

**FIRST  
ANNUAL  
DOCUMENTARY  
VIDEO  
FESTIVAL**

**FEBRUARY 75**

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**VIDEO STUDY CENTER of  
GLOBAL VILLAGE**

## INTRODUCTION

In writing of the brief history of video, and of the video documentary in particular, we are speaking of a period of less than seven years. In 1968 the first Sony Portapak became available in the United States, and it was in this period that the videomaker gained the use of equipment that approached the capacities of the hand-held film equipment that film documentarians were using in the sixties. Portable video equipment had the added plusses of lower costs, increased portability, instant replay, and feedback possibilities.

The earlier video works of that period were very similar to the films produced in the early 1890's. Like those first filmmakers, the new videomakers were enchanted with the possibilities of recording actuality.

The video documentary is not easily defined. Broadly it includes any interaction within that area of life that the videomaker chooses to focus on with the style of treatment that he or she employs. Process is all-important. Both form and content are created and locked into the making of the tape. Techniques borrowed from the film documentary, as well as those belonging entirely to video, have contributed to the evolution of the genre.

I feel most exceptional video and film documentaries are in fact very personal and subjective even when appearing to be just the opposite. They can offer a textured rendering of the connecting moments of life to reveal some hidden truth. The "truth" is very often that of the maker, but if he or she is gifted, the vision becomes one with the subject. An example of this in the Festival is Harriet by Nancy Cain, a tape about a real woman's fantasy of leaving her day-to-day life and taking to the open road. An example in film is the romantic fiction documentary of the brilliant Robert Flaherty. A work such as Man of Aran (1934) transcends the problem of recording a lost lifestyle and becomes Flaherty, the master storyteller, embellishing a long-forgotten folk tale.

The documentarian's focus on real life is not necessarily free of distortion or transformation. Obviously, we all distort by selection: in the case of video, who is taped, when, by whom and with what lens, lighting, etc., establishes the viewpoint. The enormous rearranging of

reality in the editing process is also a reordering of time, space and perception. It is in this deliberate shaping of actuality that the stamp of the maker is most apparent.

The term, "video verité", derived from the cinema, describes the most obvious documentary style currently employed. Although the term is seldom used by videomakers, verité tape adheres to some of the basic tenets of film verité, such as non-interference in the event, long takes in real (unedited) time, hand-held cameras, available light, etc. An example of this style in the Festival, Giving Birth by Tobe J. Carey, also employs self-analysis of the tape by its subjects.

Another area of significant development has been the kind of piece that documents a major event - a march, convention, war, etc. - with a definitive style and viewpoint which places the work in a larger context while retaining a feel for the scale and size of the event. Documentary film examples of this school include Football (1961) by Jim Lipscomb; Primary (1960) by Richard Leacock, D.A. Pennebaker and Al Maysles; and Gimme Shelter by the Maysles Brothers.

Four More Years, a tape of the 1972 Republican Convention by TVTV and The Irish Tapes by Stefan Moore and myself are two examples of a non-narrative rendering of the epic event. These works are more personal and less literal than the earlier films mentioned. They use special lenses, juxtaposition of separate events and other deviations from verité not found in the earlier, more pure cinema verité works. In video the camera or sound crew often involves the subject in dialogue. The style is more of a hybrid between pure verité and TV narrative or documentary works.

Another work in the Festival, William Creston's Kelsey, is reminiscent of Shirley Clarke's film, Jason. This tape treads the line between documentary and performance, and belongs to a documentary style that evokes in the viewer a sense of being 'put on' while nevertheless witnessing a true slice of life.

The work, Cuba - The People by Downtown Community Television, differs from The Irish Tapes and Four More Years in its use of an ever-present narrative voice describing what we are seeing. This style is more often used in documentaries made for broadcast television than in most video documentary works.

Documentaries have long been used successfully as

propaganda, from the Russian Keno-Pravda (1917) to the high point of national propaganda, Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will (1939; from Eisenstein's and Pudovkin's depictions of the Russian Revolution to British and American films for the Allied cause during World War II, especially Humphrey Jennings's works. In this genre, the Festival has Nothing So Precious by Bruce Grund and Brent Sharman, an unrelenting indictment of our involvement in the Vietnam War.

