a closer look / hidden histories

RADICAL LEARNING, RADICAL PERCEPTION:

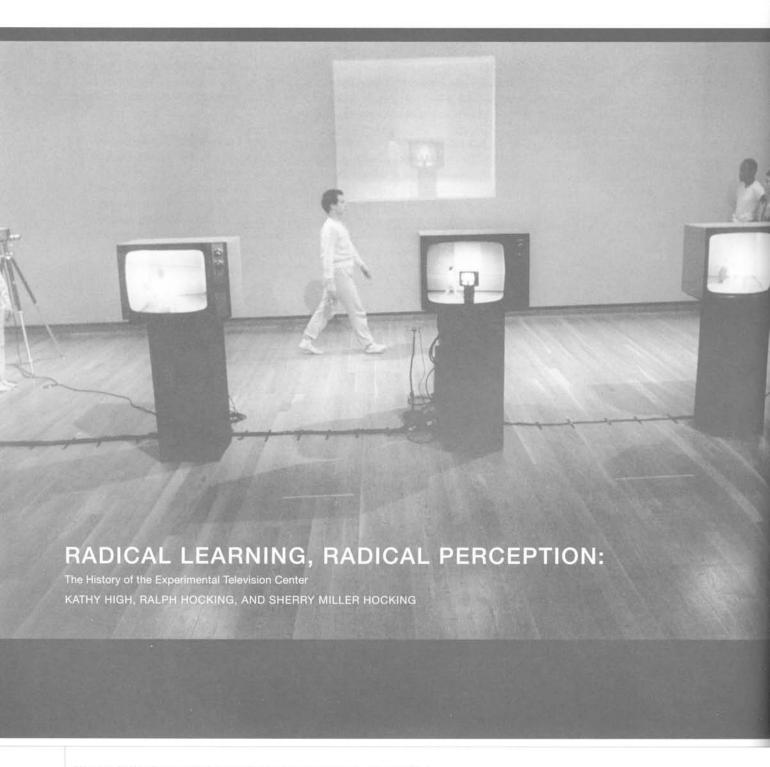The History of the Experimental Television Center

KATHY HIGH, RALPH HOCKING, AND SHERRY MILLER HOCKING

Movements for Video Dance and Music at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Ithaca, NY, April 1976. A video dance performance with Peer Bode and Meryl Blackman of ETC and Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane of the American Dance Asylum. Photo: Peer Bode

Senses and the physical world have always been my main directors. The theoretical has not been of much interest to me.
—*Ralph Hocking*

DURING the early 1970s, artists were moving outside existing organizational structures in attempts to create more utopian systems—in critique of television and even the art world and the economic engines they serviced. Video had been introduced within the countercultural milieu of the 1960s—a political and social climate marked by concerns for democratic process, a critique of the capitalist economic system, radical questioning of existing power structures, and collective or collaborative organizing principles. Artists struggled to access the new media tools of production as well as the system of distribution. As personal video tools were introduced, independent video was seen by some as an alternative to the one-way production and delivery system of broadcast television. Video art evolved alongside the centralized, one-way communications system of TV, then the dominant entertainment and information system. The instruments of TV were redirected from an institution of social and economic control into a system for creative activity and a means of self-determination within a two-way, interactive communications system.

It was during this period that the Experimental Television Center (ETC) became a hub for video engineering and artistic activity, first in Binghamton, New York, and later, in 1980, relocating to Owego, New York. In this small, quiet upstate town, a vital center of activity was established that would significantly affect video art history in New York State and beyond.

With the encouragement of founder and director Ralph Hocking, artists at ETC created machines and tools to manipulate sound and image. These experiments were often pursued with an amateur's love of invention. To this day, ETC remains a site for numerous collaborative artist-engineer developments. What might now be called a "hacker" model of reworking video and video systems was, in the early 1970s, the result of an intense interest in exploring uses of the tools of television to create a new genre of visual art and performance—an art created in dialogue with the machine. While ETC shared much with others active in the initial explorations of independent media in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it is unique for having remained constant in its goals: instrument building and the design and creation of unique image-processing tools and systems, coupled with a commitment to experimentation in electronic moving-image, sound, and performance media art.

