



Wexner Center for the Arts  
The Ohio State University

November 1994–April 1995

Rethinking Masculinity and Femininity in  
a World of “Intelligent” Machines

**gender and technology**

copresented by Division of Comparative  
Studies, The Ohio State University

Consisting of a series of visiting artists' presentations, film and video screenings, and a two-day symposium

## **Gender and Technology**

brings together scholars, artists, educators, students, and community groups to discuss the many implications of technology in our personal and public lives.

Events are structured around three themes: Gender and Technologies of **Information**, Gender and Technologies of the **Body**, and Gender and Technologies of the **Home**. The project looks at the role technologies of the past, present, and future play in our daily lives. Gender and Technology is a collaboration between the Wexner Center Media Arts Department and the Division of Comparative Studies in the Humanities at The Ohio State University.

## **v i s i t i n g   a r t i s t s**

### **Kathy High**

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Wednesday, November 2, 1994

7:30 pm

New York-based videomaker (and publisher of *Felix: A Journal of Arts and Culture*) Kathy High will present her latest work, *Underexposed: Temple of the Fetus*, a provocative examination of the medical establishment's treatment of women, especially in relation to reproductive rights. Focusing on social attitudes toward new reproductive technologies and genetic engineering, *Underexposed* combines documentary footage with a science-fiction narrative involving a TV journalist grappling with ethical issues of these new technologies. A respected educator and activist, High is presently producing a piece on TV soap operas for the PBS/ITVS series *Signal to Noise*.

### **Judith Barry**

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Wednesday, January 26, 1995

7:30 pm

New York-based artist Judith Barry is celebrated for her creation of installations and video projects using such strategies as projections, audio, and written text to demonstrate how emerging technologies create new landscapes, with the electronic broadcast media in particular forming a "space" through which we pass on an everyday basis. For this presentation, Barry will show some of her recent international projects, all of which point to the various and often subtle ways our daily lives are altered by surrounding technologies.

### **Ericka Beckman**

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Thursday, February 9, 1995

7:30 pm

New York-based artist Ericka Beckman will present her work in progress, *HIATUS*, an experimental narrative about a young woman who journeys into an interactive identity game in the privacy of her apartment. Mixing live action and sync sound with digital graphics, animation, and video effects, *HIATUS* encourages criticism of dominant cultural myths of empowerment, especially the promise of empowerment through technology alone.

# WEXNER CENTER FOR THE ARTS FILM AND VIDEO PROGRAM NOTES

## Gender and Technology

Visiting Artist Ericka Beckman

*Cinderella* (1986, 16mm, 30 min.)

*HIATUS* (work-in-progress)

Co-sponsored by the Division of Comparative Studies, The Ohio State University. Funding provided by the Ohio Arts Council.

7:30 pm

Thursday, February 9, 1995

*HIATUS* is an experimental narrative film about a young woman who plays HIATUS, a computer on-line interactive "identity game" in the privacy of her apartment. The film pictures a fictional near future where television will also be the means of annexing on-line computer games. Its aim is to inform and empower young women at a critical stage in their psychological development with self-esteem and self-reliance. Beckman has invented a game for girls that reinforces creative problem solving and intuition, and encourages them to be critical of dominant cultural myths of empowerment, especially the promise that technology can provide the means for individual empowerment.

Ericka Beckman makes movies that are playful in the most liberal sense. Boldly colored and cheerfully self-absorbed, they take their structure, rhythm, and imagery from games. Given the difficulties inherent in avant-garde film production, Beckman's work is improbably optimistic — it seems to celebrate its own coming into existence. There is something undeniably calisthenic about her vision, which is characterized by exhortatory chants (mainly composed with Brooke Halpin), repetitive gestures, and the iconic use of sports equipment and cheerleaders.

Beckman's roots are in the art world. She began making movies in the mid-1970s using the then new technology of sync-sound Super-8. Her first films were neither documentaries nor narratives, but rather idiosyncratic constructions that triumphed over the limitations of the narrow-gauge format with their ingenious homemade special effects. These remarkable early works have the vitality of primitive cartoons — and are similarly filled with comic violence and dreamlike condensation. As inventive as the filmmaker is, she's too obsessive for mere formalism. If Beckman's narratives are often cryptic, her work is preoccupied by a recurring core of themes — competition, cognition, role-playing, and what she's called "the coordination of the self in the physical world." In virtually every one of her movies, some young (usually female) individual learns, through trial and error, how to act in (or upon) the world. In the Super-8 *We Imitate; We Break Up*, a set of life-sized marionette legs teach the filmmaker/protagonist how to dance and play a version of soccer, then chase her all over the lot when she runs away with the "loot."

— J. Hoberman, press release

The history of art is not just the history of institutions but the history of individuals. A number of gifted filmmakers who surfaced in the late '70s have simply burnt-out — neither Vivienne Dick nor Manuel De Landa has released significant new work in a half-dozen years — while as (P. Adams) Sitney observed in a review of the '85 (Whitney) Biennial, "No one has *commanded* attention since Yvonne Rainer moved from choreography to cinema." Of the younger filmmakers, Ericka Beckman is the closest to a consensus heroine — her stylistically assured, graphically dynamic, relentlessly go-go work has been included in three consecutive Biennials, as well as the New York Film Festival (where it sparked a near-riot), and has been reviewed in Art in America, The Millennium Film Journal, and the Voice.

— excerpt from "Avant To Live," by J. Hoberman. Village Voice, June 16, 1987.