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ART TABLE
270 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10012
"BUYING TIME"

CASSETTE

SIDES 1-3

BUYING TIME/COLLECTING VIDEO

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION, JANUARY 26, 1999

Paula Cooper Gallery, 534 West 21 Street, NYC

Organized by Barbara London and Dara Meyers-
Kingsley

Participants (in alphabetical order): Eileen
Cohen, Bobbie Foshay-Miller, Barbara Gladstone,
Kate Horsfield, Barbara London, Mary Lucier,
Dara Meyers-Kingsley, Martha Rosler, Lori
Zippay, David Zwirner

DARA MEYERS-KINGSLEY:

Good evening. I'm Dara Meyers-Kingsley and I
want to welcome you all to this magnificent
space and thank you all for coming. It's
always so great to have such an excellent
turnout for video. I've always argued that
video has one of the greatest communities, and

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I thank you all for being interested in tonight's topic.

I'm here wearing three hats. First as a member of the Program Committee of ArtTable. This program is organized by ArtTable, a membership organization of professional women in the visual arts. Second I am here as an independent curator, specializing in film and video art exhibition. And I'm also involved with video preservation as a consultant to artists and organizations.

We're here because there are many, many questions that we all have as artists, collectors, dealers and distributors involved with video art.

Video has been around for 30-some odd years. It's been sold, collected, exhibited, projected for all those years. We cannot deny that there

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is an explosion right now in video art exhibition and sales. And, at the same time, there is the growing realization that video is not archival. It falls apart after about 10 years. And 10 years from today is only 1989. Tape has to be cleaned and remastered every 10 years.

When you invest in video, when you buy it, when you collect it, when you make it, and you want it to be around for 50-100 years, you are really making a commitment to the maintenance of the material itself. And this is not an inexpensive or uncomplicated endeavor.

Tonight we have a distinguished group of individuals participating in our roundtable discussion. We are each going to speak briefly about where we are at in terms of video exhibition, preservation and sales, and then we will open up the discussion to the audience.

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Our intention is to raise all the questions that you all have tonight and promise that we will attempt to answer the questions.

Unfortunately we don't all have the answers.

We are all in the same boat—trying to figure out the answers on our own. This is a night to learn from each other.

I'm going to pass the mike to my colleague Barbara London from the Museum of Modern Art.

BARBARA LONDON:

Thanks Dara. The collective knowledge in this room is vast. We will speak in the order of the seating, starting with Mary Lucier, artist, who's been involved with video since the mid to late sixties. Martha Rosler, another pioneering artist. Lori Zippay, Director of Electronic Arts Intermix; Kate Horsfield, Director of Video Data Bank; Barbara Gladstone, Director of her gallery in Chelsea, David Zwirner, Director of his gallery in Soho;

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Eileen Cohen, collector from New York; Bobbie Foshay-Miller, Santa Fe-based collector who is on the board of Site Santa Fe.

As Video curator at The Museum of Modern Art, I want to make a few points. Occasionally I've pulled collection tapes out of our climate controlled storage areas, and have discovered that the videos are in good condition after 20 years. A lot depends upon the tape stock, how well you've kept the tape, managed to minimize fluctuations of temperature and humidity, how loosely the tape is stored on its bobbin.

When we consider installations, a number of issues will come up: operation of the equipment, the manual, the diagram, photo documentation, what are the aesthetic intentions of the maker. When the original curators, artists, and registrars aren't around, will their successors understand how to

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install the work? Schematics, diagrams, photo documentation etc. must be in place.

What happens when the equipment becomes obsolete, and you must purchase a new projector? These are aesthetic decisions. What the artist had in mind is then in our curatorial hands.

Increasingly artists work with computers. Computers and software are made to be backwards compatible.

Cataloguing. I joke and say that curators are "word junkies". We save every shred of paper artists give us about their work. Ephemera is important for future scholars. Artists' statements regarding what the work is about is useful, too.

We have a lot on our plate tonight. Everyone

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will speak for about five minutes. Now you have a context for where these very talented people have come from and why they're involved with video.

MARY LUCIER:

Thank you. I'm a video artist and I've been making work since 1972. Prior to that in the mid-sixties I was involved with sculpture and photography and performance.

There are so many issues in regard to videotape and video installation. One way for me to focus is first to describe that I have a two-part activity. One is as a maker of videotapes, the other is as a maker of installations. I have focused primarily on installations for the past 26 years, yet I do make videotapes, as well. The issues that accrue to those two formats are somewhat different, although they do cross over.

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In terms of the management of them, I have a gallery that handles my installations, and I am only too happy to turn my videotapes over to Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) and let them distribute and sell the single-channel works. This may come up as an issue for future discussion in terms of tapes being sold as editions, or tapes being sold like unlimited paperback books or whatever is in between. Organizations like Video Data Bank (VDB) and EAI bridge the gaps between the aesthetic and the commercial realms, the other ways that tapes are being sold today.

Now I'd like to focus on three of my installations that I've sold in order to illustrate, or to raise what some of the essential issues are in the preservation, restoration and sale of installations. This may relate to single channel work, as well, because, of course, these pieces all originated

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on tape. The handling of videotape is important to installation but installation being an entire surround with sculptural elements and complicated equipment is another animal altogether.

The first piece I want to mention is called Ohio at Giverny, which I made in 1983. It was shown at the Whitney Biennial and was acquired by the museum in 1983. I sold the museum two master tapes. to be displayed on seven monitors. The Whitney purchased the monitors and the other equipment to show the installation, and the floor plans for the walls, that is, the enclosure for the piece.

I also provided a very detailed manual with sketches and instructions: what to do if this or that happens, how to operate the equipment to get the desired results.

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I must have redrawn that floor plan and elevation 10 or 15 times, because the installation traveled all over the world. I redrew the floor plan and the elevation for each site. I have this immense repository of blueprints for how to install Ohio at Giverny in every conceivable space.

So I gave the Whitney three or four of those prototypes for their own spaces.

Somewhere down the line the Whitney built a set of walls that could be joined together, which I believe they still have in storage. They've shown the piece four times at the museum, and included it in a traveling show "Immaterial Objects", for which they provided sheet rock walls.

In 1986, when David Ross first came to the Whitney, the museum decided it was no longer

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adequate to show Ohio at Giverny on three-quarter inch tape. We upgraded to laser disk, which by that time had become the industry and the art world standard.

We took our master tapes to a post-production house, reformatted the masters onto D2 tape (a digital format), and had exhibition copy laser disks pressed at Magno. The Whitney then bought all new playback equipment which has proved very satisfactory.

Somewhere down the line another upgrade will have to take place. In the meantime, the Whitney is storing both the sub-master tapes and the laser disk material.

The second piece that I want to discuss is Wilderness (1986). This large seven-monitor, three-channel installation with rather elaborate sculpture was shown in New York at my

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first gallery--Greenberg Wilson. We then sold Wilderness to a private collector. We sold the piece as it was in the gallery, with three-quarter-inch tapes and playback decks, the cabling and all the sculptural elements. The collector proceeded to put Wilderness into storage, where it has been ever since. A number of museums have approached the collector to lend the piece so that it can be shown again to no avail. In this case, a video installation went into a private collection and has been out of circulation for ten years. Meanwhile, the technology is degrading. I have no idea about the condition of the piece. I've had so many requests to show this piece, but it's too expensive to create a second edition with all the sculptural elements.

