

S P A C E

AND

M E M O R Y

VIDEO INSTALLATIONS

Swiss Institute, New York

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March 2 - 23, 1989

Swiss Institute, New York

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Space and Memory, Video installations,” is the first video exhibition to take place at the Swiss institute.

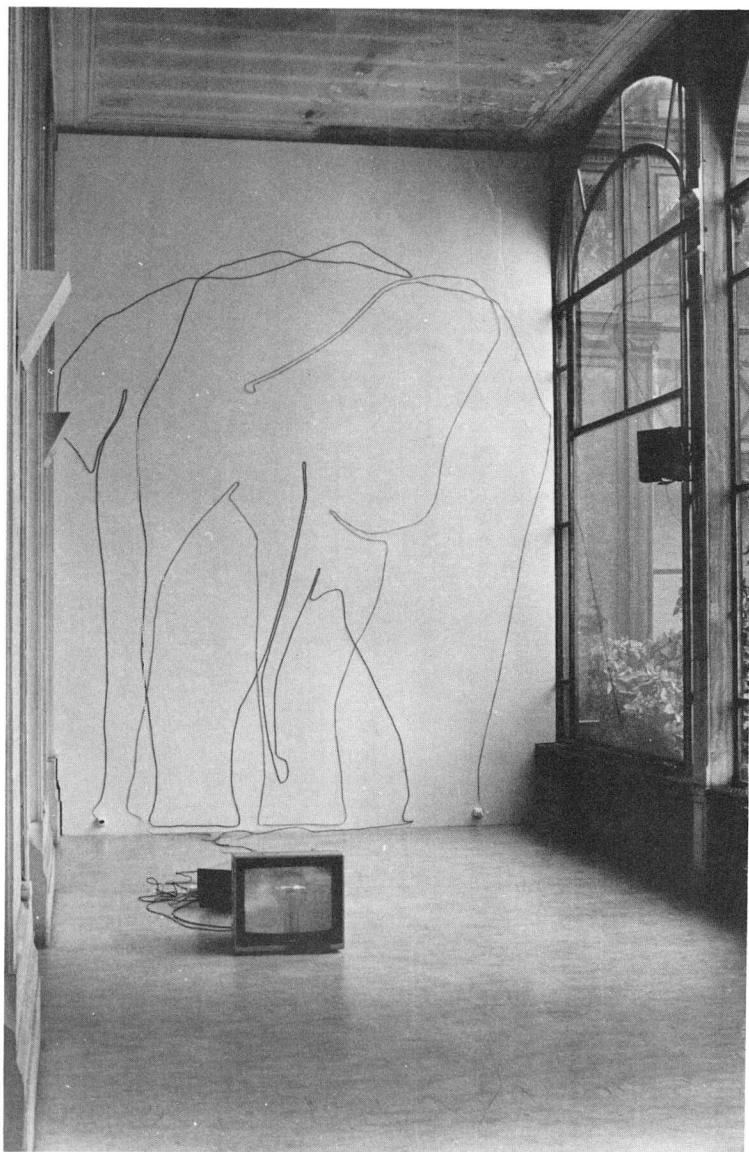
I am especially grateful to PRO HELVETIA, Swiss Council for the Arts that supported generously this project. Their gesture is most encouraging and provides the Swiss Art with further exposure abroad.

Additional funding were provided for by the Swiss Center Foundation and BALAIR, LTD. In the name of the Swiss Institute I express to them my deepest gratitude.

Finally, I am extremely thankful to Marie-Jose Burki and Alexander Hahn for their enthusiastic collaboration in this complex project.

Z.W.

Marie-José Burki, *Operation Edison*, 1986



INTRODUCTION

Video art is a time-based art. Moving into time— past, present and future— engenders endless possibilities of manipulating space—real or fictive— and dealing with countless recollections and memories.

