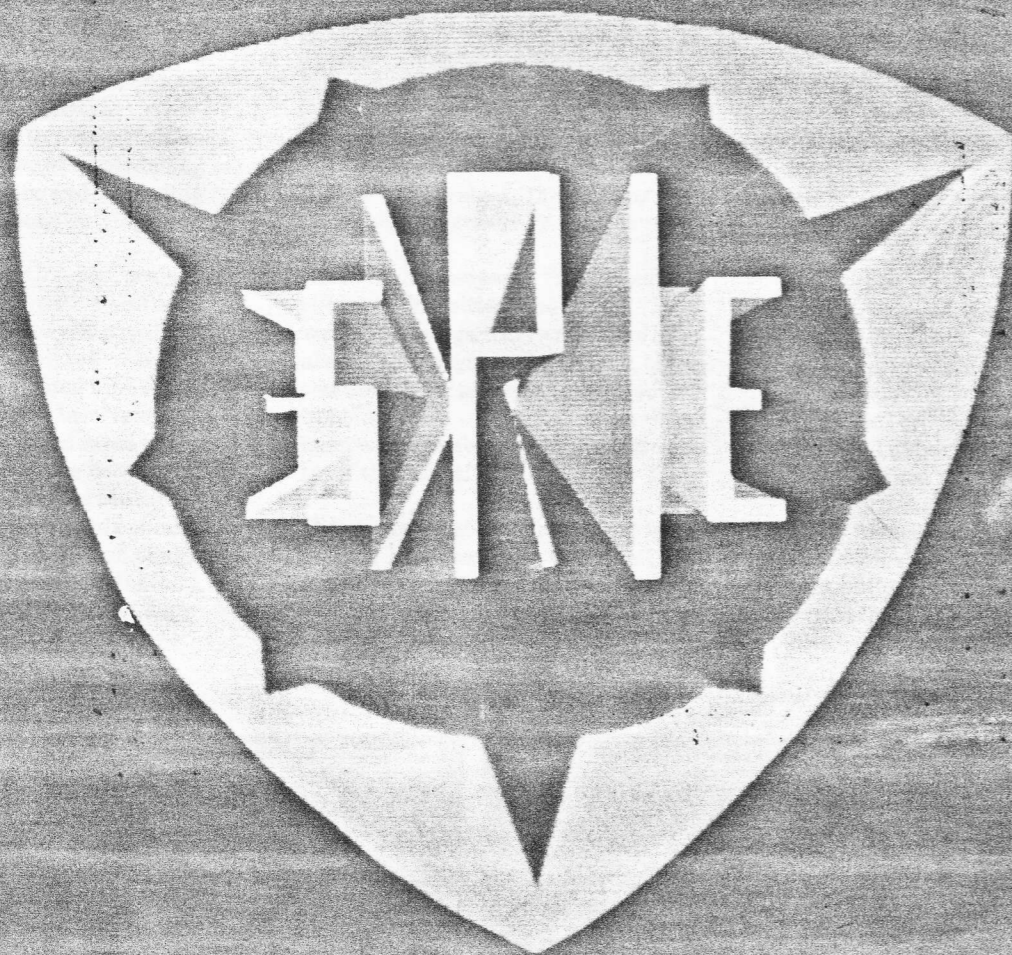


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Sharon McCormack

Kent Alexander

As Director of the School of Holography in San Francisco, holographic artist, engineer and consultant, Sharon McCormack's story is similar yet dissimilar to other artists who have started out in other fields, only to be slowly pulled into devoting themselves solely to holography.

In 1970 Sharon was a graduate student studying computer systems. At that time she did printmaking and photography to support herself. Meanwhile, out of curiosity, she enrolled in one of Lloyd Cross's first classes. Despite an early attraction to the medium, Sharon saw no practical application. In the early 70's Sharon went to Europe where she lived for almost two years producing many photo exhibitions and developing a photographic technique for 3D photos.