Today, Hocking works with assistant director Sherry Miller Hocking to provide various services to the media arts community, including an artist-in-residency program, a sponsorship program for artists' projects, a range of grants programs, a vital video-history Web database (which collects ongoing contributions), and a variety of workshops. In Ralph's words, he created the Center as "a learning place and not a production house." It was not an organization in which engineers provided technical services to artists (as seen in broadcast television studios) but rather a place where artists and technicians worked in collaboration. Ralph built the Center as a model, encouraging artists to emulate it for themselves. He and Sherry anticipated a future in which artists might own their own portable video gear and could build their own studios, systems, and processing tools—and they provided that future until it became commonly attainable. ETC's history is one that predicted our own present. This model of tinkering, experimenting, and building is one that is worth examining and encouraging.

ORIGINS

In the late 1960s Ralph Hocking began working with television. At the time he was teaching at the State University of New York at Binghamton (now Binghamton University). Hocking taught the only photography class on the Binghamton campus at the time and was not associated with any particular department. He was committed to developing new models for teaching technology and the arts. Hocking describes the onset of his attraction to video in this context, and his earliest efforts on the campus and in the surrounding community:

> My charge was to make something happen that related to visual understanding and education. I remember several experiences with "educational television" in the early sixties. One was to observe a group of college students in Pennsylvania as they viewed several monitors in a classroom that had no proctor. They reacted in the most amazing ways to the information being given to them. Much of the reaction was childish, but some seemed to come from the frustration of not being able to believe what they were watching; and certainly they had no control over their situation. I guess in some ways that incident, and just generally thinking about technology and education, was how I became interested in working with video. It seemed to me that there must be better ways to use television as a tool for expression, but I really didn't have any answers as to what those ways might be. I knew then and know now that technology is not going to go away and that unless there is some way to temper technology with human sensibilities, technology will not serve the culture in general, just those who are in control of it. ... In 1969 I was able to convince the administration at Binghamton University to purchase several portable television systems. With some difficulty we then convinced the administration in Albany that it was okay to buy these things, even if they were made in Japan. I was told that this was the first purchase of anything other than American-made television equipment by the SUNY system.

> In 1969, my first approach to video was to lend the Portapaks to the students and faculty to see what they would do. The only stipulation was that they would have to give the equipment back to me. A year later I proposed to do the same thing in the community.[1]"

Getting video tools into hands of the users was an initial goal of many videomakers and nonprofit video groups at this time. They were interested in creating a new paradigm, an "anti-TV paradigm of 'producer'"—especially in New York State, where video collectives, artist-run organizations, and art production activity proliferated.[2] This was in large part thanks to the development of funding structures that supported this growth. In 1961, the New York State Legislature created the New York State Council on the Arts, which received initial funding of $450,000. In 1969, NYSCA's Film and Television Program began accepting applications for electronic media projects. In 1965, the Rockefeller Foundation began to fund artists for experimentation with video and helped establish artists' laboratories at public broadcasting studios such as WGBH in Boston, KQED in San Francisco, and WNET in New York City. And in 1967, the National Endowment for the Arts (which had been created by Congress in 1965) established its Public Media Program.

THE WORK BEGINS

Since I had no organization, the first money [from NYSCA] went to the local [television] station, WSKG, and they wrote me a check for $50,000.00. I opened a studio above a drugstore in Binghamton, bought some equipment, hired three people. I had no problem finding people who were interested on many levels. This was all about using the machines, experimentation, and unquestioned trust but not about collectivizing, directed outcomes, or other business, educational, or tribal goals. My approach was passionate but not judgmental. My history as a student in our educational schemes is one of miserable failure. I didn't want the traditional approach to dominate my efforts. It didn't and doesn't. As an educational experiment, the Experimental Television Center was and is a resounding success. It is ignored by traditional academia. While we were handing out Portapaks we were also supporting Nam June [Paik]'s efforts to build video synthesizers.

—*Ralph Hocking*

Kathy High preparing documentation tapes on the Center's analog processing devices, 2004. Photo: Sherry Miller Hocking.

