

SIGNAUX POETIQUES/ POETIC SIGNALS

July 21 - August 17, 1986

Si en littérature on définit la poésie par une certaine beauté des associations visuelles créées par les mots ou les sons, en vidéo elle se manifeste surtout par une ingéniosité dans la juxtaposition d'images, de narrations et d'espaces. Par le refus systématique de la logique courante, la vidéo poétique repousse les limites de l'imaginaire. Elle met en scène un univers où règnent le jeu, la surprise et le merveilleux.

Forme d'art complexe, où l'artiste utilise autant le visuel que le sonore, la vidéo poétique peut être de deux principaux ordres: littéraire et visuel. Le premier utilise le texte et la voix narrative, le second fait appel aux qualités nouvelles et spécifiques de la forme vidéographique comme telle. Ces qualités varient donc beaucoup d'un pays à l'autre — voire d'un artiste à l'autre. Selon l'accès qu'il aura à une certaine technologie de pointe, l'artiste donnera plus ou moins libre cours à un imaginaire débridé. Son intention n'est pas didactique, car le but n'est pas de transmettre un sens particulier. D'où l'idée de gratuité en poésie.

L'une des caractéristiques importantes de la vidéo poétique est qu'elle interroge la signification du vu et de l'entendu à l'écran. La vidéo poétique n'exprime pas de sens fixe. Elle est oeuvre ouverte. Cette ouverture permet au spectateur d'accéder à plusieurs lectures. L'ambiguïté, l'équivoque, le multiple, deviennent donc éléments essentiels de cette poésie. Elle ne situe pas le spectateur puisqu'il voyage dans un inconnu où les fantaisies, les rêves — l'impossible — deviennent possibles.

Outre les images, la vidéo poétique explore les multiples effets sonores. Par la répétition des mots, par la douceur de la voix, jusqu'aux chuchotements, les sons deviennent musique. Un peu comme si le son, cheminant dans un espace imaginaire, se transformait en matière douce et malléable.

Signaux poétiques présente un choix de vidéos dont la sélection a été faite par deux conservatrices. L'une et l'autre illustrent ainsi leur interprétation du poétique. Pour faire ressortir la richesse de ce type de travail, six oeuvres récentes d'artistes canadiens et étrangers ont été choisies.

Poetry, in the narrow sense denotes imaginative literature, heightened by verse and imagery. The poetic impulse is of a different order, implying a broader primary drive to express the very essence of human existence, achieved by affecting the imagination and emotions through suggestive rather than explicit means, spiritual rather than logical ones. While the making of poetry itself is a matter of thinking, it speaks to us indirectly, unveiling the nature of being through an aesthetic arousal — an arousal triggered by something more than the sum of the signs and sounds by which it is conveyed. Language has been the customary carrier of this impulse but it has also been said that all art is poetry.

Video, a medium based on the sequential frame, lends itself readily to the traditional pursuits of a poetic form. The verse is replaced by the regularity of an edit or the zoom of a camera shot, establishing the rhythmic movements and progressive arrangements necessary for any poetic composition. Its capacity to electronically transmit realistic form, synthesize imagery, and then enliven it with sound provides a freedom restricted only by technical skill. As a new medium, video first struggled to identify its place within the arts and the focus was directed at experimenting with its documentary ability, formal limitations, the uniqueness of (closed-circuit) simultaneity and its relationship to broadcast television. For some time now, video art has been firmly recognized as a valid genre and while its specific attributes are still respected, it is finally free to be handled as a creative tool at the disposal of all artistic expression. *Poetic Signals* points to this freedom that has put aside the heavy baggage inherent in any medium burdened with justification and now, integrates and applies the principles and conditions of contemporary painting, sculpture and performance art in the creation of a suggestive and imaginary interior space. This space is often one of a dissected, fragmented vision. The linear form is increasingly a thing of the past, broken down instead into a multi-faceted view that is reshaped and compressed into an intricate present.

