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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DEFINITION AND APPLIED EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR PSYCHO-NARRATIVE VIDEO ART

THESIS

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By

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This thesis is concerned with three problems. The first is that of distinguishing and defining one category of video art. The second is developing criteria for the evaluation of works in this category. The third problem is the application of these criteria to a new psycho-narrative video art piece created by the author as well as two pieces by other artists.

This paper examines the use of film and video as an art form, focusing on specific influences affecting the evolution of psycho-narrative video art. Definitions for video art and psycho-narrative video art are developed. Descriptive criteria and three critiques are used to justify the conclusions. A concluding artist statement presents the personal view of the author.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancement has often inspired the artist as has the existence of different media with which he/she could express his/her artistic message. Artists during the early 1900's created exciting paintings and diagrammatic art works depicting the mechanized advancement of their society. Max Weber, Morton L. Schamberg, Francis Picabia, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray described an age of machines and momentum. Cubist fracturing led to the Futurists' concentration on the speed and movement of man and machine while Dadaists devised satirical mechanical inventions as a reaction to the negative aspect of mechanized destruction they witnessed during World War I. Alexander Calder continued the passion for movement through his kinetic experiments and introduced mobiles to the public at the same time other artists including Man Ray also were developing the use of kinetic movement in their art. Painting and sculpture were not the only media used to incorporate motion with creative concepts. Viking Eggeling, Hans Richter, Fernand Leger, and Man Ray utilized film as an art medium to represent the mechanical revolution as art while Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd animated the pitfalls of a mechanized society through film comedy.

Movement is still an integral subject of study in the history of art and in the moving image as art. Video now offers electronic techniques for the exploration and manipulation of the moving image and opens new areas for artistic expression through technological understanding. This study intends to examine film and video as a fine art form and explore the subjects that influenced the new genre of psycho-narrative video art. This information will be used to develop the definition of psycho-narrative video art as well as criteria for its evaluation.

Review of Literature

Many general and historical articles have been written on the subject and defense of video art but none have really solved the problem of acknowledging distinct differences within video art or developing criteria for the evaluation of the various forms. Artists have expressed their views on video art and have provided insights into their personal video creations, but they have not offered any theories about what differentiates one piece from another. They have, instead, offered a defense of video art, giving it a respectable position in art history.

Bill Viola (12, pp. 26-35), Nam June Paik in Willoughby Sharp's interview (11, p. 17) and Brice Howard (5, pp. 42-43) offer insights into viewer awareness, acceptance, and understanding of video art in relation to commercial TV and traditional art. The television medium as a tool for artistic

expression and a source of information is generally discussed in American Art of the Twentieth Century by Sam Hunter and John Jacobs (6, pp. 462-496), and Deirdre Boyles' article, "Who's Who in Video: Bill Viola" (1, pp. 22-24).

The Choices of Criticism by William Chase Greene (3) discusses the power and use of criticism, foundations for criticism, the critic's place in society, and the question, "What is Art?", while "Video is Being Invented" by B. Kurtz (8) and Hal Himmelstein's On the Small Screen: New Approaches in Television and Video Criticism (4) give suggestions on approaching television in a critical way.

Many books deal with singular aspects of or combined relationships between narrative play, the horror genre, avant-garde imagery, and psychoanalysis or psychological horror but none relate these elements to video.

"Video Art: Old Wine, New Bottle" by A. Kaprow (7), and Barbara London's "Independent Video: The First Fifteen Years" (9) begin to divide video art into various styles such as conceptual or idea-oriented, perceptual, narrative, autobiographical, performance, graphic, and documentary, and Peter Frank defines one single category in "Auto-Art: Self Indulgent? And How!" (2).

Christy Sophia Park comes closer to a realization of categorized video art criticism in Toward a Theory of Video Art (10) by classifying video art into various groups including electronically manipulated art and linear video art, which

includes fictional works as well as those dealing with narrative content and scripted video tapes. She also expresses the need for further ordering and critical thinking of video art.

While these and other less significant sources yield important information about television, categories of video art, video art in general, psychoanalysis, criticism and narrative form, they fail to successfully consolidate these topics into the critical evaluation of psycho-narrative video art.

Statement of the Problem and Justification

The principal difficulty in any study of video art is that thus far there have been no established standards. The term, video art, itself has been loosely defined, and well described categories of video art have not been established. Since there are so many forms of video art, each one separate and distinct, it is impossible to develop evaluation criteria that would fit all groups of video art. Each division must have its own set of criteria which may or may not include characteristics of other video art forms. Just as there are different schools or "isms" of traditional art, that is, cubism, minimalism, abstract expressionism, and many film styles, such as film noir, melodrama, musical, comedy, there are also varying branches of video art. As with film styles, video art forms often merge together, but a majority of common traits observed within the spectrum of video art enables individual genres to be distinguished and set apart. There are pure works using only

one characteristic of video art such as computer generation, performance video, installation works, narrative and comedy, to name a few, and there are works that join characteristics together to create a new, distinct look in the art works.

This study will define one of these categories, "psycho-narrative video art," and use that definition to develop a list of criteria for the evaluation of works in that form. The category/genre of psycho-narrative video art has been developed by viewing video art works and identifying similar characteristics within them. The information on video art has been obtained through studies in art, film, video art, art criticism, experimental or avant-garde film, film theory and the viewing of video art works created within the last ten years. This definition and criteria will be used for an analysis of a video art work created by the author as well as works by two other video artists whose pieces have used the same criteria.

Since video is becoming more and more popular as a medium for the artist, critical reviews of current video art pieces and trends will greatly benefit the public and the art world. This critical analysis will evaluate developments and offer insights into psycho-narrative video art, and will aid new viewers of video art in making personal evaluations of their own. Because no clear standards exist for the evaluation of psycho-narrative video art, this is a pioneering study in that area.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to (1) define psycho-narrative video art as it is used in this study, and for future artistic reference; (2) to develop and establish criteria for the evaluation of psycho-narrative video art; and (3) to apply these criteria through analyses of three existing works which represent psycho-narrative video art, one of which is a new piece created by the author.

Limitations of the Study

Because of the vast amount of video art produced since 1960, it is not practical to view, categorize, and evaluate all video art works; however, many video art pieces were examined at Anthology Film Archives, Leo Castelli Gallery, The Kitchen, and Electronic Arts Intermix. These organizations, all located in New York City, afforded the writer an opportunity to view the widest variety of video art. Out of the number of videotapes observed, two works available at Electronic Arts Intermix were selected for analysis. These are used as examples of psycho-narrative video art and are compared to the new work by the author.

