THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

M.F.A. Graduating Paper

An Accompaniment to the Thesis Exhibition:

"Signalled. Sighted. Marked."

BY

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ART

CALGARY, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 1987

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ISBN 0-315-38052-7

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Signalled. Signed. Marked." submitted by Robert Milthorp in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

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ABSTRACT

"Signalled. Sighted. Marked." is the title of the main installation work in this exhibition. There is also an unnamed integrated media installation component and an exhibition of independently viewed videotapes. These works are conceptually linked to "Signalled. Sighted. Marked." and consequently have been included under this heading in both the exhibition and the supporting paper. All of the works contain a strong element of audio and video technology combined with sculptural and photographic components.

This paper will discuss origins of integrated media works and the development of electronic media in art. It will also discuss the main content of my work as it relates to "establishing identity" with reference to art historical precedents, and relevant philosophical and critical notions. The discussion will include a description and analysis of the exhibition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would be difficult to adequately recognize the contributions John Will has made to my artistic development in his role as supervisor. His support and interest have been invaluable, his dedication to his own art has served as inspiration. His humour, comradeship and discussions over the shuffleboard have rounded my academic experience. I would also like to sincerely thank Jed Irwin and Paul Woodrow for their critical support as part of my advisory committee. Acknowledgement is also due to Professors Alice Mansell and Ray Arnatt for their insightfulness and contributions as interim members of my committee.

Particular thanks are offered to those individuals who participated in my videotapes. They provided the essential humanity upon which my work depends.

The nature of my work demanded significant technical support which was provided by Jack Filuk and many other individuals in the Communications Media Department of the University of Calgary. The artist run video centre "EM Media" in Calgary has provided both material and peer support.

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Chapter One

Introduction

How does the artist, in a predominantly middle-class urban environment characterized by deluges of all too often undifferentiated information, produce? Are new images possible or is the task simply to reshuffle the old? How can the artist dig beneath the glut of information, social myths and imagery to glimpse and record personal insights? One possible response might be to cut away the chaff, focus upon the essential, allow the "hidden truths" to be revealed. My own choice has been to incorporate a wide range of images and stimuli paralleling contemporary life experience, in the hope of discovering some connective patterns in the chaos, or even simply appreciating the chaos more. This approach implies that truths and the magic of artistic revelation lie in ordinary experience rather than in mystical realms. This paper reflects that point of view.

The work that I am exhibiting takes two conceptually linked forms. One part is comprised of videotapes which are intended to be viewed as works in their own right. The other, an integrated media installation, is composed of a number of elements in various media including videotape. Discussion of this latter form of work requires a focus not only upon the media used but also upon the formal strategies of installation and upon the underlying aesthetic principles which tie the

work together.

On the surface, integrated media installation and electronic media arts are distinct phenomena of Late Modern and contemporary art practice. Video as an art form might be considered unique and unprecedented considering television technology's brief forty five year existence. Installation, a broad term encompassing the arrangement of various kinds of media, singular or mixed, has only become established in mainstream Western art practice since the pluralist nineteen seventies. Nevertheless art history is rich in precedents for multi media works, and in the twentieth century there are clear antecedents for video art in film, theatre, performance and radio arts.

I have chosen to discuss the history and development of video art with an emphasis upon video's capacity to record or to present live or basically unaltered perceptual (visual and auditory) reality. This select focus upon video as a documentary medium excludes other purely technological approaches such as electronic image generation and digital animation.

Issues of sculptural forms, photographic images and sound elements are subsumed under the discussion of installation and video as it addresses three dimensional space and the nature of the recorded image.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

Before embarking on the task of analysis I would like to introduce some formal and philosophic notions which tie integrated media installation and video art to a common base. In discussing theories and criticism my intention is not to join the discourse directly, as that is not my task. However, for a practicing artist critical theory provides a basis for self appraisal and may itself become raw material and inspiration for the work. In this sense it has relevance even when selectively understood or reinterpreted. It too is part of the information milieu within which the artist works. According to the philosopher Michel Foucault, culture produces its values and history through just such a creative process and "truth" if there is such a thing can be evoked in alternative scenarios, as his books illustrate. (viz. History of Madness: 1961). This concept, rooted in Nietzschean philosophy, structural linguistics, post-war literary criticism and post-Freudian psychoanalysis (see amongst others: Claude Levi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes), focuses upon the production of meaning and its significance as the characteristic function of culture (and presumeably art).

> There is nothing outside the text.
> (Derrida, as quoted in Megill: 1985, 257).

Time and Space

Some commonalities of video and media installations are clear. Integrated media work may well contain a video element while alternatively such an installation might consist entirely of video components. Video with sound and image is in some sense an example of integrated media in its own right. However, the significant and essential characteristic of installation and video art is their relation to time, space and the viewer. More traditional arts such as painting and sculpture, which occasionally require only a single viewpoint, offer a discrete image. Video and installation, like film, require the viewer to experience the work by assembling a sequential image from more or less indeterminate instants in time and space. Movement which engenders time and change is in these cases essential to perception. There is no fixed image. Space and the forms within it are apprehended and interpreted as a function of time and the cognitive process. In video works this occurs within a "believable" space established by the mechanical authority of the photographic image with its point for point, apparently unmediated, reproduction of the visible world. Manipulating this potential, early filmmakers such as Eisenstein and Vertov employed the montage of dramatically conflicting images to stimulate the viewer's emotional responses.

> ...the event, as it is unfolded on the screen according to a timetable of the running of this or that passion, thrown

> back from the screen, involves the emotions of the spectator according to the same timetable, arousing in him the same tangle of passions which originally designed the compositional scheme of the work. (Eisenstein: 1949, 153).

Oppositional Models

In the tradition of Eisenstein a strategy of my work is to exploit dissonance and juxtapositions of opposites. Apart from the direct use of oppositions in montage and surrealistic works, most art seems to rely on the interplay between real and illusive, fact and fiction, which are axiomatic to representation. Video and installation art can mimic the experience of real space and time closely. In contemporary culture, communication media has been used very successfully to substitute believable images for real experience leading such social philosophers as Jean Beaudrillard to postulate that all experiences are "simulated" and mediated by determinants external to the individual (Beaudrillard: 1983). The potential of mass media forms used in art is that they can present a potent critical focus upon this simulated reality when mimicry becomes overt and contradicts anticipated experience. Marshall McLuhan states:

> One of the peculiarities of art is to serve as an anti-environment, a probe that makes the environment visible...The artist provides us with anti-environments that enable us to see the environment. Such anti-environmental means of perception must be constantly renewed in order to be efficacious...In an age of accelerated change, the need to perceive the environment becomes urgent.

> Acceleration also makes such perception of the environment more possible. Was it not Bertrand Russell who said that if the bath water got only half a degree warmer every hour, we would never know when to scream? New environments reset our sensory thresholds. These in turn, alter our outlook and expectations. (McLuhan in Kostelanetz, ed.: 1978, 83)

While this reference to accelerated change endorses the "Modernist" quest for innovation it is also a recognition of the power of information media technology in contemporary society. "Post-Modern" artists (e.g. Sherrie Levine, Barbara Kruger, Hans Haacke) who are interested in the deconstruction of cultural values employ the forms and images of popular culture such as photography, film and television while trying to show its flaws through parody and irony.

Another time related peculiarity of installation and video works is that they are necessarily experienced in a certain though not always predetermined sequence analogous to narrative form. One form builds upon or elaborates upon the next. These narratives can be open and malleable, adopting or abandonning "rational" time as a device to heighten the viewer's critical senses. In a comment upon contemporary sculpture in her book "Passages in Modern Sculpture" which is relevant to installation and video art, Rosalind Krauss remarks:

> Into any spatial organization there will be folded an implicit statement about the nature of temporal experience. The history of modern sculpture is incomplete without

> discussion of the temporal consequences of a particular arrangement of form. Indeed, the history of modern sculpture coincides with the development of two bodies of thought, phenomenology and structural linguistics, in which meaning is understood to depend on the way that any form of being contains the latent experience of its opposite: simultaneity always containing an explicit experience of sequence. One of the striking aspects of modern sculpture is the way in which it manifests its maker's growing awareness that sculpture is a medium peculiarly located at the juncture between stillness and motion, time arrested and time passing. From this tension, which defines the very condition of sculpture, comes its enormous expressive power.(Krauss: 1977, pp.4-5)

Video is both time-based and fixed in time and space (abstracted from reality). Installation also permits an abstraction of space and time through the arrangement of objects and information. These related notions of McLuhan and Krauss spotlight video and integrated media installation's like but unlike relationship to real time and experience. Video and installation work do not represent a view of reality so much as they simulate the conditions of an alternative reality.

