much a personal instrument, requiring elaborate patching, an intuitive sense of dimensional space, and something akin to musical acuity.

One of the most prolific of NCET artists, Beck's own synthesized videoworks are graceful compositions, confidently abstract and rhythmically nuanced. His style evolved along with the complexity of his instrument design: an early work, *Cosmic Portal* (1971), melds organic globules and angular forms in molten fields of saturated color, whereas, like Mondrians in motion, *Methods* (1972) employs color blocks and surprising fragmentation in a work of elegant symmetries. A five-part series, *Illuminated Music* (1972-73), disperses undulating shapes in startling sequence, cadenced to the music of in-house composer Warner Jepson. The

Poster, Solicitation for Intern Program, 1969



first of the series, *Illuminated Music #1*, was presented in a groundbreaking performance: in May 1972, Beck improvised this early version of his synthesized work, transmitting live from the KQED studios.

A second device, the Templeton Mixer (1971), designed by Lawrence Templeton, supported sophisticated keying, colorization, and overlays. This image-processing station grew as specialized circuits were built to meet artistic yearnings, and as additional processing modules were scavenged or borrowed. For its time, the Templeton Mixer was quite exceptional, allowing individual images to be broken down into multiple values and then processed via qualities such as color, opacity, edge, and luminance.

The outcome of such instrument design was a large body of distinctly abstract works, counterpointed by soundtracks composed on the Buchla synthesizer, generally by Warner Jepson. Rigorous image-processing, such as Don Hallock's *Kiss with No Up*, William Gwin's *Irving Bridge*, and William Roarty and Don Hallock's *Untitled*, illustrated the synesthesia of movement and light as a play of phosphors.

Expanding on videospace, Don Hallock's 1973 installation, *The Videola*, pushed the cathode ray surface toward a new form of virtuality. Originally exhibited at the San Francisco Museum Of Modern Art, *The Videola* is a large horizontal cone made of reflecting mylar. When a monitor is placed at the small end of the cone, the image emitted is transformed into a luminous orb. The kaleidoscopic effect is heightened by *The Videola*'s size—the depth of the cone is eight feet, the large aperture approximately five feet across. What the viewer encounters is a prismatic, ever-changing sphere. *The Videola* emphasized an important aspect of the NCET's electronic explorations, that of encouraging visual pleasure from the primal materials of the medium.

The NCET's greatest asset was perhaps also cause for its demise: the mandate to innovate without end, nor end-product.



Unlike other TV labs, where the culmination of a residency led to programming, NCET residents had no such prerequisite. This resulted in an estrangement with KQED, which as a broadcast institution still obeyed the logic of insatiable time slots. In late 1972, the Center moved into its own digs on Seventh Street in San Francisco. Without access to studio resources, priorities were turned toward nonbroadcast technologies. The works from this later period tend to be more painterly and time-based as the NCET's video synthesis, feedback, and keying resources expanded.

The NCET's impact cannot be assessed solely on the works created there. Initiated in 1969, the internship program brought dozens of public television station personnel to the San Francisco facility, encouraging them to expand their conceptions of broadcast practice and to learn to create unfettered by entrenched conventions. As stated in the NCET literature: "Television professionals are invited to assess their medium from a new perspective: to make their own individual and evocative videotapes; to consider the nature of responsibility in broadcasting and the relationship of programming to public television's political and economic structure; and to review the history of television forms and practice in relation to the medium's potential."

Interns at the Center were immediately exposed to Brice Howard's 190-page handbook with the introductory epigraph: "The mass of an electron is 1/1835th the mass of a hydrogen atom. It is here. It is material with which we can make." The intern process was like a form of regression therapy, stripping away inherited assumptions so that re-maturation could occur along a different path. What is television? What is a television program? could then be answered as institutional queries with all their political and cultural ramifications, or as inquiries into the very particulate nature of the medium.

Stephen Beck at the Direct Video Synthesizer

Photograph by Penny Dhaemer

Another pedagogical project began in 1972 with the first of the *Videospace Electronic Notebooks*, a series of innovative tapes aimed at elucidating the Center's aesthetic and philosophical research. Of special note are Howard's five episodes, each one turning on a particular issue of reception and design, and David Dowe's *A Visit to the Center* in which the process of feedback is explained with rousing, psychedelic illustration.

