For Delphine
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>B.S., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-1959</td>
<td>Teacher, Elizabeth Public Schools, Elizabeth, New Jersey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-1960</td>
<td>Teacher, Police Athletic League, New York, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-1963</td>
<td>Teacher, Harrison Public Schools, Harrison, New Jersey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-1976</td>
<td>Teaching Associate, Department of Art, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>M.F.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Teacher, Columbus Public Schools, Columbus, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-1978</td>
<td>Teaching Associate, Department of Art Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-1980</td>
<td>Administrative Associate, Department of Art Education, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio</td>
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FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Art Education

Studies in Art Criticism. Professor Robert Arnold

Studies in Film Theory and History. Professor Mojmir Drvota

Studies in Television Aesthetics. Professor Rogenia Degge

Studies in Studio Practice. Professor Sidney Chafetz

Studies in Film Practice. Professor Clayton Lowe
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INTRODUCTION

Thus a great many of the critical and theoretical writings pertaining to art video reflect the need to identify the medium as distinct from other communication forms. Video possesses its own qualities and characteristics, even though many of these are not immediately apparent. Such new qualities continue to emerge as we increase our efforts to understand the form. In order to determine what video art is and what it is not many writers and thinkers have found it useful to compare it to established art forms as well as to the new forms that have appeared during this century.

Gregory Battcock  
"What is Video Art?" 1

This examination of video art has been developed from the point of view that there is no one single theory of art. Video art has emerged within the context of the pluralism of contemporary criticism. Our efforts to understand the form of video art must not be directed solely toward an assessment of medium properties but toward the establishment of relationships between physical, or medium characteristics and theories of art. As contemporary painting includes works reflecting theoretical strains ranging from abstract expressionism to neo-realist, video art includes works that reflect more than one theoretical point of view. The history of art theory contains two basic strains--art which includes acknowledgement of the character of the medium, but is essentially directed toward other concerns, and art which includes references to external visual content, but the content which is apparently at the center of the work is directed more toward the nature of art, or the

1
characteristics of the art form. That is, Rembrandt's paintings contained references to the form of painting—color, contrast, picture plane—but only as secondary components. The paintings are aesthetic objects in which references to the natural world are primary and not means of revealing the properties of painting. Cezanne, on the other hand, introduced into his work visible references to the properties of painting, making observable, visual statements about the nature of visual organization in two dimensional form.

Film theories are organized traditionally into two major strains—formative which describes those films in which the filmmaker's forming of the work is dominant; and realist in which the images of the natural world are held to be of primary importance. Theories of the plastic arts and of the moving image are subsets of each of these major strains, sometimes incorporating elements of each.

Independent films are more like video art because both the independent filmmaker and the video artist have utilized the material of an established popular art, the feature film and television, in construction of works of art whose context (intent, production and exhibition) is related to the fine art tradition.

P. Adams Sitney, in his book Visionary Film, develops theories of the independent film. Sitney compares the independent (or avant garde) film to the human mind and organizes films into categories which reflect the processes of the mind. Although I do not subscribe to Sitney's mind/film as a theory of video art, I do find the pluralism of Visionary Film to be an organizational model for developing theories of video art. Essentially mythopoesis, lyricism and structuralism, as described by Sitney, so constitute fairly distinct theories of film, although Sitney
interprets them as subdivisions of a major theory. I am borrowing from Sitney the idea of theoretical categories.

David Ross underscores the idea of pluralism in film.

In direct contrast to the role that the artist played in the development of film technique and grammar, the artist in television is working in the only area left open to him, the development of personal attitude.

Personal attitude, in the making of art, can be interpreted as the artist's view of art, i.e., the functions of art, the relationship between idea and material, which is a personal theory of art. Personal theories of art are developed from existing theories of art. The contemporary pluralism which allows for the concurrent existence of more than one view, or theory of art, is reflected in video art.

I will organize several theories of video art, recognizing that the boundaries of these categories are soft and that some works in video art can be demonstrated to fall into the outer edges of more than one category. The categories are not meant to be hard and fast definitions of video art, but flexible descriptions, whose function is intended to encourage the development of an adequate critical language for video art.

The categories are drawn from existing theories of film, the plastic arts and television, not always closely adhering to the original form, but modified to suit video identity. A video identity is established through an examination of the characteristics of the medium, but it is the translation of these characteristics into works of art and the ways in which the medium is used to reflect a theory of art, that is significant.

Theory should not only provide criteria and language for criticism but open an art form to speculation; not only describing the past and
the present but developing the future. This is precisely why we cannot
describe video art solely within the framework of its medium properties
or one single theory of art. Video art is not identified by its tech-
nology and it is not separate from the plastic arts, film or television.

The comparison, at this point, of video art and other art forms is
in the relationship between video art and the existing theories. I do
not wish to cram video art into old containers but to search for viable
areas of commonality, out of which emerges adequate descriptions of
works in video art. The categories are meant to isolate, for the pur-
poses of examination, the major thread of the content of the work.
DESCRIPTION OF VIDEO ART

In 1965 Nam Juin Paik bought one of the first Sony Portapak video recording units sold in this country. This event is sometimes cited as the historic beginning of video art with Paik, as Johnathan Price\(^1\) describes him, as its "day-glo godfather." Paik had earlier worked with manipulated television images but the use of the recording unit signaled the emergence of art originally created with video—the initial recording of images specifically intended to be works of video art. Whether or not this event is the actual landmark beginning of a new art form, it is generally agreed that video art emerged during the 1960's. Johanna Gil says that "most video art making began in 1968 and 1969"\(^2\) and according to Johnathan Price:

> Historically, American video art begins in the late sixties within and around the studios made available at educational stations in Boston, San Francisco and New York, thanks to charitable grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the John D. Rockefeller II Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York State Council on the Arts. Numerous artists came to WGBH (Boston), KQED (San Francisco) and WNET (New York) to explore the gear.\(^3\)

In 1969 video art entered the art market with the sale of Bruce Nauman's Video Pieces A-N- by Los Angeles dealer Nicholas Wilder. In the same season, New York dealer Howard Wise organized an exhibition, "TV as a Creative Medium", which included artists Nam Juin Paik, Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider, among others. Wise has since given up the exhibition of traditional art to become the entrepreneur of a video
distribution system, Electronic Arts Intermix. In 1971, the Everson Museum in Syracuse, New York established a gallery and department specifically devoted to video art. David Ross observes:

Museum involvement with video art and television appeared in response to the growing interest of artists in the medium and in response to the unique set of social and political pressures that have forced many museums to reevaluate their relationship to communities. Much of that reevaluation is still having an impact today. But museums and galleries served a function for more significance than one would traditionally expect, for they provided artists with some very valuable feedback on the effectiveness of single-monitor video work in the art context.4

By 1980, the time of this writing, video art is shown in galleries and museums in major cities across the country, occasionally broadcast on PBS and cable television and tapes are available through distribution, such as Castelli-Sonnabend and Electronic Arts Intermix in New York.

A growing body of literature surrounds video art and major video artists can be identified. However, as Johnathan Price points out, the status of video art is still being determined.

The history of video is still roughly adolescent. Like a young nationa, video still shows the phases of growth it has gone through as it acquired its identity. The first years saw people treating video as if it were film or TV or even print, using video as a glorified training device. As awareness expanded, though, people began to use video as a tool for learning about themselves, about their vision, about the medium itself. As people's skills developed, artists camped out in educational stations, playing with the equipment, remaking it, rehearsing for the day that they could make mature art with video. That day has now come.5

That day may have come but the identity of video is still elusive because of its technological newness and because of its kinship with television, film and movements in contemporary art.
Criticism of video art is difficult because of this kinship. Criteria for approaching this new form are rooted sometimes too firmly in the theories of the more established art forms (either by adherence or repudiation) or are directed primarily toward physical or technological properties. Either of these critical approaches by itself, is inadequate because video has unique characteristics which distinguish it from film, television and the plastic arts and these characteristics are not found entirely within technological properties.

There are two aspects of video's technological identity. One, an overt technology inherent in its visible, physical properties, i.e., the characteristics that we see and the technology that we know—the bottom line of the physical existence of tubes and wires. The second identity is the covert psychology of human beings' attitudes toward this technology. Art made with complex, interactive electronic invention is recent in the history of art. In an article, "Impermanent Balance between Man and Computer," Ruth Davis describes the uneasy relationship between humans and computers: "Major confrontations can be expected and are already occurring—as the domain of these new sciences overlaps that of individuals." Davis observes that people are in the uneasy position of wanting to use the intelligence capabilities of computers, yet wanting to control the environment and the use of power.

The use of electronic technology in the making of art is a continuation of the relinquishing by the artist of some of the control of image making power which occurred with the advent of photography. Response to the absence of the direct hand of the artist, visibly apparent in the form of the work, is concurrent with the ambivalence with which we approach computer banking. No longer do we write out a check
and hand it to another human being; now we punch up numerical codes and instructions, withdrawing our money from a tray which in true science fiction style, slides noiselessly out from the wall, responding to invisible signals from within.

The mystique of complex video/electronic equipment in a work of art often produces a reverence for technology which may result in the technology being identified as the art itself. Focus on technology tends to isolate the work from other art forms, and a terminology develops which completes this isolation from the ideas and works in the mainstream of art.

An example of this terminology, or what Johnathan Price calls "cable-repair jargon", is found in this description which accompanied the showing of Kit Fitzgerald and John Sanborn's video installation *Resound*.

> Sound mixdown is handled by a special sixteen input mixer configuration which distributed the eight stereo pairs to two separate systems.7

This does describe *Resound*'s construction and is certainly not foreign to anyone familiar with audio components. However, this terminology sets a certain tone for discussion of the work and leads away from a probing of the theoretical implications of *Resound*.

Since video technology is commonly known in the form of television, a conflict occurs between the identity of video as art and the identity of video as television. TV in our society is synonymous with entertainment and information. Currently we do not think of art as popular entertainment. Video art may, in the future, become a resolution or synthesis of art as mass communication. According to Kim Levine:
Television may not be the ideal model. Video, in spite of its rapid proliferation, is not the answer to art's dilemma, not yet at least. But it is carrying clues to the new narrative.

However, at present, our ideas, as a society, are attuned to a certain expectation of what we will see when we switch on the television set and video art does not always fulfill this expectation. I do not deny that television is an art form. Much has been written about TV; its impact on human behavior, its role in the development of mass culture, its structure and its history. Writers, such as Horace Newcomb have developed a television aesthetic.

Television and video art are different, although they are forms of the same technology, much as a billboard is made from basically the same material as a painting hanging in a museum. However, as there are differences in the way that we approach a billboard and a painting, there are differences in the critical approaches to television and video art.

In order to clarify what I mean by video art, I will compare television and video art within a framework of four elements in the process of making a work of art. These elements are: the medium of which the work is made; the artist who produces the work; the audience for whom the work is intended and finally the form which the work of art finally takes.

Video art and television are technically one and the same. Essentially a video image is a series of electronic signals appearing on a receiving surface (cathode ray tube) in temporal succession and blending together to form a whole, continuous picture. This picture is called (as in motion picture film) a frame which is seen as continuous motion but which can be stopped and viewed as a still image. Video cameras are
like other cameras in that they have focus and light entry controls, but the light sensitive surface in a video camera is an electronic tube which transforms light intensity to electrical signals. The signals can be recorded onto magnetic tape and the image is finally viewed on a screen which is actually the broad end of the cathode ray tube. (Projection screens for video images are available but at present they are less commonly used.) The tubes, encased usually in plastic or wood are the television sets which are familiar installations in most homes. When they are used in conjunction with recording and playback equipment, in the production of video images, or in the exhibition of video art, they are called monitors.

The technology ranges from the sophisticated, complex and expensive equipment of the network studio to the two unit black and white portable half inch equipment. The vast assembly of switchers, special effects boards, editing equipment, lighting and so on of the television studio, requires a bevy of engineers, technicians and production crews to maintain, operate and produce a television program, while a single person can record sound and picture with the small portable video camera and battery operated recorder.

Development in video technology has been rapid—screens for large image projection, video discs and chips for storage and playback, and more sophisticated computer generated images are only part of the accelerated rush of invention which makes more available tools for creating and displaying video images.

I do not intend to direct my examination toward the technological aspects of video art. My concern is with those theories and concepts of video art which affect the criticism of the art form.
It is in the area of the purpose of video image production or the audience for which it is intended that we can begin to discuss the difference between video art and television.

Television, particularly commercial television (and to a lesser degree public broadcasting) has a format which underlies all that we see on the programs. David Antin comments on this time structure.

The time standard of television is based firmly on the social and economic nature of the industry itself, and has nothing whatever to do with the absolute technical and phenomenological possibilities of the visual representation by cathode ray tube. For television, time has an absolute existence independent of any imagery that may or may not be transmitted over its well defended airwaves and cables. It is television's only solid tangible commodity that is precisely divisible into further and further subdivisible homogenous units, the smallest quantum of which is measured by the smallest segment that could be purchased by a potential advertiser, which is in itself defined by the minimum particle required to isolate a salable product from among a variable number of equivalent alternatives. The smallest salable piece turns out to be the ten-second spot and all television is assembled from it.10

Television, as an industry, is organized for profit and the salable commodity is broadcast time. The programs are developed within this framework and their length, structure and content are largely determined by commercial viability. Public broadcasting which does not include direct visible commercial sponsorship, is also organized into relatively fixed patterns in the temporal structure of its programming.

Commercial criteria not only bring about the inclusion of product advertisement in television programs but also often determine the nature of the programs. Theories of television programming, such as Fred Schroeder11 and Horace Newcomb (whose theory of intimacy I will be discussing in a later chapter) which examine the series formation,
relationship of audience to program, building of loyal continuing audiences for specific programs in particular time slots, acknowledge the relationship between television form and content and the need to attract the maximum number of viewers. (In the chapter on Intimate Video Art I will discuss qualities of television which are linked to the common technology and viewing condition of television and video art. At this point my intent is more toward contrast between video art and television.) Video art, which is not linked to large scale selling, does not need to fit into any time structure or content format for commercial viability. The video art audience is similar to the audience for art forms which are shown in museums and galleries.

The advent of cable television systems with up to 35 potential channels opens up the possibility for new audience identity and for new developments in the relationship between video art and television. In New York City, since 1976, the Artists' Television Network has aired Soho Television, artists' tapes, broadcast on a regular basis via Manhattan Cable and Teleprompter Cable systems. Jaime Davidovich, director of the ATN, describes Soho Television. "Cable brings the arts directly into the home. One can relax and watch programs with an art content without having to go to an art museum."12 He continues, "The production and distribution of quality television programs for the special interest audience--the audience interested in art more for its innovative forms. At the same time the goal is to bring television to the artist as a tool of expression, giving the artist another medium in which to work as well as a wider audience." What is suggested here is a significant development, not only in how we might regard television in the future, but art as well. The future, as projected by the Artists' Television Network,
has implications for television itself (as distinct from video) as a medium for artists. (I will discuss this concept at greater length in the chapter on Linear Video Art.) Television is an art form which can incorporate single channel forms of video art. However Davidovich is identifying the medium as television rather than video. What he is talking about is the broadcast format as a means of exhibition (or display) of video art which then in turn redefines television for the future. However, at present, the impact of Soho Television is limited and cable television systems are not yet to the point of providing artists' video on a regular basis. Whether or not there will be, in the future, significant changes in art because of video art and broadcast communication format remains to be seen. For the present, the distinction between video art and television are those that I have described. The role of television and the role of video in relation to audiences are different.

Melvin LeFleur in Theories of Mass Communication comments on the role of television in the life of the individual.

The television set, however, which has moved into our living rooms, is a technological device which has an immediate and direct impact. The children in our society spend more than 20 hours a week, on the average, viewing its offerings. The television set and the other media at the very least, are the innovations around which the ordinary member of society organizes his life in different patterns because of its existence. It is doubtful that video art could be said to be a part of the ordinary person's life. Recently, when a group of junior high school students were asked about video art, they replied that they had never heard of it. These same students indicated that they were regular television viewers. Video artists' images are largely gallery installations and rarely seen
on television because of broadcast criteria, particularly time restrictions. The running time of video art is not always the time of television programming. Unless a video piece is made with the intent of broadcast presentation, the temporal restrictions of television are not integrated into the concept of the work—the duration is determined by content rather than the television format.

Television production involves large numbers of people, each having a specific, defined area of responsibility, ranging from conception to implementation. There is a tendency for video art to be made by individuals or small groups of individuals. Les Levine describes the video artist in his essay, "One Gun Video Art."

The art viewer is always asking, why can't video artists make their video tape like real TV? The first answer is that they simply don't want to. They are trying to use TV to express art ideas instead of simply to sell products, the most common use of broadcast TV. The second answer is that they don't have the budgets, the staff or the equipment to produce broadcast quality television.

Levine is an artist, who like Nam June Paik, Lynda Benglis, Nancy Holt, Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci have worked with other media as well as video. These artists are established figures in the art world, rather than the broadcast industry.

Some video artists have considerable knowledge of video technology which they use in their work, but others who do not have a technical background, work in collaboration with someone who does. Other artists use the medium in its simplest form.

The presentation of video art takes many forms—single channel works designed for display on a monitor or broadcast, works designed as part of a sculptural installation and works incorporating video images
with performance and multimedia exhibition.

The structure of video art is not always narrative. Jean Luc Goddard said that film should have a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order. Some video art does not even have a beginning, a middle and an end—in any order. Television programs are theatrical (drama, comedy), participatory (games), and informational (documentary, news, sports). Most of television is some form of narrative and most television programs have narrative sequence—beginning, middle and end—in that order.

