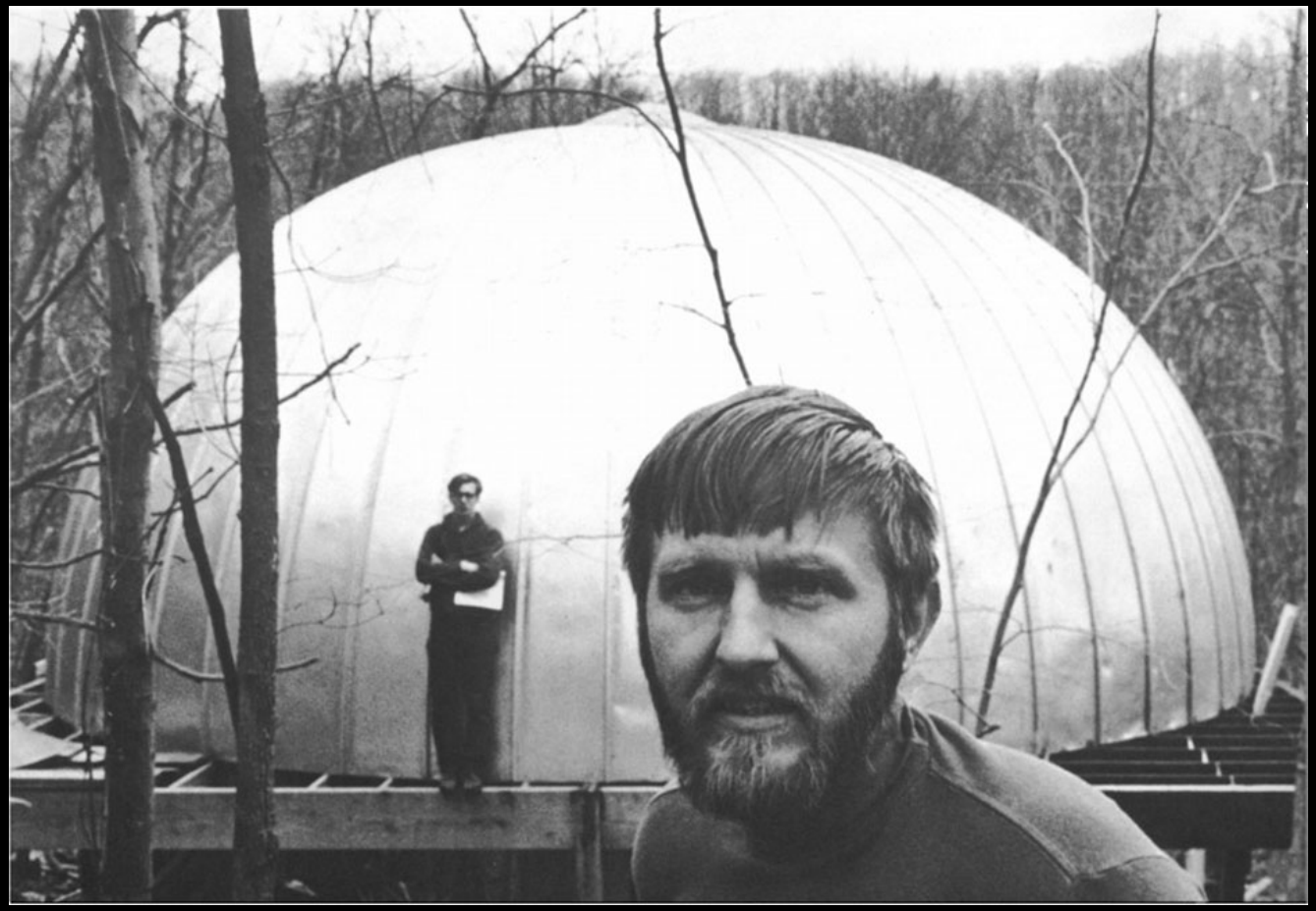
AHST 4342-501 (27532)
History of Media and New Media Art
Spring 2018
Dr. Charissa N. Terranova
University of Texas at Dallas
Arts & Humanities
T-Th 1:00-2:15

Thursday 04/26/18

Immersion and New Media Art: Stan Vanderbeek

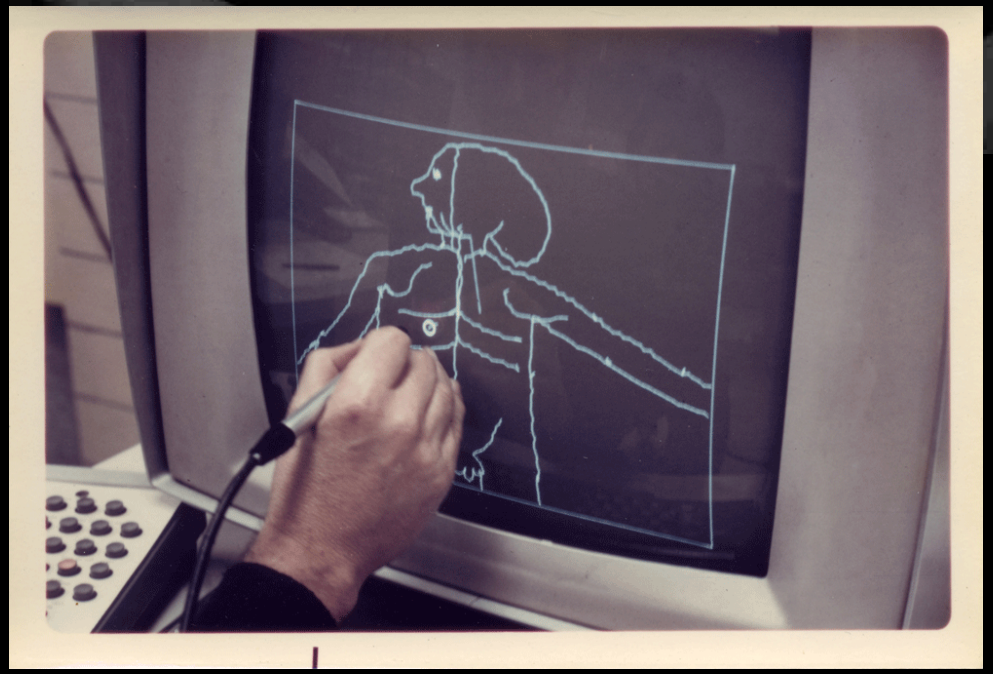
Stan Vanderbeek and Ken Knowlton, Jazz by Paul Motian, Poem Field No. 2, Life Like, 1967
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4agEv3Nkcs