The original art work by the author examined in this study was limited by the equipment available during the production of the piece. Selected visual equipment used during the production phase was:

1. Video Cameras and Recorders:

   GE color sound camera
   JVC HR-S10U video cassette recorder and TU-S10U tuner/adapter
   GE SE9-9608 VHS movie video one piece camera/recorder

2. Sankyo EM60-XL Silent Super 8 Camera

3. Editing Equipment:

   Two Panasonic NV8500 1/2" editing decks for assembly and insert edits
   JVC JXW9 Special Effects Generator
   Sony XV5000W Color Correction Unit for Colorization

Upon completion of the visual portion of the piece, the audio accompaniment was created by Scott Jacob Loehr, and recorded on a four-track system. An original voice-over by the author was incorporated with the complimentary musical arrangement. This arrangement was composed for a synchronized relationship to the visual information but does not act as a direct reinforcement of the screen image. The artist's intent was to create a synchronized sound track of non-digetic audio.

Because of the selected video, film, and editing equipment, no computer graphics or highly advanced image manipulating techniques were used. The piece, instead, relies on lighting, camera angles, film stock, editing techniques and the special effects available to the artist through the equipment mentioned to acquire the desired result.

Methodology

The procedure followed to solve the problem of this study was:

1. Collection and review of literature on art, video art, criticism, and analysis.

2. Viewing of video art pieces.

3. Definition of the term psycho-narrative video art.

4. Development of common criteria for the evaluation of psycho-narrative video art.

5. Completion of original psycho-narrative video art piece.

6. Application of new information on the original video art work by the author and two selected works by other artists.

7. Utilization of all creative tools and diaries.

A definition and evaluation criteria for video art evolved from the exploration of the literature and the viewing of the selected video art pieces. This definition and criteria were then applied to the author's original art work and other works by artists available through visual art centers in New York City. The criteria for evaluating psycho-narrative video art was developed by identifying traits common to psycho-narrative video art and justified by utilizing past standards and philosophies for evaluating traditional art and film and through the comments made by video artists and traditional art critics and historians.

Prerequisite to the commencement of the piece was the composition of an original script and the start of a production diary. A budget for the art work, scripts and notes, as well as other excerpts from the diary used in the production of the original art work is available by request with the permission of the author.

Definition of Terms

It has already been established that various genres of video art exist. The current problem is to isolate one specific genre and focus completely on it. In order to isolate and define the term psycho-narrative video art, one must comprehend the components making up the term, apply it to the medium of video as art, and distinguish it from other forms of video art.

Psycho-narrative video art are those works that reveal the subconscious thoughts, impressions, and/or emotions of the narrator, artist, or main character through the use of altered, abstracted, manipulated, or implied imagery which relates a story or description of real or imagined events in real or surreal time using the medium of video. The narrative revealing of the subconscious states of the artist or character portrayed in the piece is accomplished through creative devices employed by the artist. These techniques will emphasize a subjective point of view conveying the artist's overall expression, feeling, idea, or mood.

Achronological time and surrealistic images placed in a real time format may be used to evoke feelings of disorientation. The narrative through visual imagery may be more important than the audio narrative. The audio may be digetic or non-digetic but will be synchronized to the tape and will create a relationship between audio and video in the viewer's mind.

The use of other pure categories of video art such as performance, computer generated, and conceptual videos may be incorporated into the work but the majority of imagery/ideas will relate to the definition of psycho-narrative video art as defined in this study and delve into the recesses of the artist's psyche, releasing inner fears, desires, ideas, and emotions placed in a narrative form. A more in-depth study of the development of the term psycho-narrative video art and criteria for its evaluation will be discussed in Chapter III.

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CHAPTER II

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRITICAL ADVANCES INSPIRE CREATIVE ACTIVITY

The Moving Image as Artistic Device

Film has played a significant part in the development of the moving image as a fine art medium. Artists of the early 1900's began experimenting with film as art at the same time commercially oriented filmmakers began crafting the new medium to fit into a money making venture. Lewis Jacobs relates in The Emergence of Film Art that early films simply concentrated on documenting existing forms of entertainment such as plays, but by 1910, technological advances in editing and camera techniques pushed filmmaking to a higher level by focusing on more substantial subject matter and by applying the filmmakers' individuality to the works (13, p. 4). Early commercial cinema battled with plot development and conceptualization while artists probed the medium of film for artistic expression.

Artists were learning film language and this understanding of the new medium led to better film appreciation and the relationships apparent to film and art. Understanding how movement is revealed on film was probably quite effortless to these new media artists because movement has been depicted in

art since the time of the caveman. In The Cinema as Art, Ralph Stephenson and J. R. Debrix (25, p. 125) note that recent filming and successive animation of bison taken from cave walls revealed that continuous motion of the bisons was represented. This single frame film process was also used to animate an acrobat doing a somersault on a Greek vase. Egyptian wall paintings, Chinese scrolls, and even the complex hieroglyphics of Theban tombs can be seen as a representation of movement. Stephenson and Debrix further suggest that futurist painter Giacomo Balla may have been influenced by the cinema when he painted Dynamism of a Dog on Leash in 1907 (24, pp. 125-126). Artists had already begun crafting film as a new medium for artistic expression by this time, however. Magician George Melies transcended his earlier experiment with storytelling and animation in Trip to the Moon in 1902 and Lewis Jacobs, in the opening statement of his article, "George Melies: Artificially Arranged Scenes," maintains that film as an art began with Melies (13, p. 10) but even these creatively successful ventures remained a curiosity.

Cinematic influence on established artists continued in 1912 as Giacomo Balla's Rhythm of the Violinist, Marcel Duchamp's Nude Descending a Staircase, and futurist photographs by Anton Giulio Bragaglia exhibited further studies in movement by artists just as film itself was being elevated from a side show amusement to a serious medium for entertainment and communication.

Cubist painter, Leopold Survage, came close to realizing the first true marriage between art and film with designs for his abstract film Colored Rhythm in 1913, but complications resulting from the production of a film in color forced him to abandon the project which according to Standish D. Lawder in The Cubist Cinema, "discouraged other painters from experimenting with the medium" (15, p. 26). Pure art on film may not have been practical in 1913 but the insistence on merging painting and film was beautifully illustrated by the combined efforts of Austrian artist Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz, a Czech poet whose psychologically disturbing scenario is brought to life through the bizarre painted sets and hypnotizing design in the German expressionistic film masterpiece The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari directed by Robert Wiene in 1919.

Artists and poets continued to experiment and discuss the possibilities in which film could enable them to express their creativity and the avant-garde film movement of the 1920's evolved from the need to vent their creative expression. Early experimental films concentrated on abstract and expressionistic imaging much like the earlier imagery depicted by the cubist, fauve, and futurist movements in art. Berlin produced the abstract filmmaking team of Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling as well as independent filmmaker Walter Ruttmann. Their short studies in movement created visual symphonies of shape and lyrical line enhanced by the added dimension of color which was painstakingly hand painted on each frame of the film.

