

ENVIRONMENTAL VIDEO: PERSONAL FORMS FOR
TELEVISION'S PUBLIC CONTEXT

by

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B.A., Oberlin College
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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
degree of

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on January 27, 1981,
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Abstract

Broadcast television is a fixture in our lives, a utility comparable to the telephone or the electric current running into our homes. In developing an artistic statement in the video medium, the artist must take this precedent for television's useage as a context against which to model his or her expression. In my work, as documented by this thesis, I address the need to discover personal forms for expression designed for an intimate one-way, communications medium that is evolving towards greater viewer response and participation.

I present my thesis in three parts:

1. The script and working charts used for the production of "Performance in Color Video and Live Time." This twelve minute videotape is a talk on environmental art as it applies to the medium of television and its audience that I give as a video performance. It is my first work in video, produced in October, 1979, at M.I.T., and serves as background for the work of this thesis.

2. A written documentation of "Live Time/Video Time," my thesis exhibition presented December 8 and 12, 1980, at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies. It is described first in general terms as a sculptural environment occurring in time and space. Then, individual tapes and events are discussed, tracing an evolution that leads towards an objective of "open theater."

3. The generation of further work and speculation into the use of the television medium as an extension of my thesis work and outgrowth of the work of those artists and writers who are influencing me. I include a proposal of a project for public broadcast television I plan to accomplish within six months of the submission of this thesis.

Acknowledgements

I wish to warmly thank those individual at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies who guided me in the pursuit of an objective, and everyone at M.I.T.'s Educational Video Resources who patiently helped me carry out my work in video.

My thesis supervisor and readers, Robert Preusser, Otto Piene, and Paul Earls, while allowing me to discover my own mode of expression, consistently challenged and guided me through their insistence on clarity.

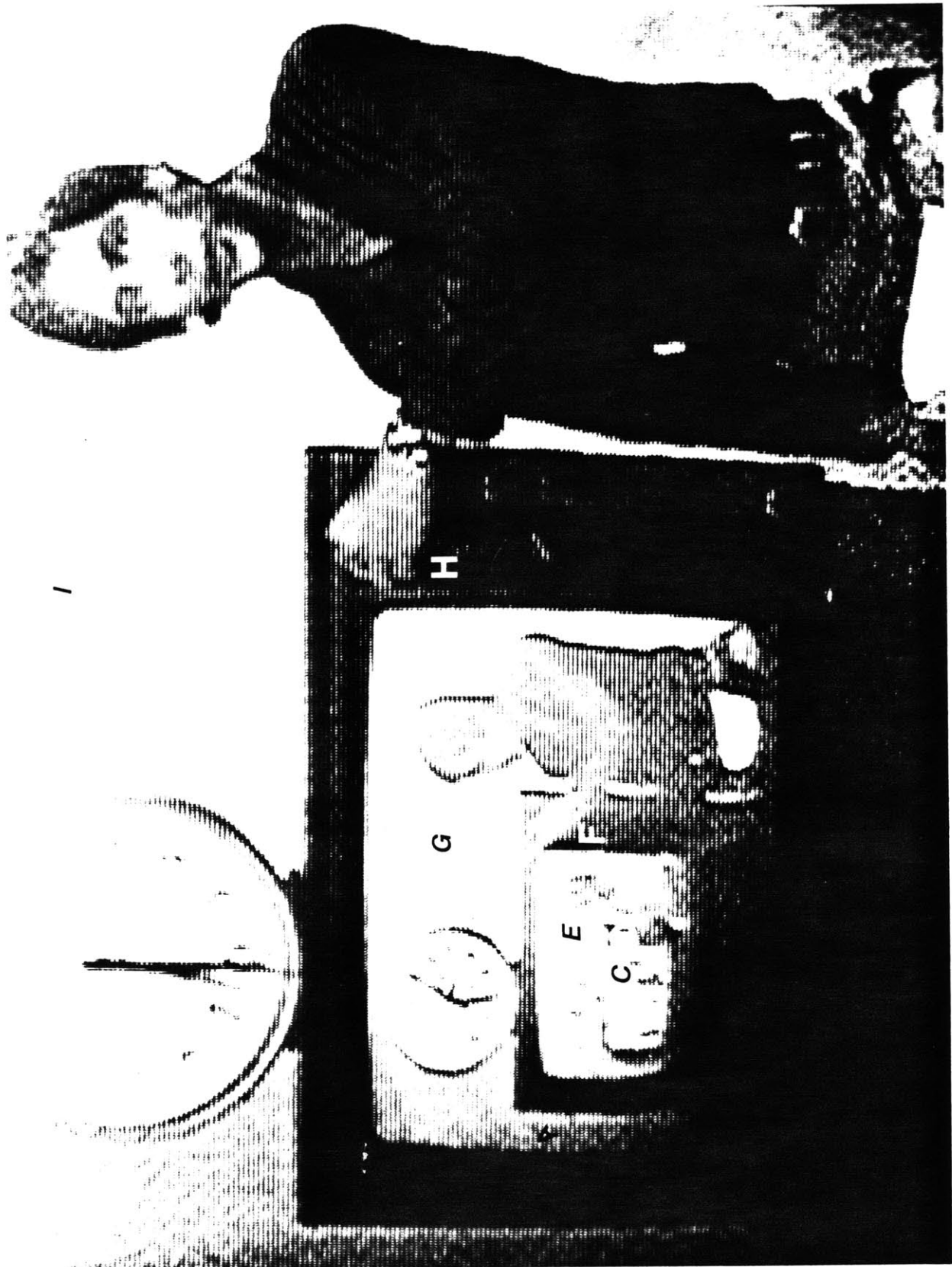
Working in the midst of the Fellows at C.A.V.S. was an invaluable ingredient to growth. The realization of artistic goals is an ongoing process. Particularly influential to my development in video has been Aldo Tambellini and Antonio Muntadas.

My fellow graduate students and friends at C.A.V.S. are engaged in the practice of sharing talents and services. Ken Kantor was able to provide pertinent discussion on the substance of artistic conviction while also aiding me at many technical crossroads. Beth Galston, Peter Codella and Ellen Sebring helped produce many tapes behind as well as in front of the camera.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the generous support of Educational Video Resources under the directorship of Mr. Ed Taylor. All realizations of ideas in visual and audio form became possible only through the help of Katrina Rescivic, Ron Ford, Skip Tenczar, Larry Gallagher, Clara Garcia, and Harris Eigenbroadt.

Video image from monitor J

"Performance in Color Video and Live Time"



Duration in Minutes of Successive Recordings
Indicating Points When Camera Pull-backs occur

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Recording #1	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Recording #2 using playback of #1	B(A)	B	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Recording #3 using playback of #2	D(A)	D(B)	D(C)	D	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recording #4 using playback of #3	F(A)	F(B)	F(C)	F(D)	F(E)	F	G	G	G	G	G	G
Recording #5 using playback of #4	H(A)	H(B)	H(C)	H(D)	H(E)	H(F)	H(G)	H	I	I	I	I
Recording #6 using playback of #5	J(A)	J(B)	J(C)	J(D)	J(E)	J(F)	J(G)	J(H)	J(I)	J	K	K
Live presentation using playback of #6	L(A)	L(B)	L(C)	L(D)	L(E)	L(F)	L(G)	L(H)	L(I)	L(J)	L(K)	L

9

Capital letters indicate which scene (monitor image, entire monitor, or monitor with clock and narrator) the camera is framing

Capital letters in parentheses denote scenes that appear on the monitor that is indicated

"Performance in Color Video and Live Time"
 Videotape produced October 26, 1979
 Educational Video Resources, Massachusetts Institute of
 Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts
 Vin Grabill, producer, performer; Ron Ford, camera, editing
 Color; 12 minute tape, plus live performance

SCRIPT

A DISTORTED IMAGE OF THE NARRATOR NEXT TO A MONITOR AND CLOCK IS SEEN (MONITOR IMAGE A). HIS VOICE IS DISTORTED THOUGH UNDERSTANDABLE. WHEN HE SPEAKS, THE TIME COUNT BEGINS FROM 0:00. ALL CLOCKS REPORT THE TIME WHEN SPECIFIC INTERVALS ARE RECORDED.

With the cooperation of Ron Ford at the M.I.T. Experimental Video Studio, I am producing a twelve minute videotape which I call "Performance in Color Video and Live Time."

When I'm involved in a creative activity, I place equal importance on several related aspects of that activity: the initial concept or inspiration, the process of realization, its finished form, absorption by an audience, and stimulation of further questioning and thought in both audience and artist. Serving as a model for this concern, I'm interested in images built from segments, in images that can only be seen by following progressive steps, in grasping regular units which when digested, hatch an understanding of the whole. I guess it's a musical concern, especially with this videotape as a specific example, where we're moving through time.

