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### THIRTEEN WAYS TO LOOK AT THE WAVE

But if the soul is quick and strong it bursts over that boundary on all sides and expands another orbit on the great deep, which also runs up into a high wave, with attempt again to stop and to bind. But the heart refuses to be imprisoned; in its first and narrowest pulses it already tends outward with a vast force and to immense and innumerable expansions.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Circles"

A sudden power outage. The farmhouse in north Vermont goes dark. This is what happens when the wave stops. A Caledonia County circuit is broken. The 60-cycle hum that dominates the atmosphere is replaced with the patter of unrelenting rain and the low buzzing of insects. I move my hand as if practicing chi gong and illustrate the three kinds of waves that can be used to carry electricity: the sine wave is a curved line; the triangle is self-explanatory; and the ramp wave crawls, rises, crosses a plateau, and falls. The word wave conjures metaphors that vibrate from music to science to cooking and beyond. Scientist and revolutionary Benjamin Franklin wrote in his memoir: "The electrical matter consists of particles extremely subtle, since it can permeate common matter, even the densest metals, with such ease and freedom as not to receive any perceptible resistance." Vermonters are philosophical about the links between weather, power, and prayer. I pick up a felt marker to make a sign for another demonstration while remembering another piece of Franklin wisdom: "Notwithstanding my experiments with electricity the thunderbolt continues to fall under our noses and beards; and as for the tyrant, there are a million of us still engaged at snatching away his scepter."

#### 1. Vibrations

It begins with *Sensitive Chaos*, a book I came across during the early 1970s, by water scientist Theodor Schwenk, a theosophist follower of Goethe and Rudolf Steiner. Schwenk borrowed his title from the Romantic poet and mystic Novalis who called water *Das Sensible Chaos*. Schwenk writes that water is delicate and always seeks balance. It lives in rhythm and is responsible for the rise and fall of everything in nature and all the creatures who inhabit the earth. Water and electricity share vocabulary and principles. Current, frequency, amplitude, and duration are measurable and malleable. Electric waves are interpenetrating, oscillating loops.

Fifty years later, Schwenk's vibrations abide: edit the brook; learn the stream's babble; observe the gentle swells. Irrigation is alteration of a liquid course in a collaboration between the water itself and an aquacultural engineer. Creeks are straightened and broadened to protect roads and homes. Culverts are buried to guide surge into the fields. Heraclitus said it was impossible to step into the same stream twice. Schwenk notices that waves form against and around rocks. Is it not possible, if water circulates, that the same flow can potentially happen again? Imagine Heraclitus with a video camera: slow motion, reverse direction, freeze, repetitions of the same place, the same time. Dangle the camera in the water to see the wave forms from below. Steer the drone-cam like a heron over the muddy, shallow river swollen with frogs and turtles. Dive into the swirling, pixelated whirlpool, the ache of narrative, the refraction of representational images, the wave pulse from beginning to end—birth, death, and beyond.

Attempting to make sense of relatively new art media, I've longed for an aesthetic interpretation of electronic and computer-based art that isn't centered on personality or style, but rather on the idea behind the wave; to make poetic sense of the somewhat chaotic nature of the field of video art. I'm borrowing from Wallace Stevens's "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" to suggest the contours of this investigation. Since video is a technological medium, we must begin with:

#### 2. Science

During the 1980s, I sent my video art students at Ramapo College to the physics lab to help them better understand how the medium works. Professor Theodore Halprin had participated in the ground-breaking collaboration between artists, scientists, and engineers that led to the *Nine Experiments in Art and Technology*, an immersive event at the Armory in Manhattan in 1967. At Ramapo, Dr. Theo, a great joke teller, entertained my students with demonstrations that illustrated electricity, the wave, and the science behind television. I remember him usinglinky toys, bubbles and fans, smoke and flashlights, and other simple props to show the students how energy flows and can be used for waveform imaging.

Around the same time, I took a psychic physicist sidekick to a video art exposition organized by video artist Neil Zusman at City College of New York. My friend retreated instantly.

"Do they know what they are doing radiating all those frequencies at once?" he asked.

Complicit, I shrugged, "What is it telling you?"

"This is happening to us all the time, but indoors, with so many processors on at once, the intensity and saturation was overwhelming for me. And this is what I study as a scientist."

"Do you know if it's dangerous?"

"I don't want to be a guinea pig for artistic experiments that are created with or inspired by hardware created for military and industrial purposes."

