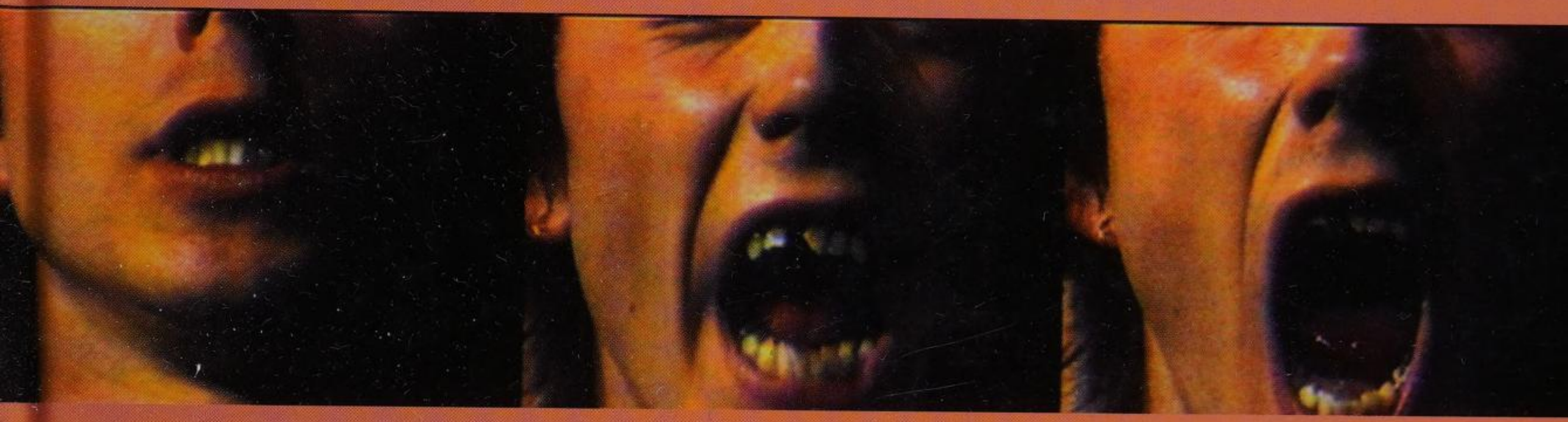


REWIND |



British Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s

Edited by
Sean Cubitt and Stephen Partridge

JL

WITHDRAWN

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REWIND |
British Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s

REWIND began investigating video art in the UK in 2003 and has since become an important resource for curators, scholars, students and artists.
In 2008 we started investigating video art in Italy and in 2011 received further funding to commence REWINDItalia.
The REWIND website has interviews with artists, critics and writers; articles, essays, exhibition ephemera; and of course, news and events for both projects. There is a fully searchable database to aid discovery. Please visit www.rewind.ac.uk

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British Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s

Edited by
Sean Cubitt and Stephen Partridge

Picture research and editing, Emile Shemilt

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

REWIND | British Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s

A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 9780 86196 706 3 (Hardback)

Front cover image from David Critchley's *Pieces I never Did* (1978).

Published by
John Libbey Publishing Ltd, 3 Leicester Road, New Barnet, Herts EN5 5EW, United Kingdom
e-mail: john.libbey@orange.fr; web site: www.johnlibbey.com
Direct orders (UK and Europe): direct.orders@marston.co.uk

Distributed in N. America by **Indiana University Press**, 601 North Morton St,
Bloomington, IN 47404, USA. www.iupress.indiana.edu

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Printed and bound in China by 1010 Printing International Ltd.

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All images from the REWIND Collection unless otherwise indicated.

Acknowledgements

The research project from which this book derives was a long but rewarding road for all of us that worked on it and we would like to acknowledge the help and support of a number of people:

First of all the artists, without whose co-operation and patience, nothing would have been achieved: Mineo Aayamaguchi, John Adams, Kevin Atherton, Doug Aubrey, George Barber, Ian Bourn, Peter Boyd-Maclean, Ian Breakwell, Wendy Brown, Marc Chaimowicz, Lei Cox, David Critchley, David Cunningham, Malcolm Dickson, Peter Donebauer, Catherine Elwes, Terry Flaxton, Rose Garrard, Clive Gillman, Judith Goddard, David Hall, Sue Hall, Mick Hartney, Steve Hawley, Brian Hoey, Madelon Hooykaas, John (Hoppy) Hopkins, Tina Keane, Tamara Krikorian, Rik Lander, David Larcher, John Latham, Mike Leggett, Malcolm LeGrice, Stephen Littman, Chris Meigh-Andrews, Katharine Meynell, Pratibha Parmar, Alan Robertson, Tony Sinden, Elaine Shemilt, George Snow, Elsa Stansfield, Marty St James, Mike Stubbs, and Jeremy Welsh.

A wonderful group of people who acted as Interns to the project, volunteering their labour by editing, scanning and populating the REWIND database: Rebecca Clark, Holly Knox-Yeoman, Johanne Cameron, Sanna Dyker, Julie-Ann Delaney, Harriet Warman, Donna Hart, Charlotte Jones, Chloe Mutton, Victoria Stobo, Sarah Laing, Claudia Muller-Hermann, and Danny Hill

Organisations (and the people who work within them) who have been instrumental include: David Curtis and Steven Ball of the British Artists Film and Video Study Collection, Central St Martins College of Art, London; Ben Cook of LUX, London; Dundee Contemporary Arts; Streetlevel Photoworks, Glasgow; Stills, Edinburgh; Gaby Wijers, Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst, Amsterdam; Janet McBain, Scottish Screen Archive; Julia Knight, University of Sunderland and Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design.

Finally, individuals who have made very special contributions: Anna Ridley, Jane Prophet, Paula Francis, Paul Shafi; Stuart Cross, Patricia Whatley Laura Mulvey, Felicity Sparrow, Lulu Quinn, Maggie Warwick, Alison Winkle and Ivor Davies.

Arts & Humanities Research Council

Supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council

Foreword/
Artists' video is blessed and cursed by its technology

Brian Winston

It is blessed because without the development of electronic media, from the introduction of industrial – as opposed to broadcasting – television equipment through to the latest digital imaging platforms, it could not exist.

It is cursed because, although the pace of change is less frenetic than hyperbolic technicists claim, it is nevertheless fast enough for a technology to become inaccessible. The Portapak and the U-matic are potentially more lost to us than the Autochrome and the daguerreotype. These last, at least, do not require obsolete equipment for replay; but without playback, recent video work is, like Brunelleschi's painting of the Baptistery, lost. The REWIND initiative, which this volume vividly celebrates, is a crucial project to blunt and indeed reverse this threat by updating the technologies originally used and, indeed, future-proofing the works as much as possible.

The archive, with digitally remastered single-screen and installation materials held at the University of Dundee and in the Scottish Screen Archive, preserves a wide range of pioneering works by British artists working with video in the 1970s and 1980s. Context, via documentation, interviews and a web presence, as well as preservation of the work itself, lies at the heart of the project. Video art has long since earned its place in the gallery, and is even acquiring a small but scholarly literature, but it is far from being taken as read (as it were). There is yet a lingering sense that the video feedback effect is its only contribution to expression, artistic or otherwise. It is still unfortunately true that outside 'beaux arts' connoisseurship, a case for video art's legitimacy still needs to be made.

This book contributes to that effort by providing the historical and theoretical backdrop to the archive, explaining how and why there was a somewhat unexpected flowering of activity in this particular form at this particular time –

Britain in the 1970s and 80s. In so doing it establishes the strong continuities of video work with British modernist and post-modernist agendas in general and also with the 'two avant-gardes' of film experimentation. The fecundity of these decades of video art activity in the UK compare well with the comparative historical poverty of British intellectual and artistic engagement with the cinema. It deserves to be celebrated.

The book is just such a fitting monument to this moment of cultural vibrancy. It is also a fitting memorial to Jackie Hatfield, video artist and REWIND's research fellow, whose tragic early death has deprived us of one of our most thoughtful and insightful commentators. Unlike the works she here introduces, her life cannot be rewound, but it should not be forgotten.

Introduction

Sean Cubitt and Stephen Partridge

It is not often that we have the chance to observe in detail the emergence of a new medium. Video art of the 1970s and 1980s allows us just such an opportunity. The record of the early years of radio is almost non-existent; that of cinema is patchy in the extreme. Earlier media like photography have left substantial records, but also substantial gaps. Video's invention is still close enough for us to see what happened when a technological invention came into the hands of a creative community, and how that meeting of technology and art gave rise to a transformed and transforming idea of what the medium could become.

The *Rewind* project undertook to archive, and present in public, works dating back only thirty or thirty-five years which already required major restoration. It added to the works themselves interviews with surviving participants – many of them still active artists -- and a collection of ephemera documenting the exhibitions, the critical climate, and artists' statements from the time. Over its four-year life, *Rewind* conducted 44 interviews, archived over 400 works, and produced digital scans of 1,500 documents. *Rewind* operates alongside sister projects such as the British Film and Video Study Collection at Central St Martins College of Art and Design, the Future Histories of the Moving Image Research Network based at the University of Sunderland, and the Computer Arts, Contexts, Histories etc (CACHe) project at Birkbeck College of the University of London. Between them, these projects have begun the task of recording the emergence, technical innovations, artistic works, institutions, distribution and exhibition, critical dialogues and early audience reactions of the emerging experimental media cultures of the last forty years.

Any attempt to write history finds itself beset with challenges. Histories of the recent past are especially tricky. For the history of British video art in the 70s and 80s, these challenges

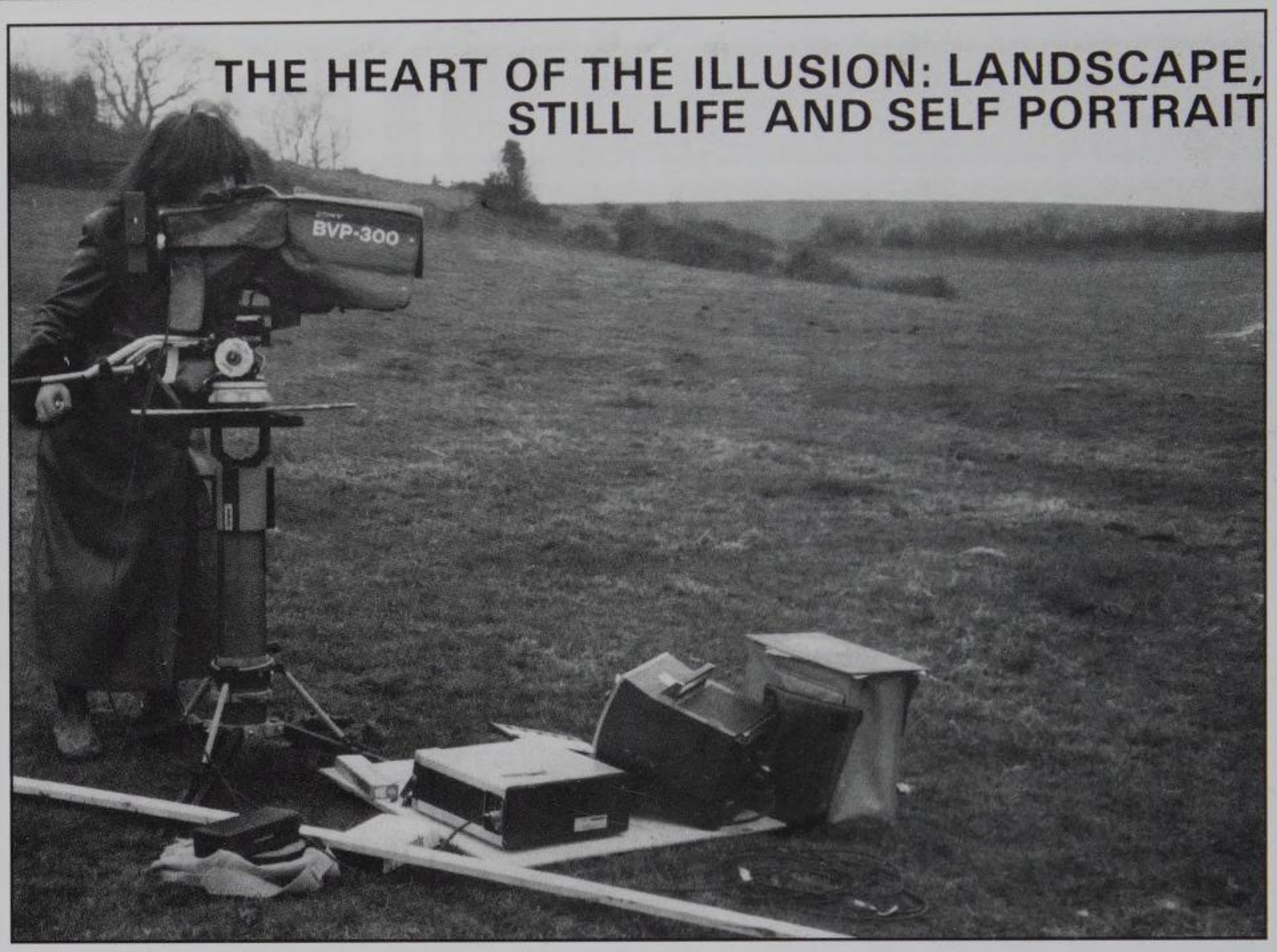


Fig. 1. Photograph of Tamara Krikorian on location; part of leaflet advertising *'The Heart of the Illusion: Landscape, Still Life and Self-Portrait'*. An installation for three monitors and mirrors; IKON Gallery, 1981.

include the surprisingly rapid loss of both artworks and documentation; the investment of living participants in those events in claiming their stake in the narrative; the question whether it is possible or desirable to avoid forming a canon of works which will, by their mention in these pages, have that much greater chance of survival; the risk of mythologising; and the equal risk of nostalgia. These are all the more tempting because of the experimental nature of so much of the work made at the time, and of the institutions which came into being, flourished, and often disappeared with all their archives.

Adam Lockhart's chapter in this collection addresses some of the key issues faced by the project in restoring archived works to viewable preservation copies. Early film stocks, which used cellulose nitrate, are notoriously unstable and dangerous, degenerating over time to a viscous jelly, and at their best highly inflammable. Videotape is not quite so exciting to handle, but suffers from the slow loss of the magnetism which stores sound and image, the probability that the magnetic oxides will fall from the tape base, and the curling, stretching and fragility of the plastic base that supports them. There were further problems with video art. One reason why video was so popular was that it was cheap to make and easy to copy (even though copying involved the loss of quality). The same reasons made it unattractive to collectors who prize rarity. The institutions of record for the moving image arts in the United Kingdom – the British Film Institute and the national collection of art at the Tate Gallery – each felt that this troublesome medium was the proper province of the other, and hoarded precious funds for their more traditional domains of preservation and collection-building. Videos were widely disseminated, but for that very reason rarely looked after or catalogued. Sensitive to heat, humidity and the magnetic fields of nearby wiring and machinery, videotapes risked disappearing altogether. Another challenge is the rapidity of technical innovation in electronic media during the period and subsequently. While cine projectors have scarcely changed since the late 1920s, video formats have come and gone, the machines to play the tapes on are no longer manufactured, and the global supply of spare parts for many of them is now vanishing. *Rewind* and its sister projects have saved as many works as possible, though many have

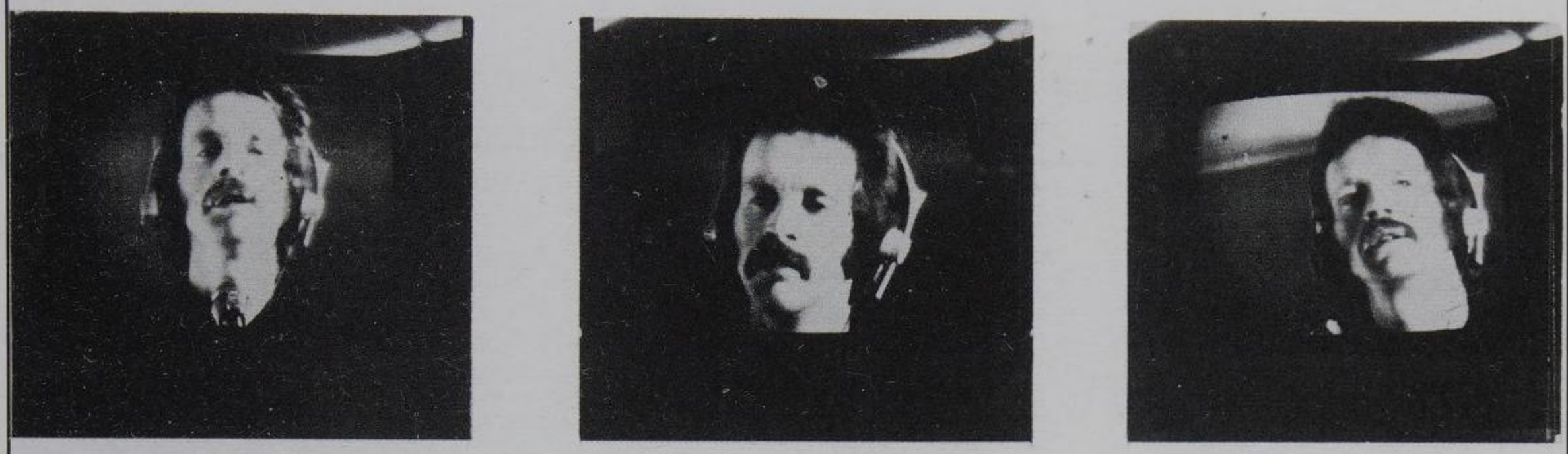


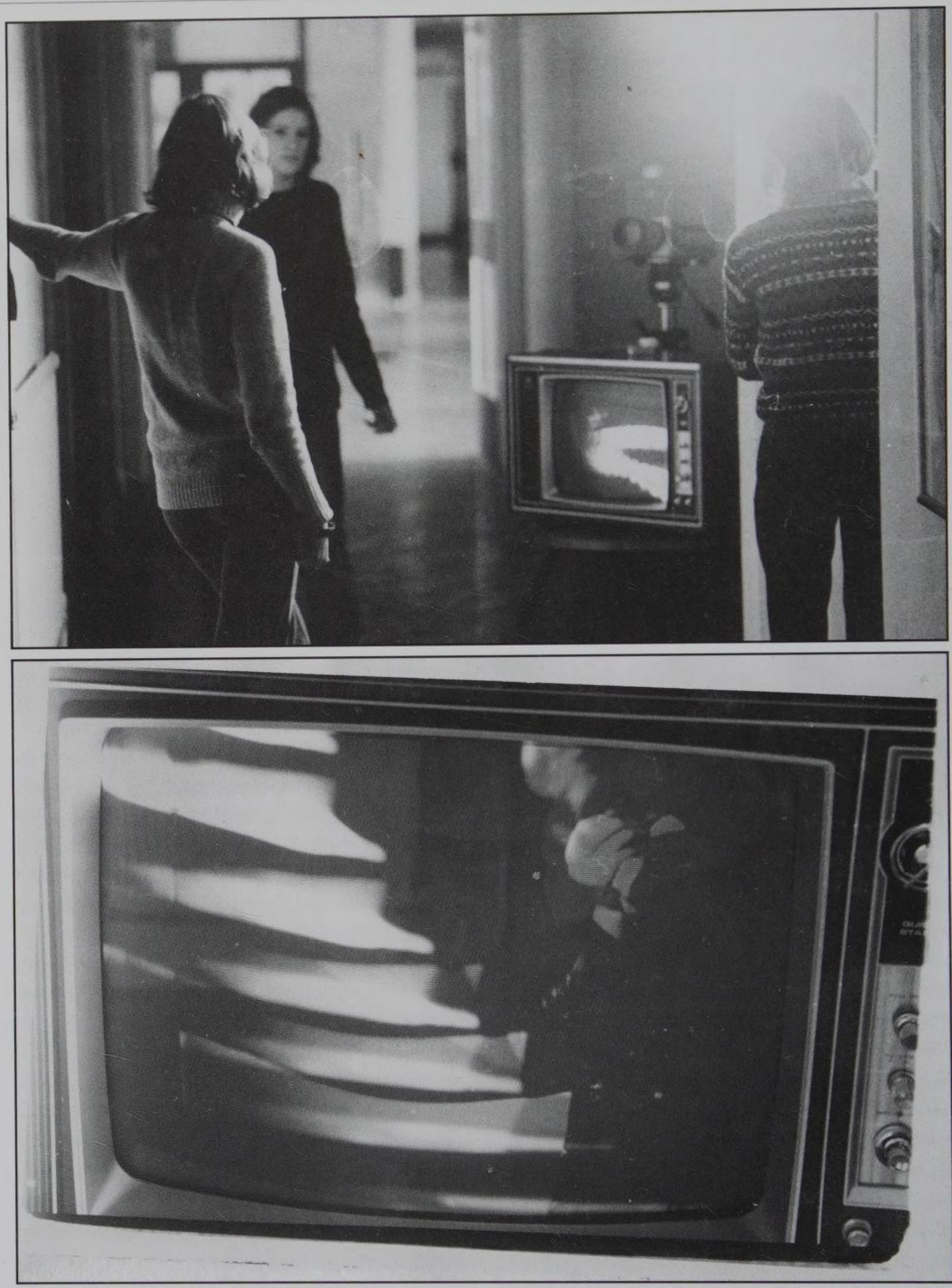
Fig. 2. Stuart Marshall, *Cry* 1974.

been lost already. Such are the accidents of history.

The memories of those who played leading roles in the early years of video art are a prized resource. Interviewees for the project shared generously with researchers, opening archives and recalling events. But memory plays tricks on all of us, and for artists whose craft has been centrally involved in the manipulation of time, memory is not a systematic recall but itself a process of creation. Sifting through the various data, Stephen Partridge in this volume seeks to establish – in many instances for the first time – who did what when, who participated in key events, and how the video aesthetic developed in its earliest years. The second challenge to memory as a resource is the temptation towards nostalgia. For many participants in the project, and for many whose interest in video has been piqued by the consolidation of the medium as a familiar mode of art practice in the 2000s, the idea of a pioneer era has the glamour of the exotic. Much the same might be observed of the second great technical format to enter the arts in the last two decades, the World Wide Web. From its introduction in 1993 to the dot.com crash of 2001, the Web had all the characteristics of a Temporary Autonomous Zone.[1] Likewise the early years of video: outside the embrace of the official art world, it created its own institutions as well as its own aesthetic.

Video art emerged at a rare moment of foment in the UK scene, in the immediate wake of freak culture and the underground scene which had given birth to the London Filmmakers' Co-op and many more vanguardist groups. John 'Hoppy' Hopkins brought the first Portapak straight into the Drury Lane Arts Lab and the Elgin Avenue squatters' movement. Hung between psychedelia and community radicalism, video was able to bridge the vanguardism of the underground and its longer-term commitment – through such innovations as the underground press, the free schools movement and DIY music culture – to the development of grassroots radicalism beyond the traditional trades union movement and Labour Party. Untrammeled by expectation, video was free to develop in any direction. To the extent that this was an objective condition, it needs to be recognised and recounted. To the extent that it appears through the rosy-tinted spectacles of a backward glance, it needs to be guarded against. Only meticulous scholarship can achieve something like the required balance.

In the critical language of the time, systems theory merged with the terminology of the New Left, inspired by the worldwide student upris-



Figs. 3 and 4. Brian Hoey and Wendy Brown, *Videvent* Exeter College of Art, 1974–1975.

ings of 1968, and with the pop sensibility which, after struggling into existence through the 60s, finally tore open the old pieties of mainstream Britain at the end of the decade. Integral to the new language was what was rapidly becoming performance art: a mix of theatre, happening, and in the case of Ian Breakwell and Mike Leggett's collaborations recalled in Leggett's chapter, a kind of structural economics exemplified by the destruction of unsold sculptures. That challenge to 'the monopolist position of broadcast television', as Leggett refers to it, involved 'a highly rational and calculated approach' to destruction. It is this mocking, ironic application of a system comprising both methodical precision and sheer mess that has

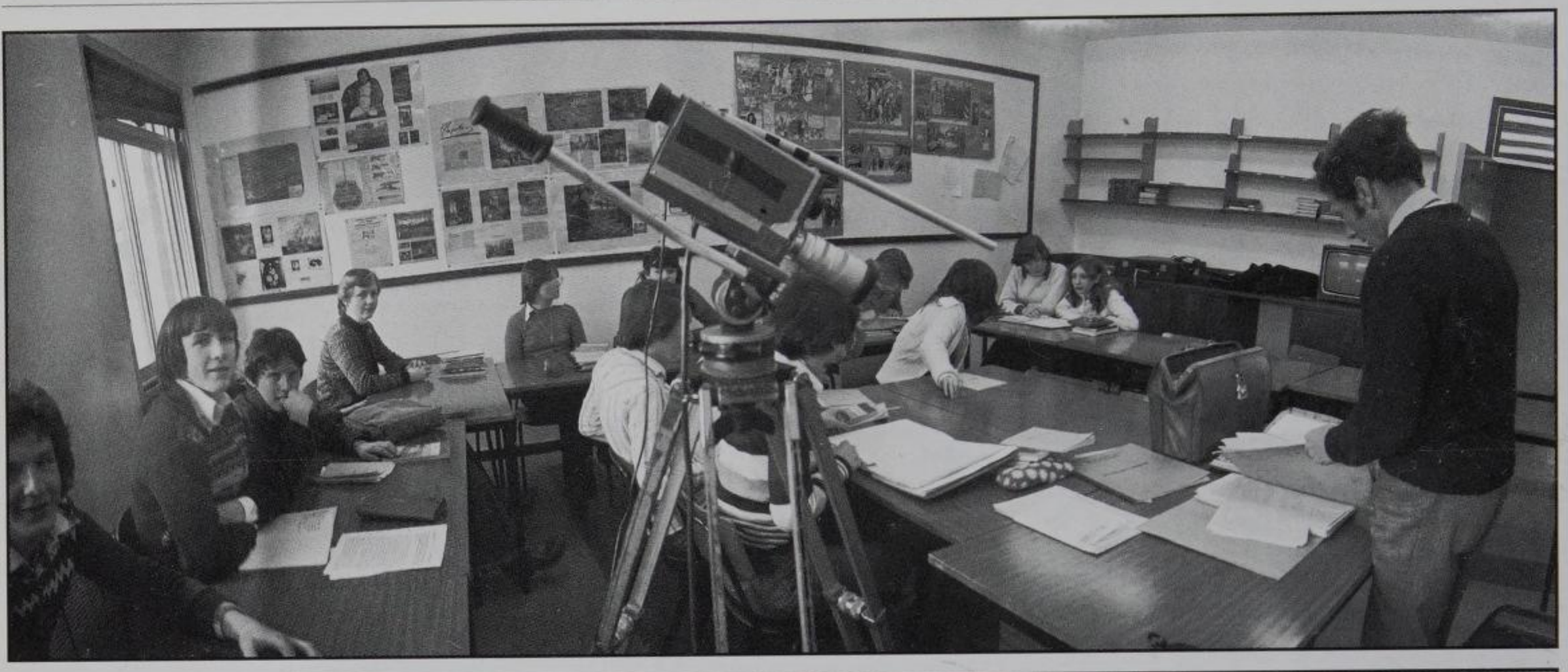
allowed, as Leggett notes with considerable originality, the documentation to take on a new role today. The ontological question of liveness – where precisely is the point when the ephemeral actually and terminally vanishes? – has its corollary in the question of what and how we recall.

And this of course is the basis of the fraught question of canon-formation. The lack of a critical discourse around video practice was a constant concern. Among participants in the first wave, perhaps no one devoted more time to developing such a discourse than Stuart Marshall, a central figure in the movement as an artist and activist, who reoriented discussion of video with his essays for *Screen* and *Art Forum*: passionate, eloquent, learned words that placed the new form at intersections of various art and media ways of talking and thinking. Tamara Krikorian and David Hall added to the stock of texts. Mainstream art magazines and reviewers for the most part ignored the new medium, with honourable exceptions like Michael Shepherd and Richard Cork of the London *Evening Standard*. It was a language that at times borrowed from film theory, but mostly developed its own hybrid tongue from the language of conceptual art of the 60s, 70s political language, and information theory.

In the 80s, a new discourse, drawing on postmodernism and showing the first inklings of themes of dialogue and interactivity that would come into their own in the digital era, grew slowly from artist-writers like Cate Elwes, Jeremy Welsh, Simon Biggs and Chris Meigh-Andrews, especially in the pages of *Independent Video* (later *Independent Media*), while a new generation of writers like Pat Sweeney, Andy Lipman and Steven Bode began to create a public for the work. In many respects, the continuity between 70s and 80s discourse around video art was grounded in inequality. From the first stirrings of second wave feminism and gay lib, through the explosive anger of punk and the post-punk Rock Against Racism movement, to the emergent queer culture, even where the art was sometimes apparently aloof from the everyday, the culture itself was strongly aligned towards radicalism. It may have been the difficulty of aligning politics and aesthetics that hampered the development of a distinctive critical voice for the sector. Writings tended towards the intervention or reportage, rather than more substantial studies. Though Geoffrey Battcock's pioneering collection from 1976 and John G. Hanhardt's anthology of 1986 placed (and perhaps slightly depoliticised) video practice in the USA, Rob Perrée's *Into Video Art* and Roy Armes' book largely devoted to the technology rather than the art, both of 1988, were the only substantial European writings to find their way to the bookshelves of the artists involved.[2] Though it is (and was at the time) a favourite pastime to pillory critics, lack of critical discourse almost invariably means lack of the kind of audience and gallery interest that the artists have been looking for.

Of course this is by no means the only criterion for entry into the canon of video art. The democratising emphasis of interactivity, portability and instant playback attracted a deeply democratic sense among the artists, for many of whom the idea of a canon modeled on the Great Tradition of art history was anathema. A first generation of artists like Ian Breakwell, John Latham and David Hall, working through new forms of practice like the Artist Placement Group or subverting old ones like art school pedagogy, made video the least essential of media. Video had no essence, for that moment at least. As McLuhan said of electric light, it seemed to be a medium without a message, one in which other messages might re-circulate in new forms perhaps, or that had the power to eat into the established medium of TV and the silence of the gallery. But while these artists and others like Roger Barnard and Brian Hoey would unleash the real-time interactive potential of video, others were moving away from the gallery, and towards new forms of political, especially community, media.

On the cusp between the two, New Zealander Darcy Lange embarked on a series of experimental observational works with commissioning agencies in regional England, away from even the dimmed spotlights of London. In *A Documentation of Bradford Working Life*, now in the Darcy Lange Archive at the Govett-Brewster gallery in New Plymouth, New Zealand, there is no sign of the Greenbergian aesthetic that was still dominant in 1974 when it was shot. With no access to editing, Lange videotaped





Figs. 5 and 6. Darcy Lange *A Documentary of Working Life* (1974); courtesy Darcy Lange Archive, Govett-Brewster Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand.

workers in four factories, shooting long takes (up to six minutes or longer) with surprising depth of field. In the opening case study, Osborne Steels Limited's smelting works, in four sequences taken in four discrete areas, Lange delights in what might today be called 'rhythmanalysis':[3] meticulous watching of everyday movement, from intense (and dirty and dangerous) physical work with red-hot metal to the unconscious tugging at an ear lobe or scratching a scalp. Elsewhere, long takes allow us into the work of women tending spinning machinery, now also archival footage from an industry that has undergone massive automation in subsequent decades, but primarily a patient observation, that allows the movement of arms and hands and their skilled intervention in fast-moving machinery, to take place in its own time. In their foreword to a recent catalogue on Lange's work, Devenport and Watkins note that

> Lange never conceived of these tapes as finished works but as 'researches' and 'an educational process'. The reactions of his subjects to the tapes became part of the body of work, guiding him in its





Figs. 7 and 8. Darcy Lange *A Documentary of Working Life* (1974); courtesy Darcy Lange Archive, Govett-Brewster Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand.

> development. By exposing the process, Lange's videos became in themselves studies of videographing as a work activity.[4]

This mixture of a medium-specific aesthetic owed more to Brechtian alienation than to Greenberg's aestheticism, with the process-based art that had begun to emerge in the late 60s also shaping his work. But so too did his adherence to the increasingly unfashionable métier of realism:

> We have a responsibility to keep questioning the nature and power of realism. Are there ways for the camera to record without stripping people of their spirit, without sloganising, without replacing a deep sense of community by a shallow voyeurism?[5]

What might sound like a cinematic aesthetic, reminiscent of the 50s writings of André Bazin, is in fact a quite different, quite specifically video aesthetic. Lange was committed to using instant playback to involve his subjects: typically, every one of the participants in the Bradford tapes is named in the documentation (again the lack of editing facilities meant that there are no titles on the tape itself). Although, in the Bradford case, the factory owners would not allow this process to go through, later tapes made in West Midlands schools did so, to great effect. Though it is difficult to tell from the existing transfers, Lange also made great play of the intense contrasts between, for example, the gloom of the foundry and the vivid streaks of sparks flying from an industrial grinder as it is wrestled by its handlers, named as Leon Frazier and Godfrey Broadbent. The soundtrack of this segment is a cacophony of furnace, heavy iron tools, machine-power and voices raised to shouting level for the simplest of communications. Throughout, the capabilities of the vidicon tube are as deftly handled as they would be in more conceptual works like those of David Hall. Lange richly deserved his place in the Serpentine Video Show.

Yet Lange rarely figures in British video art histories. Perhaps this was because he returned to New Zealand (where he worked extensively documenting farming life as well as Maori struggles for civil rights), or because of his nationality, because he worked in the regions, or because he worked into and with the realist tradition.

Other artists working with the medium used it in very different ways. Gilbert and George's video *Gordon's Makes Us Drunk* (1972) documents a performance, and while the Tate's annotation suggests a connection with television advertising, there is little in the composition to suggest that this is a signal element of the work, which watches the two deadpan artists drinking gin and reciting from time to time the phrase 'Gordon's makes us very drunk' in the front room of their house in Fournier Street. Here the exclusion from the canon seems to be based on the observation that the work might have been made on film; it is a document of a performance, rather than a work in and of video. At the opposite extreme, Susan Hiller's *Belshazzar's Feast* was for many years one of the only video works in the permanent collection of the Tate. Hiller's long-time fascination with the occult and dream states here places flames on four monitors around an installation which otherwise resembles a bonfire. In each monitor, the flames are treated by shooting slightly out of focus, and shifting the colour balance to create moving abstractions, while the soundtrack recounts stories from *Psychic News* about people claiming to see the face of an alien 'with a message too terrible to reveal' in the snow following the closedown of transmissions. Interspersed is the voice of a child endeavoring to describe Rembrandt's painting of the eponymous banquet where the moving finger of God wrote on the wall the nonsense syllables 'Mene mene tekel upharshin'. This exploration of the mesmeric capacities of TV, and the skilled use of colour and luminance, place the work squarely in the history.

Such distinctions are perhaps invidious, and perhaps based on extraneous considerations. As a knowledgeable curator and enthusiastic champion of contemporary artists, Hiller was a popular figure where Gilbert and George's apparent sympathies with the extreme right and their hermetic relation to the rest of the art world was less endearing. Perhaps too it was because *Gordon's* was produced and shot by Gerry Schum, who was responsible for

a pioneering series of films about artists in the late 60s and early 70s (see Stephen Partridge's chapter). If that was a factor, it would suggest that video art had and perhaps still has a significant auteurist dimension, even when, as would happen more and more in the 80s, artists worked with technicians, or crewed for one another. In some respects then, *Rewind* risks perpetuating not only a canon but an auteurist convention in art history, a convention challenged in many other areas of media and film scholarship. This is perhaps an unavoidable result of the decision to use interviews with artists as a key resource for the project. At the same time however, and in conjunction with colleagues working on the history of independent film and video distribution, the central role of institutions is a common thread through the interviews recorded on the *Rewind* website.

Malcolm Dickson's chapter in this collection undertakes the institutional history of video in the United Kingdom. This epic narrative parallels work undertaken at several of the Media Art History conferences[6] and in a special issue of *Third Text*[7] to recover the important roles played by both funding agencies and artist-run resources and dissemination schemes during the period. The significance of these centres and publications can scarcely be over-estimated. Equipment which artists had learned to use at art school were unavailable after graduation, but events like the Serpentine Video Show encouraged conversations as to how to secure access to them as practitioners out in the world. In parallel, community-oriented workshops began to flourish from the late 60s onwards, with constant travel between the two fields of work that had first been brought into proximity by Darcy Lange and the Artist Placement Group. Nudging into art, media and performance journals and listings magazines, the developing critical language mixed with efforts to make public an art practice which remained unloved in the established art world. Festivals like Bracknell and Video Positive brought practitioners and publics together in typically open and friendly environments where the sense of a community of artists, fostered by shared resources like LVA (London Video Arts), grew to the stage at which it might even be said to have constituted a cultural project in its own right.



Fig. 9. David Critchley's *Static Acceleration* 1975.

This network of interrelated practices, quite as much as the works produced, is what made the British video art scene of the 70s and 80s – along with the related work of the London Filmmakers' Co-op – perhaps the only true avant-garde in the United Kingdom in the 20th century. An avant-garde, after all, is not just a manifesto and an exhibition: it is a social as well as an artistic phenomenon, something that changes radically the options open to subsequent artists, and indeed to the cultural life of society. The risk of mythologising is at its most intense at this juncture, and points us to the question of myth itself, and specifically to the almost inevitable mythologisation of origins of any kind.

When we mythologise origins, we make statements about the thing that originated.

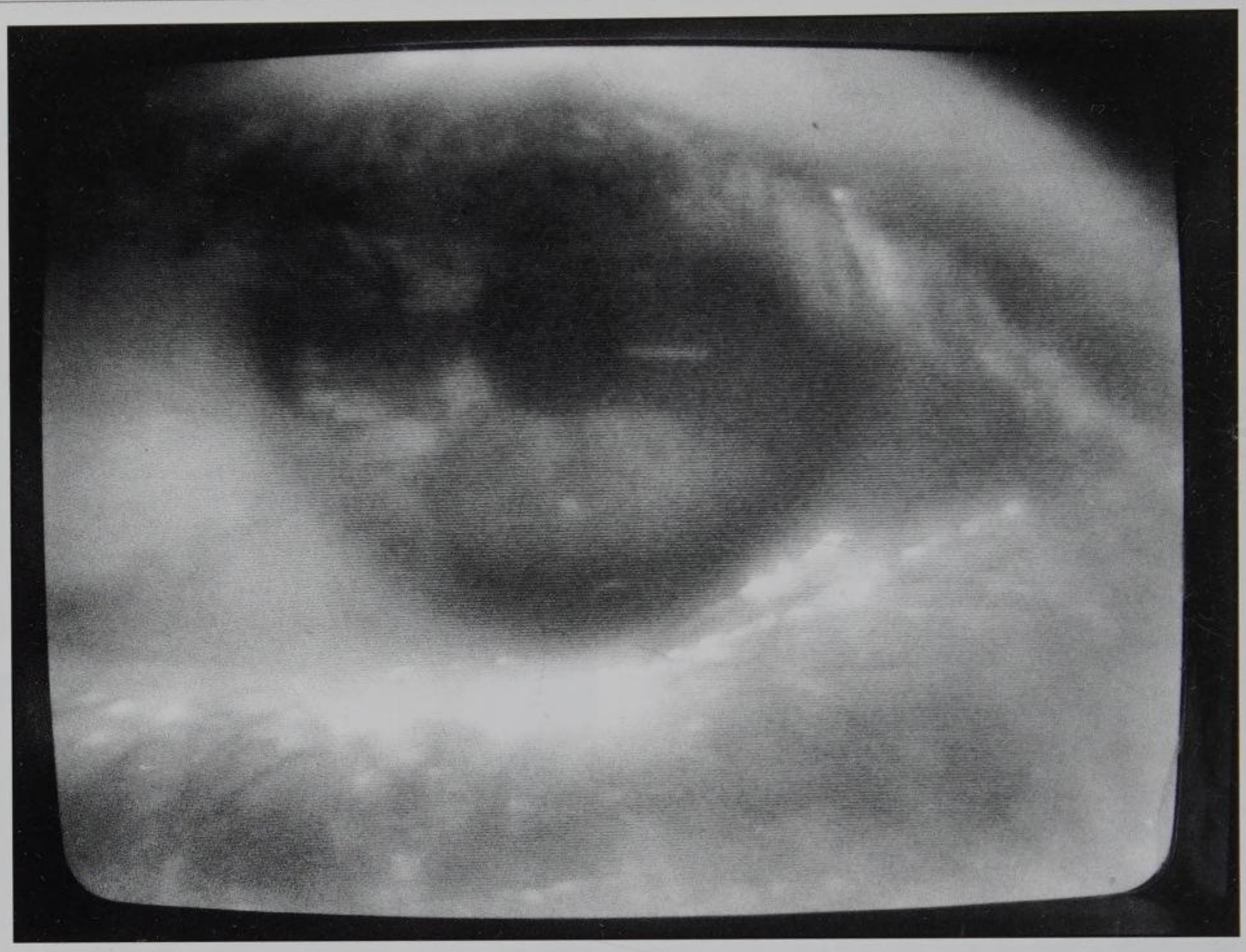


Fig. 10. Tamara Krikorian *In the Mind's Eye* 1977.

Every nation has a myth of origin: Robin Hood and King Arthur in England, the Wild West in the USA, the ANZAC legend in Australia. They say things about the kind of nation its citizens believe in or want to inhabit. To the extent that Dickson's chapter is a myth of origin, it is a statement about a kind of video culture, and more broadly the imagination of what kind of media culture we might want to live in. This is not to say that a myth is not based solidly on factual research, but that the act of turning data into narrative will almost always produce a sense of what we desire (or in another form of story, what we fear). In this instance, the central motifs of the myth are a media culture that would be radically open to invention, fundamentally democratic, and fundamentally companionable. This institutional history is integral to the project of understanding how and why the video art scene formed a discrete moment in the cultural history of the UK. Many artists said at the time that they were not video artists, but artists who used video. Much critical effort went into opening doors and building bridges with the traditional art world, de-emphasising the distinctiveness of video art. It is the nature of this project to re-emphasise that distinctiveness, while at the same time recognising that it was never that separate from the cultural, political and social life of the country.

Equally challenged by Dickson's chapter is the concept of 'British' in our title. The BBC's adoption of the designation 'nations and regions' in recent years is symptomatic of an uncomfortable resonance of nationalism in this period, when the war in the Six Counties was at its height, Welsh nationalists were burning holiday homes, and Scottish nationalism was adding major political gains to its powerful cultural presence north of the border. The concept of undertaking national histories of media practice is often contested:[8] the media are, after all, the tools for constructing imaginary communities, invented traditions, socio-cultural cohesion. To analyze them as 'national' would appear to be circular. Yet geography triumphed over video in ways that perhaps it did not over film or music in the same period. Some US artists' work made it to Europe, some European work made it to the UK, but traffic was slowed by weak international distribution, institutional inertia, the priority set for making and distributing local product, and the uncomfortable clash of broadcast standards (PAL in the UK, NTSC in North

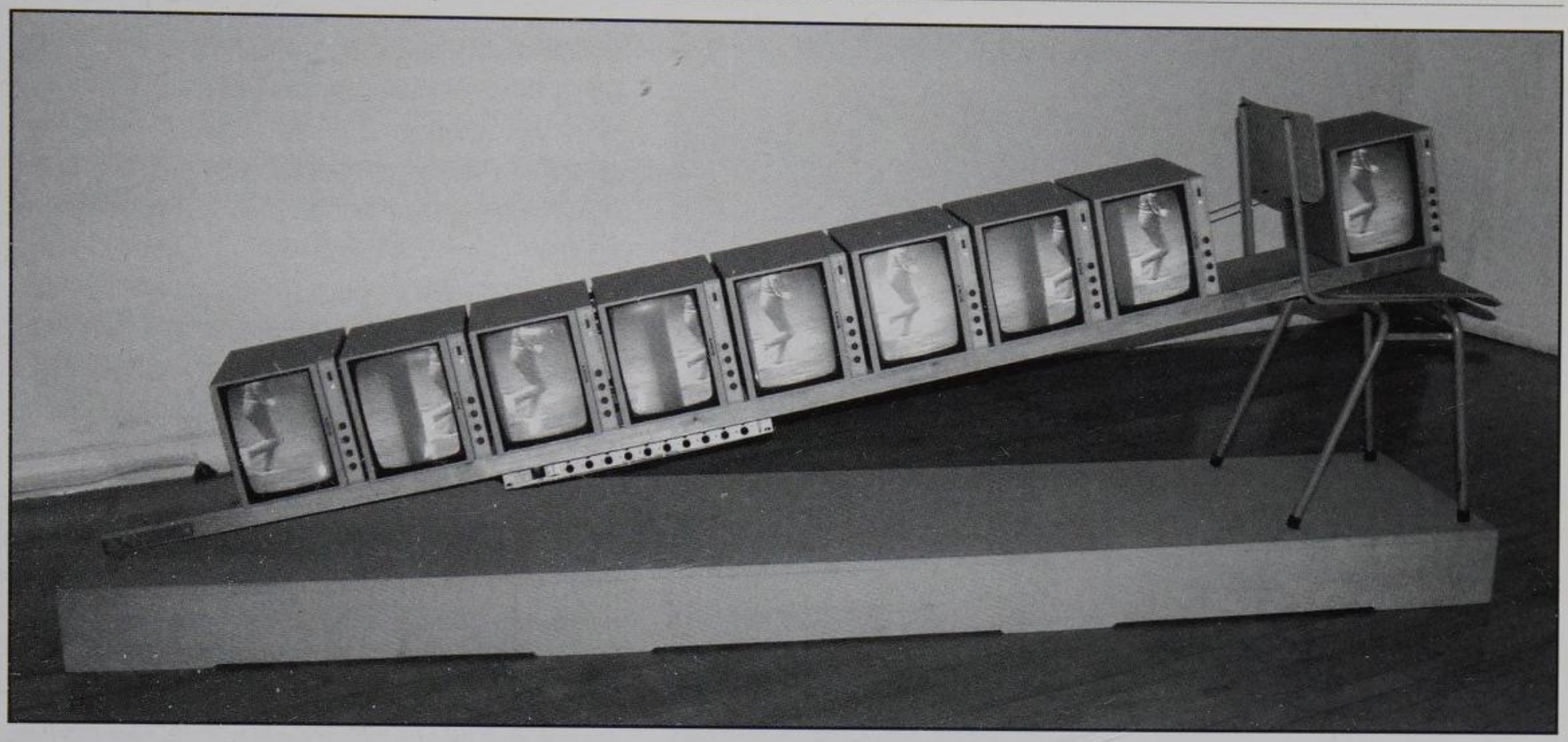


Fig. 11. Tony Sinden, *Behold Vertical Devices*, installed at Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, 1974.

America and Japan, SECAM in France). A slight insularity of the culture makes a retrospective on British video thinkable in a way that a similar history of British Internet is not.

At the same time, international circuits were in place, and international influences: the collaborations of Madelon Hooykaas and Elsa Stansfield were exemplary of this travelling aspect of the culture. Intriguing parallels, such as that between the simultaneous work on video synthesis by Peter Donebauer in London and Dan Sandin in Chicago, rose everywhere, even if the specific inspirations were local. A characteristic drive to push the limits of the medium is David Critchley's *Static Acceleration*. The tape records a performance: Critchley shaking his head has fast as possible. In the edit suite, the recording, which was already taxed to keep up with the rapid movement, was slowed down gradually over eleven minutes. The action is accompanied by loud beats, which Critchley recalls were handclaps whose sudden attack was too much for the recording microphone, and whose decay becomes more and more emphatic as the recording was slowed down in the edit.[9] This part of the process was its own small performance: the only way to achieve the effect was to hold and turn, degree by degree, a small knob throughout the duration of the transfer. In the resulting tape, the scan lines and artefacts of recording become more and more apparent. Critchley's work is in many ways close to that of US and French pioneers of the time, but the inspiration, he recalls, was very specifically Francis Bacon's portrait heads, an effect emulated in motion by the very limitations of the equipment. Many pieces used the low resolution of the screens to aesthetic effect: many of Tamara Krikorian's early works record light moving over water, not in order to capture it, but to produce a soft, lilting motion on screen through phosphors which, prior to the introduction of the Sony Trinitron shadow mask, illuminated one another in a field of light, rather than in rigid grids, the kind of luminosity and greyscale work also at the centre of William Wegman's practice at about the same time.

Histories of movements have two great forms. One of these is the interior view. Written from first-hand experience, and drawing on the wealth of documents unearthed during the *Rewind* research, Stephen Partridge's chapter gives a meticulous account of the first decade of video art in Britain. In Sean Cubitt's chapter, the emphasis is more on the context of the practice, the social, cultural and political upheavals of the following decade. These two approaches between them offer visions of how the research data might be handled. In Partridge's chapter, the centre of attention is the development of practice, and it should be read, ideally, with cross reference to Adam Lockhart's history of the tools involved. Ways of doing things, tricks, ploys, workarounds and small techniques were handed around the cir-



Fig. 12. Dr. Jackie Hatfield 1962–2007.

cuit of artists working in the new medium. Innovation may have begun with Sony, but a host of small technical steps were taken by these artists, in a process of creative invention which, because it was never turned into patents, escapes the histories of innovation so dear to a managerial account of the arts. Tony Sinden's finely crafted system, still running perfectly, for his *Behold Vertical Devices*, as well as the innovations developed with David Hall in their collaborations, are a case in point. This incremental work on change might at times include an antagonistic or at least agonistic relation with technological progress, as in Hall's own *This Is A Television Receiver*, with its slow decay of the recently introduced colour signal to a ruddy, muddy monochrome.

Technologies were rarely consumed in the form in which they were delivered, or in ways that had been projected by the manufacturers: such was the use of new editing tools in scratch video. Cubitt's chapter raises the possibility for another work, investigating the relationship between the exhilaration of the new media artists, the reluctance of the old art establishment, and the technocracy promised by one of the United Kingdom's last self-consciously progressive governments under Harold Wilson, with Tony Benn as the energetic Minister of Technology. 'The white heat of technological revolution' failed in some critical areas (Britain never achieved a major position in world computer and software markets) while succeeding with some highly controversial ones like Concorde. The shape of contemporary Britain was very much in formation at the time, with issues of industrial relations, the Troubles in Ireland and the controversy over European Union membership in the headlines. But that technological drive, which certainly powered work in the computer arts in the 70s, seems to have had a mixed reaction in the art world which we hope future historians will be able to track through documents and interviews in the *Rewind* archive, and in the works produced during the period. Such external views cannot explain how art occurs, nor even how it is received. But it can help to understand and colour the types of reading we might make of how and why works took some of the aspects they did, and how their first audiences reacted to them.

However, the true purpose of this kind of historical work is not only to organise and clarify facts, nor even to place them in relation to other events of the same era. It is to enable a new generation to find in the work produced the resources for future creation. To that end, the chapters by Emile Shemilt, Grahame Weinbren and Yvonne Spielmann included here introduce new ways of conceptualising, reading, interpreting the art of the 70s and 80s. Spielmann works with the materiality of video as an electronic practice, while Weinbren works with the experiential aesthetics of Richard Wollheim, and Shemilt places the temporality of video practice in relation to theories of narrative and medium specificity. These quite distinct approaches, with their idiosyncratic choice of works, are both exemplary critical essays and models of the kind of multiplication of interpretative strategies which are made possible by the development of the *Rewind* archive. Interpretation is a discipline. Despite the post-structural turn in literary criticism, we still require our critics to observe in fine detail the objects in front of them: to listen and to watch with acuity and honesty. It is by no means unrealistic to expect them to immerse themselves in relevant

information – technical, biographical, historical – to triangulate their intuitions about the piece. But in the end, we want them to tell us something about the work that we would otherwise have missed; something that illuminates and guides us in our experience of the specific artwork, the medium, or our perceptual and aesthetic life in general. These essays undertake such a labour, and point us as an additional bonus away from the received canon towards works which deliver great insight when approached obliquely by new critical agendas.

The specificity of the medium, challenged and problematised by Shemilt, raises a further challenge for the attempt to write a history of British video. What exactly was the medium? During a discussion in the mid-80s, Terry Flaxton insisted that video was reducible to signal, that signal was its essential property. In many respects, this was true, since the medium is capable of so many transformations as it moves from one form of storage to another, one display medium to another, from greyscale to colour, from tube to chip. Each of those supporting media has its own aesthetic qualities, either in reception or as working environments for artists, and each has its own affordances. But it is perhaps clear from the three interpretive chapters here that there is no essence to video. It is not essentially domestic or spectacular, digital or analogue, and though it is certainly electronic and usually involves vision, like an ocean it is never the same twice. The processes of invention and change, of play and deconstruction, of the equipment as well as the stylistic norms of the audiovisual arts and industries, are so integral to video art in part because video always offered itself as malleable. There were no union regulations, no guild mysteries to be learned in apprenticeships lasting years. Artists could work together, with crews, or alone, as they might with older craft media. Unlike other technological media, video did not require a team. What is more, the spirit of experiment which drew the Film-makers' Co-op towards building its own optical printer also fired the imaginations of video-makers, always ready to tinker with the kit, to remake it for new purposes.

The volume opens with a short text by our friend and colleague Jackie Hatfield, who was Rewind's Post Doctoral Research Fellow and an accomplished film and video artist and writer, and who was to have been editor on this book. Jackie's death in 2007 was a desperate blow to everyone involved in the project, and to many beyond its confines. She exemplified the energy, vivacity, love of life and creative intelligence that we find in the media arts scene we have been researching.

The editors dedicate this book most affectionately to her memory.

Notes

1. Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchism, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991).
2. Geoffrey Battcock (ed.), *New Artists' Video* (New York: Dutton, 1978); John G. Hanhardt (ed.), *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation* (Utah: Peregrine Smith Books, 1986); Rob Perrée, *Into Video Art: The Characteristics of a Medium* (Amsterdam: Con Rumore, 1988); Roy Armes, *On Video* (London: Routledge, 1988).
3. Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (trans. Stuart Elden) (London: Athlone, 2004).
4. Mercedes Vicente, *Darcy Lange: Study of an Artist at Work* (New Plymouth: Govett-Brewster Gallery and Birmingham: Icon Gallery, 2008).
5. Lange, Darcy, *Video Art* (Auckland: Department of Film and Television, University of Auckland, 2001), 17.
6. See URL: http://www.mediaarthistory.org/
7. *Third Text*, 'Media Arts: Practice, Institutions and Histories', Vol. 23, No. 3, 2009.
8. See for example Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
9. Conversation in August 2009.

Chapter 1/
Resisting Definition

Jackie Hatfield

I want to outline the philosophies, processes and methodologies, the overall research schema, and some of the findings to date of *Rewind*. The research objective of *Rewind* is to build a picture of the first two decades of video art in the UK, stemming from the testimony of individual artists (and in some cases facilitators of artworks) in semi-structured interviews; evaluation and review of artworks, exhibitions and events; and interrogation of the contextual philosophies, polemics, and material languages of this important period of artistic practice. Importantly the list of artists for study chosen by the research team and advisory panel represents a wide-ranging picture of practice. Selection is informed by the initial research questions and provenance of artworks and related critical writing; it acknowledges that whilst there may be themes, patterns and categories evolving from the unfolding history, artists' individual endeavour was part of a whole international movement, and the history of video art in the UK did not take one path.

During the first year of *Rewind*, the research methodology was based upon a broad spectrum of questions, and review of contemporaneous critical writing, artworks, key exhibitions and events. The questions were asked: What video artworks were produced during the 70s and 80s? Who produced these works? What critical, artistic or social issues were of most concern to the artists of the period? Which artworks should be prioritised for the expensive process of archiving and detailed documentation? Which artists, exhibitions and works are the most cited in interviews and in the literature of the time? Which have retained their status in the critical and teaching environments?

Mapping this practice can be summed up by this riddle: imagine images that are not images or objects or things; that happen in a single moment, never to be repeated. Imagine a place which is not a place, and artworks

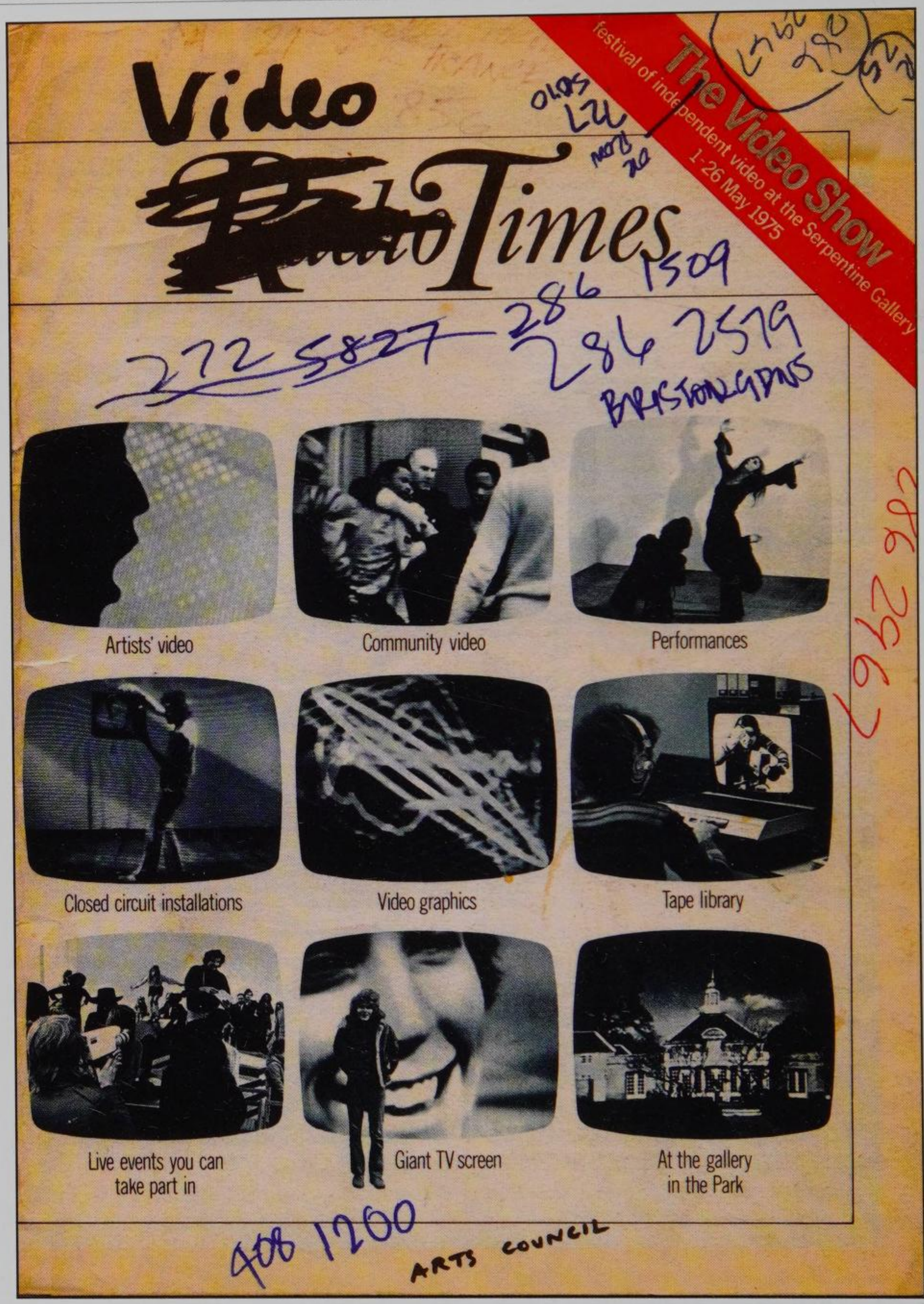


Fig. 1. Serpentine *Video Show* catalogue cover, 1975.

whose completed forms resonate only through the memory of the audience that experienced them; or changed from its moving original, a photo fixed in stasis. How would an historian write this artwork into art history? How would they map its perceptual, intangible, ephemeral language? How would we know it were true to its form?

A starting point for the initial investigation was chronology, 1968 being the first loosely documented date when video became available to artists in the UK. From this date we could

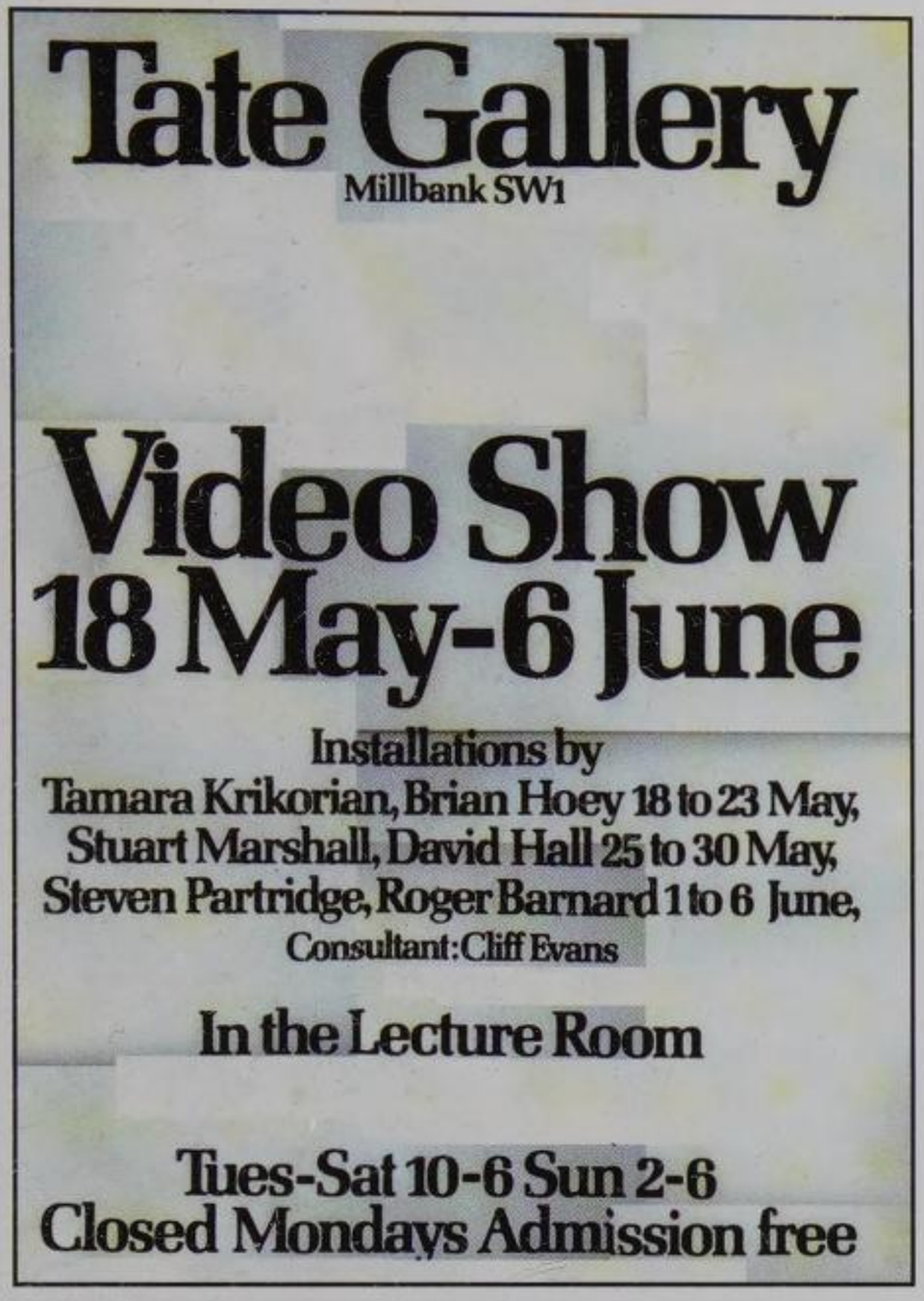


Fig. 2a. Poster for Tate Gallery *Video Show*, 1975.

map the contribution of individual artists across their careers and evaluate which were the first to explore the then-new technology, acknowledging that they may have been sporadic in their use of it, or have advocated its use through various actions or a mixture of routes; for example, through text, publications or institutional reports, or through the gallery system or within the art schools, through artistic process or output. It was important at this early stage of the research to begin with wide parameters for the study of British video art; that is, we were not focussing on establishing a list of artists who had worked solely with video. I say this to reiterate the fact that artists who gravitated towards video came to it from other mediums and disciplines, and in so doing laid open video's intertextualities, resisting traditional definitions or material specificity. In moving-image terms video technology came into being within a post-modern shift, whereby more than half a century after the event, artistic ideas conceptualised early in the 20th century were actually made manifest; that is, for the first time since the Futurists wrote their manifestos and proclaimed the demise of the autonomous artwork.

Any survey of innovation in art practice since the late 60s might automatically include video as a key aspect of the experimental process. At this time, with no fixed art-world history, video's malleability and conceptual open-endedness enabled many possibilities. An international tribe of late–twentieth century artists rejected the assumption that visual art should be an object-oriented art, and recognised that video could be an art form of the experiential, whereby the trace could physically be recorded as a continuous signal, rather than, as with film, an individual frame. Post-photo electronic video is also a latent image of the unseeable and, like sound or performance, is an art of space and time. However, although the term 'video art' connotes an analogue era and an

Fig. 2b. *eye to eye*, Tamara Krikorian, Fruit Market Gallery Edinburgh, 1979.

eye to eye
Two installations by Tamara Krikorian
The Fruit Market Gallery
29 Market Street, Edinburgh
Exhibition 20 October - 17 November 1979
The Scottish Arts Council

Tamara Krikorian has based her recent work in relation to the ephemeral nature of television on certain 16th and 17th century 'vanitas' paintings in which butterflies, bubbles and other still life objects appear as symbols of transience. In several of these paintings the artist's own self portrait appears as a 'vanitas' emblem alongside personal objects and tools.

The two installations, **Vanitas or An Illusion of Reality** and **Tableau** employ not only video but mirrors and actual still life objects to explore various aspects of broadcast television, but with particular reference to the television newscaster as the archetypal portrait figure — the 20th century equivalent of an icon or household god. In other words a figure of re-assurance — a mediator.

In addition, questions are asked about the nature of the medium in terms of screen surface, horizontal lines and the box nature of the television monitor and how this in its turn affects the actual presentation and content of broadcasting. There is also an attempt to compare the formal elements of one medium to another, for example television to film, film to photography, and photography to painting.

Tamara Krikorian has been working with video since 1973 and has taken part in numerous exhibitions both in Britain and abroad. An installation entitled **'An Ephemeral Art'** was shown at the Third Eye Centre, Glasgow in April and forms part of a series of works based on the 'Vanitas' theme.

Fig. 3. Letter to David Hall from Maria Gloria Bicocci, 1979.

la beccana
santateresa
0566 - 85087

David Hall
61 Fairmount road
London SW2,
England

January 14th. 1979

Dear David,
hoa are you? It is so long since we saw each other, but I always followe your work.

As you kano by Alessandro Silj, who meet you in London, we are together setting up a video exhibition for next spring.

I shall put together the art section, which will enclude around 5 tapes per country. For what is concerning England? I would appreciate very much if you could choose the said art tapes, (one per artist, if possible), and inform me about as soon as possible. The dead line for the catalogue (photos, informations etc) will be february 28th.

The organizatoon (the Cultural dept. od the city of Rome) will pay 100.000 lires each tape, plus shipping and insurance. The show will be open for 20 days, during which, except the videotapes ufficially proposed, there will be an open videotek, in order to let people see more works, and the artists and the operators with this medium be able to show more work.

I'm enclosing a draft to inform you more precisely. In the catalogue it will be mentioned about the fact that the english selection for art will be dome by you. I hope you will be willing to partecipate in this organization, and I'm wayting to see your videowork, which I like so much, and the others you will choose. Write me soon here in the country where I live most of the time. All my best friendship,

Maria Gloria Bicocchi

Maria Gloria

FOLLONICA

scarlino gr. via aurelia km. 224,500

apparent fixedness, its material specificities are in flux. As such it necessitates continual theoretical or philosophical review; the polemics are open to change, so that video is and always has been a technology of combination, and maintains a chameleon-like property in the continuing history of digital 'new' media.

Since video is a transient form, both philosophically and materially, and an artwork might exist only at the moment of screening or exhibition, there are inevitable complexities in its reading and subsequent textual analysis. How does such work get written into history and remembered? How in *Rewind* do we reflect this perceptual, intangible language – the subject's *own* voice? And how do we map the complex discourses or institutional frictions that Sean Cubitt, for example, has referred to in his research and texts? If all that is left of the tapestries of passionate discussion which took place

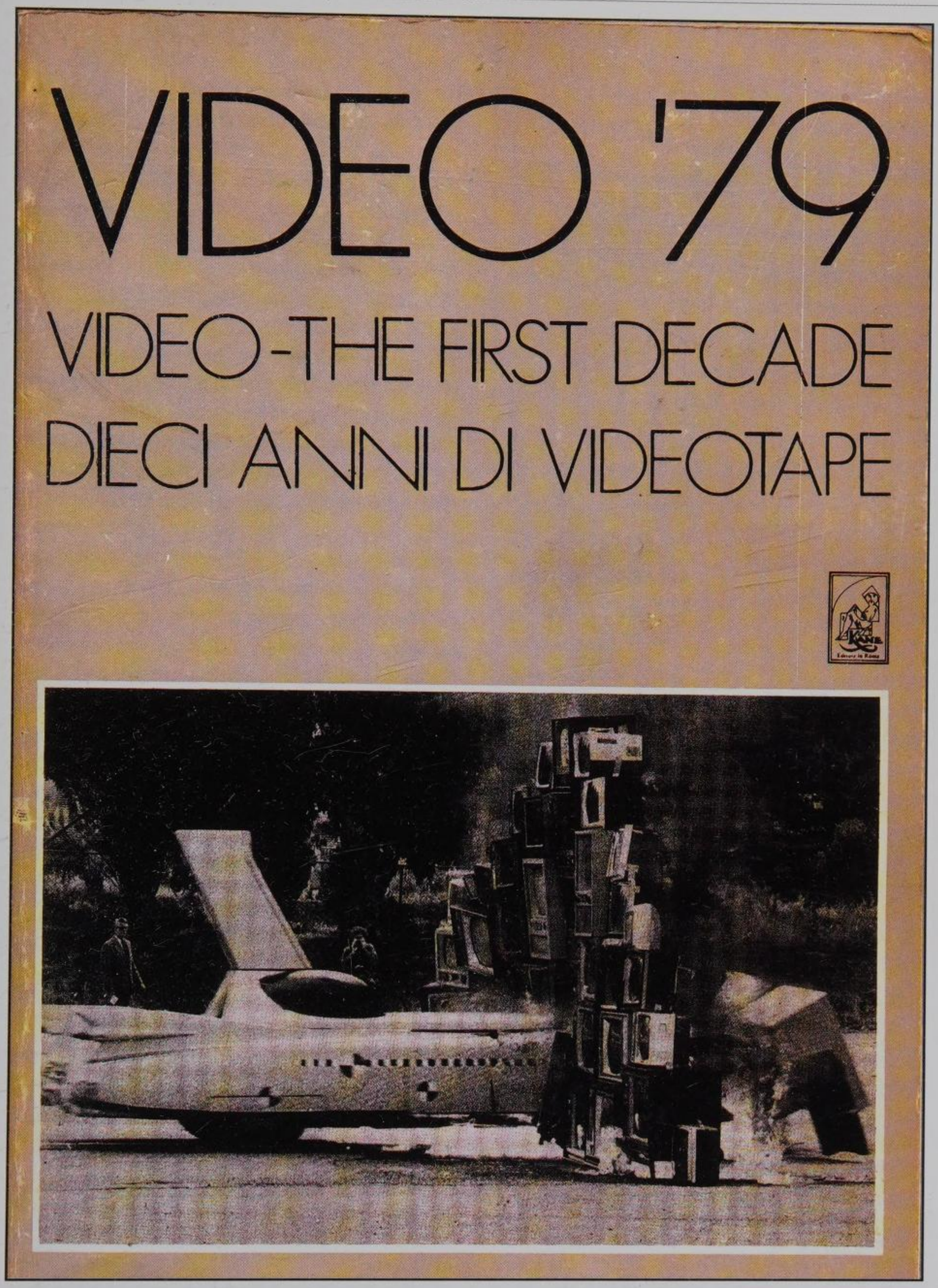


Fig. 4. *Video – The First Decade* Museum of Folklore, Rome, 1979.

in pubs, warehouses, alternative galleries – the chinks in the culture of commercial art – are scattered amongst snippets of text, then where else would we find them now but in the artists' – the subjects' – *own* voice? *Rewind*'s research methodology of interviewing around twelve selected artists per year is especially important. These video interviews focus on the artists as the source of remembrance, bearing individual witness to the contextual events around their distinctive practices. In this way, we can uncover the under-explored aspects of the history, making visible the artists, their artworks, and the contemporaneous philosophies and proc-



Fig. 5a. Leaflet advertising *Festival '79 Brighton*, 1979.

esses. This is an excavation of dialogues and polemics within diverse communities of artists. The video interviews, between two and four hours in length, provide a visual and aural record of the artist. The research questions emanate from the core objectives of *Rewind* and, whilst semi-structured, allow flexibility depending on the career of the artist and the nature of their artworks.

History, of course, is not a carbon copy of past reality, since it is mediated through subjects, the historian, the memory: the present. And is an historian not a subject like any other, embedding preferences, agendas and misunderstandings into the narration? For example, we know that in the past gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and racial bias were encoded in many different ways, and the written text that narrates artistic practice can convey any kind of bias beneath seeming impartiality. The reality of our histories is that ideas overlap, re-emerge, re-form; technologies change and means of dissemination shift. What appear to be unyielding and dominant ideologies are nevertheless only a small part of wider dialogue and artistic experiment. Yet the practical histories of art – its processes, which always come *before* the theories and philosophies (although sometimes *alongside*, if written and made visible by the artist) – remain mostly dormant, waiting for discovery.

In *Rewind*, thinking as we have along the lines of the empirical method, we have exposed the construction of some of these layers of history – through the interviews, the biographies, the ephemera and the artworks. The *Rewind* database and its micro-structures enable the artists' oral histories to be acknowledged in the content of the historical narratives. The database can make visible a part of the conceptual apparatus by which the stories are ordered. It can show us their composition: that is, the multiplicity of narrative representations in historiographies, which are never only one. The structure of databases in general can change the way histories are disseminated. With their non-linear architecture they can show strands of history, or can be chronological and show how in reality, events overlap ideas and discourses are multi-formed and multi-layered; they can show how they might resonate over time and double back upon themselves. My point is that *Rewind* will disseminate these multiple narratives of artists' practice. Where the voices of many artists are heard beside traces of process and biography, texts of sometimes-conflicting discourses and diverse strands of thought emerge; they become labyrinths of stories, challenging the hierarchies of who or what is remembered.

I like to consider that this history is liquid and amorphous, and that artists have dipped in and out of processes that *incorporated* the chameleon-like electronic moving image that is video. *Rewind* can address some aspects of the seeming impoverishment of the visibility of video art, it is true, but not all. While for the purpose of narrativising the history and describing particular artworks, processes or synergies, or for illustrating contemporary polemics, themes might ensue – technological

experiment, installation, sculpture, the televisual, gender, sexuality, performance, documentary, autobiography, and so on – there is a focus on the excavation of philosophies, and study of production contexts.

Even a cursory study of the practice would uncover the extraordinarily diverse approaches within British video art: sculptural installation by David Hall, Tina Keane, Stephen Partridge and Tony Sinden; video as a conceptual medium, seen in David Hall's *Television Interruptions* in particular and in artworks throughout his career, or as an integral aspect of process visible in some of the works of Susan Hiller; as an integral aspect of process and materiality, as with Mike Leggett's work; the diaristic and ethnographic video of Ian Breakwell, or autobiographical video by Daniel Reeves or Steve Hawley; the earliest participatory video installations by Brian Hoey or Steve Partridge; site-related explorations in works by Madelon Hooykass and Elsa Stansfield; the landscapes of Tamara Krikorian; the performative installations of David Critchley, Mona Hatoum, Mike Stubbs Kevin Atherton, Marc Chaimowicz or early Mineo Aayamaguchi; single-screen scratch video experiments of The Duvet Brothers or George Barber; experiments with material, colour, abstraction, and spectacle, expanded cinema structures and temporalities in works by Malcolm LeGrice or Stephen Littman, and David Larcher's electronic image alchemy; the video synthesiser innovations of Peter Donebauer with the Videokalos, and his experiments with music; social-political documentary by John 'Hoppy' Hopkins and Sue Hall or Darcy Lange; and issues of representation, identity, gender, sexuality and cultural or racial diasporas in the works of Catherine Elwes, Isaac Julien, Keith Piper and Stuart Marshall. A list such as this could not begin to fully account for twenty years of practice, and analysis of the hitherto-unwritten history – of the philosophies and dialogue oriented around this particular non-inert technology – would need the space of volumes to do it justice. This selection is only a snapshot to demonstrate the richness of genres, and since they are elusive by nature, to illustrate the difficulty of grouping video artworks by characteristics or themes; there is no definitive history. The bottom line is that classification should ultimately depend on analysis of individual artists' experiment, rather than around the ontology of a specific technology. It is so different to film; a philosophy built upon the materiality of video would inevitably be built upon shifting sands.

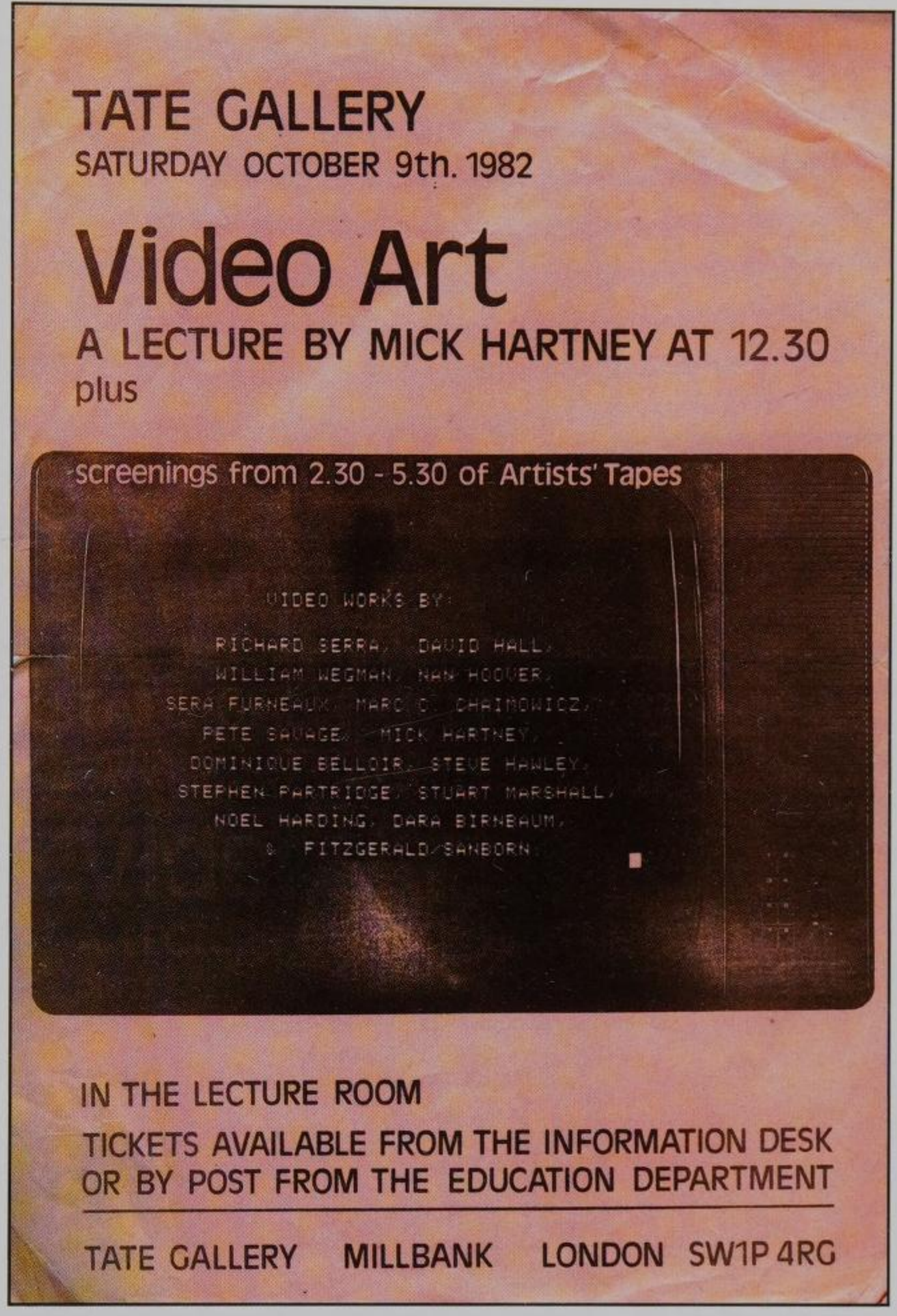


Fig. 5b. Poster for Tate Gallery *Video Art Lecture by Mick Hartney*, 1982.

This changeability produces similar complexities to those of digital forms, whereby individual works and technological combinations might defy material classification. The practical history of experimental video thus typifies the formulation of post-material paradigms. In the late 60s to 70s, it was the *apparatus* of vide*otape* that was a definable object – that is, a portapak, a monitor, the conduit of broadcast – but ultimately, *video* is a stuff of concept, and a challenge to medium-specific rhetoric. It is a perceptual thing: a post-material form of



Fig. 6a. Poster for the *Video Installation Show*, AIR Gallery, London, 1983.

moving image. While artists devoted purely to the conceptual material of video have been rare, and there could be many themes or categorisations for video artworks from 1970 to the present date – as with digital works – the technology itself resists definition on the basis of analysis of its material constituents alone. Furthermore, changeability has always been the groundbreaking aspect of video art, as well as the source of its potential for amalgamation with other art forms and contexts, whether as performance, dance, or sculpture, or as theatre, television, or digital art. Accordingly, there are complexities within the practical history that resist simple cataloguing. For example, questions arise about the methods for preservation of works that are site-related, site-specific, or which involve performance or event-type structures of exhibition.

But terminologies should not be used to restrict our reflection on the true nature of experiment at this time. I mean, for example, that although distinguishing film from video and emphasising ontological differences was particularly visible in the written polemics of the 70s, this historical discourse should not be used to overlook the fact that artists were free-flowing individuals experimenting with different kinds of media at this time, as evidenced in the interviews already undertaken. Artists committed to video and its discourses were dealing with an imaging technology unlike any other – one that was and is continually evolving, needing continual theoretical or philosophical review, so that video is and always has been a technology of combination.

Pioneers of what might be better described as experimental electronic media traversed and transgressed the exhibition contexts of gallery (white cube), cinema theatre (black space), and television broadcast. Working across various mediums and languages, their artworks were often an amalgamation of media or materials; for example, video, film, photography, sculpture, performance, or sound. This period of technological innovation, and the plasticity of video technology in the exhibition context, enabled artists to explore and make manifest some of the radical art concerns of the 20th century, incorporating the sculptural, the performative, the painterly, the cinematic and the interactive, towards a total art or *gesamtkunstwerk*.

In 1996, Julia Knight stated in her introduction to *Diverse Practices* that 'it is ironic … that, just as British video art is beginning to get the critical attention it deserves, video *per se* as an art form has in some respects already become an historical phenomenon'.[1] Or John Wyver: 'A new work consigns the previous tape by the artists to a distributor's backlist. Installations have an ephemeral existence, leaving only inadequate documentation to attest to the original experience.'[2] Or, as Stuart Marshall would have it, 'as video began to develop an autonomous practice its identification with fine art values became less relevant; secondly the critical relationship to dominant televisual ideology became more acute'.[3]

These observations articulate what artists

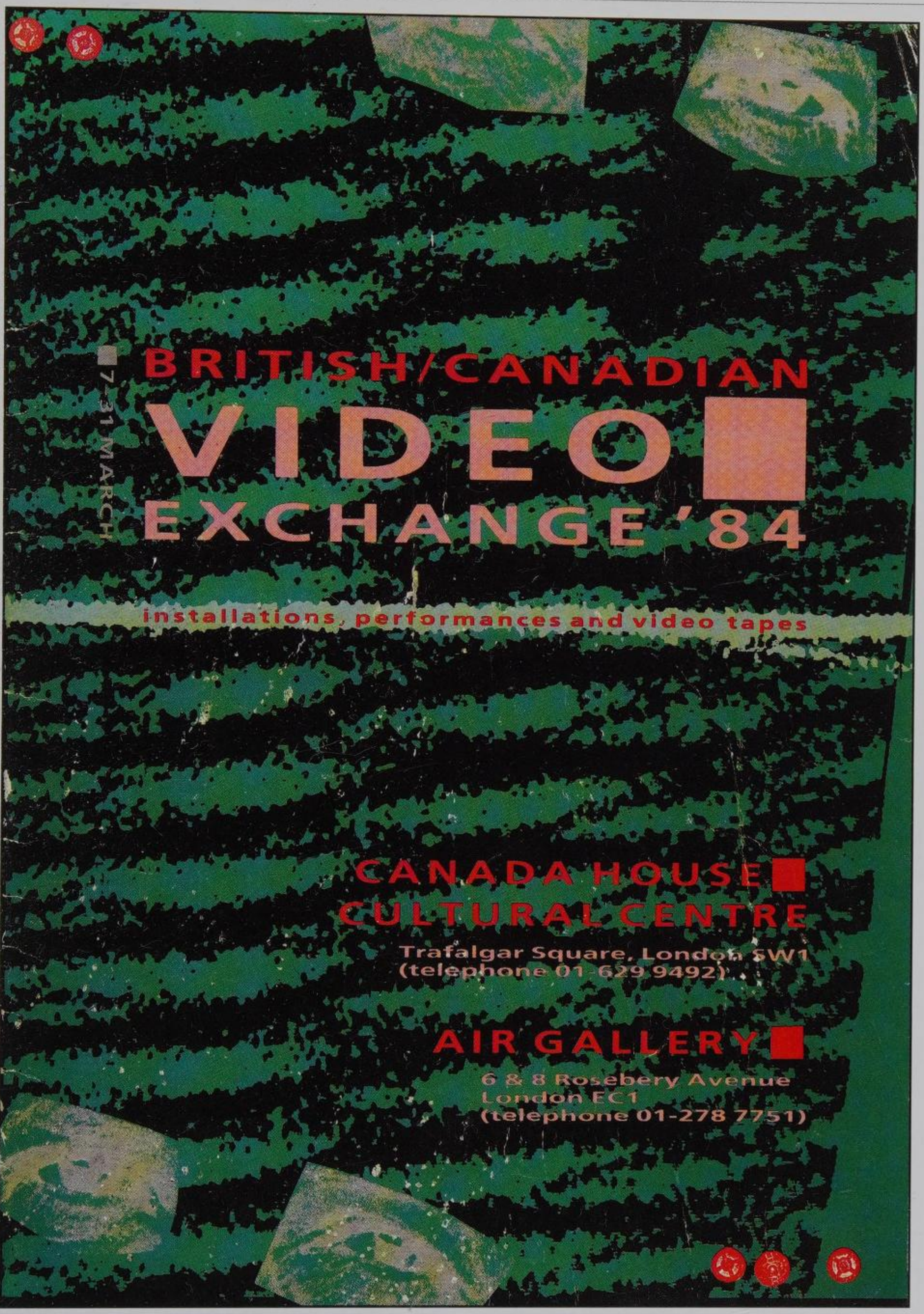


Fig. 6b.
British/Canadian Video Exchange, AIR Gallery, 1984.

using video have been aware of all along: the technology's elusive and shifting nature, and the artworks' uneasy relationship with the commercial and institutional art world. Looking at some of the past written discourse, it seems that there was an issue of 'exclusion' within the traditional institutions. Video art is a Cinderella in the major state-funded museums, and has been largely overlooked by the art critics[4] and the new curators. Is this because this art does not fall easily into capitalism's view of art: the editioned 'work' judged on economic value

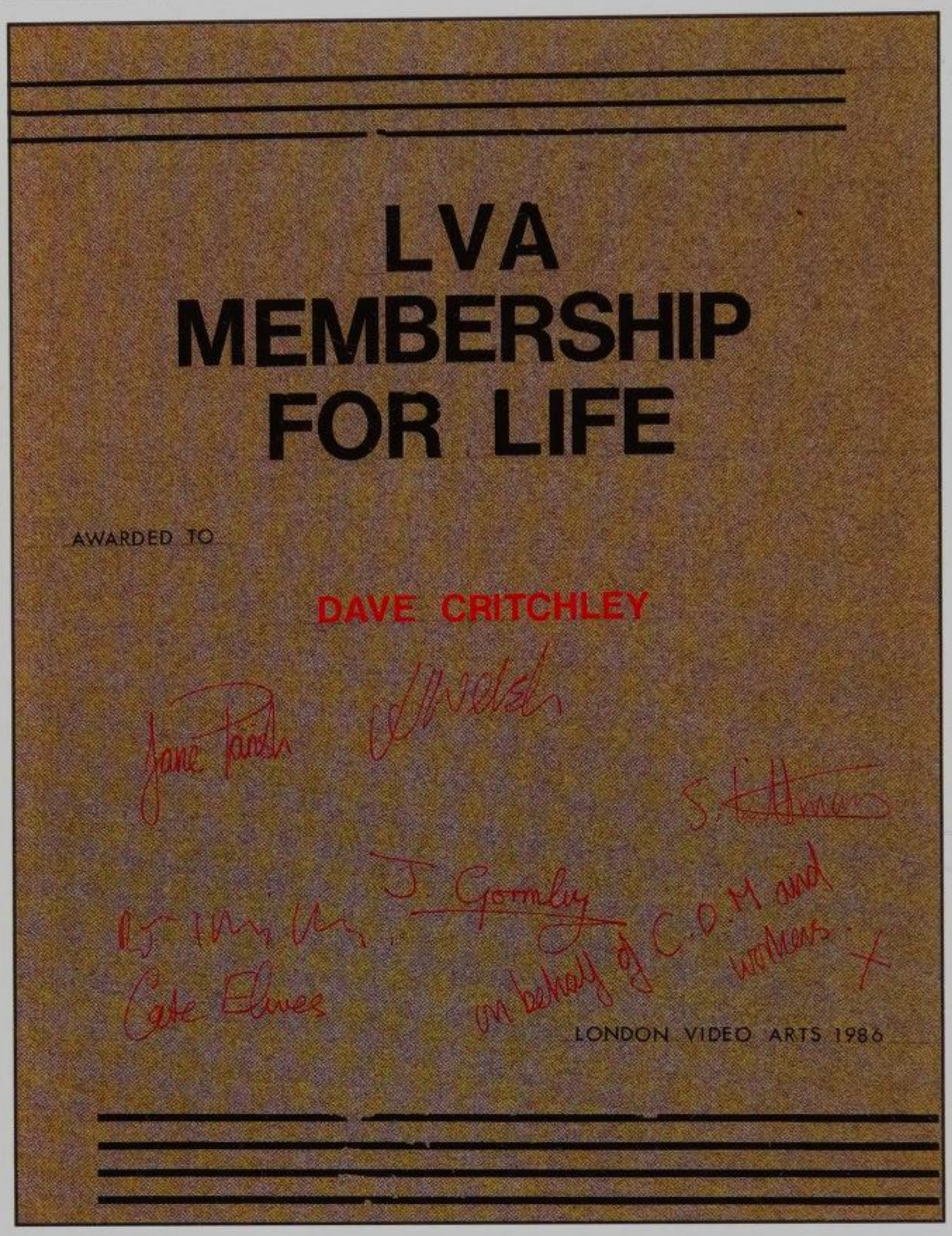


Fig. 7a. *LVA Membership for Life* 1986.

when the galleries are considering purchase and investment? After all, a prime motivation with these artists was not the marketplace. There has been talk of this all along, an accepted belief that the work was being passed by, even at its inception.