The three artists I have included in this selection are not poets as such, nor are they solely video

Le premier volet est composé du trio suivant: *Wallace et Thérèse*, par Jan Peacock, *Tatouage de la mémoire* par Hélène Doyle et *Hyaloïde* de Danielle et Jacques-Louis Nyst. La première bande représente l'approche littéraire, où l'emphase porte sur le mot ou la phrase, la deuxième illustre l'approche visuelle, où l'accent est mis sur la beauté de l'image, et la troisième fait la synthèse des deux types: l'image et la narration explorent de nouvelles avenues. Le second volet, sélectionné par Daina Augaitis, fait l'objet d'un court essai en langue anglaise.

Très brièvement, *Wallace et Thérèse* suggère les multiples possibilités renfermées dans une seule phrase. Répétée sans cesse, cette phrase devient écho dans le temps. La douceur de la voix ainsi que les différents langages exprimés, autant de moyens d'exploration qui fouillent des dimensions inconnues du son. Comme la fonction de l'écriture cède sa place à l'esthétique de la calligraphie, le sens de mots n'a plus d'importance. Seule une musique demeure.

Dans *Tatouage de la mémoire*, Hélène Doyle choisit pour sa part de pousser son travail vers une narration poétique exprimant différents états d'âme, d'explorer visuellement la représentation d'espaces illimités habités par un personnage féminin créé de toutes pièces. Tout comme chez Jan Peacock, l'exotisme joue ici un rôle central. Il permet de s'éloigner du réel tout en maintenant avec lui un contact ténu.

Hyaloïde présente une poésie complexe de l'image superposée à une poésie du texte recité. La suite des images est structurée de telle manière qu'elle réserve à chaque moment une surprise. Le jeu des espaces devient une stratégie essentielle, maintes fois répétée au cours du vidéo. Mots d'esprit, vers, contines, autant de techniques poétiques qui soulignent la filiation littéraire de cette oeuvre.

Si la vidéographie poétique ne consiste pas en une narration linéaire fonctionnelle, c'est que le poète nous dévoile une dimension cachée. Il aide à la transformation du monde, annonçant parfois, tel un visionnaire, son futur. Il exprime l'indicible.

Manon Blanchette
Conservatrice en chef.

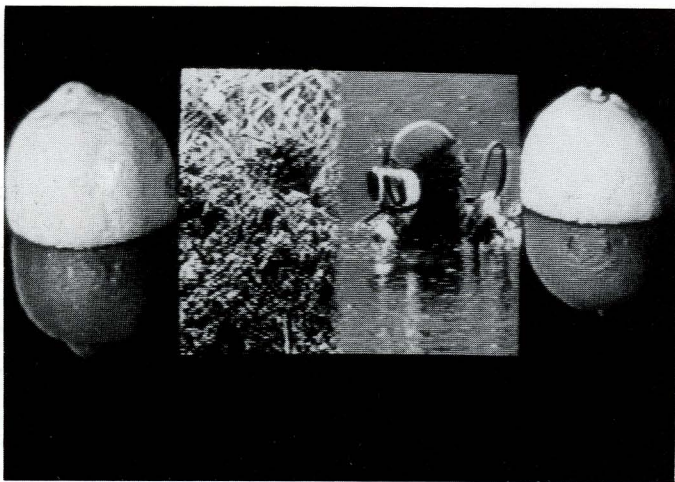
artists. Their video work, however, reveals the influences of passion, child-like play and occasionally, even mania — the indisputable aura of the mythological Muse lurks nearby. Stephen Partridge's *One Thousand and One Boys' Games* is perhaps the most literal "poem". In this collaborative tape, painter John Yeadon has provided the words and computer-generated drawings which have then been animated and synthesized by Stephen Partridge. This successful integration of language and visuals can indeed be termed a video poem, the visuals echoing the quick pace of the narrated stanzas and building up like concrete poetry. The poem itself is a terse account of male activity, provocatively addressing "boys" and describing the perfunctory minutiae of life that make up the more erotic, exotic and profound whole.