If a museum were willing and able to acquire Wilderness from this collector, the museum would have to remaster the tapes and bring the

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equipment up-to-date, and refurbish the sculptural components of the piece.

The sale of Wilderness seemed wonderful at the time, and then it turned into this very odd situation where a work just languishes in storage and becomes obsolete technology.

The last example is Dawn Burn, a seven-channel work from 1975. This work sold to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in yet a completely different way. I sold the museum seven half-inch open-reel black-and-white videotapes, the electrical and architectural plans, and that was it.

SFMOMA cleaned and remastered the seven tapes to a new format. We then made seven laser discs. They built the structure from my specifications. They now store all the elements of Dawn Burn and have shown it twice.

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In this case the museum was quite happy to take the tapes and then realize the restored work themselves.

MARTHA ROSLER:

My name is Martha Rosler. I do make video and have since 1974. I also make other kinds of art. I have a series of questions that one might ask, thinking about the history of video.

These are so basic as to be virtually moronic, but I think moronic questions are usually the best. The questions are what impelled artists to work with video in the late sixties and the early seventies. Artists' use was different from other uses of the Portapak at the same time by people who didn't call themselves artists, but something else.

Video artists drew upon other traditions--film, theater, painting, sculpture, photography, or

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commercial broadcast television.

1. What kinds of audiences were intended, and how did the artists intend to reach those audiences?
2. What was the artist's relationship to the idea of commodity production and institutional cooperation and sponsorship, corporate sponsorship, government grants, or self-organization?
3. What role did presuppositions about the impermanence of video play in artists' choices to use the medium and the uses they chose to make of it?
4. How have the changing expectations about preservation changed the producers' roles and attitudes toward dominant institutions, grantors, and so on?

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5. How has the process of what has been called the "museumization" of video--that is, its residence within institutional walls as installation art--affected the definition of video art and its position vis-a-vis those very art institutions, such as museums and art schools, corporate grantors, and the writing of the history of video?

6. How has the new high profile of video, which is a recurrent thing in the art world, every ten years or so--but I think we're at the period of maximum capitalization at the moment--how has the new high profile of video and its new high prices created a regulated market of limited editions where they have not previously existed? And how has that affected the profile, the production, the

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teaching, and the writing of the history of video?

7. What relationship does the limited-edition video have to the limited-edition photographic print? And are the models of the photographs being applied to the models of video production? Because I happen to make both forms, and I see them as extremely different, even though what is said about one has been said about the other in the past.
8. How does the increasing dominance of art world models by those of pop celebrity and fashion affect what gets made, seen and talked about in video?
9. Does the increasing spectacularization of culture and its reliance on entertainment values produce video gigantism and/or

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mandarinism and industry-like production values or slickness?

10. How does commercialization affect or even produce a critical apparatus for the discussion of video and its dissemination in the world of ideas about art?

11. And if that's cryptic, what I'm trying to say is that one of the biggest problems that video has had is that even in shows where it was prominently featured or at least given some degree of attention, that is, for example, the Whitney Biennial for many years, critics didn't bother with it, and therefore, the audience didn't bother with it. It was treated with disdain, was dismissed and denigrated.

12. Might the preceding influences that I've mentioned lead to the wholesale

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importation of bourgeois values of universalism and even celebration of the dominant culture? Or is there still a culture of opposition and critique, and is video any longer involved in it?

13. And my final remark along these lines is, we need to consider who writes video history and what that story represents. And that's where I'll end for now.

LORI ZIPPAY:

Okay, I'll answer all those questions, Martha.

MARTHA ROSLER:

Lori, they were directed at you and Kate.

LORI ZIPPAY:

Thank you. As someone who's been involved with video and media arts for longer than I care to divulge, and as the director of a non-profit organization that is a distributor of artist video and a resource center for media art, this is indeed a fascinating moment for video.

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There are many familiar faces here, but for those who don't know Electronic Arts Intermix, I can briefly just outline who we are, what we do, and why I'm here.

EAI is a non-profit organization founded in 1971. We are a distributor and resource center for media art and artists' video. We distribute an international collection of over 2,500 titles by some 175 artists, and the collection includes works from the early sixties up to and through the 1990's.

And we also facilitate and organize traveling exhibitions, special programs, exhibition events, screenings, etc. We do have a screening room where anyone can by appointment view any of the tapes in the collection, and receive curatorial guidance and consultation.

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We have a catalog publication that's a research and educational tool on the artists and tapes in the collection. We've just launched a new data base-driven version of the online catalog, which serves as both a marketing tool, in that you can order tapes directly online, and as a research and educational tool.

We also have an offline editing facility for artists, and we lend exhibition equipment. We also have a major preservation initiative. EAI is positioned at ground zero, involved with distribution, sales, preservation, exhibition, formats, prices, etc.

Distribution of video in the 1990's is a rather arcane and complex proposition. It is far from monolithic. We are dealing every day with enormously diverse artists, audiences, technologies, formats, and contexts. And I think context is the key word here.

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On any given day we may be renting tapes on VHS to a library, we may be reselling tapes in the DIA Center for the Arts bookstore. We may be working on a laser disk project for an artist's major museum retrospective, and are involved in a European television station's broadcast, in addition to the restoration and sale of works for a major museum collection or a private collection.

The prices for tapes may range from 200 dollars to 2,500 dollars.

The mutability of technologies and contexts leads back to the issue of preservation, which EAI has been involved with quite actively for more than a dozen years.

EAI holds one of the most extensive historical collections of videotapes, and many of our

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tapes are rare. Many have great cultural and artistic significance.

What began out of sheer urgent necessity--many of our tapes from the sixties and the seventies were just falling apart--has become one of our essential priorities and one of the main programs of our organization. Since the late 1980's we have conserved hundreds of tapes, cleaning and transferring them from their original and often obsolete formats to more stable digital formats.

And our physical preservation efforts are usually undertaken in close and often intense collaboration with the artists and institutions.

And in recent years we've been working with artists to conserve historical collections of works. For example, we're cleaning and

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transferring to video Vito Acconci's super-8 films so that they'll be accessible. Super-8 is a dying exhibition format.

The other major element of our preservation efforts has to do with cataloguing and archiving. Our on-line catalog and the data base project are really the fruits of this cataloguing effort.

Now, when I talk about preservation and cataloguing, I'm really talking about museological issues rather than sales and distribution issues.

This reflects both the philosophy of our organization and the responsibility we have to our collection, to our artists and to our audiences.

All of our activities--preservation,

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distribution, and sales have to be seen also in the context of education, which is crucial to our mission.

This is particularly important in light of this dramatic renaissance of video within the art world where I think artists, curators, educators and the public must have access to and a context for both historical work and contemporary work, whether it's through sales, preservation, the screening room, the online catalog.

Finally, I want to conclude with a few notes about the beginning of EAI, because it's relevant to this discussion.

