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**ON
VIDEO**



Text and Commentary

Davidson Gigliotti

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Beryl Korot

Leo Castelli Gallery — 420 West
B'way,
March 5 - 26

The word *text* is derived from the Latin *texere*, the verb to *weave*, through Old French and Middle English *texte*; although *Text and Commentary* is essentially a video work, the video portion is to be regarded as a commentary on five woven hangings, the *text* in the title of this five channel work by Beryl Korot.

The five hangings are about two feet wide by four and a half feet high, suspended from a horizontal wooden pole at a level conducive to easy inspection. They are the first objects that meet the eye as one enters the exhibition space. They are deceptively simple looking, made of linen and wool in natural colors. They appear to consist of various light and dark horizontal bands, whose widths seem to be multiples of about three inches. At coinciding horizontal intervals there are bare warp

areas with the warp threads tied together in bundles.

The hangings themselves are derived from a set of five drawings which are mounted on the right hand wall as you walk into the room. On each of them a grid has been drawn in pencil, not unlike graph paper, each line representing a warp or weft thread. Encoded into these drawings are the master patterns for the hangings; they are the programs, so to speak.

Mounted opposite to the door is another series of drawings, on blue graph paper—also five in number. Each one of these drawings has two groups of five vertical bands, each one representing graphically the temporal and linear structure and content of one of the five videotapes. Each increment of the graph paper is the equivalent of one second of videotape, and each group of five bands represents three minutes of program time, six minutes per drawing. Each band, analogous to a tape, is divided into 10, 12, and 15 second passages. Each is assigned a graphic character that is a shorthand form of the contents and composition of the frame. Many video artists use some form of video notation of their own devis-

Beryl Korot: detail of five channel video portion

ing as a useful way of dealing structurally with a medium which can really only be seen one frame at a time. Korot's characters have an Egyptian hieroglyphic quality, sometimes showing movement by the use of arrows, demonstrating certain aspects of the piece that might not be apparent from a simple viewing: a commentary on the commentary. It shows, for example, the warp and weft nature of the five channel piece, using intervals of time instead of intervals of space to create a complicated tapestry of images pertaining to the production and organization of the woven hangings.

Behind the hangings, on the west wall of the room, is the videoinstallation itself. It is mounted behind a temporary white painted wall, with five cutouts at a short horizontal intervals for the monitor screens. The screens are all you see. The decks, cables, and all are concealed. Each screen displays a different program, and all five are meant to be viewed simultaneously. The short visual passages are connected to each other by soundless black segments, each a second long. The images are uncomplicated, containing just the right proportions of scale and detail to make optimum use of the peculiarities of the black and white video image.

The subject of the program is the preparation of the loom, and the weaving and inspection of the five hanging textiles.

Except for the view of the treadles and the plan view, the weaving events all occur before our eyes as though we were doing the weaving. The patterns begin to claim our attention as loom and weaver settle into their routine. It is extremely complicated. We refer to the text for verification. The pattern is smaller in the text than it appears on the screen. It is complicated as the devil; the grid with a vengeance. Each complication is logically derived from the previous one, however. There aren't supposed to be any accidents in weaving, so we must assume that this is the weaver's intention.

This piece is not for the casual viewer. It rewards attention and should be seen several times from the beginning. The drawings and textiles should be carefully studied. As the viewer's awareness grows, the piece becomes extremely satisfying; elegant, in fact, like the ancient craft of weaving itself.

As we watch our last sequences, the patterns begin to move. It is as though our eyes were moving over them, first from left to right, as though we were checking for errors, revealing complexity after complexity. Then it moves from right to left, first one, then another, then all of them. Now from top to bottom, all closeups with hardly any depth of field, just enough. The patterns pass before our eyes, like our lives at the moment of death—when all is revealed. ●