

## Some Thoughts About Videos: Violence

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Video, with its likeness to television, often presents violence as a real event. The camera becomes a witness, willing or unwilling, to acts which are otherwise known only to the victim. Narrative and experimental structures are often integrated into documentary work to enhance the immediacy of the event, and the result is an appearance of heightened reality. No subject of violence has escaped the camera, which is often trying to capture, or come to terms with, man's overwhelming loss of control in the world today.

Television reaches the masses, worldwide, but with a view that has been filtered through layers of agendas, routing agencies, and advertising priorities. Video, which is revealed in a less public arena, has enabled an alternative public to learn about political unrest in distant lands where official news reporting is sloppy, censored, and/or controlled. Video is a link with underground activists fighting for unpopular or politically questionable (by mainstream standards) causes. The medium empowers the disenfranchised. As a tool the video camera and recorder are easy to operate, inexpensive and small. These attributes also enable it to remain unobtrusive in politically sensitive places which might otherwise be dangerous or impossible to record.

As a witness, video has captured scenes of chilling cruelty (rarely imagined except, again, by victims of similar treatment). For example, the brutal beating of Rodney King, by the Los Angeles Police Department, was recorded by an amateur videographer, shooting from his front porch. The footage was broadcast throughout the world (and has reportedly been sold to a rap group for an MTV piece). This irrefutable evidence, however, is a document of extreme power, and it led the Mayor of Los Angeles to call for the resignation of the Chief of Police.

The works in "Video: Violence" all recognize the presence of the camera and its direct effect on the viewer. TV images from the 60's (actually shot on film) used the medium to examine emotional response and strong political consciousness. Footage from early television also shows the power of black and white imagery demonstrating how, at that time, TV was a "removed" element of news. The Vietnam War is another example of how the mythology of war with honor was undermined by television, altering attitudes from one generation to another. The capacity of the hidden camera to capture the cacophony and reveal the energy of the moment is another important element of video's utility.

The medium has played an essential role in spreading information in ongoing international crisis, in places that have deeply troubled histories, and as a result little hope for recovery in the near future. The stories of the tragedy of the disappeared in Latin America, for example, are testaments to loyalty and love. The women are tireless crusaders for the freedom of expression in hostile military controlled regimes. Fear of revenge for revealing information seldom inhibits the witnesses or the survivors. The issue of women, and the political and personal violence they experience, is the subject of some of the most moving and intimate video works. Abuse is largely unreported, especially in third world countries, even so, record breaking numbers of women need hope to escape the tyranny of domestic brutality.

Video work made during recent political unrest in Asia spread information to the world, from where it was previously suppressed. In Eastern Europe, video brought the news and declarations of democracy to the people, providing an impetus for nationwide revolt against repressive regimes in power. The War in the Gulf, however, was a paradox if regarded within the framework of the recent history of military conflict and environmental disasters portrayed on TV. This war was sanitized. It is perhaps an example of what the 90's holds in store for TV's couch potatoes – all's well that ends well. In this case it was a short-lived soap opera.

Political violence is the public evidence of a dysfunctional world, the beginnings of which are found in the family and home. Private violence is widespread and seemingly endless, depending on how one defines the perimeters of the subject. Violent images, violent situations, actions by the public against a few or also by a few against the public, and violence by legal means. Violence is also an assault on a person by another: sexual violence, child abuse, and violence against helpless laboratory animals.

Video has played an important role in the education against individual personal violence. It was documented the struggle for human rights, for women's control of their bodies, for sexual freedom and it has also revealed alternatives to the 'model' TV family – a highly unattainable goal (for which failure to achieve has resulted in a chorus of personal mistreatments). Video became an important element of the feminist movement in the middle 70's. Its supporters learned to utilize the technology early, and have developed a strong narrative, documentary and experimental body of works. Crossover artists, such as performers, writers and poets, dancers and musicians, have joined film and video makers in efforts to point out the many injustices to humanity – and to life itself.

An array of socially conscious work, each of which reveals a part off the ongoing history of the human struggle with violence, creates this intense program of work. What's the point of looking at all of this violence? It's often disgusting and hard to imagine the inhumanity and pain. Today, more than ever, evidence of violence is apparent in all societies – it's all around us everywhere we go. Is it a reaction to the world we live in? Is it a reflection of societal anger resulting from defect and loss of control over one's destiny? What we do know is that violence is increasing, and is currently the largest killer of black youth in the United States. Is it evil, fantasy, or a choice of the sensitivity of the imagination?

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### VIDEO PROGRAM

#### **Political violence:**

#### **Belfast: Control Zone**

by Bonnie Donahue (1984, 5 Min.)