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL MONITOR B. (1:00).

In this case, the building blocks consist of units of time. Each interval of time is represented by an image on a monitor, a narrator in live time, and a clock marking that specific point in time. That particular event then becomes the monitor image and the same narrator introduces a new live time, with monitor and clock, by voicing over the previous live time narration. The sequence continues. All intervals are visible as they successfully...

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL NARRATOR AND CLOCK (MONITOR IMAGE C. (1:30). NARRATOR TURNS DOWN VOLUME ON MONITOR SO THAT IT IS JUST AUDIBLE AND BEGINS TALKING. (NARRATOR ON MONITOR IMAGE A CONTINUES TALKING.)

Well, I think for now we'll get off the subject of technique. I'd like to tell you about a couple of performances that I've seen that helped get my interest going in this area.

When I was working at Oberlin College, I attended a performance by contemporary composer Robert Ashley, given in a large auditorium. Ashley stands on the stage and recites a sentence lasting a minute or two. After travelling across the expanse of the hall, his voice is recorded on a tape machine at that end of the hall. This recording is played back on that machine, directed back across the hall, and re-recorded on a machine that sits by Ashley on the stage. After fifteen or twenty recordings of itself, the voice loses traditional meaning. In fact, the sounds produced have lost all nuance of tone, dynamics, and differentiation. What remains of Ashley's original recitation is an unusual series of hollow tones, yet we know where these tones came from. The process of arriving at these new sounds is before our eyes and ears.

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL MONITOR D. (3:00).

We experience the effects of the dual processors of space and the recording device, as they operate on and transform a given set of aural stimuli into a bony reflection of the original.

I enjoy experiencing this process of erosion. We learn something by it. What do we need to be able to attach meaning to something? When is a sentence just a series of sounds? In any case, we can think of other examples...

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL NARRATOR AND CLOCK (MONITOR IMAGE E, 3:30). NARRATOR TURNS DOWN VOLUME ON MONITOR AND BEGINS TALKING AS BEFORE.

At this point, I'd like to firmly establish ourselves in a specific place of historical time, namely, Friday, October 26, 1979, at 5:20 in the afternoon. For the benefit of future viewings of this tape, I will read a series of newspaper headlines and clips from this morning's Boston Globe which may or may not pinpoint this time along the stream of world happenings and non-developments:

"Inflation warning drops the market to a '79 low"

"South Africa nuclear blast is suspected"

"Major oil firms plan no price cuts despite reports of more high quarterly profits"

"Doctors give Shah 50/50 chance to live"

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL MONITOR F. (4:05).

A quote from Rosalyn Carter: "The Chappaquiddick question is brought up everywhere I go. Not a day passes when someone doesn't ask me about it. I don't know whether it will be brought up. I don't know if it should be brought up. But I think it probably will be brought up."

"The ABC television network says it likes to present a diverse range of entertainment reflecting the human spirit. A few samples: In "Masseuse in the Cold, Cold Ground" the comedy gets hot and steamy when Nick Hannigan and his students use Charlene as bait to try to save the gorgeous masseuses...."

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL NARRATOR AND CLOCK (MONITOR IMAGE G, 5:00). NARRATOR TURNS DOWN VOLUME ON MONITOR AND BEGINS TALKING AS BEFORE.

Well, we don't need to stay there too long. I'd rather talk about my own ideas for TV. I'm introducing this gradation of resolution in successive recordings as a reflection on the holding power of meaning. What happens to the meanings of events that are continuously replaced by new events? All intervals of time here are presented simultaneously, but like the recall of the past, the "memory" of earlier times is fuzzy.

I'm interested in another issue. It concerns our relationship to the television screen. This tube and others like it are capable of capturing the attention of anyone wandering by. The television screen can present images which promise new space and new times, but rarely do we feel connected to our own space at the specific time of the viewing.

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL MONITOR H. (6:00).

In this video piece, we are reminded of the fact that what we see when watching a video tape is not occurring live. The seeing of it may be in live time, and the recording of it was in live time, and I'm coming off like I'm in your live time, since I'm talking directly to you. But in this array of professed present times, we are seeing something of the limitations of the medium. It's a recording device that picks up audio and visual signals and tries

to reproduce them as convincingly as possible. What did we think of these early, more distorted renditions of reality?

NARRATOR TURNS UP SOUND IN MONITOR F, NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE E SPEAKS. (6:45).

This one's not so bad; it's just that the image is a little smaller and translates into fewer units of visual information. Let me go back to 4:00.

NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE E TURNS UP SOUND IN MONITOR D, NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE C SPEAKS. (7:00).

I was talking about Robert Ashley's piece and how original stimuli get altered through filtering systems. This image has been re-recorded five times.

NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE C TURNS UP SOUND IN MONITOR B, NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE A SPEAKS. (7:15).

I haven't talked about Robert Ashley's piece yet. I'm planning to do so in a few minutes.

NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE C TURNS DOWN SOUND IN MONITOR B, SPEAKS. (7:20).

We'll be waiting for that I'm sure. Have you ever seen what happens when you re-Xerox the same piece of printed matter over and over? It's really the same...

NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE E TURNS DOWN SOUND IN MONITOR D, SPEAKS. (7:30).

This is reverse Xerox. Let's continue towards increased clarity.

NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE G TURNS DOWN SOUND IN MONITOR F, SPEAKS. (7:35).

Back from where we started. I think we can understand...

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL NARRATOR AND CLOCK (MONITOR IMAGE I, 7:40). NARRATOR TURNS DOWN VOLUME ON MONITOR AND BEGINS TALKING AS BEFORE.

I respect art pieces that work within a particular structuring of time, whether that implies an open-ended development of phenomena, or restricted use of time as function of the piece. Either way, using time implies a perceived building up or breaking down of whatever we begin with. As I mentioned earlier, there is necessarily a specific process

involved, translating natural sensations through time, whether wind and water, magnetic tape recording, digital tape recording, or inner ear to brain recording. We must always take note of what instrument are using, so that we may appreciate the result of the translation as well as the method of translation.

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL MONITOR J. (8:40).

We can start considering the nature of filters, processes themselves that yield images. We realize that final results are an arbitrary and shortlived point along extended processes. What is finished, permanent?

So I offer this exercise in performance that we might consider the role of the performer in his or her environment. Let the performer soar with his or her medium to create images, yet let him or her maintain a meaningful connection to the environment of his or her audience, by emphasizing the roots of shared time and space. It's important that we...

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL NARRATOR AND CLOCK (MONITOR IMAGE K, 7:20). NARRATOR TURNS DOWN VOLUME ON MONITOR AND BEGINS TALKING AS BEFORE.

I've been talking a while now. I'd like to spend the next minute and a half experimenting with the combined sights and sounds throughout these intervals. The audio track will consist of what I hope will be a simulation of a musical instrument playing across many times. A single tone of uniform volume is played during each time interval. The playbacks are then altered by me through the volume control on the set as a new recording is made....

ALL NARRATOR VOICES CEASE. (10:00). EACH NARRATOR VARIABLY ADJUSTS VOLUME CONTROL ON MONITOR TO MODIFY SOUND LEVEL ON THAT MONITOR. AT 10:45, NARRATOR IN VIEWER'S REAL TIME WALKS OUT TO VIEWER MONITOR WITH CLOCK AND TURNS DOWN VOLUME. HE SPEAKS OVER THE TONES THAT ARE STILL AUDIBLE.

You've probably noticed the similarity of these props to the images of that equipment that you've been watching. The monitor has been operating in real time, and the clock has been measuring pieces of time passing in minutes and hours.

AT 11:30, ALL TONES CEASE AND ALL NARRATORS CONTINUE TO TALK. THIS IS AUDIBLE AS REAL TIME NARRATOR CONTINUES TO TALK TO AUDIENCE.

The only difference between what I'm doing now and what I did to prepare this tape each time I came out to the monitor, is that there is no camera recording this time span. That's an interesting extension of this performance, and I may add to this tape by re-recording it at a future showing. You'll have to imagine the process continuing into the future, now that we have a solid base in the present and a sketchy remembrance of the past.

NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE C TURNS OFF MONITOR IMAGE A.
(12:10).

NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE E TURNS OFF MONITOR IMAGE C.
(12:12).

NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE G TURNS OFF MONITOR IMAGE E.
(12:14).

NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE I TURNS OFF MONITOR IMAGE G.
(12:16).

NARRATOR IN MONITOR IMAGE K TURNS OFF MONITOR IMAGE I.
(12:18).

REAL TIME NARRATOR TURNS OFF MONITOR IMAGE K. (12:20).