Ralph Hocking began the Student Experiments in Television (SET) project on the campus of SUNY Binghamton in 1968–69. Along with students, community members were introduced to portable video production tools and techniques. There, in 1969, Angel Nunez taped *Bedford Stuyvesant Kids*, a video vérité document of neighborhood youth arrested by police after stealing from a factory. This tape was shown widely throughout the state and proved instrumental in obtaining funding for a number of drug-related initiatives and inner-city improvement projects. Parts of the tape were eventually broadcast by WNET-TV. Equipment from the program was used by many community-based organizations.

The Experimental Television Center began as an outgrowth of the Student Experiments in Television program. Hocking recounts the origins of the ETC program: "Nam June [Paik] told me to talk to Russ Conner, who was the person in charge of NYSCA's new video attempt. I was encouraged to apply for a grant but couldn't apply through the university because one state agency cannot give money to another state agency. My premise was more of the same: Give people machines and see what happens. Arts, education, and other interested people were the definition. It translates to everyone."

Hocking wanted to set up a program to invite artists into a studio to create work. He also wanted to encourage not just artists but all interested parties to participate. He was setting up a studio to support non-exclusive, non-hierarchical practices. Using collectivist principles of resource sharing, ETC instituted programs providing tools for artistic production and sharing the studio and video instruments with the media arts community, along with educational programs for those unaware of the possibilities of the new technology—thus providing free access for all.

With support from the New York State Council on the Arts, Hocking incorporated SET in 1970–71 as the Community Center for TV Production (later the Experimental Television Center), a nonprofit media center, in order to facilitate the uses of the new technology by three major constituencies: artists, community organizations, and interested citizens. The primary programs were designed to

help artists explore this new art form; ETC offered a residency program for artists, sponsorship to various foundations in support of artists' projects, an exhibition program,[3] and research facilities for the design of media arts tools. The early efforts, as Hocking describes them, harnessed the intended effects:

> My intention was to support as much unconventional machinery as possible while urging the usage of whatever we had for the development of video art. This led to many people in the arts community becoming aware that we were open to loans and usage in studio in addition to use of our space for presentations of arts-based ventures. Joan Jonas drove from NYC in a snowstorm to borrow a video projector that I had liberated from the campus. Bill Jones and Arnie Zane performed a time-delay dance. Woody and Steina [Vasulka] broadcast within the space. Nam June watched student videotapes and told them not to worry because he could see them while he was asleep [Paik had a propensity to sleep through many meetings]. The first gay video festival ever (queers all over the place). And on and on.

Democratization was an important part of the philosophy. In the 1960s and 1970s, various organizing strategies emerged, in part as a means to address the expense of the new video tools. Collaboration flourished in music and performing arts and was adopted as a method by media artists as they struggled to create new working models for the then-new medium of video. Collaboration was partly an economic strategy: some video instruments were beyond the reach of individual ownership. A 1969 video recording system that recorded monophonic sound with black-and-white images and lacked the ability to play back the tape would cost about $6,000 today. Group ownership was also a way to address the rapid advances in technology. "Production units"—co-ops, collectives, and media arts groups—also reflected the social and political zeitgeist of the times. ETC initially loaned equipment to "democratize" the tools of the medium. But another focus of the Center was the development of the tools themselves. ETC was and is a unique program because of an emphasis on developing "thinking systems"—artist-designed instruments.

From left: Shuya Abe, Bob Diamond, Nam June Paik, and Ralph Hocking install the Video Cello, constructed at ETC, at the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, 1972. Photo: Evangelos Dousmanis.

MAKING TOOLS/MAKING ART: THE RESEARCH AND ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAMS

Bob Diamond was the first fix-it guy I hired and David Jones was the second (and last). Both of them wanted to invent and were bored with the day-to-day upkeep of machines. They were influenced by Nam June and Shuya Abe during the time of synthesizer development and they both went on to develop their own machines. We were in constant revision with existing equipment, trying to make them do things they were not supposed to do. This was the interesting part of the studio structure that eventually won out over the lending to the community and having a space to show and tell. This was a deliberate push by me since it was obvious that we could not do all for everyone. It also became a situation where other organizations purchased available portable stuff and didn't need to borrow from us. Invention ruled and the artist-in-residence program was defined.

