



A CURATED PROGRAMME

**MID-LIFE**

**RM  
VAUGHAN**

**SHELF LIFE**

OF VIDEO ART BY

<b>ANDREW JAMES PATERSON</b>		1984
title Trio (on cover)		
language English		running time 24:00
Trio, adapted from a short story by the producer, presents a formulaic melodramatic situation (husband, wife, other man) and demonstrates the elements of that formula.		

<b>WENDY GELLER</b>		1986
title Six (opposite)		
language English		running time 4:07
Geller, working as a performer, investigates the gestures of mannerist acting from the sublime to the ridiculous and on the edge of the unbearable.		



# MID-LIFE/ SHELF LIFE

RM VAUGHAN

# ***INTRO DUCTION***

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**LISA STEELE**

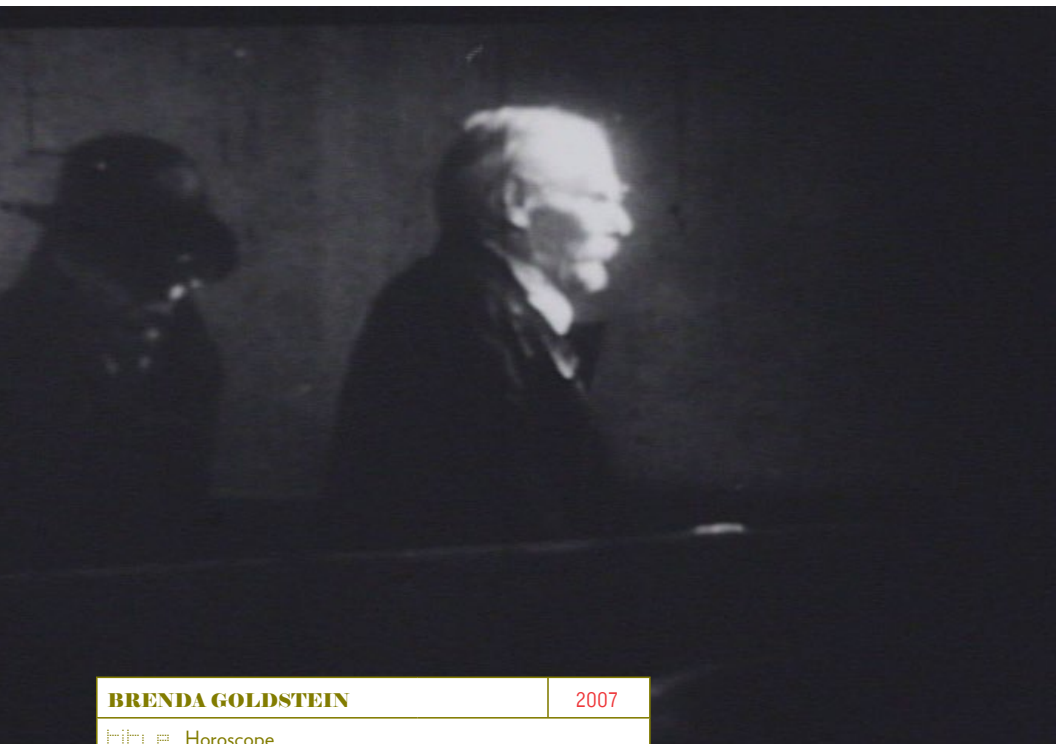
*Creative Director, Vtape*

I am always looking for people who will immerse themselves in the rich, thick humus of the various pasts that inhabit the shelves at Vtape.

In 2009, writer and artist RM Vaughan had an idea for a possible programme at Vtape. it would involve a lot of research, a lot of viewing. That summer he began a curatorial residency at Vtape, looking at work in our holdings. He viewed hundreds of titles – sometimes to the end but not always... He was searching for a programme – or rather, he was on a search for the *shape* of a programme, what it would look like.

Thus began *Mid-Life/Shelf Life*, RM Vaughan's rigorously structured (all in pairs, each programme proceeding two-by-two), yet deeply personal survey of video art seen through the lens of a patient searcher. In many ways, Richard Vaughan is an ideal writer/curator to undertake such a survey: he works actively to counter received knowledge, rejecting notions of "the canon" and other – externally imposed - pyramidal structures that dictate how "art" is to be absorbed and categorized.

Thanks to the artists who made these works and to their curator. Richard Vaughan has presented us with a delightful flow through video art, part history (he did go back and back...) and part pure pleasure (it's the humour especially here...), *Mid-Life/Shelf Life* opens new eyes on some real gems, illuminating them anew through the lens of the present.