EAI was founded in 1971 by Howard Wise, who had a New York gallery devoted to Kinetic Art --art objects with light and motion. In 1969 Howard organized "TV as a Creative Medium", the

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first exhibition devoted solely to video as an art form in the United States. He presented video within this expanded notion of Kinetic Art.

Now, after this exhibition he closed his gallery and founded EAI as a non-profit organization to support artists' video projects. It is very significant to note that EAI was founded as an "alternative" space rather than as a commercial gallery. Howard could have chosen film distributor as his model, but he created an alternative instead. In the process he acknowledged that video was somehow different. There was something radical, something even transgressive about video's ability to defy traditional modes of exhibition and presentation. Video embodied this problematic that is related very much to conceptual art at the time--video could be the poster child for the dematerialization of the

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art object.

Thirty years later, the landscape is completely different. We're talking about the Internet and digital formats. And of course, the artistic and cultural climate is completely and radically altered.

Yet here we are, thirty years later, still talking about video's recalcitrance, its resistance, its defiance of these traditional modes of exhibition and presentation.

Implicit in these discussions is the fact that video still has this whiff of radicality, this inherent transgressiveness. And I would say even work with the most conservative content has this protean, quintessentially post-modern, ability to move from museum to television to the VCR, from installation, single-channel tape, from VHS to DVD.

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Now, call me old-fashioned, but I feel that this radicality and this ability to transcend forms and this ability to move in and around and between contexts is actually video's strength, not its weakness. To me it's precisely what makes video so powerful and provocative as a mode of art making in the 1990's.

KATE HORSFIELD:

My name is Kate Horsfield and I am one of the two founders of the Video Data Bank (VDB) at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. We started out in 1976 with a different idea about video because we started making documentaries, actually interviews with artists. We built up a collection of about 400 interviews with artists, dating back to the mid-seventies. Some interviews in our collection are one of a kind. We have an interview with Joseph Beuys from his second trip to the United States. We

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have probably one of the only interviews ever with Agnes Martin, which we made when she was living in New Mexico.

We started out with the idea that video could actually be used as a disseminator of ideas coming out of the art world.

It wasn't until 1983 that we started distributing what you would call video art. Once we started, we performed a lot of the same types of services that EAI does. We have a somewhat similar type of collection.

We have Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, going all the way back to what you would call the video pioneers of the late sixties, and all the way up to 1999. We have a very broad range, with about 5,000 tapes in our collection.

I want to pick up on something that was said

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before. This has to do with an issue that started as the centerpiece of the media arts field--the issue of access. Video art was one strand of video. The other strand was much more political, which had to do with using video as a cheap tool, allowing communities to make contact with each other. It wasn't just transgressive.

It was also about the presentation of ideas which were extremely important to a kind of expanded notion of consciousness and culture in the United States. Some of these ideas were transgressive, some of them were extremely vital and very important political movements, such as feminism, AIDS activism in the late eighties and early nineties. These were roles that artists took upon themselves to expand the notion of what was important in terms of values in our culture.

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A lot of this work happened in performance and video, because it could be done for very small amounts of money.

The Video Data Bank, like EAI, has always been supported by public dollars in a variety of ways. VDB has always been in the top percentile of organizations funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, before it was dismantled in 1994. VDB is supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and by the Illinois Arts Council, with our Illinois base.

I want to bring out an important fact. Early video was really the stepchild of the art world. Organizations like EAI and the Video Data Bank have performed extremely valuable services to artists and to the idea of maintaining video collections.

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Other people have talked here about migrating and remastering work from its original format, such as half-inch open reel or now three quarter-inch tape, trying to move all this work into the digital age.

What is important to add is that we have operated off a concept of passion. The fact is that artists' video needs to be seen because it represents very important ideas that are not just transgressive but are often very oppositional to both commercial ideas and mainstream cultural ideas.

Without wanting to be dramatic, there's a lot of soul and a lot of heart in this work, which makes it easy for someone like myself to be very committed to continue making it available, both within the museum structure and the educational structure.

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With the changing demographics of video, 60 percent of our business is in Europe, and the other 40 percent is with the educational institutions, colleges and universities, many of who have large collections of video.

We feel that our obligation to the artist and to the work is a binary relationship, between getting money back to the artists as royalties and making exposure for the ideas themselves.

The ideas are a very important part of public discussion about what is happening in our culture politically and culturally, in addition to aesthetics, issues that come through the art world.

Video Data Bank has always played a kind of double role, like Lori said, between television, public libraries, and community based organizations. The medium is very

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flexible.

We can talk about preservation formats and database formats, but the underlying ideas themselves always need to be accessible. They're very important ideas that are often very well thought out. They have a youth value in the culture. This is what VDB has always dedicated itself to, as best we can, to try to keep ideas discussed in a wide variety of ways.

BARBARA GLADSTONE:

Hi. I am Barbara Gladstone. I will be rather brief. Martha's questions form a really good basis for everything we came here to discuss, because I think there are, more than anything else, questions. One of the most interesting aspects of all of this is that we're sitting here in the middle of something which is information, about which everything isn't known, about which we can still take this voyage into the unknown in which everything is

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not completely codified and regulated.

That is one of the really interesting aspects for me. Barbara London asked me when the first time I showed video was and why, and I wracked my brain and finally figured out that it was in 1984, when I included a piece by Dara Birnbaum in a group show. Over the years I've gone on to show Vito Acconci, Bill Viola, Matthew Barney, and Gary Hill, who all work primarily in video. Vito is not producing as much video work anymore, but he keeps threatening to produce more.

I think my interest was not about looking for video particularly, as it was about looking at art. For me, artists obey the same rules of art. Maybe the technology is different, maybe the visual aspect is different. But I think of these people first as artists. I am actually a technophobe, even though I have a lot of video

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in my gallery. As far as I'm concerned it's not about technology. It's more about wanting to see the things that they do and wanting to be with the things that artists do because of their urgency and because of their importance to me.

There are many other artists who are working in this field, and of course, we've seen such a kind of explosion lately. And I was thinking about the video ghetto that Martha mentioned at the Whitney Biennial.

For many years there was one room where everything was on the same size monitor, and the tapes just played over and over and over again. You just took your chances. It was difficult to distinguish between artists when the format was the same, and the presentation was the same, and the tapes just ran endlessly.

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I think that what's happened in terms of installation has changed some of that. In fact, the last Whitney Biennial was the only one I noticed where there was actually dedicated space for video installations, where it became like sculpture, like painting.

For me, single-channel video is really one of the most important and vital areas. As we look back, seeing the early videos of Nauman, Lawrence Wiener and Vito Acconci and others is like the alphabet. It is the absolute core of everything. And it's still available, which is incredible. It's incredible that you can collect artists' tapes like you collect books. You can form an entire video library. You can watch the tapes whenever you want. You can have all the richness of these artists. It doesn't matter that Bruce Nauman might today make a huge video installation that sells for a lot of money to a few select people. You can find the

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essence of him and Acconci and many other artists in these early tapes, which I think is the core.

In terms of being an open medium and a democratic medium, video is great for all of us because the ideas are there, and they are very democratically presented. I mean, the EAI and Video Data Bank collections are priceless resources, which allow us to participate, every one of us, in this.

As I said, my interest is not technological. My interest is purely in having exposure to the ideas. It is a wonderful thing that the tapes are as accessible as they are.