Television images are very seldom the result of experimentation with the medium. Technique is submerged with the narrative form. As David Antin commented, TV has nothing to do with the possibilities of the video medium. The criteria which determine the theories or structure of television programming are mostly related to the commodity of broadcast time. Video art works, not bound by the same criteria as television reflect the artist's personal point of view and may be more expansive in pushing the boundaries of the medium. While it is true that many video artists have not had access to sophisticated video equipment, experimentation can also be in the realm of questioning the theoretical realm as well as the technological realm.

Since all video art is not linked to the broadcast format, the use of multiple monitor display is another distinguishing feature. Everything that we see on a television program is usually viewed on one television set. However, the video installation can incorporate many monitors, controlling movement and placement of the image as well as the number of images. The area of installation video art is perhaps the most apparently different from broadcast television. Installation video
art shares a condition of viewing with the plastic arts—the removal of the image from proscenium presentation and all of the attendant requirements. In this context, the forms of video art are freed from the restrictions of speculations about the attention span of the viewer.

To summarize, video art can be described as the work of independent artists who are developing concepts in video form. These works are most often displayed in galleries and museums and occasionally on Public Broadcasting stations or cable television. The content of video art is determined solely by the artist, without the criteria of broadcast time, single unit display or commercial viability. While artists can choose to work with any of these, they are not bound by mode of presentation to do so. The distinction between video art and television is not intended to be a definition of video art, but a framework in which an identity of video art can be built based on its unique characteristics, both physical and theoretical.
The first requirement of art criticism is that it shall be relevant to the art under consideration; how correct are its evaluations of specific art objects is of less importance. The accuracy of the critic's judgement cannot be determined by his contemporaries, in any case. But the inflection given by art criticism to the general thinking about art affects not only the responses of appreciators of art but the creative attitudes of artists as well. When this thinking is trivial or beside the point, painting and sculpture become the specialty of feature writers, decorators, dealers and speculators in masterpieces.

Harold Rosenberg
Criticism and Its Premises

There are several functions of criticism--description, interpretation and evaluation of works of art. Criticism is based on theory. That is, how we describe, interpret or evaluate a work of art comes from our particular view of art. A view of the purposes and functions of the forms of art is described as a theory of art. A more specific definition of theory is found in the Random House College Dictionary.

2. a proposed examination whose status is still conjectural in contrast to well established propositions that are reporting matters of fact.

The observable fact of a painting, for example, is a wood substructure covered with fabric, onto which has been applied pigment. (Paintings sometimes do not have the wooden framework, but only the canvas and sometimes not even the paint, but the canvas alone and so on through a number of physical properties which may or may not be included in every
object which is identified as a painting.) What kinds of wood, fabric or paint are further divisions of the factual aspects of painting. When we look at a painting, we do not necessarily respond to these facts but rather to other kinds of information. We respond to the image or to the form of the painting into which these materials have been molded. We respond to what the painting looks like, what it means or how it affects us. The form that the painting takes--how it looks, what it means or how it affects the viewer--is the conjectural domain as the materials of which it is made are the factual domain. (Conjecture, although it is not fact, can include reference to fact.) Meaning, appearance and response are conjectural because they cannot be objectively verified, being subject to interpretation. Art theories are essentially points of view, based on conjecture, which have resulted from viewing of art and contemplation about meaning in art. Art theories examine the relationship between the appearance and meaning of and the response to a work of art.

Herschel Chipp says that "The ultimate purpose of studying theory is to illuminate art."3 The development of thoughtful criticism, a means of illuminating art, involves theoretical analysis, which can begin with the establishment of common characteristics of the art form in question. These characteristics can be both physical, related to the medium and theoretical, related to ideas about meaning in art. (The establishment of common characteristics is only a means of organizing thoughts about the art form and should not be interpreted as a check list of necessary and sufficient properties which defines the art form.) From the common characteristics which have been identified, a sense of the nature of the art form should evolve, resulting in a theory. This
theory then should result in ways to determine what is significant about particular works of art which have been determined to be part of the art form in question. Criticism is the application of criteria which are formed according to the theory. That is, the theory identifies the criteria which are used to describe, interpret or evaluate a particular work of art.

According to Morris Weitz:

There can be no theory of art, i.e., no true statement of the necessary and sufficient properties of all works of art.⁴

There are, however, multiple theories of art which have been established in different times and different societies. These theories result from the formalizing of a particular notion about what art ought to be, its functions and forms, which generates enough interest to be supported by works of art or writing about art, or both, according to the society. Consistent presentation of a particular view of what art ought to be, by artists, art historians and theoreticians establishes verbal and visual evidence of that particular view or theory, which seem to support each other in some system of cross reference. One theory of art often rises out of another, either as a development or modification of the original theory. Plato held a particular view of art which was modified by Aristotle. Both Plato and Aristotle thought that art should represent an ideal, but they did not agree about the role of the artist in the depiction of this ideal. According to Erwin Panofsky,⁵ Plato thought that art could only have a qualified value. Art is bound to reproduce the visible world as truthfully as possible. Otherwise the artist would produce "unreliable and deceptive illustration."⁶ The duplication of the world of appearances is pointless and limits the "world of ideas."
In other words, art should imitate the observable work, but in so doing is thrice removed from truth—truth being the ideal form of something in the world; the second generation being the actual object in the world and the third generation being the artist's rendering.

Aristotle, says Panofsky, took a different view—that although art should refer to the visible world, the hand of the artist and the material of which the work of art is made enter into a bond with the fragment of the visible world which is depicted in the work of art. Works of art "are distinguished from the creations of nature only in that their form before it enters into matter is in the mind of men."\(^7\)

Panofsky summarizes the two theoretical strains:

Insofar as art was an object of thought in classical antiquity, two opposing motives were from the very beginning set naively side by side (exactly as happened later during the Renaissance). There was the notion that the work of art is inferior to nature, insofar as it merely imitates nature, or at best to the point of deception; and then there was the notion that the work of art is superior to nature because improving upon the deficiencies of nature's individual products, art independently confronts nature with a newly created image of beauty.\(^8\)

Arguments about art, in antiquity, produced theories of art which determined how specific works of art were regarded. Each of these points of view would determine criteria by which these works of art were judged. The concepts of beauty, visible reality and the relationship between internal and external realities (or the artist's perceptions of both beauty and visible reality) formed the basis for approaching works of art. An example of the criticism in antiquity is found in Panofsky: "The admission that the works of Polycletus had lent the human figure a 'grace surpassing truth'. There is the disapproval of that Demetrius who went too far in being faithful to nature, preferring versimilitude
to beauty, and there are numerous poetic passages in which the almost supernatural beauty of a human being is extolled by a comparison with statues or paintings." Panofsky is citing criticism of particular artists and works of art which stemmed from the two critical strains in antiquity.

Another example of theory is the attitudinal change in the latter part of the 19th century toward existing theories of representation in art. Herschel Chipp describes the subjectivist movement.

The artists participating in the subjectivist movement of about 1886-1900 may be grouped together because they all rejected the realist conceptions of art that had prevailed from the preceding generation. It is on this basis only that they may be discussed together; stylistically they varied widely. Following the lead of the advanced poets, they turned away from the exterior world and inward to their own feelings for their subject matter. Although they often employed traditional religious or literary subjects in their painting, they declared that its feeling qualities were derived more from colors and forms than from the subject chosen. The movement therefore was a result of new freedoms made possible by throwing off the obligation to 'represent' the tangible world and of new stimuli gained from an exploration of the subjective world. The new freedom and stimuli also allowed the range of ideas on what constituted proper subject matter for painting to be greatly expanded.10

These artists, dissatisfied with traditional boundaries in art, developed theories which did not employ the criteria of antiquity--beauty, visible reality--the ideal had become something different, having to do with the art object in itself. Chipp notes that the only connecting bond between these artists is their rejection of representation and that stylistically they differed widely. Theory should not be confused with style. Style is the means for interpreting the relationship, in these works, between art and mimesis.
Later, in the twentieth century, these theories were further developed by the abstractions of Leger, Picasso and Kandinsky, who with many of their contemporaries, further widened the breach between art and the observable natural world—and this view was essentially another theory of art.

According to Chipp:

Cubism, is in fact, the immediate source of the formalist stream of abstract and non figurative painting that has dominated the art of the twentieth century.\(^1\)

This is another example of the development of theory, supported by writing and works of art. Within all of these theoretical streams, from mimesis to abstraction, there are specific theories or points of view. Although Kandinsky is not considered to be a Cubist and Leger and Picasso did not confine their ideas to Cubism, the broad theory of abstraction, which began with Cezanne's attention to the picture plane and the relationship between form and color, includes theories which are more or less subsets of the major point of view.

The recognition that there is not a "true statement of necessary and sufficient properties of all works of art"\(^12\) does not invalidate an examination of art or a particular kind of art with the intention to develop a theory (acknowledged as one of many) because as Morris Weitz observed:

In spite of the fact that all of them (theories) fail to accomplish what they set out to do--give a true definition of works of art--these definitions are nevertheless helpful and well worth intensive study. For behind every one is a redefinition of 'work of art', i.e., an attempt to get us to concentrate on certain criteria, or properties of works of art as against others. If we attend to these criteria or properties and forget the unsuccessful attempts at true, essential definitions, we can learn a great
deal from the theories, especially to what we should look for in works of art and how we should look at them. Indeed the great contribution of theories to works of art is precisely in their teaching, not in their definitions, of art: each of the theories represents a set of explorable criteria which serve to remind us of what we may have neglected or to make us see what we may not have seen.13

Both Chipp and Weitz have described a function of theory—"to illuminate art" and to "make us see what we may not have seen".

Theories, by examining those aspects of art which may not be readily apparent, make it possible to extend the reaches of response through the availability not only of the appearance of a work of art, but the context of meaning which surrounds it. This is particularly relevant in the contemporary art world because of the multiplicity of theories underlying the diversity of large numbers of work exhibited regularly. Included with traditional representational, abstract and non-objective work, are works of art not meant to be understood, work in new media and work not meant to be seen at all (yet exhibited). One of the newer art forms is video art and Hollis Frampton comments on its arrival on the critical horizon.

It is a long standing habit of artists (in the life of the race, it might be our most valuable habit) to postulate a present that is more privileged than the past. Video art, which is by now virtually alone in having no past that is shady enough to worry about, joins on this occasion in that relentless search for self definition which has brought film art to its present threshold of intensity and ambition...and which indeed I understand to be the most notable trait of the whole text of modernism, through the arts and in the sciences as well.14

I suppose the next question is, what will theory do for video art? That is, what is the relationship between art and theory. Brian Henderson in his book, Critique of Film Theory comments on this relationship.
Perhaps the existence of critical approaches does not prove the existence of a field, nor their nonexistence its nonexistence; but every approach to a subject necessarily constitutes it as an object, that is, defines it in a certain way and acts on its definition.  

This is precisely the relationship between art, theory and criticism. Theory does not bring the art into existence but articulates a description of a particular art form and criticism is based on this description.

Theory, the parent of criticism, is ultimately conjecture and therefore subjective. However, the function of theory, the illumination of art, is not undermined by subjectivity. We recognize the appropriateness of subjectivity for articulations about that area of human endeavor-art-which has traditionally been continually interpreted. The entire history of art is a series of histories written through contemporary eyes, interpreting past events. Only the names and dates seem to be fixed and in many instances, these too are subject to argument.

In an article, "The Performing Critic", appearing in the December, 1979 issue of Art in America, Nancy Marmer says that criticism creates "an exergetical fiction, a cohesive and satisfying discourse on the subject of art that, in spite of its fictional status, has the power to convince the reader of its validity." In the same article Marmer comments on the relationship between criticism and theory.

Though there has been no lack of bustling commentary on the so-called pluralism of the 70's art, comparatively little has been said about the diversity of the decade's criticism. Yet many writers on art have responded as eagerly as artists to the permissive mood of the times. Newly liberated from Greenberg dogma and no longer constrained by the putative objectivity of that school's formalist rhetoric, art critics took off in a stunning variety of directions. Critical strategies that, in the tense climate of the 60's would have seemed self indulgent or outrageous are now the familiar methodologies of the art press."
The change from outrageous to familiar methodology reflects acknowledgement of the existence of multiple theories of art. The contemporary art climate is charged with the electricity of changing views and accumulated shifts in theoretical emphasis in the last one hundred years which has resulted in the current challenge to the traditional view that art is situated in the aesthetic object. The relationship between art and object is critical because as Ellen Johnson points out, "The entire gamut of modern art can be viewed from the vantage point of the artists' attitude toward the object..." If we were to draw a horizontal line, placing Object at one end of the line and Idea at the other, art theories would fall somewhere along the line between the two. At one end of the line, Object, we might place the critic Clement Greenberg and at the other end, Idea, the artist Joseph Kosuth.

Greenberg takes the position that the physical object, painting, sculpture, etc. is significant and should be experienced in itself and not in reference to anything else. In his essay, "Modernist Painting," Greenberg describes what he means by modernism.

> The essence of modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticise the discipline itself—not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its areas of competence. Kant used logic to establish the limits of logic, and while he withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was left in all the more secure position of what remained of it.

He goes on to say in a more specific reference to painting:

> The limitations that construct the medium of painting—the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of pigment—were treated by the Old Masters as negative factors that could be acknowledged only implicitly or indirectly. Modernist painting has come to regard these same limitations as positive factors which are to be regarded openly.
Greenberg argues that critical attention should be directed toward the object which the artist has manufactured because art is located in this physical manifestation which is only responsible to itself. The visible and apparent is the art.

As Marmer noted, release from Greenberg dogma (formalist theory) accompanied a pluralism in the art world, which includes conceptualism, whose major proponent, artist Joseph Kosuth, refutes Greenberg in his essay, "Art After Philosophy." Kosuth claims that aesthetic considerations are extraneous to an object's function, unless the object's function is strictly aesthetic and then it is decoration. Kosuth argues that decoration leads to taste and taste leads to formalism and formalism is only an exercise in aesthetics and has nothing to do with art. Art, says Kosuth, is Idea and aesthetics have nothing to do with ideas. Kosuth's rejection of the aesthetic object as the location of art reflects a view shared by other artists in what has come to be known as the Conceptual Movement. "Art," says conceptual artist Sol Lewitt, "that is meant for the sensation of the eye primarily would be called perceptual rather than conceptual." The Conceptualists' rejection of anything which purports to be an art object (aesthetic object) confuses the criteria for criticism by forcing the viewer to decide not only how to respond to what is on view but to decide what is actually to be viewed and whether one should regard what is on view as art at all.

The situation is aptly described by Douglas Davis.

Duchamp declared late in life that his urinal had come to be considered an art object; Rauschenberg complains of the reverse, that his erasure is looked upon by art historians as a historical statement: He sees the erased drawing as a drawing.

Here we have what Oliver Hardy called a "fine kettle of fish." The
kettle of fish is that before we can begin to describe, interpret or evaluate a work of art, we must decide whether or not what we are seeing is a work of art, and having made that decision, we have to determine whether that which we have decided is the work of art is residue of meaning or idea (something that is not a traditional aesthetic object and therefore its physical appearance is irrelevant except in the context of reference to the idea) or whether the work of art is an aesthetic object and should be viewed only in reference to itself. At this point, theories become a paddle for our canoe and we can refer to what Max Kosloff calls the merge with epistemology.

Here the aesthetics of criticism merge with epistemology—the study of what can be known. Any profession in defining its standards must come to grips with the knowability of its subject; otherwise it must abdicate its standards. Nothing, of course, could be more obvious about works of art than that the known is relative or rather that the evidence is constituted more by shifting states of mind than it is represented by physical objects. Projecting and externalizing these states is the critic's business.23

Kosloff approaches this dilemma by suggesting the model of the English philosopher William Weldon's categorization of the levels of inquiry. Weldon, says Kosloff, poses three main activities—the solution of difficulties, puzzles and problems.

Difficulties are those common little obstacles posed by lacking such things as a string to tie a package. Puzzles are those questions to which there are answers discoverable in terms of their own gamelike constructs—one finds the key within the given construction. Problems are represented by all the larger issues and general enigmas of life to which there can be no final solutions. Needless to say, works of art, and what they can mean to us at various pivotal moments, are examples of this last situation. Under this light man typically imposes a puzzelike solution upon the innumerable problems that face him, thus taming the chronic insecurities into manageable 'versions' of the truth (as in such professions as
law and sociology.) Often enough, we are even unaware that we sow our answers by the very nature of the questions that we set up.24

Theories in the context of the game provide a puzzlelike solution to problems of art criticism by marking the board and providing rules of play. Marmer's exergetical fictions become truth, much as the admonishment, "Pass Go - Collect $200.00!" is truth in the game of Monopoly. Pink and yellow money is only currency in the context of the game. Theories are ultimately what Kosloff calls "manageable versions of the truth."

The special qualities of photography cause particular problems in criticism which are listed by Peter Plagens:

Photography's 'problems' (an inadequate word but my Roget's yielded no better) as sifted by current critics are major and they are three: (1) Is photography truth, or why does the camera lie after it assures us that it won't? (2) Is photography autonomous or why is subject matter 90 percent of the ball game? (3) Can photography be a major art form or is it just hifalutin journalism?25

In other words, is the photograph an object, the art located in the print, or is the photograph merely a record of some phenomenon in the world, recorded by the artful mechanism of the camera. Susan Sontag qualifies her answer:

Photographs are, of course, artifacts. But their appeal is that they also seem, in a world littered with photographic relics, to have the status of found objects--unpremeditated slices of the world. Thus they trade simultaneously on the prestige of art and the magic of the real. They are clouds of fantasy and pellets of information.26

All art is to an extent a "pellet of information," although that information may or may not represent mimetic image. Paintings are pellets of information about paint, canvas, wood, etc. Sculptures are pellets of
information about metal, plastic or stone. Photography is plagued by the capacity to reconstruct what we perceive to be a reflection of visible reality but the questions about the nature of art, in photography, although they derive from this inherent capability, are reflective of the questions raised about all art by artists and critics. However we couch the argument about the identity of photography, we are still talking about what it is that can be called a work of art. The camera's capabilities notwithstanding, the issue is fundamentally the establishing of the location of the art within a given piece.