—*Ralph Hocking*

Supporting artists interested in investigating video as a contemporary art-making medium has always been the most important aspect of the Center's activities, reflecting Hocking's own background in the visual arts and his commitment to the individual artist. It was for this reason that ETC became more focused on artist residencies and in research for the design of new tools with which they could experiment. Thus the community-lending program was dropped in 1979, and exhibition programming a few years later. Initiated to provide a more flexible set of imaging tools to artists, the Research Program facilitated the design and construction of new video tools. It worked concurrently with the artist residency program to fulfill Hocking's vision for a new kind of video art practice:

> As we developed, mostly through David's efforts, machines for the express purpose of trying to make visual art, I tried to encourage individuals to set up their own studios. The norms had been, and for the most part still are, for artists to book time at studios that

satisfy their current needs. My interest was for people to wake up in the morning and practice their art making as painters, sculptors, and others in the visual arts—musicians, dancers, and performing artists—also do. It seemed not enough to occasionally visit the stuff of the art making. It would be like a painter having access to paint a few times a year. ... I feel the basis for my approach is the history of visual art and not theater, which seems to dominate in the arts and television in general.

The collaboration between artist and technologist had precedents and origins in the art of the early twentieth century. Those working in the area of "experimental" video, "image processing," or "video art" in the 1960s and 70s had to engage in tool design and development because the commercially available tools were both limited and limiting. Using commercial tools, the art of image and sound was bounded by corporate economic interests. Rejecting the restrictive definitions of what was "permissible" with image and sound, ETC began making tools to discover what might be possible.

In the early 1970s, the existing commercially available video tools for individual use were on the one hand astounding in their power and immediacy but modeled after broadcast capabilities and designed to meet specific television and educational requirements. In the hands of artists, these tools soon seemed unimaginative, expensive, and restrictive. In rejecting the definition of function as determined by commercial toolmakers, ETC engaged in a subversive and radical act. By creating tools, artists could make their own marks and mix their own colors, could parse the language of the electronic image and, indeed, define it.

Some of the first tools ETC put into the hands of artists were deconstructed and repurposed, or altered from their original design. ETC technicians began with modifications to existing tools—bringing out the controls on a portable camera to let artists manipulate gain and pedestal, reverse the field vertically or horizontally, or allow constant vertical or horizontal drift by altering the sync. In 1971, funding was received from the New York State Council on the Arts for construction of the Paik/Abe Video Synthesizer. Shuya Abe and Nam June Paik designed and built one system in 1972 at the Center for eventual placement at the Television Laboratory at WNET-TV. While still at the Center, this system was used by the Television Laboratory to produce a portion of Paik's *The Selling of New York*. A second Paik/Abe was completed for use in the Artist-in-Residence program at the Center, allowing artists and others an opportunity to explore the synthesizer's imaging possibilities and thus opening up the use of this instrument more broadly [4]

During the decade of the 1970s, ETC supported additional tool developments. David Jones designed colorizers, keyers, sequencers, and interface and control systems for use in the studio. In the mid-1970s, recognizing the importance of digital technologies, Paul Davis, Walter Wright, Dr. Don McArthur and David Jones of the Center began to research the interface of an LSI-11 computer with a video processing system, a collaborative project with the Vasulkas that was supported by the NEA. ETC's goal was to permit artists without extensive experience in what was at the time extremely complex software programming to use the digital imaging system; to achieve this, ETC developed strategies that included the use of familiar interfaces such as key-boards, joysticks, and knobs, with the programming operative behind these interfaces. Control systems were tactile and responsive, relationships with images and sounds were immediate rather than mediated by language structures and strictures.

ETC approached electronic technology as a medium for art-making and looked to the inherent properties of the medium: cinematic form, color, light, sound, motion. Image processing became the name of the "genre," although the techniques were also applied in narrative, documentary, and social issue works as well as in more formalist or experimental works. ETC shared a dedication to these systems with individual artists like the Vasulkas, Gary Hill, and Dan Sandin; designers and technolo-gists Bill Etra, Steve Rutt, Bill Hearn, and David Jones; and public broadcasting efforts including the National Center for Experiments in Television at KQED and the Television Laboratory at WNET.