Formation of Meaning and Cultural Context

The role of the viewer in this alternative reality is very important and has both aesthetic and ethical implications. The power of the moving picture medium, be it film or video is in its approximation of the real life experience. It moves, it occupies time, it records point for

point images of the complex world we live in. The artist gains a new dimension to manipulate: time. Just as geometric perspective establishes space in the picture plane, time can provide its own temporal perspective ordering events, sequences, durations.(Deleuze: 1987). Media time can convincingly represent real time just as abstract perspective represents space. It can be used to foreshorten or stretch time or even to provide multiple points of temporal perspective by means of consecutive narrative or flashback. The seductiveness of the moving picture lends itself to authoritarian purposes as film theorist Laura Mulvey pointed out in her essay "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema" (Screen 16, #3: 1975, 6-18). Applying a revised (Jacques Lacan) version of Freudian psychoanalysis to Feminist criticism, Mulvey explains how in traditional film structure the camera becomes the surrogate eyes of the male viewer whose object is the female, passive and viewed. Both male and female roles are reinforced with little possibility of critical appraisal by the viewer. The transience of the image and sensory richness of the medium militate against detachment, often despite the nature of the content, a phenomenon easily noted in front of the typical family TV. The moral responsibility of the artist to the viewer in this case becomes very clear.

At the same time an enormous potential for interaction

with the audience is opened up. The viewer experiences the images and events as they happen over time, rather than in retrospect like the frozen, timeless quality of a photograph or painting. The artist can therefore involve and implicate the viewer in the "becoming" of the work. Composing and manipulating images in rhythms, layers, textures, the artist simulates the fluidity and ephemeral nature of consciousness itself, setting up a situation in which aesthetic experience can occur within the mind of the viewer. Bill Viola, a contemporary video artist, describes his work in this way and compares it to music and thought both of which exist only in time.(quoted in Parachute 48: 1986, 51-52). The focus of the artist can shift from the presentation of the completed image, allowing the viewer through his/her experience more power to complete the meaning of the work. The artist comes closer to Roland Barthes' notion of the bricoleur, the artist as an intuitive builder rather than an inspired creator. The building blocks, like the archetypes of Jungian collective consciousness, are present in the artist's society. The significance of the work depends greatly upon the sensitivity of the artist to the social/psychological realities of his or her world.

The history of cultural and artistic "modernism" is inseparable from an ambition to restore a sense of greater relevancy of art to life as the pre-twentieth century hierarchies of cultural values disintegrated. A contemporary

aspect of this ambition to resolve art and life, part of the discourse of "post-modernism", is a desire to account for difference, to allow the "other's" experience to displace the authority of authorship and at the same time to question the aura of value surrounding the artwork. Resituating the production of meaning (and value) with the reception or completion of the work by the viewer becomes not just a formal strategy but an ethical issue. The issues of "difference", authorship, the dependence of the formation of meaning as much upon reception as presentation are tied to critical theories ranging from Walter Benjamin (Illuminations) to Roland Barthes (Death of the Author) to feminist theories such as those of Kate Linker (Representation and Sexuality).

It may be useful to elaborate upon the critical dialogue of "modernism" and "post-modernism:". The post-modern attitude is itself a reaction against modernism's alleged failure to attain greater social relevance. By the mid 1920's, after a period of intense innovation and self-criticism, modernism seemed to bog down and its own values become rigid and tied to the status quo. Society's ability to consume and appropriate and thereby defuse art's critical function increased. In the mainstream of art the dominant critical theorists claimed formal integrity as the measure of artistic meaning. Current understanding of "modernism" has been heavily influenced by critical writings such as those of Clement Greenberg and his followers in the 1950's and 1960's. Greenberg theorized that

the inherent elements of painting such as surface and colour were the determinants of quality and that the task of any art was to reduce itself self-critically to its essential material elements. Anything such as narrative, description, social commentary were impurities and detracted from quality. These beliefs made him a strong supporter of Abstract Expressionism, particularly the austere second generation works of Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. When in the sixties and seventies art began to reject these restrictive formulae, indulging in mixed media works and particularly works borrowing from the forms of popular culture and entertainment such as music, cinema and theatre, and content such as politics and social criticism, the formalist position was threatened. In his essay "Art ond Objecthood" of 1967 Michael Fried defended formalism by stating:

> that theatre and theatricality are at war today, not simply with modernist painting (or modernist painting and sculpture), but with art as such - and to the extent that the different arts can be described as modernist, with modernist sensibility as such... The success, even the survival, of the arts has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theatre. (Fried as quoted in Krauss: 1977, 203).

Theatre here means not just dramatics but the recognition given to the act of communication as integral to the work, and the post-modern notion that "the 'natural' can be approached only through its cultural representation." (Craig Owens: "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism", in

Wallis and Tucker eds., 223). Fried was attacking the increasing tendency, especially in minimal sculpture, to account for the beholder within and as part of the aesthetic space. His attribution of meaning to the essential irreducible qualities of individual arts could not accomodate the modification of meaning of the sculptural object by or in consideration of its audience. Even more it denied the possibility that art could exist as a temporal experience, an unquantifiable exchange between art and spectator. The minimalist works were early indicators of the shift in focus from nature to culture which has increasingly characterized contemporary art.(viz. Leo Steinberg: 1972, 55-91).

Post-modernist criticism which addresses this shift cannot easily be termed a theory because it has as many interpretations as there are interest groups trying to escape narrow "modernist" doctrine. Many such positions however are mutually incompatible. The condemnation of "modernism" as simply a formalist dogma is itself historicist and part of a rhetorical strategy. I have mentioned attitudes towards authorship, reception and the origin of meaning which seem to be important shifts from the "modernist" position. There has also been a significant return, in most artistic disciplines to allegory; story-telling works in which content has an obvious base in the broader culture. In general in the latter part of the twentieth century art and artists appear to be giving a more self-reflexive consideration to the meaning of

the images they produce within their social and cultural context. Integrated media installations and video works with their implicit narrative form, their close relationship to forms of popular culture and their documentary potentials have a natural attraction for artists concerned with these issues. Moreover they should be evaluated in terms of this functional and cultural significance.

Historical Continuity.

Video and installation works dilute traditional art's obsession with object making and devalue the requisite metaphysics of man's transformation of materials. How then can they be situated in historical context? Video art can be identified loosely with film and performance or more often with television discourse. However, integrated media installation employs these disciplines and others such as architecture, set design and sculpture.

Krauss in her essay, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", argues the poverty and historicism of trying to fit work such as installation into the mold of traditional sculptural discourse because, in her post-modern definition:

> practice is not defined in relation to a given medium - sculpture - but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium - photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself - might be used. (Krauss in The Anti-Aesthetic. Foster ed. 1983.)

Krauss' thesis seeks new ways of understanding what she

considers to be essentially new artforms. A potential problem with invoking this "Nietzschean break" in history in order to escape established but inadequate critical discourse is that of cutting off the past entirely. It makes sense for contemporary art to be understood primarily in terms of its cultural significance as reified by its formal decisions, but historical work can also be resurrected in terms of cultural signification to offer insights and precedents for current theory and practice. Krauss attacks the critical "conjuring" (notably Lucy Lippard) which connects the installations and constructions of Robert Smithson, Alice Aycock, Mary Miss with Stonehenge and the Toltec ballcourts in order to legitimize the former as sculptural art. But conversely, while Stonehenge and the Toltec structures are not sculptural art in the traditional sense they do provide reference and partial precedents for contemporary works in the "expanded field" of cultural vectors, both in content and form. For instance we may interpret the stone circles of Stonehenge as designs for environments coordinating the visual effects of stars and planetary bodies with social ceremony and individual inspiration.

Chapter Three

Historical Precedents

In seeking precedents for integrated media installations, the major formal principle I will use as a guide is "staging", that is, the creation of an environment with which the spectator can interact. This implies a sympathy for devices and technologies calculated to have a dramatic effect, to engage the senses. In terms of content, I am especially interested in work which addresses the day-to-day issues and realities of the spectator and in that sense might be called "engaged". Consequently what I consider to be precedential is both materially and ideologically defined.