These films became an extension of the painting process and actually were paintings on film. Fernand Leger, on the other hand, having developed an understanding of film and its vocabulary, used paintings to develop a single theme and create an art film from a preconceived idea, a film that was more or less finished, at least in the mind's eye, before filming actually began. Paintings were created much like storyboards of today and became the guide from which sequences of the film Ballet Mechanique were produced in 1924. The striking similarities between painted form and film imagery can be seen in many of Leger's paintings compared to sequences from Ballet Mechanique. Mechanization and abstraction were the elements the Cubists dealt with and which became the focus of imagery created by Leger and other cubist filmmakers but artists were also experimenting with a kind of surreal narrative form both independently and in collaboration with other artists, poets, and visionaries much like the cubist filmmakers. Artists turned to filmmakers for technical direction just as those knowledgeable in film looked towards artists for creative stimulation and visual scenario. The result of these efforts were usually surreal dances of the imagination creating a feast for both the eyes and the mind. Rene Clair aided Francis Picabia in creating his dadaist vision of Entr'acte in 1924. This film followed the dada attitude described by J. H. Matthews in Surrealism and Film of being "dedicated to devaluating and ultimately destroying all consecrated forms of art" (19, p. 78)

by creating a film full of seemingly unrelated and repulsive or offensive imagery.

While the avant-garde movement, based primarily in France, was dealing with the creative and psychological affects of surreal and unrelated imagery in 1924, the Soviet cinema was perfecting the montage theory of symbolism and message portrayed through a carefully composed and juxtaposed scenario aimed at depicting the most powerful and emotionally direct impact possible. The Battleship Potemkin (1925) illustrates the power of montage through its dynamic cinematography and perfectly calculated pace. Potemkin was a commercial effort using creative cinematic techniques to depict an emotionally charged event much like the powerful social statement expressed in the nightmarish future world revealed in Fritz Lang's commercial 1926 film Metropolis, whereas the films of the avant-garde movement, especially those by the dadaists, such as Entr'acte and Man Ray's frustratingly deceptive L'Etoile de Mer (The Starfish) (1928), were rarely seen outside a small group of film-goers and were intended for esoteric awakening rather than commercial gain. One man who eventually did go on to become a commercially successful filmmaker was Luis Bunuel, a cinematographer who collaborated with the young surreal artist Salvador Dali to create Un Chien Andalou in 1928. Unlike the disorienting scenario of dada films made the same year, Un Chien Andalou contradicts its opening statement of "Nothing in this film symbolizes anything," by creating a

surreal narrative rich in perplexing symbols and imagery. Bunuel and Dali created another surreal film in 1930, but the furor over the attacks on religion and civilized society in the film caused L'age d'or to be banned resulting in Bunuel's abandonment of overtly surreal film treatment although surrealism remained a strong influence in his later films. Though surrealism and the French avant-garde vanished after L'age d'or, Luis Bunuel continued to be an inspiration for artists working in the realm of the moving image as art and can be seen as the inspiration for Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid in their 1943 film Meshes of the Afternoon. P. Adams Sitney maintains that the team of poet Deren and filmmaker Hammid, with inspiration from the French avant-garde, became a major catalyst for the American avant-garde by creating a surreal dream film with no script during a time when American art relied on expressionism and still photography (24, p. 7).

American artists finally acknowledged the creative possibilities of a medium that was, in America, dominated by the epic proportioned efforts of Hollywood moguls. Kenneth Anger grew up in Hollywood but began his avant-garde filmmaking career in 1941 at age eleven by rejecting traditional commercial filmmaking and creating his own psycho-dramas of violence, symbolism, sex, and surreality in his films while still exhibiting a Hollywood persona in his public life. The avant-garde film movement in America had its ebbs and flows and after the initial interest and production of the 1940's there

was a lull in the 50's. While some artist-filmmakers experimented with the lyrical quality of film or created works focusing on pure animation, others continued the exploration of their own dreamscapes and surreal metaphors of the psychodrama. The 1960's introduced the static camera and loop printing techniques as qualities inherent to the structural film. Andy Warhol put paintbrush aside to become totally immersed in the filmmaking scene only to fade just as quickly as a significant filmmaker in 1966 after completing The Chelsea Girls but not before he could establish the theory behind the impact of simplicity in such works as Sleep (1963), which used the loop printing technique to show six shots over a six hour period of a person sleeping, Eat (1963), 45 minutes of a mushroom being eaten, and Empire (1964), eight hours of the Empire State Building. Another contribution to the structural genre of avant-garde film was Michael Snow's 45 minute zoom of a loft in Wavelength (1967). Genres of avant-garde film continued to evolve into the seventies but a new electronic medium was already being developed and was rapidly advancing technologically. Television became the new communicator and one artist in particular was blazing a new trail for the usefulness of video as a fine art medium.

Television Emerges as an Electronic Palette

The advent, popularization, and accessibility of television in this century has created an exceptionally aware, if

not totally appreciative, video-watching society. At the same time that Dada, Cubist, and other avant-garde filmmakers were experimenting with the depiction of action on film as art and commercial artists, including Walt Disney, were delighting theater audiences with humorous animated advertisements and short subjects, the world of broadcast communications was rapidly advancing. In 1946, 8,000 households had a television set; ten years later that number rose dramatically to 34,900,000 television households. People were tuning in to the magical electronic box and artists were observing its range of possibilities. Ernie Kovacs began his intensely creative television career in 1950 using his unique sense of humor while experimenting with the television medium as a tool to create unusual visual effects for his often misunderstood television show while most programs during the 1950's leaned toward more conservative game and variety shows along with the now familiar situation comedy and drama formats. Kovac's originality in using the special qualities inherent to the television medium can be seen as formative steps toward artistic television literacy.

The beginning of video art as a recognizable art form can be traced to the late 1950's when Nam June Paik, the guru of video art, first expressed his interest in video as an art medium in a letter to John Cage (11, p. 5). This interest was realized with Paik's first video art exhibition in 1963 where he created sculpture out of television sets. Sony's introduction

of the first portable one-half inch black and white videotape camera and recorder in 1965 created the catalyst for other artists to become interested in this new electronic palette. Artists began experimenting with video as an art form and developed a better understanding of the video process. By 1969, through two different shows, "The Medium is the Medium," a program of videotapes by six artists, and "TV as a Creative Medium," the first major video art show presented at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York, video as art became a reality.

Film art continued but video offered new ways for artists to express themselves. Getting the artistic message of sound and image on film was costly and time consuming while video possessed the capability of instant replay of both audio and video. Sony's portable camera and recorder made spontaneous shooting possible without the bulkiness of the movie camera and inspired a more personal approach to the video content as the artists pointed the camera inwards and began reflecting intimate feelings and private revelations. Video allowed the artist to create a sense of immediacy through realistic imagery and fast paced editing. Artists working with video had the advantage of expressing their ideas through a medium which, by 1969, had already gained a respectable place in 95% of American homes. Today, video allows the artist to utilize those qualities inherent to video as part of their creative process including movement, light, the lines of the screen, manipulation of the image through retaping, computer enhancement and

other editing devices, the immediacy of the recorded message, the extension and/or condensation of time and space and the intimacy of the medium as used by the artist as well as the one-on-one relationship between the viewer and the monitor. Video art enables the artist to enter the electronic age without sacrificing any creativity and allows him/her to develop new creative ideas as video techniques advances and become more compatible with computers. Video art will continue to evolve as new electronic techniques become available to the artist. Just as television has become a part of today's culture, video art has found a place in the history of art. Video art is not separate from artistic tradition and Bill Viola, in "Video as Art" (26, p. 28), maintains that video art is the latest addition to the "long, long thread of inspiration stretching back through experimental film, photography, painting, sculpture, right to the roots of art history." Barbara London and Lorraine Zippay offer more insight into the history of video art in "A Chronology of Video Activity in the United States: 1965-1980" (16, pp. 42-45), "Independent Video: The First Fifteen Years" (17, pp. 38-41), and "Random Access Information" (16, pp. 46-49).