The best artists of every era somehow are on the cutting edge of technology and everything else. They want to do the new; they want to go where no one has ever been before. It is the

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pursuit of following artists that I become involved, because I want to go where they lead.

There is no question in my mind that artists are the leaders.

All of these issues that need to be discussed and need to be formulated about preservation and format and what happens, for instance, if you go from one tape format to higher resolution, it's still the same work. That is a new dilemma for us, what happens to the master, what happens to this? We have to make these decisions.

This is the exciting and vital part about video, that we'll all be there to see as these things develop. And I think that preservation is a huge issue because if the ideas are not continued then they won't be there.

So I'm watching, like everyone else. My

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primary interest is that I like a lot of these
artists very much. They are worth seeing.

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DAVID ZWIRNER:

I have a Soho gallery which I started in 1993. I was asked the same question, when was the first time you showed video? Actually the first show I presented included video. In the 44 shows that came after that, 26 had a video component and 10 were exclusively video. What I do for my trade is totally symptomatic for this decade.

1993 was an interesting moment. That year Documenta IX was organized in Germany by Jan Hoet. It was the first time I felt that video had really caught the imagination of the larger audience. People were talking about four big installations: Bruce Neuman, Gary Hill, Bill Viola, and Stan Douglas.

At that point I thought, why do we have a new phenomena? Why, when these people have been

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working, and there is a long tradition? I thought perhaps it was a technological advance, maybe the advent of the laser disk in the late 1980's.

All of a sudden you could show video work continuously in the gallery space. You didn't have to rewind the tape. Plus the laser disk could be replayed without wearing out. That opened up possibilities for artists.

I started showing Stan Douglas, featuring him in our gallery's second show which was devoted exclusively to video.

Then I became interested in the history of the medium and met Paul McCarthy. At that point Paul had a large collection of reel-to-reel tapes in his living room that were dying. He knew that reel-to-reel technology was fading. He said he wanted to preserve these tapes, and

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said that it would cost him "X" amount of money which he didn't have. How could he do it?

As a dealer, I saw this as an interesting concept. I would pay for preservation and I would present the tapes in the gallery. The show was called "Sampler-Southern California Videotape Collection." It turned out all the tapes were performance-based. That was another interesting revelation that the early moment is so interlinked with performance.

Jumping ahead a couple of years, I asked a young California video artist by the name of Diana Thater to update Paul's "Sampler" show. The next show consisted of video related to television and the history of film, with no reference to performance at all.

It was very interesting to see how many artists working with video started to refer to the

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larger popular culture out there.

I think that we are in an interesting moment. We have too much video out there now. In the beginning it seemed to be quite selective. Now, you have a situation where in many galleries you see what I would call a token video. When there isn't a really great idea you can always throw a video in. That might lead to a backlash that we will have to deal with.

I am going to say a few more things about how we are selling video works. I have made the following experiences. You have to limit the edition in order to make a work marketable. I've tried again and again to sell single-channel tapes as an unlimited edition in the gallery, and eventually I organized a show that was a video library. I asked VDB and EAI to provide artists' tapes, which we showed.

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Visitors could view them. We put out VDB and EAI literature, inviting everybody to buy tapes directly from the distributor, not even trying to sell them ourselves.

The long and short of it is that collectors have not bought those tapes from us, only institutions have. It is very curious because video is a really wonderful thing to own. People are not taking advantage of that.

EILEEN COHEN:

My name is Eileen Cohen. I guess we are down to the collectors last.

I collect art, and among the art I collect is video art. Video art is very difficult to collect, and there are not a lot of people who get involved in it. Video is difficult for lots of reasons, and good video art is hard to find. It is hard to show and live with video art in your home. It is often hard to view.

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You have to decide that you are going to make a real commitment to video. It is not like you can take a painting and hang it on a wall. A video takes up a lot more space than a painting, even if it's a huge painting. So it takes up space and it takes up a lot of energy, at least for me.

I have found that what we do is try to dedicate areas for video, the same way you would put a painting on a wall or a piece of sculpture on the floor. We treat video just like any other art form.

There are many, many problems with video that I know Martha has identified. But I'll explain in lay language so that everyone can understand. The biggest problems are, what do you get when you actually buy a video? Are you getting an original? Are you getting a master, a sub-master, an inter-neg? All of these

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things are strange words, and a lot of collectors have no idea about these things. Therefore, you don't know what you're getting. And it's hard to collect something when you don't know what you're getting.

A certificate of ownership, what does that entitle you to? Does that mean you can reproduce the piece for loan, for your own viewing? If it wears out are you allowed to reproduce it? Can you at your own will change the technology of that piece? Or is it only at the artist's will? Should it be what the artist conceived the work as? Should you keep it that way, keeping it in the original format, which then means that you have to buy extra pieces of equipment so that when those pieces of equipment become obsolete (and they do immediately as soon as you've bought them) do you have backup equipment? Do you have backup equipment of everything?

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Those are really important issues. Equipment is a very big issue because it's also extremely expensive, and it becomes very hard to find. The earlier equipment is very hard to find. If you have a piece that you want to show that was a film on a certain kind of projector, it was supposed to have been projected in a certain way, if you can't get that projector you're in trouble.

One early piece that I bought was a sound piece that had to be put on a special kind of record player. I still haven't found that record player. I've bought three of them at flea markets and they've never worked. And no one has been able to actually make them work. So-- so that's a problem.

What about the technology? As technology changes do you keep changing? And is that what

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the artist intended to happen? Will artists, actually, tell you what they want you to do with the work? Most of them do not. You know, I know Mary would like to. I think that that is really good.

MARY LUCIER:

Just try.

EILEEN COHEN:

But many, many pieces that I bought have no information as to how the artist wants them to be shown, what the optimum distance is say from a wall or from a video screen, or whether it should be projected or on a monitor?

So those are all issues. I think a lot of these issues have to be answered by artists who make the work, and I think that maybe artists have to come together and say this is the way we are going to put the work out in the world.

I know that might sound a little radical.

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Also, I love to loan video because you don't really loan the piece, you still get to keep the piece. You loan an exhibition copy. So I don't understand why anybody would have a problem loaning video. I think it's a great thing to loan.

The installation is most important. Trying to keep up with new technology is very difficult.

You really need to have somebody who's a techno wizard if you're going to own video or film work or any of the new kinds of media. We are lucky we found somebody who helps us sometimes. Without this person we couldn't do a thing. Half the pieces would not be running.

And they have to be maintained. It is true that video does wear out if you watch it too often. We try to watch things and actually force people to watch it in our house.

Looking at video requires time. We do lose a

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few friends, but the interested ones are here tonight.

Very often, if you happen to come into the house you'll see a film playing, and it's playing on a wall where there might also be a painting.

I like to buy work that I don't understand because then I'm challenged by it. I like to buy young art, although I do agree with David that there's much too much video. I also think that a lot of the young video artists do not know what came before them. They really need to educate themselves, through EAI and Video Data Bank. "Art for Art's Sake" underwrote a video archive at White Columns, where you can look at videos on their monitors with no appointment, or you can take out videos.