In fulfilling its mandate to share resources and make video tools and systems accessible to all, ETC viewed its research as open-source. They shared information—from the operators' manuals they

developed to texts written about the concepts of image processing to information about how to construct processing devices. Sherry Miller Hocking reiterates the program's ultimate goals: "We were committed to disseminating the tools—to help put them in the hands of individual artists; essentially we were trying to put ourselves out of business. Once all artists could have in their individual studios these creative tools, there would be no more need for 'media centers' like ETC, and the art form would flourish. We envisioned desk-top video synthesizers which artists could assemble themselves." ETC was designed to become superfluous as an organization when all artists had equal and reasonable access to the tools of electronic cinema production, exhibition, and distribution.

To achieve this goal, ETC hosted informal groups of artists interested in building their own systems. The Tuesday Afternoon Club included Barbara Buckner, Sara Hornbacher, Matt Schlanger, Peer Bode, David Jones, and others. The Center participated in the Tele-Techno conferences in 1973–74, organized by the Videofreex and supported by NYSCA; the goal of this regularly scheduled phone conference linking New York State media groups—including ETC, Portable Channel, Media Study/ Buffalo, and others—was to share technical information. ETC-authored equipment manuals were widely disseminated to Media Study/Buffalo and other university-based and independent media groups. With support from the NEA in 1978, Sherry Hocking, Rich Brewster, and Walter Wright wrote a manual concerning the construction of a raster scan manipulation system that was also widely and freely distributed, and now posted on the Center's Video History Project Web pages.[5]

In the 1980s, as costs fell and capabilities increased dramatically, and as more community groups acquired their own video systems, access programs became unnecessary or shifted focus to other emerging, expensive tools such as computers. As a result of these technological changes, by the late 1970s and early 1980s the Center chose to refine its focus on artists' video, maintaining the artists residency and sponsorship programs, offering a grants program for artists and arts' organizations in the state, and encouraging the exhibition of works. The research program began to shift from the building of hardware to the development of software, the repurposing of commercial systems to make them more artist friendly, and the integration of old and new tools and systems. One software initiative provided control over image elements in still images of video that could then be printed. A natural extension of moving-image processing, this became an electronic darkroom for artists and a conceptual ancestor to Photoshop and other graphics programs. The Center continued to refine the relationship between artist and computer with the General Purpose Interface Board, which interfaced analog imaging equipment with an eight-bit computer, allowing manually changed knob settings to be "remembered" and repeated digitally. ETC also employed existing digital systems from the CAT Buffer to the Amiga computer, which offered a glimpse into the future of digital moving-image works.

The Center is known to this day for its artist-in-residence program, providing artists with a unique set of tools and an open-ended environment for exploration and creative growth. The image-processing system is today a hybrid tool set, permitting the artist to create interactive relationships between older, historically important analog instruments and new digital technologies.[6]

ETC: TODAY AND TOMORROW

Situated in a small town in upstate New York in a raw loft space overlooking the Susquehanna River, the studio of the Experimental Television Center is unpretentious, and the combination of tools housed there remains open to a diverse public of users. The tools are integrated into a system, built over the years, that speaks to the very philosophy of ETC: the emphasis is on interrelationships, not on discrete components. To this day there are such devices as an analog Sandin Image Processor (using voltage controls for regulators) interconnected with Apple G5 computer systems housing Max/ MSP and Jitter programs—a synthesis of older and newer technologies, the digital and the analog.