Mark Verabioff's *Killing Time* also alludes to sexual opportunity in a brief visual account of a male's journey that focuses on the act of making a choice and accepting the outcome, symbolized here by the game of coin-tossing. This poetic tape glimpses at the truths of daily existence without resorting to streaming, figurative and emotive language, having replaced it instead with frames of solid reverberating colour, scenes of suggestive activity punctuated by the occasional image of the word "a-c-t-i-o-n", and a gyrating audiotrack of industrial sounds. These alternate elements produce a similar symbolic effect and as a totality, this work makes its inscription as a simple, elegant mark.

Lydia Schouten parodies the fairy tales and myths that inspire her, in this case, *Beauty Becomes the Beast*. We enter Schouten's imaginary world through vivid, otherworldly images of a woman who suddenly grows a tail and is lured to the underwater domain of fantasized creatures. The metaphor of a "paradisical unity between humans, goddesses and nature is only illusion" and more accurately in Schouten's vision, "the garden of lusts lies between paradise and hell". This visual allegory is a mysterious, erotic and eloquent search for morals and values and as poetry, it acts as a palimpsest, bearing the traces of the uneasy age that we live in.

The history of art is a conjunction and evolution of forms reflecting the changing human context out of which it is created. Poetry conveys the inner soul of the times, without it life would be intolerable; video as a contemporary tool harnesses technology for the purpose of art. When governed by the poetic impulse, it grows into a potent and rich form of communication, enabling us to comprehend a larger, fuller and more complex world.

Daina Augaitis
Curator



DANIELLE AND JACQUES-LOUIS NYST

Hyaloïde, 1985

color, stereo, 27 min.

Both from Belgium, they live and work in the city of Liège. Jacques-Louis Nyst studied at the fine arts academies of Madrid and Liège. He is now teaching drawing and video at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Liège. Danielle Nyst works for the R.T.B.F., the national francophone radio in Belgium. Their works have been exhibited in numerous group and solo exhibitions in Europe and America. In 1984 they won the first prize at the International Video Festival of Monbéliard.



photo: Joe Sarahan

LYDIA SCHOUTEN

Beauty Becomes the Beast, 1985

color, stereo, 9:30 min.

Resident of Rotterdam, Holland. Solo exhibitions of photographs, video, installations and performances shown throughout Europe. Select group exhibitions include *Talking Back to the Media*, Amsterdam, 1985; *The Luminous Image*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1984; and video screenings at the Tate Gallery, London, 1985; The Kitchen Center, New York, 1985; Venice Biennale, 1984; and Video 84, Montreal, 1984. Editor of *Modern Denken*, magazine about video, film, photography and installation and recently, co-curator of Edition 5 of *Infermental*, magazine on videocassettes.

