The Woody VASULKA Workshops
July 31 and August 7, 1998
Gallery D

The two workshops Woody VASULKA held in connection with *The Brotherhood*, an exhibition of his work, were almost identical in content. VASULKA talked about the concepts behind the work being shown and the background to his creation of a series of works. The focus of his presentation, however, was less on the specifics of the work than on the concept of brotherhood that provides the main motivation for it. "Brotherhood," as VASULKA described it, is a concept rather difficult to grasp in a Japanese cultural context. Alternative terms might be the "male principle" or "masculinism," but we should not therefore be led to imagine that he is referring to an abstract concept with vague social or political implications. Rather, VASULKA describes it as approximating a broad term for a more unconscious obsession—male desires that are never sated. Those desires, rooted in sexual desire, are the forces driving technological development, particularly in this century. They have also been a factor behind modern warfare.

While VASULKA recycled military scrap for the main components of the work in this exhibition, he said that he did not want to create a simpleminded connection between his work and the image of actual weapons or war materiel. His position is that what he calls "Brotherhood" is one of the contemporary world's inevitable ideologies and should not be judged in any particular social and historical context. He regards it as an absolute—the motive force behind his own creative work, the energy fueling pure play with machines.

VASULKA repeatedly rejected concrete interpretations of his work, stressing the importance of his stance towards it, which can seem indeed like a pointless, content-free game. Finally, he brought the workshops to a close by saying that *The Brotherhood* series will, for reasons adumbrated above, be eternally incomplete. His life work is achieving the unpredictable through new encounters with machines, i.e., with technology.

[GOGOTA Hisanori]

The Woody VASULKA Workshops

The Japan-Germany Media Art Symposium was jointly organized by NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] and Goethe-Institut Tokyo. Entitled "Future Form of Media Art—Theory and Prospect" and held in Gallery D on Saturday, September 12, it featured three well-known specialists in media art from Germany and Japan: Friedrich KITTLER, a professor at Humboldt University in Berlin; Boris GROYS, a professor at Karlsruhe University of Plastic Arts; and MORIOKA Yoshitomo, an assistant professor at Tokyo Institute of Polytechnics. After each spoke, the three participated in a panel discussion. In "Introduction to Computer Graphics, Beyond Technical Bounds," KITTLER ranged from basic problems in computer graphics images to such theoretical or philosophical issues as vision and natural perception. GROYS, in "Problems in the Presentation of Media Art in the Museum Context," discussed how the museum will be transformed by media art. In "Japan's Media Art Education—Present Situation and Future Challenges," MORIOKA gave a practical report on educational programs employing media art, using videos. Since the three participants' fields of specialization and interests differ, the post-lecture discussion was not restricted to a single theme but turned into a passionate exchange of views over a wide range of issues, including such essential questions as freedom of expression in media art as well as topics raised in the individual lectures. It was highly meaningful that—with the field in an ongoing technical revolution and new departures constantly appearing—these international experts gathered to add depth to our discourse on media art.

[KOMATSUZAKI Takuo]

Japan-Germany Media Art Symposium

**Steina and Woody VASULKA Video Works
July 17 — August 30, 1998
ICC Theater**

"Video Works: Steina and Woody VASULKA" is a screening of 32 videos that the VASULKAs created between 1970 and 1997, presenting a retrospective of the path by which they acquired their electronic imaging vocabulary and descriptive techniques.

Steina VASULKA, who started off as a musician, does image processing as a pure visual effect produced by music. Her work structures images from the aesthetic point of view of an "eye" scanning the media and includes «Voice Windows» (1986) and «Orka» (1997), in which images are manipulated by sound—both striking music and natural sounds. Her «Violin Power» (1970-1978) has a dual existence both as documenting the early performance of that title and as the actual performance, which was restaged at the ICC in connection with Woody VASULKA's *The Brotherhood* exhibition. Steina calls «Violin Power» "a demo tape on how to play video on the violin."

