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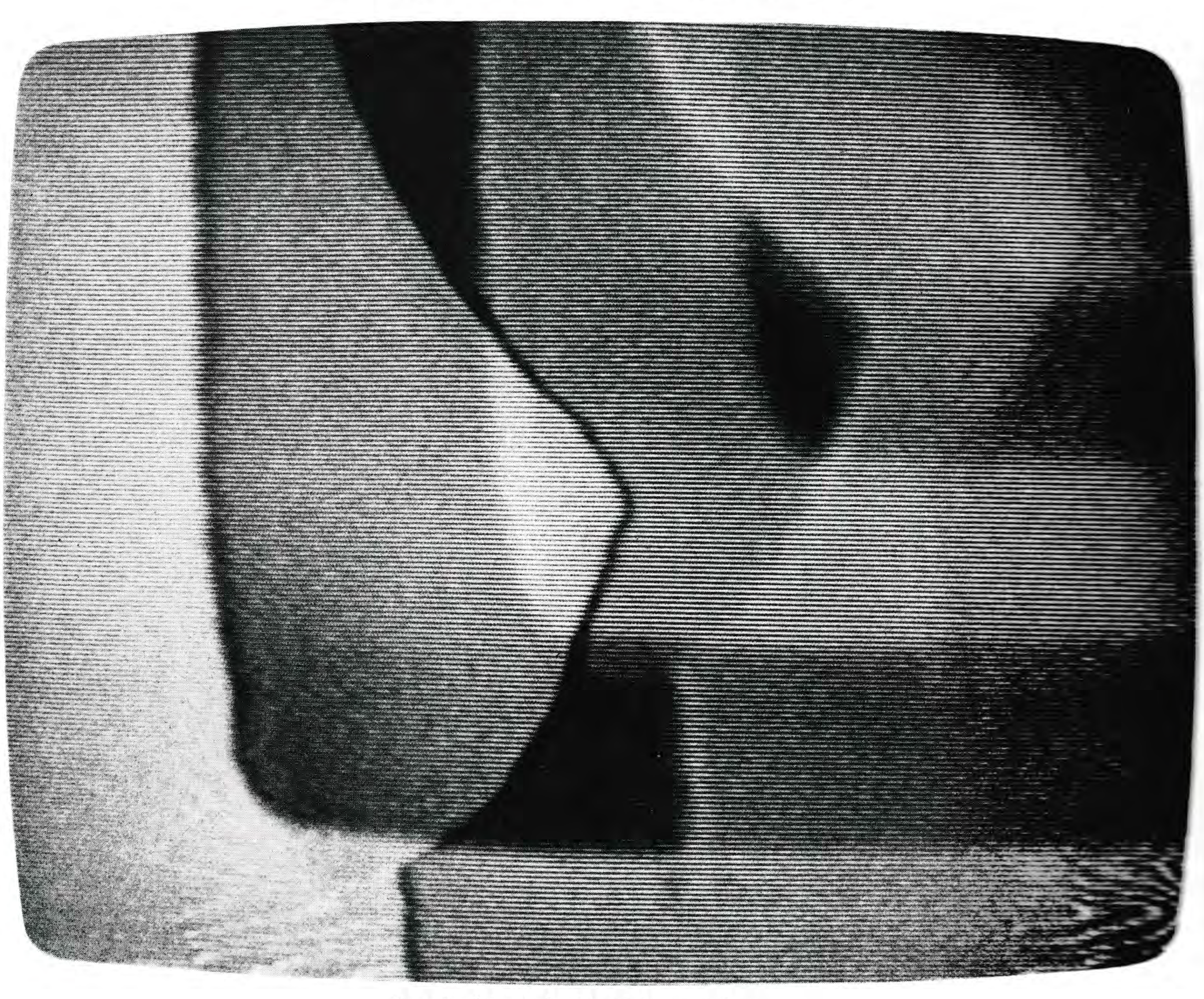
the issue of video art