Stan VanDerBeek, Movie-Drome, 1957-1969
Stony Point, NY

Stan Vanderbeek (1927-1984)

- Trained in art and architecture at the Cooper Union, NYC
- Went to Black Mountain College
- Started his career with experimental filmmaking, working with montage and collage
- Made sets and props for the children's TV show, Winky Dinky and You
- Famous for his stop-animation films, the Movie Drome, and the 8-film series "Poemfields" made with Ken Knowlton at Bell Labs using BEFLIX software for animation
- In 1967, VanDerBeek became an artist in residence at MIT's nascent Center for Advanced Visual Studies, founded two years earlier by György Kepes



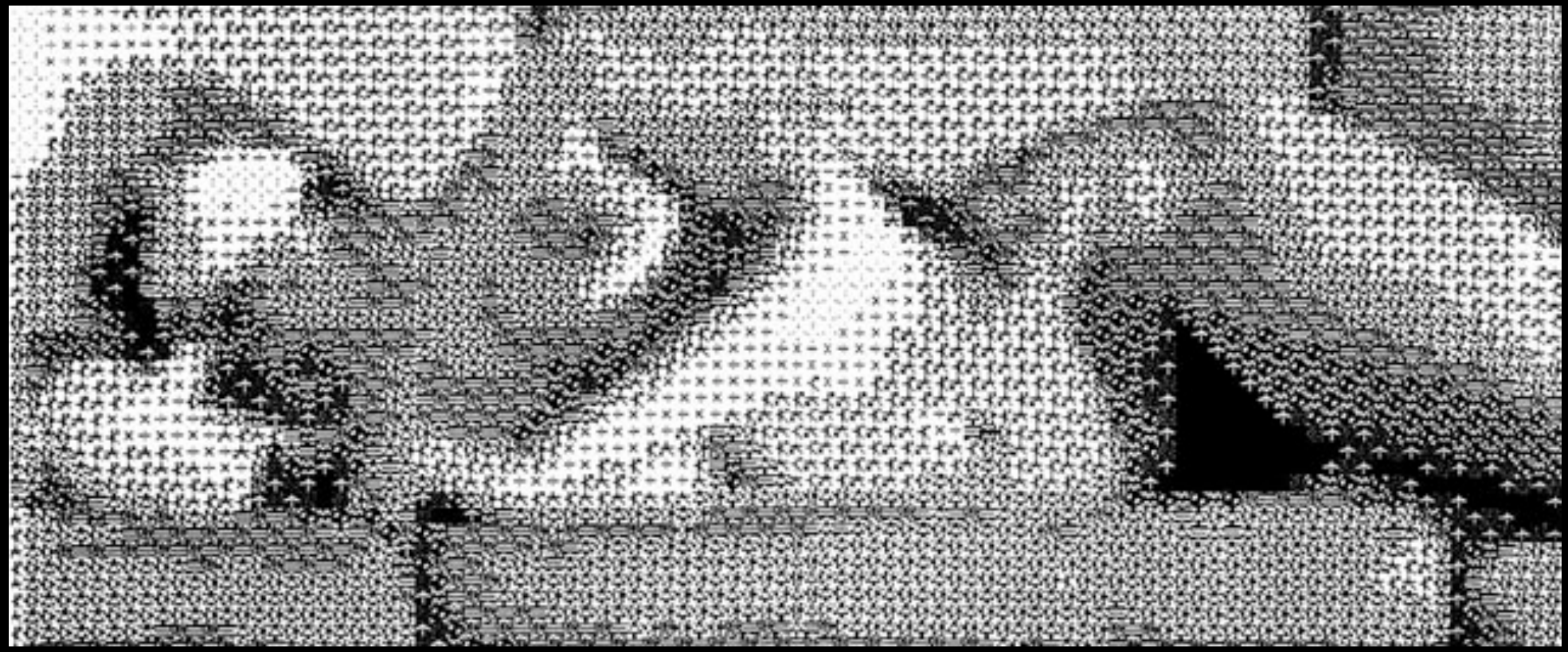
Collage and animation

Stan Vanderbeek - (1959) - Science Friction
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRcppZ5Sg7I

