

JOHN HANHARDT: Film and media arts.

WOMAN: Film and media arts.

HANHARDT: Capturing(?) film (laughter) and the media arts. You don't know the effort that went into that title. Because of the message that I want to send to that institution. Because I had been... I should just introduce myself a bit, in that my career has really been devoted to bringing film and the media arts into the context of the museum as an institution, and to have the resources of that institution support that work; in other words, support the artists. This is going to be sort of my mantra through this presentation, and is what I have learned from artists. I mean, this is what has enabled me—because I listened to them. And they would tell me, “You should be doing this.” And this is what artists did historically; they told us in institutions, they told the funders what to do. And this is what I want to reflect on. And Karen said, “John, this should be an inspirational talk.” Well, I'd love to just hold up a big mirror instead of a safe. (laughter) I mean, this is a little irony here—(laughs) Now, where's the money?—is hold up a mirror to reflect all of you. Because as artists, as distributors, as exhibitors, as funders have been so important—have been, are—you're doing something that's extraordinarily important. And we saw last evening in the screening, this extraordinary diversity of work. I mean, I felt: This is fantastic; I'm seeing all these communities of practice, all these styles and genres being represented, and happening throughout the state—which it has historically. So there's a history behind what you're doing. And I know a lot of that

HANHARDT (Cont.): history is in this room, in the people that have been active throughout the state. And in a nutshell, my career, in terms of working with museums to bring them behind media arts began where I learned how a museum could have a collection and could establish focus. That was the Museum of Modern Art. And that's where I began. And from there, went to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, where I established their film program and collection. And then from there, to the Whitney Museum of American Art, where I expanded the film program to engage and include video and installation, and bring that work into the biennials and to a range of exhibitions. And again, bringing that institution as a place to ideally represent the work the way the artists want it to be seen. That's the point. And from there, when I reached a point myself that I'd been there for so long that I wanted a change, I was very fortunately invited by Tom Krens to join the Guggenheim in 1996, to develop it's— what we call global program, of course, international program of film and video, collecting and exhibition. I'm going to return to some of that.

And what Paula did this afternoon was something else I want to respond to. It was a perfect situation to hear both the way she was directing these questions and issues and the way we were responding. And things came to mind that I'd like pick up, after speaking a bit about some history. And I really want to remind ourselves of the power, the resourcefulness and the success of the media arts. And I want to extend an understanding of that, historically across the twentieth century, from the invention of film, the development of electronic media, video and television, the development of the internet,

HANHARDT (Cont.): interactive video game technologies, this is a propelling development of the moving image, as sound and image, across the twentieth century. And essentially, artists took these technologies and transformed them into new art forms by remaking the technologies, by challenging the languages that those technologies were designed, and the way their traditional histories had been constructed, and to create something new. And another thing that we cannot forget is that all of these art forms, these technologies of the moving image, fundamentally impacted on all of the arts. The performing arts, visual arts, plastic arts, you know, dance, theater, literature, everything—photography—all changed because of the impact of the moving image, [so] that that history of the twentieth century is going to be rewritten fundamentally, in terms of arts and culture, because of what happened in the twentieth century and what happened over the past thirty years. It's going to be a fundamental rewrite. And the museums are going to have to accommodate, or they won't be the relevant institutions of the future. Because our visual culture is becoming a media culture. People have talked about, "Well, media is everywhere." It *is* everywhere. It's like paper was everywhere. But as an artist learned to work with pigment and paint and transform a medium and a material, learn from technology, science, how to create perspective, so artists have worked with film, video, electronic digital media, to give us new ways of seeing and understanding and representing the world around us. That's what we saw last night. And that's what the arts and artists have given us.

HANHARDT (Cont.): Now, over this history of the past thirty years, things—
developments that we were talking about this morning, have changed dramatically.
However, I really think we have to understand that these changes that are happening now have
been happening over a period of time. We're now in a continuing set of changing
practices and opportunities, at the same time that the very notion of fields and disciplines
is changing, as media collapse into one another and move in a variety of directions. Thus,
we're really in an ongoing process of redefining, re-strategizing our efforts to see a
history that we want shown and represented, as well as making a place and space, and
producing new work.