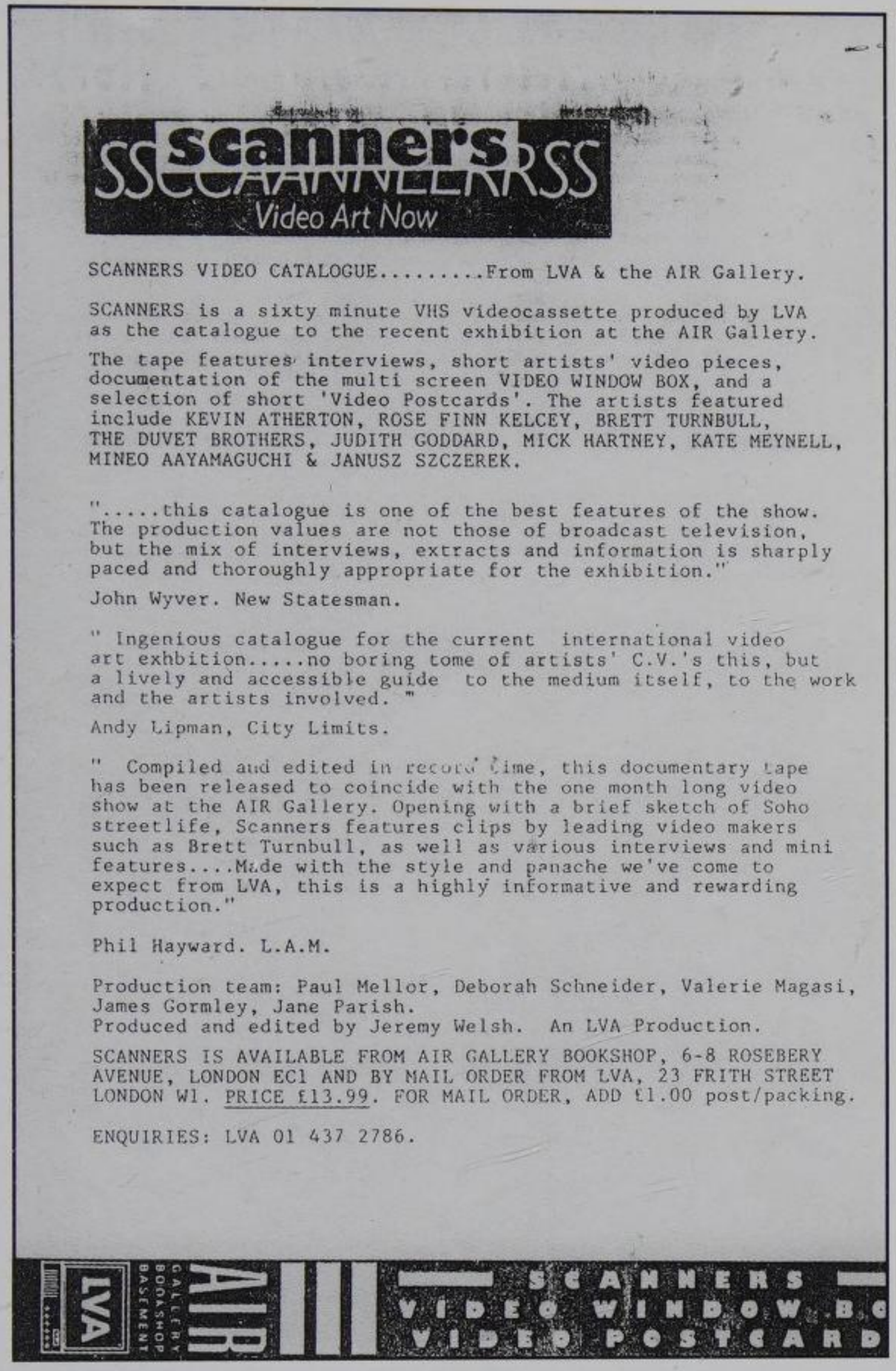
It was the artists themselves who instigated exhibition spaces or pushed for access to the technologies. It is possible to identify some of the key contexts around which video experiment and related philosophies evolved, and the collective concerns emanating from these. Our first *Rewind* Salon, for example, in November 2005, was oriented around the art schools. In the *Video Positive* catalogue of 1989, David Hall said:

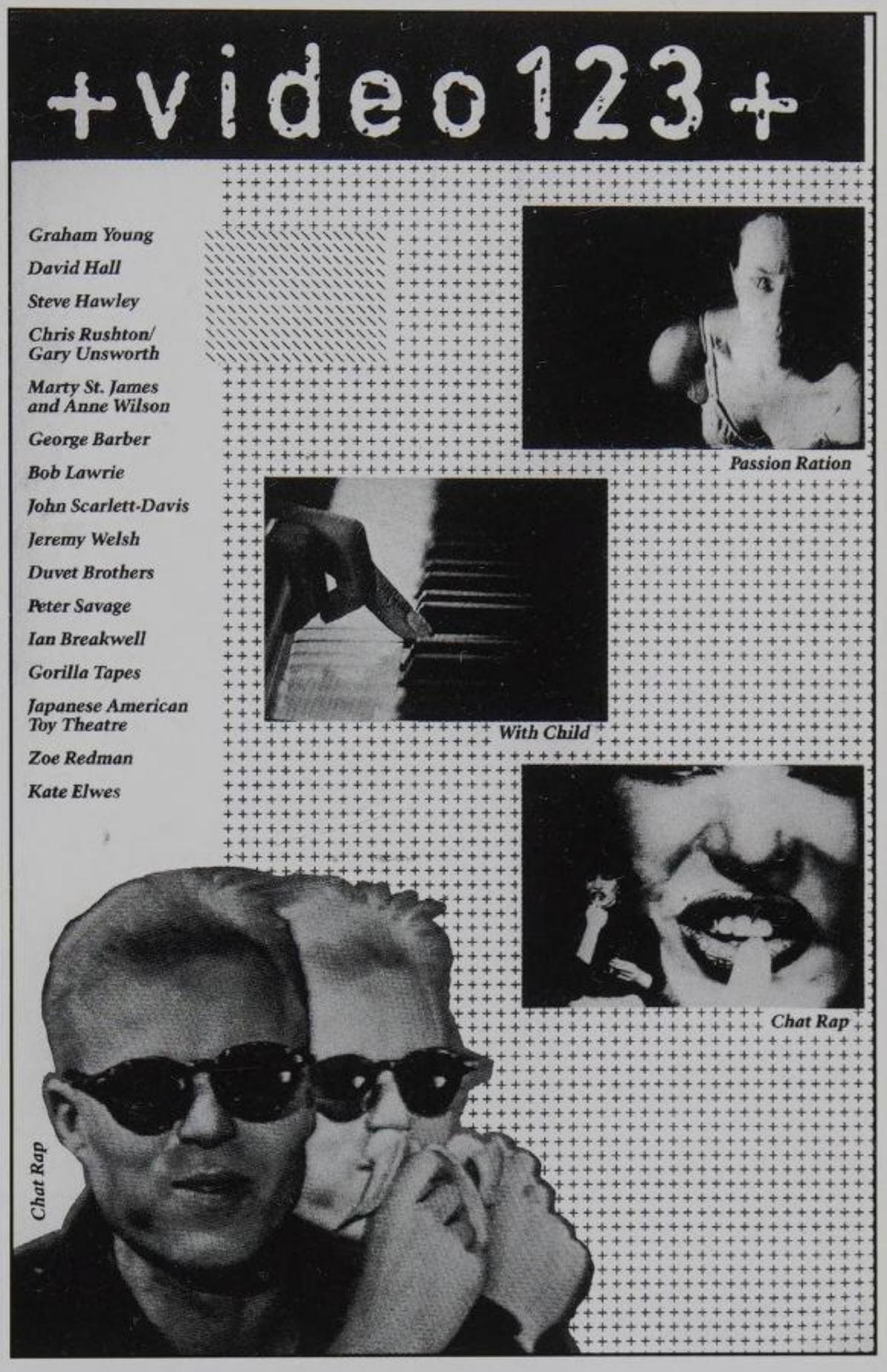
> The art education scene certainly in Britain, is inextricably linked with artists and the art world ... without doubt ninety per cent of all artists started out as students. ... the importance of the introductory period

working alongside artists cannot be underestimated, most artists do some teaching at some level, often not only for financial support, but because the art college circuit provides a platform for contact and debate – debate that rarely occurs in the gallery world. This is an opportunity to discuss work openly, in progress, with few hang-ups about social etiquette.

Other contexts that were central to the evolution of included a number of supportive galleries, often aligned to the art schools or outside the commercial gallery system (for example 2B Butler's Wharf, Basement Group, AIR, and ACME); key exhibitions (for example Gallery House, Biddick Farm, The Video Show, Video Positive); events such as conferences; workshops and collectives that supported artists' work (for example Arts Lab, IRAT, TVX, Fantasy Factory and LVA); broadcast television (particularly for key producers such as Anna Ridley, and later John Wyver); and the publications across which the critical writing was spread (*Studio International*, *Screen*, *AND*, *Variant*, and so on). Funding was obviously crucial to the continuation of electronic moving-image experiment, as it was with film, and analysis of how funding aided video art production and dissemination in the UK will be a valuable area of further study. Julia Knight and Dr Peter Thomas of the University of Sunderland and University of Luton are undertaking important research on the distribution of independent film and video during the 80s and 90s.

Contextualised thus outside exhibition norms of commercial galleries, the works were often inherently political in questioning the status of the art object and the roles of the artist, viewer, and art market. Individual artists' experiments with video were diverse and expansive, and since around 1968 a vast body of experimental work has been produced. Yet the earlier contribution of British artists to the international video art scene remains unsung in the UK, the range of discourses and ambitions largely unwritten-about and undocumented, the artworks in danger of being lost. The lack of widely available critical writing and specific artist-authored historical narratives for experimental





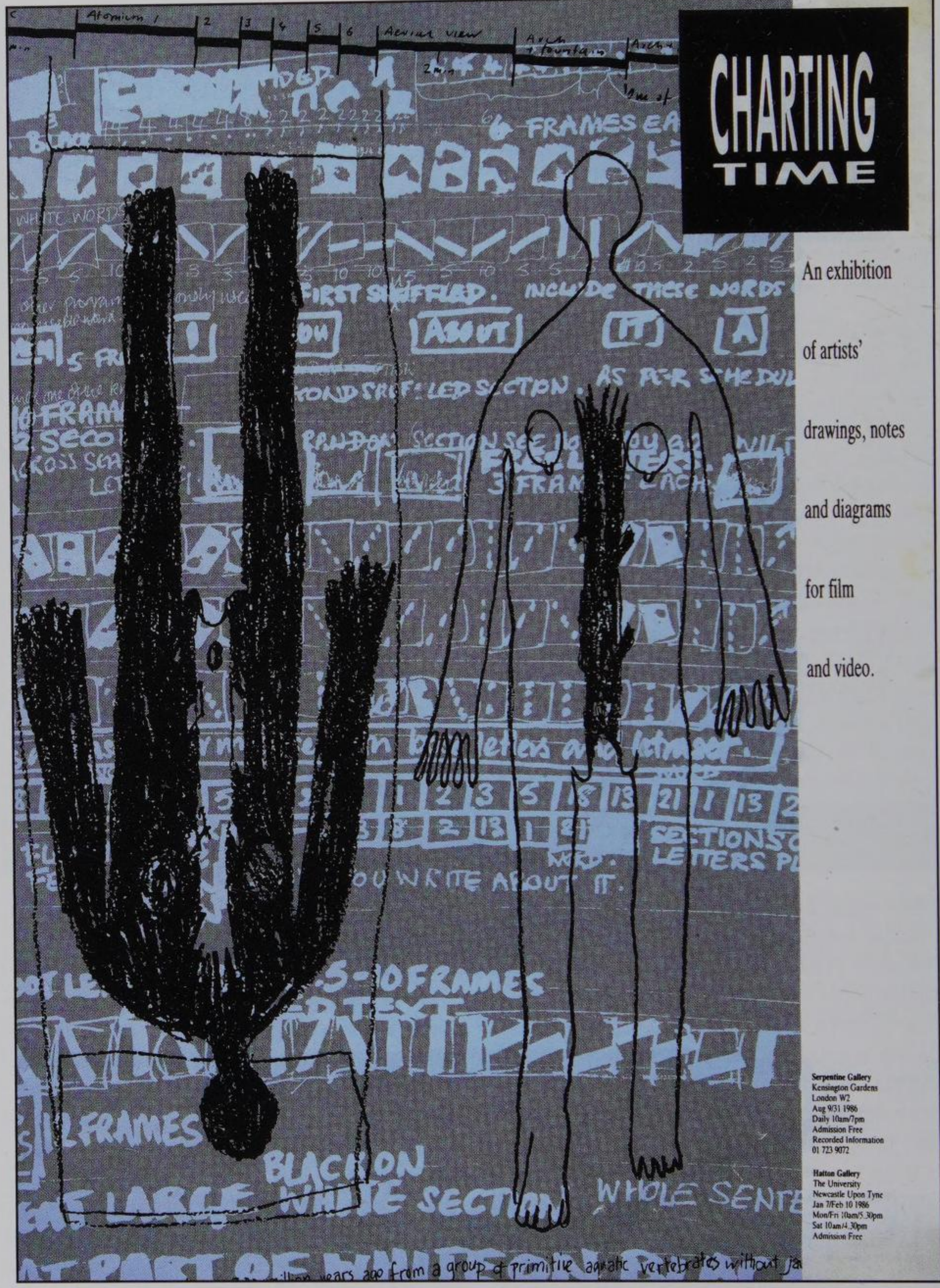
video might be one reason for this, although notable exceptions are Julia Knight's *Diverse Practices* (1996); Catherine Elwes' *Video Art, A Guided Tour* (2005); and my own recent *Experimental Film and Video* anthology (2006). It may be the implication from the contemporary writing that artists during this early production period were preoccupied with material specificity and fixed within a late–modernist oriented philosophical loop, or were focussed on the televisual or on critiquing TV culture. This alone wouldn't be a reason for the early period of video arts' apparent confinement, but its ephemeral nature is surely useful in a post-modern era that reinterprets and re-appropriates, serving it up as its own.

Whilst it is true to say that some artists were dealing with the shared languages of television and video, or took advantage of the broadcast context whilst it offered one of the few funding streams available during the 80s, it would be truly limiting to assume that concern for the televisual (either the material or its dissemination) dominated a twenty-year period of this wide-ranging and complex art history. And not to be seen in isolation, as there was also the wider cultural context of media studies' critical analysis of the televisual. For example in 1974, in *Television and Cultural Form*, Raymond Williams said: 'The new technology is itself a product of a particular social system, and will be developed as an apparently autonomous process of innovation only to the extent that we fail to identify and challenge its real agencies'.[5] As Stuart Marshall observed in 1985:

> The drive to establish the ontological autonomy of video brought the artists up against issues which constantly displaced the terms of their projects. By attempting to produce a self-reflexive modernist practice, video, in fact became embroiled

Fig. 7b (left). *Scanners Video Catalogue* LVA at AIR listing, circa 1987.Fig. 8b (right). + *Video 123* + An anthology of British artists' video, commissioned by Channel 4 for its Eleventh Hour series; exhibited at the Institute for Contemporary Arts, Boston.

Fig. 8a. Charting Time, Serpentine Gallery London, Hatton Gallery Newcastle, 1986.



within practices of signification. Unlike the media and practice of painting and sculpture, video technology and dominant televisual practices do not 'belong' to the artist. The technology was not developed with him or her in mind … Video's attempt to produce a modernist practice therefore produced a second unexpected consequence, the establishment of a critical relation to dominant technology and its representational practice.[6]

A survey of early artists' debates and practices show various decodings of video: from David Hall's conceptual and material analyses;

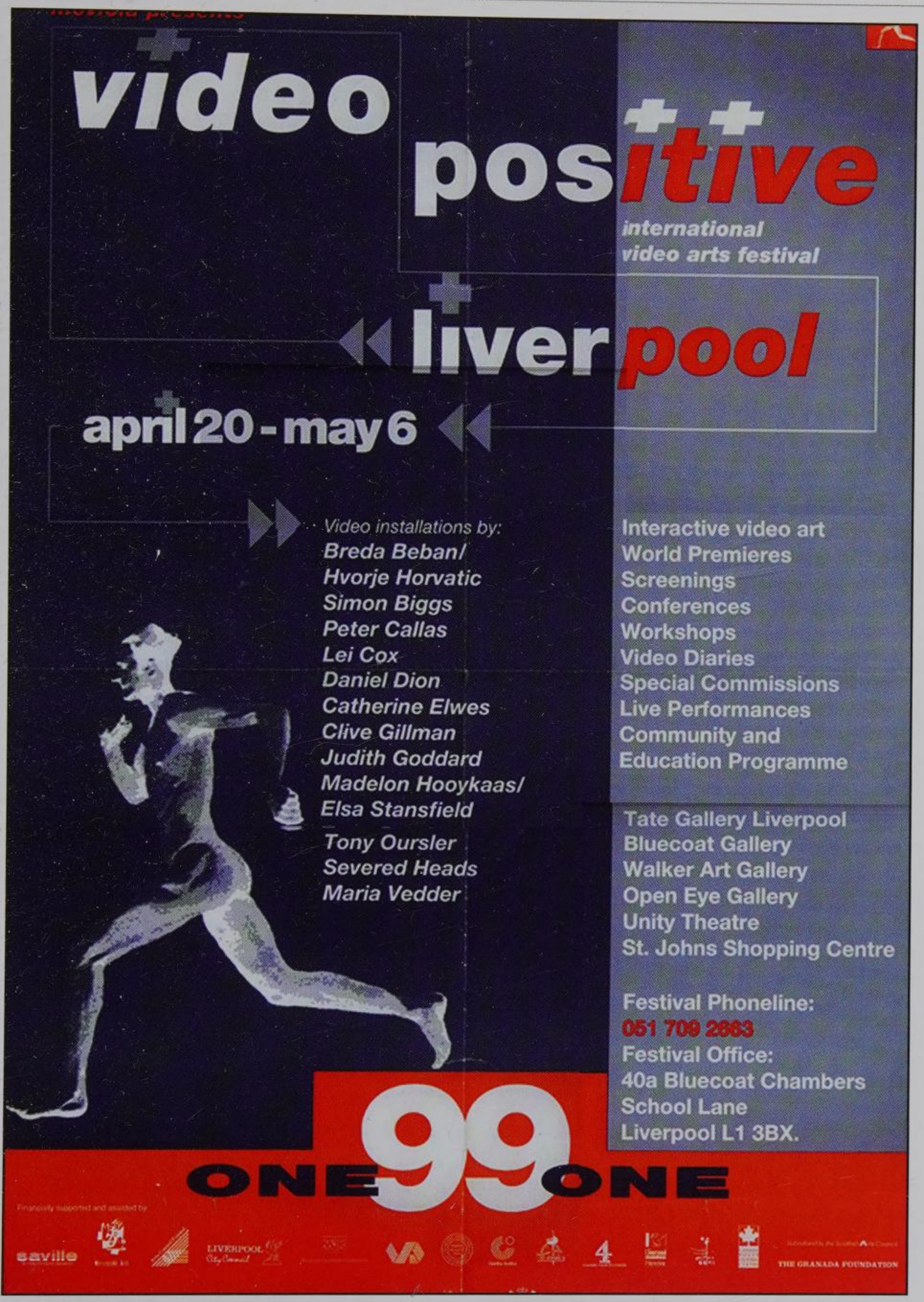


Fig. 9. Poster for *Video Positive: International Video Arts Festival*, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, 1991.

to Stuart Marshall's pluralistic philosophies and timely critiques incorporating the social and political; to the writings of the artist Catherine Elwes around feminist aesthetics and women in art; to Mick Hartney's summaries of the history in LVA's (London Video Arts) 1984 catalogue and *Undercut*; to its intrinsic analysis within specific artworks such as *TV Interruptions* (David Hall, 1971), *Almost Out* (Jayne Parker, 1985) or *Dialogue for Two Players* (Stephen Partridge, 1984).

Rewind can make the works, the ideas,

and the artists visible, as I have said, to a wider audience – but we cannot predict how this will resonate into the future, or whether the selected artists will be propelled into the other art establishments. As Julia Knight observed in 1996, already in 1978 in *Independent Video* a journalist stated: 'In North America, Germany and Holland, video art has achieved artistic recognition, but the British Video Art scene remains in obscurity'. And whether this will change remains to be seen. The important thing is to preserve what we have, and to make sure that the archive reflects the true complexities of the practice, during the periods we are covering.

By re-assembling a picture of British video art from the basis of empirical research, and through the architecture of the online database, this complex and multifarious history, which has incorporated many disciplines, crafts and philosophies, becomes tangible. The individual elements of the *Rewind* archive and online database, comprising interviews, the cataloguing and charting of the provenance of artworks, the survey and preservation of key artworks, and the collection of key texts, demonstrate the astonishing diversity of practice during this period. Over 150 artworks, including multi-channel installations, have been adopted into the programme, digitally remastered and lodged in the national deposit of the Scottish Screen Archive, to build a picture of the breadth and richness of early British video art.

The interviews and artworks evidence the fact that artists were exploring the many materialities and related languages of video and art practices. To maintain the integrity of the artworks we sourced the optimum available tape and made a digital copy with minimal intervention: for example, a half-inch reel-to-reel master tape from 1976 might be unplayable due to its deteriorated condition, but there may be a U-matic copy from 1977 which is in good condition; therefore we would remaster the U-matic. With selected expanded work we copied each individual channel and the documentation tapes where they exist. The provenance of each artwork, whether expanded or single-screen, will be shown through stills, texts, and ephemera.

This is artistic research that has laid the foundations for subsequent moving-image experiment, and we hope also of course that *Rewind* will be a starting point for new research, and will extend outwards like a spider's web to exhume myriad individual artworks and artists that this project can only begin to cover. Archives such as this and collections like the artists' study collection at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London will enable many readings of this sometimes-disordered, non-linear history of the experimental moving image in the UK. Histories have many narratives, and multiple discourses constitute any one moment. The *Rewind* database is an invaluable resource for future research, and will ensure that the endeavour of the artists, whose conceptual essences and artistic currencies were transient and ephemeral, will resonate through time.

Notes

1. Julia Knight (ed.), *Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video Art* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1996).
2. John Wyver, 'The Necessity of Doing Away with Video Art, in *Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video Art* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1996).
3. Stuart Marshall, 'Video: From Art to Independence', *Screen*, No. 66, 1985 (URL: http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/Video_From_Art_to_Independenc%281%29.html).
4. Bar one or two, such as Richard Cork, discussed in the REWIND interviews.
5. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, London: Fontana, 1972, p. 135; quoted in Marshall, 'Video: From Art to Independence'.
6. Ibid.

Chapter 2/

Video as an Art: Looking into the *Rewind* Archive through the Philosophical Aesthetics of Richard Wollheim

Grahame Weinbrein

What a painting means rests upon the experience induced in an adequately sensitive, adequately informed spectator, by looking at the surface of the painting as the intentions of the artist led him to mark it. The marked surface must be the conduit along which the mental state of the artist makes itself felt within the mind of the spectator if the result is to be that the spectator grasps the meaning of the picture.

Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 22.[1]

Catherine Elwes: *There is a Myth*

A woman's left breast. Life size on a nineteen-inch monitor. It fills the screen, left to right, top to bottom. The dramatically extended nipple leads the composition, aureola shading off into the skin above and below. The woman appears to be lactating. The shadow of an arm crosses the expanse of skin. It immediately evokes a horror-film cliché: the shadow of the threatening hand holding a weapon, to be followed by the hand itself and the inevitable violent murder of a beautiful woman. But the hand and arm that appear on-screen belong to a very young baby, its awkward movements accompanied by the animal-like gurgling and snuffling sounds of the most basic of bodily pleasures. The child is nursing at the other, off-screen, breast. The small fingers of the fleshy hand push at it with movements that at first seem out of control and purely reactive, matching the oral satisfactions the infant is deriving. His attention is elsewhere. But one's sense of the child's movements changes, as the hand seems to become possessive and grasping. There is little tenderness, no caress in the movements over and around the nipple. Rather, one sees in the gestures first familiarity, then jealous ownership, bringing to



Fig. 1. Catherine Elwes, *There is a Myth* 1984.

mind the concept of the 'good breast' and the 'bad breast' described by Melanie Klein as symbolic tokens of infant psychology. Pale watery drops form and trickle onto the baby's hand and arm. It is a messy business. A jerky hand movement by the baby smooths away the crevices and wrinkles above the nipple and flicks the fluid from its tip. More milk is produced, wetting the folds of the infant's wrist.

The baby, simultaneously erratic, proprietary, and aggressive, almost seems to be trying to push the breast away, out of sight. However, to assign value to the gestures is to attribute intentionality. How can we justify not only ascribing intention to the instinctual, reflexive behaviors of very early childhood, but also taking so uncharitable a view of an infant at the breast? The answer is that the license for this interpretation is given to the viewer by the artist herself, who is also the on-screen subject, the nursing mother.

The opening text of Catherine Elwes' *There is a Myth* describes a 'myth' in which sons kill the mothers who have given birth to them, out of fear that a being who can create life can also destroy it. This text precedes the scene of the breast and baby's hand, and informs the viewer's perception: it heightens one's sensitivity to the possibility of aggression. We feel a sadistic undercurrent in the grappling hand movements, and also in the frustration one begins to hear in the snuffles, pants and gurgles, which match the infant's inability to shift or in any way affect the statuesque, solid mound. The little hand pummels, pushes, punches, as the little voice lets out cries of anguish at his ineffectiveness and the limits of his power. When, now a fist, the hand buries itself in the soft flesh, the image freezes, leaving no doubt about the interpretation of the child's savagery. The source of nourishment is also an impediment, a blockage, an object of derision. The bad breast.

At the same time, this interpretation of the opening scene of this extraordinary work is overstated and unbalanced: right, but also wrong. Alongside and interwoven with a perception of the child's proprietary aggression is a sense of calm, of beauty and wonder at the process. The image is composed in an engaging range of tones between rose pink, indian red, and sienna brown, an abstract visual delight. The thrust of the breast's protrusion, almost beyond the forward limits of the pictorial space, is an equal source of visual pleasure. The adventurousness of the image, its subversive assertiveness in exhibiting the forbidden, the undeniable erotic thrill and simultaneous sense of revulsion aroused by the sight of the lactating breast, along with one's awareness that it is the body of the artist herself on display, together form a powerful emotional force. And, of course, all this overlays the standard feelings of admiration, love and awe for an image of the Madonna-like relationship of mother and child.

After a short pause, the screen is filled by sensual, soft lips, the color of rose madder. Something extended and flesh-coloured is slowly and erotically inserted between them. A slow camera pullback reveals that it is a thumb. An adult woman, whom we now identify as the artist, sticks her thumb in her mouth, indulging in the repetitive activity characteristic of the compulsive thumb-sucker. Her familiarity with the comfort gesture is clearly based on a sense-memory of her childhood, linking the sensuality of nursing her child with the (presumably irretrievable) memory of her own breast-feeding. The fingers of her hand gently but compulsively stroke her nose, and we feel, empathetically, the sensation of the thumb in the mouth.[2] This image and those that follow, of the mother's

snapping teeth and playful bites at her child, refer to the powerful emotional forces present in the mother's consciousness as she tends to the new-born infant: harsh, protective, overwhelming love, balanced by a powerfully destructive impulse. This is quite clear when she replaces her joyful I-love-you-so-much-I'm-going-to-eat-you-up growls with the sound of a real dog's vicious hair-raising snarl, in exact synchronisation with her toothy lunge at the infant's soft shoulder: another jittery moment.

Melanie Klein's insight, that the human mind can embrace a mass of contradictory impulses and desires, has been a guiding force for me throughout this paper. As she stresses in her pivotal essay 'Love, Guilt, and Reparation',[3] it is not even quite accurate to describe conflicting emotions towards the same object as split or separate: they are two aspects of one attitude. This is the sense that Elwes manages to convey. In *There is a Myth*, we feel the binding together of a set of contrary yet complementary desires, experienced through the medium of the body, and communicating immediately, without analysis or even a conscious registration by the viewer of what is happening from moment to moment.

It is often necessary to use many words to describe a cinematic experience like this; an experience that is communicated immediately, or grasped in a single *gestalt*. It is always obvious that the description, no matter how labored, is never quite sufficient to pin down the stream of fluttering images with their implications, associations, and colourations, all immediately present to the viewer. I think of this point in connection with Wittgenstein's aphorism: 'There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest'.[4] The attempt to find words for what makes itself manifest is at the core of my project here; the moving image resists capture by language. Time and again I will point out that what I am struggling long-windedly to describe is available immediately and non-verbally to a sufficiently sensitive viewer of the work under consideration. I open with *There is a Myth* exactly because the point is so clearly applicable to it.

The piece communicates an array of feelings not only difficult to express, but also often



Fig. 2. Catherine Elwes, *There is a Myth* 1984.

not admitted, even to oneself. This is a remarkable achievement, and depends on an expertise and sensitivity with respect to the video medium. But what does this mastery consist in? What enables Elwes to expose emotions so subtle and sub-textual, making them available, not only for the artist herself to comprehend, but also to a viewer across a span of decades, an uncompromising gender divide, and from one culture to another? What underlies the immediate expression, through images, of what can be shown but not easily said?

Richard Wollheim, in a discussion about the peculiar depiction of space in some of Manet's paintings, suggests that their backdrops refer to a vista we are deeply familiar with. From psychoanalytic literature, he draws the insight that the indeterminate space of the dream, the 'dream-screen', reproduces 'the infantile experience of that against which our first dreams were dreamt, the mother's breast'.[5] He hypothesises that this fundamental image of a specific inner landscape forms the background of many of Manet's paintings, lending them a sense of familiar mystery. If the image of the expansive breast filling the visual field has so fundamental a place in one's psyche, it is no surprise that the impact of Elwes' *There is a Myth* is equally immediate and intense.

But we need a more general description of how the artist achieves these heights of subtlety and expression.

Introduction: showing and saying

This essay is an attempt to outline answers to the basic question of how moving image art means what it means; how it succeeds in, to repeat Wittgenstein's phrase, *showing* what cannot be *said*. I draw on two sources: first, the *Rewind* archive of British videotapes from the 1970s and 80s, as a well of examples and illustrations of my ideas; second, the work of the late philosopher, aesthetician, and art historian Richard Wollheim, from whom, both in person and through his writing, I learned most of what I know and believe about looking at and understanding art.

The basic aim is methodological. I will make an initial stab at applying to the moving image some of Wollheim's insights and techniques of interpreting *painting*, which are laid out most cogently and fully in his masterpiece of aesthetics, art history, and connoisseurship, appropriately entitled *Painting as an Art*. As well as providing a framework for considering how art communicates, the date of publication of Wollheim's book is significant. Based on a series of lectures delivered in 1984, and published in 1987, the book, and the thought that led up to it, are concurrent with the production of many of the works in the *Rewind* archive. Though I am more interested in what a work says to me in the present than what it might have said in its time, it is also true that works of art are in many ways linked to their moment of production. From that point of view, it makes sense to depend on an aesthetic outlook contemporary with the works under consideration. It does not follow, of course, that a work loses its power as it ages. To my mind, both the *Rewind* archive works and Wollheim's book are as relevant and communicative as they ever were.

The dual roles of the artist

> ... when painting is practised as an art, inextricably entwined with the role of agent is the role of spectator. The artist has a spectator embedded in him.
> Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 286.

Wollheim's theory of meaning in art – unlike many philosophical aesthetics – is an account that suits *artists* as well as writers or theorists. He develops the idea that the meaning of a work of art is embedded in and attenuated by the *experience* of the work, that it is often resistant to verbalisation, and that the first, defining, experience of the work is always the artist's. Wollheim stresses the two-foldedness of the artist's role as agent and spectator, as marker and as first viewer of those marks. As agent he makes a mark, and then as spectator *sees* something *in* the mark, both what it represents, that is, what it is a picture of, and what it expresses; how it captures his thoughts about the object represented. Making an art-work involves checking how well the emerging piece matches inner intentions – not an entirely accurate way to put it, since the artist may not know what his intentions are until he inscribes them and finds them in his own work (and then may not be able to put them into words or even think them). That is to say, an essential part of the creative process is to assess whether the mark resonates. If not, it is amended; if so, added to and amplified. That very experience of resonance is what the work produces in its viewer, and where its meaning resides. At the core of this theory is the idea that the viewer's experience is an echo of that of the artist.

The making of marks on a surface, and *seeing* something *in* those marks: this is the basis of both the artist's process and the spectator's experience, and it depends on two human capabilities:

1. *seeing in*: the capability to see both depth and things depicted in marks on a surface;

2. *expressive perception*: a visual experience that can evoke an emotion, which feeds back and colours the perception; infuses it with happiness, or nostalgia, or humility, or anger, or longing; the image encapsulates the emotion.

The first of these capabilities – *seeing in* – accounts for representation, and the second – *expressive perception* – for expression. Meaning is embedded in the experience of the work, first by the artist (does it capture my feelings about what I am portraying?), then by the viewer who, by the act of looking, links back to the

creative act. The primary meaning of a work of art is something that it develops, or as Wollheim says 'accrues', through the act of creating it. Wollheim rejects the notions of meaning as code, of art as a language, of meaning as primarily lying within historical explanations of the work, and of art as illustration of sociological or other social science theories. Linking meaning to the activity of the artist makes a theory very attractive to a practitioner. It gives an immediate point and significance to the details of the activity, to the *practice*, of the artist.

One of the main principles I learned from Wollheim is that one comes to an appreciation of the importance of art through looking at individual works, using attention to their details as a basis for understanding the *what* and the *how*: what the works mean, and how their meaning is embedded and extracted. Perception, that is to say, is valued over all forms of external knowledge applied to a work. It is in apprehending works one by one that we begin to comprehend art's power. This is an argument Wollheim offers in favor of the value of connoisseurship over other forms of art scholarship. My commitment in this essay is to a kind of connoisseurship with respect to video art, relying on what we can get from a work through our eyes and ears without ideology or dogma. If only that were possible! But when I catch myself presupposing ideas that cannot be found in the work under consideration, I will retrace my steps.

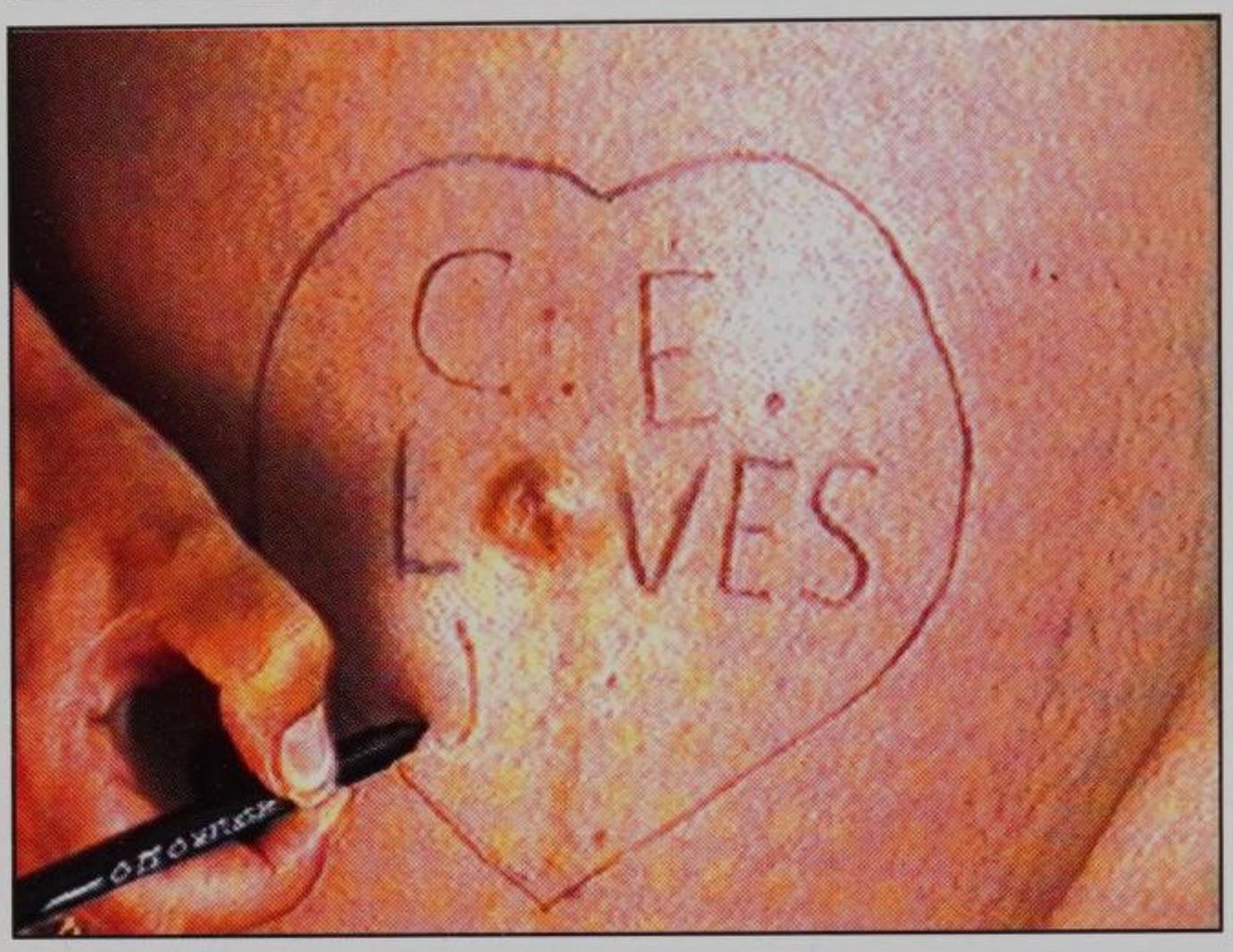
This is not as uncontroversial a point as it may seem. I recently found an online interview with the film scholar Noël Carroll which includes a glib dismissal of what he calls 'descriptive analysis', naming me (with faint praise) as one of its practitioners.[6] Carroll calls for interpretation – as if there can be description without interpretation! In my writing, in any case, I strive for interpretive description, attempting to put into words how aspects of what I see and hear operate on me and elicit thoughts, reactions, emotions, and associations. If this is not interpretation, it is difficult to imagine what might be. In my view, to recapitulate, the only way to demonstrate the value of 'experimental' film, video 'art', and 'new' media is to describe the depth and substance of key works.

Thus Richard Wollheim's approach to art informs my own methodology. He wrote about painting, and was in fact unsympathetic to time-based art. He mentions film only anecdotally in his autobiographical memoir *Germs*, and claims to be deaf to the pleasures of music. In contrast, his understanding of painting is subtle, intricate and forceful: an inspiration. My goal is to use Wollheim's ideas about painting to analyze the moving image.

Catherine Elwes' technique, used in *There is a Myth* and other works by her in the archive, fits into the familiar, much discussed category of montage, whereby meaning is built up in a flow of images. Against a widely accepted presupposition of film theory, I do not believe that montage is necessarily a language, based on rules or grammatical underpinnings. Of course there are obvious tropes, like the point-of-view cut, but these are absent from the work of an artist like Elwes. The impact of montage in her work lies in its connection with her personal psychology, and the extent to which the artist is able to embed thoughts, associations, and emotions in an audio-visual stream. It depends on an accretion of meaning as images accumulate in time, like the formation of an island by the buildup of ocean sediment. Out of context, each image is ambiguous, open to many interpretations, with no criterion of validity. The meaning is fixed, recursively, as each new image in the stream modifies the meaning built to that point, a meaning either revised or overdetermined by accompanying sound. In line with Wollheim's proposal about the dual roles an artist must play, the construction of montage is an experimental process – the artist determines, discovers, and verifies the emotional value of a particular image within a series of images in the course of assembling them. The artist assumes the role of a future viewer, and accepts that the work is done when its meaning is in line with how she feels about its subject.

Catherine Elwes: *With Child*

> The spectator of an expressive picture ... has the satisfaction of knowing that what he is trying to do is the mirror-image of what the artist tried to do when he made the picture. For what the artist tried to do



Figs. 3 and 4.
Catherine Elwes, *With Child*, 1984.

> was to give the picture a look which a spectator – and here he relied on the spectator in himself – was of a piece with the emotion that was currently causing him to paint as he did.
> Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 88

In *With Child*, the heavily pregnant Elwes prepares her house for the imminent child – 'nesting' is the slightly dismissive term for this activity, suggesting that it may be driven by maternal instinct. The clothes and toys she lays out on the shelves are second-hand, perhaps from her own infancy. Whatever their source, they are infused with emotional value. As viewers, of course we do not have access to any associations these objects might evoke, but we



can feel them in many facets of the construction of the audio-visual stream: in the interspersed images of Elwes' own verbal and facial reactions, in the care with which she handles the items, and in the soundtrack, including the intertwined rhythms of double heartbeats, foetal and maternal, that recur throughout. The erratic sound reminds one of Steve Reich's *Drumming* and lends the images a mix of urgency and nostalgia. In images such as the swaying green trees through the window, we feel something of the pregnant mother's internal rhythms, the movements of the foetus inside her belly, the calm and comfort and slowness of her body.

I write these words as a man, who will never experience these particular bodily sensations. Yet through Elwes' image and sound construction, I have been brushed by them, almost feeling them in my own body. These sensations inhere, transparent and conveyed with unmistakable force, in the correspondence between the images and sounds, and the pregnant artist's inner physical rhythms and flow of emotions. How can we be sure that this is the 'correct' understanding of the work? The first criterion of the success of the expression must be in its acceptance of the audio-visual stream by the artist herself as, in Wollheim's words, 'of a piece with' her emotions, thoughts, and sensations. It is the artist's job to make sure that the inner experience she has in relation to a set of images is conveyed in the way those images are presented. She must adopt the role of her first viewer, to make sure that the emotions carried by the currents of sounds and images are the emotions she feels toward what they depict. Then, as subsequent viewers, we can also feel her emotions, embedded in the video, when we watch the result.

> ... the artist is exclusively concerned that the meaning of the act [of making a picture] should be visible to his eyes. But if it is visible to his eyes – really visible that is – then of necessity it is so for other adequately informed, adequately sensitive, eyes, should they by chance light upon the picture. Visibility, like meaning itself, cannot be private.
> Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 304

A doll, included in the collection of objects the artist arranges on shelves, introduces a subtle discordant note. Later it becomes the vehicle for explicit violence and self-destruction, when, with a shock of aggression, the mother-to-be stabs the doll with a pair of scissors. In this moment we suddenly realise that this contrasting element of the artist's physical and mental state was inherent from the beginning of the piece; for example, in the drab quality of the used clothing and toys, in the moody lighting and muted colors in which they are presented.

Sex, mimed by hugging monkey soft toys, wipes away the darker mood. Clearly modeled on actual human interaction in the course of events and gestures, the monkey fucking is presented as a series of still images. This is perhaps partly for technical reasons, since stop-motion animation was almost impossible to achieve with the video equipment available in the 80s. However the stills sequence is very effective. The slide show of sexual positions between the boy and girl soft monkey dolls allows the viewer a distance, a moment to evaluate and reflect on the events, rather than being caught up in their eroticism. From this distance, we interpret the scene as an expression of love as much as a reference to the procreative interlude that resulted in the pregnancy. The cut to the artist's tear-filled eyes at the end reinforces the tenderness of the moment. Divorced from motion, still images encourage a more contemplative stance toward the subject of the images. However, as we will see, this is not a grammatical or semantic rule of the still sequence. Still sequences appear often in the videos I consider here, with different meanings and values in each case.



Figs. 5 and 6.
Catherine Elwes, *With Child*, 1984.

Two-foldedness

> ... like so much else connected with painting, pleasure rests on matching, on bringing together, on deriving something out of juxtaposing, two experiences or two aspects of a single experience.
> Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 100.

Wollheim describes one of the fundamental pleasures of painting as the experience of 'two-foldedness'. In looking at a representational painting (either figurative or abstract), a viewer sees, simultaneously, both the surface of the canvas, paper, or other medium, and the space depicted. One *sees* the depiction *in* the surface.

The attempt to apply Wollheim's insight to the moving image runs into trouble right away. It is virtually impossible to 'see' the surface of the projection screen or TV monitor, since its motion, indistinguishable from actual motion, carries depth with it.[7] We almost always find ourselves looking *into* the images (though I will examine a case that may be an exception later in this essay). At the same time the viewer is perfectly aware, phenomenologically aware,



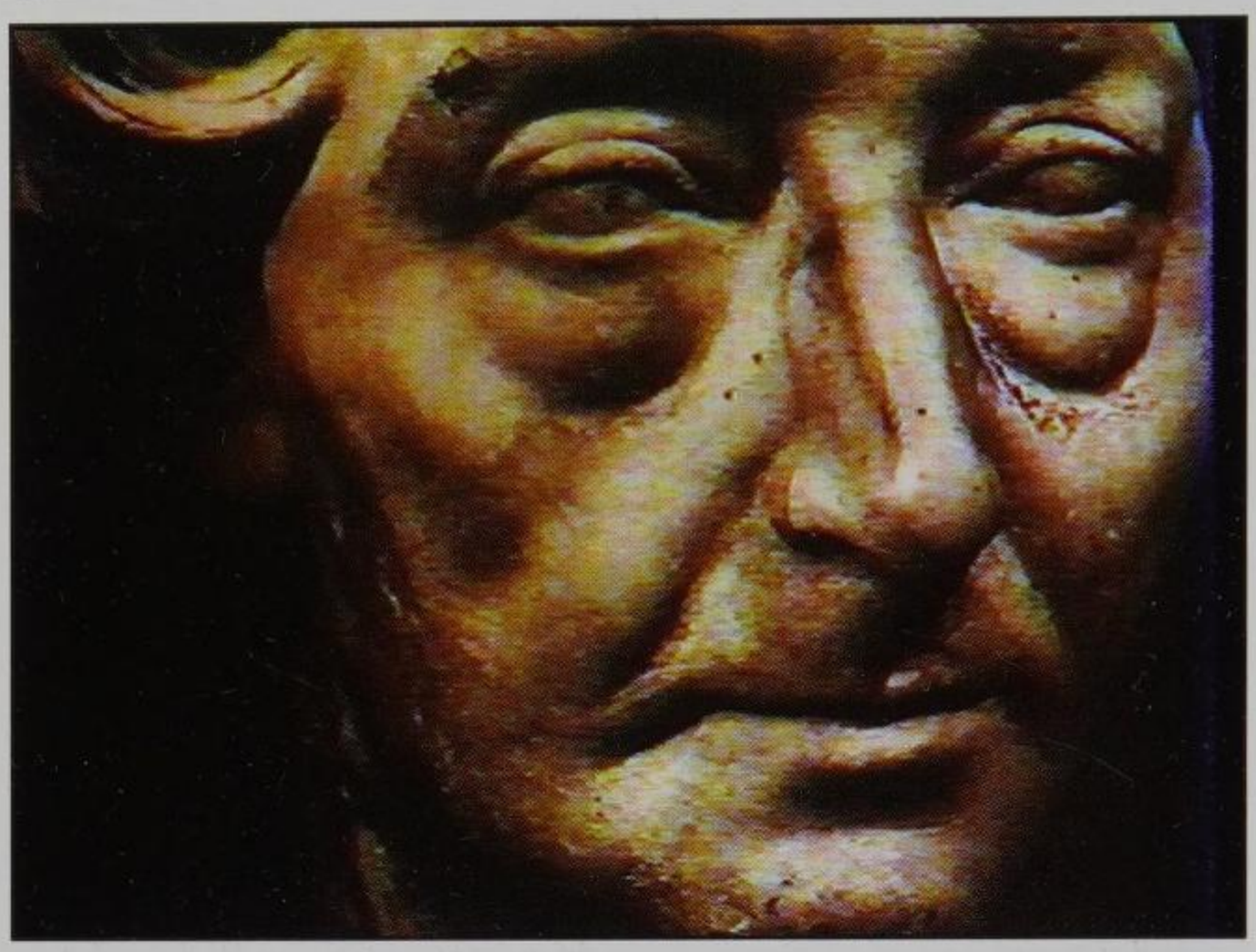


Fig. 7. Tony Sinden, *Roman Portraits*, 1989.

that the scene depicted in a cinematic image is not reality. Based on a reconciliation of these two points, I will propose that the material surface of the cinematic image can be replaced by another element in order to retain the concept of two-foldedness. I'll suggest in what follows what this element might be.

Tony Sinden: Roman Portraits

Tony Sinden's *Roman Portraits* is a deceptively simple work based on a coffee table book of the same title, published in 1940.[8] It was one of the first in the long line of Phaidon Press art publications, all largely composed of images. This particular volume consists of page after page of photographs of Roman sculptures. In the video work, the artist keeps each photograph on screen just long enough for the viewer to take in the image. We don't realise immediately that the image is of a book, but this becomes apparent as soon as we understand that the odd transitions between photographs are in fact page turns.

The book is laid out in portrait format, height greater than width, and shows only the heads of the sculptures. They are photographed with dramatic highlights and deep shadows, recalling the look of *film noir*. For the video the black and white images are tinted a warm sepia. The video camera has been set up so that the TV (landscape format) image remains within the geometric confines of each page of the book. As a result, the photographs are tightly cropped, cutting into the faces in a decidedly contemporary cinematic style. Partially based, perhaps, on our understanding of the function of the close-up in conventional cinema, the cropping, together with the color, triggers an immediate visceral response to the images. We react to them as we might react to actual faces – reading each expression, evaluating the person just as we might, were we to meet him.

In some cases, the 2000-year-old sculptures have almost a snapshot quality, catching a fleeting worry as it ripples across the features of a face. In other cases, the face is fixed and regal; in others, all we see is a damaged relic, the nose broken off, humanity worn away by the ravages of time. But the latter examples are infrequent. In most of the portraits the humanity and individual personality shines through, fulfilling the general criteria (since the Renaissance) of a successful portrait as giving access to the person behind the face.

Another way that the tight cropping of *Roman Portraits* evokes a reading of the facial expressions and character is that it calls on our tendency to complete a partial picture mentally. We frequently depend on the faculty of imagination to fill in a missing component of our perceptual experience. This psychological function often elicits an emotional reaction – just as the sound in a horror film produces a stronger effect if one closes one's eyes and imagines, rather than watches, what is happening on screen.

However, the reading of the images as *faces* rather than *sculptures* is so insistent that it must be sustained by factors other than the tight cropping alone. With Wollheim's insight about the two-foldedness of painting in mind, I am sure that it is a result of our simultaneous awareness of image and subject. There is a clue to how this comes about in *Roman Portraits*' precarious passage from living subject to video image. Here is a simplified description of the path, omitting a number of intermediate steps:

SUBJECT ➟ SCULPTURE
SCULPTURE ➟ PHOTOGRAPH
PHOTOGRAPH ➟ BOOK
BOOK ➟ VIDEO

As viewer, one registers the shape of this linear, but extended, route again without effort or question, and the many-stepped removal of the original subject from the screen is precisely what sanctions our relating to the human being at the end of the chain. I have glanced through the book itself, and found that I had to work hard to relate to the human subjects. In the book the sculptures seem not much more than historical artifacts. The video releases the human beings from their stone and photographic bindings by bringing these very bindings to the forefront of our consciousness.

When we see photographs in, for example, a documentary film, we don't see them as *within* the cinematic space. They are at the screen plane, so we can concentrate on what they are pictures of. This is equally true for *Roman Portraits*. To one's eyes, the *photographs* of the sculptures, as flat material pages of a book, are not quite in the space depicted by the video: but the photographic subjects, the sculptures themselves, are. If we see the pages in diegetic space at all, they are *at the level of the picture plane* – as close to us as they can get. But then we have to account for the motion. As the video runs, the artist flips through the book, retaining the page turns on screen. At first these page turns read more as video transitions than intrusions into the space between book and TV screen. But when we recognise the transitions for what they are, we are forced to reconsider the image as having its own position in depicted space, back from the surface of the screen. The photograph indeed appears flat, and at the same time we can see the sculpture *in* its flatness, but now we also have to recognise the book as an object which occupies its own picture space.[9]

Once again, it has taken some convolutions to describe something that is immediately available to the eyes. I have taken the trouble to develop the description because it provides a path into Wollheim's two-foldedness. Book, photograph and sculpture are all aspects of the same, simultaneous, visual experience. Seeing the layers of flatness and depth as aspects of a single visual experience increases the power of both dimensions. Also, I believe, it is a crucial factor in pushing us to the next level, relating to the subject depicted in the sculptural portrait.

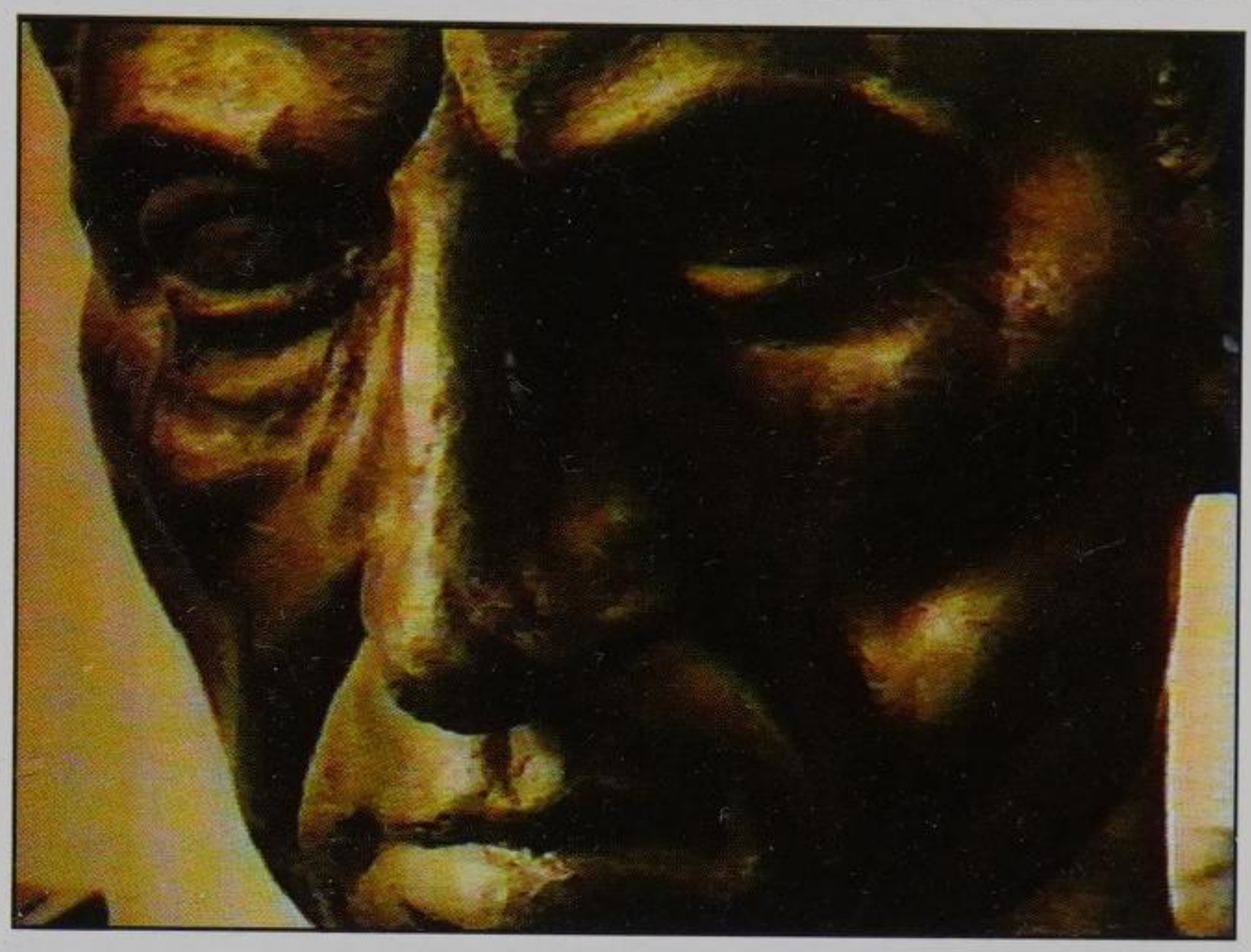


Fig. 8. Tony Sinden, *Roman Portraits*, 1989.

Here are some examples. The glassy-eyed stares of two young men denote innocence, combined with violence held in check. Perhaps they are soldiers, or members of a society that either expected or generated aggression in its male youth. Yet both youths also seem quite gentle in their physical confidence. They do not elicit fear, but rather a desire to be on their side. Is it that they are capable of protecting us, that their aggression can be summoned if necessary? The faces of these young men contrast with the jowly cheeks and deep pockets below the eyes of an older man. His self-congratulatory soft features and confidence in his right to his position in society speak across the multiple layers of representation, which again enhance rather than obstruct a connection with the original subject. Having accepted the navigation from video to book to photograph to sculpture, how could we not make the last step to subject, especially given the overdetermined visual evocation, through lighting, cropping and coloration, of the cinematic close-up?

The last factor that encourages the viewer to relate to the stone faces as if they were human subjects is the temporality of *Roman Portraits*. When we see a shot of a face on screen, the first thing we do is evaluate the person behind the face. *That is what we do*. It is like seeing a street sign: at first we read the words, and then, given time and interest, we can admire the typeface or notice its state of decay. The individual images of *Roman Portraits* are carefully timed. Each photograph is

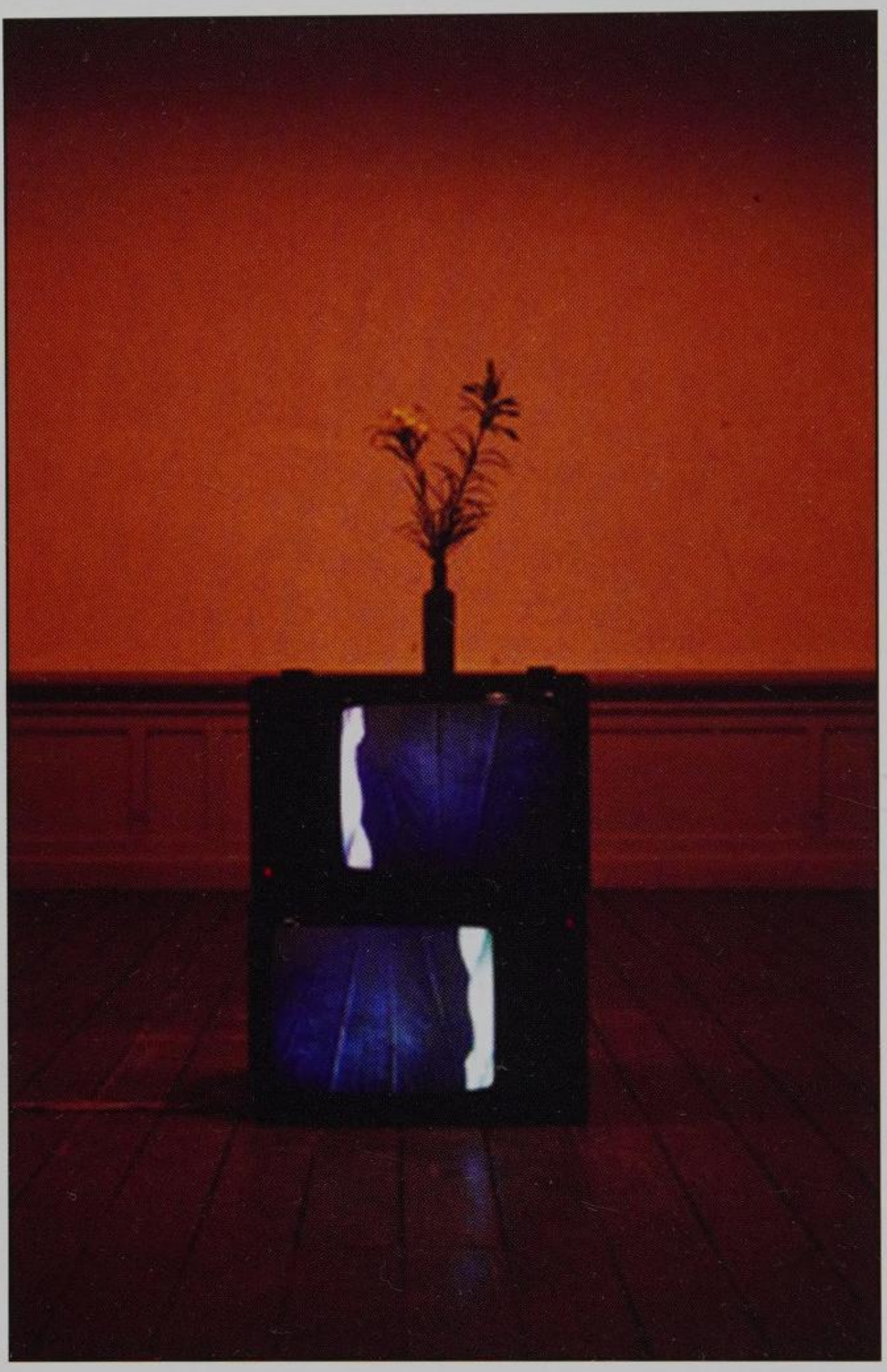


Fig. 9. Mineo Aayamaguchi *Feet*, 1983; documentation of video installation, 1992, Vila Nova de Cerveira, Portugal.

available just long enough for us to respond to the face, to register a reaction to it, and to add it to the storehouse of faces connected with this piece.

The paradox of *Roman Portraits* is in the fact that the very qualities that one might expect to mitigate against *seeing-in*, that is *seeing* the human subjects *in* the pictures, actually reinforce the experience. That we never see a sculptural portrait, or even a face, in its entirety, but only a fragment; that we are much removed both in time and in process from the models for the sculptures; that our experience of each image is limited in time: together, these factors ought to close off any possible relationship to the Roman citizens portrayed. Yet one's experience of the piece is first and foremost of the Roman citizens. I propose that it is this very fragmentation that leads us directly to the subjects.

The quality that I believe yields two-foldedness for an experience of the moving image is its containment, its limitedness, the fact that cinematic images are always framed. The frame can be real, as in the edges of the CRT box, or metaphorical, for example, foregrounded by the cropping in *Roman Portraits*. The more this factor is brought to the attention of the viewer, the greater his or her awareness of seeing-in, and the more pronounced the *visual* pleasures in the work. I will defend this proposal in the following consideration of several works in the archive.

Representation ...

> Once painting is practised as an art, then it is certain that the agent will mobilize not only his perceptual beliefs about what he represents but also a range of attitudes towards that thing. ... The way he represents a face will be bound up with what he feels about its owner; the way he represents a building is now inextricable from how he responds to its dignity or charm.
>
> Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 52.

Wollheim insists that depiction in itself has to include some aspect of the artist's attitude toward the subject, even if the subject is abstract. Though I am well aware that generalisations about art, especially prescriptive generalisations, are always open to dispute, I will still risk the claim that in many cases, especially with respect to video art produced in its first couple of decades, artists accepted the necessity of including in their depictions of reality something of their attitude toward their subjects. We rarely find, in other words, an artist attempting an 'objective' depiction of a subject that does not incorporate something of his or her attitude toward it.

... and expression

It should not be a mere association to what

> is perceived. The emotion should flood in on the perception. In expressive perception it is not enough that what is perceived invokes the corresponding emotion: the emotion must effect how we perceive what we perceive. Expressed emotion and perception fuse.
> Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 82

Creating cinematic sequences that express or embody the emotions the artist feels about the subject is as much a matter of discovery as invention. As cinematographer or videographer, the artist is tuned in and sensitive to his or her responses, setting the pictorial composition and choosing moments to record in which the appropriate emotion 'floods in' on the perception. At the editing stage, further adjustment is possible. The editing room is an environment of exploration, and trial and error, where one experiments with sequences of the image and sound materials at hand until the stream 'feels right', that is, when it embodies the desired emotions or attitudes towards its subject. In some cases, naturally, the artist is so confident and clear about what is to be conveyed, and how the sequence of shots will convey it, that he simply follows a plan and succeeds immediately. But he must still adopt the role of viewer to assess this success.



Figs. 10 and 11. Mineo Aayamaguchi, *Feet*, 1983.

Mineo Aayamaguchi: *Feet*

Some works in the *Rewind* archive may appear to address issues of representation divorced from expression. But expression still seeps in. Two works by Mineo Aayamaguchi, *Feet* and *Pictura* take, as explicit subjects, aspects of the way the image of space is constructed within the TV monitor. In both works, wide-planked floor boards form an image of recession, since the lines, parallel in actuality, appear to get closer as they recede toward the perspectival vanishing point beyond the screen. I will discuss only *Feet* in detail – *Pictura* is composed of a more complex image which incorporates video feedback, but it deals with the same issues in a different way.

The simplicity of the image in *Feet* activates a two-folded viewing, allowing one to pay attention to the plane of the screen and simultaneously look into the space it depicts. A man's bare legs enter and move slowly away from the viewer, defining the space again, this time by motion. An odd contradiction is registered between the angle of the figure and the downward-pointing camera angle. We would expect the figure to be leaning towards us, since the floor slopes upward toward the top of the frame. But he is uncompromisingly vertical. The two indicators of spatial depth within the image, motion and perspective, are slightly at odds. However we have no trouble seeing the space as consistent and coherent. It is impossible to see it otherwise. The work brings to attention the extent to which the spatiality we see in a video image is a result of mental

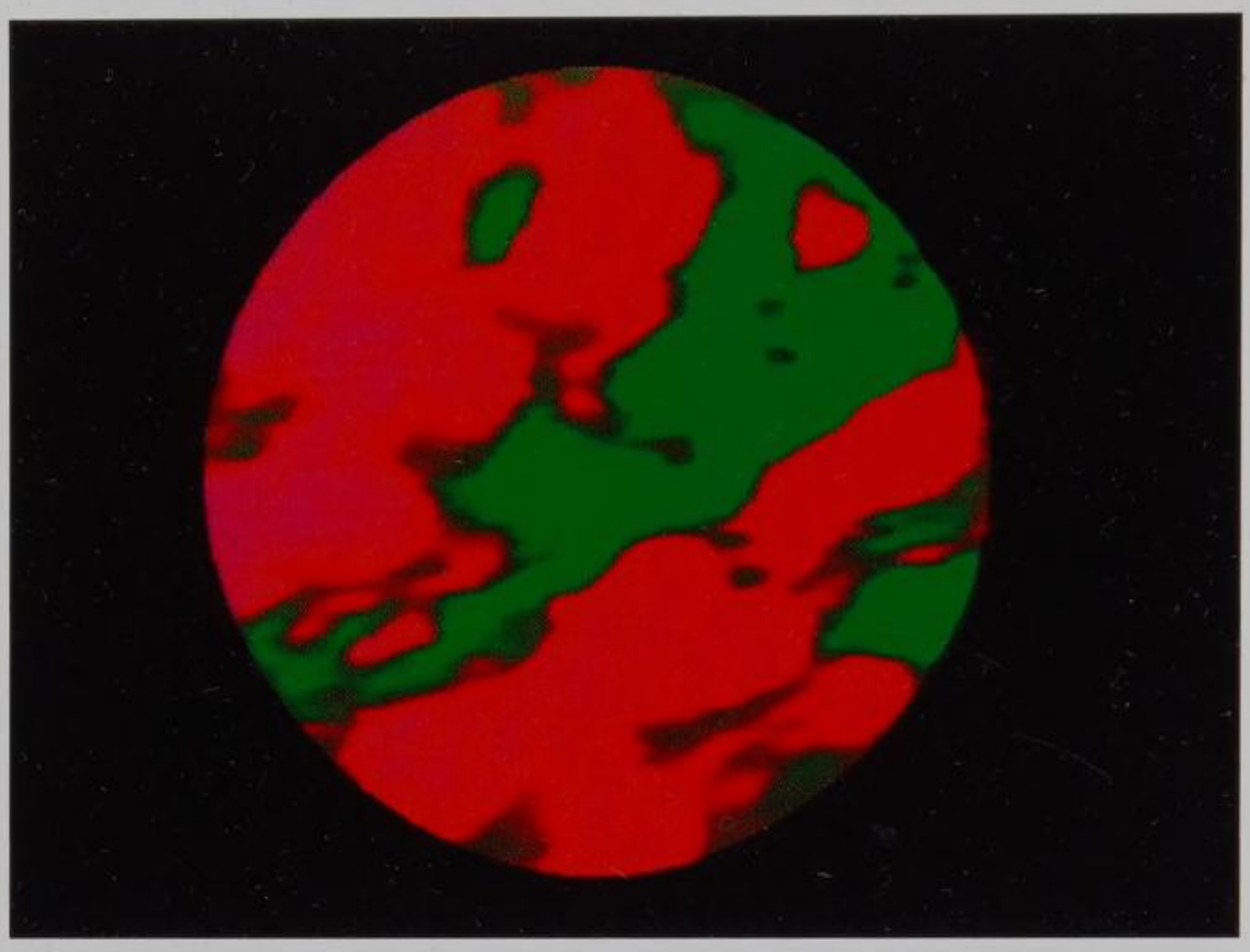


Fig. 12. Brian Hoey and Wendy Brown, *Drift*, 1978.

construction, a process of resolving contradictory cues.

Another aspect of *Feet* is our awareness that the artist is looking at the video on a monitor while it is being recorded, so we are seeing exactly what he sees while shooting. We are looking out of the artist's eyes. And by composing the image for *his* eyes, he is anticipating *our* visual experience. This is a case where the artist's adopting the role of viewer during shooting rather than postproduction is the determinant of meaning.

Finally, *Feet* is not entirely analytic. While the slow movements of the performer and deliberate composition suggest exclusive interest in formal concerns, the bare legs, the careful avoidance of any incursion of the genitals (the upper limit of the thighs are right at the top of the frame!), combined with the knowledge that the artist is looking at the video image of his own body as he performs for the camera, together contribute to an underlying erotic tension. This current is an important factor in retaining the viewer's attention by allowing a polysemous interpretation of what at first glance seems a 'structuralist' one-liner.

Brian Hoey and Wendy Brown: *Drift*

The technological limitations of video in the 80s, still pertinent until just a few years ago, severely circumscribed its visual range. Pictorial limitations led many artists to concentrate on information content rather than visual qualities: when the world can be viewed only through a dirty window, the artist tends to stay away from the *look* of the view, instead directing attention to events on the other side of the glass. Brown and Hoey are equally limited by the low resolution, narrow color bandwidth, minimal control of screening circumstances, etc., yet *Drift* is visually arresting, though abstract and silent. What is it about this work that provides repeated jolts of purely *visual* pleasure, so rare in a video work? I believe it achieves these heights by drawing attention to the edges of the image, and through this technique allowing the viewer to revel in the experience of 'seeing-in'.

Drift opens with a circle in the centre of a black screen, shifting in color from mustard to ochre to lemon yellow, containing small, irregular shapes in complementary shades of spring green and aquamarine. The circle seems continuously to redefine its spatial character, from flat to protruding to cavernous; it is a hole in the black surrounding space, a disc on the same plane as the black, or a spherical object floating in an indeterminate infinity, convex and bulging toward the viewer, or concave and receding like the inside of a bowl. Depending on how we see the spatiality of the circle, we are free to imagine the coloured figures it contains in one of three different ways: as continuing on the surface plane behind a black foreground; wrapping around the back edge of the floating globe to its hidden hemisphere; or stopping at the edge of the disc as if it were a coin suspended above the black plane. The range of possible visual interpretations is connected with the fact that the circle is inscribed well within the borders of the video frame. Furthermore, since this piece was made before projection was available for video playback, the artists would expect the work to be seen on a CRT. The image would always be rigidly contained by the TV box, overdetermining the fantasy of a shape floating inside it like a sculpture.

The shapes within the circle change organically, moving through a broad palette of colors. When the circle adopts cool aquas, mauves and lilacs, the shapes inside take on fiery reds and hot oranges, and the feeling of peering into a hole punctured in an infinite fabric

of space disappears, replaced by the sense of a bulging globe.

At every moment we are aware of the two-foldedness of our visual perception of these images – we see, as two aspects of the same experience, the flat arrangement of differentiated colors and the depicted spatial world. As I've suggested, this is an uncommon visual experience of the video image, within which the depicted usually dominates. In the case of *Drift*, circumscribing the significant part of the image in black, that is, foregrounding the edges of the moving image, reinforces its material basis.

Suddenly the elements within the circle are in coordinated motion down the screen, and for a moment it is as if we are looking through the porthole of a moving vessel travelling above a fantastic changing vista. Then it shifts and the sense of a global body or planet in deep space dominates once again. These radical changes suggest that watching *Drift* is like staring at fire or clouds and allowing one's imagination to project scenes and figures into them. But in this case, this experience is intensified, based on our awareness that the images are manufactured, produced, and, if not completely under their control (though they may be), if not selected and sequenced (though evidence suggests that they are), at least *sanctioned* by artists for our eyes. Hoey and Brown have tuned the images so as to provide visual excitement. Because this is a produced, rather than a natural object, we are willing to accept that its pleasures are integral to it, rather than imposed on it by the workings of our own minds. However in the next piece we will discuss, the fact that the effects *are* produced by our brain processes enhances the work as art.

There follows a passage of alternating blue on pink images, increasing in intensity into a frenzy tinged with sexuality. We are clearly nearing the end of the piece, and at last the circle flattens into an ellipse, then is reshaped into a rectangle, and the work is over.

Drift imposes a deliberate temporal structure on its abstraction which gives a sense of progression even though there are no narrative elements. This forward movement enhances the pleasure of the piece.

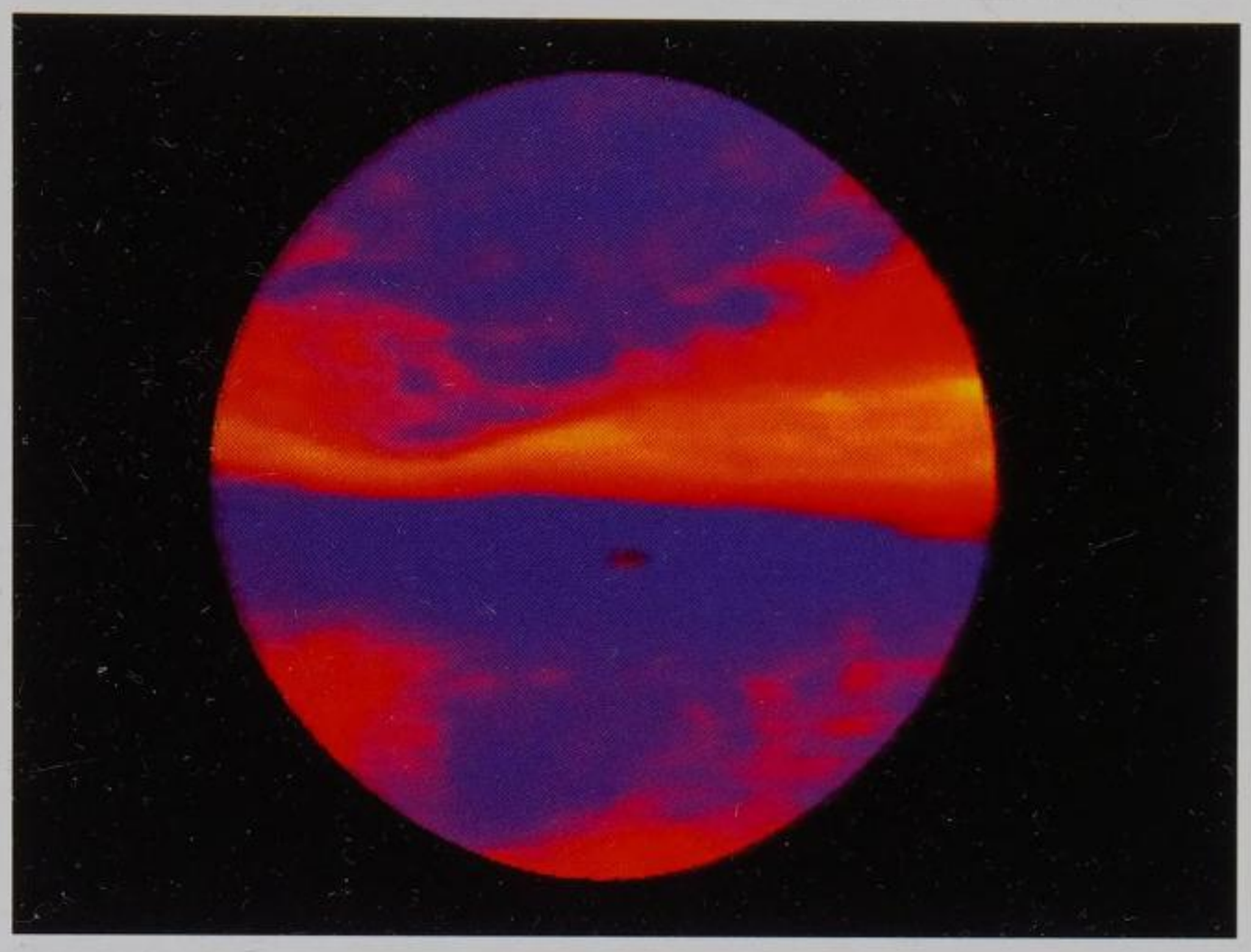


Fig. 13. Brian Hoey and Wendy Brown, *Drift*, 1978.

John Latham: *Nmutter*

A sense of progression, however, is not a *requirement* for visual pleasure in an abstract time-based work. The lack of apparent progression gives John Latham's *Nmutter* the feeling of suspended time. The work seems to exist in one six-minute-long moment, despite the fact that it undergoes extremely rapid change: there are twenty-five different images per second throughout. The work is composed of simple elements: the five basic paint mixing colors: primary red, blue, and yellow, along with black and white; and a single geometric shape: the circle.

Nmutter is unsettling, dizzying, compelling. It is difficult to take one's eyes off the screen, as an array of superimpositions, apparent motions, receding and advancing waves, and myriad other effects impossible to describe, almost overwhelm the viewer's visual system. The piece takes advantage of the processing functions wired into human perception – for example, that we see black as behind white or a color (but not in all cases), red in front of blue but behind yellow, and so on. These effects are rapid and automatic. But when our perceptual systems are called on to respond to changes and perform the requisite evaluations of spatial depth *twenty-five times per second*, things go wild, in an array of artefacts, after-images, false superimpositions, and apparent shadows.

Two-foldedness comes in because we remain fully aware that the bouquet of intense



Fig. 14. John Latham, *Nmutter*, 1984, four screen projection for *Lost and Found: Recovered Works*, Dundee Contemporary Arts, 2007.

visual transformations is a result of the brain's contribution to what is before our eyes – we know that the effects are of our own production, even though we cannot control them. On attentive viewing we can see that the pattern is quite basic. There are usually two and at most three colors on screen, at least one of the three black or white. Furthermore, each image is composed either of concentric circles, in outline or solid, centered on the screen, or a segment of a larger circle, its center off-screen so that it occupies about half the screen space. One part of the mind registers these material facts, while another is overwhelmed with the explosions of internally produced visual effects.

A final point about *Nmutter* concerns its spatiality. On pausing the video, we can see that each individual image is decidedly flat, though at the same time we can see one element in front of another. For example, the yellow circle floats in black space, frozen on the screen of my laptop. When the movie is played at twenty-five frames per second, a depth, though shallow, is unavoidable. As the perceptual system goes into automatic pilot, it effectively nullifies the experience of seeing-in, in this case seeing depth in flatness. Thus along with the shadows, after-images, superimposed colors, and other fireworks, one recognises that the sense of recession is also an effect of our internal optical systems. Together with a more primitive delight, the awareness of our own contribution to the rapid display offers a special, sophisticated, satisfaction.

The visual pleasures of *Nmutter* are reinforced by a throbbing soundtrack which gradually changes in texture as the piece progresses. This is the single element that suggests forward motion; forward motion without narrative, but definitive nonetheless.

Narrative

> A text enters the content of a painting only if, in representing some event that is connected with that text, the painting also reveals what that text means to the artist.
> Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 188

Narrative: the most common and prominent indicator of progression in a moving image work. Narrative unfolds in time. When a painting incorporates or refers to a narrative, as a single image it cannot *tell* the story. Understanding the picture depends on the spectator's prior knowledge of the events it portrays. Wollheim insists that a narrative, or any text, is relevant to the meaning of a painting only insofar as that text had for its creator a specific meaning which is apparent in the work. The painting expresses the place of the narrative in the artist's psyche.

If we apply this principle to the moving image as an art medium, we would expect to find a sharp division between the works in the *Rewind* archive, and commercial television or movies. The fiction film or TV drama presents the story in such a way that its meaning to the filmmaker(s) is irrelevant to the viewer, who is taken up with plot, character, action, etc., almost as if it were not a manmade object. A number of works in the *Rewind* archive refer explicitly to commercial television but their meanings reflect back to their respective creators. I will consider two pieces that incorporate broadcast programs. The works are David Mach's *The Clydeside Classic*, and Kevin Atherton's *Television Interview*.

David Mach: The Clydeside Classic

The apparent subject of David Mach's seventeen-minute *The Clydeside Classic* is a snooker match between seasoned professional Ray Reardon, challenged by younger player Steven Hendry. For the first fifteen minutes, the piece

is a standard TV recording of the tournament, complete with commentator, elaborate on-screen graphics and titles, commercial breaks, even lighting, and seamless live switching between multiple cameras, each mounted on a smoothly moving dolly. The commentator describes the action and narrativises it to allow the viewer to identify with the changing fortune of each player at different periods. Through this shifting identification, we experience the pleasant tensions of anxiety and relief, and are generally invested in the unfolding story of this classic David-and-Goliath contest.

Usually the presentation of a sports event doesn't even *have* an author, and the fact that in this case it is credited to an artist, the celebrated sculptor David Mach, suggests that something in addition to the prize cup must be at stake. So one begins to pay attention to aspects of the program outside the sports narrative. The visual qualities are indeed striking: the specific, limited color palette, dominated by green, with black, white and a range of browns as secondary accents. The grass green of the billiard table dominates every wide shot, interrupted only by highlights of the colored balls, the majority a crimson red, the others a rainbow of hues from lemon through cerise through chocolate and, of course, the single black. The intense variety of the balls' colors against the undifferentiated background of the table is enhanced by the limited tones of the rest of the environment – the players' matching outfits are monochromatic black and white, the audience in the bleachers are in deep shadow, and the only other shades are wood colors, the cherry and yellow pine of the panelled walls, and the dark chestnut frame of the table itself. Even the flowers are white, symmetrically arranged into two vases on each side of the enormous prize cup. Thus the visual values are deliberately calm, intensifying the studied, precise action of the game. When one loses interest in the slow-moving conflict of the match, one bathes one's eyes in the table's green expanse, licensed, even encouraged, to do so, by one's knowledge of the artistic context of the presentation.

Indulgence in the visual qualities of the scene, justified by one's awareness that it is an artist's work, is reinforced by an interruption of the sports narrative at about fifteen minutes in ... which comes as a total surprise.

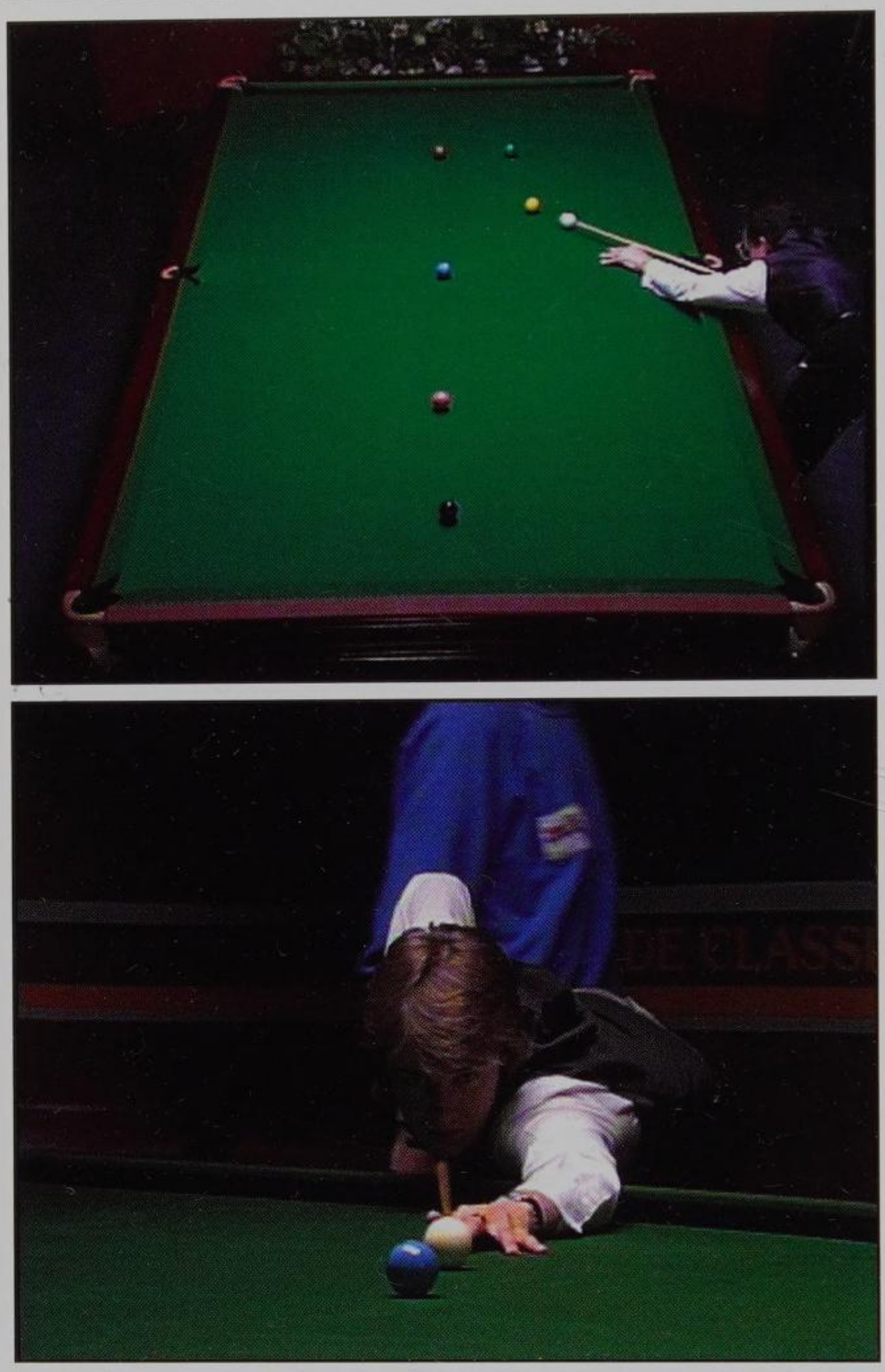
As he prepares for a critical shot which will determine the outcome of the tournament, there is a cut to a tight close-up of Hendry's face. Sweat has formed on his brow, and is about to drip off his nose onto the surface of the billiard table. Cut to a close-up of his opponent, who will lose the match if the younger man succeeds in pocketing the black ball. Reardon is calm and contained. A cutaway of a man in the audience heightens the tension of the moment.

Back to Hendry. The drop of perspiration falls off the tip of his nose. Match cut to the surface of the billiard table. It is suddenly an expanse of liquid: a green algae infested pond, but still contained by the unchanged chestnut frame. Hendry's game has changed from snooker to *pool*. I mention the cheap pun because it was surely one of the artist's inspirations for the piece. When the drop of sweat reaches the now liquid surface, it causes concentric circles of ripples to emanate out. Cut back to Hendry's shocked face – it must be an hallucination, brought about by the extreme tension of the moment in the match.

