INDEPENDENT VIDEO: THE FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIDEO as an artistic medium has occurred over a relatively short period of time. When artists began using video in the mid ’60s, it was a period of wide experimentation—the Pop Art of Andy Warhol and Tom Wesselmann, the Happenings of Robert Rauschenberg and Allan Kaprow, and the New York Fluxus events of George Maciunas and Nam June Paik—generated by intuition and spontaneity, rather than logic or reason. Video art was initiated largely by small artists’ collectives scattered across the United States, as a form of political and esthetic opposition to commercial television genres and to the more traditional art forms.

During the ’70s the nature of video activity changed, along with work in other mediums. Some artists explored alternatives to the formal exhibition space in the creation of environmental and land art works, generally conceptualized in response to a particular situation or setting. At the same time, video installations were being designed for specific spaces and audio and video equipment was being used to explore temporal and spatial
relationships, often involving time delays and viewer participation. While performance art continued, video art was employed by many artists to create personal, autobiographical or narrative pieces, in addition to conceptual works. There was extensive activity with the building and exploration of color image processors, which included synthesizers and computers. Esthetically much of this abstract work never surpassed the visual effects already achieved by two-dimensional, printed graphics.

Given the immediate-replay capacity of video and the relative portability of the camera, the medium is well-suited to documentation. Video documentaries have been made from the beginning and continue to be the most accessible of the independently produced works. The video documentary will survive beyond the ’80s, most likely through commercial, cable, and public television. More artists will be looking towards television and the home market as an outlet for their work. In so doing, they will have to adapt more to the visual vocabulary of commercial television. Others are already exploring the potential of the record industry’s entry into video disc sales. The current emphasis on narrative painting is paralleled in video by a renewed interest in the narrative form, perhaps the oldest television and film genre. However, not all artists will look to television as an outlet for their videotapes—the artists producing the more reflective work will continue to seek a more specialized audience.

From the beginning, there has been great diversity in video art. Because video has been consistently related to the other disciplines (painting, sculpture, photography, film, music, and literature), video genres and their terminology have tended to evolve from these traditional forms. Thus video works have been categorized as conceptual or idea-oriented, perceptual, narrative, autobiographical, performance, graphic, or documentary. While
today these categories are not necessarily appropriate or even adequate, they will be used until they are replaced by terms more specifically suited to the medium. This article covers the broad-based development of video as an art activity.

Over the last 30 years, video technology has evolved in response to commercial and industrial needs. From its start as the strict purview of television and industry, video production equipment has been developed and refined by different international companies (often, unfortunately, with non-interchangeable parts). In the ’60s, video manufacturers began concentrating on the home market, and in 1965 the Sony Corporation introduced the first, moderately-priced portable video camera and recording system. The history of video art began in the United States when Korean-born Fluxus artist Nam June Paik purchased one of these cameras, and exhibited his video experiments in New York at the Bonino Gallery and in Charlotte Moorman’s Third Avant-Garde Festival. With the portable video camera, artists, for the first time, could autonomously produce their own small-format, personalized video images—independent of broadcast television. The simultaneous development of cable television and satellite broadcasting expanded the possibilities even further, leading many artists to think that the world might quickly become a global village. During the last years of the Vietnam War when there was extensive radical political activity in the United States, the government mandated “public access” cable television channels. Across the US, independent video collectives formed, made up of people committed to technology and change. Existing in some cases for only a few years, these groups had such names as Ant Farm, Promedia, the Videofreex, Land Truth Circus, and TVTV. Unfortunately, the cable dream developed more slowly and more restrictively than had been
anticipated, so the earliest planning by artists was at least ten years ahead of its time.