Video Art Awareness and Criticism

The existence of a video audience is already a reality and the transition of video from being a predominantly commercial medium to one associated with art as well could mean a great deal, not only to the already video-aware public, but to the

fine artist who desires a new medium through which to vent his/her creative drive. Video artist, Bill Viola, reinforces this concept by declaring, "The coming together of art and communications media can have great benefits for us all. It should be encouraged with enthusiasm" (26, p. 35). The acceptance of video in the home can have a profound effect on the public acceptance of video as an art form. John Margolies points out,

> That insidious little box with its super-real image, on the other hand, is accepted into the home situation. It is just there, part of a person's life. It has none of the pretension associated with the art experience (18, p. 50).

While most people fail to acknowledge current trends within the various areas of art because they don't understand the visual message or are unwilling to accept current aesthetic standards and directions of traditional art forms and fresh approaches to the application and employment of media for the purpose of creating art, video art becomes an image immediately recognized because of the television viewers' familiarity with the medium.

In 1974, A. Kaprow still considered TV as art to be experimental (14, pp. 46-49), H. Freed saw video as the "culmination of the frustrations of artists" (8, pp. 67-69), and Hollis Frampton in "The Withering Away of the State of Art" (6, pp. 50-55) compared film and video to art and concluded that video is "susceptible of two approaches: the deliberative, and the improvisational." These attitudes were merely observations and not great critical evaluations. In 1975 the medium was

still too young to evaluate but critics were beginning to look at video art in a more critical way. The vast range of possible statements that could be made by combining language and a visual medium was discussed in a conversation with Bill Gwin by Johanna Branson Gill (9) in September 1975 while David Antin (1) theorized that the length and and boredom experienced while viewing video art was due primarily to peoples' comparing of video art to the fast paced commercialism of television and the fact that most video art used low budget equipment thereby projecting those works into the "Theater of Poverty." Jeff Perrone reiterates that notion in the 1976 article "The Ins and Outs of Video" (22) by stating audience complaints with video art as being "Repetitious. Boring. Static. Badly made. Surely amateur. Technically unaccomplished. Inaudible. Endless. Sloppy." He continues to say that video art borders on pornography because of the self-centered narcissism of the artist using the camera as a mirror (22, p. 54). By 1977 reviews in Artforum and Artnews magazines became regular features but these were merely reviews with no real concentration on critical evaluation.

In 1979 an article by Curtis L. Carter, "Aesthetics, Video Art and Television" (3), seriously considered the need for more in-depth analysis of video art and the need for style differentiation. He noted that different styles are evident in other art forms illustrating this idea by comparing the different styles of dance choreographers but maintained that

while there are broad categories into which video art works could be divided such as those modeled after commercial television, electronically synthesized imagery, and documentaries, there were not yet any distinctive video art styles due primarily to the fact that video artists had not yet mastered the medium (3, p. 292).

Christy Sophia Park, in her 1980 dissertation "Toward a Theory of Video Art" (20) writes that video art criticism is difficult because of the relationships it holds with film, TV, and movements in contemporary art. Existing theories of video art, she feels, rest on the technical aspects of the medium. She states that her dissertation:

> raised issues in the approaches to video art toward the end of creating an ordering of the divergent works in this art form. The purpose of doing this is to develop more criteria for critical thinking and writing about video art and in the process to increase the knowledge, and consequently response to these works (20, p. 111).

She concludes that there are no highly developed theories on video art comparable to major film theories and that her study is a building block from which further studies can be made.

Theorists and critics were beginning to notice the need to develop criteria for video art evaluation while still avoiding the problem of establishing specific genres within video art. Artists themselves were mainly discussing the nature of their own particular works through artist statements or by observing the nature of the medium. These essays can be studied in New Artists Video (2), a critical anthology edited by Gregory

Battcock and including essays by, among others, Mona Da Vinci, Nam June Paik with Charlotte Moorman, and Les Levine, as well as in The New Television: A Public Private Art (5) and Video Art: An Anthology (23) compiled and edited by Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot. Reviews of video art works from 1974-1984 can be studied in Video: A Retrospective (21).

In order to come to terms with the lack of published material on video art criticism it is necessary to go to sources which offer suggestions for the development of television and video criticism as well as art criticism. In The Choices of Criticism (10), William Chase Greene states that the critic is necessary to the artist's growth and the formation of public attitude towards art (10, pp. 4-5). The critic must be aware of the artistic intent and decide how that creative message relates to life as a whole. Video recaptures life in a more or less "real-time" experience whereas in the other more traditional art forms, reality or life can be symbolized. Video becomes reality and it tends to capture or interpret life today. While the organizational lines of painting and sculpture depict movement in time, it is the video piece itself which captures movement in real time even though it may depict a surreal atmosphere. Greene suggests that in criticism one must look for some kind of "order, some question, some expectation, some completion . . ." (10, p. 45). Questions must be raised about the piece in order to evaluate it. Does the art piece satisfy the audience? What sort of order, if any, is depicted in the piece?

Is there a sense of movement, direction, or consistency? Is the work effective and successful in what it is trying to say? These questions may not apply to all categories of video art but one thing is certain: video art should stimulate and draw us into it in some way, it must move us whether it evokes a negative or positive response. Critics must not, however, rely totally on their reaction to a piece, they must analyze the piece and not the response. Greene confers with this by saying "Analysis of the thing rather than of our responses may breed new responses and warmer understanding" (10, p. 137).

David Ross' chapter in On the Small Screen (12) helps to distinguish the differences between television and video art by saying the viewer is programmed to seeing television the way he/she has always watched it--as entertainment and information--and the critic must make the differences clear to the public thus reshaping the way people view television and video art. The chapter on Douglas Davis focuses on the artist as critic and notes the experimental nature of most video art and the relationships between the viewer and the video art piece.

The realization of video as a valid medium to the artist has been established, but in-depth research into the separation and development of distinct video art categories has been lacking. Artists and critics are willing to discuss their own views on the subject but have yet to detail any specific criteria for individual video art genres. The problem with video art categorization lies not in lack of interest but instead in lack of focus.