But no. Suddenly a white-cuffed hand reaches out of the water. And pulls Hendry in. He is face down, immersed in the emerald green table pool. Several shots follow in rapid succession, including one underwater shot of Hendry's submerged face. He is still fully clothed in his waiter/snooker outfit, face down in the water. Cutaways of shocked audience members, water reflections on their faces, suggest that this is a real, if magical, event, and not just in the contestant's mind.

Then, just as suddenly, the water has disappeared. The table is solid. Hendry makes the shot, pots the black ball, wins the tournament. The only evidence of the aberrant moment is during the closing handshake when the camera zooms in to highlight water dripping off Hendry's cuff.

So *The Clydeside Classic* uses broadcast commercial television to question our acceptance of its veridicality. But more interesting than this tired proposition is the way it builds on one's visual fantasy of the even expanse of the surface of the billiard table as a *pool* table. The



Figs. 15 and 16. David Mach, *The Clydeside Classic*, 1990.

artist's fascination with the explicit content of the TV program, the tournament itself, is an unmistakable constant throughout. At the same time his interest in its visual qualities is equally explicit, enhanced by his unanticipated intervention. Again the double aspect of the work, Wollheim's two-foldedness is a determinant of its force as a work of art.

Borrowing

> ... if a text or borrowing is to enter the content of a painting, then an appropriate spectator can be expected to have on looking at the painting an experience that is modified by the text or borrowing. ... The way in which the spectator's experience is modified by the text or borrowing is that the experience will reveal what the text or the borrowing means to the artist.
> Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p. 188

A sports event can be seen as a narrative, composed of a series of encounters progressing toward an outcome, replete with character study and development, and matched by the viewer's investment in these elements. For Mach, the narrative of the tournament itself may not mean as much as the visual qualities of its presentation and the fantasy it educes. When discussing narrative painting, with specific reference to some works by Poussin, Wollheim suggests that for the meaning of a painting what counts is the artist's understanding of the underlying story, what it means to him, and how he conveys this personal meaning in the picture. But it is not only narrative that can be incorporated into a text. Artists often use the work of other artists within their work, and Wollheim's term for this is 'borrowing'.

By *borrowing*, Wollheim means quoting, with transformation, elements of the work of another artist. The concept is introduced in Wollheim's general discussion of textuality, which refers to the inclusion of a text of some kind within a work. Wollheim's point can be roughly summarised as follows. There are many cases of artists using parts of another work in their own work, but not in the spirit of plagiarism or imitation. When an artist quotes from another source, especially another artist, it is often a way of sorting out and describing what that source, or this artist's work, means to him. This personal meaning becomes incorporated into the meaning of the new work.

Catherine Elwes: *Sleep*

The *Rewind* archive includes several instances of borrowing in this special sense. Catherine Elwes' *Sleep*, for example, borrows its title from Andy Warhol's notorious five-and-a-half-hour epic, and applies the same affectionate look to the face of a sleeping child as Warhol did to the body of his lover John Giorno. Elwes' *Sleep* captures a mother's tender attention to every

slight change that crosses the baby's face and conveys something of the fierce intensity of the mother's feeling for the child in the first year of its life, even if the baby is not a paragon of new-born beauty. The piece conveys the artist's understanding of Warhol's staring camera as a means of expressing love, rather than the perversity or iconoclasm often attributed to the earlier film.

Kevin Atherton: Television Interview

The most radical example of borrowing is Kevin Atherton's *Television Interview*, though, given the emergence of the term in the art world of the 70s, it might be better described as appropriation. The piece exemplifies the idea of interpreting the impact of incorporating another work by considering the meaning of that work to the artist. *Television Interview* quotes an episode of *Coronation Street*, the popular ensemble-cast melodrama about a working class neighborhood of greater Manchester. The program has clocked over 6000 episodes since 1960, and is still running in 2010.

In the original version, *Television Interview* was a two-monitor piece. The image of the artist, talking-head style, is on one monitor and the television program on the other. For the *Rewind* archive both channels have been reproduced on a single screen. Atherton literally interrogates the program as it runs, asking questions and apparently seeking answers from it. His performance is so convincing that we are quite taken in, accepting that he really does expect the program, its characters, the actors playing them, or the corporation that employs them, to respond to his questions and comments. It is usually obvious from which of the three parties he is trying to elicit a response. In addition to the absurdity of Atherton's unfulfillable expectation, the main humor of the piece is in the artist's alternation between this triumvirate of addressees.

The piece is set up with Atherton waiting in a window on the left side of the screen, as the opening sequence of *Coronation Street* begins in an equal sized window on the right: music, exteriors, supered title, close-up of a cat, etc.

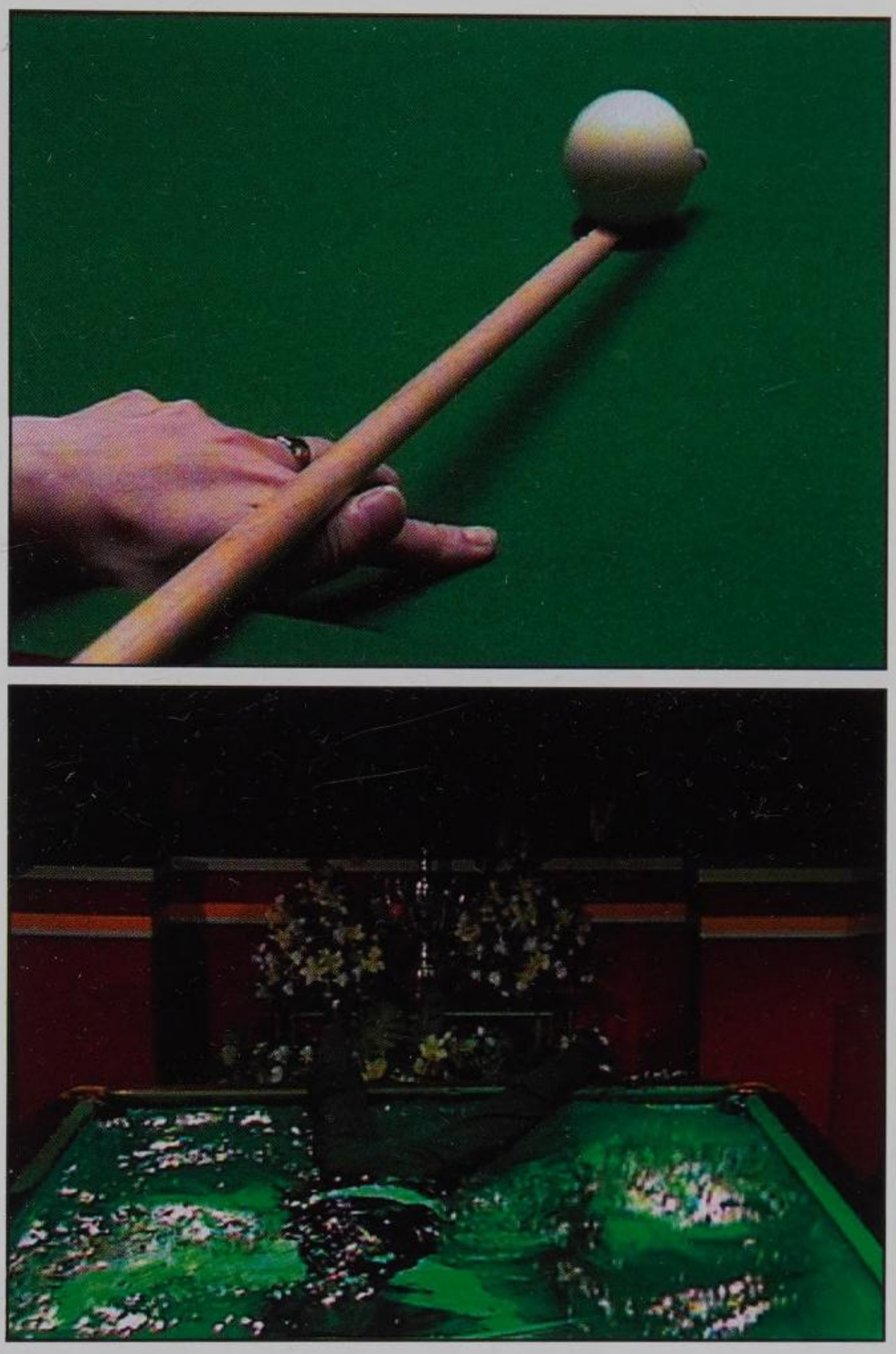


Fig. 17 and 18. David Mach, *The Clydeside Classic*, 1990.

The first scene is a typical interior – a man sits at a kitchen table with a teenage girl occupied in some kind of housework behind him. A younger man enters, and the three engage in a discussion that we don't hear. The man is large with a powerful body and an aggressive demeanor. His overalls indicate that he is working-class. Atherton, on the left screen, opens with the following statement: '*I thought we could chat about television and its relation to video art*'. Perfectly timed with the big man's turn in his direction, the artist continues, '*Could you* [pointing] *could you answer the questions please?*' Atherton's gesture highlights the illusion of a relationship between him and the character, as if they are in the same space and can interact, though we know that this is impos-



Fig. 19. Elwes, *Sleep*, 1984 .

sible. Right on cue, the *Coronation Street* character replies, *'Now don't you tell me what to do.'* Obviously he is addressing this line to the young woman in the scene, but Atherton reacts as if the answer were directed to him: *'There's no need to be aggressive ...'*. The parameters of the work are now laid out, and its first moments are taken up spelling out this imagined hostility between artist and *Coronation Street* character. The comedic aspect of the exchange is heightened by the fact that the younger man in the scene is named Kevin, and when the big man addresses him by name, Kevin Atherton of course responds with gusto.

At first the manufactured dialogue between artist and character is somewhat annoying in its slickness and puzzle-solving quality; too clever by far, too deliberately played for laughs. Atherton blithely ignores the fact that the characters, existing in the fictional world of a TV drama, never look at the camera, and thus never appear to respond to him. This makes the dialogue highly artificial, and heightens the comedy. But as *Television Interview* continues, it plumbs depths that reach beyond its apparent subject matter and artful technique.

As with *The Clydeside Classic*, the viewer's attention is directed toward the visual qualities of commercial televison – the smoothly gliding camera, the moodiness of the lighting, the careful attention to detail in the sets, the unlabored readability of the actors' gestures against the unstudied, natural ambiguity of Atherton's gestures and the muted colors of his screen, all army greens, khakis and flesh-tones. This contrast is one of the ways that the underlying sense of the piece begins to work on the viewer. For although the explicit content of Atherton's language is a rejection of commercial television, the aesthetic gesture of the work belies this position, highlighting the artist's deep attraction to, even compulsive love for, the pleasures of *Coronation Street*.



Fig. 20. Kevin Atherton, *TV Interview* (aka *Coronation Street Piece*), installation view 1984.

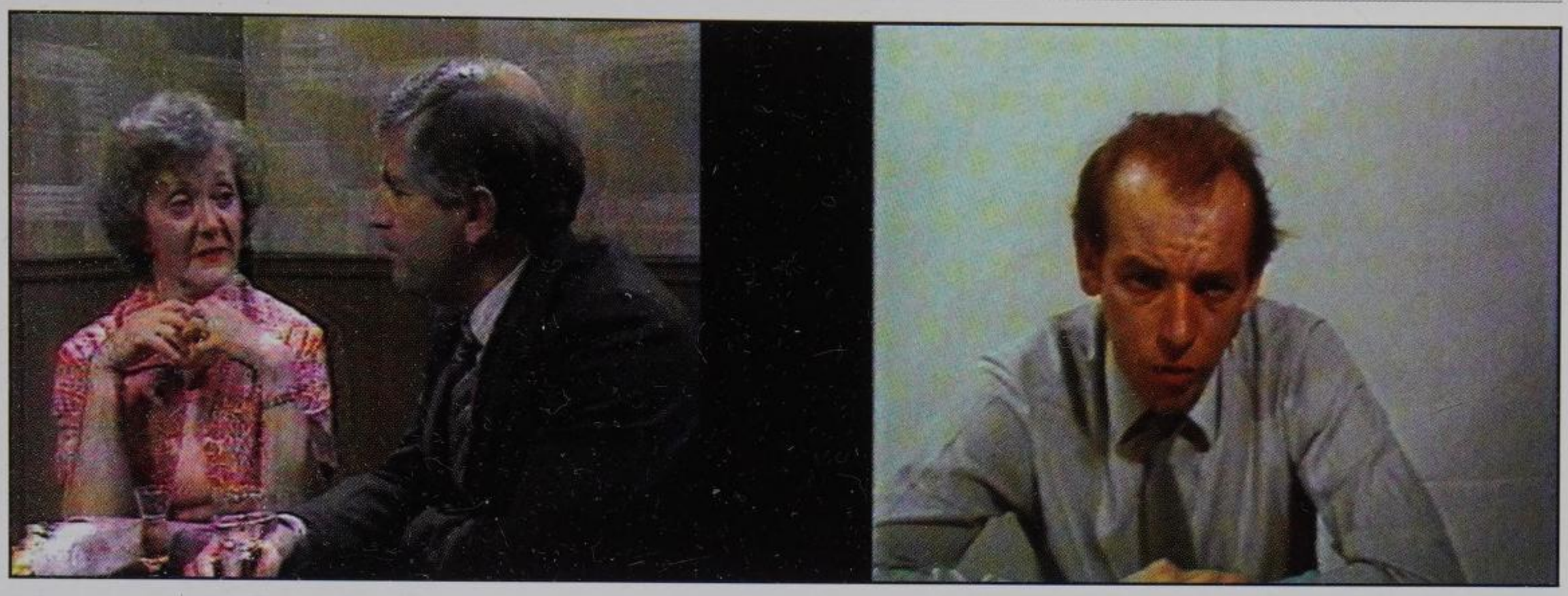


Fig. 21. Atherton, *TV Interview* (aka *Coronation Street Piece*), 1984.

Here is another fragment of an exchange:

Kevin Atherton: You are trapped by fiction. Is it like being in prison?

Coronation Street female character (tearfully): Worse than that.

Atherton has switched the object of his address from character in the fiction to actor playing the role, yet the reply comes from the actor-in-character. Atherton, however, appears genuinely embarrassed by the sincerity of the reply – he wriggles uncomfortably, and seems taken in by the emotional intensity of the actor's response, as we are by that of the character. Yet again, the force behind the effectiveness of the moment is an experience, in one moment, of two aspects of the same material, another instance of the concept of two-foldedness. To make sense of the scene, not only are we required to see one woman in the role of both actor and character, but also that Atherton himself is caught up in the very same two roles. He is perfectly aware that the woman in *Coronation Street* is not really responding to him, while his skillful acting convinces us, at least momentarily, that he believes that she is. Far from rejecting the form, he delights in interacting simultaneously with actor and character, set and fictional environment, story and construction, himself taking the role of actor, as a character in a fictional construction on *his* screen.

The multiple *mises-en-abyme* of *Television Interview* extend to its explicit conceptual content as well. We deconstruct the melodrama at the same time as we participate in at least some components of its fiction. We are also led to understand that the artist's repeatedly stated position about television's limitations, his suspicion about its ideological grounding, is itself subject to doubt, and should not be accepted at face value.

Kevin Atherton: When will artists take control of television?

Coronation Street character: I tried to explain that it was out of the question.

Now it is no longer a character or an actor who replies to the artist's question – it is outside her expertise. Television itself, or the corporate entity behind television, is speaking with the voice of its employee. Actor has become spokeswoman. The institution is speaking through its character's mouth.

After the words 'End of Part One' come up on the *Coronation Street* screen, we see Atherton fast forwarding through the commercial break with his remote in his hand, and the right screen takes on the characteristic distortion of videotape scanning. However, oddly and illogically, the left screen, the image of Atherton, is also in scan mode. This reinforces our understanding that the artist's ontological status is no different than that of the *Coronation Street* characters – he is as much a TV image as they are, both equally playing parts that do not represent reality. The issue of the unreal status of the events on both screens is taken up several times in the second half of the piece, for example:

Kevin Atherton: You're just an image on a TV screen.

Coronation Street character: Yes I am and I don't mind admitting it.

Kevin Atherton: I'm not.

Coronation Street character: Oh give over!

Atherton remarks that 'television has not been developed as an art medium, as a visual phenomenon.' Expecting, by this time, to interpret the piece 'against the grain', we are not surprised to find his statement contradicted by the *Coronation Street* screen, an elegant composition of seven characters in a single frame. The deliberate arrangement of men and women in a lovely range of complementary clothing colors resembles one of the large Rembrandt group portraits. The visual qualities of the scene are brought to one's attention by the accumulation of contradictory currents built up by *Television Interview* to this point.

Then, magically, Atherton begins to propose the concept of this very piece – that *Coronation Street* could be incorporated into a work of art, and how that would encourage a reassessment of the relationship of art to the fiction and form of the melodrama. As he veers off into a discussion of twentieth-century art, mentioning appropriation, Duchamp, and so on, an emotional scene develops in the *Coronation Street* episode: a love exchange between a middle-aged man and woman across the counter of a small shop. The dialogue is muted as usual, except when lines can be extracted as desultory comments on the artist's monologue, as it morphs into his personal memory of earlier television, his great affection for it and belief in its underlying reality. Meanwhile, in counterpoint, the love declaration plays out, its import clear in the silent language of the two characters' gestures and expressions. The fugue-like quality of this moment spotlights the complicated textures and contrary streams in Kevin Atherton's, and by extension video art's, multifaceted relationship to television: an affair of the heart, explicitly denied while also shouted from the rooftops, tinged with longing, nostalgia, distrust and jealousy, a polyphony of attitudes, exposed in this work with clarity and economy.

I have devoted so much space to *Television Interview* not only because of its complications, but also because it is a paradigmatic demonstration of the application of much of Wollheim's thought to a cinematic artwork. We see Wollheim's ideas in action: starting with the idea that borrowing from another work is a pathway for an artist to express his or her attitude toward that work; moving to the overwhelming significance of the artist's intentions for the understanding of a work; to the paramount importance of the artist's adopting the role of viewer as well as agent in the creation of a piece; and lastly the many places that the concept of two-foldedness is relevant both for appreciation and interpretation.

David Critchley: Pieces I Never Did

SHUT UP! David Critchley's *Pieces I Never Did* is also particularly suited to analysis using Wollheim's conceptual framework. It explores a series of short narratives, exposing what they mean to the artist, once again floating on an ocean of contradictory currents. It is the last piece I will consider in this essay, and it can be seen as bringing together many of the points that have come up throughout.

After a flat screen filled with video green announces the opening of the work, we see a desperate young man, shouting 'Shut up!' again and again. He is filled with anxiety; less angry, perhaps, than frustrated at his ineffectiveness. *SHUT UP!* Is he addressing the television or another speaking, but non-hearing object – a deaf person, a robot, a professor or a politician? Unable to get whoever or whatever he is shouting at to stop, maybe he is able to drown out, at least for himself, the words that are so objectionable, even painful, to him. *SHUT UP!* It is a child's gesture, a neurologically impaired child, in great distress but without hope. *SHUT UP!* The shouter is a handsome young man, his head centered in the frame and his bare torso visible. His good looks are heightened rather than disfigured by a missing front tooth and its diagonally broken neighbor. *SHUT UP! SHUT UP!*

As usual, the situation, so wordy to describe, registers with the viewer without effort or analysis, in an instant. It will affect the attitude towards the events which follow. *SHUT UP!* One

suspects that the shouter is the artist himself, and this is soon confirmed. Who he is addressing and why he is so anxious are issues unresolved until about fifteen minutes into the piece.

Critchley sits in front of a desk in the corner of an art studio, sketches and plans pinned to the walls around him. He begins to describe a piece he says he didn't make, looking directly at the camera, his calm demeanour in sharp contrast to Dave-the-Shouter. *Pieces I Never Did* consists of Critchley describing video works in a measured, casual voice, alternating with realised versions of the work he says he 'never did'. He is the on-screen protagonist, the performer, of almost all of the works. *SHUT UP!* Throughout the 30 minute work the frenzied '*SHUT UP!*' chorus is inserted as a short interruption – we begin to get the idea that the artist's animosity is toward himself, as he goes through the endless list of works he claims (in many cases falsely) never to have made. The ironical self-effacement and blatant contradictions are fertile grounds for a bountiful harvest of diverse meanings, functioning in the same way as the contradictions in many of the works discussed so far.

The first piece Critchley describes involves his building a four-walled set, like a model of the inside of a TV with its electronics removed, the miniature world of video space. He describes his intention to position a video camera above the set and record himself destroying it by throwing his body, like a demolition ball, against the walls – breaking out of the box, we might say. *SHUT UP!* In the taped performance that follows the description, the set is reduced to one wall, parallel to the screen plane, against which the artist violently runs and slams his body again and again, removing a layer of paint and plaster each time. His energy and athleticism is thrilling. Dave-the-Shouter is also present, interrupting the action. *SHUT UP!* The irony in the realisation of the description is that the main point of the set, as a model of the imagined space of video inside a TV, is absent: a single wall cannot represent the inside of a TV monitor. Of the description, only the artist's destructive actions remain. 'Destructive performance art' is one's initial three-word evaluation of the piece. As it continues, however, we will revise our view, beginning with a re-evaluation of the artist's body as a source of potential energy, a coiled spring.

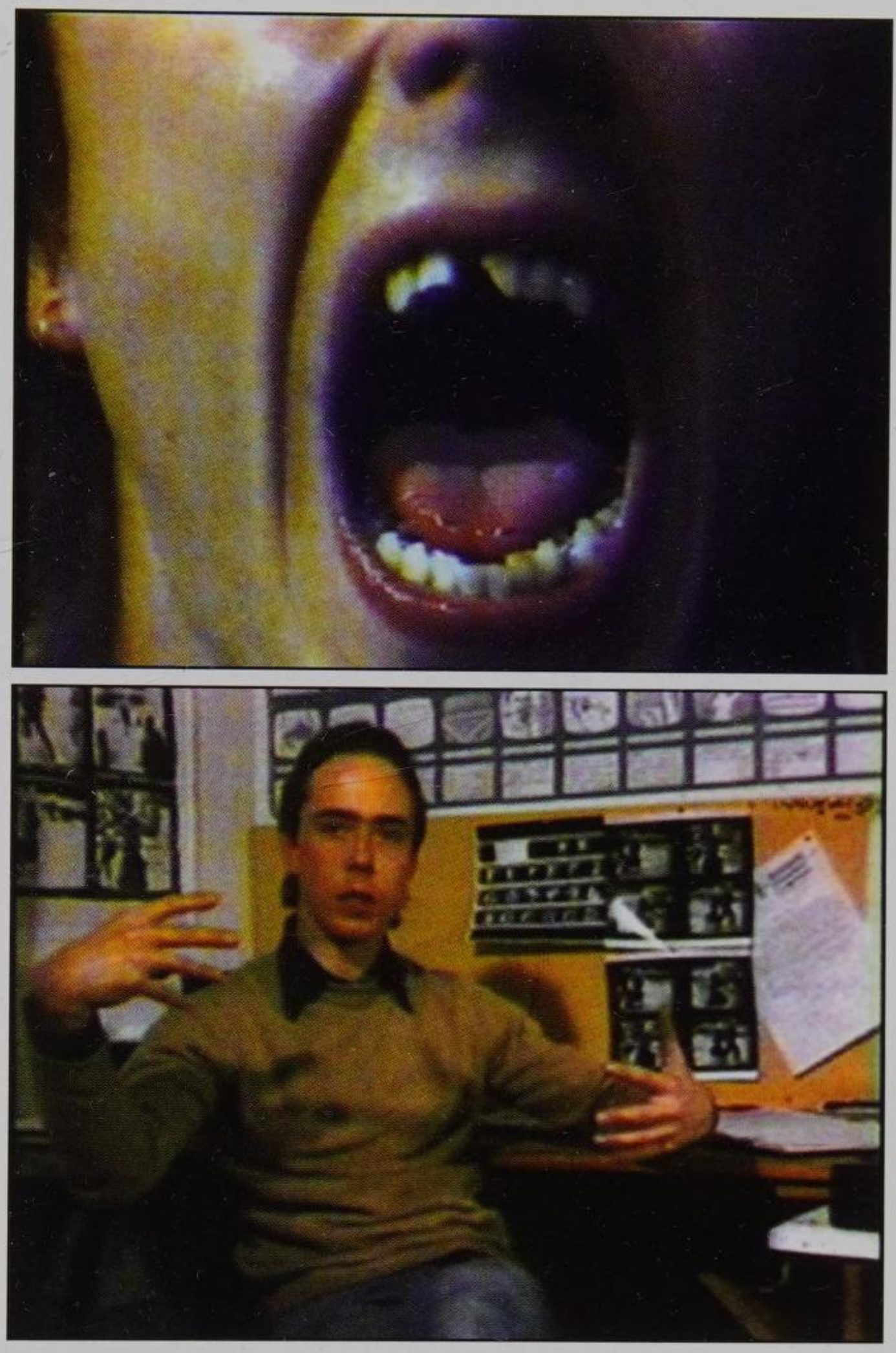


Fig. 22 and 23. David Critchley, *Pieces I Never Did*, 1978–79.

The next two or three 'unmade' pieces Critchley describes also draw attention to aspects of the structure of video. The subject of investigation is in line with the work of other video artists of the period (and with artists in other media as well): his peers like Mineo Aayamaguchi (discussed earlier), and his teachers such as David Hall, who has several works in the *Rewind* archive. But, as in many cases, the explicit subjects of *Pieces I Never Did* are minimally relevant to the meanings that emerge from the moment-to-moment flow of the work. The tone of destructiveness and self-doubt is reinforced not only *SHUT UP!* by the interruptions, but also by the artist's self-effac-

ment. He runs away from the camera in one segment. He is targeted, with cross hairs aligned on his face like the aim of a weapon in another. For another piece he proposes humiliating himself by masturbating before an audience, though for the realisation of the piece he positions a microphone in the frame where we would see his sex organ if he did in fact expose himself (which he does not). *SHUT UP!* He proposes a piece in which he shouts '*SHUT UP!*' in front of the camera until he loses his voice, accounting for the performance and tone of Dave-the-Shouter, but not his repeated interruptive appearance. Incorporating the description of *SHUT UP!* into the collection of pieces-I-never-did does not change its value. It still provides a level of irony and self-effacement, though we now understand that the tone is a result of the performance parameters he has set for himself, rather than an expression of frustration.

One point regarding the *SHUT UP!* interventions is in the connection between this component of the work and technology. *Pieces I Never Did* was put together more than ten years before the availability of the first non-linear video editing systems. This meant that revisions to any part of a video work, except the last shot, required rebuilding the entire piece from the point the revision was made. The only exception to this was if the editor wrote over, or covered with different material, the scenes he wished to replace. It is clear that this is exactly what Critchley did with the *SHUT UP!* sequence. The evidence of this is the raggedness of the points in the sequence when we return from Dave-the-Shouter: the monologue reappears in mid-sentence, often mid-word, or the action is picked up in mid-gesture. These are not edits one would deliberately make. In effect, the artist literally shuts himself up by overwriting and obscuring part of the original audio-visual stream with material from the Dave-the-Shouter sequence. In a work which foregrounds the artist's performance, even the editing technique incorporates a performative gesture that carries meaning.

We are given a view of the artist as committed to creating video as art, even if he has serious reservations about the enterprise. As the finale approaches, the pieces described and realised (or not) become increasingly self-destructive. Two of them incorporate techniques of obscuring the artist's words or making them incomprehensible. For another he has an off-screen accomplice repeatedly and violently throw a paint-dipped ball at his bare torso, undoubtedly causing pain and bruises as well as covering him with orange paint. The work culminates with a description of an (unrealised) performance with a bomb that would annihilate both the artist and his audience.

The explicit concerns with the structure of the video image and the paths along which it communicates fall away, becoming secondary at best. The first set of meanings that accrue are a sense of Critchley's distaste for the artist–self and his ideas, the desire to wear out or even destroy the body, and a disdain for the entire artistic enterprise. Out of this first interpretation, however, another emerges: a sense of the possibilities of art, that a work like this *is* able to communicate a diffracted message of contrary streams, that below the obdurate cynical surface is a hard-working artist, willing to put himself on the line in many ways to communicate a set of ideas worth pursuing whatever the cost. This mosaic of point-counterpoint is based on a conception of the self as an entity separate from the body, and a kind of trust in the endurance of this entity. The body can be damaged beyond recognition and stretched almost to breaking without affecting the self, a self that is the agent and reservoir of attitudes, ideas, thoughts, and intentions, a self that remains solid despite the tides of physical strain and humiliation. It is, perhaps, a spiritual conception of identity. *Pieces I Never Did* is a joyful work, affirming the value of art as a means of *showing* what lies beyond what is *said*.

Changes

Much has changed for the moving image artist in the two or three decades since the works in the *Rewind* archive were produced. One factor that can be seen as encapsulating the developments is the emergence of widespread, inexpensive projection for the electronic image. 'Video art', now misnamed since much work is produced without the use of videotape at any

point in the process, is projected in museums, galleries, even cinemas, to say nothing of parks, plazas and other public spaces. As a means of display, the projector brings with it a softening of the distinction between film and video, essential to the conceptions of many of these self-described *video* artists; secondly, the projector as presentation technology, and equally the LCD or plasma flat screen, dilute the metaphor of the image-in-a-box, which informs, both conceptually and phenomenologically, many of the works considered; and lastly the projector symbolises a decrease in the significance of television as a cultural icon. A number of artists in the archive conceived their works as iconoclastic, defying the communication techniques of broadcast television, or interventions in the broadcast signal. Television has lost its hegemony to digital online communications, and challenging TV has little currency in the art world of the present day.

I would argue, however, that these changes in interest have hardly diminished the value of the works as long as they are interpreted using the approach I have extrapolated from Wollheim's philosophical aesthetics. In order to make this argument, one must distinguish between what might be called the macro- and micro-intentions of the artists.

Though I have stressed the centrality of the intentions of the artist for the interpretation of his or her work, the intentions that I have postulated as animating the works are usually not those the artists acknowledge. Elwes, for example, discusses her aspirations for *There is a Myth* as explicitly feminist, bringing into the artistic discourse issues that were either taboo or trivialised,[10] while Atherton refers to the idea of raising questions about the underlying ideologies of broadcast television and its relation to video art.[11] I am not challenging the idea that these issues inspired and motivated the artists, nor do I intend to undermine their significance and relevance when one considers the works in an historical context. But they are issues that belong to their own time; and this is a point that both artists acknowledge. The video pieces have had their effect on the social and cultural environment, but their social and cultural concerns have been replaced by other cutting-edge issues. The works, I suggest, are greater than the issues that may have inspired them. Their *artistic* merits, more elaborate and textured, emerging out of moment-to-moment decisions made by the artists about construction and emphasis, are as strong as they ever were. The artistic values and meanings are a result, we might say, of the artists' *micro*-intentions.



Fig. 24. David Critchley, *Pieces I Never Did*, 1978–79.

In other words, I have tried to make the case that every work discussed is of substantial interest even if the explicit intentions that motivated them are no longer relevant. In highlighting the streaming meanings of the video pieces, rather than focusing on their ideological goals, I hope I have managed to indicate broader, more universal and timeless interpretations of this very special group of works.

End

For, to repeat for the last time, this is, above all else, an essay about methodology. Starting with Richard Wollheim's ideas about how pictures acquire meaning, I have developed a series of proposals for the interpretation of video art works. The best I can hope for is that the work I have done here draws some attention to the significance and value of time-based art, specifically for those works I have looked at in detail, and at the same time opens pathways of interpretation for works I have not considered.

It may be true, as Wittgenstein writes, that 'What can be shown cannot be said'; even

though he takes a pretty good shot at it in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the book from which the quotes are taken, and in which he ignores his own advice that 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.'[12]

As we have seen, to *say* what moving image works *show* can take many words, which never feel complete or adequate. My argument has been that what they do show, as they race by, is the route to their meaning.

Notes

1. Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).
2. For writing about film emphasising the empathetic response, see the work of Christine Noll Brinckmann, for example, 'Casta Diva: Eine empathische Lektüre', in Robin Curtis and Gertrud Koch (eds), *Einfühlung: Zu Geschichte und Gegenwart eines ästhetischen Konzepts*. (Munich, 2008); English version: Christine Noll Brinckmann, *The Primal Scene* (Berlin: Arsenal Institute for Film and Videoart, 2008).
3. Melanie Klein, 'Love, Guilt and Reparation', in *Love, Guilt and Reparation, and Other Works 1921–1945: The Writings of Melanie Klein, Volume I* (New York: Free Press, 1984), pp. 306–343.
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, §6.522 (trans. Brian McGuinness and David Pears) (London: Routledge, 1961), p.70 (see also URL: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5740/5740-h/5740-h.htm).
5. Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, p.164 and note 23, p. 364.
6. Ray Privett and James Kreul, 'The Strange Case of Noël Carroll: A Conversation with the Controversial Film Philosopher', *Senses of Cinema* (URL: http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/13/carroll.html)
7. For further discussion of this point see my essays 'Mastery: Sonic C'est Moi', *New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative*, Martin Reiser and Andrea Zapp (eds) (London: British Film Institute, 2002) and 'Film Space: An Outline Study', *Millennium Film Journal*, Nos. 16/17/18 (Fall–Winter 1986–87).
8. Ludwig Goldscheier (ed.), *Roman Portraits* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1940).
9. It also accords with Roland Barthes' insight, elaborated by Laura Mulvey and others, that while the photograph generally refers to the past and death, the cinematic image carries a sense of presence and life. See, e.g. Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).
10. Catherine Elwes, 'Interview with Catherine Elwes by Jackie Hatfield, 15 March 2006', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Catherine%20Elwes/CEL510.pdf).
11. Kevin Atherton, 'Interview with Kevin Atherton by Jackie Hatfield, 21 July 2005', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Kevin%20Atherton/KAT510.pdf).
12. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, §4.1212; §7.

Chapter 3/
Video between Television and Art: Interventions into Programme Flow and Standard Formats by British Video Artists

Yvonne Spielmann

International settings

International discussions of video arts since the 1970s reveal, on closer examination, some blank spaces. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, even the most general debates aiming to assert the novelty of video as time-based medium nevertheless show divisions due to national or intersectorial interest.[1] Certainly, the lack of an overriding media perspective on video has limiting effects on understanding the full capacity of video to change, or at least challenge and interfere with, the standardised formats of presentation and representation put in place by cinema and televisual institutions as well as the art market. A more comprehensive perspective on the specific enounters of emerging British video culture with art and television therefore demands a structural approach to analysis that must firstly insert an international level of comparison, and secondly consider the intermedial context wherein those elements of medium specificity can be singled out that were of particular importance and were scrutinised and debated in the British context of video practices.

Most discussions of video in past decades have tried to embrace video as a media form based in – and exceeding – television. Such discussions coined the term 'television art'. Only recently has interest in video increased on the part of art institutions, after a long period of curatorial disregard, anxiety and incompetence in handling technology. Since the 90s, a new recognition is manifest in the sheer number of video exhibitions in museum and gallery spaces, albeit exhibitions that prefer to present large screen-projection on walls that to some extent resemble painterly images. To the extent that the art institutions' new preoccupation, and recently increased presentation of video works at art fairs, are driven by the demands of the art market, they show more economic than cultural concern with the lately (almost too late) discovered needs of video preservation (here for the

purpose of stable commodity value). In this instance, the art business' engagement with video demonstrates another attempt at incorporation. This time – and even more effectively – video gets subsumed under a category of arts where the rubric of artists' video means in the first place genre and not medium.

Against these two traditions annexing video to the existing canons of either TV or art, the focus of my reflections stresses characteristics of video as media art. When identifying what is specific about video, an intermedial perspective is needed that regards interrelationships to contemporary art practices and their institutions and also enables an analysis of video's interferences (rather than its integration) with production and presentation modes of those established media that also deal with moving images, temporal development and duration, notably film and television. Video, not unlike the preceding media arts of photography and film, needs to articulate its own modes of expression against the conventional setup of display given through gallery, museum, cinema and broadcasting.

To view the larger picture, it is worth noting how the different national struggles toward video art either overlapped, or were staggered, or sometimes happened in parallel developments. Viewed together, these processes clarify the specificities of the medium. And finally, the larger frame of medium specificity on an international scale calls for a reconsideration of the specific aesthetic endeavors of British video artists and their prominent struggle against and from inside television. In the following, I will consider in particular how these activites contribute to the aesthetic language of video. This includes strategies of resistance when video needed to find its path between the Scylla of film and the Charybdis of television, strategies which also foreshadow general issues of establishing new media and can eventually be adopted by contemporary media arts.

Embedded in arts and media

As is widely known, video first entered the US market in 1965 with portapak units, manufactured in Japan by Sony, Shibaden and Akira, and upgraded in the following years. Not until mid-1969 was working with videotape established and it took until 1971 for portapak equipment to develop 'record', 'playback', 'rewind' and 'forward' functions. As British video pioneer David Hall[2] recalls, video equipment for the nonindustrial sector in Europe was introduced around 1970 and used equally by community groups committed to alternative information and documentation and by artists for experimentation and exploration of a new media language. In Japan, video was not viewed as an art medium until 1972, when video and television producer Michael Goldberg came from the US to Japan and reintroduced video to the art scene.[3]

In an international survey of video activities in the 70s, we find three main modes of operation. One type of engagement addressed either the programme structure of television or intervened into the standard formats of art exhibition in both videotapes and installations. Liaising with emerging forms of ephemeral performance and event arts or aimed at interrelating art and television contexts in video, above all this type of practice was critical of pictorial representation in the media industries and of the social effects of mediated information and channelled communication as presented through television programmes. A second strand of video explored structuring principles to generate, transmit and display electronic sound and image signals. This kind of work demonstrated the processual nature of video technology and the capacity of the medium to alter, modify and manipulate elements at any time and place. Because of their modular structure, video signals could be generated in a variety of ways and displayed beyond the appearance of a pictorial image, for example, when electronic waveforms are modulated with synthesisers.

Distinct from approaches to video art as critique of television and art institutions, and also distinct from video as an open, synthetic form, the third direction of working in video was interested in developing alternative production, communication and distribution models. Video activists such as Sue Hall and John Hopkins in Britain and Paul Garrin in the US not only countered public images of surveillance cameras

with their own footage; they also pursued an oppositional political and documentary approach when recording Vietnam War demonstrations and police action against street protesters and squatters, in tapes that later went on air in television news as visual evidence of brutal state force. Political video in the 70s also meant community work in the sense of counterculture. By introducing a new and easy-to-operate medium, local, alternative and art scenes were now able to get their hands on the equipment and produce their own programmes. Apart from UK video activists (such as Hall and Hopkins), German video cooperatives (for example Video Workshop Freiburg), and alternative television movements in the US (such as TVTV in New York), some other interferences with public broadcasting and revolts against social control through media corporations can also be seen in British 'scratch videos' and 'guerilla television'. This specific genre of reworking and dismantling TV footage gave birth to the development of the video clip format.[4]

Video in its early phase from the mid-60s to the mid-70s had to emancipate itself from the basis of the technology it shared with television, and cut off its initial intermedial links with the photographic recording principle of film. Because it does not produce images as a unit like the frame, and because electronic signal transfer is not restricted to the frame-bound forms of display,[5] video must be understood as in principle processual. Its signals can be generated (equally in audio and in video synthesisers) and displayed in multiple forms that are essentially fluid, incoherent and unstable, unless the line process gets adjusted. Only line adjustment and the synchronisation of the lines horizontally and vertically create the stabilised television format, a deliberate standardisation, not a technological necessity. Thus a horizontally maladjusted signal causes a horizontal drift, distorting any figuration in the visual presentation.

In order for the transmission to present a recognisable type of 'image', it is necessary to stabilise the internal scanning processes. In a conventional setup, the video image appears from the inside of the monitor in the raster format of the worldwide agreed broadcast standards of either PAL (Europe), NTSC (North America) or SECAM (France). This conventional technical setting determined the constraints already in place when video arrived. When video became a proper medium of its own, a tension arose between these institutionalised and standardised electronic television formats and the essentially open, flexible and non-fixed forms of video.

In common with these international developments, British video-making was neither limited to genres and art forms nor restricted to a specific setup and display of devices. (Here video differs from cinema, which demands the tripartite apparatus of projector, screen and seated spectator.) Viewed retrospectively, the open and expanded apparatus of video is a striking quality of the emergent medium. This focus on exploring the apparatus dominates the British context to a much higher degree than other European and North American video practices. This has contextual causes because early video practices in the UK are rooted in a much closer interrelationship with contemporary tendencies in experimental film that were predominantly analytical and discoursive. One goal of the 'structural'[6] film of the period was to dismantle the structural components and material basis of film to its skeleton. The key figures in the British structural film movements, Peter Gidal and Malcolm LeGrice, despite their conceptual and retrospectively largely ideological differences, maintained film, screening and perception as distinct elements, which were in multiple ways manoeuvrable building blocks that could be singled out and dealt with differently. This avant-garde, especially Gidal, was intensely critical of the iconic image. In analysing both the time-based nature of the film strip and the spatial setting of the cinema apparatus, some filmmakers (especially LeGrice) expanded production and performing processes into open formats (for example, multiple projections onto various surfaces, including the body of the artist). Others exploited and manipulated the raw material of the film strip to the limits of visibility and perception or, like Anthony McCall in the UK and Paul Sharits in the US, aimed to destroy or abandon cinematic essentials.

The emergence of video in the UK was thus aesthetically linked to other art and media forms, especially the experimental context of

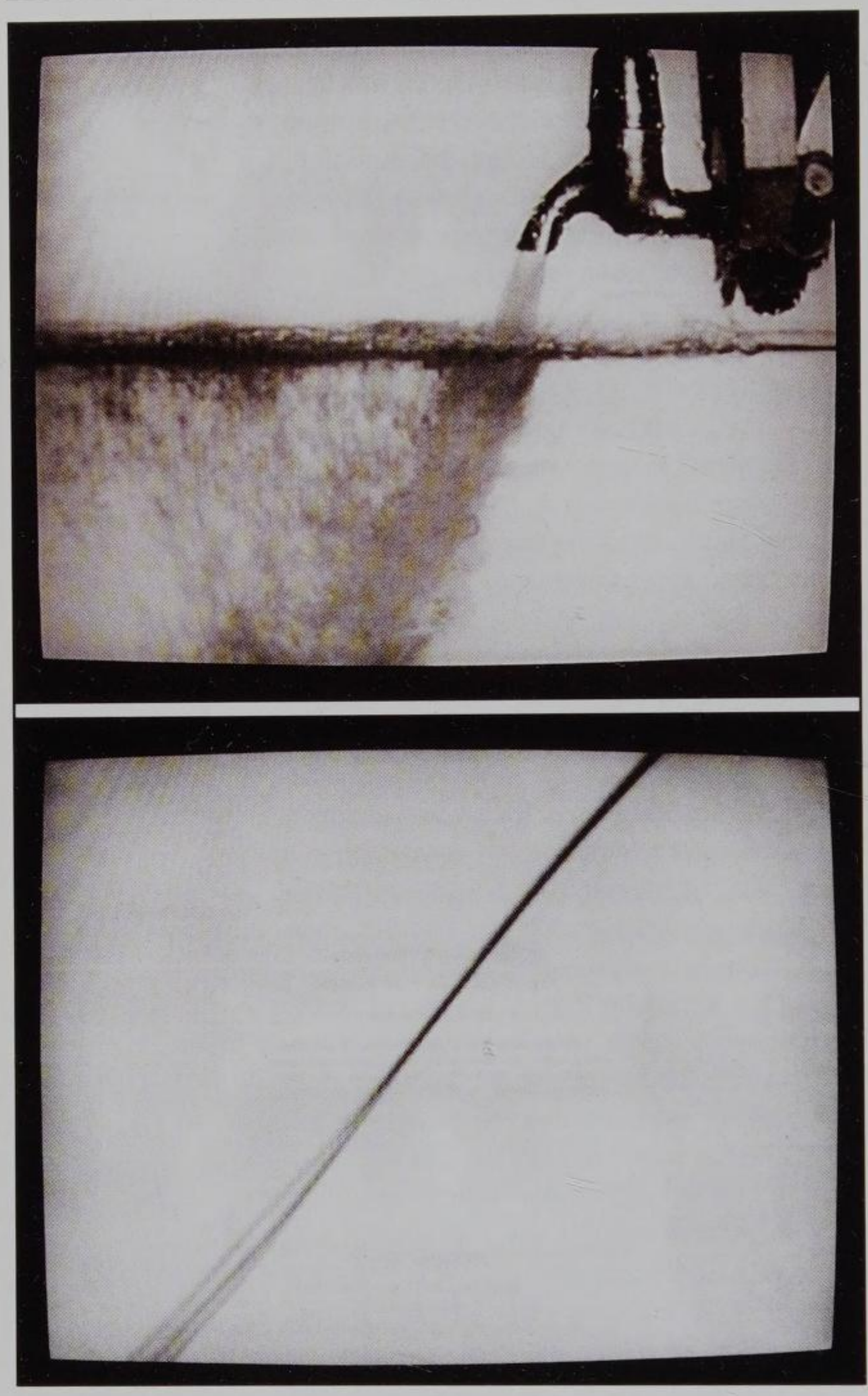


Fig. 1. David Hall, *Television Interruptions (Tap Piece)*, 1971.

time-based film art. The importance of such radical film experiments for video aesthetics is reflected in David Hall's dramatic statement that video is essentially time-based art. His statement also recalls how experimental filmmakers Hollis Frampton and Paul Sharits discovered that temporal development could not be abandoned in film, however radical their attempts to destroy it. Video-maker Hall, who trained as a sculptor, tried to embrace in video art the two diverging dimensions aesthetically shaped in different arts – the temporal and the spatial. He did so through the insertion of his short time-based video pieces (that have a temporal development) into the standard format of TV apparatus (seen as a three-dimensional object).

In *Tap Piece*, one of his famous *TV Interruptions* (1971), commissioned by Scottish Television and intended to interrupt the programme flow unannounced, Hall films an empty glass container with an immobile camera while water from the visibly installed tap runs into it and fills the space. The image of the glass container filled with water is set congruent with the monitor screen. And because of the isometric scale of monitor glass and the glass container it depicts, a fundamental irritation of the television space occurs for the viewer when the glass container is lifted on one side and the water seemingly poured out of the TV box. *Tap Piece* can be seen as a live performance for a television set which appears simultaneously as screen surface and sculpture. Herein lies a conceptual approach which also brought the spheres of art and mass media closer together.[7] As a statement of medium specificity, this piece reveals television's double reality, split between the reality of what is represented and the reality of the representation. *Tap Piece* confronts the notion of television as transparently live temporal flow of information with a critical awareness of its presence as medium. Comparing experimental film and television, A.L. Rees points out Hall's outstanding position in bridging avant-garde film's temporality and the televisual monitor image of the box in video art. Unlike structural film, Hall's TV interventions negate neither the representational image nor the ideally subjected viewer. Rather, as Rees states, Hall 'accepts that broadcast TV has already shaped or "sited" the viewer's expectations of video art, but contests the process and language of that conditioning by exposing the specific properties of the medium'.[8]

Tied strongly to the history of experimental film cooperatives, for example through filmmakers like Malcolm LeGrice who worked with video as an intermedium between celluloid film and digital, programmable film, video practices in the British context also need to be seen in the context of comparatively larger opportunites to work within television. This is not to underestimate the difficulties experienced by video-makers trying to achieve acceptance in television, due partly to technical image quality that did not

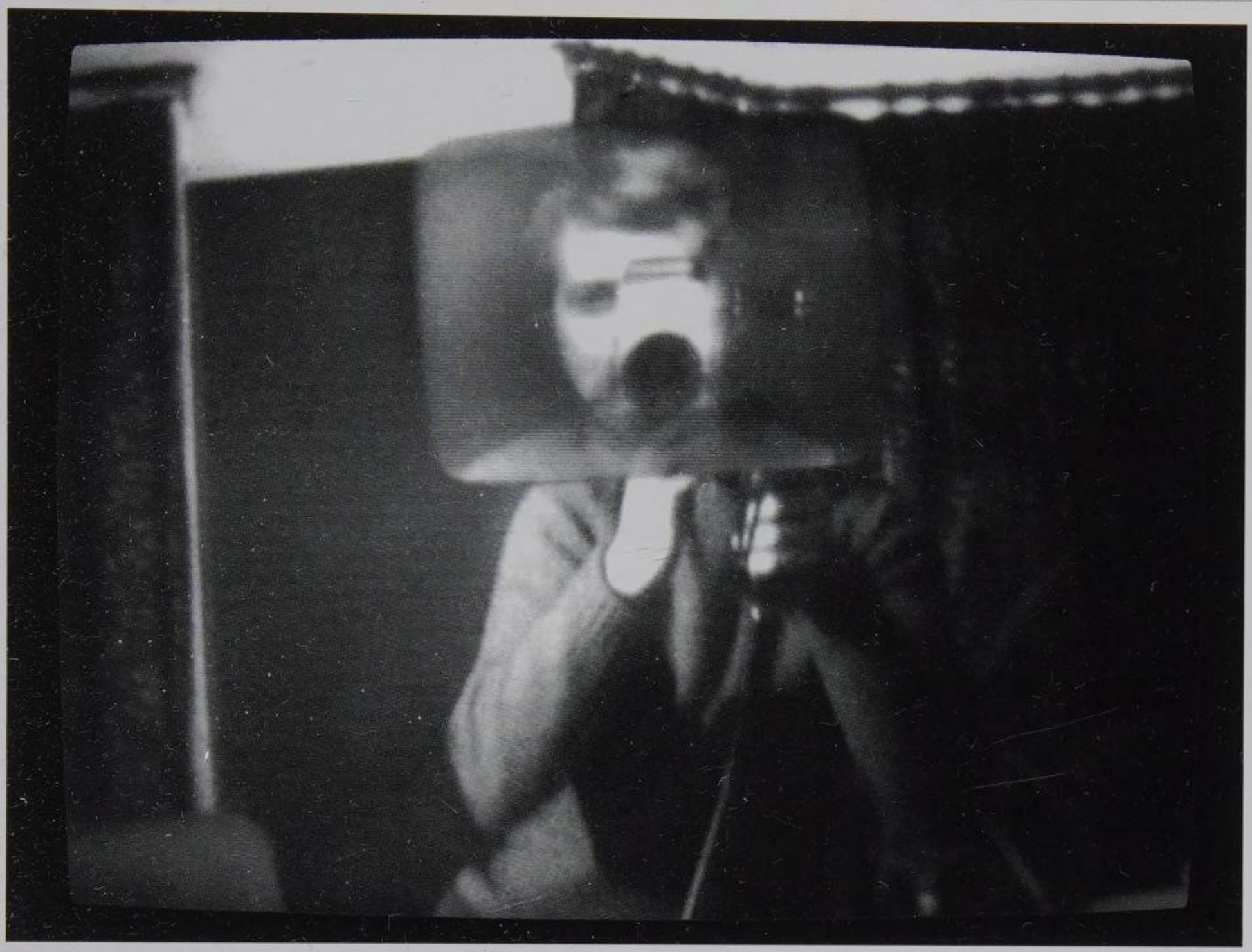


Fig. 2. David Hall, *Relative Surfaces*, 1974.

meet broadcast engineering standards, partly to the paucity of editing options in early videotapes.[9] Video's critical stand towards televisual omnipresence and its aesthetic standardisation cannot have made matters easier. Nevertheless, from an international perspective, specific alliances with television programmes, for example *Arena: Art and Design* at BBC2 and *TVX* (commissioned by BBC and produced by John Hopkins until 1972) stand out.[10] Similar ideas about reversing television's one-way flow and talking back to television circulated among video groups in the US and Europe, who conceived of television as a medium that had not only entered but occupied all aspects of daily life. In response to the domination of institutionalised television, alternative television programmes and advanced electronic aesthetics were developed, sometimes in conjunction with broadcast stations in the US and in Germany, but the alliances were random and inconsistent; far less successful than in the UK.[11]

David Hall particularly articulated his structural critique from inside the electronic apparatus when he positions his video work right at the interface of art and media. By addressing media at the point of entry into domestic spaces, in an almost artisanal manner, Hall demonstrates how viewers can get their hands on the tools and talk back to the media by rendering the media boundary, the screen and image surfaces, permeable. With *Relative Surfaces* (1972) Hall explains the specific properties of video in television as he experiments with the options of keying, using a mirror not only for self-reflexion but also to superimpose image fields. The visible video image presented on the television monitor is not coherent. A composite image, it simulates a dialogue between free-floating image surfaces that confuse the positions of the viewer and the viewed. The structural qualities of video were even more enforced in the earlier *Vidicon Inscriptions* (1973), where Hall takes the notion of recording media (such as photography, film, video/television) literally and demonstrates, light bulb in hand, how this energy hits the surface of the vidicon tube inside the camera. When the intensity of the incoming light is high, the vidicon burns and the visible results become black.

Where electronic video technology was applied to television, it critiqued TV's characteristic function as a culturally core medium,

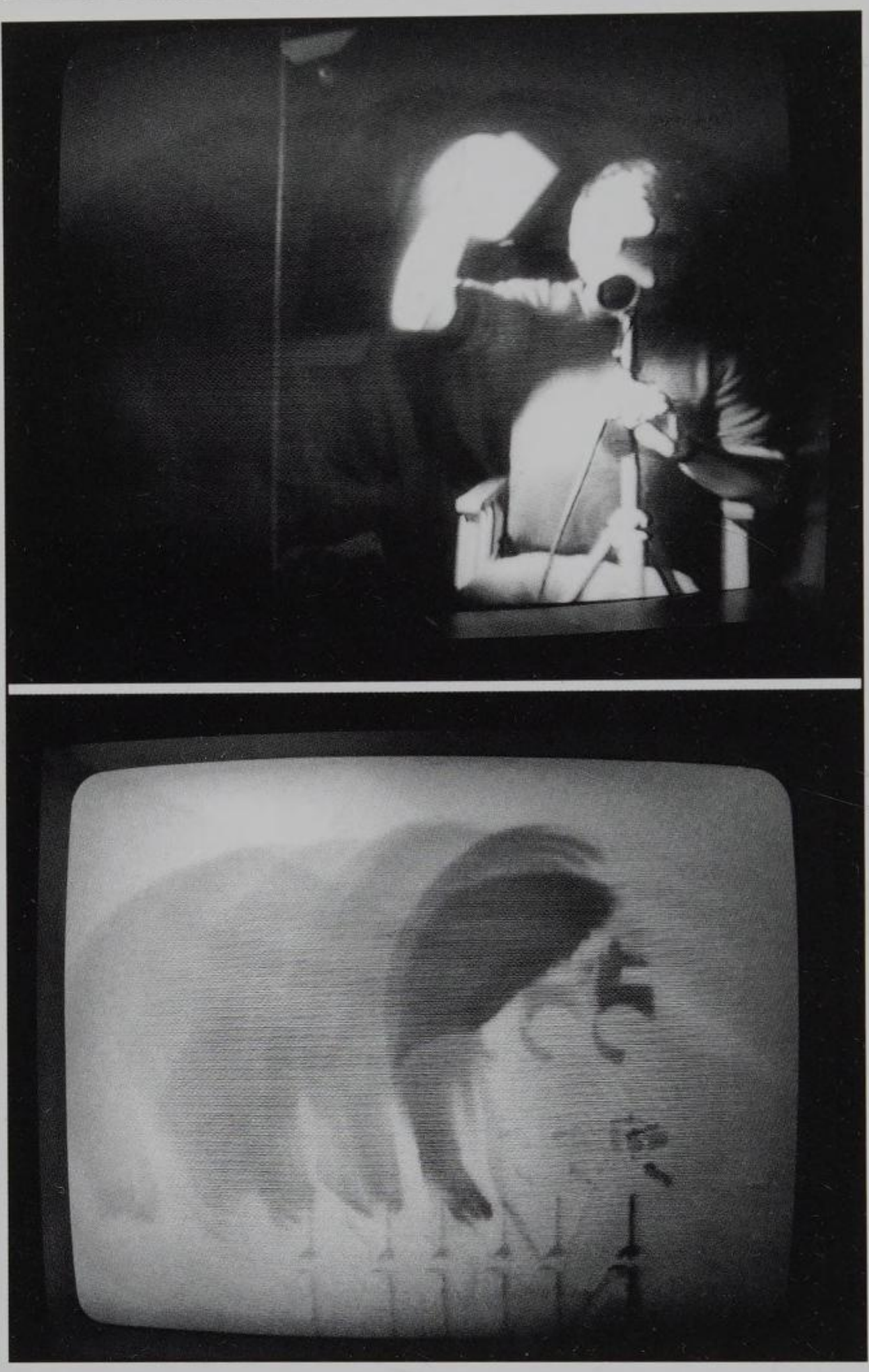


Fig. 3. David Hall, *Vidicon Inscriptions*, 1974.

deconstructing it from within. American video artist Dara Birnbaum, who exclusively reworks television footage in her video clips, represents the strand of cultural critique when she explains the task of the pioneering video artist: 'By turning the medium of video/television on itself, the real dislocation took place by altering the iconography of television through changing its original structure and content. ... It was a way of talking back to the media'.[12] One way of talking back to television through the voices of video is to disassemble familiar television footage. Another option was to perform video live for television and erase the media border between the two. In a series of performances for the video camera, Vito Acconci (US) had aggressively denied his spatial separation from the audience and requested viewers to join him in the actual performance space. In another strand of video performances, Kevin Atherton (UK) requests answers from television characters and engages in conversation with prerecorded videotapes. Using video's immediacy to enter the structure of television programme and interact live with a supposedly 'live' medium (broadcast to us in a closed, non-interactive form) Atherton as performer forces television to reveal its rules, stereotypes and limitations.[13]

By using televisual presentation as raw material of video art in *Television Interview* (1984), Kevin Atherton reframes an example of the contemporary TV series *Coronation Street* into a double-screen format. While the television programme runs in the right hand screen, he questions and comments on the preset dialogue from the left hand screen, which displays his portrait as interviewer. The simulation of live interaction with television programme is further highlighted when Atherton deliberately plays the commercial breaks of *Coronation Street* in fast forward mode, thereby stating the viewer's power to actively interact and manipulate the televisual presence that comes to us in a package. 'I thought then, and I think even more-so now looking at it, that what I was trying to do, was use the critical distance that video art permitted and gave me to look at television. If one was a critic and used a different language, to allow me to critique television, I was taking the piss out of broadcast culture. I was trying to merge the two.'[14]

Earlier in the 70s Atherton had also self-ironically commented on his approach – that video programmes should be about art and not television – when he built a dialogue with himself on two distinct media levels, clearly separated spatially but also temporally. As in his television interviews, Atherton conceives the self-interviews of *In Two Minds* (1978–81) on two different reality levels. On a presumably recorded and unedited tape of 1978, we see him talking about the place of video in relation to the video show at Serpentine Gallery and other spaces,[15] while in a supposedly live performance of the artist three years later (1981) he is dialoguing with his recorded self in front



Figs. 4 and 5. Kevin Atherton, *In Two Minds*, 1978.

of a large screen-projection of the tape from 1978.

The interaction works through questioning the statements of 1978 in 1981 in a rather aggressive mode. Atherton constantly claims his present reality as being superior because 'live', whereas the video art of 1978 had the problem of not being live and was in danger of losing a live audience on top. Atherton deliberately confuses the two states of reality by neglecting the difference between 'life' outside and 'live' inside the video medium. This procedure of making strange reveals the crucial difference between art and life, a difference that needs to be maintained when the video work is considered a video performance – that is to say a video live performance where the performativity of the live video is at stake. The conflation of art and life was be the achievable goal of many live and performance art pieces of the time. Atherton's performances distinguish themselves from these practices by asserting his performative presence, twice mediated as differentially 'live' in a closed dialogue that is nevertheless viewed by an actually present audience.

Thus, viewing happens on multiple levels. Atherton views himself from time distance and the actual audience of his 1981 performance views him 'live' (in the same space) and 'live' in the media space. The viewers of the final videowork *In Two Minds* are external to these media interactions that belong to the production times. To the video viewers, the duration of the two taped performances of the artist are equal but the temporal distance gives Atherton in 1981 the pretext to contradict and distance himself from the earlier immature statements. The double presentation of Atherton in the same media space of the final video provokes further confusion when the artist performed a new version twenty-seven years later and we (the external viewers) need to consider that each of the performances did have a live audience in the performance space at the time of the recording. The later video of the performance from 2005 also demonstrates radicalisation of the video artists' position in the contemporarily expanding media landscape, as Atherton uses the dialogue gaps that he left in the initial recording of 1978 to comment on recent concepts of interactive television. 'You are acting, I am reacting', says the artist to himself trapped on the earlier video, thereby reversing the direction of televisual communication. The self-ironic statement is not true because Atherton actually becomes the medium when he uses his video piece for live action in-between the two: the live audience of 2005

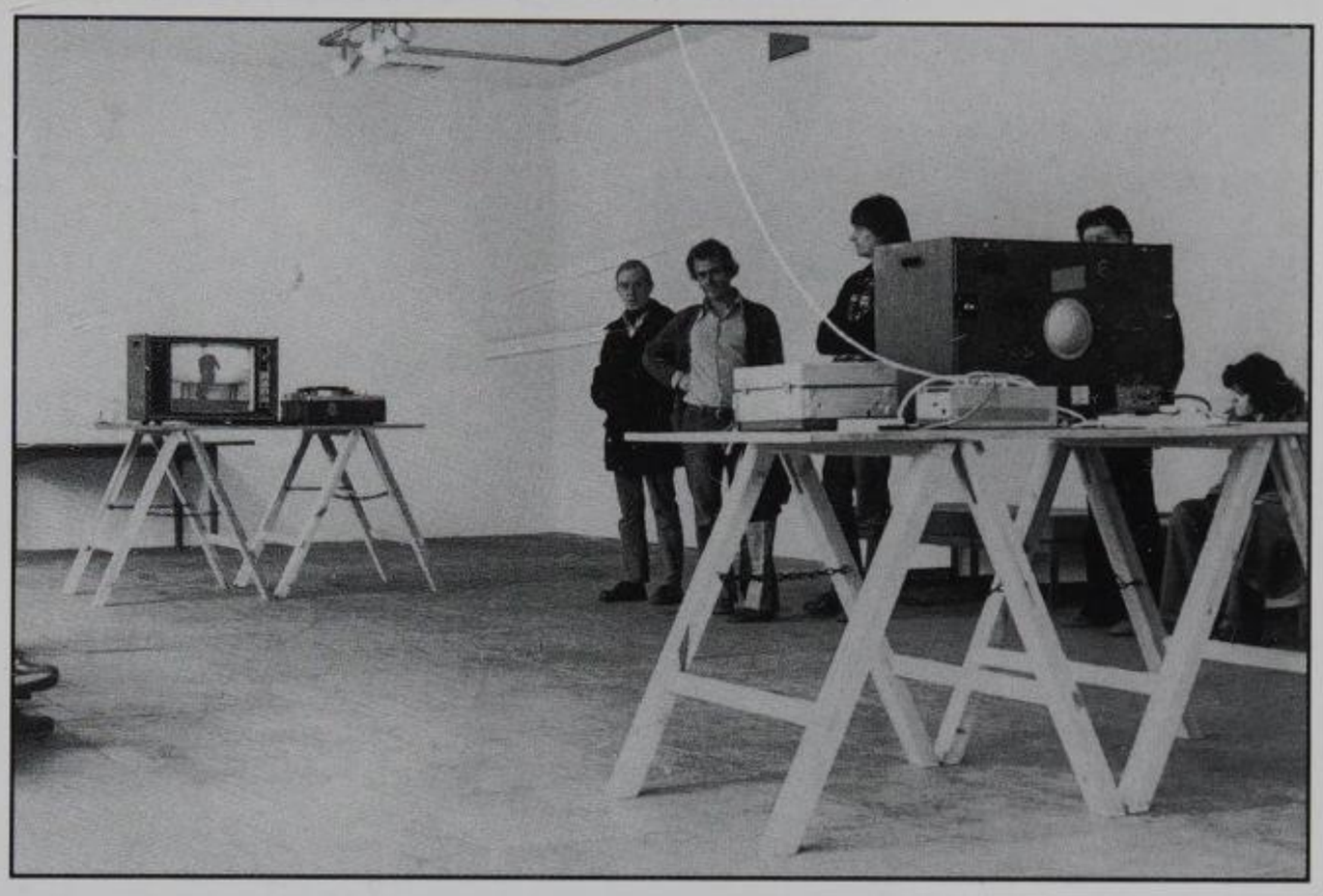




Fig. 6. Kevin Atherton, *In Two Minds*, 1978.

and the live recording of 1978. As Marshall McLuhan argued, the medium massages the content in the process of transmission. In this respect Atherton not only talks back to television, but also interferes with the transmission by occupying the position and role of the medium himself.

By disturbing the usual separation between medium and audience which television's reality effect requires, the video works of Stephen Partridge and Chris Meigh-Andrews also unveil mediation processes and physically enter the space of production. Both appear as interviewers who, as the camera records them, enforce a dialogue on the mechanisms of media reality that converge in studio (production) and broadcast (reproduction). Their enforced dialogues with the televisual presentation format drags into the light television's hidden monologue, usually veiled in the parasocial interaction whereby television news address 'you', the audience. The simulated interviews in the video works *Dialogue for Two Players*, (Partridge, 1984) and *The Viewer's Receptive Capacity*, (Meigh-Andrews, 1978) were conduced by male authors and confuse the thin line between live and life, most of all when the interviewee, usually female, reacts as if emotional and out of control.

The title of Partridge's piece, *Dialogue for Two Players*, contains a self-reflexive view of non-dialogical television that is further deconstructed towards the collapse of dialogue. Intially the interviewer commands camera positions and selects the shots, playing the leading role in the dialogue with the woman seated in the same studio space. But while her responses end in almost existential monologue, his part turns into silence so that the



Fig. 7. Stephen Partridge, *Dialogue for Two Players*, 1984.



Fig. 8. Chris Meigh-Andrews, *The Viewer's Receptive Capacity*, 1978.

dialogue fails. As this video work demonstrates, television is not about dialogue. Nor is it the right medium to present descriptions of the self. Instead it imposes a violent mechanism for exposing the self in a powerless situation under complete control. Communication with or within television, as video art tells us here, is one-dimensional. There are no equal players in front of and behind the control panel. The critique of media form is pushed further through the focus on editing.

> As this work unfolds, its complexity becomes evident, as a series of images from different parts of the recording, are shown together on screen. The manipulation of the material is made clear as these images are variously re-wound, slowed down, frozen or played in fast forward as well as played in real time, an interaction with TV itself.[16]

The artist-interviewer gives on-scene instructions to the off-screen control room, instructions inaudible in normal broadcast situations. Here they help to manifest the double nature of media reality, apparently taken from real life but actually constructed in front of the apparatus of the medium.

Chris Meigh-Andrews' scrutiny of *The Viewer's Receptive Capacity* takes these media conditions as starting point to talk in the studio situation about the modes of production in two directions: to us the audience of the videotape and to the image of a woman who appears on an internally-framed monitor and also standing in the studio but in another room. The recordings of her explanation of the technical and scientific purposes of television entertainment and news are immediately controlled by Meigh-Andrews. By playing the role of a studio director who – similar to Partridge's position – oversees all elements of vision and sound, Meigh-Andrews introduces another personal level of commentary and agitation when he demands that she repeat and rehearse again and again in a tone that rather belongs to their relationship in real life than to the process necessary to produce the 'live' effect of television.

The tape stretches the viewer's patience to the limit not so much because of the media-within-media situation but through the increased failure of the two televisual 'actors' to meet the basic requirements of the medium

and deliver content ready for broadcasting. Like Vito Acconci's refusal to accept the separation of production and display spaces, Meigh-Andrews here contests their split reality and argues with the woman on the monitor in real time. The struggle to maintain control over televisual production reverses the impression of real life, however, as the recorded material that creates the content of the video in return deals with the structure of television programmes. What is strengthened here in this conceptual loop, is how video can function as rupture and breakdown of television formats at the end of a chain of reception.

The control issue is also addressed beyond power-play in David Critchley's refusal to produce content for the media at all. This view is expressed in extreme with a self-interview about work that, he announces, he never did. The *Pieces I Never Did* (1975) are a fusion of Critchley's live performance to a video camera set up in his studio and the realisation of performance videos he talks about but supposedly did not act out. Only excerpts of the non-executed performance videos (such as the video of himself lying on the floor and screaming at the top of his voice) are shown as part of the video performance that is *Pieces I Never Did*. The performed 'pieces' come from another media reality which provides the content of the resultant video recording. But their reality is contested by Critchley in order to force himself – and by extension the viewer – to focus on the sheer presence of the artist being taped on video. The stress on immediate presence allows only glimpses of pre-recorded media reality. Evidently the conceptual approach of not doing anything in the videotape means a rigorous denial of entertainment. It opposes programming and, in broader perspective, opens a parallel view on television's presumed immediacy. The commonly held belief of television's live function as window onto the world is questioned here when Critchley conceals 'information'. The flow of information rather comes to a standstill in this piece which, rather than talking back to the media, runs communication down to zero.

As these examples suggest, the conflation of life and live reaches a summit with video performance tapes when the performance of an author as actor is reflected at the level of the performance medium. Artists' live performances in video and the performativity of the medium are by nature both fluid processes and in principle open-ended. However, the situation changes when video works target television's control mechanisms, more or less violently forcing the television to melt its programme structure into interaction and performance. In this respect, those video works which assert immediacy as the essential characteristic of the electronic medium can be considered television art in and against television. Making visible the crossover between showing an art performance on television, on one hand, and dismantling the performance capacity of television as essential to the electronic medium, on the other, requires representational level. What is needed is a position of reflection that interposes a critical distance from the analysed situation. This, naturally, is the position of video. Video ideally supplies the technical closeness and the necessary conceptual difference to make a critical intervention into the standard forms of television.

Aesthetics of the electronic vocabulary

It is incorrect to position video as the 'little sister' of television – a view still propounded in many scholarly works on media and communication. The interventions into the structure of TV production and programming carried out by British video artists show how video in many ways bears the capacity to appear visibly and audibly as an electronic medium in its own right. These processes of self-reflexivity in and on video are evidence in particular of transformative, intermedial and interchangeable features. They shape the appearance of electronic cultures emerging since the 70s in the context of the fast growing industries of electronic tools and toys. Video holds a key position because of its double function: a technological connection to the leading medium of television *and* an aesthetic separation from its culturally dominant form. Determined by immediacy, open structure and variable audio-visual input and output, video has the option to relate or not to existing pa-

rameters of broadcasting, cinema and art. In this respect video rather than television plays the leading role of core medium in electronic cultures, at the convergent point of art, technology and medium specificity.

Many video artists felt these specificities of the medium were not acknowledged and were concerned that they might be immersed by either television or the art market. It is worth recalling the problem of naming associated with the first steps of the medium. In his influential article on 'British Video Art' in 1975, David Hall argued the categorical distinction between video arts, on one hand, and artists' video on the other. After asserting that video 'has no historical precedents as an established practice', Hall concludes, 'my purpose here is not to elaborate on the position of art work using video, but rather to tentatively examine video as the art work'.[17] This view, by and large shared internationally by pioneers of experimental video, sought to recognise and understand the essential properties and fundamental characteristics which condition the form of video and allow all sorts of manipulations. Because various groupings were interested in the then 'new' medium for various purposes (notably documentary video, artistic video and technical-aesthetic video), the term 'video art' is in itself problematic and generally includes the direction of image technology that denotes concepts of experimental video praxis. Though the representatives of this direction are discussed under the rubric of 'video art' there is the disadvantage that the term also carries other connotations such as the artist performance video and the so-called artist video. A similar gap also exists between video performance and performance video. For clarification and in evaluation of performance works, it is worth differentiating between dance, theater, film and other performances recorded with video which are properly 'performance videos'; and those video performances where the aesthetic-technical capacity of video – including the variety of devices – is applied in performative ways. Striking examples can be identified in Atherton's and Acconci's interplay with camera, monitor and tape recorder.

In another interview thirty years later, David Hall acknowledges the interconnectedness of video with performance. He reasserts the historical necessity of distinguishing media/video activites from surrounding event, performance and film practices. But he also looks in more detail at their mutual influences and how the introduction of technology brings a certain immediacy which tears open conventional art forms and makes the viewer aware of any media presence.

> There was medium specific work, quite clearly stuff that was actually concerned, I would always argue not just technologically specific, but also culturally. That is work, that at least I was interested in, that reflected the culture of moving image, and video moving image, which primarily was television and the whole culture surrounding that. The culture of the medium and the technology of the medium were integral considerations, or apparently so, in the work; right through to work that was like performance work, which was really just using it as an artist video. It wasn't video art. I made these claims, I wouldn't do it perhaps quite so much, or quite so strongly now, but a lot of work was talked of in the context of video art when really it was merely a documentation of performance. Equally though, one has to admit there was a lot of performance work which was on the cusp, where it was only meaningful through video. Through the system of recording, certain considerations were made of what a performance was trying to say, that ironically you couldn't actually get to by simply seeing this performance live. It needed that durational thing. It needed that time, that consideration of maybe repetition or whatever, some means of editing, some means of replacing, replaying parts and all the rest of it. It was emphasis that you could give with a close-in live camera at the time, which you couldn't get viewing it in an audience, in a performance.[18]

One might wonder why video art and artists' video did not happily merge.[19] One reason lies in the fact that the overriding interest of artists using video was to push out the bounda-

ries of what they saw as the closed context of 'white cube' gallery and exhibition spaces. In their attempts to open up new spaces, artists in the US like Peter Campus, Dan Graham, John Baldessari, Dennis Oppenheim and others carried out performances with hand-held video cameras that reproduced disorienting close-ups of architectural spaces and contrasted the camera coverage with the fields of the performer's perception. In Britain, the history of video arts has for the most part been evaluated in discourses that critique the banal, repetitive and finally commercial structure of television programmes. One major challenge was to break through television's refusal to accept video. However, even more challenging perhaps was the articulation of an electronic vocabulary and the assertion of a media aesthetic that relied on technological knowlege and produced unstable, collapsing imagery.

Among the few examples in video arts to combine the open and fluid forms of performance arts that emerged from Happening and Fluxus with the open structural components of video in Britain are Tamara Krikorian's video critique of art conventions and in Germany Dieter Kiessling's lucid performances of closed-circuit video. Krikorian enriches video's aesthetic language through merging, and thereby comparing structurally, still, moving and multi-layered electronic imagery. As a result the technical and conceptual constraints of painterly as well as cinematic and televisual display are dissolved in the flexible and manipulative structure of video. In *Is this Art? Is this Entertainment?* (1983), Krikorian, who belonged to David Hall's group and emphasised video as art, introduces words and images taken from different media sources and turns them into performative elements. This produces an ironic interrogation of how meaning and cultural value are constructed historically through art and in the present through media images and texts. The point of blurring the distinctions between art and media contexts lies in an application of video as the appropriate platform to rework conceptually the capacities of preceding and established art forms. In the earlier tape *In the Minds Eye* (1977) Krikorian had disassembled sound and image and set the narration of a French language text against an empty screen followed by a silent continuity shot from a train window. Not only does language barrier impede understanding: the arrangment of media elements is supposed to express inner vision. In return, the reference to processes of a human mind resembles the modular structure of video processing.

While Krikorian's videotapes work towards the interior of media languages, the example of the opposite direction, centrifugal exploitation of video's performative capacities, is given by Kiessling. His work merges camera and display levels in video installations where the apparatus' performances are multiplied in feedback. For example, Kiessling projects a continuous televisual image from behind an opened television set so that the direction of broadcasting is reinforced. In another installation work, *Switched On/Off Television Set* (1988), the video camera scans the reflection on the surface of a switched-off television screen and transmits this reflection to another switched-on television. Circular repetition is contained in this deconstructed and reconstructed pictoriality which performs video's capacity for endless feedback. Here again, the notion of video performance of itself is stressed in order to dissect its elements and force them to visibilty.

British video artists of the 70s and 80s were greatly concerned to resist any tendency for the electronic language of video to become just another art genre of international modernism, as had happened with performance. At the same time, the use of video equipment among political activists for purposes of alternative media coverage built another strand of video practice that parallels more or less international development in the US, France and Germany, and later in Japan. But in their search for a proper language of video, British artists, though exploiting the available tools and devices, were to a much lesser extent interested in signal processing and modulation of electronic waveforms. Experimental pioneers in the US like Dan Sandin, Steve Beck and Eric Siegel built synthesisers and processors to generate and alter sounds and vision differently from the standard devices that were available on the market between 1970 and 1972. In the UK, however, Peter Donebauer, who in 1975 conceived the Videokalos Colour Synthesiser, is somewhat

exceptional. The device allowed him to perform video in open processes and to experiment with synchronisation between visual and audio elements, in short to play video like music and vice versa.

Donebauer did not see himself as a performer, unlike Steve Beck who engaged in public synthesiser concerts. Instead he performed on his device as a necessary means to produce the electronic waveforms that he wanted to capture on videotapes which form the body of his work. Nevertheless Donebauer was also interested in the live performativity of the medium and explored the structural relations of video and music in abstraction. Starting from the technical possibility of interchangeable audio and video signals in the electronic medium which allowed video artists of the first generation to plug together video machines and audio synthesisers (when video synthesisers and processors were not yet available), Donebauer wanted to develop a syntax of the electronic language. Like many experimental pioneers working in the US, especially Steina and Woody Vasulka, he thought the common denominator of electronic sound and vision manifests in abstract forms of video art. Here, signal processing – audio and video – was understood as the building block of a new electronic vocabulary. As Chris Meigh-Andrews notes, 'Donebauer's approach to video was also highly influenced by his perception of music as an abstract language, and his notion that live video produced by an interaction between performers could be perceived in a similar way'.[20]

This point needs clarification, however. Donebauer's Videokalos belongs to a category of image processor which, like Sandin's Image Processor, are in principle analog computers and not synthesisers, unlike Beck's Direct Video Synthesiser. The difference is that the synthesiser does not need any external input: generating pulses autonomously, it literally synthes- ises the video signal inside the device. Processors on the other hand need an external input which can then circulate through the device. Early processors usually had four to eight input channels and priority mixers for real-time processing of sequences arranged at a programmable level. By routing the image through



Fig. 9. Peter Donebauer demonstrating the Videokalos Synthesiser at Biddick Farm Arts Centre, 1978.

different modules (keyer, switcher) and using priority keys which qualify the instrument as computer, it is possible to maximise the number of modifications of the image and sound processes. Regardless of what deformation has been achieved, in the end the modified video image needs to be restored with the Broadcast Signal Generator. Only then is it possible to display the violated image in a visible format, specifically a standard television format. From a technical perspective, these requirements are shared in common by television and video. But while the TV tries to avoid processuality as much as possible in favor of the appearance of a coherent 'image', video exposes these processes as creative tools.

Fig. 10. Peter Donebauer and Richard Monkhouse of VAMP, Biddick Farm Arts Centre, 1978.



Attacking and subverting the media system from inside

Initially, video technology consisted of low-tech devices: portapak camera, monitor and cassette recorder. Step-by-step video equipment was used by artists, filmmakers, musicians and engineers collaborating in a spirit of exploration. Eventually they began to build new devices because they were dissatisfied with the available tools. In the early days, when options were limited, many artists worked with closed circuit and electromagnetic distortions. Some focussed extensively on feedback and delay effects. Co-creative and collaborative efforts of artists and television engineers were needed to conceptualise and build video devices to alter the appearance of video. Video synthesisers, scan processors and keyers could be plugged into standard video equipment and resulted in new audiovisual forms and unforeseen images completely different from both film and television. Most of these instruments were designed and built by engineers and artists working together in the US[21] and – with the exception of Peter Donebauer and a few others – were introduced to Europe not as devices but through the circulation of the abstract videotapes that were produced with the machines. Because the British video sector was characterised at the time by interventions into the broadcast TV formats, on the one hand, and rearticulations of self-reflexivity inherited from avant-garde film's strategies of opposition, on the other, a twofold, rather paradoxical strategy emerges: to make video art both for and against television. This paradox entails another challenge for video, highlighted in Nam June Paik's well-known claim to make art for 25 million people.

Video art suffered from the unavoidable rule that the arrival of a new art form is always violent. Viewed historically, any new medium both incorporates and departs from the previous media culture. In this intermedial phase of dynamic negotiations between the 'old' and the 'new', the new medium relates in various ways to the old institutions, media languages, and means of transmission and distribution. Dialogue and interaction between the emerging medium and established genres and their institutions are violent to the extent that the new form resists absorption. The configuration of the medium takes place step by step with the development of devices, the articulation of a vocabulary and the recognition of its specificity.

As it developed from technology to medium, video separated from surrounding media on the basis of the scale of its audiovisual form, the tempo of its display and the schema of transmission. At first, video revolts against electronic imaging according to television rules: while television channels the flow of electronic signals in accordance with culturally accepted norms of representation, video operates from outside the cultural institutions. It has the advantage for artists of modulating, reworking, expanding, and inverting the signal flow and its connotations of immediacy.

> The discourse of TV flow is 'present' in the sense that the viewer can enter into dialogue with the screen. Yet the broadcast flow is also a vanishing, a constant disappearing of what has just been shown. ... Yet not only is the sensation of movement on screen an optical illusion brought about by the rapid succession of frames; each frame is itself radically incomplete, the line before always fading away, the first scan of the frame all but gone, even from the retina, before the second interlacing scan is complete. ... TV's presence to the viewer is subject to constant flux; it is only intermittently 'present' as a kind of writing on the glass, to the distracted viewer, and even in moments of concentration caught in a dialectic of constant becoming and constant fading.[22]

Televisual flow is the technical precondition for the character of video as present, referring also to the modalities of programme reception and distribution. Usually, the components of scanning and interlacing lines are kept invisible, and for the most part only become noticeable to the viewer when technical failure occurs. The introduction of the videotape recorder however creates another possibility for manoeuvring the flow. 'Timeshifting'[23] describes the cultural use of the video recorder as device to reproduce television. To the extent

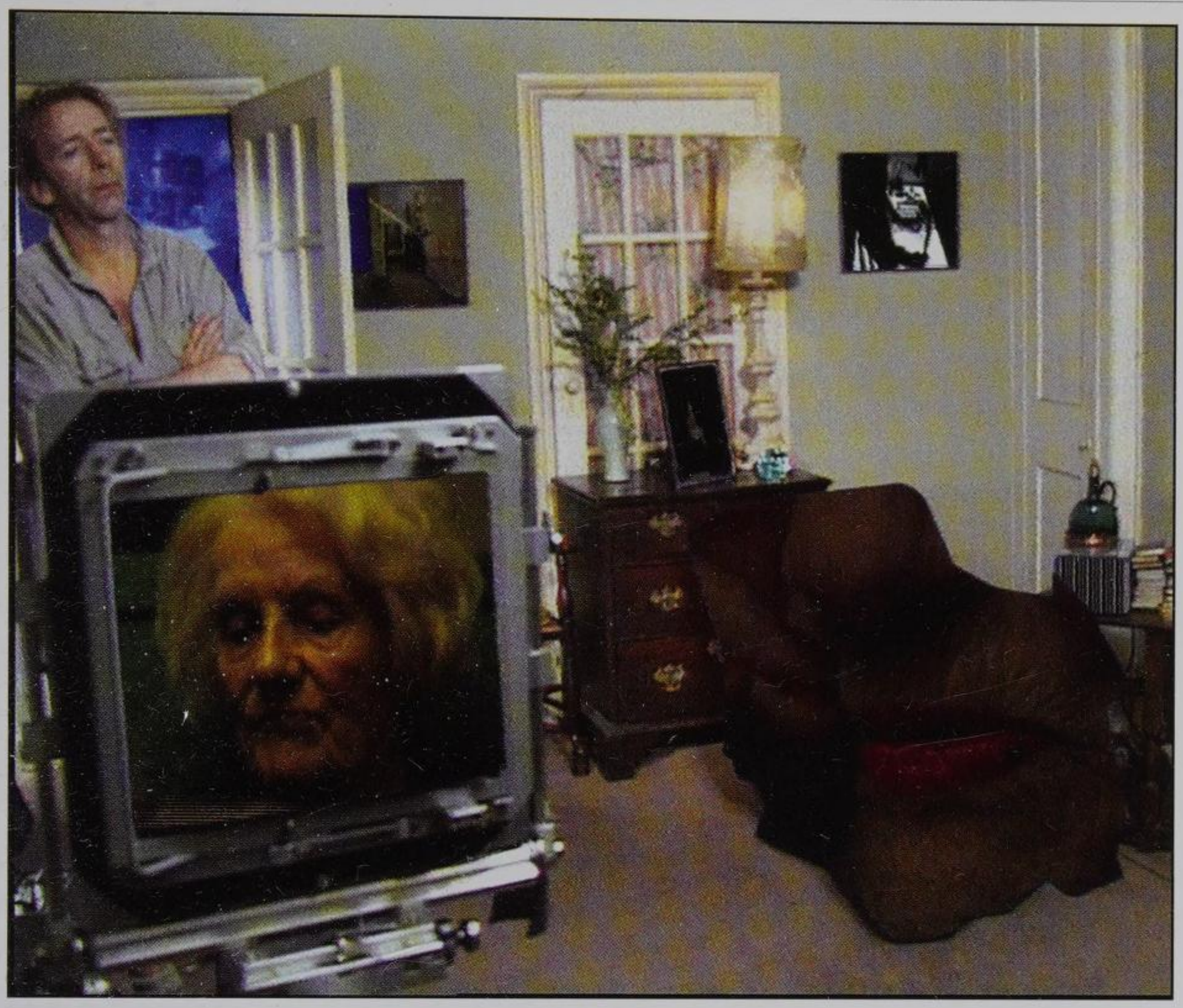


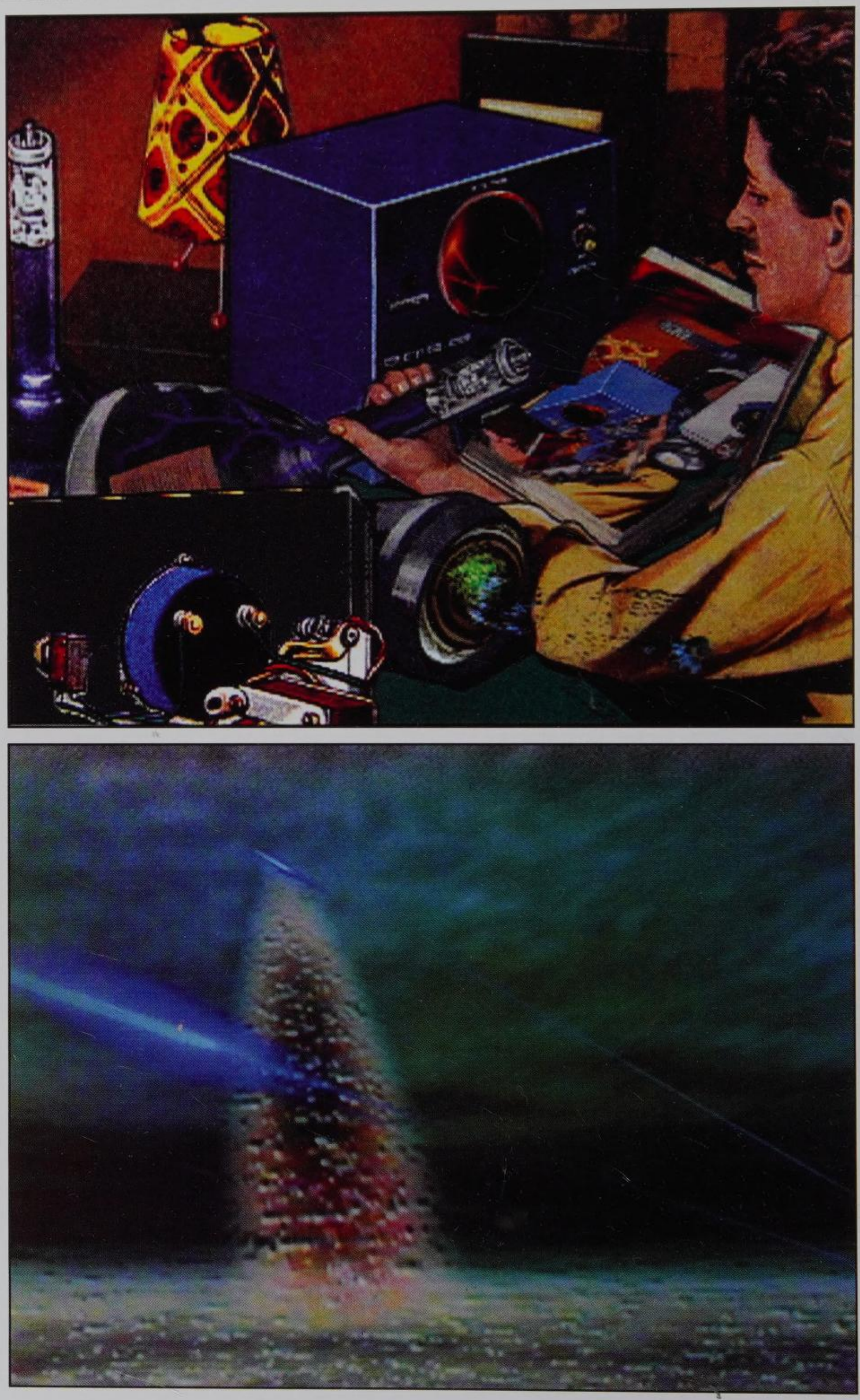
Fig. 11. David Larcher, *Granny's Is*, 1989.

that this operation determines video as cultural praxis, it also demonstrates essentials of the time-based, linear and processual technology. 'Timeshifting' has thus two connotations: one referring to the technology of signal processing (flow of images) and the other to dealing with television as institution (flow of programming). The former can be actually achieved in the simple schema of camera and screen (it describes how electronic signals are constructed and reconstructed and how the half-images are put together while shifting them in time). Intervention in the institutional flow of programming appears in the application of video recorders to fast forward/ rewind and occasionally to grab a still image. To this extent, the shared technological basis of video and television makes cultural retroengineering of television possible through video technology, placing television's position as dominant model of electronic culture in doubt. Rivalry is taken to extremes when the video recorder is used like a feedback machine for endless timeshifting and the re-recorded decaying image is reintroduced back into television to perform, self-reflexively, its instability and incompleteness.