Now, I want to remind ourselves—and I've mentioned this already—that what has been
achieved in looking at that past thirty years, and the role that artists have played. And
when I'm talking about artists, I'm talking about an open definition of art practice, all
genres, styles and practices; what roles these artists have played. And it can't be over-
emphasized, the establishment of federal and state funding for film and the media arts,
artists impacted on how those policies were written. Artists as activists informed the
establishment of the funding guidelines, and knitted together the support for production,
distribution and exhibition. They understood the issues. It was not an abstract concept,
but addressed how you could exist as an artist; how you could exist as an artist by
showing your work, and by showing your work so that people would know about your
work. And thus, production, distribution, exhibition. And the creation of the alternative
space movement, again, led by artists, as sites for creating and representing a diverse

HANHARDT (Cont.): array of innovative art practices, from audio performance, media installation, all these practices. These were incubators. These were the places where artists could see their work and other artists' work. And presenters—this is where I— this is my school. I would go to The Kitchen, all these places, to see this work. And to the artists' studios.

Now, all of that is modeled, I think, in part— and I don't think we should forget independent film—I'm looking for Michelle—distribution. The co-ops that were fashioned by filmmakers as a way to distribute their work; the work that Jonas Mikas did to locate independent film programs in theaters; the whole new American film movement, this was an independent feature movement—Shirley Clarke and other filmmakers, whose work was seen as a way to empower their work in production, and get it out into exhibition—was developed before there was public funding. That history that precedes, in the early seventies, the public funding initiatives is, I think, a model. And also, the kind of networking that took place in film. The Pittsburgh Filmmakers Travel Sheet. Now, many of you don't know this, but here was a travel sheet organized by an independent film group in Pittsburgh, that listed and identified filmmakers coming to the United States, traveling in the United States, where you could share their availability and resources at screening centers everywhere—before the internet. So, you know, a lot of these models people have been talking about are, in a sense, in place, in play to remember.

HANHARDT (Cont.): Then the development of the videotape, the portapak technologies, the response to television was, once again, led by artists. Independent video collectives expanded the playing field, and established goals and means for changing television, through cable, public access, and the Public Television TV labs—perhaps one of the most important moments in Public Television’s history—and the very instruments that artists created, the image processors that altered the visual landscape of moving image making, developed by artists in the late 1960s and early seventies. All of these initiatives are artists as individuals and collectives sharing resources, fighting for studio access, working in institutional and non-institutional environments and settings outside of the industry, seen, and seeing themselves, in a complex relationship to the cultural and public spheres. I think this is very important. And so the terms of what we have today were set, to some measure, to large measure, in this period—a period of dynamic change, which we’re going through again, as those models are forced to change, as earlier ones were, for a variety of cultural, political, economic and technological reasons; the internet, obviously, and the interactive media creating new tools and forms of creative expression.

Now, when we look back over thirty years, we see what I like to call a thick history, a complex history of creativity and proactive practice and organization, a linking of cultural and social activism. The roles that foundations played—and I’d like to remember, from Ford, the role they played in film, to Rockefeller and the role they played in video—and how they worked together with state and federal funding.

Organizations such as NAMAC—where the C used to stand for Centers, now Cultures—

HANHARDT (Cont.): established in 1980, as Dewey mentioned this morning, was an organization that was created by the field to support a lobby for its own interests, which linked, once again, production, distribution, exhibition. Those were developing in the public funding sector through the seventies. The field then saw a need to organize, lobby for itself; and created NAMAC to do that. A field that was seen as inclusive of a variety of art practices, a variety of communities, and a variety of histories. And I put histories in the plural. Installation and single-channel video, independent feature film productions, independent documentaries, personal diary productions, political, activist documentaries—the list goes on—image processing, a variety of performance, audio and narrative making strategies embracing feminist, political, multi-cultural, gay/lesbian issues of self-reflection and empowerment all emerging, and unfolding over this timeline. What an amazing history.

And I can't stress this enough. A contested debate was going on through and about all of these issues throughout this period. It wasn't, oh, we all got sat at a table and we all agreed. It was a debate. People were fighting, because they were individuals. Their programs represented individual constituencies. And we cannot homogenize ourselves into single languages. We should be using ourselves to re-empower where we can work as a collective, and how we can continue as individuals. And all of these debates were so important, because they increased awareness of the very variety of practices and interests, and the need to respond to them.