The Need for Video Art Categorization

Video art appreciation continues to grow through exhibitions, books and articles, and increased awareness of video art on college campuses and museums but, while video art awareness has steadily increased, the fact that video as art is still a new medium has made critics unsure of how to approach the novel imagery created by a predominantly commercial medium. Commercial television is aimed at a large audience for monetary gain whereas video art is aimed at a limited audience for artistic expression with little or no financial gain expected. Critics have not yet undertaken the task of categorizing video art and developing criteria for its analysis as they have for commercial film and television.

Many artists and critics have already grouped video art into a number of broad categories but no one yet has narrowed down or defined specific genres of video art. Instead there are overlapping categories cited by individual observers. Christy Sophia Park (20) describes linear video art which falls into a video fiction category using narrative content or scripted video tapes including satire, fantasy, one gag skit and pseudo-documentary and says it can be confused with commercial television but through the intent of the artist it becomes art. Ingrid Wiegand in "Video Shock" observes this linearity of content by noticing that many "artists are developing the 'video movie,' a more or less narrative kind of videotape" (28, p. 63). The depiction of narrative form on commercial television has a

definite beginning, middle, and end whereas video art is not necessarily bound to those confines of linear thought. The surreal qualities produced through video by the artist may alter the order of the narrative creating a surreal narrative form. Wiegand suggests other categories including documentary form which she notes was one of the first areas of video to be explored; conceptual or performance art which is then taped to become performance video art; multi-channel video using more than one monitor in an installation; and synthesizer video using electronically manipulated imagery. Robin White's "Great Expectations: Artist's TV Guide" (27) suggests four categories of video art as performance video, video sculpture or installation, video painting through computer, and documentary video. Barbara London (17) proposes seven categories of video art: conceptual or idea oriented, perceptual, narrative, performance, graphic, documentary, and autobiographical which relates directly to Peter Frank's category in "Auto-Art: Self-Indulgent? And How!" (7) where he deals with himself working from the inside out using straight or not so straight story-telling techniques. These categories are all valid but they are too broad for any serious analysis. While they do help define differences between the large amount of video art created, they do not focus on particular qualities inherent to one genre. They are categorical observations on the whole area of video art instead of distinct differences with specific criteria for evaluation.

This study combines narrative form with the elements of psychoanalytic thought and film genre influences to create a new, concise genre with specific evaluation criteria in hopes that other specific genres will be recognized within the previously noted broad categories creating the arena for more thorough and direct video art criticism.

Boring, endless, sloppy, and pointless video art will undoubtedly continue to be made and while many beginning video artists will still be forced to use low budget equipment the advancements in the home video industry along with hope for the establishment of reasonably priced editing facilities for video artists by private funders and museums will probably aid in the creation of cleaner video art works. The development of more clearly defined video art categories will surely provide a better understanding and guide for the continuation of quality video art. By providing the artist with positive direction for higher art, technical flaws due to the inaccessibility of professional equipment will be overshadowed by excellence of content giving artists the impetus for the continuation of quality work and the opportunity to advance technically and conceptually in the area of video art.

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CHAPTER III

DEFINITION AND CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PSYCHO-NARRATIVE VIDEO ART

Specific Influences Affect the Development of a Video Genre

Film possesses the ability to evoke physical and psychological responses as well as personal associations in an individual and filmmakers have created works which use this ability to make audiences run the gamut of emotional expression. When Robert Wiene directed The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari in 1919, the ground was already fertile for the growth of subversive thought and new awareness of man's consciousness and his role in society. Wiene created a distorted world of primal fears, confusion, and societal frustration using psychological interpretations of imagery and ideas. German expressionism, exemplified in The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, used angular imagery in both set design and characterization and harsh couplings of light and shadow. The combination of these expressionistic qualities were meant to shock and outrage the naive audiences so that they were forced or compelled to view their world in new ways. Expressionist film reflected a modern world of chaos, alienation, frustration, sexual repression, and misidentification. In 1922, F. W. Murnau's expressionist film Nosferatu was released and again audiences were subjected to

bizarre lighting, angular visions, and subject matter dealing with insanity. These elements played on man's fears and anxieties creating what S. S. Prawer in Caligari's Children specifies as eliciting emotions which "may often be described as 'weird,' 'eerie,' 'ghostly,' or 'uncanny' rather than horrifying" (5, p. 108). These German films revealed the hidden truths of their society. Dr. Caligari, a man obsessed with the notion that under his influence a somnambulist could be persuaded to perform acts which he would otherwise deem unthinkable, evolved from the ideas of the time. In essence, it became the story of the German people manipulated by the power of an overwhelming government, thereby making Cesare, the somnambulist, the symbol of the people and the victim of Caligari, the symbol of the impending power of the government. Siegfried Kracauer, in his book, From Caligari to Hitler (4), theorized this as a premonition of Hitler. The nightmares and evils in Nosferatu reveal the weaknesses of man's conscious mind as opposed to his subconscious fears. German expressionism was capturing the mood of a world embarking on a new level of awareness of man and his environment.

While German expressionism was influencing filmmakers, Sigmund Freud's theory that individuals each possess an unconscious psyche was becoming popular and by 1920, people were striving to obtain a deeper knowledge about themselves making it easier for them to identify and shape their own actions and reactions. The Freudian use of psychoanalysis combines

psychosexual repression with the socioeconomic observations introduced by Marx and "offers a radical critique of the alienated society" (2, p. 42). This opposition of the psychosexual qualities inherent to human nature along with an individual's position in society creates tension and repression as the individual struggles to fit in often becoming alienated and driven to understand the reasons for his action. Post World War I films became tools to expose the sexually repressed society and this neurosis was displayed through the voyeuristic ability of film on the audience. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, directed in 1920 by John S. Robertson, was influenced by Freud and dealt with the unleashing of sexual frustration and the human subconscious allowing the audience to witness another person's anxieties which they silently desired to watch. The insightful vision of German expressionism, Freud's uncovering of psychological and psychosexual frustrations and film's voyeuristic ability on the audience created a suitable arena for artists and filmmakers to venture into controversial and shocking methods of expression. Amos Vogel suggests films' power by stating,

> Subversion in cinema starts when the theater darkens and the screen lights up. For the cinema is a place of magic where psychological and environmental factors combine to create an openness to wonder and suggestion, and unlocking of the unconscious. It is a shrine at which modern rituals rooted in atavistic memories and subconscious desires are acted out in darkness and seclusion from the outer world (7, p. 9).

The element of shock, new awareness about sexuality and the psyche, and rebellious statements against society became dominant themes in works by both artists and commercial filmmakers. Dada artists had already been practicing their revolt against society by taking ordinary objects out of context. These new symbols re-evaluated the society from which they were created and manipulated the everyday experience into nonsense. Unimportant objects were thrust into new importance and the new realities they created changed to suit the artist. Marcel Duchamp's Fountain (1917) was actually a urinal on which he signed "R. Mutt," and Man Ray's 1921, "Gift," was a flat iron with nails affixed to the bottom so that the points protruded outwards. Dada artists Francis Picabia and Rene Clair in their 1924 collaboration, Entr'acte, proved how offensive and shocking a funeral procession, when taken out of context, could be towards the society of the day. By elevating daily fixtures and rituals into art with deliberate shock value, Dada applied significance to the unimportant and became fundamental in the development of surrealism in film.

