WORLD WIDE VIDEO
AN INTER WE W WITH TOM VAN VLIET
By Johan Pijnappel

Johan Plinappel: *What was your first contact with video art?*

Tom van Vilet: What fascinated me 20 years ago was the combination of the moving image and sound. Film was very narrative, whereas there was something elusive about video; you never quite knew what was going to happen. McLuhan' s expression, ' The medium is the message, was intriguing. Anyone could use video, it was just that easy. The sense of anarchy, which video still has, was very attractive.

At the end of the 60s, the Kijkhuis, a club in The Hague, was exploring the alliance between video and film. Meatball was also there and was somehow connected with the internationally known exhibition Sonsbeek buiten de Perken' (Sonsbeek Beyond the Bounds), which had included the first experiments with video. In Amsterdam there was the club of Jack More and the Videoheads which later became the Bank. Freaking with video machines, it grewout of the hippy movement. This is how my thinking about video evolved. Then there was the cross pollination between the visual arts, video, performance and other more socially and politically engaged art.

There was a time when engaged art was not so in, certainly not in the European art world in the 80s. Now, particularly in the United States and the former Russian satellite countries, there is a strong push in this direction. Aesthetics have long since been abandoned.This renewal of engaged art parallelsthe developments in the early years of video art. Currently, only the performance art movement, in which video played a strong role, is no longer involved.

– *Who were the engaged people in the early years ?*

The Lijnbaancentrum in Rotterdam, which later became the Rotterdam Video Centre, made socially involved productions and exhibitions. Felix Valk brought in the first video machines. In England there was a fairly strong movement with small clubs like The Fantasy Factory. Furthermore, many performance artists, including Marina Abramovic and U lay, used video to record their work.

At the time, some people were already working with transparency, with light. For example, the American artist Dan Graham combined architecture and sheets of glass for an exhibition in the Netherlands. How to view videos was presented in Graham' s 1986 installation *Design for Interior Showing Video Tapes.*

The first video art works weren' t made by typical video artists, but by individuals far better known as visual artists, such as Nam June Paik and Wolf Vostell. They were followed by a generation of artists who had never painted or sculpted; who also worked with the moving image and didn' tfall back upon other forms of expression. The generation now emerging is again distancing itself somewhat from video images and developing images with computers instead. You notice quite a few male artists working with the computer. This was not the case in the video world, where there were a substantial number of women, far more than in film making and painting. This may have been because the conventions were not yet fixed. In this sense, video was democratic. In relation to film, video encouraged experimentation and allowed greater autonomy. Incidentally, there are a lot more women among curators of moving images.

– *What does video mean to you?*

I am increasingly intrigued by the nature of light. Video is primarily light with movement and information. Nan Hoover, whose video installations I greatly admire, first worked almost exclusively with slides and video screens. More recently she has been making charcoal drawings. While this seems primitive after all the years she spent working with video, the drawings clearly reveal her ongoing concern with light. Or take James Turrell, for example, whose studio is in a crater in Arizona. For an exhibition of his work in Madrid he made a space dome with a bed in it. As the bed slowly rose, the intensity of the light was changed electronically. The artist Gary Hill has a strong visual feeling for the projection of images in relation to literature. In an installation in the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven he projected texts onto the pages of blankbooks.

– *How has the use of video in art changed for the viewer in the past 20 years.*

We began at the World Wide Video Centre by collecting video tapes. It was actually a kind of postponed viewing. We even had television recordings. This must sound strange now since everyone has their own video recorder, but at the time no one did. Oncewewrotetheword ' video' inwhite letterson a window pane. No one knew what it meant; the word video simply did not exist. The idea of taking a tape, placing it in a machine, recording whatever you want

OPPOSITE AND OVERLE
Justin Bennett, Dervish, *1993, World Wide Video Centre, The Hague*

and being able to play it back instantly struck people as unusual, if not crazy. This is hard to imagine now. Still, many people don' t know what video actually is. In art, video is applied in a completely different way than in the corner videotheque. At our centre, people could view productions upon request. In this way a small group of viewers evolved. The collection of videotapes slowly grew through purchases and copies left behind by visiting artists, and now com-prises 5,000 titles. A special aspect of the centre is that it began by showing what was on hand, and as a result of increased demand it grew organically into a distribution centre.

_ *How did the World Wide Video Festival originate?*

Atter setting up the distribution branch ot the centre, I realised that there was a need for larger international meeting places for viewing these sorts of production. In 1979 I attended one of the first video festivals, which was held in Rome. The first World Wide Video Festival, which lasted for two or three days, actually got off the ground in 1982. Our building was really small and we had to borrow the education bus of the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague to get the art onto the sidewalk. The bus was parked in front of the World Wide Video Centre and housed Michel Cardena' s video installation with the billiard balls. Now it would probably be impossible to do something like this given the context of the tiny work rooms where 60 people stood looking at a small screen, but it really was charming. The first festival was a big rowdy happening. The building was bursting at the seams. You had no idea who would show up and it was surprising that so many people came.

Among the artists there were Nam June Paik; Dara Birnbaum, whose works had a strong social dimension; and Dan Reeves, who worked out his syndromes from the Vietnam War using delayed images and toys. Elsa Stanfield and Madelon Hooy-kaas both showed installations and video tapes; and Nan Hoover' s work strove for an aesthetic effect. There was also documentary work on the squatter' s movement.

_ *What significance does the World Wide Video Festival have for artists now?*

From a happening with a strongly informative source, over the years the festival has grown into a meeting place where a very international public comes to see what' s new. Initially, it presented a survey of developments that had taken place in the previous three or four years. Now it shows the work of the past year. It has become more multi-faceted with the inclusion of installations spread over all sorts of locations. Larger works are in The Hague Gemeentemuseum and in empty buildings, depending on the spirit of the artwork. The

importance of the festival now for artists is that they get something out of it in the form of an exhibition or distribution.

I' ve always looked tor new ways ot presenting this art form. But how do you exhibit the content, which changes constantly? Well, take the television set. People watch it in the privacy of their homes. So, I simply bought air time on cable and television. Museums are built for paintings but since everyone has a television and chair, you can show video work right in people' s homes.

_ *How did video evolve into three-dimensional art?*

The use of videos in installations dramatically alters the impact of a given environment. Initial attempts at creating video sculptures incorporated videos in objects. An installation always changes and its surroundings determine its effect. The works of Shigeko Kubota recently exhibited in the Stedellik Museum in Amsterdam are by and large installations with a few sculptures. They acquire their final form through the etfects of light and their setting.

_ *What is the museum world' s influence on video art?*

Since museums are frequently the organisations interested in mounting exhibitions, they have a great impact on how artists work. Video is a relatively expensive art form. Video installations fit into muse-ums better than video tapes, which because of their frequently narrative character can be more easily shown on television. Though most museums still have auditoriums equipped with film projectors, nevertheless regular film showings, including experi-mental films and particularly artfilms, are history. Why does the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam reject Fellini but welcome Jeff Koons? The answer is that for art museums the moving image plays a subordi-nate role. This is fairly surprising considering how very important moving images are to man' s under-standing of life.

While there are museums which, in fact, have video collections, they tend to treat them somewhat differently to installations. After all, you can display installations in the same way that you can hang paintings on the wall. Paintings are generally unique objects, whereas videos can be duplicated almost endlessly. This last aspect naturally makes it a difficult medium for the art trade. However, there was a short-lived trend in autographed videotapes. While it' s fun to have a signed video, it is totally inappropri-ate because of this element of duplication. Many artists weren' t happy with this and with a view to sales, gallery owners concurred.

_ *Has the appreciation of museums for video tapes in signed, limited editions changed?*

Films have vanished from museums and video tapes will experience a similar fate. After all, selecting videos is extremely time consuming. If you compare this selection process with that for paintings, you can see far more paintings in a day then video tapes,

some of which last up to 60 minutes; and then you've only seen them oncel Bear in mind that many video tapes can only really be understood after multiple viewings. Video tapes have a somewhat uncomfortable position in museums. For example, video showing rooms are frequently located near the toilets or below the stairs. An exception to this rule is the new museum in Bonn which houses the Oppenheimer Collection. There, video tapes are treated as though they were priceless paintings or drawings.

