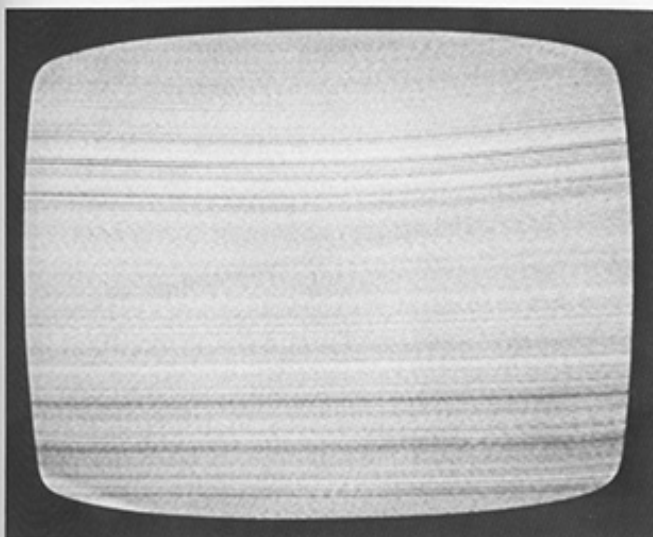


The new TV-related abstraction uses space, colors, shapes and lines generated by electricity. This invisible vocabulary of forms first became visible through television and analytical devices such as the oscilloscope. Playing with imagery derived from this abstract realm was an early preoccupation of video artists, and led to the development of video synthesizers, complex machines that deconstruct the video signal to form eerily colored moving abstract shapes. The advent of computers offered increased control over synthesizer effects.

The new abstraction revealed by electronics moved into the realm of wall pieces when artists began photographing their tapes. In a 1973 silkscreen series, *Video Still Screen*, Keith Sonnier sought to present a pure image reflecting the technology through its electrical effects. To make this work, two cameras, one in a positive and one in a negative mode, were focused on a white wall; their signals were mixed down to one monitor, the image photographed and silk-screened with further positive and negative permutations.

Not all abstract investigation of the TV image relies

Keith Sonnier
Video Still Screen II, 1973
Silkscreen



Opposite, below:
Alastair Noble
Scrambled Possibilities, 1982
Cibachrome photograph and
silver pencil on museum board

Left:
Lewis Stein
TV Light, 1986
Black and white photograph

of Ronald Reagan was electronically drawn directly on the screen, and then distorted and multiplied with the aid of computer programmers. While transferring an image from the TV screen into hard copy once required the clumsy task of photographing off a screen, new technology allows a direct printout. Nancy Burson's *Etan Potz Update* demonstrates perhaps the most sophisticated use of TV and related computer technology. This photograph, produced by the artist for the FBI, is intended to picture the child abducted in SoHo in 1979 as he might appear today. It shows the remarkable imaging power of TV as specially designed computer programs reshape the image of a face pixel by pixel, dot by dot.

The future of television offers rich possibilities for art. But it has its ominous side. Don Leicht's painting of video game "pieces" with John Fekner's words *Your Space Has Been Invaded* reminds us that the new technology is not all fun and games. Though 1984 has come and gone, Orwell's vision of Big Brother is still a real possibility. Lewis Stein's series of photos showing surveillance cameras is a reminder that TV is not just something we watch, but something that is watching us.