Staff at the Center further disseminated their new approach to television through lecture and performance tours to college campuses across the country. This developed a network of satellite programs at universities including Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Rhode Island School of Design, and Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas. A highlight of these exchanges was The Electric Concert, first staged at SMU in November 1972, a "live symphony of videospace light and sound" employing dancers, and real-time video and music synthesis.

With Brice Howard's departure in 1974, Paul Kaufman, who had been hired in 1970 as executive director, assumed command, if such a thing could exist at the Center. As Kaufman recalled: "The Center was never really an 'institution' but rather a loosely woven fabric of very diverse personalities, affections, and interests, initially attracted to Brice's enthusiasm, mission, and aesthetics. But that 'center' couldn't really hold...for everybody."

However, it wasn't just the "center" that was fracturing—pressure also came from the periphery. By the mid-seventies, the NCET was growing moribund as funding drastically diminished. Though the concept of the NCET was much lauded in its earliest days, the eponymous "experiment" was finally of little interest or relevance to the broadcast-oriented affiliations they had tried to cultivate. One influential visitor had reported back to her colleagues that the Center was little more than "an electronic sandbox." Child's play next to the frightful parent, television.

A final move to a small storefront in Berkeley signaled the end. By mid-1975, the grand experiment was over.

For the next quarter century, the artifacts of the NCET lay smoldering until a preservation project at the Pacific Film Archive retrieved them from obscurity. Dozens of videotapes—some from overlooked personal stashes, others from uncatalogued collections—have been transferred to archival media while newly accumulated documentation (posters, brochures, essays, etc.) is slowly being annotated.

In this first reappraisal, the videoworks, installation, and electronic tools from the National Center for Experiments in Television offer an unusual glimpse of some of the earliest efforts to turn television technologies toward more artful ends. They also represent not just the creative output of individuals, but the concerted labors of an innovative institution to promote a new breed of television.

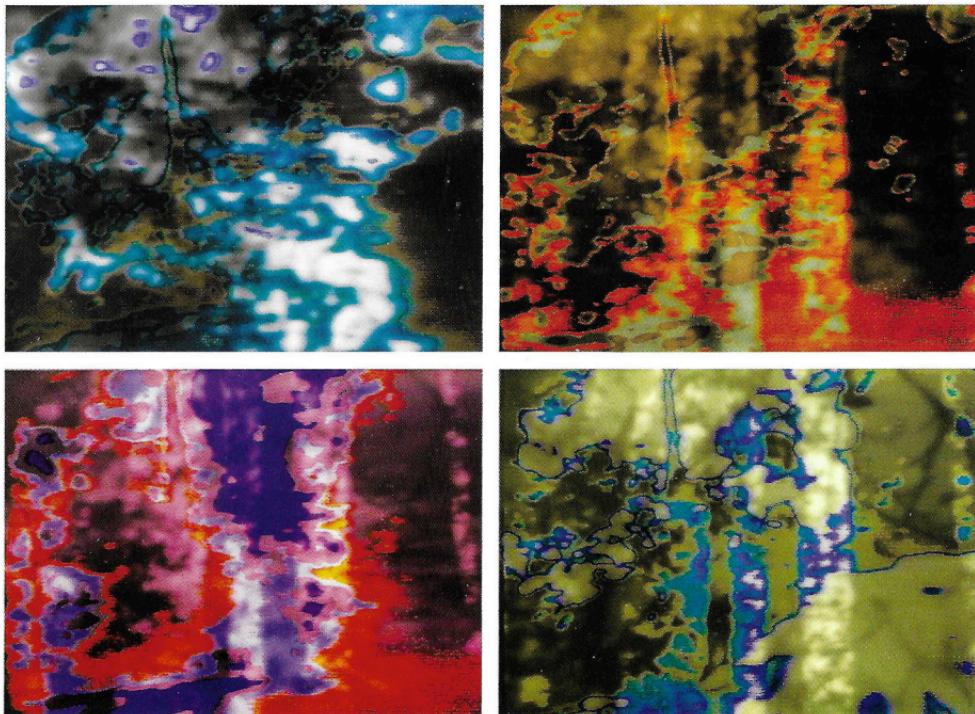
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And so, assuming our artist friends continue to be interested in applying their visions to this medium—where can they go? That is, perhaps, as central as any question our explorations raised. Can an artist create in this medium? Of course he can. But where?