Lately, I find myself wondering whether what is presented in museums is dete rmined by the content of an artist' s work, an artist' s reputation or style, or by the particular tradition of the museum.

What strikes me at the video exhibitions is that museum visitors spend a long time looking intently at moving pictures, in fact, far longer than at a painting. You also notice that certain artists take into account the rhythm of the viewer when creating a video artwork. Thus, they develop video installations bearing in mind the period of time the museum public will spend observing the work of art. Fortunately, there are also some obstinate artists who force you to sit for two hours in order to truly see the entire installation. Examples are Tony Oursier whose layered installations reveal many stories and Jean Michel Basqulat, whose paintings require a relatively long time to ' read' .

‒ For quite some time the reach of video art, which originated in a climate of opposition, remained limited. Now there is a growing number of large media manifestations, such as the Mediale *in Hamburg, and video art appears to be becoming a mature and accepted art form. Will this medium come even closer to people?*

Some 20,000 to 30,000 visitors attended exhibitions such as Passages ' Images in Paris, and Video Positive in the Tate Gallery in Liverpool. Ten years ago, no one would have believed this. It is now clear that a radical development has taken place. In the future, more and more information will be transmitted via satellites. Art installations are still very physical things.

As far as the artists are concerned, they are far more involved in what is going on in the world now, such as environmental issues and the political situation in the Middle East and in Eastern Europe. There is some resistance to the established order, but since we no longer have any idea what exactly the status quo is, this resistance takes on a different meaning. Actually, it' s no longer a matter of being for or against something. It is extremely interesting to see how the media and especially artists respond to the situation in Eastern Europe. Also, many people nowadays travel throughout the world with small Hi-8 cameras.

‒ Can video transmissions via satellite bring about a form of direct democracy?

For me, satellites are a means of dissemination. Democracy is being able to see different things. This is particularly so when art can be viewed by satellite. In that sense, art is democratic. However, I don' tthink that bringing a truck load of art to people where they live would cause them to have an ' experience' . In that sense it has nothing to do with democracy. It' s importantthat moving images be spread per satellite, in the same way that museums serve democracy by being everywhere.

‒ Do you think that the image in a video tape impresses people differently than that in a painting?

Yes, I do. Because a video presents moving images and has a particular time span, the mind apprehends it differently. I see paintings in my surroundings all day long, while I look at video images only for short periods of time. Yet the moods of video works that have really captivated me always linger in my mind.

‒ What is the relationship between technology and art in video art?

As a result of technological developments much has changed in the past 15 years, including video art. Initially one worked with a video camera and a screen, but using a large, flat image was impossible. Then the video projector was developed, which some thought only served to enlarge the image as in film. Of course, that' s not how it works. The medium is determined by those who work in it. This is how you can see that video has developed a different language. In the beginning you worked with numerous screens, while now the choices, the materials available for presenting the work, are far greater.

The first LCD projectors, which operated like slide projectors with moving images, based on the triple-tube projector, were developed several years ago. They allow artists to work more easily in space and set the mood. The link between the new technology and the visual arts also yields very specific applications. An example of this is the LCD screen, which is not encased in a box and only shows moving images. Some artists are gaining increasing mastery of the tools, such as Gary Hill, who has been using television as a video projector. Thus, technology provides artists with all kinds of new possibilities and, in turn, artists open up technology because they think differently about what you can do with specific equipment.

‒ One of your dreams was to work with a new way of presenting video art on a large architectural scale. Since then you have discovered Priva-Lite.

Priva-Lite interests me because I kept thinking, why do you have to have a box around a screen? You should be able to hook up a video plug directly to a

window in order to project a moving image onto it.   After talking about this for many years, I discovered

Priva-Lite. The moment you turn on the electricity in such a window with a LCD film, you get a diffuse image that filters the light which can serve as a transparent projection screen. You can use it as a new medium: one moment the screen is visible, and the next it vanishes. You can show a moving image and let it suddenly disappear or keep several windows transparent and place an installation behind them, using other windows as a projection screen. Priva-Lite lets you develop very intense three-dimensional images. The current system cannot yet be connected to a video plug and therefore you still have to project it onto the window; but that doesn't take away from the concept.

Because of Priva-Lite's possibility for large applications, moving images can be introduced into the public arena to enliven the city scene. Until now video has usually been set inside a building. I think it would be exciting to experiment with artists versed in various disciplines, such as film and architecture, as well as with video artists, such as Bill Viola, and with the Ponton Media Art Lab to develop this medium's possibilities for art in spatial surroundings.

How do you perceive the future of video?

The fact that we still displace ourselves physically, that we still go to and have places where we physically look at art, is rather primitive. I am sure that the entire context of art is going to change. Why was it first in caves, and why did it then move from caves to museums? Man's development is related to the idea, the source of inspiration, that you feel through art. Whether art reaches you by satellite or in your dreams

it's all going to happen. Certain forms of traditional art will, of course, endure, just as books have survived video tape. People will always want to be able to touch things physically, just as Joseph Beuys melted fatwith his body heat. The remaining question is what place will the virtual world occupy in that spectrum. Video art plays an important role within the development of visual thought processes.

Video Centre in The Hague,
OPPOSITE: *Sabina de
Chalendar,* Les tendus de
neige (Snow stretch),
1992

JOHN HANHARDT
EXPANDED FORMS, NO TES TO WARDS A HIS TORY

Since its emergence more than 20 years ago, video art has made a vital and important contribution to American culture. Its beginnings can be traced to the early 1960s and Wolf Vostell's and Nam June Paik's incorporation of the television set into their artworks; however, it was in the middle of that decade, when the Sony Corporation introduced into the American market its portable video recorder, that video became more widespread as an art form. This Portapark system released the medium from the economic, ideological and aesthetic confines of the television studio and placed it in the hands of individual artists. The immediate appeal of video was the ease and flexibility of its operation. It did not require crews and specialists to operate; one could work with it by oneself in the studio/loft and out-of-doors; what was being recorded by the camera on videotape could immediately be seen on the monitor's screen. The electronic recording capability of video was such that, unlike film, there was no wait for the videotape to be processed before seeing what had been shot with the camera. The subsequent rapid development of video technology – the introduction of colour, more sophisticated editing systems, improved cameras – in part accounts for video's dramatic rise in such a short time. But there was also the fact that artists already working in other art forms were attracted to the medium. They came to video with ideas which were further elaborated by the capacities of this new medium, and which, in turn, helped shape video's aesthetic discourse.

Thus, at mid-century, there was introduced a new electronic moving image medium that was to challenge the mechanical and industrial technology of the motion picture system as the dominant means of image recording and representation. Video was situated on the cutting edge of the art of the time and the new technologies coming to change our culture. However, the difference between, and relationship of, video to broadcast television was to have a profound influence on the history of both. By the 1950s, network television had become the most pervasive mass communications technology. The statistics of how many people owned televisions and the amount of time they spent in front of their sets was staggering. According to many sociologists, television – the most powerful popular entertainment commodity – had transformed our society into a 'TV culture'. It was the format of television viewing within the home and the nature of its programming that video artists were to confront in attempting to gain serious attention and recognition for their work. Broadcast television was not something we watched to see either a new visual art form or a serious means of narrative expression. The very conditions of viewing television in the home were full of contradictions: one sat in a well-lit room facing a small screen surrounded with visual and aural distractions: the programming itself was constantly interrupted by commercials that were, in terms of their placement and impact, what television was actually delivering to the viewer. Television became a marketing tool, representing the most effective means to create and promote a need for new products. Thus the television narrative was structured to demand little in the way of concentration from the viewer. Rather than giving the programme their full attention, viewers were supposed to be attracted to the commercials. Thus, these 30 or 60 second spots often became the most interesting, imaginative 'programmes' on television. Alternative forms of programming were available in the United States on the Public Broadcasting System and on cable; however, the overwhelming presence of commercial TV conditioned the viewer to expect from the medium the lowest common denominator. This attitude was reinforced by the technology of television as it was made available to the viewer as consumer. It was not the communications medium it claimed to be, but rather, a one-way channel, broadcasting programmes that admitted no innovation. The production process was invisible to the viewer (we did not grow up with home video tapes as we did with home movies) and removed from his or her control.