HANHARDT (Cont.): So I thought that I would talk a bit— some personal observations on that history and relate them to today. And one of them is the role of individuals within funding organizations. Individuals make the difference because of how they formulate, how they interpret institutional guidelines on federal and state levels of public funding, as well as foundations—individuals in this room, who have been so important historically and today to NYSCA. But the person I'd like to cite, because I'm sure he's not known by many of you, is Howard Klein at the Rockefeller Foundation in the early 1970s; and how he listened to the field—to Nam June Paik and to others—and provided support for artists to innovate. He gave money for the development of image processing; he provided the technical support that allowed me to create the video viewing space at the Whitney. And I realized then, and increasingly, how individuals make the difference by staking a position and formulating guidelines and policy. The control of discretionary use of funds allowed funders to develop policy through support of specific projects. And today, we have— which we've been talking about—we have the overall political change, a reduction in all areas of public support, thus causing foundations to shift priorities to social areas away from traditionally defined culture. We have to formulate, within a new generation of private family foundations, as well as the established foundations, new strategies for enabling and empowering support to this changing and continuing media cultural paradigm. We have to tell stories about what we're doing that people can understand, and then become vested in. They *want* our stories. I just— you know, I can't say that enough. They want to hear what we're doing. And I think it's absolutely important. I think that we also have to critically look at some of the things that have been put into place. Creative

HANHARDT (Cont.): capital. I mean, how is this working? You know. And examine it. And policy should be informed and should not be seen as static. And it is something that has to be responsive to the artists who are creating the work that is so important.

And there was what I would like to call—another point—a creative distrust, over the past—in these years, seventies and eighties, a creative distrust of established institutions; yet an understanding that they could be changed. And this was, of course, formulated in an era of social change. And collectives showed a way of working together and addressing institutions. And I remember when I began the What's Happening documentary program that Willard Van Dyke and I worked on at the Museum of Modern Art, that there were collectives creating alternative political documentaries, who had to decide whether they wanted to be shown at the MOMA. You know: Do we want our work shown there? What is this institution? You know, is this a place that should be showing work that's attacking the very people that are on the board? And so that kind of dialogue of that activist film forcing a change on an institution, because I fought to bring that work in, and my director fought to support me in representing work that the board, in fact, reacted against. What I learned right there, at the beginning of my career, was that program needed to be defended; and that risks had to be taken; and that what I was then achieving was through mentoring. I was being given an opportunity. And we who are established now have to give this opportunity to new a generation. So both of these issues, I think, pertain today; new ways to bring new issues and work into program, as well as supporting a new generation of leadership in the field. The increasing

HANHARDT (Cont.): proliferation of the field, the opportunity for new programs to be developed, I think, is real, and is definitely on the horizon of what's happening.

The impact... I want to be careful. I get carried away. So I'm sorry. (laughter) I don't want this inspiration to turn into tedium. But anyway... (laughter) Let me just... The impact of NEA and NYSCA guidelines. I—I can't stress enough, again, from the media arts center concept, which challenged the field to allow it to get more funding by that triad of production, distribution and exhibitions supporting it, to the pressure that it would put those public policies on organizations, institutions to open up their boards, to open up their programs, to diversity, to represent diversity. Remember those issues? They were very important. Enabled by these funding institutions. And NYSCA has been instrumental in making this state—from Buffalo, Binghamton to New York, the center—and Woodstock—the center, the model to state arts funding around the country. And here, we need to understand that individuals working at NYSCA fought for our programs, fought for us. Tough decisions were needed. And today, with the reduction of support, we need to find new funding partners, structurally realigning the field, turn our—I like to think of turning our organizations into kinds of laboratories that can link long-term funding to their development. I think there's an interest in going into—to supporting institutions to develop themselves as laboratories, and bring new sources of support. The developments of—the collapse of the dot-com boom has seen organizations that wouldn't come for public funding now coming in and discovering the public funding area. And this, I think, is an opportunity to restructure. Private—the new foundations I

HANHARDT (Cont.): discussed earlier—and public funding alliances, to direct them to new programs that can establish alliances between new and more established programs, by addressing and creating shared interests.