Although in different ways, space and memory are important elements in Marie-Jose Burki and Alexander Hahn's video works. Burki has a liberal arts background and studied literature, while Hahn has for a longtime been involved in research and the study of psychology, sociology, linguistics, semiotics, and computer science. Their works in the video medium is a new way to approach nature and culture and an innovative tool to convey their message, a message strongly informed by their previous, respective educations.

In her two video installations here, Burki employs the theme of the elephant. The elephant is a metaphor for power, but also memory. Burki often states "an elephant never forgets." *Operation Edison*, 1986 is a perfect example of how she relates her concepts of space and memory in a work dealing with complex issues. The installation is made of two electric cables—one the negative and the other the positive pole—drawing a gigantic elephant image on the wall. On the monitor a mass of clouds in transformation (metaphor for space) periodically appears, and is immediately superimposed by the image of an electric bulb. As if under the electric discharge, the filaments inside the bulb oscillate gently, presenting an image like a line of elephants seen afar, that gradually disappears.

Operation Edison, remembers Edison's story of electrocuting an elephant to demonstrate electrical power, but the

underlying statement in Burki's work is the manipulation of opposite concepts. The same cable which draws the image of the powerful animal on the wall is responsible for its electrocution. The electric resistance plays against physical resistance, and the body's materiality against the electronic immateriality.

In *Untitled*, 1986 a black electric cable feeding the equipment turns a few dozen times around the video player. Four small loud speakers are placed on the lower part of the player, creating an object resembling an elephant paw. The monitor displays a tape made of objects moving at various speed, such as train and globe. Images change through successive superimposition. Each time a new image appears, the loud speakers release a powerful crashing noise, the physical power of the elephant manifesting itself here through acoustic intensity and visual perception.

Driven by his previous studies in psychology and semiotics and making video tapes, where the image is simultaneously perceived externally and internally, Hahn became increasingly interested in dual and opposing concepts such as conscious/unconscious and reality/unreality. Later Hahn was introduced to computer, a tool providing him with countless new ways to simulate events. This has since become a key element in his artistic creation.

Central to Hahn's work are the used electronic parts which he could easily and inexpensively find at businesses in lower Manhattan. Among these junk objects, there were also discarded satellite-transmitted video newsreels. These offered Hahn a treasure of electronic images which he calls "images trouvées" in an allusion to Marcel Duchamp's "objects trouvés." Hahn frequently uses these disparate images in his video works.

Urban Memories (1986-87), is an installation made of three monitors and two players. The monitors play a tape which has been filmed under a silvery light and in an extremely cold surrounding. The camera moves through a labyrinthine network of Renaissance perspectives drawn by Jan Vrederman De Vries (1527-1604). On the monitor we see continuously the same architectural structures—hallways and rooms—appear and disappear, and meet on their recursive trajectories images of a nuclear war aftermath. Hahn's transformation of an orderly and real space into a disorderly and unreal one points to an alienated world which has lost touch with reality.