In David Hall's self-explanatory *This is a Television Receiver* (1976) the enforced remediation of television through rewinding and re-recording the same videotape three times in a row sheds light onto the dissolution of 'image' into electronic snow. The progressive loss of sound and vision from generation to generation of videotape not only exhausts the capacities of analog video. More importantly, the video works by demonstrating timeshifting, by means of which it deconstructs technically the essential characteristics of an ostensibly live event, dismantled at the core of a decaying videotape. At the same time, the disappearance of understandable sounds and recognisable images produces the underlying signal flow as the raw material of any electronic medium. In this respect, Hall's tape merges video and television on the same technical basis, visually and audibly.

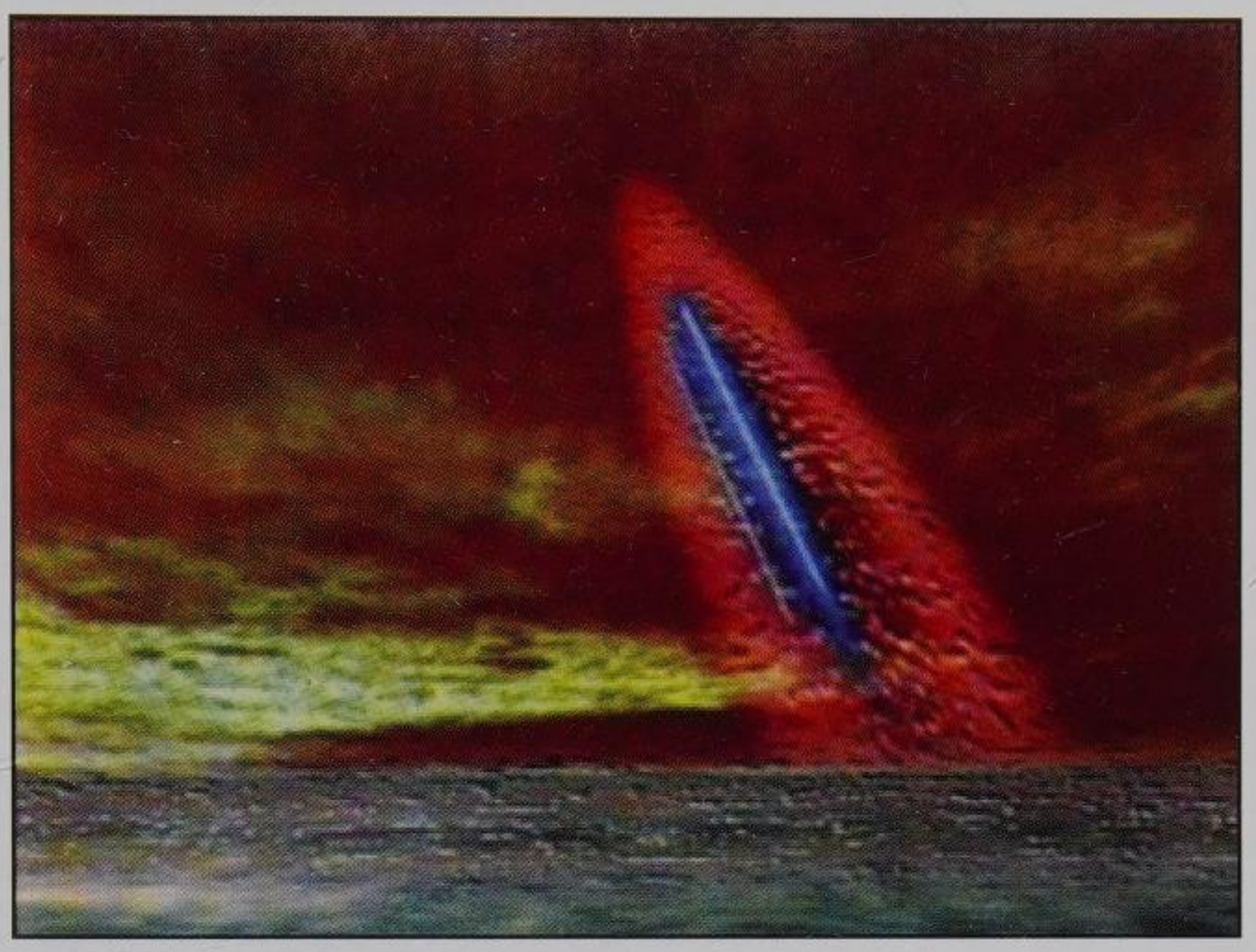
Finally, these video inscriptions by David Hall and others can also be read as research

Figs. 12 and 13. David Larcher, *VideOvoid: The Trailer* 1993.



into basic constituents of the iconic image, a concept that was heavily debated in the neighbouring discipline of film criticism in the 70s. When viewed together, the television disturbances in David Hall's and Kevin Atherton's performances of video for television, and interventions into communication processes in video works by David Critchley, Stephen Partridge and Chris Meigh-Andrews including Tamara Krikorian's dissociations of electronic language, contribute to building up video as a medium of its own *and* in relation to the existing media setting. Another direction is represented by David Larcher's refusal to accept the viewing conditions of television. His video works deconstruct video elements in a manner reminiscent of radical structural approaches in the London Film-makers' Co-op where Larcher had his roots. His later works also have a central position in current media development, as Larcher adopted digital-effects computers to make the passage from analog to digital.

Using technologies such as blue screen, optical prisms, mirror balls, synthesisers and computer graphics, David Larcher works in two directions simultaneously. In one direction he reaches towards the limits of visuality through



high density effects (keyers, layers), while in the other he is emptying out the image field to reveal the raw material of video noise. Larcher, who uses the term video void instead of video noise, is interested in basic phenomena of electronics and modifies the recorded image material to such an extent that any representational level is rendered unrecognisable. One technique is to multiply image segments, turning them into free-floating forms reminiscent of col-

Figs. 14 and 15. David Larcher, *VideOvoid: The Trailer* 1993.



lage elements. The idea of stretching the possibilites of electronic imagery arises from questioning how the limits of visuality can be visualised.

In *Granny's Is* (1989), Larcher expands the personal portrait of his elderly, housebound grandmother with spatial elements derived from optical, electronic and digital effects. When single images are set in motion as if in a centrifuge, the grandmother (whose image at the same time is reflected onto the surface of a mirror ball) seems to wander endlessly in the universe of the electronic void. Here, the metaphor of the cycle of life and death is strengthened by an equally distorted soundtrack. Individual words and images are violently disassembled, alternating between audibility, visibility and erasure. In transcending video images and sounds into immateriality, Larcher explores the possibilities of image as object. This involves fluid transitions of simulated movements, for example when an image sequence is presented as stacks of images 'behind' one another. The open form also arises from keyed-in photographs and from abstract forms generated through pulsing signals. The work draws a parallel between the flow of imagery and the flow of life. Towards the end of the tape, when his grandmother is dying, Larcher liberates the video image from any photographic and cinematographic conventions of representation and sets it free as unbound object to 'fly around' in the raster format.

In two later works *VideOvoid: The Trailer* (1993) and *VideOvoid: Text* (1996), David Larcher makes the signal processes visible on cartographically displayed flat images. The technique translates the electronic model of processing into computer graphics where the generic development of video dissolves into the abstraction of noise: video void. This marks a shift from recognisable information into the basic elements of iconic display in the digital. The work converges the media form of video (waveforms) and computer (bits) at the level of signal processing.

Today we are facing a fast-changing media context with the introduction of an all embracing digital code and its technical ability to dissolve the borders between media. At such a moment it seems advisable to stop briefly to recapitulate what was specific to the medium of video. As the discussion of early video approaches in Britain demonstrates, the contribution of video to the overall development of media has been underestimated. It can be argued that because of its electronic specificities (processuality, open structure), video conceptually bridges the electronic and the digital. In this respect the characteristics of the medium should not be confused with the technologies with which video started in the late 60s and early 70s. It would be shortsighted or rather banal to announce the death of the video medium by limiting it exclusively to obviously outdated technical devices. Pioneering video artists around the world deliberately agree video is decaying, but the statement needs to be understood in its twofold message. There is no doubt that the equipment and the carriers of the signal (tape, cassette, disc) are obsolescent and hard to archive. But such innovative characteristics as processuality, immediacy and open apparatus have been carried forward in digital processes. Furthermore, video's oppositional role and its transgressive power in countering the art market, the rules of commodity television, and the institutions of broadcasting, gives a still-lively example of artists' intervention into dominant culture.

Notes

1. Such divisional tendencies are reflected in landmark publications that by and large exclude British video production. *Video Art: An Anthology* by Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot (New York and London: Raindance Foundation, 1976) focusses on the US and Canada; Dominique Belloir's special issue *Vidéo Art Exploration* (Paris: Cahiers de Cinéma, Hors Série, 1981) discusses video in France and US but not the UK; and *Kunst und Video: Internationale Entwicklung und Künstler* by Bettina Gruber and Maria Vedder (Köln: Dumont, 1983), against the grain of its programmatic subtitle (international development), is limited to American and German artists with the exception of David Hall.

2. 'Some experimentation occurred with a few artists (including myself) and community groups around 1970, but

I think the significant moment was when I made ten unannounced TV Interruptions transmitted by Scottish television in 1971.' Email statement by David Hall to the author.

3. Pioneering video artists Fujiko Nakaya and Shinsuke Ina laid the grounds for politically engaged videotapes, video installation and the merger of video and computer graphics.

4. The transition from political video activism that violates copyright to video clip aesthetics becomes evident in the 'Gorilla Tapes', a series of scratch videos collectively produced at Luton Workshop in 1985–86. The assembled clips *Death Valley Days* recycle sound and image footage from news entertainment. See Jon Dovey, 'Copyright as Censorship: Notes on 'Death Valley Days', in: Julia Knight (ed.), *Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video Art* (Luton: Luton University Press, 1996), pp. 283–290.

5. Video signals generated inside a camera may circulate between recording and reproduction equipment and can be variously modified by processors and keyers. Only when the line processes are adjusted and the signals are synchronised will the video image appear on a screen within the form of a frame. The adjustment of the horizontal drift of the video signal rather violently locks the flow of signals to meet the engineered standard of broadcast format. If the signals were not locked they would run endlessly.

6. I take the term 'structural film' here as an analytical concept and will not engage in the fierce debates of the American (Sitney) and the British (Gidal) understanding of structure, material and form in experimental cinema of the 70s that have continued to preoccupy theorists and historians of film over the decades.

7. A merger of art and mass media can also be seen in the 'Arena Video Programmes' on art and design in 1976, which – among others – presented David Hall's work *This is a Television Receiver*.

8. A.L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video: From Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice* (London: BFI, 2nd edn. 2011), 98.

9. For a more comprehensive account of the parallel but intersecting spheres of the beginning of community video and television stations consult Sue Hall and John Hopkins, 'Interview with Sue Hall and John Hopkins by Jackie Hatfield, 17 November 2004', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Sue20Hall,20John20Hopkins/SHJH506.pdf).

10. Mick Hartney recalls BBC's transmission of video art in 1976: 'Perhaps even more significantly, a couple of months earlier, on March 10, the BBC2 arts magazine *Arena: Art & Design* had also been devoted to a survey of artists' video. ... The programme included video tapes by American and British artists, including one by Hall made specifically for the programme and another, *Struggling*, by British artist Peter Donebauer.' Mick Hartney, 'InT/Ventions: Some Instances of Confrontation with British Broadcasting', in Knight, *Diverse Practices*, p. 44 fn.

11. Noteworthy are Nam June Paik's *9/23/69: Experiment with David Atwood* which features the Paik-Abe synthesiser as it was used in 1969 in the WGBH television studio in collaboration with the engineer David Atwood; Steina and Woody Vasulka's *Six Programs for Television*, produced by WNED in Buffalo 1978; and the path-breaking initiative of Gerry Schum's television and video gallery in Düsseldorf (1968–73) that had to close down and ended abruptly when German television refused to support the concept of television as an artistic medium.

12. Dara Birnbaum quoted in Nicolas Guagnini, 'Cable TV's Failed Utopian Vision: An Interview with Dara Birnbaum', *Cabinet: A Quarterly Magazine of Art and Culture*, Issue 9 Winter 2002–03, p. 37 fn.

13. In this article, I will not discuss the direction of video performances that is driven by gender critique and dissociates and attacks stereotypes of femininity throughout cultural history, as prominently featured in video works by Joan Jonas, Ulrike Rosenbach, Valie Export, Mona Hatoum and Catherine Elwes.

14. Kevin Atherton, 'Interview with Kevin Atherton by Jackie Hatfield, 21 July 2005', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Kevin20Atherton/KAT510.pdf).

15. Kevin Atherton and David Critchley were involved in an alternative gallery space '2B Butler's Wharf'.

16. Stephen Partridge, quoted in Anna Ridley, 'Down among the pixels', *Professor Stephen Partridge Inaugural Exhibition Catalogue*, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design Dundee, 20 March – 15 May 1999, p. 15.

17. David Hall, 'British Video Artists: Towards an Autonomous Practice', *Studio International*, Vol. 191, Issue 981, May–June 1976, 249.

18. David Hall, 'Interview with David Hall by Jackie Hatfield, 9 December 2005', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/David20Hall/DH510.pdf).

19. The question raised by Sean Cubitt's scrutiny of television and video art points to a diagnosis of excessive demand from both sides. 'The first generation of video artists, reaching maturity in the 1990s and beginning

to produce work of more than experimental value, have had to assimilate and critique not just the electronic medium, and the institutions and embedded aesthetics of TV, but also the spiralling complexities of contemporary aesthetics.' Sean Cubitt, 'Populism and Difficulty: Television and Video Art', in Knight, *Diverse Practices*, p. 293.

20. Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art. The Development of Form and Function*, Oxford: Berg 2006, p. 142. See also Peter Donebauer, 'Interview with Peter Donebauer by Jackie Hatfield, 20 September 2004', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Peter20Donebauer/PD504.pdf).

21. The most prominent artist–engineer collaborations can be found in the spheres of the artist production space, The Kitchen (1971, New York), the Center for Media Studies (1973, Buffalo), the Electronic Visualisation Laboratory (Chicago) and the Center for Experiments in Television (San Francisco).

22. Sean Cubitt, *Timeshift. On Video Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), 30 fn.

23. 'The third video market was opened up in 1972 by the first Philips video cassette recorder, a half-inch cassette machine designed specifically for the domestic market so as to allow "time-shifting" (the recording of awkwardly timed broadcast programmes and their replay at leisure).' Roy Armes, *On Video* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 84.

Chapter 4/
Artists' Television: Interruptions – Interventions

Stephen Partridge

There have been a considerable number of artists' television works, arguably starting with the experiments facilitated by ORTF (French Radio Television Office) in 1964–65, which included animations and theatrical productions by Jean-Christophe Averty (*Ubu Roi* by Alfred Jarry and *Eh Joe* by Samuel Beckett). Later in 1967 KQED-TV in San Francisco set up an experimental workshop, on the double initiative of Brice Howard and Paul Kaufman and with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1969 it was given the title National Center for Experiments in Television at KQED-TV, and funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Arts. In the same year, WGBH-TV in Boston also initiated its artists-in-residence program through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.

In the UK, no experimental workshops were established by a broadcaster, although John Hopkins founded the radical video group TVX with Cliff Evans in 1969, which was the first British TV workshop with the associated video research centre IRAT (Institute for Research into Art and Technology). John Lennon had given the fledgling group some broadcast equipment. TVX staged 'experimental happenings' at the New Arts Lab in collaboration with the London Film Makers Co-op, including filmmakers such as Malcolm Le Grice. In 1970 Hopkins was commissioned by the BBC to produce some pilot experimental video programmes, but only two of them were actually broadcast. Of the first, *Video Space*, Hopkins says:

> BBC2 hadn't been around for very long and that was where the progressive people were. There was a programme called *Late Night Line Up*. One of the directors there was called Tom Corcoran and somehow we made contact or he heard about us and he was progressive … This was one of the BBC2 production studios, a small one with



Fig. 1. 1970 UFO + TV Bachdenkel' promotional poster, New Arts Laboratory, 14–15 February.

its own production gallery. We were recording onto 2-inch (Quadruplex VTR) … we got a bunch of people together including Richard Neville who was the editor of Oz and some musicians and friends and hangers-on and some of us were technically minded. We roughed out, not a script, but who would do what and when. Different people were on different pieces of equipment which none of us had seen before … There was a light show there, done by a friend of ours called Dermot Harvey … There was a studio discussion, but we experimented in the control room with a vision mixer and there was an elementary synthesiser or colouriser and stuff like that … .[1]

The nature of artists' television broadcasts in the UK has been very diverse. The majority have been included in magazine-style anthology programmes – usually preceded by culturally patronising 'do not adjust your set' advice to viewers. In this format can be included: *Alter-Image* (Channel 4, 1983); *The Eleventh Hour* (Channel 4, 1985); *Video 1/2/3* (Channel 4, 1985); *Ghosts in the Machine* (Channel 4, 1986–87, and 1988); *Dazzling Image* (Channel 4, 1990 and 1992); *Midnight Underground* (Channel 4, 1993). There have also been rare instances of single long-form works by Peter Donebauer, Derek Jarman, Malcolm Le Grice, David Larcher, Jayne Parker, Sally Potter, and Peter Greenaway,[2] transmitted without introductions. Donebauer is noteworthy for many reasons, not least because he represents one of the only British artists who was interested in what might be termed 'abstract imaging'. In 1974 he was commissioned by BBC2 to make a broadcast work, *Entering*, for the arts magazine programme *Second House*. A further innovation was that the work was transmitted via an outside broadcast unit from the Royal College of Art's television studio in Kensington, to BBC Television Centre in White City, Shepherd's Bush, although this was largely due to the inflexibility of the BBC infrastructure at the time:

> Mark Kidel the BBC producer said, 'can I re-make it?' I said, 'no problem', he said 'well we'll get you down to the BBC studios'. What I found was of course I couldn't do it there. The studio was in one place, the engineering controls were 150 yards away … they were completely separate processes.[3]

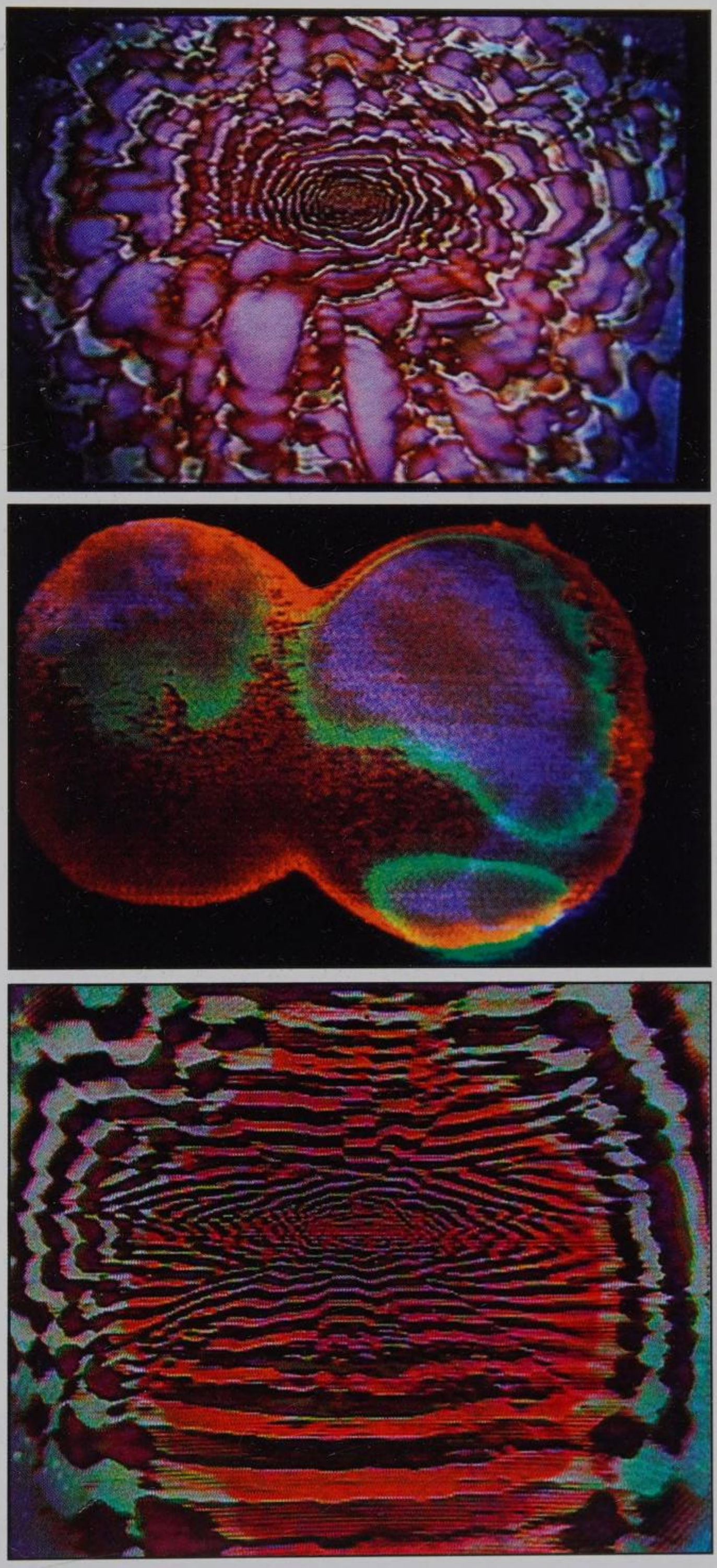
However, there have been very few projects involving artists that have sought to challenge the nature of the television landscape and evade mediation by the broadcaster as part of their premise, and even fewer that succeeded even partially. Of these the most significant include projects by Gerry Schum, David Hall and Anna Ridley.

The German artist, producer and gallerist, Gerry Schum, commissioned the earliest artists' broadcasts by British artists. The British works included Barry Flanagan's *A Hole in the Sea* (1969), and Richard Long's *Walking a Straight 10 Mile Line Forward and Back Shooting Every Half Mile. (Dartmoor England, January 1969)* (1969); other works were by Dennis Oppenheim, Walter de Maria, Jan Dibbets, Marius Boezem, and Robert Smithson. These were made for Schum's pioneering *Television Gallery*, and this first collection was branded *Land Art*. Keith Arnatt's stand-alone *Self Burial* was broadcast a little later that year and a further collection was called *Identifications*, broadcast a year later in 1970 and included Gilbert & George. It is important to note that all the works were shot by Schum on film,[4] as were David Hall's *Television Interruptions*[5] for Scottish Television in 1971, although the works were clearly made for television and therefore the shooting medium was a matter of practicality. Both Schum and Hall were at pains to have the works broadcast without mediation by the broadcasters although only Arnatt's work achieved this goal. Schum said after the broadcast:

> During all the 38 minutes of the *Land Art* show there is no word spoken. No explanation. I think an art object realised in regard of the medium TV does not need a spoken explanation.[6]

Similarly David Hall:

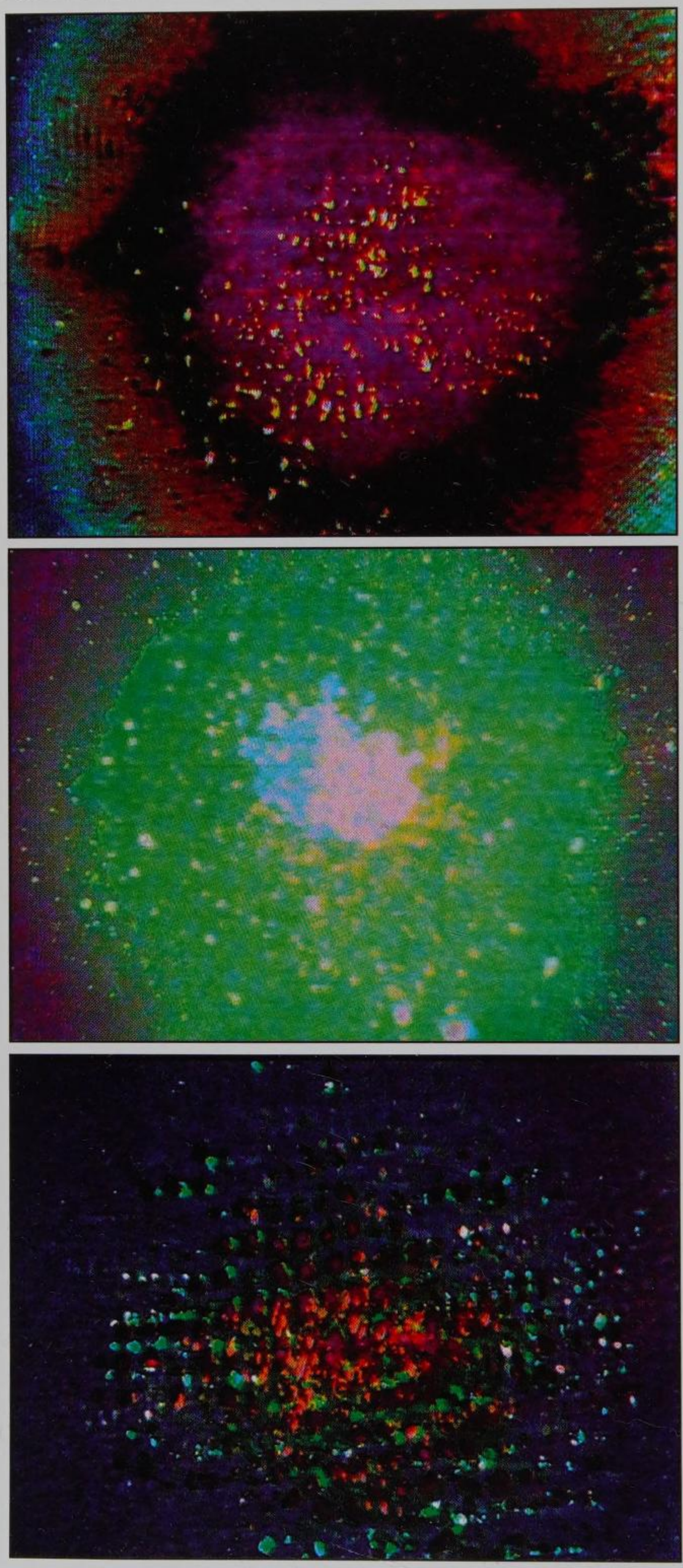
> ... it had to be shipped off to Glasgow to be broadcast and say, 'Look I don't want any voices or any announcements. I don't want anything to be said, or any credits or anything.' It was pretty tough for an artist. Most artists love to have their names splattered over everything as the auteur. But no, it was most important that this was a surprise, a mystery.[7]



Figs. 2–4. Peter Donebauer, *'Entering'*, 1974.

Fig 4.09 David Hall, *TV Interruptions*, 1971.

Both Schum and Hall's efforts to avoid the mediation of the broadcasters were, and remain, extremely rare examples of relative success in this regard. Hall's approach was far more radical. These works, originally ten in all (later seven were issued as *7 TV Pieces*) went out a number of times during the ten days of transmission, presumably during the regional



ITV channel's advertising breaks or instead of the many public information films that were broadcast at the time. Hall is a little vague on the transmission protocol as he was shooting each work day by day:

> I didn't have much opportunity to see them because we were working every day on a new one. I can't remember how it went. I would literally in the evening be thinking about what I might do the next day, trying to work out an idea. The next morning I would shoot a piece.[8]

He did however manage to catch two of the interruptions and recalls:

> I went to an old gentleman's club in Princess Street in Edinburgh and the TV was on and it's when the Tap piece was going to come on. They had a TV on all the time and they were all sleeping or reading newspapers, dozing and then suddenly the TV began to fill up with water and the newspapers dropped, they all woke up and looked amazed. They were disgruntled and then it finished, and they all dozed off again. That seemed to me to be actually quite a positive thing. It was the sort of thing I was looking for I think. And the other occasion was when I went to a TV shop, where they sold and repaired TVs, and I said 'Look I've got a piece coming on TV in a minute can I have a look', they said, 'Oh yeah, go downstairs and have a look at it.' I went downstairs, some engineers were working on repairing stuff and were all very enthusiastic. But it was the last piece, the *Two Figures* piece, I remember it beeping and it went on and on and on and on. At the end of it, there was so much anger in their faces I had to leave by the back door.[9]

Hall's short series is an anthology of counter-television strategies, unanchored by a programmer or voiceover, quietly asserting a frame of values that opens a hole in TV space and then refuses to fill it with any explanatory content.[10]

Recalling the *Television Interruptions* in

Figs. 5–7. Peter Donebauer, *'Entering'*, 1974.



Fig. 8. Gerry Schum, *Television Gallery*, 1968 – 1969 (installation at Changing Channels 1963–87, Museum of Modern Art, Vienna, 2010 – photo David Hall).

1990 Hall wrote: 'The pieces were not intended as declarations of art in their own right, they did not assume that privilege. They were gestures and foils *within* the context of the predictable form, and endless inconsequentiality of TV. They needed TV, they depended on it.'[11]

Schum's works were transmitted in a more conventional setting: the first broadcast (transmitted by Sender Freies Berlin/ARD at 10.40 pm on 15 April 1969) began with a studio-recorded opening that had something of the atmosphere of a vernissage. Following short speeches by Schum and Jean Leering, the director of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the artists' contributions were shown with no commentary.

Two further projects by Schum, Keith Arnatt's *Self Burial* and Jan Dibbet's *TV as a Fireplace* were however broadcast without Schum's sympathetic mediation, on WDR in October and December of 1969 respectively. Both were serial pieces, transmitted at the same time over a period of a few days, and were therefore probably the first true television 'interventions' by artists. Originally, Keith Arnatt says that he discussed his piece with John Latham. They then took the idea to the BBC who were initially interested, but later rejected it. Arnatt subsequently met Schum in London who immediately agreed to do it in Germany. The work was conceived as a take upon a technical fault in the transmission – an unexplained image 'interrupting' the flow:

> The project ended when I appeared on German TV and explained, through a direct translator, what I was doing, and my own explanation was 'interrupted' by the same succession of images.[12]

In 1976 Anna Ridley, who collaborated with Hall on the *Television Interruptions* of 1971, persuaded Mark Kidel, the editor of BBC2 arts programme *Arena*, to devote a programme to video art. Although this was a survey of the field including Peter Donebauer and Peter Campus, the programme started with a piece especially made for the programme by David Hall, *This is a Television Receiver*, with no explanation. The work featured the newsreader Richard Baker who 'recites a text about his own material construction as a TV image. Successively re-shot and degraded, the cool delivery of the presenter is reduced to a grotesque distortion of the human form and voice: analytical art with a Dada streak.'[13] The use of the most well-known newsreader of the time gave the piece both resonance and accessibility:



Fig. 9. David Hall, *TV Interruptions*, 1971.

It was in four sections. I showed the first two sections at the very beginning and then there was a break and I think Mark Kidel, who was the producer, his voice-over was talking a bit about what the programme was going to do and then they carried on with the other two sections. I would have preferred that my piece ran for the whole 8 minutes, but I guess again that was too much for TV to accept, but at least I got the first 4 minutes with this very surprising image of the most well known newsreader breaking down the illusion through what he was saying. The point about that was although, it wasn't introduced or at least there were some indicative words but there wasn't really any kind of introduction; that was good. It was a surprise.[14]

In 1982 Anna Ridley established her independent production company Annalogue Ltd, which over the next decade produced many television projects with artists under the generic label *Artists' Works for Television*. The early years of Channel 4 was particularly conducive for experimentation and innovation – words which appeared in its charter – although rarely experiments in the forms and aesthetics of television itself. Ridley was commissioned by Channel 4 to produce a series she called *Dadarama* as a working project title, which also spawned her most prolific collaboration with Ian Breakwell. Again, she insisted that these works went out in their own right, avoiding wherever possible the packaging and mediation of the host broadcasters which, in later projects, included the Spanish broadcaster TVE and MTV.[15] Ironically, this may have led to a relative invisibility for her efforts in historical appraisals of artists' television. The *Dadarama* works included: *The Kiss* by Paul Richards and Michael Nyman (9.02 minutes, transmitted November 1984); *Dialogue for Two Players* by Stephen Partridge (17.10 minutes, transmitted April 1985); *Close-downs*, a series of five pieces by David Cunningham (*Stars/Eagle Clouds*, 8.47 minutes; *Green River/Yellow River*, 9.41 minutes; *Spire*, 8.50 minutes; *Heat*, 9.26 minutes; and *Ripple*, 9.54 minutes, transmitted over five consecutive evenings in April 1985); *Spaces Four*, by Rosemary Butcher (19.45 minutes; transmitted April 1985); *Targets*, a series of six pieces by John Latham (*Cumbrae Clyde*, 7.30 minutes; John O'Groats to Cape Wrath, 6.12 minutes, *The Gulf*, 6.28 minutes; *Roads One*, 6.10 minutes; *Dave's Bike*, 7.40 minutes; and *Nmutter*, 6.00 minutes, transmitted over six consecutive evenings in April 1985); and *Tumbled Frame* by Rose Garrard (23.10 minutes, transmitted 1985).

Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary was a series of twenty-one programmes, transmitted April to May 1984. A further eight, titled *Ian Breakwell's Christmas Diary*, were transmitted by Channel 4 in December 1984. There was also a later collaborative series, *Public Face: Private Eye*, a series of five non-diary works transmitted in 1989.

> There had been compilations of artists' videos put on to television. This was different. This was using broadcast television as the medium.[16]

Finally, Ridley collaborated with David Hall once again in 1993, producing *TV Interruptions 93*. These were commissioned by MTV. Peter Docherty, who was the commissioning editor, had made a policy of inviting artists and designers to do things for MTV and had seen a retrospective of Hall's work.

In 1988, inspired by Hall's original vision of 'interruptions' into the broadcast landscape, I had the idea of making a number of works that would intervene in the cracks and crevices of the television schedule, coinciding with the year-long festival celebrating Glasgow as European City of Culture in 1990. I coined the term 'Television Interventions' and, with independent producers Jane Rigby and Anna Ridley, approached first Scottish Television, then the BBC, and finally Channel 4, whose Head of

Television at the time, Mike Bolland, agreed to commission nineteen works by artists and others from Scotland, the UK and Europe (including Robert Cahen, David Hall, Rose Garrard, Bruce Mclean, Raul Rodriguez, Stephen Partridge, Pratibha Parmar, Peter Missotten, Ron Geesin, Alistair MacLennan, Steve Littman and David Mach). Each work was to be four minutes long and be broadcast many times over a month. However, by the time of completion, Bolland had left Channel 4 and the responsibility passed to a new commissioning editor Waldemar Januszczak, who had neither the power, nor possibly the inclination, to meet the radical criteria of our intention of 'intervention'. The works were eventually transmitted a number of times over the Easter bank holiday weekend of March 1990. They were untitled, but did have an end credit for the artist, the production company,[17] and project ident. Inevitably sometimes the continuity announcer would make some introductory audio comment along the lines of 'do not adjust your set' or 'and now for something different', without, it would seem, any sense of irony. In addition Januszczak wrote and presented a piece to camera, which went out in an obscure slot on the Friday afternoon before the transmission of the first work. This was done against our wishes as the production company. It did little to undermine the project as a whole however, as so few people saw it compared to the audiences for the *Interventions* themselves.

This mediation by the broadcaster has echoes of Schum's experience for his second collection *Identifications*, as his partner Ursula Wevers relates in the catalogue *Gerry Schum*, which accompanied the exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 1979:

> The main argument put forward by the television people was that our work was incomprehensible to the public, and that we wanted to confront an audience wholly unprepared by explanatory statements ... we proposed that the broadcasting organisation should devote one of its programmes about art to *Identifications*, thereby allowing a number of people with divergent opinions to take part in a discussion. The proposed discussion was

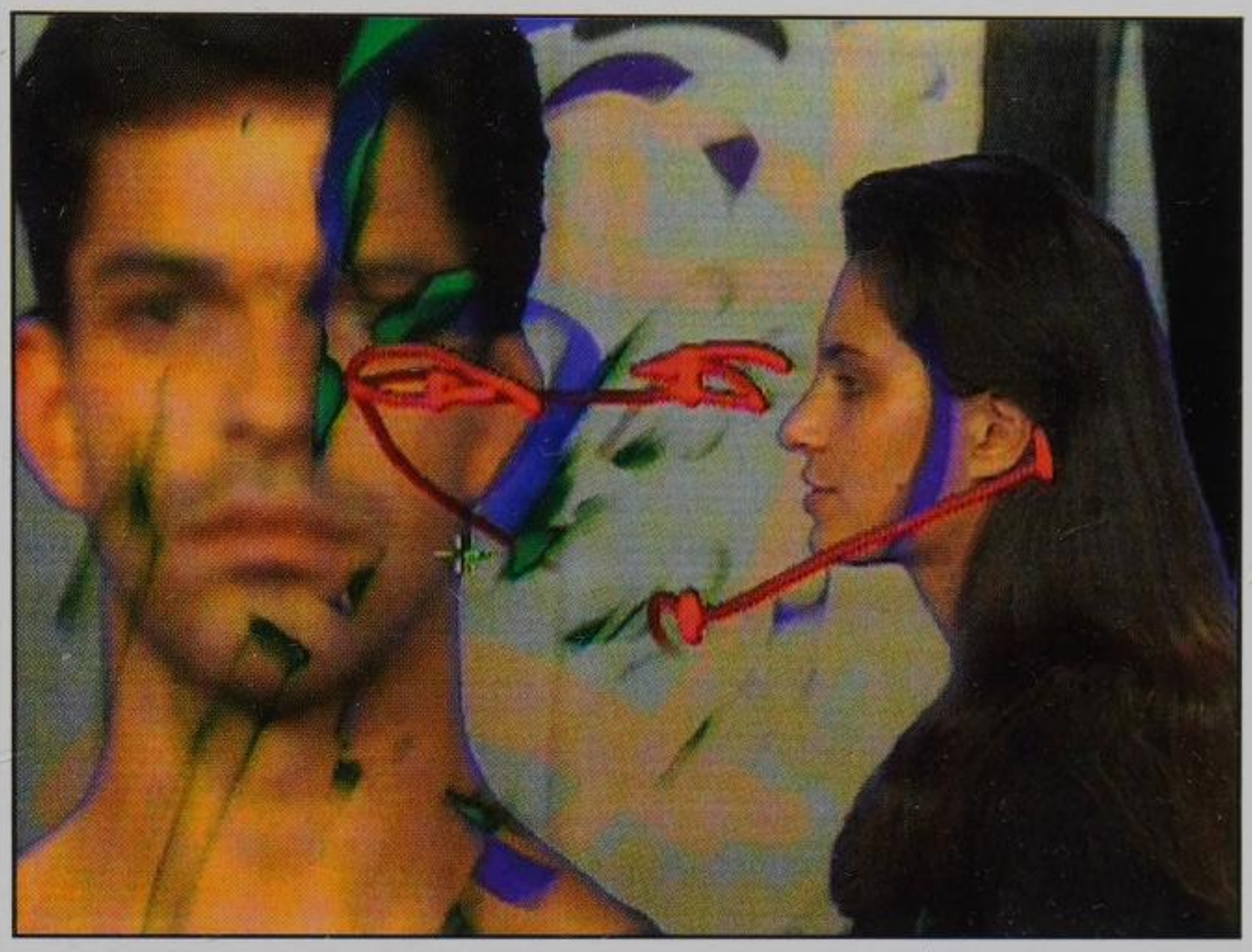


Fig. 10 (above). Paul Richards and Michael Nyman, *The Kiss*, 1984.

Fig. 11 (both images below). Rose Garrard, *Tumbled Frame*, 1985.

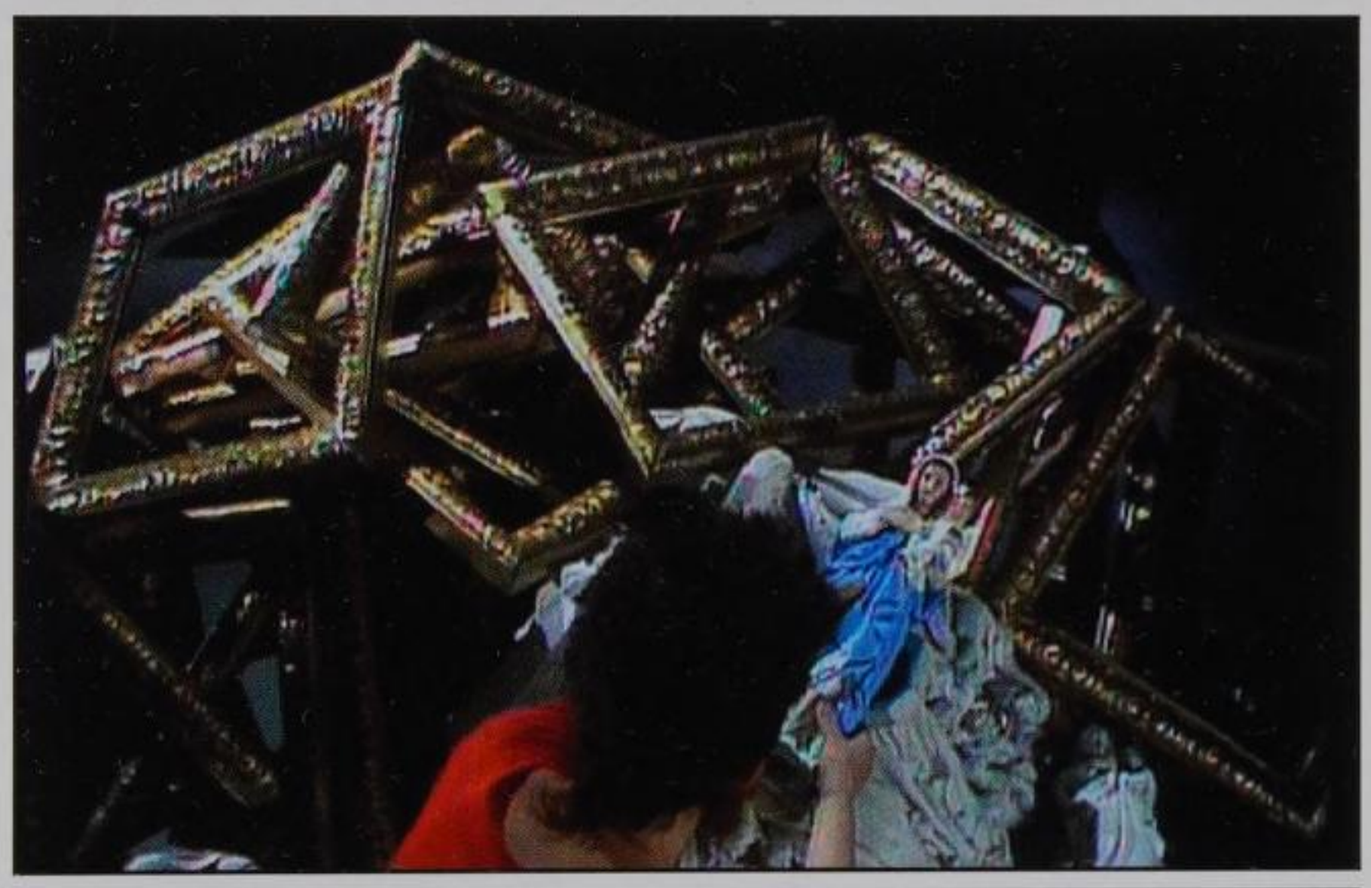






Fig. 12. Production Still from *Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary*. Courtesy Anna Ridley.

TELEVISION
19:4:90
INTERVENTIONS

19:4 :90 TELEVISION INTERVENTIONS

Is a multi-faceted project consisting of a series of commissions to artists to produce a work for television; a youth and community project, Telly Pieces; and a touring exhibition which feature all the works made for television and Telly Pieces, as well as a selection of historical works.

19:4:90 Television Interventions, Telly Pieces, and the Exhibition were produced and organised by Fields and Frames Productions Ltd.

Series Producer Jane Rigby
Co-Producer Anna Ridley
Devised by Stephen Partridge
Consultant David Hall
Production Co-ordinator Julia Kennedy
Telly Pieces Co-ordinators Doug Aubrey and Jak Milroy

Third Eye Centre *june 9–24*

Seagate Gallery *july 6–21*

Ikon Gallery *september 1–27*

Exhibition organised in collaboration with Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, and Ikon Gallery, Birmingham.

Curated by Stephen Partridge.

Catalogue design and production by Adrian Tyler, Glasgow.

Printed by Peterson Printers, South Shields.

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Firelds and Frames Productions, Corshellach, Brigend, Dunning PH2 0RS

ISBN 0 9516280 0 3

The Producers would like to thank all those people who have worked on and been associated with the project, and all those who have lent it their goodwill and support.

Funded by:

Channel Four Television · Glasgow 1990 · All Round Theatre · Subsidised by the Scottish Arts Council · Arts Council Funded

Sponsors:

McMillan Video The Future at Work · Klick Photopoint · db

Fig. 13. Catalogue for accompanying exhibition to *Television Interventions*, 1990.

rejected ... When [they] transmitted the programme we found ourselves watching a typical example of manipulation by television ... Ruthenbeck's piece, a film showing him tearing off sheets of paper from a pad, crumpling them up and throwing them on the floor, was interspersed with images of a typist crumpling up sheets of carbon paper and throwing them on the floor in an office. Rinke's work had been mixed with shots of a farmer emptying a bucket on a dung heap ... It was like slashing a work of art ...[18]

Four of Hall's original interruptions were rebroadcast as part of *Television Interventions* ('Tap', 'Interruption', 'TV on Fire', 'TV Shoot-Out'). But the work that was most in tune with Hall's original idea of interrupting the flow of transmission and our new one of intervention was David Mach's *The Clydeside Classic*. This featured snooker players Ray Reardon and the then up-and-coming challenger, Stephen Hendry.

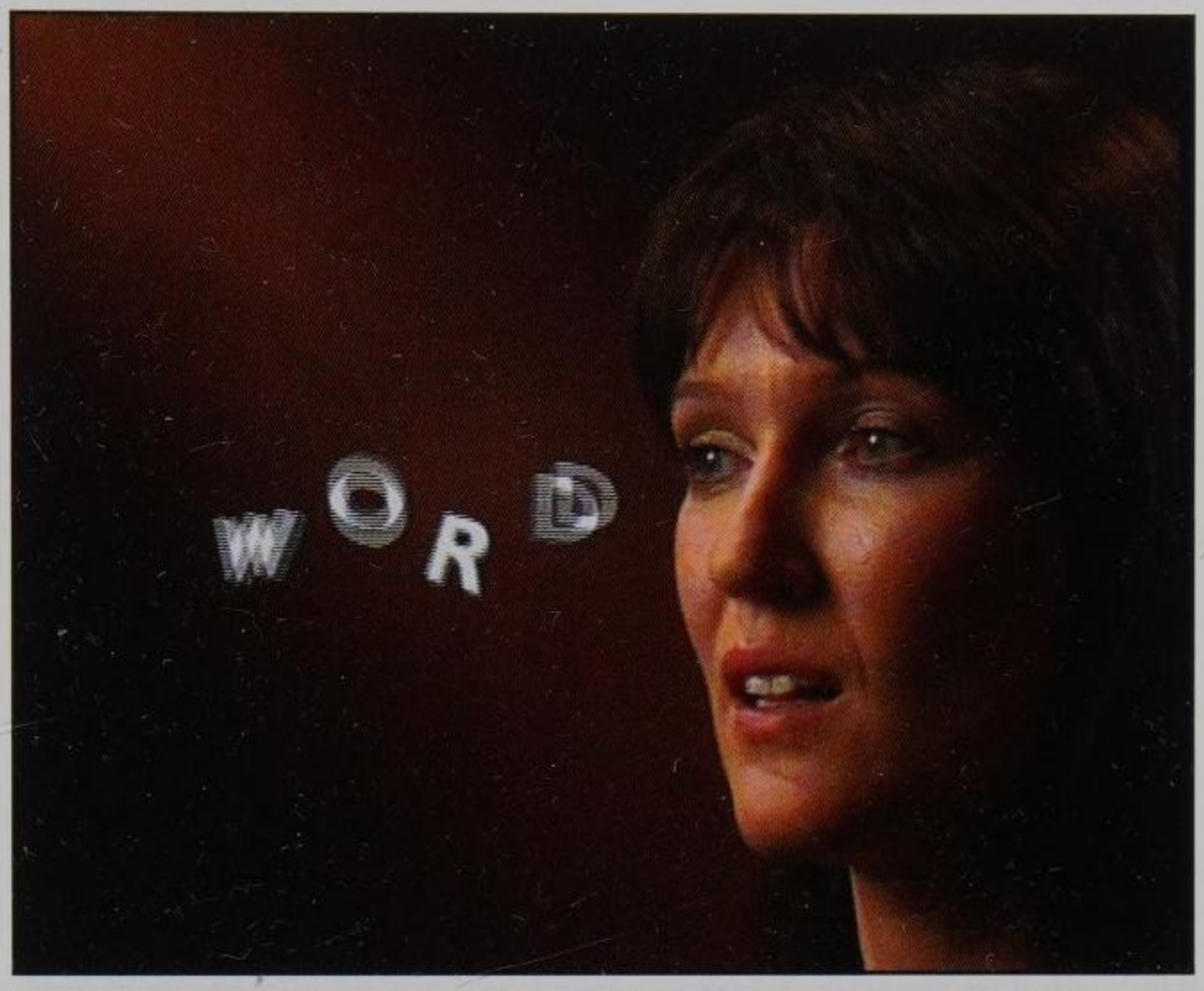
> I wanted to take this game, known and avidly watched by millions of people, and turn it on its head, interrupting the regular flow of television as well as viewers' expectations.[19]

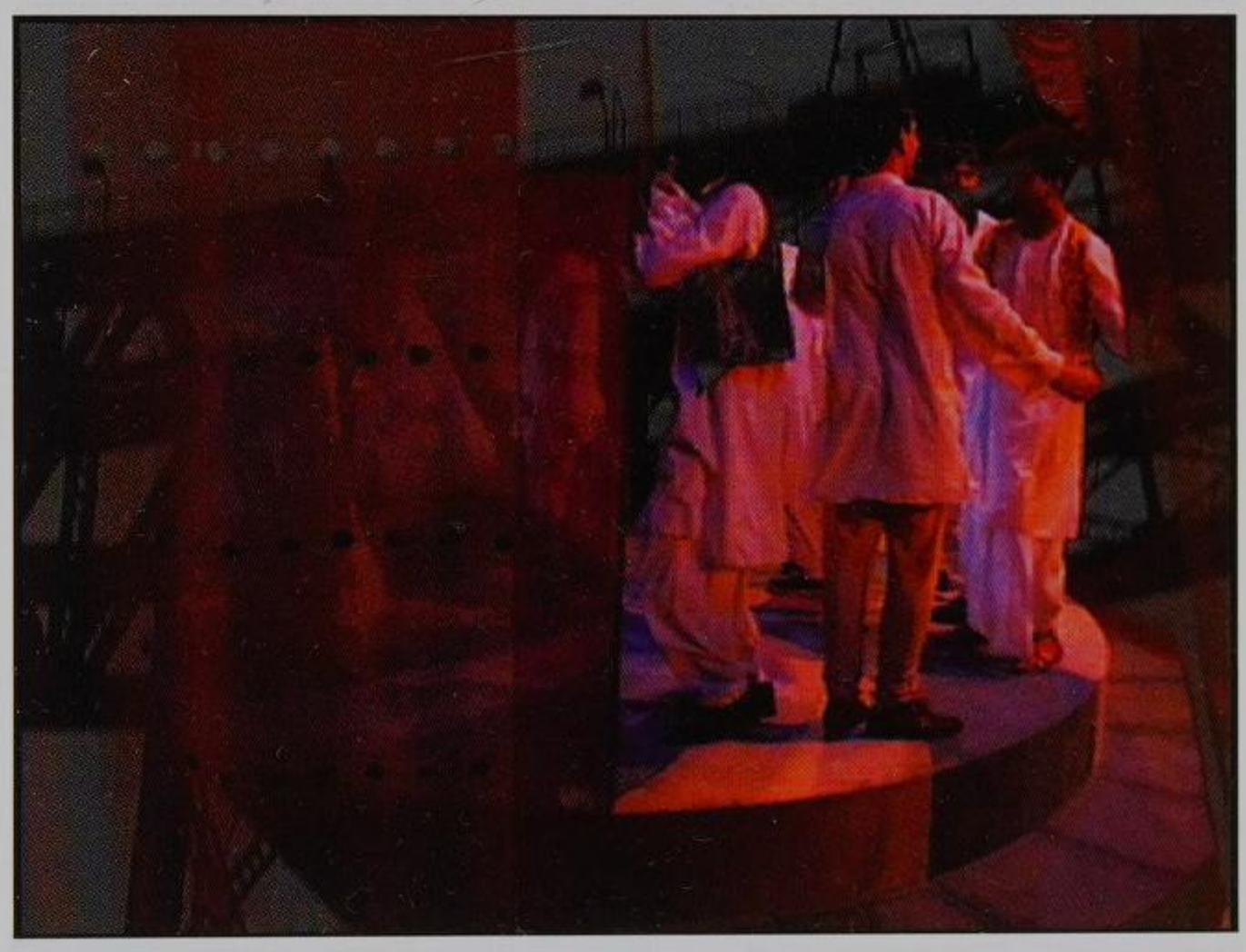
The work – a series of short vignettes of a snooker game between the two protagonists – was broadcast across the afternoon on 28 April 1990. On the BBC Stephen Hendry could be seen competing for his first World Championship, causing a great deal of confusion amongst viewers beyond even Mach's intention. Ridley recalls:

> When the piece was scheduled, it went out when the BBC was running the real snooker championships, so effectively Stephen Hendry was playing on both BBC 1 and Channel 4 simultaneously.[20]

Of the many works commissioned by broadcasters and included in anthology-type magazine programmes a few stand out in the way in which they challenged the cosy alliance between television and its audience.

Kevin Atherton's artist-presenter confronted his audience in between presentations





of other artists' works in one programme of the Channel 4 series *Eleventh Hour* (1986). He berated the audience for their lack of intelligence and taste in their viewing habits, and also refused to be interviewed by the programme makers, denying the normal opportunity and contract for television 'balance' that passes for objectivity. As Atherton argues for his approach:

> Unless it is touching the fabric of television itself – it [television] is like it was – and continues to be a missed opportunity ... It doesn't make the viewer aware of what's happening.[21]

Another Channel 4 production company

Fig. 14. Stephen Partridge, *The Sounds of these Words*, Television Interventions, 1990.

Fig. 15. Pratibha Parmar, *Bhangra Jig*, Television Interventions, 1990.

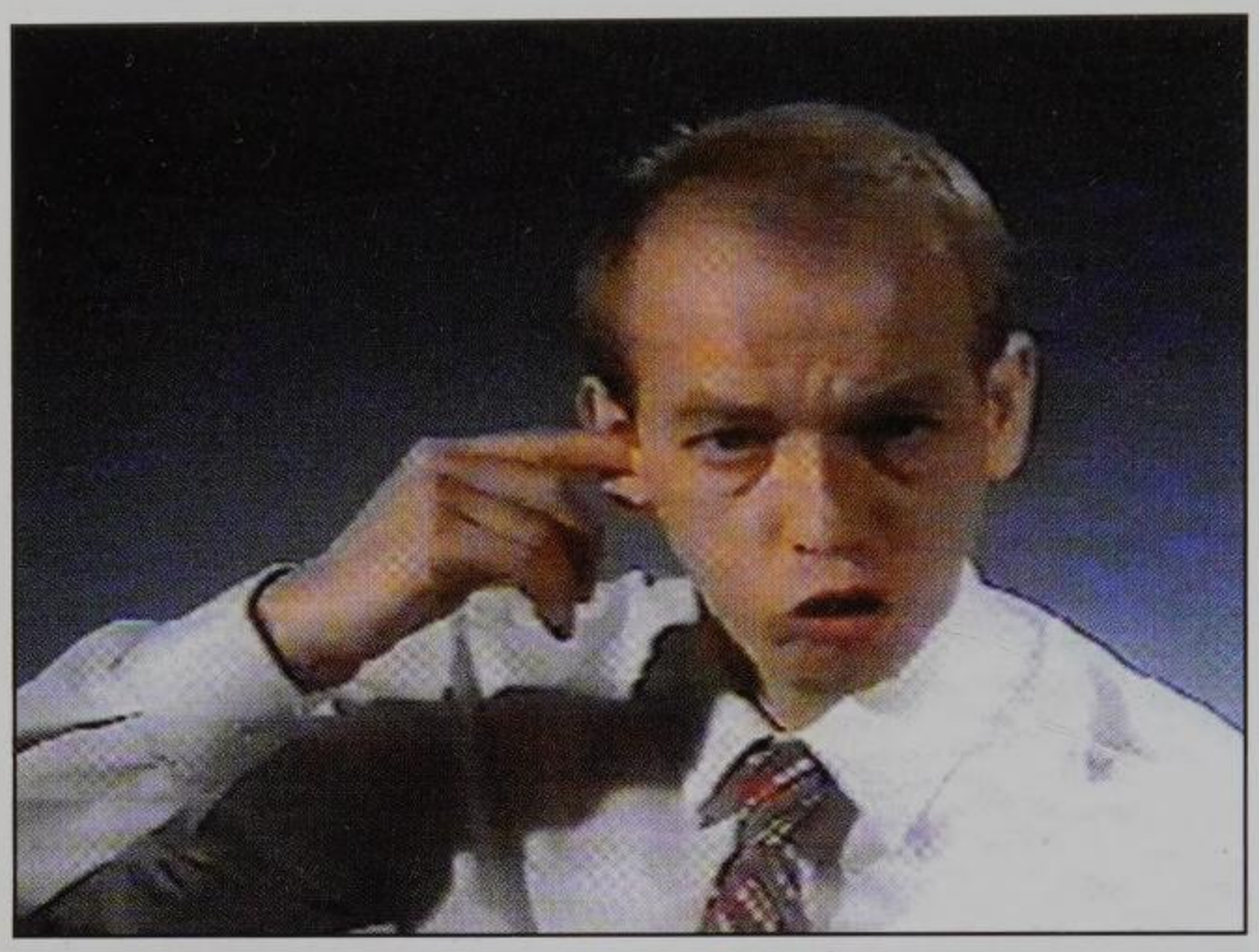


Fig. 16. Kevin Atherton, *The Eleventh Hour* 1988.

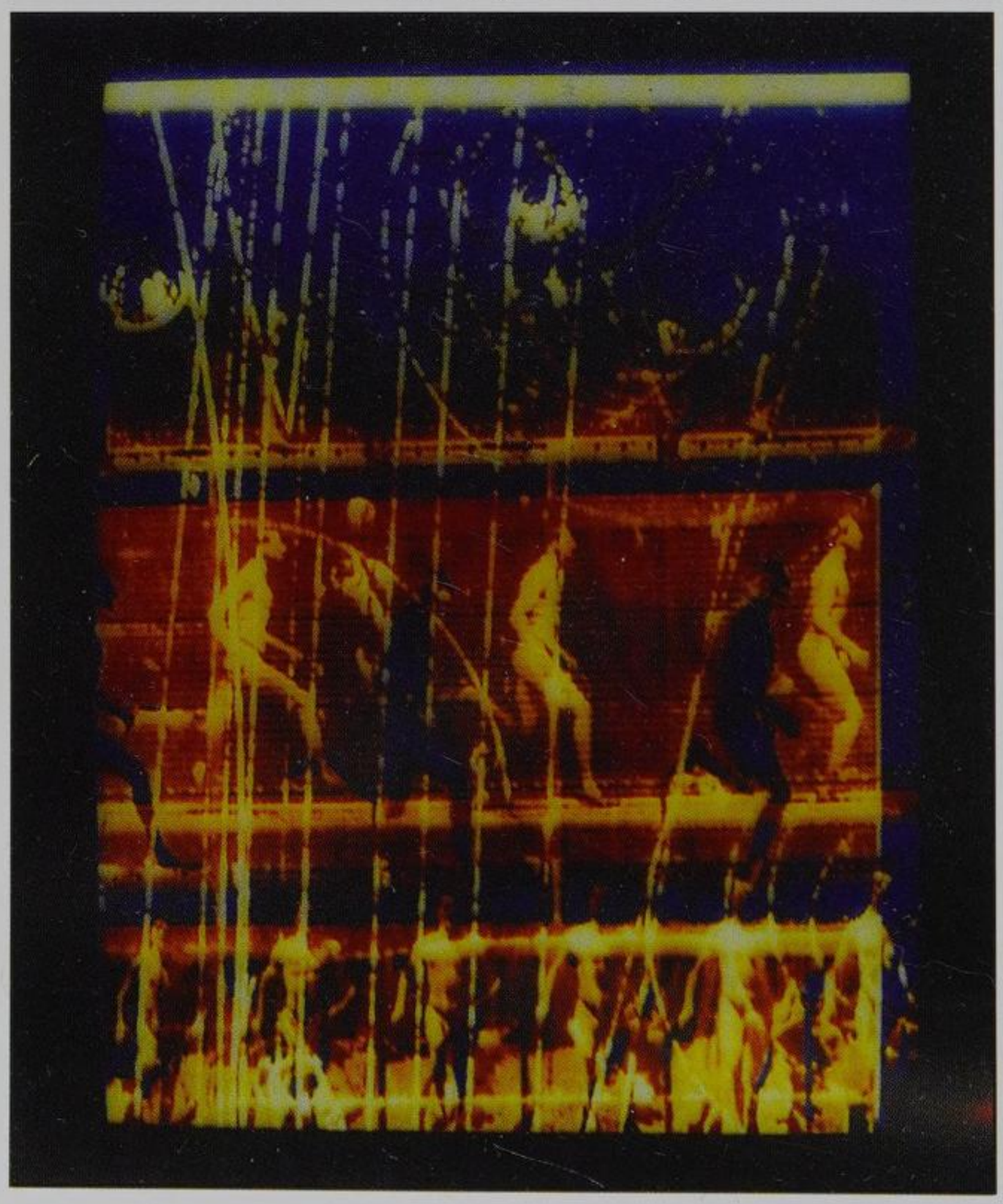


Fig. 17. George Snow, *Muybridge Revisited* 1987.

tried to redress the balance later by inviting Atherton onto its *Big Breakfast Show* to read out a recipe:

> Tracey Emin would have done it. I didn't do it. What the hell? I don't want to be on television, in the bed with Paula Yates. I was to go on and read out a recipe, it was all right if you didn't have one, they'd give you one. I'm desperate but not that desperate. I got wind that somebody at Channel 4 – a commissioning editor, really could not abide my work, so that stopped me.[22]

For the Channel 4 series *Video 1/2/3* there was at least an understanding by the producers of the need to minimise mediation. Zoe Redman's *Passion Ration* (1984) addressed issues of identity and self-representation within a visualised lament about a one-sided love affair. The piece was not introduced, but rather allowed to 'speak' for itself. Louise Forshaw was not so lucky. Her work *Eleven Years* (1990) was shown within the *Dazzling Image* series and introduced by Dr Anthony Clare. The term 'introduced' is misleading, as Clare did a complete interpretation of the work before it was shown, rendering its subtle power of imagery and content an illustration for his own (imposed) thesis. Ironically the work dealt with male abuse, the artist's own experience of rape and her struggle to maintain her own sense of power (over her body).

Finally, there are artists who produced experimental works, exploring the surface of the television raster itself – works that, if they did not challenge broadcast conventions in the social/political sense, did at the very least develop to the limits of electronic image making and manipulation. Unlike Donebauer these artists also were interested in narrative and representational form. The two best examples, in my view, are David Larcher and George Snow. Interestingly, both of them also operated outside the loose groupings of artists clustered around the co-ops and collectives, as well as the art schools, and they spent considerable time and money on aquiring or gaining access to the latest technologies. George Snow, in his *Muybridge Revisited* (1986) combined every layering and animation technique he could lay his hands on (including the rather difficult-to-program *IO Research Pluto* video card) to produce his own homage to the ubiquitous early photographer.

> A Pluto ran on the same Intel 8088 as my PC, only this chip had one task, and that was to convert video into 8-bit colour. So,

I got the Pluto. I figured out how to connect it up and how to synch it and I started writing a programme in code in BASIC for the Pluto. I wrote this amazing programme to take the video image in black-and-white and colourise it in virtually real time. There had to be a delay of one frame. And this chip, this Intel 88 chip, from circa early 80s, could process video in real time and colourise it. I wrote some routines. I spent two or more years programming the computer until I got a notion of what it could do. I was extremely proud of myself but the problem was nobody could really understand what it was I was doing, apart from other programmers. They are pretty few and far between and not very important people anyway. You know you have written a line of code, and it's very elegant. It's very beautiful and nicely written and it does the job perfectly, but how do you say that to somebody? So, I just looked at video and thought, 'Well that's interesting. Let me see what happens.'[23]

David Larcher was commissioned during the 1980s by the BFi for *eETC* (1984–1986), and later by Alan Fountain, commissioning editor at Channel 4 for *Granny's Is* – a mammoth work eventually broadcast in 1989. Both were always works in progress from Larcher's point of view:

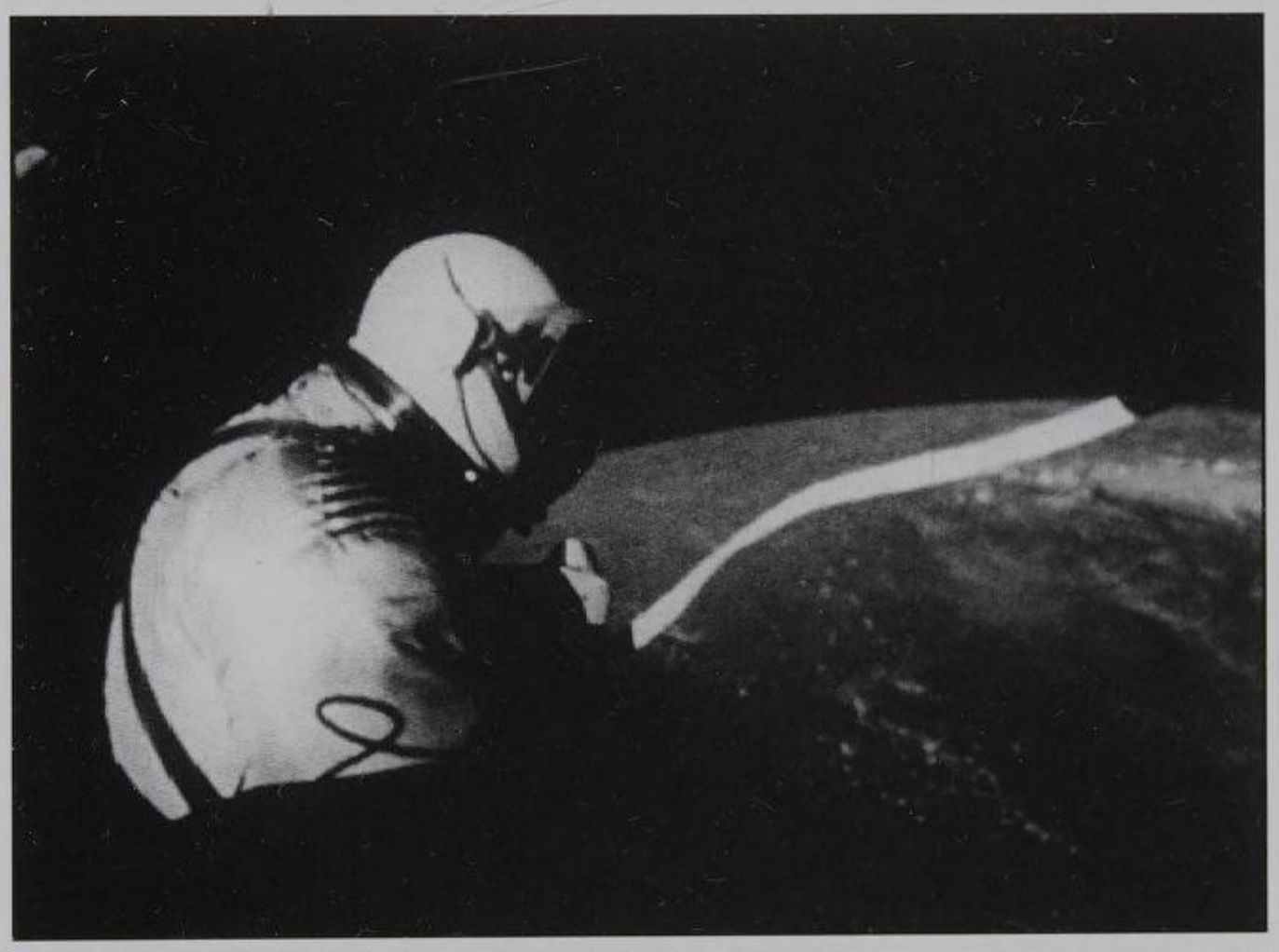
> ... in terms of process it's quite interesting because there are two sequences that were done on digital, which in those days as it cost thousands of pounds, £600 an hour. I ended up getting one sequence done one night, and then I got another a night later, and then added another. What happens, is you go through these various stages. Half of it's all falling apart because it's thirty generations of analogue Betacam. At the end, I just see it and I just see the whole materiality of the Betacam with about eight Hi8 images in it. You could actually see the end of the material. But, if I'd had the money to do it all on digital I think I might have.[24]

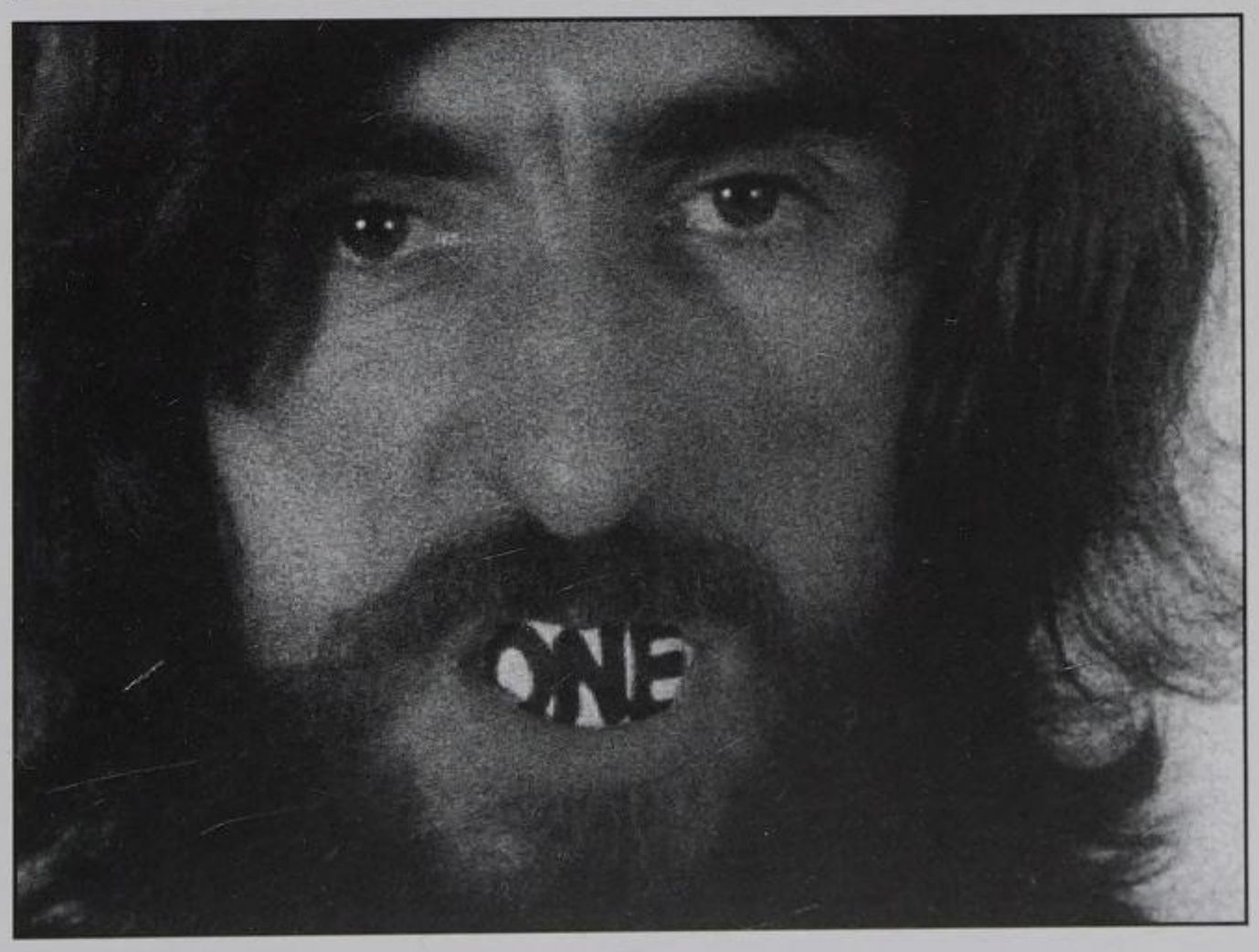
After the early 90s, UK broadcasters lost interest in film and video artists. They had in any case appropriated any innovation that they felt



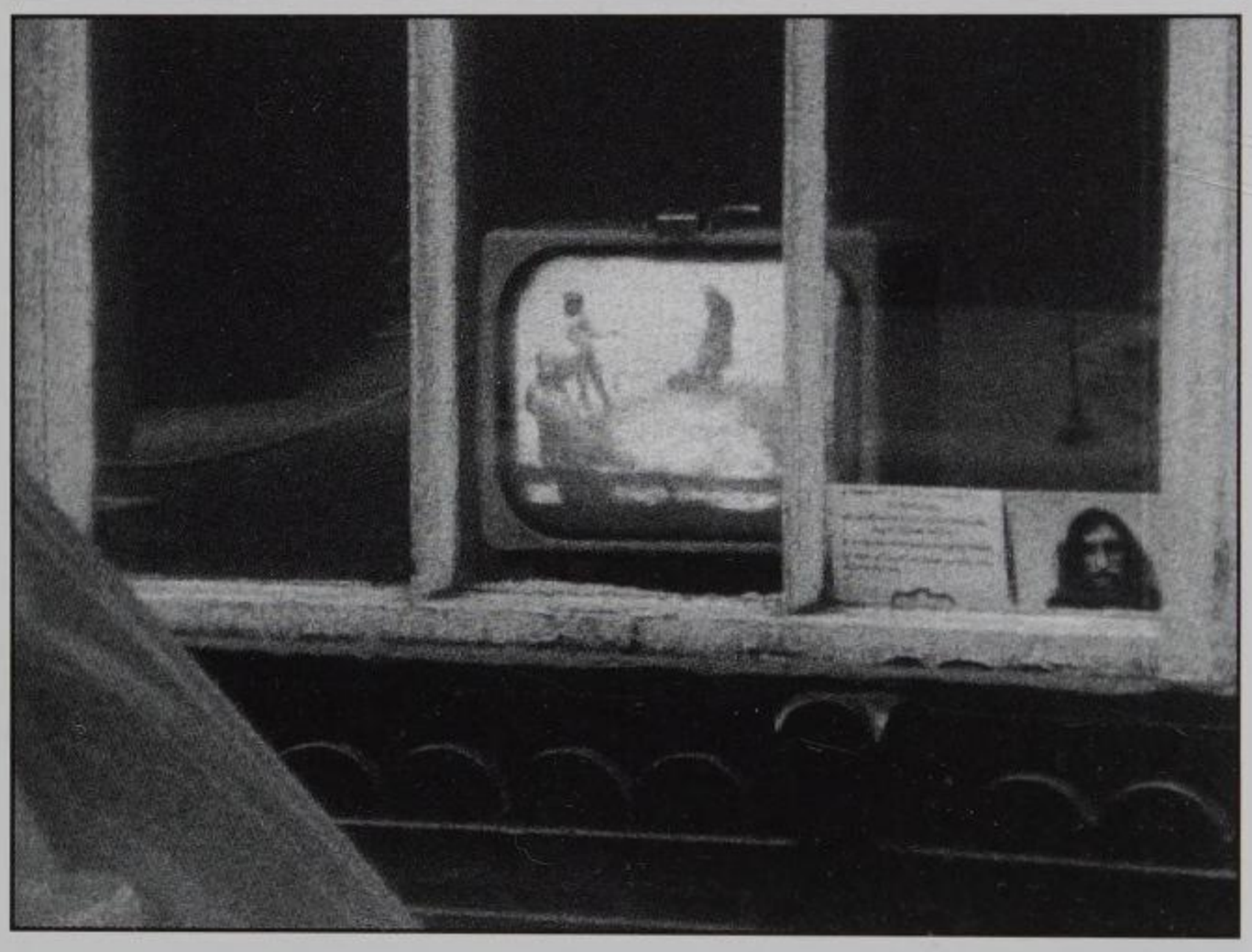
Fig. 18. Channel 4 production still David Larcher, *Eetc* 1984–88.

Figs. 19 and 20. Ian Breakwell and Mike Leggett, *One* 1971.









Figs. 21 and 22. Ian Breakwell and Mike Leggett, *One* 1971.

artists had to offer, and the uneasy collaborations and alliances were now at an end.

Post Script: Without a trace

The vast majority of the work produced from the earliest days would not be labelled as video or video art at all. Events, arts lab multimedia experiments certainly, but most especially performances which utilised video CCTV, recordings and instant playback, and more often than not film loops, sound, and props of any description (some would now be recognised or labelled as 'installation'). Most artists saw video as a useful extension of their work in another medium. This characteristic of early work was not confined to the UK. In an interview in 1998, the Dutch curator Rene Coelho said of the early 70s:

> I wanted to humanise technology with the help of artists. When it opened, the gallery had one Sony U-matic recorder, an old monitor, a second-hand slide projector, two videotapes and one artist: Livinus van de Bundt. Livinus was one of the first Dutchmen to make use of video as a medium for art. Together with people such as Michel Cardena, Stansfield & Hooykaas, and of course, in America, there was Nam June Paik. So there were various people here who worked with video, with something that could be called video art, usually registrations of performance art. Performance art ran rampant in those years, and because it was a fleeting art form, artists quickly resorted to video to record it. People often confused performance art with video art.[25]

Similarly Malcolm Le Grice:

> I used all that video kit for this exhibition that I did at the Arts Lab in '68 called *Drama in a Wide Media Environment* which was a week or two weeks of constant performance ... .[26]

Kevin Atherton:

> 'I used it as a bolt, within installation and as a counterpoint to a live performance. I think I was attracted to video, I'm attracted to time-based media in the same way that there's something about metal that's forgiving. You can revisit it and heat it up and hit it.'[27]

David Critchley:

> The very first video piece I made was in 1973, I just called it *Changing*, it almost never existed other than as a performance ... .[28]

Other significant early performances which involved video include Susan Hiller's *Pray (Prayer)*, a three-hour long work for ten participants exhibited at the Serpentine in 1969; and Ian Breakwell employed CCTV to relay images of workmen shovelling earth to a monitor in the Angela Flowers Gallery window in 1971. A quote from Breakwell illustrates many artists' ambivalent attitude to the new technology:

... a show I did in 1970 with John Hilliard at the New Arts Lab, which is where the first film co-op was set up, and this exhibition involved a lot of destruction of hard material and reconstruction. The process of the destruction and the reconstruction was recorded on video. Now, it's possible there wasn't even tape at that time. It's possible that it was just playback. But the idea of an ephemeral medium replacing a physical concrete medium was established very early. I would say that in the first place the great attraction of video was twofold. One was that it was linked, unlike film, which I had already used, to instant playback. You could see what you were getting. Seeing what you were getting immediately struck me as being more suited to ongoing action rather than merely a substitute for film where you do take one, take two, take three and you can tell by looking in the video camera, whether that take was right. Somehow it was the immediacy of video that was appealing. When I began using video it was linked to performance. To this day, I don't differentiate between any media.[29]

Because of the performative approach taken by the artists with much of the early work it means that many have been 'lost'. The works were ephemeral, un-recordable as discrete material artworks, and often not intended to even be repeated. The REWIND collection can only represent these early approaches by proxy (and then only within the collected ephemera on the database). This has also led to an unintended consequence within the project as a whole, with men disproportionately represented in the collection. This can be explained by the possibility that although both men and women artists of the period shared an antipathy towards the art market and the commoditisation of art objects, the men were much more cautious at discarding elements or fragments of their works. Even if the videotape was lost, some other piece of ephemera remains to support their position in the 'canon'. Many of the women artists stayed rigidly true to their principles and the works are lost – 'without a trace'. The catalogue from the earliest exhibition, *The*

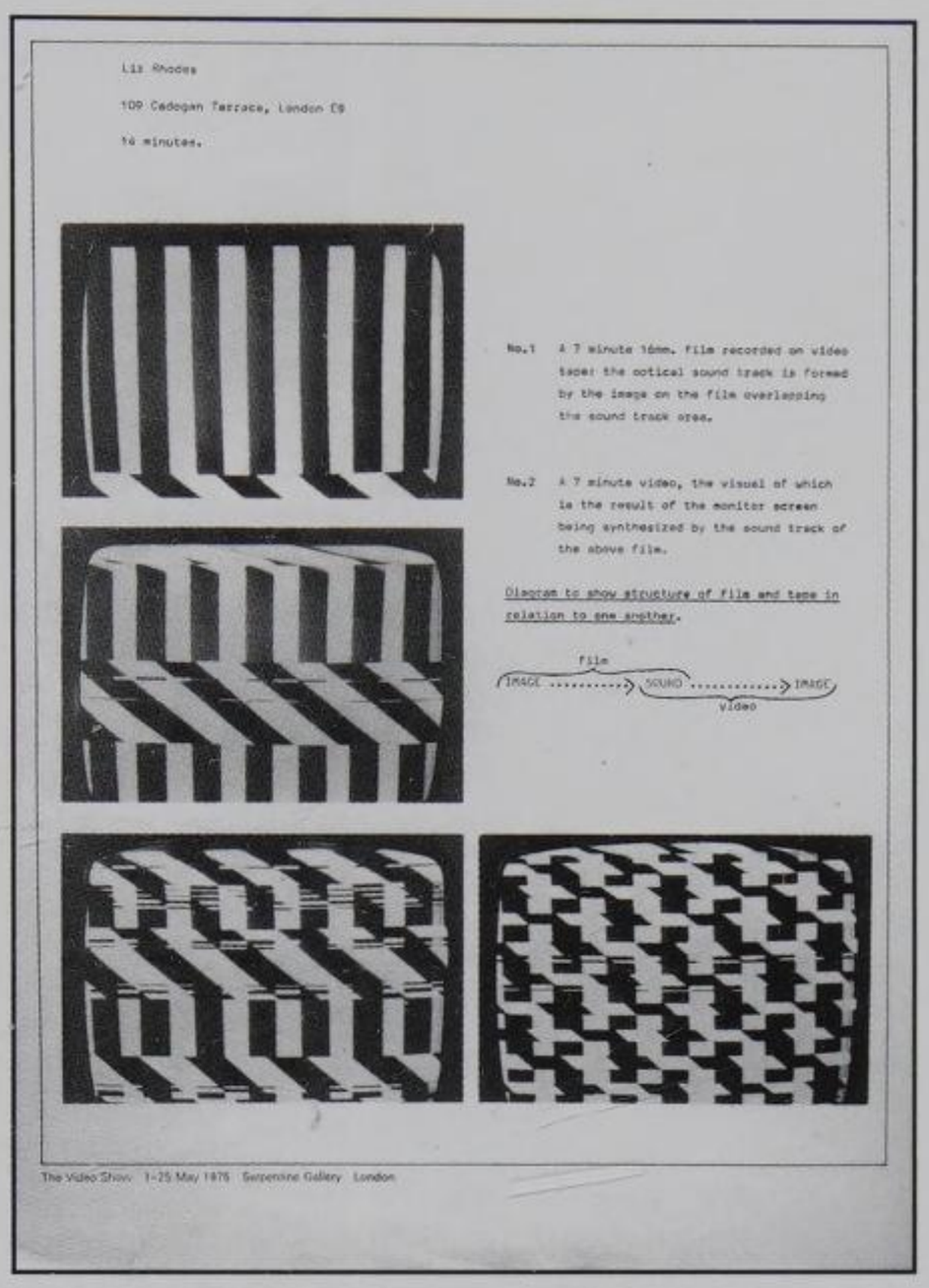


Fig. 23. Lis Rhodes, *No.1* and *No.2* 1975.

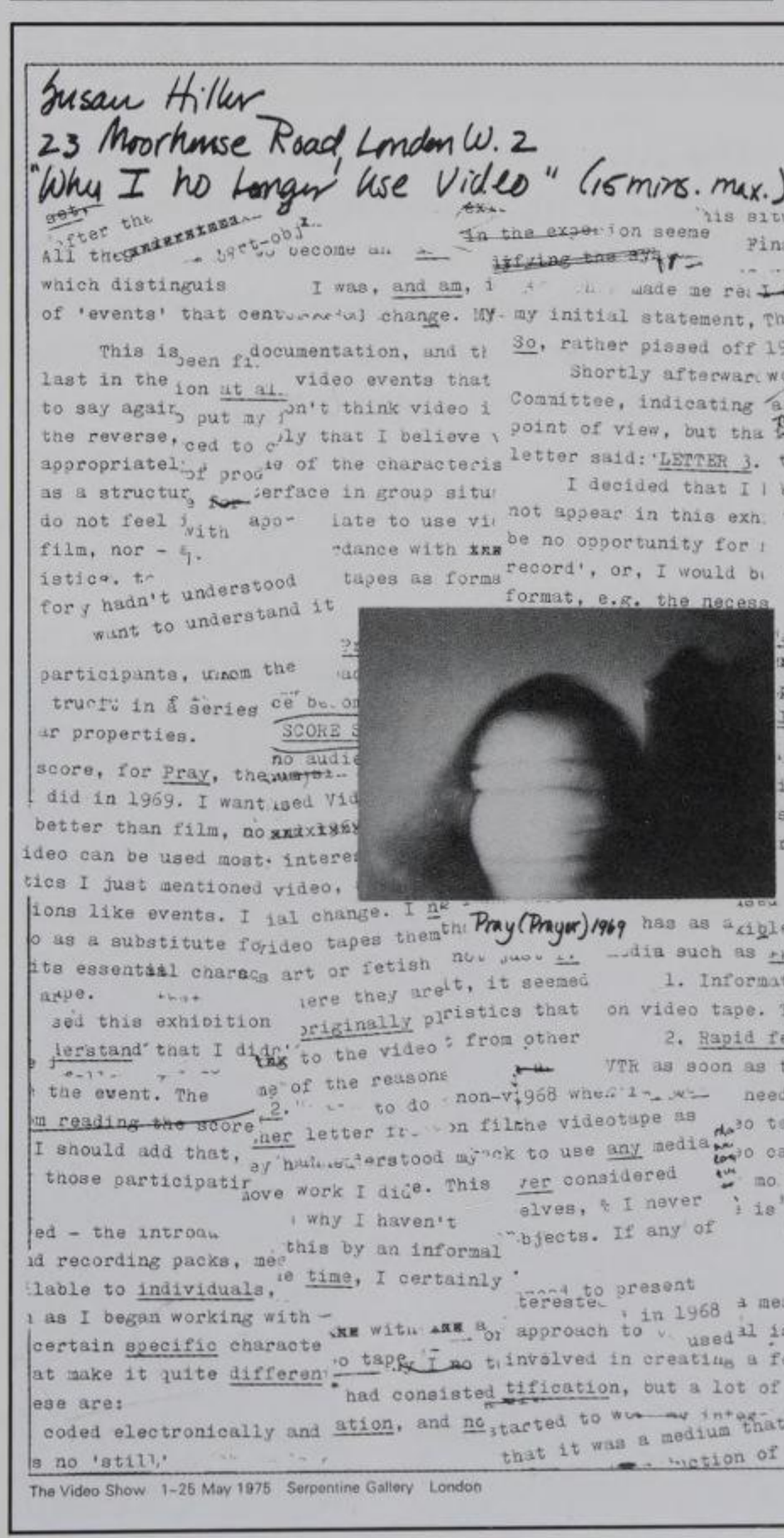


Fig. 24. Susan Hiller, *Why I no longer use video* 1975.