For Ralph Hocking, ETC has always been "a learning place." In 1983, he made a presentation at the Society for Photographic Education National Conference, whose theme that year was "Photogra-

phy within the New Technology/Defining a New Philosophy of Education." There, he explained the philosophy and working methods of the Experimental Television Center, then in its thirteenth year:

> I think of ETC as a learning place and not a production house. With very few exceptions, the artists in residence at the Center accept and I think agree with that definition. The people who work at the Center have to learn the systems because we will not act as a production crew. We help if help is needed only in the understanding of concepts and not in the production itself. My goal is to develop individual artistic expression using electronic technology as the tools. All of my efforts and those of the people connected to the center are aimed toward getting individual studios constructed in order for individuals to create. In essence, we are trying to put ourselves out of business, at least the access business. This position is, of course, contrary to the traditions of television but absolutely necessary if video is to mature as an art form. I find team videomaking about as interesting as team painting or team drawing. The visual expressions that seem the strongest to me have come from one mind and in general have been realized by that individual. My concerns in art and in education are with the individual differences in thinking and not in trying to fit ideas or people into their designated place. In order for individuals to develop their own studio, the cost of construction must be reasonable. We have our own research and development program aimed at making available tools at low cost. … We are quickly coming to a time when the tools are easily available, and the major problem will be what to do with them.

ETC continues to be primarily a center for testing and exploring processes, not necessarily a production center. Artists and groups of students go there to experiment and learn the systems, to work in dialogue with the machine. As Ralph Hocking explains it: "I have said that I want to give the control of the imagery to the machine within limits. Using voltage control is a method of finding what you don't know." With a commitment to processing and processes, and while it strives to become unnecessary by encouraging artists to develop and model their own working studios, ETC is not obsolete yet.

Ralph Hocking and others worked in tandem with the machine, explored processes of the new instruments, and "used voltage control as a method of finding what you don't know about." As a social space, a working space, ETC is rare among organizations these days because of this emphasis on experimentation and process. As a laboratory, ETC is being emulated in universities and in artist studios across the country. In this day of corporate monopoly and institutionalization, ETC remains singularly independent, with a keen interest in amateur invention, and it continues to provide artists with unique tool sets and an environment for exploration and creative growth. ETC is a key organization in the history of new media, and in the history of media arts in New York State. ETC's adaptive strategies, forward thinking, and dissemination of tools allowed artists to develop their work, create a new vocabulary, and build the field of media arts.

Sherry Miller Hocking and Ken Dominick videotape with a CV Portapak at the 8th Annual Avant Garde Festival at the 69th Infantry Regiment Armory, New York, 1971. Photo: Evangelos Dousmanis.

APPENDIX: SHERRY MILLER HOCKING
"SOME THOUGHTS ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE CENTER" [7]

Risk-taking is essential for innovation, but often it is initially antithetical to and rejected by institutions and traditions of mass culture and commerce. As the dominant culture redefines the risky work, its once-alternative form and content is appropriated into mass culture, branded and marketed for commercial gain. Dominant institutions invite alternative content and form when profit can be made.

Artists are risk takers. They envision what hasn't been. In this process, they may "misuse" or "misapply" the instruments—whether aesthetic tools or organizations—deploying them in ways unforeseen and unpredictable. As an organization, ETC incorporates this thinking, and provides programs and resources to support, encourage, and celebrate artists and their honesty and courage in the creative processes. The environment for residencies emphasizes a richness of resources, opportunities for

continued learning, and freedom for experimentation and research without undue regard for the end "product." Artists need to be able to "fail"—to change their minds, to reject entire projects, to begin anew. We have a responsibility to advocate on their behalf. The creation of a new work doesn't always proceed as planned or end in the place expected. That's okay.

ETC was created by an artist for other artists, and is guided by that spirit. If the art work is experimental, the process, the discourse, and the practice should also be experimental. While many early organizations operated as collectives in order to produce collaboratively and share the cost and use of then-expensive tools, the Center was organized as an egalitarian assembly of individuals—artists, educators, and technologists—working together to help define electronic media art and the programs which sustain it.

Small is sometimes good. We operate from an economy of scale and sustainability, mindful of our capacity and interests and mission. ETC believes in a culture that embraces a responsibility to support artists and their work, and to make the arts accessible for the benefit of all citizens.

Annie Langan, Monica Duncan, and Matt Underwood, co-instructors at the 9th annual International Summer Residency at ETC, 2004. Photo: Aaron Miller.

ETC was founded to contribute to the re/definitions of this new medium and its arts practices. We see historical precedents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—Futurism, Constructivism, Pointillism, Kineticism, Expressionism, ready-mades, Fluxus, Conceptual art, light works, Minimalism. The form is hybrid, embracing many contradictory ideas. Artists who worked in the early years of ETC, as in the field as a whole, came from different art forms and brought with them a variety of conceptual frameworks. ETC supported many projects that were intermedia in nature, incorporating live performance, sculptural and installation forms, elements of film, music, dance, or theater.

