

"Stan VanDerBeek, Works from 1950–1980"



Art

★★★★★

Guild & Greyskul, through May 3
(see Soho)

In the 1960s and '70s, experimental filmmaker Stan VanDerBeek (1927–1984) collaborated with scientists at research hotbeds like MIT and Bell Labs to produce some of the most innovative cinema of the time.

Curated by daughter Sara, an artist in her own right, this tight survey highlights VanDerBeek's achievements—from stop-motion animation made in the '50s to computer-generated movies and works transmitted over an early version of the fax machine in later decades.

VanDerBeek's artistic development reflects his quick mastery of new media, and judging by his frequent references to classical Greek sculpture and Renaissance painting (evidence of past aesthetic revolutions), he clearly understood that technology would transform the making and consumption of images. *Symmetricks* (1972), a computer-generated ballet of lines set to sitar music, seems to celebrate this potential. But other films featuring the presence of mushroom clouds or whirring machinery suggest a downside to the mechanization of daily life, whereby information was becoming just another throwaway product.

Ultimately, VanDerBeek hoped that an increase in the speed and ease of communication would foster shared cultural experiences. In *The Human Face Is a Monument* (1965), he presents the cycle of life as a series of faces ranging from the newborn to the age-ravaged, revealing the universality of human emotions.

Technology has indeed abetted globalization, but as the group show of younger, female artists organized by Ms. VanDerBeek to accompany her father's work indicates, it was his method of mining the media—and his cynicism about it—that has endured.—*Joshua Mack*