During street squirmishes and bombings in Northern Ireland, a Protestant minister rants about "the sin."

### **Bilocation**

by Marina Griinie und Aina Smid (1990, 12:40 Min.) Englische Untertitel.

Conflicts between Serbians and the Albanians in the territory of KOSOVO, in the south of Serbia, have resulted in violent repression of this ethnic minority.

### **Black Celebration**

by Tony Cokes (1988, 17 Min.)

Televised footage from the 1960s of the Watts riots in Los Angeles are interspersed with quotes from Malcom X and the Situationists.

### **Bound to Strike Back (Part II): The War**

by The Capricorn Video Unit, Zimbabwe (1986, 32 Min.)

South African township violence and spontaneous anger among blacks is harnessed by the African National Congress.

### **Canon: Taking to the Streets. Part One: Princeton University – Take back the Night**

by Dara Birnbaum (1990, 10:10 Min.)

Poetic acknowledgement of campus violence at a feminist rally, with video as a witness Concept.

### **Disorderly Concept**

by der Gruppe Buffalo Artists Against Repression and Censorship (1990, 29 Min.)

In response to the institutional "self censorship" of a performance /installation by the San Francisco group Survival Research Labs, Buffalo artists become activists, and are jailed.

### **Fedefam**

by Catherine Russo und Carlota Chartier (1990, 40 Min.) Englische Untertitel

Women of fourteen Latin America countries have formed an umbrella organization to represent families of the disappeared. Since 1981, they have combined efforts to search for and identify the bodies of their families: victims of torture and oppression.

### **The Feeling of Power**

by Robert Beck (1990, 8:48 Min., 8 MM/Video)

The camera is the empowering tool, and is immediate and uncensored at the New York city demonstration.

### **Free Society**

by Paul Garrin (1988, 3:22 Min.)

The force of the military is represented with multiple images.

### **Home (less) is Where the Revolution Is**

by Paul Garrin (1990, 3 Min., 8 MM/Video)

Garrin addresses the camera, and predicts that now, people will watch the state, and " ... the revolution will be televised ..."

### **Like a Prayer: Stop the Church**

by DIVA TV (1990, 28:22 Min.)

The Feb. 17, 1990 New York City demonstration at St. Patrick's cathedral brings a variety of individuals together to voice opinions against Cardinal O'Connor and the Catholic Church's ruling on reproductive rights and AIDS education.

### **The Gulf Crisis TV Project II**

by Paper Tiger Television und dem Deep Dish Satellite Network, produziert (1991, eine Auswahl aus sechs halbstündigen Programmen).

Produced during and after the war in Iraq, The Gulf Crisis series presented alternatives to the official, government sanctioned television approved for American home viewing. The series was available nationally through cable. PBS and local television, and was edited for broadcast in the United Kingdom on Channel 4.

1. Manufacturing the Enemy by Ludger K Balant & Simone Farkhondeh, editors (28 min) is an analysis of anti-Arab racism and the violence against Arabs who are American citizens.

2. Newsworld Order by Chris Hoover and Indu Krishnan, editors (28 min) is a response to the censorship of journalists and the portrayal of the war on American media.

### **Sari Red**

by Pratibha Parmar (1988, 12 Min.)

Kalbinder Kaur Hayre, a young Indian woman killed by fascists in 1985 in a racist attack in England, is the symbol of the everpresent threat of violence upon the lives of Asian women in both private and public spheres.

### **They saw Their Blood Flow: Testimonies from El Salvador 1990**

by Rosemary Bodolay und Mary Giovagnoli (1990, 12 Min.) Spanisch und Englisch.

Six Jesuit priests and two residents of the community of Comunidad Ignacio Ellacuria were openly killed on February 11, 1990, by the Salvadoran military. Survivors show members of a human rights violations team the site, and recall the brutal incident.

### **Smothering Dreams**

by Daniel Reeves (1981, 22:05 Min.)

A personal account of the Vietnam War and how society condones, and in fact supports, violence at all levels by the way little boys play with war toys and make games with guns.

### **Update Brazil: Women's Police Station**

by Nancy Marcotti und Colette Loumede (1986, 15 Min.) Englische Untertitel.

Sao Paulo Brazil: 65,000 women sought refuge at the new women's police station during 1986. In a country where women are frequent victims of violence, the facility (staffed entirely by women) seeks to provide hope.

