

PROPHECY AS VISIONARY NARRATIVE

History was invented around 1300 B.C., when the Mesopotamians first set down successive records of royalty that made reference to predecessors and chronicled important events. Once it became possible to think of a past, thoughts of a future followed by obsession, and a civilization could depict itself as existing "in" a certain time.

This archetypal equation on which collective consciousness is formulated—past "times" future equals present—is elegantly traced in Stuart Bender and Angelo Funicelli's intricately structured video installation *Seven Prophecies*. Narratives based on myth, news accounts, personal reflections and dreams answer prophecies drawn from a range of historical sources starting with the oracles of ancient Egypt and extending to previsions of 19th century Native Americans, all transformed under the spell of the purest temporal art, music. What this "trans-historical" melange illuminates is the essential dynamic whereby narrative structure itself imposes history and futurity, loss and hope.

It is the stories we share about what we have witnessed that shape the futures we can imagine and thus create, and this tension between memory and desire is what "now" feels like. Any valid prophecy is thus universal and self-fulfilling—it is so true of what we know about ourselves that its certainty is a product of its integrality, its quality of being connected to our ideas and lives.

But, as Antonio Porchia writes, "A hundred men together are not the one-hundredth part of a man." Nothing is really "generally" true that is not first and foremost personally manifest. *Seven Prophecies* uses interactive technology and subjective allusions to position each spectator in a highly personal relationship to utterances of collective fate. It is by personalizing prophecy, Bender and Funicelli suggest, that prediction becomes a form of empowerment and gains its highest office as a way of deciding what to do. For them, the visionary is not one who is able to see what will happen, but one who sees what must be done. This is the spiritual inquiry that lies at the heart of their equation of narrative with prophecy.

In an age when the *Book of Revelations* has been cited as a justification for fatalistic nuclear policies by an American President, the moral problem of taking individual responsibility for the influence of oracles and auguries is more pronounced than ever.

—Michael Nash, Media Arts Curator

SEVEN PROPHECIES

Written by Stuart Bender and Angelo Funicelli
Video and Installation Design by Stuart Bender
Music Composition and Performance by Angelo Funicelli
Mary Daval, Soprano
Nancy Buchanan and Douglas Wichert, Narration
Luis Manuel, Dance Performance

Additional Camera, Nancy Buchanan and Joe Leonardi

Music recorded at MAXSOUND, Long Beach California
Max Solomon and Nick Camas, Engineers

Rich Rosensweig, Installation Disc Programming

Martin Betz, LBMA, Head of Exhibitions / Operations
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2300 East Ocean Boulevard Long Beach, CA 90803 (213) 439-2119