  Woody VASULKA's 1987 «Art of Memory» reaches a pinnacle of video art, encompassing a critique of technology that is also self-critical, the result of countless video experiments. While in recent years VASULKA has shifted to installations as his main format for presenting work, he continues, while skillfully manipulating technology, to engage the concept that provides the title of our special exhibition, "brotherhood," and its essence—violence and war.

[HATANAKA Minoru]

Screening of SUZUKI Ryoji's Film, «Experience in Material No. 35—Clairière. Creux Vide.» September 18 and 25, October 2, 9, 16 and 23, 1998 ICC Theater

How possible is an encounter between architecture and moving pictures? Answering that question, and revealing what architecture and moving pictures have in common, is one of the missions SUZUKI Ryoji sought to carry out in *Experience in Material No. 35—Clairière. Creux. Vide*, a 15-minute work in 16 mm film he made in 1992. One of his analytic techniques for making that encounter a reality was to tackle a material memory shared between architecture and moving pictures.

The ICC special exhibition entitled *"The Library of Babel"—Characters/Books/Media* included SUZUKI's «Experience in Material No. 39, BIBLIOTECA». In this work SUZUKI dares to make BORGES's library—boundless, inchoate—visible. The resulting structure is what SUZUKI calls a "void model." A void model adds to the three dimensions of space—the *x*, *y* and *z* axes—a fourth dimension, *t*, or motion, making it an approximation to moving pictures. Through motion, the structure acquires the coherence it had lacked. SUZUKI's model of the library, one of an infinite number of fragments, is built with a sloping surface to generate the effect of boundless, spiraling motion. Thus he has a structure with motion; substitute time for motion and the result is a moving picture, a structure that encompasses the realization that all time equals memory.

Let us assume an identity, "moving picture equals structure," and scan time, from before structures existed until after they have ceased to exist. Scanning, SUZUKI presents fragmentary images: the foundations of a structure, not yet completed, or perhaps an abandoned cave; a model that takes as its motif structures in the 15th-century Florentine painter Fra ANGELICO's «The Last Judgment»; a model that suggests a city of the future, the remains of a vanished city, or a city somewhere not of this world. These fragmentary images are offered to us for dissection within pre-formed visual perceptions provided by iconic memory fragments—the Odessa Steps, Casa Malaparte—to achieve the architecture-moving picture encounter.

[HATANAKA Minoru]

Nick PHILIP'S Selected Works September 16-27, 1998 Gallery D

The young San Francisco digital designer Nick PHILIP was invited to show his work and present four workshops at the ICC. PHILIP, who began working in this field in London about a decade ago, initially attracted attention for punk-influenced, in-your-face design, particularly of t-shirts. His t-shirts, his early graphic designs dating from after he moved to San Francisco and began working in digital design, and his work on the early issues of the magazine *Wired*—work in the heyday of digital design, which caught the beat of the personal computer boom—put this designer in the limelight.

It was characteristic of his work in the first half of the 1990s that, while groping for a digital design methodology, he retained an ironical perspective on the burgeoning digital culture. Social criticism, a rare attitude in a designer, can be clearly read in his work. In its early phases, *Wired*, which had an underground magazine image, shared that critical stance. (The impression it gives now is somewhat contrary.) Thus, PHILIP's origins are different from those of commercial digital designers.

PHILIP was one of the designers who typified the West Coast rave scene, but he subsequently shifted to a style that might be described as a revival of the late 1960s psychedelic movement. He worked in a wide