The Intern Handbook

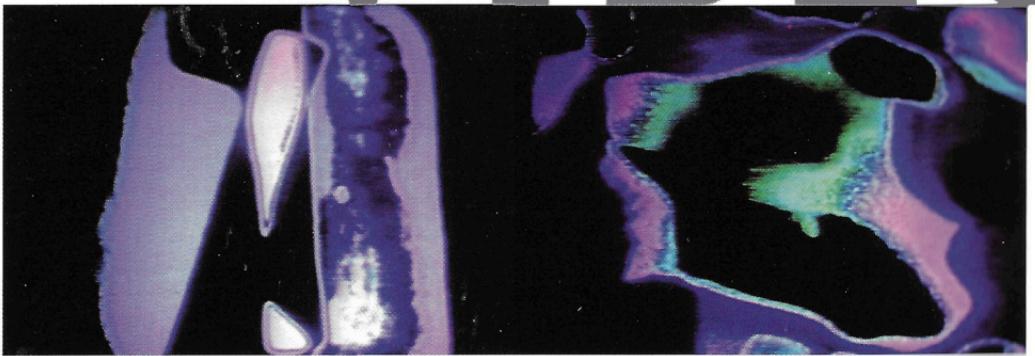
STEVE SEID, UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive

MARIA TROY, Wexner Center for the Arts



Irving Bridge by William Gwin

VIDEO



SPACE

by Brice Howard
Published 1972, excerpt

No one can count the number of times it has been said that television is the new technology with the greatest impact. It certainly can't be very clear to us what is meant by that. Were we clear, television would not be the thing it is. We do all seem to have the impression that it has deeply affected our lives. Games have changed. Politics have changed. Journalism has changed. Education has changed.

Despite its proliferation, it's doubtful we have much serious sense of it. Who cares about how many households? Who cares about how many advertising dollars are spent? Who cares about soaps and toothpastes and automobiles and deodorants and pharmaceuticals to ease the pain? Who cares? Who seriously cares about television?

Anymore than who cares about millions of dollars spent a year on cigarettes and alcohol. Or, on insurance. Yet, it's all here. And the cultural warp and woof has television's thread weaved into it. And that's the way it is.

But it's doubtful many of us have a very serious sense of it. It's doubtful many of us pay much attention.

Do we pay attention to paint? To sound? To the movement of human bodies along the streets? Do we see the sculptured lumps of our cities? Do we see the trees, the air creatures, the salmon struggling up the streams to the spawning pools? How seriously do we hear and see and touch the substances and essences, the qualities of our lives? Who knows?

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Does television?

Of course not. Television is nothing but a technology; more than anything a massive distribution system. It doesn't see or hear anything at all. It's a giant means that some of us use apparently to further only God knows what ends. Television isn't serious. Anymore than an airplane is serious. But, if we place an incendiary bomb in an airplane, and shoot it toward some humans working in their fields, it's serious. Are we serious if we load it full of bananas and send it to Biafra? Or with pink-faced jollies, and send it to the ski slopes of Switzerland? Who pays attention in either of these instances?

It's the old argument about use, isn't it?

Light, sound, and organic substance are all here, aren't they? And we come and go from work each day, passing light, sound and organic substance by.

Someone among us has been looking and listening. He's been there all the time of our lives. He's been playing with forms composed of history and his own insights. He's been playing seriously. He's been paying attention. In other forms he is called an artist.

You see, people who devote their energies principally to television—those who earn their living in this environment—are hounded by product and time. Most of us who earn our living accept this as part of our daily bread. It can be said the artist does too, perhaps. But in quite a different way. Though it may give him intense pain, he can chuck it. That is to say, when he confronts the emerging made object, he has disciplined himself to accept the fact that if it does not satisfy him, he will not accept it.

A curious principle that seems to pervade the television system has it quite contrary, however. If there's a time slot up ahead there—it is accepted traditionally that it has to be filled with something. So—it's very difficult for the television maker to dump what he's making if it is not acceptable to him. Oh, indeed, he may do it from time to time, but he will not last long in the system if he does. There are many reasons for this. And we will try to deal with some of them.

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Principally, the reasons are all linked to one very basic and relentless one: television's distribution characteristic.