<b>BRENDA GOLDSTEIN</b>		2007
title Horoscope		
Language English		running time 5:09
<i>The future of film... As divined through an internet horoscope generator.</i>		

*“The first time I worked with video, I hated it! Ha! The video I did was awful! But, very slowly, I started understanding the materiality ... and then I started liking it more and more and more.”* **GUTLERMINA BUZIO**

First, an advisory note: if you're approaching this exhibition in the hopes of finding a comprehensive, archive worthy and museum-rigorous account of the long history of video art in Canada (and friendly nations), as aided and abetted by Vtape ... well, you're shit out of luck.

*Mid-Life/Shelf Life* is not intended to present such a history, and I wonder if anyone ever could? Anyone with only one life to live? There are thousands of hours of video art on the shelves at Vtape. I picked the works I liked. It's that simple.

To further frustrate completionists, I distrust the very notion of fullness when applied to histories, the idea that any survey, no matter how encyclopaedic, no matter how carefully footnoted, cross-referenced, or tidily arranged, could possibly be considered a reliable document – because personality, taste, and preference always play a part, especially when one is trying one's hardest to be less oneself.

*“Since I’ve been in art school, everything that I have ever made has been intended to be one thing, and turns into an installation, ultimately! Ha! It’s partly the way I structure works, that makes them open ended. I don’t care anymore, really, only in some cases, with newer works, am I determined to say how it is shown, where it belongs.”* **BRENDA GOLDSTEIN**

Here, then, is what I did and why I did it: I chose a collection of works made in the salad days of video art (roughly the late 1970s to the early 1990s). If an artist chosen is still making video, I paired a tape made in his/her youth with a sample of her/his more recent work. If the artist is no longer making work, I paired her/his early tapes with a video by a contemporary artist whose project struck me as related, by theme or style or presentation strategy.

While grounded in my own (admittedly wide and ever-winding) video art history learning curve, and a good sense of the overall trajectory of video art as evidenced by/at Vtape, my final curatorial choices are ultimately and entirely personal, based on viewings of way too many videos. I hope you will enjoy these selections, and pairings, as much as I loved playing cupid.

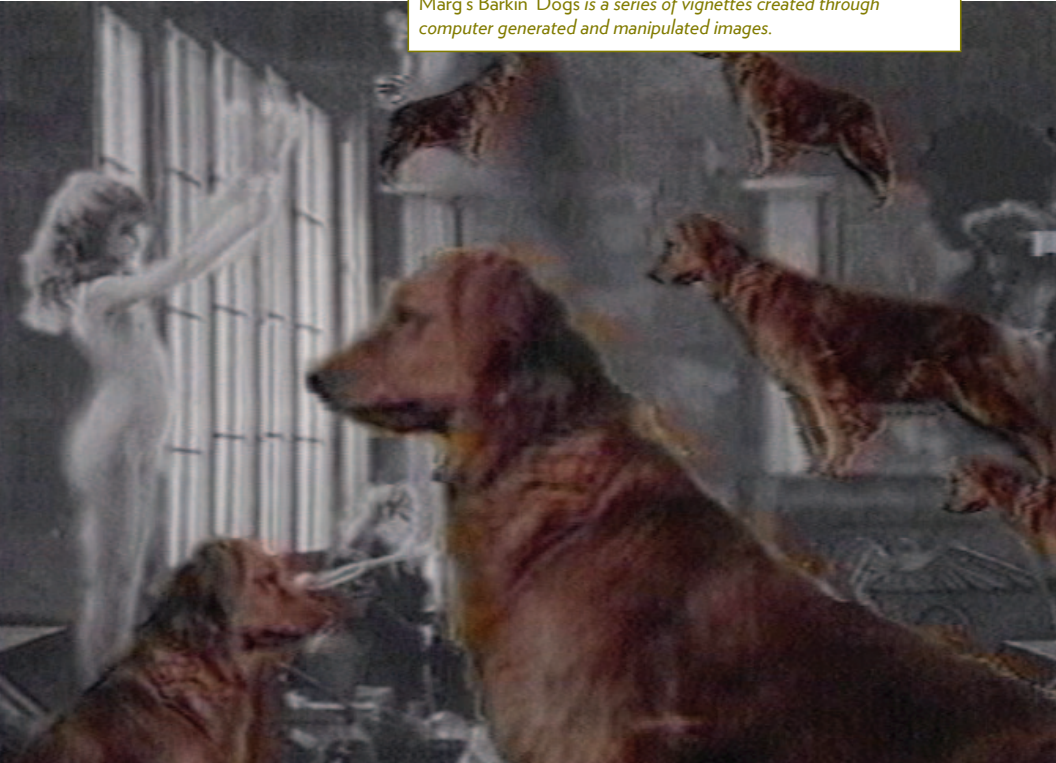
*“I was around people who were using video when I started making it myself. I started becoming attracted to people who were using the medium in more interesting ways. And I was always a film buff, reading a bit too much screen theory in the early 80s. I don’t think in a lot of ways I even became, really, a video artist*





MICHAEL CHO		1991
title Animal Appetites		
language English	running time 18:30	
Animal Appetites examines the case of two Cambodian immigrants, who were arrested in Long Beach, California, for killing their dog for food. Using humor and an unconventional style, this documentary follows the rising tide of racism in the U.S.		

