

MindFrames

Media Study at Buffalo 1973–1990 (December 16, 2006 through March 18, 2007)

»Academy« and »Art« are highly actual themes. The founding of academies and universities is a hot topic. Twentieth-century art history is, namely, not only a history of individuals, but also collectives, groups, circles, and (institutional and informal) schools. Academies and universities have made history in that they gather outstanding artists and develop a teaching program. Sites of teaching and production such as the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts) in Vienna, Bauhaus in Weimar, WChUTEMAS in Moscow, Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and the Hochschule für Gestaltung (Academy of Design) in Ulm have influenced and shaped the development of art just as greatly as individual creative personalities have.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Department of Media Study at the State University of New York at Buffalo became one of these places of, teaching and mediating, in the area of Media Art, developing into what was perhaps the most influential school for media in the twentieth century. Teaching there under the leadership of the founder Gerald O'Grady were the (meanwhile canonized) structuralist, avant-garde filmmakers Hollis Frampton, Tony Conrad, and Paul Sharits, documentary filmmaker James Blue, video artists Steina and Woody Vasulka, and Peter Weibel. At an early stage, they prepared and realized extensive work blocks showing the way for the entire spectrum of Media Art—from photographic image to slide installation, from music performance to film and video performance, from film to film installation, from videotape to video environment, from computer graphics to interactive installations. In doing so, they recognized the media's social role, especially that of television and its participatory possibilities, and used this for artistic and sometimes also political projects. All members of the Buffalo faculty were not only practitioners, but also theorists. In theoretically based lectures, essays, and publications, they accompanied the artistic developments and issues in their media.

The exhibition will offer the first comprehensive insight into this groundbreaking art of the 1970s and 1980s, which was so decisive for Media Art's further development and whose style remains influential today. Ideas and concepts from this former era are available through the architecture developed especially for the exhibition: a studio laboratory. It allows novel ways to perceive, analyze, and empathize with the time-based art of the moving picture (the artwork, as well as the auratic object and the study model).

The significance of the Department of Media Study at Buffalo for the media age is comparable with other historical institutions' influence on art history. Its founding came at a time in which there was no academy or institute dedicated explicitly to an art of all media, and, at the same time, also included theoretical and cultural analysis as part of its curriculum. Those involved were pioneers, the first who taught and did research against the backdrop of a constantly changing concept of the image—between photo, film, video, and digital image—and therefore joined in

Press information

October 2006

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MindFrames
Media Study at Buffalo
1973–1990
02.09–15.10.06

Location
ZKM | Media Museum

Exhibition opening
Friday, december 15, 2006

Location
ZKM_Foyer
Time
7 p.m.

Press conference
Friday, december 15, 2006
(including the presentation of agenda for the upcoming 10th anniversary of ZKM)

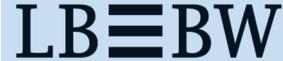
Location
ZKM_Media Theater

Time
11 a.m.

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carrying out the changeover from the space-based arts to the time-based arts (such as, music) and the transformations of art practice thus implied. The artists represented in the exhibition and their individual positions exemplarily open up the entire horizon of aesthetic problems and solutions that arose with the entry of the technical image into art. The faculty holds a unique position in Media Art History in that, within their individual artistic approaches, it is possible to find shared positions, such as a focus on perception, machine aesthetics, mathematical sensibility, language games, and an openness to all other media. The artists no longer define themselves through »a medium«, but instead, in the course of their artistic development search for links and references to other media and experiment with presentational forms.

The title »MindFrames« indicates that this was a time and a place for re-positioning and expanding the frame of reference for Media Art and pushing ahead the transformation from Film Art to discourse of the (visual) code. The exhibition teaches us to understand the art of media, and through that, media themselves.

Participating artists:

Gerald O'Grady, Hollis Frampton, Paul Sharits, James Blue, Tony Conrad, Steina and Woody Vasulka, and Peter Weibel

Curated by Steina and Woody Vasulka, and Peter Weibel with Thomas Thiel.

The results of the exhibition will be presented in an extensive scholarly publication that will be published by The MIT Press in 2007 in English. Numerous illustrations, source texts by the artists, previously unpublished interviews, essays, and other historical documents outline a comprehensive panorama of the pioneers of Media Art at the Department of Media Study, the State University of New York, Buffalo.

Editors: Woody Vasulka and Peter Weibel.

Guided tours: Sat 2 p.m., Sun 4 p.m.

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