and creatively. Not only does this book present many prominent figures in their early days, it also brings some artists who are not as well known (many of whom deserve more recognition) to our attention. Serving as the catalogue for a 2008 exhibition at the Getty Center that presented 40 years of groundbreaking video, California Video: Artists and Histories is an impressive contribution, documenting the 1960s artists who participated in the isolated burst of experimentation in the San Francisco Bay Area, the explosion that followed throughout the state in the 1970s, and later work. Among the artists featured in the book are Eleanor Antin, John Baldessari, Brian Bress, Nancy Buchanan, Chris Burden, Jim Campbell, Meg Cranston, Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn, Allan Kaprow, Mike Kelley, Suzanne Lacy, Paul McCarthy, Bruce Nauman, Tony Oursler, Martha Rosler, Jennifer Steinkamp, T.R. Uthco and Ant Farm, Diana Thater, Bill Viola and William Wegman. Seven commissioned essays further enhance the interviews and still shots that comprise the bulk of the volume. These include two essays on the Long Beach Museum of Art (LBMA); Meg Cranston’s consideration of feminist video in the Women’s Building collection; Robert R. Riley on concept, art and media in California video; Steve Seid on the early works of Tony Labat; Bruce Yonemoto on L.A. video; and Rafa Guerra’s thoughts on teaching video art, which she claims is now actually teaching the history of video art, since we live in a “YouTubian” environment.

One aspect of the book that sets it apart is its first-hand perspective on video’s history in relation to contemporary culture. Several of the essays and interviews draw connections between the experimental video of the late 20th century and those of our networked culture. With the pace of technological change today, it is fascinating to think that the early innovators of the late 1960s and 1970s, when video was a new technology, have seen the medium evolve and are now a part of a totally new scene. Equally fascinating are the commonalities between the new and the old. For example, in the 1970s, the weight and limitations of the Portapak often made it difficult to cart around a video camera. Thus, many works were conceived by someone alone with a camera, turning it on and doing what they wanted in front of it, much like many on-line postings today. Still, as this volume demonstrates, many of the projects conceived within this early framework are evocative and quite creative, as are contemporary state-of-the-art works. Also addressed is how video joined with conceptual art, performance art and time-based artistic productions as the artists turned the technology into an abstract electronic canvas, added poetry or combined it with sculpture, performance and politics. By the 1980s, video was already an accepted form of gallery display, aided by the many innovations that had turned potentials into tools. Readers will appreciate the discussions relating how the young art form benefited from color advancements, better editing equipment, basic special effects and much more sophisticated sound; all in all we are left with the impression that it is probably most accurate to say that these developments did not enhance creativity but rather opened up new possibilities. Lastly, the new possibilities offered by digital video further expanded creative work, as did video projection, which has allowed artists to create new forms of video installation, a type of video art that occupies space in a sculptural and architectural way.

Another valuable contribution of this book is its documentation of the importance of small institutions, particularly the Long Beach Museum of Art in Southern California, which is a featured venue in this book because much of the Getty Research Institute’s extraordinary collection of video art was acquired from the Long Beach Museum of Art Video Archive in 2006. This acquisition made the Getty’s video collection one of the largest institutional collections in the world. Other noted venues, such as CalArts, also in Southern California, and Northern California centers such as the de Saisset Gallery, Santa Clara University and the National Center for Experiments in Television (NCET) in San Francisco, are well woven into the text. Although the book is a first step in documenting video projects, and its depth and scope are most impressive, it is the supplementary documentation on-line, including clips from the interviews and some of the work itself, that makes the project come to life. (This archive is available at <www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/california_video/>.) I found myself mesmerized as I watched the story unfold visually. It is fascinating to see the young video enthusiast transformed into mature figures on the screen while watching the offerings. Many reflected on the history of...
video and how the field has evolved and morphed with the growth of digital technologies.

Probably everyone who watches the clips will choose their own favorites. I was quite taken with Joanne Kyger's 1968 Descartes. Kyger, a poet, collaborated with the filmmaker Loren Sears on this work, which combines abstract, aesthetic and philosophical ideas. Descartes was conceived while the artist was in residence at NCET in San Francisco. Kyger, who felt that the medium of television was an ideal form for resolving the problem of Descartes' dualism, makes particularly good use of video feedback in this visual illustration of her prose poem Descartes and the Splendor Of, a recasting of Descartes' Discourse on Method in personal terms. A small image of a woman's face is situated in the middle throughout the video and, although it seems stationary, it also seems to go through metamorphoses achieved through the use of distortion, feedback, tape loops and tape delay. Although the video did not significantly add to my understanding of Descartes' work, this piece is so artistically evocative that it stands on its own terms. (The video is on-line. The poem and some still shots are included in the book.)

I was also quite taken with Stephen Beck's work, which sculpts light to create imagery. While at NCET, which he described as a video "Bauhaus," he developed the Beck Direct Video Synthesizer (in 1969) as a constructivist approach to generating real-time, kinetic color video that is made using the basic visual elements of form, shape, color, texture and motion.

Two of his videos are available on-line: Ex (1972) and Video Weavings (1976). Unlike many of the works in the book that seem to highlight conceptual/intellectual ideas, Beck's videos are more abstract and perceptually titillating. In Video Weavings, for example, he creates patterns that resonate with the whole history and lineage of textile and fabric to come up with a metaphor for how video works. Ex, which is silent, presents a visual music that plays through the abstract configurations we see.

All in all, it is hard to say what the greatest contribution of this project is. Scholars will no doubt relish this documentation of the artists, the curators, the many institutions and the work. As the first major survey of video art produced in California, it is a dramatic starting point. Practitioners and the public will certainly appreciate having the projects available to more of us.

One thing that I felt was missing in the catalogue was a comparative essay that would look at California video in relation to, say, that of New York or perhaps Japan or Europe. Here and there, the catalogue mentioned that California video was quite different in orientation from video work from other places, without offering an in-depth commentary. This leaves me with some questions about cross-fertilization and geographic distinctions, because so many of the artists worked in more than one locale. Nam June Paik, for example, was quite involved in California video. Yet it is often said that video art began when he used his new Sony Portapak to shoot footage of Pope Paul VI's procession through New York City in the autumn of 1965. Other artists visited one coast while working mainly on the other. For example, Stephen Beck mentions that a stream of visiting artists came through NCET over the years (e.g. Bill Fria), so there was some real appreciation of the value in having exchange with people working in other localities. I also found that the book reminded me that life itself is time-based. As I explored this field's history, it was stimulating to think about video in light of this documentation, which shows video has been around long enough to have a "historical" feel to parts of it, particularly when juxtaposed with the experimental postings found on-line today. As a record of video's history and a reminder that its history is still evolving, this book belongs in the collection of anyone interested in media art, particularly in light of the many "historical" figures still crafting cutting-edge work today.