Pre Twentieth Century

The Gothic cathedral provides an early case of interest. Abbe Suger's vision for St. Denis evolved into the authoritarian and inspirational environments of Chartres, Notre-Dame , Milan Cathedrals et al. The fragile spiring interiors illuminated by stained glass windows and encrusted with didactic sculpted images, inhabited by irridescent painted altarpieces and larger than life sculptural figures, tied together by surges of devotional organ music gave life to interior spaces which placed the worshipper at the centre, observer and observed. The mysticism and drama of the Catholic mass completed the participant's seduction. At the same

time, the architectural exterior served as an organizational locus for the surrounding community.

In the Baroque era Gian Lorenzo Bernini's sculptural "installations" according to scholar Fagiolo dell'Arco:

> transformed immobility and certainty into movement and ambiguity. And this movement was not merely psychological and representational; it was actual movement. The statue had ceased to be the ideal: now it was the fountain, the theatrical set, the ephemeral construction. (quoted in Battcock: 1984, 18)

Roselee Goldberg cites dell'Arco and adds "...it is clear that Bernini's spectacles stimulated the imagination to contemplate the profound questions of the cosmos - space and time - that occupied the Platonically spirited artists of the Rennaissance." (Battcock, 18). While Bernini's emphasis may have been upon the issues of natural and supernatural science, his approach is echoed in culturally reflexive works of the twentieth century.(See below Bill Viola).

As technology developed, artists employed a greater variety of materials to achieve their aesthetic goals. This embracing of material means was matched by a willingness to combine artistic media such as performance and music with the visual arts. In the late nineteenth century evidence of this can be seen in the operatic works of Richard Wagner (c.1870) which combined music, theatre, lighting and sound effects in an effort to achieve a total experience, the

"gesampkunstwerk". The Symbolist movement in painting presented a synesthetic principle which blurred the distinctions between sensory arts, conceptually if not materially.

In the early twentieth century artists found themselves in a culturally oppositional role within a rapidly changing society. They assumed the role of Avant-garde, seeking to contribute to this transformation and at the same time to make art relevant to the new societies being shaped by technology. Adaptation of new media, particularly ones related to popular culture, was a logical "critical" strategy for devaluing traditional art assumptions. Another key strategy in the search for relevance was an interest in changing the role of the audience from one of "voyeur" to one of intellectually and emotionally engaged participant. While painting experimented with new concepts of visual and psychological reality, sculpture after Rodin began to leave its pedestal and invaded human space, incorporating industrial and found materials representative of the times. Painting and sculpture though, no matter how radicalized, were tied to their historical roots and increasing numbers of disaffected artists experimented with new media approaches.

Futurism and Dada

Of particular significance to attitudes regarding the uses of extended media were the Futurist and Dada movements.

They were influenced by the examples of cafe-concerts and cabarets such as the Montmatre coffee house "Le Chat Noir" (Paris 1881), and the performance work of Alfred Jarry and Jean Cocteau. Experimental theatre such as Oskar Kokoshka's 1907 play "Murderer, Hope of Womenkind" and Wassily Kandinsky's 1909 "Yellow Sound", which sought a total synthesis of expressive media were influential and were just part of a larger radicalization of German Expressionist theatre which affected Western aesthetics. Berlin director Max Reinhardt was introducing new lighting and stage technology into German stage works (Rolland's "Danton" 1906) as well as a reorganization of the stage which frequently resulted in the actors and audience mingling. Elaborate stage sets allowed scenes to be presented simultaneously which was a forerunner of film montage. Shadow plays and magic lantern performances, also presaging film and ultimately video, were first introduced as media on the stage.

The Italian Futurists (1909-15), led by theorist Marinetti, responding to general social discontent, employed painting, performance, music, public declamations and political actions such as flag burning to discredit contemporary art and culture. Essential to Marinetti's concept of performance was his 1913 "Manifesto of Variety Theatre". Acknowledging the appeal of popular entertainment and its iconoclastic nature, he construed theatre as being a mixture of circus acts, devoid of serious narrative. The actor's

purpose was to constantly bring something new to the eyes of the audience and even more importantly to engage the audience by directly addressingthem: insulting, disappointing, boring them, making them laugh; in any case encouraging them to respond and abandon their voyeuristic complacency. As Marinetti was to suggest in the 1915 manifesto "Futurist Synthetic Theatre", there was no need for everything to be understood by the audience and so the action was one of involvement rather than exposition.

Simultaneity was central to Futurist theory. Acknowledging the density of human experience, recognizing the importance of commenting upon it, while at the same time seeing the absurdity of conventionally "making sense of it" Marinetti envisaged a theatre in which multiple sounds, dialogues, forms of imagery would occur simultaneously. Like a three-ring circus the stage would have separate areas of activity. The futurists used lights to dramatic effect and employed whatever props might cause a sensation and thereby a memorable image. Actors and musicians were often positioned in the audience in order to minimize actor/audience division.

Futurist ideas spread to Russia as a weapon against the dominant pre-revolutionary culture. In the post-revolutionary period the director Nikolai Foregger who had been influenced by the Futurists established himself in Petrograd, committed to a new kind of theatre dealing with current events. Foregger was involved in the development of the agit-prop trains, with

travelling acting companies whose performance occured wherever a crowd could be gathered. It was also in the twenties that Eisenstein was developing his concepts of film montage, a kind of simultaneity not unlike Marinetti's notion. Film was influential as a popular cultural medium and was associated with social advance. In his 1922 Kidnapping of the Children. Foregger went so far as to use spotlights strobing the stage to give his play the effect of a film. The Blue Blouse Group of 1923 used film, dance, theatre, circus acts, gymnasts, clowns in possibly the greatest realization of Marinetti's "Simultaneist Theatre".

Both in Russian and Italian Futurism a sensibility was refined, concerned with social and psychological reality. It employed various "non-art" media including popular entertainment, language, music and audio-visual technology. It demanded audience participation and deliberately challenged the notion of the artist as removed from the common sphere.

Dada in the post World War 1 period employed and refined Futurist methods in its own form of rebellion. The mainstay of Hugo Ball and Emmy Henning's Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich , 1916, were variety theatre, simultaneity, audience involvement, noise poetry, which remained key principles even when the group was disintegrating in 1921. Above all the "Dadas" wanted to find a way of reattaching art to the real world because art as culture in the past had seemingly failed

to save Europe from the holocaust of war. Richard Huelsenbeck, the ideologue of Berlin, stated it more forcefully:

> Art in its execution and direction is dependent on the time in which it lives and artists are creatures of their epoch. The highest art will be that which in its conscious content presents the thousandfold problems of the day...(En Avant Dada. 1920, in Richter: 1949).

This attitude prompted the riotous lectures in which arbitrary sound and nonsense poetry were hurled at audiences of professionals who thought they were attending lectures in their field of specialization. It accounted for artists such as Marcel Duchamp and Marcel Janco who juxtaposed traditional artistic techniques with non-traditional, found materials, in order to cause doubt and cognitive readjustment in the viewer. Chance and automatism manipulated the same element of associative meaning. In Berlin, the most radical seat of Dada activity, photomontage was developed as a technique by John Heartfield and Raoul Hausmann. The power of photomontage rested upon the photograph's ability to represent the real while at the same time being a two-dimensional abstraction. The artist could arrange photographic documents of contemporary life simultaneously in ways determined by the artist to reveal alternative interpretations.

> We called this process photomontage because it embodied our refusal to play the part of the artist. We regarded ourselves as engineers and our work like construction: we assembled our work, like a fitter. (Hausmann quoted in Richter: 1949, 118)

These principles were adapted to surrealist purposes after Dada fizzled out in the early 1920's. Although not a Dadaist, Kurt Schwitters, particularly from 1919 to 1923 and before his association with the Bauhaus, championed interdisciplinary work. He combined poetry with drawing and performance and employed found objects in paintings and collage. In Hannover he began his first Merzbau, a transformation of a house interior into the quintessential artist's installation and one that anticipated later works of such artists as Robert Irwin and to a lesser extent Ed Kienholz. Corridors, nooks and crannies remodelled with off angle sheets of wood were home for photographs, found objects and artwork, which often were built over as the structure grew. Schwitters practised the art of assemblage while also emphasizing the relative values of materials and the relationship of all media.