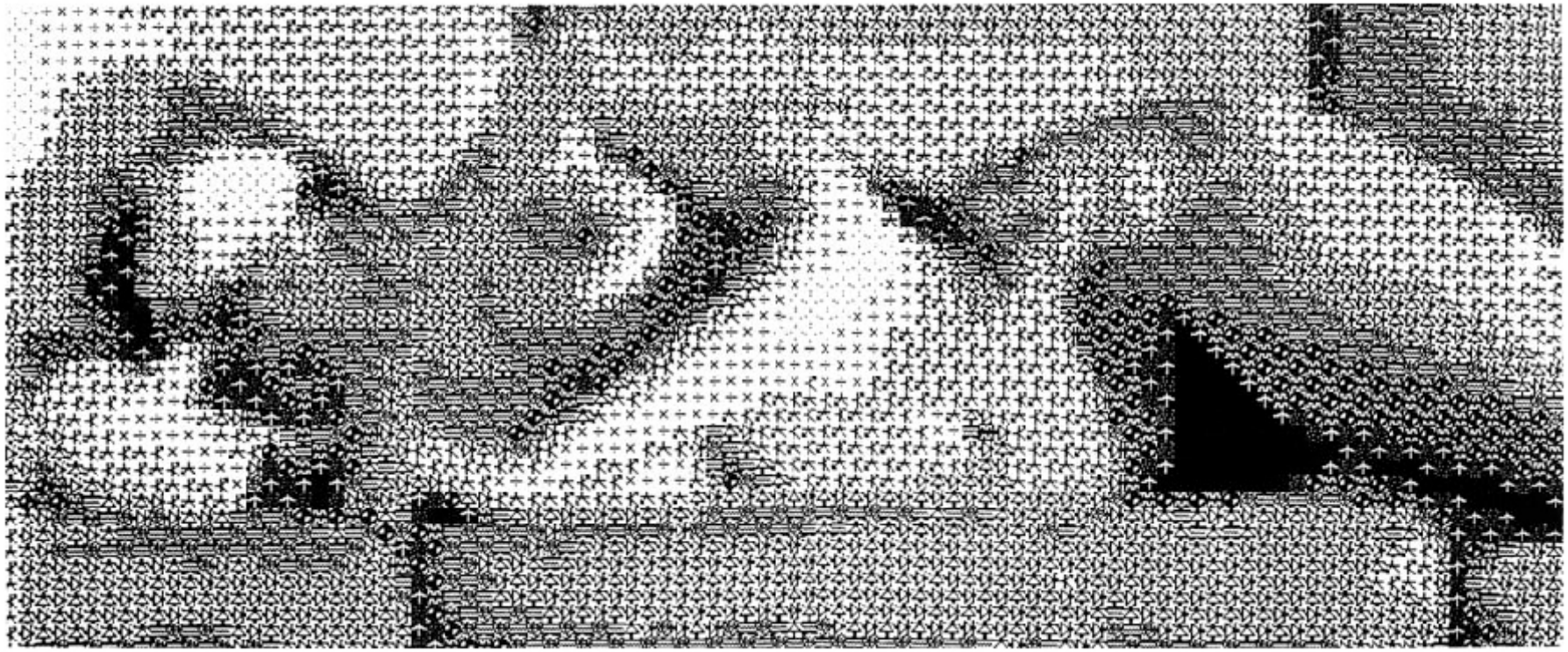
Stan Vanderbeek - (1960) - Achooo Mr. Kerrooschev

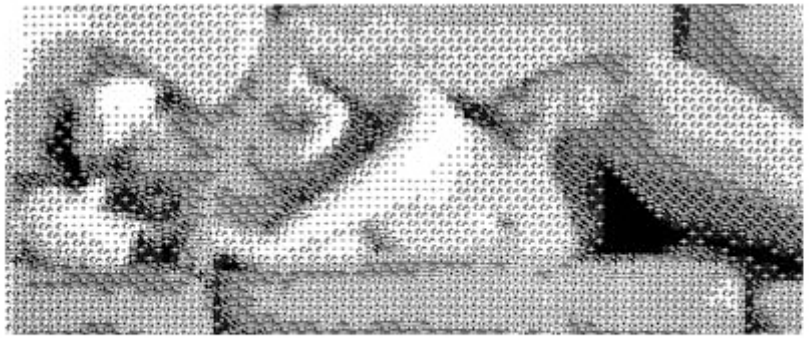
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-1rQ_76seI

Stan Vanderbeek and Ken Knowlton, Jazz by Paul Motian, Poem Field No. 2, Life Like, 1967
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4agEv3Nkcs



Kenneth Knowlton and Leon Harmon, Studies in Perception 1, 1966





Studies in Perception #1. Computer-produced mural, as shown in the 10/11/67 New York Times, and the 1968 MOMA Machine Show, 5x10 feet, © Leon Harmon & Ken Knowlton, 1966.

In order to create the original version of this image, Bell Labs neuroscience researcher Leon Harmon and computer graphics pioneer Ken Knowlton scanned a photograph of the choreographer Deborah Hay. To create the image, the two men translated the image into code. They scanned a photograph with a camera and converted the analog voltages to binary numbers which were assigned typographic symbols based on halftone densities. The resulting printout was 12 feet wide and was hung in a colleague's office at Bell Labs as a prank but was then shown in the 1968 MoMA exhibition *The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age*.

The New York Times

L+++ 49

Art and Science Proclaim Alliance in Avant-Garde Loft

By HENRY R. LIEBERMAN

In a sound-drenched Lower Manhattan loft building that was enlivened by revolving painted disks, film projections, floating pillows and miniskirted girls in paper smocks, representatives of industry and labor joined a number of artists and scientists yesterday to proclaim a "working alliance" between art and technology.

This modest and uncertain merger seeks to bridge the gap between the two worlds. It is intended to bring modern technological tools to the artist for creating new art forms and fresh insights and viewpoints to the engineer for creating a "people-oriented" technology.

The event was celebrated at a news conference "happening" in the six-story loft building at 381 Lafayette Street used for studio purposes by Robert Rauschenberg, the avant-garde artist.

Kheel's 'Biggest Mediation'

Mr. Rauschenberg, along with Dr. Billy Klüver, an electronics engineer who is specializing in laser research at the Bell Laboratories, and Theodore W. Kheel, the lawyer-labor mediator, are prime movers in the art-technology merger.

with a device operating like a television camera.

