

EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION CENTER LTD.

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A primary goal of the Experimental Television Center since its formation in 1971 has been to serve the fundamental needs of professional, independent videomakers by providing the opportunity to learn the concepts and processes of electronic image control and generation and to then apply this knowledge in the creation of new works. By providing access to video image or processing systems, by providing individualized instruction in their use and by engaging in basic research into the development of tools and systems the Center hopes to expand the language and domain of video imaging.

Video currently encompasses many different approaches stylistically and conceptually; a thoughtful dialogue concerning this must be encouraged. Artists working in video adopt many different stylistic approaches, as do artists working in film or the other arts. The area of electronic imaging or processing is perhaps the least well understood of the areas in which videomakers work. Much of the language used to communicate ideas derives from the sciences; a commonly understood vocabulary to refer to and define image elements, their origins and structures has just begun to develop. The internal compositional structures of the works, growing out of the traditions of the contemporary arts, electronic music, independent film, painting, sculpture and photography, are defining a new involvement and experience in image making. The aesthetics of this form may derive from the processes of understanding systems architecture, the processes of making and the electronically generated spatial and temporal elements of the works themselves. References to documentary, narrative, conceptual and processual frameworks are contextually reformulated in this area of video. The artists are engaged in the study of the physicality of video, the generation and control of the image and those qualities of texture, color and light which are uniquely present in video.

The electronic tools of the art range from basic image collection systems such as portapacks to image generation and control systems, encompassing analog and digital synthesizers, processors and computers. Many of these systems are not available on the commercial market, and some are still in the developmental stages. Artists working with the electronic image are facing problems analogous to those faced by electronic musicians and composers; the art-making tools must be first invented and carefully studied before the artist can employ the tools intelligently and intentionally.

As is the case with much of contemporary painting, music and film, the works are distributed through other than conventional commercial channels; tapes are often presented in museums and galleries or through cable or other closed circuit viewing systems. In some cases, broadcast television as a means of distribution for these works has been appropriate and successful. Videomakers working at the Center are exploring television as a material with which to make and define art. Importantly, the criteria of mass distribution as an indication of value or worth of the work must be approached

with caution.

It is with these briefly outlined concerns in mind that the Center has structured its programs in the coming year to emphasize the continued development of image processing systems in conjunction with the publication of the results of research conducted over the last several years as well as the continuation of the production program for artists. The instruction and exhibition programs which include workshops, exhibitions and the tape archive will assume a secondary order of emphasis. The Center will continue to function as an umbrella organization for independent artists by assisting in the development of projects and proposals concerning the electronic image.

The research program at the Center has resulted in the design and construction of processing and control systems, among them the Jones Four Channel colorizer, keyers, switching matrix, spatial and intensity digitizer, analog control system and a microprocessor interface to these voltage controlled systems. The importance of the pure research to the continued development of the art is implicit; the tools resulting from the research have been integrated into the artist production program. The Center, in the coming year, intends to broaden the numbers of people benefiting from this program by publishing the results of the research in a series of pamphlets which document the theory of operation and the specifics of construction of certain of these components. It is believed that the distribution of this information will provide an avenue by which arts and educational institutions and artists themselves can begin to develop highly flexible and responsive imaging systems.

It is also clear that although the ideal model is probably the personal ownership of these art-making tools by individual artists, in the traditions of most of the arts, this is not currently feasible because the systems are not readily available or the costs preclude individual ownership. The production program at the Center, which makes available these electronic imaging systems to artists, is still clearly required by these artists in order to continue working in this area of video. As one of the only organizations which is able to provide and develop these systems, the Center plays a critical role in the continued growth of video as an electronic art, evidenced in the past year alone through the works of artists such as Barbara Buckner, Shalom Gorewitz, Walter Wright, Peer Bode and others; since the artist production program was developed in 1971 it has been utilized by hundreds of artists from the United States, among them Nam June Paik, Aldo Tambellini, Tom DeWitt, Gary Hill, Jackson MacLow and Shigeo Kubota, as well as artists from Canada, Japan and Australia, and has served as a model for the development of similar programs in the United States, South America and Europe.