I realized then that my generation of boomer artists, the first with easy access to television and computers, were experimenting with what could/might/has become a battleground of weaponized communication technology. My friend and I ended up sitting outside, enjoying the weather and discussing the cloud formations above the gothic campus. Science and art are both experiential and experimental. Artists generally love their materials and try to learn everything about them.

A painter collects, grinds, mixes their own pigments. The sculptor caresses a rock, pours molten iron. Video artists reckon with hard sciences and theoretical physics. Since everything begins with the television signal, video artists must be aware of at least rudimentary wavetheory as it affects everything from camera operation to postproduction. A critique of work by first-generation video artists like Steina Vasulka or Shegoko Kubota demands knowledge of history, physics, electronics, and optics, at the very least. Science and art each begins with a question or thesis, works through process, and collects data, but science requires proof and is meant to lead to practical results while art doesn't. Zen Buddhists call art painted cake. A balanced appraisal of the world shows us we need both knowledge and dessert.

In 1972, during the early years of video art, Brice Howard, a visionary television executive, published two books, *Videospace* and *Videospace and the Image Experience*. Howard encourages artists to explore the technological structure of technological tools: "We must learn to manipulate the materials of the medium, the flow of electrons. We must go with process. And we must infuse this process with our own instantaneous awareness, our own experiencing." Howard was more interested in the materials of the medium than in distribution. He championed electronically derived images over camera-based ones. He made a clear and passionate case for artistic attention to the essential qualities of the medium rather than the creation of conventional format programming.

Cultural critic Christopher Benfey once mentioned to me that, when it comes to technical breakthroughs in the arts, "knowingness" substitutes for widespread ignorance. If the basis of video art is the signal, how much must an art critic or historian know about the electronics, cybernetics, and quantum physics that make the signal possible? Is it the artist's responsibility to educate the public about technology? Most general writing and conversation about art takes place in a vernacular that minimizes science. How can art historians and theorists analyze questions of authorship, for example, without knowledge of and access to the science behind the tools of production? Engineers, designers, and software coders tend to remain invisible behind the artist's vision. Even for artists who work "alone," there are layers of invisible collaborators. We are living in a tele-crazy world glued to screens that radiate anxiety. The medium of television requires stability, consistency, and constant flow in order to capture and mildly hypnotize the viewer. Pull the plug and you are left with:

### 3. Nature

Suddenly the trees seem to oscillate. During a trip through Europe in 1969, Joel Hadary and I visited the Duino estate in North Italy. Rainer Maria Rilke was in the midst of existential despair when he visited the estate in 1882. He claimed to hear a voice in the wind:

Yes, the Spring-times needed you deeply.  
Many a star must have been there for you so you might feel it.  
A wave lifted towards you out of the past, or, as you walked  
past an open window, a violin  
gave of itself. All this was their mission.  
(Translated by A. S. Kline, 2004)

I remember hearing that Rilke was leaning against a tree when the first words of the Duino Elegies came to him. Joel and I listened carefully and hugged every tree we encountered, but no poetry flowed.

In 1968, visiting Walden Pond in the thin New England woods, shivering in the late autumn of Thoreau's prose, I stared long enough to see the forest reveal itself as a living organism. Conversation is one-sided; the trees tell me what they want. Above, light; below, soil. The woods are a place where diverse visitors can experience natural healing. Above, birds; at ground level, animals; below, bugs, snakes, and night creatures. Some rain to rush food into the circulatory system. The forest is a place of refuge, a bird's cafeteria, an animal sanctuary. Thoreau's mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay "Circles" (1841) describes the life of a person's soul in terms of circles and waves: "The life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end. The extent to which this generation of circles, wheel without wheel, will go, depends on the force or truth of the individual soul. For it is the inert effort of each thought, having formed itself into a circular wave of circumstances, —as for instance an empire, rules of an art, a local usage, a religious rite, —to heap itself on that ridge and to solidify and hem in the life."

Circles in circles, swirls in spheres, waves everywhere. Circles are waves that connect. Zen circles always leave a gap. Anyone who can make sounds or likes to dance is invited to the drum circle. The air circulates as I shoo away a fly. The fly stays afloat by the wind beneath its delicate wings. I blow off a mosquito before it feasts. What's a tiny drop of blood sucked from my copious flow? I feed the mosquito, the bird eats the mosquito, the bird sings for me. The cats track the song, catch the bird, and leave the scraps in the living room as a hunter's gift. The prayer wheels of Tibet, "turn, turn, turn," a renewal of love and happiness. Everything is always changing, and we don't stay the same. It's called . . .