Bauhaus to Pluralism in America

The significance of the German Bauhaus, 1919-1933 was twofold. First it took the radical aesthetics of the early twentieth century, including the ideas of the Futurists and Dadaists, and integrated them into accepted mainstream art forms such as dance and theatre. The Bauhaus commented on technology and industry, but as a vehicle of progress rather than as an apocalyptic process. This normalization diverged from the radical avant-garde's critical and self-marginalizing

strategies. Secondly, the Bauhaus was forced out of Nazi Europe, taking its personnel and ideas to the United States where it profoundly affected the course of post 1945 art and architecture.

Founded by Walter Gropius as a Utopian concept of the new German and indeed world condition, the Bauhaus was based upon a unification of all the arts under the umbrella of architecture. Klee, Itten, Feininger, Kandinsky, Moholy-Nagy were among its faculty. Oskar Schlemmer, who took over the theatre division in 1923, had the most profound effect upon ideas of stage and theories regarding the articulation of human space. Schlemmer's particular concern with space was the relationship between visual plane and spatial depth, what he called the :Raumempfindung" or "felt" volume of space. The human figure in motion defined this space. In "Dancers in Space" 1927 the stage was crisscrossed by wires which made the dancers look like stylized marionettes and restricted their motions in particular ways. These works were investigations not only of spatial relations but also of the relationship of man to the restrictions of technology.

The importance of dance and performance and their relation to human space and technology was recognized at Black Mountain College N.C. where Albers, Feininger and several other Bauhaus masters found teaching positions after the 1939-45 war. A profound effect was made upon American artists

such as John Cage in music composition and performances such as "4:33". In "4:33" spectators of the piano recital were forced to become aware of their environment as the expected performance was actually four minutes and thirty three seconds of silence and anticipation. Merce Cunningham, the dancer/choreographer who collaborated with Cage, was deeply influenced by the spatial and improvisational works of the Bauhaus. Robert Rauschenberg, a student at Black Mountain in 1949-50 produced a tryptich of three painted white panels whose "emptiness" forced the viewer to be aware of her own shadow and reflected light upon the work. He was also one of several artists such as Jim Dine, Claes Oldenberg and particularly Allan Kaprow who developed improvisational theatre in the late 1950's. Pop Art and "happenings" used vernacular lifestyle as their subject matter, commenting on cultural, social and political conditions. This was to some extent a reaction to the esoteric art of the abstract expressionists which had distanced itself from day-to-day representation and which dominated the mainstream art market. It also reflected a certain ironic wariness in American society with regard to affluence and social responsibility. In Europe and America the "Fluxus" group carried the Dada tradition forward opposing traditional art styles. The difference between these performance/statements and those of the Futurists and the Dadas was that they were self-consciously part of the art scene, eccentric but not

marginal or truly radicalized. The easy accomodation by mainstream culture of the forms of political and social criticism was representative of a homogenization of values occurring in Western society as a whole. The communication industry, particularly television, contributed to this by means of its indiscriminately ordered presentation of news, drama, fiction and fact.

These factors contributed to the conditions which allowed the diversity of the work of the late 1960's and 1970's, an era characterized as "Pluralism". While George Segal, Ed Keinholz and Claes Oldenburg made installation environments based upon the altered representation of common objects and scenes in the tradition of Pop Art, others such as Bruce Nauman (Corridor: 1970) and Robert Morris (Labyrinth: 1974) reconstructed interior spaces for the spectator to experience particular spatial situations. The architectural creations of Robert Smithson, Walter de Maria, Michael Heizer, Mary Miss and Alice Aycock among others, whether inside a gallery or out, used displacement of normal physical experience to achieve their intentions. These works frequently dwelt upon the location of identity in time, in space, in culture and history. Robert Morris' Observatory. in Holland (c.1972) encircled the viewer with a six foot earth wall broken by a notch. This both manipulated the viewer's gaze and by placing the top of the wall just above viewing height emphasized human physical scale. The viewer observed himself

as much as he viewed the outside world. The work used the metaphor of architecture and archeological site (such as Stonehenge) to relate these spatial concepts to cultural history.

It was in the context of these artistic directions coupled with the advent of television that video art came into being.

Video Art Since the 1960's

Video technology established itself as an art medium in the latter stages of post-minimalist and conceptual art in North America. Live camera installations supplemented post-minimalist explorations of the meaning of self, space and time. The first use of video in an art exhibition was in New York by Wolf Vostell in 1963. This and other very early uses of video were mainly experimental, visual or musical supplements to the central work. Nam June Paik (Korean/American) an avant-garde musician who had been strongly influenced by the neo-Dada aesthetics of Duchamp, the Fluxus "group's" non-aesthetics and John Cage's process work, was responsible for increasing video's credibility as a medium. His interest in the meaning generated by found and juxtaposed images inspired such works as TV Buddha, TV Bra, and TV Cello (early 70's). The latter two featured Charlotte Moorman partially nude playing the cello, strategically covered by small monitors showing live images of

herself. Gradually as in Bruce Nauman's Live Taped Video Corridor (Whitney Museum, N.Y.: 1969-70) and Dan Graham's TV Camera/Monitor performances (Nova Scotia College of Art and Design: 1971), in which the audience was forced to consider its own role, the live video system took on a primary importance.

While live closed circuit applications of video continued, recorded videotape art evolved in several directions, picking up momentum after Sony Corporation's introduction of portable recording equipment in 1967. The appeal of the medium lay in related and, in retrospect, naive assumptions. First, as a unique technology video was seen as a creative alternative to other media and almost any visual innovation was accepted, often uncritically (Buchloh: Art Journal, Winter 1986, 217). Secondly, it was hoped that video as a broadcast technology would give the artist access to the mass public via television and the public access to the creative arts in the same way. This overlooked the economic and social underpinnings of television which had little use for experimental, critical and not necessarily popular art. Video, which potentially offered an escape from the gallery/museum structure, in fact became even more deeply entrenched in that structure and today, ironically, public access is more limited than for the other arts because of the need for expensive monitoring equipment and the inevitable comparison with television.

Four interrelated approaches to video art can be identified. The first is that of technocract: formal image processing and manipulation of the electronic potentials of the machinery. Nam June Paik pioneered this approach which was carried on by such artists as Woody and Steina Vasulka, Frank Gillette and today has been expanded by the use of computer technology (Jane Veeder: Montana, 1982). Philosophically the approach appears to range from a desire to make formal abstract imagery to a semiological examination of visual language.

A second approach has been that of documentary, one form of which was exemplified by "Guerilla" television. Michael Shumberg (U.S.A.) was responsible for the establishment of a production group known as "TVTV" in 1971. This group covered political, sporting and other media events trying to show the inside workings of television, those human aspects normally edited for broadcast television. It is the measure of their success and failure that they were able to broadcast some of their work on broadcast television and were recognized for their journalistic talents. The TVTV phenomenon died as the artists involved were hired by the networks to produce better funded but mainstream entertainment programmes. Bill Murray for instance was later to be associated with Saturday Night Live. Michael Shumberg directed Hollywood films.

Documentary and didactic video took the form of tapes inteded for the limited community or gallery audience. Richard

Serra's 1973 classic Television Delivers People presents a rolling text which comments upon the relation of the advertiser, television medium, and viewer as consumer and consumed. More recent works such as Martha Rosler's A Simple Case for Torture 1983, challenges middle class awareness of the torture and repression in U.S. backed regimes in Central and South America by presenting, relentlessly, the "real" facts, against a background of philosophical and journalistic stories about America. Lisa Steele, Dara Birnbaum, Linda Kupnis are three other artists who question the realities presented by the mass communication media, often by appropriating and altering television images in ironic fashion. (e.g. Birnbaum's Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman. 1978). These latter approaches touch upon a third category of narration which often overlaps documentary because of its allegoriacal character. Narrative video may use either or both a literal story telling format or a structure of images, which suggest movement and serve as an allegory or metaphor for a broader concept. The Toronto group, General Idea, produced an elaborate satirical narrative surrounding the mythical "Miss General Idea Pageant 1984". They developed a story of their own efforts to promote "Miss General Idea". This served as a base for criticism of the representation of art in the media in both performance and video works. (Pilot. 1977). Their most recent work, Shut the Fuck Up. 1987, while more direct, has similar elements of parody. Lisa

Steele's 1975 Internal Photography. (Toronto) represented a personal narrative addressing sexuality and personal identity. Her telling of metaphorical stories about dreams she has had are juxtaposed with information about birth control, images of her torso against a world map, and a sequence of her, nurturing plants. Colin Campbell (Toronto) recently produced a tape entitled No Voice Over. 1986, which documents the thoughts and converstions of several fictional individuals as their personal lives and relationships begin to diverge. The tape ends ambiguously with the possible death of one of the characters. The viewer is left to question the nature of relationships, self-knowledge and time.