I've attempted to trace only a few of the strains and influences of the film documentary on video because of the highly personal and original nature of so much of contemporary video, where the lines of descent are often not clear. Works in the Festival that don't easily draw parallels to film are Walter, a very intimate and revealing portrait of an extraordinary human being, by Bob and Ingrid Wiegand; and the Beautifully structured and evocative view of women in Politics of Intimacy by Julie Gustafson.

It seems to me that those who work in videotape like to live it. It becomes an intimate part of them. They love the oneness of it - no labs, no technicians. It's a portapak way of being. This closeness to the medium means that works are usually undertaken, not because a sponsor is found, but because it is important to their their creators to explore the subject. Most of the works in this Festival are distinguishable from films for this reason alone.

It should be noted that this, the First Annual Documentary Video Festival, is not meant as the definitive statement on this video form, but rather as a means of presenting the form to a wider audience. In future festivals we will show many of the fine works that were not included this year.

John Reilly

Text by Ingrid Wiegand



## FOUR MORE YEARS

TVTV

60 min-1972

The Nixon machine in full gear is laid down in a long series of smooth and fast-moving edits in this videotape of the 1972 Republican Convention. From the maniacal intensity of shiny-cheeked elderly and adolescent supporters chanting "Four More Years" to the cool, computer-like replies of Trisha, the nature of the Convention is communicated primarily by its active participants. These are counterpointed in the tape by the TV media people and the Veterans Against the War. The Veterans appear as clearly antithetical to the drive of the Convention and completely hamstrung by the Nixon propaganda that "they aren't real veterans." The media people appear very two-dimensional in their carefully groomed personae. Even if it were not viewed in the ironic light of Watergate, Four More Years demonstrates how good video can give us much more than we are getting.



## WALTER

Bob & Ingrid Wiegand 30min-1975

Walter, a portrait of Walter Rozhen, is both the concrete expression of a very American life experience and a formal videotape constructed in multiple video-time layers. As a gym teacher, Walter appears in virtual real-time segments - the middle of his class appears at about the time it occurs in the original footage. Into this structure are looped segments with other time bases: a catamaran sail of two hours; survival in a German slave labor camp over five years. Throughout, the tape is entirely on him - no one else talks about him; no one else appears except as the object of his momentary concern. The immediacy of videotape is thus used to bring a human being into focus at his full scale outside of a social or political context.



## HINDUSTAN I: DELHI

Eric Siegel

30 min-1974

This lyrical, flowing videotape of Old and New Delhi, in India is at the opposite pole from the film and TV travelogues that banalize the world for us on screen. Shot with a careful hand and cultivated innocence, India appears to the viewer all new: strange, but unjudged. The tape is one of seven in which Siegel explores different parts of India. Delhi is un-narrated, so that there are no statistics, no condescensions. While details are thus missed, the viewer experiences the cities more as he might hope to in reality than as an information-gathering process. The slow-motion final edit of Delhi street children exuberantly mobbing Siegel is a technical and aesthetic tour de force.



**UNDERSCAN**  
Nancy Holt

8 min-1974

Produced with Carlota Schoolman, Underscan is a documentary only in the sense that Whistler's Study in Black, White and Grey is a portrait of his mother. The primary intent of the artist is a formal exploration of her medium and its use in the creation of perceptual constructs. The title refers to the tape's use of a video monitor adjustment that reduces the size of the image so that its edges can be examined. Underscan consists entirely of photographs of the home of Holt's aunt, and of excerpts that Holt reads from her aunt's letters dating from 1962 to 1972. The photographs are snapshots; the house is ordinary; Holt's voice is flat as she reads; the image and the speaker are at several removes from the viewer - the tape is 'cool' in the McLuhanesque sense of the word. The visual compression of the image is paralleled in the tape's compression of time; the ragged edged, underscanned image reiterates the snapshots.