WOMEN & VIDEO



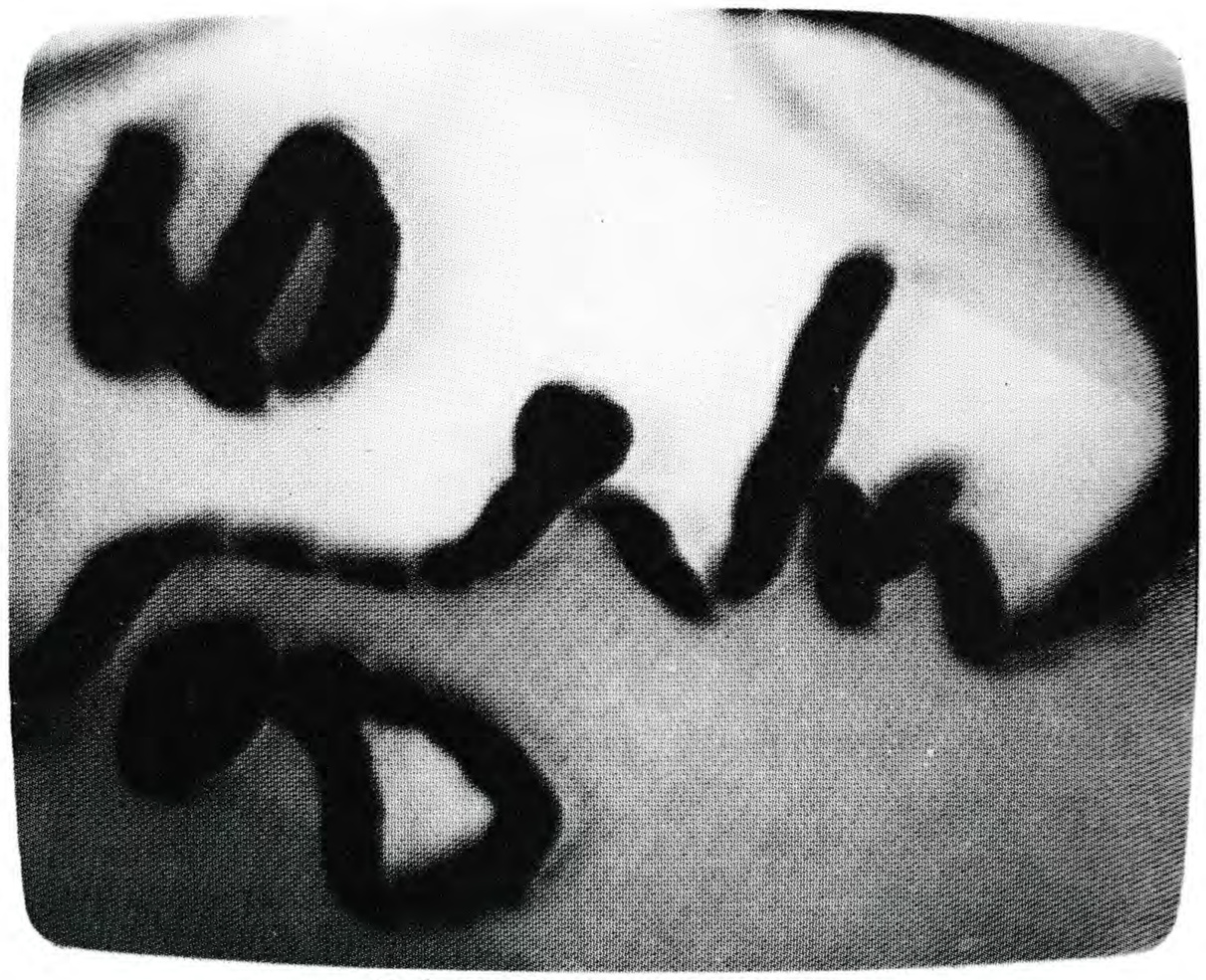
Les seins de Louise by Lise Noiseaux-Labrecque

