

Merging image & imagination

Video exhibit enters the third dimension

By PATRICIA C. TURNER



The image of a face projected onto dolls, from Tony Oursler's 'System for Dramatic Feedback'

By releasing the image from a single screen and imbedding it within an environment, the artists have extended their installations in time and space, creating works with a distinctive visual vocabulary and style that exemplify the current state of the art. This direct connection to another moment and an external location is unique to video installations."

Barbara London,
Associate Curator,
Department of Film and Video
The Museum of Modern Art.

Those words introduce "Video Spaces: Eight Installations," a major exhibition of recent work produced by

nine internationally acclaimed video artists, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

The exhibit, on view to Sept. 12, is designed to "demonstrate how artists have released video from its traditional two-dimensional context by placing it in three-dimensional space."

The exhibit pulses with light and sound, so much so that the uninitiated find themselves a little disoriented. This is not video as most of us know it, proud fathers recording a child's kindergarten graduation or squealing kids jumping into the backyard pool.

Rather, the images fill the spaces, some of them high and large. In the center of "Slowly Turning Narrative," Bill Viola placed a 12-foot panel, mirrored on one side and blank on the other, rapidly rotating on a vertical axis.

The panel, the four walls, the ceiling and the floor all become part of the work.

And in some the spectator is forced

to become part of the action, as with Viola's piece, where you find yourself on the screen, or "Lovers" by Japanese artist Teiji Furuhashi.

In fact, London explained, there is a motion detector in the room where "Lovers" is displayed so that if the viewer is alone in the room, the image of a person will come right in front of him, raise its arms and then fall back, as if into an abyss.

This illustrates "the integration of video and computers," London said, as well as "rhythm, repetition and pattern" and "theater," elements seen in all of these pieces.

Tony Oursler's "System for Dra-



A picture from 'Slowly Turning Narrative,' another video on view at the Museum of Modern Art's 'Video Spaces: Eight Installations'



'Evening,' by Stan Douglas, in 'Video Spaces' at MOMA

Video exhibition at MOMA enters the third dimension

matic Feedback" has a movie theater audience projected on the back wall as images of faces are projected onto dolls which portray a range of expressions, from poignant cries to murmurs of resignation.

Some pieces seem a little more conventional, at least until you try to understand them. Canadian Stan Douglas' work "Evening" uses three large video screens showing clips of 1960s American television newscasts.

This was the time when stations introduced "happy news" and emphasized the stardom of the news anchors over the substance of their newscasts.

If you stand directly under the speaker, the individual broadcaster's

voice is distinguishable as he smiles through stories about the Vietnam War, the trial of the Chicago Seven, the murder of a Black Panther leader or bombings in Ottawa.

Stand a little in any other direction and the three voices become a babble, the smiles and words blurring in your mind.

In "Inasmuch as It Is Already Taking Place," Gary Hill uses 16 video rasters — monitors stripped of their outer casings — to display life-size parts of the body.

Hill wrote of this: "The monitors appear as a kind of debris... bulbs that have washed up from the sea or perhaps stones that have broken down into smaller and smaller particles. Each one is a witness to a fragment of a body — perhaps a reclining figure, a man reading, a corpse — rendered actual size, ad infinitum."

"HardCell," too, looks like debris. Collaborators Judith Barry and Brad Miskell use high-tech detritus to warn against the current infatuation with technology. Spilling from a battered wood crate, flickering and groaning computer components, wire, tubing and "fleshy parts" resemble the remains of a cyborg or space creature that has just crash-landed.

Disembodied messages and bits of computer code stream across computer screens in "conversation" with each other, blurring the distinction between mechanical and human.

Much of "Video Spaces: Eight Installations" concerns that border be-

tween machine and person.

London noted that "artists have been working with video since the 1960s. It allowed artists to work outside television. One of the first things they did was explore video and architecture, video and space."

Using video, you could see yourself doing something as you did it, she added. Artists often made video of themselves.

Now-video has moved on to what London calls "tuned environments," which "involve an image in space" with sound.

"As a society we go through love-hate relationships with technology," London said. In the 1960s, many people associated technology with the aircraft and napalm of Vietnam. Technology was bad. Now, so many people have become familiar with computers, technology is in.

"This show uses technology but isn't about technology," London said, citing the video "HardCell," which she said "questions the implications of artificial life."

The Museum of Modern Art is located at 11 W. 53d. St. in New York. It is closed on Wednesdays. Hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday; noon to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday and Friday.

General admission is \$8, full-time students and seniors pay \$5. Children under 16 accompanied by an adult are admitted free. Thursday and Friday from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. you pay what you wish.



'HardCell,' by Judith Barry, part of the MOMA exhibition