During the late ’60s, technical information about both the ever-changing portable video equipment industry and the satellite and cable television industries was generally unavailable to artists interested in video. In 1970, Phyllis Gershuny, Beryl Korol, Ira Schneider, and Michael Shamberg formed the magazine *Radical Software* to disseminate information about equipment, and to provide an outlet for the ideas of groups and individuals working with video in isolated areas. For several years, this New York–based magazine was a focal point for many artists.⁵

By 1970, video had received its “official” recognition as an artistic medium through several important exhibitions. In 1968, “The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age” at The Museum of Modern Art in New York included Nam June Paik’s videotape loops *McLuhan Caged, Nixon Tape,* and *Lindsay Tape.* Because only commercial television stations could afford color cameras, artists had been attempting to generate color images from their black-and-white videotapes. In the 1968 exhibition “Television as a Creative Medium” at Howard Wise’s kinetic art gallery in New York, Eric Siegel presented his *Psychedelevision in Color,* the first color tapes made from black-and-white tapes processed through the artist’s specially constructed synthesizer. The same exhibition included Thomas Tadlock’s *Archetron,* in which kaleidoscopic patterns were composed of separate images taken from three black-and-white cameras focused on three television sets. Ira Schneider and Frank Gillette created a nine-monitor installation system that had three- six- and nine-second delays of imagery that was simultaneously being recorded in the gallery space.⁶ Paul Ryan presented a Mobius strip videotape booth in which viewers were confronted
by recordings of their own images, which were subsequently erased. The 1970 exhibition “Vision and Television” at the Rose Art Museum in Waltham, Massachusetts, brought together the work of 14 artists and the Videofreex group Ted Kraynik devised a six-monitor bank with a light panel; Les Levine presented videotapes of himself with adjacent prints of the same images photographed off the monitor. Also during the show, Charlotte Moorman gave a performance, wearing the TV Bra sculpture that Nam June Paik had designed for her.

What had previously been viewed as bizarre experimentation was given formal recognition when, in 1970, the newly-formed New York State Council on the Arts initiated a funding category for video art. At the start, the Council chose to assist a large number of artists by funding new production centers and exhibition spaces. State monies with National Endowment for the Arts grants then went to establish media centers, artist-run facilities where independent artists could gain access to video hardware. In New York City, Global Village, Young Filmmakers/Video Arts, and Electronic Arts Intermix were among the first of this kind. In California, Video Free America in San Francisco and Media Access Center in Menlo Park were formed at the same time.

The rise of “alternative spaces,” new contemporary art programs, cable and public television, and a strong foundation commitment to supporting art archives all contributed to further video stabilization. In New York City, the Electronic Kitchen in the Mercer Arts Center was founded in 1971 by artists Steina and Woody Vasulka for the presentation of multi-media video, music, and performance events. In Seattle, “and/or,” was established; in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA); and in San Francisco, La Mamelle; all in 1974. These and other places developed
regular video screening programs which have continued to serve as important testing ground for experimental, multi-media works. Gradually a number of foundations (Rockefeller, Ford, Markle, Jerome, and the JDR III Fund) became involved in funding independent video activity, partly in response to Public Television’s interest in video art. Several stations received major support from these foundations, and from federal and state agencies, to enable a limited number of artists to work with broadcast quality equipment and engineers. Artists’ programs were begun at WGBH-TV in Boston; at KQED-TV in San Francisco; and at WNET-TV in New York. In the early ’70s, independently produced artists’ videotapes were broadcast by public television stations irregularly and late at night, when they did not have to be concerned with viewer ratings. However, once the stations began receiving larger grants to supplement the artists’ in-house tapes with outside material, they created series formats, such as “Artists’ Showcase” at WGBH and “Video and Television Review” at WNET. It was then that producers had to consider audience size. The short, independent video series requires a large advertising budget, due to the granting agencies’ stipulations for high visibility, and to the fact that ratings are directly related to regular airing and promotions.