<b>MARGARET MOORES</b>	1989
title Marg's Barking Dogs	
Language English	running time 5:00
Marg's Barkin' Dogs is a series of vignettes created through computer generated and manipulated images.	





**MARGARET MOORES &  
ALMERINDA TRAVASSOS**

2010

title Lesvatar

language English

running time 8:50

*This latest work takes on a new frontier that needs some queer. Moores and Travassos have created a machinima of a pixel-posse of digital dykes checking out the metaverses.*

*until much later. It was a fairly low-end medium I had access to, which I could use to frame certain narratives that were informed by various gobbledegook I was reading around melodrama, or, God forbid, film noire.”*

**ANDREW JAMES PATERSON**

I am 45 years old, at “mid-career” and mid-life. These are tricky times. I want what I have made to be recognized, and I want the new things that I make to do better than my previous efforts. It’s a tightrope walk between preservation and aspiration. This era in life inspires pride and anxiety in equal measure. Thankfully, I am not alone.

*“I am broke and unemployed at the moment! Ha! I do not support myself through my art, and this has been a constant struggle over the last decade – how do I make a living? I could talk your ear off for five hours about working in artist-run culture, and how problematic that is. At this point, I don’t get to make a lot of the things I want to make, because I don’t have the funding. .... [on selling video art] I could have given you one answer in the 1990s and another one now. Perhaps people don’t see a video tape as a thing of value. It kind of reads as an object you can see sitting in the gutter with the tape spewed out all over. And now that signals can be put onto the internet, and now that a nine year old with video editing software can do essentially what I’m doing and what I call art – it has just become so valueless that it’s meaningless to try to place a value on it.”* **BRENDA GOLDSTEIN**



MARCOS ARRIAGA		2009
title Tales of Winter		
language English	running time 5:40	
Tales of Winter <i>focuses on the societal indifference towards homeless people.</i>		



<b>MAKO IDEMITSU</b>		1982
title Shadows 2 (excerpt)		
language English		running time 41:43
<p><i>"In my work Shadows, there is another monitor in the images of the main monitor. The inside monitor shows the mind of the outside characters." (M.I.)</i></p>		





Watching videos from the late 1970s and through to the late 1980s, I remembered how precious and strange video art was in its adolescent years. Nobody knew what to do with it, and nobody knew how to sell it (that, sadly, has yet to properly change). Debates swirled around video art: was it different than film? Was it merely film's poor cousin? How was video art to be displayed with other art, or was it to be displayed only at format-specific events?

*“I’m not an actor, I’m a performer ... there’s a schism there, and I see it in a lot of work from the 80s, when people were trying to get away from the performance self-documentation mode, disparities between people who were performers and couldn’t give a toss whether or not they are actors and the people who are actors. And then you see the people who are trying to be actors, because they think they are supposed to be. I think people were trying to compensate for the fact that the lighting possibilities were so limited [with video], and the shots were so tiny. And everything was made fairly low-end. The funding agencies didn’t allow you to go that big, not for video.”* **ANDREW JAMES PATERSON**

Given these uncertainties, I was not surprised that many first generation video works grew out of performance practices, and/or acted as documents of performances. Performance-to-video grounded video in an established realm.

Similarly, a great number of early videos were identity-driven, because the urgency and immediacy of video's filmic roots appealed to groups wishing to proclaim their presence in mainstream culture – groups who desired to detour around the hidebound (and systemically discriminatory) gallery system.