The artists who pioneered the development of video as an art form – Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell, Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, Richard Serra, Nancy Holt, Peter Campus, Juan Downey, Frank Gillette, Ira Schneider, among others came to the medium from other fields

such as music, performance, dance, and sculpture. Some were interested in subverting this dominant model of television while others wanted to see theirwork distributed on television. The context in which they worked was the art world, and they were ultimately attracted to the conceptual properties of the medium, to the fact that within its time-based image recording capacities one could explore visual and sound relationships within a whole new set of options. These options were in part guided by the intertextual nature of the medium: while exploring its unique capacities for recording and transforming imagery, artists could combine video with other art

OPPOSITE: Nam June Paji Video Garden, *1974-78*

forms. Not only was video a two-dimensional screen of black and white (and later colour) sequences, but one could write and compose for the soundtrack. Artists could also direct the camera at themselves and express and explore personal narratives and body art; they could take it out-of-doors and record and interpret events and create video landscapes. The image transformation properties of video came in part from the very nature of the medium: one could create effects and later, with the development of the colouriser and video synthesiser, transform these pre-recorded images into wholly abstract sequences.

The question 'What is video art?' seems to imply that the medium must somehow legitimise itself as an art form. But the real question is not whether video is an art form but how video changes definitions of art. Walter Benjamin's influential essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' stated the same proposition in examining the challenge of photography and film in the later 19th and 20th centuries. As with any new medium, the traditions resist a new technology that appears to simply record reality rather than transform it through an artist's vision or aesthetic. However, the argument that film, and by extension video, simply reproduces what is before the camera has been proven false. By extension, video art is ontologically different from film and the other visual arts: yet, as I noted, it does not exist in a vacuum unaffected by the aesthetic concerns of painting, sculpture, performance art, film, music, theatre, and dance. It appropriates aspects of these forms and transforms them into a richly suggestive and complex iconography of genres and styles. At present, the discourse called video art confronts the text of the art object, which is codified strictly by a market created by other definitions and art forms. Video is on the 'cutting edge' of expression, as new technologies open up possibilities for image making.

Video art is not only single-channel videotapes created for gallery and/or broadcast, It also has its expanded forms: sculptural installation pieces that engage multimedia and formal issues within gallery spaces. It is on this work that I would like to focus, because it addresses a set of issues and questions intrinsic to our understanding of video's creative use, and it re-examines the basic ontology of video, its distinction from television, and its intertextual nature. The 11 pieces I will discuss represent historically the forms that were part of video art from its beginning. They demonstrate how flexible video is both in terms of its technology and of how we can conceptualise with it. In these projects a whole series of issues is raised regarding the relationship of the image (the monitor's screen) to the monitor itself (the television set). Both the screen and its container are taken as integral elements in a whole: that whole reshapes video into a plastic form that suggests the full experience of the medium. Thi is also demonstrated in that work which employs ojected video where the monitor as a physical pr sence is erased and the image becomes an enla ged surface.

Certainly the key figure in the history of video art is Nam June Paik, who was given a comprehensive retrospective exhibition in 1982 at the Whitney Museum of American Art and whose work has explored all areas and forms of video. In 1963, in an exhibition entitled 'Exposition of Music-Electronic Television', at the Galerie Parnass, Paik included prepared televisions – sets whose components had been altered to produce unexpected effects – as part of his performance and installation. It was the first time Paik appropriated television technology and it signalled the beginning of a lifelong effort to deconstruct and demystify television. With sets randomly distributed in all positions throughout the gallery, each television became an instrument, removed from its customary context, handled and manipulated in a direct and physical way. The exteriors were marked up and cluttered with bottles and other objects, while chairs were scattered about the space. The scanning mechanism in the television was also manipulated, affecting the reception of broadcast images. Paik's prepared televisions were his first video sculptures. Just like the prepared pianos, Paik's first television sculptures displayed the residues of use (and abuse), and were radically transformed into sculptural objects. In the process, Paik changed our perception of television as a cultural form. The origin of Paik's attitude towards both the high art instrument of the piano and the popular cultural icon of the television comes in part from Fluxus. Like Wolf Vostell, who also incorporated television in his contribution to Allan Kaprow's Yam Festival in New York in 1963, Paik shared in Fluxus' aggressive attack on all forms and attitudes of culture.

The transformation of television into a post-modern art form came about through Paik's understanding of the social presence and meaning of television. To Paik the popular perception of television as only a mass commodity of entertainment, or as simply a radio with pictures, was shortsighted and he set out as an artist both to demystify and change it. As he expressed it in his writings, teaching, and later, videotapes, television represented a new communications technology of enormous potential and signalled the beginning of a post-

industrial age where manufacturing, the organisation of society, and the making of art would be transformed. Paik viewed the electronic medium of television as a discourse functioning in social, cultural, political, and economic ways. Like the computer and other developments in science, it initiated a change similar in magnitude to the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century. His art was to reflect radically on that discourse and create a complex aesthetic text that would reconceive television through an array of formal strategies. Television became the centre of Paik's art through which he explored visual, performance, and sculptural ideas.

One of the key works Paik developed in 1965 was the *Magnet TV,* shown the same year at his exhibition at the New School for Social Research in New York City. A large magnet was placed on the exterior of a

including the videotape *Chott el-Djerid* (1979) and *Hatsu Yume* (1981), Viola's attention to the mysterious in the ordinary and the sublime in the natural environment displays a potent visual sensibility and ability to create images that synthesise subject matter and video technique.

Concurrent with the projects which employed live close circuit video were multi-monitor and multi-channel installations in which artists utilised the unique properties of video to compose visual interpretations of places. One of the seminal works of this form of video is Beryl Korot's Dachau (1975). A two-channel, four-monitor installation, it presented, in black and white videotape, a meditation on the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau. The silent images conveyed in its subtly unfolding perspectives and shifting points of view the empty shell of the architecture of this institution of death. A powerful landscape of desolation is pictured in Korot's work which effectively uses the ability to articulate shifting points of view and imagery between monitors. Time and the representational image are fused here as Dachau's history is evoked through the presence of the place today whose walls echo the death of the past. Korot's decision to mask the monitor's dials makes the surface of the monitor's screen the focus of our attention as we strip that image of its connotations of being a television set.

Shigeko Kubota's *Three Mountains* (1977-79), employs a subtle interpretation and treatment of the monitor within an allegorical sculptural form. Three *Mountains* presents an elaboration of the form/face of a mountain. Within this angular structure are fitted monitor screens whose surfaces and images are distended by mirrors reflecting into a variety of prismatic patterns the coloured images of desert and mountain landscapes of the American Southwest. Situated in front of the two larger pieces is a truncated triangular shape. By leaning forward and looking into its centre, the viewer can observe a pool of video images. This action by the viewer is similar to looking over a rocky ledge or into a stream, but in this instance one can see rectangles of video imagery that are reflected among actual rocks placed on the mirrored surface.

The strength of these structures rests partly on their scale and physical angularity which does not imitate mountains but creates a subtle metaphorical experience through the video fissures in the wood's surface. As in a Japanese or Romantic landscape these pieces conjure up visages of terrains past and present, with openings like crystalline deposits at the base of the mountains in which we see evoked the video impressions of the landscape. Kubota refers in her writing to the Indian and Oriental land bridge between the Asian and North American continents as a source of spiritual and linguistic interrelationship between herself and the Native Americans of the Southwest. Looking at this video sculpture one perceives in action the dialectical process of two cultures joined in a total sculptural gestalt between the technology of video images and the material structures of the monitors.

