

ARTFORUM

FEBRUARY 2015

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



\$10.00



0 74470 29084 1

clean up the attic, whether that cramped space is within a suburban home or a familiarly cluttered twenty-first-century mind.

Still, there was a lot of humor here, of the ilk that appeals to the thirteen-year-old inside you. Layered into one of the sculptures is a collage of listings clipped from the phone book—the sorts of unfortunate names that would have been tough to bear in middle school. Such juvenile jokes additionally point to something meaningful that pervades these works: our compressed experience of time. The stickiness of memory saturates such sculptures as *yurt rookie riot (bowl)*, in which a weathered basketball net drapes over a sheaf of collages made from 1980s heavy-metal album covers—Finley's own, recently rediscovered at his parents' garage sale. Below these lies a stack of the artist's expired membership cards, vestiges of identities carried and then discarded. This sculpture also includes two books in which the artist has mischievously circled every word—to stave off boredom or guilt over putting off other, perhaps grander, projects. The books are the post-rapture novel *The Leftovers* and *Iconoclast: A Neuroscientist Reveals How to Think Differently*, which together provide a key to Finley's wry sense of humor. The leftovers of American mass culture seem to be exactly what Finley is attracted to, and he has taken them in hand in his bid to play the skeptic to high-tech industry's dematerialization of experience.

—Elizabeth Mangini

LOS ANGELES

Stan VanDerBeek

THE BOX

Comprising eight films from Stan VanDerBeek's "Poemfield" series, 1965–71, including two versions of *Poemfield No. 1, 1967*, and more than two dozen of the artist's works on paper, this exhibition provided a welcome point of access to one of the late twentieth century's major innovators of computer-based visual art during a key period of his production. Appropriately, the "Poemfield" films were accorded pride of place, projected side by side in the Box's large main gallery space.

Each of the films hinges on a poem written by VanDerBeek. Unfolding as associative wordplay and emphasizing the words' formal attributes as graphic images, these poems were originally arrangements of single words or short phrases in vertical columns on a typewritten page. With the assistance of Ken Knowlton at Bell Labs, VanDerBeek then transferred the poems into code, linking the text's corresponding typewriter keys to dots of light on a cathode-ray tube. Working with a surface of fifty thousand dots, VanDerBeek shot the resulting geometric patterns on 16-mm film (transferred to digital video for this exhibition). He later added color (with the help of artists Robert Brown and Frank Olvey) and sound tracks, which he created by combining recordings of

work by contemporary composers such as John Cage and Paul Motian with computer-generated audio.

Instead of merely reading as typewritten language presented via projected media, however, the resulting works are indeed "fields," in the sense that VanDerBeek's text is deeply embedded within configurations of light that shift back and forth between legible letters and abstract designs. Standing in the midst of these films, which were projected in continuous loops, was a dizzying experience. Across these many screens, language gave way to bright, flickering blocks of color that catch the eye and draw it away from the linear script. Some moments of the "Poemfields" anticipate the kinetic graphics of early eight-bit video games, while others are more architectonic in appearance, evoking an aerial view of building blocks or the distracting visuals of animated highway signage. These moving cells of color can be ethereally mandala-like one moment and then statically fixed in words or chunky forms the next. The majority of the graphic works that were on display are xerographs—along with one stunning blue silk screen employing a graphic from one of the "Poemfield" projections. Also included were three early watercolors, each 1955, evidencing the artist's long-standing interest in diffusing language into color fields.

VanDerBeek imagined that the fluid digital worlds created by his works marked the beginning of a new media era that would "delight the eye and rearrange the senses" while also "shap[ing] the overall ecology of America." And in many ways, his vision was remarkably prescient. These films were likely included among the simultaneous multichannel media that bombarded the audience in later iterations of the artist's famed *Movie-Drome*. As with VanDerBeek's work as a whole, this immersive environment, serially remade with new works during the 1960s and '70s, exemplifies the hypersaturation of media outlets that would characterize the succeeding half century. VanDerBeek had a strong conviction that computer technology would break down the barriers between the outer world of objects and the inner world of neural experience, and his ideas in this vein are detailed in a terrific catalogue of primary source materials published by the Box in conjunction with the artist's estate, which co-organized the show. Alongside Marshall McLuhan, VanDerBeek envisioned computer technologies as "amplifiers of human imagination" beyond the body. Grounded as it may have been in '60s-era psychedelics, mysticism, and media theory, the artist's concept of computerized experience as a kind of disembodiment long predated the notion of virtual reality that saturates contemporary media art. From our vantage within present-day digital interfaces, this presentation of VanDerBeek's visual output offers a timely historical perspective, just as his own theorization of his work brings into sharp relief the flawed twentieth-century fantasy that information can float free of material embodiment.

—James Nisbet

Dwyer Kilcollin

M+B/LAXART

For three days in early November, on a hillside on the east side of Los Angeles, Dwyer Kilcollin erected a freestanding metal fence on which she mounted "algorithmically derived image-shapes" she had cast by hand from computer-generated 3-D models. Boundary, screen, and makeshift gallery wall, the armature further served as a viewfinder: Through the chain-link grid, the tree- and house-flecked expanses of the surrounding rises became conflated with their pictures. These "image-shapes" (as the show's press release described them)—small, rectangular reliefs—translate and, in their incorporation of various organic matter and pigments (silica, glass, calcium bicarbonate, feld-



of "Stan
" 2014.
Poemfield
Poemfield
1967. Both
the series
1965–71.