Made commercially available in 1972, the 3/4-inch video cassette became the first standardized, easy-to-handle format, facilitating the distribution of artists’ tapes to museums, universities, libraries, galleries, collectors, and even television stations. In 1972, Castelli-Sonnabend Videotapes and Films, founded by dealers Leo Castelli and Ileana Sonnabend, began distributing their artists’ tapes. Others followed, including Howard Wise’s Electronic Arts Intermix in 1973, and Anna Canepa’s service in 1975. Providing rentals and sales largely to institutions, these operations have had great difficulty due to the limited market that they serve.
In 1974, Douglas Davis, Fred Barzyk, Gerald O’Grady, and Willard Van Dyke organized the conference, “Open Circuits,” at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. International scholars, curators, artists, writers, and educators were brought together to exchange ideas and cast predictions about the future of television. The conference was held at a significant time, “in the early development of ‘alternative’ work in the medium,” when video activity was expanding internationally. By this time in the US, ongoing video programs and video collections had been initiated at several museums—in 1971 at the Everson Museum in Syracuse; in 1974 at both The Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum in New York; and in 1976 at the Long Beach Museum in California. (There are relatively few private collectors of artists’ video works. During the early ’70s in Los Angeles, Stanley and Elise Grinstein began acquiring videotapes, largely by artists whose works in other mediums they were already collecting. Simultaneously on the East Coast, kinetic art collectors Dave and Ruth Bermant purchased videotapes for themselves, and placed a permanent video installation by David Cort at the Long Ridge Mall in Rochester, New York.) In 1975, the first comprehensive video survey exhibition was organized by Suzanne Delehanty at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. “Video Art” consisted of videotapes and installations by 79 international artists, and travelled to three museums in the United States, as well as to the São Paulo Bienal. Several video festivals were also initiated at this time, including the Documentary Video Festival at Global Village in New York, the Southland Video Anthology at the Long Beach Museum, the Women’s Video Festival in New York, and the Ithaca Video Festival in Ithaca.

Since 1965, cable television has only partially fulfilled the idealistic expectations artists had about gaining access to large audiences. Lanesville
TV, founded by the Videofreex, began originating live weekly programs for the local community in 1971. Several artists, such as Paul Tschinkel and Shalom Gorewitz, purchased time independently on New York’s two “public access” cable channels to present tapes by themselves and others. In New York City, Cable Soho was inaugurated in ’76 with a performance by Douglas Davis live from the Kitchen Center. Cable Soho went on to sponsor the collective cable-casting of other artists’ tapes, and in 1977 became the Artists’ Television Network. Since 1978, it has had a weekly 30-minute cable series, “Soho Television.” As of recently, shorter video and film works are being distributed to “pay cable” television through Independent Cinema Artists and Producers (ICAP).

In the late ’70s, video activity in this country declined slightly. This was only partly due to the recession; some artists were frustrated showing their work repeatedly to the same local, closed audience, while others became discouraged when their videotapes or their larger installation pieces did not sell. After working with portable equipment, some artists wanted to produce technically better images, but could not afford the best cameras and most sophisticated editing facilities. In order to maintain greater control over their own imagery, a number of artists stopped working with video. Peter Campus, for example, is currently working in photography, Joan Jonas is concentrating on performance, and Beryl Korot is developing a linear, temporal kind of painting that is integrated with weaving.

Video, more than other medium, has been criticized for being tedious and self-indulgent. In the early ’70s this was a valid criticism, because the length of many artists’ early ’70s works were dictated by standard videotape length—30 or 60 minutes—which in some cases was much too long. However, as a new medium which needed support. It is significant that video works were
initially accepted both critically and curatorially. But when the novelty of video wore off, many failed to invest their time and attention viewing newer work. In the ’80s, video equipment will be further refined, and as the number of television and museum programs grow, so should an adequate vocabulary that defines video work. Improved, small-format editing systems and lightweight cameras with internal tape-recording devices will be made for the home market, which will allow videomakers to develop images inexpensively with their own equipment. At the same time, the visual differences between imagery produced with small-format and broadcast-standard equipment will be minimized. When more museums assemble collections of both video installations and videotapes, a more comprehensive interpretation of ’70s art activity can be articulated. It is financially possible for a museum to establish a comprehensive video archive—videotapes cost between $250 and $500, and installations cost in the vicinity of $8,000. But before too many videotapes are lost or destroyed, it is the museum’s obligation to protect and maintain these materials for future audiences.