The arguments about art-as-object and art-as-idea lead us squarely into the eye of the storm which surrounds contemporary written and visual articulations of the quest for the nature of art. The development of theories of such a new art form as video art takes place within this storm and the initial identification of the character of video art must begin with an effort to establish the location of art within video works.
CHARACTERISTICS OF VIDEO ART

Location of the Art in Video Art

Although the identity of video art is determined partly by the unique characteristics of the medium, it must extend into the larger area of ideas about the nature of art, or theories of art. If video theory is to produce intelligent criticism for current, past and future works; if a theory of video art is to illuminate video art, then it must reflect more than an assessment of the characteristics of the medium, much as criticism of painting must extend beyond a description of the observable facts of the medium. As the observable facts of painting are combined with conjecture to form theory, so those characteristics of video which come from medium identity combine with conjecture to form theory.

There are two aspects of a theoretical examination of video art. One is the establishment of the medium's unique properties and the other is a group of theoretical categories which describe how these unique properties are incorporated into works of art. (All of the qualities or properties of video will not be present in each and every work of video art.) How these properties are used, or interpreted, is determined by the theory of art to which the artist subscribes. A taxonomy of the physical properties of video is available in technical manuals and is not our concern here because purely physical description does not include those qualities which are theoretically significant. What we need to
examine is not video technology but the use of this technology in works of art, seeking to identify those areas of greatest importance in the manufacture of and response to video art.

Essentially video is a photographic moving image. However, other art forms, photography and film contain these properties. What characterizes video as a unique art form?

A survey of the literature surrounding video art reveals two major issues:

1. The relationship between film, video and the object in art.

2. The relationship between process and product in video art.

Through examination of video art within the context of these issues, we will move toward an initial identity of the character of video as an art form.

I have earlier described the contemporary challenge to the traditional notion that art is located in the aesthetic object. This argument is particularly relevant for an examination of video art because video, like film, has no object in the traditional sense. That is, there is nothing comparable to a painting, drawing or sculpture. The confusion about the location of the art, or that which we view, or that to which we respond, is evidenced by recurring references in writing about video art to the equation of art with process (or product with process). Before we direct our attention to the point of view which seeks to replace the traditional idea of a product in art, the aesthetic object, with process, we might examine the relationship between film, video and the object in art.
The Object

A speculation about the elusive object in art might begin with a formal definition of the word object. Random House College Dictionary defines object as: "Anything which may be apprehended intellectually; a person, thing or matter to which thought or effort is directed; goal; purpose." These definitions would appear to simplify the identification of objects in art. However, recent works of art have persistently confused the issue.

Joseph Beuys' The Silence consists of five 35mm reels of the Ingmar Bergman film of the same name, galvanized first in copper, then in zinc. The Silence is available in an edition of fifty. What is the object in The Silence? Beuys asks the question by making the piece. In both of the versions, the projected film and the galvanized edition, elements of the formal definition of object are present.

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<tr>
<th>Projected Film</th>
<th>Galvanized Edition</th>
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The Silence seems to fit the definition of object in both of its forms. (Including a criteria of the visual arts--visibility.) Where do we find the location of the art--in the projected or the galvanized version? We cannot touch the film as we see it projected; the fifty copies of Beuys' The Silence present the physical rendering of the film. However, we cannot see or hear the film images in the galvanized edition. Since each of these forms of The Silence presents properties of the film, our
efforts to locate the art are tangled in the brambles of the relationship between art and object. We might take a simplistic view which would present two options—one, to deny the validity of object as the location of the art; or two, to define that which we see, or that to which we respond as the object in which is located the art. Neither of these options is by itself adequate, for film, as illustrated by the example of *The Silence*. The galvanized reels are not the whole film. That to which the effort is directed and that which may be apprehended intellectually is visible only when the sound and picture images are projected. On the other hand, the galvanized *Silence* points to a physical presence which also exists. If an object is that to which we ultimately respond, then Beuys' edition is one form of the artwork and the rectangle of light modulated by Bergman's photographic images is another. Both are manifestations of the work, each incorporating characteristics of film. Film is a totality of components which form the art. Beuys has blocked the projected image of film and in so doing has directed our attention toward both the missing film image and the physicality of the film strip. There is a parallel here between film and video because video images are only visible when the tape is displayed through video receivers. By galvanizing *The Silence*, the artist sealed away the cinematic image as video images are sealed away on magnetic tape. However, as in *The Silence*, both the displayed video image and the physical tape exist side by side.

**The Physicality of Film and the Physicality of Video**

Hollis Frampton in his essay, "The Metahistory of Film," describes the physicality of film.

The act of making a film, of physically assembling the film strip, feels like making an object; that
film artists have seized the materiality of film is of inestimable importance, and film certainly invites examination at this level. But at the instant that the film is completed, the 'object' vanishes. The film strip is an elegant device for modulating standardized beams of energy. The phantom work itself transpires upon the screen as if notation is expended by a mechanical virtuoso performer, the projector.2

Video, in comparison, never, at any point in its manufacture includes anything which might be construed as an object in the sense that Frampton describes the object in film. Recorded images are never visible in the physical form of tape; the frame cannot be seen by examining the recording material. Editing and assembling is never done physically because video images are visible only through specific display equipment. The video artist never feels "like making an object."

Frampton, in a lecture at Hunter College in New York illustrated the performance of the projector and the rectangle of light on the screen. In a sequence of demonstration, he blocked the projector light with his hand, withdrew his hand, inserted a pipe cleaner into the gate, withdrew the pipe cleaner and said:

Already we have devised four things to put into our projector.

We have made four films.

It seems that film is anything that may be put into a projector that will modulate the emerging beams of light.

For the sake of variety in our modulations, for the sake of more precise control of what and how much we remove from our rectangle, however, we most often use a specifically designed material called: film.

He continues:

But only one thing has always been in the projector.

Film.
That is what we have seen.

Then that is what film is all about.  

The object in film is only present to a certain point; the physical thing that the artist touches--film--becomes something else during projection and it is to that something else that we respond.

In "The Metahistory of Film," Frampton observes that "film meets what may after all, be the prime condition of music: it produces no object." It seems to me that Frampton is describing an art form which appears at one point to contain an object but which does not, in fact, constitute an object. In his lecture he points out that the specially designed material (film) which is used in the projector to modulate the beam of light from the lamp, is at once the identity of the art form and a component of the art form. The projector, strip of film and rectangle of light are interactive parts of the art form called film.

Video, like film, contains objects but does not constitute an object. The video totality, or total sum of parts and the relationship between these parts is physical as well as ideational. The device for displaying video images is directly, technically, linked to the device for recording video images. There is no projected rectangle of light; the light of video is physically within itself. Frampton says:

The photographic cinema must be "driven" as synthesizer folk say, from the outside. But video can generate its own forms internally, like DNA. It is the difference between lost wax casting and making a baby.

Video images are not revealed by an external light source, but by a series of compatible electronic signals generated within itself. We cannot insert anything foreign into the light source to alter the picture, as the pipe cleaner or hand; there are no external manipulations
such as demonstrated by Frampton, which will directly affect what we see. Any manipulation must be fed through or generated by the video process. Video may be manipulated only on its own terms, responding to its own signals, recording that which is in the camera's eye or generated within or through itself. That to which we respond is a video image. Part of that video image is the display device or the monitor.

The Video Monitor as Object

Frampton says that when the film is finished, the object vanishes. Although an object in video, in this sense (visible images laid onto a film strip) never exists, the monitor or receiving tube, either encased in a box or in its original form, is a physical object, which seems to contain the video image. Its physical oneness with the image is both real and illusion. In Douglas Davis' video work Handing, the artist extends his hands, asking the viewer to respond by touching. Only the height of altered sensibilities would make it possible to reproduce the sensation of the touch of hands. The touching is only in the mind--the physical response is to the touch of glass. There is a dialectic set up by the physicality of the monitor and the conditioned belief in the veracity of photography. The tube is hard, solid and three dimensional but unlike Aladdin's lamp, it does not contain a tiny genie. The tiny genie, or Douglas Davis with his hands outstretched, is not more in actuality, than modulations transferred to electrical signals in the receiving tube. Nevertheless, the object of the monitor is always present. When it is switched off, the images vanish, but the grey face of the glass remains. The tube is present and even in its silent passive state retains a character of its own.
The argument might be made at this point that all video art is not always displayed on a cathode ray tube and it is possible that developing technology might produce new projection display for video images. However, historically video art is usually associated with tube display, and consequently, at present, the presence of the monitor is one of the characteristics of video art. The development of theories in any newly emerged medium always presents the possibility that one may limit one's view of an art form to current technology and like Rudolf Arnheim, whose restricted view of film technology and insistence on the purity of the silent film, weakened his theory. I suggest that although, currently, the physical object of the cathode ray tube forms part of video identity, should technical change occur in the future, I would (like Sergei Eisenstein who successfully incorporated sound into his theories of film) acknowledge new developments and incorporate change in further theoretical examinations.

Currently, the size and scale of video images are linked to the object, or the monitor and the physical presence of the object contained images is a unique property of video art.

However, all artists do not use this characteristic directly in the production of video art, as observed by Deborah Perlberg.

While the avenue for exhibition broadcast pieces are expanding, the emphasis on gallery installations decreases, many of the newer artists seem to conceive of video as broadcast art, rather than object.

Video artists do not agree in their attitudes toward video art as installation and video art as broadcast. Perhaps we do not want to so quickly dismiss the significance of the object/monitor in video art as Perlberg does, preferring rather to examine this aspect of video art in
the context of its theoretical potential. The juxtapositioning of moving images with three dimensional objects has produced some interesting (and major) works in video art.

In some video art, the monitor/object is less important in the construction of the work, while in others it is either the focus of the work or an apparent component. The emphasis on this video property, in individual works, can be placed on a continuum line ranging from direct concern with the object/monitor to minimal reference to it.

The video monitor is a physical object that can be picked up and moved. Numbers of these objects can be grouped together in various configurations or built into another form, becoming components of a larger object. Object does not necessarily imply a traditional aesthetic object as we have learned in recent times, beginning with Duchamp's ready mades. In spite of the efforts of the Dadaists to ridicule the object in art into oblivion, the object has continued to appear in works of art in the decades since, in new forms and definitions. The connotation of the traditional art object may have changed but the physical presence of something that signifies 'art' is still with us. Although we may not always be looking at something which fits traditional ideas of aesthetic, we are looking at something and that something is often an object. An object is present in video art, but video art is unique in that the physicality can be either brought to the fore or veiled, according to the artist's dictate. As illustrated by my earlier example of Joseph Beuys' The Silence, the physical thing and the moving image are always there, but the artist chooses whether to direct the response to the work toward an overt recognition of the three dimensional character of the monitor.
My example of Douglas Davis' *Handing* demonstrates how the physicality of the television set becomes willy nilly part of the work.

In Nancy Holt's *Points of View*, the video image is in the form of cathode ray tubes installed in a sculptural structure, an example of the fixing of video in a specific space as a component of an installation. The presence of the video image within a three dimensional structure is a form of the containment of the moving image within a static object and Holt uses this paradox to play on perceptions. The artist describes *Points of View*:

In *Points of View* (an installation at the Clocktower, N.Y. May 1974) four monitors were placed facing out N, E, S, W at eye level in the center of the room. They were enclosed in a white rectangular structure 6½' by 4½' with monitor screens exposed 4½' by 5½' from the floor. This structure repeated the structure of the square room with its high walls and four windows, N, E, S, W overhead. Four tapes previously shot from the four windows through a static camera with a movable circular tube in front of the lens were played back simultaneously on all four monitors revealing passing circular glimpses of the world outside. The windows themselves were made circular causing an interaction between the circles of sunlight shining into the space and circles of video light being emitted by the monitors. Eight persons (two per tape) have a dialogue about what they are seeing on the screen in a sound over audio track. The video installation unit thus became a repository of divergent interpretations of the world as it can be seen from the heights of the Clocktower through the video system (a vision not available in the room itself since the windows are above eye level). The view is quite vast; it includes lower and mid-Manhattan, the East and Hudson rivers, and part of Brooklyn and New Jersey, as well as things closer in, such as flues, chimneys and water towers. Verification of video perceptions was possible by going through a door in the room out onto a walkway which completely surrounded the outside of the Clocktower. So the outside was brought inside through video (a double take) when the actual outside was confronted. This visual transposition brought a constant referencing toward the center (video unit) followed by counter movements out again toward the periphery (tower walkway).
Points of View is an extension into video form of some of the concerns of an earlier work, Locators with Spotlight and Sunlight, installed at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York. Locators consisted of two ovals of light— one formed by a spotlight on the gallery wall and the other by sunlight shining through an oval cut into a board covering the window. A T-shaped steel pipe is positioned between, so that either oval of light can be viewed by looking through the horizontal bar of the T. When looking through the pipe, which is additionally angled so that it appears to project the light on the wall from the source of the light at the window, the ovals of light are framed by the interior contour of the pipe. Bruce Boice comments about Nancy Holt.

Holt's work does not question perception, it rather questions the constructions we put on perception, and our clinging to the constructions even in the face of confusing evidence.11

The locator pipe, in fact, does not project the sunlight onto the wall. Boice continues: "When the mental construction of the situation successfully shifts away from the causal reading, the steel locator pipe which is apparently and physically at the center of the work becomes almost ludicrous."12 The questions of the constructions put on perception take a different form as video is substituted for the locator pipe in Points of View. Here the evidence becomes more confusing because the relationship between what appears to be happening and what is happening are further complicated by the use of photographic images and recorded sound. The veracity of the circular views of the outside world, in Points of View, which is given by the video images, conflicts with the sound track in which the individuals who describe the videotaped landscape have been deliberately chosen for their differing perceptions. Another dimension
is added by video. The T pipe in **Locators** acts as a directional finder for spots of light, whereas the video image in **Points of View** is a directional finder to itself. The interaction between the circles of light in the windows of the Clocktower and the circles of light on the monitors is more ideational than apparent.

Holt's perceptual questions are asked, in **Points of View** in video language. The video image is the matrix of a radius which extends outward from the installation in the Clocktower, checking and rechecking the relationship between the video image and the world. Monitor installation affixes the moving image firmly to the environment of the room and pulls the viewer to focus on the video structure and its windows of movement.

Gregory Battcock in his article, "The Aesthetics of Boeing", talks about implications of the monitor/object.

Thus by moving the television set, the major visual device of our time, away from the wall, one introduces the notion of portability to television and in a sense we are confronted with the transportation of television, or in other words, a new disciple that opens up an era for visual video communication that began in ancient Greece (that led to the transitional and Hellenistic periods) and that equals the innovations in the Duecento in Siena and Florence (that introduced elements of portability in fact and concept, to the new art form known as painting).

By moving the television set away from the wall, one moved it away from its mother, architecture, upon which it was dependent, though badly nourished and into the realm of the everyday object.13

The television set is an apparent part of Nam June Paik's **TV Bra** for Living Sculpture and **Concerto for TV, Cello and Videotape**. In **TV Bra**, Charlotte Moorman plays the cello, wearing on each breast a tiny television set. In **TV Cello**, Moorman plays three television sets strung
together as if they were a cello. As Moorman plays, images of herself in real time and later images of Paik in real time appear on the three screens. Johnathan Price describes the three TV sets as an "off set of blocks, like a cubist cello." Moorman wears dark glasses attached to miniature monitors attached over her ears—one tuned to a replay of Janis Joplin's final concert and the other to ABC television. Paik comments on these two pieces:

> When given a choice between truth and convenience, people always choose convenience. Both artists and distributors are concentrating on video-tape making which is more convenient, whereas my live video art with Charlotte is expensive, clumsy and, as an art object, almost unsalable--like a piece of truth. It is about time that we make the distinction between video art and video taped art.

These pieces, by inclusion of the object, do not push video art into the realm of static sculpture but rather refer to the full video image—object, real time, sound, picture and broadcast transmission.

The association of video with an object is anathema to some writers (which I will discuss in the section about process and video art). However, TV Bra and TV Cello illustrate, within the work, the presence of the object in video art and the fact that its overt inclusion as a directly visible component of a work of video art does not denote a leaning toward traditional criteria of sculpture.

Paik chose TV Bra and TV Cello to make apparent the total accumulation of the components of the video image, as Hollis Frampton illustrated the relationship of the components of film.

In Frank Gillette's Track/Trace, fifteen monitors are placed, in stairstep formation, to form a pyramid. There are three cameras, recording in three second delay, images of the viewer which are replayed on
each row of monitors in the same ration of sequence. "The display of monitors," says John Hanhardt, "makes it clear that we are seeing individual TV sets." He continues: "Rather than being a scientific or transcendental experience, Track/Trace makes the viewer aware of his physical size and proportions in relation to the distance from the camera and within the television's frame."

Track/Trace, like TV Bra, makes use of the monitor's presence to illustrate something about perception and video. Davis' Austrian Tapes (of which Handing is a part), while making inquiry into communication, are enveloped in the physical size and space of video.

The question of the identity of video art does not lie in a decision as to whether video art is an object in the traditional connotation of an art object, but how extensive is the artist's use of a quality which is a part of video--the presence of an object in the totality of the video image. All paintings for example, do not incorporate to the same extent, characteristics of painting, but reflect choices made by the artist. Since portability of the image and the monitor/object are characteristics of video, we should rethink the relegation of this aspect of video to the scrap pile of history and acknowledge that the monitor/object is perhaps representative of a new class of art forms which although defying definition as traditional aesthetic objects may contribute to the new definitions of object which have emerged in this century.