### 4. History

In the beginning, video art was defined by administrators and government agencies as including all independently produced work made for non-profit purposes. During the early 1970s, there was considerable federal, state, and city support for private and taxpayer funding to establish decentralized public access centers, specialized studios for experimentation, and places to exhibit new work. Video art included community activism, documentary, narrative, and abstraction. Artists in these diverse disciplines competed for the same public money and viewing space. Very few fine arts galleries showed video because it didn't have commercial value. An exception was the Howard Wise Gallery in New York City which showcased video and technological art, especially work by Korean artist Nam June Paik. Wise ultimately transformed his gallery into Electronic Arts Intermix, a distribution and postproduction service facility for the numerous artists who were exploring the potentials of the early new technologies. The Hal Bromm Gallery and 112 Greene Street, two of the earliest exhibition spaces to spring up in SoHo, exhibited my early video art work during the early 1970s.

When John Cage was asked how history was made, he responded, "You invent it." It is relatively easy to write about independent and innovative narrative and documentary work. There is some kind of story or theme for a casual viewer to follow. However, abstract work, whether painting or video, is much more difficult to categorize or understand. I've been working with wave forms for almost fifty years and still have trouble explaining them. I remember seeing video art experiments by visual artist Keith Sonnier investigating the ways light is reflected on a television screen. He created electronic work that echoed Helen Frankenthaler and Barnett Newman color field paintings on canvas. The first instinct of professional visual artists is an investigation of the structure of the medium and how it effects images. Looking at the history of other art disciplines, there is always a diversity of voices, styles, and intentions within a shared time and place. The cliché is true, when things are written they are believed, even . . .

## 5. Poetry

Poets make promises that they are sometimes able to keep: "The wave always returns, and always returns as a different wave. The same water—a different wave. What matters is that it is a wave. What matters is that the wave will return. What matters is that it will always return different. What matters most of all: however different the returning wave, it will always return as a wave of the sea. What is a wave? Composition and muscle. The same goes for lyric poetry." The Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva should know. With all of her suffering and struggle, she could be sure of one thing: the wave returns. Is it the wave of fascism, just waiting for the wheel to turn; the wave of water with its clear rules and consistent behavior; the less reliable wave of our bodies' biological flow from birth to death; or the wave of art and artists who surf these currents? For some of the answers, watch . . .

## 6. Dance

In his 1951 dialogue *Dance and Soul*, poet and philosopher Paul Valéry imagines a dialogue between Socrates, Eryximachus, and Phaedrus. Each classical personality observes and reflects on the dancers from their distinct areas of expertise. The dance and dancer are convenient subjects for investigating the complexities of nature, science, and identity. The wave is a recurrent theme in their musings. Eryximachus is the doctor for the dancers and admits he knows them in intimate ways. He is eloquent about the physical aspects of movement: "She places with symmetry her alternating tread; the heel pouring the body towards the toe, the other foot passing and receiving the body, and pointing it onwards again; and so on and on; whilst the adorable crest of her head traces in the eternal present the brow, as it were, of an undulating wave."

The writer Phaedrus is always looking for a narrative to follow. He says that dancers teach us to know ourselves better. Phaedrus imagines that the dancer is engaged in "a thanks-offering to Aphrodite, look at her. Is she not of a sudden a very wave of the sea?—Now heavier than her body, now lighter—she bounds, as though dashed from a rock; she softly subsides. She is a wave!"

The philosopher Socrates notices that there is no place for chance or randomness in the choreography. "I contemplate this woman who is walking and yet gives me the sense of the motionless." Toward the end, the three observers panic:

Phaedrus: She turns, she turns. She is falling!

Socrates: She has fallen!

Phaedrus: She is dead . . .

Eryximachus: Let rest act to cure her of her movements.

They huddle around the dancer and ask if she is injured. "How well I feel," is her response. She ends the dialogue with a dancer's prayer, "refuge, refuge, O my refuge, O Whirlwind! I was in thee, O movement—outside all things."

Through the responses of the three sages, Valéry leaves no room to wonder how and why we are seduced and attracted to the wave as expressed through dance. They understand that we are watching sculptural movement over time in space. They see that the dancer disappears into the movement and compare it to a thought or an image that merges with the thinker or maker. They don't mention the driving force behind dance and many technological innovations . . .