Ziba de Weck

MARIE-JOSE BURKI

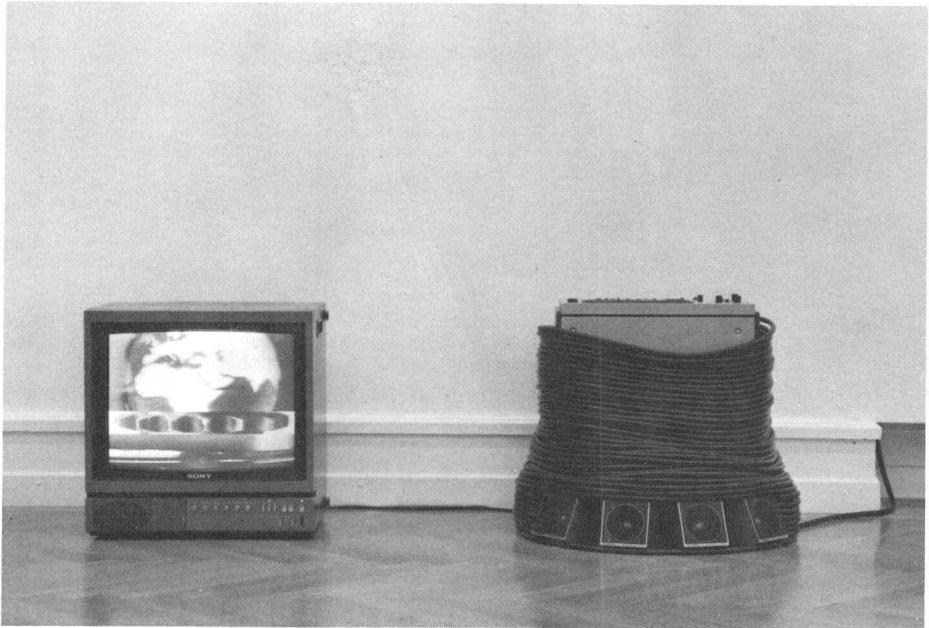
Born 1961, Biel, Switzerland

EXHIBITIONS

- 1989 Swiss Institute, New York
Kunstverein, Freiburg i. B., Germany
- 1988 Centre d'art contemporain, Geneva
"19&&," CNAC Magasin, Grenoble, France
- 1987 "Wind in Getreibe," Galerie Grita Insam, Vienna
Centre d'art contemporain, Geneva
- 1986 Centre culturel Suisse, Paris
"Von Bildern," Kunsthalle, Bern

SELECTED VIDEO TAPES PRESENTATION

- 1988 "3. Videonale," Bonn
"Festival vidéo de femmes," Montreal
Le Cargo, Grenoble, France
- 1987 Swiss Institute, New York
"Filmer à tout prix," Brussels
"Video Biennial," Barcelona
"World Wide Festival Kijkhuis," Den Haag
"Festival s-8 et vidéo du Québec," Montreal
- 1986 "International Video Festival," Madrid
Kunstverein, Cologne
"2. Videonale," Bonn
Danae Foundation, Paris
"Videonale ORF," Vienna
- 1985 "VFIPER," Luzern, Switzerland
"First International Video Week," Geneva
"Videoart Festival," Locarno, Switzerland
"FRI.ART," the Kitchen, New York
- 1984 ELAC, Lyon, France
"Einhorn Kunst und Video," Basel, Switzerland