END

Video image from "Live Time/Video Time"



Video image from "These Foolish Things (Remind Me of You)"



EQUIPMENT LAY-OUT FOR "LIVE TIME/VIDEO TIME": EXHIBITION ROOM C.A.V.S.



Screen for
video projection D

Working chart for
"Live Time/Video Time"

Left channel
hi-fi speaker X

Advent projector

Monitor A
3/4" deck 3
1/2" deck 1

Monitor B
3/4" deck 4
1/2" deck 2

camera

Monitor C

Chart for
"Variations in
Simultaneity"

Chart for
"EVR Words"

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Right channel hi-fi speaker Y

Performer's station:
sound amplifier, videotapes, props

Live Time/Video Time

"Live Time/Video Time" was presented twice, on December 8 and 12, at 8:00 pm at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As a seated viewing experience in the Center's exhibition room, the range of video activity to be seen occurs over as wide an area as the room allows. Chairs are arranged in four rows across the long-dimension of the room. What the viewer sees from these seats occurs along the entire length of the long wall facing him or her. Altogether, my program has the capacity for using four video playback/record decks and four screens or monitors. Allowing my role as stage director to occupy a central location is a vital ingredient to the system of presenting my work. The chart on page 14 diagrams the arrangement of the room.

The program is organized over time to slowly build towards a full-capacity use of all equipment: towards an active involvement on my part besides a greater use of the space as a whole. Chamber video develops into open theater; each element or separate experience serves a particular use or format for video that I feel demonstrates a use for the medium beyond that of television.

The tapes follow two basic lines of development in their sequence of playback: first, on their reliance of more and more equipment culminating in a blending of all machinery during the last piece; second, in my role in the

presentation. My role begins as stage director changing the tapes and during the next tape develops to the point of playing tapes that involve me performing on the tapes. In the second half of the program, I perform these roles while actively manipulating the playing of two simultaneous tapes. An aspect of the present time is introduced that is not a part of the playing of earlier pre-recorded tapes; the two tapes must be combined by me at the moment of their playback for the program to make sense to the viewer. Finally, in the last piece, participating with an assistant in a form of open theater, I develop a fuller involvement in this growing process of machine maintenance, performance, and creation of imagery in a more spontaneous way.

A printed program is distributed which lists the sequence of the seven video pieces, an intermission following the first four. The first tape, "Prelude for Wind and Cars," is noted on the program as occurring "upon entering." Unlike the other entries on the program, no time duration is given. This tape plays on the small monitor in the far right corner and runs for about twenty minutes, until the point at which I introduce myself and begin the program. I consider this time period an opportunity to play a tape that serves as a video "window," an unchanging frame, in this case revealing a snowy forest scene through which periodically a car passes on an unseen road. The amplified sound of the cars blending with strong gusts of wind provide what I intend to be a soothing, oceanic and thoroughly undemanding sound presence

within which to situate oneself. The sounds are simple and undifferentiated enough to take on the form of non-developing, wave-like activity. With no visual change except for quivering branches in the wind or occasional car passing through the frame, the experience is intended as a timeless window, television as wallpaper, a role consciously or unconsciously served by television all too often.

When I turn "Prelude for Wind and Cars" off and real silence occurs, my interaction with the audience and with the tapes begins with my introductory remarks.

"8 Short Processes" is presented as the first piece on the program, though I intend it to be the second work seen in the evening as a whole, following "Prelude for Wind and Cars." "8 Short Processes" is the earliest work shown. I completed this compilation of nine short pieces from material and ideas I had been developing over the spring and summer of 1979. These tapes were made at a point when I was exploring what was available to me in video processing. I became fascinated by the way events are shot and how they are transmitted into images. I take these processes as methods of composing musical-like structures, in which I am more interested in the rhythmic pacing and change through process than the narrative presentation of the images themselves. In "8 Short Processes," there is an attempt to uproot the conventional authority of the picture by editing according to sound. The picture is simply forced to conform. It provides texture for the rhythm. We experience these

short pieces along a measured timeline where divisions in time occur through processes of fast editing, repetition, and re-recording of the same phrase or images. Sound is never over-dubbed or manipulated. It is always the original sound picked up by the camera's microphone.

Following are briefly described seven of the nine pieces that make up "8 Short Processes," with the purpose of mentioning those factors that influenced me most in their creation.

"Lawrence Welk" takes material directly off of the television, a camera shooting images off the screen during "The Lawrence Welk Show." Camera activity consists of making in-camera edits, assembled according to a continuous and pre-determined plan. The rhythm of making in-camera edits is a three-part process involving starting and stopping the camera and holding for a one-fifth second interval. In conjunction with the rhythm of the television musical material, this camera action produces a new rhythm, or pattern of even intervals of sound. In following this procedure for editing, rather than editing according to visual judgments, a videotape is made deriving closely from the original television content yet reflecting the formative characteristics of the process, i.e., the overlaying of the polyphonic editing rhythm.

The visual translation of the material involves shooting through a convex lens the size of the television screen. The television image is distorted by being stretched. The new

image becomes a split-image, stretched translation of one quarter of the size of the screen. Through this enlargement, the pixel unit basic form of the cathode ray tube is made visible. Images used are solely full-frame shots of women who sing on the program. Visually, there is great constancy in the blond-haired, red-lipped singers, even as their faces are transformed.

Finally, this newly taped source material made through in-camera editing is composed into a final arrangement through repetitive editing techniques. The purpose is to develop a new "language" of signals based on pre-existing television programming, and then to create a piece based on my own compositional judgements.

The final section of "Lawrence Welk" uses advertising images from the television without faces to provide a relief from the "Welk" women. If this earlier material is seen as abstract, this coda sequence, through the magnified distortion of the lens, presents more basic abstracted material of motion and light. For the sound, I turn off the television sound and subject Karlheinz Stockhausen's "Kontakte" to the in-camera editing procedure.

"Musical Bridges" is a variation on the same process. Here, a different input is used. One-fifth second in-camera edits are made by alternating the direction of a camera mounted on a tripod between two side windows in the back seat of a car driving along the elevated highways around Boston. Visually, the result is a continuous flow of city/highway images that move across the screen in alternately

opposite directions. On one window that the camera shoots through, press-tape letters in white read "Is this forward motion?" across the frame. On the other window, the same letters in black read "?noitom drawrof siht sI."

In this tape, the microphone records two things: first, the sounds of driving and passing cars; second, the sounds of me holding long tones of varying pitch and dynamics with my voice. When translated through the in-camera editing technique, these human utterances become stacatto tones reminiscent of a saxophone or a sequentially programmed car horn. Once again, having derived a new visual and audio language, I arrange repetitive patterns into a short musically structured piece ending with a coda.

The third piece from "8 Short Processes" is also color videotape and around a minute in length. Entitled "Tunnel," it is concerned with images of driving along highways and through tunnels. As in the previous tape, it follows a similar treatment of collecting short segments of material, that are edited into repeating patterns, emphasizing this rhythmic thrust and reflecting the nature of individual images. Particular shots become part of a flow of time, a fast-paced flashing of signs, cars and voices, cemented by a consciously chosen structure. And, as in the first two pieces, I intend structure to demonstrate a separation between original input and final result of that input's transformation through a process. John Cage states:

Structure can and ought to be agreed upon, and the underlying necessary structure of music is rhythmic. Form cannot and ought not be agreed upon: it is purely a matter of the heart. In the Orient, it was always arrived at by means of improvisation within the law-giving rhythmic structure.¹

In the next three pieces discussed, the process of a videotape's making is elevated into the sole focus of the tape. Little composition is involved beyond the initial system for image transformation. Two short tapes, "Energy" and "Brian" proceed through change of a single image rather than through compilation of different imagery. In both, I am dissecting the electronic make-up of a video image by re-recording the same thing many times. I start with image X, record it directly onto another video tape recorder to produce Y. Y produces Z. I continue this process twenty-eight times, the point where audio and visual signal lose all distinction from the field of electronic noise. The twenty-eight one-half second intervals are then edited together so that initially the tape starts with the cleanest video image, in the first case a television newscaster recorded directly off of a television news program speaking the word "energy." This segment then descends through its own self-analysis to a point of total disintegration, eventually returning to the original point of clarity and recognition. In "Energy," the entire process back and forth takes twenty seconds; I repeat it twice. In "Brian," the original segment is a two-second sequence of four fast edits of a dancer, while accompanying music plays four distinct

beats. This initial rhythm is set up to then deteriorate into an indistinct wash of sound before returning to original clarity.