**NATALIE WOOD**

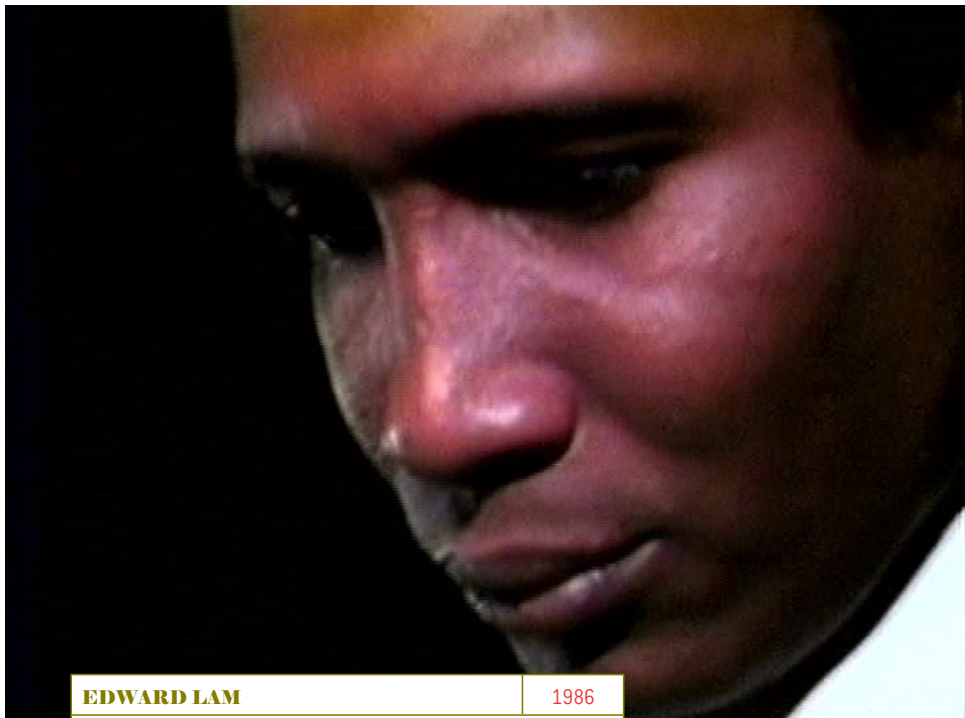
2005

title Medusa's Hats

language English

running time 3:00

*Music videos of black women with dreadlocks trying on Medusa's Hats -- like a crowning.*



<b>EDWARD LAM</b>		1986
title Soul-Blind		
language	English	running time 13:00
<i>"Soul-Blind is a restaging and reworking from the introduction of a performance of mine from 1986. Soul-Blind is an examination about the notions of stylized presentations and "entertainment." "(E.L.)"</i>		

CAMERON ENSLER & DAVID BATEMAN		2000
title The Bather		
language English	running time 5:00	
The Bather is a video poem about sensuality, the gaze, and private emotions in public spaces.		



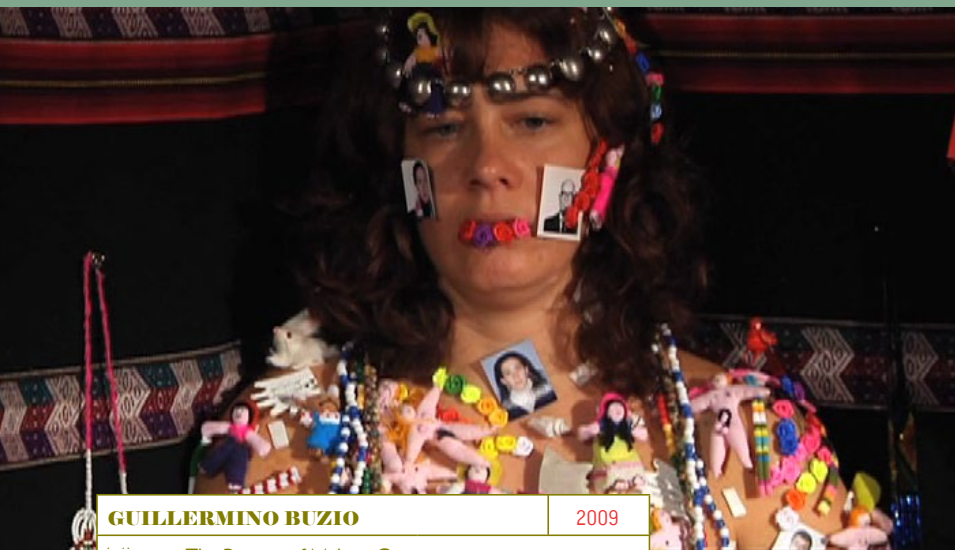
*“I started making video when Peter Kingstone asked me to take part in a project with Inside Out. I did it, and I loved it. Let me tell you, I loved every aspect of it. In particular, I loved the editing. The technical part of video, I really enjoyed. I started doing video, and I didn’t want to stop. Now I’ve made six or seven, with two on the go. When I started, I did a lot of research. I was particularly interested in early African-American films, silents, and looking at narrative films, less so the artsy kind of films. I was looking at story, how to integrate the arc of a story into a short, short video. I didn’t want to do anything long. I just wanted to tell stories.”* **NATALIE WOOD**

As I dove deeper into the archives, other oddities, visual ticks if you will, unique to early video work began to appear and re-appear. A fondness for already-antiquated technologies is evident (typewriters and dial telephones are practically extras, character actors, in an uncountable number of works), while poetry and spoken word, always on the verge of antiquation, found a new, and thriving, venue. And what a lot of singing! The pop value of video art – a wildly portable medium capable of making its artists/performers into instant “stars” – was immediately apparent to the first wave.