The exhibition and distribution of works produced at the Center are undertaken by each individual artist, and, acknowledging the difficulties of maintaining records of audience sizes, it is known that thousands of people each year view works produced here, through broadcast, cablecast and closed-circuit exhibition channels. Further, works produced at the Center several years ago are still being exhibited and distributed; last year tapes were shown in Canada, West Germany, Japan and Sweden as well as in the United States, in festivals such as Documenta and the Swedish Film Festival and

in galleries such as the Kitchen, Anthology Film Archives, the Everson Museum and the Museum of Modern Art.

The workshop program provides, in part, a public service to arts, educational and other not-for-profit organizations in Broome and surrounding counties. Because of the large increase in the purchase of small-format video systems by organizations for the purpose of producing informational or documentary materials, the need for workshops concerning theory and techniques of operation and production is evident. In the last year the Center has conducted workshops specifically designed for local organizations such as the Broome County Red Cross, the Binghamton Head Start program, the Broome County Summer Fun program and Tri Cities Opera.

A second function of the workshop program is to introduce and encourage creative applications of video by organizations throughout New York State who request presentations; these are also tailored to meet the individual requirements and address specific questions posed by the organization. The Center participated in the state-wide Dance Festival sponsored by the University Wide Committee on the Arts and hosted this year by State University of New York at Brockport, presenting a three day series of workshops for dancers encouraging the full integration of video within dance performance.

A third function of the workshop program is to provide a means whereby artists from Broome and surrounding counties with an interest in video as an art may receive instruction and limited use of the image processing systems within the workshop; participation provides these artists with the knowledge necessary to take part in the production program. This program helps to broaden the aesthetic and philosophical bases of video by encouraging artists from other visual, performing and literary arts.

The exhibition series held at the Center provides a forum for the presentation of video works, tapes, installations and performances, to the local community. This year the series 'Video by Videomakers' presented fourteen separate programs with an average attendance of twenty five people; the only video exhibition program in the county, it is also frequently attended by individuals from the surrounding counties. The series serves to introduce the variety of approaches to video and provides the opportunity for interchange among artists from throughout the State, the local arts community and the interested public.

The Center's programs, in particular the production program and the research and development program, are designed to be highly flexible and responsive to the individual requirements of independent artists working in the field of electronic imaging and have made significant contributions, visible in the body of tapes produced by independent videomakers and in the electronic image systems designed and constructed to permit the construction of new images and a greater refinement in control of compositional elements.

The Center intends to study, in the coming year, the establishment of an alliance or consortium of artists working in this area of video, with similar concerns and commitments, for the purposes of better articulating and communicating the intentions of the artists and the art. As an umbrella organization the Center can help videomakers to secure the necessary support for arts projects. These artists, along with the board of directors, will also

serve as a means of generating support for the programs which assist them in the making and showing of their art, contribute to the development of the field and facilitate the recognition and understanding of this area by the larger community.

Without significant support for independent video production facilities such as the Center the continued development of video, particularly electronic imaging, is jeopardized. Without support only those individual artists with the substantial resources necessary to purchase the few imaging systems now available or to support the design and construction of equipment or those whose work is intended for and appropriate to broadcast distribution will still be able to produce and exhibit. A philosophical and financial commitment to video as art must be made to insure the vitality and availability only a diverse and cross-disciplinary program can provide.

The Center's programs evidence a respect for the art and the artist and invites a broadly-based participation by artists from many art traditions. It requires a commitment to the learning/making process. Offered to the artist is a place to assimilate the necessary information regarding the technical craft of electronic image making as well as a place to construct these images, to structure and resolve, to analyze and discard, to explore and to make; the process is the same in any art, and to facilitate this process the programs and the organization must be committed to art and to the process of growth and learning.