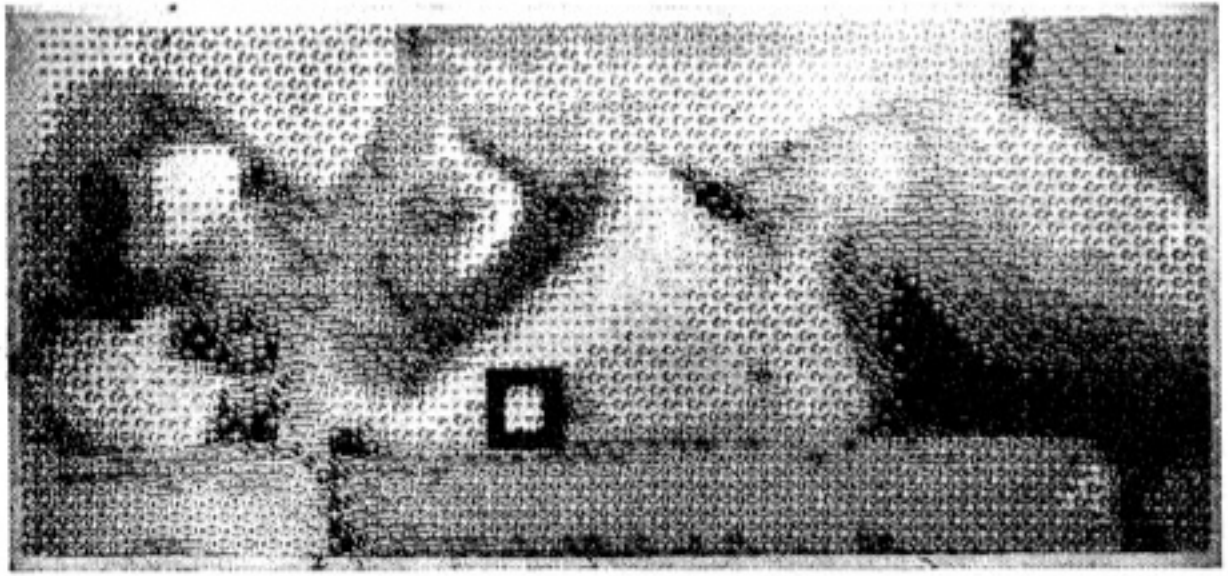
The information on the transparency was then stored on magnetic tape in the form of pulses standing for digits, with the brightness level of the picture elements represented by numbers ranging from 0 to 7. After processing all the numbers, the computer printed a drawing of micropatterns formed by clusters of symbols used in electronic design.

Visitors at the studios were intrigued by a sculptural representation of a woman taking a shower. As droplets of water dripped from the shower-head in a white stall, moving-picture images of the woman were registered by a projector behind the stall on a sand-blasted Plexiglass panel.

Rauschenberg's 'Oracle'

Another sculptural construction was a sound-emitting assembly consisting of a tire, truck door, window frame, bathtub and air vent. This is Mr. Rauschenberg's "Oracle."

Five radios are used, with the tuning dial of each being rotated by motor. Thus, each radio picks up snatches of the broadcasts of all the local



Drawing of nude above was generated by a computer under direction of L. D. Harmon and K. C. Knowlton, engineers. Black square encloses the detail shown.

contribution dollar that goes to the arts."

"Along with its obligation to be a profit-maker for its owners, the modern business corporation has an obligation to be a good citizen in the community," he said. "As a basic part of this obligation, the corporation must examine carefully its responsibility to

dividuals in seeking to make "valuable contributions."

He noted that union members were also consumers, members of audiences and citizens concerned with the quality of society.

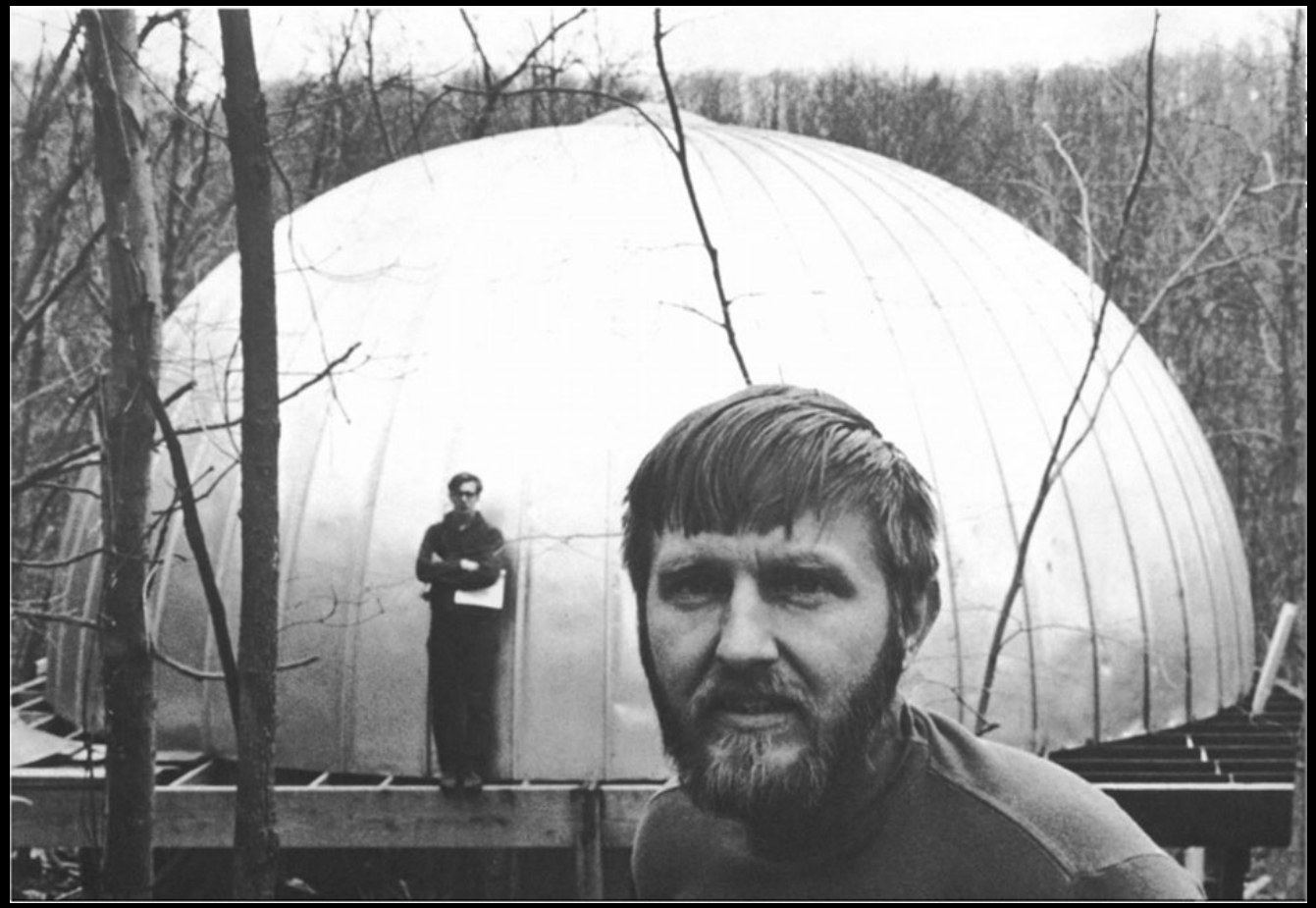
The event served to dramatize a drive to win organizational support for the art-technology merger and to mark the transfer of Experi-

