Steina Vasulka

(Steinunn Briem Bjarnadóttir)
Born in 1940, Reykjavík, Iceland
Lives and works in Santa Fe, NM

Bio

Steina Vasulka (b. 1940) is a pioneering video artist who has been producing work since the 1960s. She moved from Reykjavík to Prague in 1959 to study the violin and there met her husband, the filmmaker Woody Vasulka. In 1965 they relocated to New York where Steina gradually came to focus on electronic media and video art. With Woody, she began showing video art, and in 1971 they founded The Kitchen, which has been a powerful force in shaping a cultural landscape in the US. It was among the very first American institutions to embrace the emerging fields of video, performance, and cross-disciplinary explorations. An internationally acclaimed institution, the Kitchen is one of New York's oldest and most active nonprofit art centers, and has helped launch the careers of many artists who have gone on to worldwide prominence. Together they also worked to develop the Center for Media Studies at the State University of New York in Buffalo. Although Steina and Woody have often collaborated in their art, Steina's own approach has resulted in an extensive body of work, which includes both video art and performances. She often uses the violin to create not only sound but also images by manipulating the signal through electronic means. Steina's work has a strong lyrical quality, which is perhaps most clearly expressed in her series of multi-screen video installations using images of landscapes in Iceland and New Mexico, where she and Woody settled in 1980. She has explored the entire range of possibilities in video art and electronic media, from documentaries to purely machinegenerated art. Her work has been exhibited at major museums and festivals around the world, including the Whitney Museum, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Berlin Film Festival, and the National Gallery of Art in Reykjavík. Steina became a Guggenheim Fellow in 1976, and in 1997 she represented Iceland at the Biennale di Venezia. In 2014, the Vasulka Chamber, a center of electronic and digital art in Iceland, was established at the National Gallery of Iceland and includes a part of the Vasulkas' archive.

Chronology (selected)

2026	Solo exhibition at Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany. Works exhibited at Videoex, Zürich, Switzerland and OFFSCREEN, Paris, France.
2025	Solo exhibition at Buffalo AKG Art Museum, New York, US, solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland and The Reykjavík Art Museum, Reykjavík, Iceland. Publication of *STEINA* by MIT Press. Works exhibited at Musée d'arts de Nantes, Nantes, France, Klingental Exhibition Room, Basel, Switzerland and Thoma Foundation, Santa Fe, NM.
2024	Solo exhibition at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, BERG Contemporary, Reykjavík, Iceland, and The National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland. Works shown at Museum fur Neue Kunst, Freiburg, Germany, LOOP Barcelona, Tate Modern, London, UK, Buffalo AKG Art Museum, New York, US.
2023	Works shown at Skaftfell Art Center, Seyðisfjörður, Iceland, LOOP Barcelona and House of the Arts, Brno, Czech Republic.
2022	Works shown at LÁ Art Museum, Hveragerði, Iceland, Chart Art Fair, Copenhagen, Denmark and Frieze No. 9 Cork Street, London, England.

