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LONDON GALLERY WEEKEND SCREENING: STEINA VASULKA AND STAN VANDERBEEK

Screening throughout Friday 13 - Sunday 15 May 2022
Supported by LUX

Steina Vasulka
Bad, 1979
SD Video: 2'14''

Steina and Woody Vasulka were among the first to consider the electronic signal as an artistic medium. *Bad* (1979) is a technical exploration of several commands in the Vasulka's Buffer Oriented Digital Device, which controls digital imaging functions such as up/down and right/left movement, as well as the stretching and squeezing of the image. Steina uses her own face as visual material, rhythmically dismantling and reconstructing her self-image.

Bad continues the Vasulka's exploration of sound/image inversion, in which the digital differs from the analogue modulation of waveforms that either become video or audio noise, demonstrating a highly complex image calculation which exceeds the limitations of the machine. Vasulka elucidates: 'The tape starts with the register at Zero and adds One at a preprogrammed speed. For sound, the most active bits are selected, translated through a digital/analogue converter to voltage controlled oscillators ... *Bad* is a play on a computer performance. By a simple command: "add one", the machine scrambles for its pictorial and tonal expressions, succeeding at random.'

Stan VanDerBeek
Poemfield No. 1, 1967
16mm film: 5'00''

A pioneer in the development of experimental film and live-action animation techniques, Stan VanDerBeek achieved widespread recognition in American avant-garde cinema. In the 1960s, VanDerBeek produced theatrical, multimedia pieces and computer animation, often working in collaboration with Bell Telephone Laboratories. VanDerBeek's multimedia experiments included movie murals, projection systems, planetarium events and the exploration of early computer graphics and image-processing systems.

Poemfield No. 1 (1967) is one of a series of eight computer-generated animations by VanDerBeek. Each work is a complex, syncretistic tapestry of geometrical configurations in mosaic patterns. The animations were originally programmed in a language called Beflix, developed by computer scientist and artist Ken Knowlton. These instructions would be applied to an IBM 7094 interfaced with a microfilm recorder which would film a black-and-white image that would be later be colourised, superimposed or otherwise edited – constituting an emphatically material process. These micro-patterns of text and computer animation seem to permeate in a constant process of metamorphosis, reflecting the reciprocity between mind and machine. Each *Poemfield* relates concrete poetry and new media communication, as VanDerBeek says: 'The world hangs by a thread of verbs and nouns.'

Steina Vasulka (b. 1940) is a pioneering video artist who has been producing work since the 1960s. In 1965 she relocated to New York with her husband Woody Vasulka. As a partnership, they began showing video art in the 1970s and founded The Kitchen, a non-profit, avant-garde performance and experimental art institution. It was among the very first American institutions to embrace the emerging fields of video, performance, and cross-disciplinary explorations.

Steina and Woody Vasulka also developed the Center for Media Studies at the State University of New York in Buffalo. Steina Vasulka's own practice includes both video art and performances, often using the violin to create sound and images by manipulating signal through electronic means. Her work has a strong lyrical quality, often most clearly expressed in her series of multi-screen video installations using images of landscapes in Iceland and New Mexico, where she and Woody settled in 1980. She has explored numerous possibilities in video art and electronic media, from documentaries to purely machine-generated art.

Her work has been exhibited at major museums and festivals around the world, including the Whitney Museum, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Berlin Film Festival, and the National Gallery of Art in Reykjavík. Steina became a Guggenheim Fellow in 1976, and in 1997 she represented Iceland at the Biennale di Venezia. In 2014, the Vasulka Chamber, a centre of electronic and digital art in Iceland, was established at the National Gallery of Iceland. The Vasulka Chamber is a collaboration with Steina and Woody Vasulka, and includes a part of the Vasulkas' archive.

Stan VanDerBeek (b. 1927, d. 1984) studied at Cooper Union and Black Mountain College, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Cooper Union in 1972. Among his numerous awards are grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts; and an American Film Institute Independent Filmmaker Award. He was artist-in-residence at WGBH and the University of South Florida, and professor of art at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. His work was the subject of retrospectives at The Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

For press enquiries and further information, please contact: alex@hollybushgardens.co.uk

Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm; or by appointment.