**TRIBUTE TO JOHN CAGE**

Nam June Paik

60 min-1972

Produced with the assistance of Jackie Cassen, Tribute is very different from the conventional testimonial. It does contain a laudatory introduction, but this is spoken by a man who stutters - according to his own view of it - in the manner of Cage's music. The introduction is done in TV studio style and leads into several more or less related sections, including a four-and-a-half minute street version of Cage's famous and infamous Sixty Minutes of Silence. This performance - with grand piano - is taped in the street, with many shots of audience reactions and non-reactions. Another segment has Charlotte Moorman playing her cello in Paik's TV Bra, a piece that requires her to immerse herself in a tank of water. Tribute is constructed with hundreds of beautifully assembled edits, including a one-minute version of Woodstock that sums up that last-bang-of-the-sixties extravaganza in fast and funny fashion. The work is a perfect meld of



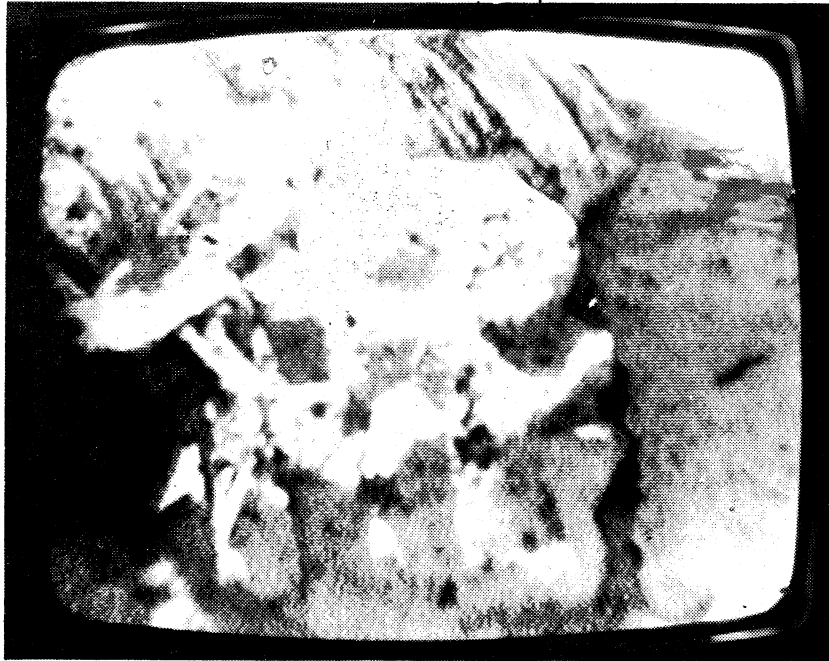
**THE IRISH TAPES**

50 min

John Reilly & Stefan Moore

1972

Beginning with a rolling image of the damaged streets of Ulster, taken from a moving car, The Irish Tapes is an intense video chronicle of a period in the war in Northern Ireland. Until the tape comes to an abrupt stop in a freeze-frame of the bleeding face of an ordinary woman caught in a crossfire, the viewer is confronted by an entire people engaged in a nightmare. Throughout, the reality of the situation is brought into focus by juxtaposition with the myths and expectations of the Irish in New York on St. Patrick's Day. Although the tape does touch on 'news' events, the weight of the images is on the side of the people - Protestant and Catholic, priest and soldier, woman and child. The medium of videotape and the sensitivity of the videomakers creates a personal document that remains with the viewer like memory.