It is very important for people to educate

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themselves as to what happened before, to see the history of video. Only then can you really judge what's happening now. It is just like looking at a painting. You have to know a little bit about art to appreciate what artists are making now.

BOBBIE FOSHAY MILLER:

I am Bobbie Foshay-Miller. I was both surprised and delighted, not to mention nervous, when Barbara London asked me to be on this roundtable. I guess I was surprised because I thought what do I know about any of this?

I was delighted, because it gave me a chance to really think about why I own video and to formulate thoughts about this medium that I always am fascinated by and most of the time love.

I'm not a techno-involved person either, but

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can make a few personal observations.

I first encountered video when I was working at ICP in the early eighties. Luckily Barbara presented video at MOMA and I was just blown away by Gary Hill and Bill Viola's shows at the time. Back then it occurred to me that this is a medium born in my lifetime, and probably in the lifetime of most people in this room. A new kid on the block, and in spite of television, certainly here to stay.

Perhaps pigments suspended in oil and put in a tube was a more important invention for the progress of art, and it still yields unending possibilities. But as far as I'm concerned, there's no question that the applications of video--with technology at its base--are endless. And even more exciting and unknown. Most of us in this room were there at video's birth.

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Maybe we should heed the words of Tony Oursler, who recently said, "How we make art with video is our only hope of remaining vital in this culture."

Maybe many of you remember the book and exhibition that Peter Galassi did in the early eighties called Before Photography, where he showed that pictorial expressions of photography and its vocabulary were mostly present in many paintings before 1839, i.e., before the technical ability to make photographs existed.

This seems to be true of video, too. Barbara, maybe we could talk about this sometime. Certainly, many of Duchamp's films and ready-mades with their arbitrariness and their qualities of improvisation and chance seem to foretell early video vision. In the early to

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mid-sixties, just prior to Sony's portable video camera hitting these shores, Bruce Nauman's photographs and performances, such as Wall Floor Piece Positions and Manipulating a Fluorescent Tube, all have that unrehearsed, repetitive, without beginning or end characteristics of early video.

Then, in 1969, Nauman made a videotape of these performances.

Now onto what we're here for. Unfortunately, I didn't buy video in the early years. It didn't occur to me. I was just beginning to buy photography, which had been around for 140 years but was still fighting for high art status.

Video has had an easier time being accepted as a separate category. It was born in a more experimental era.

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Video's problem seems to be not "is it art?" but "where is it?". In museums it's usually, unfortunately, relegated to back rooms or high floors, unless it's a specific video exhibition. It also seems to be a leap for a lot of museum-goers who are used to regulating their own pace as they go around a museum. With video they must stop and look for a certain amount of time, decided by somebody else.

But it was small video projection and video sculpture pieces that propelled me and my husband to buy video. We don't own a lot yet, a few pieces by Tony Oursler, Linda Post, and Peter Sarkisian, an artist from Santa Fe. All the pieces we own are sculptural videos. They exist on their own, whether a tape runs or not.

They are the most popular works in our collection. Our New Mexico friends don't get to see much video, even though Bruce Nauman

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lives down the road. So does Nancy Holt, and the Vasukkas live nearby.

Site Santa Fe is the first local organization to show video on a regular basis. No gallery sells it.

When we first bought, we were not all that concerned about editioning because our videos are sculptural and they're linked to specific objects and are unique objects. The artists all have the master tape. So it isn't editioning that is our concern, it is more conservation and preservation.

I would like to have all the tapes we own and their masters transferred to digital, sooner rather than later. Although Dave Hickey recently said that he sees the technology craze renew itself every five years. The digital imaging technology is "in" right now, but it is

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about to hit the beach when the new wave comes in.

I do believe it is the responsibility of the owners--museums and individuals alike--to take the preservation steps, and this would include the master tapes, as well.

I had thought that maybe when DVD players become the norm, we should put our VCR's in a safe deposit box.

Recently, I was talking with San Francisco artist Alan Rath, whose work is showing at Site Santa Fe now. He said he never used videotape because early on he realized that tape was impractical and inherently obsolete. He started to make digital video sculptures in 1985. He wanted to make objects over which he had complete control, from the tiniest computer chip to the largest attachment, objects he

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could just plug in and turn on.

Alan admits there's a problem with his works, too -- if something happens to him, nobody else knows their minute intricacies.

I will conclude by saying that the visual, formal qualities of video pieces are and always will be intertwined with their technology. Whatever the technology, it is the owner's responsibility to preserve; the artist's responsibility to create; and everyone's responsibility to enjoy.

BARBARA LONDON:

We have a lot of information to think about right now. I'm sure people will take issue with some of what was said, because video history is getting written, and there are many approaches to the material. People in the audience and on the roundtable helped to create

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this rich field, which isn't regulated. Good art is hard to find no matter what the medium is!

I am fond of an image of The Museum of Modern Art's façade from 1939. Founding Director Alfred Barr said that the museum was committed to the art of our time. Now this is a difficult task, because it means commitment to the moment we are living through. We all have a history, which favors how we approach today and how we interpret the past.

DARA MEYERS-KINGSLEY:

I would jump in and ask whether anyone on the panel agrees that it is the owner's responsibility to preserve the tapes. Do the artists feel that whoever buys their tape is responsible, or do they feel it's their own responsibility to preserve their work? Or is it the distributor's responsibility, who have

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mostly taken on the role of preservationist?

KATE HORSFIELD:

I want to mention one of the most extraordinary days of my professional life at the Video Data Bank. I went to Castelli-Sonnabend to pick up a portion of their collection, because they discovered that there was no market for video.

In the 1970's they had assembled one of the first extraordinary collections of artists' work in video. Castelli-Sonnabend had been busy distributing this collection for more than ten years when they realized it wasn't economically viable for them as a gallery. They really didn't seem to know what to do with it.

After VDB and EAI received calls, we each went to pick up the Castelli-Sonnabend video work, which was in various states of physical need. The work needed to be catalogued; it needed to be preserved. We needed to determine which

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were the masters, which were the dub masters, and which were the copies. All this took several years to piece together.

All of the Castelli-Sonnabend has now been remastered and we have digital copies. VDB and EAI played a kind of service role. Dara's question is important.

Video is very labor-intensive in terms of maintaining a collection. Who is responsible for keeping the field going? That always has to be our central focus.

In our case, the artists themselves were either not interested or not able to maintain their work. They did not have the money to do it. In various different eras we have all obtained federal, state, and foundation dollars to keep this work going!

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At this point, in the digital era, you wonder how many more times can I migrate a collection to another format. It's very shaky for all of us right now and it is imbedded with a lot of responsibility.

EILEEN COHEN:

Can I just say one thing? I think there is a difference between unique work of video and film, and works that are unlimited editions. What VDB sells is a work in unlimited editions, right?

KATE HORSFIELD:

There is no limit on the number of works. Those issues are the responsibility of the artist, the gallery, and a combination of many people who have an interest in that piece. If someone buys a painting, it is the responsibility of the collector (museum or private) to assume the role of making sure that the painting is kept in good condition. It's similar to when someone buys a unique piece of

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video or film—the collector has to treat it as art! Responsibility comes with the pleasure.