**Video Art and Process**

The rejection of the traditional definitions of art, particularly the association of art with the aesthetic object, combined with the peculiar status of newer art forms (film and video) in relation to
traditional art, have left us with an inadequate set of descriptive terms. How do we describe a work of art which does not fit the criteria for the plastic arts, or the more traditional terminology which is used to describe the moving image? The technological association of video with communication media and the ideological association of many early video artists with the Conceptual movement has produced some confusing definitions of video art. One of these is the equation of video art with process or product with process. The desire to identify a video piece as a work of art, yet art which is not traditional and which incorporates an entirely new set of characteristics has encouraged this difficult equation to be offered as a major identifying characteristic of video art. Hermine Freed describes the relationship between process and product in video art.

Most video art can be seen, in fact, as process-and-idea orientated rather than product-and-object orientated. The time element in itself identifies the unfolding aspect of both form and idea. If the abstract expressionists' work was process orientated, we are still left with the product. I've written elsewhere about the relationship between video and abstract expressionism, and in particular about some of Bruce Nauman's early work as metaphor for the process in a Pollock painting, although it is doubtful that he meant it to be such a metaphor. In Pollock's work the image is paint. In Nauman's the image is Nauman.

With video the process is the product. In Freed's logic, Pollock's image is paint and the product is painting, and Nauman's image is Nauman and the product of video art is process. However, as the image of paint is finalized in the form of painting, the image of Nauman is finalized in the form of video. The process--Nauman's incorporation of video into a performance or an interaction with video--is also the product. (Product defined as result.) Freed's
comment that "If the abstract expressionists' work was process orientated, we are still left with the product," is difficult because the key word "still" is also applicable to the video work of Bruce Nauman, because if the video work of Bruce Nauman is process orientated, we are still left with the video image. The process/product which in Nauman's video work may not be regarded in the same way as painting, is visualized in the form of the video image, whether that video image is recorded (preserved) on tape or not. The disassociation of video art from the traditional concept of aesthetic object is necessary because video has no object comparable to painting, for example. Criticism of video art therefore must be based on criteria which will incorporate its characteristics. However, whether the process/product equation fully describes video character is another matter. Avoiding reference to the traditional aesthetic object as the source of response to video art, or locating the art entirely in the process, obscures rather than clarifies the identity of video art. The role of process in video art, however, is important because of the video capability for photographic recording which can be combined with interaction in real time. That is, with video, the artist can interact with pre-recorded video images and with directly transmitted images and the final form that the art takes can include these interactions. Process and product are each parts of the total video identity but we cannot identify video art as only process because there exists something which elicits a response which is not described by the word process. Process is formally defined as a series of progressive and interdependent steps by which an end is attained.
What we are seeing in a video work includes process but does not constitute process, much in the way that I have described how video art includes an object but is not an object.

Frank Gillette illustrates another example of the process/product equation.

It seems to me that artistic processes, or aesthetic process, if you will, have always been processes of isolation. You isolate collected material or intellectual material in such a way as to produce an anti-environment. What television—or decentralized communication media—represents is a reversal of that isolative tendency. Television makes possible instead the direction and the composition of processes qua processes, as opposed to isolating objects or static images.

And this, is in my opinion, the intrinsic revolutionary import of videotape technology as the medium of an art form. Instead of contemplating objects, as an aesthetic loop, so to speak, we can now potentially contemplate processes. The real revolution is moving from static image to evolving process. In that move we are destroying all the arcane, hierarchical conceptual structures that required a quarter of a million years to develop.18

Gillette is describing an objectless moving image which incorporates, or better personifies a kind of collective communication. The roots of the notion that we will contemplate process instead of object may be found in theories of communication and photography. One of the issues in photographic theory is whether that which we contemplate is something in itself (a photograph, which is in this definition, an object) or whether that which we contemplate is a recording of something in the world which by the very nature of existence, is in flux, or evolution or process, and this constant change continues beyond the moment of the capture of the image by the camera. Therefore, in this view, the photograph is only a part of continuing change, which seems to be interpreted by
Gillette as process.

Theories of communication include the notion that television is an extension of the photographic tapping into ongoing phenomena. When Gillette says that the real revolution is moving from the static image to evolving processes, I think that he means to establish a specific character for the moving image, a character which is different from the plastic arts. However, by drawing almost entirely upon video art's common parentage with television he omits the recognition that there exists in video art properties which are not described by theories of these more established forms. The notion of process as product, as the location of the art in video art, is vague because without something specifically visible, we have no reference to process. Earlier I quoted Hermine Freed's observation that Pollock's image is paint and Nauman's image is Nauman, adding that in Nauman's work in video, the image is a video image. The video image includes all that makes up video--both process and product, which are not necessarily one and the same. We need to come to the point where we acknowledge that there is a product in video art--the video image. Gillette and Freed seem to be defining product as aesthetic object, with all the baggage of traditional theories. So if we establish that there is a product in video art, but that product is not an aesthetic object in the traditional sense, subject to traditional values and criteria, we can begin to describe what it is that elicits a response to video art.

I have included this argument about process/product because the issue appears in the literature surrounding video art and because I think that process is a part of video art. Process in video art is often directly revealed in the work more than in the plastic arts. As I
mentioned earlier, video is not a passive medium; it has the capacity for immediate feedback and interaction in real time. This is a quality which I think is being interpreted as process because it is unique to video. (In a later chapter, Real Time Video Art, I will discuss real time as a defining characteristic of some works in video art. At this time I am referring to real time interaction as a process in video art rather than a final form.)

A painter interacts with paint and canvas, but beyond the inclusion of the texture of the brush stroke in the surface of the paint, the work itself does not include any lasting reference to the act of painting. If we are to record the painter painting, it must be done in another medium.

Freed's comment that the abstract expressionists' work was process orientated seems to reflect a contemporary movement toward the disassociation of art from the sacred isolation of museums. "Acting Painting" in the 50's carried the connotation that painting (art) is a part of life as the artist splattered him or herself on the canvas and consequently painting was supposed to take on new meaning. However, in actuality these painters included no more of themselves in their work than did Rembrandt in his painfully real self portrait of the aging artist. Video art in the 60's and 70's seemed to be the perfect medium for the art/life equation because of its moving photographic, interactive capabilities. But video, although having the capacity for recording in real time, is not process. That is, like all art, video art contains references to the world but it is not the world. (The chapter on Real Time Video also approaches this issue.)
What is significant is the utilization by artists of these video capabilities and the revealing of process in the final form of the art. This is illustrated by the artist Lynda Benglis.

The following paragraph accompanies a still photograph of Lynda Benglis' *Now*.


However we describe *Now*, the work has been catalogued, offered for sale and presented as an available commodity. The process of *Now* or the interaction with video, one of the aspects of process, is revealed in the work. In *Now* Benglis is positioned against a large screen monitor, in which is seen a pre-recorded image of herself. She interacts with the large close-up profile of herself, the taped image, in synchronous movement, responding to her video self with voice and action, kissing her taped self, swallowing her taped tongue. This performance is taped and retaped until the interaction of several Benglis images, each responding to the monitors self, is built into layers. She/they ask, "Are we recording?" "Now?" they continually ask each other as the hiss of the recording machine roars in the background. The process of videotaping--the monitor images of sound and picture--is revealed in the final work which is distributed by Castelli-Sonnabend. *Now* is a presentation of the process in the final form, incorporating rehearsal and event as one and the same. The content of *Now* is as much video as Benglis herself. The character of video not only makes the work possible but appears as part of the work. Bits and pieces of performance and video character are woven together in a work which synthesizes process and product in the final form of a video image.
Another example of the interaction of artist and video is found in the early works of Vito Acconci, who in the early and mid 70's made a number of video pieces which incorporated events involving himself, video and the audience. Acconci's image, like Nauman's in Freed's example, is finalized in the form of a video image. In contrast we might look at another work by Acconci which did not involve video. Seed Bed, installed in the Sonnabend Gallery in New York in 1972, consisted of a wooden ramp, on the floor of the gallery, which enclosed the artist, who unseen by the audience, allegedly engaged in an onanistic act, his sounds amplified by a speaker system. Seed Bed, as performance or event, exists only in memory or description. However, in his works with video, Acconci elected to introduce a new element into his art. He describes this in his "Ten Point Plan for Video."

7. The alternative is to leave out my image, stay behind the scenes. The video monitor then can function as a middle ground, a depository for objects-- an arena where I, offscreen on one side, can hand things over to the viewer offscreen on the other side. The viewer and I can be concerned about the object while we're with each other (since objects are screened to begin with, since they don't talk back, their mode of presence is adaptable to the screen. Their image doesn't interfere with our contact.)

Acconci is describing an active partnership with video, stating that the monitor can function as a middle ground. Video here is not merely a tool, making notations of Acconci's ideas, but an integral part of the process which in turn becomes the form, through simultaneous video interaction in real time and documentation (recording) of the video image.

Acconci's commentary about video describes a different process and form than Seed Bed. In Seed Bed, Acconci's invisible action was understood by the audience only because of the auditory and written
description. The audio element and the structure in which he concealed himself were not active partners in the work. Something else—a megaphone and a metal container could just as easily have been substituted. In his video work, video could not have been exchanged for anything else. Acconci's video work is dependent on the presence of video and the final form of the work is the video image. Video functions as an irreplaceable part of the performance (which he describes in point seven of his Ten Point Plan) during the process of interacting directly through video by handing objects through video space.

Jack Burnham describes an Acconci video performance:

The piece (Command Performance) involved a series of video monitored positions, relayed from the front of the gallery to the back. Hundreds of viewers stood for some time in the relatively unheated space watching Acconci in a head-on view laying down, singing to himself in the most incredible masturbatory language, fantasy upon fantasy. The complicated work included the rapt attention of those young people, hungering for a slice of that intimate, onanistic space provided by the artist. What the hundreds of young people got was video space and their voyeuristic hunger was recorded to become part of the video image, which made up the work. As in Now, Command Performance included interaction with video as part of the work, in which recording, response and performance were summed up in video images. Acconci's image was presented as video (through video) and the process of the work, or the interaction of artist and audience, was videotaped. The difference between stage performance in which the audience leaves the theatre retaining mental after images and video performance which is retained in the form of video images. The form of the video performance is not only determined by video but its replay or recorded image for later playback, is video form.
Video performance does not end with the original event but continues to exist. As in the example of Command Performance, video not only documents the event but forms the work, through the interaction of process and product.

Conclusion

In the examples of Lynda Benglis and Vito Acconci, we can see the direct relationship between process and video art. Process does not substitute for object, or result, but is part of the video art form. Rather than equating process and product, disavowing one or the other, both should be recognized as components of the video image, in which is located the art in video art.

Video is not an object, no more than film is an object but the concept of the object-in-art is with us in our search for the identity of video art. If we try to pinpoint an object in video art as the location of the art, we are confused because, although video art does contain visible tangible things (tube and tape) that to which we respond is not found entirely in each of these things. To deny the physical presence of the monitor and tape is inadequate as illustrated by the dilemma posed by the argument for process as product. That is, we cannot describe the character of the visual image of video as something as elusive as process.

Video is a total of properties in which no single source of response, which is linked to one single component, can be identified. The art, in video art, is like the art in film, a sum of components. The art is not located entirely in the tape because without the display, the recorded images are not available. The display determines the observable appearance of the video image, becoming part of that image. The
art is not located entirely in the display because without the recording material or the camera, the images are not available. Because of the condition of display, video art or video image is a synthesis of static form and moving image—the containment within a solid three-dimensional portable object—of sound and motion.

Video art is the gnu of art—stripes, mane, beard, horse's tail and split hooves—characteristics associated with other animals, recognized as trademarks of this unique species. Video's process, scale, monitor, movement and sound combine to form the video image.

Each of the artists which I have discussed—Benglis, Acconci, Holt, Paik, and Gillette—have made works of video art. The particular examples which I have described, incorporate unique video characteristics. That each artist has been able to emphasize different aspects of video illustrates the breadth of this art form. With Benglis' Now, we have an interactive single channel work, whose fabrication process is included in the final form. Acconci's work is in the form of interactive performance in which audience, artist and video come together at a single time. Some of Acconci's work is also recorded as a single channel work, which like Now can be distributed for replay. Nancy Holt's Points of View incorporates video in a static installation, with video images forming only a part of the work and which does not, as Acconci's and Benglis' work, result in a single tape for playback. Nevertheless, Points of View, like Paik's TV Bra and TV Cello and Frank Gillette's Track/Trace, is built around video character as much as Now or Command Performance because the video character determines the final form of the visualized idea.
Gregory Battcock comments:

...if video is truly a new form it must, on a greater or lesser degree, reintroduce on its own terms, qualities and principles that are timeless and universal. At the same time it must remain true to the special qualities that differentiate video from other forms. Otherwise one might wonder, why video at all?

I have attempted in this chapter to describe those characteristics or qualities which differentiate video from other art forms. The next step is to identify those "qualities and principles which are timeless and universal." Those qualities will come from the development of ideas about art or theories of art, in video form. Within this framework, the larger view of video art or the video image will be developed; that which goes beyond the physical identity of the medium into a direct relationship between the video art form and theories of art.
Some works of video art can be described as Structural. In "The Cinema of Structure," J. Hoberman describes two interpretations of structuralism in film theory. French structuralism, he says, "was a method of inquiry which was practiced largely in the University and applied mainly to conventional narratives." Christian Metz, perhaps the best known proponent of French structuralism, directed his inquiry toward the discovery of structure in film by isolating film elements as signs of meaning within the framework of linguistics, placing film analysis in a semiotic construct. P. Adams Sitney proposes an interpretation of structuralism which is not concerned with signs in art. Where Metz' semiotics leads toward organizing the signs of cinema into syntactic relationships, American structuralism (as Sitney's interpretation is sometimes called) is concerned with the analysis of the relationship between the appearance and the structure of individual films. Advocates of French structuralism contend that there is a logical order which underlies all art and seek this order through the application of linguistic method. Since I do not hold that there is a single theory of all art, I am not pursuing French structuralism at this time, although it might be a fruitful direction to pursue in another study. At this time American structuralism, because of links to reductivist movements in the plastic arts will be the framework for the development of a theory of structural video art.
Hoberman comments on the relationship between Sitney's theory of structuralism and reductivist art, expressing surprise that Sitney failed to relate the structural film to the minimal movement in the New York art world.

In fact, concerned as they were with a sense of materiality, the films of Landow and Snow seemed almost "objects". They were far closer to the strip paintings of Frank Stella or to the box sculptures of Donald Judd than they were to the hand held subjective films of Stan Brakhage.3

Sitney's failure to acknowledge, in a theory described by Hoberman as "an international anti-expressive and reductivist tendency in avant-garde film making," the relationship between the structural film and reductivism in minimal art is not really surprising because the separation of the paths of film theory and theories of the plastic arts is more or less traditional.

Although we find very few direct connections, in the writing, between movements in film and movements in art, we do find major common points of view reflected in the work of each. Expressionism, representation, minimalism and conceptualism are theoretical points of view, which although described differently, are found in the theories of cinema and the plastic arts.

Moreover the pluralistic climate of the art world of the 70's has included the independent film. Hoberman observes that the critical support for the structural film was found in Artforum (which he describes as the Sports Illustrated of postpainterly abstraction) rather than Film Culture, "the house organ of the American avant-garde film."4 The Whitney Museum in New York has long had a film and video department (with two curators) and regular screenings for the work of independent filmmakers.
Perhaps the reason for the critical separation which amounts to an isolation of the independent film from the mainstream of art (or the plastic arts from the mainstream of the moving image, depending upon how you look at it) is that the independent film has an ambiguous identity caused by association with the feature film. Sitney comments on the difficulty of developing theories of the independent film.

If we are to take seriously the rejection of linear narrative which is nearly a defining feature of the independent cinema, how can we discuss the accumulated achievements of more than fifty years of filmmaking within such a framework?5

Since most of the theoretical writing about film is concerned with the linear narrative (which I have been calling feature films) the independent film suffers the same ambiguity that afflicts video art in the latter's association with the linear form of television.

There seems to be a protection of the autonomy of the film form, in this separation in critical writing from other art forms, as if theoretical connections would result in a raid on cinema by the ravenous hordes of paintings and sculptures who would ram their criteria on the hapless film maker in a frenzy of conquest of the moving image by static values. However, the ambiguous identity of both the independent film and video art, caused by the association with dominant linear forms of the same technology, and the resulting theoretical confusion, should provoke us to see if potential theoretical links with the plastic arts might be of value. We should perhaps look to theories of art in general rather than to medium identification, seeking first the why, then the how, which leads to an understanding of the relationship between the two. If we ascribe to the idea that a work of art reflects first a particular view of art, then we can see that Michael Snow's films and Donald Judd's
boxes have no less connection than Sol Lewitt's drawings and Donald Judd's boxes. Bela Balazs describes this direction.

Lines of development are never rigidly set. They often proceed in a roundabout way throwing the light of old knowledge onto new paths through dialectic interaction.6

The kinds of connections that one can make by stepping back and viewing the whole picture are viable because those links are forged through the light of old knowledge falling onto new forms, and these links cannot be made with nearsighted vision. I recall in my early drawing classes, being urged to refrain from concentrating on the elbow before I had drawn the whole figure. Without the knowledge of where and how the elbow fit, I was only able to render the elbow.

Video art shares with structural films the major defining quality of the moving image and some video art shares the rejection of linear narrative.

Sitney's identification of the structural film is a solid base for beginning to describe those works which I am categorizing as structural video art. However, since I am taking a larger view of the connection between structural film and minimal art, I will modify Sitney's theory to incorporate those qualities which I think are representative of video art. That is, my discussion of Sitney will be interrupted by argument in those areas which I think need to be altered for the purpose of following Balazs' roundabout way. "Structural Film"7 in this instance is a springboard rather than a model.