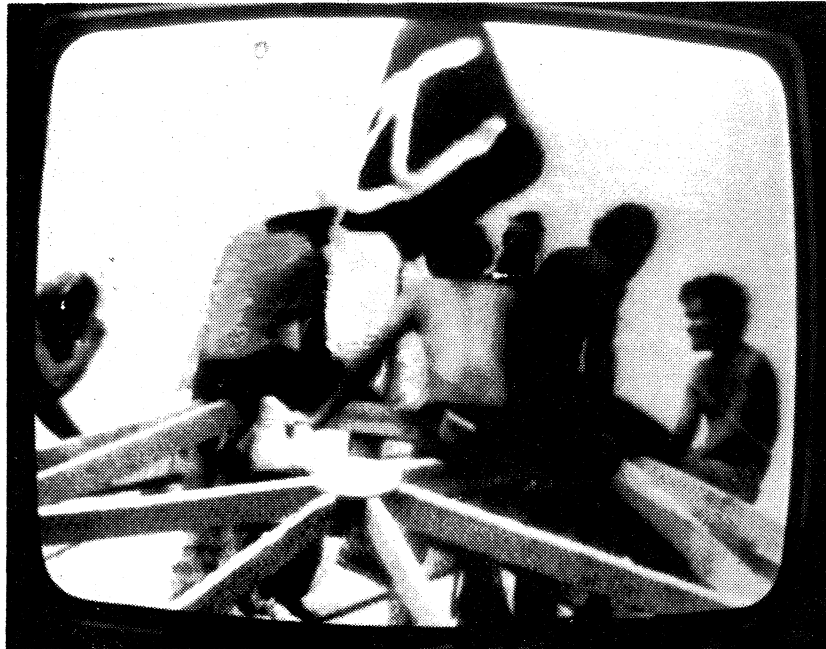


## YUCATECA 2

Juan Downey

45 min - 1974

This is one of an extended series of tapes, called "Video Trans Americas", that Downey is making on the American continents. From the first lingering shots of water, trees, horizon and sky, the viewer realizes that this is no informational travelogue of Yucatan but a personal and idiosyncratic document. Although the camera work and editing are carefully handled, ordinary expectations are deliberately disturbed by interrupted audio. The shooting and editing are also organically rather than logically organized to communicate a sense of place. In Yucateca 2, the versatility of video permits a personal style rather than documentary conventions to structure a documentary work.



## BUILDING A GEODESIC DOME

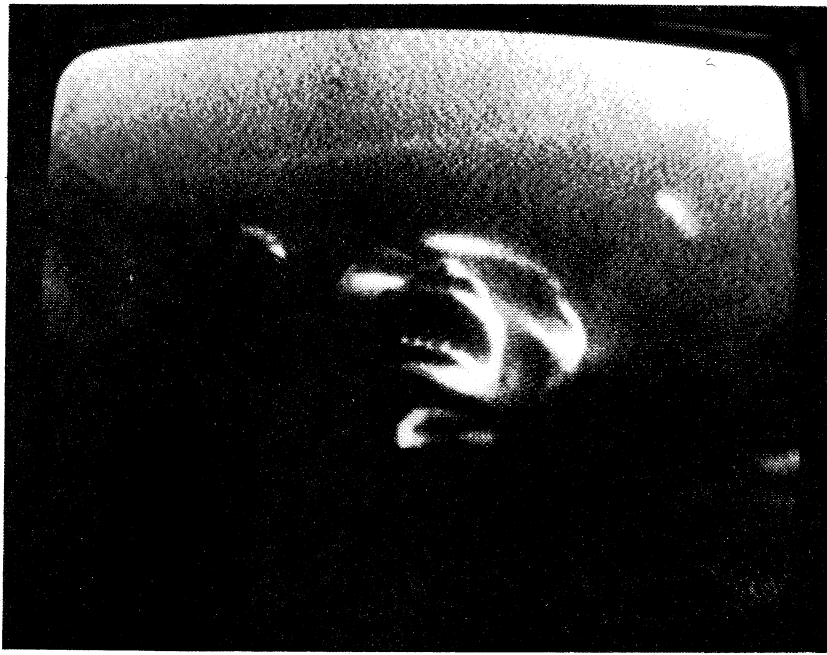
Videofreex (David Cort) 55 min-1970

Despite the instructional nature of its title, Building a Geodesic Dome is really an impressionist documentary of the communal lifestyle in Vermont. Formally edited, the tape does involve discussion of dome-building specifics on site, but the substance of the tape is a way of life. The relaxed manner in which it was shot reflects this substance as much as does the content itself. This includes awkward but telling interviews with the children, footage of a young woman who sings and collects aromatic and medicinal herbs, and the informal and yet structured action of the dome-building process. Building a Geodesic Dome is a good example of the particular mixture of intimacy, informality, fluidity and non-linear design that constitute much of the best video.



**NOTHING SO PRECIOUS**      25 min  
**Bruce Grund & Brent Sharman** 1974

Created as a propaganda piece against the continuing war in Vietnam, Nothing So Precious uses stills, film and original videotape to communicate the full dimensions of the reign of terror that we have created and abetted there. More than any single other videotape in this Festival, Nothing So Precious shows how half-inch videotape makes it possible for groups and individuals of limited means to make powerful documents, an ability that has been limited to more popular and power-supported causes that have large funds available. Seeing this tape, one wonders whether the war would have continued so long had videotape been around in 1965, since our own media so obviously failed us.



