

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY TALK TUESDAY JANUARY 25TH 1994.  
MARTY ST.JAMES & ANNE WILSON

1. Historical context:

A likeness and a document.

Painting to photography, likeness assured, cheaper images available.

New technologies .

Our own history: performance, video, electronic imaging.

Interventions in reality:

Things passing, events and acts

We intervene

And take a bite

Recreate it in another form.

Add, subtract or combine.

We intervene and put it back

In a new place.

So that its different

Therein lies our art.

2. Perfect Moments: Life is not perfect , art can be.

Unlike the reality of performance

Video can make the sequins sparkle

Both video and performance are fundamental to our work.

3. "THE SMOKING MAN"

Portrait of an activity, filmed in Canada and completed in London.

Subject Pirani, an Italian mask maker.

One of a series of anthropological portraits; laughing, crying.

Came from a fascination with the habit and its past fashionability, chic associations and more recent descent into health horror story. Its a strange thing to do.

We placed him in a Rembrandian spotlight and lit the smoke.

The piece is really anonymous unlike "The Swimmer" which is a portrait of both a man his activity.

The activity is performed, telescoped and repeated.

Relate to Jeff Koons point of orgasm.

Nam June Paiks lack of figuration.

Andy Warhols icons.

Historical convention of the frame.

4. VIDEO/TIME/PORTRAITURE;

Most common use of video is to create a narrative, an illusion of time and place.

Our passages of time are not trying to be longer or shorter than they are.

The subjects of the video portraits are not pretending to be someone else.

Yet performance is one of the most important contributors to our work.

We see the portraits as a bridge between fine art & technology.

For us electronic media work has to be figurative and the one to one relationship between the video portrait and the viewer is fundamental.

5. New Works: Electronic portraits still and moving of:

A place,

An activity,

A time,

An experience.

Using ourselves as templates, motifs ,performers, vehicles.

Using the conventions of frame, cabinet, surround and support.