The last two artists represent in their very different work how recent video installation projects are at once engaging the latest technologies of video production techniques and capabilities while focusing on issues central to video art making throughout its history. Dara Birnbaum's *PM Magazine* (1982) uses commercial television as a source of imagery and articulates a powerful critique of TV's meaning and hidden agenda. Mary Lucier's *Ohio at Giverny* (1983) is a lyrical and eloquent landscape which fuses her birthplace in Ohio to Monet's garden in Giverny, France. Two sites are joined into a visually compelling evocation of place and time. Birnbaum creates a vivid fusion of TV commercials and popular news programming. News and entertainment become one in a synthesised and dialectical approach to the seductive, and subliminally sexist subtext of commercial TV.

Lucier places her monitors into a series, framed by a walled surface which masks the dials of the monitors and juxtaposes several different-sized screens in different positions as two channels of video are played through them. A soundtrack composed by Earl Howard resonates through the space as the colour and composition of the images are joined in a subtle use of editing and image processing. Flowers, fields, streets, and houses are joined in a work of hypnotic power. *Ohio at Giverny* uses movement and time, through the juxtaposition of monitors and image sequences, to create a genuine video landscape that ultimately confronts and challenges conventional notions of painting and sculpture.

In Dara Birnbaum's videotapes, which are the basis of the *PM Magazine* installation, she refashions television's popular images through a variety of editing and image processing strategies that expose the hidden meanings within narrative and commercial programmes. The three panels into which the monitors are inserted present a static image which in its juxtaposition with the moving video image, constitutes a layered text of meanings. Each panel represents a photographic blow-up of a scene from the videotapes playing on the monitors. The pulsating action of the commercial and programme introduction shifts the point of

view as the illusory two-dimensional space of the photographs is contrasted with that of the videotape. The kaleidoscopic content and juxtaposition of sound and word to image, both frozen and moving, not only create a complex visual surface, but expose the dark side of broadcast television. *PM Magazine* th ngages the issues of representation in narra e and dvertising.

The individ projects described briefly here outlinethef st20 years of video art' s history. As notes towards history of video as installation they demonst ate the quality and variety of work that has been cr ated in the United States. In beginning to chart vid o art' s distinctive features we must recognise that any artists and individual artworks define

and determine that history. In commenting on these as the post-industrial, technologised age creates a works, we can begin to identify a body of work that, new paradigm for our culture. Just as the industrial although it has yet to be fully examined, is already revolution introduced photography and film, so the challengingthecriticalandhistoricalinterpretationof electronic, technologised age has brought forth 20th-century art. It is a medium that is constantly video, Its future will affect how we perceive the world evolving and changing through the aesthetics of its around us and ultimately how we refashion and artists and the development of its technologies. The preserve it. The artist, forever participating in chart-homeviewerandthegallerygoerwillbeconfrontinga ing change, will be creating new works from the changing home space and museum/exhibition space resources of this extraordinary medium of video

LUDWIG SEYFARTH AND KAREL DUDESEK
PONTON EUROPEAN MEDIA ART LAB

Piazza Virtuale is a television broadcast developed by Van Gogh TV which makes it possible to participate directly from one's home. An international telecommunications network converges on a computer-controlled TV picture. Phone voices, mailbox texts, pictures from public entry points, telefax messages transmitted directly to the screen as well as pictures and sounds provided by videophone transmission from 25 places in Europe, Japan and America fill a computer-generated frame. From this, thrilling, chaotic, swift, slow, hectic, calm, boring or incomprehensible constellations of events result.

The Television Image as a Multimedia Interface

More and more computers have interfaces that are understandable without extensive technological know-how. There are pages, columns, windows, a wastepaper basket – an imaginary office is set up, a virtual workplace. Even though nothree-dimensional graphics or video sequences appear, even though no music resounds, when the senses are charmed in such a way that the 'feuiletonists' in the computer journals conjure up Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* — the most simple interface still is *multimedia:* text and picture, symbols comprehensible on account of our daily experiences.

Just like the computer screen, the TV screen is a multimedia interface – but usually not a USER interface. In contrast to the computer, the activities of the user or rather spectator, is restricted to remote control. The fact that back channel' is missing is not due to the medium itself, but to 40 years of television policy which denies the spectators' presence in television and at the same time prevents television from being experienced as the normal thing it is.

Since the back channel for the spectator is not installed in the TV set, Van Gogh TV establishes it via phone. Due to the various possibilities offered by telecommunications and the combination of TV set-computer-phone, a television picture was created making an interactive USER INTERFACE available to the spectator.

The spectator uses his television in a completely normal way, like he uses the phone or his PC. It is, however, not a virtual office but a public space which emerges, a place for communication, for dialogue. This is the keynote of Piazza Virtuale: talking, strolling, flirting, stopping, walking on, buying, selling, making music, painting .

The Language of the Market Place

The Russian literary scientist Michail Bakhtin has shown that the dialogue is a more original form of literature than the monologue. The dialogue is most common in medieval and Renaissance folk culture which was opposed to the purity, decency and order of aristocratic culture.

The venue of folk culture is above all the market place, the first interactive user interface. The language is unofficial, impure speech which is ironic, ridicules, exaggerates, turns upside down – never a monologue, but constant interaction, shrill, colourful, loud. The market place has a firm place in the art and literature of the early modern times, eg in Rabelais' work. In the 18th and 19th centuries the market place was less and less frequently used for literary scenes or became the object of detached observation as exemplified in ETA Hoffmann's short story *Des Vetters Eckfensterof* 1822.

The Perspective of the Peep.Box

The cousin who is paralysed and therefore confined to the house, uses his opera glasses to look out of the window at the market place. The narrator tries to do the same asthe cousin, but only sees an undifferentiated milling crowd. He is lacking what the cousin has, ie an eye that really looks'.

The cousin observes the crowd on the place and 'his opera glasses make genre scenes stand out to him' as Walter Benjamin puts it. He takes delight in 'living pictures'; the market is his television', his window from the living room to the world in which he can only participate in such a way due to his disease.

Having contact with the world outside red ed to eyesight, however, is not the special p pective of diseased individuals. It is the object a perception training which fixes man to a rectan e to be looked at

– at the latest with the rationalist rame view' of the Enlightenment. In his basic stu y on 'frame view' August Lange wrote in 1934, 'Pe ception and imagination take place within the fra e of a small,

inner stage, the head is, so to speak a, erspective peep-box which only lets us view a sinai, strongly framed apperception field and in front of ose trimmed opening the outer world or imagination ı rts pictures and lets them pass by' .

This peep-box perspective is followed by

Hoffmann' s cousin when he looks through his glasses, even though the ascetic slide show of the 18th century has become a rather film-like animation: ' The optical box becomes the symbol of life in its colourful shifting of

scenes which pass by the philosophical observer' ₋moving, but formed as genre picture.

The exchangeability of the concepts outer world' and imagination' or inner world points to the ambivalence of inside and outside which runs through the entire 19th century. The act of looking out to the distance is imitated in the interior.

The Panorama
The back figures in the paintings by Caspar David Friedrich are the paragon of those looking out to the distance. Positioned intheforeground they look atthe landscape in front of them. Direct access to it, however, is not possible; an insuperable trench separates foreground and background.

Just like the market-place, the observer appropriates nature only as a picture of itself. This is also the mode of perceiving the panorama, the ' first optical mass medium in a strict sense of the work' and the most popular leisure activity of the 19th century. In a circular building they were able to look at gigantic, detailed panoramic paintings showing landscapes, towns or battles from a platform. Friedrich' s *Wanderer Gber das Nebelmeer* (at the Hamburger Kunsthalle) could be a panorama visitor as well.

The panoramas did not move and therefore it was not very arduous for the eye to detect genre scenes. The market place in Hoffmann' s short story, too, is referred to as a panorama' at first and small, framed pictures are isolated from the entire panorama.

