

CAL COLLEGE OF ARTS & CRAFTS

by Harriet Ainsworth

On May 24, 1844, the message "What Hath God Wrought" crackled over the first telegraph wires between Baltimore and Washington D.C. That historic occasion gave birth to telecommunications as we know it today. Post industrial revolution scientist Norbert Wiener in 1948 presaged another major revolution when he noticed ways in which electronic control devices and the human nervous system are similar. He wrote a book about it, the science of control and communications in both machines and humans. He called it cybernetics. While Wiener was stating his case IBM built the Mark I at Harvard. As we all know Grandfather Mark was the founder of the now-famous electro-mechanical-magnetic line. In less than a quarter of a century since these gentlemen busied themselves, electronics and feedback have become household words. Communications via satellite during the Olympic Games at last brought home, into more households than ever before, both the bright success and the dark failure of communications between mankind.

The TV program of the New California College of Arts and Crafts Film Arts Department (formerly Visual Communications), when begun by Phil Makanna in the fall of 1969, was the first fine arts video teaching project in the United States, and according to Phil it still is. CCAC grad and now Film Arts Department assistant professor Keith Walker offers another image for the relationship between film and TV. Keith notes that "each new medium wears the trousers of an older medium before — until it can break loose."

Tall blond Keith and shorter dark and gentle Phil Makanna form the "go group" of hot new property at the CCAC creative TV facility. Phil says, "There is enough work and enough competition — such as Captain Video (Willie Walkers) whose *Life with Video* a

TV film was shown recently at the Whitney — to keep us all very interested and working continuously. Among many innovative ideas, Makanna has arranged an exchange of students with the well known Mills College electronic music center. CCAC sends video students to Mills, and Mills sends music majors to CCAC.

Last September CCAC enrolled a record 45 students, grads and undergrads. "We have begun this fall with three new spaces and a new engineer." What's in the TV facility? Basically a closed circuit system with three cameras connected to a Viscount switcher which contains a special effects board . . . "so we can do all kinds of fancy stuff — such as fading and dissolving, wipes and keying." What are the faculty and students doing with their facility? All kinds of things. Pure videotapes using the medium as subject . . . feedback . . . scripts . . . Fantasies and Westerns . . . documentary work . . . what goes on in Berkeley . . . what goes on in your own home. "We record activities — art is in performance now and art works are activities instead of static works. We are into process," Makanna says. "We have mixed media events, using electronic music, video film, and live performance. What we hope for is a well-defined community of TV, film, dance, and drama, where we can make an interaction program of all these disciplines."

TV film, in the words of writer Youngblood, "is the only aesthetic tool that even approaches the reality continuum of the conscious existence in the non-uniform, non-linear, non-connected electronic atmosphere of what I call Paleocybernetic Age." Phil Makanna says, "We are on the edge, the leading edge, and we will be there for the next four or five years . . . and that is what makes it all so exciting for us."

While TV-Film machinates, Fine Arts Division's Assistant Professor John Wehrle gets behind Paleocybernetics via his series (above) done with Xerox model 4000, one of the newest in the line. By special arrangement with Xerox Corp., Wehrle and a few other U.S. artists were given access to machines (Mr. Ben Hurley of the San Francisco office was Wehrle's host) and Model 4000 was the machine conveying the message. "The machine or anything is my tool," says Wehrle as he explains the 4000's unique ability to spread the electrostatic charge over the whole drum to achieve the sought-after solid black in the background. This is just the beginning of a calculated assault-collaboration-capitalization of the machine. Entropy of the image is all a part of the technique.