*“I still like the work I made back then, actually! Ha! I have such a laugh at some of the stuff I did. It seemed totally goofy at the time, and it still does. And I would say back then there was a division between film – the boys’ club – and video, which was much more accessible, in terms of equipment and cost, and that appealed to a lot of queers. Film costs were outrageous. And a lot of people worked through cable TV community programs. But my interest was more in telling stories, not making an alternative to film. I loved video because it was a medium you could do tricks with, easily. I liked making things look totally unreal.”* **MARGARET MOORES**



GLACE W. LAWRENCE		1989
title D-E-S-I-R-E		
language English	running time 3:30	
D-E-S-I-R-E focuses on fashion magazines in addressing the issue of female body image for young black women.		



**GUILLERMINO BUZIO**

2009

title The Process of Making Consistent

language English

running time 5:55

*In Argentina it is not unusual to come across popular altars devoted to people who have tragically died because of accidents or social injustices. Constantly in flux, these altars act as ephemeral interventions into public space.*

Once I settled on a core of first wave tapes, the real fun began with the pairings. Talk about inexact sciences.

*“It’s interesting to me that you chose my video Medusa’s Hats, because it seems to me that every black film or video artist has to do something on hair! Ha! It may be a generalized statement, but I’m noticing a pattern. And it was one of my first pieces, so it had to be about hair! Of course!”* **NATALIE WOOD**

In some cases, particularly with artists who have had continuous careers since the 70s and 80s, the “then” category was easier to fill than the “now” slot. People change, practices change even more. When confronted with a then/now dynamic that was so marked as to lead the viewer to think two artists were at work, I decided to embrace the shift, not fight it. I did not wish to impose a false continuity.

The pairings between contemporary artists and artists who no longer make video were, delightfully, wholly driven by the vagaries of my own tastes. I have made links across generations that I feel are either baldly apparent or more sneaky, elliptical. I was determined, however, not to pair artists simply on the basis of identity or other socio-political specifics evident in their practices. Instead I prefer a bit of mystery.



**TOM SHERMAN**

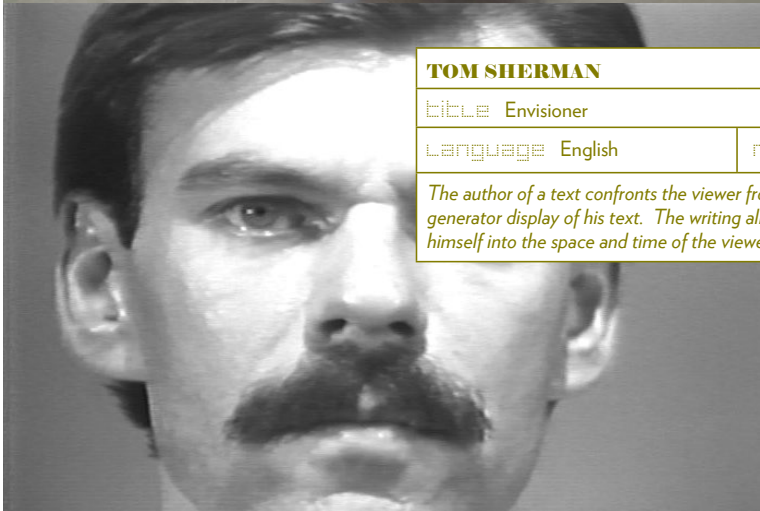
2007

title Cultures of Fear and Loathing

language English

running time 1:30

*"In our cultures of fear and loathing practically no one is frightened by the singing of birds. You can hear them in the dark of morning, and as the day collapses into night." (T.S.)*



**TOM SHERMAN**

1978

title Envisioner

language English

running time 3:00

*The author of a text confronts the viewer from behind a flat character generator display of his text. The writing allows the author to extend himself into the space and time of the viewer.*





<b>ANDREW JAMES PATERSON</b>	1984
title Trio	
language English	running time 24:00
Trio, adapted from a short story by the producer, presents a formulaic melodramatic situation (husband, wife, other man) and demonstrates the elements of that formula.	



<b>ANDREW JAMES PATERSON</b>	2008
title The Enigma of S.A.P.	
language English	running time 9:56
The Enigma of S.A.P. is an almost ten-minute non-camera video-tape set in a visual arts milieu. S.A.P. is a mysterious new art gallery, and two gentlemen (G & H) are checking it out.	

