

16 MINERVA WORKS, 158 FAZELEY STREET, BIRMINGHAM, B5 5RS

MEDIAFEST | PART TWO | VIDEO - DATA

11-27 October 2018

Featuring The Vasulkas, Steina, Michael Lightborne, Sarah M Farmer, Shelly Knotts, co34pt, Heavy Lifting, Coral, Mike Dring, Sian Macfarlane, jack_mugglestone, Carol Breen & Matthew Evans, hellocatfood



MEDIAFEST is a one month season juxtaposing new media art works by UK artists with innovators from the 1970s-80s. Beginning in the 1970s with the hypnotic click of the slide carousel and ending with open source performance through algorithms, the season demonstrates the impact of accessible, affordable consumer technologies on artist practice. MEDIAFEST PART TWO explores how the domestic cathode ray tube TV set, video processing, the CD and the laptop have driven the aesthetics and politics of media arts. Works from preceding decades developed for video and hand built machines, will be interrogated through new performance and live digital commissions on 19 – 20 October, culminating in an Algorave on 27 October for Museums at Night, 2018.

ARCHIVE SPACE

From the VIVID archive, we have selected workshop documentation exploring the experimental processes pioneered by The Vasulkas and their collaborators in the 1970s-90s. The earliest video is *Cantaloup (1980)*, in which Steina documents image programming with the Digital Image Articulator. In *Techne & Eros: Art and Science Laboratory (1999)* held in Santa Fe, New Mexico Woody Vasulka, Steina, composer David Dunn and physicist James Crutchfield began a dialogue on larger conceptual questions regarding the future of electronic and digital art. *Techne & Eros* was one of a series of workshops in experimental and interactive media art. The Laboratory's research was an exploration of the ways in which digital code and computer tools could determine new types of human perception. Other works presented include Sarah M Farmer's process based score *Soundwalk (Vivid Projects Artist Bootleg Edition)* created at the launch of Mediafest; and *Stop She Said (1982-3)* the first slide-tape work made by the late Monica Ross in the context of the miners' strike, the Falklands war and the Thatcher government.

AV ROOM 1

Steina | Violin Power | 1970-8 | 10 minutes, B&W, Sound, 4:3

Steina describes this ongoing work as a 'demo tape on how to play video on the violin'. It both explores the dynamic relationship between sound, music and the electronic image and references her evolution from classical musician to media artist. Beginning with footage from 1970 with The Beatles' Let It Be playing, the violin becomes an image generating tool as Steina connects it to multiple image-processing devices and layers images, audio and time.

AV ROOM 2

The Vasulkas | Noisefields | 1974 | 12 minutes, Colour, sound

The Vasulkas | Soundsize | 1974 | 4 minutes, 40 seconds, Colour, mono

Woody Vasulka | C-Trend | 1974 | 9 minutes, 47 seconds, Colour, mono

Woody Vasulka and Steina are world renowned electronic media artists who established the Live Audience Test Laboratory (The Kitchen) in New York in 1971. They produced a pioneering body of electronic imaging works between 1974-1992. After seeing the ground-breaking TV as a Creative Medium exhibition at the Howard Wise Gallery in 1969, they began early experiments with sound and video. The Vasulkas quickly became central to the burgeoning underground scene in Soho, with Steina documenting rock concerts and underground events alike using the first Sony Portapak camera. In 1971 they founded The Kitchen, an electronic arts and sound "test laboratory which became a haven

for the new video artists. The Kitchen soon became a NYC legend, presenting screenings, performances and concerts ranging from the new music of La Monte Young to Talking Heads, and it continues today as one of the city's most interesting multi-media spaces. Since then the Vasulkas have continuously pushed boundaries, working with the entire range of formats and configurations of electronic media, installation and interactive technology, transforming the traditional genres of narrative and performance in the moving image, alongside pioneers such as Nam June Paik, Bill Viola and Joan Jonas.

Collaboration was and is absolutely central to the Vasulka's practice. Unlike almost anyone else working in the early 1970s, the Vasulkas didn't want the multi-purpose tools contained in a box, usually referred to as a synthesizer. They wanted to work in real time; and they wanted to combine and re-arrange material from a variety of primary sources. Throughout the 1970's, they collaborated with electronic engineers to create their own tools which were specifically intended to deconstruct video. Electronic engineers central to the development of these new devices include George Brown, Bill Etra & Steve Rutt, Jeffrey Schier and Eric Siegel. In the process, the Vasulkas developed new "imaging machines". The earliest machines built include the *Field Flip/Flop Switcher* (George Brown, 1971) a programmable device which allowed the user to switch between two image sources at a specified number of fields or frames and the *Horizontal Drift Variable Clock* (1972) enabling manipulation of the horizontal signal of the video image. Works including **Noisefields**, exhibited here, make use of these devices.