P. Adams Sitney describes the structural film.

The structural film insists on its shape and what content it has is minimal and subsidiary to its outline.8
The content of what Sitney calls the "cinema of the mind rather than the eye" is found in the film itself, which is a "cinema of structure in which the shape of the whole film is predetermined and simplified and it is that shape which is primal expression of the film." Structural films reject expression, linear narrative and the traditional use of the film medium, for any external content, using film rather as an indicator of the nature of film.

The description of structural film is paralleled by Sol Lewitt's observations about conceptual art, or the art of ideas which is the extension of minimalism—perhaps conceptual art is better described as the major theoretical category of which minimalism is a subset. (Minimal art is one form of the acknowledgement that art is more about ideas than materials.) Writing about minimal art has eventually blended into the body of criticism surrounding conceptual art in the middle and late seventies. Lewitt says:

> In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a prefunctory affair.

By rejecting expression or aesthetic content, structural films are close to Lewitt's definition of art that elicits cerebral response. He says that "It is the objective of the artist who is concerned with conceptual art to make his work mentally interesting to the spectator and therefore usually he would want it to become emotionally dry." The objectives of the structural film maker begin at the same point.

However, Sitney displays more interest in the materials as he lists four characteristics of the structural film: fixed camera position (from the viewer's position), flicker effect, loop printing and rephotography.
off the screen (or photographing the screened image). He says that very seldom will one find all of these characteristics in a single film and some film modify these elements.

Use of characteristics specified by medium capacity is less important than the summary of how artists have used properties of the medium to make ontological references; medium characteristics do not constitute a defined character. That is, the qualities which indicate structural video will not necessarily be organized into such a tidy package as Sitney's four areas of recognition.

Here is where reference to art theories becomes critical. Ad Reinhardt, who in his later years became the guru of the minimal movement, said about the content of art:

> The one subject of a hundred years of modern art is that the awareness of art itself, of art preoccupied with its own processes and means, with its own identity and distinction and concerned with its own unique statement, art conscious of its own evolution and history and destiny, toward its own freedom, its own dignity, its own essence, its own reason, its own morality and its own conscience.*

This poetic statement describes reductivist art. Although Reinhardt thought that the true art form, exemplifying these qualities, was abstract (non-objective) painting, his words clearly illuminate the basic character of minimalism. "Awareness of art itself" is characteristic of the structural film and of structural video. However, we cannot delineate the boundaries of the properties which reveal that awareness because in so doing, we tie the bonds of material and form too tightly, risking the possibility of closing off a previously unnoticed quality which may be a significant marker for the revealing of awareness.
In the structural film, the camera is always present and the frame is often present (as repetition and image boundary). Conscious perception comes to the fore as the triggering of emotion retreats. As Lewitt observes, to make work mentally interesting, it should be emotionally dry. The structural film is not concerned with response in the affective domain, but with an examination of the nature of film in the form of film.

For example, in Nancy Holt's *Points of View*, which I discussed earlier, the video image attends to the conditioned truthfulness of the photographic image in the scrambling of perceptions. This is a characteristic of video, assumed truth, which is determined partly by the physical capacity for recording images of the visible world and partly by the psychological trusting of the veracity of this recording. Photographic reproduction is at the center of video--the specific approach to its use is another issue. In *Points of View*, apperception comes to the fore through the recognition of the relationship between video images and the world. Examination of the constructs we place on perception in *Points of View* is structural because it draws us into an awareness of the nature of the video image.

Sitney cites the example of Andy Warhol, whom he calls the major precursor of the structural film. Warhol, in his six hour assault on the human attention span, the film *Sleep*, according to Sitney:

...exploded the myth of compression and the myth of the film-maker. Theorists such as Brakhage and Kubelka expounded the law that a film must not waste a frame and that a single film-maker must control all the functions of creation. Warhol made the profli­gacy of footage the central fact in all of his early films and he advertised his indifference to direc­tion, photography and lighting. He simply turned the camera on and walked away.
Warhol attacked film as he attacked sculpture and painting with his Billo Boxes and Campbell's Soup Cans.

Of course he did not walk away from the camera in actuality. The six hours of *Sleep* were constructed from loop printing of hundred foot takes, finished with the still form of freeze framing. The significance is that these elements were used to draw attention to the properties of film—camera movement, variety in shots, editing. Warhol reduced the movement in the moving image to a minimum, disregarding not only Brakhage and Kubelka's laws, but the tradition in filmmaking which mandates exploitation of cinematic qualities, in this instance, motion. The absence of cinema, in *Sleep*, attends to the presence of cinema.

Warhol's apparent neglect of craftsmanship, in *Sleep*, is akin to Donald Judd's disregard for the act of manufacture in his minimal sculptures. Judd's use of prefabricated forms is traced to Duchamp's irreverence for the making process in art, visually stated in the exhibition of bottle racks, bicycle wheels and other ready made objects. This is not to say that *Sleep* was not carefully constructed, but that the apparent form of the film consciously eliminated all visible evidences of care. Lewitt's references to beforehand decision making and Judd's farming out of the fabrication of his work are tied to the deliberate removal of the distraction of the hand of the artist in the work. The absence of brush stroke or editing cut, makes a statement about art—the function of the object, the role of the artist. This statement is made, in a particular form, in which the function and roles are translated in the terms of the medium.

Warhol's approach to duration, particularly in *Sleep*, at six hours running time, and *Empire* at eight hours, constitutes a direct attack on
traditional views of duration in film. According to Sitney:

Warhol broke the most severe theoretical taboo when he made films that challenged the viewer's ability to endure emptiness and sameness.¹⁴

Six hours of a man sleeping, eight hours of the Empire State Building (Empire) or even half an hour of someone eating a mushroom (Eat) push the viewer beyond endurance. But to what end? Sadism, perhaps? No sensible human would willingly endure such punishment. Theoretically the duration of these films lasted beyond the viewer's initial perception, pushing into apperception and changing the viewing experience into a response to the act of viewing.

Sleep is not more boring than some of the large, stark minimal works of Judd or Morris. However, because of the viewing condition of film, the audience has less control over viewing time. In the presentation of Sleep, one is seated, presumably, in a darkened room, psychologically set up for a running time which is usually built around the human attention span. Since films are usually constructed in such a way that pace, action, etc. hold the viewer's interest, usually one expects temporal compression. Sleep, however, contained none of those interest holding elements, as Judd's galvanized boxes incorporated no interest arousing distractions from stark geometry. "The great challenge, then," according to Sitney, "of the structural film became how to orchestrate duration; how to permit the wandering attention that triggered ontological awareness while watching Warhol films and at the same time guide that awareness to a goal."¹⁵

Film, because of the viewing condition, may be a better means for illustrating duration than sculpture because the minimal sculptures carried no pre-conditioned compulsion for the viewer to stick around and
push to the state of increased awareness of ontology.

I remember that in the informal conversations in New York, during the mid sixties, the word boring appeared frequently in reference to some of the newer minimal work. Everyone eventually became so familiar with these bland forms that they became conventional and almost seemed to be the forerunner of a new classicism built around purity of form, color and material.

However, Sleep, to my knowledge, in itself, has never become anything but its original statement of excruciating time. Warhol's films influenced those that followed--Sitney attributes to Warhol the major influence on structural films--but Sleep is as intolerable today as when it was first screened.

Duration is an issue in video art, the word boring often coming up in informal conversations about video art in general and specific works. Actually the word interminable aptly describes some works of video art. Perhaps in these long running works, the question should be asked as to whether the work is simply too long. What distinguishes structural video, in this context, from a misunderstanding, on the part of the artist, between duration and content.

I think that it is necessary, at this point, to differentiate, in terms of duration, between installation pieces which are clearly meant to be seen in a proscenium presentation. Paintings or sculpture which are installed in galleries or museums carry the tacit understanding that the time of viewing is determined by the viewer, who chooses how long he or she wishes to contemplate the work. Installations such as Holt's Points of View share this kind of temporal duration. However, works which are presented in another context, chairs or other seating provided,
programmed specific beginning, make a temporal claim on the viewer.

Tom Bagg's *Cloud Deflected Air*, exhibited at the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati, in the winter of 1978, consisted of multimonitor displays of abstracted photographic and electronically generated images, accompanied by electronic music. The audience was assembled as for a performance and the whole thing lasted more than an hour. At the time the images did not seem to justify the duration of the piece. There was no apparent reason for involving the time of performance for these images which were more akin to the graphic arts. As the images moved from monitor to monitor in endless repetition, the visuals seemed at best an accompaniment (sometimes distraction) to the sound which seemed to be the central focus of the work. The quality of visual and aural stimulation devices did not reduce the work to a meditation of perception or a recognition of an essence of video. *Cloud Deflected Air* was electronic sound which was accompanied by electronic images which did not merge into a total experience. On one hand we had a concert and on the other an exhibition of graphic forms, which like paintings or drawings, not meant to be viewed within a performance context.

Vito Acconci's *Centers* is a twenty minute video rendering of the artist pointing his finger out from his face to the center of the world outside the monitor. Although only twenty minutes in length, *Centers* stretches the audience's endurance because of the sameness of the image. Eventually one becomes aware that Acconci is pointing, not at the audience, but at the camera and consequently at himself.

Rosalind Krauss says that *Centers* is:

...meant to render nonsensical a critical agreement with the formal properties of a work or indeed a genre of works--such as 'video.' The kind of
criticism. Centers attacks is obviously one that takes seriously the formal qualities of a work or tries to assay the particular logic of a given medium. And yet by its very mise-en-scene, Centers typifies the structural character of the video medium. It is the duration of Centers that brings us to the point of recognizing the content of the work. The twenty long minutes of running time (long describes the duration of this work from a relative point of view) forces us beyond the initial response because we are not given any distractions—we are forced to focus on Acconci and his pointing finger caught in the monitor. Although the content of Centers may consist of more than duration, the effect of its temporal span reveals the content, whereas in Cloud Deflected Air, no more is revealed at the end of the running time of the work than in the beginning.

Nam Juin Paik's TV Buddha is an installation work in which a statue of Buddha sits contemplating his image on a monitor. The endless circle of the regeneration of Buddha's image by the video scan lines, constantly renewing, can be interpreted both as a statement of Eastern Philosophy and a demonstration of the mirror of video. Bruce Kurtz remarks on Paik's use of video properties in TV Buddha:

Employing video's entirely unique capability for live feedback, the work is constantly and instantaneously renewing and regenerating an image of a small sculpture of Buddha on a small monitor. This apparently simple work exists in so many dimensions of time simultaneously that all the time dimensions are being constantly and instantaneously conjugated to the present tense.

TV Buddha is, like Centers, a marker to the character of video. Unlike Centers, TV Buddha contains the physical object of the monitor as an apparent structural element in the work. While we are aware of the monitor in Centers, as the object which contains Acconci's image, it is
a tacit awareness, while in TV Buddha, the monitor visually locates a relationship between the external world and video. Paik's reference to the immediate feedback characteristic of video is integrated into this subtle and complex work in a way that combines direct reference to video itself with another content (Meditation, the Wheel of Life) stretching structuralism beyond its narrowest bonds, then snapping back like a rubber band to the character of the medium.

TV Buddha is, like Holt's Points of View, an installation, whose duration is akin to the temporal presentation of painting and sculpture, having no beginning and no end. The circular simultaneous recording/display of the work pushes TV Buddha into the instantaneous now of real time. Nothing in the work was recorded in the past (unlike Points of View). Its entire identity rests in the present. What we see is occurring this instant. It may occur tomorrow and it may have occurred yesterday but in each of these temporal spaces, the work is in the present. TV Buddha, as we see it, is intact; there is no residue, other than photographic documentation, and in this context, it is an original object, having the same connotation (object) and the same viewing condition as a sculpture.

The work is complex because like Joseph Beuys' The Silence, it is at once physical, tangible form and something that is neither physical nor tangible. TV Buddha is comparable to The Silence in that it raises questions about the nature of the art form and illustrates answers to the questions at the same time.

Because TV Buddha is essentially real time, it might be thought that the placement of this discussion here rather than in the chapter on real time video art is confusing. However, in this particular work,
real time is used to call attention to its existence as a video characteristic, and to other properties of video as well.

Sitney's four characteristics of the structural film are essentially mechanisms for revealing the structure of film and can be translated in video as rephotography, obvious edits, shifting frame, real time transmission—to name a few. These characteristics do not always identify structural video, sometimes appearing as stylistic devices. *Frankie Teardrop*, a video work by Edit Deak, Mike Robinson and Paul Dougherty, employs these aspects of visible video characteristics. Rough edits, grainy still images, and the general appearance of half inch portable recording give *Frankie Teardrop* the appearance of raw video. The images counter any standards set by commercial television, but in actuality the tape was constructed carefully for just this effect. Described as an "artists' interpretation of a blue collar plaint" the tape presents Frankie's miserable existence in a multitude of images, accompanied by a sing-song lament. Although the overall look of this work seems to be a reference to the bare bones of video, the work is really concerned with narrative, the structural references becoming a style. The narrative, though punctured by pauses, stops and lateral movement, is essentially linear and the stylistic devices are more of a rebuttal to television smoothness than a tightly bonded facet of the content. If *Frankie Teardrop* is a response to an art form, then that art form is television, not video art.

Lynda Benglis' *Now*, however, through recording and re-recording taped images and performance in matched time, employs video characteristics as indicators of video. *Now* is not linear--all of its surfaces are played together in a circular stream which only seems to end because the
tape has run out. In Now, the viewer is aware of the starting and stop­
ning of the camera, the quality of replay and the scale and internal
light of monitor display. The stylistic devices in Frankie Teardrop are
on the surface of the narrative, holding it together, propelling it for­
ward, but always dominated by the saga of Frankie. In Now, the reveal­
ing of video is one and the same with the video image of Lynda Benglis--
her actions and voice.

The distinction between structural video and video which is better
described by other theoretical categories is that the interlocking of
structure and image in structural video is inseparable. Structural
video is not necessarily identified by specified video characteristics
but by the inclusion of video characteristics as markers to video
character.

Hoberman concludes his article:

By the late seventies, the most innovative and ambi­
tious young film makers were looking for ways out of
the structural bind.19

The structural bind is caused by rigorous adherence to a definition of
structuralism based upon known and defined characteristics of the medium.
As the lines between minimal art and conceptual art became fuzzy, the
lines between structural video and whatever theoretical categories of
video art may be developing will blur. That is, if structuralism in
video includes all aspects of the art form, (the qualities of object­
ness, broadcast capability, electronic generation of images and so on)
new theories can emerge, which are not limited by the assumption that we
know all there is to know about video characteristics. Structural video
points out video art of the past and present while marking directions
for video art of the future.
I have consistently held to the view that video art and television, which David Antin describes as "video's frightful parent," although they share a common technology, are different. Rather than parent and child, a better analogy might be siblings, who have shared characteristics, but different personalities. There are areas where these siblings, television and video art, converge. One of these is the condition of viewing, or the display of images on a cathode ray tube. In the last chapter, I discussed the inclusion of the display or monitor, in the total sum of components making up the video image, citing in comparison, Hollis Frampton's example of the role of the projector in the identity of film.

Horace Newcomb in his essay, "Toward a Television Aesthetic", directs his attention toward the relationship between the monitor and programs made for television.

We should examine the common elements that enable television to be seen as something more than a transmission device for other forms. Three elements seem to be highly developed in this process and unite in varying degree other aspects of the television aesthetic. They are intimacy, continuity and history.

Newcomb is examining the underpinnings of what we see, the relationship between idea and material. There are references to intimacy in writings about television and video art, but Newcomb examines several aspects of this element and makes the kind of connections that can
direct our attention to new views of video art. Intimacy is the most important of these elements outlined by Newcomb because this characteristic is directly linked to the condition of viewing which is shared by television and video art. According to Newcomb:

The smallness of the television screen has always been its most noticeable physical feature. It means something that the art created for television appears on an object that can be part of one's living room, exist as furniture. It is significant that one can walk around the entire apparatus. Such smallness suits television for intimacy.

The television set not only determines the size and scale of the video image but as part of the furniture in our homes, forms a context for what we see, or the television image. Not only the smallness of the format, but the condition of viewing within the informality of our private spaces, produces the element of intimacy. One is not struck with the grandeur of something that one can pick up and move about. The television set and consequently the television image has moved from the status of household god, in its early days, to household companion, friend during the day, solace during the night; annoying, exciting, but most importantly always there.

In his article, "Video Aesthetics and Serial Art," Fred Schroeder observes that the television screen is:

...small, virtually square in shape, and image does not allow for fine detail or for nuance in shading. These factors combine to make of television a two dimensional medium. It is difficult to create an image that can draw a viewer into a background, that can surround him with panorama. Not only is the screen incapable of creating the illusion of space in depth, but it cannot create lateral space either, at least without reducing significant objects to a few insignificant electronic dots. In addition to this, the television camera cannot sweep over a scene or record rapid movement.
The result of this is that television images are generally more involved with interior scenes and human response than depiction of outdoor panorama and long shot activity. Newcomb refers to an episode of Alistair Cooke's *America: A Personal History*, in which Cooke accompanies a discussion of the changing seasons in New England with a close up shot of leaves which he holds in his hand. Cooke commented that the cameraman for the series insisted on filming explicitly for television, reducing what would be, in large screen film, a sweeping view of the New England landscape to a focus on a few leaves, condensing the large by expanding the small.

In a comparison of Arthur Penn's film, *Little Big Man*, with the long running television series, *Gunsmoke*, I noted that although the setting of each of these narratives is the wide landscape of the American West, the interpretation of this landscape differs for the small screen and the large screen. In *Little Big Man*, the action is played out of doors, people and the natural surroundings woven together, whereas in *Gunsmoke*, references to the out of doors are mostly implied (or minimal) as the action is in the form of human interaction, most often in interior spaces.

