

Stan VanDerBeek: Transmissions**March 7 – May 4, 2024****Level One, Level Two, and Lower Level**

Magenta Plains presents *Stan VanDerBeek: Transmissions*, a solo exhibition of the artist's collages, drawings, and films. The exhibition expands across three floors to include a curated selection of works made between 1950 and 1970 that demonstrate how VanDerBeek's experiments with transmission, animation, and recomposed fragments of ephemeral media ramify throughout his rich archive.

In his 1966 text, "CULTURE: Intercom and Expanded Cinema A Proposal and Manifesto," VanDerBeek issued an urgent call for "the maximum use of the maximum information devices that we now have at our disposal." Attuned to the immediate political effects of a rapidly transforming media-sphere, he recognized that images were not only proliferating at increasingly dizzying speeds, but also being transmitted across vast distances with greater ease and frequency than ever before. With special attention to the mediation of war and state violence against bodies rising up in dissent, he warned, "technological research, development, and involvement have almost completely outdistanced our emotional and socio-'logical' comprehension." Rather than slowing things down, artists must find ways to grasp and adapt to these new conditions of "visual velocity." Only then, he argued, might they play a role in mitigating devastation at a global scale.

Guided by this conviction, VanDerBeek initiated a series of technologically adventurous experiments in image production and display, including *Panels for the Walls of the World*, which he first prototyped in 1969 as part of the exhibition "Art by Telephone" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Proposed as a "process art" event capable of "penetrating the walls of the community electronically," *Panels* took the form of an iterative "telephone mural" that could be sent directly from the artist's studio via fax machine to multiple sites simultaneously and revised daily with the input of feedback gathered over the course of its production.

Anchoring the exhibition at Magenta Plains is one of the two, 20 ft.-long fax murals completed by VanDerBeek in the spring of 1970 while he was in residency at MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies. Titled *Panels for the Walls of the World: Phase II*, the realization of this work involved the dissemination of hundreds of individual, collaged and painted legal sized sheets of paper by way of Xerox "Telecopier" machines. An exhibition curated by Gregory Kepes for the MIT Hayden Gallery as well as partnerships with the Xerox Corporation, Walker Art Center and Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston enabled transmissions of the "Telephone Mural" to the following sites: Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; First National Bank, Minneapolis; Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts, Boston; New Boston City Hall; Boston Children's Museum; and The DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, MA.

For the Magenta Plains exhibition, the original color collages that make up *Panels for the Walls of the World: Phase II* are displayed below one of the remaining original black and white faxed versions of the mural. The mural's open grid can barely contain the cultural debris scattered across its surface. Diaphanous bursts of spray paint frame floating silhouettes. Broken bits of newspaper copy rain down on a dense matrix of media images cartwheeling through space. Antic arrays of bodies clipped from

advertisements bump up against meaner scenes of Vietnamese villagers displaced by war and peaceful protesters besieged by police. VanDerBeek conjures a destroyed image world where the forces acting on the body's sensorium at this moment are acutely felt.

Additional highlights in the exhibition include drawings made to accompany a 1966 publication of "CULTURE: Intercom," 16mm film documentation of the fax mural at the First National Bank in Minneapolis, and a large fax collage in the shape of a fist that addresses the killing of four students at Kent State by the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970, during a demonstration against President Nixon's expansion of the Vietnam War into Cambodia. Here VanDerBeek responds in real time to the strike that shut down MIT and other campuses across the country in the wake of the shooting. The students took the raised fist as the emblem of their movement. VanDerBeek's fax collage includes glimpses of Black Panther Bobby Seale and Emory Douglas's distinctive illustrations for the party, emphasizing the alignment between efforts to dismantle American imperialism abroad and a host of other struggles, including the pursuit of racial and economic justice at home. Recognizing the violence inherent in the transmission of images depicting vulnerable bodies in peril and in pain, VanDerBeek pursued strategies of reconfiguration capable of generating new icons of solidarity and resistance.

This exhibition, organized by Sara and Johannes VanDerBeek of the Stan VanDerBeek Archive in collaboration with Chelsea Spengemann, Executive Director of Soft Network with exhibition design by Darling Green, follows presentations of *Panels for The Walls of the World Phase I and II* at Document Gallery in Chicago and The Box, Los Angeles in 2022 as well as Offscreen, Paris in 2023. *Stan VanDerBeek: Transmissions* offers the first major gallery presentation of VanDerBeek's work in New York since the solo exhibition at Guild & Greyshkul in 2008.

—Erica Levin

Stan VanDerBeek (1927–1984) was a prolific multimedia artist known for his pioneering work in experimental film, expanded cinema and computer art. Stan VanDerBeek studied at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York (1948-1952), and at Black Mountain College, Asheville, North Carolina (1949-1950). Recent exhibitions that have featured VanDerBeek's work include *Signals: How Video Transformed the World*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2023); *Coded: Art Enters the Computer Age, 1952-1982*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA (2023); *CONSOLAS: Democracia para la imagen digital (1972-2003)*, ETOPIA Centre for Art and Technology, Zaragoza, ES (2020); *VanDerBeek + VanDerBeek* at the Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, Asheville, NC (2019). VanDerBeek's work can be found in numerous public collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, ES. The Stan VanDerBeek Archive is dedicated to preserving and providing access to artwork produced by American multimedia artist Stan VanDerBeek (1927–1984). For more information on VanDerBeek and the Archive, please visit www.magentaplains.com/artists/stan-vanderbeek.