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## GIVING BIRTH

Tobe J. Carey

23 min-1972

A subject that has been a natural for portable videotape from the beginning has been the birth of a child, and this tape represents what is virtually a video genre. Giving Birth documents the home delivery of the child of an American couple, but by their choice the birth occurred in Mexico, in a hammock, with a Mexican midwife attending. The tape is introduced and concluded by the couple, who provide a loose narrative structure. They appear in typical informal video style, addressing the viewer directly, mike in hand, sitting on the grass, as the woman holds their now six-months-old child.



**RIFLE: BOOM TOWN OF THE 70's?**  
**Candida Harper & Dan Hindelang**

30 min-1974

Rifle was made for the Aspen, Colorado, community television network, and reflects the style and concerns of that sector of television. Through street interviews with townspeople and taped segments of various conferences and meetings, the tape deals with the impact of massive oil shale development by private companies on neighboring Federal lands. In style, Rifle is close to that of broadcast television. It represents an example of how a community can use half-inch videotape to explore a local problem in detail.





WOODSTOCK, N.Y.

25 min

John Keeler & Ruth Rotko

1974

Despite its place name, Woodstock is basically a documentary of a lifestyle. Although the tape contains footage on local activities, it is primarily concerned with the style of the young, hip couples of the sixties who have found a congenial place and settled down. The tape views different aspects of their way of life - a man tapping his own sugar maples; a man and his son living in a fitted bus; an informal party where the men talk in the kitchen and the women sit together on the terrace and discuss their children. Short sections of different aspects are juxtaposed in the early sections of the tape, so that the viewer's awareness of the thrust of the tape is gradually developed.



## THE POLITICS OF INTIMACY

Julie Gustafson

45 min-1974

This tape is subtitled "Ten Women Talk about Orgasm and Sexuality". The women include one of the first doctors to write about feminine sexuality (in the Thirties) and nine other women of different ages, sexual preferences and economic and social situations. While the structure of the tape is basically clinical - different subjects such as "Arousal" and "Masturbation" are discussed under appropriate subheadings - the Politics of Intimacy transcends the factual to communicate for perhaps the first time to an audience what women's sexual experience involves. The content is entirely of medium and closeup shots of the women speaking, so that the action of the tape consists of what their faces, words and body language convey.

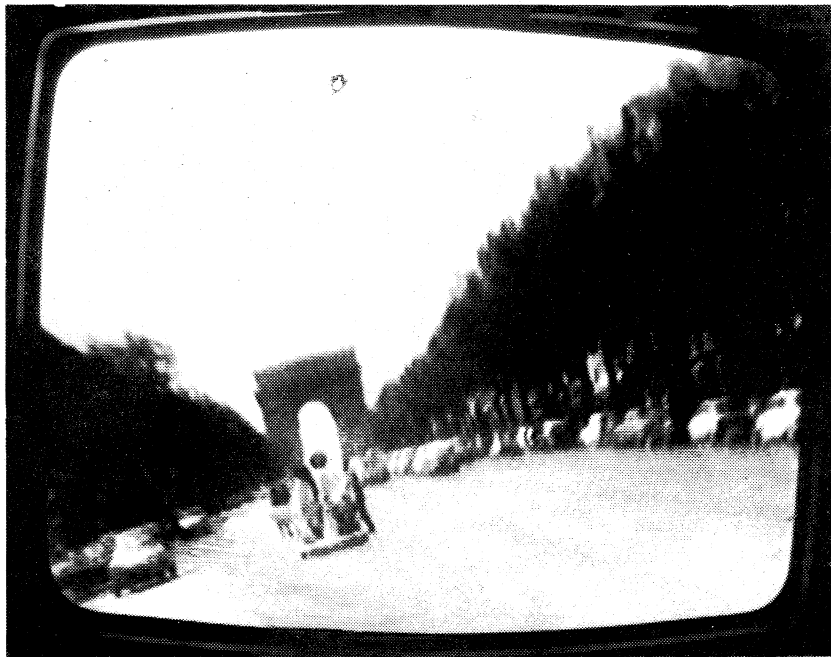


## CONFRONTATION ON WEST 4th STREET

Brent Sharman

28 min-1972

This is one of those videotapes that was created as much by the medium itself as by the videomaker's own design - although it is no less his for that reason. What starts out as a leisurely 'stoop' interview soon becomes a humorous but telling confrontation between the street's young middle-class residents and its street people. This transformation is wrought by the very presence of video - the very fact that a camera and a microphone are in operation attracts the passersby, including, naturally, the street people. Their exchanges on this tape delineate in microcosm the fundamental differences and barriers between the landed and landless; between the committed and the uncommitted. But the star of the confrontation is videotape - to the last foot on the reel.