BARBARA LONDON:

You can say that video is a publishable form. A videotape, like Nam June Paik's Global Groove exists at least in the hundreds. When it comes to the master-- EAI has a preservation and a distribution copy: The Museum of Modern Art does too. But as institutions we might work together in preserving the work in the future. We could use film archives as another model. FIAF archives share their databases to make certain that only one institution goes to the expense of preserving and maintaining a great masterpiece. With video archives, we would preserve and then collectively upgrade our copies.

A videotape can exist as a unique copy; it can be in a limited edition; it can be unlimited.

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KATE HORSFIELD:

Well, I just wanted to ask the dealers a question that I've always wondered about. I think you know how I am related to the art world, so forgive me if I'm being naïve. But what happens when somebody buys a limited edition videotape in the secondary market, even at an auction? How does it maintain its price through time?

If you have a limited edition, what happens? The auction market for paintings always has a kind of effect on how artists' careers go up and down. Does that work with video?

BARBARA GLADSTONE:

I think it depends. It depends on the artist and if there is a secondary market at all! For instance with Bruce Nauman, yes there is! He started working in video a long time ago and he

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is very well known for installation. I am sure there are records at Sotheby's.

For instance Good Boy, Bad Boy which probably sold for 500 dollars as an edition of 40 when it was new, is probably worth 40,000, 50,000 dollars. That is the secondary market deciding something worth owning.

Good Boy, Bad Boy is simply two tapes shown on two monitors and the monitors are not sold with it.

It might exist on laser disc now, but not in the beginning. Back then it was a very low-tech kind of work! It was never an installation, but somehow its importance to people has made it worth a certain amount of money. Of course the secondary market should function in that way!

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It is not for us to decide what the secondary market is. The public decides, because it is by demand that something has a price or does not have a price in the secondary market.

BARBARA LONDON:

Let me give an example. When the video program began at MOMA, some of the very first tapes we showed were three works by Gilbert and George. Gordon's Makes Us Drunk, In the Bush, and Portrait of the Artist as Young Men.

These tapes were made as an edition of 25. Each purchaser of that series received a signed piece of paper--a document from Gilbert and George. Gilbert and George allowed Nigel Greenwood--their dealer at the time--to make a copy for exhibition at MOMA. Ultimately, the exhibition copy went into the vault--not to be shown and not to be considered part of our collection.

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So it is really not our property, but it is there, and it needs to be preserved. But—it is really not our copy, so it is like all of a sudden this piece came out of the woodwork.

Another case is Vito's Theme Song which he made in Italy in 1975. We showed that in 1976. The exhibition copy went into our climate controlled storage area. That exhibition copy turned out to be the best extant sub-master, even though we had played it in an exhibition. With Vito's graces, because he did not have a copy, the Museum paid for the preservation of our copy, and that became the sub-master for us and for EAI.

CHRISSIE ILES:

I just want to say something in relation to what David [Zwirner] said, and also for information. I obtained Leo Castelli and Ileana Sonnabend's permission to recreate the

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Castelli-Sonnabend tape and film collection at the Whitney Museum. This will be a special collection, purchased by the Whitney.

In relation to David's comment about the fact that there doesn't seem to be a market for tapes when they're made available for 40 dollars is that perhaps people need to feel more confident about what they are first. That is where museums have a responsibility really to show the work and make these tapes more visible. Then people will then want to take a tape home with them, as I get to do regularly.

I watch a work over and over again and get different things out of it every time.

Whereas people perhaps do not buy them because they are not quite sure--they don't feel familiar enough with them. The responsibility is on all of us to allow people to become more familiar with the work to start with. Video

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still is very invisible in museums.

BARBARA LONDON:

In New York City you can look at the history of video at the Whitney, at MOMA, the New Museum, sometimes at the Kitchen, and Anthology Film Archives. Often these programs are not heavily publicized. The public has to read the museum brochures, which are often obscure. Work is not always picked up by the press; or given a Voice Choice or Time Out Pick.

DAVID ZWIRNER:

For me personally it is amazing that none of the big institutions in New York have made a viewing room accessible to the larger public. It should just be really easy to make work easily accessible.

I just heard about the White Columns Room for the first time, and that is great. I believe if the history of video would be easily seen by

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younger artists, we would have some great work out there, and a lot more of it.

We need video art libraries. If you want to read a book, it is so easy to go to a library. But with a videotape it is really hard.

BARBARA LONDON:

So I would imagine Chrissie [Iles] would agree that is a goal. At MOMA when we have completed our expansion in the year 2004 we expect to have an area where visitors will be able to request to see artists' tapes.

CHRISSIE ISLES:

That's exactly what I am in the process of doing. I have been talking with artists like Douglas Gordon for years about the idea of a video library and having tapes there, and people being able to choose something the Pompidou has had for a long time. I am

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actually in the process of doing that right at the moment at the Whitney. If you have a film program, why can't you just have video tech in a smaller room, in a much more informal way where people can just walk in and see tapes every day. The program could be much less formal and much looser.

LORI ZIPPAY:

I want to make a brief comment in the context of this idea of the video screening room. Our screening room is open by appointment only because it is a small. It is not really a public facility, but it is booked constantly and there is usually a waiting list.

There is this hunger on the part of students, scholars, artists, curators, media professionals and the general public, really. There is a tremendous need and a tremendous wish on the part of individuals to have access

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to this work.

KATE HORSFIELD:

The same thing is true in Chicago. We have a public screening room that's booked constantly.

We have a huge collection of more than 2,000 articles and essays relating to the history of video. The texts include almost everything that's been written. I've been trying to figure out some way to make this accessible to people but I am a little scared because there is so much interest that it might be impossible for us to keep up with demand for it.

And I think that the history has become more interesting to people now that there has been a revitalized interest for video on the part of galleries.

BARBARA GLADSTONE:

This is not only an old medium, but something

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that is developing and growing! Photography existed for a long time before people thought of it as collectible! I mean photography was there! It had another purpose!

This is just evolutionary, which takes time. Eventually you have people who have grown up with video and are accustomed to the medium. The collecting public and the museum public for the most part are accustomed to painting and sculpture. It is a big leap to go even to photography, and from photography to video, which in many cases requires a dedicated space. Video makes demands that most people are not prepared to commit to at this time. But it is inevitable, as well.

DARA MEYERS-KINGSLEY:

I wanted to ask the dealers whether or not your pricing structure and editioning or not editioning is based on any model in the art

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world - such as photography or prints?

Is video being sold with some kind of structure in place, either institutionalized or not? How are decisions being made about pricing and editioning?

DAVID ZWIRNER:

Pricing reflects supply and demand. That is really the basis of all pricing.

DARA MEYERS-KINGSLEY:

Is it based also on the format?

DAVID ZWIRNER:

Increasingly. The video art that is sold is sold without the equipment nowadays unless it is custom-made; you know, then you deliver it with it.

We are trying to bring some kind of standard

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into it. You have an artist like Bruce Nauman who makes his work in editions of 2 or 3. That has rubbed off, so that Bill Viola, Gary Hill, and Stan Douglas edition this way, too.

There is really no logic. It is arbitrary, but that seems to be the model.

DARA MEYERS-KINGSLEY:

Arbitrary? -- pricing? That is what it seems like, which is why I'm asking the question.