One of the things I mentioned this morning was the role of new media in Europe and Asia, and the public programs and support that we see at “*Zed Kah M*”, the Center for Kunst and Media, ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany; Ars Electronica in Austria, and other initiatives that represent institutional new media support that we don’t see here. Cities that have funds, throughout Germany and France, that... And these European and Asian versions of public and state funding, private and corporate support, are going to go through some period of struggle in Europe; but there’s still a lot there. And I think that as they grow in Asia, as culture and technology are seen as a means for state and capital formation, in the face of China’s rapid development, that there’s going to be very interesting opportunities for alignment. And I feel that our history of state and federal support realized a variety of initiatives unmatched elsewhere. Public funding made something happen that is unmatched in the rest of the world. But with its collapse, we have to look to partnering and linking with global programs. And here I would cite the international biennials, Documenta—they produce work—art fairs; these can be valuable production and distribution centers ripe for alliances with all of you. And they don’t know about you. I’ve told—I mean, they want... I’m just so convinced. (laughter)

HANHARDT (Cont.): Also, collaborating. As we've seen the acquisition of media artwork by museums, so museums can become effective producers. I've been able to bring the Guggenheim Museum, through its Berlin program, which is supported by Deutsche Bank, to support production; the creation of Bill Viola's large installation, *Going Forth by Day*, which was produced at a cost of well over one-million dollars. So this was monies that the institution brought to the support and creation of a major media artwork.

So in talking about the past, I think it's important that we not become nostalgic, or as an act of nostalgia. Nor can we simply turn back the clock or model our practices on this past. But we can learn from those successes and failures. And there's a kind... I'm not going to go into detail about the art world, because the art world is an incredibly interesting model to what's happening across our culture, in terms of support; but there's this painful irony that the efforts by curators on behalf of film and the media arts in museums around the country, from which artists, the art world, and the public benefited, learned so much, are increasingly under threat. The invaluable historical and contemporary theatrical film programs are being threatened—and even new media programs—as the victim of budget cuts, reduced funding, internal politics at these institutions, and a lack of imagination. And I would cite the recent developments at the Walker Art Center, the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, and Harvard University. The history of theatrical film is absolutely crucial, as well as single-channel video, to institutions art practices today. But in many of these institutions I've just mentioned,

HANHARDT (Cont.): leadership... I actually spoke to— heard from a museum director that said, “Why do we have to show films? Aren’t they all available on video at your store? I mean, can’t you... They’re available anyway.” And I think that what’s happened is that they have seen the introduction of installation practice as substituting for representing the full history of film and video—which is all connected, and you can’t give up that theatrical presentation. But there was a problem. There was a limited response to these developments from our field. No— few protests. And I think this is a problem. So with our success comes a development like this, which I’ve described. And we should be responding. And we should be learning from these developments. The art world of galleries, museums, collectors, art fairs, et cetera is a very special case scenario, and something that we can examine and look at in terms of the limited understanding of history; but yet the fact is that the art world is fundamentally changing through the moving image.

I want to conclude with some thoughts in response to Paula’s presentation and the list that we saw. Because as I keep saying, we are in a transitional period that’s effecting—and I think we have to understand—is all cultural production. It’s presentation and reception. We are not alone. It’s effecting all of it. And what we achieved has been extraordinary, and is now fundamentally changing. And what I like to call the big problem—the elephant in the room, I call it—is the loss of public funding, and the private funding support. The impact of the dot-com collapse, the politics of Washington, and the politics of states and cities, as we heard, around the country. We have to organize to

HANHARDT (Cont.): respond on a local and national and international basis. The market now rules. And it can, I believe, be a flexible and innovative means to produce, show, sell and distribute work. But once again, the capitalist model of constantly increasing profits being the measure of success, rather than small markets sustaining value and profit, needs to be recognized as a problem, and critiqued, and the alternatives established and supported. Remember what Garrison was saying last evening. When independent video is shown on PBS, it's seen by a larger audience than attends the museums in a year. And the figures, I'm sure, for CUNY's Public Television programs are significant. The impact of cable is proving that smaller markets support innovative television. HBO, again, the pay-per-view, the digital delivery. There are, I think, some... HBO provides a very interesting case of partnering for production and access to resources. I think you can hear what I'm saying is that I'm looking to use my institution as a way to produce major media—in terms of capitalization—work. And collaboration becomes a key to this. And we have to think on larger and smaller scales, and move nimbly, and be radical in our vision in empowering new sources for art and its presentation and distribution.

