

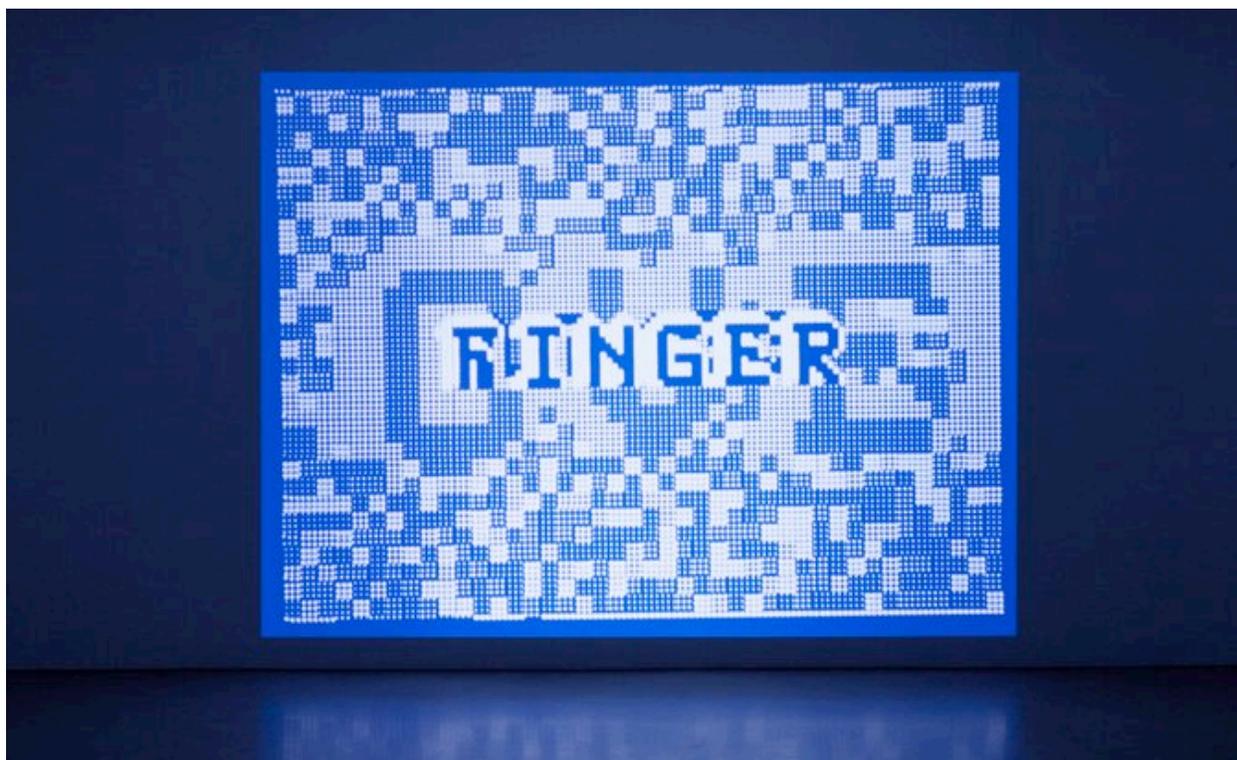
The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

Review: Stan VanDerBeek at Andrea Rosen Gallery

By **ROBERTA SMITH**

JUNE 1, 2015



A blue-and-white version of "Poemfield No. 1."

Credit: Estate of Stan VanDerBeek and Lance Brewer/Andrea Rosen Gallery

Projected on four walls of a small space, Stan VanDerBeek's experimental 16-millimeter films (transferred to video) form one of the best shows in Chelsea right now. They also create a pulsing environment that increases our understanding of this pioneering, experience-oriented artist, who died at 57 in 1984.

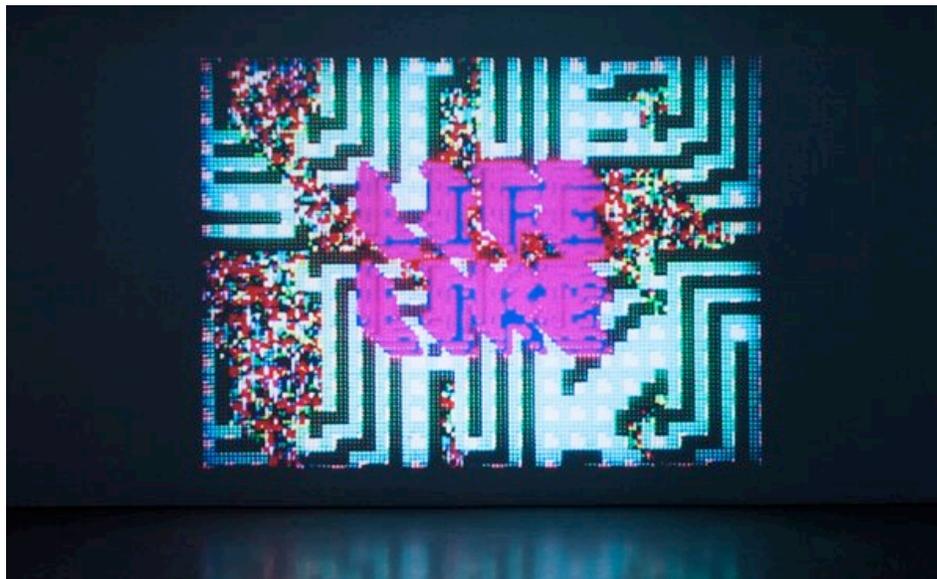
Made between 1966 and 1971 as part of his "Poemfield" series, these short films were "realized," as the credits say, with Ken Knowlton, a computer programmer and physicist at Bell Labs. Mr. Knowlton wrote an early animation program that



enabled Mr. VanDerBeek to create fields, patterns and words in moving, glowing dots of color — although the process involved quite a bit of analog work as well (and the results often evoke fast-moving cross-stitch embroidery). The films captivate, flooding the mind, eye and ear with sometimes psychedelic color; wordplay; antiwar sentiments; and interesting audio, including jazz and the music of John Cage. The poems emerge fitfully. “Crying is an edge,” pulses “Poemfield No. 3.” The elliptical punch line follows several minutes later: “But a cutting edge.”

“Poemfield No. 1,” seen here in multicolored and blue-and-white versions, emphasizes shorter utterances: “Words,” “The Space Between Things” and, eerily, “Falling Towers.” “No. 2” and “No. 7,” which are alternately screened on the gallery’s south wall, often exude mandalalike compositions, while the patterns of “No. 5” are layered over tinted footage of sky divers. “While falling — free-falling,” it intones.

These films feel very contemporary, but in fact they connect all over the map of postwar art — to Concrete poetry, the choreography of Merce Cunningham, Conceptual Art’s use of language — and painting too. Mr. VanDerBeek’s 1963-66 installation “Movie-Drome,” a dense collage of films, slides and drawings projected inside a dome, caused a stir when exhibited [at the New Museum in 2012](#). This show provides another tantalizing glimpse of his achievement.



Part of “Poemfield No. 2.” Credit Estate of Stan VanDerBeek and Lance Brewer/Andrea Rosen Gallery