DAVID ZWIRNER:

It is just a reality that people want to spend a lot more on a limited edition. They want something precious, and they want to be exclusive in owning that particular work of art. A dealer can only provide that by limiting the edition. A collector can buy a Bruce Nauman videotape for 300 dollars, which is phenomenal! But it is very hard to sell.

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That's part of human nature.

BARBARA GLADSTONE:

I was going to say I think that there are different models for different works because some video works have sculptural components which makes them in a sense unique and which makes it easier to find a model in sculpture and painting.

I work with 3 or 4 artists who do a lot of video, and in each case the pricing is quite different, depending very often on the format.

I mean if Rosemary Trockel makes videos which go on a monitor, that is a completely different thing than if Gary Hill makes a video which has video projectors and a high degree of technical proficiency and production value and other things.

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Matthew Barney functions in a completely different way. He has more or less functioned like an independent filmmaker with a sculptural component.

So all of these are quite different. The pricing completely depends on what it is that the artist is making.

DARA MEYERS-KINGSLEY:

And what do the collectors (institutional or individual) receive when they buy a video piece? Videotape or laser disk?

BARBARA GLADSTONE:

Different in different cases!

BARBARA LONDON:

But should that be different. We can say some artists will give an operating manual with the electronic schematics in addition to photo and

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video documentation with their description of the piece. That should be the standard.

Collectors should expect this documentation. A museum must have this information so that when the curator, the artist, the registrar and the original preparator are gone, knowledge about the installation remains.

MARY LUCIER:

As an artist who has been selling installations, there are several issues.

The people who have the greatest libraries are the artists themselves! I mean we hold thousands of tapes that may be generations of rough cuts leading up to a final project and in some cases those are saved and archived and stored somewhere.

So actually the artists themselves are the

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original libraries for most of this work, and a lot of us spend a great deal of time showing work in our studios, because there's no other way to show it. You don't happen to have a show up at the moment - what if a collector or curator comes into town and visits your studio, you have to try to set the installation up in some way that can recapture the experience of being in that particular work. That is hard for museums to do, and it is terribly hard for artists!

As far as the sale of these things, I have always felt honor-bound to provide a sub-master of all the tapes that go into the installation.

That sub-master is regulated for copying purposes only to the owner to replicate when they want to upgrade to another format or if they want to make playing copies. This used to be the case with tape.

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Resale is a different matter. Resale means selling the concept and all the materials in their entirety.

Included should be this famous manual that we have been talking about. The manual, if it is thoroughly done, really describes the piece. It has photographs of the original installation; it has floor plans; it has elevations; it describes the tapes; it includes the possibility of these tapes being able to be re-created in the future. The manual looks back to the history and it looks ahead to the future, and if there are sculptural objects, it explains how to take care of them.

I had a piece that toured for four years, and there was a manual. In each place the registrar participated in unpacking all the crates. The registrar made a report in the condition book that traveled with the piece,

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like any traveling show.

I would always arrive to oversee the installing of the work, because I still did not trust an institution to do it by itself. I would appear and there would be this book that was history of this piece. It kept getting thicker and thicker and it had snapshots, some drawings, and some restorer from some museum would get very finicky and be delicately touching up something on [it, and I'd just say] well you do not really have to do that; oh, yes I do - that is my job.

So-- there's a part of all of this that, that we've had to take responsibility for and that is how to tell you and you what to do with these works, and the other is where to give up and say I have handed you all of this and now at this point I no longer can interfere with your processes, with what the museum does, with

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how they, they do restoration.

So-- I don't know; I think that that's really critical - how the artist communicates to whoever the purchaser is.

WOMAN:

But on, on that note - how do you feel about - if you had done a piece in film and then it was converted into a video or into a laser disk - it would feel different - it would look different - I mean - where is the original - where is the original work of art [the way you conceived it].

WOMAN:

I don't work in film. [LAUGHS] I never have, but--

WOMAN:

Well, I'm not talking about you specifically, but as an artist--

MARY LUCIER:

Well, but going from let's say half inch open

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reel to laser disk! This was a challenge when we did this in San Francisco for Dawn Burn I had to make a really crucial decision: Was I replicating it simply to preserve it, or was I actually allowed to make a change.

Am I allowed to fade in and fade out now, because it's going to go from laser to laser disc; therefore it's going to recycle in a way. What about authenticity? This is the kind of thing I worry about, and how preservation might change the look! The work is going to be shown on different monitors than the original ones.

But finally I give up. I mean I don't give up, but at a certain point you have to stop caring about some of those details, because I would be so burdened in my life if I continued to care about all of those things -- about the 50 pieces I've made that may be out there somewhere in the world. The only thing I wish I

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could do is go around whenever a piece is broadcast and tune everybody's TV set. But other than that, there are certain things you really have to accept, and I've found it was a challenge. There were no answers. Do I dare fade in - do I dare fade out? Otherwise it's all the same, you know?

MARTHA ROSLER:

You just-- you play it by ear. It actually might be a nice idea - do you think I could hang myself from the gibbet and the noose?

I think it would be a nice idea if a percentage of sales went to a new non-profit institute set up in every country or as a Nafta-like organization for the support of indignant [sic] video - I mean indigent video artists for the preservation and dissemination of video art. I'm really quite serious.

I think that because the government has ceased

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to give enough money to the upkeep and maintenance of video art, I think we ought to set up something like the American Film Institute's Preservation program, and that everyone who buys video should expect that a portion of that profit should go to that and that the money be sent to other non-profits like Data Bank and Electronic Arts Intermix.

There's a problem which is that on the one hand, inevitably when no goes for preservation, money doesn't go for production. The other is that, I just want to think for a minute about something that is not related to who is responsible for what but what are we all responsible for.

And one of the unconscious emanations that we are all responsible for is the relentless imposition of ideologies and models on this supposedly new and different art form to see

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how we can fit it into the old forms in exactly the same way. I think one of the most pernicious ones is represented by the following.

Nam June Paik, Vito Acconci, Bill Viola, Gary Hill, Bruce Nauman, Tony Oursler, Marcel Duchamp, Paul McCarthy, Gilbert and George, Peter Sarkisian, Douglas Gordon and Matthew Barney, and Diana Thater, Linda Post and Rosemarie Trockel filling the roles of the young women as opposed to the old men. I would like to offer Joan Jonas, Linda Benglis, Mary Lucier and Nancy Buchanan, Barbara Smith, Nancy Holt, Steina Vasulka, Ulrike Rosenbach, Eleanor Antin and Ardele Lister, Kathy High, Joan Braderman, Dee Dee Halleck, Mona Hatoum, Valerie Soe, Janice Tanaka, Susan Mogul, Ilene Segalove, Nancy Angelo and Candace Compton, Lisa Steele, Max Almy, and Cecilia Condit, just as a start.

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And then I'd also like to point in the direction of people like Tony Cokes on the one hand and Ant Farm on the other and just say that's my little intervention.

BARBARA LONDON:

We have a few minutes for questions from the audience. I know there is a lot of knowledge in the room.