Over the last year, strong and quite diverse video- tapes have been made. Bill Viola, in *Chott ei-Djerid (A Portrait in Light and Heat)* (produced through the TV Lab at WNET/Thirteen), combined spatial and temporal elements to study perception. His subject is the desert mirage seen at close range through a telephoto lens. Viola juxtaposes two radically different environments, the snowy midwestern American plains and the Sahara desert of Tunisia, unifying the horizon line throughout the work. Barbara Buckner’s *Hearts* (produced at the Center for Experimental Television in Owego, NY), integrates synthesized and real imagery. Painterly colors are used to define abstract forms and landscape scenes alternate to the pulsating rhythm of a heartbeat. *She Came to Stay* by Jane Brettschneider is a parodic
study of the narrative genre, based on Simone de Beauvoir’s book of the same title. Brettschneider uses four main characters, including a narrator who is revealed through both photographs and a voice-over that is at odds with the projected text. Dara Birnbaum’s *Pop Pop Video* is a highly-structured statement about television and society. Excerpting sections from prime-time television programs, Birnbaum analyzes television actions, camera techniques, and plot developments, which she then interprets musically.

Because video installations frequently require many pieces of video and audio equipment, and complicated construction, they are costly to produce. Despite financial limitations, strong video installations have been shown at museums in the last year. Mary Lucier’s work *Planet*, commissioned by and shown at the Hudson River Museum, studies a planetarium dome in different seasons, creating a “sense of motion in space” with the repetition of one image on seven monitors installed in an arc on the gallery wall. Frank Gillette’s *Aransas: Axis of Observation*, exhibited at the University Museum at Berkeley, is a study of the rare wildlife in a remote county of southern Texas, presented on six television screens in a circular configuration. John Sanborn’s and Kit Fitzgerald’s *Resound*, shown at the Whitney Museum in New York, is a study of man-made objects such as a hammer and a glass, and the sounds such objects create when in contact with other objects and surfaces.

In the next decade, cable, commercial and public television, and the video disc, will provide a much wider range of choices to the home viewer. While the most innovative video art may not, for still some time, be successful financially, it will have a definite impact on our perception of art in the years to come.
Barbara London has curated the ongoing Video Program at The Museum of Modern Art, New York since 1974, and teaches a course, “Experimentalists in Video” at New York University.

NOTES

1. The term “video” signifies the medium—cameras, videotape recording and editing devices. “Television” is used to signify the industry surrounding the broadcasting and cablecasting of live, videotaped, or film materials during transmission.

2. American television sets have 525 lines, and every 1/15 of a second the scanning process completes two sweeps across alternate sets of lines across the screen. European television has 625 lines, and is not compatible with American units.

3. Charlotte Moorman founded the Avant-Garde Festival in 1963. Since 1965 it has included video. The 15th Festival was held July 20, 1980, at the Passenger Ship Terminal at 12th Avenue and 55th Street in New York. Charlotte Moorman has collaborated with Nam June Paik on many projects since the mid '60s.

4. Videotape that is used with small format portable cameras is generally 1/2 or 3/4-inch wide; stationary broadcast quality cameras use tape 1- or 2-inches wide. Today with digital equipment, videotape editing can be as precise as film editing.

5. Several other magazines followed Willoughby Sharp and Liza Bear founded Avalanche in 1970, a magazine devoted to avant-garde art,


7. John Godfrey, Engineer with WNET-TV, New York, has played an integral role in many videomakers’ work.

8. The “Artists’ Showcase.” WGBH-TV.Boston, which is regularly broadcast on Sunday evenings, has developed a large audience.

9. The smaller format and less expensive Betamax and VHS cassette systems made for the home market became available in 1975. The demand for old movies is considerably greater than the demand for artists’ tapes


11. The Film Department at the Whitney Museum changed its title to the Film and Video Department in 1976.
12. Two major video installation works have been purchased in the last few years. The Centre Pompidou in Paris acquired Dan Graham’s *Present-Continuous Past(s)* in 1975, and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam purchased Nam June Paik’s *TV Buddha* in 1977.