*“I’m not sure how I fit into the Canadian video art world, but maybe in one way – I am interested in telling personal stories. Hmmm. I think that is something that you can see a lot in Canadian production – always there is something in relationship with your own experience .... But, I don’t know where I fit in the “video world”. My videos, they have components of diaries, performance, etc., but I’m not sure where exactly I fit, or if I fit at all. And I think maybe it is better not to fit!”*

**GUILLERMINA BUZIO**

Finally, *Mid-Life/Shelf Life* makes no claims to establishing or replicating a canonical “great chain” of video art. Any such “progress model” would be impractical at best and wholly false at worst.

While growth and change in video practice are certainly evident, if on no other level than technological, to apply hard and fast, linear readings to the myriad shifts in a decades-long practice would be only supposition – and a bad supposition at that. Such a chain would be missing too many links.

My hope is that this project will inspire curiosity about the first wave of video art, and perhaps lead to similar endeavours. Heaven knows there is no shortage of tapes out there waiting to be dusted off, rewound, and loved all over again.

And no shortage of artists either, dusty or otherwise.



**JASON EBANKS & RAMON CHARLES**

**2001**

**title** Shadow Boxing

**Language** English

**running time** 4:20

*D4C dances in harmony as they slide in and out of sight.*



**PRATIBHA PARMAR**

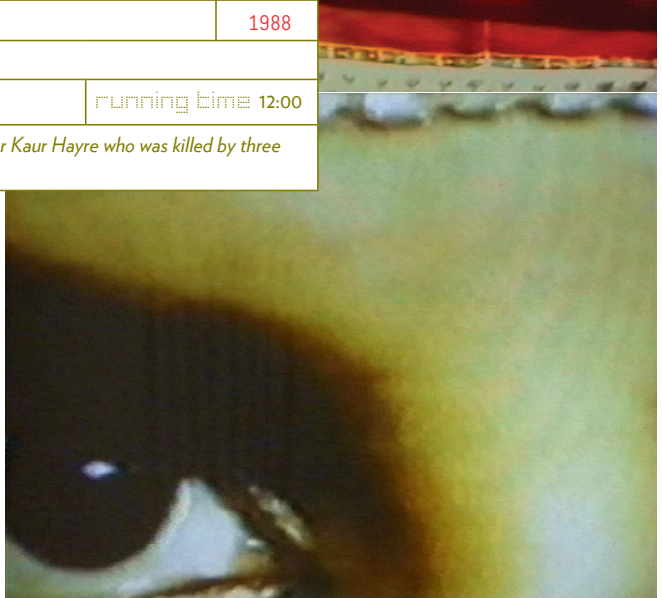
1988

title Sari Red

language English

running time 12:00

*Made in memory of Kalbinder Kaur Hayre who was killed by three white fascists in 1985.*



*“Back then, everybody came to video from something else – painting, literature, sculpture, traditional image making. People came to the medium because of the elasticity. It’s hard to fathom now, someone coming to video that way, with its ease of access. I think we all thought we could see the future of it, of video, but the future is funny, the way it tends to creep up on you.”*

**TOM SHERMAN**



**FARHEEN HAQ**

2005

title Endless Tether v.2

language Silent

running time 7:45

*This video examines an intimate gesture between two people, in doing so it exposes the audience as voyeur.*

<b>JAMES MACSWAIN</b>		1989
title Amoeba Culture		
language English		running time 4:00
<i>When the diversity of cultural critiques multiplies to the point where the mind can no longer comprehend, then it's time to sweep the playing field clean of contaminants.</i>		