The close up is characteristic of television and can be easily observed by a random sampling of programs, perhaps most notably in Daytime Dramas, or Soaps, which are indigenous to television. (Moving from radio with the addition of visuals.) The Soap images consist of close up views of actors' faces, with intense concentration on the dialogue. Outdoor scenes are virtually of little importance in serial television. Newcomb observes that "the iconography of rooms is far more important to television than is that of exterior location."
Close up intimacy is particularly suitable to television as illustrated by Fred Schroeder's tale of what happened when this quality was translated into another medium.

Ironically, for a time, cinemascope filmmakers borrowed these techniques from television with the result that theatre audiences have had to accustom themselves to Brobdingnagian cleavages and in dino-sauric closeups of actors' pores and pimples.6

Interior spaces and close up photography are matched, in television, with that which is shown and the combination heightens the quality of closeness. Newcomb observes that situation comedies are built around the audience's intimate knowledge of the characters' intimacy. Objects are used to define a particular social class or group (he uses the example of Archie Bunker's chair) and encourage the sense of comfortable familiarity between the program and the audience. We find fictionalized versions of aspects of contemporary life: divorce, marriage, abortion and childbirth (also the more sensational and less savory human habits--murder, incest, etc.). Then there is the documented real life sharing of personal secrets by real people, such as the recent airing of a woman's decision to take her own life. In this documentary,7 friends listen as she discusses her planned suicide and asks them (and the audience) for support in her decision.

The forms of intimacy on television can be summed up as the revealing of personal events and feelings and the close up, or the translation of the sweeping panoramas of life to the magnification of small segments of the world.

I don't intend to examine the psychological underpinnings of this phenomenon, the revealing of our souls, fiction or documentary, to the television camera, but rather to point out that intimacy is an element
not only of television but of video art.

Particular works of video art seem to be directed toward intimacy through personal revelation and through a close up inspection of objects or people. In the first of these, personal revelation, the artist has pulled the audience into a close world in which there is a direct sharing of intimate exchanges. Performance alone is an inadequate description of, for example, Vito Acconci or Chris Burden, because the major characteristics of their video work is an intense involvement with the sharing of their intimate feelings or their bodies.

Perhaps the clearest example of that intimacy which takes the form of self revelation to an audience is the video work of Vito Acconci. In 1973, Acconci locked himself in a closet in the Sonnabend Gallery in New York, with a video camera, a mirror and a microphone, in one of his best known works, Air Time. For five days a week, during a two week period, Acconci confronted his mirror image, speaking into the microphone, focusing on his long intimate relationship with Kathy Dillon. Viewers could follow Acconci's dialogue on a monitor outside of the closet, in the Gallery. In this same year, Acconci continued his personal spillage, making four videotapes in which he addressed Dillon (in absentia) talking about their now defunct relationship and his comparison of her with his new lover. Willoughby Sharp describes Air Time and the four subsequent tapes as "almost totally stream of consciousness, as if Acconci is trying to get it all off his chest, to come clean." The response, according to Sharp, to Acconci's invitation to participate, through video, in the disintegration of his personal relationship was not positive.

There was considerable reaction in the New York Art World to such blatantly personal performance work
and Acconci was heavily criticized both publically and privately for revealing such intimate thoughts.

However, Public Broadcasting aired a documentary series, The American Family, which presented the break up of the marriage of the Louds and the emerging homosexuality of their son, Lance. Perhaps the outrage at Acconci's performance was prompted as much by the viewing condition of the gallery installation. Acconci's Air Time was made in real time, that is, the audience in the gallery could follow the daily diatribes without the interjection of compressed time or the distancing of a television documentary. We only saw the Loud family once a week and even knowing that these were real people, in their actual home, living their everyday lives, we occasionally forgot that this was not really a verite version of Love For Life. (For the most part the acting was a distinct clue that The American Family was truly a documentary.)

If we look at Air Time as a video image, that is the summation of the work, placing the video between ourselves and Acconci, responding to more than real time performance, then the distancing changes how we regard the piece. (I will not deal here with the moral issue of displaying someone else's life, Kathy Dillon's, to an audience.) If we look at Air Time as a work of art which is about the revealing of human feelings, then we can begin to ask questions. Was real time in the gallery essential to the work? Since Acconci's performance was recorded, what was the role of the audience? At what point does the immediacy of voyeurism become meaningless or take on meaning?

Air Time is a close up version of The American Family. Acconci moves closer into himself, eliminating settings, context, all other people; even the woman is absent. In The American Family, various
individuals interact, verbalizing their responses to one another. Acconci's dialogue is with himself. Ostensibly the performance in the Gallery involves the audience in the closeness of simultaneous time and space, but in actuality, Acconci's image, even in the real time performance, was a video image, the person himself unavailable behind the closet door.

Intimate video art suspends attention to duration and visual organization in order to focus on the intense experience of self revelation. One of the complaints about psychotherapy is that it is difficult to turn off and on the psychic faucet for the mandated hourly appointments. The conflict exists with the intimate video performance. If Acconci is to build up a true dialogue with himself, the temporal criteria of audience attention is suspended for the temporal requirements of stream of consciousness build up.

Johnathan Price describes Acconci's **Claim**.

In **Claim** (1971) he defended a basement. "I'm in the basement, blindfolded, seated on a chair, at the foot of the stairs--I have at hand two metal pipes and a crowbar--I'm talking aloud, continuously to myself--talking myself into a possession obsession...I'm alone down here...I want to stay alone here...I don't want anyone with me...I'll stop anyone from coming down the stairs...I'm alone in the basement...I'm staying alone... The video here acted as a warning; a visitor could see and hear Acconci, murmuring, threatening down the stairs. "If, during the first hour, I had hit someone, I would have stopped, shocked and horrified; if, during the third hour, I had hit someone, I would have used that as a marker, a proof of success, a signal to keep hitting."10

In **Claim**, Acconci is again partners with video, placing the video images at the outer gates of the territory which he has staked out for himself. Through video, Acconci reveals the primal human, defending his portion of the world. The video image forms a doorway to this fearful place, so
ferociously defended by the artist. Claim reveals one of the most awful aspects of human nature, the recognition that the link between enlightenment and instinctive animal behavior is tenuous, an ever present threat to our civilization, something that, although we always suspect is there, we prefer to slide the eyes of our consciousness by. Television and films present violent possession, but Acconci, in Claim, presents the reality without benefit of narrative or any other distracting dressing. Claim offers the audience the protective wall of the video image while at the same time using the video image to present an intimate view of an aspect of our common nature. Acconci's work horrifies us because he probes into himself and consequently into all of us, pulling out often unsavory or frightening information. Because Acconci's work is video art, not television, the criteria of narrative and temporal limitations are suspended and intimacy becomes raw. Earlier I described Command Performance, in which Acconci's onanistic fantasies were shared by an audience via video. The audience's voyeuristic participation in the event was also recorded, forming a video image which revealed the intimacy of looking on at an intimate performance. Command Performance, Air Time and Claim delineate intimate realms of human feeling and behavior, exploiting the intimate characteristics of video.

The second aspect of intimacy in video art is found in John Sanborn and Kit Fitzgerald's Resound, exhibited at the Whitney Museum in New York, in the fall of 1979. Resound, an installation, consisted of eight monitors, and four stereo speakers. The viewer stood in a darkened room, facing the monitors, which were placed at eye level in a wide arc, on black pedestals. The walls and floor were black so that only the colored video images were visible. The stereo speakers were placed
behind so that one was conscious that the sound did not emanate from the monitors themselves, yet appeared to do so. The ambiguity of the sound source was actually caused by the superior quality which is not usually associated with video sound. Images of fingers snapping, hands clapping, a hammer breaking glass, an aerosol can, among others appeared on the monitors in off and on sequence, skipping from monitor to monitor. These were photographed in clear network quality closeups, high quality of resolution, color and scale. In Resound Fitzgerald and Sanborn developed the intimate closeup to a magnification of the small and mundane as trifling happenings became monumental because of their isolation from the everyday context.

Everyone who watches television is aware of the effectiveness of closeup views of various products in advertisements. The scale of reality becomes distorted causing the child to long for the beautiful, large, shiny truck on the television screen, which is in actuality a two inch plastic model bearing little resemblance to its TV counterpart.

Resound makes us aware of the minute world which exists within the frantic landscape of the larger world. This small world is intimate and quiet until transformed by the video image to the large and loud. We are pulled into small sounds, actions and objects, as Alistair Cooke's handful of leaves transcribed the larger view into a focus on its smaller evidences.

Fitzgerald and Sanborn describe Resound:

Prepared with words and photo illustrations, the score is a running block diagram of the inner workings of each channel in relation to the other seven aspects over time. The score is read both left to right as in conventional notation and vertically to depict the occurrences of all eight channels combined effect...
What is essential to this work is not its elaborate construction. The viewer is aware only of the video images of hands and objects, of the crack of breaking glass or the whoosh of the aerosol can. That which we see and hear in Resound, is intimacy, a closer look, through video image, of the unobtrusive parts of our world. The arrangement of the monitors in a proscenium half circle and the removal of all aural and visual distractions draws the viewer into the images. In a later installation at Athens University (part of the Athens Video Festival), the quality of the presentation was altered by the substitution of white pedestals and the addition of another sculpture stand, spotlit, on which was placed a hammer and a piece of broken mirror. The insertion of these objects--glass and hammer--confused the piece. These direct references to the prototypes of the video objects were not necessary. The sounds and pictures of the video image were more real than the physical hammer and glass, which became extraneous additions to an already complete work because Resound does not seem to be about participation with actual objects but about response to video images. The complete isolation of these images from the context of the surrounding physical space in the Whitney installation was much more effective than the inclusion of direct references to real objects in the real world, in the Athens installation. Resound is an intimate look at everyday objects and actions but that intimacy is video intimacy, created through the video image, not by the actual objects.

Newcomb concludes his essay with this comment:

*But intimacy, continuity and history are devices to help distinguish how television can best bring its audience into an engagement with the content of the medium.*
I have been attempting, in this chapter, to bring the audience into an engagement with a content of video art. Intimacy always beckons us in, pulling at the human inclination to eavesdrop. However, we need to recognize this quality for what it is, and not obscure the description of works in this genre by failing to recognize the role of the video image in creating intimacy. Newcomb's identification of intimacy as a characteristic of television is also a marker for a group of works in video art.
FORMALISM

The avant garde poet or artist tries in effect to imitate God by creating something valid solely on its own terms, in the way nature itself is valid, in the way a landscape--not its picture--is aesthetically valid; something given, increate, independent of meanings, similars or originals. Content is to be dissolved so completely into form that the work of art or literature cannot be reduced in whole or part to anything not itself.

But the absolute is absolute and the poet or artist, being what he is, cherishes certain relative values more than others. The very values in the name of which he invokes the absolute are relative values, the values of aesthetics.

Clement Greenberg
Art and Culture

In Greenberg's definition of the avant garde, the location of the art is lodged firmly in the aesthetic object. That object's references and hence the response to it, are found within this physical presence which constitutes the work of art. The appearance of the actual object is so important that Greenberg declares that "Modernism in art, if not in literature, has stood or fallen so far by its 'formalism'."

Formalism is a theory of art in which the value of a work of art is found in the visual relationship which determines how the work of art looks. Formalist criticism attends to matters of appearance and the description, evaluation and interpretation of works of art are based upon the manner in which the artist manipulates visual components.
One of formalism's (and Greenberg's) major detractors, Joseph Kosuth, offers a view of formalism.

...formalist painting and sculpture can be granted an 'art condition' but only by virtue of their presentation in terms of their art idea (e.g., a rectangular-shaped canvas stretched over wooden supports and stained with such and such colors, using such and such forms, giving such and such a visual experience, etc.).

Perhaps the key word is 'visual experience.' That is, response to a work of art, within the framework of formalism, is directed toward the visual elements in the work of art, in reference to each other and to the total appearance of the work of art. A traditional method of teaching drawing composition is to develop a concern for the relationship between the marks on the page and the edges of the page; any object of reference, such as a still life or a model, is merely reference. Skills in perceiving and rendering proportion, color, etc. within these references (model, still life) are secondary only to the primary task of organizing the marks on the page into visually satisfactory relationships. If we stop here, we have formalism. However, if we punch a hole through the page, illustrating that what we have is a sheet of paper whose surface is marked with pigment or graphite and if the hole in the paper makes no contribution to the visual composition of the page, then we have left the formalist domain.

Formalism describes works of art in which the appearance is the content, or as Greenberg says, content dissolved into form. To the Formalist, form is content and the form is an encapsulation of visual elements rather than a revealing of the ontology of the work or a reference to anything else.
Although all abstract art cannot be described as formalist, abstraction is the primary form of formalist art. Greenberg equates modernism with formalism and defines modernist painting as abstraction. In modernism, according to Greenberg, "It was the stressing however, of the ineluctable flatness of the support that remained the most fundamental in the process by which pictorial art criticizes and defines itself under modernism." The flatness is to be preserved as the unique territory of painting as Greenberg continues:

Three dimensionality is the province of sculpture and for the sake of its own autonomy, painting has had above all to divest itself of everything it might share with sculpture and it is in the course of its effort to do this, and not so much--I repeat--to exclude the representational or the "literary" that painting has made itself abstract.

In abstract art, references to the visible world are withdrawn, and vision and thought are concentrated on form. During the contemplation of a Mark Rothko painting, for example, we respond to subtle color relationships and painterly geometry. What we initially see in Willem DeKooning's work are merging strokes of color which jockey with each other for dominance in the multilayering of pigment. If DeKooning's references are to the nature of painting or to anything else, these references are inevitably stated in such a way that the painted surface triggers responses to color and form. The visual components are so bombastic in these paintings that conscious reference to anything is diminished.

Formalism in film theory is difficult and complex because of the qualities of sound, motion and time. It is more difficult to describe the photographic film as an object, faithful only to its own framework, loyal to its own criteria. The properties of sound, motion and
photography draw the observable world into the apparent form of that which we see.

Dudley Andrew in *The Major Film Theories* identifies the formative theoretical strain. Within the formative theories are those films which reflect more the hand and mind of the film maker than the recording of the observable world, describing film more as a raw material to be formed. Andrews acknowledges Bela Balazs as the most important theorist in the tradition of formalism. Balazs does not define formalism in the same way that Greenberg defines formalism in the plastic arts because he recognizes properties of film which do not fit into the object centered theory of modernist art. However, in a particular description of some film, Balazs identifies characteristics which are very close in theory to Greenberg's definition of formalism, or modernism.

In the chapter "Formalism of the Avant Garde" in his book, *Theory of the Film*, Balazs describes the condition of film following a break with literary content.

The last chapter, which dealt with the attempts of the film to emancipate itself from literary content, from the story, began with the statement that this escape from the invented literary story developed in two opposite directions: toward the presentation of naked facts and the presentation of pure phenomena. On one hand the intention was to show objects without form and on the other to show form without objects.

Balazs thought that the removal of images from the context of literary continuity divorces pictures of visual phenomena from reality. The absolute film, he said, is film picture objects which exist independently as the atmosphere of Claude Monet's paintings do not exist in nature. However, the impressions of the absolute film, although they are no longer presentations of some concrete reality have real existence
as visual impressions which are often seen in the external world and may have been seen by someone else. These impressions are actually "optical phenomena susceptible to being photographed." Conceptual films, says Balazs, are internal views of themes dealing with something that exists outside of the film.

It is in the Abstract Film, however, that the final removal of the film from external reference occurs.

The striving for a 'pure style' finally purged the film of every vestige of life just as logic carried to its final conclusions makes nonsense of all human thinking. Eggeling, a Swedish painter, invented the abstract film as long ago as 1917. Abstract shapes, circles, squares, waves, gratings, moving and changing, outlines dissolved into each other, no longer depicting any object existing in the reality and not resembling any natural object. They existed in themselves and for themselves and if they signify anything at all, they signified only themselves. It appears then, that abstraction is the touch point between formalism in the plastic arts and formalism in the moving image. Balazs states that the visual forms in the abstract film do not signify anything but themselves which parallels the formalist view that the elements in a painting do not signify anything but the visual experience.

It should be noted here that all abstraction cannot be described as formalist, but abstraction, as described by Greenberg and Balazs, is the major identifying characteristic of formalism, and through abstract art, formalist views are best expressed.

Formalism in video art is found in its purest form in the work of those artists who employ video characteristics in the creation of art in which abstraction of images of the visible world are interpreted as form, sound and color in a self referential stream of components which provide purely visual/aural experience.
One of video's unique characteristics is the compatibility with electronic devices which either generate images or distort and modify photographic images. The video synthesizer is one of these devices and the interface with computers is another means of image generation.

Stephen Beck describes his work with a video synthesizer.

Affected by images of color and movement, I was led to invent the Direct Video Synthesizer instrument. Rather than a distortion device, I incorporated a theory of visual "ingredients" of color, form, motion and texture into electronic circuit modules which generate these building block elements on a television display. The images that appear are due to the interplay of electronic vibration established by the artist which creates them.11

Beck's images created from the web of electronic-video-display interaction are self referential, "from a subjective reality to non objective plane."12

Johnathan Price describes Beck's Point of Inflection, a collaboration with composer Richard Feliciano, made with the direct video synthesizer.

Here again there is not an outside image, nothing 'natural'. The picture is generated entirely within the system. The result is a highly generated work in which diamonds reform as squares and periodic waves interrupt the screen dazzling us with curves before square waves come down enveloping the red diamonds with repeated washes, counterpointing the somewhat Japanese sound composition.13

Price is describing the content of the work which is the visual and aural surface. There are no implications for meaning beyond this; the work consists of the visual and aural experience which Price describes.

