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VIDEO EMERGES AS A FINE ARTS MOVEMENT

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Five television screens. On each runs a continuous image of weaving: linen and wool fibers; a loom manipulated by hands and feet; the designs made by the fibers as they are woven into fabrics. The half-hour videotape by Beryl Korot, in the film and video gallery at the Whitney Museum of American Art (through Sunday) is a complex work called "Text and Commentary," which explores visual patterns as they are made by both the loom and the television screen.

It hasn't exactly the audience appeal of "Dallas," but then the point of video - as opposed to commercial television - is not to sell cars and deodorants. A fine-art medium, as painting and sculpture are, video was born in the late 1960's, when artists began to use portable equipment, color-image processors and other tools of the commercially developed television technology. The resulting video "movement" has so far produced work of great diversity, ranging from "abstract" pieces to penetrating documentaries on social issues.

In a medium geared to fast-paced moving images, say some critics, many videomakers are evoking snores from their viewers. Yet video's champions point out that by its very nature art in other media is often inaccessible, and viewers of conventional television should not expect the same "entertainment" components when the screen is used as an artist's medium. But there does seem to be a tendency for younger videomakers to think of wider audiences.

"More videomakers are talking about reaching a broader public," says Barbara London, curator of the video program at the Museum of Modern Art. And she goes on to suggest that in the 1980's, the refinement of video equipment, as well as the accessibility of video in the home via cable, public and commercial television, will lead to more audience interest and help develop a body of criticism.

Tom Bowes, video director of the Kitchen Center for Video and Music in SoHo, agrees that videomakers are putting emphasis on "broadcast quality," with a "strong movement toward narrative, using real life and fictional situations." As for the public, comments John Hanhardt, curator of film and video at the Whitney Museum, it is finding that video "is easier to deal with because we're becoming more familiar with it."

In general, video presentations divide into "art" video, whose primary intent is esthetic, and documentary video, a factual record. Many videotapes combine something of both, however, such as Barbara McCullough's "Shopping Bag Spirits and Freeway Fetishes," a study of ritual in the work of some black artists, part of the current "Minority Festival" at Global Village, the documentary video center in SoHo. A further difference is between video intended for broadcast television and that made for gallery viewing only. Tapes made for broadcast are usually designed for a single screen, or "monitor," while those for museums or galleries, such as Beryl Korot's "Text and Commentary" at the Whitney, are often multiple-screen "installations," enhanced by audience feedback, additional audio material and such added visual material as photographs.

Video shows and installations can often be found in galleries. Last spring, for example, the Ronald Feldman Gallery, 33 East 74th Street, showed "Left, Right, Center" by Douglas Davis, a two-monitor installation, in which the artist staged a video debate with the left and right sides of his brain. Through tomorrow, the Leo Castelli Gallery, 420 West Broadway, is showing "American Architecture Now," a marathon series of videotape interviews with architects by Barbaralee Diamonstein. And the Donnell Library Center, 20 West 53d Street, not only houses a viewing collection of more than 300 tapes, but also sponsors video events (Monday at 6 P.M. the Off Broadway director Richard Forman will be present for the screening of his 28-minute "City Archives"). But for video watchers who want intensive exposure, there are more specialized viewing facilities. Here's a brief rundown:

Museum of Modern Art

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53d Street, began its video program in 1974. The Modern presents single-monitor tapes and installations regularly in its small auditorium gallery and occasionally in other galleries. There is also a fall lecture series, "Video Viewpoints," in which independent videomakers show and discuss their work. The museum's new facilities, still in construction, will offer better viewing space, large-screen video projectors in two new auditoriums and more video presentations in other galleries. The museum's current installation (through

Jan. 13) is "Two Viewing Rooms" by Dan Graham, in which the responses of audiences in adjoining rooms are monitored by closed-circuit video and mirror images.

