

Steina: Playback
12.6. – 7.12.26

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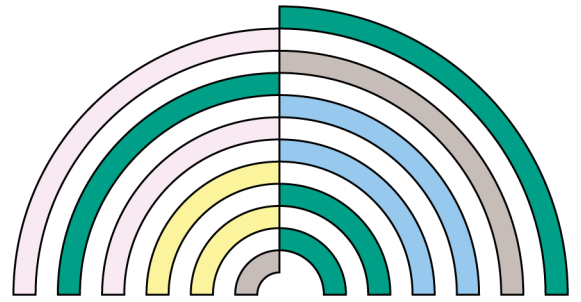
Media artist Steina transforms Haus der Kunst with her immersive sound and video landscapes



Credit: Steina, BERG Contemporary, and Vasulka Foundation. Press release and images: hausderkunst.de/presse

“Steina: Playback” traces more than five decades of work by an artist considered foundational to the history of video art. A classically trained violinist, **Steina** (b. Steinunn Briem Bjarnadóttir, 1940, Reykjavík, Iceland) took up the medium of video in 1970, approaching the camera as a musical instrument guided by what she has called the “majestic flow of time.” Image and sound become exchangeable in her work: the electronic signal is simultaneously image and sound, the apparatus simultaneously tool and agent. Coming from the world of music, she brought qualities of play and performance to her sense of composition and to the interfacing of musical instruments and video imaging tools in real time.

Playback, repetition, and the looped temporalities of the medium have long structured how Steina has presented her work. At Haus der Kunst, the exhibition unfolds not as a chronology but as an orbit through Steina’s cosmos: her invented tools, projected environments, and the long collaborations that have shaped her practice. Images turn, re-enter, and recirculate across time, carried by the circular motion, rotation, feedback, and return that recur throughout her work. From voice to signal to system, it follows sound, liveness and technology as forces that move through her practice. Spanning twenty-one works, ranging from early documentary experiments



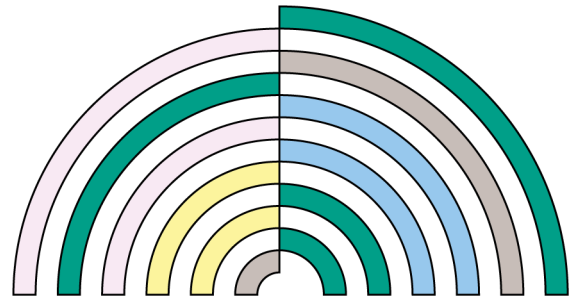
from the late 1970s to large-scale projected environments, the exhibition includes *Outer Cosmos* (2026), Steina's most recent work completed and presented for the first time here. The work extends *Orbital Obsessions* (1975–77) by returning to that footage decades later. A self-portrait recorded in Steina's Buffalo studio, in which multiple camera views are layered, fed back, and multiplied, is now placed at the centre of a wider spherical image space, with the original source material recirculated around it.

Since the early 1970s, Steina has been central to the formation of video as an artistic field. In 1971, with her life partner Woody Vasulka, she co-founded *The Kitchen* in New York, a venue for expanded forms of image, sound and live practice. It grew out of informal gatherings in their 14th Street studio. *The Kitchen* became a shared working environment for an emerging community of video makers, visual artists and experimental composers, among them Joan Jonas, La Monte Young and Alvin Lucier, whose practices held performance, sound and the moving image in close relation. The department of Learning and Engagement at Haus der Kunst draws on this collaborative ethos in a programme of public encounters built around shared tools, play and open knowledge.

Despite the presence of Steina's works in major museum collections across the US and Europe, her practice remains underrepresented within wider narratives of the visual arts. Moving between sound, image, tools, and place, "*Steina: Playback*" presents a practice in which video is approached as material, instrument, environment, and temporal form. With this retrospective, Haus der Kunst recognises Steina as a foundational and still-generative figure in the histories of the moving image, whose work continues to resonate with the technological conditions through which images are produced, circulated and experienced today.

"*Steina: Playback*" continues Haus der Kunst's focus on women artists whose practices have reshaped the fields of image, sound, performance and exhibition-making, following exhibitions dedicated to Joan Jonas, Fujiko Nakaya, Katalin Ladik, Shu Lea Cheang, Meredith Monk, Rebecca Horn and Liliane Lijn. Within the 2026 programme, the exhibition stands between "*ECHOES. Skin Contact*", which explored the interplay between the body and mediated reality, and Diane Severin Nguyen's forthcoming exhibition, in which she experiments with photography as an expanded field of image production, moving between still and moving image, sound and installation. Together, these projects reflect Haus der Kunst's sustained interest in how images are produced, mediated and encountered today.

Following "*Inside Other Spaces*" (Haus der Kunst, 2023; on view 5.5. – 29.11.26 at Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul), which reconsidered the environment as artistic form, "*Steina: Playback*" carries this question into signal, duration, feedback and the electronic image. Seen today, Steina's work speaks directly to a present in which vision is no longer only human, stable or singular. At Haus der Kunst, her work comes into focus as a practice in which the moving image is alive, unstable and in continuous transformation.



“Steina: Playback” is organised by the MIT List Visual Arts Center in collaboration with the Buffalo AKG Art Museum. It is co-curated by Natalie Bell, MIT List Visual Arts Center, and Helga Christoffersen, Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Coordinating curators at Haus der Kunst are Lydia Antoniou and Marlene Mützel.

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Press Preview: Thu, 11.6.26, 11 am

Press Images: hausderkunst.de/presse

For their annual support of the programme, we would like to thank our shareholders, the Free State of Bavaria, and the Gesellschaft der Freunde der Stiftung Haus der Kunst München e. V. Our special thanks go to our major supporter, the Alexander Tutsek-Stiftung, for its generous support of our work. We also thank the Ulli and Uwe Kai-Stiftung for its long-standing commitment. In addition, we thank the Beisheim Foundation for funding the “Third Place.”