① **MICHAEL CHO**  
Animal Appetites, 1991  
*paired with*

**MARCOS ARRIAGA**  
Tales of Winter, 2009

② **MARGARET MOORES**  
Marg's Barking Dogs, 1989  
*paired with*

**MARGARET MOORES & ALMERINDA TRAVASSOS**  
Lesvatar, 2010

③ **MAKO IDEMITSU**  
Shadows 2 (*excerpt*), 1982  
*paired with*

**NATALIE WOOD**  
Medusa's Hats, 2005

④ **EDWARD LAM**  
Soul-Blind, 1986  
*paired with*

**CAMERON ESLER & DAVID BATEMAN**  
The Bather, 2000

⑤ **GLACE W. LAWRENCE**  
D-E-S-I-R-E, 1989  
*paired with*

**GUILLERMINA BUZIO**  
The Process of Making Consistent, 2009

⑥ **TOM SHERMAN**  
Envisioner, 1978  
*paired with*

**TOM SHERMAN**  
Cultures of Fear and Loathing, 2007



PROGRAM



PROGRAM

B

**ANDREW JAMES PATERSON**

Trio, 1984

①

*paired with*

**ANDREW JAMES PATERSON**

The Enigma of S.A.P., 2008

**WENDY GELLER**

Six, 1986

②

*paired with*

**JASON EBANKS & RAMON CHARLES**

Shadow Boxing, 2001

**PRATIBHA PARMAR**

Sari Red, 1988

③

*paired with*

**FARHEEN HAQ**

Endless Tether v.2, 2005

**JAMES MACSWAIN**

Amoeba Culture, 1989

④

*paired with*

**BRENDA GOLDSTEIN**

Horoscope, 2007



**CURATOR RM Vaughan** is a Toronto-based writer and video artist originally from New Brunswick. He is the author of eight books and a contributor to over 50 anthologies. His videos and short films play in galleries and festivals across Canada and around the world. Vaughan comments on art and culture for a wide variety of publications and writes a weekly visual arts column for *The Globe and Mail*. **ARTISTS Marcos Arriaga** was born in Lima, Peru, and worked as a journalist and photographer for the daily newspaper *Marka*, and the weekly magazine *Amauta* before immigrating to Canada in 1987. His short films have been shown widely in Canada and internationally and *Marcones (Faggots)*, Arriaga's documentary from 2005 has screened in scores of festivals around the world, earning awards in several. **David Bateman** is a spoken word poet and performance artist whose most recent performance piece, *A Brief History of White Virgins* or *The Night Freddy Mercury Kissed Me* was presented across Canada in 2009, and his spoken word monologue *What's It Like?* has been presented in Montreal, Toronto, Peterborough, and Cyprus (2010). His next collection of poetry *House of a Nancy* - will be published in 2012.

**Guillermina Buzio** is a Toronto-based artist whose works in a diverse range of media, including video installation, performance, and painting focus on human rights and identity and have been shown nationally and internationally. She also programs for festivals and venues in Canada, Argentina, Uruguay, and co-creates and facilitates self-representation video workshops for youth and queer Latinos in Toronto, Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico.


**Ramon Charles** is a filmmaker and editor. Along with Jason Ebanks, he is co-founder of KHO films, a production company with a focus on music video, short films and commercial spots for clients such as Addidas and Converse. At KHO, Charles is the creative director and editor. KHO has produced music videos for Shawn Hewitt and the National Strike, Fito Blanco and Universal Soul, among others. **Michael Cho** is an award-winning independent documentary producer. Michael is currently completing a MD at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. As part of his studies, he is working on a web-based series of short stories that explore patient perspectives on living with illness. He plans on combining his medical and media skills as a physician and documentarian. **Jason Ebanks** is a director, filmmaker and artist. Born in Kitchener, Ontario, he was introduced to photography at the age of 10 by his grandfather. He has gone on to direct short films and videos working with a number of musicians to produce short films. Ebanks is currently working as a Production Manager at Trinity Square Video, an artist run media organization, and has recently been picked-up by Revolver Film Co. to direct music videos. He is co-founder of KHO films with Ramon Charles.

**Cameron Esler** is director, D.O.P and visual editor. He is also a published poet and produced playwright. Besides directing cinepoems, he has many television and film credits. Including: *Between Midnight* and *The Rooster's Crow*, *Superamigos* and *Small Wonders*. *Burning Water*, a documentary he co-directed, co-wrote and shot, was recently broadcast on *The Passionate Eye*. **Wendy Geller** was born in Winnipeg, Canada in 1957. Geller's work has been exhibited in the United States, Europe and Canada. In addition to her work as a video artist she was an Assistant Professor at the Kansas City Art Institute from 1987-1990, during which time she also curated a major show of international videotapes for the Charlotte Cross-Kemper Gallery. Geller died in 1996. The Wendy Geller Fund was established by her family at Video Pool to assist members in the completion of independent works.