In 1974, Bill Etra & Steve Rutt designed and built the *Rutt/Etra Scan Processor*, an analogue image processor providing 'real time' electronic control over the deflection signals what produce the tv image (or 'raster'). The Vasulkas pushed the possibilities of Scan Processor, manipulating the raster's size, position and brightness, pushing the luminance of the input video signal until it affected the vertical position of the image. Through a process of systematic deconstruction, the Vasulkas created a new electronic language seen in their 1974 works **Reminiscence**, **C-Trend** and **Violin Power**, producing what Jeffery Schier called the 'Vasulka Effect' - frameless 'time-energy objects' constructed from the components of the video signal itself. A further important instrument was the *Dual Coloriser*, developed by Eric Siegel, which generates a colour signal (chrominance) from the brightness component of a monochrome video input such a camera or videotape. This generated a colour palette utilised in Vasulka tape works. By the second half of the 1970's, the Vasulkas were collaborating with Jeffrey Schier, a student at New York State University in Buffalo on what became the Digital Image Articulator. Steina's work **Cantaloup**, available to view in the Archive area, documents the building and operation of this device.

For Mediafest we are screening four seminal Vasulka works from this period - **C-trend**, **Noisefields**, **Soundsize** - and Steina's groundbreaking performative media project, **Violin Power (1970-1978)** developed using sound and video synthesisers.

EVENT AREA

Michael Lightborne | Digital Light Processing | 2018 | Multiple digital projection

Lightborne's experimental installation explores the objecthood of the projected image, the imagehood of the object, the thinginess of the projection screen, and the spatio-temporal presence of projected light. Combining now antiquated home movie and slide projection screens with contemporary DLP projectors that have been prepared or augmented in various ways, this piece situates digital projection within a long history of the moving, reflected and radiant image, proposing questions about our imagined relationship with the digital image, with virtual and real spaces, analogue and digital media, materiality and intangibility, the important and inconsequential, the singular and the multiple, work and art, blinky lights and loud noises.

'The moving image always transforms the space it occupies' - Chrissie Iles

'Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana' - Groucho Marx

Please note this installation closes 17:00, 26 October.

EVENTS

Carol Breen & Matthew Evans | Singing Litter | FREE | [Book here](#)

19 October, 19:00-20:00

Singing Litter is an audiovisual performance by Carol Breen & Matthew Evans which explores sonification. Data from imagery will be used as the catalyst for the creation of sound exploring the image as a sonic stimulant. The performance explores the aesthetics of analog, digital and post-digital imagery. **Please note this performance includes flashing lights.**

Singing Litter has been developed with the assistance of a Black Hole Club Presents bursary.

Sound Of The Projection Box | Talk & Performance Michael Lightborne | £2.99 | [Book here](#)

20 October, 14:00-16:00

This year Michael released an album of field recordings from cinema projection boxes (*Sounds of the Projection Box*, Gruenrekorder, 2018). This talk and workshop will explore how his project used phonographic field recording as a means of investigating the sonic environment of the projection box, the work of the projectionist, and the sounds of 35mm film. This work formed part of a larger research project based in the University of Warwick, called [The Projection Project](#), which examined the role of the projectionist, and the history of cinema projection in the UK across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Michael will talk about the larger research project, the role of sound recording as a sensory ethnographic methodology and artistic practice within it, and will play some tracks from the album. Participants will get the chance to use induction coil and contact microphones to listen to the hidden sounds of both digital and analogue projectors, as well as CRT and flatscreen televisions.

Digital Light Processing | Live performance with Michael Lightborne | FREE | [Booking advised](#)

20 October, 19:00-120:00

A live manipulation of the system of projectors, screens and sound that makes up *Digital Light Processing*. Using induction coil microphones the electromagnetic fields produced by the individual projectors are amplified, processed and mixed, while the digital video flowing through the projectors is gradually altered to produce radical shifts and rhythmic patterns of image and sound.

Please note this performance includes strobing.

Tidal Cycles Workshop | £10 (plus booking fee) | Book [here](#)

27 October, 11:00-16:00

In this workshop we will cover everything you need to get up and running with [TidalCycles](#) (or just Tidal for short!) - a free and open source platform for live coding musical patterns.

ALGORAVE | £7.50 (plus booking fee) [here](#) | A Museums at Night event

27 October, 19:00-midnight

Featuring Shelly Knotts, co34pt, Heavy Lifting, Coral, hellocatfood, Sian Macfarlane, jack_mugglestone, Carol, Mike Dring, Echo Juliet.

To close the Mediafest Algorave returns to Vivid Projects for a night of live algorithmic techno and algorithmic visuals. Algorave is a combination of “algorithms” and “rave”, the opportunity to dance to alien rhythms and freaky visuals, all created from code before your eyes. The Algorave scene is fast-growing around the world building on its fine roots in electronic music history.

“.. not so much a revolution as a de-volution, a rolling back to the backend of music production, where the possibilities of the encoded information inside computer software is open and endless” – Mixmag

MEDIAFEST is curated by Yasmeen Baig-Clifford for Vivid Projects. Further info at vividprojects.org.uk

Thanks to The Vasulkas and LUX.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

 **PAUL MELLON CENTRE**
for Studies in British Art