The shock experience, ' as if one' s eyelids had been cut off' , which Heinrich von Kleist describes in Freidrich' s famous *Mdnch am* Meerin 1810, has been banished by this internalised frame view. But the need for a 1:1 representation of the world always aimed at bigness and in the history of photography, too, the striving for big pictures preceded the massive spreading of small pictures, the universe of the picture preceded the universe of the pictures.

The panorama was the virtual reality of the 19th century. They pretended that the painting was infinite and thus, took the place of reality. The visitors took delight in travelling to Jerusalem, the Alps or Africa without having to go there. Already here the first ' mind travels' took place which Peter Weibel admires in telecommunications. In contrast to Stanislaw Lem' s figures, however, the panorama visitors still found the exit of the panorama and hence of fiction.

The frame view was only seemingly terminated by the panorama since the gigantic paintings were always framed by the outer wall of the panorama building. From inside any view to the outer world was avoided. The ' television of the 19th century' however, also shut off motion and all sense-data except for the visual ones. The enthusiasm of the masses can only beexplained bythefactthatthe panoramaoptimised the way of external observation prevailing at that time:
the matter-of-fact, sober, detached, scientific view, the ' positivism' on which the economy and natural sciences of the 19th century were based.

But there is something dead about this stiffness
and silence. The panorama is an ' island of the dead' just like Bdcklin' s painting which, not by chance, especially stimulated the urge of contemporary composers (eg, Max Reger and Sergei Rachmaninov) for bringing paintings to sounding life. But the atmospheric, synaesthetic tone poems of late Romanticism were paralleled by exact trials to capture the lacking complexity of experience in the medium.

Auditive Mosaic Instead of Perspective:
Modern Art and the Television Image
Paul C6zanne replaced the visual peep-box per-spective by a construction of ' atmosphere' . His paintings come as close to the flicker of electronic images as does the pointillism of Seurat, whose point-by-point technique seems to anticipate the grid of the television image. Cubism, too, wants to bring the onlooker into the

painting. By means of painting, a resonating space shall be created just like the sound box of the frequently depicted musical instruments. For Marshall McLuhan, Cubism is the perfect example for the end of the 'Gutenberg galaxy' in art which was determined by the linearity of and the overemphasis on eyesight: 'Cubism represents interior and exterior, top, bottom, back, front and all the rest in two dimensions and thus drops the illusion of perspective in favour of directly, sensually grasping the whole'. The stress on tactility, simultaneity and linearity as well as the renunciation of detailed representation are essential features ofthe television picture for McLuhan:

'Like all other forms of mosaics, television, too, does not know the third dimension, but it can be copied onto it'. Unlike film, television offers no naturalistic pictures rich in detail, but a 'mosaic' lacking details which have to be added by the spectator. According to McLuhan, television is a 'cool medium inviting participation'. Therefore, the television image would be closer, for instance, to the medieval way of representation than to the naturalistic, perspective pictures of modern times. The naturalistic portrayal 'heats' eyesight – to the disadvantage of the interactive interplay of all senses. In 1964 McLuhan's analysis of television was based, of course, on a resolution standard which is comparable to today's videotape transmissions. Would he have liked HDTV at all? McLuhan's thesis that 'improved' television was not television any more still merits consideration. The development of television with better and better resolutions does not make a cool, interactive medium a hot, detached one which above all addresses eyesight. Aesthetically speaking, it belongs to the 19th century in this respect. McLuhan considered television an 'interactive' participatory medium meaning inner duplication and not real interventions by the spectator. He considered taking part in the creative process television entertainment at its best. He praised Glenn Gould's recording sessions of piano concertos and Igor Stravinsky at the orchestral rehearsal as exemplary entertainment broadcasts.

The director of the McLuhan Programme at the University of Toronto, Derrick de Kerckhove, sees th

inner duplication of television primarily on an unconscious level: 'TV talks to the body, not to the mind' since the interval between stimulus and reaction required for conscious apperception collapsed with television, as the German media scientist Hertha Sturm stated. Even if the broadcast apparently does not move the spectator there are nevertheless, still strong physical reactions.

Like movies, television functions only by going below a perception threshold. At a close look, the picture is not a representation and the smaller the points of which the picture is composed, the more perfect it appears. Just because we are constantly adding, we perceive, but in contrast to paintings we are doing it unconsciously.

Television as a Peep-Box

Despite all attempts to see the nature of television in various concepts of interactivity, the peep-box persists: we see the pictures of the world move past – everyday family life in soap operas, the Gulf War, Yugoslavia, strip-tease in German living rooms, tennis an an ideally easy-to-grasp genre sport.

In terms of cultural history, television is a child of the 19th century regarding its ability to give the private sphere a 'window to the world' and its delight in bringing the world to the home, even if it is just the rear window'. Hoffmann's model of a handicapped person looking out of the window who makes up coherent contexts by keenly observing fragments of reality occurs again in Hitchcock's film *Rear Window* of 1955. What else is the yard but television, the various windows but various programmes, the glass but the remote control? The window to a public place becomes the window to the backyard, to the private sphere of the neighbours. The onlooker becomes a Peeping Tom, a voyeur, an observer of a revelation process. The object of these revelations is always privacy, the intimate sphere, human dignity pressed by television. In Italy, for example, it is common practice to broadcast from private homes. The TV station invades everything. Here, too, Kerckhove's saying 'TV watches you' applies. Van Gogh TV takes the opposite direction: the spectator shall have access to the TV station from his private sphere without his human right to his room being infringed.

In the voyeuristic perspective, however, the desire of the 19th century for a 1:1 copy of the world has survived until today. If we want to follow Jean Baudrillard, the hyperrealistic observation fetishism can be considered the expulsion of erotics by means of a universal pornographisation. The link between mimesis and voyeurism was highlighted by Marcel Duchamp in his late work *Etant Donn~s* (1946-66, Philadelphia Museum of Art); through peep-holes in a real wooden door we see a

female corpse lying in a landscape holding a gas-lamp. Isn't this work, by which Duchamp erected a final monument to the peep-box perspective and the imitation aesthetics, an allegory to television as a peep-hole to the world?

In the SOs, when the new peep-box was sold as a

representative piece of furniture, it went by such names as 'Leonardo', 'Michelangelo', 'Raffael de luxe' or 'Raffael special'. In museums and galleries the television set lives on as furniture in the art branch of 'video sculpture' while it increasingly loses importance in the private sphere 'due to the integration of monitors into the most simple household appliances.' When there are broadcasts from many monitors and frequently un-noticed, de Kerckhove's dictum, 'You don't watch TV, TV watches you' applies even more. The spectator is the target of a permanent broadcast. The television set as a cosily flickering space of light, as a modern open fire has been discarded, except for video installations. Fabrizic Plessi has sea waves rolling on monitors and contrasts the hectic video-clip aesthetics by calm nature rhythms. To render more complex experiences possible, Van Gogh TV does not refer to a 'natural' organism but to the 'biotapes' of metropoles. The reaction to the attack by the televi sion stations is not going back to nature, but opening the back channel. Thus, the spectator can counter the 'chocs' (W Benjamin) which constantly act on him.

Television in the Public Space
The public created by this differs from the public television theatres of the 30s to the 50s, where the television pictures were projected just like movies.

channels. The visible surfaces, however, are not large screens but the television sets at private homes. The visible screen surface is a programme ARCHITECTURE which is ready for the actions of the spectators. Except for live transmissions via video phone, it has been prepared entirely by computer. Filmed reality is replaced by different image fields. The different entry modes— modern, fax, video phone

—appear side by side. Entirely digital production makes it possible to fully automate broadcasting which only has to be monitored by one person. This idea of digital live television is faced by a different conception, which has been integrated by Piazza Virtuale and —despite Venturi — links television to the real public space: the establishment of public entry points in the urban area which allow for direct entry into the programme by picture and sound. The transmission from real places to the telecommunication network was effected above

The National Socialists, especially, did not aim at developing a private TV set but established public TV sites in order to be able to control the impact on the audience in a better way. Large public screens in the urban area, which used to form part of the stock of negative social utopias for a long time, already determine the face of cities quite naturally in Japan, the country where HDTV originated. The public space is replaced by the 'public picture' (Paul Virillo). The city penetrated by electronic networks gets its electronic 'design' —such an outfit would probably be becoming to a town like Kassel which is marked by faceless post-war architecture.