WOMAN [Sarah Stauderman]:

You talk about transferring things and going digital, and as a person who's a bit of a Luddite and somebody who likes [well I'm a] conservator, which is a - means I'm a conservative when it comes to handling materials. I'd like to caution the rush towards digital transferring things so quickly to digital materials, the reason being that most of the affordable digital formats that you can transfer your tapes to will require you to use

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compression, which means that you will lose information from your original tape when you transfer it to your digital medium.

And that's just something to keep in mind, because this is a technological medium. We want to be hip about these things, but in fact the analog, the early, some of the early analog tapes have an interesting quality that gets lost with digital, with the change to digitization.

So-- I just want to throw that out there as an issue and something that we should talk about again, and other people should also be aware I should just say there is AMIA, The American Moving Image Archivists. They have task forces that deal with preservation. They are trying to put forward a preservation of video which is great, cause now they have moved away from film, and now they are dealing with video.

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And there is also the American Institute for Conservation which has just started an electronic media group, so people are concerned from the preservation end about these materials.

We are not present up here, but we are in fact concerned about them. There's also a publication that the Media Alliance did, and is somebody here from Media Alliance? I don't know. Mona Jiminez is here.

WOMAN [Mona Jiminez]:

There actually has been quite a lot of work over the last 10 years or so in preservation which has come out of a number of different sectors - conservation sector; the archivists; and media arts professionals and people in museums and so forth.

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So there are some resources. There is a book that was published by Media Alliance called Video Preservation, Securing the Future of the Past which was edited by Deirdre Boyle, and there was a followup done by the New York media arts community written by Jim Hubbard.

The Bay Area Video Coalition with the Media Alliance did a symposium called "Video Playback," which was an attempt to start a network with conservators in the electronic media arts.

One of the conservators involved with the symposium started a special interest group. And BVAC (Bay Area Video Coalition) published recently the proceedings of that symposium. There's also another publication from Media Alliance called the Magnetic Video Sourcebook, which is also a good resource.

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So those are some of the things; and the Association of Moving Image Archivists is an organization that is - has been working quite a lot on this issue as well.

WOMAN:

You know when we first started in this medium the whole thing that was appealing about it was it was ephemeral! It wasn't about saving anything! It was about the moment - experiencing the moment - re-experiencing it in the next moment and pieces would be shown once and that was it!

And we didn't worry about it for the longest time. And then all of a sudden museums started wanting them, and all of a sudden people started wanting to re-live that experience and re-create the piece, and so we began to think well there's more value in it than we ever imagined there was!

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And now we've all kind of got caught up in this, and, and I'm not saying that I object to it; I'm as caught up in it as anybody else, but-- but there's an irony there, and, and-- you know, the, the thing about having this personal library that one has is - is that - who's going to fund me to preserve all of my work - you know - who's going to go into my personal archive and-- you know, unless, you know, somebody's even decides oh, we're going to buy absolutely everything you ever produced! - you know, which is not - not that likely.

It's a very double-edged problem here. On the one hand you want things to live, and as you get older you care more about what you've done and more about it having some mark in the world. Then you think, well what really is that mark? Does it exist in some review, somebody's enthusiastic response to how much they loved your work? Or does it exist in preserving the

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work and allowing it to be shown again and again after you're dead?

One other thing is estate planning for video artists! Cynthia Thousen's very involved in estate planning for artists! You have these massive estates of videotapes! Think about it!

DARA MEYERS-KINGSLEY:

Do we need an industry standard?

WOMAN:

The answer is to put it in a cold storage locker along with our bodies.

STEPHEN VITIELLO:

I work in Electronic Arts Interimix with Lori Zippay and we have had two thoughts running constantly. One is about how we preserve the work in the changing formats, and also how we preserve the way the work was shown. I've been working on several exhibitions where archival work has been shown, projected, and these were

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all works that were made to be shown on monitors.

Projection is a very sexy thing; it's a very practical thing to have a lot of people see work, but it also enlarges what's imperfect about an image -- it changes the context.

And just as much as going from reel-to-reel to digital changes something, it also -- blowing it up I think changes it that much more.

And then in the worries about preserving work on digital formats, I think the worries come when you don't specify what those formats are. One of the most famous video artists in the world called me and said I'm putting all my work on laser disc because, and then he named one of the other 5 most famous video artists in the world - he is. Laser disc is a great exhibition format; it is a terrible

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preservation format.

You lose sound quality; you lose image quality; and if you scratch it, it is destroyed.

An analog tape can be salvaged if it goes through a flood and through a fire or gets smashed by 10 five year olds; it, it can stand up to a lot.

And what we have been doing at Electronic Arts Intermix is making one digital Beta and one analog Beta tape; storing them in two different facilities and just tracking that the formats stay available. The tapes need to be stored in temperature and humidity-controlled environments, and played regularly.

And just one more comment is in reference to the comment about there being too much video. When you said that, Alex Perlstein, the artist

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next to me, said well there's too much painting; there is too much drawing. What I would say is the biggest problem is that most people who are presenting work - which does not include the people on this stage are not educated in how to show it.

There's a spontaneity about video. It is produced very quickly and gets caught in a hype, so what people want is to present it immediately before they have studied what is good work.

I mean we so often get a call saying we are doing a show; we need video quick.

This happened in the early 90's, with the awareness of multi-culturalism. We would get calls every day saying quick, we need a black artist. And you just say, but that is not the point. There's a hundred million wonderful

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artists in every format, every background, and it is a lot the responsibility of the presenters to figure out what is good work; how to show it and where to show it.

CHRIS EAMONS:

I advise and manage a very important collection of video art here in the United States. I just want to follow-up on what Barbara London was talking about with respect to standards, and Stephen Vitiello was saying about laser discs.

Since I started managing and acquiring for this collection, the standards have been all over the map. It is very nice that Mary Lucier insists upon the substantial manual. This is something that would make everybody - every collector - every registrar - every curator's life a dream, but it is just not the case.

It is one of the hardest things to regulate -

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we are just all over the map. There are sculptural items; there are edition pieces; there are distributed pieces; and one of the worst things I've found and something that we plan to overcome with our collection and how we manage and how we negotiate acquisitions is not to buy low band material - a 1/2 inch VHS tape and laser discs just won't do. It just does not make sense.

And I think that some of that is-- is at the root of Dara Meyers-Kingsley's questioning about what is it worth?

Analog media aren't like digital media. The generation, the distance away from what the artist has determined is the master does make a difference. It makes a difference to me, anyway, as someone who is interested in preserving and archiving for future generations even beyond the life of any specific collection

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or collectibility of an object.

BARBARA LONDON:

So-- shall we say that's it?

DARA MEYERS-KINGSLEY:

Are we done?

BARBARA LONDON:

Are there more questions? Also before you all leave, I want to say some thank yous - maybe we'll take another question or two, but I want to thank of course our great panel members, and the audience, too.

I also want to thank Barbara Tolle, Jane Wesman, who are co-chairs of the program committee of ArtTable; Peeky Berenson and Jan Anderson; chair and co-chair of the New York Chapter of Art Table.

I want to thank Paula Cooper for allowing us to be here in her wonderful space.

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DARA MEYERS-KINGSLEY:

And Aleya Saad, the executive director of ArtTable, who does an amazing job in running ArtTable and organizing these events.