Marie-José Burki, *Untitled*, 1986

ALEXANDER HAHN

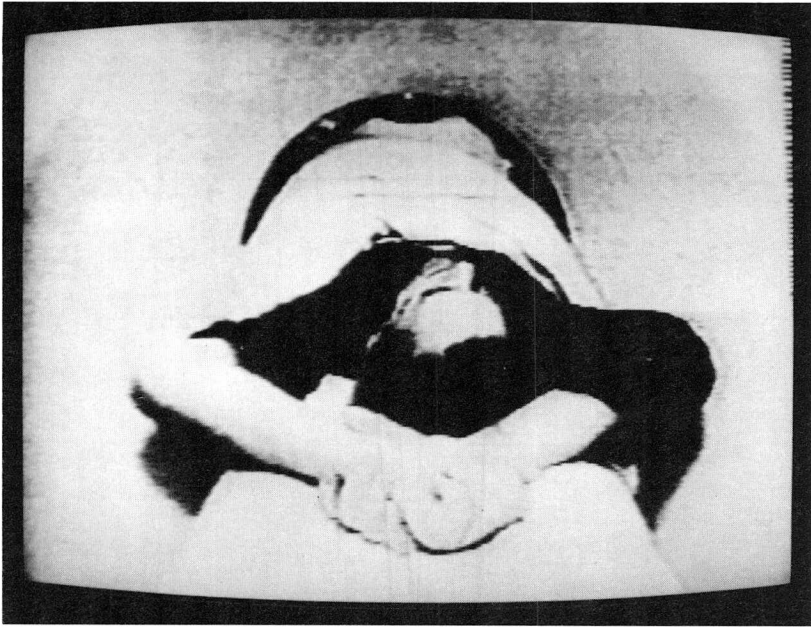
Born 1954, Rapperswil, Switzerland

SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

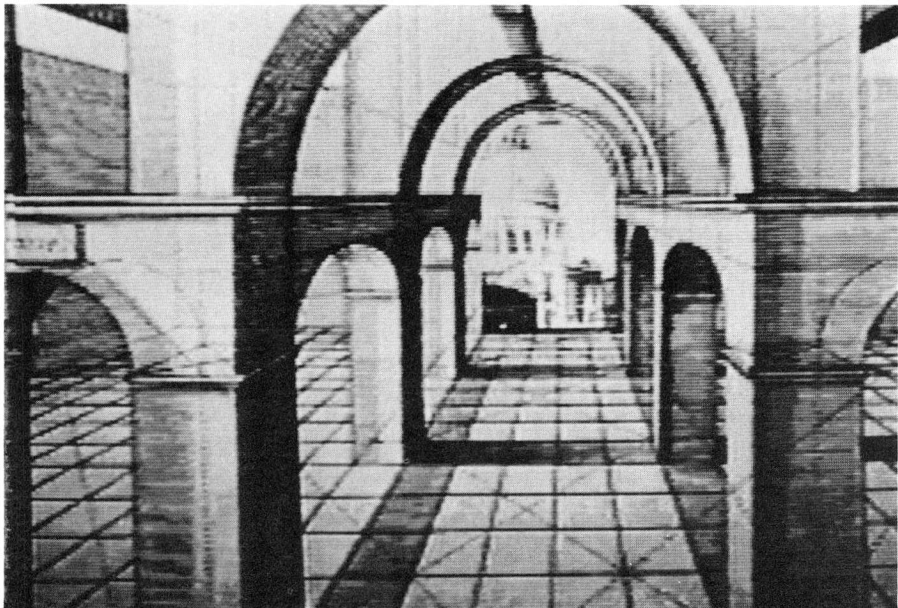
- 1985 "Video Art Festival," Locarno
- 1984 White Columns, New York
- 1981 626 Broadway, New York
Galerie Apropos, Luzern, Switzerland
- 1980 Galerie Toni Gerber, Bern, Switzerland
Galerie Apropos, Luzern, Switzerland

SELECTED INSTALLATIONS AND VIDEO TAPES PRESENTATIONS

- 1989 Swiss Institute, New York
Kunstverein, Freiburg i. B., Germany
"San Francisco Poetry Film Festival," San Francisco
Kunsthau Zurich
- 1988 "7. World Wide Video Festival," Den Haag
"VFIPER," Luzern, Switzerland
Swiss Institute, New York
"18. International Forum Junger Film," Berlin
"London Video Arts," London
International Cultural Center, Antwerp, Belgium
"3rd. Australian Video Festival," Sydney
- 1987 "Video Culture International," Ontario, Canada
The Kitchen, New York
"International Video Art Festival," Locarno
"2. Semaine Internationale de video," Geneva
American Museum of Moving Image, New York
- 1986 "Videowochen im Wenkenpark," Basel, Switzerland
"Video Refuses," San Francisco
Kunsthau, Zurich
American Film Institute, Los Angeles
- 1985 Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland
Franklin Furnace, New York
Art Atrium, Stockholm
- 1984 Makkom, Amsterdam
"Vidéo 84," Montreal
- 1983 "Terminal Show," Brooklyn
Kunstverein, Cologne
- 1982 The Pyramid, New York
"International Video Art Festival," Locarno Campus Montreal
- 1981 Des Refuses, New York
A's, New York



Alexander Hahn, *Urban Memories*, 1986-87



Alexander Hahn, *Urban Memories*, 1986-87

Swiss Institute
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Director: Ziba de Weck
Event Coordinator: Elisabeth Schuler
Gallery Assistant: Ariane Braillard

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