Both in content and structure these works differ from broadcast television format in that they do not present a complete "story" for entertainment, rather a series of images, visual and auditory, which frame the content for the viewer's consideration. Disjunctive narrative of this kind has roots in modernist literatire (James Joyce and e.e.cummings) Dada and Surrealist filmmaking (Richter, Dali) and the avant-garde film theories of the 1960's. Jean-Luc Godard, Stan Brakhage and Andy Warhol not only broke with continuity of narrative form but also employed repetition, superimposition and elongation of scenes to affect the viewer's reception. Videography can differ from cinemagraphic practice (less so with small format 8-16 mm. art films) due to its extreme portability. This allows the camera to move with the subject as opposed to

simply viewing from a single point. The framing is therefore not that of a stationary viewer but that of the subject's broader reality.

These and other approaches have been used in more lyrical and esoteric video works such as Canadian Tomiyo Sasaki's Spawning Salmon. 1986, an installation of twenty video screens showing rapid edit scenes of the British Columbia salmon run. The effect is of visual and auditory rhythms similar to formal poetry. Bill Viola's portraits of human environments such as Chott el-Djerid. (A Portrait in Light and Heat) 1979 and Hatsu Yume. the latter which examines contrasts of Japanese life and country, evoke emotional response to basic symbols of life , using slow motion, repetition and sound. Viola states:

> In the visual sense, my works are more related to music than to the printed word. They are visual poems, allegories in the language of subjective perception, open to diverse individual interpretation, yet each thematically expressing specific concepts derived from everyday experience. (Program Notes: Whitney Museum, March 1982, 2) .

A fourth approach is the use of video as an element of integrated media installations. This might also include the kind of use made of the technology in performance works such as Laurie Anderson's U.S.A. in the early 1980's. Joseph Beuys, Joan Jonas, Chris Burden, Tanya Mars are others whose work has combined video with performance. However my particular interest is for integrated media works in which the viewer provides the participating body rather than the artist.

Two such artists' works hold special interest for me: Bill Viola(U.S.A.), and Vera Frenkel(Toronto).

As reviewed in Art in America by Thomas Frick, Bill Viola's Room for St. John of the Cross. 1983, a video/sound installation was presented at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston. What the viewer was initially confronted with was a blackened 20X20 foot room upon one wall of which was projected a huge mountain landscape. The image moved errratically and violently giving an unsettling feeling of the whole environment being in motion. A loud sometimes overwhelming sound recording of the wind played constantly. In the centre of the space a 5X5 foot black cube was positioned with a window in one side. The interior of the cube was lit revealing a small room with wooden table and a miniature television monitor. The monitor displayed the same image of mountainscape projected on the wall. The viewer was informed by a posted note that this interior was the same size as the cell in which St.John had been incarcerated and tortured. During this time St. John had written poems of "spiritual longing and mystical freedom". These poems were recited by a soft Spanish sounding voice emanating from within the cube (Frick:Art in America, June 1985, 146).

What Viola presents the viewer with in this work is a set of dialectics: the expanse of nature with the smallness and confinement of the cell; the chaos and noise of the outside

versus the calm and isolation of the interior. The viewer is invited to share the innermost feelings of the poet yet in the end is excluded, hearing his words but not sharing his presence. Viola did a series of similar works such as He Weeps for You. and Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House. in which the viewer shared a darkened room with a projected image and/or monitor, sound, symbolic objects and minimal architectural structures. Viola's work is strongly influenced by his study of Taoist philosophy, the relationship of ying/yang and the essential and chaotic nature of his world.

Vera Frenkel's work falls much more in the literary, narrative genre. One major aspect of her work is the documentation of a supposedly real character, Cornelia Lumsden. In a series of videotapes and installations dating from the 1970's to the present Frenkel reveals the few available details of the life of Lumsden, a "famous Canadian woman author" who disappeared from her Paris hotel room between the two world wars. Her Room in Paris. is a recreation of just that, with odd personal articles occupying dresser tops. An accompanying videotape stars Frenkel as the investigative narrator who reads Lumsden's letters and develops her character in the style of historical romance. Nevertheless the structure of the videotapes is circular and indefinite with as many doubts being raised as solved. Can we believe Frenkel? Is there such a person as Cornelia Lumsden? There is an obvious but unspoken parallel between the personae

of Frenkel and Lumsden as story-tellers. The line between fact and fiction is left tantalizingly vague. The ultimate response by the viewer is both a desire and a reluctance to believe what is both a plausible and seductive story. The fact that articles of Lumsden's effects now occupy a space in the National Gallery in Ottawa adds to the suspicion of authenticity, and of the source of truth, be it artist, gallery or media. The creation of this doubt is ultimately Frenkel's goal.

In both Viola's and Frenkel's work the viewers are asked to place themselves in the same environment as the subject physically and psychologically and to question the nature of reality.The elements in these artists' works which interest me and to which I will refer are the simple yet dramatic staging of works which address the personal and universal.

Chapter Four

Exhibited Work

Installation: "Signalled. Sighted. Marked."

The following description includes references to video and material components which have already been produced. However the overall presentation has only been approximated in a studio setting. As a result much of this "analysis" remains in the realm of speculation and may alter as the final work is installed. The following extended description omits an analysis of the whole, which I anticipate will be greater than its parts, for the obvious reason that even I am not sure of the end result. These elements of uncertainty, risk and last minute spontaneity are inherent to my work.

There are five distinct units in the installation: four are both conceptually and spatially integrated; the fifth is conceptually linked to the rest but isolated in its own space. This separation is made with a partial wall which divides the gallery into two spaces which I will designate as "A" and "B".

"A" Space.

The viewer enters "A" space through the front door of the gallery and around a light trap wall. Area "A" is rectangular, extending lengthways away from the entering viewer. Four monitors are positioned against the four walls of this space. As the viewer enters the monitor to his/her left against the dividing wall plays the tape Spectacular/Vernacular. Against

the dividing wall to the viewer's left the monitor plays the tape Marked. Immediately beside the viewer a monitor plays Signalled. This monitor is part of an arrangement of objects which extends towards the centre of the space. On the far short wall a monitor plays the tape Sighted and it too is part of an arrangement of objects extending towards the centre of the room.

As the title suggests the concept of the work revolves around the physical actions of making signs and perceiving signs. This is not intended as a literal study of the senses but as a metaphor for the establishment of relationships between people and between people and things as a cultural process. How do we make our way through the business of living in society, with each other, with the images we have made of ourselves? There are always private moments of reflection, adjustment, self-appraisal and comparison which accompany the act of communication. The images and information which I present attempt to externalize some of these moments, not as representations but as allegories.

a. "Spectacular/Vernacular"

This tape begins with the scene of an operating room interior. An official voice invites the viewer to watch the operation. The scene fades to five simultaneous images. The screen is split into four quadrants and a small central window. In each quadrant two people engage in conversation. It

is mainly their profiles that are visible. Gradually the four couples' faces come into close proximity, violating the normal comfortable distance for dialogue. This posture is maintained to different degrees by the couples throughout the 11 minute tape. The central window is a close up of the eye operation. the conversation of the couples is indistinct and muffled, occasionally mingling with the operating room sounds. At four points during the tape a short(less than one minute) slow motion image of each couple fills the screen. These slow motion interludes punctuate the somewhat chaotic and relentless course of the combined images. Tension is generated by the parallel actions: the psychological violence and physical vulnerability of the eye in surgery; the violation of personal space and implied personal vulnerability in the conversations. The spectator chooses between the images, unable to to obtain all the visual information just as the audio allows only fragments of information to be gathered. In this way the spectator may experience an uncertainty of knowing and communicating which is at once frustrating and isolating.

b. "Sighted".

Fifteen feet from the far wall parallel to the entrance doors the viewer first confronts a black 8X8 foot wall. A small glass window occupies the centre of the wall. Two speakers are mounted on either side of the window. In

direct line with the window, close to the permanent wall is a monitor. A number of cutout plywood dogs (lifesize, two-dimensional) are placed on the floor facing the monitor between it and the window-wall. The dogs, painted black, have silhouettes ressembling the RCA Victor "His Master's Voice" dog. The tape "Sighted" is a simply structured 13 minute portrait of a blind couple, George and Sharon, and their seeing eye dogs. The visual images follow the pair on a walking trip to the neighbourhood grocery store. This narrative is the most conventional, documentary-like tape in the installation and operates on a human interest level.