Television Instead of Public Space
The 'fall and end of public life' (Richard Sennett) cannot be stopped by large HDTV screens. Since television existed, the public space was no longer needed, said the architect Robert Venturi and thus freed his brotherhood from the task of designing the square, the Piazza. Maybe he was right. 'Post-modern' attempts at reviving the square as a (multi) cultural meeting place have not really proved successful. Charles Moore's 'Piazza dItalia' lives on as an icon of post-modern architecture —copied innumerable times —but not as a living centre of New Orleans' Italian quarter. The square which is full of quotations from the history of architecture appears unreal fictitious — not like a piazza as a meeting point, as a place for communication which has been the centre of urban life for centuries. The Piazza Virtuale takes Venturi's dictum literally: the piazza is moved from the public spaces to television, the paths in the city become the network of electronic communication

all via video phone from international 'piazzettas'. The idea of a local meeting point, which was realised in Kassel by means of only one entry point, can be extended to a regional network by setting up several entry points, which correspond to broadcasting in regional cable networks. After promoting the idea on internationality by the Kassel project, the further development will concentrate more on local aspects so that the utilisation of the programme by certain social, ethnic and cultural groups is promoted. Thus, the multicultural idea, which became manifest in transmissions from Riga, Moscow, Sloven a, Italy or Japan, is focused on smaller living spaces. The real-time live broadcast transfers the idea of 1:1 representations to the level of time. The piazza does not reflect itself as a naturalistic cyberspace mimesis into which you can virtually stroll. For Van Gogh TV 'virtual reality' is not the perfect imitation of an environment by which cyberspace creations are still often obliged to

adhere to the panorama arrangement. For Van Gogh TV 'virtual reality', telepresence is the sum of everyday electronic communication processes.

Interactive Television in Context

Soon, almost everybody will use a PC and television will be part of the domestic multimedia system. But Van Gogh TV deliberately disassociates itself from other attempts at 'interactively' utilising television connected to the computer as a multimedia space.

In the USA we can ascertain two trends of turning conventional TV entertainment interactive by means of network systems: on the one hand the 'film at the push of a button', ie the possibility to select among a great variety of feature films just like in a video-tape library and not depending on prefabricated programmes; on the other hand the feeding of computer games into networks, above all of Nintendo/Sega games which have become an important means of training social roles for children and youth.

No matter whether it's the spectator of the movies at home or the player of a fantasy game – interactivity enhances fictional entertainment. Van Gogh TV opts

for a third alternative (and these three possibilities probably describe television of the future in essence): the linking of real situations of people who are in completely different social and geographical situations. In the medium an exchange between different cultural environments can take place which makes it clear and communicable that entirely disparate things exist side by side in our 'global village' (McLuhan). While various persons can participate in a 'reality' or 'fantasy world' in a fantasy game and in cyberspace, Van Gogh TV aims at the opposite: it is not *entering* a common context but coming out of differing contexts into a common 'framework' made possible by networking.

The point is not to experience a common 'naturalistic' environment which is artificial for exactly that reason. The pseudo-presence created by the networks is not disguised aesthetically but is the object of an artistic

process as a structure.

Within the context of art, Piazza Virtuale was presented at Documenta 9 in 1992. It was still difficult to recognise its artistic nature—even though Claudius Seidi wrote weeks before broadcasting began: 'Piazza Virtuale is engaged in the deconstruction of television, it mocks at its laws just like deconstructivist architecture, mocks at the law of gravity – and already for that reason it is a work of art at the height of our post-modern times.'

The language of the Piazza is ambiguous, just like the language of the market place as described by Michail Bakhtin. As a new 'folk art' – a term Van Gogh TV likes to use – interactive television builds a bridge back to the rich experience and resonating space of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Maybe the overlap of many channels, which is frequently considered annoying and sometimes inarticulate is not the 'background noise of our society' stated by Seidl, but the return of an audio-visual complexity suppressed by rationalism.

To see Piazza Virtuale as a 'work of art at the height of our post-modern times' is especially difficult for the art constituency. The possibilities of participation are considered too rudimentary. Interactivity, getting directly involved, does not seem to be very fascinating. People have got used to the reflection offered by works of art, to the observing and reflecting which directs action in order to participate in the programme. Hence, they comprehend a painting or a statue by touching and feeling it – an urge which has been abandoned by the intellectual as naive and atavistic for a long time.

From Frame to Space

The television pictures of Piazza Virtuale, however, also offer the passive spectator sufficient reasons for reflecting on the theory of art. Besides Seidl's assignment to deconstructivism, the division of the screen into several fields where mailbox texts, contributions provided by public entry points or via video phone, telex messages or computer animations appear side by side, can also be seen in the tradition

VITO ACCONCI
TELEVISION, FURNITURE AND SCULPTURE
The Room With The American View

*T*elevision space is fish bowl space. There's a world going on in there: that exclamation might be made by a child-person looking, from out of the large world he/she is in, into the small world behind either the aquarium-glass or the TV-screen. In the case of TV, the world is on something, on-screen, not (as in the case of the aquarium) in something, in the bowl; but, unlike movies, the TV screen isn't all, there's something behind it, something underneath it all ‒ the TV tube lies behind the screen. We know that the screen is only the facade of the box; even now that the screen can be drastically reduced in size ‒ as in the two-inch watchman' ‒ there still has to be room for the TV tube, the TV box still has to have depth, which remains the largest dimension of the box. The TV screen might bethought of as the window into the box ‒ except that we probably can't, in 1984, be innocent enough to believe we're really looking through a window, really peering inside the box. Rather, the screen might be seen as some kind of distorting, inside-out mirror, which the power inside the box holds up to the world at large. Inside the box, the world ‒ or the power-to-be-a-world is condensed: it's the size of a conven-tional package, a gift, it's power made handleable. The viewer might be led to believe, then, that the world is in his or her hands.

The close-up literalises television. The close-up face is the same size as the TV screen; the face on-screen, then, is a fact, just as the TV set is a fact in the living-room. Whereas on a movie-screen a close-up face is at least 15 times the size of an actual face (so that the face on film is a landscape, like John Wayne's face, a face to walk around on ‒ the face is distant, out-of-reach, like a landscape outside a train window, untouchable, like Greta Garbo's face; or the face is a monument or a monster— it comes up from the ground or the grave, it comes from another time), on a TV-screen a close-up face is approximately the same size as an actual face: his/her' face and my' face are face-to-face ‒ we're in the same world ‒ this is here and now. The viewer and the face on-screen are comfortable with each other; the news from that face, then, is assumed, taken as fact. But then second thoughts might come up: if this is a face, where's the body? The face on-screen is a

detached head: a head-without-a-body-without-organs. This is pure mind, without a body to ground it; this is a head that floats, and can't (won't) come down to earth. The news from that face is news from nowhere.

Watching television is like staring into a fireplace,
or looking at a lightbulb. The viewer is heated' : information has been passed. 'I'm not myself', the viewer might justifiably say, Welt, who are you then? You are what you see. There's no time to think; information has already been implanted in the brain. The viewer has television inside the self, like a cancer (the disease that has become the dominant disease of the time, the time in which television has become the dominant medium); the person is 'replaced', displaced' (as in The *Invasion of the Body Snatchers).* Television is a rehearsal for the time when human beings no longer need to have bodies. The way a movie projector shoots images onto a movie-screen, the television set 'shoots' images into the viewer: the viewer functions as the screen. With television, a person finally is enabled to become a 'model person'
‒ but what the person is a model of is non-self. The person functions as a 'screen', a simulation, of self. Television confirms the diagnosis that the boundaries between inside and outside are blurred: the diagnosis that 'self' is an out-dated concept. (Saying the word 'myself' has been reassuring: it announces possession, claims something to grab onto; writing the word 'I', in English, is similar to writing the numeral 'I' ll ‒ it gives the illusion of placement in a hierarchy.)