Here, the internet is a powerful promotional and distribution tool, as a means to link sites on the ground, because we can empower ourselves as global communities of shared differences, as well as being a means of promotion and streaming media distribution. It's an important new platform that we need to seize and develop. I would cite Shu Li Chiang's(sp?) project she did with the Guggenheim, where she brought in a variety of

HANHARDT (Cont.): sites around the world to her project, enabled through the web, the internet connection. And that work was ultimately brought into our collection. And when I say this idea of working with the media arts field globally and locally—think locally and globally—I know it’s— everybody— you know, it’s a kind of hackneyed term. But I think it’s absolutely essential to have to develop new production, distribution and exhibition models. And here I’m very interested in the micro radio, low power radio, wireless internet, empowering possibilities for networking support and programming. Again, looking at Shu Li and Berlin, the way... It was going into studios, where artists were broadcasting on the web, in the city, in neighborhoods. It was fantastic. And linking that to the microcinemas, to performance, music sites, the micro radio I mentioned, these are all enabling opportunities that are part of what’s redefining our field. And again, our models from the past can encourage us to the success that we can create.

And I think that we have to see the profit and not-for-profit model really challenged—I think there’s some policy issues here—to allow for a more fluid movement of investment and production and exhibition. And we need to empower new sources of criticism and information. And again, the internet and local forums and festivals become stages for new work and new ideas. Smaller markets and shared funding can support specific areas of creativity and activity. And remembering how public funding was there to create an alternative film community, I think this mixing of funding to bring in local program support. Again, EAI was a great example of working with a website for international sales and creating local programming at Dia. And that kind of institutional collaboration,

HANHARDT (Cont.): picking up the costs. Institutions want to collaborate. And I think that in looking at these local markets, also, that we shouldn't only look at the mainstream, blue chip galleries, but we should see the variety of cultures and markets, and the fact that there's a new generation of collectors, people who want to support, not only through their family foundations, but as collectors, and actually could get involved in supporting initiatives. And I think this means working with... It can be a very interesting match, in terms of artists across generations. And again, on the community level, I like to think of where I'm visiting from, Mass MOCA, where the museum there and the community of North Hampton(sic) became centers for new music, as we see in sites throughout New York State.

And I want to conclude by saying that the opportunity for alliances globally and across institutions, I think that we can broker ourselves into new alliances, where we hold firm to our ideas and ideals; and that the integrity of the artist, however defined, not only as an individual, but as a linked community of players—I can't stress this enough—has to be supported, because our field, as it's expanding, redefining and changing, with new a generation, new world views, ideologies that are in the making today, that they need to be forged in compelling and clear arguments. The impact here of new fields of study, cultural studies, theories, being felt in the language of a new generation of artists, where popular culture and the history of movies are now the primary reference for our culture, and where the avant gardes are historical resources that are being manipulated instantly with the art world, and absorbed into popular culture. So we have to enable new

HANHARDT (Cont.): constellations of practices, identifying genres and issues, knitting them together as markets and funding opportunities, and moving ahead and participating in redefining what we defined over the past thirty years. And I think the issue of preservation has been one of the outstanding examples of how the field is knit together to impact institutions on reclaiming history by preserving that work.

As I said, the playing field is changing, and we need to play and define the media arts not as one discourse, but as a linked playing field of discourses dispersed geographically, politically, ideologically, aesthetically. And just as academic disciplines are changing, so is art making, its presentation and its reception defined not by medium anymore, but as fluid forms of expression, where artists seize and employ what best expresses their interest; not media specific, but there are media specific histories. And this is what we have to put together. And we can only respond to this, again, by listening to the artists; listening to the artists of an earlier generation; listening and looking at the work being created today, just as we did thirty years ago, to bring them in, partnering them and forging new cross-institutional practices and ways of producing, thinking about, and representing the media arts. We must lead that change. Thank you. (applause)

I think I talked too long, but anyway. It's just stuff I've been wanting to... You know, for me, it was a real privilege to be in front of you, to be given this opportunity. But for me, what had been very interesting in talking to— having a chance to see people who I've been hearing about, programs which I'd known about earlier and haven't seen more

HANHARDT (Cont.): recently, is... I think this kind of meeting and gathering is absolutely essential. But I think that what has to happen, just to repeat, is the way we can strategically, you know, work, in very specific and smaller ways, toward larger goals of change. I think that is a key. We don't all have to buy into the same language. We don't have to buy it; but we can find particular goals that can shape and support us, as the genius and strength of each of your individual programs and the constituencies you represent are powered by how we can all support each other. Thank you. (applause)

KAREN HELMERSON: Well, it's almost ominous to come up to the podium after that. It's like... But anyhow... Here I am. (laughter) It's time to close. There are a few closing remarks; there's a little bit of housekeeping. And I'm going to stand; I'm trying to find a place to stand, so I can see you all.