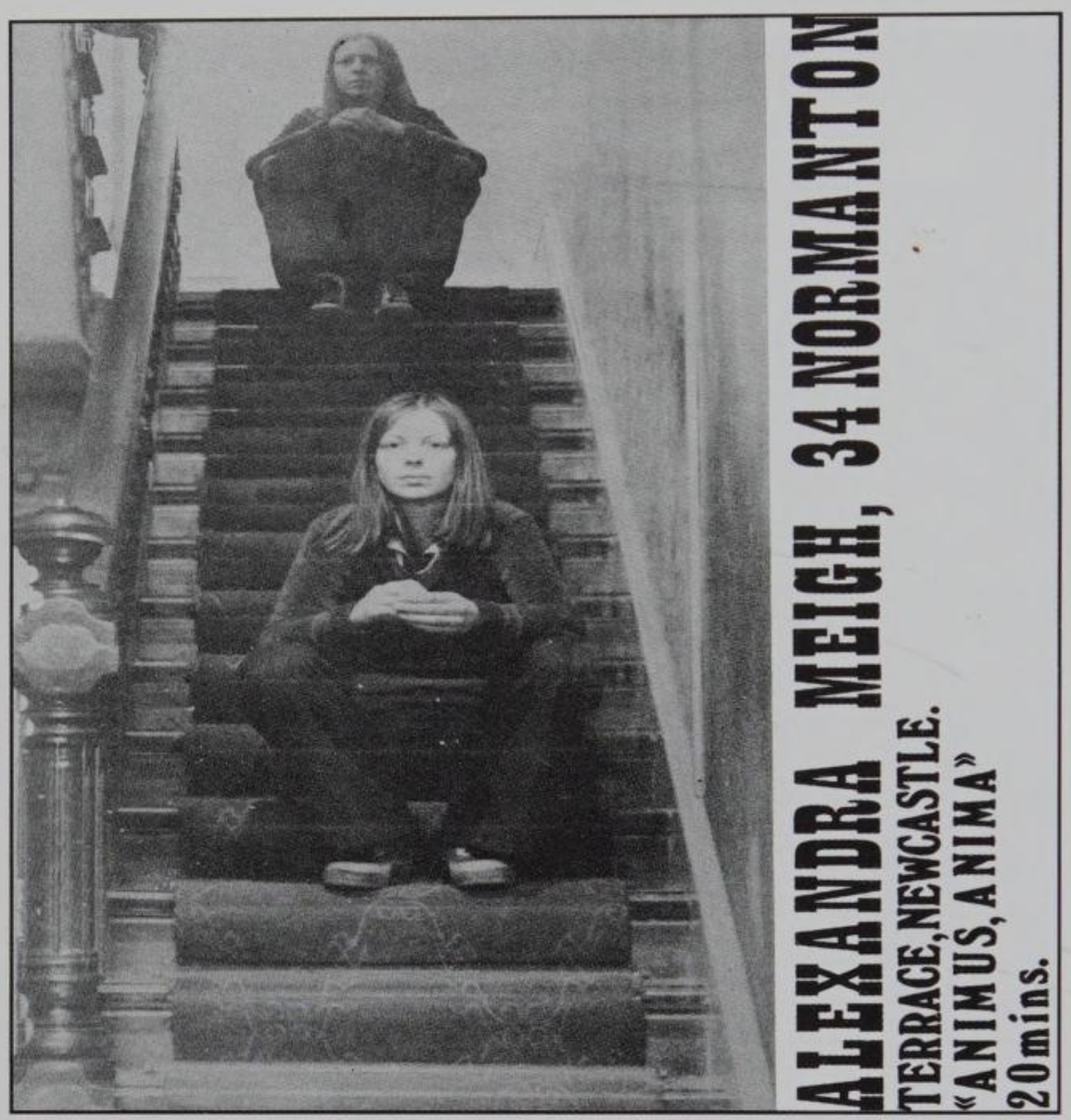


Fig. 25. Alexandra Meigh, *Aminus Amina* 1975.

Video Show at the Serpentine in 1975 is revealing. On her catalogue page the filmmaker Lis Rhodes describes a film/video work which was made up of two seven minute companion works, respectively a 16mm film and a videotape which were related through a synthesis of the optical sound track. Similarly Susan Hiller, Elaine Shemilt and Alexandra Meigh also describe a number of works, long since lost.[30] Tina Keane:



Fig. 26. Elaine Shemilt, *Doppelgänger*, 1980.

There were all these sorts of things going on, but they weren't documented. We were experimenting really. I think a lot of work didn't come out of me thinking I'm making sculpture or installation; I'm making performance. Therefore I don't think I ever expected my work to be lasting. I wasn't making a big statement. I wasn't making a big sculpture and I wasn't making a painting. It was about process.[31]

Rose Garrard:

> ... having originally been seen myself or regarded myself as a painter, and then being made to do sculpture at college, and then going into what I saw as four dimensions by using time-based media – my work then moved through each of the what I would call core disciplines of each of those things very deliberately, and then out beyond into performance. So you might get one work that was three dimensional or a sculpture, definable as that, that led to a video or a painting or an object that was hardly definable as sculpture, and then eventually that would lead me into some sort of linkage where they would become an installation, and then I would perform within the installation.[32]

Rose Garrard's statement is echoed precisely in the process of art-making and exposition by Elaine Shemilt, a contemporary and friend of Helen Chadwick, both of whom employed sculpture, mixed media, print, video and performance in their extended works. They would rework the same material over and over in several media, giving iconic significance to a repeated image or even gesture, reminiscent of the layering in musical symphonic form. The works produced had to be experienced in the round, and therefore even if elements survive, the piece as a whole cannot said to still exist in any real sense.

One property of the medium that contributes to the lack of permanence was also very attractive to these artists, as Catherine Elwes describes:

> Video was like having a pencil with a rubber. I could put something down, and if I didn't like it I could just rub it out. To me

> it was much closer to drawing and that is why I felt an affinity with it … .[33]

As Elwes also pointed out in her book, this property of the medium also enabled an interesting (non)legacy:

> YBA video art showed how easy it is to record over the past.[34]

Notes

1. Sue Hall and John Hopkins, 'Interview with Sue Hall and John Hopkins by Jackie Hatfield, 17 November 2004', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Sue%20Hall,%20John%20Hopkins/SHJH506.pdf).
2. For example: *Entering*, Peter Donebauer, BBC2, 1974; *Blue,* Derek Jarman, Channel 4 and BBC Radio 3, 1993; *Sketches for a Sensual Philosophy*, Malcolm Le Grice, Channel 4, 1988; *E ETC*, David Larcher, Channel 4, 1986; *Granny's Is*, David Larcher, Channel 4, 1990; *TV Dante*, Peter Greenaway, Channel 4, 1987.
3. Peter Donebauer, 'Interview with Peter Donebauer by Jackie Hatfield, 20 September 2004', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Peter%20Donebauer/PD504.pdf).
4. With the exception of Keith Arnatt's *Self Burial* where each of the nine still images was transmitted without explanation or introduction for two seconds on successive nights on WDR Television, Cologne.
5. Seven of the original ten works were later re-packaged as *7 TV Pieces* and distributed extensively as film works by the British Council and later on video by various distributors including Hall himself. By the 1980s they were usually titled TV Interruptions and in 2006 under this title Hall worked with Adam Lockhart, *REWIND* archivist to produce an installation version on DVD as a limited edition, one of which was purchased by the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid as part of a new collection of seminal works by Viola, Paik et al.
6. Gerry Schum, *Land Art, Television Gallery, 1969*, quoted in Dieter Daniels, 'Television – Art or Anti-art? Conflict and Cooperation between the Avant-Garde and the Mass Media in the 1960s and 1970s', *Media Art Net* (URL: http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/overview_of_media_art/massmedia/1/; http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/die-fernsehgalerie/).
7. David Hall, 'Interview with David Hall by Jackie Hatfield, 9 December 2005', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/David%20Hall/DH510.pdf).
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. A.L. Rees, 'Experimenting On Air: UK Artists' Film on Television', in Laura Mulvey and Jamie Sexton (eds), *Experimental British Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 153.
11. David Hall, '7 TV Pieces', *Television Interventions* (exhib. cat.) (Dunning: Fields & Frames Productions Ltd, 1990), 40.
12. Keith Arnatt, 'Self Burial by Keith Arnatt', *Television Interventions*, p. 44. The work was finally recorded on videotape by Fields & Frames with Arnatt's cooperation in 1990 to accompany the exhibition *Television Interventions* at the Third Eye Centre, Glasgow (9–24 June 1990); Seagate Gallery, Dundee (6–21 July 1990); and Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (1–27 September 1990).
13. A.L. Rees, 'Experimenting On Air', p. 159.
14. David Hall, 'Interview with David Hall by Jackie Hatfield'.
15. *De La Mano* by Stephan Decostre (4.20 minutes, transmitted by TVE Spain, 1989); *TV Interventions '93* (6 x 1 minute, transmitted by MTV, 1991).
16. Ian Breakwell, 'Interview with Ian Breakwell by Jackie Hatfield, 5 May 2005, *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Ian%20Breakwell/IB505.pdf).
17. Fields & Frames Productions Ltd, a production company set up by Jane Rigby and Stephen Partridge to facilitate their art projects for television.
18. Ursula Wevers, *Gerry Schum* (exhib. cat.), (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1979).
19. David Mach, 'The Clydeside Classic', *Television Interventions*, p. 32.
20. Anna Ridley, 'Interview with Anna Ridley by Jackie Hatfield, 14 June 2005', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Anna%20Ridley/AR505.pdf).

21. Kevin Atherton, 'Interview with Kevin Atherton by Jackie Hatfield, 21 July 2005', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Kevin%20Atherton/KAT510.pdf).
22. Ibid.
23. George Snow, 'Interview with George Snow by Stephen Partridge, 4 September 2007', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/George%20Snow/GS510.pdf).
24. David Larcher, 'Interview with David Larcher by Jackie Hatfield, 27 October 2005', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/David%20Larcher/DL510.pdf).
25. The interview accompanied the touring exhibition *The Second – Time Based Art from the Netherlands*, 13 November – 27 December 1998, ICC, Japan (URL: http://www.ntticc.or.jp/Archive/1998/The_Second/interview.html).
26. Interview recorded by Michael Mazière to provide background to the paper *Institutional Support For Artists' Film And Video In England 1966 – 2003*, 2004 for the British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection.
27. Kevin Atherton, 'Interview with Kevin Atherton by Jackie Hatfield', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* ((URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/).
28. David Critchley, 'Interview with David Critchley by Jackie Hatfield, 2 September 2004', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/David%20Critchley/DC503.pdf).
29. Ian Breakwell, ' Interview with Ian Breakwell by Jackie Hatfield', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/).
30. Other significant works in this category would include those from Helen Chadwick, Rose Finn Kelcey, Zoe Redman, Susan Hiller and Alison Winkle.
31. Tina Keane, 'Interview with Tina Keane by Jackie Hatfield, 2 March 2005', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Tina%20Keane/TK505.pdf).
32. Rose Garrard, 'Interview with Rose Garrard by Maggie Warwick, 29 April 2008', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s*.
33. Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History Of Video Art: The Development of Form and Function* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2006), 85.
34. Catherine Elwes, *Video Art: A Guided Tour* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 161.

Chapter 5/

Decay Behind a Glass Monitor: The Prophetic Deterioration of Early Video Installation

Emile Shemilt

When taking a retrospective view of British video art from the 1970s and 1980s, it is difficult to deny the strong emphasis the concept of medium specificity played on the practitioners of the time. And yet, when a new generation of artists made their impact on a much wider scene during the 1990s, the concept's influence seemed to fade considerably. The apparent abandon with which later artists drew upon the conventions of cinematic narrative and documentary emphasised their liberation from the constrictive, self-conscious studies of medium specificity. Perhaps ironically however, their breaking away from such rigid concepts was also a way returning to the traditional image-medium relationship. As is typical of most forms of cinema, the captured image returned to its usual dominance over the processes by which it was recorded or *re*presented. The emerging fashion for creating darkened gallery spaces in the 1990s accentuated video art's associations with the more familiar cinema-house setting, rather than with the distinctive televisual or sculptural approach that characterised many media-specific works in the 1970s. Later comments such as Sean Cubitt's reference to 'the banal repetition of the unexamined foursquare screen'[1] demonstrate how little relevance this complex history of medium specificity still seems to have on artists and audiences alike. One might conclude that the conceptual practice that had previously questioned such phenomena as the actual materiality of a moving image still remains largely unexamined by a majority of curatorial and critical circles who by now are long accustomed to the varieties of moving image technology. Yet with the benefit of history, it is clear to see that media specificity aided a number of important developments in moving image theory and practice.

Where certain issues of experimental filmmaking looked to readdress notions of photographic moving image media as mere tools in

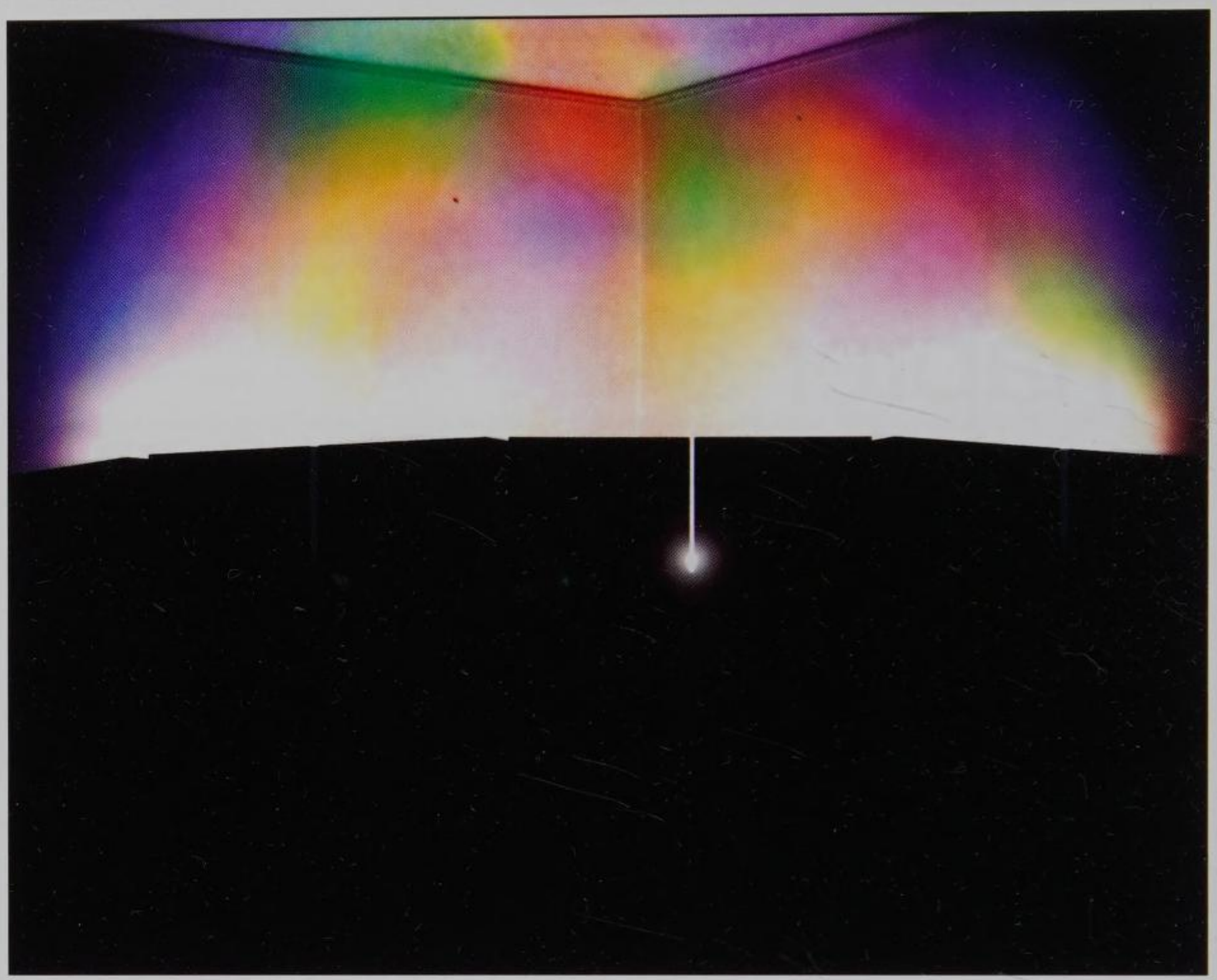


Fig. 1. David Hall, *The Situation Envisaged*, 1978.

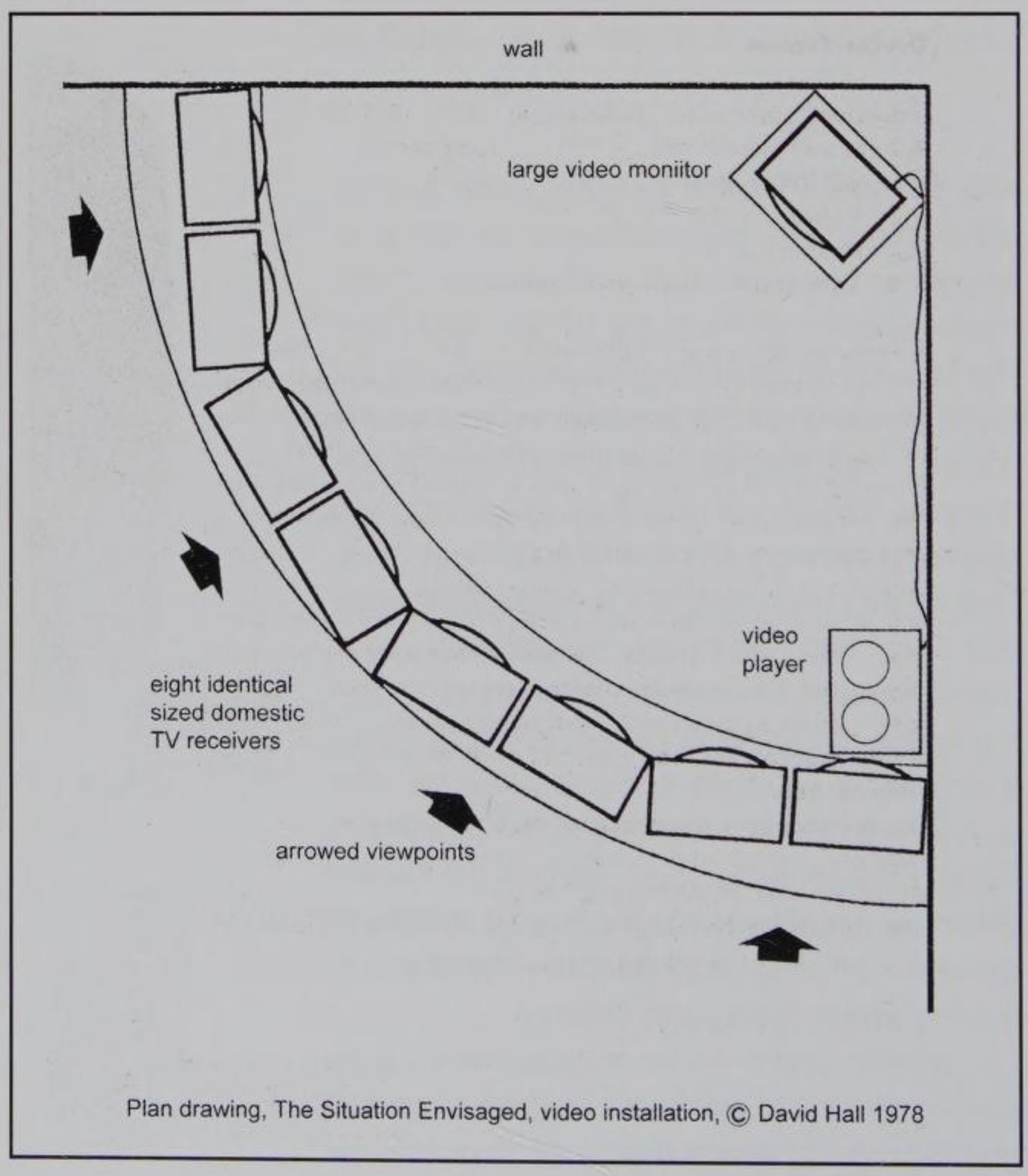


Fig. 2. David Hall, plan drawing for *The Situation Envisaged*, 1978.

a process of unmediated representation, the emergence of video technology proved to be an important contributing factor in the confirmation of this cause. The appearance of a new technology that became very rapidly accepted as an industry standard (whilst simultaneously gathering ground as a community-based and domestic feature) invited responses that not only sought to explore the phenomenal, cultural and political impact of video, but also to pose its emergence as a platform for a fundamentally unique discipline. For artists engaging with electronic media during the 1970s, definitions such as David Hall's 'Using Video and Video Art',[2] helped refine an expectation of video art that remained true to a language of the video medium itself, rather than, as Hall puts it, 'artists using video', which he more simply defines as 'Artists' Video'.

Amid these detailed explorations of video's unique inflections and idiosyncrasies, between its capabilities and limitations, was a burgeoning approach to the medium that emphasised its material and structural characteristics. It included an area of interest within the

practice as installation, where the specificities of video's physical and potentially sculptural components, from its apparatus to its signal, were as integral to the work as the represented image. The most apparent of these were in the sculptural possibilities of the distinctly physical monitor. The very fact that moving image art could now be exhibited in a white gallery space, rather than projected overhead within a darkened cinema, focused attention on the presence of the three-dimensional object that defined most video viewing at the time. For audiences already grappling with the material properties of film and its projection, a structural transition could occur that would now find them dealing with an ethereal image located somewhere behind a glass screen. Even the cinematic glow would have a very different sense of physical presence, as the light that had previously been thrown by a projector and subsequently reflected back from a screen, was now being emitted from within the monitor itself.

Not surprisingly then, the monitor could be largely identified as fundamental to the vernacular of early video art, and it was thus that artists would seek to undermine and readdress the role it played in the accustomed viewing habits of their audience. This led to a number of artworks exploring its physical properties as distinctive materiality within the video-image-object relationship. An example of this is in David Hall's *The Situation Envisaged* series. By turning a number of stacked monitors towards the walls of a gallery, and presenting the viewer with a range of great, black monoliths, Hall utilises the monitor's light emitting specificity to flicker an array of colours outwards onto the hidden walls. Limited in their ability to view the screens, the viewer is subjected to the unfamiliar perspective of the monitor as an aesthetic object in its own right. Equally, some works were created in a way that deliberately exposed an imagistic quality or effect particular to a specific model or type of monitor technology. Tamara Krikorian's *Breeze* (1975) is one such example, where the technology used in its display is as fundamental to the imagery as it is to the overall concept. *Breeze* recognises the imagistic quality of an image of water mediated and abstracted by the video technology of the mid-70s. It is an image that highlights a raw beauty to an otherwise dull, monochrome aesthetic, amplifying a distinctive specificity in both the video recording and in its exhibition. As if responsively, the light emitting quality of the monitors used in the four-channel installation intensifies the ethereal nature of the image. Another work is Stephen Partridge's aptly titled *Monitor* (1975) where a particular model of Sony monitor displays a recorded image of itself. But within the screen of this depicted self-image, another monitor is repeated. It follows that screens within screens repeat the self-image in a seemingly endless fashion, which plays with an illusion of depth that is mirrored by the three dimensions of the actual monitor on which the

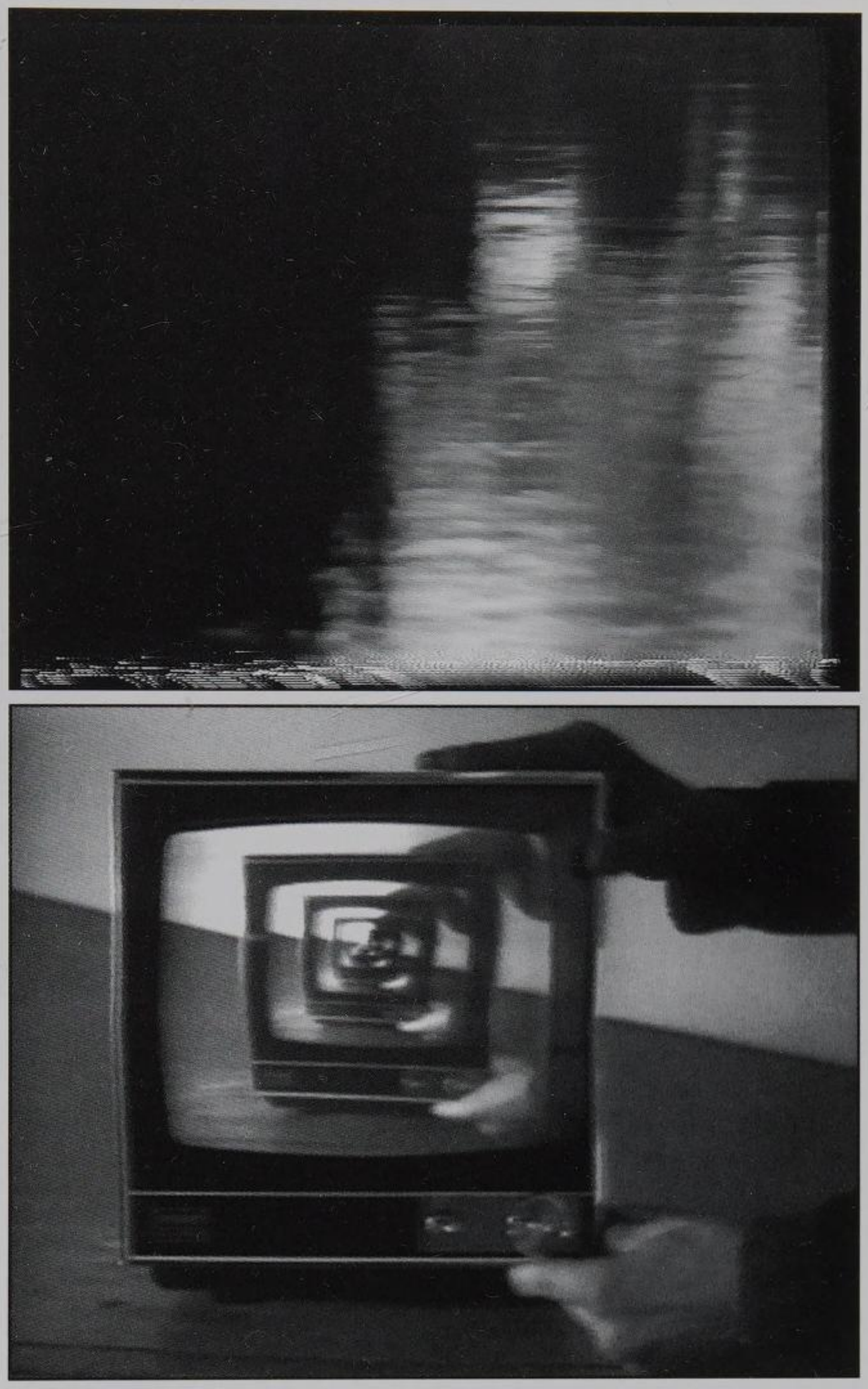


Fig. 3 (upper). Tamara Krikorian, *Breeze*, 1975.

Fig. 4 (lower). Stephen Partridge, *Monitor*, 1975.

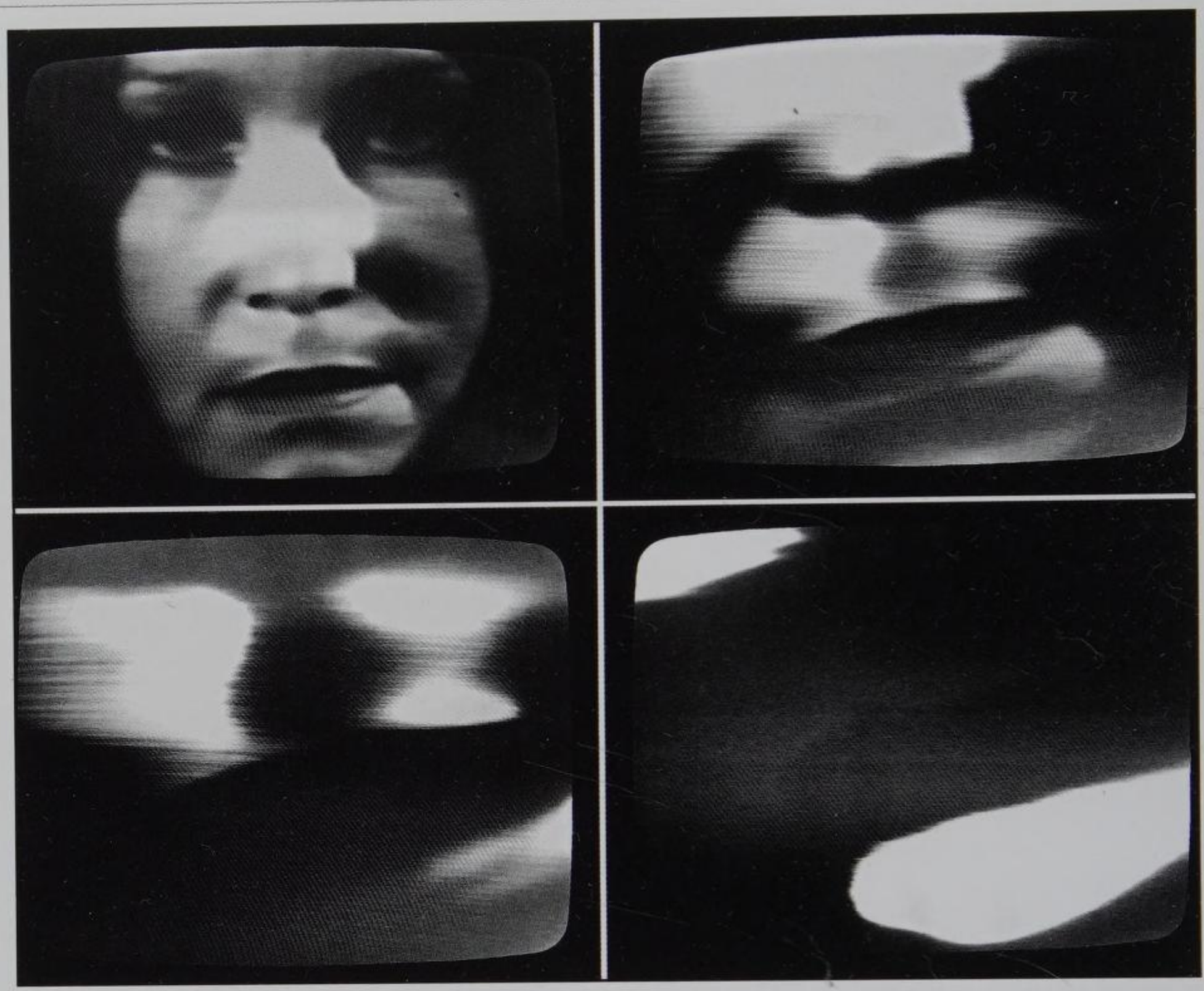


Fig. 5. David Hall, *This is a Video Monitor*, 1973.

work is displayed. The repeated image reflects the resulting feedback that occurs when a camera is pointed directly at its outputting monitor, but this is not how the work was constructed. As a performer within the work, Partridge's forearms enter the frame of each screen to gently pivot and revolve the displayed monitor; with a slight but deliberate time delay between each rotation revealing the pre-recorded nature of the work's structure. Nevertheless, the resulting illusionary cone that Partridge's technique mimics continues to stretch far beyond the depicted horizon line, creating a sensation that should defy the boundaries of the monitor's physical casing. In its simple reference to the idiosyncratic nature of 1970s video display *Monitor* – along with *Breeze* and *A Situation Envisaged* – embodies an artistic concern of video that distinguishes it from the (more contemporary) aesthetics of video projection. But this is a concern that is not simply aesthetic. Essential to each of these works, is an independence from other recording and representational media that is vehemently conceptual. Perhaps among the best examples of this concern are David Hall's *This is a Video Monitor* (1973) and *This is a Television Receiver* (1976). As works with their own distinctively 'material' qualities, they also provide an interesting point to reflect upon Hall's unique approach to the sculptural properties of video.

Superficially, *This is a Video Monitor* and *This is a Television Receiver* appear to be very similar, with *This is a Television Receiver* retracing a familiar formula of production to its predecessor, made three years earlier. Both works initiate with an image of a person looking directly into camera in close-up shots of their head and shoulders. Conversely, the images might also be read as the head and shoulders of a person looking directly towards the audience. Initially, this is the ambiguous conflict that Hall seeks to address. It is an indication towards a perceptual difference that occurs between the phenomenological recognition of a person who appears to be addressing a viewer directly, and the cognitive understanding that this occurrence is the actual result of a carefully orchestrated system – a system, to which television as a medium is, in fact, very adaptable.

While *This is a Video Monitor* takes the form of a woman speaking directly to the viewer, *This is a Television Receiver* echoes this image but manifest in the form of the newsreader Richard Baker. Similarly, Baker is addressing the viewer, but with this piece, his delivery comes from an authoritative position upheld by the cultural conventions of television. Over their duration, both works deliver a very similar monologue. Their resolutions serve to deconstruct the system that fabricates the illusion that this person is, firstly, speaking directly to the viewer, and secondly, that it is in fact a person at all. '*This is a Video Monitor*', she says. 'This is a Television Receiver', he says.

> Which is a box. The shell is of wood, metal or plastic. On one side, most likely the one you are looking at, there is a large rectangular opening. This opening is filled with a curved glass surface, which is emitting light. The light, passing through the curved glass surface, fades in intensity over that surface from dark to light and in a variety of shades of grey [colours]. These form shapes, which often appear as images. In this case the image of a woman [man]. But it is not a woman [man].[3]

The implication in each monologue is towards the physical apparatus that *materially* combine to form the image. The monologue informs the viewer that what they are looking at is not a person, but the image of a person composed from a series of electronic signals and glowing pixels. After both monologues suggest that the sound heard is not in fact a voice, the second phase of the works is a distortion of the image. At the end of each 'apparent' monologue Hall rewinds and replays and re-records the image. As the monologues are repeated a second time, the signal is significantly deteriorated. Again the process is repeated as the image is rewound and replayed and rerecorded with the deterioration increasing incrementally. Gradually the images become less like those of a man or a woman and come to resemble a series of tonal blobs and muffled, crackling sounds. It is a process through which *This is a Video Monitor* primarily reveals the nature of video as an electronic system of recordings and representations. But it is also a process that reveals the malleable, material nature of video's electronic signal in a sculptural form. In the way that the monologue's reference to the physical properties of the monitor indicate video's potential as a sculptural object (one that is defined by its apparatus), Hall's manipulation of the deterioration of the medium indicates the materiality of the signal. The revelation is the same with *This is a Television Receiver*, but in a way that also allows a further implication: that of the physical manipulation, and the sculptural potential of television as a signal.

With a number of media-specific video artists maintaining that the associations between video and television were far from slight, works like David Hall's *TV Interruptions* extended these comparisons from conceptual to actual.

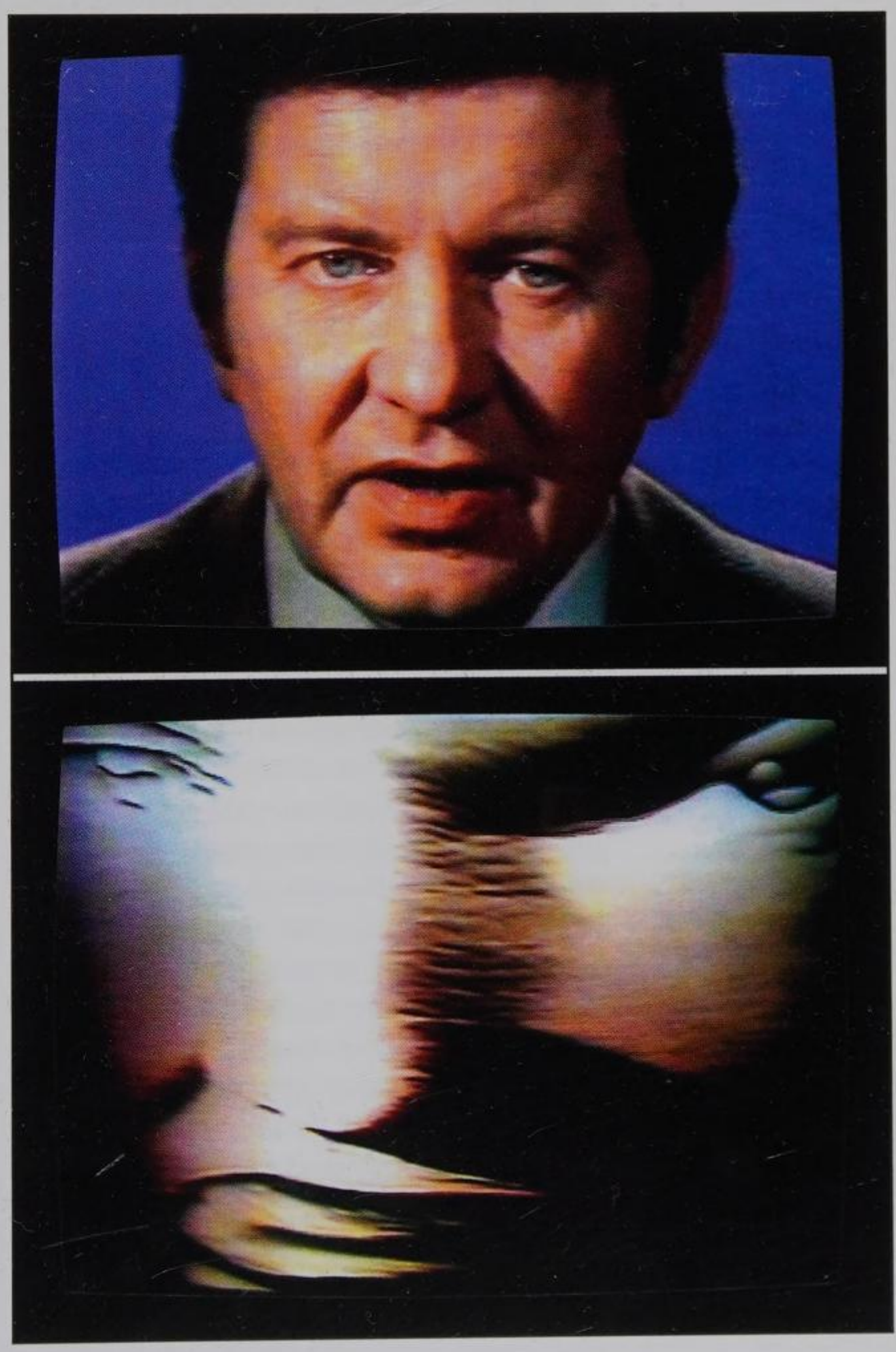


Fig. 6. David Hall, *This is a Television Receiver*, 1976.

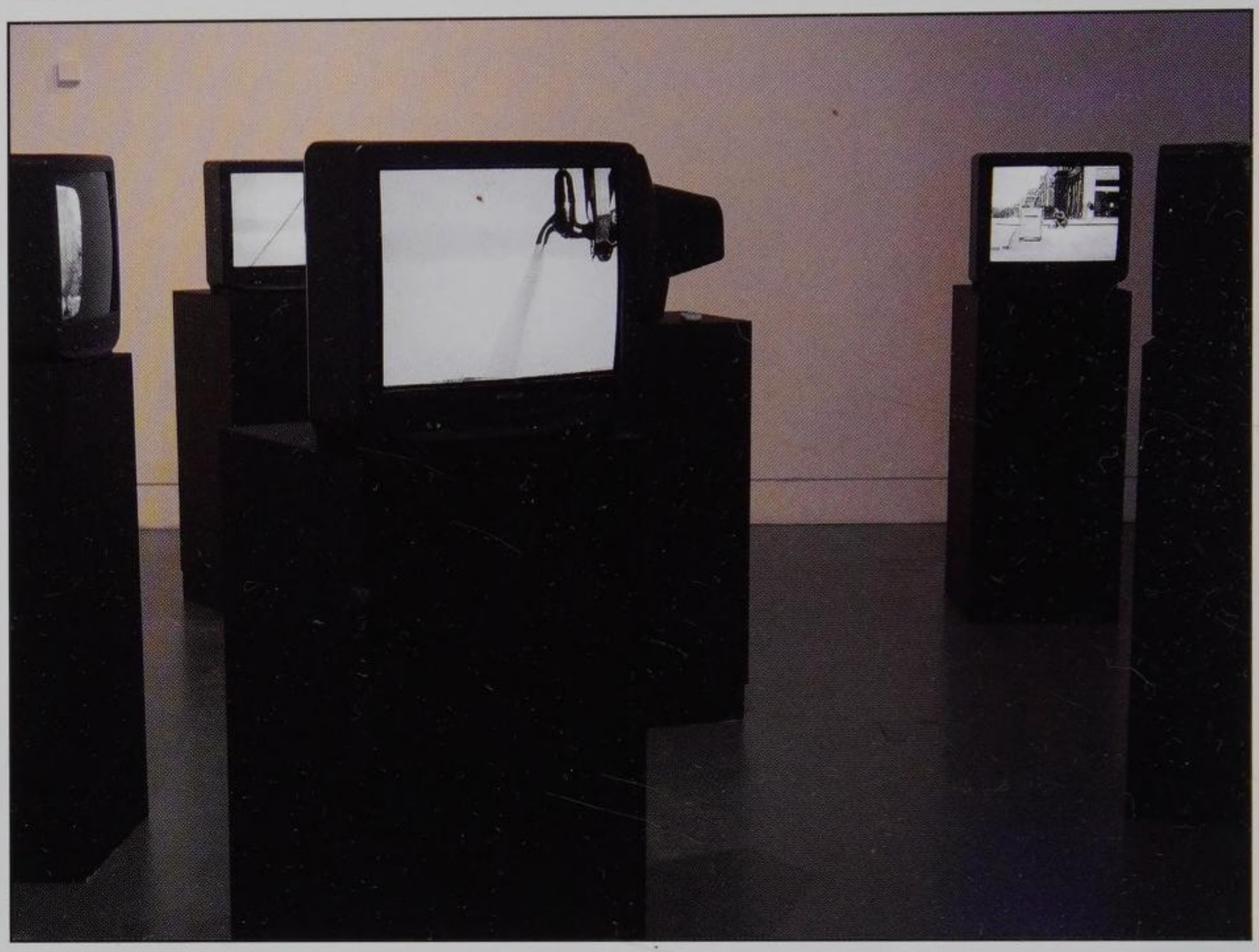


Fig. 7. David Hall, *7 TV Pieces*, 1971/2006.

His 'interruptions', broadcast on Scottish Television during the 1971 Edinburgh Festival, were a series of unannounced and uncredited instances within the actual framework of television. Over the course of several days, normal broadcast television was interrupted at random by a series of unscheduled bursts of Hall's work, ranging from burning television sets to, famously, a running tap. This 'Tap Piece' in particular is very revealing of Hall's sculptural approach because it more explicitly emphasised the viewer's television set as the object by which the image was displayed. In a moment when Scottish Television suddenly became a greyish-white blank, a tap appeared to be lowered into the top, right-hand corner of the screen. At this point, unseen hands turn on the tap and allow water to stream forth. As a meniscus line gradually rises up from the bottom of the screen, in a way that momentarily transforms it into a kind of goldfish bowl-like container, an illusion is created of the viewer's television set flooding. But for *TV Interruptions* as a whole, there was in fact a more physical metamorphosis. Curiously, Hall's *Interruptions* were actually shot and edited on 16mm film due to union rules and engineering standards regulating broadcast quality at the time. Despite this, Hall maintains the view that these works actually constitute video art. More precisely, he maintains the position that they in fact constitute media-specific video art.[4] Hall's reasoning for this is founded on the precise point at which they were transmitted and the fact that their physical 'state' was mediated as a video signal. For Hall, this was in fact the point at which *TV Interruptions* became an artwork.

As a 'happening', it was absolutely necessary that television was indeed interrupted, and so it was only at the point when these works were broadcast as an analogue signal that they came into conceptual and actual fruition. Bearing this in mind, if one takes a sculptural perspective, and considers the idea that it was in fact only at this point – when they were physically mediated in television's most essential state as an analogue, video signal – that they truly existed as an artwork, it does raise an important question as to whether the integrity of media-specific video art is fundamentally dependent on its specificity at this actual, material level. In which case, these works face a certain predicament.

Tendencies towards viewing video have

changed since the 1970s, not least in terms of the available technology, and as a result the future display and exhibition of media specific video art could be perceived as being under threat. For example, with the majority of the original 70s video monitors almost extinct, works such as Tamara Krikorian's *Breeze* in particular, pose the question as to whether a contemporary monitor or other method of display would capture its original radiant quality. And from a conceptual perspective as well as a formal one, unless these art works continue to be displayed using the appropriate apparatus, they face a certain crisis of truth in their material validity. When one considers how *TV Interruptions* is only truly realised as an artwork when broadcast, there is an ambiguity in its conceptual legitimacy when it is viewed under different circumstances. It is of course an ambiguity that Hall has sought to address by additionally titling the work, *7 TV Pieces*, and now exhibiting it as an installation involving seven monitors. But with time, as analogue video technology all but fades, the ideology of medium specificity threatens the sincerity of these works being exhibited on contemporary formats. The migration of these works onto digital media may be a perversion of a once integral philosophy, but the imperative of preserving the work poses the distortion as a necessary evil. Nevertheless, the validity of the medium-specific concept is somewhat strained, especially if one considers Hall's renowned statement 'Video Art is video as the artwork',[5] and feels obliged to add the postscript, "but now in digital". It is in this sense that one might conclude certain works like *This is a Video Monitor* and *This is Television Receiver* embody the end of medium specificity's dominance over moving image art. In the same way that *TV Interruptions* by necessity requires the framework of broadcast television, unless *This is a Video Monitor* or *This is a Television Receiver* are actually displayed on an appropriate video monitor or television set with a 'curved glass surface', then the works' essential statements remain simply untrue.

In revisiting these particular works however, one might also view them as actually prophetic of the demise of medium specificity. The insistence that 'this' is *not* what it seems, but actually a video monitor, seems somewhat sympathetic to the displacement of the technological specificity. Furthermore, it is a reading of the work that potentially reveals a sense of tragedy in the emphatic nature of the monologues delivered by the 'apparent' figures. In this case, one might also recognise an underlying irony in Hall's encouraged deterioration of the video image that pertains to a sense of existential ambiguity, one that could now indicate a knowing premonition of the demise of video as a medium itself.

Although video specificity was clearly a dominant force behind much of the early practice, it was not without its controversy. In his essay, 'Int:Ventions: Some Instances of Confrontation with British Broadcasting', the artist Mick Hartney likens video specificity to a metaphorical straitjacket strapped around the artistic practice.[6] Envisaging that new and emerging technologies would 'offer an escape' from its stranglehold, his position can be summarised as a critique of Hall's conceptualisation, and a refusal of the proposal that what constituted video art depended on a static state of the medium. In the sense that technologies are constantly in flux, there is some validity to this argument. The feeling that new and emerging technologies might offer an escape can be read in a number of ways, not least that, technologically, new media tend to dictate the passing of older media in a more formal, usability sense. But it could also be read as arguing that a focus on the specifics of one medium is likely to limit the novelty of an artistic effect to the temporal fragility of the exclusively current technological 'state of the art'. Given that Hartney goes on to indicate the emphasis on technology at the expense of 'the panoply of devices – tension, relief, surprise and sensory appeal – which elsewhere constitute time-based arts',[7] one might understandably presume that in a formal approach to video, the reductive nature of medium specificity is, at its most fundamental, solely a study of the technological potentialities or limitations of one medium when compared to those of another. In a study of a medium's limitations, it is unsurprising that a contradiction should exist in the presentation of a self-referential artwork that stresses the ineptitude of its technology on a digital format more

than capable of challenging this incompetence at the push of a button.

Paradoxically there is, in defiance of this, the potential for a counter-argument here. In an age of media convergence, the perception that digital technologies have the potential to replicate the imagistic qualities of video and challenge the resolution of film comes with a resignation that any sculptural or material properties of the moving image slip further from grasp, as the gradual omnipresence of digital code replaces any prior sense of moving image physicality. The concept of materiality in digital media is still a study that eludes a clear definition. It follows from concepts, which can be indicated most notably in the language of film, as the study of the medium beyond the conventional language of the frame. It is a way of drawing a viewer's attention to the apparatus of the projector and the filmstrip itself, which in its scratching or smudging of emulsion identifies a malleable materiality. With video and digital media however, the notion of materiality is largely dominated by the distance an artist finds themselves from the tangible properties. For artists working with video installation, it could be said that the monitor typically highlighted this distance. Similarly for artists working with digital media, where media is edited on computers, there is still the distance between the artist and any material or physical properties.[8] Unlike the more accessible material properties of film, the video monitor encased the image behind its exoskeletal glass screen, leaving the artist at a restrained distance from the material. Sean Cubitt's analogy of a musician's proximity to the strings of a piano compared to those of a guitar[9] is a fitting comparison to the sense of control or contact that an artist might have over these material properties of analogue video compared to those of film. So for the media-specific video artists, the exploration of this vestige of materiality formed a particularly inviting prospect – with Nam June Paik's early experimentations involving magnets held to monitors[10] probably amongst the best known.

In Britain, David Hall's *Vidicon Inscriptions* (1975) indicate the related interest amid British practitioners. In this interactive installation, the viewer approaches a monitor through a custom-built, enclosed corridor where their motion trips a sudden flash of light. A closed-circuit vidicon camera captures the suddenly brilliant image. On the screen of the monitor are a number of gradually fading, still images of people caught in momentary gestures. Each image gradually fades away until the viewer is confronted by his or her own frozen, yet fading, video image. The spectacle is conjured using a photographic camera-style shutter device covering the lens of a strategically placed vidicon camera. Basically the technological reverse of the conventional cathode ray tube, the vidicon-tube suffered the major failing of being susceptible to an afterimage. This afterimage can be most easily described by comparing it to the act of looking at the sun or a bright light, and how the light burns onto one's retina, creating a negative image or a black spot. In industry terms, this was an entirely unwanted property. Given the vidicon-tube's absolute vulnerability to this, if a vidicon camera was pointed at a light source for too long, the tube actually burned out. Unlike human eyes, however, there was no healing process.

It is through this otherwise unwanted property of the early video camera that Hall exposes an example of materiality to the medium. When the shutter device is opened the image of the viewer is burned onto the camera's tube, which is then relayed onto a monitor, resulting in the multitude of ghostly figures. *Vidicon Inscriptions* suits a certain study of materiality given that image-burn on the photoconductive surface of the tube is the actual manipulation of a physical entity. But the condition is subject only to the specific camera technology and so, as if in realisation of Hartney's skepticism, the long-since ceased industrial manufacture of the vidicon camera means that not only the contemporary exhibition of the work is difficult, but its status in a canon of study recognising the materiality of video is also limited to a mere acknowledgement of the technological state of the art. With its emphasis on the camera, *Vidicon Inscriptions* is an exposition of the technical aspects involved in creating the video image, exposing materiality in the recording process rather than in its eventual display. But while a filmstrip may be manipulated even as it passes through a projector, the comparable sense of control a video user has is a lot less palpable.

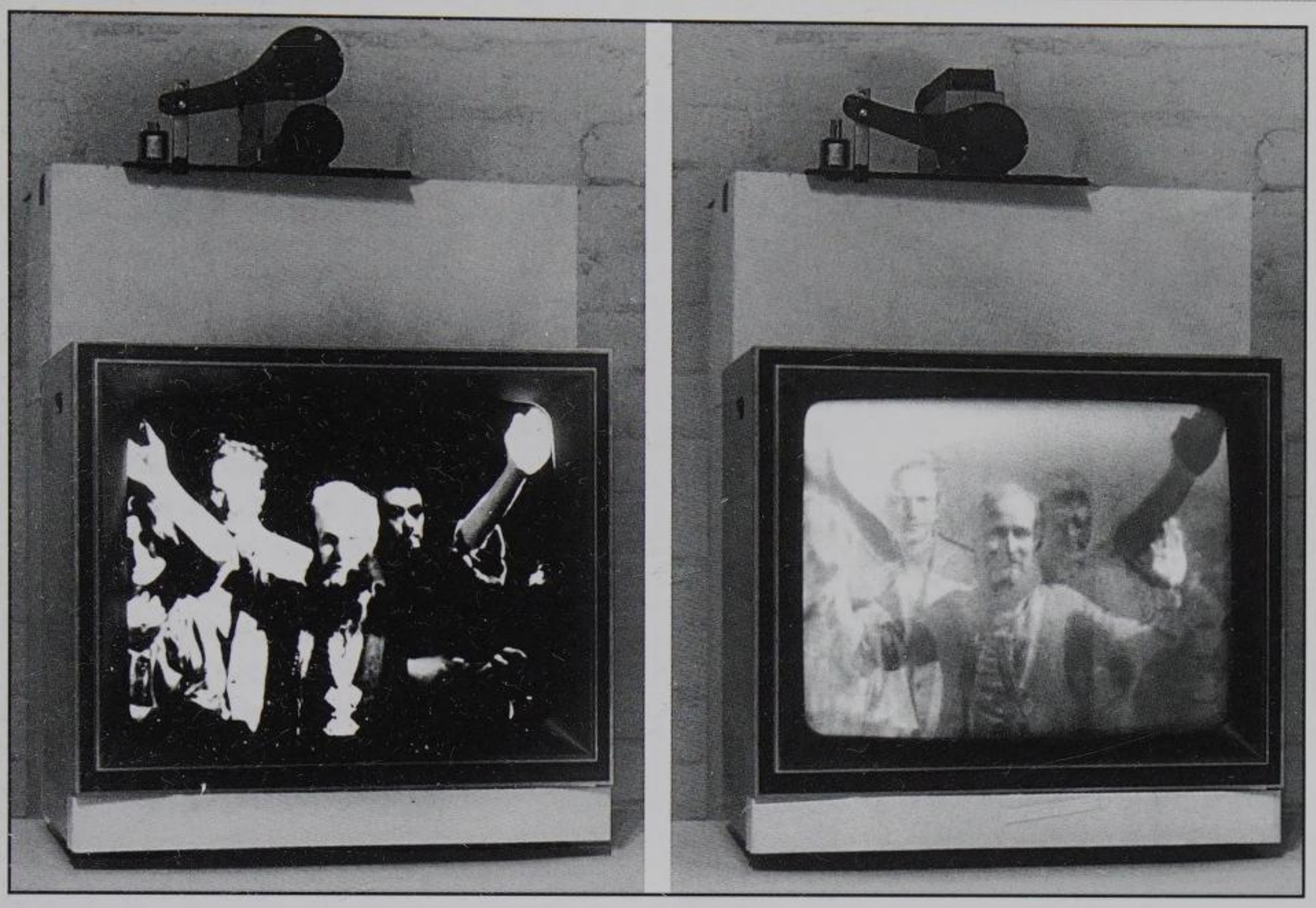


Fig. 8. David Hall, Vidicon Inscriptions, Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, 1976. Photo: David Hall.

Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that this is because the materiality of video is at its core, a signal rather than a series of visible frames. It's something which Peter Donebauer's Videokalos work is testament to. As Chris Meigh-Andrews points out, the Videokalos was a technology that granted the user an opportunity to manipulate the image within the videofield in a way that had some resemblance to that of the optical printer used by experimental filmmakers.[11] So if one refers back to David Hall's *TV Interruptions,* because of its eventual broadcast and reception as a video signal, it follows that one might assume that the only true specificity of the medium is at this fundamental level, and so, beyond the physicality of the monitor, one could argue that the manipulation and interruption of the signal is the closest exploration of video's malleability.

With *This is a Video Monitor*, an initial reading of the work identifies Hall's engagement with the material properties of video through the monologue that emphasises the physicality of the original screening format. Because it is so particularly dogmatic in its specificity, it may seem ridiculous screening *This is a Video Monitor* on a more contemporary format, let alone as a projection or even over the Internet. With *This is a Television Receiver*, the specificity seems even further detached from Hall's original concept, given that the work should really be broadcast. Further to this is the deterioration of the image, and therefore the message. This deterioration can be understandably read as an exposition of the material properties of the original medium. Hall's reduction of the image to a blur exposes the construction of the otherwise ethereal image, and thereby undermines the expected language of television. But in revising this work as digital, one predictably finds a criticism in its technological specificity, most particularly since its dictum refers to a different technology from that of its essence. Furthermore, it is also facing a crisis as to the cultural status of the medium – particularly as to whether the original authority with which television specific works questioned the language of viewing can still challenge a contemporary audience, any more than the once authoritative figure of Richard Baker still has the cultural resonance of the BBC's hegemonic role in British culture of the 1970s. It would seem that the predictive criticism of Mick Hartney has been realised. In its technological specificity, "the state of the art" has most likely been overshadowed, and the truth-claims of the works no longer hold any validity.

So what of the prophetic quality of the

work? With reference to Hartney's position that media specificity inclined some video art towards a 'predetermined process' at the expense of 'tension, relief, surprise or sensory appeal',[12] early 21st century reflection on these works typifies the limited 'state of the art'. But despite this, there is the possibility for a further reading, which transforms the decline of specificity into an existential reflection. In a rather tragic manner, the work transcends the rudimentary formalism that exposes the language of video and television. Instead, the work offers a more human reflection that maintains a level of artistry far beyond the staying power of the technological state of the art. This reading is articulated through the personification of the medium, most obviously in the use of the figure.

Consider the woman's face in *This is a Video Monitor*. The monologue describes what it is not: a woman. It indicates the physicality of the monitor as a simultaneous container and distributor of the message; and the deterioration of the image articulates a further construct behind the image. But it is not a woman. Already there is an existential conflict in the work. The assumption that the viewer reads an image of a woman as a woman, is more than likely to do with the language in which a viewer chooses to engage with the received information, whether it is through a narrative construct or the pseudo-conversational manner of television. Nevertheless, there is still something provocative in using something as symbolic as a face, particularly when the face not only denies its very existence, but is then subsequently erased. Hall's scrubbing out of the woman's face and voice is a heavily symbolic gesture that extends his use of video materiality via an act of exposition through deconstruction. In the desire to reveal the essence of the medium, i.e. the signal, Hall finds it necessary to deteriorate it. With this deterioration though, Hall is revealing a form of physicality to the message. The personification of this use of materiality allows a physical presence to the figure, and in granting it this presence Hall exposes it to the conditions of ageing. This crisis is enhanced with the wane and ebb of the monitor itself. In its projected state, the work is either read retrospectively, or as nonsensical. But what if the deterioration were to represent the demise of medium specificity – the essential concept with which the work engages? In this sense, we find that the work never really provided any definitions in the first place. Despite initially seeming to promote the dogmatic reductivism of video into an apparent one-lined modernist theme or statement, the deterioration in the work proposes a conflict, which counterbalances everything in that initial reading. This existential conflict in the work, the demise of its own self-realisation, is metaphorical for any human crisis, where deterioration and death are the only known constants. And so, with *This is a Television Receiver*, we see the same crisis taken to another level where the newsreader, Richard Baker, once so authoritative in his iconography, strains against his immanent obliteration; with each rewind and replay marking a poignant recognition of aging and increasing irrelevance. In dogmatically exclaiming 'this is a television receiver' before actively deteriorating it, Hall seems fully aware of the fragility of such a claim. In the face of its imminent demise, the claim is defensive. This premonition of inevitable defeat raises the work beyond that of a mere challenge to the language of the medium, and humanises it. It is a humanisation that not only indicates the vulnerability in this work, but in the whole of video specificity as an ideology. In doing so, the work transcends its original interpretation as a challenge to the vocabulary of 1970s video, forging an analogy that is not only relevant to the demise of the technological state of the art, but that is also sympathetic to human susceptibility.

Although not necessarily manipulating or engaging quite so directly with the materiality of video as Hall, there are other works of this period into which one might also recognise this prophecy as a specificity. Madelon Hooykaas and Elsa Stansfield's *Running Time* (1979), is a work that draws its inspiration from the scan-lines of the video image. The title *Running Time* has a versatile meaning, focusing our attention towards the video field that constantly renews itself through these lines that imperceptibly realise the video image from left to right. This is set against an image of a figure running, snaking from distance across a landscape towards the foreground. Before the figure reaches his destination, the image is cut and the figure is

seen repeating his attempts with the same Sisyphean futility. Of course the 'running time' also refers to the work's actual duration. Installed in a gallery, the tape would have been set on a loop making a point of video's technological ability to rewind and replay. Initially this might be read as a kind of celebration of a perpetual image, but even on this apparently closed circuit, there is the inevitable break. As the tape ends, the video apparatus is realised as a necessary requirement for the tape to be rewound, replayed, and effectively sustained. The figure's attempts may be perpetual, but the tape is not. Meanwhile, the soundtrack is that of a thumping heartbeat, to which *Running Time* makes the more considerate juxtaposition to the ultimate lifetime of one's own body.

Another work is David Critchley's *Static Acceleration* (1976). Critchley's practice has always had a strong performance base and his early work often involved pushing his body to certain extremes, usually to their inevitable outcomes – eating until he was sick, drinking until he was drunk or in more extreme situations impaling himself with various objects.[13] Although he initially considered himself a performance artist,[14] Critchley's work was often cross-platform and his performances would regularly include film projections or slide displays. In 1973 when he first started working with video, Critchley's considerations began to develop towards testing the performative possibilities inherent within the video medium itself. With *Static Acceleration* Critchley performs another act of extremes as he repeatedly turns his head from side to side, incrementally increasing the speed, until he reaches such a point of slamming his head from one side to another that he can no longer withstand the motion and has to stop. As a video piece however, Critchley invites his audience to view the work as a specific video recording rather than as simply documentation of a performance. At the point were Critchley suddenly stops shaking his head, just as his eyes appear to bulge beyond their sockets, the performance is repeated. Except at this point, the recording is replayed at its slowest possible speed. Instead of presenting the viewer with a performance that displays how fast he can move his head, Critchley actually exhibits the extent to which the technology



Fig. 9 (above). Madelon Hooykaas and Elsa Stansfield, *Running Time*, 1979.
Fig. 10 (below). David Critchley, *Static Acceleration*, 1976.



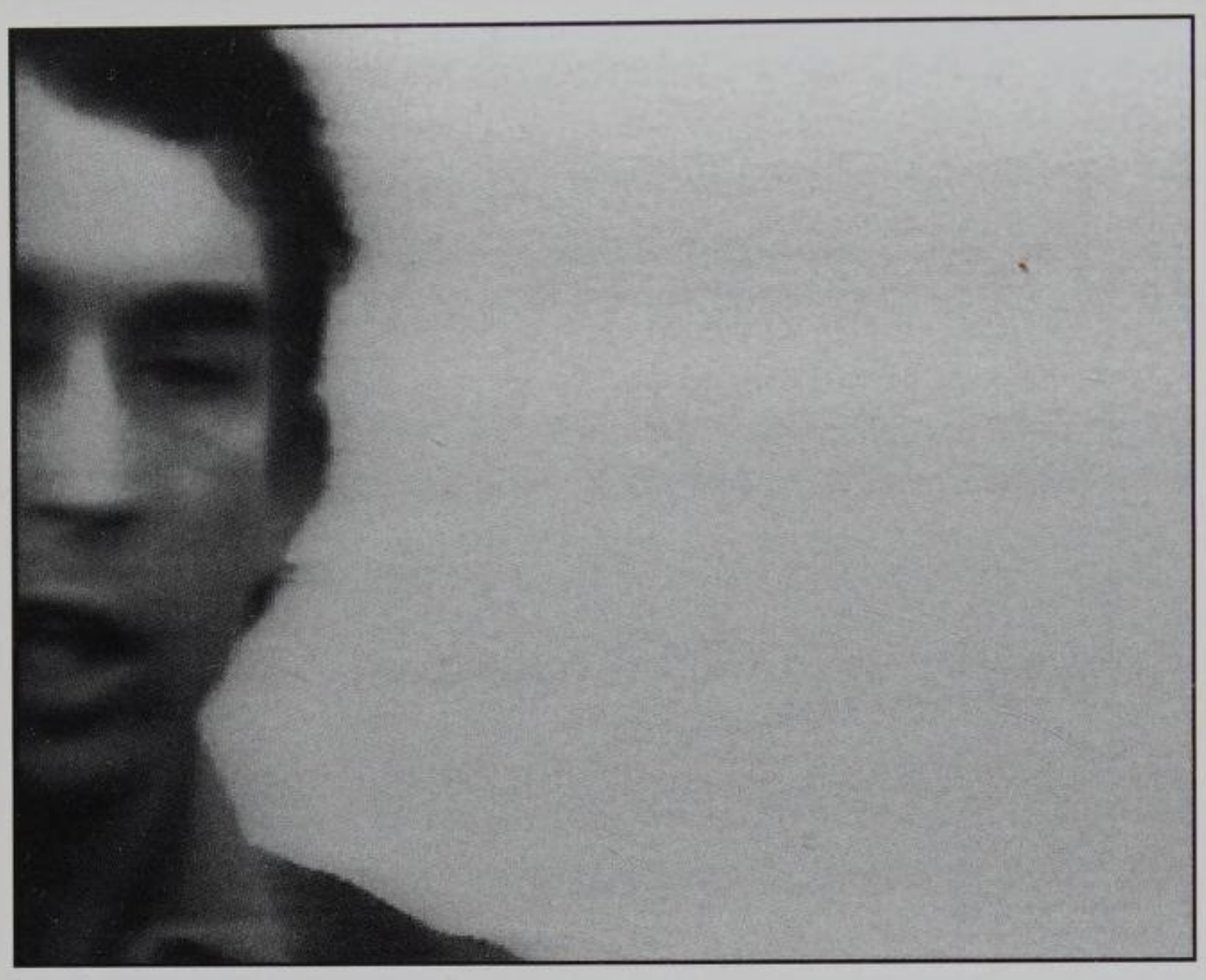


Fig. 11. Mick Hartney, *State of Division*, 1979.

can effectively record the speed of his motion. From one perspective, what we view is a mediation of Critchley's performance, but it is also a performance that we can attribute to the medium. In this way, *Static Acceleration* is viewed as a work of two extremes: Critchley's and video's.

As an artist initially working in the 1980s, Lei Cox's practice has traversed video technology and now resides in that of digital media. His use of each medium is in the manipulation of images of his own body to create fictional characters such as *Lighthead* (1987). A sperm-like figure with a light bulb for a head, the character swims around the empty black, illusionary video-space within the monitor. His work is an example of installation video art where the actual dimensions of the monitor or the edges of a projected image, act as boundaries to the illusionary landscapes. What is apparent in Cox's work is the desire to celebrate the possibilities of video when it is disassociated and removed from its status as a recording medium. Instead the content is fantastical: generated from within the medium. In *The Parallel* (1988), Cox plays specifically with this contrast. As the title suggests, *The Parallel* refers to a concept of a parallel universe where things appear exactly the same with the exception of only the slightest difference. In the work, two versions of the same figure walk across a mirrored horizon line: one is below the line, upside down, while the other is above, right side up. The lower figure is seemingly a reflection of the other, but it soon becomes apparent that this is not the case when the continuity is disrupted and the figure's mirroring footsteps desynchronise. At this point, an obvious temporal and spatial separation occurs. This separation embodies the contrast between the known universe recorded by video and its semi-independent, parallel universe created in video. For Cox, video is a medium that can enjoy a limitless imagination. The majority of the characters in Cox's work are fantastical like *Lighthead*: characters created by video in video, their impossible bodies transcending the recoded image. Yet existentially, Cox's work still recognises the conflict between a celebration of the medium's unique capabilities and a resignation to its ultimate limitations. After converting the video space into an empty, black limitless void, the *Lighthead* character crashes against the edge of the monitor screen. The figure's transcendence through its metamorphic ability is curtailed by the limitations of the medium in which it exists.

Ironically as far as this essay goes, of all the works in the REWIND archive, one piece that has a particular degree of success in articulating this conflict is Mick Hartney's own work, *State of Division* (1979). It is a work that acutely balances the indifference and apathy of depression through the depiction of a figure that exists as both a human portrait and a product of the medium. In another monologue describing the medium-specific conditions of a message recorded as video, the words narrate a fundamental recognition that these specificities are not only necessary to the figure's own existence, but also represent the ultimate limitations of that existence. In sentences such as 'other people seem so colourful in comparison to me' and 'I feel grey and indistinct, just an insubstantial milky shadow from the past, left running in the future', the existential strain is positioned on video as much as the depicted figure. In an ironic sense of spectatorship, the monologue positions the figure as subject to the viewers' gaze with descriptions such as, 'It's as though there is a sheet of glass between them and me, that only works one way. They can see me, but I can't see them', before the work ultimately culminates with a lonely self-critique, that prophesises the isolation of both the

figure and of medium specific video as a whole: 'I know they'll just look at me strangely for a few minutes, and switch their attention to something else'.[15]

As these works are archived in digital form, and their contemporary exhibition appears on flat-screen monitors, while at their essence they exist as digital code rather than as an analogue signal. It is ironic that it may be only in this deterioration that we find the remnants of analogue video. In which case, we might entertain the idea that video's decay is a true specificity. Literally, this decay is somewhat unique, quite different from the artefacts of digital media. In resistance to convergence, and the assumption that digital media can replicate video aesthetically, the deterioration becomes an act of exposition in true specificity. With a subtle policy of preservation arıd not restoration, the migration of this work to digital media for the necessity of archival storage, marks not only their considered preservation, but also the preservation of their deterioration. The decay therefore reads as a true marker of video's identity as a formal medium. This is despite the assumption that digital media possess the potential for perfect replicability without decay, which would then, rather interestingly, present the possible paradox of digital media's specificity being their non-specificity. But this deterioration is also a cultural specificity. Amid rapid changes in technology, the deterioration reflects the ephemeral quality of the work, both in the time-base of the medium and its temporal existence as state of the art technology. Such an interpretation of media specificity today will continue to remind us of this existential resignation.

Notes

1. Sean Cubitt, 'Projection: Vanishing and Becoming', in Oliver Grau (ed.), *Media Art Histories* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2007), 416.
2. David Hall, 'Using Video and Video Art: Some Notes', *Video Art '78*, (Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry, 1978).
3. *David Hall, This is a Video Monitor* (1973); *This is a Television Receiver* (1976).
4. David Hall, 'Interview with David Hall by Jackie Hatfield, 9 December 2005', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/David%20Hall/DH510.pdf).
5. David Hall, 'Using Video and Video Art: Some Notes', *Video Art '78*, (Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry, 1978).
6. Mick Hartney, 'Int/ventions: Some Instances of Confrontation with British Broadcasting', in Julia Knight (ed.), *Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video Art* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1996), 46.
7. Ibid.
8. In this sense the experiments of the early video practitioners may prove a valid template for issues concerning materiality in digital video installation, particularly if its projection remains aligned with the more predictable conventions of cinema.
9. Sean Cubitt, *Videography: Video Media as Art and Culture* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1993), xii.
10. Such as *Magnet TV* (1965).
11. Chris Meigh-Andrews, 'Early Video Tapes: 1978–87', in Jackie Hatfield (ed.), *Experimental Film and Video* (Eastleigh: John Libbey Publishing, 2006), 115.
12. Hartney, 'Int/ventions', p.46.
13. David Critchley, 'Video Works 1973–1983', in Jackie Hatfield (ed.), *Experimental Film and Video* (Eastleigh: John Libbey Publishing, 2006), 107.
14. Ibid.
15. Mick Hartney, *State of Division* (1979).

Chapter 6/
Liveness, Performance and the Permanent Frame

Mike Leggett

Introduction

This chapter recalls film, video and photographic records of performance events from the 1970s, emerging today as objects of permanence: of the gestural, ephemeral and spontaneous. Does restoration of analogue media from the period into the digital domain and the reconstruction of live performance extend performances as objects of study? As objects, are the ideas of these artists compromised? Are context, place and presence central to the experience of these earlier works? What part does the discourse at the time play, when it is retrieved, relived, reframed?

These questions form the basis of extensive research by historians and indeed practice by artists. Marcel Duchamp, in making the art object *L.H.O.O.Q.* initially in 1919, made ready La Gioconda for multiple reframing of an original framing by Leonardo da Vinci of a painting referring to encounters with Lisa del Giocondo in a setting of the artist's choosing, recording, or recalling or restating the performance of that encounter. What remains in the case of both works, together with all their many reproductions, are re-enactments of states of mind and states of consciousness, of the artists' practice displayed on canvas and other surfaces, of the respondents to these objects, the audiences and the legions of interpreters.

Essentially, another question is, are time-based arts as objects of study regarded differently from the artefacts of the visual and fine arts? We are culturally familiar with the repertory of traditional time-based arts – music, dance, theatre – and the technologies developed in each case to enable their re-performance (or revival as they quaintly call it) on score, choreographic notation and playscript. Do the contemporary technologies of digital video in all its forms, including the Web and mobile devices, by appealing to spontaneity and informality,



actually encourage and provoke the reframing of the original into a new presence, thereby evoking the certainties of ceremony and redefining context within the moment of performance?

In this brief introduction to the topic I will outline three of the performance events before examining them for shifts in emphasis from the artists' original intentions and expectations. I will refer to my collaborative work with artist Ian Breakwell on the *Unword*, *Unsculpt* and *One* performance projects in the 70s, the use of moving picture technologies in their execution and the re-presentation of these works in digital media, including the contemporary format of the Digital Versatile Disc (DVD). I will consider if these documents constitute the proto-dissolution of the notions of the traditional artist as hero and if their representation in public spaces and the contemporary audience context extends or distorts the ideas and concepts of the initiators. In the guise of performer and witness to the events documented I will address the words of the art historian, Eve Kalyva: 'I want to note how documentation affects understanding the historical condition of art. By relocating photographs, texts, and performances in space and time, documentation reconfigures meaning as much as matter.'[1]

Unword

In the case of the *Unword* performance series by Ian Breakwell, the ephemeral nature of the first performance, *Unword 1*, in a space capable of accommodating no more than ten people, *required* the photographic record of the event. As a painter and collagist to that point in his career, Breakwell's milieu was that of gallerists and collectors, from whom many practitioners were retreating at the time, Breakwell included, if only to reconsider further positions from which to make a living. As Victoria Worsley has observed in an extended catalogue essay for *Unword*:

> Action-based art's transience was resistant to commercialisation but there

Fig. 1. Upper, *Unword 1*;
Lower, *Unword 2*, 16mm filmstrip (1969).

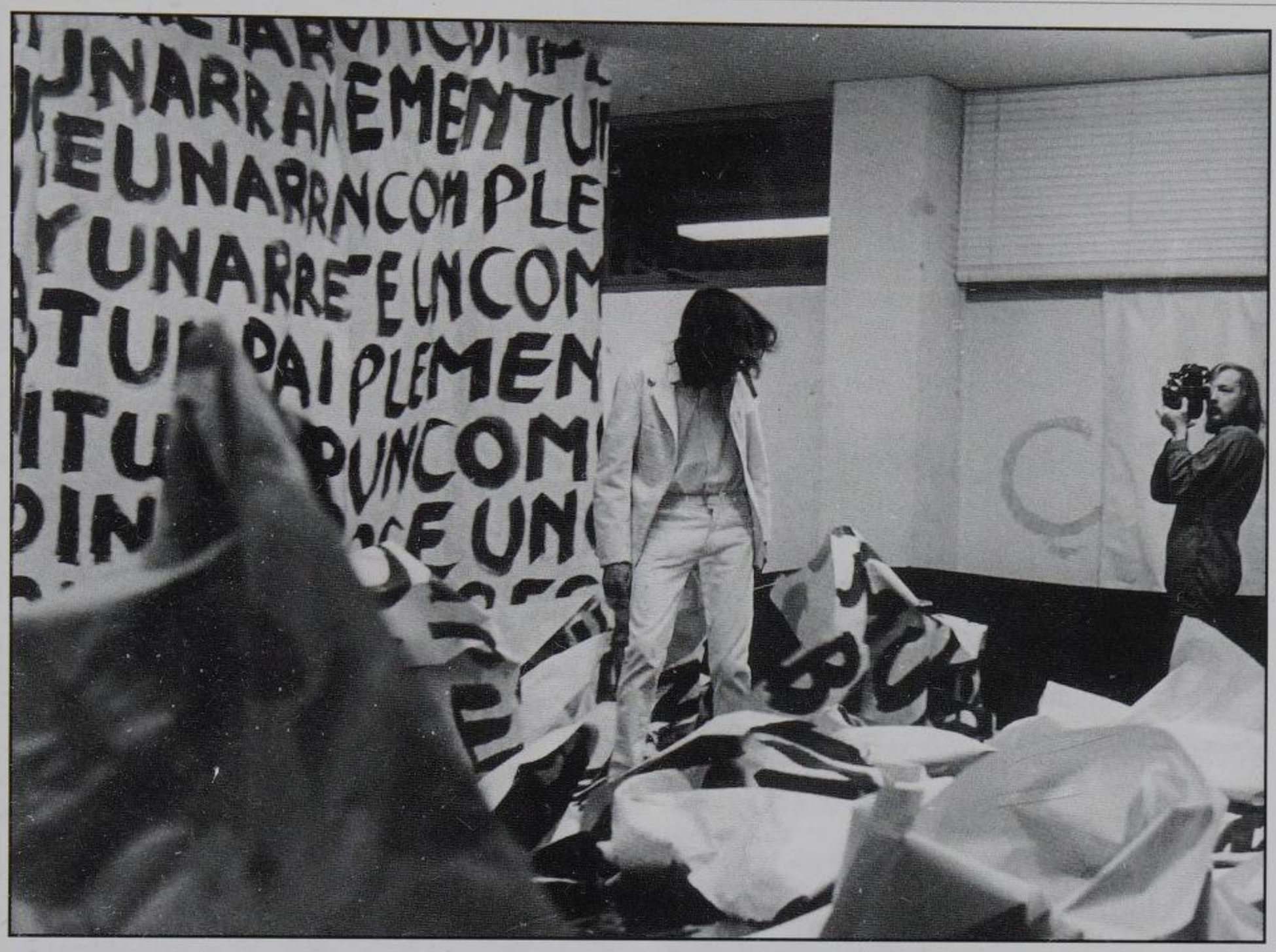
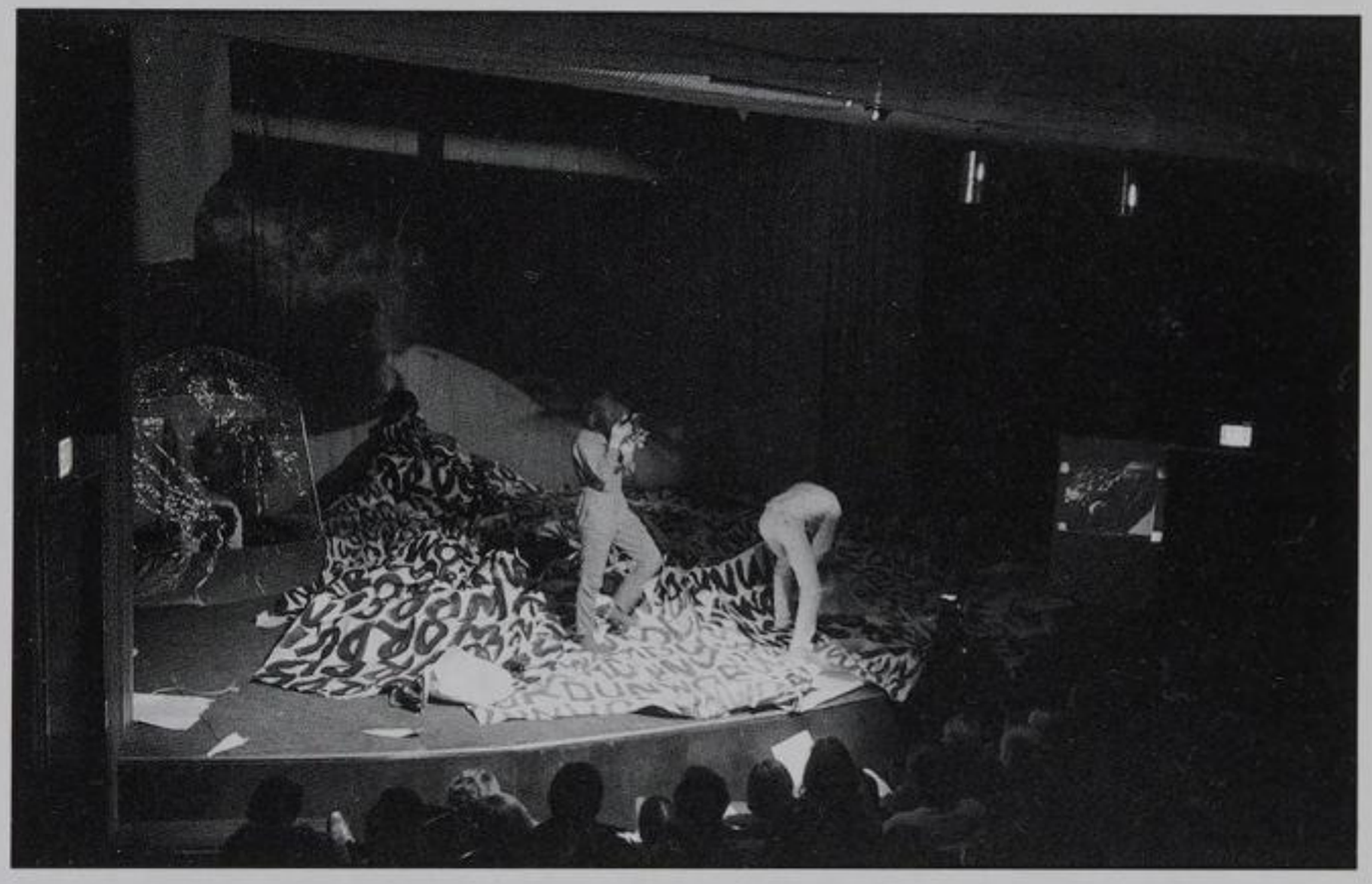


Fig. 2. Upper, the *Unword 4* Swansea performance, Breakwell (centre) and Leggett;
Lower, the *Unword 3* Bristol performance, Leggett (centre) and Breakwell; with the analysis projector and image to the right of stage (1970).

was still a need for an objectification of the process, a need to leave a trace, largely through documentation. This desire did not come from the art market (although ultimately it led to commercial exchange) but from the artists themselves.[2]

The photographs of *Unword 1* were subsequently enlarged to 1500 x 1000mm panels (Figure 1, upper), as artworks by Breakwell. As the person who took the photographs, my contribution was that of a trained photographer, with a Leica 35mm camera and wide-angle lens[3] and some experience as a 'photojournalist' or, more precisely, recorder of actuality. The presence of the photographer became embedded in subsequent renditions of the performance series, commencing at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in October 1969 (see Exhibit A, Description of the *Unword 2* performance at the ICA), when a 16mm Bolex film camera was used instead of the stills camera. The longer duration of this version of the event required more picture exposures than the thirty-six possible on a roll of 35mm film. The Bolex enabled up to 4000 individual frames to be exposed on a single 100-foot roll of film, with each frame being exposed at approximate two-



second intervals (Figure 1, lower). The series of images following laboratory processing were examined on an analysis projector, a piece of engineering equipment with which I had worked previously.[4] Subsequent performances included a borrowed analysis projector for screening the results at subsequent performances (in Swansea and Bristol in 1970), the projector running at two frames per second, in the front and to one side of the performance area (Figure 2, lower). The Photographer, as named performer, thus generated a link as documenter between each of the perform-

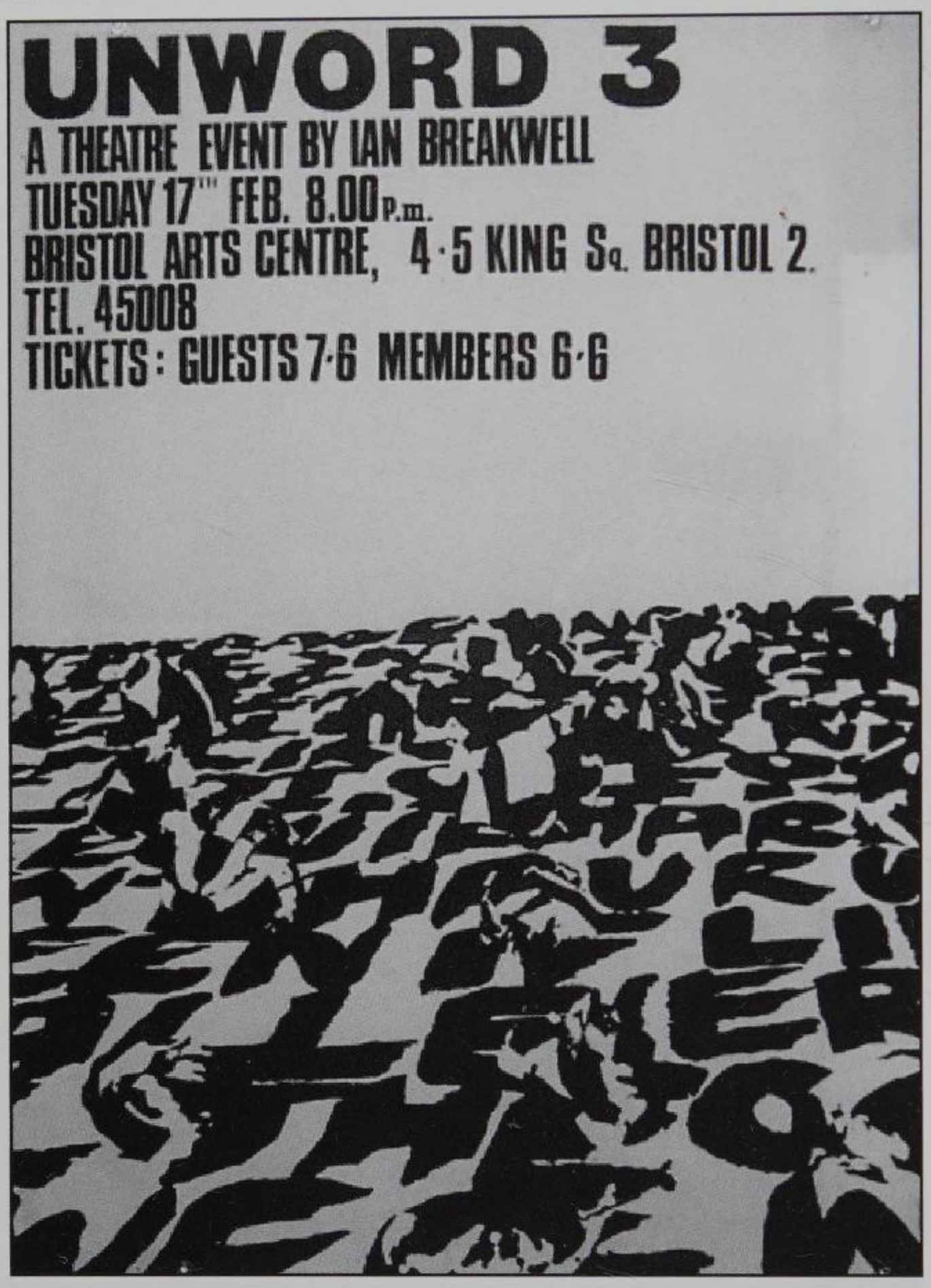


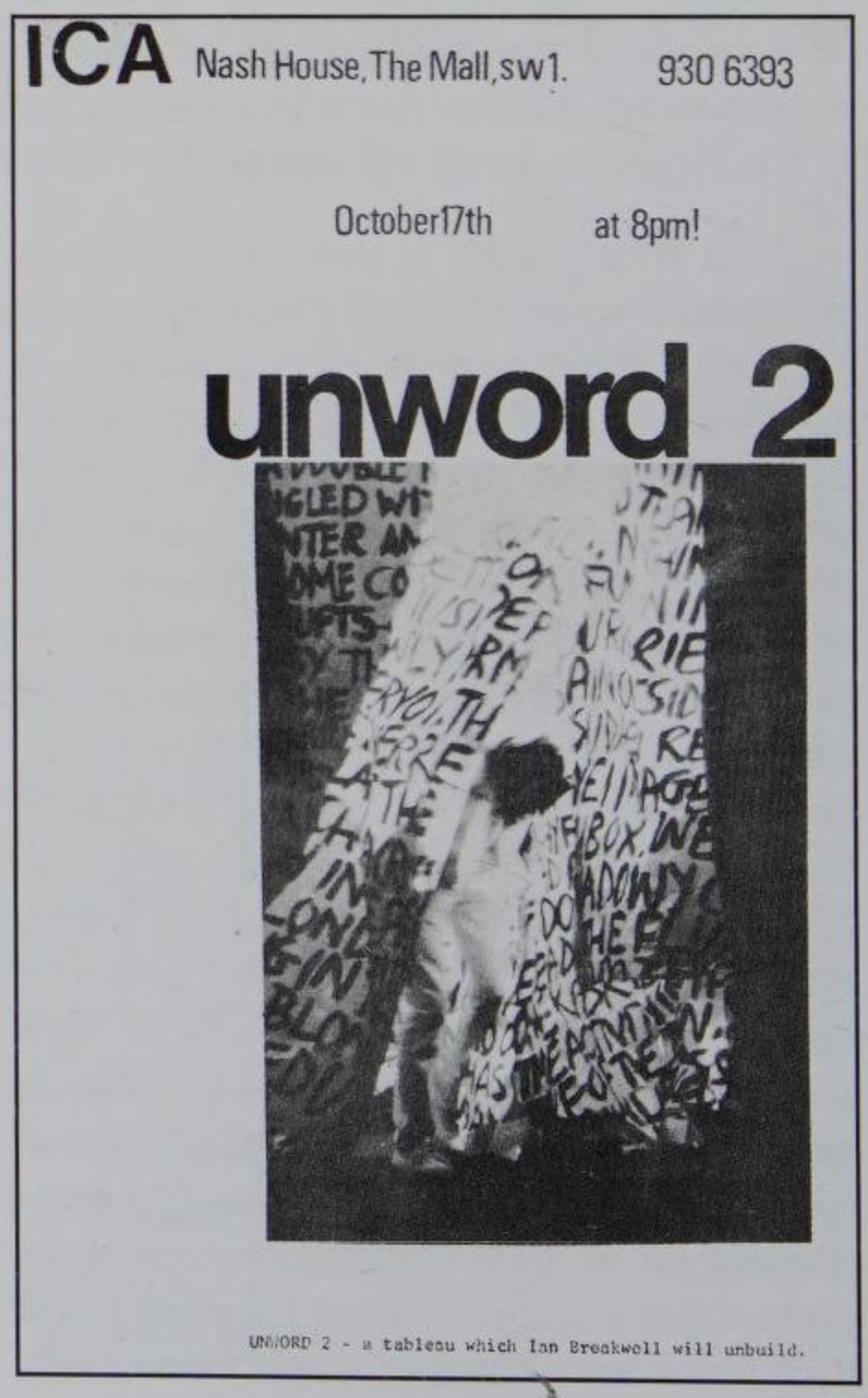
Fig. 3. *Unword* publicity – Left, silk-screened poster by Gerald Buchanan (80 cm x 50 cm); Right, A4 flyer, Mike Leggett Collection.

ances, with both the act of recording and representation present in each of the two latter versions of the event.

