

Videopoems

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Shigeo Kubota The Kitchen

Shigeo Kubota opened at The Kitchen on May 30 with two major video works, both part of her continuing Self Portrait Video Poems. A column of 12 nine-inch color monitors set in front of a 25-foot-long mirror is a headstone for Marcel Duchamp, using Kubota's tape of Duchamp's grave.

"I was in Paris, making *Europe on 1/2-Inch a Day*, when I decided to go to visit Duchamp's grave, as we do in Japan, when someone in the family dies. When I ask people, "Where is Marcel Duchamp's grave," they say, "Marcel who?" Nobody seemed to know where he was, until a friend told me to go to Rouen, which was his hometown. There the cemetery had two entrances, and I didn't know which one to use, so I went into a flower shop and asked, "Where is Marcel

Duchamp's grave?" I was amazed because they didn't know who he was either. Here he was a very famous artist, but he was not so well known in his hometown. I finally did find it, and then I made the videotape."

The mirror "path" leading through the Kitchen's large performance space to Kubota's monument creates a lower space, rather than a simple reflection, because the column appears to continue, or recur, below the floor. Although the ceiling is clearly reflected in the glass, the continuity of the column creates the physical sense of a deep space below floor level.

"I first met Duchamp when he and John Cage came to Toronto to play an electronic music chess game in 1968. I was living in Buffalo, and I went to Toronto and took lots of pictures, but then I just left them and didn't develop the film. One

day I read in the paper—it was on the front page of The New York Times—that Duchamp had died, and I suddenly remembered the photographs. So I took all the film and rushed to the photostore and had them developed. Then I saw that they were very good pictures, and I thought, "Everyone has forgotten about those beautiful moments," so I made them into a book."

The book is *Marcel Duchamp and John Cage*, and includes haikus (direct and indirect) about Duchamp by Cage. "Then in 1970, when I started making videotapes, I made a videotape of the book. This piece (*Marcel Duchamp's Grave*) is also about death. I think a lot about death since my father died last year. To me death is a process, and so I made this piece, the same above and in the mirror. (In Kubota's book, Cage quotes Suzuki: "there is no difference between life and death.")

The *Self-Portrait* is one of Kubota's video poems, in which single lines of the written poem are projected on the wall in sequence, behind the video image. The latter is played on a color set which is hidden, except for a diagonal slit, by a ballooning, blue nylon zippered cloth. "The cover is from my first boyfriend. He is a great composer, Takahisa Kosugi. I used to support him. I worked three jobs. And I said to him, 'Why don't you work?' and he said 'Because I am a composer.' so I said, 'So where are your compositions?' 'I give you one,' he said, and he gave me this piece, this bag which he had made, which I inflate with the air from a fan, with wind, like breath, you know. Because I don't like the video always being in a box, a heavy box. Every weekend at Anthology (Kubota is Video Curator at Anthology Film Archives) I have to carry the equipment, the boxes, and they are so heavy, they hurt my back so that every Monday I must have it massaged so I can work. So I make the hardware soft for my video poem."

The poem is: "Video if Vengeance of Vagina./Video is Victory of Vagina./Video is Venereal Disease of Intellectuals./Video is Vacant Apartment./Video is Vacation of Art./Viva Video . . ." The tape is Kubota herself, in color, chroma-keyed, colorized, on snow, behind snow, negative and positive, glimpsed through the slit in her first boy-friend's bag, reciting her poem soundlessly.

"This self-portrait is concrete poetry, really. I write poems, I work with video. Nam June works with video. I do video at Anthology. Everything is video. We eat video, we shit video, so I make video poems. I made this poem with words beginning with V, like Video. And it is about my life. Part of my day, every day, the memory—I like to put in video."

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