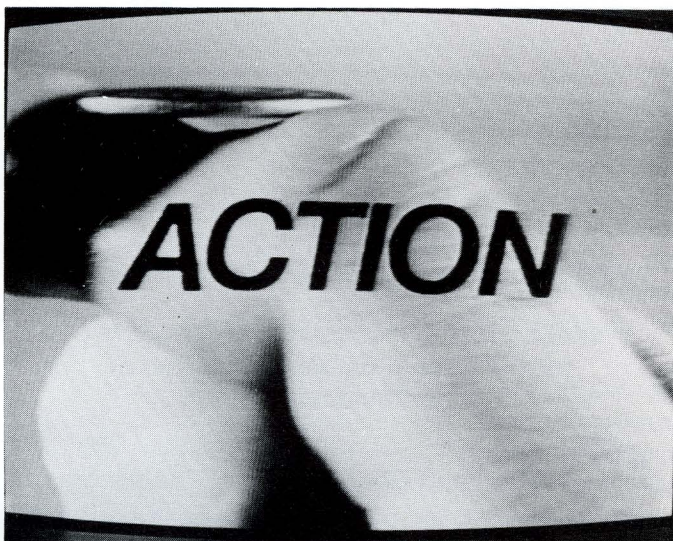


photo: Mark Verabioff

MARK VERABIOFF

Killing Time, 1985

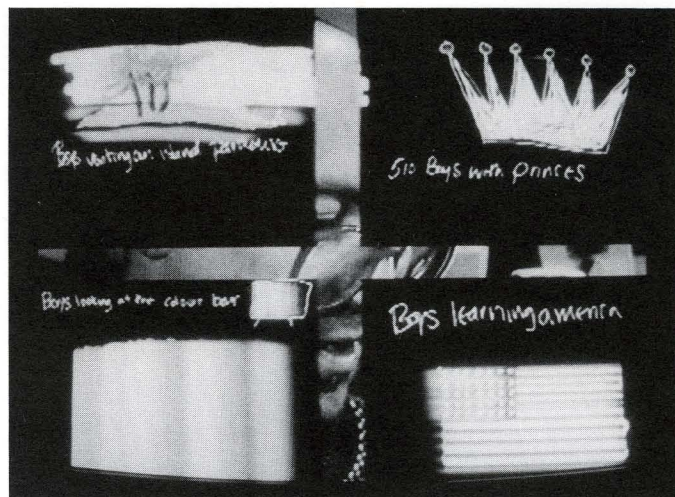
color, stereo, 4:55 min.

Studied at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax and at The Banff Centre. Exhibited in numerous group exhibitions including *Audio by Artists*, NFB, Halifax, 1986; Ludwig Museum, Cologne, 1985; 8th Tokyo Video Festival, 1985; *Festival of Canadian Video Art*, Saw Gallery, Ottawa, 1985; *4th San Francisco Gay Video Festival*, 1985; *British/Canadian Video Exchange*, AIR Gallery, London, 1984. Producing member at Centre for Art Tapes, Halifax, 1985 and currently research intern at the Dept. of Video, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

STEPHEN PARTRIDGE

One Thousand and One Boys' Games, 1984
color, stereo, 7:20 min.

Studied Fine Art at Maidstone and at the Royal College of Art, England. Lectured in Video and Performance in Coventry, 1976-83. Presently lecturer in charge of Video and Computer Graphics at Duncan Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee. Curated *Video Art 78* at Coventry and *UK TV* for the Kitchen Center, New York, 1979. Videotapes and installations shown extensively since 1975 throughout Europe and North America. Recent screenings include ICA Videoteque, London, 1984; Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, 1985; Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1986.



HÉLÈNE DOYLE

Tatouage de la mémoire, 1984
color, stereo, 55 min.

Born in Quebec city, she studied at the University of Laval and is one of the founders of Video Femmes in 1973. Besides being a video artist, Hélène Doyle has collaborated as camera person and editor for such movies as *Macho Macho-man*, by Jean-Pierre Bergeron and *La lumière blanche* by Pol Pelletier. On several occasions she has sat on juries for the Canada Council's video section.



photo: Jean Fiset

JAN PEACOCK

Wallace and Theresa, 1985
color, stereo, 8:35 min.

Studied at University of Western Ontario (BFA, 1978) and University of California at San Diego (MFA, 1981). Since 1982 has taught Intermedia Studies and Video at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Solo exhibitions of video and multi-media installations include 49th Parallel, New York, 1986; Centre for Art Tapes, Halifax, 1983 and Annex Gallery, UC San Diego, 1981. Group shows include *Holland Festival*, Monte Video, Amsterdam, 1985; *Festival of Canadian Video Art*, Saw Gallery, Ottawa, 1985; *Video Culture*, Harbourfront, Toronto, 1983.

ISBN: 0-920159-24-9

Thanks to Art Metropole, V/Tape and Video Out.

WALTER PHILLIPS GALLERY
for the production and exhibition of
contemporary art



The Banff Centre

Box 1020
Banff, Alberta
T0L 0C0
(403) 762-6281