**Brenda Goldstein** is a Canadian film, video and installation artist. Her short films and videos have screened at Canadian and International festivals. Her writing and an artist's project have appeared in Fuse magazine, and she contributes to *POV* magazine. She is also a member of Toronto's Pleasure Dome film and video exhibition group. In 2010, her solo installation *Hereafter* was exhibited at Mercer Union in Toronto. **Farheen HaQ** was born in Welland, Ontario, Canada in 1977 and currently lives in Victoria, B.C.. Her work explores cultural inscriptions of the body, gender, ritual and gesture. She was raised a devout Muslim within a tight-knit Pakistani community in the Niagara region. She has had solo exhibitions of her work in galleries across Canada and been in group shows internationally. In 2006 she was awarded Artist of the Year by SAVAC (South Asian Visual Artists Collective). **Mako Idemitsu** was born in Tokyo, Japan in 1940. From 1963 to 1975, Idemitsu lived in the United States, where she was involved with Jungian analysis and feminist studies. Recoding the conventions of soap opera melodrama, she creates domestic narratives that examine the cultural role and identity of women within the context of the contemporary Japanese family. Her work is shown in international festivals and collected by museums around the world. Following his studies in video and performance at OCAD (and a year in Philosophy at the University of Toronto) **Edward Lam**, with partner Deborah Moss created Moss + Lam, an installation and design firm that has done interiors for stores, restaurants and hotels, often incorporating unusual materials such as naturally shed antler horns a floating installation at Wolfgang Puck (Detroit) and bisque-fired porcelain star fish wall installed at the Blue Water Grill (Chicago) **Glace Lawrence** has worked in Toronto's and Vancouver's film and television communities since the late 80s. In 1999, her one-hour documentary *Coming to Voice* on the emergence of Black cinema in Canada, received a Reel Black Award from the Black Film & Video Network. *D-E-S-I-R-E* made in 1989 was her first self directed film. She currently line produces a variety of programs with Vancouver-based Paperny Films. **James MacSwain**, Halifax, Nova Scotia, produces work in a variety of media including theatre, photo and collage, film and video. He has received numerous arts council grants and served on numerous boards of directors for regional and national cultural organizations including the Exhibitions Committee of Visual Arts Nova Scotia and he has just retired as the Director of Programming for the Centre For Art Tapes.

**Margaret Moores'** artistic practice includes film, video, animation and machinima and ranges from documentaries about artists, to work exploring the public and private nature of lesbian relationships. Her work is often humorous, ironic, visually rich and slips easily from the slightly off-kilter to the surreal. She has had a long producing partnership with artist, Almerinda Travassos, as well as collaborative projects with other artists. **Pratibha Parmar** was born in Nairobi, Kenya and grew up in London, England. Her work has been exhibited widely at international film festivals and broadcast on television in many countries. In 1993 she produced and directed *Warrior Marks* in collaboration with Pulitzer Prize winning novelist, Alice Walker, who was also the Executive Producer. Parmar runs her own film production company **Kali Films**. **Andrew James Paterson** is an interdisciplinary time-based artist living and working in Toronto. Active in experimental music, writing, performance and video, his work has been concerned with exchange systems and shifting boundaries between public and private spaces. In 1977, he formed the band The Government and issued several LPs. His performance art and videotapes have been exhibited internationally and his critical writings on media art have appeared in a number of Canadian periodicals. **Tom Sherman** works in video, radio and performance and writes all manner of texts. His interdisciplinary art has been exhibited internationally across a broad spectrum of media. He received the Bell Canada Award for excellence in video art in 2003 and Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts in 2010. When not at home near Liverpool, Nova Scotia, he is a professor in the Department of Transmedia at Syracuse University in central New York. **Almerinda Travassos** is a Toronto based video artist. Her media art is primarily focused on single-channel video works that explores issues of history, memories and family within the context of being Portuguese-born and Lesbian. Born and raised in Trinidad, **Natalie Wood** is a multimedia artist, curator and arts educator. Her works have been presented nationally and internationally and a variety of film and video festivals (the New York Mix, San Francisco Film and Video Festival, Inside Out, Images, Pleasure Dome and Mpenzi Film and Video festival where she won the Audience Choice Award in 2006). In 2006, she received the New Pioneers Award for her contribution to the Arts in Toronto.

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<i>Operating as a distributor, a mediatheque and a resource centre with an emphasis on the contemporary media arts, Vtape's mandate is to serve both artists and audiences by assisting and encouraging the appreciation, pedagogy, preservation, restoration and exhibition of media works by artists and independents. Vtape receives operating funds from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council.</i>		

<b>Video Art in Canada:</b> Vtape's on-line educational resource		
english	<a href="http://videoart.virtualmuseum.ca">http://videoart.virtualmuseum.ca</a>	
french	<a href="http://artvideo.museevirtuel.ca">http://artvideo.museevirtuel.ca</a>	

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# MID-LIFE/SHELF LIFE

⋮  
was presented as a

⋮  
*live programme*

at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre on two Mondays in November 2010.

⋮  
PROGRAMME A played on Monday November 8, 2010, 7-9pm.

PROGRAMME B played on Monday November 15, 2010, 7-9pm.

⋮  
*Screenings*

were interspersed with

⋮  
*live flash-interviews*

⋮ conducted by curator RM VAUGHAN with  
some of the artists in the programme. ⋮

VTAPE

⋮  
thanks



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