



# **Doris Chase, Artist in Motion: From Painting and Sculpture to Video Art (Samuel and Althea Stroum Books)**

*Patricia Failing*

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Doris Chase has achieved international stature as a pioneer in the field of video art since she moved from Seattle to New York City in 1972. An artist of remarkable and continuous creativity, Chase now divides her time between her video headquarters in New York and a Seattle studio where she works on new projects in painting and sculpture.

Beginning as an innovative painter and sculptor in Seattle in the 1950s, Chase created sculpture that was meant to be touched and manipulated by the viewer. Chase then developed large-scale kinetic sculptures in collaboration with choreographers, and her art was set in motion by dancers. In New York, her majors contribution to the evolution of artists' video has been her work in videodance. On videotape, dancers and sculpture evolve into luminous abstract forms which represent some of the most sophisticated employments of video technology by an artist of the 1970s. In the 1980s, Chase began working in the nascent genre of video theater. In these productions, she uses the intimacy of the video screen to achieve a new synthesis of visual and dramatic art. Her video theatre compositions present multicultural and social commentary, utilizing scripts by writers such as Lee Breuer, Thulani Davis, and Jessica Hagedorn in the "Concepts" series. Collaborating with actresses Geraldine Page, Ann Jackson, Roberta Wallach, Joan Plowright, and Luise Rainer in the "By Herself" series, she focuses on the viewpoints and experiences of older women. Today, coming full circle, Doris Chase in Seattle is exploring a renewed interest in painting and sculpture as well as in the modernist aesthetic she never really ceased pursuing, even during her most adventuresome multimedia years.

This profile by art historian Patricia Failing is both a celebration of a distinguished artists and a historical summary of the development of video as an art form from the early seventies to the present day. The making of Chase's widely acclaimed filmdance, *Circles II* (1972), is discussed within the context of her own artists evolution and also as exemplary of an artistic milieu shaped by McLuhanism and a growing interest in multimedia experimentation. An entire chapter focuses on the institutional and theoretical working environment for video artists in the 1970s, outlining the circumstances under which New York became the best-endowed center for the production of artists' video. Attention is also paid to the specific manner in which Chase learned to employ video technology, the mechanisms of exhibition and distribution of independent video art, and the theoretical and practical issues raised in collaborations among artists from different art forms. Centering upon first-hand commentary by Chase and her colleagues, *Doris Chase, Artist in Motion* is an accessible introduction to a pioneering artist and her milieu.

The Foreword by noted critic and teacher of video art Ann-Sargent Wooster adds a valuable dimension to the volume. *Doris Chase, Artist in Motion* is illustrated with representative examples of Chase's work and includes selected lists of her videotapes and films as well as her works in public collections. It will appeal to students of video art as well as to those interested in women artists and feminist performance.

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