In making these two tapes, I am concerned with acknowledging the essential particle make-up of the video image, something we should consider whether an image is clear or distorted. Other issues I address are the relativity of "quality," or "closeness to reality" of the video image, the change in meaning of recognizable words as they become recognized more as sounds, and which incidental changes and textures are perceived through experiencing a reduced set of initial inputs that undergo a single, uncomplicated process through a highly regimented system. There is no interpretation possible because there are no questions; only revelations into the nature of the television medium in its treatment of images through its particular electronic system of translation and transmission. Steve Reich writes:

While performing and listening to gradual musical processes one can participate in a particularly liberating and impersonal kind of ritual. Focusing in on the musical process makes possible that shift of attention away from he and she and you and me outwards towards it.²

"Petition," "1-2-3-4," and "Pop-hey" demonstrate structures concerning sequential treatments of time. In each, a composition is determined by imposing an external rule on the length and patterning of phrases, regardless of the particular subject matter of the images.

In "Petition," the initial source material consists of

a ten second, high-contrast, black and white interval of a dancer wildly flailing her arms and turning her body to an accompanying recorded voice that she hears, that blasts, "You cannot petition the Lord with prayer!" The same ten second video phrase is repeated and edited next to the previous segment after one second has been removed from the end. This continues until all ten seconds are removed. At the end, a coda matches the quickened pace at the conclusion of the process. As in "Energy" and "Brian," my objective is to find a process that is clear, simple, and complete in its execution. A piece of musical video is the result of inputting a certain piece of audio and visual material through a process. What is essential is the idea that the making of the piece is of equal importance to the final expression, that the piece makes itself while it is being watched.

"Pop-hey" again uses a source phrase, in this case a fifteen second interval consisting of thirty in-camera edits that slightly break up and animate the subject activity. A figure moves back into space across a field and then returns, approaching the camera. Accompanying random sounds of cheering crowds and out-door construction machinery form points around which edited phrases are identifiable. The fifteen second interval is edited according to the following system: starting with the first five seconds (1-5), new phrases are added by sequentially maintaining the same interval of time but shifting forward one second. To 1-5, add the phrase 2-6, then 3-7; it is an almost equal repetition of what has come

before, except that the phrase eventually passes through the fifteen second event after twelve edited phrases. Again, the rhythmic characteristics of the piece determine how the piece is experienced, primarily along the timeline set up by regular and repeating segments of sound. The source material is used to create this musical quality of video and is not seen or heard for its representative characteristics. In developing these pieces, initially as experiments with video technique, I am certain that the television medium has a different impact when the element of sound is considered as the primary object of editing.

In the exhibition, "8 Short Processes" is projected through an Advent video projector onto a movie screen, enlarging the image to a size of 8' by 12', larger than the traditional video projection. Stereo sound is amplified and separated into two channels through two high-fidelity speakers. In using material from commercial television, I desire to maintain close ties with the subject matter and pace of television, as well as with the possibilities of the medium itself through these processes and amplifications.

The two entries on the program following "8 Short Processes," "Animalogic" and "These Foolish Things (remind me of you)," continue the programmed format of playing a pre-recorded videotape, this time on one of the two centrally located twenty-five inch monitors. In each, there is a conscious tendency to merge in an integral way what is seen as taped material with the world outside of the monitor,

i.e., the viewing space.

"Animalogic" is a fifteen minute videotape concerned with point of view, specifically camera point of view. In earlier experiments focusing on camera identity, I let the camera take on other points of view than those possible through hand-holding the camera or mounting the camera on a tripod. A hand-held camera is limited to recording what the operator sees and echoes his stance, usually resulting in a jerky up and down shaking of the picture frame if he is walking. A camera mounted on a tripod records an objective view of a scene or activity. Its detached stillness does not bring a sense of involvement with that activity to the viewer.

I am interested in motion, and as in many of the tapes in "8 Short Processes," I decided to let the camera get out of my hands and become part of a driving car, a roller coaster, or a boat. This meant mounting the camera to a structural element of these vehicles, that the camera register that vehicle's connection to road or water without the softening effect of human intervention. In another tape I hang a camera from a ceiling and operate the camera by twirling the rope. I am seen in this tape standing on the floor handling the rope. The swirling smooth motions of the camera are indirectly initiated by me but are translated along twenty feet of rope to offer a view largely independent of the actions of my hands.

There are four parts to "Animalogic." A five second

pause with Roman numerals introduces each section. Part I is a fifteen second episode where the camera, close to the ground of a forest setting in autumn, watches a cat on a wooden ledge. The cat locks "eyes" with the camera, jumps down and walks away. With this suggestion, in Part II, the camera explores the environment from the vantage point of a cat or other small animal. In operating the camera three or four inches from the floor of the forest, all aspects of the surroundings become very large and close. Passing through dried leaves becomes a rough and noisy adventure. This section lasts eight minutes. In taking on the slowed down pace of a small animal, I try to anticipate response to various situations in an authentic way. As I explain in the interview section of Part IV, "some of the things that happened were jumping up on stumps, jumping down from stumps, landing in leaves, stopping, starting, looking around, rolling in the leaves, looking up at the sky, looking at the wind, looking back down, taking a rest, sniffing around, going after something as if there was a purpose, just resting, keeling over from sheer exhaustion..."

Part III is a two minute interval where the camera is still. Its view is determined only through panning and zooming. The vantage point remains that of a small animal. At the end of a pan across the forest floor, the camera discovers a looming body reclined in the leaves. At this point a certain interaction occurs between the camera and the lying person that reflects a sense of detachment on

both parts as opposed to the earlier response and act mode in Part II. The person jerks to life, rolls forward toward the camera, then back away and out of the frame. The camera does not respond to follow this restless action, keeping a fixed gaze on the horizon, the sky through trees bending slightly in the breeze.

Finally, in Part IV, the camera takes on an explorative role once again within its environment. Out of the forest, the scene is an indoor setting. I am being interviewed standing against a white wall. As I speak about making this videotape in the forest, the camera roams over my body and the surrounding room as if it had a mind of its own. The juxtaposition between two independent activities, my verbal expression and the camera's constantly varying imagery, create spontaneous combinations of word and picture, where the initiative of direction, and of viewer attention, shifts between the two.

Parts I and III offer objective, watchful points of view, the taking in of nature and events. The camera assumes little or no initiative. Parts II and IV offer subjective points of view. The camera takes on a mind of its own as it must react to nature or subject. And in the short interview in Part IV, the camera becomes as active a participant as the subject of the interview. I am trying to develop more play and loose exchange between the dominating, often judgemental presence of the camera and the artificially propped up action set before it.

Directly before and after playing this tape, I offer comments about the tape in much the same manner as I appear in the videotape interview. This point in the program provided the first opportunity to imply a connection or equivalence between taped material and live presence. I use myself as a medium in this exchange in order to suggest that what I say live can just as well occur on tape, and that what I say through a monitor has an element of unrehearsed, live-time reality to it. The distinction between what is on the program and what is not on the program is really the subject of this presentation.

The final tape shown before the intermission is entitled "These Foolish Things (remind me of you)." Made in collaboration with Ellen Sebring, "These Foolish Things" is a twenty minute black and white videotape. The extemporaneous nature of the preceding tape's final interview is pursued to a point where the vital activity of camera discovery and interchange between the tape's participants extend for the entire duration of the tape. The only edits in the tape occur at the beginning and end where titles and credits are added.

An environment was established by Ellen and me prior to making the tape that reflected what we consider typical of our American TV/magazine culture. A television was on sometimes with sound, sometimes without. A "mood music" record played occasionally. Most of what the camera recorded was shot into a pair of mirrors, joined vertically at one edge

and tilted into a free-standing, obtuse "V". On one side, Ellen's world was seen, on the other side of the demarcating border, I was seen. From my position, I could control the camera's zoom, focus, and swivel on a tripod. Ellen's half of the frame included several props: a candleabra with lit candles, an antique chime clock with a loud tick. Ellen provided the texture on the left side of the screen by applying make-up to her face and brushing her hair for most of the twenty minutes. Before turning on the camera, I was not fully aware of what Ellen was planning to do, and this sense of puzzlement and frustration becomes my persona's role throughout the tape. Throughout the dialogue, which is transcribed beginning on page 49, the tension that exists is fed by my inability to break through Ellen's shield. On two occasions this occurs, and we achieve a union by merging the mirror images of our faces into one composite face on the television screen.

What we are conveying in "These Foolish Things" is a simple conviction: one's environment does tend to mold the behavior of its participants. In this case, it is a man and a woman whose actions are strongly affected by the continuous presence and glow of the television and recorded music. Their priorities and goals appear to derive from the advertising pages of a magazine. The tape is made continuously to arrive at an uninterrupted time flow of this fantasy space.