13. Sony Corporation recently announced a single-unit combination video camera and video cassette recorder weighing 4.4 pounds. Called the Video Movie. It will be marketed in 1985. In the meantime, Sony hopes that other producers will agree on standard sizes for similar video-cassette and video-recording units.

14. Transfers made between video and film will also be improved. Later in the decade, when computers are used extensively to create precision images, technically perfected and more reasonably priced video projection systems will make video and film nearly identical.

The development of video as an artistic medium has occurred over a relatively short period of time. When video was first introduced to the public in the mid 1960s, it was a period of intense experimentation—the Pop Art of Andy Warhol and Tom Wesselmann, the Happenings of Robert Rauschenberg and Allan Kaprow, and the Fluxus events of George Maciunas and Nam June Paik—generated by intuition and spontaneity, rather than topic or reason. Video art was initiated largely by small artist collectives scattered across the United States, as a forum of political and esthetic opposition to commercial television genres and to the more traditional art forms. In the beginning, the video activity changed, along with work in other media. Some artists explored abstractions of the formal exhibition space in the creation of environmental and land art works, generally conceptualized in response to a particular situation or setting. At the same time, video installations were being created for specific spaces and audio and video equipment was being used to explore temporal and spatial relationships, often in outlet for their videotapes—the artists producing the more reflective work will continue to seek a more specialized audience. From the beginning, there has been great diversity in video art. Because video has been consistently related to the other disciplines (painting, sculpture, installation, photography), the image changes as video artists’ interests in particular genres and their tendency have tended to evolve from those forms. Thus video works have been categorized as conceptual or idea-oriented, narrative, autobiographical, performance, or documentary. While today these categories are not necessarily appropriate or even adequate, they will be used until they are replaced by terms more specifically suited to the medium. This article covers the broad-based development of video as an art activity.

Over the last 30 years, video technology has evolved in response to commercial and industrial needs. From its start as the strict purview of television and industrial video production equipment, it has been developed and refined by different international companies (often, unfortunately, with non-interchangeable parts). In the 1980s, video manufacturers began concentrating on the home market, and in 1985 Sony Corporation introduced the first, moderately priced portable video camera and recording system. The history of video art began in the United States when Jonas Mekas's Fluxus artist Nam June Paik purchased one of these cameras, and exhibited his video experiments in New York at the Bonnack Gallery and in Charlotte Moorman's Third Avant-Garde Festival. With the portable video camera, artists, for the first time, could autonomously produce their own small-format, personalized video images—indeed, broadcast television. The simultaneous development of cable television and satellite broadcasting expanded the possibilities even further, leading many artists to think that the world might quickly become a global village. During the last years of the Vietnam War, when there was an intense national political activity in the United States, the government mandated “public access” cable television channels. Across the U.S., independent video collectives formed, made up of people committed to technology and change. Existing in some cases for only a few years, these groups had such names as Art Farm, Promedia, the Videofreex, Land Truth Circus, and TVTV. Unfortunately, the cable dream developed more slowly, and more restrictively than had been anticipated, so the earliest planning for artists was at least ten years ahead of its time.