Television broadcasts the same programme, all over a particular country, at the same time. One world is transported into different worlds: each different world (different household) is kept in place (in step, in line, in time) by the importation of the same ('universal') world. When a TV set, in a particular household, is turned off, that world is lying in wait, the world-within-the-TV-set ready to erupt, to flash on 'in the middle of things' (the plot has already been going on without us). 'It' is always there, though we might not be yet, we might not be watching. But people in some other house are already watching: 'it' has plenty of time, plenty of viewers already ‒ and, anyway, we'll probably

come around to watch sooner or later. This wave of sameness, about to enter everywhere, could be seen either as ' frightening' (as a loss of individuality: all those supposedly particular ' I' s' about to be entered by ' it') or as assuring' (as a unification of people in commu y, or as something to fall back on:

regularity in the idst of psychological and sociological variables) One way television, in its early days, was made t appear ' reassuring' by means of its housing: the introduction of the TV console ₋ the TV appeared in the home as furniture, like any other furniture. The non-physicality of television was made physical; the r was grounded and brought down to

earth. This was something we could 'feel at home with'. The sameness imported into the home did not have to be seen as anonymity; rather, it could be seen as the sameness of furniture, the sameness of clothing and fashion, a sign of comfort and equality.

Looked at from the viewpoint of art, furniture is analogous to sculpture. Just as furniture fits into a room, and takes up floor-space inside a house, sculpture fits into and takes up space in an art-exhibition area. Take this 'thing': it isn't as big as a room, so it's only furniture; it isn't as big as architecture, so it's only sculpture. In its early days, the TV set took, inside the house, the position of specialised furniture: the position of sculpture. It was like other furniture, but there were differences: it couldn't be sat in, like a chair; it couldn't be sat at, like a table; part of the console could, as a by-product, function like a cabinet, for storage, but not the TV-part itself. Compared to other furniture, the television set couldn't be used, it could only be looked at; it had the uselessness that one associates with art. A person could walk around the TV set, the way a person could walk around a sculpture; but, in order to see what was being transmitted, the person would have to look at it frontally (the way a sculpture is looked at in photographs: photographs being the most convenient way a sculpture becomes known, since a sculpture is harder to move than a painting – the world of art distribution, the world of art-books, is predicated on frontality and therefore on painting). But recently there's been a change in the shape of television: the mode of television is no longer the unmovable console but the portable. What was analogous to sculpture is now, at first glance, more analogous to painting: the TV set can be moved from corner to bed to kitchen-counter, the way a painting can be moved from wall to wall. But the analogy doesn't hold: the TV set is too 'thick', too deep, to be a painting (though soon-to-be-possible and maybe already existent in privileged cases, is the dream of the paper-thin TV). At the moment, anyway, the conventional TV set is neither painting nor sculpture: television evades the world of art—television is too much science to be art.

The connotation of television is: science and technology. In the 50s, this spelled terror to the American home: science belonged to the Russians, the Russians had put the first person into space, outer space was the Russians' territory *(of* science-fiction movies of that time – like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and The *Thing* – which equated the unknown with the 'Red Menace', the Communist spy). In an atmosphere like that, bringing science into the home in the shape of a bare TV, space would have been like inviting to dinner a composite of

Dr Frankenstein and Kim Philby. So science had to be domesticated: turned into furniture, it was nothing to be afraid of, it was something to relax with. But then things changed; by 1969, the first person to step on the moon was an American, the American flag was implanted on the moon. Science wasn't frightening anymore, the heavens were brought down to (an American) earth, the future was now. More recently, therefore, there hasn't been the need to camouflage the science-look of television inside the hand-crafted-looking console; the hand-crafted look could be seen as the old world, the European world, dragging the American back, whereas the American now was allowed to be a cowboy again – and the cowboy travelled spare and lean, with tenuous connections to 'home', the cowboy was the 'Swinging Single'. The new spareness and leanness could be exemplified in the sleekness of the television set; the new TV set has been allowed, encouraged, to announce its hi-tech background. Television, now, is science-fiction dropped into the middle of your home: television (as well as stereo equipment, etc) is science turned into a pet. The viewer/consumer can have part of what NASA has, what Bell Telephone Labs have: science becomes democratised.

Assume that there are two kinds of power: economic power and sexual power. What new TV equipment does, now, is camouflage economic power: it gives the buyer the illusion that economic power is in his/her hands – after all, the buyer can prove it, the buyer can hold the state-of-the-art in a box (as if looking at himself/herself in a photograph, like other people, in other photographs, holding the state-of-the-art in a box). And holding it, and looking at it later in the privacy of his/her home, and making that home a show-place where equipment can be shown off to friends – all this is a way of draining sexual power. Because television is the absence of the body; television signifies the body-become-electronics, the body-without-sex. This sexlessness, then, is placed in the home, in exactly those spots where the body runs rampant: the woman watches the TV set in the kitchen, as she prepares food – the couple watches the TV set at the foot of their bed, right before sexual intercourse. The sexlessness of the television set functions as a sign, a reminder; it induces a nostalgia not so much for the past as for a fiction of the future: 'If only we didn't need to eat', 'If only we didn't desire to fuck.

Since television represents an absence, a difference, it has to be seen as at least slightly out-of-place in the home. It has to look more 'hi-tech' than anything else in the home. Science,

though democratised, still flaunts its future (science, talkin democracy, announces capitalism): the cu nt TV set is being outdated at the very momen ' s looked at _ the fact that it' s so advanced says lily that ' you ain' t seen nothin' yet' . The viewer, the uyer, owns only a piece of the future: the viewer, th buyer, has only a model, only a toy version, of tech ological development. Science maintains itself as graspable, while at the same time promising itself a ' dreams money can buy' . The toy version of scienc announces that matter is governable, with money; s secret message is: once matter is governed, then se>-wjll be governed along with it. Having money, then, might e the opposite of the possibility of ' buying sex' ; having money might be a matter of 'buying out' sex, getting rid of sex, the way

the business person gets rid of the opposition. Toy-science allows a person in the role of television-viewer to practise other roles: practise for a role in the world of the rich, and in the world of no-body.

The TV-consumer practises the role of the TV producer. The means is the field of home-made video. Theoretically, cable-TV is public-access TV ‒anyone can have a programme on cable-television. The connotation of home-made video, put on cable-television is: this is television from one home to another ‒ television like a cookbook, like a recipe handed down from grandmother. The proof of this is:
you can see the seams show—this is television with its pants down. Home-made television presents itself as evidence and prophecy: this is both the past and the future of television. On the one hand, this is television on-the-cheap, before corporations and advertising slicked it up (but this past is a simulated past: TV came into existence only by means of the money provided by corporations and advertising). On the other hand, this is television by the people and for the people (but this is an abstact
future, without real-time political determinants).