The manner in which "These Foolish Things" is made is

partly in reaction to the highly programmed time-slotted nature of commercial television. It is partly made due to an interest in discovering more open forms for theater or broadcast television, a form that is demonstrated in the final piece of the exhibition, "Live Time/Video Time."

"These Foolish Things" marks the end of the first half of the presentation and is the last piece of material that is simply played from pre-recorded tape. Following the fifteen minute intermission, "Variations in Simultaneity" is presented by playing two videotapes through the two centrally located monitors. It is crucial that the two tapes run at the same pace after being synchronized in order that the planned combinations between the two monitors take place. It is likely, however, that over the eighteen minute span of this piece, one playback deck would be a half a second or so ahead of the other. It is necessary for me, therefore, to return the decks to alignment periodically. This is accomplished by pausing on one or the other of the decks at several cue points along the way, where sequential numbers appear on individual sections on each monitor. Unlike the playing of the other tapes, this piece involves a measure of timing, judgement and risk. I am not trying to divert attention away from this necessary procedure; it is my role in this piece. Because of my interference with the playback, there can not be two identical viewings of this piece; what is seen is in a large part arranged at the moment of the viewing. The resulting atmosphere of uncertainty and

trial-and-error contributed to a heightened sense of present time of the viewer, the antithesis to a casual and detached home television mode, lack of attentiveness, or loss of self into the program. For the most part, television is a utility that is taken for granted. Until the development of cable response systems, there has been little sharing, two-way communication, or personal connection between programmer and user, between the creating and the seeing.

"Variations in Simultaneity" consists in the following sub-titled arrangements of material shown on two television monitors:

"Jon Talking Heads I - Jon Talking Heads II" - two cameras record the same event during the same time period. Two cameras face each other at twenty-five foot distances. The participant stands in the middle and turns to face one then the other, his head taking up the full frame of each monitor. Both the back and front of his head are seen alternating between the two monitors, his voice alternating between the two stereo speakers as he faces one microphone at a time.

"Peter Whoa I - Peter Whoa II" - the same event is played on each monitor. This is the most simple variation. Two identical tapes play with a half-second delay to achieve a slight movement from left to right through the echo.

"Peter Boat Talk - Peter Dream Talk" - two different monologues last the same amount of time, in the same visual set-up. The subject describes two activities of his day,

breaking out into laughter at the same time on each tape. Overlapping words merge in simultaneous laughter to unify the two tapes at the end.

"Vin Crest I - Vin Crest II" - the same monologue is given two separate times in the same visual set-up. The only visual difference is that my head is slanted to the left in one tape and to the right in the other. I speak the "Crest motto," written on the back of every box of Crest toothpaste, two times at a normal speed followed by one time at double speed. The identical words overlap and shift apart in near echoes as they are spoken at approximately the same rate each time.

"Memorial Drive I - Memorial Drive II" - the same section of Memorial Drive is driven on two separate occasions, each trip lasting approximately the same amount of time. It is hard to distinguish whether I am playing the same trip tape twice or two different tapes, as the variations are slight. The viewer gazes out of the front windshield; the two drives are identical except for a passing car or pedestrian in one and not the other or a difference of a second in the trip's duration.

"Memorial Drive I and II" - stemming from my interest in fast editing, Ken Kantor, a graduate student at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, developed for my use an automated switcher. The outputs of two cameras can be alternately assembled together at edit lengths ranging from one twentieth of a second to five seconds. I merged

the two Memorial Drive tapes described above, each interval lasting one tenth of a second. The differences between the two can now be seen. The final result takes on a rhythm of its own, the combined fragmented sounds taking on the regularity of a car's engine due to the regularity of the editing.

"EVR Words" - an exercise with spoken words, this segment presents what can be heard as a complete phrase of words by combining split versions of the phrase on two monitors. The process begins by writing the words into syllables on a chart, including pauses (p. 47). Using a metronome, I speak every other syllable every other half a second. The other half of the phrase was recorded the same way on a separate tape. At the end of each tape, I speak an uninterrupted coherent sentence. The preparation of the material then involves the following: while the right monitor plays black, the first half of the phrase plays on the left. By itself, this is meaningless. Then while the left plays black the other half is played on the right, thus establishing the characteristics of each half separately. Then both tapes are played together, one on each monitor, sound alternating between right and left, the message becoming whole. The complete sentences at the ends of each then become meaningless as these words overlap. Finally, both tapes are played on a single monitor with the aid of Ken Kantor's switcher, a second way of combining the two halves and achieving a meaningful arrangement of the words, though

still far removed from a direct recitation of the message through one television monitor or none at all.

"Bowling I - Bowling II" - two separate activities occur in the same visual set-up. On each monitor, a set of hands is seen rolling a steel ball down the ramp of a toy bowling set. When three balls are bowled, the hands appear at the other end to set up the pins. First, two separate sequences of bowling are seen, one on each monitor. Then each monitor takes on the switched combination of the two. At the end of the two minute segment, there is a total of the sights and sounds from four separate bowling interludes on the two monitors. The audio takes on the rhythmic pace of the fast switching, using the sounds from the bowling process as input for its patterning.

"Boat I - Boat II" - the same activity is performed in two different times. A camera mounted in a boat bobs and turns as the boat strains on its mooring to maintain its upwind orientation. Over a two minute time span, I walk backwards into the water, which is never deeper than my waist, walking away from the boat in a perpendicular direction to the monitor screen. Then I walk back towards the boat as the boat continues to move the camera in horizontal pans and vertical bobs across my track. The results of two of these segments are played side-by-side. What is visible are the two horizon lines rising and falling, moving right and left; occasionally, I am seen in some position along my walk in one or the other monitor or occasionally in both.

"Eyewitness News I - Eyewitness News II" - the same activity is seen in two different times. The first one-and-one-half minutes of the Channel 4, WBZ-TV, Eyewitness News program from two successive days is played on each monitor. What becomes apparent is not the details of the news items but the similarity in formats and formulae of the news programming, minute for minute.

"Jon Autumn Day I - Jon Autumn Day II" - two cameras record the same event during the same time. In a freer use of two cameras than in the first episode, two hand-held cameras capture the speaker from two different angles. The two interpretations are played simultaneously and the voice travels from one speaker to the other depending on the direction of the speaker's voice projection. This establishes a spatial context for the relationship of each camera operator to the speaker.

"Variations in Simultaneity" is a composite of these separate sections. The total playing time of the two continuously running videotapes is eighteen minutes. Each section treats the recording and playback of similar events in time differently, and the entire series is intended to describe a full range of possibilities in the synchronous use of two television monitors. No section lasts more than two minutes. There is no focus on particular content, rather, through fast pacing, each section becomes an example of one playback situation. My interaction in the pausing and restarting of one tape or the other brings more emphasis

to the manipulation of the machines as focus rather than taped subject matter at any given moment. The overall organization of the variations is of primary importance; individual video work remains freely shot, unrehearsed, relatively unburdened in any adherence to narrative portrayal and prepared statement. The camera is open. A situation is established through which unrestricted life may pass.

Marinetti and Boccioni may have been the first practitioners of channelling the flowing of random phenomena through a rigidly defined system, in their Futurist Synthetic Theater of 1915. Roselee Goldberg writes:

A section of the synthetic theater manifesto was directed to explaining the idea of simultaneity - simultaneity is 'born of improvisation, lightning-like intuition, from suggestive and revealing actuality', it explained. They believed that a work was valuable only to the extent that it was improvised (hours, minutes, seconds), not extensively prepared (months, years, centuries). This was the only way to capture the confused 'fragments of interconnected events encountered in everyday life which to them were far superior to any attempts at realistic theater.³

The final piece of the presentation is entitled "Live Time/Video Time." It is designed to allow the creation of experience to occur at the moment of viewing; the making of videotape rather than the playing of videotapes. The piece becomes performance and culminates the evolution through this presentation towards a live time response to structured phenomena. The use of video here extends aspects of the moment and creates instant media-translated images of

the presented events. Video is not primarily used to play back past events; there is no reliance on pre-recorded tapes as is the case throughout the rest of the program, except at a point of media crescendo in the piece.

Douglas Davis speaks to these concerns and echoes the goals of the Futurists:

He is discussing the exhilaration of acting in live time, what Jung means that a heightened awareness to the possibilities of the moment draws out of us a psychic response that is in tune with that moment. We have erected elaborate safeguards in the past against that reality (the same reality which you occupy as you watch) both in art and life. In our reaction to live TV I think I see the beginnings of a desire to contact reality immediately. Immediacy, finally, is in the eye and mind of the viewer: a heightened awareness brought on by the sense of authentic presence. The time that passes in that state is irreversible but it is also irreplaceable.⁴

There are two aspects to this piece that provide a basis for viewer interpretation: first, a tightly structured but skeletal plan along a seven minute time line in the form of a chart pinned to the wall (see page 48); and second, what the audience sees when those outlined activities are executed. In this piece, I am constantly putting to question the division between performance and non-performance. When does the piece start and when does it end? Are all activities proceeding according to plan? Are any activities proceeding according to plan? Are incidental details, technical malfunctions, and circumstantial happenings to be considered "part" of the piece?