2020	Works shown at CHART Art Fair, Reykjavík, Iceland, Centro Internacional de Cultura Contempoánea Tabakalera, San Sebastian, Spain, Kjarvalsstaðir, Reykjavík Art Museum, Reykjavík, Iceland, the National Gallery of Iceland.
2019	Works shown in Zebrastraat, Ghent, Belgium, BOZAR, Brussels, Peter Blum Gallery, New York, Museum of History of Photography, St. Petersburg, Russia, Fiac, Paris, France, Gerðarsafn – Kopavogur Art Museum, Kópavogur, Iceland, Hafnarborg – Centre of Culture and Fine Art, Hafnarfjörður, Iceland and the National Gallery of Iceland, Vasulka Chamber.
2018	Solo exhibition with Woody Vasulka, *Art of Memory* in Pori Museum, Pori, Finland. Works shown in Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Germany, The Current Museum of Art, New York, Media Art Festival, Rome, Carroll Gallery, Huntington, WV, Verksmiðjan, Hjalteyri, Iceland, and the National Gallery of Iceland, Vasulka Chamber, Reykjavík.
2017	Works shown in the Vasulka Chamber at The National Gallery of Iceland, The Vasulka Kitchen in Brno, Czech Republic, The Reykjavík Art Museum, The National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík, BERG Contemporary, Reykjavík, Photo London, LOOP Barcelona.
2016	September dedication and opening of the Vasulka Kitchen in Brno, Czech Republic. Works shown in Whitechapel Gallery, London, Entrance Gallery, Prague, The Vasulka Chamber at the National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík, Raven Row, London, Le Lait Art Centre, France, Galeries Lafayette, Toulouse, France, Berlin Atonal, Berlin, Code Art Fair, Copenhagen, Atelier Nord, Oslo, Kuryokhin Center of Modern Art, St. Petersburg, Neon Digital Arts Festival, Dundee, Scotland, Untitled Art Fair, Miami Beach, Vasulka Kitchen, Brno, Czech Republic. Received the Distinguished Artist Award For Lifetime Achievement in Digital Art by The ACM SIGGRAPH Awards Program and an Honorarium Artist Salary from the Icelandic parliament.
2015	Works shown in Culturehouse, Reykjavík, The Vasulka Chamber at The National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík, Momentum 8: Tunnel Vision, Norway, Currents Festival, Santa Fe, Hafnarborg, Iceland, Nordisk Panorama, Malmö, Sweden, Axle Contemporary, Santa Fe, Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, Czech Republic, The Paseo Taos Outdoor Art Festival, New Mexico. Received Knight's Cross of the Order of the Falcon from the President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson.
2014	Presentations and workshops in France, Belgium, Germany, Norway and Seattle, WA. Works shown at Oslo Screen Festival, Oslo. Nomination for Prix Ars Electronica award, as Visionary Pioneers of Media Art. October dedication and opening of the Vasulka Chamber, at the National Gallery of Art, Reykjavík, Iceland.
2009—2013	Works shown in Glasgow, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Reykjavík, Long Island City, Long Beach, Denver, Boulder, Albuquerque and Santa Fe, US.
2008	*Steina: 1970-2000* solo show at SITE Santa Fe; shows in Iceland and Bern, Switzerland.
2006—2007	Artist-in-residence at the ZKM | Karlsruhe, where she helped to organize and participate in the exhibition MindFrames: Media Study at Buffalo 1973—1990.
2006	Vasulka Lab, 1969—2005 *Allvision* (1976) and *Theater of Hybrid Automata* (1990) presented at the ICA, London and VIVID, Birmingham, UK.
2001	Invited to festivals in Norway, Russia, Estonia, Portugal, Montreal, England and Italy.
2000	Created two installations (*Lava & Moss* and *Mynd*) for the Art Festival 2000, in Reykjavík, Iceland.
1999	Organized a workshop on Art and Science in collaboration with Woody Vasulka, the composer