## EUROPE ON HALF-INCH A DAY

Shigeko Kubota

30 min-1973

Europe on Half-Inch a Day is one of the tapes that teeters on the edge of the territory assignable by common agreement to the documentary video concept, and even slides over into the area of more abstract and personal videotape. The tape is about a European trip of the artist, but it does not 'document' anything but her own experience of the trip -- remaining an uninterrupted fifteen minutes on a sophisticated street-organ grinder and cutting briefly into a woman-and-dog nightclub act. The camera is moved freely to create visual jokes and textures. Kubota deliberately sets out to avoid information conventions and to form the tape from her personal point of view.



## **MEET THE FAMILY**

**Ken Marsh**

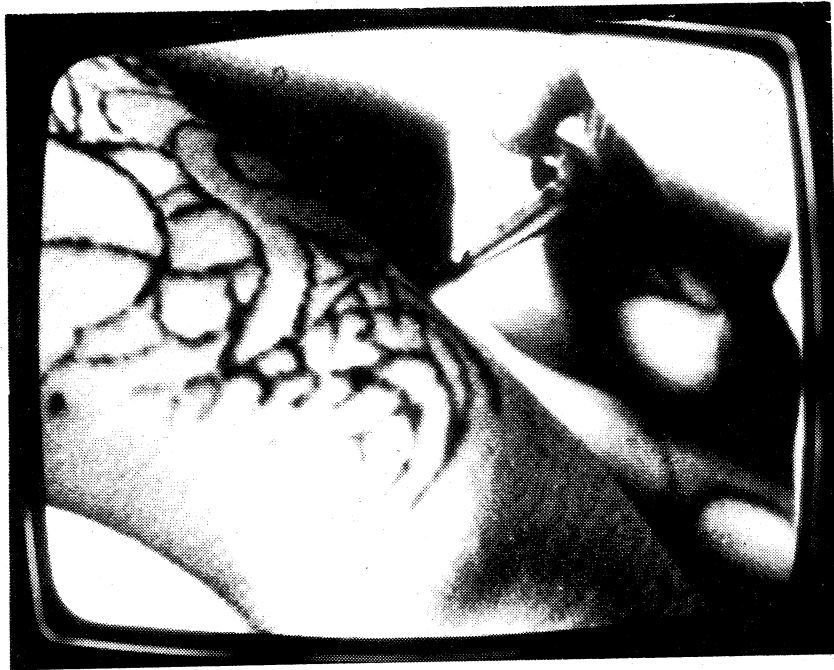
**10 min-1974**

In this short, densely edited tape, Ken Marsh creates a video collage of his family experience, using stills, old home movies and a videotape of a family reunion. The family is often the first subject for the videomaker, and many have come back to these old tapes and edited them into mature video works, such as this.



**CUBA - THE PEOPLE** 40min-1974  
**Downtown Community Television**

Cuba is a tape that blends aspects of independent videotape making and broadcast television conventions. Shot in Cuba on half-inch videotape, it was edited at the Experimental TV Lab of WNET. Its segments are connected by formal, explanatory overvoice narration, which contrasts with the more relaxed video style in which the tape was shot. Cuba shows that country in a generally sympathetic light, with the people healthy and, on the whole, cheerful, working hard and praising the Revolution. The footage covers many aspects of the new Cuba that well-equipped network cameramen could probably not have gained access to. In the next few years it is probable that many new places and subjects will be opened to the public eye by independent half-inch videomakers.