"Live Time/Video Time" begins directly after the end of "Variations in Simultaneity." Starting at that point, it

runs concurrently with the progression of time above all other designs. Soon after the end of the preceding tape, my assistant, Peter Codella, a graduate student at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, and I begin switching cables and making necessary adjustments to the machinery, as is the case between all pieces in the program. In this case, however, a new videotape is not turned on nor is there my customary introduction. Because no point of departure is established, the fact that the piece does have an end becomes a special moment of confusion for the audience. I consciously induce a distinct sense of completion through a coda-like performance separate in nature from the preceding seven minutes. I provide half of what is expected: an end, but no beginning. In both evening's performances, this comes as a surprise; the confusion of media barrage is replaced by the definition of the moment. And what is seen as an exercise in spontaneous response to machinery is replaced by the natural extemporaneousness of the non-performance moment through a sudden turn. Questions pivot on this point: are we out of performance? Must we now view things differently? Why cannot real time be performance? What is the difference really between the two?

The answer to the last question lies in the creation of a declared structure or framework with which to organize or attempt to organize events. The "plan" is reproduced here. There is no script. Extemporaneous dialogue occurs in reaction to following stage directions that both Peter and I

have on paper. At the conclusion of "Variations," Peter makes several cable switches as I stand at my "desk" going over my notes. I speak to Peter occasionally as he turns on a deck to record mode, transmitting my image that is picked up via the camera facing me to one of the two central monitors. I remain with my back to the audience and speak to Peter through the camera. As I ask him whether he wants a glass of water, Peter records an eight second loop of my image. This loop is played on that monitor for the duration of the piece, repeating an eight second fragment through sound and image of me holding up a glass of water to the camera and speaking to Peter.

The camera input is switched by Peter to another deck and my live image appears on the adjacent monitor. I appear as two images and two voices talking about water. Peter then plays a videotape on monitor C. In this pre-recorded tape, the screen is split vertically into a dark half and a light half. Peter's face appears in profile in the light half, my face appears in the dark half, almost nose-to-nose. With a metronome counting one second intervals in the background, we alternately speak two words every two seconds, providing a cadence rhythm to contrast and add to the mounting cacaphony of our live and taped voices. After three minutes, our faces turn to face forward and merge in the style of "These Foolish Things," while our voices continue the steady beat of words. In making this tape, we speak our words in an unplanned way, solely in response to the two words

spoken by the other. Sentences sometimes are built in collaboration, other times words reflect, echo, or counter what has just been said.

After playing this videotape, Peter agrees to pour himself a glass of water and replaces me at the desk. His live image pouring water is now next to my repeating loop image pouring water. I play another videotape on the movie screen through the Advent projector, using the fourth and last available deck. This tape documents a rehearsal of this performance made at an earlier time and is designed to reflect the same series of activities as seen through the lens of a camera that roams around the room, offering many different perspectives. Its purpose is to remind the viewer that he or she is not moving (though could) and is observing everything from one point of view. It is also designed to double the quantity of sound in the exhibition space. A slow building of overlapping sound is at a peak at this moment. At all times, Peter and I remain in a quiet working mode of behavior, continuing to converse in a normal manner while all other elements eventually overcome our own verbal contributions.

Whereas nothing we do up to now has the look of performance, the final coda point reverses this trend as it marks the pivotal point of the performance. Peter and I change positions once again, returning to our original stations. One by one, Peter turns off all tapes except the tape on monitor C which continues its cadence-paced delivery

of single words. At my desk, I turn around and face the audience, holding a full pitcher of milk. Peter turns to face the audience while rolling a sheet of newspaper into a conical container. The point when all tapes except the one on monitor D have been turned off is the point when Peter and I refrain from speaking. I perform a magic trick that presents the illusion of pouring milk into the newspaper container. Placing the half emptied pitcher on the desk, I steady the paper container for a while before crumbling it into a ball and throwing it to Peter, demonstrating that it contains no milk. I turn off the last tape and the performance is complete, an end point that is as distinct as the beginning is indistinct from its surroundings in time.

Both performances of December 8 and 12 followed this outline, but differed widely in all other regards. Often there were mechanical set-backs which required a new interpretation of the plan on our part. We did not hesitate to talk about problems with the same casualness with which we discuss drinking water, which remains the continuing thread to the dialogue. Everything that occurs, then, whether obviously coincidental or deliberately staged takes on a quality that falls between the area of random spontaneity and performance; I call it "open theater," believing that this midpoint between natural occurrence and artifice is the source of the creative response.

What is observed by the viewer becomes a matter of personal decision. People offered varying descriptions of

what happens in the piece and pointed out several different moments when they consider the piece beginning. Artists in many fields have dealt with this issue. The format of picture within a picture, movie within a movie, and un-tampered-with reality on the stage are common themes that have been treated in various ways for centuries. I offer one passage from John Cage who remains a progenitor of much of this thinking:

Now what this non-intentional music wants to do is, by that means and other means, which can be theatrical or architectual or what not, to make it clear to the listener that the hearing of the piece is his own action - that the music, so to speak, is his, rather than the composer's, for the composer was not in the same position as he was, in respect to it on the most mundane level, not in the same part of the room...⁵

The objective of these pieces has been to develop an artistic statement through the articulation of process. Process generates and becomes the essential ingredient of a fixed work in time. The process of making and viewing live work is an extension of this logic which stems from the activities of music and performance. Steve Reich composes musical pieces where "the compositional process and the sounding music are one and the same thing."⁶ My exposure to Reich and others stimulated much work in the video medium. Structures are determined and material arrived at that could not be possible through means extending solely through human intelligence and logic. Steve Reich: "The distinctive thing about musical processes is that they determine all the note-to-note (sound-to-sound) details and the

over all form simultaneously."⁷

"It's Gonna Rain" by Steve Reich is a twenty-two minute recorded piece of music based on a simple use of the phase shift technique which he introduced as a valid musical process. Two identical loops of spoken material are played on two tape recorders, initially so that they overlap. Because the overlapping registration of the two five second segments does not remain exact over time, due largely to the slight inconsistencies between the two machines, a new combined sound is produced through the process of the two tracks moving slowly in and out of phase. The initial input's banal meaning is supplanted by our focus on the sounds of the text's transformation into an extended outgrowth of rhythmic variation. A new sense of time is spun out of a five second segment, a listening process with depth providing exposure similar to the effects of meditation as we stay with one cycle of this simply conceived process.

In this work, as in many of my own pieces, an initial segment of source material is chosen as input to begin the work. These parts remain visible for us to mark their transformation through time or process. Part of comprehending the piece becomes a matter of identifying the essential artistic element: is it the recognition of the process and thereby artistic intent or the qualitative listening, or viewing, of generated imagery? There are two reasons for my regard for viewer perception of process. It is a means to derive material through systems other than ones of personal choice. To make

clear this elimination of personal bias, the artist decides on an external rule to generate material, and then makes known this rule as in much of the work of John Cage, Steve Reich and others. Secondly, besides separation of self from the artistic statement, revealed or unhidden process allows the viewer to experience a work developmentally. The work makes itself. The more an audience can grasp the artist's intent and method, the more the essential ingredient of change is communicated.

In developing videotapes that rely on viewer recognition of process, I am confronting other questions that stem from operating through the television medium and especially through broadcast television's public context. Walter Benjamin describes the "aura" of a work of art in his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." He refers to "aura" as that quality inherent in any natural object that becomes lost upon reproduction. What becomes detached is the object's connection to original time and place. Benjamin points out that originally the artistic product was part of social interaction and ritual; ("The unique value of the authentic work of art has its basis in ritual.")⁸ When some element of this experience is uprooted from its context, for further communication or dissemination, "the authority of the work, its aura" is sacrificed.

It is clear that the television medium does not rely on the production of copies or reproduction. The camera recorded transmission is the essential expression to be

communicated even if it has lost its uniqueness through a wide reception. Also, unlike other forms of reproduced expression, the television product belongs in its livingroom setting; a part of the home, it addresses the user's consumer oriented lifestyle and need for distraction and information. The television image is not transplanted in the way most paintings in museums are, losing their connection to the time and space in which they were created. And as long as the television industry continues to introduce communication oriented advancements to increase viewer reaction and participation, artistic expression may turn away from one-way programmed presentation towards an interplay among many choices.