	David Dunn and the physicist James Crutchfield at Santa Fe Arts Institute.
1999	Showed three installations in three countries: *Nuna* (1998) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, *Textures* in Reykjavík, Iceland and *Machine Vision* (1978) in Milano, Italy.
1998	Received an honorary doctorate from the San Francisco Art Institute, and was honored with an award for her exceptional contributions to media art by The National Association of Media and Culture (NAMAC), San Francisco, CA (together with Woody Vasulka).
1997	Represented Iceland at the Biennale di Venezia, 47e Esposizione Internationale d'arte, where she presented *Orka* (1997) at the Icelandic Pavilion.
1996	Served as artistic co-director at STEIM (Studio for Electronic Instrumental Music) Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Collaborated with software engineer Tom Demeyer in the development of a performance-in-real-time image processing software.
1995	Received the Siemens Media Art Prize, conferred by the ZKM | Karlsruhe and, together with Nam June Paik, performed at the Kwangju Biennale, in South Korea.
1993	Media Art Production Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.
1992	Together with Woody, received the Maya Deren Award for Independent Film and Video Artists, conferred by the American Film Institute, Los Angeles, California, honoring her for her contribution to developing and reinventing the film and video industry. Together with Peter Weibel the Vasulkas acted as curators for the exhibition Eigenwelt der Apparate-Welt (Pioneers of Electronic Art) for Ars Electronica Linz (Austria). Taught media at the Akademie fur Angewandte Kunst in Vienna, Austria.
1991	Began producing interactive performances titled *Violin Power* applying the Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) to a videodisk player control, enabling communication between her violin and video images.
1989	Received the American Film Institute Grant to post-produce her video installation *Tokyo Four* (1991).
1988	While spending six months in Tokyo on a U.S./Japan Friendship Committee grant, she produced *In the Land of the Elevator Girls* (1989) and *A So Desu Ka* (1994).
1986	Collaborated with singer and composer Joan La Barbara on a series of interactive technology compositions included in the works *Voice Windows* (1987) and *Events in the Elsewhere* (1989).
1984	Received the Laser d'Or AIVAC, International VideoArt Festival Locarno, Switzerland.
1982	Received grants from the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts to produce her installation *The West* (1983), which in the following years, was widely shown both within America and internationally, e.g. at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France (1984).
1981	New Mexico Art Division Production Grant for *Summer Salt* (1982).
1980	Moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico. In the following years, the exploration of landscape became a recurring theme for Steina. She applied her idea of *Machine Vision* to diverse landscapes, e.g. in *Ptolemy* (1990) and *Geomania* (1987) and used the Digital Image Articulator in works such as *Selected Treecuts* (1980) and *In Search of the Castle* (1981).
1977—1979	Taught video at the Department of Media Study, State University of New York, Buffalo (SUNY Buffalo).
1976	Received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship. Participated in the Berlin Film Festival, 6. Forum des Jungen Films.
1973	Moved to Buffalo, New York. From 1974 and over the ensuing years, the artistic interests of Woody and Steina diverged. Steina started to experiment with the camera as an autonomous imaging instrument which evolved into her *Machine Vision* series, and that has since been widely exhibited e.g. at Albright-Knox Gallery Buffalo, NY (1978), The Pittsburgh Museum of Art, PA (1982) and ZKM,

	Karlsruhe (2006).
1971	Co-founded The Electronic Kitchen (later abbreviated to The Kitchen), an experimental performance space devoted to electronic media in New York (official opening June 15th), together with Woody and Andres Mannik. In addition to the vanguard daily program at The Kitchen, established the first annual video festival and cooperated with David Bienstock in the organization of *A Special Videotape Show* at the Whitney Museum. Participated in some of the first exhibitions of video art, such as *Continuous Video Environment*, at WBAI Free Music Store (New York) and *Transmitted Environment* at the Experimental Television Center Binghampton (New York). During this period Steina and Woody collaborated in wide-ranging investigations into the electronic nature of video and sound.
1970	Became very involved in the New York cultural scene, taping theater and music, notably at the "legendary Audubon Hall in Harlem." Their early tapes, such as *Don Cherry* (1970) and *Participation* (1971) are from this period.
1969	The Vasulkas began experimenting with video feedback and working with the SONY Portapak Video System.
1965—1970	Worked as a freelance musician and studied music. By the end of the 1960s she decided to focus entirely on video.
1965	The Vasulkas emigrate to New York City.
1964	Joined the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra. Married Woody Vasulka in Prague.
1962	Met Woody Vasulka in Prague.
1959—1963	Received a scholarship from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Culture to attend the State Music Conservatory in Prague, Czechoslovakia.
1953—1957	Studied violin and music theory in Reykjavík.