... **Will Be Televised:** Video Documents from Asia ,Produzent: Shu Lea Cheang (1990, *Ausschnitte aus fünf einstündigen Programmen*) *Englische Untertitel.*

- 1. Until Daybreak: Korea my Hye Jung Park (60 min) features South Korean's decade-long street insurrections from the point of view of the people.
- A Legacy of Violence: The Phillipines by Nick Deocampo (60 min) depicts the rejuvenated atmosphere through home-grown war movies.
- The Generation After Martial Law: Taiwan by Ching Jan Lee (60 min) shows the video movement's successful use of home cassette distribution that document the struggles of people against the repressive state system.

### **"MANÖVER IN DER STADT",**

by Radio Subcom (1990, 5:13 Min.)

Filming and Postproduction: Antonia Neubacher, Armin Medosch, Reini Leitner.

"Manoeuvre in the City" is about the action taken by the police and riot squad troops against demonstrators and on-lookers at the Opera Ball demonstration in Vienna, on 22nd February 1990. the video puts the observer into the perspective of a sniper with wavering crosswires. This coverage interlocks with what is happening as the suggestive means of the medium – television as a weapon – is cynically exhausted.

### **PERSONAL VIOLENCE:**

#### **Age 12: Love with a Little L**

by Jennifer Montgomery (1990, 22 Min. Super 8/Video)

The tyranny of childhood and domination of the strongest.

#### **An I for An I**

by Lawrence Andrews (1988, 18 Min.)

Eine dynamische Darstellung der Internalisierung von Rassismus, Gewalttätigkeit und der Auswirkung in den Massenmedien.

A dynamic cultural statement on the internalization of racism, violence and mass media exploitation.

#### **Belladonna**

by Beth B and Ida Applebroog (1990, 12 Min.)

Confrontational and confessional, several people reveal why they are (and are not) really "a Bad Person . . .

#### **Beneath the Skin**

by Cecilia Condit (1981, 12 Min.)

A 'true' murder story, heard on television news, is retold with complications, contradictions and embellishments.

Fascinated with the incident, the narrator reveals herself as a victim complicit with violence.

#### **Buzz Box**

by David Daniels (1986, 15 Min.)

Aggressive and relentless slice animation, a comment on TV violence in a week-in-review.

#### **The Dead Man**

by Peggy Ahwesh and Keith Sanborn (1989, 38 Min.)

A Georges Bataille text: Maria is portrayed in erotic accuracy as the violent protagonist on a rainy night ...

#### **Familiy Tyranny**

by Paul McCarthy (1987, 10 Min.)

Performance by Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley, a father subjects his son to the same treatment he experienced as a child.

#### **The Good Friday**

by Teernu Miiki (1989, 9:07 Min.)

Violent self abuse in the tradition of De Sade & Artaud.

#### **He Was Once**

by Mary Hestand (1989, 15 Min., 16 mm Film auf Video)

Family violence, role reversal, and disturbed, distorted fantasies reveal anger in a disfunctional domestic environment.

#### **Hey Bud**

by Juli Zando (1978, 10:30 Min.)

A violent act of suicide by Bud Dwyer, a government official, before a live television audience, is mixed with scenes of innocent girls trying on prom dresses. Both activities seek public exhibition.

#### **How to Shoot a Crime**

by Chris Kraus (1987, 28 Min.)

Dramatic and documentary combine footage from a Police investigation alongside a revealing discussion about control, sex and violence with a 'pissed-off' dominatrix.

#### **Keep Your Laws off my Body**

by Catherine Saalfeld and Zoe Leonard (1990, 12:30 Min., Schwarz-weiß).

Is this a crime? Various laws that regulate sexual practices, pornography and women's reproductive rights are enforceable by police action.

**L. A. Nickel**

by Branda Miller (1983, 10 Min.)

The police and skid row residents share the same address, yet at 5th and Wall daily violence creates the dark side sunny Los Angeles.

**My Way**

by Teemu Mäki (1990, 7:15 Min.)

An uncompromising attack on the false values of consumer society.

**A Place Called Lovely**

by Sadie Benning (1991, 20 Min., Pixelvision).

A diary for video about a teenager and her encounters with personal violence.

**Police State**

by Nick Zedd (1987, 18 Min.)

Based on real life experience, a look into back rooms, police harassment and intimidation.

**Rape Stories**

by Margie Strosser (1989, 25 Min.)

A chilling personal account of terror by a rape victim, told two days after the attack and again by the same person 10 years later.

**Son of Sam and Delilah**

by Charles Atlas (1991, 30 Min.)

New York City 1988: raging homophobia and a killer is on the loose ... devastating the avant garde dance and theater community.

**Tales of the Forgotten Future: Part II – The 5 0' Clock Worlds: The Organ Minder's Gronkey**

by Lewis Klahr (1990, 15 Min.)

In a science fiction atmosphere, a solitary figure seeks a cure for his disease in a silent and still city, portrayed in animated cut-outs.