The viewer is presented with a choice. The sound of the tape can be heard directly only while standing in front of the window wall. This places a barrier between the viewer and the video. On the other hand it is possible to stand between the wall and the monitor but with a resultant sound loss. The viewer also then becomes directly implicated in the work, viewed as well as viewer. The simple device of sensory separation parallels the real-life experience of the blind couple. Of course it is far from being the same thing and acts more as a metaphor of the real. The viewer is asked not only to consider George and Sharon's situation but also the difficulties in actually understanding or relating to their experience. The plywood dogs are metaphors for the viewer, attentive to authority but inquisitive as well. Their

two-dimensionality suggests that they are most "real" from only one angle and possibly reflect the question of how and what is understood.

c. "Signalled."

On the interior side of the light-trap wall is the video and mixed media work entitled "Signalled". As with "Sighted" a monitor is placed facing the centre of the room its back close to the light trap wall. Speakers wired to the video monitor are placed 15 feet in front of the screen. Beyond these speakers on the gallery floor are arranged 80 to 100 electronic whistling key chains with key blanks attached.

The tape presents a series of full face images of individuals whistling. The images are very clean and crisp with a corresponding intimacy. As each individual tries, makes mistakes, is frustrated, laughs or is exultant, his/her personality and presence are revealed. The whistling sound is projected from the speakers and because each key chain responds to a slightly different frequency and distance from the sound source different whistles will operate at different times. The tape itself is playful and sometimes comic in a human way. As with "Sighted" the main concern, although approached differently, is the mediation of time, presence and communication. The whistling is spatially removed from the crisp and intimate visual images creating a slight cognitive dissonance. The key whistles respond in current time to an event both visible and yet past.

As with the previous two tapes there is a disjuncture of time and space. An attraction and separation is generated to which the viewer may respond in various ways. In this case humour and casualness contrast with the seriousness of "Sighted" and "Vernacular/Spectacular" but the foci are clearly related.

d. "Marked."

While the other works are distinguished by their large standard viewing monitors and/or media extensions, "Marked" is distinguished by its use of a small obliquely angled monitor unaccompanied by other objects. It is placed against the long permanent wall on a high pedestal. The tape is a series of clips of a pooltable. Poolballs are struck on an irregular but constant basis. Some ambiant but banal conversation occurs in the background. The meaning of this piece lies in its rhythmic structure and its very obliqueness. I perceive it as being similar to a metronome marking out time which relates to the element of time refered to in the rest of the installation. It is a radically different image than the other works and possibly acts as a foil and a diversion from the pervasive human imagery.

e. Further Observations. Spatial Structure.

The four video/installation components in space "A" are directed towards the centre of the room, forming a cross-like

configuration. The viewer naturally occupies the centre. Each of the works is considered equal and the viewer is not directed to consider them in any particular order or for any particular length of time. The videotapes are looped and replay although with the exception of "Marked" they are between 10 and 15 minutes in length. It is unlikely that most viewers will watch each entire sequence. The intention however is that the meaning can be conveyed by random segments of the tapes.

The visual appearance of the room is simple and severe, few objects mostly painted black and very subdued lighting. The intention is to reduce extraneous stimuli and to allow the viewer to deal with what is presented as if he or she were in a different reality. This lighting emphasizes the flickering movement of the videos and the relationships of objects and shadows presents the feeling of an architectural site.

Any one of the four components could convey meaning in its own right; however, their interaction provides a richer field for response and the imagination. As stated at the beginning of this chapter I am unsure of the overall effect of the completed piece; however, I do have some preconceptions. I do not want the monitors to dominate in the same way that a large cinematic image does. The monitors are small and two at least are visually obscured by a manipulation of viewpoint. The viewer will be able to turn away, return, and freely wander through the space unobstructed. My intent is to offer

images that linger in the mind rather than ones that are forced upon the audience by means of sensory assault.

"B" Space.

This space is also rectangular and is accessible through a space left between the dividing wall and the permanent walls. The long permanent wall displays mounted photographs of rock cairns built and used by mountaineers as guide posts in alpine regions. The centre of the floor space is occupied by piled clothes, analogous in some ways to cairns. On a short wall a larger than life-size series of slides is projected in which a male figure is shown putting clothes on and off at random and then discarding them in a pile. A soundtrack projects the sounds of wind and water in nature and rock clinking as in the building of a cairn. A second, simultaneous, soundtrack contains parts of conversations and words refering to the passage of time and the making of decisions. The lighting in "B" is brighter than in "A". The clothes and rock cairn photographs are specifically and intensely illuminated.

The meaning of this piece is again largely intuitive and touches on man's relationship to culture and nature. Cairns have the fascination of being traces of human presence in the wilderness. They have a function, may even be critical for survival, yet as the photographs illustrate, they are also aesthetic creations requiring a human interaction with nature.

They are markers of passage (time and distance) and have their own material presence in nature outside cultural significance (as part of the landscape).

Clothes, among other objects, are similarly traces, and as MacLuhan has pointed out are "extensions" of self and others. They have a resonance of culture, of personal taste, and of personal history. They eventually are discarded but retain traces of their wearers. The separation of nature and culture has been both the goal and the problem of modern society and I believe this work attempts to find a reconnection. As with the work in "A" space I am addressing the process and significance of marking and signing oneself within time and space, as such marking and signing relates to culture.

Independent Videotapes.

Three videotapes have been presented separately from the installation work. Voice.Sound.Track, Time to Time, and Out of Air deal with diverse but connected subject matter. The contents of all three address the relationship between individual, everyday experience and the external world. The external world is represented by mediated images and symbols of things beyond personal grasp or control. Irony is an important tool in this strategy. Structurally, these works employ simultaneous imaging (montage), discontinuous and parallel timing and incomplete or open narrative form. There

are, loosely speaking, three scenes in each work. The visuals are mainly non-theatrical studies of individuals within particular environments and it would be fair to say that I consider these works to be influenced by a desire to make portraiture. The audio tracks are variously composed of a mixture of interview, ambient noise(particularly urban or industrial) and nostalgic appropriated music usually altered in some fashion.

The format for analysis of these tapes will be: a brief physical description; the working process and intention; the formal structures; and finally, comments on the content.

a. "Voice.Sound.Track."

This is a 12:30 minute tape consisting of two interwoven narrative themes: one of a voice training lesson; the other of a journey on foot and by train. A woman (Lena) is the subject of both. The title scene opens with a passenger train approaching and passing the camera, then fades to Lena walking purposefully through a suburban area. Clips of the voice lesson and scenes of Lena on the train are intercut with this, establishing upcoming scenes. Linear time is present but simultaneous events introduced. At one point Lena's profile is frozen and a still text-over is presented which comments upon the difficulties of communicating with others. The soundtrack intersperses the dialogue and scales of the singing lesson

with the roar of the train. The scene ends as the train noise accompanies Lena's walk down a long flight of stairs.

The following scene is predominantly the voice training lesson in which the student and instructor carry on a dialogue of words and gesture. Repeated scales and instructions are intercut with clips of Lena walking to the train station and boarding the train, and views of the landscape outside the train through Lena's eyes. Four more texts are superimposed over frozen images. These texts continue to comment upon the difficulties of communication, comparing the roar of the train to the overwhelming nature of the external world and the necessity of learning how to make oneself heard. The tape ends with a return to the title image of the passing train which rumbles into the distance and into silence.

The original intention was to make a tape about communication problems. Footage of a speech therapy session was the first step I envisaged. Using the metaphor of travel by train followed from that. For me the train has always represented a kind of industrial and worldly power and at the same time a Romantic symbol of the uncontollable external world. On another level the train is a regional symbol and it appealed to my desire to make work related to my immediate environment, the West.

Another consideration was that I wanted to experiment with a tighter script and directorial approach than I had previously used. Rather than setting up a situation in which I

taped actions as they occured, these scenes were carefully planned. This was especially true of the travelling scenes in which walkthroughs, angles, lighting situations were predetermined. Several "takes" of each scene were made.