Later, after the series had come to an end, the footage was edited to 'recreate' a filmic version of events that had occurred throughout the series to an approximate equivalent duration. The editing strategy was to follow documentary filmmaking convention and maintain a sense of continuity between one series of frames captured at one performance and another group of frames from another performance.[5] By incorporating different features from the performances the intention was to relate a narrative approximating to the events witnessed by the audiences, in the tradition of documentary filmmaking.

The final print was projected, again using the analysis projector, with the sound prepared from the various tapes used in the series, playing from a quarter-inch spool-to-spool tape recorder. Because of the scarcity of the analysis projector and our inability to source one on demand, the film was publically screened once or twice before being stored away.[6]

In 2003 the footage was telecine-transferred to digital video and the process of restoring the original commenced using a non-linear editing software application.[7] Following capture from the tape to the computer hard disc the footage was initially 'stretched' on the editing timeline to slow movement down from twenty-five frames per second to the two frames per second of the original. The digitised quarter-inch sound tape was imported to the editing application and added to the picture track. A few adjustments were made to the sound track and to shots that were too bright or too dark, before the whole project was exported back to digital videotape. Digital versions of *Unword* were made from this for presentation exclusively as a large-screen installation, in an edition of two plus two artists' proofs, represented by Breakwell's gallerist, Anthony Reynolds Gallery.[8]



Unsculpt

As will be discussed in more detail later, *Unword*'s three versions were presented to audiences who *observed* the unfolding events.[9] In the *Unsculpt* event, audience agency was extended from observation to *participation*, with the construct of the gallery being switched from repose to performance.

On a February night in 1970, people began to assemble in the exhibition area of the New Arts Lab in Robert Street, just off Euston Road in Central London.

> At 8.00 p.m. on Saturday 28 February 1970 the exhibition commenced with a retrospective viewing of three large pieces of sculpture made by John Hilliard. At 8.30 p.m. Hilliard took a microphone and announced that there would now, as advertised, be a change of work on display, the past work to be replaced by new work built on the spot. Before this happened, however, the work in the gallery would be offered for sale, to quickly complete the process of making/displaying/selling that is assumed of work of this kind. As each of the pieces came up for sale, Ian Breakwell and two assistants[10] began to wrap or shroud them in paper covered with the word UNSCULPT, effecting a visual transformation of the exhibits. This procedure being complete, and no one having offered to purchase any of the three pieces, Breakwell, Hilliard and the two assistants, armed with sledgehammer, axe, hammer and spanner, began to demolish/dismantle the sculpture and to dispose of the remains into a rubbish 'skip' outside the gallery, thus clearing the space for the erection of the first new work.[11]

The events that were documented with stills and film camera together with the new media of the day, the video image, demolished traditions of both object trading and performance watching. Following Hilliard's carefully

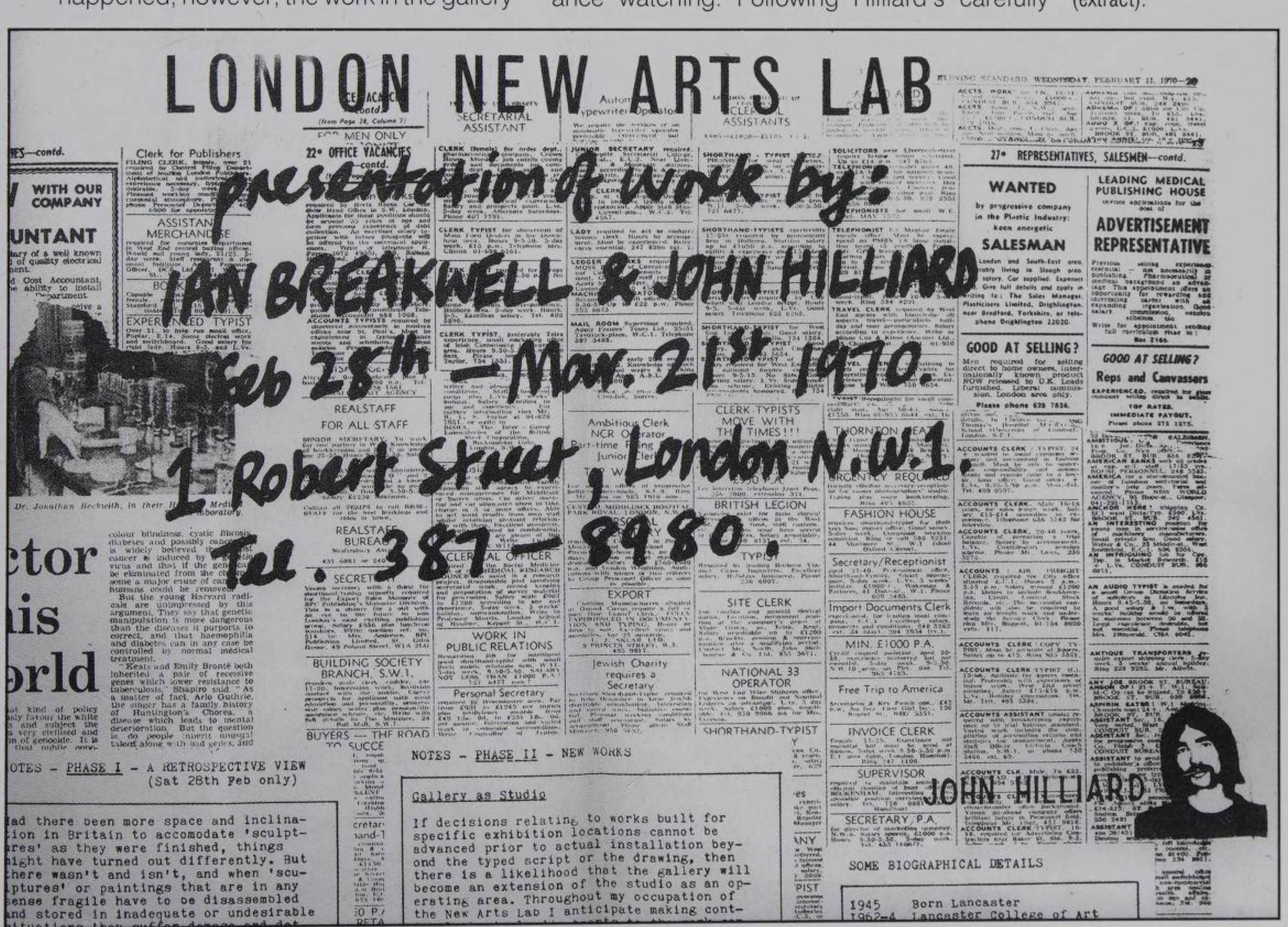


Fig. 4. *Unsculpt* flyer (extract).

prepared statement in offering the works on display for sale,[12] and Breakwell's entry with his assistants in white coats to drape the artworks with word sheets, all of which was observed with a private-view hushed reverence, the destruction began. Initially this was carried out by the performers, but quite quickly as the physical effort became apparent, members of the audience began to help out. The development of agency within the audience will also be discussed later.

A few days later a sound recording was made with Breakwell, introduced by Leggett as an A.R.T. Newsreel.[13] The 16mm film documentation had a limited exhibition life as there was only about two minutes of material available, but screened together with the photographs gathered by two or three photographers present,[14] gave a good sense of the event's process for the benefit of students and others attending any of Breakwell's subsequent talks.

In 2004 following the restoration of the *Unword* film to digital video, work commenced on the *Unsculpt* materials. As the event had followed a pre-determined sequence of actions not fully documented in the film, my proposal to construct a collage that synthesised all the extant elements was accepted by Breakwell. Hilliard too agreed, also providing a contemporary recording of the statement he had used on the night.

With the advent of the wide-screen video format, the decision to work with a 16:9 ratio frame gave greater flexibility for the re-presentation of the visual material. The editing followed the sequence of actions comprising the event using visual evidence overlapping and layering on the screen, still photographs in movement within the frame and moving frames of film slowed down or speeded up. The final eight-minute digital film commences and ends with a sequence of stills of the exhibition component, prior to and following the event performance itself.

One

10 February 1971 marked the first year of operation of the Angela Flowers Gallery in Lisle Street, Soho, in Central London, which was in the process of moving to new premises. The occasion was marked with a performance event by one of the gallery's artists, Ian Breakwell. On the second floor of the building, a group of labourers shovelled earth over the course of an 'eight-hour day', each man continuously shovelling onto the adjacent man's mound of earth. Visitors and well-wishers came and went.

At street level in the window of the adjacent business was a television monitor relaying an image of the events on the floor above, captured by a video camera mounted in the corner of the ceiling. The image was indistinct but conveyed a sense of removed activity (Figure 5).

Meanwhile in every television shop window in the district, the BBC was relaying live footage of the activities of astronauts on the moon. By a curious coincidence, the Apollo 14 astronauts were shovelling rock samples on the surface of the moon whilst Breakwell's labourers were shovelling sodden lumps of mud on the floor of the Flowers Gallery. Gradually through the course of the day, as the all-white gallery space was reduced to a sea of mud, the video images relayed from each event became nearly indistinguishable from one another (Figure 5, right).

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) loaned from the Centre for Advanced Television Studies (CATS) had made possible the placing of a monitor in a West End street with an image on its face that had not been pre-processed by an entity like NASA or the BBC. It was noted at the time that the action effectively challenged the monopolist situation of broadcast television, additionally making a mockery of one of its more extravagant and nauseous spectacles.[15] A video recorder was not available to tape the event but 16mm film was shot throughout the day and later assembled with a soundtrack into a twelve-minute version[16] projected the following year at the new gallery premises. A year later a proposal by the Arts Council of Great Britain to distribute the film foundered over the cost of making a print.[17]

Following the film's re-emergence in 2002, a telecine transfer to digital video enabled the digital reconstruction to be completed, with the removal of some later shots and a soundtrack completely reconstructed from most of the

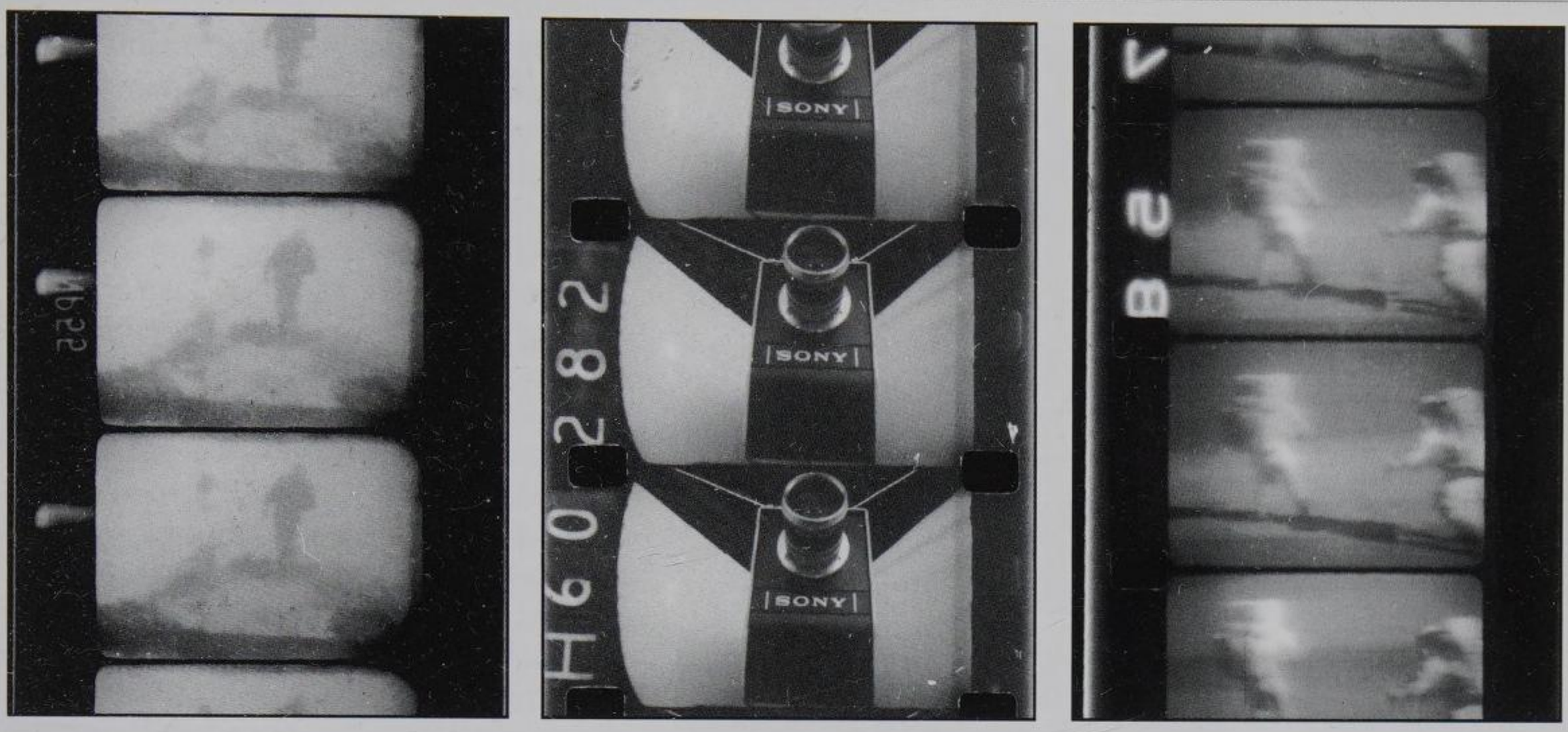


Fig. 5. *One* film strips – left, the monitor viewed from the street of the image from the video camera (centre) suspended in the gallery ceiling; right, Apollo mission images.

original compcnents, using the by now barely audible original track as a guide.

Discussion

Understanding the 'historical condition'[18] of Breakwell's performance art from the late 60s to early 70s period, through documentation and the replaying of documents for contemporary audiences, will now be discussed.

Collaboration with other artists and volunteers was key to the development of Breakwell's performance work. My collaborations with Breakwell began in Bristol, where we had first met in 1966, and emerged from conversations conducted over periods of months leading to publically presented work, including *Buffet Car News*, *Fading Menu* and several exhibitions.[19] The first substantial jointly made work, the 16mm film *Sheet* (1970) commenced in 1969.[20] At weekends and holidays we would depart to a chosen location with a three-metre-square linen sheet, Bolex and tripod and shoot twenty seconds or so of the sheet *in situ*, arranged by Breakwell and shot by myself. It was a performance based on nuanced gesture and a consensual approach to an emerging ontology of motion picture image-making that, like the later editing process, developed as the material was projected and reviewed over the period of the film's making.

The three event performances already outlined, however, had been preconceived and planned, with the ordering of the changes, tempos and durations carefully explained to the collaborating performers. There were sketches and words to aid in establishing the framework within which performers worked. The means of documenting the events, given the technology available to the artists both at the time and subsequently,[21] are core to an understanding of the reception of the artwork by audiences.

> Breakwell's matter-of-fact description of UNWORD demonstrates his highly rational and calculated approach to a performance based on the principle of transformation through destruction. The multi-media absurd event was 'a collage of activity extending through any length of time' as part of an 'event-process'.[22]

Breakwell's intention extended beyond the performances themselves and the residual images on print and film. It included the distribution to audience members and participants of a questionnaire in which he affirmed:

> The performance is but one stage in the event-process, a process encompassing gradual conception of idea/format, realisation of that conception through performance, and progression from there through documentation (e.g. photographs, photo-enlargements and film). I would like to develop this documentation process by collecting

reactions to the UNWORD series both by participants and witnesses.[23]

Breakwell posed four questions, which included the challenging, 'What was *Unword* about?' My responses to the questionnaire ran to four pages mixing description of each event with nuanced responses, including progression of the work and its documentation during development.[24]

The digital version of *Unword*, at this point in time (2010), can be screened at dimensions scaleable according to the need, from centimetres to several metres. The question can now be asked, as Kalyva has noted:

> ... is there a difference, and if so what is the difference, between viewing a performance and viewing its recording? Surely there is the factor of threat and keeping it under check, for presumably ... one can interfere with a performance; or to put it another way, the whole point of a performance is this conditional interaction.[25]

Conditional interaction refers to the physical distance between the point of consumption and the place of product(ion). The invisible fourth wall in theatre or cinema is the membrane through which the product is delivered, regardless of the state, or frame of mind, of the audience. The agency of each member of an audience is restricted – by custom – to removing oneself from the auditorium. The conditions for delivering performance-based art in the broadest cultural sense are similar to the conditions prevalent for other forms of consumption in the late-capitalist context: producers meet consumers' demands and expectations but on condition the consumer adopts the artist's *règle du jeu*. The arrangement is symbiotic, as by tradition it prevents confusion between the object and the context in which exchange takes place.

In the *Unword* series, the rules met the demand for events and sounds that departed from traditions of narrative, whilst a framing distance would be maintained by the physical delineation of the space. In other words, the audience would be spectators (of a spectacle) and not participants.[26] The film, and later digital documentation, as artworks in their own right, similarly maintain a distancing frame, the membrane of the screen. With the liveness and the presence of the performer(s) removed, the condition of interaction changes the terms of individual agency: the screened image can be approached and appropriated into the physical space of the viewer. This in itself is dependent on varying degrees of authority for such physical interaction, right up to the most authorative qualifying agency, that of ownership. The assumption is that the gallerist, the collector and the gallery visitor are able to encounter the work as the artist(s) intended, though agency of action has moved from the performer to the audience (or to the owner, with the ultimate agency of the destruction of the artwork.) The modality of encounter switches from one tradition to another, from that of theatre and cinema, where agency is limited, to that of the gallery, where agency in the physical act of viewing is essential. As Kalyva observes: 'This act exposes the limits of social constructs such as subject and object, galleries and spectators, not at the level of the *effect*, but of the mechanisms that create, enable, and sustain such constructs'.[27]

The distinct separation between performers and audience in *Unword*, with the audience seated or corralled at one end of the space, provided a 'closed studio' situation within which the Photographer could record the progress of each performance with the film camera. The concurrence of the process of both recording and re-presenting the events was echoed in another later performance, *The Institution*, in which a video camera linked to a monitor was employed to similar effect.[28]

Like the formality of the event itself, the subsequent editing of the three film records maintained the separation between the activity of performing and the activity of viewing the performance. The presence of an audience at each event is never visible on film, but neither too is that of the Photographer, the one performer who was visible to the audience for the entire duration of the piece. The images and sounds encountered in the *Unword* digital document, are related to each of the performances but they are not *of* the performances. Some associations can be drawn here with speech acts and the performative and 'Bakhtin's notion of dialogue ... where the condi-

tions of communication and the choices of speakers depend on what has already been said, the conditions of the conversation (situation, purpose, etc.) and the framework within which the speaker thinks he or she will be understood'.[29] This echoes some of Wittgenstein's 'language games' where 'the utterance cannot be separated from the speaker, or from the systems of meaning in which speaker and hearer are enmeshed'.[30] (This alternative description of the convergence of audience with performers also conjures the image of Breakwell enmeshed and wrestling with the word sheets used in the event, before their disposal.)

The audience entering the performance space anticipated an experience based not only on transgression of the norms of theatre but also on the novelty of someone known to be a visual artist working in a theatrical context. Similarly, visitors to a sculpture collection at the Henry Moore Institute do not expect to encounter the two-dimensional projected image of *Unword*, in a space reserved for three-dimensional objects. But nonetheless what is quickly understood is the relationship between the spatiality of their act of viewing – screen to viewer - and the hybrid spatiality of the images and sounds they observe. This 'social act of communication as participation and selection'[31] and the performative occurs through both the advance of motion picture technologies – in this case digital video and the video projector – and the willingness of the artists, Breakwell and Leggett, to experiment with the possibilities thereby afforded. The exhibiting institution both facilitates and validates the artwork, now independent of the original *Unword* series and able to become, as portable and reproducible media, an object of study. The art dealer is thereby able to exploit the artwork as an object of monetary worth, essential to the economics of collecting, the trading of rare objects and the vagaries of connoisseurship from which the benefits of income to the artists cannot be denied.

The placing of the audience in the two versions of *Unsculpt* – the performance and the digital video projection – advance the notion of individual agency as an important component of meaning being made from the experience of either form. As with *Unword*, planning and communication with performers and the tempo and cueing of the stages, of entries and exits, was essential.

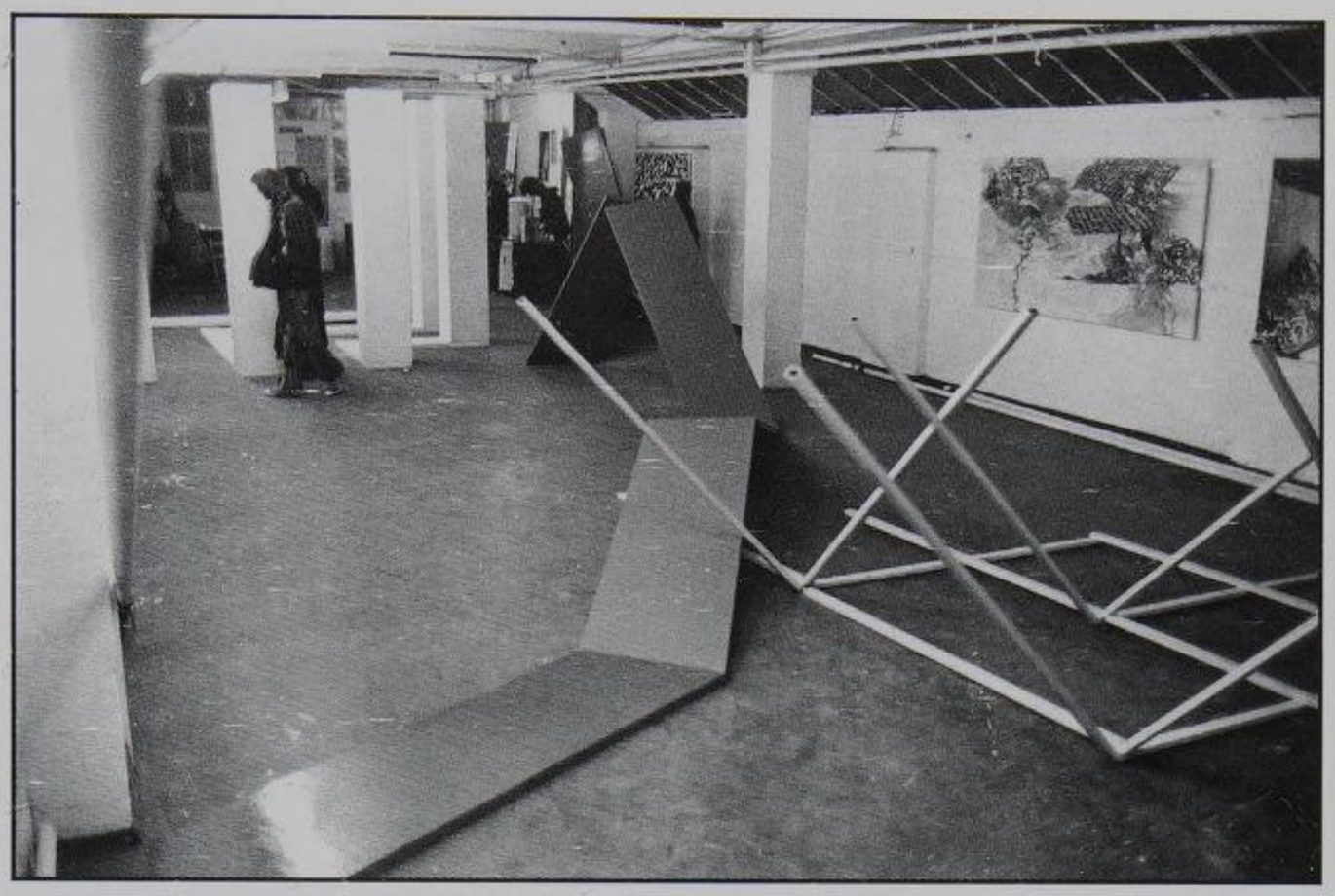


Fig. 6. First arrivals at the *Unsculpt* opening, London New Arts Lab, ground floor gallery / performance space, viewed towards the street. Breakwell's prints on the walls.

The intervention Hilliard and Breakwell were about to make with *Unsculpt* relied initially on establishing the audience in, for most of them, the familiar space of an art gallery vernissage. The A3 publicity flyer circulating announced 'a presentation of work' by the two artists with the words 'action space' underlined in Hilliard's 'Notes', contained on a panel in the centre of the sheet. The 'Notes' he paraphrased to begin the proceedings using a microphone and public address system, his image appearing on a video monitor to his left side (the new media technology of the period). Though sound was not recorded, the image and the events that followed were recorded to videotape, adding to the experiences of the audience a novel and quite different way of *becoming* a part of the artwork. As the video camera panned around the room, images of both the performer and audience members were linked together within the unifying frame. The familiar membrane between the televisual subject and audience dissolved as the camera continued to relay images throughout the ensuing evening.

The entrance of the three other performers (Breakwell, Deacon and Rice) had the effect of clearing away the audience from around the pieces of sculpture amongst which the crowd were standing as Hilliard spoke. Covering the objects with the *Unsculpt* word sheets (Figure 7) took some ten-to-fifteen minutes, the chatter from the crowd increasing, only ceasing at the point the first sledgehammer began to demol-

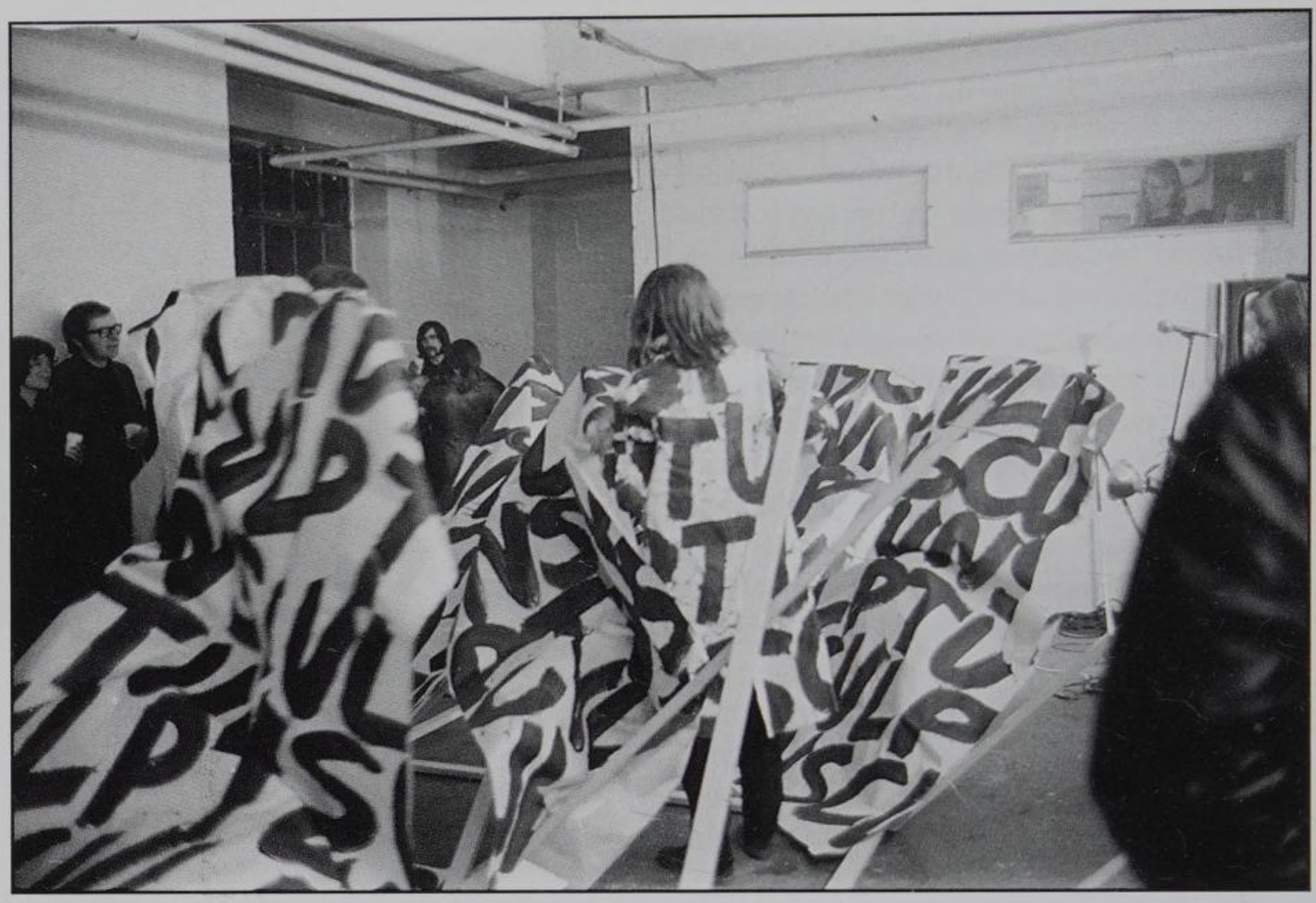


Fig. 7. Breakwell shrouds the sculpture with *Unsculpt* word sheets, Hilliard in background, view towards the cinema projection box.

ish the covered objects. But within minutes the physical effort of smashing wood and steel were taking a toll on the performers and individuals in the crowd from both genders began to provide them with respite (Figure 8). This was encouraged by several factors emerging as events progressed: the close proximity of performers and audience, due to the absence of a clear 'stage' area; the images on the video monitor dissolving the membrane between the two designated groupings; and even the coldness of the winter night in an unheated building encouraging people to keep moving about and, in some cases, physically participate.

As the action began to draw to a close, with the debris being shifted to the skip outside in the street, so the crowd returned to the edges of the space to allow the new works, already heralded by Hilliard in the poster and during his speech, to be built. As the scaffolding poles were being bolted together and taking shape across the space, many gathered around the monitor to watch the playback from the videotape recording of the earlier events. Participation with and reflection upon the evening's activities by the viewers of the video, as part of an over-arching notion of performance, moved back and forth between the edges and centre(s) of the stage. Now events were moving toward the new work, establishing a fresh set of relationships between components and the site in which they were located. The proposition emerging was that art-making was moving away from the perfection of form of three-dimensional objects towards provisional and ephemeral visual concepts that foregrounded the presence of the individual within a place and encouraging physical interaction of the audience with(in) the artwork.

As Hilliard had determined at the planning stages in defining what the New Works were to be:

> The 'object' is a kind a matrix, an intermediate stage between my 'performance' in the gallery and the resultant 'performance' of the spectators ... a formalised expression of my response to the environment resolved as participatory structures.[32]

The events that Breakwell had planned had brought an altogether different expression of how the object was to be regarded. The placing of the audience was anticipated not only in the physical arrangement of spaces for the evening and the events that were to occur but also through the organisation of image-makers, filmmaker and photographers, for the

subsequent re-enactment through technology, of the transgressing *Unsculpt* events.

The realisation that images and speech can be placed in contexts productive for the making of knowledge has recently been described by Kalyva:

> Understanding speech as an act can help us understand the *conditions* of the social creation of meaning and the *assumptions* we make in the process. Confronted with a polarised moral judgement of art between truth and entertainment, the work may risk its own presence ... .[33]

The risk for Breakwell was worth taking. Groups of art students from this point on would see the images as part of Breakwell's program and practice of changing attitudes through the application of humour, irony and mockery of visual art institutions intent upon establishing good taste and orders of natural progression. Kalyva succinctly concludes:

> By manipulating the authority of institutional discourse, and by inverting the temporal relation between presence and absence, acceptance and censorship, the act of eating one's words and disappearing one's work suspends the subject forever: the subject of the artist, and of the viewing subject of the spectator and of art.[34]

The inversions implied in the event produced curious resonances in the infamous *Crashed Cars* exhibition that followed in the IRAT gallery space during April, mounted by the writer and celebrity J.G. Ballard. Ballard records his incredulity at the smashed wrecks he had towed into the space being vandalised during the following weeks by visitors.

> What he underestimated was the force of the reaction and the desire on the part of some visitors to continue with the process of destruction and desecration of the cars ... [confirming] Ballard's thesis that social relations between individuals were now increasingly complicated by our relationship with what he termed the 'technological landscape'.[35]

Breakwell and Hilliard's provocations of passive gallery goers had clearly encouraged



Fig. 8. *Unsculpt*, the destruction in full swing, the author in foreground with 16mm Bolex film camera.

visitors to the New Arts Lab to participate in what they discovered, though the main complication in the landscape presented to regular users of the Lab in Ballard's show was a pile of stinking cars virtually blocking access to the working areas.[36]

The shift of all the extant *Unsculpt* material to digital video in 2004 – the videotape made on the night was lost, being recycled soon after the event[37] – enabled an interactive format to be designed, thus introducing further and unanticipated levels of performance participation for the viewing subject. An introductory menu (Figure 9) offers several options: to see and hear the eight-minute version, compiling film, photographs and sound in 16:9 aspect (2004), with the additional option of being able to 'skip' through to each of the sections (chapters) of the event; or to see the original 16mm film at twenty-four frames per second in 4:3 aspect; to see the 16mm film slowed by forty per cent to approximately ten frames per second; to see a 'slide show' of the original photographs and at the same time hear the complete unedited twelve-minute recording made in 1970 (see Exhibit B: The *Unsculpt* DVD Menu).

The digital video restoration and reconstruction of the *One* event film similarly produced a 'matrix' of objects, relayed by media formats over space and time, as recordings that enable a different condition of interaction and participation within the events of the day. For the contemporary audience interaction with the digital video is limited to selecting the format and size of the screen the work is viewed on, a

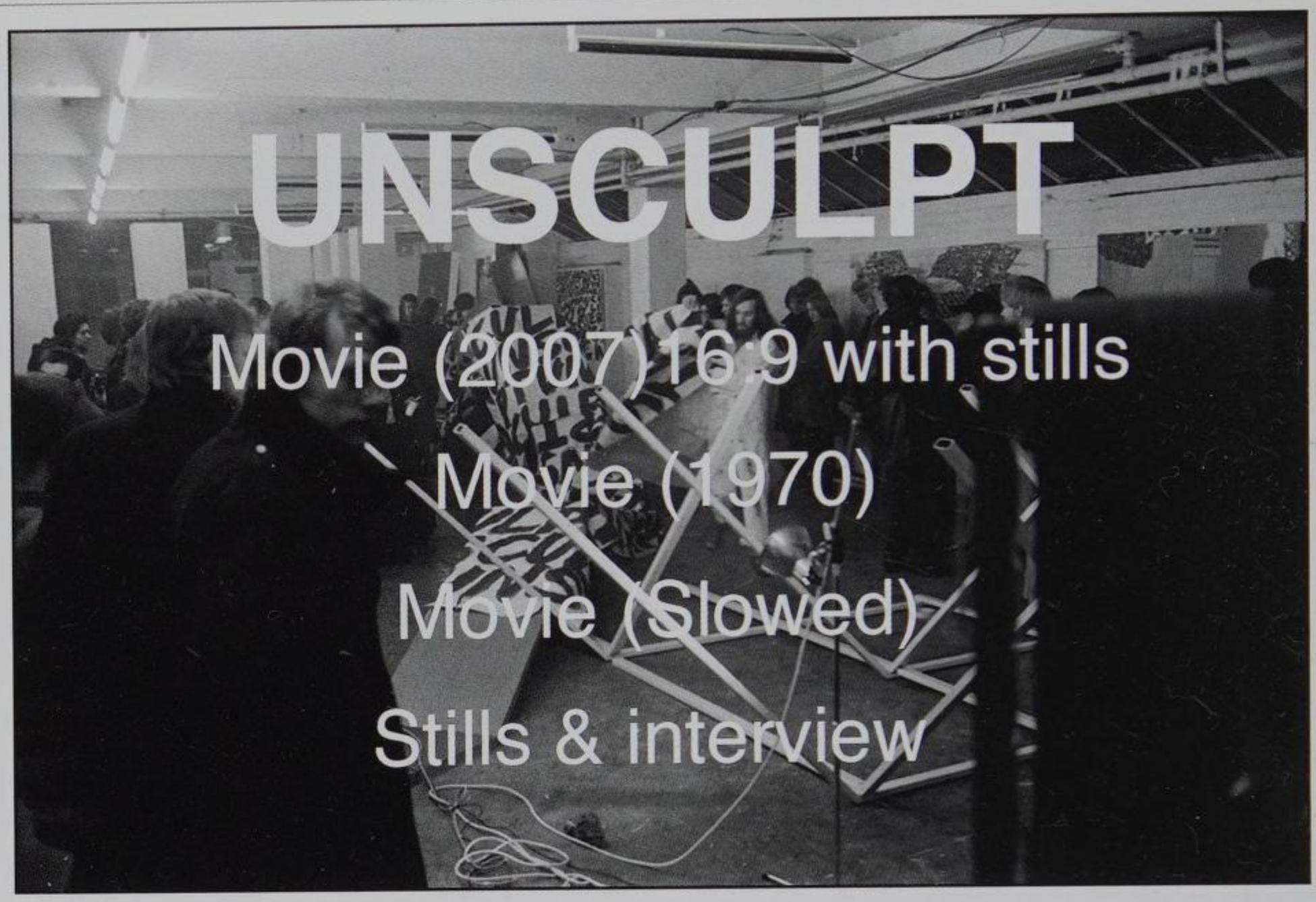


Fig. 9. The *Unsculpt* DVD with four menu options superimposed over an image of the shrouding of the work, in the foreground right, the video monitor edge.

significant factor in the post-reception of the artwork. In such circumstances, where the screen is encountered during the playing of the digital video, echoes the 'conditional interaction' of the original event, where the electronic connection between activity in the gallery and images on the monitor at street level create associations with the Apollo images on the television sets in the neighbouring streets. As Duncan White has subsequently observed, the aesthetics of expanded cinema, a developing mode of practice amongst filmmakers at the time, in deliberately separating the material of media images and their production as part of the performance and audience experience, found new spaces in the streets of London.

> In many ways, *One* ... acts as an Expanded Cinema document. Gallery, video, film and performance meet within a context of cinematic production – as a socially codified set of experiences. The earth-bound transmission/production of the image is juxtaposed with the aura of heavenly (satellite) broadcasting and space travel. Again the way in which a form of reception gathers 'distances into itself in order to redistribute them according to its own program' becomes the material of the live viewing and its recording; the temporal and spatial arrangements built into the conditions of media reception again act as the material of a practice that might be associated with Expanded Cinema.[38]

One, an 'object as a matrix', initiated as a performance, continued to develop during the day itself, and subsequently through the following years. The celebratory birthday event was tinged with irony, in which useless activity performed by labourers ended in cake-eating and champagne, involving the traditionally bizarre mix of rich and poor, collectors and artists, and terminating with the destruction of the floor and the exit of the gallery owner to new premises. A year later, a screening at the new Angela Flowers Gallery of the just completed 16mm film version occurred.[39] In this part of the matrix, moonshot images[40] had been added to the footage shot the year before, together with shots gathered using the analysis projector as a performance tool. In a darkened room, the projector throws the image onto a back-projection screen like a crude optical printer.[41] The screen and the projector are observed being operated by an unseen hand, the filmmaker in the act of manipulating the appearance of the images; the sequences of the Moon walkers and those of the labouring shovellers; the edges of the image and the horizon line on the

Moon; the candles at the birthday and the lamp in the projector. The extension of performance as filmic intervention included spoken reflections on the abstracted nature and ambiguities of the visual record that were themselves lost from the magnetic stripe, of which no duplicate or master was made.[42]

The restoration process continued the performance through to re-establishing a document for the present times, employing the affordances of digital technology. This included improving the appearance of many shots, being able to freeze-frame others to work together with the Breakwell voiceover, some parts of which were re-recorded by Breakwell in London. A reworking of the later sections were in response to the fact that the reflective words had been lost to electro-magnetic decay; beyond imagining what had been said, it was decided it was better to restore what was clearly evident. The record – the completed DVD – was premiered again at the Angela Flowers Gallery in 2004 and then, together with the digital transfer from the original faded 16mm film, a tape and DVD were lodged with Lux and the British Film and Video Artists' Study Collection for subsequent hire or study.

Conclusion

The 'conditional interaction' described by Kalyva identifies the position of the observer and the limits of their participation within the ceremonies of cultural activity. The idea of 'situated action'[43] arising from Heidegger's *dasein*, of *being* (there, in the moment), are all useful in understanding how the event, whether formalised or quotidian, is more often than not intuitively framed by the participant who is in the process of sharing events as they happen. This is especially true for those events encountered in a cultural, rather than say industrial or commercial, precinct. Provisional reasoning, responses or interaction provide a context for understanding what is happening. As two passers-by to the window of Angela Flowers Gallery were heard to say to one another when inspecting the image on the monitor face: '*Es ist der Mond*' (It's the Moon), to which the other replied, '*Nein, es ist Kunst*' (No, it's art).

Conditional interaction applies differently upon encountering the restoration of analogue media objects into the digital domain. Agency operates not only the machine delivering the sound and images, but also allows options for the scale, position and surrounding context for the screen itself. As objects of study, the ideas of the artists are compromised no more than comment and discussion following the original, live performance. The context, place and presence central to the experience of the earlier versions, come to be replaced by the conditions of interaction proposed by the existence of the document (the documentary) for study. Discourse from the time of the performances to the present, plays out through different channels – the liner notes essay for DVD, in exhibition catalogues, in books and through online resources, where it is retrieved, relived, reframed.

The contemporary technologies of digital video in all its forms – in galleries, on the Web, on mobile devices – in appealing to spontaneity and informality, encourages and provokes the reframing of the original event into a new presence. This extends the impetus initiated by the performers of a previous time, bringing about the certainty of ceremony and redefining context within the moment of performance.

In 1970 Breakwell posed four questions included the challenging, 'What was *Unword* about?' My part response, was that it was 'about how you can start at one point and keep working it until you've discovered a vanishing point.'[44] Back then it was impossible to predict that in 2010, with the ever-expanding affordances for descriptions of media and performance, the vanishing point would become a task of continuous exploration.

Acknowledgement: Ian Breakwell's creative and fraternal presence remains sorely missed and my appreciation is extended to his partner, Felicity Sparrow, for her comments. The Estate of Ian Breakwell is represented by Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London. With thanks to John Hilliard for his cooperation during the Unsculpt restoration, and to Eve Kalyva for stimulating correspondence during the preparation of this chapter.

Exhibit A: Description of the *Unword 2* performance at the Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA) on 17 October 1969 (Ian Breakwell, c. 1969)

... The audience then passed through to the performance area to find it filled with seemingly impenetrable sheets of paper stretching from ceiling to floor (15 feet high) and covered with words (random extracts from Ian Breakwell's prose texts). (Figure 1.)

Two films were projected onto the front wall of words. The first film lasted three minutes and was called 'Language Lesson'; the second film, also lasting three minutes was called 'Bio-Mechanic Man'. A third film was then projected onto the sheets of words, a film demonstrating how to shear sheep; simultaneously a tape-recording of eye-sign test dialogue began to play. Both tape and film continued throughout the subsequent action.

During the subsequent action a film of an aero-engine destroying itself was run continuously onto a side wall in forward then in reverse, and gradually the film itself was physically destroyed by the projectionist.

Five minutes after the beginning of the tape and film, Breakwell appeared from out of the forest of words and slowly began to bite at the sheets and to tear down the sheets of words with his teeth. As he tore down a layer of words another would be revealed, until eventually he reached the back wall of the room, and the removal of the last sheets of words revealed a seated girl, her body completely enclosed in a white straightjacket. On the front of the straightjacket were stapled a dress, stockings and shoes in the appropriate places; a hat was on her head. Her face remained expressionless.

The projected film-image, which had inevitably increased in size as each layer of word-sheets was removed, now covered the area of the back wall, which included the seated girl.

Breakwell pulled off the clothes, which were fastened to the girl's straightjacket. He nailed the clothes and hat in the outline of a figure onto the wall beside the seated girl. He then took the torn sheets of words, which covered the floor and stapled them to each other and to the girl's straightjacket until the girl and the floor area were covered with words in a kind of robe which stretched to the feet of the audience.

Breakwell exited and John Hilliard entered wearing a polythene suit and carrying a crop-sprayer filled with black paint on his back; he sprayed the complete word-robe.[45]

Exhibit B: The *Unsculpt* DVD Menu

This DVD, made in 2007, brings together those materials and uses four means of presentation:

1. Digital video composite in 16:9 format, with 16mm movie and stills made during the event at the Institute for Research in Art and Technology, (IRAT, or the new London Arts Lab) in February 1970 including an interview with Ian Breakwell made shortly after the event and the statement spoken by John Hilliard during the event, re-recorded by Hilliard in 2007. This digital video edited version brings together all the material in about the sequence it originally occurred, with the film 'slowed down' in several sections.

   The material is also shown as individual components:

2. Movie (1970) running at 25 frames per second (fps) with a duration of 1m 25s.

   The original 16mm footage was a 'roll end' of less than 100 feet in length, all that could be afforded at the time. The light in the gallery was also at a low level and in order to improve the exposure, the camera was run at the lower speed (12 fps) that also had the benefit of extending the duration of available film.

3. Movie (1970) showing at 10 fps with a duration of 3m 20s.

   As most of the shot lengths were very brief, for reasons given above, this version is the same as at 2, slowed by about forty per cent to enable the movie to be viewed in more detail. (Option: spoken sound commentary by Mike Leggett in 2008,

identifying people visible, with reflections and comment on the occasion.)

4. Stills and Interviews, including all the still photographs extent at the time of the 2007 reconstruction, shown as a slide show, together with the unedited interview made with Ian Breakwell by Mike Leggett shortly after the event. (12 mins)

Notes

1. Eve Kalyva, 'Textual Counterparts: A Performative Beyond Visual Attention?', *Intersections 35th Annual Conference*, Association of Art Historians, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, 2–4 April 2009, p. 13.
2. Victoria Worsley, 'Ian Breakwell's UNWORD' (exhibition catalogue), Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2005.
3. A Leica M2 with 35mm lens and 400 ASA film was used at the Compendium bookshop in Camden Town, London.
4. The Spectro analysis projector was designed for the scientific analysis of usually slow-motion film produced by high speed filming of engineering events. One of the films projected on the word sheets was such a film, showing the slow-motion destruction of an Olympus jet engine compressor under test during development at the Bristol-Siddeley factory where Leggett worked from 1966 to 1968. The projector was designed to run at sixteen, eight, four and two frames per second, as well as freeze frame. In *Unword* it was used, in effect, to slow down the otherwise rapid passage of frames when projected on a normal projector at twenty-four frames per second.
5. 'The governing dictum whilst combining the three films into one was to remove all points of reference and *discontinuity* between the three films'; Mike Leggett, 'Statement of explanation' [of the *Unword* films], Breakwell/Leggett Archive, Henry Moore Institute, c. 1970.
6. An alternative was to use an optical printer to make a copy negative in which each frame was duplicated twelve times. The London Film-makers' Co-op workshop was at this time just establishing and it would be some years before an optical printer was to be acquired. Until that time, the process was prohibitively expensive to commission using the commercial laboratories.
7. Final Cut Pro, developed for the Macintosh computer, which the author had been using already for a decade.
8. An edition of *Unword* was acquired by the Henry Moore Institute at the Leeds and Bradford Art Gallery. This included a digibeta master videotape, DVD copies and copious photographs and texts, all signed by Breakwell; the digibeta master is used for copying to whatever exhibition media format is required.
9. One of the prepared tapes used in the performances, 'Ready-Observe', was edited from an original sound roll recorded for a science documentary made at the BBC, where Leggett worked from 1968 to 1971.
10. One of the assistants was Richard Deacon, who had been a student of Breakwell, Leggett and Hilliard between 1969–70 when they were teaching at Somerset College of Art, Taunton, between 1968–73. The other assistant, Andrew Rice, was a student at St Martins Art School, who bore a remarkable physical resemblance to Breakwell, probably unintended.
11. Ian Breakwell 'Presentation of work by Ian Breakwell and John Hilliard at the London New Arts Laboratory: Feb 28 – Mar 21 1970', Breakwell/Leggett Archive, Henry Moore Institute, also published in 'John Hilliard and Ian Breakwell' in *Studio International*, September 1970, pp. 94–95. Breakwell's recollection in a recorded interview with Victoria Worsley included: 'The events of the opening, recorded up to this point on video-tape, were now played back to the "audience". At the same time Hilliard and the two assistants commenced the erection of a structure built of scaffold poles. As the last pole was positioned, the gallery lights were extinguished, and ultra-violet (black) lights were switched on. Hilliard then began to paint the scaffolding with fluorescent blue paint, so that the form emerged under the light as he proceeded. When the fluorescent structure was complete the opening of the exhibition terminated.'
12. John Hilliard poster statement, '*Unsculpt* Notes', London: Institute for Research in Art and Technology (IRAT), Tate Modern Collection / British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection, 1970.
13. Intended as the first of a series of short reports documenting performance-based events. Unfortunately the series was short-lived, as the cost of paying for film and processing was rarely included in anyone's budgets and the cheaper-to-use portable video was a couple of years off. Stuart Brisley's 'Garage' event at the Edinburgh Festival in 1971 was one however, and Rose Finn-Kelsey's 'Flag' series was another.
14. Mick Stubbs and Andrew Walker, who shared Mike Leggett's camera.

15. Mike Leggett, *Video + Video/Film – Some Possibilities Suggested by Some Experience* (Exeter: Exeter College of Art & Design, 1973).
16. Without a proper budget, the soundtrack for the film was mixed onto a magnetic stripe on the side of the print, using a magnetic track-equipped projector. The method was not intended for permanence and led to the soundtrack's rapid deterioration. Like the *Unword* film, it was put to one side and emerged many years later at the bottom of a pile of cans that had been moved from Devon, to Bristol and then the roof of a house in Reigate, Surrey, from where it was recovered in 2002.
17. Mike Leggett, typescript letter dated 17.12.74 (London, 1974).
18. Kalyva, 'Textual Counterparts', p. 13; fn 1.
19. Breakwell was employed as caretaker at the Bristol Arts Centre, which in 1966 had a small theatre/cinema and gallery space.
20. Ian Breakwell and Mike Leggett, *Sheet*, 16mm, black and white, sound, 21 minutes, 1970. 'A film of architectural, indoor and countryside locations in which a three metre square white linen sheet appears within each location as a focal point. Sometimes like a billowing sail, at other times a discarded rag or a shroud.' (Ian Breakwell, *Ian Breakwell* (DVD), British Film Institute, 2007). The fascination with landscape and the ethereality of time is also explored in *Sheet*. Here the spectator's eye is focused by the insertion of a white sheet in the image. *Sheet*, which is one of the few films featured in the season that explores London's streets and buildings at that time, succeeds in leading the viewer to engage with place, atmosphere and duration.' (A.L. Rees, *Shoot, Shoot, Shoot: British Avant-Garde Film of the 1960s and 1970s* [DVD liner notes] London: Lux, 2006.)
21. The crisis of having the means to create documentation continues to the present, requiring a more or less continuous process of transposition from 'old media' to 'new media' as the material substrate of any medium succumbs to ageing and decay.
22. Worsley, 'Ian Breakwell's *Unword*'; Ian Breakwell's statements from 'John Hilliard and Ian Breakwell', *Studio International*, September 1970, p. 95.
23. Ian Breakwell (ed.), *Unword Questionnaire 28.4.1970* (London: Tate Archive / British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection, 1970).
24. Leggett, 'Reply to *Unword* Questionnaire', in Breakwell, *Unword Questionnaire 28.4.1970*. At the time of writing, the whereabouts of other people's responses to the questionnaire are unknown, although it is hoped that further material will be found in the Tate Archive, deposited by Breakwell before his passing in 2005.
25. Eve Kalyva, email correspondence 26 May 2009.
26. 'Participatory theatre' was in vogue at this time amongst thespians and desperately avoided by visual artists developing a performance practice – depending on the *règle du jeu*.
27. Kalyva, 'Textual Counterparts', p. 15.
28. Mike Leggett, 'Early Video Art as Private Performance', conference paper, Re:live Media Art History Conference, University of Melbourne, Australia, 2009.
29. Eve Kalyva, 'Documenting Performance', *Reading (about)/Looking (at) Art: Image/Text Juxtapositions in Early British Conceptual Art*, PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2010, ms. pp. 7.
30. Paul Dourish *Where the Action Is: The Foundations of Embodied Interaction* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).
31. Ibid.
32. John Hilliard, '*Unsculpt* Notes' (London: Institute for Research in Art and Technology [IRAT], 1970).
33. Kalyva, 'Textual Counterparts', p. 15.
34. Ibid.
35. Simon Ford, 'A Psychopathic Hymn: J.G.Ballard's *Crashed Car* Exhibition of 1970', *Seconds* (September, 2005).
36. J.G. Ballard, though generously supporting IRAT as one of the Trustees – a condition of the licensed occupation of the building from the local Council – thereafter in his book *The Kindness of Women* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), made bitter and sardonic references to the New London Arts Lab and its users. By some irony, a copy of the book was discovered during the preparation of this essay in a second-hand bookshop in Canberra, Australia.
37. CATS, who managed the video equipment at IRAT, like all artist-run organisations at the time had no public funding, so materials used in the making of film or video works were at a premium. Although making art objects was viewed with suspicion by many users of the Lab (IRAT), the art of the ephemeral being elevated, the tapes for videotape recorders at this time were expensive items and little remains of the works recorded

on them before the tapes were reused. John 'Hoppy' Hopkins initiated CATS and subsequently archived at Fantasy Factory, many of the tapes made in the period.

38. Duncan White, 'Expanded Cinema in the 1970s: Cinema, Television and the Gallery', in *Expanded Cinema: The Live Record* (London: National Film Theatre, 2008).
39. The print was commissioned and paid for by the Angela Flowers Gallery.
40. The moon shot images used in the film were not captured during the Apollo 14 mission but one of the subsequent missions, Apollo 15–17.
41. An optical printer allows multiple frames to be printed from one frame of film, usually an automated process, in the case of *Unword*, printing twelve frames from each frame of the negative.
42. Ironically, the videotapes made of the early Moon landings including Apollo 11 have also succumbed to the ravages of time and have either faded or, in the majority, were simply re-used without (unbelievably!) archival copies being made, either by NASA or the BBC. A recent call went out to the world's media asking for remaining copies of tapes to be donated to NASA; conservation of time-based histories is an issue not confined only to artists.
43. Lucy Suchman, *Plans and Situated Actions: The Problem of Human–Machine Communication* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
44. Mike Leggett, 'Reply to Unword Questionnaire', in Ian Breakwell (ed.), *Unword Questionnaire 28.4.1970* (London: Tate Archive / British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection, 1970).
45. Text written by Ian Breakwell in the papers and photographs relating to Ian Breakwell and Mike Leggett's *Unword*, Acc. No. 2005.455, Leeds Museums & Galleries (Henry Moore Institute Archive).

Chapter 7/
Vide Verso: Video's Critical Corpus

Malcolm Dickson

How long
Do works endure? As long
As they are not completed.
Since as long as they demand effort
They do not decay.

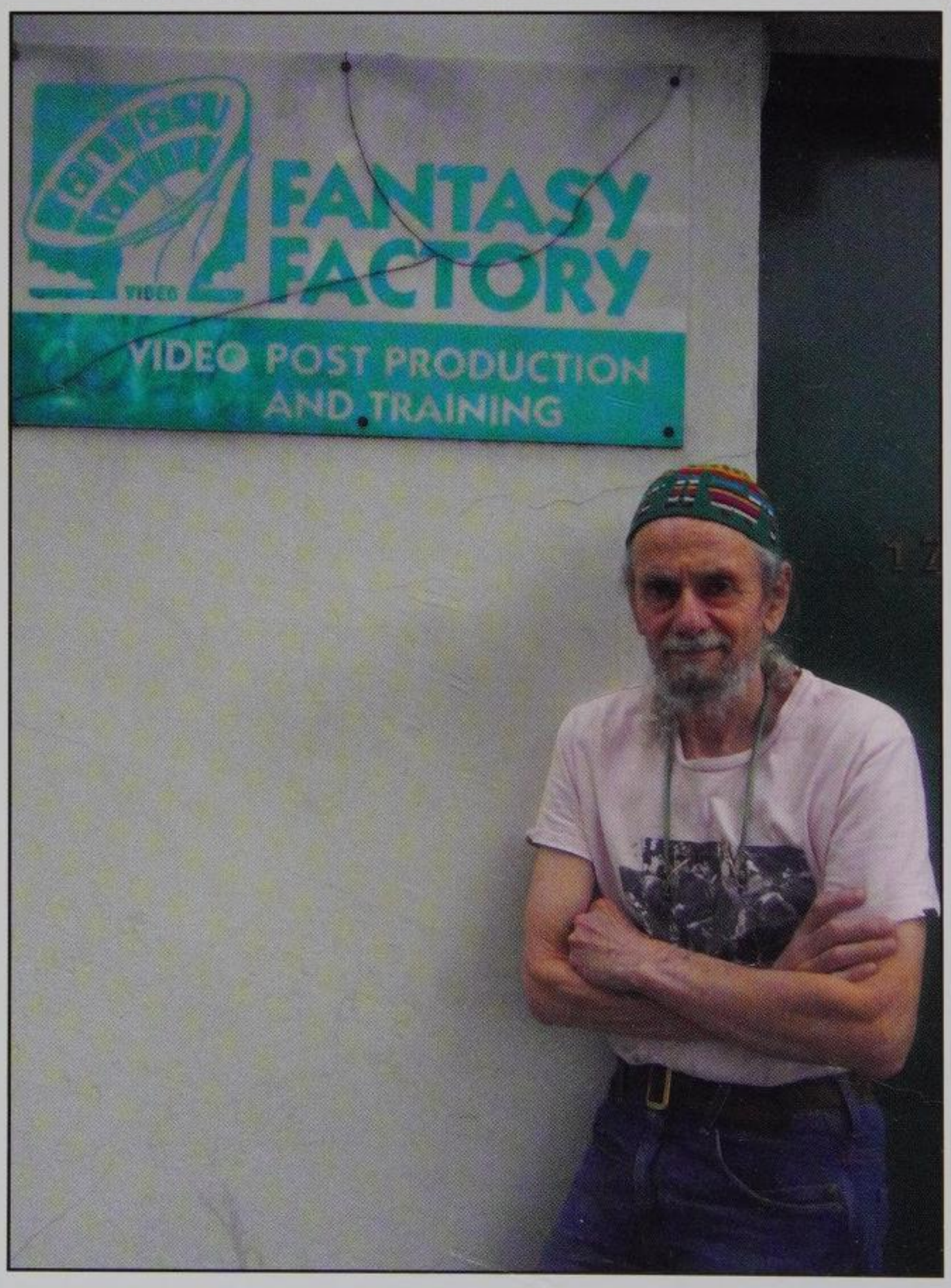
Bertolt Brecht, 'About the Way to Construct Enduring Works', 1938[1]

In the early 60s I earned my money by being a photographer in Fleet Street. By about the middle of the 60s I got more involved in organising underground events, so much so that I put down my camera. The 'Summer of Love' was very psychedelic and I spent six months in jail for dope and various other things happened and I went traveling in Europe with my then wife called Suzy Creamcheese. About early 1969 I was in a town called Rieti, near Rome helping to organise a carnival ... I ran into Jim Haynes who was the guy who ran the original Arts Lab, and he said 'there's something new on the scene that's called video'. He explained to me in five minutes what video was and I knew, something clicked. I went more or less straight back to England and went to see Sony. I persuaded them with all the muscle I could bring to it, which was my previous public persona, to let me borrow an open-reel Portapak. What I thought I knew before I picked one up was incredibly amplified by the first use of it and that's what started me off. That was in early 1969 and I persuaded some branch of Camden Council to let me take part in the Camden Arts Festival, where we showed some video and shot some video in Notting Hill and brought it back to Camden to show it and stuff like that. Video was clearly something very interesting and at the same time there was a bunch of artists, about twenty-five of us who, because of



Fig. 1a. Hoppy In Portobello Rd 1960s Photo: Adam Ritchie.

Fig. 1b. Hoppy in front of Fantasy Factory Sign, July 2009 Photo: Malcolm Dickson.



> Camden's housing policy, found Camden receptive to give us a short lease on an empty fire station, in other words a factory-type premises. We did it under the name of the London New Arts Lab, the alternative title of which was the Institute for Research in Arts and Technology (IRAT) … At IRAT, among the artists and organisations that came together to occupy this factory, were the [London] Film-makers' Co-op, among them were Malcolm Le Grice, Dave Curtis, Annabel Nicolson and John Lifton. There were various departments, and my gang was called TVX as the video department of this burgeoning institute …
> John 'Hoppy' Hopkins[2]

In 2008 an impressive hardback book appeared called *From the Hip* containing photographs from the early sixties by John Hopkins, a central figure in what was to become the video culture of the 70s and 80s. It includes iconic images of the known and the unknown, the British jazz scenes of Graham Bond, Keith Tippet, the centrality of Ronnie Scott's Club in Soho, the New York avant-garde of Carla Bley and Cecil Taylor, and the jazz giants of Roland Kirk, Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane; Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Alexander Trocchi at the seminal beat poetry convention at the Albert Hall in 1965. It also saliently captures some of the political figures and events that characterised those times of awakening and expansion – Bertrand Russell, the Aldermaston Peace March, the Committee of 100 demonstrations, some of the first Anti-Racist Marches calling for civil rights for blacks in the USA, and Malcolm X and Martin Luther King in their brief visits to London. Also included are snapshots of the everyday that are no less bewitching as records of a changing city and its people. One of these includes the shot of a figure standing aloft a decrepit large tenement-style building, arms raised to the sky which seems to say 'seize the moment'![3]

One of the contributors to an article in that book is record producer and founder of Witchseason, Joe Boyd, who wrote of the 'underground' in his book *White Bicycles*:

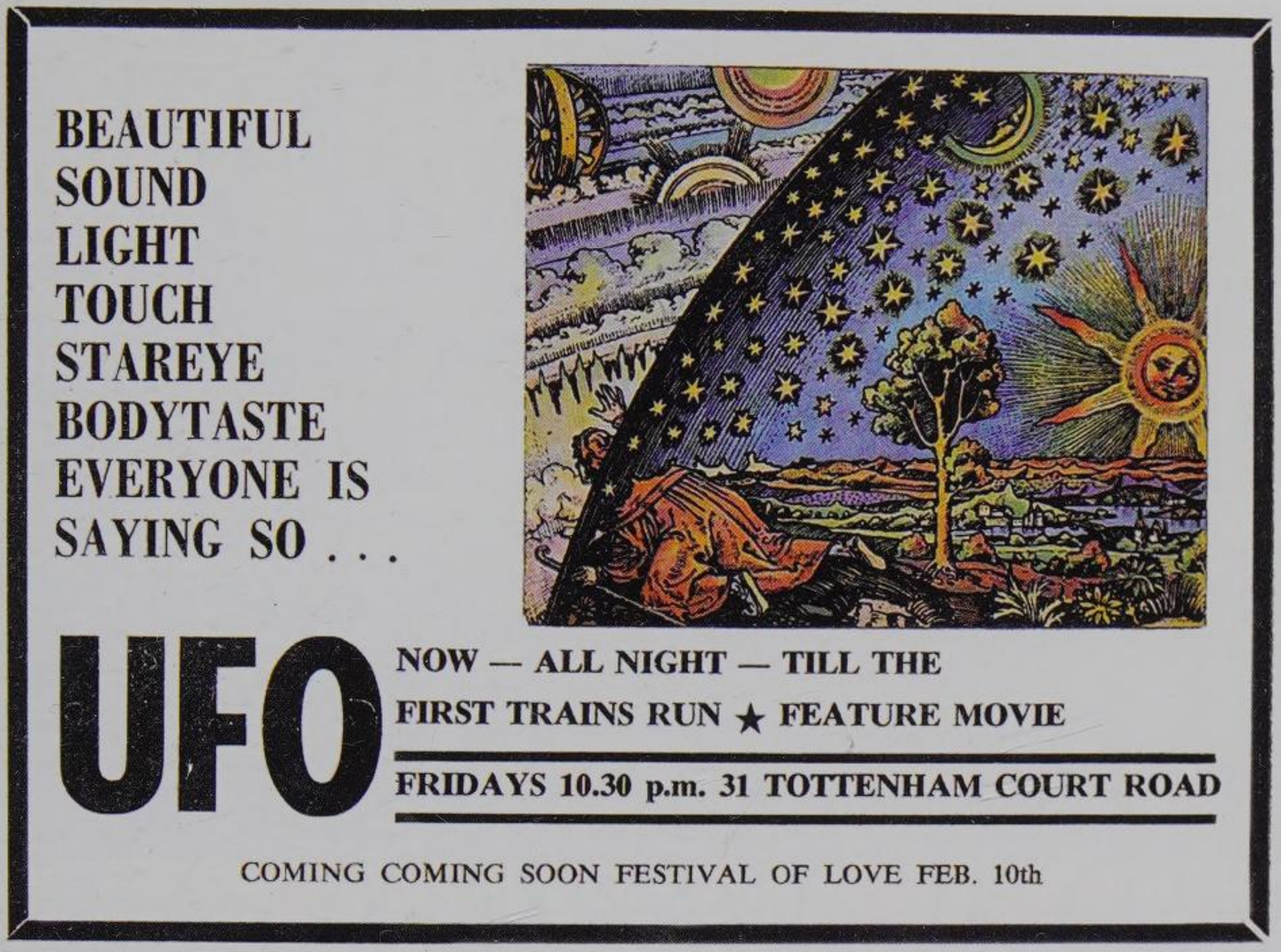


Fig. 2a. *UFO*, poster from IT.
Image courtesy John Hoppy Hopkins.

When it flourished in the spring of 1967, it was seen as a sub-culture of drugs, radical politics and music built around the *International Times*, Indica Bookshop, *Oz* magazine, UFO, the London Free School, Release … and the Arts Lab. To me, the expression referred primarily to the fruits of the energy of one man: John Hopkins … Hoppy always seemed in a process of discovery, treating the city as his research laboratory … .[4]

John Hopkins, or 'Hoppy' as he was came to be known, was originally a reactor physicist, who in the early sixties became a photojournalist and joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Centre 42. He was an early organiser of Pink Floyd and Soft Machine concerts, and a founding member of *International Times* and the UFO club. Hoppy was to take that activism into video with the aim of giving a voice to the disenfranchised through access to media, education and learning.

Predating the British manifestations of the Free University, Hoppy was involved in the London Free School, which focused on the Notting Hill area of the city with its diverse cultural and class communities, having a high concentration of West Indian, Irish and Polish immigrants. The London Free School offered free classes in photography, French and politics and also gave free advice to members of the community around housing issues, how to claim unpaid benefits, and also in ways to empower people to challenge the criminal justice system. Although Boyd refers to this as 'heartbreakingly naïve', it is a function that has been taken up and is replicated in a number of community liaison and campaigning organisations.



Fig. 2b. *International Times* staff photo 1966, featuring Jim Haynes, Jack Henry Moore, Jeff Nuttall etc. Photos: Adam Ritchie.



Fig. 2c. Indica Bookshop advert from IT. Image courtesy Barry Miles.

Significantly, the London Free School restarted the Notting Hill Carnival, possibly its major legacy today.

The potentialities of the counterculture are electrifyingly captured in Jeff Nuttall's 1968 book *Bomb Culture*, which chronicles the emergence of the international underground in Britain. Nuttall, another key player, was a poet, publisher, painter, and jazz trumpeter. In his book he comments on the Notting Hill Festivals as being

> models of exactly how the arts should operate – festive, friendly, audacious, a little mad and all taking place on demolition sites, in the streets ... Hopkins, however ... had a whiff of the psychedelic movement and knew more clearly what he was after, that stemmed from the Free School, and via a series of benefit gigs launched the Pink Floyd, the first English psychedelic pop-groups, complete with lightshow. In early 1967 he shifted to the old Blarney Club in the Tottenham Court Road and with Joe Boyd opened UFO which was the scene of the wildest regular public events London has yet experienced. A number of inventive artists staged happenings at UFO. The Exploding Galaxy, a particularly Goonish dance-troupe run by David Medalla (who had previously been active at Signals, the London centre for kinetic art) made its debut there. The People Show, a theatre group who combine



Fig. 3. London Free School Carnival, 1966. Photo: Adam Ritchie

techniques from music hall, happening, straight drama, cabaret, funhouse and children's party, sometimes ventured out of their domain in Better Books basement to perform at UFO. All this juxtaposed with underground movies, old silent comedies and Mark Boyle's perpetually changing lights created an atmosphere in which young people could relax quietly or create frenetically.[5]

Michael Horowitz remarked upon two 'defining moments' for Nuttall – the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the poets' convention at the Albert Hall in 1965.[6] Nuttall and John Latham had planned a performance happening for that gig but they missed their cue as Latham allegedly passed out after they painted themselves blue which blocked all their pores. This work, 'Fiona's Shoe' was re-enacted at the South London Gallery on 7 March 2009, alongside a screening of work from the period, including Peter Whitehead's film *Wholly Communion*, a film which documents the 1965 Albert Hall Poetry Convention initiated by Ginsberg, photographed by Hoppy, and which included readings from Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Adrian Mitchell, and Ginsberg.

Involved with Hoppy in the UFO at the time were Joe Boyd, Jack Henry Moore, and Mark Boyle, whose artistic liquid light experiments moulded in with the ambience of the club and the times. Other acts to be introduced to London through the UFO were Soft Machine, Tomorrow, Mick Farren and The Social Deviants, and Arthur Brown. Also in London at the same time was Jim Haynes, an American, who had previously been based in Edinburgh where he built up a formidable track record through establishing the Paperback Bookshop, organising The Writers Conference in 1962 (along with the publisher John Calder), opening the coffee shop and performance space The Howff, and then the Traverse Theatre in 1963. Haynes left the Traverse to set up The Arts Laboratory, an experimental cultural centre combining cinema, gallery, tearoom, information resource, music, books, and a theatre.

> The Arts Lab exploded on London and became overnight *the* place, the heart of London's underground movement. We had a cinema in the basement, a gallery on the ground floor, a theatre in another connecting warehouse and a restaurant upstairs.[7]

The London Free School and the Arts Lab are early structural models for learning and

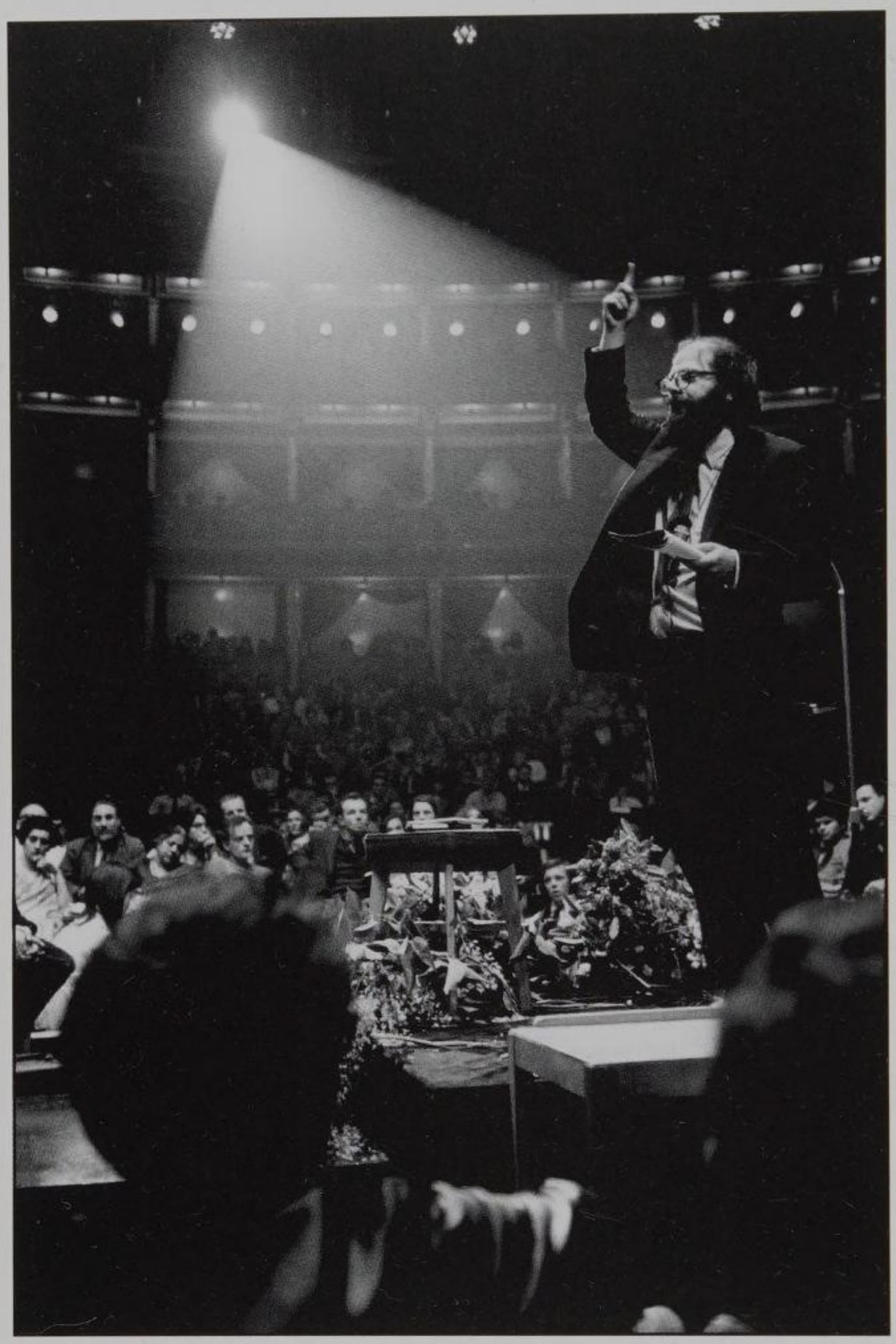


Fig. 4. Alan Ginsberg, reading At Albert Hall, 1965. Photo: John Hoppy Hopkins.

creativity. The former was about empowering those without a voice, and the latter was about the synthesis of different art forms that later become known and funded as arts centres. The Arts Lab (like the model of the Artist Placement Group later repackaged as artists' residencies) became a model for a number of other Arts Lab–like places that grew up within six months of the Drury Lane Arts Lab opening. Jim Haynes recounts:

> People were arriving from virtually every town in Britain … We also had visitors from various towns on the Continent, who then went off and set up Arts Labs of their own. The Milky Way in Amsterdam is probably the most successful copy, but there are two in Paris which are still running today.[8]

It should be noted that other geographically spread centres of note were the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow and the Project Arts Centre in Dublin.[9] Tom McGrath, former first editor of *International Times* started by Haynes, Moore, Barry Miles and Hoppy, was the first director of the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow. He was invited by – among others – Cordelia Oliver, who was on the management committee at the time and was art critic for the *Guardian*, and who knew of his work for *International Times*.[10]

David Curtis, author of the 2007 book *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain*[11] (and previous film officer at the Arts Council of Great Britain), used to screen films at the UFO club that were hired or borrowed from Bob Cobbing and what was to become the London Film-makers' Co-op. He was one of the original cinema programmers at the Arts Lab in London.[12] In his *Rewind* interview he recounts:

> The underground film as it was at the time, the avant-garde film, began in the context of Better Books and the arts approaches, where it was in a kind of mixed economy, a kind of media venue. Cobbing was basically a poet and half of the things that one went to at Better Books were poetry readings … there was a strong sense of cross-fertilisation between literature and the moving image, and even painting, though Jeff Nuttall did wonderful installations in the Better Books basement and went on during the Arts Lab's period to do sets for the People Show. So, there was that sense of a wider community being involved. Jim Ballard did a crashed cars exhibition, which actually prompted his book about crashed cars at Robert Street Arts Lab. Annabel Nicolson, who got involved with the Co-op when it was in the second Arts Lab in Robert Street, felt very strongly that it was important to link film back into music, partly because she was in partnership with Paul Burwell.[13]

With the establishment of TVX (the video 'department' within the Institute for Research in Art and Technology, also known as New London Arts Lab) and then the editing facility called Fantasy Factory, Hoppy and his associates (in particular Sue Hall), were key to the



Fig. 5a. Arts Lab (Drury Lane), Poster Kenneth Anger, 1967.

early growth of the social uses of video through community action and development.[14] 'It was the idea of controlling the means of production and being able to do something to amplify one's own community of interests', said Sue Hall, Hoppy's long-time collaborator, in their *Rewind* interview.[15] In his editorial for the *Studio International* issue on video in 1976, Richard Cork quoted Hall and Hopkins' assertion that

> we see video primarily as a communications medium which has an 'aesthetic' or 'expressive' component (or subset); and they ask the video artist to consider the questions 'shouldn't the democratisation of culture, and in our case the liberation of communications technology for public access, be an integral part of our actual art activity?'[16]

'Videospace' (1970) was an experimental happening, combining different formats of film, black and white video, and live studio action in a real-time mix with around 15 people involved. Although it was not broadcast, it led to the commissioning of a further two short works, as Hoppy recounts: 'they were probably the first promos made in this country and they were called visualisations, the word promo had not been invented'.[17] One of these, 'Tell me you love me' uses Frank Zappa's track of the same title to explore video feedback and visual effects – the use of White Panther imagery offended Mary Whitehouse and they were subsequently banned from the BBC after its broadcast. As well as experimental work, they did a series of reportage works arising out of their everyday lives, such as that around the squatting scene in London at the time. 'Ben's Arrest', for example, is a single, spontaneous take of a squatter being arrested by the police. 'As squatters we used video to record street life, police atrocities and evictions. The video was used later for

Fig. 5b. New Arts Lab (Robert Street), Poster Warhol Bike Boy, 1969.

Images by Biddy Peppin, British Artists' Film And Video Study Collection.





Fig. 6a. Fantasy Factory Edit Suite with Sue Hall circa 1990. Photo: John Hoppy Hopkins.

Fig. 6b. Fantasy Factory Satellite Dish Logo, 1970s.

people to brief themselves prior to appearing in court, resulting in numerous acquittals as the police evidence fell apart, and setting the precedent for video being used as defence evidence.'[18] The use of video to defend communities was also demonstrated in 'Squat Now While Stocks Last', which was broadcast on BBC in 1974 on the same day the footage was shot. 'Song of Long Ago' (1975) was funded by the British Film Institute and is an early example of local history video, using interviews with elderly residents reflecting on changes in their neighbourhoods. It was screened extensively in libraries, with its distribution remaining cross-local (rather than broadcast) and as such its unique value embedded in this community base. Their 'Com Com Commercial' addressed the lack of local public access to otherwise abundant airwaves controlled by the military, with the Official Secrets Act preventing the issue being discussed at parliamentary level. The use of video for TVX then was within a context of local radio, media education, community publishing and the information role of local libraries, part of an emerging 'do-it-yourself' culture which would later proliferate in the decade through radical bookshops, independent record labels, the video workshop movement, pirate radio, self-help projects, legal aid centres and other mechanisms of support. Much of this work was a precedent for the politically driven imperative of video culture in the 80s, as part of wider campaigns, as in the work of Despite TV, The Miners Tapes, and various projects around issues of gender and identity, as discussed in Sean Cubitt's article in this volume, 'On the Reinvention of Video in the 1980s'. This media activism provides a working example and theoretical springboard for the work that was to emerge in the digital culture of the 90s.

TVX was also to collaborate with artists exploring the use of colour and soundtrack, and with their Fantasy Factory facility, with its three-machine edit suite, provided subsidised and supported access to the means of production, which was used equally by community groups as well as artists. An example of the groups who used it illustrate the left-of-centre milieu of the

times – Rock Against Racism, Liberation Films, the Consumers' Association, Women in Manual Trades, West London Media Workshop – whilst a namecheck on the artists using the subsidised resource were Madelon Hooykaas and Elsa Stansfield, Terry Flaxton, Dave Critchley, Tamara Krikorian, Stuart Marshall, and the People Show. Fantasy Factory was more than an editing facility however, offering training, an information service, print reference library, distributor, and publisher. Their 'Post Production Tips' was first published in 1985 and ran to three subsequent editions due to demand. The publications division was called the Centre for Advanced TV Studies, and its journal gave birth to another abbreviation: J.CATS. Volume 8 of 1980 gives a flavour of its concerns in media education, public access to broadcasting, and the importance of the local in the global technological and industrial complex.

The advent of the Portapak prised open the utopian well to explore the democratic possibilities of media. Through the work of Hoppy, TVX, and Fantasy Factory, video's *potential* cross-fertilisation in the discourses of art, science, technology, mass media, and politics is deep-rooted, and it has never evaporated. The critical blend of medium awareness and social democratisation was to characterise a philosophical tenet of the video workshop movement that blossomed in the UK in the late 70s and 80s. With the contemporaneous emergence of community art in all its myriad and colourful forms, art was a means to a social ends.



Fig. 6c. J.CATS Cover, 1980.

'The world of the future may have no clocks'[19] – John Latham and APG

The origins of John Latham's film work reside as documentation of his book works, but he went on to produce some abstract and computer-generated work also. The tabloid version of Latham's history – and it is a good story – is that he got sacked from a part-time teaching job at St Martin's School of Art for failing to return a copy of Clement Greenberg's treatise *Art and Culture*, which Latham, aided by students, had suitably chewed up and spat out, the actual distillation of which was bottled and the work titled *Spit and Chew: Art and Culture* (the work is owned by the Museum of Modern Art in New York). The work was one of the first of an ongoing series of works that Latham regurgitated throughout an intriguing 'career' that remained so right up until his death in 2006. Latham was concerned about the dominance of the written word over the visual – books are also symbols of thought and knowledge, but also the symbols of different belief systems. In 2006, the work by Latham *God is Great* (1991) was withdrawn from a large survey show at the Tate. The work included copies of the Bible, the Talmud and the Qur'an embedded in glass.

Applauded and maligned because of his complex ideas and visceral artworks, he eschewed specialist categories, and worked across media – book art, film, assemblage, installation, performance, conceptual art, paint-

ing and sculpture – in an uncompromising approach which explored some of the most complex cosmological ideas through art. This challenged the views of specialists and critiqued the art market. Ironically, Latham is one of a few post-war British artists that you can, in a pedestrian kind of way, shoehorn into almost any post-war art historical tendency or current curator-led pick-and-mix trend.

Latham was a genuine *art* radical. The Artist Placement Group (APG),[20] which he formed with Barbara Steveni, and in which David Hall and many other artists participated, proposed that 'context is half the work', a theory that in the late 80s became a conceptual cornerstone of the Environmental Art Department at Glasgow School of Art. David Harding, head of that department, was a long-time associate of Latham's and undertook the first town artist placement in Glenrothes from 1968 to 1978, contemporaneous with the work of APG, which was founded in 1965. In that, Harding played a key role, much like Latham's 'Incidental Person', in the planning process for the new town, working with architects, town planners, the community and others, in a manner possibly more hands-on than the work of APG artists. 'APG were always very supportive of what was going on in Glenrothes', remarked Harding, and in fact, Latham and Steveni were present at a talk given by the Chief Architect at Glenrothes at a time when they were trying to get a 6 month placement in the Scottish Office which was successful in 1975, which Harding remarks 'resulted in the West Lothian Bings being designated as works of art. The APG were always very supportive of what was going on in Glenrothes.'[21]

Steveni's proposition *I Am An Archive* continues the work of the APG and its successor Organisation and Imagination. A current project is to revisit APG placements, including the West Lothian bings.[22] Flat Time House, opened in 2008 as an exhibition space which houses the John Latham Foundation and Archive, and through this, the collaboration with South London Gallery and writer Stewart Home in March 2009 led to the event which included the restaging of 'Fiona's Shoe' by Latham and Jeff Nuttall from 1965, referred to earlier in the context of the Poetry Convention at the Albert Hall. Steveni is also working with Lorna Waite in the future re-gendering of some of APG's activities within a context of work by radical women.

The APG was Latham's tangible expression and political attempt to bridge artistic, philosophical and scientific ideas, which was to crystallise in his theory 'event structure', which in turn would confront and confound the views of scientists and cosmologists. He believed that everything that exists can be explained as recurring time-based 'events' of finite duration. 'Event structure' was the main sustaining principle of his art and suggests that the most basic component of reality is not the particle, as understood through physics, but a 'least event', which a recent press release referred to as 'the shortest departure from a state of nothingness'.[23]

Despite Latham's eschewing of specialisms, his ideas remain complex yet refreshingly challenging. What is at the axis of APG, however, is the ethos: it is artists who invent their own models of production, exhibition, and distribution, initially in 'opposition', but importantly as a way of retaining control over the use and reception of their work. Predating the current concern around social engagement, APG's moment still remains inconclusive in terms of the intrinsically radical and political interventions by artists outside of commonly perceived notions of what artists are, and what they can do. This underlines the philosophy of the 'artist-run' space and characterises those support organisations that have been key to the development of video art: 2B Butler's Wharf, the Basement Group, London Video Arts, and (in Scotland) Transmission, EventSpace and New Visions. David Curtis remarks on this aspect: '... a continuing strength of the British scene has been the role of artist-led organisations, exhibition spaces and magazines; pragmatic, do-it-yourself utopianism being the recipe for success'.[24]

The 1970'S: 2B Butlers Wharf, London Video Arts and David Hall

A member of APG, David Hall is credited with coining the phrase 'time-based media' which

aims to describe art created using the fourth dimension as the creative medium. His *TV Interruptions* in 1971 were part of a series of actions by Artist Placement Group members in Edinburgh that year. Notable among his many works are *60 TV Sets* at Gallery House in 1972 and then restaged as *101 TV Sets* in *The Video Show* at the Serpentive Gallery in 1975 (a collaborative work made with Tony Sinden), along with *Vidicon Inscriptions* which was in turn included in the exhibition *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* at the Third Eye Centre in 1976. '101 TV Sets' was restaged in April 2012 as '1001 TV Sets (End Piece)' at Ambika P3 in London to mark the end of analogue broadcasting in the UK, to much critical acclaim. This reinforces the contemporary currency of Hall's work. Needless to say, Hall's work is highly influential in British video art, as is his writing and advocacy work. In a time of 'overratedness' we can safely say that Hall grasped the demanding and conceptually dynamic aspect of video, and regularly used his position to say so.

> For [Hall] ... the video medium was an unexplored territory for artists, its codes yet uncracked. He argued that video art was integral to television and not just its technical by-product. TV – and its subversion – was where video's vital core was located, well beyond the ghettos of film co-ops, arts labs and art galleries. This view opened an unusual space, somewhere between high art formalism (which it resembled) and the mass arts (which it didn't). Anti-aesthetic and anti-populist – conceptual art with a looser, dada streak ... (A.L. Rees)[25]

Some recent projects have argued that the legacy of the art practices and related institutions from the 70s onwards has been overlooked by more recent depoliticised art. The final exhibition at Fieldgate Gallery in London in July 2008, for example, explores the radical influence of conceptual artists Terry Atkinson, Stuart Brisley and Tim Head. In the press release that accompanied that show, Peter Suchin writes

> The 1960s and 1970s were a period of radical transformation in contemporary art, resulting in what Terry Atkinson has aptly described as a 'complex and expanded' field of art practices and related institutions, both in the UK and abroad. The most visible legacy in Britain of such innovatory work is that now historicised under the rubric of 'young British art', with the truly innovative developments of the 60s and 70s having been to a large extent obscured by the pomp, hype and market-led fanaticism that was so much a part of the YBAs' success in the 80s and 90s.[26]

An earlier exhibition at Fieldgate Gallery titled *fast and loose (my dead gallery)* also looked at the avant-garde past and its radical 'failures' in London in the past fifty years.[27] The curators focused on creative projects and spaces that were unorthodox, certainly outside the cultural mainstream and as a result, ripe for revisiting and assessing their impact in the light of current alternatives. Included in the total installation were Indica, London Free School, the Arts Lab, Signals (1964–66), 2B Butler's Wharf (1975–78), Fantasy Factory (1975–93) and more recent manifestations such as Bank and workfortheeyetodo.[28]

Butler's Wharf was a former riverside warehouse dating from the late 19th century, near Tower Bridge. Many artists had studios in the area due to the availability of cheap rented accommodation – one group of artists, who had met whilst at college in the Isle of Man and Brighton, rented a floor of 2B Butler's Wharf in 1975, and were soon joined by recent art graduates from Newcastle, Leeds and Maidstone. David Critchley discusses this in an article in *Readings* magazine from February 1977 (edited by filmmaker Annabel Nicolson):

> At 2B, we decided to invert the prevailing emphasis by which forms of art work are given precedence and gave priority to time durational work like music, expanded cinema, video and live performance. Because no long term installed work has to be taken into account, the demands on gallery space and time are such that no rigorous selection of artists is necessary, and working about six to eight weeks in advance, a broad selection of performed work is accommodated. The group's



Fig. 7a. David Critchley, Kevin Atherton, Et Al On Tower Bridge circa 1978. Photo courtesy David Critchley.

common artistic purpose was always evolving through dialogue as we progressed, but we all worked in time-based media: performance, film, video, sound, installation, photography, music, slide projection and light, either singly or in many combinations. In presenting artwork to an audience we were all keenly aware of context … .[29]

And recounting events in his *Rewind* interview:

> we (David Hall, Steve Partridge, Tamara Krikorian, Roger Barnard, Stuart Marshal, Johnny Turpie, myself, Pete Livingstone) actually met for the first time at the Serpentine Gallery at the Video Show in 1975 so there was this Newcastle gang and Maidstone gang essentially and that was where we first had a conversation about the possibility of something like London Video Arts existing and it was on the basis that here we were all about to finish college courses, we were doing an exhibition foregrounding video art in Britain for the first time … what happens next? … create an organisation for artists to make video … .[30]

Fig. 7b. 2B Butlers Wharf Tooting Dinner, 1979. Photo courtesy David Critchley



The birth of London Video Arts (LVA) was announced in the 1976 issue of *Studio International*'s special issue on video. LVA was formed to furnish the needs of the small milieu that it would serve, and as a consequence, the critical elevation of profile and development of new niche audiences through existing gallery outlets. Catalogues of their distribution tapes with critical essays and screenings at various artist-run spaces and other galleries followed. They were also involved in the programming of installation works for the various pivotal shows in the mid-70s onwards: *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* (Third Eye Centre), *Video Art 78* (Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry) and Artists' Video festival at Biddick Farm from 1976. David Curtis comments:

The common perception that the video installation is an invention of the 1990s – born miraculously free of any evolutionary history – is understandable, if wholly wrong. Certainly, dealers in the 1990s succeeded in marketing the film video installation as a limited-edition commodity where their 1970s predecessors had failed, but the modern form of the installation in all its diversity was the product of long periods of experiment sheared by the post-Caro generation conceptualists with their commercial gallery shows, and by members of the Co-op and future LVA groups, exhibiting mostly in artist-run and public sector spaces.[31]

Video symposium, Third Eye Centre, 1976

In 1976 the symposium *The Future of Video in Scotland* occurred at an opportune moment in video's infancy in proposing that 'there is a chance for the people working in video to demand – the sort of organisations that will be best for them – because things are not yet institutionalised and there is still time to work out what the best procedure would be'.[32] Representatives of community video, early cable TV experiments in Scotland, video art and documentary were in attendance, which is perhaps testament to the expansion and diversity of positions around video at the time. It could be said that this also characterised the funders' motivation for calling the event which was intended to assess existing facilities for video, the future needs of users, and their own commitment to it.