We remain interested in electronic media as a visual/sonic arts practice. The phenomenology of video is time-based and cinematic. We see video as immaterial and infinitely reproducible; it can operate as a formalist document of electronic and electromagnetic processes; it is oriented to process not object; it may function as a concept and not a commodity. It is a medium that creates itself. While illusionistic, it helps us frame the "other"—reality outside ourselves. It is immediate and interactive. The apparatus may be sculptural or seemingly invisible.

Technological inquiry is fundamental to the development of media art as the engine for the creation of the instruments of aesthetic experimentation. An artist's use of contemporary tools reflects personal, cultural, and social beliefs and assumptions about science. Video has antecedents in other technologically based arts throughout history.

The goal of research at the Center was the development of systems accessible to artists—directly through the Residency Program, or indirectly by creating and sharing information resources that encourage artists to acquire personal instruments. The process of research involves a culture of conversations among artists and technologists as equal participants.

A prolonged, ceaseless dialog between artist and instruments is essential to creating works. Artists must live with the tools of their art-making. We have tried to help people do this.

The instruments and systems at ETC share certain traits. They are flexible and open-ended; they support a branching architecture, and allow artists to create unique combinations of image and sound; they are immediately responsive, and usable by amateurs without a specialized knowledge base; they help expand the vision and function of television tools; they require thought and engagement, and challenge presumptions; they are performative and generative; they encourage individual ownership.

Within the last two hundred years, the evolution of the technology has transformed the ways we perceive and engage the world. The history of image and sound technologies is the history of a struggle with space and time, the two primary properties of video and new media.

Invention in the sciences involves impulses similar to art-making—risk-taking, surprise, innovation, rejection of the norm, constant questioning of assumptions. The "failure" of a particular work may lead to unintended or unanticipated but powerful results. The search is ceaseless.

We have an ethical responsibility to share information we develop about new tools. Collaboration and sharing of information were a part of the early philosophy of the media arts field. We gave away videotapes, disseminated schematics, and shared knowledge so that all could benefit. Many people were involved for love; we were amateurs. The gift economy and our personal commitments and ethical stance in the world assured us that we could survive.

And finally…

An institution has a life span. When it achieves its mission, it's okay to stop.

KATHY HIGH is a media artist, curator, and teacher living and working in upstate New York and Brooklyn. Her videos and installations look at issues of gender and technology and other subjects. She is associate professor and chair of the Department of Arts at Rensselaer Polytechnic University in Troy, New York.

RALPH HOCKING is professor emeritus of Cinema at Binghamton University and recently released *Works: 1969–1986*, a DVD of his early video, in partnership with the Institute for Electronic Arts.

SHERRY MILLER Hocking is assistant director of the Experimental Television Center and continues to work on Web publication projects about early media art history.

NOTES:

1. All quotations from Ralph Hocking are from conversations with Kathy High, unless otherwise noted.

2. In the media universe of the late 1960s and early 1970s, artists chose to work either alone or in groups, or to use the facilities of the newly founded media centers. Collaborations and other forms of working relationships were initiated among artists, between artists and technologists, and among media and other art disciplines. Artists created collaborative working relationships to achieve projects that pushed the boundaries of conceptual and activist art works at collectives such as Ant Farm, TVTV, Raindance, the Videofreex, and Lanesville TV.

3. ETC had a regular exhibition series every spring for many years—the first video screening series in the Southern Tier—and brought many artists to Binghamton to show work and meet audiences. ETC saw the exhibition of work as integral to the making process. These exhibition series were formalized in 1976 as *Video by Videomakers*. The Center also hosted many traveling series such as the Ithaca Video Project Festival and the Creative Artists Public Service Program Fellows for the regional community. The annual exhibition series brought video artists like Beryl Korot, Woody and Steina Vasulka, Harald Bode, Ernest Gusella, Gary Hill, Shigeko Kubota, and Dickie Landry.