Surrealism reproduced a subconscious world of dreams and hallucinations to create images of disturbing consciousness and beauty and expressed themes that were cryptic reactions against civilization without the sharp angles and harsh lighting techniques of German expressionism. In 1926, Fritz Lang imagined a dark and uncaring world which pitted the common man against the evils of a bureaucratic nightmare environment

and retained the harshness of German expressionism while introducing the unusual settings of surreality in Metropolis. Two years later, Luis Bunuel collaborated with Salvador Dali to create the "first" surreal film, Un Chien Andalou. Their intention was to make a film in which no segment related to another. This fact of non-narrativity has been disputed because even though familiar objects and events were placed in illogical and unrelated settings, the flow of the film remained intact and signified life's continuing drama. Titles throughout the film such as, "Once Upon a Time," "Eight Years Later," "Around Three in the Morning," and "Sixteen Years Before," do not seem to relate in any significant way to the actions of the characters but suggest and reinforce the surreal ideas of a world of dreams and hallucinations where time has become altered and is no longer necessary for life's drama to continue. In 1930, Bunuel produced another surreal film L'Age d'Or, which combined the same sexual and anti-establishment attitudes of Un Chien Andalou but P. Adams Sitney claims that "Surrealist cinema suddenly disappeared after Bunuel's L'Age d'Or (1930) to re-emerge thirteen years later in America, essentially transformed" (6, p. 229). The American avant-garde did not explore the surrealist dream state introduced by Bunuel and Dali in Un Chien Andalou focusing instead on expressionistic, impressionistic, and realist films until Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid made Meshes of the Afternoon in 1943. Meshes of the Afternoon relates a dream narrative which is played out in the

mind of its character creating a totally internal experience. Maya Deren wrote that the film was concerned "with the interior experiences of an individual. It does not record an event which could be witnessed by other persons" (3, p. 1). Sitney maintains, however, that "Meshes of the Afternoon is not a surrealistic film. It was made possible through a Freudian insight into the processes of the surrealistic filmmakers" (6, p. 14). Deren and Hammid re-introduced the concepts and elements of surrealism, such as the dream state and sexual innuendo, and this representation of personal conflicts, desires, and subconscious emotions, became popular in American avant-garde films of the late 1940's and early 1950's.

Amos Vogel declares that "The three most subversive aesthetic tendencies in our century--surrealism, expressionism, and dada--are anchored in the reality of a civilization in decline" (7, p. 45). One genre overlooked by Vogel as subversive but equally important because of its shock value, depiction of a tormented and sexually repressed and obsessed society, and its dream-like qualities is the genre of horror. The avant-garde in France and America was influenced by the classic horror of German expressionism illustrated in The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari and Nosferatu as well as the psychological horror of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Early horror films were able to effectively combine Freudian thought with subversive attitudes. James Whale utilized the Freudian theory of alienation and the corruption of innocence by an evil society

in Frankenstein (1931) while Fritz Lang combined psychological horror with the expressionistic elements of light, shadow, and angles to depict a society at odds with itself in M (1931). This film created a sense of horror through suggestion and tension rather than blatant visual display much like Carl Dreyer's use of these blended qualities to imply the sexual content of Vampyr (1932), derived from Sheridan La Fanu's lesbian-oriented tale, Carmilla.

Horror is capable of searching the recesses of the human psyche to reveal hidden personalities and desires which reflect the revolt against society's repression and individual frustration through the depiction of bizarre situations with nightmarish results. Sexuality, fused with the previously mentioned subversive elements, has been a recurring theme in horror. Alfred Hitchcock revealed the shocking consequences of a split personality derived from an alienated young man's suppressed sexual desires due to psychological matriarchal dominance in Psycho (1960). Roman Polanski, who had already experimented with surrealism in Two Men and a Wardrobe (1959), used surrealistic images to portray the violent sexual psychosis and mental deterioration of an alienated young woman in Repulsion (1965). The resurrection of expressionism and dada was masterfully blended with surrealism and horror in Eraserhead (1978), by David Lunch who created a bizarre world of psychological confusion, repulsive imagery, sexual frustration, alienation, and self doubt combined with a dada sense

of objectivity. This film stands out as a monumental influence in the development of psycho-narrative vision and its disturbing effect on the viewer.

Video art reflects the society which inspires it and the psychological visions of those who create it. Freudianism was introduced at the same time that the feminist movement was beginning and the two focused on many of the same frustrations but, while these two forces have enlightened society, the repercussions from changing a predominantly patriarchal society before 1920 to a current system striving for sexual equality has created a multitude of confused individuals trying to express themselves while striving for self-knowledge and the acceptance of their lives. Video allows the artist to look inward and explore his/her creative vision through totally personal, often psychoanalytic, processes. The narcissistic nature of video art is merely a reflection of what today's society has instilled in its artists. Alienation remains a predominant factor in the reflection of today's society but video allows artists to divulge inner thoughts and emotions to the public while remaining at a distance and retaining the self-imposed alienation that society has created within them. Psycho-narrative video art becomes an outlet through which Freudianism, the feminist theory of psychoanalysis, and subversive though creative imaginations can be expressed.

Definition of Terms

As currently defined, video encompasses many areas of art including performance, computer graphics, narrative play and animation, to name a few, making its definition difficult. A comprehensive definition of the term would have to encompass all elements that make up what is being labeled video art. The introduction of New Artists Video (1) states that the "question, 'What is video art?' is, perhaps, almost impossible to answer." The following definition was developed so that it would embody all components of work in this medium. Video art: Any creative event or idea recorded on videotape which may incorporate other media to fulfill the artist's intention. By developing a definition broad enough to cover all aspects of art in the medium of video, it is easier to understand and develop a more concise definition for one category of video art, in this case, psycho-narrative video art. Psycho-narrative video art: Video art which reveals the real or imagined psychological condition of the artist, narrator, or character(s) portrayed in the work through the use of linear or nonlinear narrative devices employed by the artist. The use of this term will enable this study to succeed in relating the criteria for evaluating psycho-narrative video art to its definition.

Distinguishing Characteristics and Criteria for Evaluating Psycho-Narrative Video Art

All critical analyses must be viewed with personal evaluation in mind. The likes and dislikes of individuals affect the acceptance and understanding of works of art and the degree of audience satisfaction; therefore, the success of a work of art is often a matter of personal interpretation.