Beck's Video Weavings, made with an "electronic loom for television using digital circuit techniques"14 are electronic renderings, versions of painting, using movements of twelve hues which shift vertically and
laterally, retreating and merging across the screen. As with Points of Inflection, the Video Weavings are concerned with the interplay of visual and aural elements in a composition of sensory experience.

Synthesizer video works by Bill Etra and Ed Emshwiller are essentially abstractions of photographic images which have sloughed off the external visual reality to assume a new identity in the distinctive forms of electronic manipulation: repetition, splitting, layering, subjective color and disintegration. These images depart from their original photographic sources and assume the formal character of Beck's Video Weavings.

The relation between these formal video abstractions and painting is particularly significant because of the viewing experience of formalist video art, which is theoretically closer to the viewing experience of the plastic arts. If the viewing condition of formalist video art is perceived as proscenium presentation (the display to an assembled audience with a preplanned beginning and ending), a context is assumed which may actually obscure the real content of the work.

Even 15 minutes of color, form and sound, which is experienced as formal relationships between these elements, may impose, in the proscenium format, a time of viewing which is inappropriate. That is, the viewer's attention to evolving shifts in color and form in the display is closer to the viewing process involved with response to abstract painting, than to a video display in which the running time is directly linked to the development of themes other than formal relationships. It is true that often a longer contemplation of abstraction leads to more sophisticated levels of response than a cursory examination of the same images will produce. However, to chain a viewer in front of a Rothko,
for example, will not necessarily insure that the viewer will become more attuned to the complexity of the work or enrich the response.

Formal video involves an element which can retard or advance the acceleration of the pace of the movement. This element is sound which can be used to make the apparent time of the moving image longer or shorter. Sound is a video property associated with the moving image since the advent of sound film. However, even with the addition of sound, as counterpoint or complement to the visuals, there is only so much that we can absorb in a given time, particularly in the response to abstract images.

Often in formal abstract video art, the images of abstract painting are found in the context of movement. Because these abstract forms are now seen in motion, the traditional viewing condition of the moving image is assumed to be right. However, is the programmed beginning and end actually compatible with self-referential images which provide a response more akin to the aesthetic object? I have identified a common theory for some video works and some works in the plastic arts--formalism. Is it not possible that if the experience of viewing a formal video work is derived from a theory which is shared by formal painting, for example, then the traditional viewing condition of painting may be more satisfactory for the presentation of formal video art? Since video has the capability for installation and continuous (through loop replay) presentation, the aspect of the viewing condition becomes a matter of choice.

I earlier spoke about Tom Bagg's Cloud Deflected Air, remarking that the duration was not supportive of the work. If Cloud Deflected Air was viewed, as an installation, presented not as performance, but
object (which it ultimately is), then the response to the work would be
directed toward the images themselves. The duration became a distrac-
tion which eventually dominated the work as the relationship between
visual and aural components receded in a wash of boredom.

Abstract Formalism in video art is related more to painting than to
works in other theoretical categories of video art because the major
concerns are the same; the experience of images in themselves, refer-
cenced to themselves. In video art, the video capabilities are inter-
preted as sound, movement, color, line, form, duration and pace. The
criteria for these works is response to the relationships between these
elements in the experience of the work as a whole. All other considera-
tions are suspended.
LINEAR VIDEO ART

In the last chapter, I cited Bela Balazs' observation that the avant garde film departed from literary content or story. One of the distinctions between most works in video art and most television programs is the absence, in the former, of the linear narrative of the latter. (Although currently literary content and linear narrative are not necessarily synonymous, traditionally there is a direct relationship between the two.)

Works described as video art but which are essentially a linear narrative form, often with literary content, have recently emerged. Deborah Perlberg calls these works video fictions.

Video fiction describes the broadest category of work being produced today, and the one that is changing the fastest. Attracting more and more newcomers, enticing most video veterans, the fiction category seems likely to exert the most lasting influence on future work. The reason seems obvious. Any new advance in technique, in studio-produced effect or post production can be assimilated into the personal style of any artist. The trend is to collaboration with artists free to give directions to technical people with the skills to implement them. Any artist can produce an impressive professional product with a techie at his side.1

Perlberg includes in the video fiction category narrative, performance or scripted video tapes. She describes artists' narrative as a "diverse group of tapes including satire, parody, fantasy, one-gag skits and pseudo-documentary in a personal style."2 Perlberg sees this assortment of video works as "moving out of the gallery, into home
broadcast and film-style situations where an expanding audience will see it, and hopefully, begin to demand it."

And here we land squarely in the boar's nest of the connection between video art and television. Earlier, in the chapter initially describing video art, I commented that television is one art form and video art is another, and while video art (single channel works) can be broadcast via television, it is not television. The television format, or what is viewed on TV, consists of programs and short spot advertisements, and one of the characteristics that currently distinguishes between a television program and a work of video art is sequence. A television program most often has a beginning, a middle and an end--in that order, whereas a work of video art is not bound to this sequence and often does not have an observable beginning, middle and end--in any order. These are not hard and fast laws, but they are characteristics which generally distinguish television from video art. Currently we have works in video which challenge the notion that video art is different in form than the television program. The issue is, what distinguishes, if anything, a video work with linear form and sometimes literary content from a television program?

When James Rosenquist presented his early painted versions of canned spaghetti, automobile bumper and hair dryers, he knocked the art world on its ear by publically flaunting images usually associated with popular culture, in particular those considered most obnoxious by the visually sensitive--billboards. However, Rosenquist translated these pop symbols into canvases, jumping the images from the highway into the art context.
Rosenquist was a part of the stream of artists who brought criticism to the state which Harold Rosenberg describes in his book, *The Anxious Object*.

Today, there is no agreed-upon way of identifying works of art except by including them in art history. But art history is constantly being expanded to comprise such new species as photography, TV, cinema, comic books. Moreover the historical qualification of works of art is today threatened by the transformation of the museum and the art book into media of mass communication.

Rosenberg describes the liquidation of art as classification of objects and the redefinition of art as the intellectual acts of artists.

Thus, 'art' has been opened up to include ready-mades produced by industry, snapshots of dreams, events on and off the canvas, demonstrations of color relations and tricks of the optical nerve. What is decisive is who does what for what reason.

"Who does what for what reason" is an interesting speculation, particularly in our current inquiry into linear video art. The relationships between Rosenquist's spaghetti and video fiction are not so farfetched as it might seem. Rosenquist borrowed images from one visual form, the advertisement, which he reorganized, as fragments, into carefully woven visual statements about the contemporary environment in the billboard culture and the gallery culture. Inevitably these plagiarized images became his personal iconography, stamped through scale and juxtaposition with his personal view. These paintings are not quasi-billboards, whose presence only signifies their original source, but visual statements, in their own right, whose identity is autonomous.

Do video fictions, or linear video works stand alone or do they draw our eyes to television through the realization that we are seeing reproduction, on a lesser scale, of the television program.
Rosenberg's cry of the anxious object, "Am I a masterpiece, it must ask itself, or an assemblage of junk?" is translated in our current argument to "Am I video art or am I an imitation television program?" What are the criteria which will point to the answer?

Rosenberg replies:

"Art does not exist. It declares itself."

We are seeking a declaration, in linear video art, that the work is not refined television, but an autonomous form of video art. The reference to Rosenquist illustrates that the billboard and the painting are distinct because each, while acknowledging the other, declares itself.

It is difficult to isolate the qualities, within the narrative form, that distinguishes a work of linear video art and a television program. What characteristics declare linear video art as video art? Perhaps it is not profitable to isolate a group of characteristics which positively identify linear video art, but what we might seek is an identification of major influences. That is, to what extent in a particular work, or group of works, is the primary influence the format of a television program? How is this influence manifested and what are the implications for the linear video work in video art?

Linear video art may be a point of touching between video art, as I have described it, and television. The artist is redefining television within the context of television, unlike Rosenquist's removal of pop images from their original territory. It may be that linear video art is a category of video works whose reference is to the television program. P. Adams Sitney offers a description of the avant garde film which might apply to video art.

The precise relationship of the avant garde cinema
The Artists' Television Network is bringing the "radical other" form of television into the realm of broadcasting through regularly scheduled programs of video art. ATN is part of the movement to identify video art within the broadcast context, rather than within the context of museum and gallery exhibition. Douglas Davis, one of the proponents of broadcast video art, declares that the only "authentic" audience for video art is the home audience. Soho Television, under the wing of ATN, is distributing a series of video art pieces, which I am describing as linear video art, in support of the view that video art should be presented to the home audience.

In the chapter, Description of Video Art, I discussed the Artists' Television Network, referring to ATN director, Jaime Davidovich's comments that cable brings art into the home while providing artists with a new medium of expression. I observed that Davidovich is describing television, not video, as the medium. This is a significant point because television as the medium has different implications than video as the medium. Even with the hoped for changes resulting from the proliferation of cable systems (which I have discussed in the earlier chapter), the existing structure of television—broad audience, temporal constructs and tradition of linear forms—currently dominates what we see on the set.

Davidovich is resentful of criticism of individual programs and in response to panning from the Village Voice in New York, suggested that rather than responding to single works, the "critic should recognize the effort of bringing art programming into the home to let the public
decide whether or not the programs bear watching.  

(It is not clear how Davidovich means to implement his suggestion, perhaps by installing the rating boxes used in gauging viewer response to commercial television programs.) Unfortunately this approach to criticism is problematic because of the difficulty of suspending critical response to single works in order to attend to the premise of the whole undertaking. The quality of individual programs cannot be divorced from the larger project.

And herein lies the problem: the identification of artists' television, or linear video art, and the development of an adequate set of criteria based on this identity.

If linear video art is referenced to television programs, then is its effort to declare itself directed toward merely emulating these television programs (content, form and technical quality) or toward bringing to the television medium the "radical otherness"; either developing new ideas within the traditional form (TV) or commenting directly on the nature of television? Direct emulation of existing television programs is difficult because of the technological superiority of network facilities which are not always available to independent artists, and the different processes which are involved with large studio (and large personnel) productions. What does linear video art bring to television?

At this time we need to distinguish between the airing of single channel video art which is not construed as linear video and those works which are formed, in temporal duration, content and form, toward the end of broadcast presentation. This is an area of confusion and it is in this area that Rosenberg's element of decision is invoked: who does what
for what reason or what does the work declare itself to be? The single channel works which I have earlier described, for example Lynda Benglis' *Now* and Vito Acconci's *Centers*, are not apparently influenced by the television program. Video is the medium in each of these works, not television because there are no references to the television form, to broadcast communication, to prescribed duration or the structure or content (linear form or literary content). That is not to say that either of these works could not be broadcast; they could, but the major influence, or direction, is to video, not television.

We might look at some of the ATN or Soho Television programs which were aired in Columbus, Ohio as examples of the kinds of work made for artists' television in order to discern the relationships between linear video art and television. I acknowledge that the programs offered in Columbus represent a limited sample of the total ATN offerings, but they were distributed as a representative package. The programs can be described briefly as: fantasy narrative, inquiry about art, panel discussion and interview.

The first group includes two space operas and surreal Pilgrim's Progress. *The Last Space Voyage of Wallace Ramsel*, a two part work by Ruth Rothko and John Keller, seems to be not much more than a low budget attempt at science fiction of the original Buck Rogers genre. An unimaginative narrative about an encounter with alien humanoids, set to country rock music, treats us to almost an hour of lumpy action and dialogue. (A few snappy well made commercials would have been a relief.) *Wallace Ramsel* is clearly emulating a tradition of fantasy narrative, in particular the C grade BEM (Bug Eyed Monster) films of the 50's. The production quality is shabby and this, coupled with a dearth of
imagination, makes the piece comparable, not to the best, but to the worst of television. Mutants of Bella Nova can only be described as dreadful, abusing the audience's sensibilities with a half hour of folks having fun with their friends, broken intermittently with a sampling of video effects. Wallace Ramsel and Mutants are outclassed by the television productions of two science fiction classics, Ursula LeGuin's The Lathe of Heaven and Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles. It is understandable that the latter productions would be technically more extravagant but artists, who understand their medium in relation to their purpose, should be able to excel in the area of concept, which is not bound by budget. The two Soho Television fantasy narratives are examples of influence which is ultimately manifested in poor imitation and therefore fail to establish identities as works of art.

In contrast, Vincent Trasov's My Five Years in a Nutshell is an interesting exploration of fantasy in verite documentary style, whose central character is a life size Mr. Peanut. Trasov traces the adventures of the indomitable legume from the initial suiting up in costume to a final exuberant bid for mayor of Vancouver. "Where politics is concerned, one nut is as good as another." Nutshell is a combination of narrative and performance and includes the onlookers which Mr. Peanut attracts along the way, the ever present saxophone band and a tapdancing chorus, in an odyssey which is counterpointed with a voice over discourse on topics ranging from politics, anthropomorphic images, art and imagination. Trasov has not leaned on television but has skewed the documentary format to develop a theme which blends intellectual activity with amusement, seasoning serious content with humor in a piece which is suited to the television pace. Far removed from the self indulgent
recreation with video equipment of Mutants of Bella Nova and The Last Space Voyage of Wallace Ramsel, Trasov has carved new territory in television space, in a fast moving narrative, whose multiple aural and visual levels suggest ways of dealing with a mass audience medium.

Soho Television offered two austere presentations of John Cage. In one, By Cage, the interviewer, Richard Kostelanetz's whispery voice, which he explains is laryngitis, is the only indication that this is not a very traditional interview. In Mesostics Re and Not Re Duchamp, Cage reads, sitting in spare, spotlighted area, in a very low key classic presentation of a reading. Both of these, although they are very fine presentations, have the look and sound of traditional educational/cultural television.

However, La Vie Boheme by Robert Wiegand, incorporates direct references to the role of television in a piece which explores aspects of art. Shots of the artist working on a large painting (start to finish) are intercut with head and shoulders close ups of an art patron, a psychologist, a dealer and a critic, who one at a time talk about their views of art and artists. Occasional long shots of the studio reveal a small television set on which are displayed the images of one or the other of the four speakers, locating the source of the dialogue as television. Television references itself as the artist becomes audience as well as participant in the work and in the processes of art. The painter paints and the commentators comment, describing the roles of making, viewing and talking. That the commentary about critical, business and psychological aspects of artists and artmaking is seen on television removes the talking from the studio. The television set in the studio effects a separation between production and explanation.
Interviews with artists and views of the artists' studios are not unique to television. However, the unique thing about La Vie Bohème is that Wiegand is telling something about artists and the business, politics and criticism of art and establishing relationships between these aspects of art through the interaction of work in the studio and television. The interview has become a work of art.

Gregory Battcock's Outreach: The Changing Role of the Art Museum is a very funny parody of the television panel discussion. Battcock and a group of people, both actually and purportedly representing various museums, drink wine and discuss such issues as marketing in the museum gift shop (salt and pepper shakers which are exact replicas of the Guggenheim Museum), parties in the museums, the role of physical education in staff development, the lovely drive to the Monmouth County Museum through the Jersey Meadows and various ways to attract crowds. Marcia Tucker describes the "Beartrap Program", a simple method of enticing visitors into the New Museum. A newcomer arrives; there is no available chair, so he sits on the floor and the Mad Hatter's teaparty continues. At the close, as the camera pulls back for a classic end shot, Battcock's voice is heard: "I think you've taken enough wine--would you put the glass down! The technicians are waiting and would like some. You can all shut up now." Battcock turns humor on both the art museum and television. The slick presentation of Outreach has the look of a standard television panel discussion until one begins to realize that something is askew. (TV panelists are seldom forced to speak from behind a large funereal arrangement of gladiolas.) Because Outreach is carefully made, the humor ranges from the subtle to the overt ridiculous as Battcock smoothly moderates the insanity. Outreach
is directly referenced to television but turns the reference around to expose the backside of both television and the art world.

In these Soho Television presentations, only My Five Years in a Nutshell, Outreach, and La Vie Boheme bring anything unique to television (unless we count excruciating boredom or horrendous production quality). These three develop themes within the context of television, referencing both external content and television itself, blending television qualities in a content which is not simply imitation. Wallace Ramsel and Mutants of Bella Nova are merely shadow forms of television technology and themes and consequently their major contribution to our view of television is that maybe some of the programs could be worse. The Cage interviews completely reflect television style but essentially do not attend to any thinking of this style or awareness between art and television beyond television as documentary and transmission device.

To return to the example of Rosenquist, we can ask which works in linear video art make any attempts to alter our thinking about television as the painted spaghetti reformed our thinking about the relationships between art and the visual landscape and between art content and the museum.

The relationship between linear video art and other forms of video art is the extent to which the artist chooses to draw upon the video form of television as a medium. The apparent form of linear video art is linked to the television program whereas the apparent form of structural, formal and intimate video art is not linked directly to the television program. Works in other video art categories may be aired via television's transmissions but they are not referencing the characteristics of the television program.
The fulfillment of the prophecies of the development of television as a major outlet for video art is in the future. However, since the concept of television as an artists' medium has been discussed in the literature which surrounds video art, the issue needs to be addressed in a theoretical examination of video art. Linear art may eventually prove to be an inadequate description of what is sometimes called artists' television. However, it is extremely difficult to make predictions for such a newly emerged concept. This chapter is an acknowledgement that there may be significant developments in video art in this area in the future and this category is intended to develop criteria for existing works. The confusion between video art and television is most intense in these works. From the standpoint of recognition that the relation between works such as those which I have described as linear video, and television programs, we can begin to see how it is that linear video art can declare itself.
Sigfried Kracauer traces the origins of the two major strains in film theory, realism and formative, to the pioneer filmmakers, Louis Lumiere and Georges Melies.

Lumiere appealed to the sense of observation, the curiosity about "nature caught in the act"; Melies ignored the workings of nature, out of the artist's delight in sheer fantasy.