with human problems caused by automation — notably the problem of individual "isolation."

Dr. Brodey, who heads M.I.T.'s science camp for underprivileged youngsters, noted that new technologies had opened large new areas of creativity. While the in-

The image found fame when it featured in a press conference in Robert Rauschenberg's loft and subsequently appeared in the New York Times on 11 October, 1967.

Stan Vanderbeek and Ken Knowlton, Jazz by Paul Motian, Poem Field No. 2, Life Like, 1967
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4agEv3Nkcs



Stan Vanderbeek, Movie Drome, 1957-1969

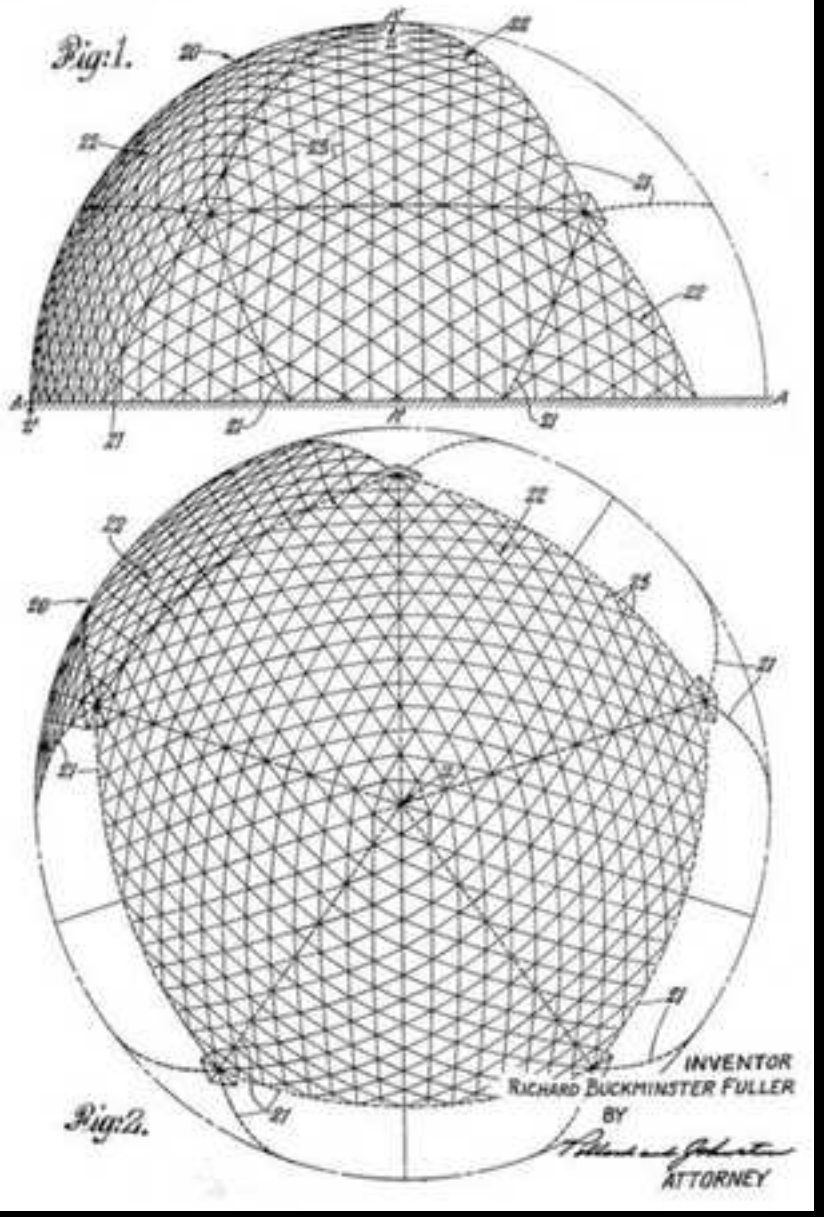
Influenced by Buckminster Fuller's spheres, VanDerBeek had the idea for a spherical theater where people would lie down and experience movies all around them. Floating multi-images would replace straight one-dimensional film projection. From 1957 on, Vanderbeek produced film sequences for the Movie Drome, which he started building in 1963. His intention went far beyond the building itself and moved into the surrounding biosphere, the cosmos, the brain and even extraterrestrial intelligence.