I believe Benjamin's "aura" can survive through any medium as long as resulting imagery remains subordinated to viewer recognition of process and involvement. How can viewer absorption of and response to the vital, ritualistic forms of our time be established through the television medium? What is broadcast television's capacity to increase the intimacy and spontaneity of response oriented art making and viewing? A successful working dialogue between artist and viewer must consider television's natural habitat in our lives as subject matter itself for programming. The expression can be as fluid as our own interplay with television already is, yet not as rigidly presented, not as commercially designed, not as removed from those properties of the medium that can offer us a quicker, truer reflection of the environment.

I agree with Douglas Davis who believes that in any art form when the artist is "creating or attempting to create something, he totally destroys the creative process, because the creative process is not to create anything, but to allow what is happening to be absorbed by you in such a way that you can express it and clarify it and make it clear. In the making available of that information, the creative statement manifests itself."⁹

At the conclusion of this thesis is a proposal for a television production I intend to accomplish as an extension of the work documented by this thesis.

EVR WORDS

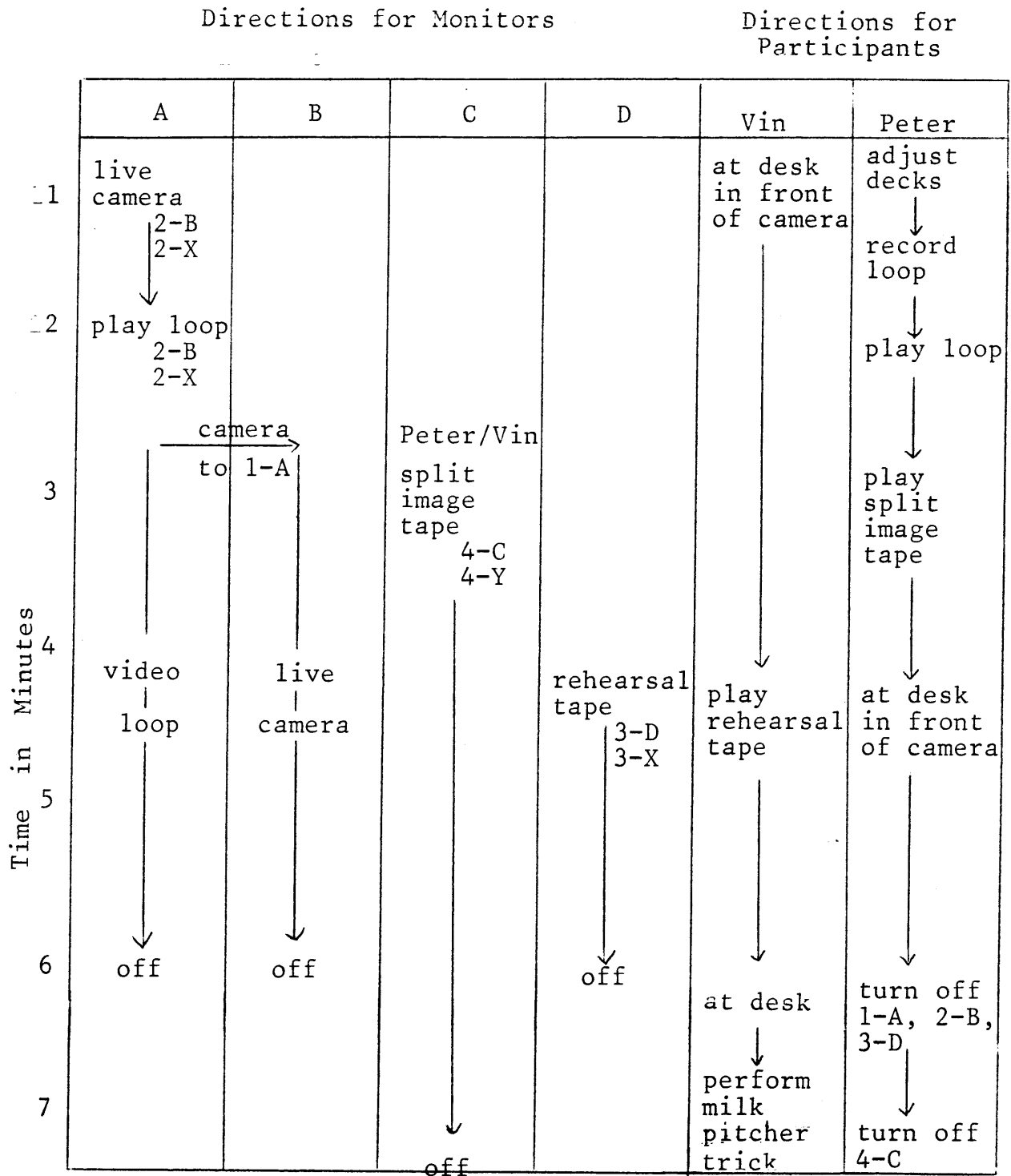
JUST	a	QUICK	state	MENT	-	OF	ex	PLAN	ation
--	-	--	Most	OF	to	NIGHTS	vi..	DE..	o..
TAPES,	-	WERE	made	POS	sible	THROUGH	the	WILLING	help
FROM	eh..	VREYONE	at	M.I.	tees	ED	djew	CA	shun
UL	-	VI..	de..	O..	re	SOURCES.	-	--	-
--	-	--	They	U..	jully	--	ma	NAGED	to
BOUNCE	back	IN	to	WORK	king	OR	der	EH	vrey
TIME	I	HAD	laid	WASTE	their	MAH	shee	NER	ree.
--	-	--	-	--	Yer	GREAT!	(wave)		(wave)
	(wave)								

---Break into improvisational running monologue while getting up and moving away from camera.

"Live Time/Video Time": Working Plan

Performed December 8 and 12, 1980

Center for Advanced Visual Studies



Letters and numbers indicate which deck (numbers) is sending an image to which monitor (capital letters).

"These Foolish Things (remind me of you)"
 Videotape produced November 18, 1980
 Concord, Massachusetts
 Vin Grabill and Ellen Sebring, producers, performers
 Black and White; 18 minutes long
 Recorded music by Geraldo and His New World Orchestra

SCRIPT

PAN FROM TITLES SET-UP ACROSS ROOM TO TELEVISION SET SHOWING A FEMALE SINGER. HER VOICE IS HEARD DURING THIS PAN, SINGING:

Love's a blessing, true love's a wonderful blessing,
 true love's a blessing, wait and see...when you've
 got a good man, the world is in your hands, true
 love's a blessing, yessiree...

CHANNELS ARE SWITCHED FIVE TIMES SETTLING ON CAR WRECK SCENE DURING AUTO RACE. MOOD MUSIC IS HEARD FROM AN UNSEEN RECORD PLAYER. CAMERA PANS BACK ACROSS ROOM, ZOOMS INTO TWO MIRRORS WHICH ARE ARRANGED TO PRESENT A SPLIT IMAGE VIEW OF A WOMAN ON THE LEFT SIDE AND A MAN ON THE RIGHT. ON THE WOMAN'S SIDE IS A CANDLEABRA AND A TICKING CHIME CLOCK. SHE IS APPLYING MAKE-UP TO HER FACE AND BRUSHING HER HAIR. THE MAN, WHOSE SIDE CONTAINS NO PROPS, TRIES TO GET HER ATTENTION.

Man: What's on TV? Is that body-building show on?... Sorry. (Coughs)

Woman: I saw this show at the Pompidou in Paris...

M: When was that?

W: It was a bedroom. Two couples...I mean, a couple lived there. And there were his things and her things. And everywhere was his mess and her mess and total...lack of communication. It was...

M: uhh...

THE MAN MOVES HIS HEAD TRYING TO GET INTO THE WOMAN'S VIDEO-SPACE.

W: She had slippers, you know, and romantic magazines. And you know on one half of the room the radio was on playing a symphony...

M: yeah...

W: And then for a while they played...

M: One by one?

W: What?

M: There was no interruption, no overlap?

W: Well, it was repeating over and over again. His things draped here, her stockings...

M: His things and her things in the same room. What was the total effect? What was the impression you were left with?

W: They lived together, but didn't know each other at all. And were very frustrated.

M: hmmm!

W: What kind of exhibit would you make?

M: Well, I would have it all going at once, I guess.

W: What do you mean all going at once?

M: Was it...was it all separate?

W: No, it was all going at once. It was...

THE MUSIC STOPS. THE SOUND OF THE NEEDLE GRATING AT THE END OF THE RECORD CONTINUES A MONOTONOUS BEAT.

M: hmmm!

W: I wonder if I'll be late.