INDEPENDENT VIDEO: THE FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS

Barbara London

During the late 60s, technical information about both the ever-changing portable video equipment industry and the satellite and cable television industries was generally unavailable to artists interested in video. In 1971, Phyllis Gerhartz, Beryl Korot, Ina Schneider, Michael Smilburg formed the magazine Artforum International. As an offshoot of this magazine, they developed an exhibition program that included video art and to provide an outlet for the ideas of groups and individuals working with video in isolated areas. For several years, this New York-based magazine was a focal point for many artists. By 1975, video had received its "official" recognition as an artistic medium through several important exhibitions. In 1968, "The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York included Nam June Paik's videotape loops McLuhan Caged, Noon Tape, and Lindsey Tape. Because only commercial television stations could afford color cameras, artists had to invent new ways to generate color imagery from their black-and-white video output. "Video as a Creative Medium" at Howard Wise's video art gallery in New York, Eric Bentsen presented his Psychokinesis in Color, the first color tapes made from black-and-white tapes processed through the artist's specially constructed synthesizer. The same exhibition included Thomas Radofo's Ascension, in which kaleidoscopic patterns were composed of separate images taken from videotapes of rock concerts, focus on three television sets. Ina Schneider and France Gmelin created a video installation known as "The Video System" that had three, six- and nine-second delays of imagery that was recorded on and broadcast from the gallery space. Paul Ryan presented a Mostly strip video installation in which viewers were confronted by recordings of their own images, which were subsequently erased. The 1970 exhibition "Vision and Television" at the Rose Art Museum in Waltham, Massachusetts, brought together the work of 14 artists and the Videofreex group Ted Kraynek devised a six-monitor bank with a light panel. Les Levine presented videotapes of himself with adjacent prints of the same images photographed off the monitor. Also during the show, Charlotte Moorman gave a performance, wearing the TV Bra sculpture that Nam June Paik had designed for her. What had previously been viewed as bizarre experiment was given formal recognition when, in 1970, the newly-formed New York State Council on the Arts initiated a funding category for video art. At the start, the Council chose to assist a large number of artists by funding new production centers and exhibitions.

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tion spaces. State monies with National Endowment for the Arts grants was to be the first grant to establish media centers, art centers where independent artists could gain access to video hardware. In New York City, Global Village, a non-profit, video production center, was among the first of its kind. In San Francisco, the San Francisco and Media Access Center in Menlo Park was established at the same time. The rise of "alternative spaces," new contemporary art programs, and public television, and a strong foundation commitment to supporting art activities all contributed to further video production. In New York City, the Electronic Kitchen in the Mercer Arts Center was founded in 1971 by artists Stan Van and Woody Vasulka for the presentation of multimedia video, music, and performance events. In Seattle, "and more," was established in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LACMA), and in San Francisco, the San Francisco, in L'Amour in 1974. These and other places developed regular video screening programs which have continued to serve as an important resource for experimental multi-media works. Gradually a number of foundations (Rockefeller, Ford, Marine, Jerome, and the JDRF Fund) became involved in funding independent video activity, partly in response to Public Television's interest in video art. Several stations received major support from these foundations, and from federal and state agencies, to enable a limited number of artists to work with broadcast-quality equipment and engineers. Artists' programs were begun at KOUM-TV in Boston, at KQED-TV in San Francisco, and at WNET-TV in New York. In the early 1970s, independently produced video tapes were broadcast by public television stations regularly and late at night, when they did not have to be concerned with viewer ratings. However, once the stations began to experiment with regular broadcast, the artists' in-house tapes with outside material, they created several series, such as "Artists Showcase" at WNET, "Video and Television Review" at WNET, and "And More." It was then that producers had to consider audience ratings. The short, independent video series required a large advertising budget, due to the granting agencies' high visibility, and the fact that ratings are directly related to regular airing and promotion.

