Long-Distance Art Making

By JOHN R. MUNSON
Of the Press - Citizen

The long-distance conference phone call — and the facsimile machine for transmitting pictures, charts and letters via phone line — are tools familiar to the business world.

Now, three artists working in Iowa City, Chicago and Pittsburgh are using this technology to produce a kind of art work called the "composite joined image."

The artists are Leif Brush, of the University of Iowa School of Art; Sonia Sheridan, of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and Willard van de Bogart, media director at the University of Pittsburgh.

The images are made by transmitting from three facsimile machines, Brush said, in what businessmen would describe as a "conference call." The machines can be connected to any telephone.

Usually, an image is transmitted from a single location and picked up by one or more facsimile machines located elsewhere. He said an example is the transmission of pictures by a wire service to newspapers.

A near simultaneous transmission of several signals, Prof. Brush explains, sets up patterns of interference which produce the composite images.

Each of the three artists transmit their own works.

Prof. Sheridan transmits what Brush describes as "sequential drawings," or "time wafers," produced on standard-sized typing paper. Van de Bogart transmits infrared photographs of the sun, and Brush himself has been using recordings of snowflakes and raindrops striking wires stretched across his lawn.

The sounds are picked up by special electronic gear, recorded and played at one-quarter speed, he said.

The artists work out in advance the precise timing of their transmissions, and decide on their respective volume levels, Brush said.

For interested UI students and faculty, Brush said, there will be a three-day "transmis