Videos by Steina

2015	*Emerald World Without Us*, video, color, sound, 25:59 min.
2014	*Pergament*, digital video, color, sound, 12:31 min.
2005	*Pyrospheres* (with Tom Joyce), Video Hi 8, color, sound, 5:57 min.
2004	*Rome Performance*, digital video, color, sound, 14:40 min.
2004	*Twisted Water*, Video Hi 8, color, sound, 4:33 min.
2002	*Music in the Afternoon* (with Tony Conrad), digital video, color, sound, 4:15 min.
2000	*Trevor* (with Trevor Wishart), digital video, color, sound, 11:06 min.
2000	*Lava and Moss*, digital video, color, sound, 15:09 min.
1999	*MidiViolin*, 3/4" U-matic video, color, sound, 10:50 min, with Michael Saup, Tim Thompson, Saburo Teshigawara, Joan La Barbara, Michel Waisvisz, Leatitia Sonami, Cas de Marez, Trevor Wishart and Francis M. Uitti.
1997	*Orka*, Video Hi 8, color, sound, 15:11 min.
1995	*Pyroglyphs* (with Tom Joyce), Video Hi 8, color, sound, 26:05 min.
1994	*A So Desu Ka*, SVHS video, color, sound, 9:33 min.
1994	*Warp*, digital video, color, sound, 4:13 min.
1992	*Eigenwelt*, Video Hi 8, color, sound, 15:05 min, with Peter Weibel, Lee Harrison, Stephen Beck, Lori Zippay, Glen Southworth, Bill Etra, Ralph Hocking, Sherry Miller Hocking, Eric Siegel, David Dunn, David Muller, MaLin Wilson, Melody Sumner Carnahan and Michael Sumner.
1990	*Vocaquad* (with Joan La Barbara), 3/4" U-matic video, color, sound, 11:35 min.
1990	*Ptolequad*, 3/4" U-matic video, color, sound, 12:20 min.

1989 *In the Land of Elevator Girls*, SVHS video, color, sound, 4:16 min.
1987 *Aria*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 3:13 min.
1987 *Lilith* (with Doris Cross), 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 9:12 min.
1982 *The Making of Somersault*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 1:30 min.
1982 *Summer Salt*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 17:56 min.
1980 *The Making of Urban Episodes*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 2:20 min.
1980 *Urban Episodes* (with Josef Krames and Woody Vasulka), 3/4″ U-matic video , color, sound, 8:59 min.
1980 *Selected Treecuts*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 6:39 min.
1980 *Cantaloup* (with Jeffrey Schier and Woody Vasulka), 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 22:56 min.
1979 *Bad*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 2:10 min.
1978 *Violin Power*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, b&w, sound, 10:04 min.
1978/2006 *Funtime at the Vasulkas* (with Tom Busch, Hollis Frampton, Jeffrey Schier, Paul Sharits), 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 7:30 min.
1977 *Nam June Paik* (with Esther Harriott), 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 25:55 min.
1977 *Orbital Obsessions*, 3/4″ U-matic video, b&w, sound, 24:13 min.
1977 *Flux*, 3/4″ U-matic video, b&w, sound, 8:12 min.
1976 *Switch! Monitor! Drift!*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, b&w, sound, 50 min.
1975 *Land of Timoteus*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, b&w, sound, 6:46 min.
1972 *Distant Activities*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, color, sound, 4:48 min.

Videos by Steina and Woody Vasulka

1999 *Techne and Eros*, digital video, color, sound, 14:35 min, with Mort Subotnick, Jim Crutchfield, Steina, Woody Vasulka, Diane Armitage, Oliver Scott, David Dunn, Joan La Barbara, Simone Aaberg, Tom Demeyer, Bruce Hamilton, Russ Gritzo.
1992 *Doris*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, color, sound, 16:35 min.
1989 *Events in the Elsewhere* (with Joan La Barbara), 1/2″ Open Reel video, color, sound, 15:40 min.
1987 *Voice Windows* (with Joan La Barbara), 1/2″ Open Reel video, color, sound, 8:05 min.
1984 *Pariah* (with Tim Thompson), 1/2″ Open Reel video, color, sound, 26:05 min.
1981 *In Search of the Castle*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, color, sound, 9:40 min.
1981 *Progeny* (with Brad Smith), 1/2″ Open Reel video, color, sound, 18 min.
1974 *Noisefields*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 7:05 min.
1974 *Soundsize*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 4:40 min.
1974 *Soundgated Images*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 9:15 min.
1974 *Heraldic View*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 4:17 min.
1974 *Solo for Three*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 7:10 min.
1974 *1-2-3-4*, 3/4″ U-matic video, color, sound, 4:10 min.
1973 *Telc*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, color, sound, 5:10 min.
1973 *Golden Voyage*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, color, sound, 14 min.
1973 *Home*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, color, sound, 16:45 min.
1972 *Spaces II*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, b&w, sound, 7:45 min.
1971 *Participation*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, b&w, sound, 63 min, with Paul Ambrose, Ian Anderson, Billy Andrews, Garry Bartz, Tally Brown, Lary Chaplan, Don Cherry, Kevin Coe, Jackie Curtis, Candy Darling, Miles Davis, Jack DeJohnette, Eric Emerson, Estelle!, Christmas Eve, Michael Henderson, Jimi Hendrix, Stephen Holt, Keith Jarrett, Jay Johnson, Aunt Josie, Agosto