The realist strain continues the mimetic tradition which has been a point of view in art theories since the beginning, in antiquity, of written inquiry into the nature of art. Realism in film theories develops Lumiere's concern with "nature caught in the act" into a sophisticated relationship between the film image and the observable world.

Theorists such as Andre Bazin and Kracauer espoused the view that film characteristics should be employed in such a way so as to create a film reflection of observable reality because they thought the nature of photography essentially mimetic. In the "Ontology of the Photographic Image" Bazin delineates the "essentially objective nature of photography."

The objective nature of photography confers on it a quality of credibility absent from all other picture making. In spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually re-presented, set before us, that is to say, in time and space. Photography enjoys a certain advantage in value of this transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction.
For Bazin and other realists, the nature of photography, identified in its capacity for re-presentation, dictates that the use of the camera should be toward the end depicting observable reality. Neither Bazin nor Kracauer suggested a total sublimation of film to a faithful rendering of the natural world, but that film properties and cinema techniques should be used toward the creation of a cinema reflection of the natural world. Realist theory is actually built around a rationale for the discrepancies which occur in the fabrication of a scripted, fictionalized, manipulated art form which is to be a reflection of life, yet at the same time true to its own medium characteristics. (An example of film technology applied to this end is the deep focus lens which Bazin thought included more of reality by showing maximum information in each shot without the artifice of montage.)

One of the characteristics of film which distinguishes the moving image from still photography is the element of time, the marking of temporal change through images in motion and the actual time of viewing, or running time. Bazin extends objectivity in photography to objectivity in film through this element.

...the cinema is objectivity in time. The film is no longer content to preserve the object, enshrouded as it were in an instant as the bodies of insects are preserved intact out of the distant past, in amber.

Time is an element of film which can be manipulated through the duration of the shooting and editing. Film time, of the images, can be compressed or expanded by visible reference to external surfaces of the world in different temporal periods, or in closer proximity to actuality by splicing old footage onto new. (An example is the use of newsreel footage from earlier time periods.) Running time can be accelerated or
slowed by choices of sound and editing. However time is used in film, it is always cinema time. That is, those little chunks of time, the shots, are connected to create a temporal state which exists only in the film.

One of the characteristics of video is the capacity to record and transmit in real time. The temporal space of film is always removed from real time, or immediacy because of the delay between filming and viewing which is part of the physical properties of film. Films can never be viewed in real time. Real time, or the temporal merge of event and viewing of the event, is the most significant characteristic of video in the depiction of the world. Douglas Davis recounts a story about video recording in real time. The owner operator of a small cable television station dollied a camera into his office one night at sign off. Turning the camera on, the man began to rummage through his desk and files, sorting through and cleaning out an assortment of personal effects, papers and other memorabilia which accumulate through the years. Absorbed in the task, he continued through the night, only realizing at dawn that he had broadcast himself for eight hours. Much to his surprise he learned that his audience had responded with delight to the experience and the story snowballed. Davis calls this a climactic story and the man "the unidentified hero of pop culture, if not of art," because "he forgot he was on". Why does Davis think that this story is climactic? Because real time video breaks through the self conscious modifications of life which separate life from art. The self conscious barrier was removed because of real time transmission. If an artist's objective is a depiction of the real world, then time is a critical element. Davis comments on the attitudes toward the time of the present.
I do not have to remind you that this turn away from the static and vestigal concept of time has received mixed reviews. The critic at large in the fine arts, the arts normally held to be above time, is particularly ill at ease in the presence of the fourth dimension. He does not want art to pass by, fleeting the life; he wants it to stand still, for the delection of future generations. Jung points out in his introduction to the I Ching that western man has traditionally regarded the present tense as inferior to both the past and the future; his ethic demands always the pursuit of a goal; the present is not there for itself but as a step toward the later, better time.6

This is a bit like Alice's jam every other day--jam yesterday, jam tomorrow but never jam today. In Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass, Alice learns about the elusiveness of today, the frozen past and hoped for future. Real time video breaks through the perpetuation of the unavailability of today. So we regard the present tense as inferior because we simply cannot have 'today'? Perhaps the story of jam every other day or our ethic demands which Davis cites, comes from the realization that there is no mechanism which enables us to isolate and savor the present tense, that is to experience externally what is happening, as it is happening. We have not in the past been able to view our own present objectively.

The point of Davis' story of the eight hour real time broadcast is that this event signified, according to Davis, a merge between art and life through the depiction of the present tense. Davis observes:

"Video is not life, of course, any more than art is, but the two can come together in a rhythm synchronized by the dynamic views of time."

The most dynamic view of time is real time video. Real time video alters our historical perspective. Davis says that a friend thinks that the most memorable event in his life was watching Jack Ruby shoot Lee Harvey Oswald on TV. Real time video is the ultimate realism, in moving
images, because for the first time in the form of the moving image, the viewing of the present is unlocked, as the temporal distortions which set art forms apart from the world are removed. (There is an art form which can incorporate real time--live theatre. However, since this examination is directed toward film, video and the plastic arts, I have not incorporated a study of the relationships between real time and theatre, although I acknowledge that at another time such a study might prove significant.) Real time video is real time. Second for second, the occurrence matches, temporally, the image. This simultaneity is the closest thing we have to jam today--jam today as a metaphor for an art/life equation.

There have been hints, in art history, of a striving to create an art/life equation. Ardent mimesis of everyday objects and events, ready-mades, photographs of 'real people' in sequences all try to pull art and life together in an observable relationship. But all of these are ultimately static images which only succeed in becoming markers, indicating fragments of life. Those fragments are pauses which can only be pauses, signifying a hoped for relationship between present existence and art. The goal of an art/life equation can never be reached with these fragments because the essential condition of life, the constant flow of time, is never present. Indicators of the passing of time is reflected (and abbreviated) in the moving image but any pre-recording in either film or video becomes a frozen temporal chunk and we are back to jam every other day. Today's occurrence, viewed tomorrow, is yesterday's occurrence. That piece of life today is already past when we view it on another today. Real time video art describes those works in which video is used today to present today, no pre-recording, no saving of
today's leftovers for lunch tomorrow.

The form of real time video art can be installation or broadcast single channel video. If the image is recorded, the taped aspect of the work becomes something else, one of the fragments. This fragment can signify real time because the temporal duration of the work is matched exactly with the temporal duration of the event, but it is no longer real time video art because of temporal delay between occurrence and viewing.

Frank Gillette's Track/Trace (which I described earlier) is an example of real time video art. In Track/Trace, the image of the viewer appears on the monitors. John Hanhardt says that "The viewer's experience with this work is the initial realization that he is on television and being recorded." Beyond the initial realization of being on television, the viewer is on. Every gesture, every second matched to the image on the monitors. Track/Trace expands the instantaneous by splitting the temporal period into movements as the image shifts from one row of monitors to the next, adding the realization that not only is present time unfolding, but within present time exists the constant changes of a world always in flux.

Les Levine's Iris is three concealed cameras, focused on a space, in three formats: close up, mid-range and wide angle. Images appear on six black and white television tubes mounted in an eight foot structure. The cameras are within the structure and record the environment. Iris presents three spatial orientations in real time. These spatial orientations are camera orientations, but the realism is simultaneous time, of environment and video image.
Contact, a Cybernetic Sculpture, also by Levine, is a slicker, more expanded version of Iris. Gene Youngblood describes Contact:

It involves eighteen monitors and eight cameras mounted in a steel eight foot stainless steel console. Nine monitors and four cameras on each side beneath plastic bubble shields. As in Iris, the cameras produce close-ups, mid range and wide angle views as images shift from screen to screen every few seconds. Each monitor is covered with a colored acrylic gel so that a given image may be seen in nine different colors as it swirls through a closed circuit system.

Both Contact and Iris share the real time quality of altering awareness. Levine, whose motivation, Youngblood says, is somewhat psychological, comments that viewers become conscious of their physical appearance, adjusting hair, ties, etc. Images of the observable surfaces of the world, including hair and ties, are reflected in close proximity in Iris and Contact, to the actuality of their physical presence because the viewer is able to change these appearances and the changes are effected immediately in the video image. When one views a tape in replay, one's appearance (or any appearance) is frozen in whatever state it existed at the time of the taping. There is no adjustment that can be made. The reflection and the actuality merge in real time.

In "The Present Tense" Bruce Kurtz comments:

The viewer's experiencing a certain kind of psychological and physical space, rather than an object, focuses the attention of a work of art on the very precise time dimensions of the viewer's present. Experience that is not of the consequence of vision only, but an integration of all the senses, physical and metaphysical, can occur only in such a dimension. Visual perception is then not primary, but is an aspect of location in a particular time and space as in life.

Again we return to the relationship between art and life. This relationship can be perceived as a revealing of phenomena, which realist art
strives toward, or a probing of the internal landscape of the mind. The integration of the reflection of the visual surfaces of the world and the probing of the psyche come together through the direct involvement of the viewer with him or herself in time and space, in real time video. In real time video, the "I am" is repeated over and over again in each pass of the scan lines.

Bruce Nauman's Live Taped Video Corridor, a video environment installation, combines tape with live transmission. There are two monitors at the end of a narrow corridor, one displaying a tape of the empty corridor and another displaying a real time image of the person who enters the corridor. The viewer looks for himself or herself in the top monitor, which remains empty, but begins to see his or her image in the bottom monitor. The image of the empty corridor in the top monitor gives a sense of being absent while the approaching self in the bottom monitor says that one is present. Nauman puts the viewer into a dialectic of absence/presence in a time jag which is also now and then. One knows that one is present but the top monitor denies it. At the same time, the bottom monitor further confuses the evidence in the form of a real time video image of oneself approaching, corroborating that indeed, one is present. There is nowhere to go in this corridor except to move forward and confront the puzzle or to turn and run. Corridor exploits time and being, by juxtaposing real time with time delay. There is no compromise in the narrow passage; nothing exists but presence and absence, side by side, identically displayed in video images.

Real time video art may probe human psychology but any probe is inevitably bound up with time. The presentation of the now, the duration of the instant, is the mechanism for any revelation of self. All of the
works of real time video art, which I have described, are woven on a
temporal web in which the video image and the external occurrence are
simultaneous.

Images in real time video art are real images. That is, for ex-
ample, Contact and Iris display the spatial disorientation of lenses and
mirror image reversal. The quality of credibility, cited by Bazin, con-
tributes to the temporal disorientation of Live Taped Video Corridor.
In this sense, real time video art shares with realist film the transla-
tion of information from the observable world into media terms. But the
time of real time video art is the time of the world and it is this
quality that lends to works in real time video art, a closer proximity
to the actual and the confusion of uncomfortable realism.
CONCLUSION

He thought he saw a Rattlesnake
That questioned him in Greek:
He looked again and found it was
The Middle of Next Week.
'The one thing I regret,' he said,
'Is that it cannot speak.'

Lewis Carroll
Sylvie and Bruno

Video art is on one hand questions in a foreign language, and on the other hand speculation which jumps from yesterday into the future, leaving us rather confused in the present.

I have, in this dissertation, raised issues in the approaches to video art toward the end of creating an ordering of the divergent works in this art form. The purpose of doing this is to develop more criteria for critical thinking and writing about video art and in the process to increase the knowledge, and consequently response to these works.

To my knowledge, there are no highly developed theories of video art which are comparable to major film theories. There are texts which deal with the medium characteristics, such as camera, lighting, etc., such as Herbert Zettl's Sight, Sound, Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics. However these do not link video, theoretically, to the mainstream of art but rather discuss specific uses of video technology.

This dissertation is intended to make connections between video art and contemporary art in general. I have demonstrated that these connections not only exist but the recognition of them is critical to a
recognition of the significant directions in video art.

I have described video as a form of the moving image which also contains the quality of object. Video art, although it does not always constitute an object, has the capacity for the quality for three dimensional form because of the monitor display. The object quality of video is present and can either be brought to the fore or veiled, according to the dictate of the artist. Another aspect of video is the presence of the tape on which a moving image can be recorded, subsequently possessed and marketed. Again, the use or dismissal of this quality remains with the artist.

Simultaneously, video art is process. The process of forming a work of art can be included in video art because of the video property of real time interaction. This property can either be included in the final form of the art or hidden.

Video characteristics, therefore, include both tangible object and images which are not tangible and which are not objects. The video image is made up of motion, time, sound contained in a three dimensional form. How an artist will use the video image depends upon the particular artist's view of art, the end to which the work is created.

At the beginning of this study, I stated that I do not think that there is any one single theory of art. Therefore I have organized works in video art into five major categories, each of which reflects a view of the purpose of a work of video art. These categories have been developed from existing theories of film, the plastic arts and television because video art share qualities with each. All video art cannot be described by one theory and I have demonstrated that the recognition of a pluralist approach to video art is in direct relation to existing
theories of other art forms.

At this time, attitudinal shifts in the writing about video art are occurring; for example, the arguments that we are seeing a wholesale move from installation to broadcast works. This is certainly in keeping with the acceleration in movements in the art world: conceptual art yesterday, patterning and decoration today, and who knows what tomorrow. Recognition of pluralism prevents a disregard of video art's short history in the identification of the new art form. If we jump to the Middle of Next Week, thinking that there is only one direction for video art, then we can't reply to the questions of today's and yesterday's Greek-speaking Rattlesnake, and consequently we don't know whether the answers were worth hearing or not.

I have translated the Rattlesnake's questions in order to bring us closer to a sense of the nature of video art. This study is essentially a beginning, like any theory, meant to become a building block, not to seal video art forever in a frozen identity, but to offer directions for further study. It is an overview of video art which condenses widely spread views about the art form, turning them around for possible new ways of thinking.

Harold Rosenberg said that art declares itself. My approach to video art has been to approach a language for its declaration, and to fulfill one of Morris Weitz's functions of theory--to make us see what we may not have seen.
NOTES

Chapter 1: Introduction


2 Morris Weitz develops this idea in his essay, "The Nature of Art", originally given to the National Committee on Art Education Conference at Columbus, Ohio, March 24, 1964. Reprinted in Readings in Art Education, edited by Elliot W. Eisner and David W. Ecker, (Waltham: Blaisdell, 1966)


Chapter 2: Description of Video Art

1 Naim Juin Paik has called Johnathan Price a video poet.


4 David Ross, p. 246

5 Johnathan Price, p. 9

7 Notes accompanying exhibition of Resound at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, New American Filmmakers' Series, September-October, 1979

8 Kim Levine, "Video Art in the TV Landscape", New Artists Video, p. 75

9 Horace Newcomb teaches American Studies at the University of Maryland, contributes to the Chicago Review, The Journal of Popular Culture and is a former television critic for the Baltimore Sun.

10 David Antin, "Video: The Distinctive Features of the Medium", Video Art, p. 174


12 Interview with Victor Ancona, "Soho Television: Bringing the Arts to the People", Videography, August, 1978, p. 71

13 Melvin LeFleur, Theories of Mass Communication, (New York: David McKay, 1970) p. 4

14 Mohawk Junior High School, Columbus, Ohio. Art teacher Linda Ringler, October, 1979

15 Les Levine, "One Gun Video Art", New Artists Video, p. 89

Chapter 3: Video Art and Criticism


4 Morris Weitz, p. 54


16 Nancy Marmer, "The Performing Critic", Art in America, December, 1979, p. 69


19 Greenberg, The New Art, p. 68


21 Sol Lewitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", Esthetics Contemporary, p. 415

22 Douglas Davis, "Art as Act"
Chapter 4: Characteristics of Video Art


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6 Douglas Davis, Handing, one of three five-minute segments of The Austrian Tapes, produced by the Austrian Television Network in collaboration with Galerie P.O.O.L., 1974

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11 Bruce Boice, Artforum, January, 1973, p. 84
Chapter 5: Structuralism


3 Hoberman, p. 12

4 Hoberman, p. 12

5 P. Adams Sitney, "Introduction", The Avant Garde Film, p. viii

6 Bela Balazs, Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art Form, (New York: Dover, 1970) p. 39
Chapter 6: Intimacy

1 David Antin, "Television: Video's Frightful Parent", Artforum, 1976


3 Newcomb, p. 245

4 Schroeder, p. 266

5 Newcomb, p. 247

6 Schroeder, p. 266
Artist Jo Roman's decision to take her own life rather than face a slow death by cancer was the topic of a documentary produced for PBS (aired on June 16, 1980). Responses of family and friends were videotaped.

Willoughby Sharp, "Videoperformance", Video Art, p. 260

Sharp, p. 260

Johnathan Price, p. 171

program notes accompanying exhibition of Resound

Newcomb, p. 264

Chapter 7: Formalism

Clement Greenberg, Art and Culture, (Boston: Beacon, 1961) p. 6


Joseph Kosuth, p. 160

Greenberg, "Modernist Painting", p. 69

Greenberg, "Modernist Painting", p. 70

Dudley Andrew, Major Film Theories, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976)

Andrew, "Bela Balazs and the Tradition of Formalism", p. 76

Balazs, Theory of the Film, p. 174

Balazs develops this theme in a discussion of the films of Joris Ivens, p. 176-177

Balazs, p. 181

Stephen Beck, "Videographics", Video Art, p. 20

Stephen Beck, p. 20
Chapter 8: Linear Video Art


2. Perlberg, p. 22

3. Perlberg, p. 23


5. Rosenberg, *The Anxious Object*, p. 17


7. Rosenberg, *The Anxious Object*, p. 18

8. P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film*, p. viii


10. Jaime Davidovich, interview with Victor Ancona, *Videography*

Chapter 9: Real Time Video Art: Realism


3. Bazin, p. 14

4. Bazin, p. 14


14. Stephen Beck, *Video Art*, p. 21
Chapter 10: Conclusion


3 Harold Rosenberg, *The Anxious Object*, p. 17

4 Morris Weitz, "The Nature of Art"
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