If one's means is irrevocably linked to distribution, one's means must be productive. There can be no unpublished periodicals. And in television there can be no dead air, no blank space in time.

Such an occurrence is regarded as catastrophic.

Though an artist may feel deeply and bitterly what he wants to make and can't, he always retains in himself the obligation and the right to reject his own work. He is not a periodical that must be published. He is not a time slot that must be filled. His means and its distribution are not by convention linked.

No suggestion is being made that the medium and the broadcast are only and necessarily separable. The television broadcasting system is what it is. And there are a lot of good reasons for it. But, it is something else. The medium is a making-means separable from its technical capacity to distribute—to broadcast. And there are many who work these vineyards who are unaware of this fact. Being unaware, they rarely encounter the medium, so intense is their concern for the broadcast.

How many times in the past ten years the term "cultural revolution" has been used! Whatever is meant by that? Is it a revolution? Or is it evolution?

It's all happening.

All around us, the currents rush and flow towards centers of attention. And somewhere in the midst of all is electricity, speed, and television. Electric circuitry makes us feel sometimes as though we're all a giant nervous system being touched and stimulated by each other's memories, by each other's probes toward meaning. We're in each other's heads. And we can't get out. And we can't let go. And we're on this incredible and holy planet-boat that tosses and spins in the heavens. We're together whether we like it or not.

So—many of us are searching for ways to make the joining more meaningful. And Einstein has insisted his equations upon us.

We must be relative.

And we must be relevant as well.

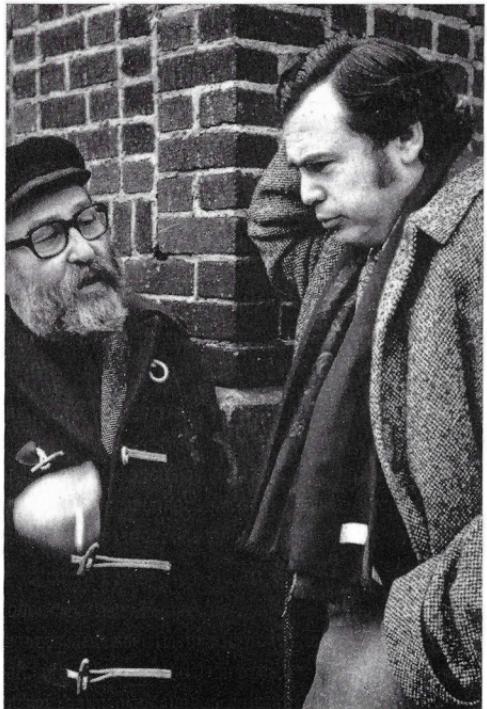
So—we search. And one of the glorious mysteries that impels us is the one that gets somehow hatched in the nervous systems of those who call themselves artists; or, rather, who let others call them that. And their search is for expression. They want to express themselves. And if they are the best of us, the rest are very fortunate. For, the artist's expression somehow helps to join us.

A medium is available. A very sophisticated, complex technology which human beings invented is available to us. It is dumb, inarticulate, contains no magic. It is available and manageable and probably stunningly beautiful when managed by graceful people who are bent upon acts of expression.

This newer medium is swift in nature. It demands a new kind of perception. It moves like light sparked into life as through a nervous prism. It is another paint, another dance, another music of sound. Another message meant to catch the quick vision of the inner eye.

It is a medium that's available for expression other than game shows, public events, journalistic word packing, theatrical scar tissue, western movies, old movies, ladies sewing circles, baby sitters, football, baseball, basketball, boxing, super salesmen and savant.

And, hopefully, what follows is about that. About this. About being human.



Portrait of Brice Howard and Paul Kaufman, 1971
Photograph by Richard Bellak

VIDEOTAPES from the National Center for Experiments in Television

Awakening (William Roarty, 1975, 12:23 mins, Color)

A subtle study in light, movement, and the body. Using expressive chiaroscuro lighting and a finely tinted image, Roarty turns the human form into a sensual landscape. Mime Noel Parenti is featured.

Charles Olson Reading (Loren Sears, 1968, 3 mins, B&W)

Using multiple layers, this short piece captures poet Charles Olson's reading of two poems. Sears creates a swirling atmosphere for the poems by applying various delay effects to the audio as well as the video. Robert Creeley and Joanne Kyger can be seen. This event was videotaped on the day Martin Luther King was murdered.