Nick PHILIP'S
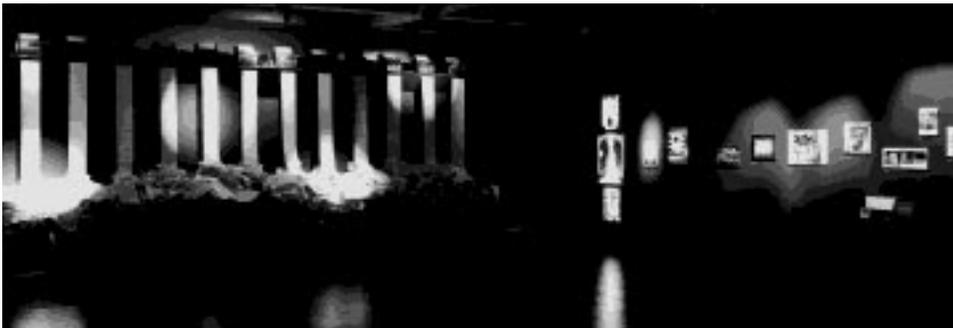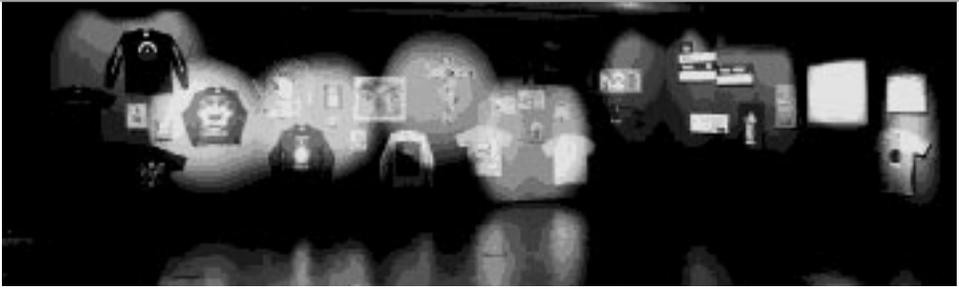
Nick PHILIP'S

range of fields—including music as well as graphic design—while addressing the influence of digital technology: not only its superficial, mass production aspects but its impact on the human spiritual world. That work came together in his «Radical Beauty» CD-ROM released in 1997, which revealed his intensifying interest in the human body. «The End of Man» series, his latest work (part of which was included in the ICC exhibition), focuses on the direct relationship between technology and the body and uses digital methods to give a sense of organic images.

The new «nowhere.com» installation was a particularly noteworthy part of the exhibition. Emerging from his interest in where the Internet is heading, this work addresses the Internet society of today with biting irony.

"nowhere.com" is a fictitious Internet domain name. Domain names are the addresses of the people participating in the Internet and are centrally controlled so that they are never duplicated. Some people, however, use fictitious, nonexistent domain names to send e-mail messages while concealing their own addresses (i.e., their identities). The classic fictitious domain name is "nowhere.com." Almost all the e-mail sent from nowhere.com is junk mail or spam. Invitations to invest in dubious businesses, abuse, harassment—mail that symbolizes the dirty underside of the Internet pours out from nowhere.com, day and night.

In this installation, PHILIP hacks mail from nowhere.com in real time to send it spewing forth from 12 fax machines connected to modems. Whenever a piece of e-mail is sent from a nowhere.com domain anywhere in the world, the computer randomly fires up a modem and dials up a fax machine. The 12 fax machines are kept busy printing out a torrent of such junk mail. Each was loaded with a 100-meter roll of paper and had a large trash can set beneath it. The fax paper was already overflowing from the trash cans on the first day of the exhibition. By the last day, the space around them was buried in mountains of paper.

We cannot visualize or perceive a huge body of digital data flowing over the networks in a physical form in real time. But PHILIP's installation provides a vivid visualization of part of that flow, the dark side of electronic mail and the Internet—its multi-directionality, simultaneity, anonymity, and simplicity. The mutter of dialing sounds, the screech of fax warble, the 12 faxes spewing forth mountains of junk mail: this installation vividly shows one aspect of the network society, today and in the future.

PHILIP's four workshops included two lectures on his work, a concert with DJ's, to which he invited MUNETOMO Ryuji and GEO as guests, and, finally, a class in PhotoShop 5.0 by PHILIP and his assistant Jeff TAYLOR. Most of the participants in it were design students and other young people, for whom PHILIP's remarks addressing concepts, not technique, was a glimpse of something new, since the digital design world in Japan tends to be focused exclusively on technical maters.

As one would expect of an artist with a grounding in street culture, PHILIP brought a relaxed atmosphere to his exhibition and workshops and found many occasions for direct communication with visitors. The events came to a successful close with a sense that both the artist and visitors were on the same wave length—a good model for future ICC events with young artists.

[GOGOTA Hisanori]

Nick PHILIP'S Workshops