Contributors included Su Braden, then visual art editor of *Time Out* and working at that point on the significant publication *Artists and People* looking at the area of artists working within communities; Richard Reynish, then running Edinburgh Video Access, an independent agency working to develop portable video as a communication tool in the community at large; Anne Duffy, a community television worker for the Quality of Life Experiment in the Dumbarton district of Strathclyde; David Hall, artist; and



Fig. 7c. Poster from last event at Butler's Wharf, 1979. Photo courtesy David Critchley.

Stuart Hood, professor of Film and Television at the Royal College of Art.

Richard Reynish:

> ... there is another option open to us, that is the development of networks of VTR's scattered around Scotland in secondary schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, factories and so on and it is a simple standard transfer service if it were established that could move between high and low density systems ... .

And:

> ... citizen access resource centres ... Video is a communication medium and it has the potential of operating both at grassroots level and at much more flexible levels through society and, if I can make the assumption that most of us are in favour of a participatory democracy in this



Fig. 8. LVA Founders at VideoManifestatie, Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands, 1977. Left to right: Tamara Krikorian, (Marga Bijvoet), David Hall, David Critchley, Roger Barnard. Photo courtesy David Critchley.

country, that depends on very full freedom of speech and in the mass society that we live in, the voice of the individual gets lost hopelessly, and real freedom of speech in this country actually means, access to media.[33]

The afternoon of the symposium was devoted to viewing a range of work related to the contributions, including a selection from *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* which was on show at the Third Eye Centre at the time, the work *What's It To You* by Elsa Stansfield and Madelon Hooykaas, and *Stone, Sheep and People*, a tape by Malcolm Green and John Wheeler at Loch Eriboll in the Highlands of Scotland. Tamara Krikorian, reporting in *Studio International*, noted that there has been a commitment in Scotland which at times has been lacking elsewhere:

> these successfully brought the discussion back to the level of what video is all about: a tool, which, if skilfully handled, offers an alternative to the broadcast mode. It allows the users insight into the situation in which they are involved, and an insight into the medium itself. A possibility of analysing, re-assessing and eventually re-directing TV itself ... .[34]

In 1975, artists Elsa Stansfield and Madelon Hooykaas marked the beginning of their productive partnership with an exhibition of *What's It To You*, a two-screen installation work made for the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow in 1975.[35] Stansfield studied at Glasgow School of Art and then moved to London and studied at Ealing School of Art, where she met Hooykaas in 1966. Stansfield then studied film at the Slade School of Art and during that time she was an assistant to John Latham and was also one of the early film programmers at the Arts Lab.[36] Video is central to their collaborations but often in combination with photography and objects in order to make environments and



Fig. 9a. Elsa Stansfield & Madelon Hooykaas, *What's It To You*, Third Eye Centre, Glasgow 1975. Photo: Madelon Hooykaas.

installations they described as 'video sculpture'.

Hooykaas recounts:

> The Third Eye Centre was very advanced because they had their own Portapak, which we could work with … The work also had live video in it. A lot of our work is a combination of live video, pre-recorded work and photography. People could also give their own comment. We had made different questions and people could relate to that. So we would prepare our work, shoot it and edit it in London, then go back to Glasgow and show the work, with maybe only a few months in between … .[37]

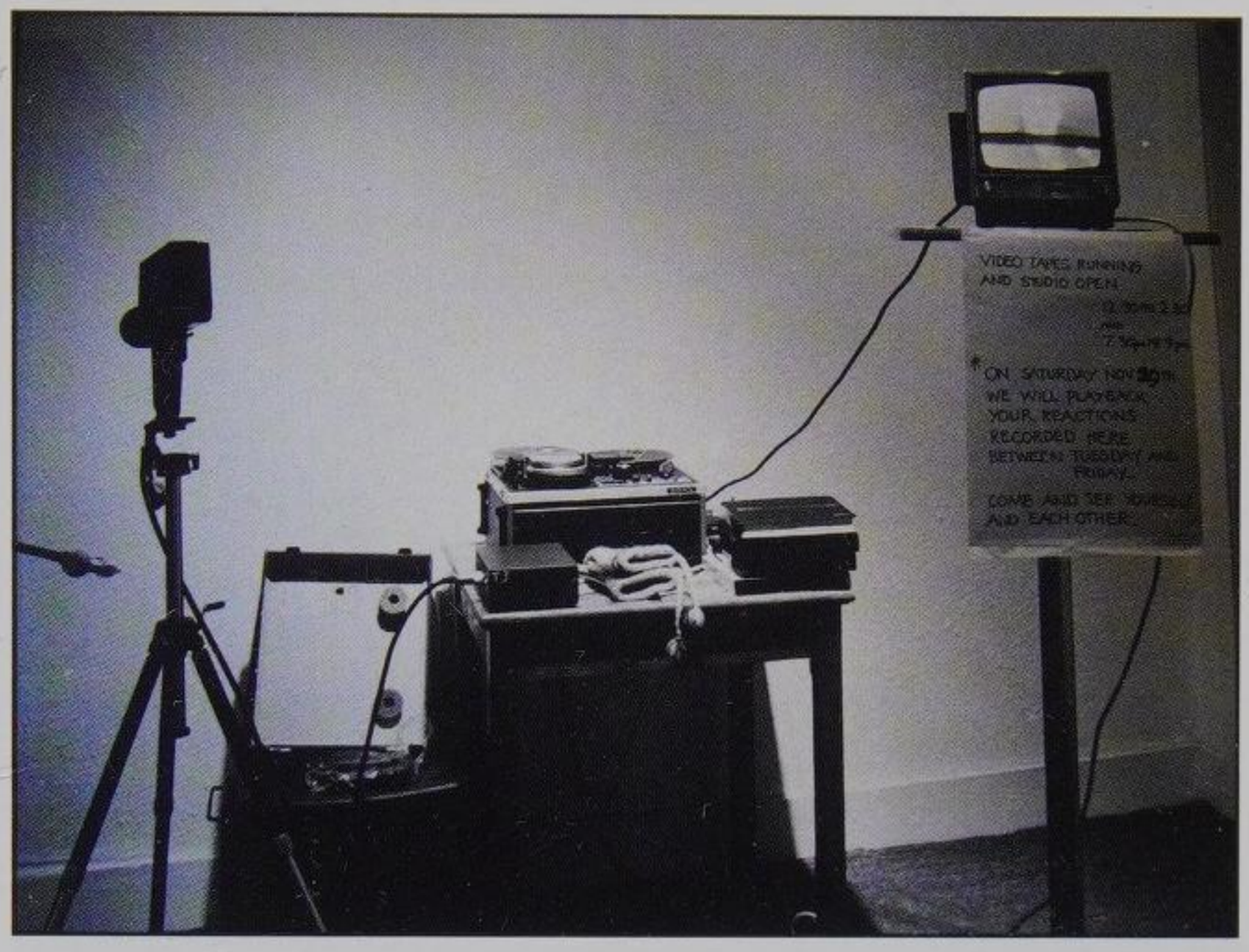


Fig. 9b. Elsa Stansfield & Madelon Hooykaas, *What's It To You*, Third Eye Centre, Glasgow 1975.
Photo courtesy Madelon Hooykaas.

In addition to the connection with Latham and the Arts Lab, Stansfield got the first video bursary at Maidstone College of Art, an initiative set up by David Hall, and they both used Fantasy Factory, and through that LVA. In 1980 Elsa Stansfield was appointed head of a new department for video at the Jan van Eyck Academy, a postgraduate institute in Maastricht, the Netherlands, and she named this department Time Based Media. They went on to become founding members of the Association of Video Artists in the Netherlands which later became Time Based Arts and then, in 1993, Montevideo/Time Based Arts.

Hooykaas:

> Time Based Art was a new term in the Netherlands, because video is very much a time related media. But, by calling it Time Based Art, we were not only talking about video. We were talking about audio and we



Fig. 9c. Madelon Hooykaas, August 2008.
Photo: Malcolm Dickson.

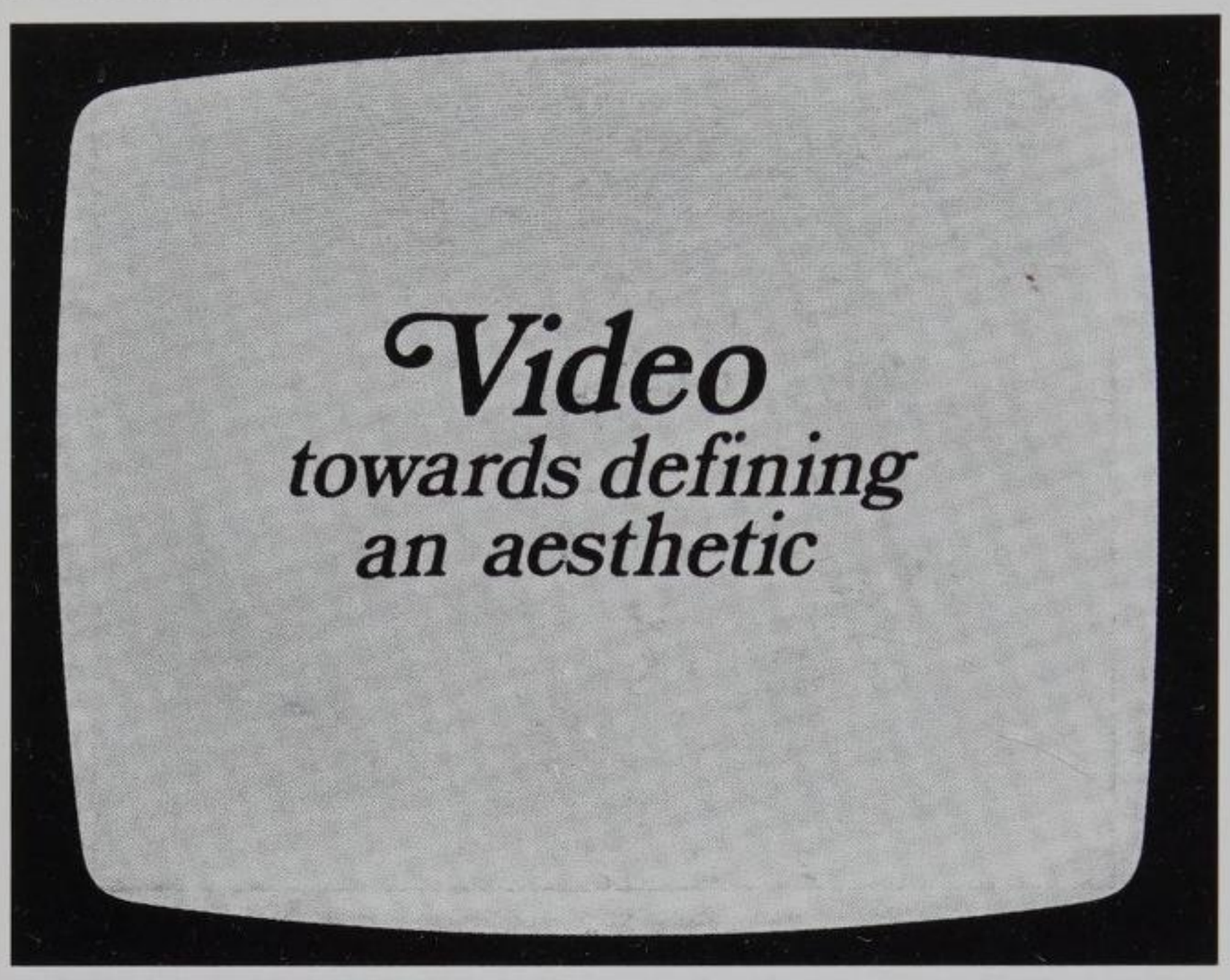


Fig. 10a. *Video: Towards Defining An Aesthetic,* Catalogue Cover, 1976.

Fig. 10b. *Eventspace1*, Poster, 1986. Images: Free Association.



were talking about performance. So, it was an expansion from being just about video. We always wanted to have it in a larger context. So it became not just about what the medium was, but what the medium could do.[38]

Josine van Droffelaar wrote of their work:

> Previously recorded tapes are tuned into the space where they are presented, so that not only the nature of the space itself but every given element that determines it plays a role. Closed circuit was used regularly as part of their environments, so indoor and outdoor linked to each other. Their work was often site-specific and often landscape based reflecting upon light, water, wind and clouds etc. … By making use of video, photography and film in combination with organic materials and objects, they have succeeded in combining different levels of reality in their work. Image and presentation of image are in continual dialogue with each other and demonstrate clearly that what we perceive as our physical reality is in fact no more than the cognitive construct that we make of it.[39]

The work of Hooykaas and Stansfield prioritised the spiritual over the aesthetic, encouraging the viewer to dig deeper, to create another level of consciousness. *Day for Night* was the last installation that the duo undertook together before the death of Stansfield in November of 2004. It was shown at Centrespace gallery in the Visual Research Centre, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, in Dundee and was the outcome of a three-week residency a few years earlier in June 2001. The installation centred around a 700-year old Spanish Chestnut tree which grows in Balmerino Abbey. About the work, the artists wrote:

> The purpose of this installation was to make a new work in which we brought together the virtual presence of the old tree in relation to the projected images and sounds from cinematic history. Apart from this work being a dedication to the tree the work could be read as being a homage to history, that is non-linear history. A work dedicated to the recycling of culture,

ideas, experiences, sounds and images. In this work, the tree is always present, a consciousness, a guardian of memories. The tree can also become: a house, a fire, a book, which in turn contains other stories, history of memories.[40]

For the past few years, as well as creating new works, Hooykaas has been working on their archive, augmented more recently by interns from the Preservation & Presentation of the Moving Image Master's course at the University of Amsterdam. For artists who undertook their first and their last publicly collaborative works in Scotland, it is fitting therefore that a significant body of their work was staged in Glasgow in 2010.[41]

It is interesting to note that the formative years of artists' moving image were manifesting themselves in geographically dispersed galleries. Glasgow and Edinburgh played host to some key events that cemented the future growth of the practice of video art. Some of these did circulate around specific groupings of artists (for example, involving artists associated with LVA) but others were 'unaligned': Hall's *TV Interruptions* of course, with their affinity with the Artists Placement Group at the time of 1971; *Open Circuit* at the Scottish Arts Council Gallery, Edinburgh, in 1973 organised by Lesley Green and Robert Breen (including work by Tony Sinden and David Hall); 'What's It to You' by Elsa Stansfield and Madelon Hooykaas at the Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, in 1975 (the same year as the Serpentine show in London); *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* at the Third Eye Centre, Glasgow, in 1976 (same year as the video installation show at the Tate Gallery, London); *EventSpace 1* at Transmission Gallery in 1986 (see below); and *Interference* at Seagate Gallery in Dundee in 1987.

EventSpace 1 took place in March 1986 at Transmission Gallery and was the first major video installation show in Scotland since *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic* was held ten years previous. The exhibition was organised by Steve Partridge, aided by Stephen Littman, Doug Aubrey, Alan Robertson (the latter two collaborated under the name of Pictorial Heroes), and Malcolm Dickson of the Transmission committee. Partridge had moved to Dundee to run the Electronic Imaging department at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, a resource that very quickly attracted students from across the UK due to its state-of-the-art facilities. The event included video installations by Partridge, Pictorial Heroes, Steve Littman, Zoe Redman, and Alasdair MacDonald (who all made work for a videowall that Littman was experimenting with); video performances by Kevin Atherton, and by Tony Judge and Brian Rowland; a film installation by Jane Rigby and musical contributions from Tom McGrath and Peter Nardini.[42] The videowall works by Littman, Partridge, and Pictorial Heroes and installations by Zoe Redman and Kevin Ather-





Fig. 10c and d. Steve Littman, *Overseen … Overheard … Overlooked,* Installation at *Eventspace 1, 1986*. Photos: Steve Littman.



Fig. 11a. Pictorial Heroes Faction: The Thin Blue Line, Mclellan Galleries, Glasgow, 1987.

Fig. 11b. Pictorial Heroes, Search, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, 1987.

Photos: Doug Aubrey.



ton, as part of 'Lost and Found' at Street Level Photoworks in 2010. *EventSpace 2* featured video from the Federal Republic of Germany, new films by women (introduced by Cordelia Swann, then with the Film and Video Umbrella), and new performances by Richard Layzell and Charlie Hooker (the latter two being facilitated by the Arts Council of England's Live Artists on Tour scheme).[43]

In the years that followed, video's visibility and validation increased: the first Scottish Arts Council's (SAC) Visual Artists Video Bursaries operated for a few years from 1987; there were video programmes at the National Review of Live Art at the Third Eye Centre; work included in the Smith Biennial (Stirling); Variant, retaining a keen interest in video and time-based media, had been injected with funding from the SAC to improve its look and its reach; EventSpace were organising occasional screenings in various venues in Glasgow; the monthly open doors film society Flicker at Glasgow Film and Video Workshop was proving that inventive video work did exist in the unlikeliest of quarters, the latter were also running a commissioning scheme called Cineworks; Transmission, Street Level, Fruitmarket and Collective Gallery (the latter two both Edinburgh-based) were regularly showing video as part of their regular programmes. The self-styled 'shock troops of

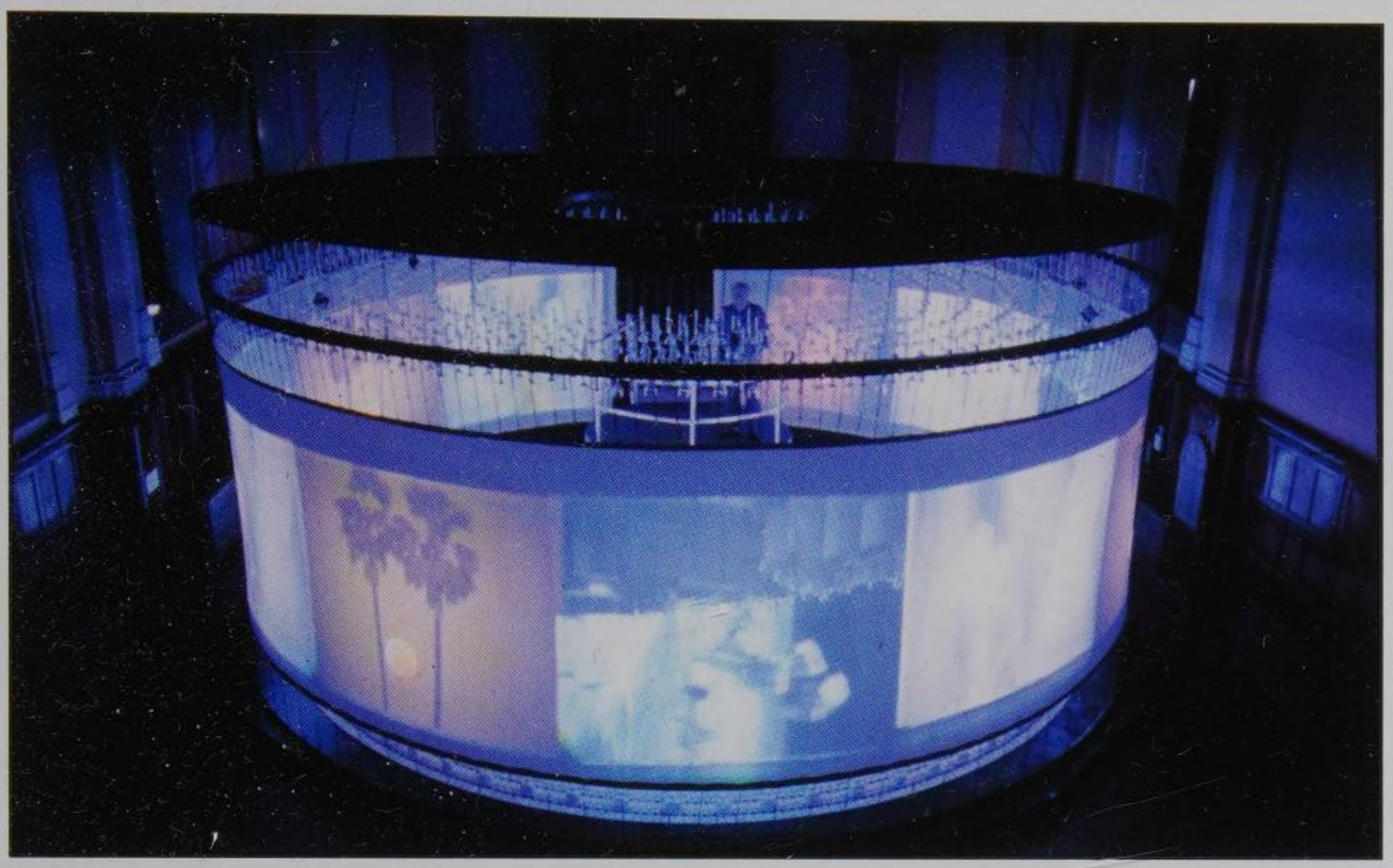


Fig. 11c. Daniel Reeves, *Well Of Patience*, Pearce Institute, Govan, 1990. Photo by Ken Gill, courtesy Malcolm Dickson.

Video Art' Pictorial Heroes staged a number of ambitious multi-monitor installations at the Society of Scottish Artists annual exhibitions, whose recently appointed chairman was the iconoclast and energiser George Wylie, who actively encouraged a creative shake-up in that institution.[44] On the lyrical side of the medium, the large scale multimedia work *The Well of Patience* by American artist Daniel Reeves (who had been resident in Scotland from the late 80s) was staged at the Pearce Institute, a large town hall and community centre in the former shipbuilding area of Govan, as part of Glasgow's European City of Culture 1990 programme.[45] His entrancing *Zen Gardens* installation toured a number of remote areas of Scotland in the Travelling Gallery. Festivals such as Video Positive in Liverpool took matters to a higher level nationally in terms of recognition for video, whilst both New Visions in Glasgow and the Fringe Film and Video Festivals in Edinburgh celebrated the increased interest and production of low-budget moving image art and documentary, in the tradition of the National Video Festival, combining artists work with community productions.[46]

The anxious archive

History is a process of selection – the job of the art historian is to plot credible histories that can be traced in order to get things in their proper and rightful place. The origins of video are multiple and its roots oppositional – rather than obstruct that process of historicisation, this should enrich it. This is saliently covered in the book *Illuminating Video* by Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, when they remark:

> video defies the art historical practice of ordering the field into a depoliticised hierarchy of stylistic categories. Over time, this hierarchy, when based on historical inclusion and exclusion, implicity endows cultural value to certain works. Works of art are perceived as valuable enough to be positioned in the historical niche then risk becoming neutralised as they are isolated from their social and political context and assigned new meaning in the historical process ... As with all the arts, the process of creating an art historical narrative for video is complex. It includes not only historians but also the art institutions – the museums in which cultural value is assigned to artworks and the universities where the historical process is made academic. A third part of this equation of legitimisation is the interested public, which reaffirms the institutional selection process. This public, complicit with art history, forms the art market and helps to generate the menu of 'important' art from



Fig. 12a. Kevin Atherton, *In Two Minds*, *Lost And Found*, Rewind Screening, DCA, Dundee, 2008. Photo: Stephen Partridge.

which the institutions, mediated by curators, critics, and scholars, select the works that are made available to the market in the first place. Since this closed system of historicisation traditionally has been based on formal aesthetic criteria, it has been taxed by works of art that gain their meaning from the very things which formalist art criticism strives to deny - the unruly social and political tangle that exists beyond the walls of art history. This, then is the second obstacle for creating a coherent art history for video: anti-Establishment in its disregard for commodity values, video defies a depoliticised hierarchy, since it is socially engaged … .

And then, more directly: 'Works that meet an institutional agenda for connoisseurship are preserved and become the focus of analysis in art history while other works are marginalised … .'[47]

Such connoisseurship is extended to archives too – the proliferation of archives in the past several years has led many institutions to treat them as commodities (they are, of course, cultural assets as research resources), inaccessible, or with access at a price. On the other hand, the *potential* of the archive as a starting point, 'a repository for the future' and as 'offering models of critique' is considerable. In *Potential: Ongoing Archive,* Anna Harding references Derrida's *Archive Fever*: 'There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory'.[48] The exhibition that accompanied it looked at how a number of artists are referencing 'the archive' in their research processes, as subject matter or as a springboard for a body of work, and whose practices may challenge conventional structures of institutional archives. But beyond the aesthetic play of this, there is the growing issue of artists and tendencies' archives being bequeathed to our culture, but with little space to hold or allow access to them:

Ever-expanding capacities for digital storage and retrieval reduce the need to decide what to throw away and hence decisions as to what is important is deferred. We reach the danger point of information overload. To avoid obsolescence, archival data must regularly migrate onto the latest format – from floppy disc to CD-ROM (zip and jazz discs being long defunct) to DVD and so on. This is time-consuming, requires

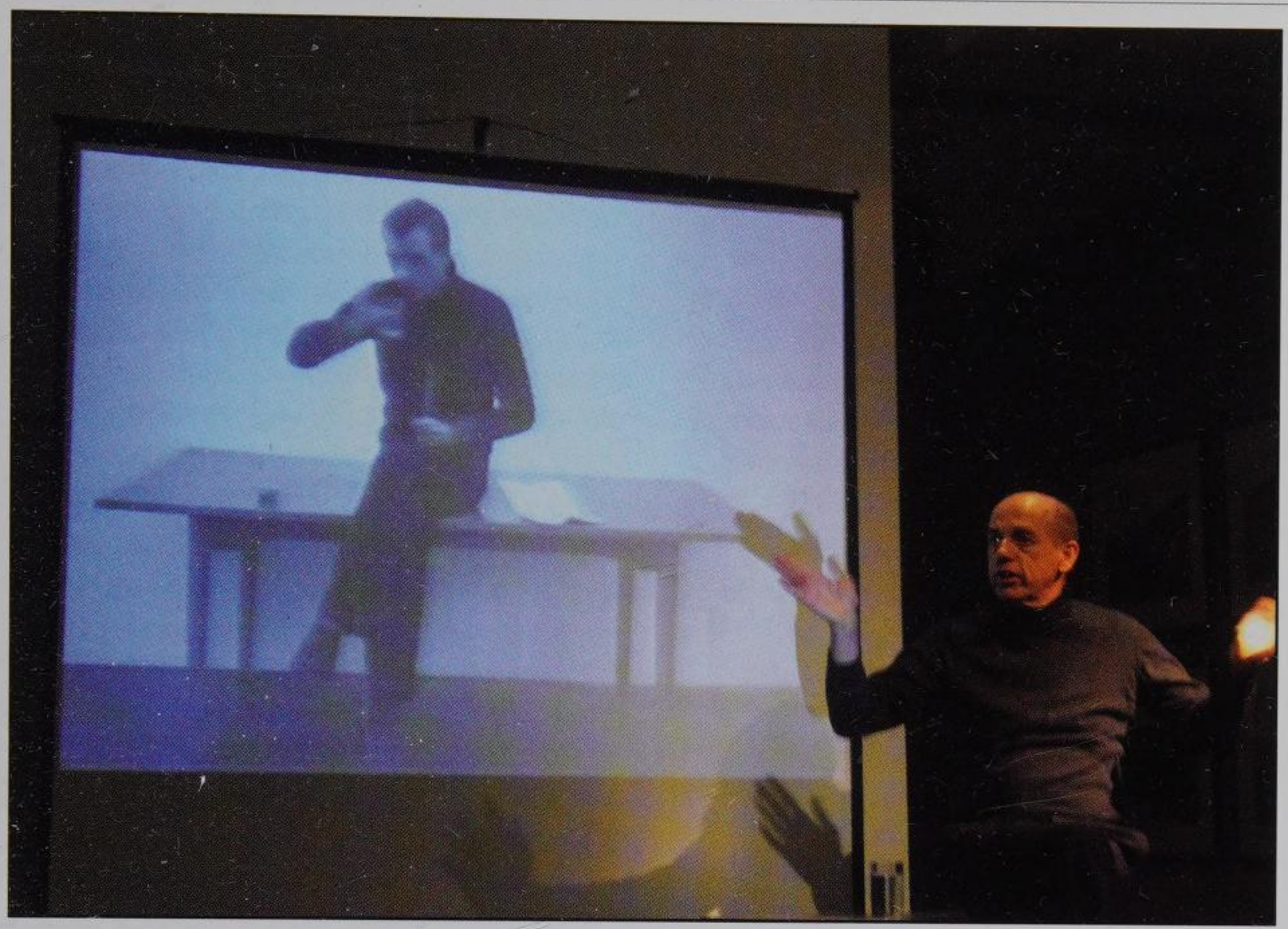


Fig. 12b. Kevin Atherton, *In Two Minds*, Performance at STILLS, Edinburgh, 2009.
Photo: Malcolm Dickson.

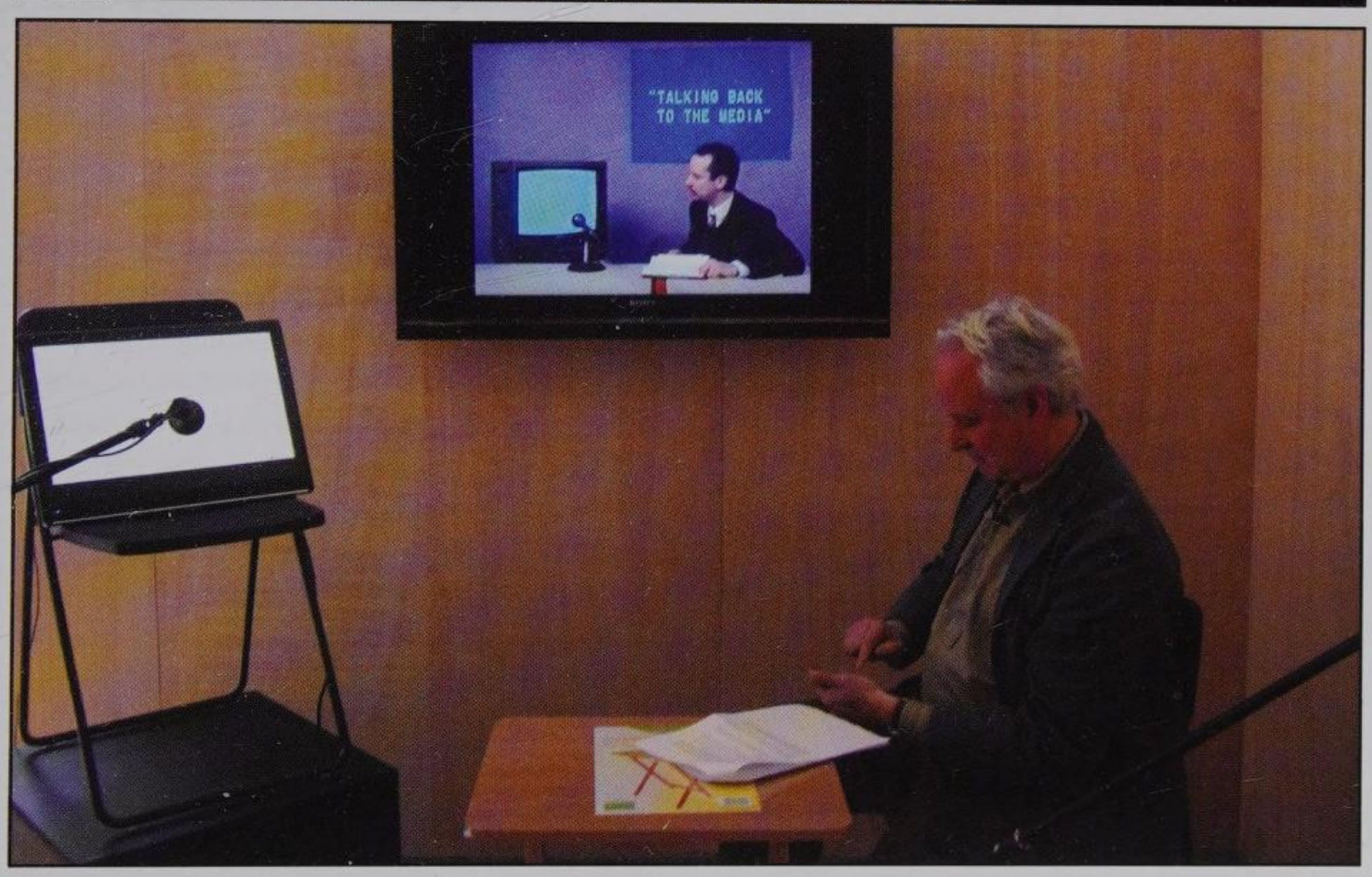


Fig. 12c. Kevin Atherton 'The Television - Repeat' 2010, at Street Level Photoworks.
Photo: Alan Dimmick.

vigilance and accuracy, is costly and as with all archival work, is completely unglamorous.[49]

All of this of course has to be interpreted and presented so that it can appeal to a critically mindful public who can, in turn, interact with it, and through reflection and an 'enhanced' understanding of contemporary art practices, contribute to the process of re-ordering the archive for future and continued use. That is, it never remains static or ossified. Projects like *Rewind*, however, have an ambivalent relationship to this – contained as it is to a specific timespan and finite and particular groupings of artists. It has captured (though in

the case of John Latham, just missed) the primary sources of a practice and listened to them and their stories, as well as preserve and re-present some of the works of the period – as exemplified on the DVD *Rewind and Play* which presents some key works from the first decade of video art, in collaboration with Rewind.[50] This also offers a rich seam for artists to revisit earlier works. Kevin Atherton, for example, has undertaken a dialogue with his earlier two monitor video installation work *In Two Minds,* originally shown at the Serpentine Gallery in 1978. Using the structure of the 'press interview and Q+A', the artist is able to interrogate himself and the work in the form of an auto-interview. With subsequent versions (*Rewind Soft Launch*, Dundee 2006, *Lost and Found*, Dundee 2008, and at Stills gallery, Edinburgh in October 2009), for example, he responds in real time to the questions put by his younger twenty-seven-year-old self in the original work, substituting new answers. A recent gallery installation includes all three versions of *In Two Minds* in the same gallery space, this time at Golden Thread Gallery in Belfast: the original version at the Serpentine 1978; The 2006 'Past Version' where he talks to the questions tape from 1978; and 'The Future Version' where in 2006 Atherton talks to an eighty-one-year-old version of himself suitably made up to look like an old man on the answer tape. Within the often-frustrated dialogue, there are some humorous and insightful observations on the shifts in video art practice and the contemporary art scene.

In *The Television – Repeat* at Street Level in 2010, Atherton referenced his earlier works *Stand Up TV – Death in Glasgow* staged at Transmission in 1986 as part of EventSpace 1, and also an interview undertaken for Amsterdam Artists Cable with David Garcia in 1985. In this recent version Garcia was invited to participate and undertake the interview with The Television showing clips from the works 25 years previous.

In his article from 1988 'Declarations of Independence: Shows, Schisms & Modernisms', Michael O'Pray noted that (at that time) there had been no book published on British video art, claiming, 'neither has there been a video journal, nor a major exhibition or festival dedicated to video since the mid-70s, all of which says much about the often paradoxical problems faced by the British video art community'.[51] Twenty years on, however, the critical landscape is not so barren, with a number of important publications chronicling the emergence and development of video art; and of course a number of exhibitions and catalogues which recover and re-present earlier phases of video art, or link the continuities across the decades.[52] The visibility of video art in galleries is higher than ever before, and the position of artists' video within the art market is unproblematic. As Catherine Elwes writes,

> Video is the default medium of the twenty-first century. It is everywhere, trapped on monitors and computer screens and projected, cinema-style, onto pristine gallery walls, across public spaces and onto the hallowed surfaces of national museums. The prominence of the moving image in contemporary art hides a forty-year history in which video played a vital role on the margins of the avant-garde. It began life in the mid-1960s, screening to small groups of aficionados in obscure, 'alternative' spaces. Then, in the 1990s, video art broke through into the mainstream of the museum and gallery system, taking up a central position as the twentieth century came to a close. The early history of the medium is only now coming to light and the present volume is devoted to reintroducing the work of pioneering video-makers while positioning their ideas as a prism through which to offer an understanding of contemporary video.[53]

However, in Taschen's intro survey book *Video Art*, only three artists from the countries of Britain are included – Douglas Gordon, Gillian Wearing, and Smith/Stewart, with two of these based or emanating from Glasgow and the third, Wearing, from London. What is presented by this welcome spate of publications that cover gaps in historical knowledge, is a challenge to attempts to rewrite or ignore the importance of the early part of this period by current curators and critical writers.

There are also a number of database resources and archives either currently existent or

in development that are striving to overcome the advancing amnesia of the art scene on the one hand, and the catastrophic effects of technological disintegration if works are not transferred to digital formats on the other. These include the *British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection* and *Rewind: Artists Video in the 1970s and 1980s*, both of whom were partners in the Future Histories of the Moving Image Research Network.

All three of these bodies have received funding and support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to undertake their distinct but related work. The Future Histories of the Moving Image, whose funding has now come to an end, was set up to 'address the issues of sustainability and historiography arising from the growing number of moving image arts databases and digitised collection projects in the UK'.[54] Aiming to map and link the narrative chronologies, original works and key documents from the history of video art, its concern was to provide a significant record, digital collection and online database. In an open discussion at their conference in November 2007, a number of concerns were raised around the issue of future sustainability: a repository for data archiving; the need for joined-up thinking; adequate financial support for archiving, preservation and sustainability independent of the higher education institution and the bridging of institutions with not-for-profit arts projects; developing relationships to encourage further networks or collaborations between consortium members; and digital repositories being trusted both by the depositors and their users. This issue of links between the independent sector and the educational institution is an important one in terms of relationship building that can fuel intellectual and technological sustainability – there are too few institutions recognising this:

> institutions could work with not-for-profit organisations, particularly with the moving image, that have found solutions in their geographical areas ... there's not enough looking outwards ... there are ways to start using collaboration.[55]

Graeme Rigby of Amber Films reinforced the point that

> in the scheme of things in history, so much gets lost ... I think the point about making a relationship between what's going on in the universities and what's going on in organisations outside universities is really important, because it's only in those kind of relationships that you'll get a kind of stability around the future of these things. Some of them will just disappear – organisationally they will just disappear. So, I would say that you need to have these things in a number of different places.[56]

The Future Histories of the Moving Image states that it aims to connect these projects to external organisations 'in order to maximise their collective visibility (Nationally and Internationally) and target wider audiences for their resources'.[57] Other initiatives concerned with archiving specific artforms and cultural tendencies include: *Capturing the Past, Preserving the Future* – digitisation of the National Review of Live Art video collection (Bristol University, AHRC funded); Luxonline; Screenonline; InIVA; and the Film and Video Distribution Database (FVDD), which provides information about and a wide range of documents from the key distributors and promoters of British artists' film and video. Internationally there are a number of projects also, amongst them: MonteVideo (Netherlands); Archive of Polish Experimental Film; Cinovid (Germany); C3 Foundation's GAMA (Gateway to Archives of Media Art, Hungary); Video Data Bank; Electronic Arts Intermix (both USA); 40jahrvideokunst (Germany); the online catalogue of imai (Inter Media Art Institute, formerly 235 Media) in Dusseldorf; the Danish Video Art Data Bank (Archives of Independent Danish Video Art). These projects are supported at various levels, but there are others that struggle to find the sanctioned support within any institution, such as that of Fantasy Factory (John 'Hoppy' Hopkins and Sue Hall) and Videoheads (Amsterdam) – the project of Jack Henry Moore, a partner of Hoppy's in the *International Times*. These two came out of the Arts Lab scene in London and both are seeking to digitise thousands of hours of videotape, with a focus on restoring the early productions and the creation of a definitive catalogue of the entire collection.[58] Within this material, there is

a unique record of alternative culture, including squatting, free festivals, and community media.

Independent Video magazine

Independent Video emerged at the turn of the eighties and was a vital reference point for all the people involved in video – community video and video art, and also for those makers who would later be involved in the multifarious departures offered by Channel 4. The first several issues took the form of large format four-page broadsheets as an information exchange and listings, with an attempted populist approach to promoting video activity.

Ironically though, the first issue contained a long article by Sylvia Harvey on 'Counter-Cinema' which dealt with notions of 'independence' which would equally apply to video. The aim was to address the polarity between film and video work and further harness the division between the artistic and the community milieus.

> Given the present system of social relations and of relations in the cinema only the very wealthy are 'independent' … what we need to understand and analyse are the complex series of dependencies which characterise the position of the non-commercial filmmaker. What must be emphasised is the fact of dependence on whatever system of finance presents itself. 'Independents' are part of an economic system which contains and to some extent controls their production. The important question then becomes, from within that dependency, what are the possible areas of action, the possible areas of freedom within the larger constraints?[59]

Independent Video was based at the Bracknell Media Centre where an annual festival of video also took place. The November 1986 issue of *Independent Media* (the title which superseded *Independent Video*) appeared as a guide to the seventh National Festival of Independent Video. In it some key independent magazines of the time were invited to select works around themes relevant to their titles, for example *Square Peg*, *Women's Review*, *Marxism Today*, *Community Care*, and *NME*, whose chosen selector, Steve Bode (later of Film and Video Umbrella), earmarked Mark Wilcox's *The Man of the Crowd*, Jez Welsh's *Labyrinths*, and John Adams' *Intellectual Properties*. *Screen*'s Sean Cubitt chose works by Clive Gillman, Kevin Atherton, Tina Keane, Clive Gregory, Graham Young, John Goff, and Tower Hamlets Arts Project 'Despite the Sun'The festival and this issue of *Independent Media* also took the opportunity to host the British Film Institute's National Conference on Video, and a number of papers were published alongside that, by authors including Phillip Hayward, Sean Cubitt, and Nik Houghton, the latter working on behalf of LVA, whose article 'Towards a Critical Language for Video' wrestled with the lack of coverage for video with a justified swipe at the lack of critical depth on and around it:

> a critical mechanism has yet to emerge for the analysis of video art … Informed opinion is essential at this juncture as is any initiative for debate and discourse about video art, its origins, intentions, and direction [the] video art scene often seems too hypnotised by its own eclecticism to fully consider where it's going. Alternatively it could just be that video art's vitality, its form hopping fluidity, has developed precisely *because* it has been unconstrained by the baggage of theory, history and 'high art' mediation. The 'truth' lies, perhaps, between the two ideas: video art has developed, broadened, enlarged itself at least partially because it has no 'rules' nor a dominant theoretical base or critical system, it's been free to shift, dabble and diversify in a multitude of directions … .[60]

Independent Media was an essential link between community workshops, media centres, exhibitions, festivals, courses and commissions. The Arts Council of Great Britain funded it in its latter years, as well as Channel 4 independent film and video department. 'Economic restrictions' forced its closure (along with the *Good Video Guide*) in 1992 with issue 117, but with the announcement of a new publication *Vertigo*, with a new editorial board and the stated aim of broadening and deepening its



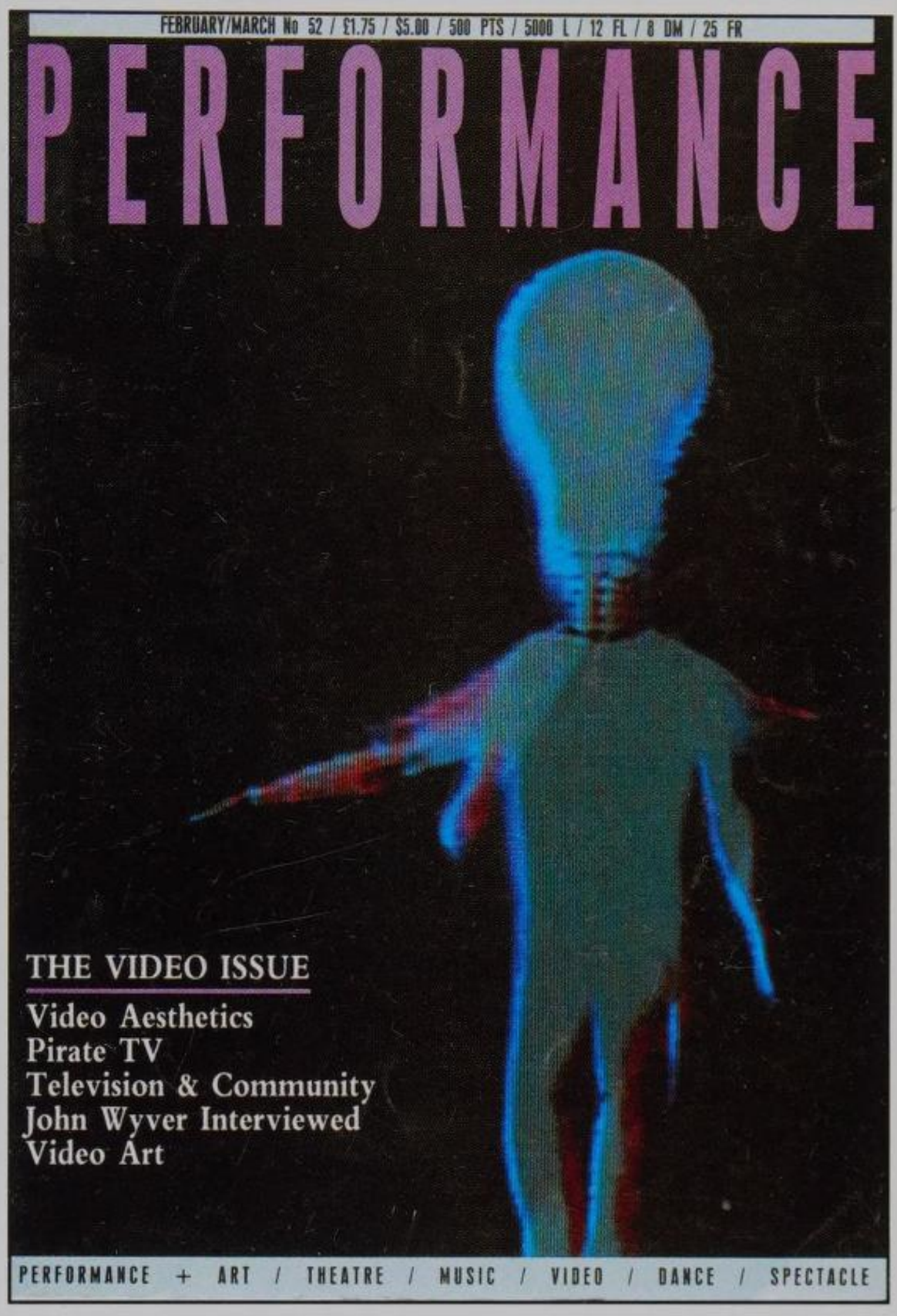


Fig. 13. *Independent Media* magazine 1986, and Performance magazine 1988. Courtesy Malcolm Dickson.

readership and approach (it first appeared in 1993). The last editorial stated:

> *IM* [*Independent Media*] has had its day. It arose … in the days when video was the newcomer, and formed a forum for all the people involved in what was essentially non-broadcast video. It encompassed both video art and community video, and was influential in brining together a large number of independent filmmakers prior to the launch of Channel 4 in 1982 … as the nineties struck, and especially the recession, things seemed to slow down … IM's readership has, in the main, remained solidly non-broadcast. Yet now much of its former readership have gone into broadcast production and these people want channels for the sharing of ideas.[61]

Video Positive

'You need an audience to contextualise the work', said Eddie Berg on the occasion of the first Video Positive festival in 1989,[62] the outcome of a steady build-up of critical mass for video art in Liverpool through the work of Merseyside Moviola.[63] This was recognised by the festival curators who opened up video to different constituencies by involving wide partnerships in the city, a feature that has remained a significant strength in the development of the Liverpool Biennial and its status as European City of Culture in 2008. This was a festival that proposed a more inclusive conversation than that just between video artists and media artists and enthusiasts. Whilst it tentatively claimed to be the biggest festival for video, it was also probably the most coherent, arriving at a developmental turning point twenty years on since video's introduction to the UK. A few factors made this unique to its time and location: the commissioning of new installation work, including the National Videowall project coordinated by Steve Littman; the 'expansive' education programme, which later became the Collaborations Programme and which has led to such

initiatives as TenantSpin; and thirdly, its entrepreneurial approach in fostering partnerships across the city and its various sectors.

Video Positive was part of a wider move to 're-establish both film and video culture within Arts as a whole', wrote Littman: 'As in the early days of video art, technological advancements are providing new opportunities for the development of a new video aesthetic. The Videowall ... was a powerful new tool for the progression of the installational ideas of video art as a whole.'[64] Littman developed this idea in 1986, piloting it in Glasgow in the *EventSpace 1* project at Transmission Gallery. In addition to the Videowall, Video Positive commissioned six new video installation works, and restaged several others.[65]

In his catalogue article, 'Video and the Art Gallery', Jeremy Welsh considers the gallery an untapped magnet of attention for video art (as distinct from the broadcasting industry), one which is again affirmed as having arisen out of artist-run support structures. This is borne out of the approaches of early video art which was, according to Welsh:

> shaped by the thinking of conceptual/minimalist art and structuralist film making [which] saw itself existing in opposition to the aesthetic and political structures of broadcast television. One can see two major tendencies in early video work: on the one hand, the 'materialist' concern with the phenomenology of the video medium itself, on the other, the use of video as a tool for self examination, made manifest in its proximity to performance and body art, and most significantly, in its use by feminist artists ... There now seems an unprecedented interest in video within the public gallery sector, and as an art form with a growing status video now has its own international network of festivals, curators, publications, distributors and production centres. The upward shift has been more dramatic in Europe and North America, but Britain's contribution is nonetheless significant, particularly in terms of television, where Channel 4 has to a large extent made the running internationally as a commissioner and purchaser of independent productions. However, the larger museums in the UK have been slow to respond to the growth of video as compared with the commitment shown by major institutions abroad, particularly the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Long Beach Museum of Art in California.[66]

Of particular note in relation to European museums, the Stedelijk in Amsterdam organised the major exhibition of video installation *The Luminous Image* in 1984, including work by David Hall, Elsa Stansfield and Madelon Hooykaas, Nan Hoover, Bill Viola, Brian Eno, Marie-Jo Lafontaine, Robert Wilson and many more. Welsh's article concludes with the assertion of the social need for festivals and public events:

> The crucial difference here would be that the activity is drawn out into a social sphere; it becomes a cultural practice by engaging the social and resisting the subtle imperative of consumer technologies to stay at home.[67]

Another contributor to the catalogue was David Hall whose reprint from the catalogue for *The Luminous Image* celebrated the integrity of practitioners staying true to their principles and the centrality of colleges in their cultivation of video art:

> Video art emerged out of, and has been sustained by, art colleges in this country not only because of an empathetic and progressive context ... but also out of necessity, since colleges of art have been the main providers of the essential and expansive hardware. Many artists in Britain have been dependent on their connections with these facilities in one way or another since the early seventies ... the college department that actively encourages video work is invaluable as a cultural and production context for students and artists alike. In this case, education is not only intended as a brief initiation period preliminary to coming out into the real world, but is more an ongoing interface of introductory courses; professional artists'

activity; common facilities; research and debate ... .[68]

Video Positive took place within a context of exhibitions across the UK, with many going beyond gallery spaces and engaging with site specificity. Houghton wrote that 'video as a singular and highly specific art, set apart and distinctive from other forms, is no longer the unifying idea it once was: video has, for many, become one element in a more broad-reaching and integrated strategy'.[69] By the mid 90s Video Positive had progressed to reflect the *fusion* of production, distribution and exhibition media – the commissioning of the first interactive CD-ROM *The Toybox*, which was presented at the 1995 festival, as well as *Hearing is Believing*, a radio station featuring artists' sound commissions in the context of radio. Video Positive, as well as embracing the diverse forms of electronic arts, was forward thinking through its parent organisation Moviola in setting up MITES – the Moving Image Touring and Exhibition Service in 1992 as a subsidised service to the gallery sector in exhibition technologies such as projectors and various other playback and display equipment. MITES has provided equipment for almost every major technology-based exhibition in the UK since its inception in 1992, and was also already planning its further evolution into the creation of FACT, the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, the first purpose-built space for the creation, presentation and appreciation of new media art.[70]

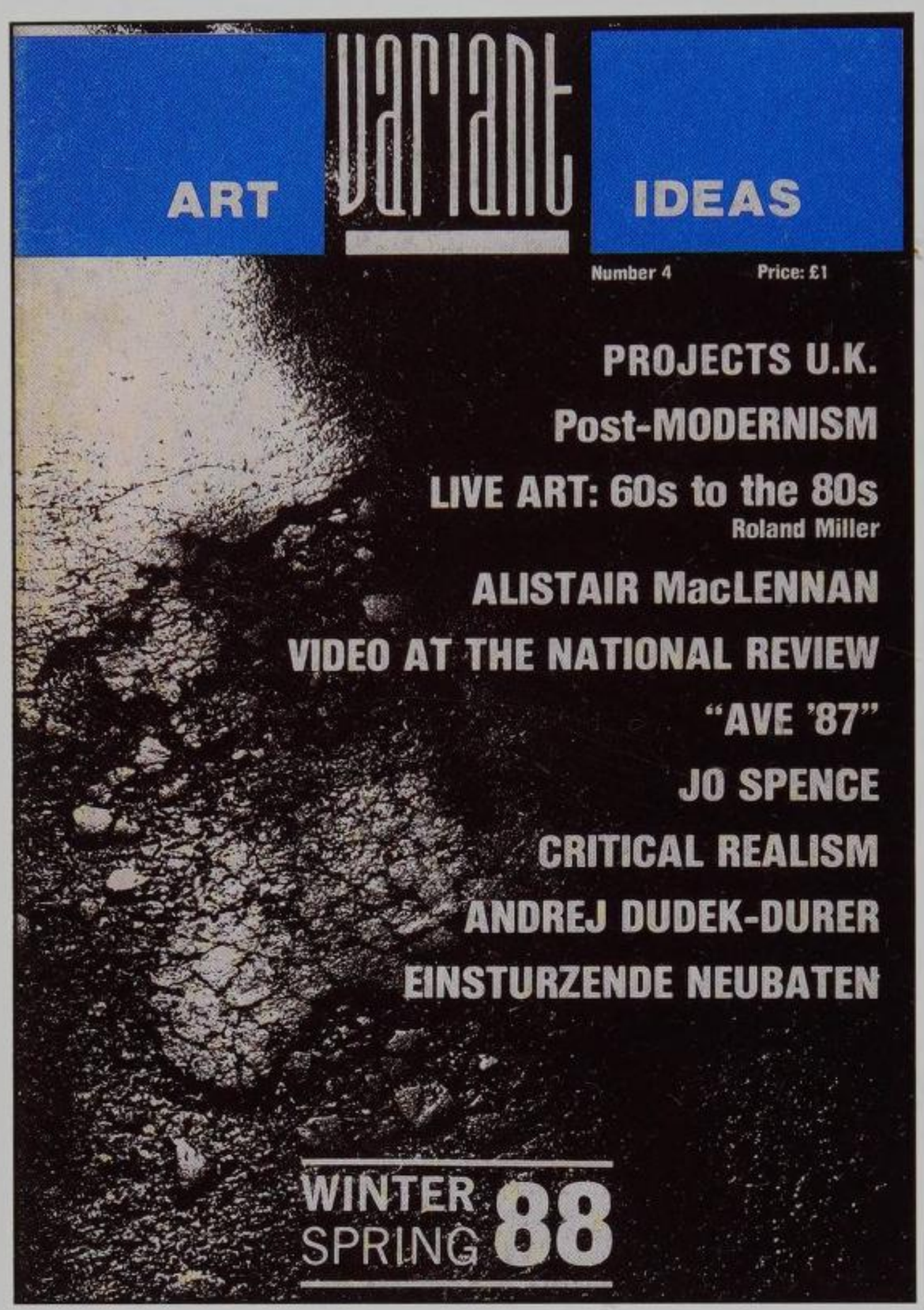
Around that time, bold but unrealistic attempts were made to strengthen European networks for video. In 1991 EVS (European Video Services) circulated a discussion document and proposal to potential partners in a new network. The aim was to make creative video available to a wider audience and to encourage a critical approach to audiovisual media. Partners were Fields and Frames, LVA, the Worldwide Video Festival, Gen Lock (Switzerland), Danish Film and Video workshop, AV-ARK (Finland), Vigo Festival (Spain), and MedienOperative (Germany). The only seeming outcome of this was one issue of a magazine called *Scope* in 1992, with features on Alexander Hahn, David Hall, and Despite TV.

Similarly, another network of existing magazines had been established through the East–West Meeting of European Media Magazines, later to become the Association of European Film and Media Journals, with the aim of exploring the potential of cooperation between the participating periodicals. The third meeting, which coincided with the Diagonale Festival of Austrian Film in Salzburg, took the theme of 'crossing borders in the global village', which pragmatically meant improving the economic situation of the journals through an advertising pool; increased support from the European Union; joint representation at international film festivals; exchange of articles, exchange subscriptions; and a joint promotional flyer. Although the rhetoric referred to film, and included such magazines as *BLIMP*, *Andere Sinema*, *Cahiers du Cinema*, *Sight and Sound*, it also included *Variant* (Scotland), *Mediamatic* (Netherlands), and later *Vertigo* (UK), titles which were also concerned with video and new media as artistic practice. A more recent equivalent to this was Mag.net (Magazine Network of Electronic Cultural Publishers), which explores the connectivities in publishing projects devoted to, or intersecting with, digital culture.[71]

Magazines

A contemporary of *Independent Media*, and a precursor to the spate of magazines that were to emerge a decade later, was *Undercut*, which emerged out of the London Film-makers' Co-op and ran to nineteen issues between 1981 and 1989. This was a tumultuous time of course and the cultural struggles that characterised the period were to some extent reflected in the magazine. *Undercut* critically explored the aesthetics and politics of film and video practices within the context of visual arts and independent cinema. Reviewing *The Undercut Reader: Critical Writings on Artists' Film and Video*,[72] Liz Wells wrote:

> Key features of the magazine included: eclecticism of style and thematic content; focus on medium, materials, and craft method; diversity of debates; interviews with practitioners; and a refusal of critical fashionability, for example, the focus on postmodernism which hijacked a number



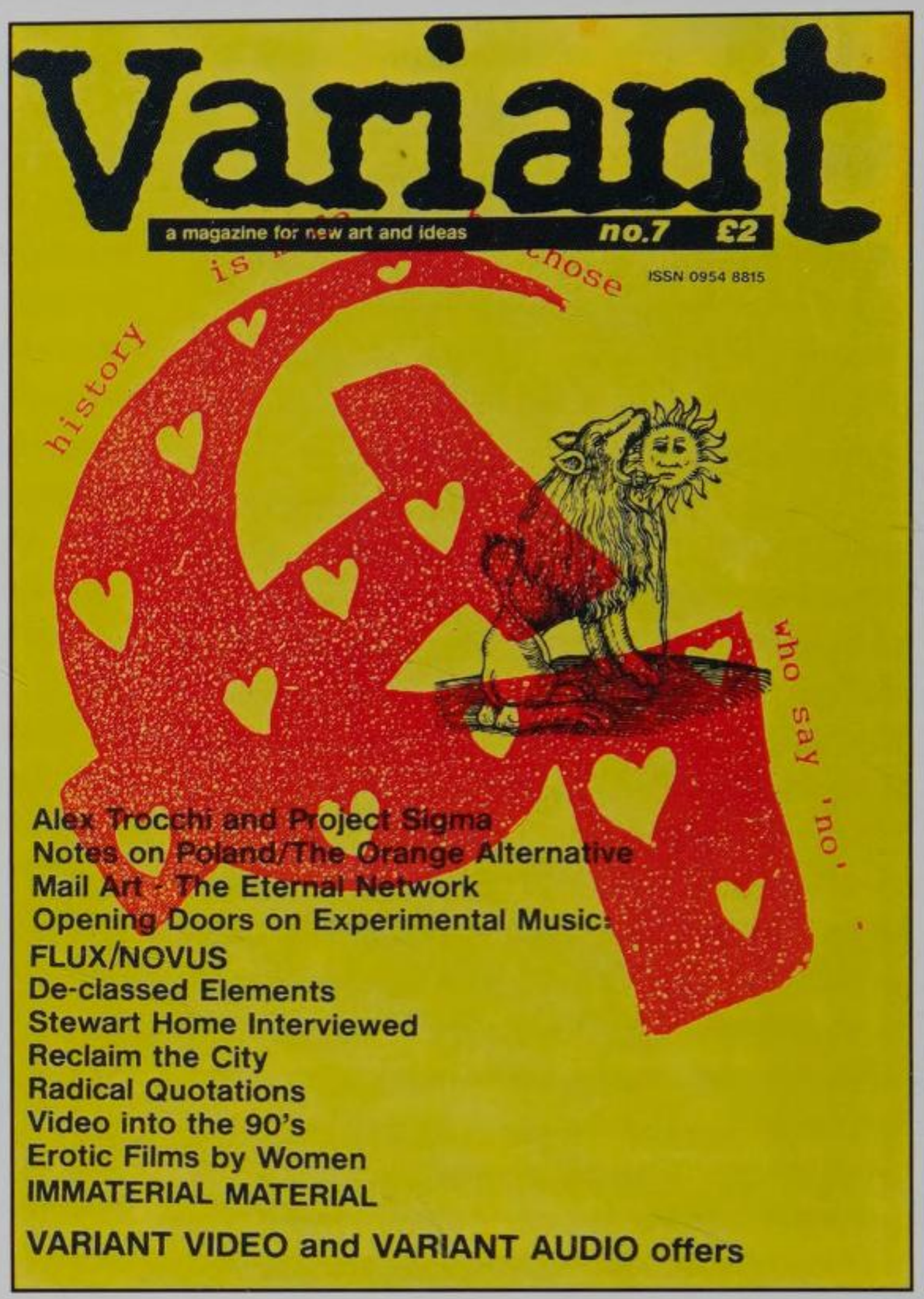


Fig. 14a (left). *VARIANT 4*, 1988.

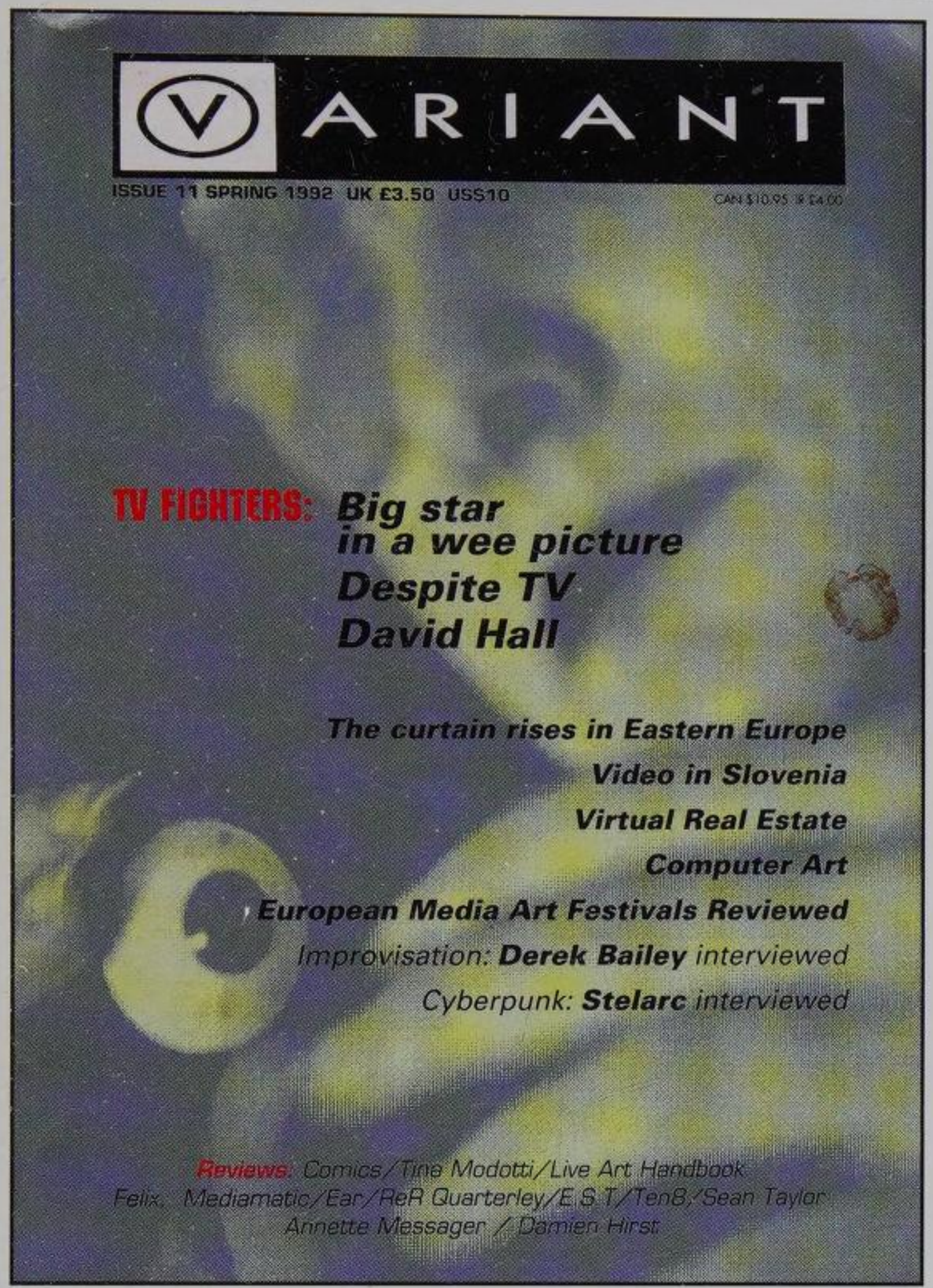
Fig. 14b (right). *VARIANT 7*, 1989.

of other magazines and journals of the 1980s.[73]

In 1989, Projects UK contributed £500 towards the duplication of *Variant Video*, 'the magnetic magazine', which consisted of two separately themed programmes and was produced as an extension of the printed version as a way of tapping into other modes of distribution for art and ideas. One of these tapes explored the use of video as a medium in an arts context whilst commenting on the politics of electronic media. *Video Art: Midnight of the Decade* included a number of interviews at the first Video Positive Festival in Liverpool in 1989: Jeremy Welsh, Eddie Berg, Mike Stubbs, Moira Sweeney, Maria Vedder, Willem Velthoven, Michael Maziere and Simon Robertshaw, plus a feature on Pictorial Heroes on collaborative video practice and oppositional culture. Later issues of the printed magazine were published alongside the 1992 New Visions festival (issue 11) and Video Positive '93 (issue 14, edited by Helen Cadwallader). Writing in *Independent Media*, Nik Houghton was to remark:

> [*Video Art: Midnight of the Decade*] is a fast moving introduction to video art. It features some stylishly executed interviews with video artists and curators, alongside a collection of striking video art pieces from students at DJCA (Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design) … [it] looks set for success, with potential markets being libraries, galleries and overseas sales.[74]

In Britain in the early 90s, new magazine titles emerged which addressed moving-image art – the first issue of *Vertigo* in 1993 included a piece from Amber and Derry Workshops on 10 years of Channel 4; the second issue was on 'Black British Cinema'; issue 3 in 1994 was a tribute to Derek Jarman.[75] *Mediamatic*, the Dutch arts and media magazine developed its format and concerns to cover design and theory, occasionally publishing CD-ROMs and organising symposia and exhibitions, in collaboration with other agencies, for example the Netherlands Design Institute in the 1994 Doors of Perception conference. Issue 1 of



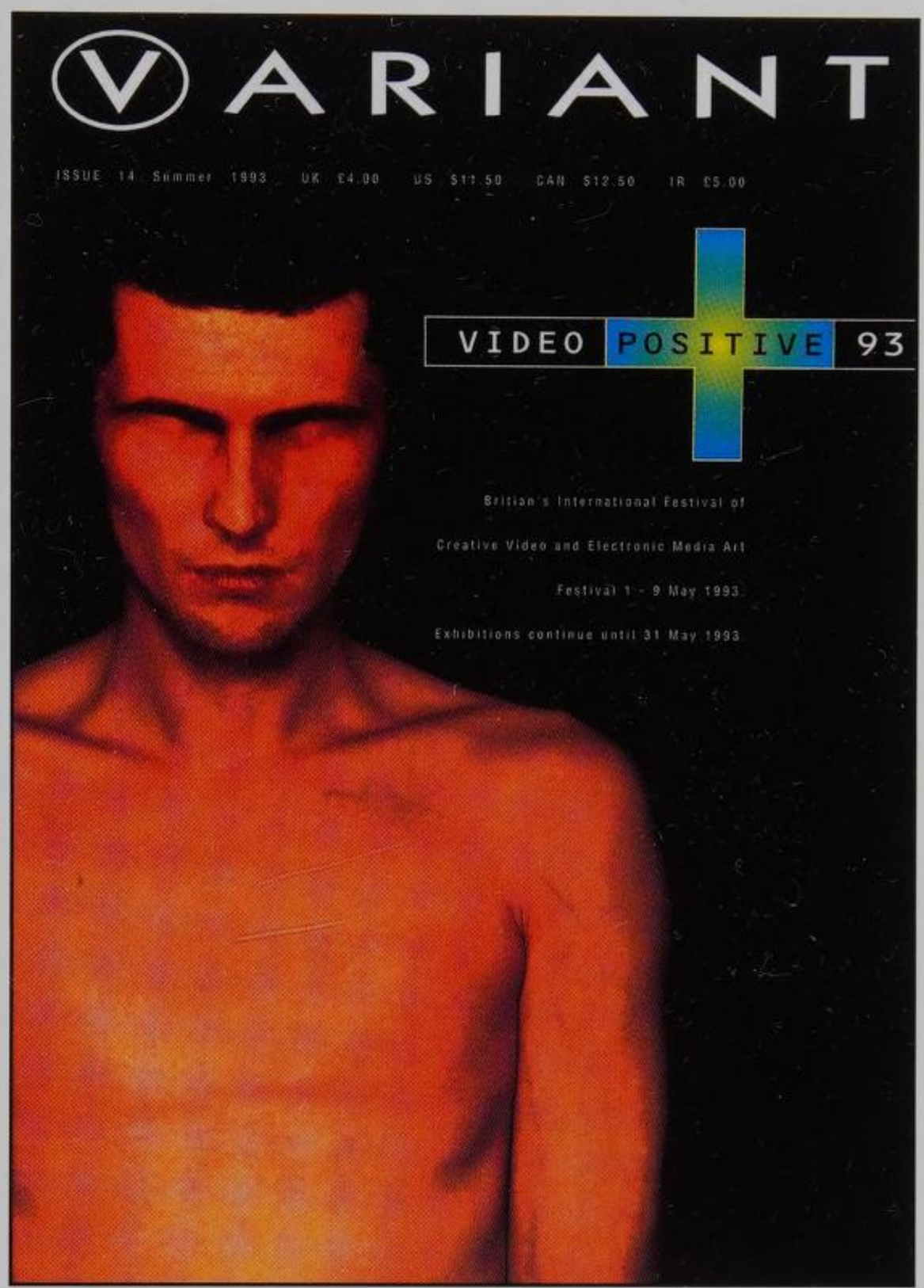


Fig. 14c (left). *VARIANT 11*, 1992.

Fig. 14d (right). *VARIANT 14*, 1993.

Images courtesy Malcolm Dickson.

Filmwaves in 1997 featured articles by Paul Willemen, and Duncan Reekie of Exploding Cinema whose article *From the Circus to the Office* examines the London Film-makers' Co-op. The first issue of *Coil* was in 1995 and included articles on or by Derek Jarman, Kathleen Rogers, Gina Czarnecki, Jayne Parker – this reflected the mix and crossover of concerns that had always been a characteristic of moving-image culture and is not exclusive of the articulation of the specific aesthetic characteristics of one particular medium.

Film and Video Umbrella

The Film and Video Umbrella (FVU) was and remains an initiative aiming to promote video art in the gallery setting and it receives support through the Arts Council of Great Britain (it is directly cited as emerging out of David Curtis' exhibition policy at the ACGB in Michael Mazière's study 'Institutional Support for Artists Film and Video in England 1966–2003'[76]). It set in motion the prospect of an audience development approach for film and video that could operate through a network of geographically spread art galleries, municipal venues and museums. Early packages were curated by Michael O'Pray, Cordelia Swann, Jeremy Welsh, and Moira Sweeney respectively, and embrace themes prevalent at their various times. Later programmes reflected shifting concerns and through its director Steve Bode, FVU illustrated the influence of new technologies and a changing media landscape. In 1994 *V-Topia: Visions of a Virtual World* was an ambitious affair. Staged at Tramway in Glasgow, and curated by Bode, Eddie Berg and Charles Esche, this represented a more proactive role as a commissioning agency for FVU, curating video and new media projects for exhibition. It also marked the shift in practice to embracing artists' video and work by artists who use video and film but who would not define themselves as 'video artists' *per se*. Recent projects, for example, have included Mathew Buckingham, Tacita Dean, Gillian Wearing, and Ori Gersht.

In the early 90s, the distribution outlets for

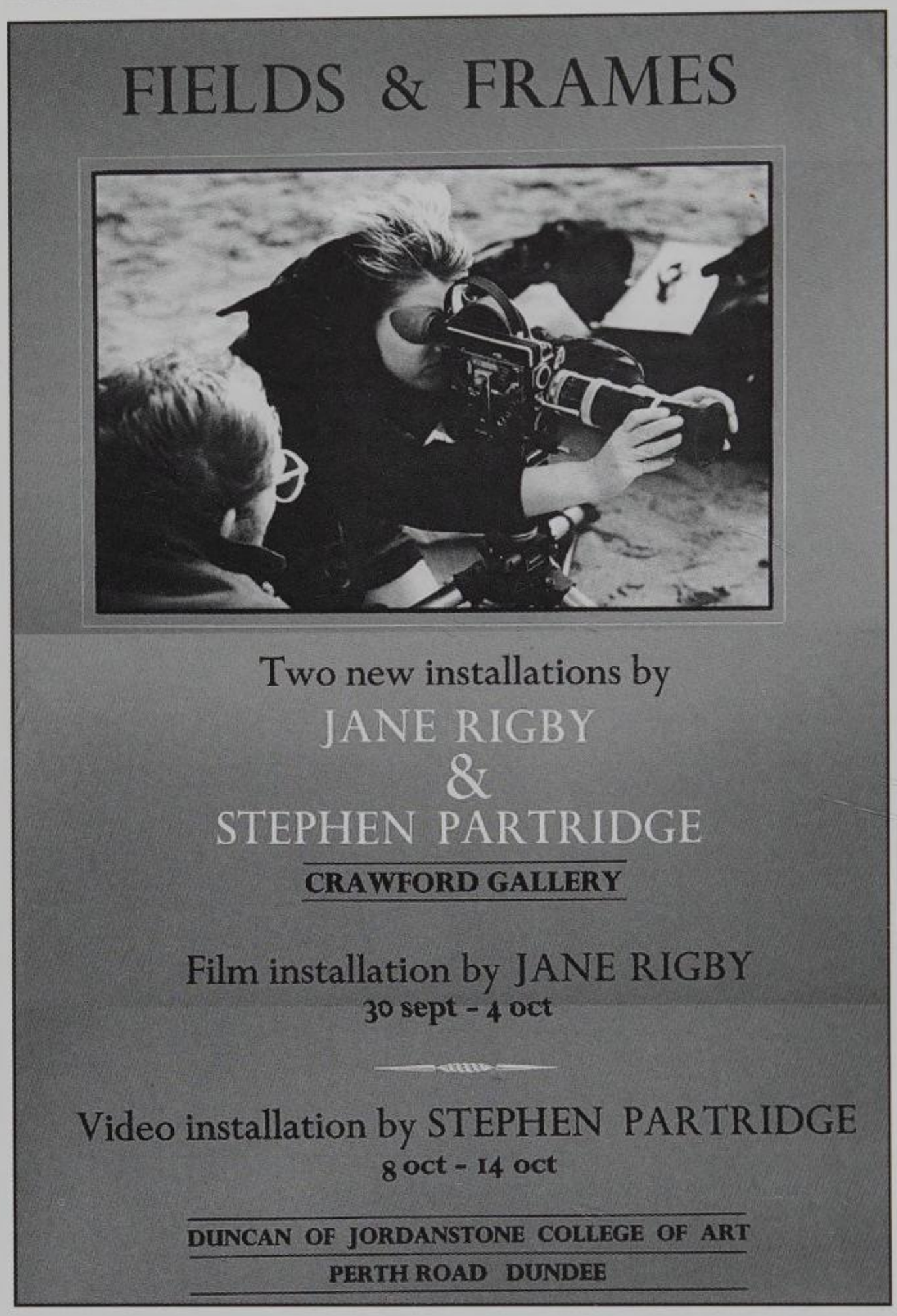


Fig. 15. *Fields And Frames*, Crawford Gallery, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, 1985 Poster.

video and film were expanding: new festivals and magazines would emerge (and some disappear!) and more galleries were now programming the moving image across the country. In parallel to FVU's curatorial initiatives, there were packages also from the LFMC, London Electronic Arts and from Cinenova. Cinenova was formed through a merger of the two feminist film distributors, Circles and Cinema of Women, and published their distribution catalogue in 1991.[77]

Fields and Frames

As previously noted, video was undertaking some significant regional developments – in Scotland at the turn of the 90s, there was some critical mass emerging around video which was cultivating the needs of a critically appreciative audience. Included within this was Fields and Frames, the arts production company, who were undertaking a considered series of attempts to generate space and reception for artists' video and television in Scotland, including the homage to Hall's television interruptions: *19:4:90 Television Interventions*, broadcast on Channel 4 in 1990.

A series of packages followed, aimed at establishing a Scottish presence within the European (and beyond) network of video activity, using the combined contacts and influence that its company partners, Jane Rigby and Steve Partridge, had.[78] Touring programmes included the *Made in Scotland* packages of the 'best of' video from Scotland; *Semblances*, video art from women artists in 1993; *Passages*, film, video and computer art from Scotland-based artists; and a programme of Scotland-based animation. Much of this drew upon the strong work being produced in Dundee through the School Of Television & Imaging, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design.

The packages on offer included a brochure foldout with an introduction and information on the tapes, but more essentially, the playback equipment of a 27-inch Sony monitor, U-Matic VCR and the flight case – with only one scart lead connecting the two, there would therefore be no technical obstacles for hiring venues.[79] A festivals database, which included events throughout the world, was also compiled by Fields and Frames, and this fed into several issues of *Variant* magazine. This was significant in building up a context for artists' work in the moving image in Scotland. A Fields and Frames application for funds to the Scottish Arts Council in the early nineties stated:

> We believe that it is essential for the venues to be supplied with a regular flow of material from alternative sources and we would seek to collaborate with our contacts both in Scotland and Europe. For example: EventSpace are curating tape packages based upon the New Visions Festival; Eddie Berg of Merseyside Moviola is developing a similar Touring initiative based in Liverpool; Film and Video Umbrella have been putting together

Touring compilations for the past two years. We have been discussing plans with all of these to see if we can create a network of regular screening venues throughout the UK. There are twenty venues that we have established as being very keen to participate in regular screenings as part of a circuit. This, taken with the results of the recent research carried out by Merseyside Moviola (MITES – Moving Image Touring & Exhibition Service) proves that there really is a demand for the regular supply of curated and professionally supported, moving image material. We would also like to support an Advice and Training Programme to help galleries come to terms with the demands associated with the regular showing of artists' film and video. A central equipment resource would also be essential, initially held and administered by the SAC.[80]

Between 1992 and 1993, a Consultancy and Research Project on Artists' Film and Video in Scotland called *Calling the Shots* (named after a noted work by video artist Mark Wilcox), was commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council. It was carried out in response to the demand put upon the main funding body by organisations promoting video and basically its purpose was to prove the demand within the visual arts sector, which was composed of a fragmented and dispersed constituency, and what would be the most desirable funding schemes required to support new work. Despite some good research and promising results for developing the sector, in the years that followed, Fields and Frames ceased its distribution of artists tapes, New Visions and the Fringe Film and Video Festival would be forced into a merger to become the Moving Image Art Agency, resulting in acrimonious splits and disillusionment in the working relationships of the artists who had built up these festivals on a voluntary basis.

Another proposal 'Towards a Scottish Video Archive' recognised the productivity of the video culture at the time across fine art disciplines and was inspired by the amount of video works being made in Dundee and the

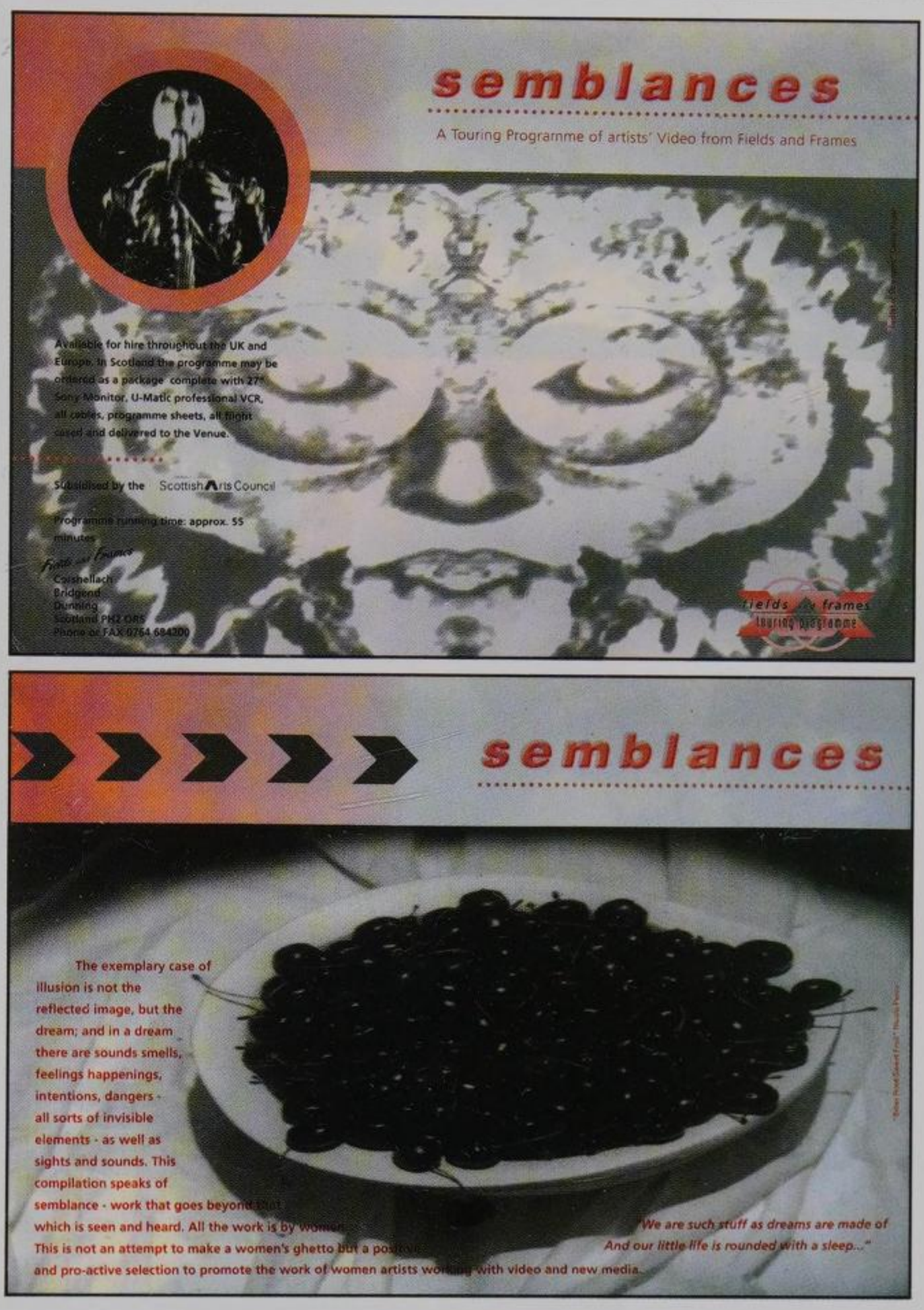


Fig. 16. *Made in Scotland,* Poster.

large representation of video in the National Review of Live Art (and the consequent amount of tape accumulating as a result of documenting the NRLA). Although this didn't progress, it pre-dated the *Rewind* initiative, and signals concern of the need for a post-*Rewind* repository of Scottish video art where its various histories can be plotted and reassessed as a valued legacy of current practice.

Writing in the Video Positive 1995 catalogue, Critical Art Ensemble stated that 'video art has often sought to combine the socially and politically transformative aspirations of both art and technology',[81] a continuity that remains through the move to new media. The example of the New Visions festival, for example, recapitulates where the 'sector' was in relation to the past and the future of moving-image practice, one which was reflected in many international



Fig. 17. *New Visions Festival*, poster, 1994.

festivals at the time. Sprouting from roots in the Glasgow art scene of the mid-80s,[82] New Visions brought together a community of film and video makers hovering between the white cube and the black box, and embraced the convergence of film, video and computer-generated work.[83] Importantly, it aimed to create a platform for social dialogue to take place

around wider political, technological and aesthetic concerns. Sean Cubitt said of video in 1991: 'What is at stake is what I like to think of as video *culture*, that is to say, a set of relations around the uses of videotape, a set of practices and a set of possibilities concerning what these relations, uses and practices may become'.[84] Swap 'video' for 'digital' and you have a challenging inflection which positions new trends in the development of media art, from strategies of using electronic networks by established institutions and autonomous art projects to 'post-media' on-line activity of an international spread of media activists.[85]

The seminar *Video Art is Dead, Long Live Video Art*[86] at Video Positive 1991 was organised to address some statements made by television producer John Wyver in his article *On the Necessity of Doing Away with Video Art* that 'we should nurture a broad and disparate moving-image culture, with many different, overlapping and often contradictory stands within it, and develop moving-image festivals in which film and television and computer animations are shown alongside works made in video by those who choose to work as artists and those working within other production set-ups'.[87] Michael O'Pray replies in *The Impossibility of Doing Away with Video Art*, attacking Wyver's argumentation as representing 'a sort of vacuous aesthetic whereby ... any politics have been eschewed along with the high culture autonomy of aesthetics central to the modernist project.' He asserts that there are 'concerns that can only exist in the domain of art, for their aims are in many ways "subversive" of the general flow of images that seems to bewitch Wyver'.[88]

Whilst that contribution to the debate on video was a fruitful one, his remarks at an Institute of Contemporary Art talk in 1995 were less than empathetic in their grasp of what 'independent practice' is. Stefan Szczelkun cites the exchange in a fascinating study: '[Wyver claims] there is no independent film culture outside of TV ... referring to Exploding Cinema type activity as *bedroom cinema*.' This coincided with 'a public critique of the term *independence* and the exclusive practices of the *establishment*' from the point of view of the Exploding Cinema, debunking the notion of 'independent' only in relation to mainstream concerns and

> the parameters of existing state funding streams ... Nevertheless undaunted by the non-existence of INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO [sic] Wyver goes on to re-define it not as an economic or political practice but as a "tradition", a tradition which is alive and kicking thanks to the benevolence of the state funding agencies and the enlightened television companies ...[89]

The Exploding Cinema were just one of several examples of the thriving DIY cinema circuit across the UK, many of whom continue to operate today.

It is within this context of an appreciation of 'oppositional cultures' that terms and positions such as 'underground', 'independent', 'subsidised' and 'the establishment' come into sharper focus. It echoes some of the issues facing the emergence of such organisations as the London Film-makers' Co-op originally, and the resulting frictions (and harmonies) with funders' imperatives.[90] That also connects back to the aforementioned article by Sylvia Harvey in the very first issue of *Independent Video*.[91]

And it connects to issues of 'validation' and 'the original' for video that impinge upon the questions of monetary value. Any technological barrier to the collecting of video art is eclipsed by the commodity value of the artist's brand name – collecting schemes by their very nature replicate the status quo, are anathema to risk taking, and are constructed to prevent a dilution of value by allowing too many products which will flood the art marketplace. Much good work passes by under the radar of the mainstream art establishment, which is why a diversity of 'independent' outlets – magazines, spaces and other independent initiatives – serve a deeper critical function than peer or mutual support.