## 7. Music

Music is the organization of acoustic waves. Electronic instruments, like the Moog, help us understand how frequency, duration, texture, and repetition are based on bending, looping, and layering sound-waves. Charlie Morrow's *Wave Music*, from the late 1970s and early 1980s, layers unconventional instruments to explore the acoustic experience and expand the possibilities of musical scores and composition. For example, *Wave I for Bagpipe and Conch Shells* is an audio illustration of sensitive chaos. The bagpipe, considered a sacred instrument by Scottish Highlanders, is all about circulation and flow; conch shells are organic instruments shaped by water. During the Haitian revolutions against the French colonialists and slaveholders, the conch shell was sounded as a rallying cry for freedom. Both conjure the song of birds and fish, the fissure where air meets water, the crying clouds.

The structures of electronic music and video are similar. Nam June Paik and the engineer Shuye Abe created video synthesizers by increasing the velocity of audio oscillators. Analog video and audio synthesis required patching of cables as well as real time control of the signal as it was being transformed. Now these same effects are available through digital simulation. We know that music impacted . . .

## 8. Painting

"Lend your ears to music, open your eyes to painting, and . . . stop thinking! Just ask yourself whether the work has enabled you to 'walk about' into a hitherto unknown world. If the answer is yes, what more do you want?" asked Wassily Kandinsky who waved his paint brush and color poured like sound onto a canvas. If the painter's dream is to make the image durational like music, why not paint electronically, over time? Walter Benjamin began his 1935 essay *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* with Paul Valéry's prescient thoughts about changes in the arts written in 1928, which echo Emerson's 1841 warning that "the new arts destroy the old." Valéry writes, "In all the arts there is a physical component which can no longer be considered or treated as it used to be, which cannot remain unaffected by our modern knowledge and power. For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial. We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art."

The mixed media artist Frank Stella after visiting North Africa in 1952, focuses his creative attention on the wave. What did Stella see during his travels? Did he visit a madrasah and see the circular architecture with calligraphic texts layered on the walls? One recites hypnotic Koranic passages while walking in circles through the space. Stella might have noticed that towns, villages, and cities were gently curved with undulating lines etched into the sidewalks. He might have also noticed that perception of space changes in places without straight lines. He certainly would have seen that homes were decorated inside and out with a range of simple to complex designs that had spiritual significance and served as an example of another kind of art, one that is not separated from life. Stella tried to overcome the flatness of painting by making his work three-dimensional, off the wall.

Perhaps Stella knew and was inspired by Muslim artists like Mohammed Melehi, the master of the wave in public and private spaces. In 1984, I produced a documentary about Melehi to accompany a career retrospective at the Bronx Museum of the Arts. After a brief study of Islamic art, it became clear to me that Melehi's work serves as a bridge for Western artists and those interested in abstract visual imagination. I recorded examples of his work where it exists in Morocco—post office walls, hotels, outdoors on city facades, and integrated with ordinary home interiors. Melehi's art merges utilitarian, functional, and devotional respect for the wave.

Melehi answers the question raised by orthodox readings of the biblical Second Commandment not to make graven images. Muslim artists left without representation reduce everything to the wave and line. Sometimes the moon, sun, water, fire, snakes, and other elements of nature appear behind the abstractions. For example, Melehi painted the phases of the moon on ceramic tiles. Similarly, the Buddhist Nam June Paik created a cycle of moon changes on television screens. Muslim and Buddhist artists answer and ask the same questions at the same time in wildly different media. By its very nature, the wave appears to be a shared language, especially when it appears in . . .

## 9. Public Spaces

At the huge demonstrations around the United States these days, voices rise from the distance, crescendo as one joins, then dissolve down the endless avenue of angry people happy to be with their own. In stadiums, sports fans interact by waiting, then standing while raising hands to the sky, then sitting and enjoying the audio-visual phenomenon as the crowd rises and falls in perfect sync. In Kumasi, Ghana or the village of Asilah, Morocco, the roads are often circular. Homes are built off the streets behind walls. When invited, one enters an open courtyard and garden, a formal sitting area, and then the home itself. The boundaries are nonlinear. Perspective bends. In contrast to the straight lines of most Western architecture, one cannot see into the distance; continuously curving corners change the way we treat the surroundings.