One interesting change in the course of the work was that the speech therapy session which I had anticipated, turned out to be a voice training lesson (singing). At first this was distressing but in working with the material I decided to use it because it added an element of ambiguity, an indirectness that I felt still conveyed the message while adding a dimension of everyday life that a therapy session with its overtones of "illness" could not.

The importance of the main character was the tension between her intimate pupil-teacher position in the lesson and her isolation as a figure in the landscape and on the train. The figure is vulnerable and even in the the lesson is subject to demands. Only at brief moments does a laugh or a pause establish a subjective relationship between teacher and pupil. A mirror on the piano reflects Lena's profile, intensifying this self-containment.

The constancy of the roar of the train included in all the scenes whether the train was visible or not; the repetitive drone of voice scales added to the claustrophobic and inevitable movement in the work. This was the operative metaphor and content: the need to communicate, the difficulty of doing so. A final word on the text is appropriate. While

the text relates to the metaphor as a whole it is indirect, another layer in an intuitive allegory. It is the artist's personal statement. I had the most difficulty working with this element, especially as it tended to punctuate the movement of the visual sequences. I now think that it is a necessary component, being a way of captioning "personal/subjective" information and inserting it into the rather more distanced information.

b. "Time to Time."

This 5:30 minute work opens upon a scene of black and white images appropriated from a National Film Board documentary about astronomy. These images begin with a sunrise, a ticking clockwork mechanism and then move to the raising of an astronomical telescope. A close-up of the crosshairs of the sighting scope as they converge on a star alternate with images of the astronomer's hand control which moves the telescope. The soundtrack is ambiant mechanical noise. After a minute the scene changes to the launch image of the "Challenger" space shuttle which I taped from the television news. The black and white image changes to colour as the shuttle takes off. A brief glance at the watching crowd is followed by an overlaid image of a woman's head in profile, operating a blowpipe toy which makes a ball float on air. This inset, which I taped myself, is matted by the perimeter of the broadcast image of the Challenger takeoff and subsequent

tragic flight. Only traces of exhaust while the craft is in flight and smoke streamers after the explosion are visible on the strikingly blue border. The inset image is simple: the pipe, the ball, the profile, one hand. The pipe and ball are in plastic colours of green, yellow and orange. The background is bright white. The ball hovers, rises and falls. There are occasional close-ups of hand, lips and ball. At the beginning of this scene voices count down in several languages while laughter is heard in the background. A rendition of "If You Were the Only Girl in the World", played on recorders, follows. It is distorted and inaccurately played and breaks down at the moment of the shuttle's explosion. Mixed with this music is an incessant generated sound that might suggest a satellite pulse. The scene changes back to the sequence of film footage in which the telescope is being raised. In the crosshairs of the telescope an overlaid image appears of the astronauts training in weightlessness and walking to the shuttle for launching. This is accompanied by a piano rendition of the theme song played in a full and accurate manner. The final scene is from the film footage depicting movement through the expanse of outer space. The credit scene changes to the profile of the woman who for the first time faces the viewer. She smiles.

"Time to Time" emerged from two sources: the first the poignant and disturbing media spectacle of the Challenger; and secondly from an image of a person interacting with basic

natural laws using a child's toy. The film was selected as a kind of framework connecting the two with its suggestions of both technology and nostalgia. The music was chosen for its content which touched upon identity (gender) and survival and which has a distinctly romantic nature.

The film images in the first scene use a common entertainment format to build tension and anticipation of the main event. Repetition of scenes, the symbols of clock and sunrise, the targeting device all contribute to this. At the same time the flickering film image in black and white distances, mediates with time (historical) and traditional heroic notions of science. The industrial sound of the telescope mechanism identifies technology with this distanced image.

The appearance of the Challenger introduces contemporary society and technology but it too is a mediated image redolent of tragedy and grief. At the same time it is a media event, a distanced technology represented by indirect experience through broadcast journalism. Time, space, identity are changed. The inset image is purposefully intimate and formally sensuous in order to present another version of time and reality. The playful irony of keeping the ball afloat while the shuttle defies gravity, the personal involvement versus technology's role are in opposition. The discordant rendition of "If You Were the Only..." emphasizes this relationship.

When the scene changes back to the film, overlaid by images of the astronauts as individuals and backed by the more nostalgic rendition of the theme song, a certain irony is apparent. How can we experience others, whatever the event, by means of mediated images? The final dissonant image as the woman turns smiling to the viewer underscores this question.

c. "Out of Air."

Unlike the first two tapes "Out of Air" (8 minutes) employs an interview format. The title scene is a full screen image of the driver's view from a car cruising through a suburban middle-class community. The car radio indistinctly plays "When You Wish Upon a Star" mixed with the voice of an announcer. A woman's voice from another source becomes prominent, speaking about the process and experience of buying and living in a suburban home. Within the first minute an image of this woman sitting on a deckchair outside her house is superimposed over the driving scene, covering a central one-third of the screen. As the driving scenes move past, the woman continues to talk about her feelings regarding house ownership, her husband and suburban life. The interview images are quick edited clips in contrast to the long suburbanscape shots. Halfway through the tape the scene changes. An aerial view of Calgary appears. The woman appears in a small box at the top right hand side of the screen. As the aerial sequence moves from distance shots of suburban landscape to ever closer

images of houses, shopping centres, roads, the interviewed woman continues her reflections upon suburban life. In the final minute the woman's image disappears, the scene continues with extreme close-ups of housetops. The laboured, breathing-like sound of the hot air balloon from which this sequence was shot is brought up to full level. The scene fades to credits over a still shot of the woman outside her house and then as a postscript the image of a sprinkler on the lawn acts as background to a rolling text. This is the introduction to the Calgary Plan of 1970, a statement of philosophy for suburban development. The song "If You Wish Upon a Star" plays through this final scene.

This tape originated from a desire to comment somehow upon suburban life and the Calgary Plan statement was the first piece of research. The idealism of the policy suggested juxtaposing it with a documentary of a real situation. The aerial views from the balloon occurred concurrently but were not necessarily connected at this point. The unusual perspective provided a removal from the normal viewpoint. The interview was planned to add a personal perspective and was more sucessful than I had anticipated. Eve, the interviewee, had recently lost her husband and was alone in a large house. Her appearance and self-presentation matched my image of a suburban housewife. Her comments, apart from the poignancy of her loss, presented the ambiguity of someone not entirely happy with her environment but envisioning alternatives mainly

as dreams. A sense of entrapment, inevitability and resolution are present. The superimposition of Eve over a moving scene adds to the sense of separation from that reality and also to her vulnerability.

The tape is not an indictment of suburban living so much as it is a double portrait: of an environment and of a person, and of their interrelationship. The poignancy of Eve's situation can be extended by implication to other occupants of the suburbs. The structured layout of the aerial view and the constant repetitions of houses, lawns and cars in the driving scenes emphasize the abstract impersonality of suburbia. Here are controlled and predetermined environments. In the end we retain dreams, possible or not, as an alternative to this reality.

Chapter Five.

Motivation, Inspiration and Method.

It is important to address the subjective and sometimes nebulous questions of what my work means to me and what holds it together as an artistic production.

The essential content of the work is a humanistic one, tied to a desire to understand people, their relationship to each other and to me. This isn't a detached interest by any means. On the one hand I believe my work reflects a general insecurity and angst, a sense of unease endemic in contemporary middle class society. On the other hand I see it as an active attempt to "sign" myself, to establish my own cultural identity. "Signing" oneself to others is involved in all the exhibited work to a certain degree. How one appears to and relates to others and how one places oneself within the flow of events are common themes.

Representations of the appearance of people and situations are not as important to me as speculating upon the social and cultural dynamics in which they are involved. These universal concerns are placed within contextual boundaries. The tapes are directed at a middle class audience, not necessarily an art audience although that is their probable fate. They are intended to be critical in their reflection of life situations although not in the sense of saying: "This is

wrong!" but rather "This can be seen in this way. What do you think?

None of the persona appearing in the works are myself and each presents distinct aspects of his or her own personality. Nonetheless I feel that these individuals are surrogates for myself and that I am not so much a narrator as a participant in the work. I have in the past found that when I am personally in the leading role it is difficult to be objective, to allow the stepping out of myself that allows an uninhibited creative (and critical) approach.

A related question is why are so many of the main characters women? The answer is complex and not entirely clear to me. In part I believe it is because it further provides a distancing, gender-based, which I require for objectivity. Obversely it may be less threatening for me as a male to associate my identity with that of a woman than with a potentially confrontational male surrogate. Awareness of this issue has had some influence upon the direction of my work as in the nose to nose scenes of "Spectacular/Vernacular".