I just want to thank John, especially, for that. He and I certainly, you know, spoke a while ago about this convening and this meeting. And when I was talking with some colleagues about having this, his name came up right away, and we called him that very same day, before he even knew what we were doing, or before we knew what we were doing. We just thought of him, and he said yes. So that was a wonderful surprise, because I thought: Oh, gee, you know, that's really— it was really quite an honor for you to say yes that day, and it's been a tremendous honor to have you with us as you have been, and spending this much time, and then your presentation. So I want to say thank you, especially.

HELMERSON (Cont.): I have to— I didn't plan on any closing remarks, but I'm compelled. And... (laughter)

WOMAN: You're tired.

HELMERSON: I'm tired. I'm very tired, believe me. (laughter; inaudible voice) What? (inaudible; laughter) But thank you. (laughs) I'll take it as a compliment.

So through that, there's... I do, again, want to say thanks, because of the inspiration that you've all provided, to WAMC, the engineers, Marian, who had to leave earlier, Alan(sp?), of course, and Selma(sp?), and all the people who've really, really worked to put this auditorium together again; all of you, the participants, for coming, for being... You know, and some of you, I know, especially on just faith and hope that it's going to be ok, (laughs) in a very busy schedule; Experimental Television Center, of course, Sherry, who put a lot of work and planning into this; Claude, who really, you know, doesn't— always says, "Oh, I didn't do anything," but he provides a tremendous amount of support for this kind of work for the program; Debby, of course, NYSCA; and NAMAC. So a big thank you to everybody. And the presenters, of course, who I thought really took the context and the intention of our outline and did just a beautiful job with it.

HELMERSON (Cont.): The closing remark part that I just had to share with you, that I did come away hearing confirmation. There is a confirmation that we've reached, over these two days, of professional development. We have been in a very intensive two days of professional development. So that's what it is. That's what it does for individuals, for organizations, to move us forward, to move you forward. And (inaudible) put in another plug for TA, and we'll get more information on that to you. But the confirmation and possibility, I really did hear that coming out of these two days. And we are focusing. And we are focusing in our history, organizing, definition, and representation. Those things, I think, came through very, very clearly in these last two days. And on a new level, we're doing these things. And it's on a deeper level. And it's new because it's maturity of vision. The thirty years that John was talking about; the time that many of us have given throughout our lives to this issue; the new people, so to speak, coming in, the younger generation—there is a maturity now that is giving us a depth that I think is adding to the conversations that we're having, and allowing a new kind of focus. There is experience behind us now. And mass. These things are essential to moving forward. And what I really want to leave you with is that I do believe we are poised. We're poised for strength, at this point; we're poised for the next step; and we are poised to position ourselves. I really do believe that. So again, that's why I want to thank you for coming together again for two days to help clarify, confirm, and to just, again, look at possibilities, because that's how we keep ourselves fresh.

HELMERSON (Cont.): So we're going to continue after this meeting, to this particular group, through the e-mail list that we're all on, that you've been receiving your information from. So there'll be some follow-up through that list. We, again, have the meeting in Buffalo in September. And I believe it's the fourteenth, at this point; we'll go ahead and, you know, confirm that for you again, too. So those of you who can make that meeting, it would be wonderful, because we'd like to carry it forward with some people who have been with us in these two days, and just continue the dialogue. And I think we're also going to do some, you know, smaller group debriefing after this, as well. So it's not over. And that's part of the process, as well. This is information we've gathered; now we're going to keep looking at it, and keep going a little deeper, and keep refining it, and keep focusing it. And we came away, I think again, with some very real action opportunities, a lot of(?) these possibilities. So thanks. (applause; brief comments; END)