After this European stint, McCormack returned to the States with a new commitment to do holography. She realized that "to be half involved was not enough. (What was needed was) a lifestyle commitment, total involvement." Like others, she soon graduated to living in her lab. In 1975 she became an apprentice to Lloyd Cross at Multiplex Company where she began to not only familiarize herself with 35 mm equipment, but also was tossed into the very different environment of those early



Sharon McCormack, Director of the School of Holography in San Francisco

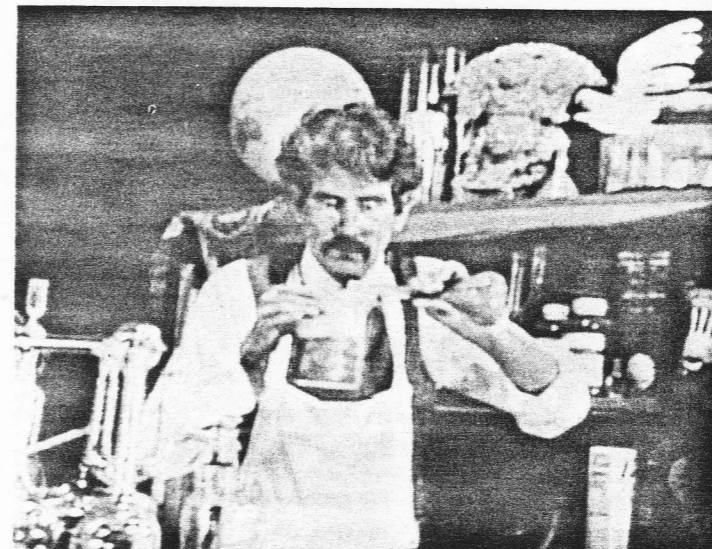
Photo: by Joseph Beck

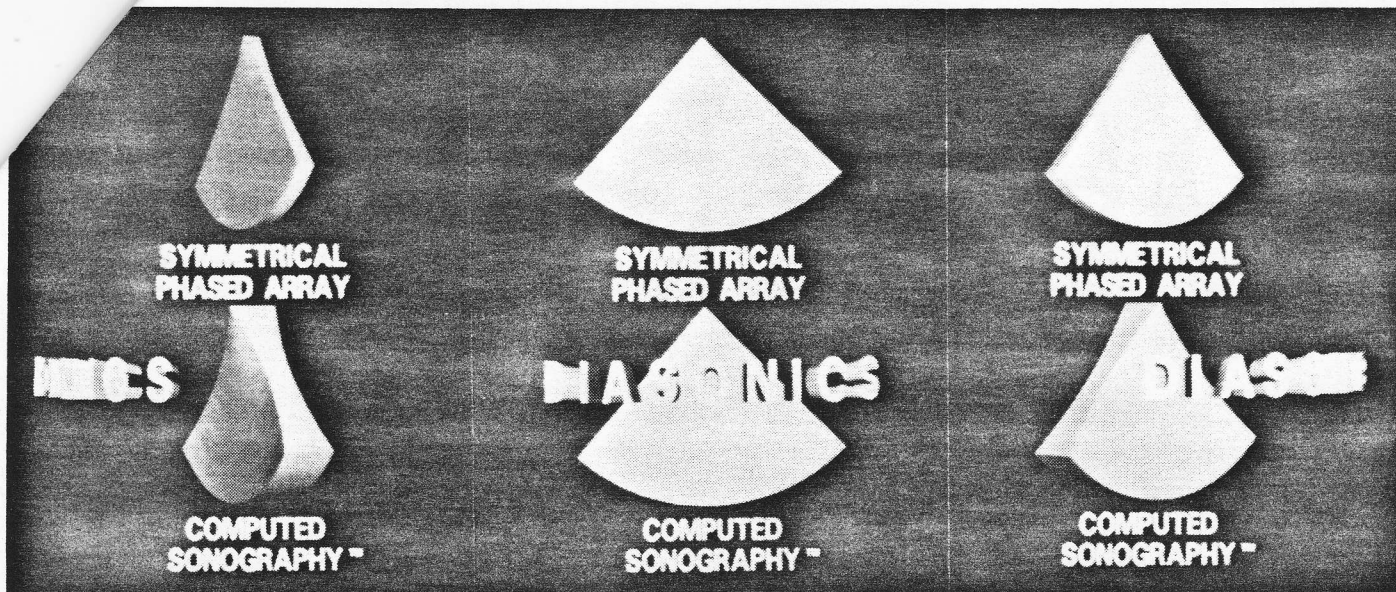
times of the company. "The place was rife with difficulties," she stated. "They were very disorganized while I had been always very organized; however, there was nowhere else to go and get involved in holography. . . here was an environment where one could pretty much walk in off the street."