http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/movie-drome/

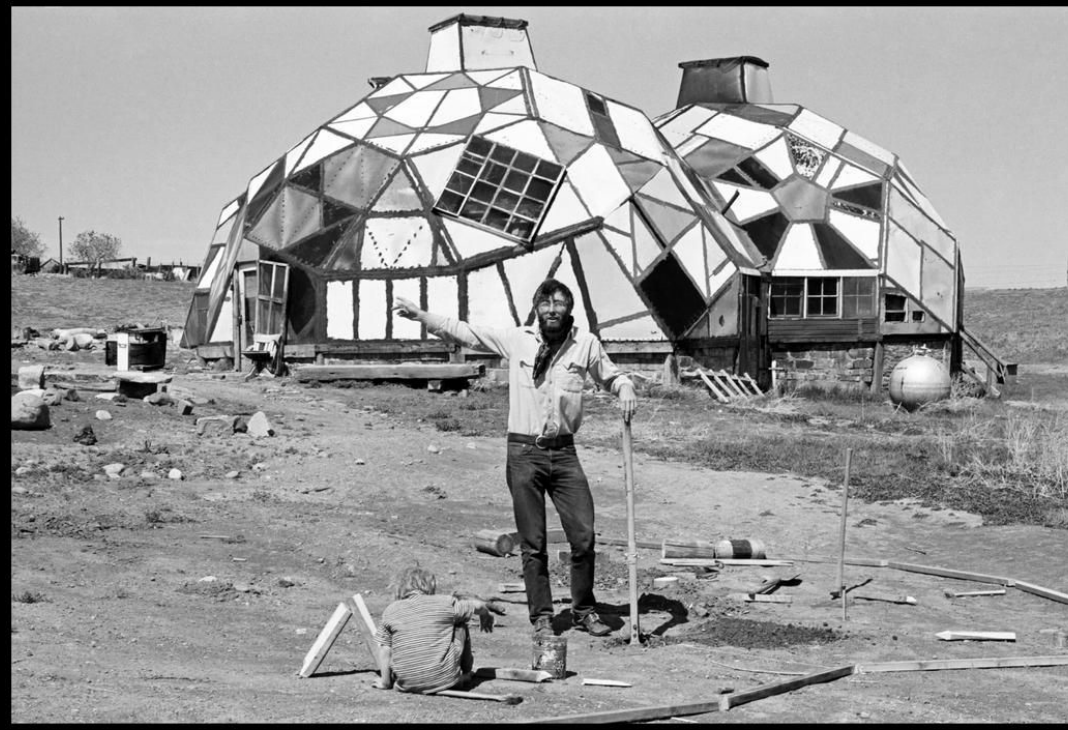
June 29, 1954 R. B. FULLER 2,682,235

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

Filed Dec. 12, 1951 6 Sheets-Sheet 1

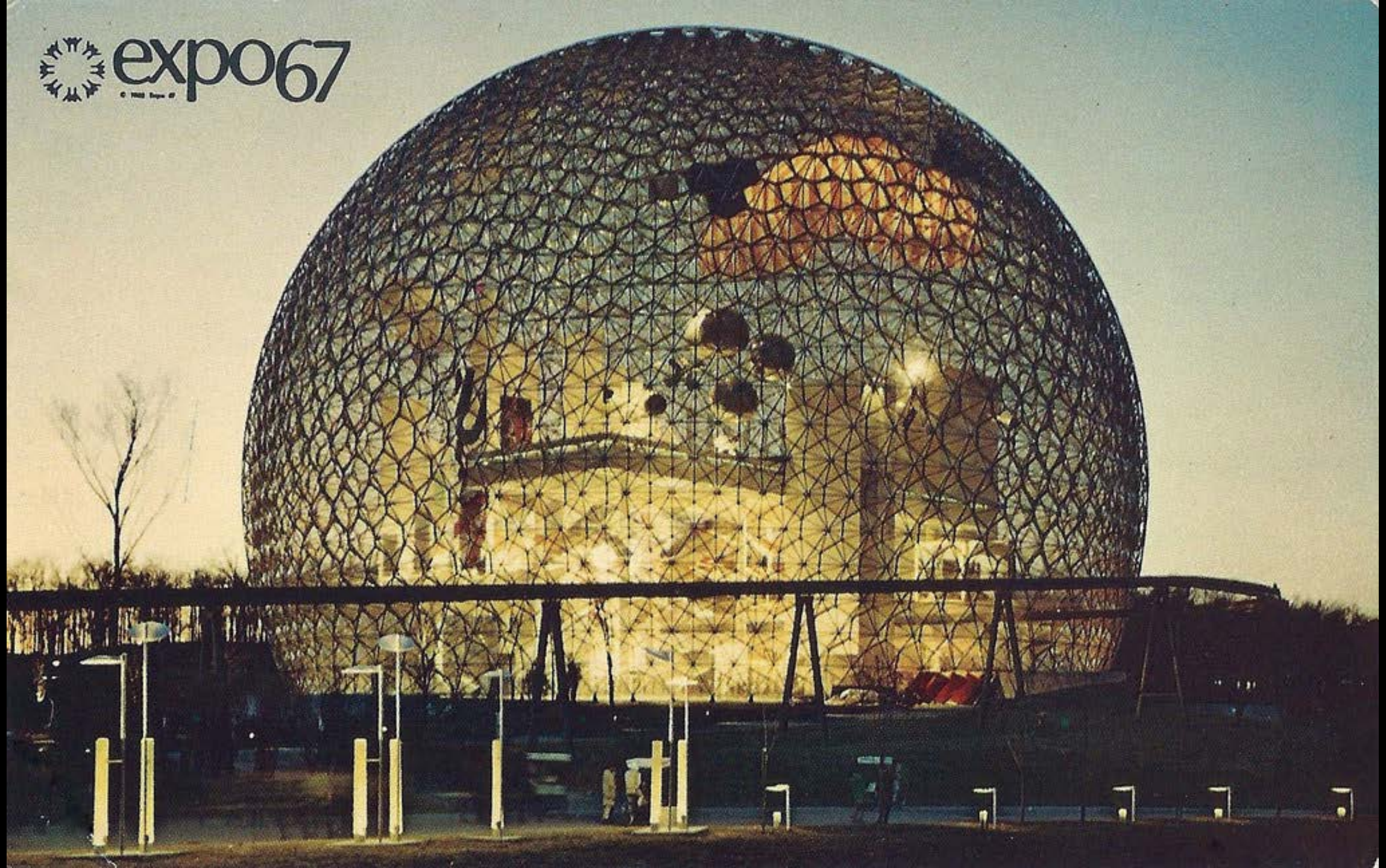


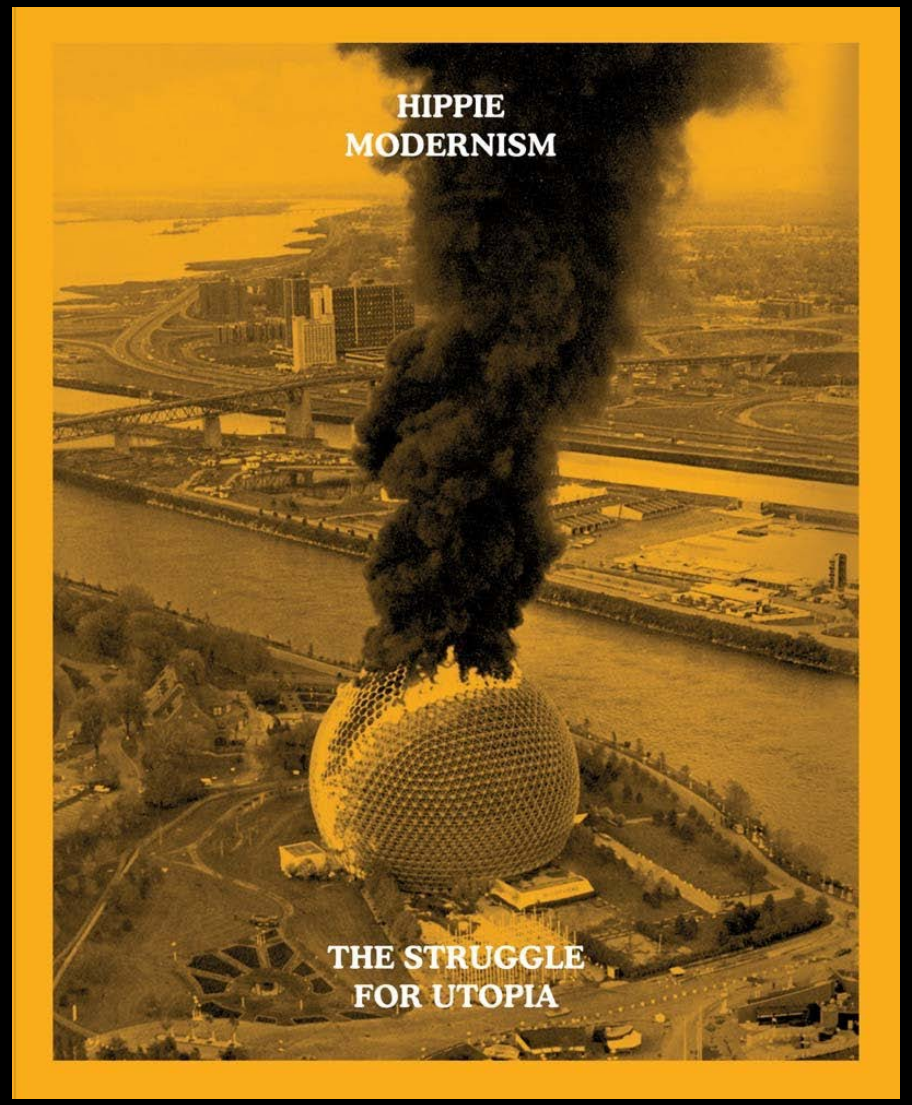
Buckminster Fuller, Geodesic Dome, 1950

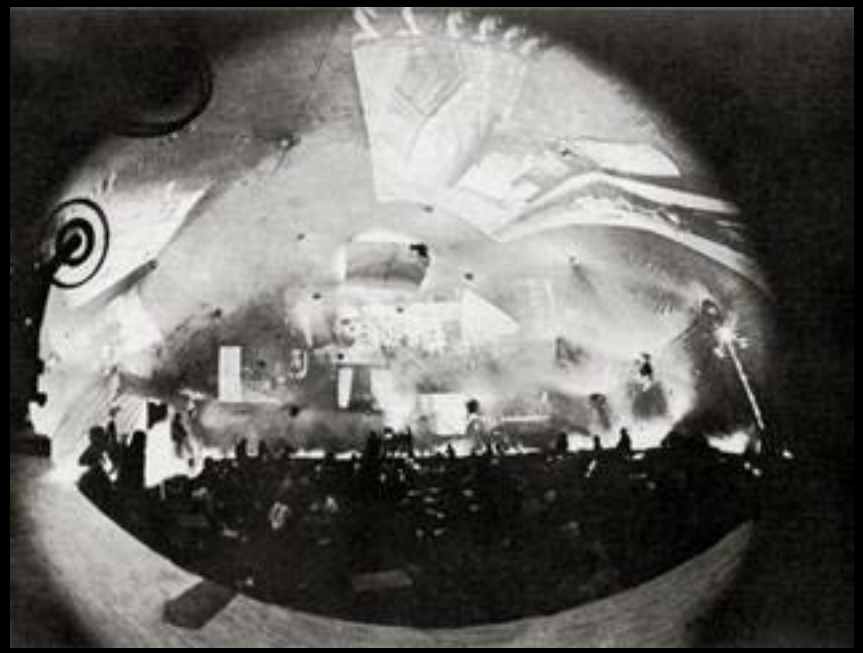


Buckminster Fuller in front of the exhibition dome at the American National Exhibition, Moscow, 1959

Buckminster Fuller and Shoji Sadao, United States Pavilion, Montreal World's Exposition, 1967


expo67


HIPPIE
MODERNISM
THE STRUGGLE
FOR UTOPIA



The Movie Drome was a grain silo dome transformed by VanDerBeek into an ‘infinite projection screen’. Viewers entered the dome through a trap-door in the floor; then, after entering, they were invited to spread out over the floor and lie with their feet pointing towards center of the space. Then the audience experienced a dynamic and distributed set of movies and images around them, created by over a dozen slide and film projectors filling the concave surface with a thick collage of moving imagery. These experiences consisted of many random image sequences and continuities, with the result that none of the performances were alike. In this way, the analogue imagery mimics algorithmic image loops.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Vp1xJdWrOk

Expanded Cinema

The term “expanded cinema” was popularized in a text of the same name by Eugene Youngblood, and was most commonly used (though Youngblood’s definition was considerably broader) to describe multi-screen and mixed-media presentation built around one or more film projectors. Cinema is “expanded” in more than one sense in this definition: it could utilize a number of screens or surfaces, it could involve other not-strictly-cinematic mediums, and it could utilize the conventionally static screening environment; even the audience could be implicated or drawn into the flow of performance/event.