**Thanatopsis**

by Beth B (1991, 11 Min.)

Text written and performed by Lydia Lunch, describes the violence of the military machine and mourns for the victims of war.

**Unnecessary Fuss**

by dem Verein People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Inc (1984, 30 Min.)

Laboratory documentation from a head injury clinic at the University of Pennsylvania, where Baboons and other small animals are subjected to cruel experiments.

**Le Voyage de L'Ogre (The Path of the Ogre)**

by Marc Paradis (1987, 20 Min.) Englische Untertitel.

The fragmented and sexual investigation of John Gacy, mass murderer of young boys, in scenes of sexual violence and homoeroticism.

**VIDEO AGAINST AIDS:**

A counter-representation of the AIDS crisis, Video Against AIDS takes a passionate look at the personal and political issues surrounding the AIDS epidemic. Produced by concerned artists, activists, people living with AIDS, and their family and friends, these tapes give voice to first-hand experiences, ideas and feelings which the mainstream media have for the most part denied. Video Against AIDS is thematically organized around 9 sections which provide a creative framework for increasing awareness on the viewpoints, ideas, facts and political organizing strategies related to the AIDS crisis.

Video Against AIDS was organized by Bill Horrigan and John Greyson. It was produced by Kate Horsfield, Video Data Bank, Project Coordinator, Gail Sax. It is distributed on VHS to the home market by the Video Data Bank, Chicago and New York and V-Tape, Toronto.

**Program One (114 minutes)**

**PWA POWER**

"Survival of the Delirious" by Michael Balser and Andy Fabo (1988, 14:28 min); "Living with AIDS: Work Your Body: Options for People Who Are HIV Positive" by Jean Carlomusto and Gregg Bordowitz/Gay Men's Health Crisis (1988, 28:38 min).

**DISCRIMINATION**

"The Second Epidemic" by Amber Hollibaugh and Alisa Lebow/AIDS Discrimination Unit, NYC, Commission on Human Rights (1988, 27 min).

**AIDS AND WOMEN**

"Safe Sex Slut" by Carol Leigh (aka Scarlot Harlot) Tuscon Western International Television (1988, 2:42 min); "Cori: A

Struggle for Life" by friends of Jacqueline Corianne Shearer with Nina Sobell (1989, 17:47 min); "Living With AIDS: Doctors, Liars and Women: AIDS Activists Say No to Cosmo" by Jean Carlomusto and Maria Maggenti, Gay Men's Health Crisis (1988, 22:52 min).

### **Program Two (119 minutes):**

#### **RESISTANCE**

"The AIDS Epidemic" by John Greyson (1987, 4:52 min); "Snow Job: The Media Hysteria of AIDS" by Barbara Hammer (1986, 7:33 min). "We are NOT Republicans" by Adam Hassuk and Robert Huff (1989, 13:10 min); "Stiff Sheets" by John Goss (1989, 19:05 min).

#### **MOURNING**

"Mildred Pearson: When You Love a Person" by Yannick Durand/Brooklyn AIDS Task Force (1988, 9:05 min); "The Inaugural Display of the NAMES Project Quilt" by David Thompson (1987, 15:41 min); "Danny" by Stashu. Kybartas (1987, 20:10 min).

#### **COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

"Se Met Ko" by Patricia Benoit/Haitian Women's Program (1988, 28:46 min).

### **Program Three (115 minutes):**

#### **LOSS**

"A Plague Has Swept My City" by Emjay Wilson (1985, 1:44 min); "Gab" by Ann Akiko Moriyasu (1987, 10:22 min); "A" by Andre Burke (1986, 8:06 min); "This is not an AIDS Advertisement" by Isaac Julien (1987, 9:44 min).

#### **ANALYSIS**

"They are Lost to Vision Altogether" by Tom Kalin (1989, 13:10 min); "Reframing AIDS" by Pratibha Parmar (1988, 38 min).

#### **ACTIVISM**

"Another Man" by Youth Against Monsters (1988, 3:03 min); "Testing the Limits: NYC (Part One)" by Testing the Limits Collective (1987, 29:45 min).

### **JOHN DUNCAN VIDEO RETROSPECTIVE**

Within the Video Violence Program and in connection with his performance, all the video works John Duncan produced in Japan are shown, including his Tokyo Pirate Television, and the works for Rabotnik TV in Amsterdam.

TVC is pirate television broadcasts made with equipment built and illegally operated by Duncan over the frequency of NHK 1 Tokyo.

THE JOHN SEE TAPES: a commercial porn video series written, directed and scored by Duncan to be cut up at will by the viewer, for the Tokyo production company KUKI under the name John See.