Made commercially available in 1972, the 14-inch video cassette became the first standardized, easy-to-handle format, facilitating the distribution of artists' tapes to museums, universities, libraries, galleries, and even television stations. In 1972, B㈏t-Video, founded by dealers Leo Castelli and Helen Sorokin, began distributing artists' tapes. Others followed, including Howard Wise's Electronic Arts Interim in 1973, and Anna playful's series in 1975. Producers found that sales were limited to those who were interested in the subject matter they developed. In 1974, Douglas Davis, Fred Banyak, Gerald O'Shea, and Wilfrid Van Dyck organized the conference "Inter-Video" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. National scholars, curators, writers, and educators were brought together to exchange ideas and cast predictions about the future of television. The conference was held at a significant time. In the early development of alternative work in the medium, television was expanding internationally. By this time in the U.S., ongoing video programs and video collections had been initiated at several museums, including the Everson Museum in Syracuse, the Everson Museum in Buffalo, the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Whitney Museum in New York. Alice Neel began acquiring video tapes, largely for artists whose works in other mediums they were already collecting. Simultaneously on the East Coast, kinetic art collector Dave and Ruth Bernett purchased videotapes for themselves, and placed a permanent video installation at David Kofsky at the Long Ridge Mill in Rochester, New York. In 1975, the first comprehensive video survey exhibition was organized by Suzanne Delehanty at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. "Video Art," comprised of video tapes and installations by 79 international artists, was received to these museums in the United States, as well as to the São Paulo Bienal. Several video festivals were also initiated at this time, including the Documentary Video Festival at Global Village in New York, the Southland Video Anthology at the Long Beach Museum, the Women's Video Festival in New York, and the Thacka Video Festival in Thacka. Since 1965, cable television has only partially fulfilled the idealistic expectations artists had about gaining access to large audiences. Lanesville TV, founded by the Videofest crew, began originating live weekly programs for the local community in 1977. Several artists, such as Paul Tschinkel and Shalom Gorewitz, purchased time independently on New York's two "public access" cable channels to present tapes by themselves and others. In New York City, the "Soho" television was inaugurated in 1976, with a program of artists' video by Bruce Nauman, and performed by Douglas Davis. The Soho Channel was sponsored by the Kitchen Center. "Soho" television was initiated by Douglas Davis, who was an independent video artist and producer of "Eyebeam." The "Soho" television was a weekly 30-minute cable series, "Soho Television." As of recently, shorter video and film works are being distributed to "pay cable" television through independent cinema artists and producers (ICAP). In the late 1970s, video activity in this country declined slightly. This was only partly due to the recession; some artists were frustrated showing their work repeatedly on the same channel. Videotapes were watched, but could not afford the best cameras and most sophisticated editing facilities. In order to maintain greater control over their own imagery, a number of artists stopped working with video. Peter Campus, for example, is currently working in photography. Joan Jonas is currently developing projects. And Bert Noguchi is developing a linear, temporal kind of painting that is
integrated with sequencing. Video, more than other medium, has been criticized for being tedious and self-indulgent. In the early '70s this was a valid criticism, because the length of many artists' films. '70s works were dictated by standard videotape length - 30 or 60 minutes - which in some cases was much too long. However, as a new medium which needed support, it is significant that video works were initially accepted both critically and financially. But when the novelty of video wore off, many faced to invest their time and attention viewing newer work. In the '80s, video equipment will be further refined, and as the number of television and museum programs grow, so should an adequate vocabulary that defines video work. Improved, small-format editing systems and lightweight cameras with internal tape recording devices will be made for the home market, which will allow videomakers to develop images inexpensively with their own equipment. At the same time, the visual differences between imagery produced with small format and broadcast standard equipment will be minimized. When more museums assemble collections of both video installations and videotapes, a more comprehensive interpretation of the work activity can be articulated. It is financially possible for a museum to establish a comprehensive video archive-installations cost between $250 and $500, and installations cost in the vicinity of $8,000, but for too many videotapes are lost or destroyed, it is the museum's obligation to protect and maintain these materials for future audiences.

Over the last year, strong and quite diverse video tapes have been made. Bill Viola's Chot de Quid (4 Portrait in Light and Heat) (produced through the TV Lab at WNET-Thirteen), combined spatial and temporal elements to study perception. His subject is the desert mirage seen at close range through a telephoto lens. Viola juxtaposes two radically different environments, the snowy midwestern American plains and an urban industrial site, and this disc Moser: The Human Brain, which was filmed at the University of Illinois, is a study of the mind and perception, the record of the actions of a person's brain in the process of thinking. The video disc will provide a much wider range of choices to the home viewer. While the most innovative video art may not, for still some time, reach the home, there is a growing awareness of the potential of video art as a new medium. A new exhibition at the Whitney Museum in New York, a study of man-made objects such as a hammer and a glass, and the sounds such objects create when in contact with other objects and surfaces. In the next decade, cable, commercial and public television, and the video disc, will provide a much wider range of choices to the home viewer. While the most innovative video art may not, for still some time, reach the home, there is a growing awareness of the potential of video art as a new medium.

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