Post-modernist, Euro-American designers are still obsessed with linear grids and tired geometries. In New York City, the Guggenheim Museum manages to exhibit diverse shows on curved alcove walls where a singular work can be shown by itself; The Museum of Modern Art has wonderful exhibitions and permanent collection, but architecturally it more and more resembles a mall representing multiple art shops; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History, grandiose and old fashioned, still maintain a sense of circularity and mystery that most new art spaces lack. Visitors can get lost and end up back at the starting place. At the other extreme, with severe space restraints, the New Museum in lower Manhattan is an awkward pile of white boxes weirdly trying to show iconoclastic art in square spaces. I was always a fan of the Daniel Libeskind design that inspired the spiraling architecture of the new World Trade Center. When I recently visited an office on one of the top floors, I was struck by the circularity, a space without right angles. When there are no straight lines, space becomes more difficult to define, as in . . .

## 10. Video Art

Conceptual art draws attention to technique; entertainment makes the tools transparent. How does an artist experimenting in an esoteric field satisfy personal inquiry and still communicate with both specialized and general audiences? For example, video artist Mary Lucier blends landscape, documentary, and impressionistic video imaging in her work. Her classic 1983 installation "Ohio at Givency" was recorded in Claude Monet's gardens. The work is fraught with art history inherent in the knowing blend of impressionism and pixelism liquified on the television screen's faux plasticity. In Lucier's work, the old and new are layered, historical ideas are examined mostly without words. There are always skillful production values. Lucier's installations force casual viewers to consider traditions and innovation. Kandinsky credited Monet as the first artist to remove the "subject" from his paintings. Lucier's monumental installations testify to Kandinsky's recognition that "The arts are encroaching one upon another, and from a proper use of this encroachment will rise the art that is truly monumental."

I remember seeing lyrical and muscular videos by Frank Gillette during the early 1970s. I realized that his videographic gestures are about the blurring of the landscape, not its representation. He waved his video camera and the earth merged with the sky. Why walk when you can dance? The swoops of his camera should not be critiqued as out of control recording, rather as an example of a liberated camera, untethered from the tyranny of the eye. Gillette's book *Between Paradigms* (1973) captures the zeitgeist of the early days of video art. He intersperses quotations from diverse sources (from the Talmud to Frank Herbert) with his own thoughts about the shifts in communications and meaning. When someone with Gillette's philosophical chops and artistic daring allows all of the currents to flow through at once, the result is a layering of politics, psychology, history, ecology, environment, education, spirituality, soulfulness, and sounds. He quotes T.S. Eliot: "But the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past, in a way and to an extent the past's awareness of itself cannot show." Gillette understands that video is a memory of an event, moments of the past captured in real time, updated later, or discarded, erased from personal history.

Gillette's drawings and video stills could easily fit into Schwenk's Sensitive Chaos. In the chapter "Streaming Wisdom," Schwenk compares thinking to the flow of water. "Like water thought can create forms, can unite and relate the forms to one another as ideas; it can unite, but also separate and analyze. The capacity of water in the realm of substance to dissolve and bind together reappears in thinking as a spiritual activity." He concludes this passage by calling water "a tool for its own activity." If art is the study and interpretation of nature, then video is a tool that can be used to study video.

The ephemeral nature of electronic and cybernetic art makes it . . .

## 11. Metaphysical

One hears many spiritual aphorisms and stories about “becoming the ocean, not the wave.” Waves begin and end, the ocean existed before time and will probably exist when our species is extinguished. Oceanwaves are energy created by the wind, ebbing and flowing gently with the tide or crashing with storms. The wave is a form created by water, wind, gravity. Wave is an activity, a movement, a process. Waves appear and disappear, the ocean remains. One of the 112 meditations in the ancient Vigyan Bhairav Tantra is: “As waves come with water and flames with fire, so the universal waves with us.” We are temporary waves in the cosmic ocean. If we cling to the wave, we will not return to the ocean, yet we are present in the rise and fall, the inhale and exhale, the flapping wings of mortality. The guru helps us prepare for the cessation, reminding us the ocean, which is a metaphor for life, remains. Don't identify with your own wave, but witness it without effort, moving, changing, dynamic, and formless, something like . . .

## 12. Internet Art

When one waves at the internet, most likely it waves back. In his 1928 essay “The Conquest of Ubiquity,” Paul Valéry prophetically describes the internet and how it will change art. “It will be possible to send anywhere or to re-create anywhere a system of sensations, or more precisely a system of stimuli, provoked by some object or event in any given place. Works of art will acquire a kind of ubiquity. We shall only have to summon them and there they will be, either in their living actuality or restored from the past. They will not merely exist in themselves but will exist wherever someone with a certain apparatus happens to be.” Valéry predicts that this network will be a utility that is mobile and in our homes.