Descartes (Joanne Kyger, 1968, 11:05 mins, B&W)

A rousing, feminist-inflected poem illustrated with brilliant feed-back flourishes. Kyger performs her composition "Descartes and the Splendor Of" with a jubilance rivaled only by visual effects that appear as energy emanating from her body. One of the NCET's seminal works.

Ecotopia: A Visual Essay (Stephen Beck, Don Hallock, and Paul Kaufman, based on Ecotopia written by Ernest Callenbach, 1975, 14:20 mins, Color)

A crystallization of social theories on the environment, politics and

the use of media, this work is a pilot for an unproduced television program with the premise that in the near future the northwestern U.S. becomes a dedicated space for a radical living experiment based on ecological principles. The second half of the program (6:45 minutes) is an example of "ecotopian television", namely an abstract essay on the perils of industrialization, animated by Stephen Beck.

The Father Tapes (Don Hallock, 1972, 37:48 mins, Color)

The complete title of this work is *The Father Tapes: Video Paintings of My Father and Myself*. Using a series of photographs that chart his growth into manhood, along with complementary ones of his father, Hallock pans the photographic surface as it transmutes in color, steadily dissolving into the next. A paean to the continuity of generations.

Flour Arrangement (William Allan, 1967, 24 mins, B&W)

Using several hundred pounds of flour, Bruce Nauman creates an evanescent sculpture on the floor of a TV studio while nearby two artists (including William Allan) conduct a mock interview program. One of the rare NCET works to actually acknowledge the conventional use of television.

Golden Gate (*Philip Green, 1968, 8:28 mins, B&W*)

This work was shot on 16mm film, then transferred to tape and manipulated. It is a grand montage of the Golden Gate Bridge, adhering to the classic 60's school of architectural dissection. Green's work has a subtle anti-war theme: as an aircraft carrier passes under the bridge, Vietnamese flute music can be heard in the score.

Graham Tape Delay (*William Stewart Jones with John Graham and Richard Felciano, 1968, 34:38 mins, B&W*)

A stunning early experiment using a mechanical delay, 2" videotape running between VCRs to create a six second lapse. By observing his image on a monitor, John Graham was able to dance with himself, each progressive gesture coming six seconds later. The outcome is a wondrous multiplicity of dancers, all Graham, all mimicking the first, then evolving.

!Heimskringla! (*Tom O'Horgan, Brice Howard, Robert Zagone, 1969, 87 mins, Color*)

Paul Foster's off-off Broadway play about Leif Eriksson's discovery of America is peopled by the La Mama Theater Troupe with *Hair* director Tom O'Horgan at the helm. Foster's anti-conformist style, in which ruptures in the narrative abound and the actors take on parts regardless of gender, was matched by a "Videospace Mix" that

included hallucinatory image processing, eerie feedback effects, and keyed backgrounds.

Instruments of Violence (*Brice Howard, 1967, 17:42 mins, B&W*)

Possibly the first tape made at the NCET and one of the few with Howard's authorship. A sculptural form, reminiscent of Rosenquist's fabric constructions, is explored by the camera with occasional dissolves to instruments of violence, a gun, billy club, bullets etc. Felciano's soundtrack combines music with concrete sounds of sirens, crowd noise and other markers of emergency.

Irving Bridge (*William Gwin, 1972, 47:30 mins, Color*)

The eponymous bridge is located in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Please see the note for *Pt. Lobos State Reserve* for a fuller sense of this work.

Linearity (*Richard Felciano, 1967, 13:14 mins, B&W*)

New music composer Felciano wrote an adventurous score for harp which was recorded, then played again with additional improvisations added on the second pass. Beautiful, tightly composed camerawork fills the frame with the pluckings and reverberations of the performance. Beverly Bellows is the harpist.

Loops (*Loren Sears, 1968, 4:57 mins, Color*)

Using shockingly bright colorized imagery, metronomic pulsations,

and an aggressive sound track, *Loops* is an assault on the senses. The social context of the late 60s seems especially important here as a backdrop.

Lostine (*Willard Rosenquist, 1973, 39:30 mins, Color*)

This is Rosenquist's masterwork. Perfecting what he called "light-forms," Rosenquist employs table-top mylar objects and multiple light sources. The cameras record not a synthesized video signal, but light refracted through a spectral rainbow of sensual colors, uncanny, crystalline and dreamy.