The inclusion of elements contained in the various art and film styles influencing the development of the psycho-narrative video art category is the basis for the critical evaluation of works within that category. These elements, which were described in more detail in the previous section will be used to identify a video art piece as psycho-narrative, however, all the elements need not play a part in individual works. The two factors used in the identification and evaluation of a psycho-narrative video art piece are the components which make up the term and are used in the context of this study as follows:

"Psycho" refers to the mind or mental processes which reveal the inner feelings and emotions of the artist or character(s) portrayed in the video and which express the artist's creative intention, often reflecting the individual's place in society or society's effect on the individual. The depiction of these processes may include elements which create a sense of confusion, frustration, self-doubt, fear and paranoia, alienation, disorientation, repulsion, distrust, love, hate, joy, melancholy, satisfaction, sincerity, the final hope

of something better, and peace of mind. These may be achieved through the devices of madness, sleep and dreams, multiple personalities, unique or odd sets and design, montage, shadow and light, angles, exaggeration of reality, hallucinations, sexual references, hypnosis, horror, repulsive and/or non-conventional imagery, unexpected events, editing, and character point of view.

"Narrative" is the arrangement of events in chronological or achronological time thus, these events need not necessarily be placed in a concrete or logical format but in a way which reflects what happens within the mind of an individual and may be achieved through the fragmentation and merging of thoughts and ideas to attain the final psycho-narrative statement.

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CHAPTER IV

APPLIED EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR PSYCHO-NARRATIVE VIDEO ART

A Feminist Twist on Masculine Violence

Possibly in Michigan by Cecelia Condit
1983, 12 min., color

> Synopsis: Possibly in Michigan follows the actions of Sharon and Janice, secretly followed by an unknown man (Arthur), as they shop for perfume, and the consequences resulting from the man following Sharon home with hope that she will see him as her Prince Charming.

The iconography of male-female relationships in today's culture is illustrated in Cecelia Condit's Possibly in Michigan. It is a warning addressing violent male dominance from a female point of view. Condit connects three characters with a common interest in violence and perfume. She uses the psycho-narrative elements of dream sequences, frightening imagery and situations, hallucinations, and memories elicited by the scents of perfume. Cultural symbols of prosperity and alienation are suggested in the opening setting of a harshly lit shopping mall and the blank stares of display window mannequins. The upbeat, lyrical narrative takes on a humorous air of feminine realization. Female rejection of the inequality of male dominance is heard in the lyrics: "I bite at the hand that feeds me--slap at the face that eats me--some kind of animal,

cannibal," reinforcing man's stranglehold on women through sexual and emotional consumption. The breakdown of the male-female relationship is symbolically shown through a filmed building demolition and the funeral pall imagery of Sharon with roses in her hair signifying the death of sincere love. Arthur wears a variety of masks (mule, dog, wolf, pig) illustrating the female view of men as well as male feelings of loss of identity and virility. Women often see men in the roles that the masks signify while men feel they must wear them to be masculine in the eyes of other men. Women are expected to fulfill the Frog Prince tale and Arthur's frog mask depicts egotistical male beliefs in their own sexual prowess and female submission. The physical and psychological violence that men inflict on women is viewed as something men do for love. When Sharon asks Arthur if he loves her, he avoidingly replies "You smell so good." Arthur's longing for the "sexual scent that smells like home" implies the male viewpoint that women are only good for sex and homemaking. Arthur's violent domination results in revenge with a twist as Janice rescues Sharon by killing the "run of the mill animal," Arthur, in a wolf mask. The two women proceed to cut up and eat their victim the way women often see men symbolically devouring them.

This complex feminist statement about voyeuristic and exploitatious men effectively uses psycho-narrative devices of lighting, angles, montage, superimposition, and slow motion combined with the dream-like quality of film juxtaposed with

the super real imagery of video. These elements reveal sexual desire, violence, and dominance of men over women and the fantasy of revenge by women over these male attitudes.

Sharon and Janice further illustrate the icons of love and sex as they sit in the kitchen nude, smoking cigarettes and toasting each other with wine as Arthur's remains lay on a platter on the kitchen table. The metaphor of a throw away society and a culture where love is easily disposed of is represented as the women playfully package the bones of their pursuer/victim in plastic trash bags and place them on the street for the garbage collector to permanently remove from their lives.

Personal Dissatisfaction and the Loss of Identity

Mirrored Reason by Stan Vanderbeek
1980, 10 min., color

> Synopsis: A woman crosses a bridge and views her reflection in the water. From that moment on she is convinced that someone who looks exactly like her is trying to take over her life and push her out of it with ultimate success.

The visual simplicity of Mirrored Reason accents the intricate narrative of a woman's psychological and emotional outrage and final surrender as she faces the realization of the loss of her conscious identity. Stan Vanderbeek takes a Kafka short story and transforms it into a modern day nightmare of alienating impact. A mirror splits the image of a woman's face and reflects the other half, while other images of herself

flash behind her. This creates distorted view of the whole face and a symbolically correct representation of her psychological frustration as she narrates the events leading up to the ultimate alienating break from her life as she once knew it.

Upon seeing her reflection in the water, the woman becomes obsessed with the notion that the woman in the reflection is not her; but someone who has been watching her, hoping and trying to become her. This dream-narrative suggests the dissatisfaction of the woman with her current status in society and her personal life and her unconscious approach to changing her own personality. The presence of the other woman, which at first, is merely a shadow or a breath always following right behind her, is instead the woman's own subconscious. This split-personality is visible only to herself and reinforced by the split image created by the mirror. The subconscious presence finally moves directly into the woman's life and the woman, immersed in her own image, becomes herself, exchanging one personality for another. The visual imagery changes only once when the woman faces herself as she continues her story.

The narration reflects the rejection of the transformation by the original personality. This creates psychological feelings of distress, confusion and frustration as the woman rebels against the take-over of the new personality through agitated actions and loss of self-control while the new personality remains calm and finally accomplishes the task of role/personality reversal. The original

personality, now alienated, is forced to watch silently stating, "I watch this woman all the time now--she's doing a very good job." As the woman speaks these final words, the face to face imagery moves closer together so that lips just barely touch each other and visually connect the two personalities of the women.

The psychological role reversal creates tension, anger, uneasiness, and discomfort in the character. The viewer is forced to wonder if this narrative is a dream, merely the paranoid ramblings of an insane mind, or simply the character's subconscious wish for a personal change in her life and attitude through a rejection of her current status. The unique visual design utilizes superimposition and juxtaposition to expose the many personalities possibly residing within all of us.

A Psychological Self-Portrait

A Tendency Towards Suicide - Reversions Back to the Egg by Gail Sadlowski
1987, 17 min., color and black and white

> Synopsis: A lone, white-gowned figure at a train station embarks on a journey through desolate landscapes and the ancient ruins of past civilizations while the documentation of an artist painting a similar landscape begins. The scenario continues and alludes to the mysterious figure being in some way related to the artist. The final scenes confirm the suspected as the painting becomes reality and the lone figure returns to the eternal sands victorious.

An individual often hides inner feelings of inferiority and self-doubt from the outside world resulting in tense psychological frustration and the search for a peaceful solution to

the pain experienced in everyday life. A Tendency Towards Suicide - Reversions Back to the Egg explores one woman's attempt at self-reconciliation and psychological understanding through the exploration of a personal dilemma using the elements of psycho-narrative video art. The choice for the woman revolves around the decision of life or death and the narrative becomes a battleground of emotional release and sobering realizations. Using a poem as a voice-over, the audio reflects the visual imagery through ethereal sounds, electronic intensity and disturbing thoughts on life, death, and love.

