

Gestures on Videotapes.

For Fred Forest.

This paper is meant as an introduction to the tape which Forest and I are trying to make as an experiment to use video to communicate phenomenological vision. What we are trying to do is this: make a tape which shows me gesturing and commenting my gestures. This process involves the following stages: (1) I am proposing a theory of gestures by defining them as specific motions of the body and by distinguishing between various types of gestures. This I do by speaking toward Forest and, behind him, toward those who will watch the tape in the future. (2) I illustrate my theory by performing certain gestures. (3) Forest gestures his camera in a way that mirrors my argument and my gestures, but also comments and both and in some way criticizes both. (4) I adjust my gestures to Forest's gestures. (5) The tape which results from our dialogue is to be shown in public. It should show the dialogue as a space-time continuum in which I appear both as an image and as a linguistic discourse, and Forest appears as the structure which orders critically my image and gives my discourse a specific meaning. (6) The public should participate in that dialogue in a form which is left more or less open, but which may take the following directions: (a) the public may discuss the tape, and the discussion may be taped to be shown later to a different public. (b) some comments by the public on the tape may be included in the tape itself, and the tape thus completed may be shown later to a different public. (c) The tape may become part of a videothèque and be used as a lecture, for instance in schools or museums. But there are other forms of participation by the public which cannot be foreseen and to which the tape should be open.

The purpose of this experiment is this: to learn how to use video for communication of concrete phenomena and theoretical comments on them on an "academic" level. The motivation in this is the hope that video is a medium which may enrich, (and even come to substitute), traditional academic media like books, essays and classroom lectures. That hope is based on the fact that video has certain aspects which other media lack: it is audio-visual, a space-time continuum, it is involved in the phenomenon it shows, it permits immediate projection but does not permit "editing", and it is open to dialogical process. In other words: it synthesizes some aspects of the printed message, some aspects of filmic message, and some aspects of the lecture. This tape means to show how this character of video may be used in the future.