an introduction to the community of video

CAROL ZEMEL

Magic Journey by Steina and Woody Vasulka

Take My Picture by Laurie McDonald

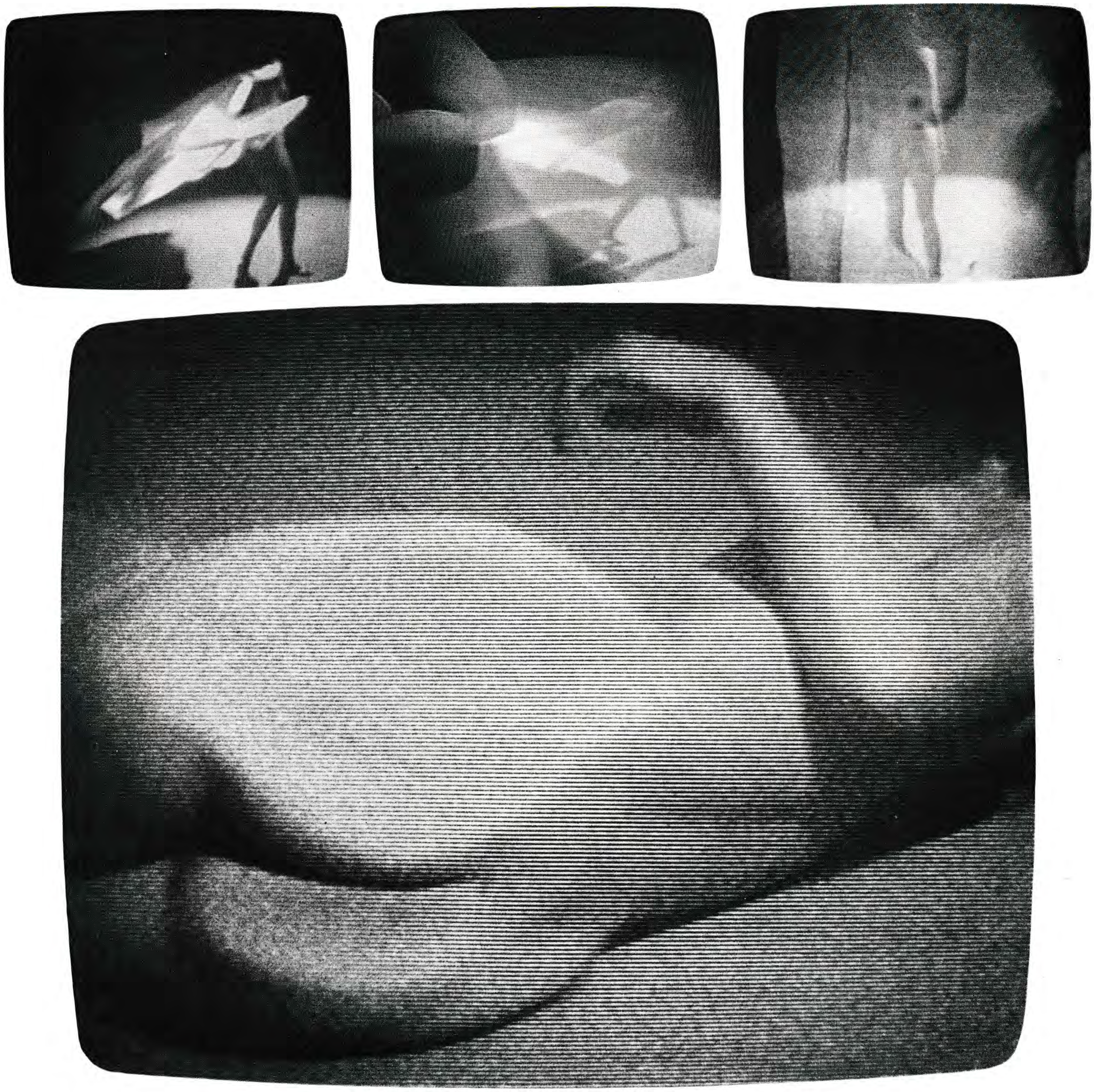


Body Tape by Laurie McDonald

Vasulkas and others are resonant with poetry and impressive in their formal explorations and techniques.

In *Magic Journey*, Steina and Woody Vasulka expanded upon René Magritte's painting *Golden Voyage*, where loaves of bread float through the crenellations of a medieval castle. The loaves – at once primal, phallic, and funny – float through dream landscapes over seas and beaches, through castle walls and up from behind silhouetted skyscrapers, to tantalizingly circle around the recumbent body of a nude woman. She, in turn, reaches up to caress or grasp the mysterious loaf-creatures – the Michelangeloesque gesture of Adam reaching for the spark of life is a visual pun both humorous and touching. A variety of synthesized effects were used: images keyed-in from several monitors effectively animate the sequences, high intensity light and color contrasts create expressive city views and landscapes. Sadly, the festival did not provide color video equipment, limiting appreciation of a tape that was both playful yet powerfully primal in its fantasy.

Laurie McDonald's works reflect her interest in video experiment. *Take My Picture* showed men on street corners muttering and bantering about the video camera and themselves. High-contrast, superimposed portrait images melted and fused in smoky patches, and combined with electronic sound to suggest an "inner space" or haunted mind that was in direct contrast to the crude literalness of the actual street situation. In *Moog Synthesized Images #1*, shifting abstract veils (again, unfortunately not seen in color) were controlled by the sounds of the Moog synthesizer to which the video system was keyed. This is perhaps video's most synaesthesic imagery, for as the sound determines and shapes the picture, the viewer experiences a transmutation of senses: sound is "seen." McDonald's most dramatic work was *Body*



Dervish by Amy Greenfield

Tape, where the lighting was arranged so that body contours and edges received the most intense illumination. The camera was then swung pendulum-like from above and the tape run between two decks to effect a brief time-delay. The resultant imagery, reversed so that the body's lit contours became black lines, was like a Matisse drawing come alive. Time-delayed pictures recurred and faded behind the primary image, increasing the rhythm and grace of an already powerful graphic drama. Images were at once extremely abstract – like Matisse's simplest sinuous line – and photographically real; and hovering continuously between these two perceptual levels, they created a video poem of startling lyricism.

Jane and Walter Wright's *Pulaski Skyway* was presented on a diamond-shaped arrangement of six monitors. The tapes revealed the banalities of an American superhighway – cars, dumps, roadside sheds, landscape – along with strongly structural images of the Pulaski bridge. Moving shots of bridge beams produced an abstract geometry that contrasted with the realistic roadscape, the sounds of children crying during a long car trip, and symphonic music that was romantically "cosmic" in mood. High-contrast negative-reversed images created visual patterns that were amplified by the kaleidoscopic monitor pattern. The result was decorative, with movement, sound, and pattern producing a travelling fragmentation and re-creation of the highway-bridge trip.

In Amy Greenfield's *Dervish*, a nude woman whirled continuously till exhausted, then dropped and rested. The only sounds were the motion of her feet, the rustle and flap of drapery, and the increasingly labored rhythm of her breathing. Images were super-imposed and dramatic patterns of light and form appeared with repeated close-ups of parts of the body or fabric folds. The climax of action and visual