One and One (*Loren Sears with Robert Creeley, 1968, 1:30 mins, B&W*)

Shot in profile, Creeley reads a short poem on numeric soundings from his book *Numbers* while his image is reproduced in mirrored and kaleidoscopic feedback.

Pt. Lobos State Reserve (*William Gwin, 1972, 25:46 mins, Color*)

Gwin was, before arriving at the NCET, a painter. He continued to think of his work as a form of painting in which implied "time was expressed as motion." *Pt. Lobos* began as a naturalistic montage which was then slowly, almost imperceptibly manipulated by keying different tonal properties within the frame. The shifts are languid, one painterly scene to another.

See Is Never All the Way Up (*William Roarty, 1973, 24:57 mins, Color*)

A non-figurative temporal painting that continually contests the edges of the frame. Abstract morphing shapes gather and pulse sustaining an organic tension while foregrounding and redefining the surface of television.

Self-Portrait, D-37 (*Warner Jepson, 1975, 50 mins, Color*)

Interconnecting a video synthesizer and a Buchla audio synthesizer, composer Jepson was able to modulate the texture, luminance, and chroma in direct relationship to the musical correspondences of his playing. Super saturated color and the musicality of the image make this a mesmerizing work.

Slip Back Into the Shining Sea (*Loren Sears, 1967, 11:15 mins, B&W*)

Multiple image and audio layers create a tone poem inspired by verse and (con)versation. This calming meditation was achieved via live and pre-recorded mixing improvisation. Sears, Joanne Kyger and Richard Felciano can be heard.

Suite to St. Paul (*Don Hallock, 1972, 13:30 mins, Color*)

One of the only surviving tapes made specifically for *The Videola*. Hallock's beautiful, pulsating floral tape is a homage to Paul Kaufman. Colorized images of Kaufman are merged with a revolving

field of multi-colored flowers.

Suzanne (*unknown artist, 1968, 4:20 mins, B&W*)

A performing dancer, claimed to be the "Suzanne" of Leonard Cohen fame, is keyed through a jig-saw pattern employing multiple passes. Quite complex for its time.

Three Minute Western (*William Allan, 1968, 3 mins, B&W*)

A fractured narrative spoofing the form of the television western with two men crouched in front of a fake landscape. They talk about guns, women, and rope tricks—the usual cowboy stuff.

Trio for Speakers, Screen and Viewer (*Richard Felciano, 1968, 20:34 mins, Color*)

Aside from Kovacs and Winky Dink, this is one of the first interactive television works. After an introduction about using tools, gadgets and just any old thing from around the house as music makers, the audience is given cues for categories of sound. Color patterns and Felciano's musical compositions provide the foundation for this two-way improvisation. This is also the NCET's first color tape.

Triptych (*Willard Rosenquist, 1973, 14:40 mins, Color*)

Structured in three segments, this pieces shows a further exploration of light as a soft form. Featured are Rosenquist's "lightform" arrangements as well as layered video and sound compositions.

The inclusion of images of cave paintings perhaps references the artist's sense of wonder for the medium of television just now being explored.

Untitled (*William Roarty & Don Hallock, 1972, 22 mins, Color*)

A work in two parts, this tape begins with a slow fade up from color bars then moves through electronic static to an aqueous landscape, drawing attention to subtle changes of light and hue. The second half of the piece (by Hallock) uses a mesmerizing feedback pattern, in effect a pulsating mandala. The overall sense of this subtle and elegant work is meditative.

Visit to the Center (*David Dowe, 1973, 29:08 mins, Color*)

Opening with an original colorized feedback and audio composition, this tape is a primer on the many uses of video feedback as well as an introduction to the basic philosophy of NCET. Dowe describes working with feedback as a process guided by intuition and experience. Envisioning a "feedback channel" or program before and after the nightly news, Dowe explains that it is not what information you extract from television, but that "the information you get out is the information you put in."