Machado, Taylor Mead, Buddy Miles, Geri Miller, Mario Montez, Airto Moreira, Paul Morrissey, Ondine, Ritta Redd, Al Sayegh, Silva!, Ekathrina Sobechanskaya, Steve Stanwick, Steina, Artchie Strips, David Susskind, Tinkerbelle, Jethro Tull, Richard Weinstock, Holly Woodlawn.

1970 *Studies*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, b&w and color, approx. 45 min.
— *Calligrams*
— *Decay I*
— *Decay II*
— *Descends*
— *Discs*
— *Tissues*
— *Interface*, performer: Charles Hayworth, audio: Gino Piserchio

1970 *Sketches*, 1/2″ Open Reel video, b&w, sound, approx. 27 min.
— *Alfons*, performer: Alfons Schilling.
— *Charles's Story*, performer: Charles Hayworth.
— *Gundance*, performer: Daniel Nagrin.
— *Let it be*, performer: The Beatles.
— *Red Roses*, performer: Jackie Curtis.
— *The Kiss*, performer: Helen Wong.
— *Thierry*, performer: Thierry Benison.

1970 *Don Cherry* (with Elaine Milosh), 1/2″ Open Reel video, b&w, sound, 19:20 min.

Installations by Steina

2002 *Bent Scans*, life interactive environment.
2001 *Of The North*, three video/audio channel projected video environment, variable length.
2000 *Lava & Moss*, three video/audio channel projected video environment, 14 min cycle.
2000 *Mynd*, six video/audio channel projected video environment, 18 min cycle.
2000 *Cascades* (with Sissú Pálsdóttir), six video/audio channels, 16 min cycle.
1998 *Nuna*, three video/audio channels, 10 min cycle.
1997 *Orka*, three video/audio channel projected video environment, 15 min cycle.
1995 *Pyroglyphs* (with Tom Joyce), three video/audio channels, 20 min cycle.
1993 *Borealis*, two video/four audio channel projected video environment, 10 min cycle.
1991—present *Violin Power The Performance*, interactive performance.
1991 *Tokyo Four*, four video/four audio channel installation, 23 min cycle.
1990 *Vocalizations* (with Joan La Barbara), four video/eight audio channel projected video environment, 15 min cycle.
1990 *Ptolemy*, four video/eight audio channel video matrix, 10 min cycle.
1987 *Geomania*, two video/four audio channel video matrix, 15 min cycle.
1983 *The West*, two video/four audio channel video matrix, 30 min cycle.
1978 *Machine Vision*, electro/opto/mechanical environment, with instrumentation by Josef Krames, Woody Vasulka, and Bruce Hamilton.
1976 *Allvision*, electro/opto/mechanical environment, with instrumentation by Woody Vasulka.

Installations by Steina and Woody Vasulka

(Produced various multi-channel installations and matrixes at The Kitchen, 1971—1973)

1992 [1972] *Soundprints*, two channels video/audio, b&w, variable cycle.
1983 *The West # 2*, video environment, two channels, color, sound, 30 min cycle.

1974	*Matrix II*, video installation, 12 monitors, color, sound, 8:30 min, dimensions variable.
1972	*The West # 1*, video environment, two channels, b&w, sound, 15 min cycle.
1970—1972	*Matrix I*, video installation, 12 monitors, b&w, sound, 24:20 min, dimensions variable.

Collections (selected)

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
The Daniel Langlois Foundation Collection
The National Gallery of Iceland
The Reykjavík Art Museum
The Living Art Museum
The Smithsonian American Art Museum
The Thoma Foundation
The Centre Pompidou
The Tate Modern
The Roswell Museum
ZKM
LUX
The Whitney Museum