

# Sculpture

## OBJECTS THAT FLICKER: ARTISTS' VIDEOS FOR THE HOME

by Rebecca Dimling Cochran, June 2001

The way artists use video has changed dramatically since the early days when cameras were incredibly bulky and editing facilities were rare. Advancements in technology now allow artists to record, edit, and project their work in numerous diverse ways. A recent trend has been to turn large-screen projections into full-room installations, but smaller scale video objects are rapidly gaining popularity among both artists and collectors.

Successful video objects must fuse two very distinct elements: sculptural presentation and the moving image (which may or may not include an audio component). Often one element is more successful than another, or the two work better independently of one another than together. "Objects That Flicker: artists' videos for the home" brings together five artists whose works vary in their level of success. Each has a very distinct flavor, created not only by the content of the video itself, but also by the form of presentation.

Three of the artists, in particular, successfully bring together object and video. Matthew McCaslin's *Rolling Delight* celebrates the exhilaration and even the nausea created by amusement park rides in both content and context. A little red wagon proudly displays the mechanical workings of the piece--the monitors, players, and accompanying cables and wires. The tallest of three 13-inch television screens features a flashing neon star that rotates on its axis, as if marking the top of some fantastic attraction. To each side, McCaslin placed two other monitors, which play actual footage of people on a Ferris wheel-type ride. In a wonderful move, he flipped the monitor to the left upside down so that when the footage plays, it creates a three-dimensional effect, changing the empty space around it as if it were all in motion. The sounds of ringing bells, whirring rides, and muffled crowds recorded at an actual fairground add to the general vibrancy of the piece.

Janet Biggs evokes a much more serene atmosphere in *Nordicap*. The presentation of three sleek LCD screens, two of which are positioned at a 45-degree angle from the central panel, is reminiscent of an altarpiece triptych. A calm meditative tone is set on the two side screens by simultaneous vistas of peaked mountains jutting out of the ocean. In the center is a woman diving into the water, projected upside down and in reverse so that she appears to blast out of the water. The dynamic movement of the figure, coupled with an accompanying soundtrack of NASA flight recordings, provides a jarring contrast to the peaceful surroundings.

The strongest and most elegant piece in the exhibition is *Weekend* by John Daniel Walsh. His minimal presentation features a single LCD monitor set into a small white wooden box mounted on the wall. The pristine appearance serves to strengthen the visual rhythms and patterns of the video. Walsh filmed individuals at play in a local park--a man throwing a Frisbee, someone walking a dog, a runner, a rollerblader, and a biker. He isolated the figures from their original setting and placed them on stark white or black backgrounds, using their movement to create graphic designs and traces. The scale of the work is perfect: from a distance, visitors only see the alternating patterns, which are accentuated by pulsating tones created by an analog synthesizer. Yet as one draws nearer, there is a marvelous moment of recognition when both the images and the sounds (of people at the beach, for example) reveal the lighthearted, playful nature of the piece.

"Objects That Flicker" does well to reveal the diverse practice developing around the video object, from monitors set into the familiar two-dimensional canvas to full-scale three-dimensional constructions. Yet this collection of work also exposes the complex nature of the medium and the necessity for both the sculptural and video components to work hand in hand for the piece to be successful.