Works by Stephen Beck:

Stephen Beck was the perfect NCET resident—a capricious artist with the meticulous nature of an engineer. While at the Center, he produced a group of groundbreaking works and built the device needed to make them. By plumbing the chaos of random voltages, the Beck Direct Video Synthesizer (1969–1972) could compose intricately plotted geometries, hues, and patterns that sinuously unfold in time. As a result, Beck's synthesized videoworks are graceful compositions, confidently abstract and rhythmically musical. An early work, *Cosmic Portal* (1971, 31:15 mins, Color) melds organic globules and angular forms in molten fields of saturated color. Like Mondrians in motion, *Methods* (1972, 13 mins, Color) employs color blocks and surprising fragmentation in a work of elegant symmetries. Part of a five-part series, *Illuminated Music #1* (1972, 7:18 mins, Color) disperses undulating shapes in startling sequence, cadenced to the music of Yusef Lateef. *Illuminated Music #2–#5* (1973, 13:31, 13:32, 13:48, 14:24 mins, Color) continues the jazz-like spontaneity of this series, displaying the full fluidic maturity of Beck's tool-driven vision. One of the last works made at the NCET, *Video Ecotopia* (1975, 6:45 mins, Color) charts the evolution of man ascending toward post-industrial enlightenment.

Other Works by Beck:

Point of Inflection (1970, 28:22 mins, Color)
Scan (1972, 28:35 mins, Color)
Conception (1972, 5:45 mins, Color)
Day Dreams (1972, 10 mins, Color)

The Videospace Electronic Notebooks (1972–1973)

In 1972, the NCET received funding to complete twelve **Videospace Electronic Notebooks**, half-hour to hour-long programs that would formally showcase the investigations of the artists. Stephen Beck's **Illuminated Music** and William Gwin's **Pt. Lobos State Reserve** are two examples of these pedagogical efforts.

Within this series, Brice Howard completed five installments, shot at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. Seated in a circle with students from the university, Howard, in freeform fashion, discussed the major philosophical and aesthetic explorations of the NCET, illustrating them with works by the artists. Throughout these sessions, colorization and overlay effects are imposed to simulate aspects of the discussion. *Notebook #1* addresses the aesthetic surface and time as a compositional element. Included are: Green's **Golden Gate**, Zagone's **Ace of Cups** and Rosenquist's "lightforms."

Notebook #2 looks at the relationship of language to image. Included are: Kyger's *Descartes* and *I Nevertheless*, extensive footage of Charles Olson reading (processed by Loren Sears), and Brown and Green's *Finding the Chanterelle*. *Notebook #3* pursues the kinaesthetics of the surface and matters of temporality. Included is: Jones and Felciano's *Graham Tape Delay*. *Notebook #4* tracks the connections between visual experience and auditory reception. Included are: Felciano's *Linearity* and *Trio for Speakers, Screen and Viewer*. *Notebook #5* explores the unification of the aesthetic surface and time. Included is: Gwin's *Irving Bridge*.

Many of the videotapes from the National Center for Experiments in Television are available through the Video Data Bank, 37 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, IL, 60603, 312/345-3550; info@vdb.org

The majority of the above videoworks have musical scores composed and performed by either Richard Felciano or Warner Jepson.

RIGHT:

The Videola re-installed at the Berkeley Art Museum, Fall, 2000

Photograph by Ben Blackwell

Former NCET Artists-in-Residence at *Videospace* opening, Fall, 2000, left to right: Joanne Kyger, Loren Sears, Paul Kaufman, Ron Pellegrino (intern), Warner Jepson, Stephen Beck, Woody Vasulka [front], Rick Davis, Penny Dhaemer, Allan Hinderstein (intern), William Roarty, Richard Felciano
Photograph by Don Hallock



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Front cover: *Self-Portraits, D-38* by Warner Jepson

P 1, 14, and 15:

Stephen Beck's work, processed through Don Hallock's *The Videola*

Photographs by Penny Dhaemer

Back cover: Quotes from *Videospace* by Brice Howard

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Written, compiled, and edited by Steve Seid and Maria Troy.

Designed by Mary Kate Murphy.

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Dedicated to the memory of those NCET artists and
affiliates who are no longer with us: William Gwin,
Rita Howard, Willard Rosenquist, and Ann Turner.

Willard Rosenquist, and Ann Turner.

Process can be described as the movement of the unformed toward form.

Process is one thing.

But to experience process is another.

**If any medium is capable of this mastery, the television medium seems uniquely qualified,
only if we get out of theater space, however, and into videospace.**