The desolate landscapes and ancient ruins through which the lone figure travels represent the artist's feelings of alienation from a society whose existence no longer matters. The solitary figure and the ancient scenery represents the peacefulness of desolation that alienation can bring as well as the hope for a better world and the dream of starting over. As the lone figure progresses through the landscapes the painting by the artist begins to reflect the same quiet imagery but the tranquility of the scenario is repeatedly interrupted by abstract and vaguely identifiable blasts of color and light. Feelings of confusion and frustration are created by the juxtaposition of the super real imagery of the painting documentary with the dream-like, almost impressionistic quality of the figure silently traveling somewhere through time, space, and the mind of the artist. Self portraits on the studio walls

reinforce the artist's desire for self-identification. Through the use of extreme close-ups and image manipulation, objects are taken out of context with dada connotations so that they are viewed in new ways and become not what they appear to be thus adding to the confusion and frustration experienced by the artist. The repetition of the animated sequence as the painting paints itself reveals the anxiety of the artist as she works on and completes the project. As the artist finishes the painting and lies down, representing the desire for retreat, the figure in the landscape does the same, only to appear at the door of the studio and complete the transformation of art into reality. The depiction of the artist's desire to return to the safety of the womb is enhanced as the now nude figure walks victoriously back over the dunes signifying the chance for a brighter rebirth. The message of rebirth is used throughout the work and is seen in the use of tunnels while the desire to return to the womb and peace is signified by eggs, sleep, and the use of film to create a dream-like image. Perhaps the best understanding of the psycho-narrative message is seen in the following poem which, through the use of voice-over, reflects not only the visual imagery of the video but the psychological processes of the artist.

It's All Over
by Gail Sadlowski

I never thought it could be this way.
Sometimes things become so abstract that it's hard to identify them.
And then, just when you think you understand them,
It's all over.

I never thought my life would be this way.
Sometimes I let myself become so mixed up that it's hard to explain my actions.
But then, just when I think I've gotten them straightened out,
It's too late.

I never thought love would be this way.
I spent so much time reaching out to find someone.
And just when I thought I'd found myself,
It was all over.

I never thought death would be this way.
I tried so hard to keep from humiliating myself.
And just when I thought my life was working out,
It was all over.

It's all over.
It's too late.
It's all over.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Artists are inspired by personal experience, society, and the psychological elements affecting their lives and that inspiration can be seen in the cultural iconography of their work. Avant-garde artists explored film in new ways to express their creative thoughts and cultural condition. They combined different artistic styles and philosophical theories to create revolutionary directions for the artist.

Karl Marx theorized that society and its economic condition influences the art of the times. Marxism has traditionally attempted to relate any art product to the economic conditions under which it is produced. It expresses a society's ideology through media and signifies the reality of society at the time the work of art was made. Works of art analyzed through Marxist philosophy are indicative of the materialistic and economic conditions of society and become historical examples of their culture.

Claude Levi-Strauss studied the laws and myths of society and revolutionized anthropology by seeing culture and art as a part of language. He introduced structuralism as a procedure for deciphering the meaning of the smallest elements of a work of art as they apply to the whole work. By studying media in an

archeological way, the structural analyst is able to uncover the artifacts and icons of our culture and reveal the hidden myths of society through the representation of its cultural signifiers within its works of art.

Freud opened the doors for psychoanalysis to influence the artist through a better understanding of the subconscious. Freudian philosophy explores the human subconscious and reveals cultural identity through psychological evaluation. Psychoanalysis has traditionally used the text to speculate on the artist's or his society's psychosexual disposition. The neurosis of American society is displayed through the voyeuristic approach to film offering the realities of a psychosexually repressed society. The feminist theory of psychoanalysis compounds Freud's theory with the Oedipus narrative of masculine desire where man is seen as the hero and woman as the obstacle. Feminist psychoanalysis exposes how the culture of a period reflects the psychological needs of women.

Video art has been able to take influences from film, psychology, and other art forms and mold them into a unique and varied new art form.

The development of the psycho-narrative video art genre is a step in the development of more distinct video art categories which artists and critics can use to create a more intelligent approach to video art while triggering the interest of artists currently working with more traditional media. Video art has been gathering a small following in recent years and the

development of new material regarding its critical evaluation will undoubtedly increase the number of people appreciating its creative ability for both the artist and the viewer while stimulating the growth for its study and utilization on a college level.

Video allows the artist's full creative vision to be expressed and further knowledge into its capabilities should be encouraged and should not be limited by apathy or ignorance. As long as political, religious, societal, and personal prejudice and hierarchies refrain from interfering, artists will be allowed to explore all territories of creativity without fear of condemnation or censorship.

CHAPTER VI

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I tend to be the outgoing loner, too absorbed in my own cerebral nightmares and imaginings to let anyone know who I really am. I sometimes feel like the tragic artist; alienated by my fellow artists as well as others, seeing the futility of my life and the lives around me. Because of this I have created a surreal world for myself, trying not to believe that what happens around me is real, casting aside my experiences as easily as possible and moving on to the next one. It is all just a big fantasy to me. A dream. A story. I often long for the conclusion, yet I fight to see the end and wonder what the outcome will be. I cannot say that I am unhappy. I believe in seeing some importance in all my actions and experiences and my narcissistic qualities often make me appear to be more self-absorbed and solemn than I am. I think these tendencies in my personality have a profound influence on my work. I am caught up in the macabre and my sense of humor as well as my art work reflects it.

In addition to painting and drawing, I have found that film and video are the best ways for me to express all of my thoughts by enabling me to incorporate my poetry and other writings as well as my painting into it. My subject matter tends to lean

towards violence, death, pain, horror, sex, and self portraiture but my imagery has been softening as my age increases. While my images may seem recognizable, my message is often told through symbols and icons with just enough clues for the viewer to decipher my meaning or perhaps create his/her own. I want to put my internal struggles in a form that modern audiences can identify with, and what better way than with video and its electronic box, the ultimate icon of our culture.

I have so many goals that I want to pursue that I confuse myself with what I want to do, and this confusion leads to new sparks of creativity and inspiration. I know I am strong enough and my interests are varied though linked enough for me to succeed in the arts. I have chosen art as my career in life and will never give it up whether I am applauded or damned for my ideas. Though the macabre fuels my imagination and experience inspires my creativity, my surreal world is shattered over and over by reality. It seems that just when I think I have it all figured out, I am confronted with a new obstacle and a new addition to my original idea. Elaborating on my original concept forces me into new setbacks but ultimately makes my idea more understandable and complete.

I will strive to keep my audience guessing as to what I am all about. I may give hints of who I am, then, just when they think they have me figured out, I will slap them in the face with a new facet of myself pronouncing that they were wrong all along.

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