Methodology is closely related to content in my work although they are by no means the same thing. Heeding Shakespeare's "all the world is a stage" my approach is very close in principle to stage setting. I employ images and objects as signifiers, selecting them both conceptually and intuitively from my own immediate experience. They act metaphorically as well as literally and sometimes it is their

ironic or quixotic nature which motivates me to use them rather than their literal interpretations. Thus the image of a guest at a Christmas party struggling with a toy blowpipe remained in my mind until I "discovered" its relationship to the Challenger explosion in the tape "Time to Time". As an observer and commentator on life as it unfolds for me I have no hesitation in employing any "image" that comes to hand. In this way my work does not always have the consistency of work which focuses upon a particular issue or formal aspect. Its consistancy lies in the autobiographical nature of my approach to issues and events. Idea and execution are frequently far apart and not linear in character. For instance "Out of Air" developed from a desire to comment upon suburban living. This desire was reinforced by the opportunistic shooting of images from a hot air balloon. The strong character of the individual interviewed pushed the tape towards a personality study. Similarly, one work will not necessarily inspire the next although similar concerns as in the installation Signalled. Sighted. Marked. have produced obvious relationships.

Much art tends to abstract essential forms and images. Whether this is to locate the operants of Jung's collective unconscious, to reduce the image to Platonic ideals or formalist purity (for instance), or to proselytize a world view, some kind of abstraction occurs. This is an unavoidable consequence of developing common languages for communication. Unfortunately this quest for clarity seems to sacrifice one of

the essences of reality. That is, that our experience of life really is one of a chaotic, cluttered, partial, multilevel barrage of sensations, sometimes illogical, sometimes intuited rather than comprehended. Making sense of these aspects of life may involve taking them apart and viewing them discretely, which in turn may provide insight into the human condition. However there is a case to be made for considering the whole, the surface of the matrix of experiences that sweep us along. The overall experience cannot be understood in terms of frozen moments or aspects of life because it is a complex of things continuously in the process of becoming and disappearing.

To represent temporal and indefineable experiences my solution has been to present metaphorical alternatives or parallels. Setting the stage <u>is</u> the work, within which the viewer makes his or her own connections and associations. My assumption (admittedly large) is that being an individual with particular aesthetic, emotional and intellectual characteristics, and living within a particular cultural context, my stage will provide the locus for a meaningful experience for some members of my cultural milieu. However, I am never sure of the the final appearance of the work until the final moment. Moreover the nature of the viewer's experience is not a factor in the determination of the work. As an individual with biases and desires I may certainly hope

that others approximate my vision; however, that is purely incidental. It may be just as significant to discover that someone has interpreted the work in a totally different manner.

Perhaps then the question remains: how can I critically judge my work, where does quality lie? My answer to this is as indefinite as the subject of my work and relates mostly to relevance. Does it contribute in any way to discourse, to an understanding of the world? Many people "like" the tape Sound. Voice. Track. This may be because it is most like a narrative and therefore easily accessible. I prefer Time to Time perhaps because I have a particular experiential relationship to the concepts and images portrayed. Other viewers may favour a different work for equally idiosyncratic reasons. I would only consider a work a failure if it had no point of contact with the viewer and was "insignificant". Quality is for me very subjective, a permutation of the saying "Be true to oneself". The works are meant to operate on an intimate level. They are related to vernacular life experience. The more true to my experience they are, perhaps the more relevance they will have in the greater audience.

The tapes eschew the more obvious strategies of entertainment television such as rapid pace, closed linear plot development, exotic situations or didacticism. The goal is to achieve engagement not through showing something

seductively absent but through showing something recognizably present in the viewer's life.

When I talk about experience of my work my emphasis is upon a mental or thinking experience. The physical experience is necessary but secondary to "the idea of" left with the viewer. Material and formal aspects are consequently viewed as functional elements rather than for their intrinsic material presence. I have great sympathy for the spirit of Conceptual Art in the 1960's and 70's. Objects, images, texts and music are "props" on my stage and can as easily be rough and unfinished as refined and decorous, as long as they serve as signifiers for the meanings I desire. That does not mean a lack of consideration of materials. In the case of the independent videos I have been concerned to make a product that has at least the visual finish of broadcast television (or better). The somewhat lyrical and contemplative content of these works makes that appropriate although I do not believe in sophisticated technical effects, smooth editing or high quality production in general as necessary goals of artists working with video. In the case of these tapes I wanted to minimize the initial difficulties of access which often occur with an audience whose expectations are set by television, allowing the content to create the difference.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

There are a number of challenges inherent in writing about one's own work particularly if, as in the case of an installation, the writing precedes the completed piece. There are the normal problems of trying to put a poetic expression into descriptive and/or analytic words. If one is limited to a description and evaluation of meaning in the absolute sense dictated by language and as ascribed to intention and physical nature, then the "greater" meaning is likely to be missed. This is because analysis abstracts and isolates the work from the the constantly changing subjective reality of the viewer. If on the other hand one is tempted to reread what is presented in as many ways as the work may suggest and bear, then the original meaning is likely to be superceded and lost. This last critical approach has special appeal for me as an artist because it is connected to the dialectic purpose of poetic expression: i.e. by naming or circumscribing meaning the work may open up to the imagination of the viewer the greater possibilities of meaning associated with real-life experience. This for me is much more significant than objectifying original intent or meaning. The play is <u>not</u> the thing.

To write about my work is to continue it and every new writing will have new content or extensions of meaning which

are both derived from and distanced from the original work. In some cases new writing may even contradict old. Axiomatically, to paraphrase video artist Norman Cohn, I consider this support paper not to be so much about my work as of my work, just as my work is not so much about individuals, events or ideas as it is of them, of me, a product and extension of their nature.

In the poem Ash-Wednesday of 1930 T.S.Eliot writes:

> Because I know that time is always time
> And place is always and only place
> And what is actual is only actual for one time
> And only for one place
> I rejoice that things are as they are and
> I renounce the blessed face
> And renounce the face
> Because I cannot hope to turn again
> Consequently I rejoice, having to construct
> something upon which to rejoice
>
> (Collected Poems:1936, 95.)

Eliot recognizes the process of life as ever-changing and unalterable by reflection. In such circumstances there is no place for predetermination and authority (historical or otherwise), just the unceasing task of reworking reality, of creativity as a continuously partial step towards a constantly shifting meaning.

My work emerges from my identity and that in part comes from the psycho-social context which I share with others. My work is that of an urban dweller in a contemporary bourgeois post-industrial society. The issues and concerns which I address are embedded in the framework of current lifestyles,

particularly the issues of personal identity and the need to "sign" oneself to others. Jurgen Habermas writes:

> The problem of the modern big city, in sociological terms, is not to be found in overurbanized life, but rather in that this life has again lost the meaningful characteristics of urban living. The mutual effect of the private and public spheres on each other has been upset. Not because man has become mass-man, but because the city is increasingly more like an unfathomable jungle in which the individual must withdraw, while the public sphere of activity is reduced to the lowest common denominator determined by tyrannical and ill-organized communication.
> (quoted in Biro: 1982, 66.)

Identity, individuality, self-determination are the victims of urban homogenization, while their achievement, ironically but necessarily, demands social recognition and reinforcement. Story-telling is a way of bridging identity and social being. This is the arena for my work.

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APPENDIX 1

SLIDE #

1.	"VOICE.SOUND.TRACK."	video clip.
2.	"TIME TO TIME".	video clip.
3.	"OUT OF AIR".	video clip.
4.	"SIGNALLED. SIGHTED. MARKED."	installation view.
5.	"SIGNALLED. SIGHTED. MARKED."	installation view.
6.	"SIGNALLED. SIGHTED. MARKED."	installation view.
7.	"SIGNALLED. SIGHTED. MARKED."	installation view.
8.	"SIGNALLED. SIGHTED. MARKED."	installation view.
9.	"SIGNALLED. SIGHTED. MARKED."	installation view.
10.	"SIGNALLED. SIGHTED. MARKED."	installation view.
11.	"SIGNALLED".	video clip.
12.	"SIGHTED".	video clip.
13.	"MARKED".	video clip.
14.	"SPECTACULAR/VERNACULAR".	video clip.

* Slides attached to back cover.