

**Stan VanDerBeek: *Perceptual Transcendence*
Magenta Plains | Art Basel Miami Beach 2023 | S17**

Magenta Plains is pleased to present *Perceptual Transcendence*, a solo exhibition of historical works from the late 1960s and 1970s by the revered experimental artist and filmmaker Stan VanDerBeek. Centered around VanDerBeek's recently preserved film, *Moirage* (1967), shown alongside computer generated works on paper, this presentation speaks to the artist's relationship with contemporaneous cultural phenomena of Op Art and Psychedelia.

Stan VanDerBeek (1927–1984) was a prolific multimedia artist known for his pioneering work in experimental film, expanded cinema and computer art. VanDerBeek believed in technology as a tool to further the human experience. In his words, "new technologies will open higher levels of psychic communication and neurological referencing."

Moirage is an abstract film study in optical illusions and pattern-superimpositions which built on VanDerBeek's longstanding interest in visual phenomena. Made with a moiré pattern kit consisting of transparencies with concentric circles, parallel lines, and arrays of dots, the resulting effect (generally curved, radiating and sometimes very complex rippled or "watered" appearance), demonstrates wave interference and can be said to be a psychological experience due to how any imperfect alignment forms a pattern in one's own eye. Moiré was one of the key motifs of the 1960s as seen in avant-garde films by peers of VanDerBeek such as John Whitney and Jordan Belson, following progenitors of the form, Oskar Fischinger and Len Lye.

The result of a moiré effect is a visual trick akin to a moving animation, despite it being only an intersection of forms. The patterns in *Moirage* were created by Gerald Oster, a biophysicist with whom VanDerBeek shared many interests. Paul Motian, one of the most influential jazz musicians of the second half of the 20th Century, provided a backing track including xylophone, upright bass, tom-toms, drums, cymbals, and chimes. The vibrant colors in the film were added by artists Robert Brown and Frank Olvey, who along with Motian, were frequent collaborators on VanDerBeek's films. The combination of intense visual phenomenon with an arrhythmic auditory experience enraptures the viewer in a near hallucinogenic state; indeed, VanDerBeek stated that he was "seeking a new type of visual music."

Moirage is supplemented in this presentation by unique and editioned framed works on paper called "Intergraphics" by VanDerBeek. Made from his 35mm computer art film stills of mandalas and output as color silkscreens, black and white intaglio prints, and early color Xerox experiments, VanDerBeek's electronic imagery proposed a new matrix for representing a native part of visual culture. His exploration of the mandala, a form also central to his contemporary Bruce Conner, was evidence of VanDerBeek's belief that technology could be used as a means of "expanding consciousness."

Throughout his career, VanDerBeek was deeply invested in how technology had the potential to build new cultural spaces, calling for a broader understanding in the ways accelerated media impacts our experience of the world, and ultimately each other. During his tenure at Bell Labs (1964–71) and as the first artist in residence at CAVS at MIT (1970), VanDerBeek developed new-media works in collaboration with other multidisciplinary researchers and artists interested in expanding and advancing an audience's experience. Visually seductive, this succinct display encapsulates not only VanDerBeek's technological prescience but also a humanist idealism and curiosity expressed to stunning, poetic effect.

Artist Biography

Stan VanDerBeek (1927–1984) was a prolific multimedia artist known for his pioneering work in experimental film, expanded cinema and computer art. VanDerBeek believed in technology as a tool to further the human experience. In his words, “new technologies will open higher levels of psychic communication and neurological referencing.” Throughout his career, VanDerBeek was deeply invested in how technology had the potential to build new cultural spaces, calling for a broader understanding in the ways accelerated media impacts our experience of the world, and ultimately each other. During his tenure at Bell Labs (1964–71) and as the first artist in residence at CAVS at MIT (1970), VanDerBeek developed new-media works in collaboration with other multidisciplinary researchers and artists interested in expanding and advancing an audience’s experience. This led to his explorations in various forms of transmission and feedback, such as his *Movie-Drome*, multi-site fax murals *Panels for the Walls of the World*, and his later engagements with public television broadcasting. Each encapsulates VanDerBeek’s technological prescience, humanist idealism, and poetic curiosity.

Stan VanDerBeek (b. 1927, New York, NY, d. 1984, Baltimore, MD) 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); *Judson Dance Theater: The Work is Never Done* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2018); *Delirious: Art at the Limits of Reason, 1950-1980* at the Met Breuer, New York, NY (2017); *Merce Cunningham: Common Time* at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2017); *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905-2016* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2016); *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College, 1933-1957* at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2015); the 55th Venice Biennale, IT (2013); and *Stan VanDerBeek: The Culture Intercom* at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, and at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, TX (2011). 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). Established in 2018 as the formal entity for the artist’s estate, the Archive keeps VanDerBeek’s work visible through maintaining the collection and providing support for acquisitions, exhibitions and publications. The Archive is comprised of an advisory board that includes the artist’s children, scholars and curators. Chelsea Spengemann has been involved with the estate since 2007 and currently serves as Director of the Archive.