During the 1970s, filmmaker Shirley Clarke and her TP Videospace Troupe created ambitious installations that networked remote places and provided interactive, immersive experiences for participants. Clarke used miles of coaxial cable and perhaps fifty monitors and video mixers to allow people to communicate verbally and physically with people in other rooms. Video artist Andy Gurian, who worked closely with Clarke, remembers: “Clarke discovered that video offered something new and exciting: live, moving images, which could be transmitted to several discrete architectural locations simultaneously. Moreover, the images could travel in two (or more) directions: two people in different rooms, for example, could each carry a camera and two monitors so that each could see the other camera's live image as well as a live image of the other person. Video could dissolve the distinction between creator and audience; anyone could use a camera and create live moving images. The images were immediately available to be combined with other people's images on adjacent or nearby monitor displays.” For example, a man might pull down his pants in one part of the building. He sees his penis on the lower half of a stacked monitor. In another room, a woman takes off her top and sees her torso over the man's genitals. Now it's 2018: I'm in Vermont and can Skype with a friend in Baltimore. This is what Clarke and her colleagues were playing with: telepresence, a simultaneous and paradoxical state of being and non-being.

Clarke was clearly trying to physically construct the internet. Since its introduction to the public in the early 1970s, the World Wide Web has drawn artists from every discipline to discover its creative potentials. By the mid '80s it was clear that the internet and World Wide Web were leading to radical change in production and distribution of electronic and conventional art. Some of the greatest artists of that time—Vuk Cosic, Alexie Shulgin, Heath Bunting, Olia Lialina, jodi.org, and Mark Napier, to name just a few—recognized that there were no boundaries or artificial borders on the internet (as yet).

At a public presentation at Electronic Arts Intermix a few years ago, Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans, partners of jodi.org, spoke about their roots in video art and cited Nam June Paik as their teacher and influence. After hearing them speak, I admired their work even more. I realized that .net art consumed video art just as video art evolved from poetic cinema. If you decide to watch a jodi.org project, be aware that it will seem that your computer has been taken over by cyber-tricksters. Don't freak out and think you're seeing a virus break out in a furious fever of misinformation. Don't unplug and pray that your files are safe. Jodi.org visually prophesized today's chaos in the pioneering internet art during the 1990s. They were not the only artists mischievously manipulating code, browsing, and hacking other technical elements of the medium to experiment with what would happen if . . . The web is inherently circular, what you put in is immediately looped out. Feedback is instantaneous and easy. There is very little control over content. The .net artists worked outside of the art system until their work was noticed and museums expanded their websites to include new .net art creating another . . .

## 13. New Wave

Modern decay leads to postmodern compost out of which grows the new modern. When a movement or a flurry of activity occurs, it is called a wave: the French, Australian, postpunk New Wave. As if history is hurtling at such a great speed that the wave appears as a brief gesture, a greeting that is also a goodbye. One can see the next wave on the horizon begin to roll toward shore, cresting to turbulent foam, then collapsing down into the defenseless sand. By its very nature, the wave is consistent and predictable, an endless subject, one that can only be waved at.

Rilke/Gillette, Goethe/Lucier, Albers/Sonnier: a tsunami of invention and creativity that still cascades around, over, and through us today. In *Sensitive Chaos*, Schwenk observes, “Water merges with water.” The flow of water and air appears random, but it isn't. There is always a pattern, a direct cause for the way a flow behaves. Schwenk attempts to bridge the solid (laws) and liquid (wisdom) with a detailed, well-illustrated analysis of how water and air patterns parallel biological processes. The scientific and spiritual merge through observation. Schwenk shows that flow has recurrent forms.

Photographs can help identify patterns. Technological artists, romantic nerds in an unromantic time, apply radical new technologies to traditional aesthetic ideas. The literal study of waves in large scale photographs by visual artist Jonathan Lipkin, for example, were recently on public display in a Tribeca gallery space in New York City. Lipkin freezes the moment of a wave. The ocean disappears. What remains are horizontal lines of exquisite frequencies, chaos calmed. Unleashed, as in the early video art work of Peer Bode, the signal is coaxed to a repetitive balance, with the artist's delicate touch, in realtime, stirring the electrons to show the effect of duration on color, light, pattern, and energy.

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