## TATTOO

Susan Milano

28 min-1972

A tattoo artist and a former tattooed lay introduce the viewer to the tattoo as an art form and a lifestyle. The process of applying a tattoo and the various techniques and options involved are outlined in this videotape, as work on an arm-length tattoo proceeds. The tattoo artist tells of the development of his interest in tattooing from adolescence. The woman, now retired, recalls how becoming a tattooed lady was the means of her personal liberation from a narrow small-town existence. Tattoo proceeds at a leisurely pace, providing the informal shots and interviews at which portable video excels.



## LIBERATION

People's Video Theater 20min-1970

Liberation includes five short pieces from the work of the People's Video Theater group that cover major social and political concerns of the early videomakers. The subjects, in order, are Gay Liberation, Squatters, Women's Liberation, Puerto Rican Liberation and American Indian Liberation. All are made in the video style of the time - street interviews, closeups of rapt listeners and frenzied speakers, peripatetic pans, and an absence of explanatory overvoice narration. The particular nature of the edits in this tape is due to the fact that it was made on the earliest portable video equipment, and had to be cut, like film, rather than being electronically edited.





## ISIS

Women's Interart Center      23 min-1974

This tape was made in a workshop directed by Susan Milano. Isis is an all-woman rock group that speak and perform on the tape. Each of the women talks personally about her development as a musician and her relation to the band. The tape is also a strong document about the process of becoming a serious woman artist - especially regarding the problem of taking on a traditional male role. The women on the drums, bass, saxophone and trombone underscore the point as they are taped at a rehearsal and a performance. Isis is a well-constructed documentary.



**COMMUNITY SEX INFORMATION AND  
EDUCATION SERVICE, Rudi Stern, 16 min-1972**

This simple, classic social documentary presents a service agency that provides sexual, birth control and abortion information and advice to anyone who calls, writes or appears. Through listening in on telephone calls and through interviews with workers at the service, a great deal about the sexual mores and difficulties of our culture are revealed. Although the tape consists primarily of closeups of the workers talking, the interviewing and editing are handled to create a fast-moving videotape.

**VIDEO MOMENTS**

**Rudi Stern**

**25 min-1969-73**

Subtitled "A Video Journal", this tape assembles brief segments of video documentaries that the artist made over the four years he was Co-Director of Global Village.



## TRANSSEXUALS

Global Village

25 min-1970

This tape was made in a workshop directed by John Reilly, on very early video equipment. It deals with a tough subject - men who have chosen to become women as literally as surgery, hormones and their minds can make them. Skirting both the sensational and the clinical, Transsexuals concentrates on the presences of several of these new women, and two in particular. In the tape, street interviews that provide conventional reactions to transsexuality are juxtaposed against the reality of the people involved. The tape is well shot and edited, underlining the essential simplicity of using videotape for documentary purposes, although Reilly's direction is evident throughout.



## KELSEY

William Creston

45 min-1972

Kelsey is an Eval Knievel who never found a motorcycle. Con man, clown, adventurer, artist, peddler and probably schizophrenic, he entertains the viewer with anecdotes, demonstrations, costumes, speculations and toys at a small party in the artist's loft. The tape was shot with two cameras and was partly edited live with a special-effects generator that permitted Creston to switch, fade, lap and dissolve between cameras. In its loose shooting and editing, Kelsey reflects not only the mood of the piece but the aesthetic concerns of a large group of videomakers.



**MARCH AGAINST RACISM-BOSTON  
1974, Claude Bellar, Vito Brunetti, Cara  
DeVito, Jeffrey Kleinman, Stefan Moore  
30min-1975**

This tape, subtitled "The Boston Busing Crisis," deals with both sides of this bitterly contested issue. March concentrates on the anti-racism rally that drew the lines between the two sides even more sharply than before. Like the Irish Tapes on which Moore collaborated, the emphasis is on the participants, although there is more of principal spokesmen and less of the ordinary individual than in the earlier work. The tape is finely edited from what was clearly extensive and well chosen footage. March also shows how serious independent videomakers with a couple of hundred dollars of tape and a half hour of playing time can bring us closer to a familiar issue than the million-dollar media men.

The Video Study Center of Global Village is a focal center for the creative study and use of video tape in New York. It schedules workshops, seminars and regular viewings of center tapes as well as those of guest artists and other organizations. The center is a division of Global Village, a non-profit organization committed to exploring the potential of portable video, supported in part by the New York State Council on the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

**JOHN REILLY**/DIRECTOR

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