Sharon stayed at Multiplex for only six months because when Cross left the company, she went with him to continue her apprenticeship which lasted several

years. She started to make the lenses which were, at that time, mostly designed by Lloyd. They began to construct printers and other machines. Sharon says, "I learned to make things work well by taking a lot of the responsibility. I didn't produce a lot of images but I learned the technology." During this period she saw the commercial work "overshadow" the artistic. Over the years, she began to want to develop and build her own equipment which would liberate her to make images for

"Time Man" Photo: MOH archives





This hologram was produced for DIASONICS by Sharon McCormack, utilizing a custom built laser printer.

herself and others. Sharon defined what was necessary: her own equipment and the control of the process where she could be free to run prints whenever she desired. "I took my experience in photography. I wanted to do it when I wanted."

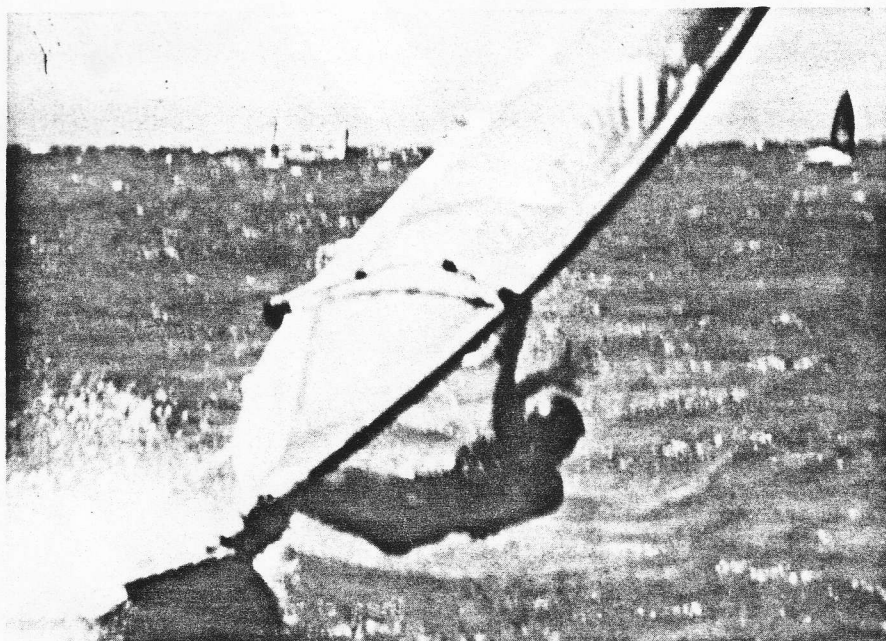
In 1982, Sharon got a job to produce "Time Man" (see *holosphere* Vol. 13, No. 1. Fall 84/Winter 85 for details of the piece. editor) and didn't yet have a printer. She says of that period, "I made

two sets of lenses. I built an editing room... I had to because I got the job without any of the proper equipment." However, with some encouragement and assistance from friends she proceeded. "The job was to be done in six months and conveniently for me, I was then working at Lucas Films, R&D stuff. They introduced me to special effects, computer graphics and visuals. They also made me feel at home there. So, during this time, I built a studio, all the equipment and made a computer

system. "Time Man" became my first commercial job with a computer-generated visual."

Soon after followed a job for the Olympics where she was a technical consultant for the construction of a dozen cylinders, each one bearing a holographic face of an "ordinary" Los Angeles person. Each cylinder had a pretaped interview with the person which could be listened to on headphones as the viewer examined the hologram. The stories of these "people" were recorded in several different languages.

Sharon doing her thing.



Sharon's current work is still fanciful and creates the same sense of wonder. She has recently created a rendering of a computer-generated hologram for SPIE created a 3D image from Ilford's 2D logo (when they gave her "total creative freedom"). She has also done a medical image for RSNA, a medical trade show. Presently touring throughout Australia, is a self-contained unit housing a 77 foot holographic movie, produced by English artist Alexander with Sharon's assistance. The piece is titled "Masks" and is a series of people's faces as well as aboriginal masks. She says of this experience, "I like working with Alexander. He doesn't operate with constraints. He's willing just to go for it." She is presently working on a new piece with him.

When I asked Sharon what she did for relaxation she laughed and replied, "Windsurfing. It makes me feel 18 years old again... keeps me in great shape. You could call me a fanatic. It's my great passion."