Art-video might be placed as a sub-category of home-made video. Or it might be placed on a sliding scale somewhere between home-made video on the one side and regular-broadcast television on the other side. Wherever it is located, theoretically, art-video is grounded, practically, in America. The fact is:
getting hold of video equipment at all, not to mention getting hold of more sophisticated video-equipment, is easier for artists living in America. Making the choice to do video, then, is the privilege of someone who participates in a power culture. Video-art might be considered as American art's last-ditch attempt to retain hegemony (an hegemony that, furthermore, could be retained by employing the style of an American tradition: a push towards more and more airiness, a push for purity, like chasing after Moby Dick), before Europe fought back with neo-expressionism. Neo-expressionism was, for one thing, a last desperate attempt to retain the body in an electronic world where the body was in the process of disappearing ‒in this sense, neo-expressionism is like jogging, or aerobic dancing. But jogging, and aerobic-dancing, are also badges, proofs of income and class: the signs of a rising young professional upper-middle class. So neo-expressionism, just as it brought back the body to a world-at-large that was becoming body-less, brought back 'body', substantiveness, to art at the time it was talked about as being objectless. Neo-expressionism courted collectors by giving them something they could, at the same time, put their

minds to and put their hands on: neo-expressionism confirmed the body-consciousness of a wealthy class and, at the same time, gave collectors something to do again, something to collect. The desperate American attempt at hegemony, then, advertising video-art as the product, was still-born: it concentrated too much on production and not enough on accumulation ‒ since video-art was inherently
multiple, it couldn't attract the collector, who needed to acquire something unique. The video-artist, born in a situation of power,had no power of his/her own, that could go outside the self. Like a spoiled child, then, the video-artist had the luxury of playing at power: the video-artist could take on all the roles in a solitary world. On the one hand, video-art could claim the advantage of the context of regular-broadcast television (since this is the tool of big business, video-art must have power and influence); on the other hand, at the same time, video-art could claim the advantage of home-made video (since the video-artist isn't part of the commercial television system, the video-artist must be the people's artist).

The sensibility drawn to regular-broadcast television is willing to give up the name 'artist' and slide off into the category of 'TV producer'. This type of sensibility shows self-sufficiency: it doesn't need the name 'art' to justify one's own existence ‒ art is seen as, on the one hand, a bag of tricks (skills, crafts) and, on the other hand, an attitude, a piloting device, that can be applied to any number of roles ('there's no art, we just try to do things the best way we can'). This type of sensibility is comfortable with the notions of summary' and 'condensation', and doesn't feel the need for 'experience' (this sensibility would, probably, prefer driving to walking, choose the aeroplane over the railroad). In a world before video (or, more precisely, further back than that: in a world before mass-media), this type of sensibility would have turned, probably ‒ for lack of anything else ‒to painting: this type of sensibility feels comfortable with walls, and with standing in front of a wall ‒it feels no need for a floor to walk around on. At the same time, this sensibility feels uncomfortable with walls con-fined to one kind of place; between the time of the dominance of painting and the time of the dominance of television, this sensibility would be drawn to posters on the sides of buildings or to (miniature) walls that can be turned, like comic-books.

The alternative sensibility ‒ that of the video-artist who turns towards home-made video ‒ might leave the arena (of distribution) altogether, and withdraw into the gallery/museum. Video, there, is shown as an exhibit (like a wild-animal

exhibit): video is brought into the museum and displayed as an artifact of the 20th c ntury —the way period furniture, for example, is d played elsewhere in the museum. The sensibility dr wn to the gallery/museum is unsure of itself: it eeds the terms 'art' and 'artist' to fall back on. This ensibility has to 'gather in' rather than 'spread out'; ~ nything, from any field, can be used for art-doing, ut whatever is used has to be imported into the

tegory of art (rather than allowing the category of ar to dissipate itself into other fields). This type of sen ility, in a time before video (before mass media), ould have turned, probably, towards sculpture: this sens7bilityrneeds a space to be in, needs something tangible to grab on to. This sculpturesensibility might begin by having a tendency to go outside, where it could have the space of town and

country to work in – but, once outside, that sensibility is in danger of sliding into the category of 'architecture'. To stop that slide, and keep for itself the name 'art', this sensibility has to resort to an architecture that already exists. This sensibility needs an enclosure into which something can be fit, like squeezing a figure into an alcove. Inside the gallery/museum, the video-monitor is placed on a pedestal or base. The video situation is transformed into a theatre situation:

inside a room, the TV monitor is set up in front of rows of seats – the lights are out (video shoots back into the past, into the world of movies). This situation might cause the sculpture-sensibility to have nagging doubts: it has kept the name 'artist' only to lose the name sculptor' – 'sculpture' slips into 'performance art'. To preserve the term 'sculpture', this type of sensibility might have to resort to the paradox of 'video installation'.

Video-installation is the conjunction of opposites (or, to put it another way: video-installation is like having your cake and eating it, too). On the one hand, 'installation' places an art-work in a specific site, for a specific time (a specific duration and also, possibly, a specific historic time). On the other hand, 'video' (with its consequences followed through: video broadcast on television) is placeless: at least, its place can't be determined – there's no way of knowing the particular look of all those millions of homes that receive the TV broadcast. Video-installation, then, places placelessness; video-installation is an attempt to stop time. The urge towards video-installation might be nostalgic: it takes aeroplane travel, where all you can see is sky, and imposes onto it the landscape incidents of a railroad journey. Video-installation returns the TV set to the domain of furniture; the TV set, in the gallery/museum, is surrounded by the sculptural apparatus of the installation, the way the TV set, in the home, is surrounded bythefurnishings of the room. The difference is: in the home, the TV set is assumed as a home-companion, almost unnoticed, a household pet that can be handled and kicked around; the viewer doesn't have to keep his/her eyes focused on the TV screen, the TV set remains on while the viewer (the home-body) comes and goes, the viewer goes to get something in the kitchen and brings it back to the TV set. Once a TV set, however, is placed in a sculpture-installation, the TV set tends to dominate; the TV set acts as a target –the rest of the installation functions as a display-device, a support-structure for the light on the screen (the viewer stares into the television set, as if staring into a fireplace). The rest of the installation is in danger of fading away; the rest of the installation is the

past that upholds the future (as embodied in the TV set), but the future wins. Video-installation starts out by dealing with a whole-system, a whole space; but the field, the ground, disappears in favour of the 'point', the TV set. The situation seems similar to wanting what you can't have; now that the TV set is camouflaged by the apparatus of an installation, an

extra effort is made to find it, to 'get the point'. The reason for this might be that the conventional location for a television-set is in the home; when it is come upon elsewhere, whether inside a gallery/museum or outside, in a store-window or a supermarket, the viewer is stopped in his/her tracks: the situation is like that of a visitor from another planet happening upon a TV set – only in this case it is the 'other planet' (the home, the living-room) that comes upon the viewer, out of the privacy of his/her home and in public. The viewer, seeing the TV set, is brought back home – and here, abstractly, 'home' reads the way it could never be allowed to read when surrounded by the customs of living-room furniture: 'home' means 'resting place', 'the final resting place', land of the numb/still/dead.

If the electronics of TV makes it comparable to science fiction, then the sculpture-part of a video-installation brings the science-fiction down to earth:

there's a mix of genres – the genre of science-fiction is brought together with the genre of the *film* noir the gangster flick. The way a viewer moves around a sculpture, the detective moves over the street-scape looking for clues, finding the body (and, after that, trying to find the agent that caused the body to be considered no longer a 'person' but only a 'body'). The detective-story might drift: off into another genre, that of the horror-movie—the body becomes the body that couldn't, wouldn't, die. If television posits the body-that-disappears-into-thin-air, then sculpture counters that by positing the body-that-can't-die. Sculpture, while refusing the urge for the supernatural that painting reveals, betrays the urge for something even more unnatural: the urge for permanence, the urge to be the un-dead. Sculpture, placed under the cover of its father/mother architecture, yearns, finally, to be experienced; it can't always depend on being photographed and documented, because then it would lose its category – sculpture drifts off into painting or photography. This doesn't mean that the only way each person knows sculpture is by experiencing it; of course a person can know it through photographs – but that knowledge is sufficient only because it includes the knowledge that, somewhere, the sculpture is already being experienced omebody else. (It's not enough to know at somebody *already has* experienced it,

in the ast, now that the sculpture no longer exists: in t at case, sculpture drifts off into the realm of ' archa ology' .) Sculpture, in order to be experienced, has t be preserved; it has to exist the way a city exists, lo g enough to be taken for granted. The sculptor, th n, whatever other intentions he/she might claim have, is always engaged in an act of conservatism: ough the means might be the apparent flaunting of tra ions, the end is the most traditional, the most conservati of all making the being that refuses to die. The sculptor, then, who tries to thicken this plot, the sculptor who imports video into his/her object-installation, might be a person who' s afraid of being out-dated, a person embarassed about clinging so hard to the past.