-- Steven McIntyre, “Theoretical Perspectives on Expanded Cinema and the ‘Cruel’ Performance Practice of Dirk de Bruyn” (2008)

Expanded Cinema (1970)
Gene Youngblood

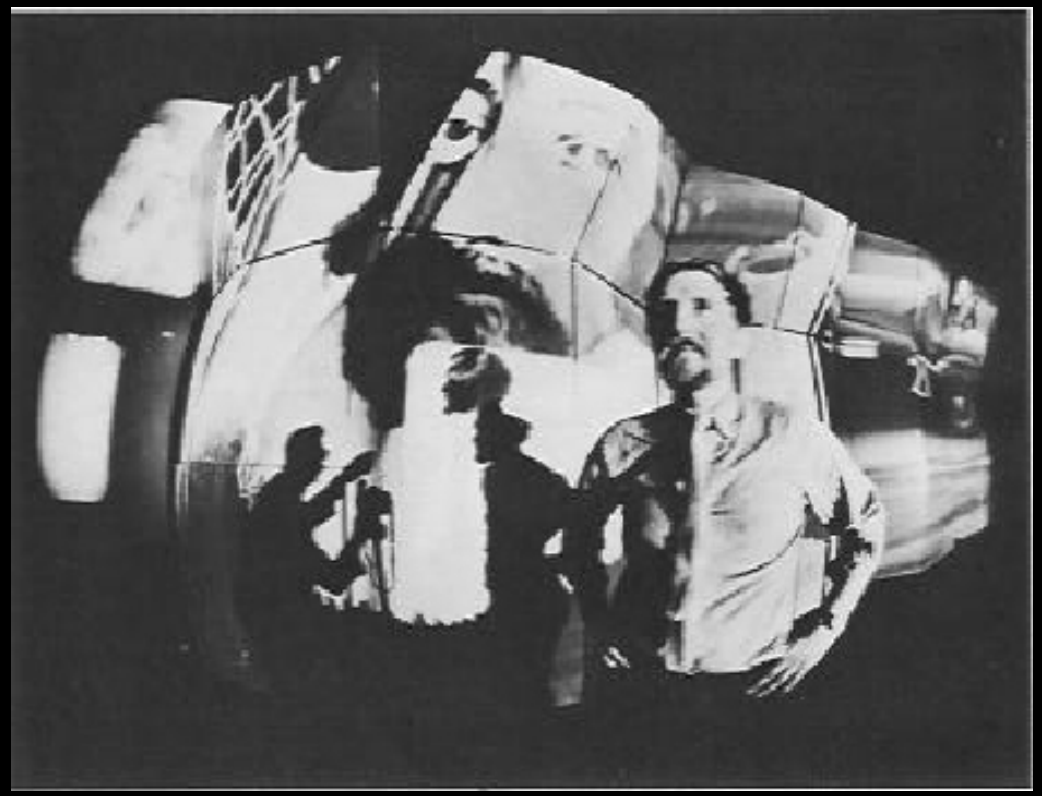
In the cinema, feedback is possible almost exclusively in what I call the synaesthetic mode, which we'll discuss presently. Because it is entirely personal it rests on no identifiable plot and is not probable. The viewer is forced to create along with the film, to interpret for himself what he is experiencing. If the information (either concept or design) reveals some previously unrecognized aspect of the viewer's relation to the circumambient universe – or provides language with which to conceptualize old realities more effectively – the viewer recreates that discovery along with the artist, this feeding back into the environment the existence of more creative potential, which may in turn be used by the artist for messages of still greater eloquence and perception…

When finally we erase the difference between art and entertainment – as we must to survive – we shall find that our community is no longer a community, and we shall begin to understand radical evolution.

The Artist as Ecologist, from *Expanded Cinema* by Gene Youngblood (1970)

For some years now the activity of the artist in our society has been trending more toward the function of the ecologist: one who deals with environmental relationships. Ecology is defined as the totality or pattern of relations between organisms and their environment. Thus the act of creation for the new artist is not so much the invention of new objects as the revelation of previously unrecognized relation- ships between existing phenomena, both physical and metaphysical. So we find that ecology is art in the most fundamental and pragmatic sense, expanding our apprehension of reality.

Artists and scientists rearrange the environment to the advantage of society. Moreover, we find that all the arts and sciences have moved along an evolutionary path whose milestones are Form, Structure, and Place. In fact, man's total development as a sentient being can be said to follow from initial concerns with Form or surface appearances, to an examination of the Structure of forms, and finally to a desire to comprehend the totality of relationships between forms, that is, Places. Since it generally is thought that art represents the avant-garde of human insight, it is interesting to note that science itself has evolved through Form, Structure, and Place appreciably in advance of the arts.



L: Stan VanDerBeek with multifaceted surface for multiple-projection intermedia environment. Photo: Richard Raderma; R: He presides over intermedia presentation at his Movie Drome in Stony Point, N.Y. Photo: Bob Hanson.

CONCLUDING QUESTION

With respect to Gloria Sutton's essay on Vanderbeek, many of you were concerned with the cycles of obsolescence at work in new media art. New media art is fundamentally connected to technology – often cutting-edge technology. How does the ongoing rapid-paced evolution of technology affect the "art" part of "new media art"? Is new media art about "Art" with a capital 'A'? Or have we, in fact, been studying something entirely other than art all semester long?