Whitney Museum

The Whitney Museum, Madison Avenue at 75th Street, added video regularly in 1975. Now, during a 40-week season that alternates between film and video, programs are shown in a comfortable viewing room on the second floor, flexibly equipped for all kinds of electronic installations. Presentations also take place in other galleries; in 1982 the entire fourth floor will be devoted to a retrospective of work by the video veteran Nam June Paik, and the Whitney Biennial, which starts next February, will have film and video installations by more than 30 artists. Through Sunday, the museum is showing Miss Korot's "Text and Commentary," the second program in a two-part Korot retrospective that celebrates her use of multimonitor screens.

The Kitchen

The Kitchen Center for Video and Music, 484 Broome Street, was founded in 1971 by the artists Steina and Woody Vasulka for the presentation of video, performances and musical events. The Kitchen quickly established a reputation as a place for far-out work. Video installations are often shown in the main gallery, regular programs in a small viewing room, from 11 A.M. to 6 P.M., Tuesdays through Saturdays, and three Sundays a month at 8:30 P.M. One current attraction is Mike Glier's "Training for Leisure" (next Tuesday to Jan. 3), a gallery installation of videotapes, slides, sound and a double bed with black light effects. Another is "Electronic Image Processing" (in the viewing room all this month), a series of works by well-known videomakers selected by Shalom Gorewitz.

Global Village

Global Village, 454 Broome Street, is the center in New York for documentary video. It began in 1969, when John Reilly and Rudi Stern, filmmakers, sought a place to show their video documentaries. Now directed by Mr. Reilly and Julie Gustafson, Global Village produces documentaries for public broadcasting, offers workshops and an internship program and has a weekly viewing schedule. The Village is presenting its second annual "Minority Festival" (through Dec. 13). Work by black video and filmmakers will be screened today and tomorrow, beginning at 7:30 P.M.; by Asian-Americans next Friday and Saturday at 7:30. The Village is also planning its seventh spring video and television documentary festival, with a January 1981 deadline for submissions. For further information, call Irving Vincent at 966-7526.

Anthology Film Archives

Anthology Film Archives, 80 Wooster Street, was set up in 1970 as a center for the study and presentation of film art. It has a strong video schedule, begun in 1975 by the videomaker Shigeko Kubota, still curator, with exhibitions, cablecasts and events by independent videomakers, who are usually present to discuss their work. There are also seminars and lectures and regular screenings (Saturdays from 2 to 4 P.M.) in a ground-floor theater that boasts a large Advent screen, as well as a monitor. Now playing is "Video Art Review Series" (with Electronic Arts Intermix, a distribution and editing facility), 30 programs running through June. Next year, Anthology hopes to move to new quarters in a former courthouse at Second Avenue and Second Street. Plans call for equipment for live cable-television programs, a separate video theater, space for long-term video installations and a multipurpose theater.

Downtown Center

In its ramshackle but well-equipped second-floor loft at 87 Lafayette Street in Chinatown, the Downtown Community Television Center has both production and viewing facilities for the burgeoning phenomenon of "community" video. "We feel a commitment to give more exposure to the work of community people - many who've turned to video because they can't afford film," explains Tami Gold, a video producer and teacher at the center. "They put out thousands of informative and innovative programs that all too often are never seen outside the neighborhoods where they were produced." The center, which functions also as a laboratory workshop, got started a decade ago when its directors, John Alpert and Keiko Tsuno, began doing tapes in Chinatown. Now it's staging a "Perspectives in Community Video" festival, a juried selection of 40 tapes from all over the country on such topics as the elderly, abortion, city living and housing. Screenings are on Fridays and Saturdays (through Dec. 13) at 1 P.M. and 8 P.M. Information: 966-4510.

P.S. 1

Video, once an occasionally seen orphan at P.S. 1, that beehive of a former Queens school building run by the Institute for Art and Urban Resources at 46-01 21st Street in Long Island City, is taking on more importance. This weekend, in the first-floor hallway of its main exhibition gallery, P.S. 1 begins a program of video installations and single-monitor showings, on view 1 to 6 P.M., Thursdays through Sundays. The opening show (through Jan. 25) is by Dan Graham, who is also showing at the Modern. Mr. Graham offers drawn and videotape proposals for video in public and architectural spaces.

And good viewing to you.