4. The Paik/Abe Video Synthesizer (PAVS) was developed in several places, including in collaboration with students at the California Institute of the Arts and at the New Television Workshop at WGBH-TV in Boston. While an artist-in-residence at WGBH, the necessity of such a device became acutely clear to Paik, who was frustrated by the production means of the large television studio: "Big TV studios always scare me. Many layers of 'Machine Time,' parallely running, engulfs my identity. It always brings me the anxiety of Norbert Wiener, seeing the delicate yet formidable dichotomy of Human Time and Machine Time. … In the heated atmosphere of the TV control room, I yearn for the solitude of a Franz Schubert, humming a new song in the unheated attics in Vienna."

5. Begun in 1994, ETC's "Video History Project" is a research initiative that reflects the complex evolution of the media arts field and its many stories, and encourages a collective voice in the crafting of the histories. Mainly through the efforts of Sherry Miller Hocking and Mona Jimenez, ETC also organized "Video History Making Connections," a conference in 1998 at Syracuse University concerning the links between early media history and contemporary practice, and "Looking Back/Looking Forward," a working symposium on media preservation held in New York City in 2002. These projects, and the Video History Project, utilize the implementation of collaborative strategies for the advancement of electronic moving-image preservation resources and tools. For more information see http://www.experimentaltvcenter.org/history/index.html.

6. Artists who have worked through the Center since 1972 include such first-generation figures as electronic pioneers Nam June Paik and Shigeko Kubota; poet Jackson MacLow; video artist Gary Hill; filmmakers Ernie Gehr, Jud Yalkut, and Hollis Frampton; and Hollywood director Nicholas Ray. Artists Peer Bode, Shalom Gorewitz, Barbara Buckner, Larry Gottheim, and David Blair also received sponsorship support in earlier decades, while resident artists later included Dan Reeves, Maureen Nappi, George Stoney, Barbara Sykes, Arthur Tsuchiya, Peter Rose, Kathy High, Shu Lea Cheang, Taka Iimura, John Knecht, Vanalyne Green, Peter D'Agostino, Alan Berliner, Irit Batsry, Thomas Allan Harris, Abigail Child, Jillian McDonald, Barbara Hammer, Ken Jacobs, Jeffrey Lerer, Kristin Lucas, Slawomir Grunberg, and many others. Artists continue to create works at ETC in the new millennium, among them Torsten Burns, Darrin Martin, Kristin Lucas, Lynne Sachs, Aaron Miller, Shaun Irons and Lauren Petty, Alex Hahn, Amoeba Technology, LoVid and Termite TV.

7. From a presentation by Sherry Miller Hocking given in 2000 at the Munson Williams Proctor Institute, Utica, New York. Dedicated to Ralph Hocking, whose vision made ETC. And to the thousands of artists whom ETC has had the privilege of working with. For a more detailed chronological history, please visit ETC History at http://www.experimentaltvcenter.org.

a closer look / hidden histories

A CLOSER LOOK 2005 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of NAMAC as a national organization serving independent media.

We invited seven authors to look back at some of the "hidden histories" of the field: from under-recognized artists, collaborations and collectives, to organizations and intentional media communities. These creative clusters, found throughout the country, have embodied the dynamic spirit and vision of this media movement that continues to gain energy from – and exists in key dialogue with – issues of identity and race, marks of regionality, processes of tool and technology exploration, and the artifacts of mediated communication scattered throughout the environments we inhabit.

The anthology opens up a field of inquiry for a new generation that may know very little about the artists, the organizations, or the times in which the media arts, as a self-described field, began developing and growing in cultural influence. Delving into perspectives about these subjects that only the long view backward can offer, the authors map a wide range of activities from a twenty-first century point of view, and look at how these transmissions from the past remain more than relevant today as our media environments change at warp speed. What are the lineages and patterns of practice that, when re-examined, have fresh significance for the concerns facing artists and organizations?

These histories are strong reminders that uncertainty, playfulness and openness to unpredictability are part of the effort of making media. The driving forces surrounding the subjects that these authors explore may have changed over the years, but the questions they amplify re-emerge in new ways as creative generations overlap and eventually succeed one another.