M: umm...turn that way a little bit.

W: umhmmm.

M: Now move this way a little bit, not this way, this way...now turn your head. Now...that's right... now move a little bit, don't move your head but move this way. OK...

BOTH FACES ARE SPLIT IN HALF BY THE MIRRORS' VERTICAL DIVIDING LINE, AND MERGE TO ALMOST FORM ONE FACE ON THE SCREEN.

...I would do an exhibit where there was more...well, there has to be some kind of union.

W: Union? What do you mean union?

M: Well, after all they're living together.

W: Unity and living together...

M: That was a statement on what? on separation?

W: Marriage? Men and women?

M: You think it's just men and women? I suppose so.
At least there's more obvious differences.

W: Male-female dichotomy...

THE SINGLE "FACE" SPLITS INTO TWO, EACH BACK IN THEIR OWN MIRROR. THE WOMAN CONTINUES TO APPLY MAKE-UP.

M: hmmm! What are you doing?

W: Can you see?

M: Yeah...I guess I was...wanted you to talk about it.

W: What does it look like I'm doing to you?

M: I don't think you're doing anything to me, except talking to me and presenting your things...

W: Things?

M: Well you have your candle, you have your mascara, you have your clock. What do I have?
I have my wires.

MAN HOLDS UP CAMERA WIRES.

W: Have you ever thought about wearing make-up?

M: No...No...I never really did!

W: Want to try some?

SHE HANDS THE MAN A MASCARA BRUSH.

W: Are you doing it right?

M: What? What do you mean?

HE APPLYS MASCARA TO HIS CHEEK.

W: It doesn't go on your cheek. Wait a minute...
this is for your cheek.

HANDS HIM A SMALL CONTAINER OF FACIAL "BLUSH."

M: This? What's this for?

HE HOLDS IT UP TO HIS CHEEK, THEN HANDS BOTH OBJECTS BACK.

M: I think these are your things.

W: You can't deal with these, hmm?

M: Well, (laughing)...perhaps...I'd rather do... something else...

W: I'd rather change the record.

THE CAMERA PANS BACK TO THE TELEVISION WHERE A WHEEL HAS JUST SPUN OFF OF A RACING CAR. THE MOOD MUSIC BEGINS AGAIN, OCCASIONALLY DROWNING OUT VOICES.

W: The reason I do this...

M: Is that really the truth?

W: The truth?

M: Or is that what you're telling me?

W: At the moment it's definitely the truth. I mean videotapes can be boring.

M: So you're occupying your half of the videotape with your activities.

W: That's right...I mean what else would you do on tape? Maybe we should read a book.

M: No, you can't, I think...

W: Do you think it's nice to read books while you're on videotape? Make-up's very interesting.

THE CAMERA PANS BACK TO THE MIRROR SET-UP AND ZOOMS INTO THE MIRROR IMAGES.

M: No, I know what you mean. Uh...can you see?

W: Oh, yes, perfectly now, thank you.

M: No, me...I prefer the...natural look. It's hard enough just dealing with my chin.

W: What's with your chin?

M: It grows hair.

A NEW "UPBEAT" SELECTION BEGINS ON THE RECORD. THEY SMILE.

M: Gee.

W: Gee??

M: It's swell music.

W: (laughs) ...words like 'gee' and 'swell'...

M: This is bound to be a little too long.

W: And a little too boring.

M: Sort of like wallpaper.

W: Wallpaper?

M: Really like a...elegante...it reminds me of a brazil contempo piece of furniture...or a set of furniture, perhaps.

W: Is there such a thing as brazil contempo furniture?

M: Maybe a man and a woman are...set themselves up as furniture.

W: Brazil contempo...ooh, look what I did! (applying more cheek shadow)

M: Why don't you tell me to do with my face?

W: Do you want me to do your face?

M: No, just tell me where to move my face.

W: Oh. (disappointed) Move...your...face.

M: That is, if you can take time out.

W: Time out? Let me check the time.

PUSHES OLD-FASHIONED TICKING CLOCK INTO VIEW.

W: Um-hmm. We have a little time.

M: Well, wait a minute.

RUBS MASCARA SPOT FROM CHEEK, WHILE WOMAN WATCHES, APPROVINGLY.

W: That's right.

M: Am I getting the hang of it?

W: It's much better. It looks natural.

MAN'S FACE DISAPPEARS PARTIALLY FROM MIRROR, AS HE MOVES TOWARDS WOMAN.

W: You're almost coming into my screen.

M: You want to make a face?

W: What kind of face?

M: Well, here's my half...

THEY MOVE THEIR FACES BACK AND FORTH TO CREATE VARIOUS COMPOSITE FACES, ENJOYING THE EFFECTS.

W: All right...that's nice...(laughs)...hermaphroditic!

M: I guess I should be made up for this.

W: I'm much prettier this way.

M: Well move in mine a little bit here...oh, it's ugly now!

ORIGINAL MUSIC SELECTION (THESE FOOLISH THINGS (REMIND ME OF YOU)) BEGINS AGAIN ON THE RECORD PLAYER. THE TWO FACES APPEAR ABSORBED IN EACH OTHER, PARTIALLY OFF CAMERA IN THE CENTER BETWEEN THE MIRRORS; THEN EACH MOVE SUDDENLY APART, BACK INTO THEIR OWN MIRROR-SPACES.

W: I think they're playing our song.

CAMERA PANS QUICKLY TO TV, WHERE A BOWLER HAS JUST MADE A STRIKE. WHILE THEY CONTINUE TALKING OFF-CAMERA, THE TELEVISION IMAGE CHANGES TO A MALE AND FEMALE BODYBUILDING DUO WHO ARE POSING FOR AN AUDIENCE. CREDITS FOR THE VIDEOTAPE FOLLOW.

M: Strike!!

W: Great.

M: Well (clearing throat), I'm going to turn the camera off I think for now.

W: Well, we're pretty quiet. You could leave it on and be boring for another half an hour.

M: Maybe we should play this back.

W: And listen to it, and devise some great plan for making it into a great videotape? (mockingly)

M: I don't think it ever will be a great videotape!

W: (laughs) Do you think it's...

M: I think there are some germs of ideas here.

W: There's a lot of germs...maybe some ideas.

M: Probably a good 10 or 15 seconds...

W: Seconds?!

M: ...which could be developed into some solid material.

W: Solid material...we could always leave it the way it is.

M: Does it look like I'm looking at you?

END

"A Television Landscape"

Proposal for a five minute videotape for broadcast in the
WGBH-TV Artists Shorts Series.

Submitted by Vin Grabill

January 10, 1981

Background

I am concerned with the overall infusion of television into our lives. Real landscape becomes television landscape and vice-versa. Human emotional landscapes are part of either and can be turned on and off.

I am involved with the investigation of our cultural/human environment (that I see as a landscape), that is expressed through the television medium (television, stores, banks, computers, security, communications).

I use the television form as a metaphor for our vision. Instead of normal television programming, I introduce real aspects of our environment as if they were the content of different channels and play with the premise that we have the choice to keep them on or turn them off. The television monitor is a window, creating a boundary between inside and outside, real and imaginary. The window can be a mirror or an edge between different spaces and times. It is common for us to experience many levels of our environment at once; the television will serve as a device for switching between and overlapping among changing layers of imagery.

"A Television Landscape"

Script for a five minute videotape

The opening scene is a black and white, grainy image of a man pleading to the camera operator, "Don't leave, please don't leave." The camera operator does not respond and walks towards a door while the man walks backwards trying to impede his progress.

A camera pulls back to reveal that this scene is on a television monitor. As the camera pulls back more, we see that the monitor is standing outdoors, in an isolated winter landscape. The man in the monitor continues his entreaties as the camera pans slowly around the landscape. The voice on the monitor fades as the monitor leaves the frame of the winter landscape image.

As the camera pan continues, a camera-pull back reveals this scene on a monitor that is in an indoor setting. Immediately, the channels are switched several times to reveal short segments of other non-television environments:

- driving a car (looking out the windshield)
- the ascent of a roller coaster car
- a fast-edited collage of magazine models
- people passing through a busy doorway, shot from above
- driving again.

The camera zooms back into the monitor image, the driving scene. A conversation develops between the driver and passenger. The car drives to a place where the camera

looking out the front windshield can slowly zoom in on a monitor that sits on the hood of a car. This monitor image is an indoor scene of a family watching television.

The "outer" camera pulls back to reveal the car windshield shot within an "outer" monitor. Three monitors are now in view and undergo various combinations of channel switching. Many "landscapes" pass through the steady configuration of three monitors within each other's image. Finally, each monitor settles on the same scene of a family watching television, or watching itself watching television. The television monitors click off sequentially.

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