The issues of long-term care and preservation may well be beyond the resources of many public collections, but it should be borne in mind that museums allocate lots of resources each year to maintain recently purchased paintings from decay. Paintings and mixed media by post-war artists to the present are decaying faster than the oxidisation that is destroying

videotapes. It is said that the mortality rate of a CD is not in excess of 50 years; DVDs also, it is guessed. Alessandro Ludovico, editor of *Neural* magazine said: 'In the era of "unstable media", paper is the most "stable" medium in the complex and fast-changing mediascape'.[92] Paper will remain, but U-Matic tape will die, 'It is rare for an entire art medium to become obsolete … video art may be the first to fall victim to what … Bruce Sterling refers to as "dead media"'.[93] The carrier may corrode but the information on it will migrate to new digital formats and mutable forms of presentation, a process which is likely to accelerate.

The *Rewind* collection is a resource in the progress of video in Britain as an artform and a locus for significant cultural debate, with the book presenting some conceptual core samples and issues. The artist's word is of course the clearest and most powerful component of constructing a history, and the archive of interviews from primary sources are a valuable contribution to the way artists work and ideas are located and historicised,.[94]

But what of its longevity and who ensures public access to its contents for future researchers? As *Rewind* draws to a close, the Scottish Screen archive have committed to the project 'in perpetuity' – until the end of time! That takes us back to the forum at Future Histories of the Moving Image – we must ensure that institutions work with publicly funded organisations that are driven by a commitment to the area, that have ethical frameworks in support of the artist (as well as the institution), that are lighter on their feet, and that are located in different (or several) places and are publicly accessible.

And what of the material and milieus that are yet to be excavated and assembled for the purposes of the archive? Video's variable ecology is its challenge and we must remain optimistic in that endeavor as it creates new practices and vocabularies for the specialists charged with constructing and preserving histories. But what about those works and histories under that radar, that do not meet institutional agendas, that are not talked of, taught, curated, written about and known? And where are the curators of the future with fire in their bellies? Who chooses the context for video in the 90s – the books, magazines, videographies, collections of tapes, other ephemera? The *Rewind* project – by its inclusions and exclusions, by its fixed time period ending at the turn of the 90s – leaves another burning question that is perhaps the new departure from which *Rewind* terminates.

The tension between video as a tool of social change and video as an art form should be used to stimulate debate, not polarise it. The roots of this stretch back to the earliest days of video. Paul Ryan notes the distinction that was to emerge between the European Fluxus strand in video history and the American utopian current, making the observation that the former besieged the latter as the video collectives of the late sixties and early seventies began to dissolve, and along with that the principle of the anonymous collective advocating shared ownership on ideas and production, which gave way to 'name' artists and 'signature' artworks.[95] Such polarities seem obsolete when faced with the inventiveness of new work, the convergence of technologies, the emergence of new art institutions, and practices in the social realm – but it remains a fruitful paradigm in the cultivation of pluralism.

> Never go forward without going
> Back first to check the direction.
> Brecht, 'About the Way to Construct Enduring Works', 1938[96]

Notes

1. Bertolt Brecht, *Poems 1913–1956* (New York: Methuen, 1976), 193.
2. Sue Hall and John Hopkins, 'Interview with Sue Hall and John Hopkins by Jackie Hatfield, 17 November 2004', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Sue%20Hall,%20John%20Hopkins/SHJH506.pdf).
3. Hoppy's work was recovered from obscurity through an exhibition staged at Photographers Gallery, London, organised by Addie Vassie in 2000. Subsequent retrospectives have been curated at Idea Generation in London

(July 2009) and at Street Level Photoworks in Glasgow (September 2009). See http://www.streetlevelphotoworks.org.

4. Joe Boyd, *White Bicycles: Making Music in the 1960s* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2006).
5. Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (London: Paladin, 1968), 200.
6. Michael Horowitz, 'Obituary: Jeff Nuttall, Author of 1968's *Bomb Culture*', *The Guardian* (Monday, 12 January 2004) (URL: http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2004/jan/12/guardianobituaries.artsobituaries.
7. Jim Haynes, 'My Life in the Theatre, by Jim Haynes', *Jim Haynes* (URL: http://www.jim-haynes.com/life/theatre.htm).
8. Jim Haynes, *Thanks for Coming* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984).
9. Whilst there is no tangible link to the Project Arts Centre, it is worth noting this parallel development from a voluntary, artist-led cooperative to the current structure of a full-time artist-driven company.
10. See Oliver's brief history of the Third Eye Centre in *Variant*, Issue 15, 1993, and interview with Malcolm Dickson in *Free Association* 1, 2006, both Glasgow.
11. David Curtis, *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain* (London: British Film Institute, 2007).
12. More recently Curtis was an AHRC Senior Research Fellow at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design and also a key assembler of the British Artists´ Film and Video Study Collection.
13. David Curtis, 'Interview with David Curtis', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/).
14. Hopkins co-edited *Video in Community Development* (London: Ovum Limited, 1973), which helped articulate the role of video in community action and social change, and which was based upon a number of works they had made at Fantasy Factory: 'The portable videotape recorder has made television a fast and cheap medium which can be used in social change and community development. This collection provides a practical handbook for planning a community development project in the form of detailed references and a programmed test. Techniques for setting up a project and working with the community are described and illustrated with numerous examples in the form of project descriptions from previous experiences.'
15. Sue Hall and John Hopkins, 'Interview with Sue Hall and John Hopkins by Jackie Hatfield'.
16. Richard Cork, 'Editorial', *Studio International*, May–June 1976, 286.
17. From programme notes for a screening at Lux, 2005, and at Document Human Rights Film Festival, Glasgow, October 2009.
18. Ibid.
19. Tom McGrath, writing of the 'Underground' in his last edited issue of *International Times* (No. 10, 13 March 1967).
20. A comprehensive analysis of Latham's work and ideas is addressed by Howard Slater in the article 'The Art of Governance – On the Artists Placement Group 1966–1989', which appeared in *Break/Flow* February–March 2000 (URL: http://www.infopool.org.uk/APG.htm). See also John A. Walker, John Latham: *The Incidental Person – His Art and Ideas* (London: Middlesex University Press, 1995).
21. Interview with David Harding by Malcolm Dickson, *Variant*, Volume 1, Issue 8, 1990.
22. See Craig Richardson, 'Breathing Spaces', in *Free Association* 1 April 2006, and Craig Richardson 'John Latham: Incidental Person' in *MAP* magazine, Issue 11, Autumn 2007.
23. Press release for the exhibition *John Latham in Focus*, Tate Britain, 12 September 2005 – 26 February 2006 (URL: http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/latham/default.shtm).
24. 'Researchers' Tales: David Curtis', *British Film Institute* [website] (URL: http://www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/researchers/tales/curtis.html).
25. A.L. Rees, *Stephen Partridge* (exhibition catalogue), University of Dundee, 1999, quoted on David Hall's website (URL: http://www.davidhallart.com/bio.html).
26. Peter Suchin, 'Atkinson Brisley Head' (media release), Fieldgate Gallery, London, July 2008. The exhibition was curated by Richard Ducker.
27. The exhibition ran 13 October to 5 November 2006.
28. It should be noted that a number of these organisations intriguingly connect with John 'Hoppy' Hopkins and his associates.

29. David Critchley, '2B Butler's Wharf', *Readings*, February 1977.
30. David Critchley, 'Interview with David Critchley by Jackie Hatfield, 2 September 2004', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/David%20Critchley/DC503.pdf).
31. David Curtis, *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain* (London, BFI, 2007).
32. The Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Film Council supported the event, which was held at the Glasgow Film Theatre, organised by Tamara Krikorian and John Adams. A transcript of the event is in the collection of the National Libraries of Scotland, Edinburgh.
33. From a transcription of the conference, Scottish National Library, as above in footnote 32.
34. Tamara Krikorian, *Studio International*, May–June 1976, p. 286.
35. This work is the first gallery-based video installation in Glasgow.
36. Remembered by Madelon Hooykaas.
37. Madelon Hooykaas, 'Interview with Madelon Hooykaas by Stephen Partridge and Emile Shemilt, 10 May 2007', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Stansfield%20Hooykaas/ESMH510.pdf).
38. Ibid.
39. Josine van Droffelaar, *Audio Video Installations* (exhibibion catalogue), Provinciaal Museum, Hasselt, Belgium, 1983. Distributed by the Centre for Advanced TV Studies.
40. 'Day for Night: Madelon Hooykaas and Elsa Stansfield', *Visual Research Centre* [website] (URL: http://www.vrc.dundee.ac.uk/centrespace/2004/Day_for_Night.html).
41. The exhibition presented key installations, video and photographic pieces, as well as recent work by Hooykaas at the Gouda Museum in the Netherlands, and then at Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) and Street Level Photoworks, both in Glasgow, in late 2010.
42. See the review article by Malcolm Dickson, 'Come In, We are Open, This is Art and This is Free', *Performance*, May–June 1986. Pictorial Heroes members Alan Robertson and Doug Aubrey also wrote polemics on the need for a greater recognition for video in a number of early issues of *Variant* magazine.
43. Aubrey and Dickson went on to set up EventSpace as a separate artist-run project, later joined by ex-Basement Group and Projects UK member Ken Gill, whose principle outputs included some site-specific projects in the city and the development of the New Visions festival of film and video.
44. A DVD, *Last Stands and Lost Causes*, brings together the work of Pictorial Heroes from 1984 to 1990 (Glasgow: Autonomi, 2006). [Available from Autonomi – http://www.autonomi.tv or http://www.ribproject.org.]
45. Organised by the aforementioned Ken Gill under the project name Pan-European Arts.
46. New Visions organised three festivals (1992, 1994 and 1996), whilst the Fringe Film and Video Festival staged ten festivals from 1984 to 1995.
47. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (New York: Aperture in association with the Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990). See review by Sean Cubitt, *Variant*, Issue 15, Autumn 1993, p. 61 (URL: http://www.variant.randomstate.org/vol1/issue15.html).
48. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever* [trans. Eric Prenowitz] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 4; quoted in Anna Harding, *Potential: Ongoing Archive* (Amsterdam: Artimo Foundation, 2002).
49. Harding, *Potential: Ongoing Archive*, p. 53.
50. London: LUX, 2009 (URL: http://shop.lux.org.uk/index.php/dvd/lux-dvds/rewind-play-an-anthology-of-early-british-video-art.html). *Rewind* has re-staged a number of installation works from the collection, as well as a number of single-screen works, in various gallery exhibitions: the *Soft Launch* at the Visual Research Centre, Dundee 2006; *Lost and Found: Recovered Works from the 1970s* at Dundee Contemporary Arts, 2007; at doggerfisher, 2008; at Stills, 2009, in 'Lost and Found' at Street Level in 2010 which reconstructed the video wall installations from EventSpace 1 in 1986, as well as Tony Sinden's earlier work 'Behold Vertical Devices' shown at the Third Eye Centre in 1976; in various collaborations with Kill Your Timid Notion, Street Level, and Edinburgh Arts Festival, as well as providing advice and works for various exhibitions, such as *Running Time: Artists Film from 1960 to Now* for the National Galleries, Edinburgh, 2009.
51. This can be contested however as *Independent Video* had existed from the early 80s, and a number of exhibitions that O'Pray mentions in the same article would contradict the remark.

52. Curtis, *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain*; Jackie Hatfield (ed.), *Experimental Film and Video: An Anthology* (Eastleigh: John Libbey, 2006); A.L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video: From Canonical Avant-Garde to Contemporary British Practice* (London: BFI, 1999); Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art: The Development of Form and Function* (Oxford: Berg, 2006); Catherine Elwes, *Video Art: A Guided Tour* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005); Julia Knight, *Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video Art* (Luton: John Libbey, 1996); Catherine Elwes and Chris Meigh-Andrews (eds), *Analogue: Pioneering Video from the UK, Canada and Poland (1968–88)* [exhibition catalogue] (University of Central Lancashire, 2006).
53. Elwes, *Video Art*, p. 1.
54. *Future Histories of the Moving Image Research Network* [website] (URL: http://www.futurehistories.net/).
55. Campbell (Luxonline) in 'Have We Produced Unsustainable Resources? Transcript of Discussion Forum on 17 November 2007', *Future Histories of the Moving Image Research Network Conference*, University of Sunderland, 16-18 November 2007 (URL: http://www.studycollection.co.uk/futurehistories/future_histories_transcript.pdf).
56. Graeme Rigby, Ibid.
57. 'Aims and Objectives', *Future Histories of the Moving Image Research Network* [website] (URL: http://www.studycollection.co.uk/futurehistories/aims.html).
58. Cf. http://videoheads.info/ and http://www.hoppy.be/.
59. Sylvia Harvey, 'Counter-Cinema', *Independent Video*, Issue 1, 1982.
60. Nik Houghton, 'Towards a Critical Language for Video', *Independent Media*, Issue 59, November 1986, 28.
61. 'Editorial', *Independent Media*, Issue 117, 1993.
62. In an interview in *Variant Video*, 1989.
63. Also involved in the early screenings that led to the establishment of Moviola were Stephen Littman and Lisa Haskel.
64. From the Video Positive festival catalogue, 1989.
65. Original commissions included David Hall's *A Situation Envisaged: The Rite II (Cultural Eclipse)* and Judith Goddard's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, both of which were restaged in the exhibition *Re: [Video Positive] Archiving Video Positively* of 2007. Cf. Malcolm Dickson, 'Re: [Video Positive] Archiving Video Positively' [blog review], *Dotcrawl* (URL: http://dotcrawl.org/wordpress/?p=29).
66. Video Positive '89 Catalogue, ISBN 0 9514230 0 2.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Nik Houghton, 'Signs of the Times', *Independent Media*, Issue 100, June 1990.
70. FACT opened in February of 2003.
71. Members were *Mute*, *Neural*, *Zehar*, *Springerin*, and *¾ Revue* magazines. Editors of the respective magazines in Mag.net attended the symposium 'The Work of Media Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction' in Glasgow in 2006 organised by Malcolm Dickson of Street Level Photoworks, which coincided with the launch of the book *The Mag.net Reader: Experiences in Electronic Cultural Publishing* (Miren Erason, Alessandro Ludovico et al. (eds); Mute, 2006).
72. Nina Danino and Michael Mazière (eds), *The Undercut Reader: Critical Writings on Artists' Film and Video* (London: Wallflower Press, 2003).
73. *Film-Philosophy*, Vol. 7, No. 41, December 2003.
74. Nik Houghton, 'Midnight Success', from Independent Media, December 1989, issue 94.
75. See http://www.arts.ac.uk/research/filmcentre.
76. Michael Mazière, 'Institutional Support for Artists Film and Video in England 1966–2003', *British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection* [website] (URL: http://www.studycollection.co.uk/maziere/paperintro.html).
77. 'Circles emerged from the LFMC at the end of 1979. It was a radical organisation which came from a tradition of formal and experimental film practice and cooperative organisation. It was one of the first groups to break down the boundaries between film and video work and to promote performance art and installation … for the first two or three years it was run voluntarily by Felicity Sparrow from her flat.' It was initially funded by eleven women (including Annabel Nicolson, Tina Keane and Lis Rhodes) who each, it is reported, gave £20 to help set it up. *Institutional Support for Artists Film and Video in England 1966-2003*,

Michael Maziere, AHRB Centre for British Film and Television Studies: British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection.

78. With, for example, Anna Ridley, Annalogue Ltd, London; Syn Guerin, Paris; Serap Dogu, Mirage Productions, Berlin; Brian Langer, Sydney; Jose Antonio Hergueta, Madrid; and Alan McCloskey, Genlock, Geneva.

79. At the time, many galleries could not accommodate any art driven by technology, as few knew how to operate the most basic of equipment. Even at the more partisan level, at the time of the first New Visions Festival, the only sync-starter for U-Matic decks had to be sourced from Montevideo in Amsterdam.

80. Fields and Frames 'Application for Funding', 1992, for curating and promoting touring packages of artists video.

81. *Electronic Civil Disobedience* (reprint), Video Positive 1995 catalogue, Liverpool.

82. See Malcolm Dickson, 'Coals to Newcastle' in Jonty Tarbuck and Matt Hearn (eds) *This Will Not Happen Without You* (Newcastle, UK: Locus+, 2006), and Sarah Lowndes' book *Social Sculpture: Art, Performance and Music in Glasgow* (STOPSTOP, 2003), a history of independent practice, exhibitions and events since 1971.

83. It should be noted that Glasgow Film and Video Workshop, through their low-budget film and video scheme Cineworks, helped facilitate that mix.

84. Sean Cubitt, *Timeshift: On Video Culture* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 1991), 1.

85. See the writings of Howard Slater, Matthew Fuller and Andreas Broekman on the subject of 'post-media' operators.

86. Chaired by Stephen Partridge with Simon Biggs, Peter Callas and Catherine Elwes.

87. John Wyver, 'On the Necessity of Doing Away with Video Art', in Julia Knight (ed.), *Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1996), pp. 315-320.

88. Michael O'Pray, 'The Impossibility of Doing Away with Video Art', in Knight, *Diverse Practices*, pp. 321–334. Quoted in Marina Turco, 'Changing Histories, Changing Practices: An Instance of Confrontation Between Video Art and Television' (URL: http://comcom.uvt.nl/e-view/04-2/turco.pdf).

89. Stefan Szczelkun in his study of The Exploding Cinema, 'Politics and Policies 1991–1999' (URL: http://www.stefan-szczelkun.org.uk/index2.htm).

90. See the section 'History of Conflict/Conflicted History' in Peter Thomas article 'The Struggle for Funding: Sponsorship, Competition and Pacification' (URL: http://alt-fv-distribution.net/Struggle%20for%20Funding.pdf), p. 1.

91. Sylvia Harvey, 'Counter-Cinema', *Independent Video*, Issue 1, 1982.

92. See *The Mag.net Reader* (Erason et al. (eds); also published in *Free Association*, No. 1, 2006.

93. Gina Cavallo Collins, 'The Future of Video Art in the Digital Age', *Moving the Image: Visual Culture and the New Millennium* [website] (URL: http://www.chart.ac.uk/chart2000/papers/noframes/cavallo-collins.html).

94. Since embarking on this chapter, two of the 'younger' members of British video's first generation have died – Tamara Krikorian and Tony Sinden – both in July 2009.

95. Paul Ryan, 'Video Journey Through Utopia', *The Early Video Project* [website] (URL: http://davidsonsfiles.org/videojourneythroughutopa.html). Ryan cites Frank Gillette of the Raindance video collective.

96. Bertolt Brecht, *Poems 1913–1956* (New York: Methuen, 1976), 194.

Chapter 8/
On the Reinvention of Video in the 1980s

Sean Cubitt

> It was when Thatcherism and Reaganism were at their peaks, so that influenced the way everybody thought and talked about everything. There was definitely a sense that you weren't alone. You knew you were part of something.
> (Jeremy Welsh, *Rewind* interview[1])

The opening broadcast of Channel 4 on 2 November 1982 can serve as a signpost. On the one hand, as others in this collection have noted, the new service would open up new opportunities for video art in the broadcast arena. At the same time, Channel 4 was a flagship in the large-scale overhaul of television undertaken by the Thatcher government, which had come to power in 1979. In a series of landmark policy initiatives which included the Cable and Broadcasting Act of 1984 and the Peacock Commission on financing of the BBC (1985–86) culminating in the 1990 Broadcasting Act, the Conservatives separated the production and distribution functions of terrestrial channels, requiring them to buy in a minimum of twenty-five per cent of their programming from independent contractors. The multi-channel future arrived with the widespread dissemination of direct broadcasting by satellite, while the old hegemony of the BBC and ITV companies was broken up in favour of a competitive landscape. The process caused much heart-searching. The Old Left had long accused television of being the mouthpiece of the ruling class. Now they found themselves trying, in the words of one commentator, to defend the indefensible. It was a quandary quite typical of the Thatcher years.

Old hopes for revolution, whether political or aesthetic, were largely dashed by the apparent triumph of the new Conservatism. Old faiths and old strategies crumbled in front of the innovative if destructive drive towards a monetarised, free-market vision of a share-owning citizenry, no longer tied to the apron strings of

the 'nanny state'. Old satirical clichés about Auntie BBC were suddenly turned into political attacks on its public service remit, in parallel with assaults on the welfare state, all couched in the language of privileged childhood that the new competitive environment would force us to grow out of. It was in this climate that some of the hallmark styles of the 80s came into existence: synth-pop, Blitz kids, the typographic aesthetic of Neville Brody's designs for *The Face*.

But perhaps the most significant act of the Conservatives in the 80s was the deregulation of the London Stock Exchange, which took effect on 27 October 1986. The 'Big Bang' removed constraints on who could trade, introduced 24-hour trading, and linked finance capital directly to the high-speed computer networks which have provided the global infrastructure for global capital ever since. In conjunction with a move from direct to indirect taxation, which hurt manufacturing and increased unemployment dramatically in the early 80s, this move created not only the terms for a new mode of globalisation, but the conditions for the ascendancy of finance over the old manufacturing and newer service industries, and the consequent arrival of a new class of wealthy speculators, a boom in London property prices, and a culture of easy money and entrepreneurialism.

At the same time, the new wealth was concentrated in London and, despite creeping gentrification, among a small part of London's population. Intense regionalisation of wealth in the capital city, collapsing pubic services, assaults on the old trades unions and mass unemployment created a climate of despondency, only exacerbated by the Conservatives' continuing electoral success. For many video practitioners this would provide the anger that fueled such remarkable projects as the *Miners Campaign Tapes*, drawing together workshops across the country in support of the National Union of Mineworkers' strike actions of 1984–85.[2] Chris Reeves and Lin Solomon of Platform Films in London and Stuart McKinnon of Trade Films in Newcastle were among the founders of the project. They represented a new organisational structure that had come into being with the birth of Channel 4: the franchised workshops. These were grant-aided cooperative ventures dotted across the country (eventually there would be a total of twenty-five of them by the late 80s) supported with revenue (rather than project) grants through an agreement signed between Channel 4, the film and television union ACTT, the regional arts associations and the Independent Filmmakers' Association (IFA). Unionisation gave many film and video makers not only the financial security of being able to broadcast their products, but a working environment closely involved with the unions at a time of crisis.

Many video centres outside London, such as Cardiff's Chapter Workshop, were primarily concerned with promoting a radical television model, where the central characteristic of video was its cheapness, its ease of use, and therefore its openness to allowing communities to produce their own 'television'. Some of these groups came in under the Workshop agreement, providing guaranteed wages and autonomy from commissioning agencies. Others, like Liverpool's Open Eye, the Leicester Film Collective, and the East Anglia Filmmakers Coop, did not, and survived in the same way that they had before the Declaration. Nonetheless, the Workshops did finally receive recognition from the union of what then Deputy General Secretary Roy Lockett called 'the cinema of social practice'.[3]

The *Miners Campaign Tapes* were a particular result of this movement. They also reflected the history of video as not only an artistic but also a campaigning medium, as it had been in some of its earliest uses, by Sue Hall and John 'Hoppy' Hopkins in support of squatters' activism in 1968–69. In cities like Manchester, Cardiff and Liverpool, video meant activism, as indeed it did for many of those who trained with Hall and Hopkins' Fantasy Factory facility, and went on to work in the community sector and in development. The *Tapes* were particular for two reasons. Firstly, the urgency of their production, shared by participating workshops, in the heat of 'the longest epic of collective resistance in the annals of British labour';[4] another campaign tape of the time, made by a video crew from Nottingham, was called *Get It Shown!* Secondly, the equally intense distribution they received through the National Union of

Mineworkers and the network of support groups developed to raise funds and support for the strike. Though the best known of the activist video projects, the *Miners Campaign Tapes* were far from unique, and the model of activist video was both an integral part of the UK video scene and became a critical element of schools of development studies, such as the one based in the 80s at the University of Reading. As we will see, such issues were also visibly concerns of video art. Indeed, in the pages of *Screen*, a number of articles articulated the goals of the IFA and the kinds of aesthetic concerns (anti-narrative, anti-illusionistic, anti-ideological) which animated at least some sections of the art sector. But there was nonetheless a blurred yet effective distinction between the video art world and the world of video activism.

For artists, few of whom were members of franchised workshops, a complex set of reactions began to take form, fueled by the arrival of new digital equipment. The radicalism of the Film Coop avant-garde seemed alienating, and while political sympathies were common to artists and activists, artists began to look not for negations of contemporary popular culture – as the *Miners Campaign* tapes were bound to, in reaction to often deeply biased news coverage. The loose current of renewed populism known at the time as post-modernism had a subtle, sometimes invigorating influence. The problem arose from the concern that new ideas could not necessarily be poured into familiar forms. Jeremy Welsh caught the mood in a reflective essay for *Undercut*: 'The over-riding effect of television – a kind of tautological democracy – is a process of evening out ... Although it is possible to intervene, to introduce new ideas or alternative viewpoints, the context somehow militates against the efficacy of content.'[5] Populism was, Welsh observed, at once a way of escaping from the 'cultural ghetto' and a way of moving into the media in order to critique them. Most of all, the post-modern populist turn meant that video was no longer bound to its own frame, the medium specificity critiqued in this collection by Emile Shemilt; it was open to its multiple, changing and inter-relating contexts.

The phrase 'cultural ghetto' is perhaps especially poignant. Much work of the 60s – from Beuys to Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema*[6] – had sought to extend creativity beyond the walls of the gallery, but without necessarily abandoning the attempt to take control of gallery-type spaces. By the 80s, the philistinism espoused by Thatcherite government, along with the old boys network of the Stock Exchange, had launched a right-wing anti-elitist attack on the Governors of the BBC, again putting the Old Left on the back foot, unable either to defend the outgoing order, or to welcome the new. Welsh's essay is caught in this dilemma, ending with the observation that 'the Post Modernist idea of Populism will either result in a further de-specialisation of cultural production, or it will simply deliver up another load of willing compliants to the waiting arms of the media industry'.[7]

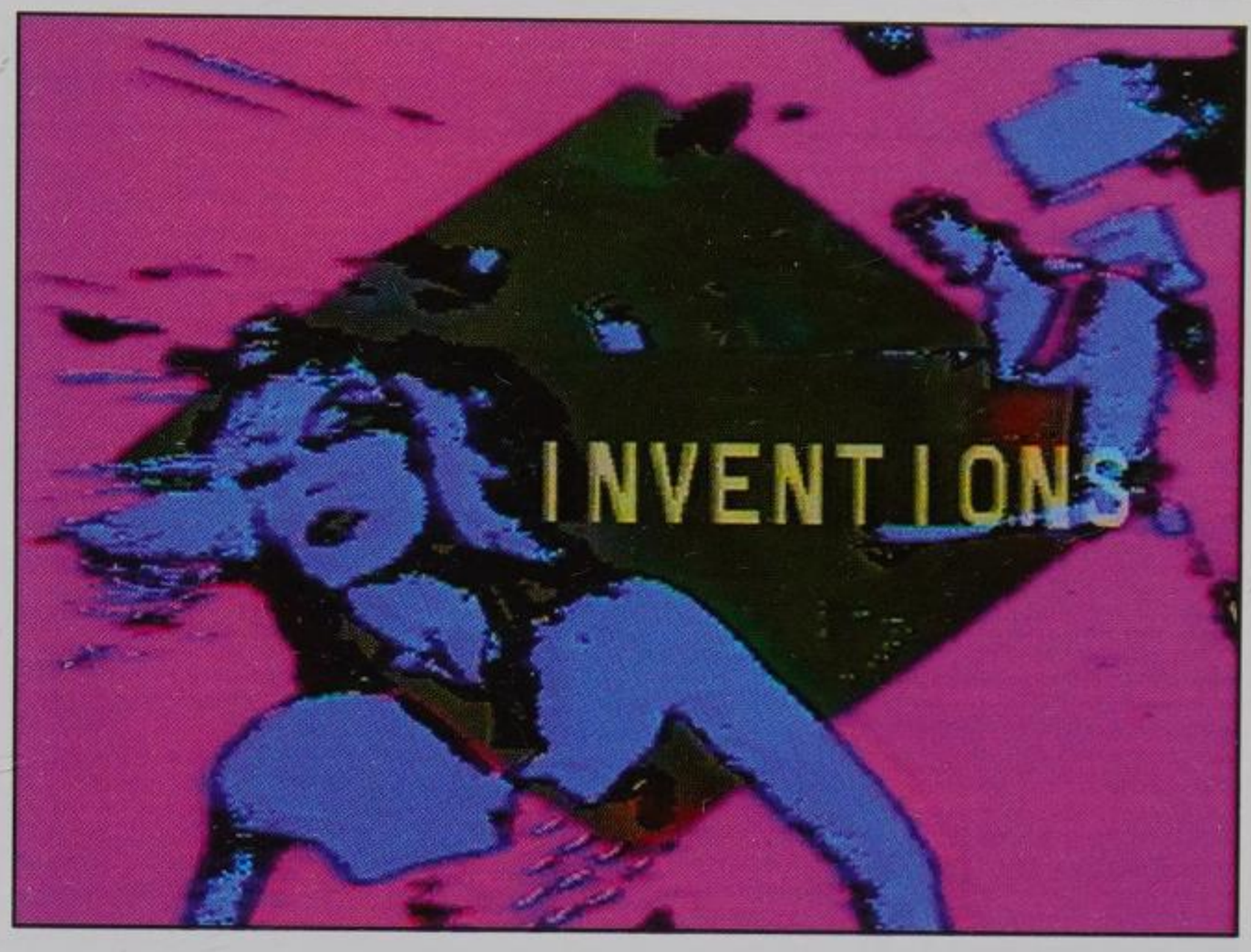
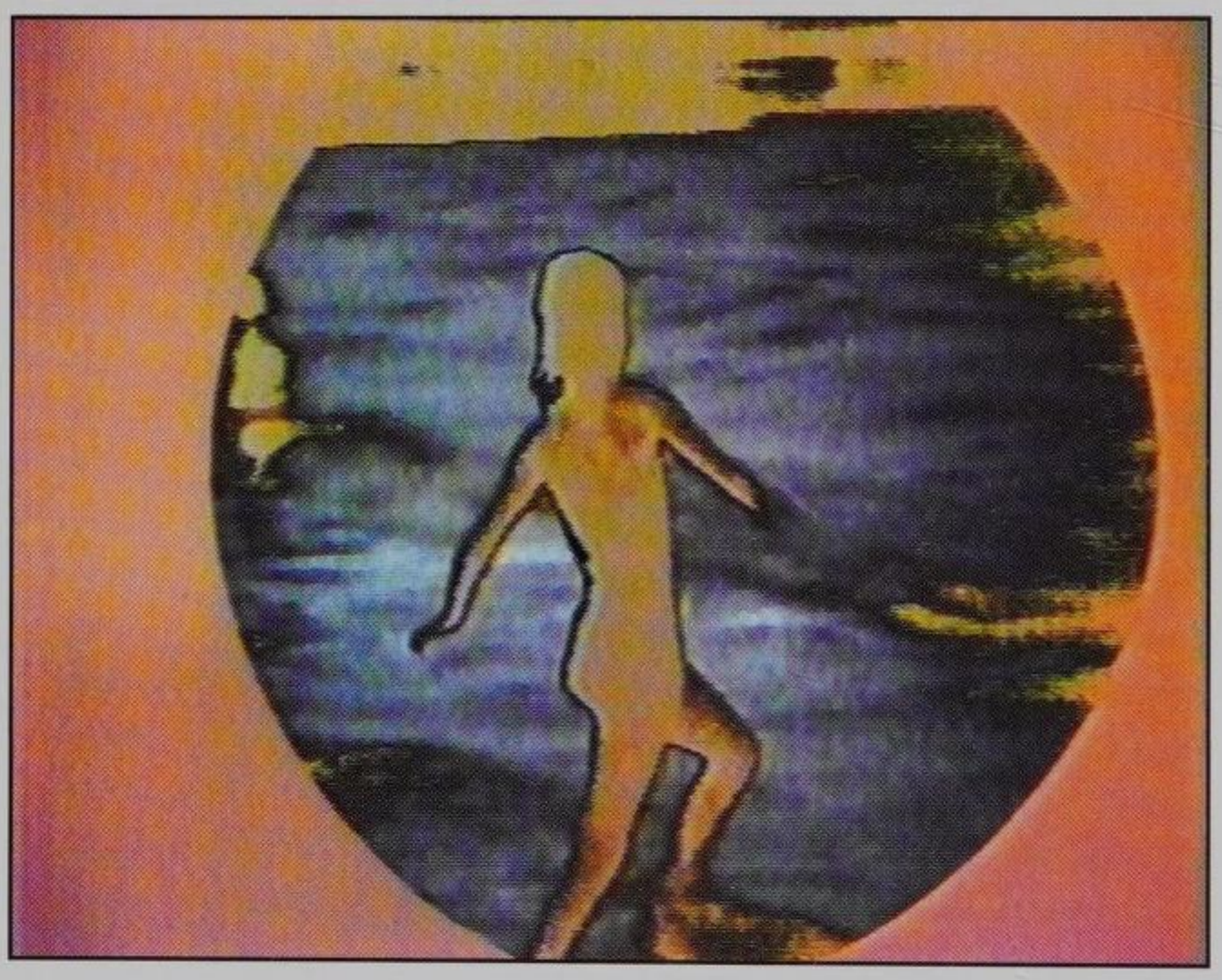


Fig. 1. Jeremy Welsh, *I.O.D.*, 1984.

Welsh's own move was towards a brilliantly superficial art of constant change, packed with references to the media and popular culture, mimicking the kinds of flips, rolls and tumbles that had begun to pour out of infographic and music video edit suites in the early 80s. With *I.O.D.*, whose title evoked simultaneously the universal debtors' language of the IOU and a premonition of information overload as 'I overdose', Welsh moved towards what Chris Meigh-Andrews has described as a pre-digital medium: 'it was absolutely non-digital. The piece was produced by projecting 35mm slides on to sheets of rotating cardboard, shooting it with a video camera and then re-scanning it off





Figs. 2 and 3. Clive Gillman, *W.A.R. (Warning, Attack & Recovery)*, 1983.

a monitor.'[8] Unlike the news programs with their shiny presentations of pie charts and swingometers, Welsh's work eschewed the apparent depth of meaning, grasping instead the phenomenal surface, the sheen under which there lay only the pretense at meaning.

That slippage of meaning was one of the great discoveries of scratch video, a loose grouping of artists and activists in the mid-80s which ranged from self-consciously artistic montages to political satire. Gorilla Tapes (Gavin Hodge and Jean McClements of the Luton 33 Video Workshop with Jon Dovey and Tim Morrison), formed in 1984, used found footage to create short, funny political clips inspired in part by the cut-up techniques pioneered by Bryon Geesin and William S. Burroughs in the 60s. According to a group statement, '*Commander in Chief* reveals the true message behind the manufactured mediation of news and politics'.[9] The idea of truth lying behind the surface of television had once been a marker of the Marxist theory of ideology. What seemed to happen here, however, was that the slippage between appearance and reality, once started, became a landslide. In other tapes collected in the anthology *Death Valley Days* (1985), the group posited an illicit affair between Thatcher and Reagan, pieced together from official footage of the American president's state visit to the UK in 1984. If on the one hand, as Dovey noted in an article in *Screen* in 1986, the deft use of copyright to prevent broadcasts of the tapes seemed to indicate that the group had indeed struck a nerve, still the wedge they had pushed between televisual image and political reality also seemed to suggest that the reality might include the obviously fantastic (an affair between world leaders). The notion of a truth which could be revealed by intervening in the audiovisual flow seemed as unlikely as that the self-referential experiments of the previous generation might change television viewing habits. Reviewing the work of contemporary scratch artists, Catherine Elwes noted pointedly in the pages of *Independent Video*,

> Some artists are now trying to make direct social comments with scratch. The Duvet Brothers for instance, cut together urban wastelands and well-fed conservative politicians. The pace is snappy and the images are well oiled by the inevitable disco soundtrack. We are left wondering whether to debate the evils of unemployment or get up and dance.[10]

At the same time, however, as Clive Gillman recalls in his *Rewind* interview,

> The National Video Festival would be showing a lot of work that was essentially single issue, politically generated video work alongside work by artists from around the globe. Often there was quite a lot of crossover. There were obviously a lot of artists for whom that was a very special

attraction, who wanted to make works that did cross over between those genres, like Tina Keane and Sandra Lahire. They were making works that were fairly overt political statements at the same time as making works that were referencing contemporary art practice.[11]

This political edge to both the scratch video and the wider video art scene in the mid-80s is very visible in Gillman's early work *Warning, Attack & Recovery (W.A.R.)* of 1984. Originally prepared as an accompaniment to a performance, as a result of which there is a lengthy passage during which there is no activity on the video screen, *W.A.R.* uses extensive tracts of found footage, much of it of military hardware in action. But it opens with footage derived from family home movies, especially shots of children playing at the beach. In the third passage, following the militaria, a hand-held camera swoops through a tangled scene of greenery. Throughout, the liberal use of vision mixing provides a broad palette of video effects, which as with Welsh's *I.O.D.* is suggestive of a pre-digital sensibility in the making. But where Welsh had embarked on a quasi-political critique of the capability of the media to address the political at all, Gillman placed his work in relation to the resurgent anti-nuclear 'Protest and Survive' movement of the early 80s.

That Cold War climate was very apparent in many of the works undertaken at the time, such as Tina Keane's *In Our Hands Greenham*, another work making great use of vision mixing. Here Keane's long-time fascination with play as a mode of expression linking people generally – but women in particular – back to ancient times and rituals, meets the demands of a campaign video. Established in 1981, the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp protested the siting of US Air Force Cruise missiles at the RAF base. Finally successful in 1991, the camp was a central experience for a generation of feminists, and a model of both peaceful protest and innovative use of the legal system to extend the grounds of protest. Keane's tape used the motif of hands which she had already deployed in an early piece from 1974 called *Hands*. In the earlier tape, the hands suggested both the ancient and magic string game of cat's cradle and the actions of weaving, an ancient women's art remade by the Greenham women, who wove peace messages into the wire fences around the base. The hands form masks for the layered video images (though Keane also recalls projecting Super 8 footage onto Sandra Lahire's hands to acquire effects), while the soundtrack replays recordings of singing, chanting, conversation and domestic sounds from the camp. At forty minutes one of the longer tapes of the period, the work used footage acquired by Keane and her collaborators at Greenham, but since the camp was extremely successful at attracting news interest, in many instances the effect was similar to that of the use of found footage by Gillman, the Duvet Brothers and Gorilla Tapes. But the hands motif altered the framing radically.



Figs. 4 and 5. Tina Keane, *In Our Hands Greenham*, 1983.

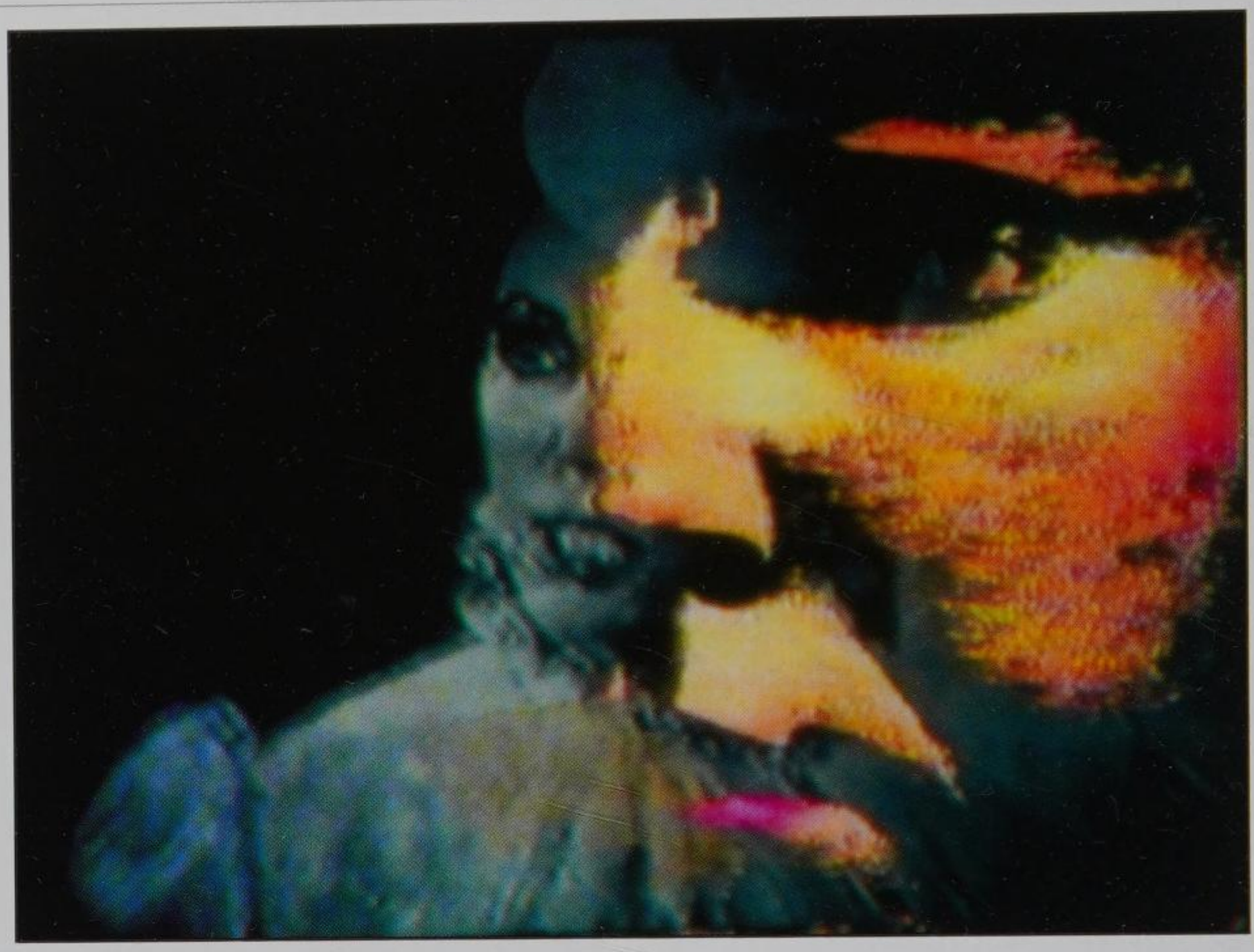


Fig. 6. Tina Keane, *Faded Wallpaper*, 1986.

Hands seemed to be the most important thing, for the whole demonstration. We were holding hands around the fence. It was all about communication and hands and linking up … It wasn't just the footage. It wasn't of someone being there, it was about the link up. It was about how the hands represent all women around the world. I think about it, but nobody had ever really seen technology used like that … 'Is this not just an ordinary film? How can I get the meaning and the experience of all these women who are round a huge diameter of fence that went for miles and miles and miles all holding hands?' The videotape for me was a continuum of their hands.[12]

Describing *In Our Hands Greenham* and the near-contemporary *Faded Wallpaper* as 'process tapes in the uses of technology', Keane discovered in the mid-80s the possibilities of video as a technology capable of multiplying the image track in ways that Super 8 film seemed not to allow, even though much of the imagery was generated in Super 8. Like Welsh's inventive use of projections on spinning cardboard sheets, Keane's improvisations using projections on hands secured the kind of complex layering of images associated with digital tools which only began to become available to video artists in the later years of the decade.

In this mid-80s period of technological experiment, the problematic relation of the image (and by extension soundtracks) to any kind of reality remained in dispute. It would be unfair to situate these artists as opponents or extremes on a scale. The politicised art of Keane and Gillman happily coexisted with Welsh's more conceptual work, and all three had strong links with London Video Arts (LVA), the cornerstone institution for video production, and with the National Video Festival at the South Hill Park Centre in Bracknell, which became the key venue for exhibition and exchange from 1981 to 1988. The problematic was then less to do with any political division, or a division between politicised and apolitical, and more to do with different practices employed to convey the density and difficulty of making political video in the context of a hardening hegemony combining free market ideology with domestic repression, and a loss of Old Left bastions of public service like the BBC. Artist-run institutions like LVA and the National Video Festival

were in certain respects responses to the loss of the older and stronger institutions founded on what felt increasingly like an outmoded belief in citizenship. The new groupings were of their nature more flexible and responsive. But in the problematic zone of political communication as an art practice, the critical problem was not intention or analysis but the problem of constructing and conveying meaning. The media landscape surrounding them appeared to have successfully completed a transition from public service and citizenship to consumerism and the celebration of triumphant capital. Central to the terrain which video artists operated on was the question of whether meanings could be anchored in their work, or whether the increasingly glossy surfaces of 80s television had successfully realised Baudrillard's (1983) nightmare vision of a hyperreal so vast and coherent that it had eradicated reality. This problematic slippage of meaning was probably nowhere more apparent than in the influential scratch videos of George Barber.

Reflecting on the possible responses Jean Baudrillard might have had to the emergent video form, Barber noted:

> he'd probably see it as the condensed version of an evening's entertainment, the collapsed version, and he'd be right. Seeing things faster than they go in real life *was* Scratch – the same old impatience as that shared by Fillipo Marinetti, James Dean or, more contemporarily in Britain, the country-based BMW-driving lager lout.[13]

In a similar vein, describing the fast editing made possible by the Sony Series V decks, Barber describes 'the technical ability to reawaken memories of a shot just gone, a process so fast that you enter oblivion or, paradoxically, a *fast stasis* – life between edits, video that keeps referring back and back to itself'.[14] The reference, appearing in an essay which also refers to the structural-materialist film of Peter Gidal, is strikingly at odds with the post-medium specificity moment which seemed to be the hallmark of the second-generation video artists of the United Kingdom. Yet the context haunted Barber throughout the decade, driving him to a vision of 'the odd person



Fig. 7. George Barber, *Yes Frank No Smoke*, 1984.

still beavering away amidst the indiscriminate landscape of Post-modern Corporate Culture, swamped by a vast TV industry'.[15] The welcome given to scratch by the industry at a landmark lunchtime session during the Edinburgh International Television Festival in 1985 was perhaps a warning. After years of neglect by the art world, corporate television was suddenly warming to video art. In a flier for the event preserved in the *Rewind* archive, Michael O'Pray poses an analogy with Pop Art, 'which also re-appropriated the images of mass-commodities in Western society, both in an ironic and witty way and in a more critical and serious one'. The realisation that the techniques of scratch were so instantly recuperable by the industry was exactly what both Welsh and Elwes had argued, and yet the completeness of its assimilation still came as a surprise. For the most part, the movement was over within a year.

Yet it left behind some remarkable work, not least Barber's *Yes Frank No Smoke*, which bears up extremely well with the digital generation of the early 21st century despite its almost exclusively analog production. The tape extracts a brooding tension around loss of innocence and broken communications from two rather undistinguished Hollywood films, *The Deep* (Peter Yates, 1977) and *The Blue Lagoon* (Randall Kleiser, 1980), the latter graced by the cinematography of Néstor Almendros. The success of the tape derives in equal measure from its own pre-digital aesthetic and from the imma-

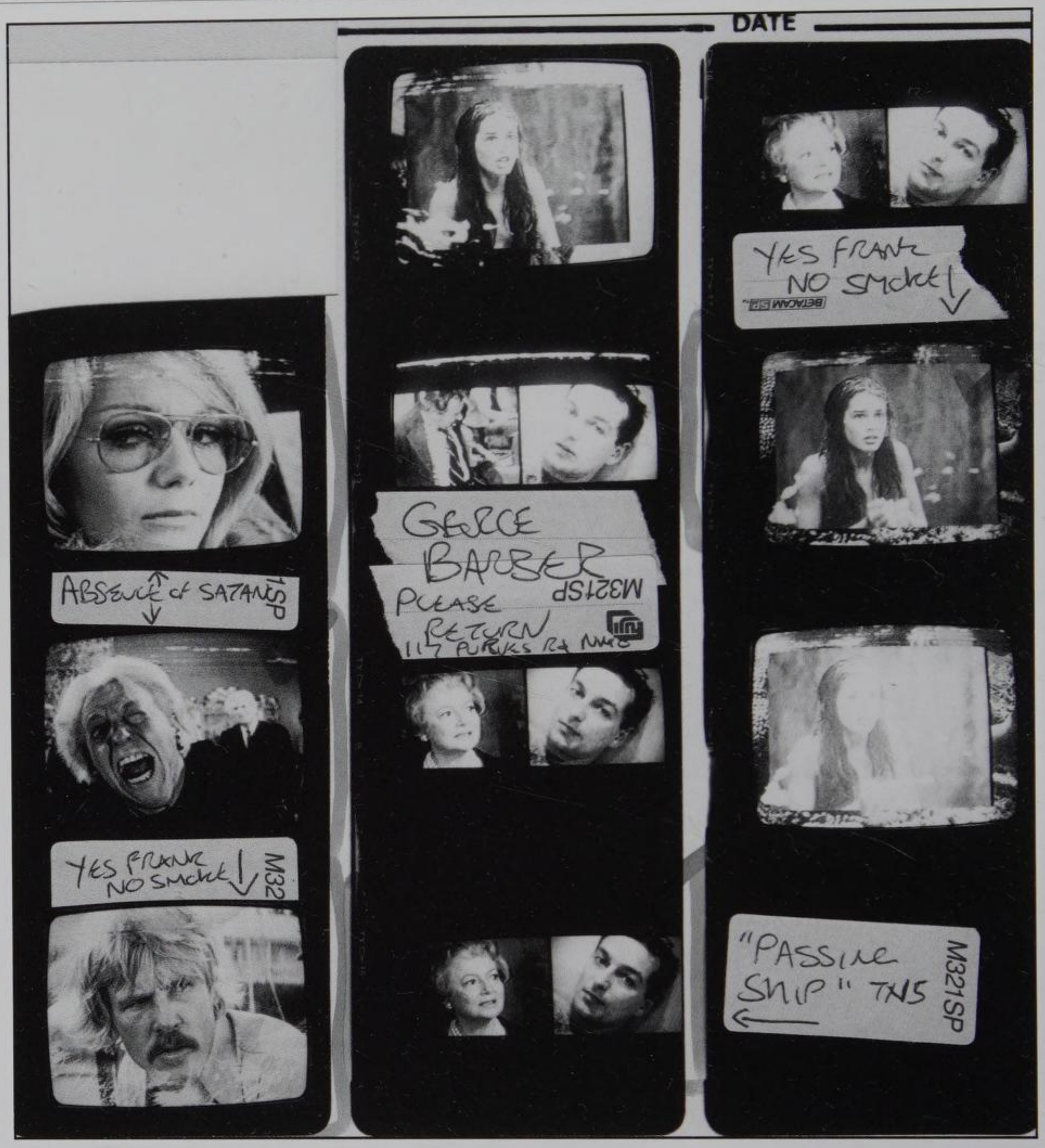


Fig. 8. George Barber, collection of positive prints from a negative strip, including *Yes Frank No Smoke* video stills, 1984.

nent anxieties which inhabit its source material, and which it draws out into a palette of saturated primaries and moiré patterns. If the synthesiser and percussion score has the hallmarks of its period in musical taste, the mix of audio samples is still sprightly, the repetitions never quite meaning the same the second, third or fourth time around, not least as they return in more distorted forms later in the piece. Drawing on the mesmeric pleasures of contemplation which footage of water seems to have conjured up since the earliest Lumière Brothers films, *Yes Frank No Smoke* reduces drama to its binary poles, the thought-free attraction of colour in motion, and the tickle of an unspoken cultural nervousness. In its sheer generality, in the way it abstracts anxiety from either its causes or the people who are supposed to experience it, the tape approaches the abstraction of the digital.

Though experimental computer animation had begun in the UK in the 60s, and had attracted Malcolm Le Grice at the beginning of the 70s,[16] it was not taken up in the video art scene until the end of the decade when John Butler (for example *World Peace Thru Free Trade*, 1989) and Richard Wright (for example *Superanimism*, 1988–91) began to work in digital formats whose political content drew them towards the same cultural ambit as video artists. As Richard Wright recalls, scratch

> built up a visual language that articulated

the oppositional energy of a whole social group. For the computer animators of the same time, a curious 'funnelling' effect took place instead. ... their work became narrowed down on to a certain range of visualising increasingly identified with corporate conformity.[17]

It was just such archetypally corporate associations which would fuel Butler and Wright in their expropriation of the smooth surfaces and geometric perfection of digital animation for a socially engaged parody. For the video artists, however, as in the case of Chris Meigh-Andrews' *Interlude (Homage to Bugs Bunny)* of 1983, animation still meant the styles of Chuck Jones, in this instance re-edited to create a labyrinth of repetitive action punctuated by the addition of video zooms to the found footage. Meigh-Andrews notes at least four levels of action for the tape:

> For me *Interlude (Homage to Bugs Bunny)* was important because it became 'physical', both because of the use of duration, which I had learned from the structuralist film-makers, and rhythmical because of what I had learned from listening to Reich. It was also nostalgic, because it referred to my childhood television viewing, and conceptually interesting to me because it referred to the 'flow' of programming which by now seemed to define the medium of television so specifically.[18]

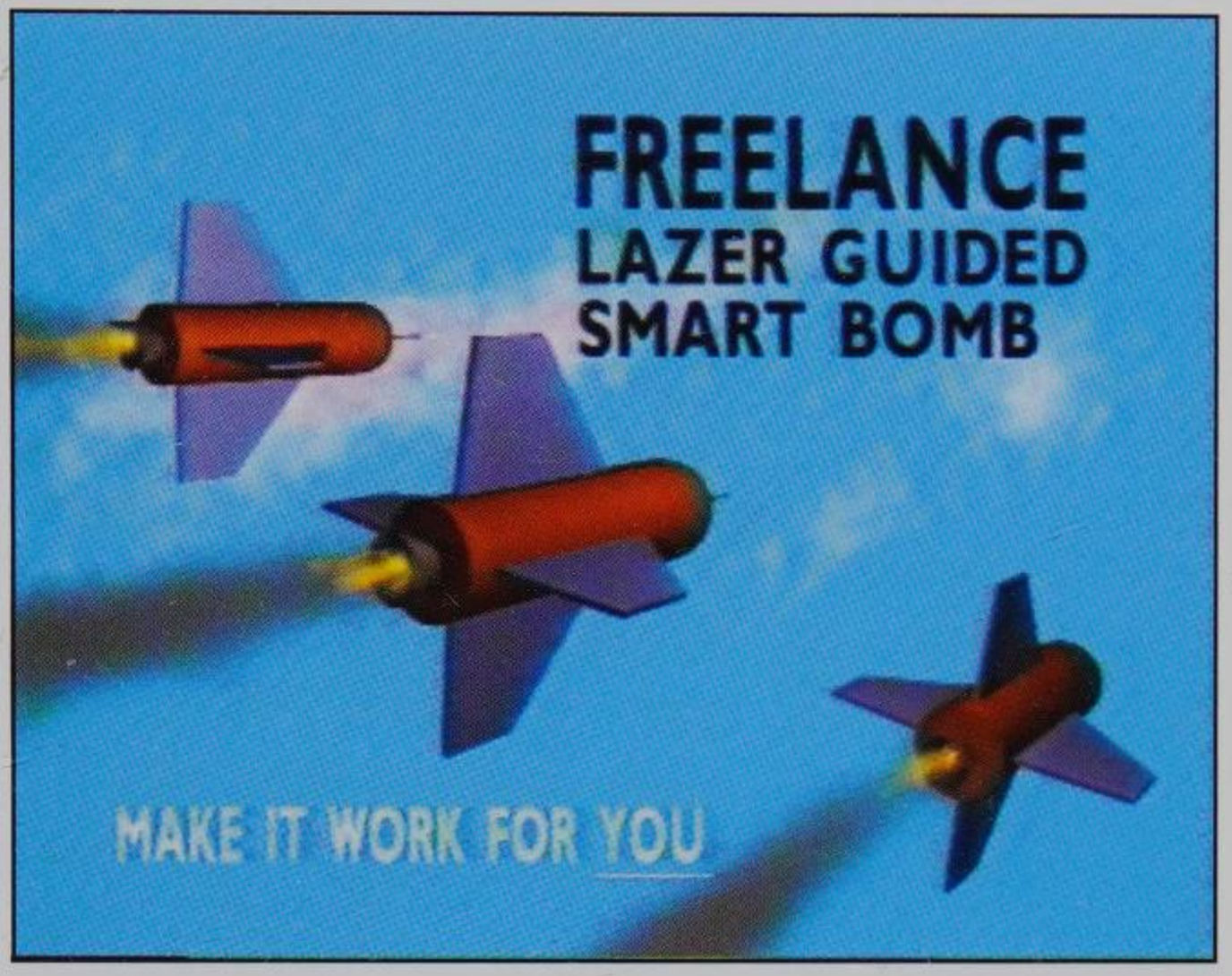


Fig. 9. John Butler, *World Peace Through Free Trade*, 1989.

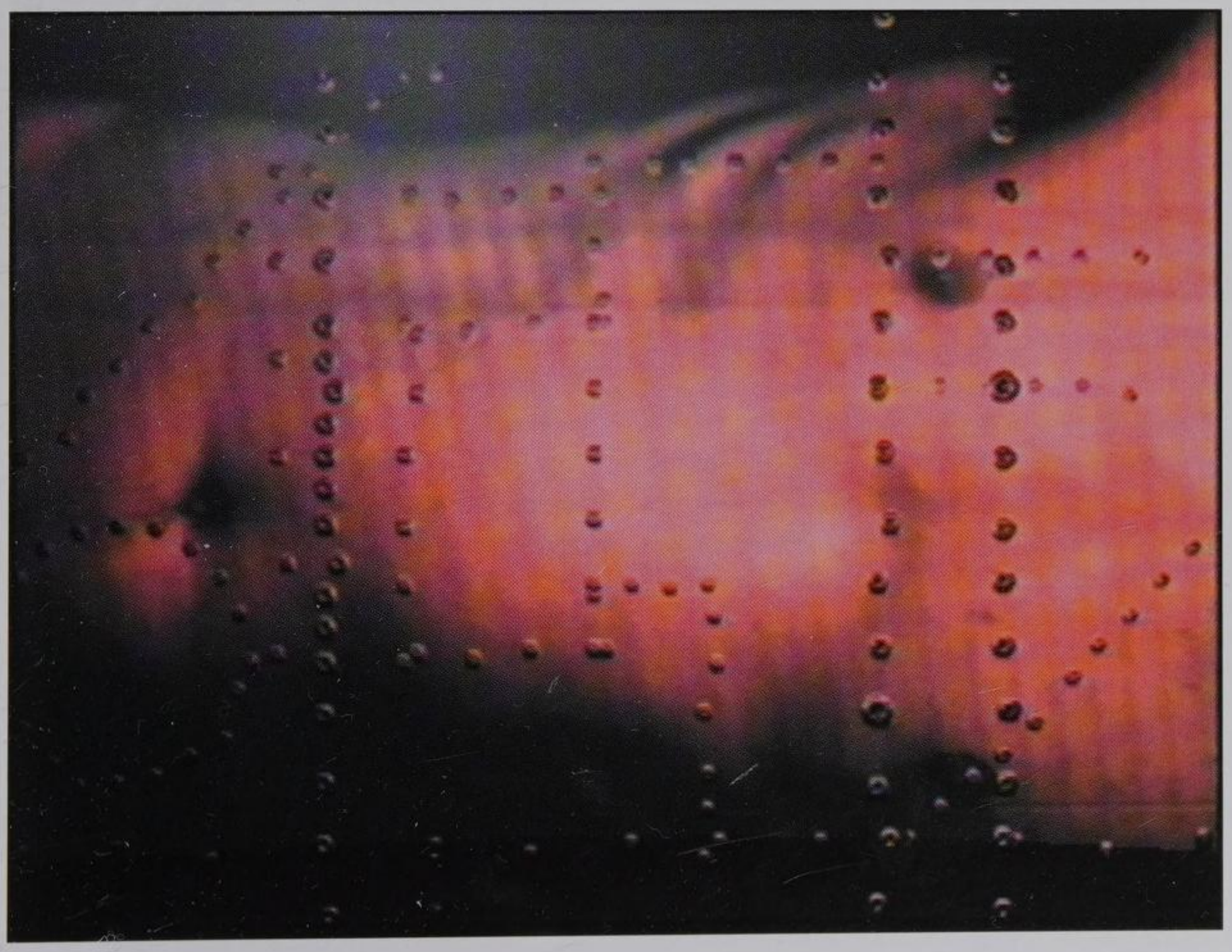


Fig. 10. Richard Wright, *Superanimism*, 1988–91.



Fig. 11. Chris Meigh-Andrews, *Interlude (Homage to Bugs Bunny)*, 1983.

Though antedating scratch, Meigh-Andrews' tape appeared in scratch contexts, adding to the variously critical or post-modern applications an articulation with structure, system and the material presence of the object which refers, among others, to the structural-materialist film work of LeGrice (for example *Berlin Horse* of 1970). For her part Catherine Elwes parodied scratch in her 1985 tape *Gunfighters*, in which her nephew and his playmate enact a violent game of shooting and dying, a game which she edits in the first part of the tape 'how the boys wanted it to be – as much like telly as possible'. The cutting approximates to the scratch style, punning on 'toys for the boys' while at the same time portraying with something close to shock – in the second half of the tape the artist is heard repeatedly asking the boys why they play like this – the apparent inevitability of violence as an intrinsic part of male play. Such personal devices, whether Meigh-Andrews' nostalgia for childhood or Elwes inquisition of childhood violence, while in certain senses prefiguring a digital aesthetic, were at the time remote from it in their manner of working and their emotional tenor, every bit as much as in their choice of tools.

It was perhaps the apparent affectlessness of Barber's work that aggravated Elwes. Formalist abstraction, newly informed by systems theory, was centrally important to computer media at the time, including the organic geometries of William Latham, and similarly abstract forms in analog video, such as Peter Donebauer's Videokalos synthesised imagery, were also displaced from the centre of the LVA culture. Thus Steve Hawley, characterising the new grammar of proto-digital edits (squeezes, flips, tumbles, lozenges, pixellations ...) saw these effects as foregrounding the punctuating function of edits, like 'a written sentence which consists only of elaborate commas and full stops', noting that their extensive use in advertising parallels the advert's function as a punctuation in televisual flow, accusing them of banality, and suggesting that, in using such effects, the US artist John Sanborn 'has found a form of expression that mirrors Western society in the early 80s: its obsession with pace and technology matched by a jewel-like surface, which reflects much but remains opaque'.[19] In context it is clear that this is not an achievement Hawley admired. It speaks indeed to Hawley's own fascination with language, semantics and the generation of meaning in the interface between images and words, an exploration which raised in profound ways the problem of the slippage of meaning. In an analogue world, meanings proliferated. In a digital world, he implies, they not only proliferate but now no longer stick to reality or to the emotional life of audiences. Their surfaces are in fact vacuums.

On the other hand, such effects could become tools for a new mediation of campaign video, as in the case of Simon Robertshaw's 1987 *Biometrika*, a single-channel tape which made the most of digital editing effects while analysing the relations between the disturbing history of British eugenics and a case of forced sterilisation upheld by the House of Lords in respect of a young woman with Down's Syndrome. Here there was not only a parody of television news' use of computer-generated graphics and edits, but more significantly an implicit argument that the use of digital, and therefore numerical, codes to structure imagery had a directly analogical or isomorphic relation to the disciplinary society of which eugenics was such a pernicious instrument. At a time when Foucault's later work on biopolitics was only just beginning to be known in the UK, Robertshaw's tape made a suggestive case that formal properties might not only serve the

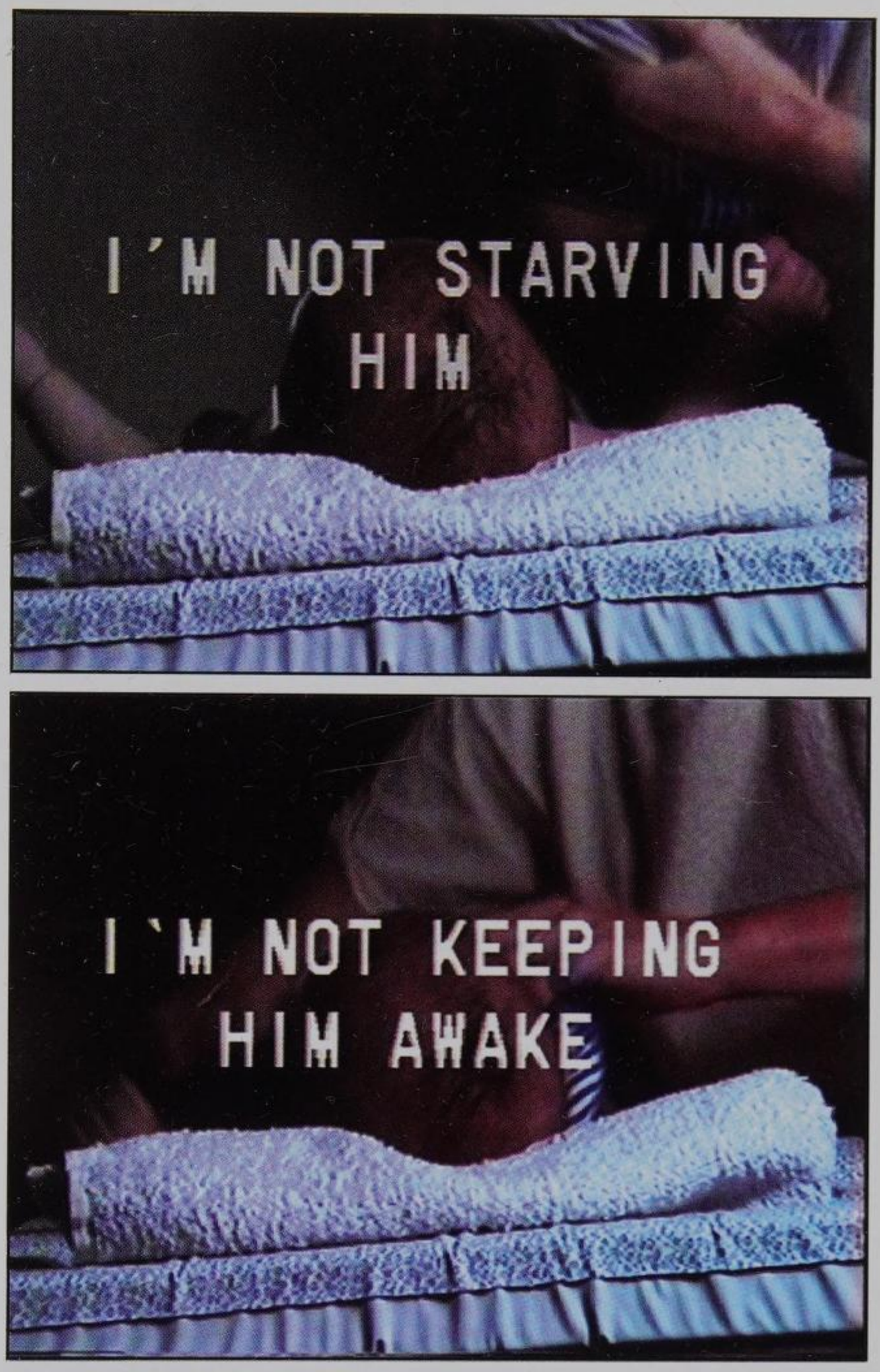
purposes of making new content newly visible: they might also serve the interests of power.

In these debates over the value and meaning of technologies, the video artists of the 80s generation shifted the emphasis in the definition of video one more time. After the medium specificity derived from Greenberg's modernist aesthetics, with Hall in particular there is a move towards thinking video as an alternative mode of television, a modality that allows and indeed encourages thinking of the medium in terms of its social and political responsibility. This is as true of Ian Bourne and Kevin Atherton as it is of Hoppy Hopkins or Gorilla Tapes. But in the pre-digital moment, there is a halt in the progressivist discourse. It is no longer a question of how to intervene in or replace television, nor one of rushing to secure access to the best equipment. In fact many artists, like George Barber and John Butler, did have access to such equipment, and later in the decade, as prices began to fall, artists like Judith Goddard secured access through educational institutions, notably Duncan of Jordanstone in Dundee.

But it was precisely at the point at which these tools, or their immediate forebears, began to be available that the doubts begin to be voiced. In one way, Pratibha Parmar's experience is typical:

> I remember watching it with the editor and couple of friends in the edit room on Three Machine U-matic Tapes. Now it sounds so archaic but at that point it was the highest video technology we could get. I had a Three Machine so I could do fades and dissolves and all those kind of things. It was very moving.[20]

The available analogue machinery seemed capable of everything that both anger (against British racist attacks) and poetry could demand, and the edit-room experience was moving in itself, as well as for the content of the work at hand. In *Sari Red* (1988), Parmar creates an articulation of rage against the racist murder of South Asian woman Kalbinder Kaur Hayre with the sacred and the enduring in the form of blood and the sari of the title, in a tape which rhymes the scarlet splash of blood with the endlessness of the menstrual cycle, the



Figs. 12 and 13. Catherine Elwes, *Gunfighters*, 1988.

vulnerability of a woman's body with its holiness across times and borders. But if for Parmar three-machine editing was in itself a moving experience, for others the newer tools began to be seen as suspect, as replacing content with technique, of regendering video as a male technological preserve. In this way video was no longer pitched as not-film, or as not-TV, or even as not-traditional art, but as not-digital. This was a brief moment perhaps, coinciding with the emergence of sophisticated visual tools in the last generation of analogue editing, but is indicative of a peculiarity about the video culture of the 80s. This cannot be entirely bracketed as anti-commercialism. Too many of the active participants in the culture either worked with or



Fig. 14. Simon Robertshaw, *Biometrika*, 1987.

expressed their enjoyment of popular mainstream culture for that to be the case.

Indeed, such implications of popular and political cultures were rife in a number of works from the period, perhaps most notably in Isaac Julien's 1983 *Who Killed Colin Roach*, his graduation work from Central St Martins where he had studied with Tina Keane. In this sharp documentary on the protests against the killing in custody of a young black man, street politics is skillfully mixed with the dub music of the Mad Professor, and Roach's death seen as both a symptom of endemic racism and as the generator of intense creativity in protests against it. In later works like *This is Not an AIDS Advertisement*, Julien would also skillfully blend politics



Fig. 15. Prathiba Parmer, *Sari Red*, 1988.

with style, grace and desire. Something similar could be said of John Scarlett-Davis, whose *Chat Rap* in many ways replicated the nightclub Blitz scene, but inflected it with a kind of passionate urgency that pitched gay love and the love of fashion against the moralising climate of Thatcher's AIDS policies. Among the beneficiaries of the Workshop declaration, the Black Workshops, including Sankofa which Julien co-founded, tended to work in film: Black Audio Film Collective, Ceddo and Retake made work with varying degrees of avant-garde elements. The relation between art and activism came to the fore once more in this fraught ground. Of all people, the novelist Salman Rushdie launched a critical attack on Black Audio and Sankofa in the pages of *The Guardian* newspaper, while Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall among others replied with spirited defences of Sankofa and Black Audio's demand for a new form for new content.[21]

While their work falls beyond the remit of the current research, it exhibits much of the cultural concerns of the video culture of the 80s: a clear political trajectory, and a willingness to experiment with complex layers of imagery, using superimposition within frames as well as montage between them, but eschewing the available digital tools. A sense of political urgency rather than any allegiance to documentary realism seems to have shaped the aesthetic decision-making. Ceddo and Retake both argued that the need to speak with the Black British and British Asian communities was more significant than formal experiment. Yet neither was dogmatic in this idea: they both pursued, respectively, documentary and narrative drama as communicative strategies, rather than as ethical or aesthetic imperatives. The struggle for racial justice in the UK which informed Pratibha Parmar and the workshops, as well as other individual videomakers like Peter Harvey, was open to documentary and art modes, to authorial and to community productions, and the crucial institutions of the culture like *Independent Media*, LVA and the Bracknell Festivals moved readily between modes, as indeed did tape makers themselves.

The central dispute between the pre-digital and the digital seems not to have been conducted at the level of signal, code, pixellation,

sampling, the loss of fields or any other technical component of the two systems. Nor, in the cases of Gillman, Barber and Welsh in particular do they seem to have been based in reluctance to work within shots to edit elements. Gillman indeed, in his NLV tapes as well as his collaboration on *Saboten Boi* with Nine Attrition Magic, was a pioneer of non-linear editing and digital effects. No doctrine of documentary truth seems to have been in play. Instead, the core problem seems to have belonged to a cultural allegiance to a political direction. Among the people associated with LVA and the Bracknell video festivals there were many variations on this direction, far too many to allow the video culture of the 80s to be characterised as a coherent ideological platform. What does cohere, however, is a desire to maintain a certain gravity, a centripetal quality, to the meanings generated in often poetic, multi-accented, polyvocal and polysemic works. Pure abstraction of the kind explored earlier by Peter Donebauer, was a cause for anxiety as the innovative spritual or modernist drive became the material for the simply replicable abstractions of mainstream effects editing. What may have been problematic in the specific form of digital abstraction was the proliferation of meanings beyond either the artist's intention or the general field of ideological struggle in which individual pieces and the culture more generally sited themselves. Such was Elwes complaint, that some of the more proto-digital works of scratch left themselves so ambiguous that audiences did not know whether 'to debate the evils of unemployment or get up and dance'. The debate then was not over analog and digital form, but over their characteristic functions.

It was undoubtedly the case, as the epigraph from Jeremy Welsh at the head of this chapter suggests, that this clinging to what may, even at the time, have seemed an outmoded form of political aesthetics, was the direct result of the way modernity, progress, technology and even hope itself had been seized upon by the political Right as their banner. The Good Life was described in every advert, in every political speech, and in the voting patterns of the decade, as the property of neo-liberal Conservatism. In retrospect, at least some elements of the aesthetics of 80s

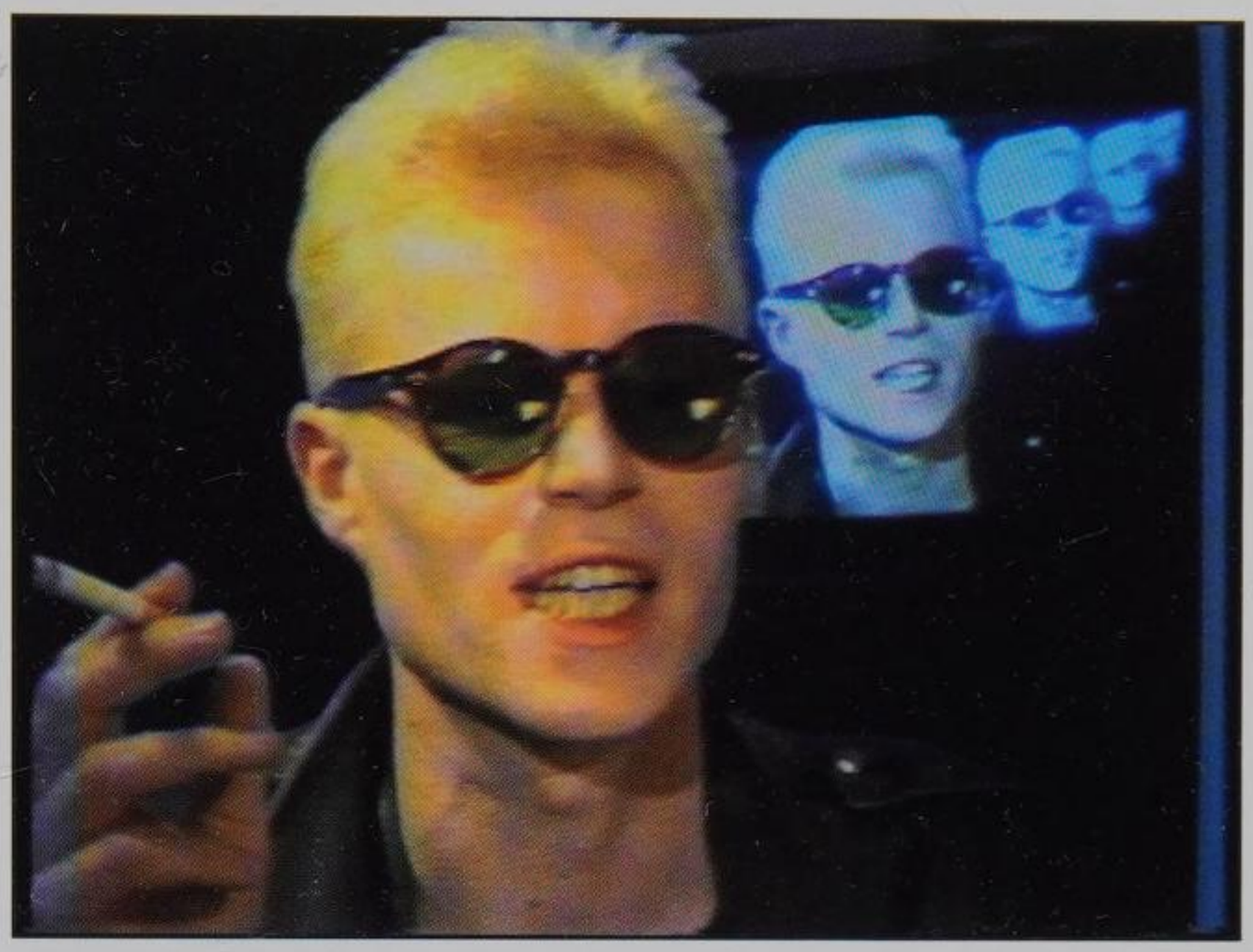
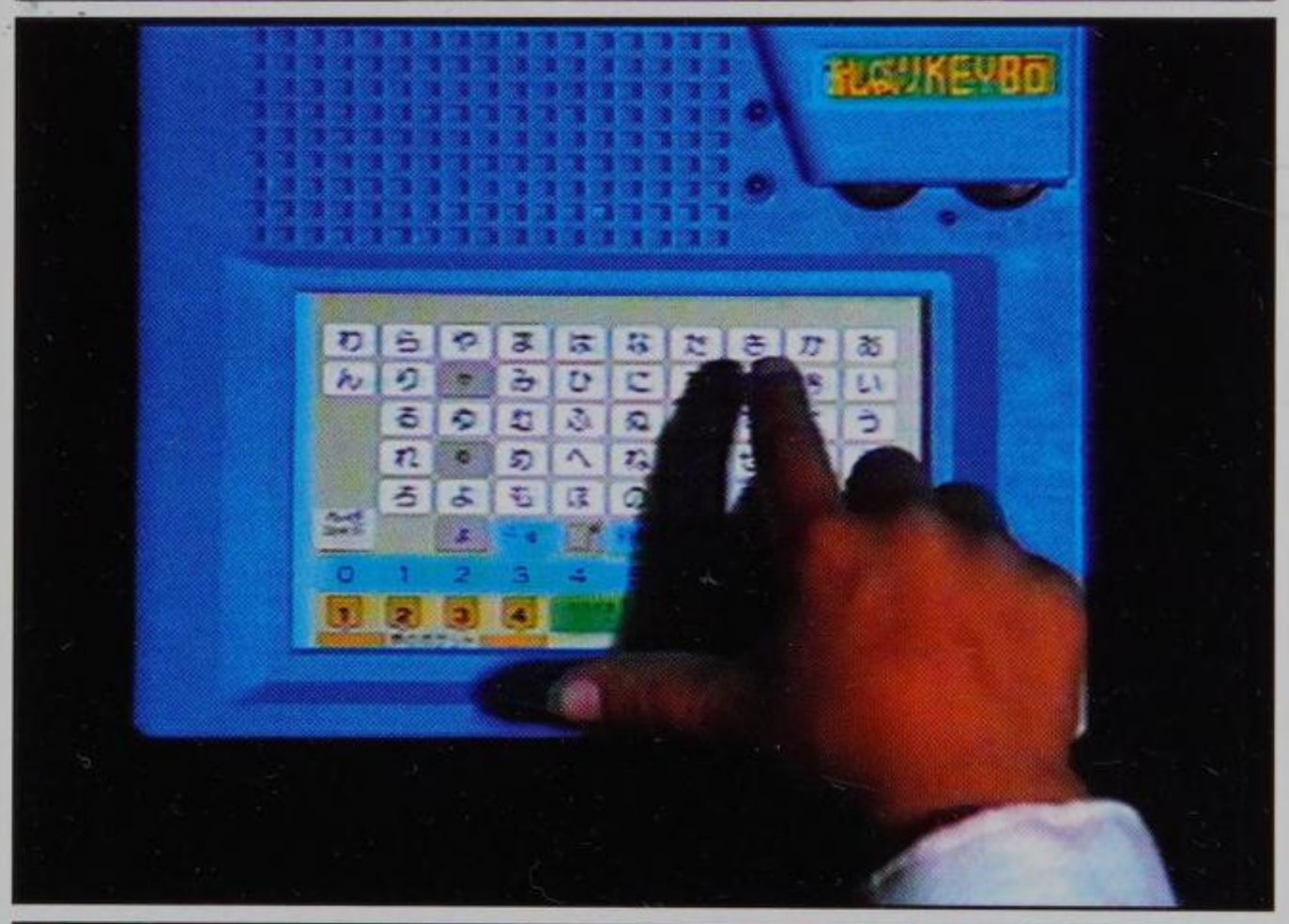


Fig. 16. John Scarlett-Davis, *Chat Rap*, 1983.

video art can be seen as nostalgic, not only in terms of the kinds of imagery recycled in works as diverse as Meigh-Andrews' *Interlude* and Anne Wilson and Marty St James' parodies of soap opera. It was nostalgic too for a poetic documentary tradition, for a vanguardist cause that might make the work of video genuinely public, not merely gallery art. In this sense it belongs to the kind of avant-garde tradition pinpointed in an influential book translated at the heart of the period in question, Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.[22] Bürger argued that the 'historical avant-gardes' of the early 20th century had set themselves the task of healing the rift between the most modern art and the contemporary audience. This was also the task which much video art, and scratch especially, set itself, and it involved a hugely difficult tightrope walk between artistic excellence, political acuity, and populist vacuity or, worse, subsumption into the machinery of post-modern asignification. The previous attempt to hitch a political bandwagon to UK party politics, Harold Wilson's 'white heat of technological revolution' promised by the incoming Labour Government of 1965, had caused, if anything, only anxiety about Big Brother. Thatcher's grab for the glamour of electronic speeds in finance capital seemed on the contrary to seal for the powers of reaction the potentialities of digital graphics especially. In the field of work surveyed in the *Rewind* project during the Thatcher years, these topics return again and again.

The derivation of a politics from aesthetics







Figs. 17–19. Clive Gillman and St John Walker (as Nine Attrition Magic), *Saboten Boi*, 1988.

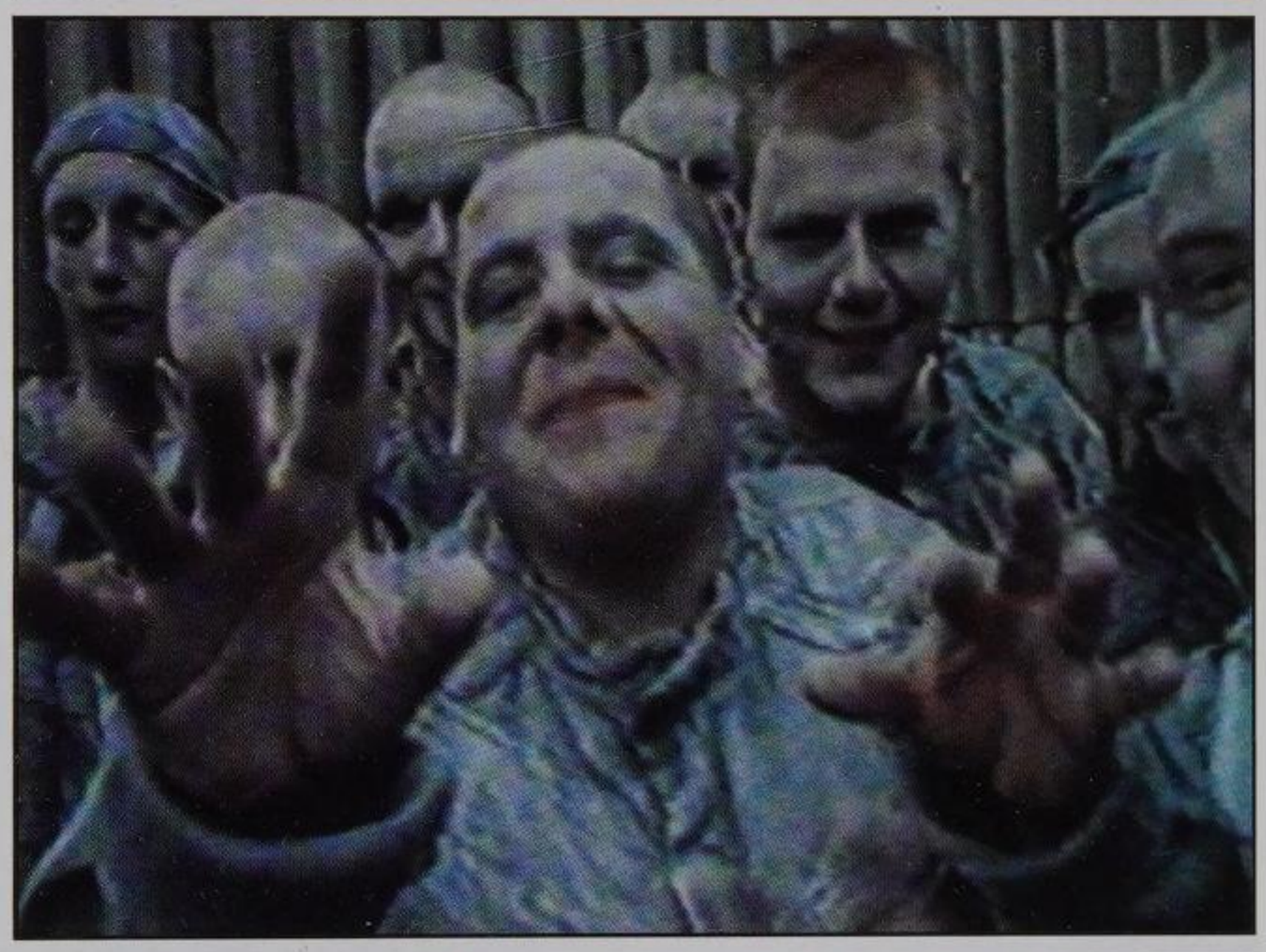
and of an aesthetics from politics, with all the risks those paths bring, is perhaps in few tapes more apparent than *Prisoners*, a tape produced by Terry Flaxton while working on a documentary on the making of Ridley Scott's famous *1984* commercial for Apple Computers. The ad was famous for a number of things. It was shown only once in the USA, in the most expensive slot available, half-time at the gridiron finals, the Rose Bowl. It was at the time one of the most expensive adverts ever made. It symbolised Apple's Mac desktop computer as the alternative to IBM's Big Brother approach, and the commercial dawn of the era of personal computing, desktop publishing and computer lib. All of these things, and yet, as the tape documents, it was cast with extras drawn from the fascist ultra-right of East End skinheads. 'It seems as though the sheer weight of the image has overcome my intentions', an intertitle says in block capitals, 'One simple voice-over cannot regain the ground lost'. The documentary footage of preparations is split by scenes from the finished ad, the sound of voices by scrambling rollback on tape-decks, and the screen partitioned between a central rectangle in more or less true colour and a bounding frame where the footage is solarised into deep blue. The trappings of video art break up again first by a playback of the whole ad, and then by a cut-up of interviews with the skinheads, where the hatred is palpable.

What makes the juxtapositions so disturbing is the briefly flashed quote from Orwell's novel, and its reference to the daily ritual of two minutes' hate. This of course is what the ad portrays, with a colourful woman athlete storming in to destroy the screen. But for the extras, the oppression is visited on them as skins, not on the migrant communities they despise. They see themselves as the outcasts, even see capitalism as the enemy. But they are as alien to the resistant culture of 80s video as Thatcher's cabinet. The tape ends with a run-through of the 'making of' documentary that was originally commissioned, and then returns to the same ominous words, silent and appalling: the year has come and gone and we still do not understand what it has meant. The emblematic power of the year, derived from Orwell's novel, and echoed in the riot shields and batons of the

fictional police of the advert's mise-en-scene, chimes with the indefinite identification of the new world order of digital capitalism as revolution. The tape's still-disturbing power comes from the collision of these forces: the glamour of the new machine, the satire of creeping Stalinism from *1984*, the police state emerging in Thatcher's war with the enemy within, and the brutal resistance of the skinheads. That the same artist would, with Penny Dedman, encapsulate the decade's work in the *Video* series for Channel 4, and go on to make some of the most subtle digital effects in *The World Within Us*, perhaps indicates something of the overall movement of the decade. A kind of consolidation, even if one achieved in a fragile ecology of festivals, screenings and publications, emerged around a common and largely unargued position on the left of British politics. At the same time a sense of the old poetic traditions of the British left, the left of Humphrey Jennings and Basil Wright perhaps, would constantly return, with almost nostalgic power.

Yet this was also the decade in which anti-racism and feminism became as much norms as the hatred for Thatcherism, and in which those movements constantly demanded fresh responses to newer and fiercer challenges. The old left had its last stand on the picket lines of the Miners' Strike, with only a brief return to glory in the Liverpool Dockers' Strike a decade later. With it went the old Labour Party, and with that the idea of parliamentary roads to socialism. In the Six Counties and in Scotland and Wales, older political movements began to meet the newer intellectual forces of post-colonial politics. It was in these terms that the struggle between digital and analog video were worked out. In many respects, the argument, now far more internationalised, has yet to reach a conclusion. The tensions certainly were not brought into any equilibrium in the 80s themselves. The digital would remain tainted by association with the brutal imposition of monetarist politics, the destruction of the Isle of Dogs,





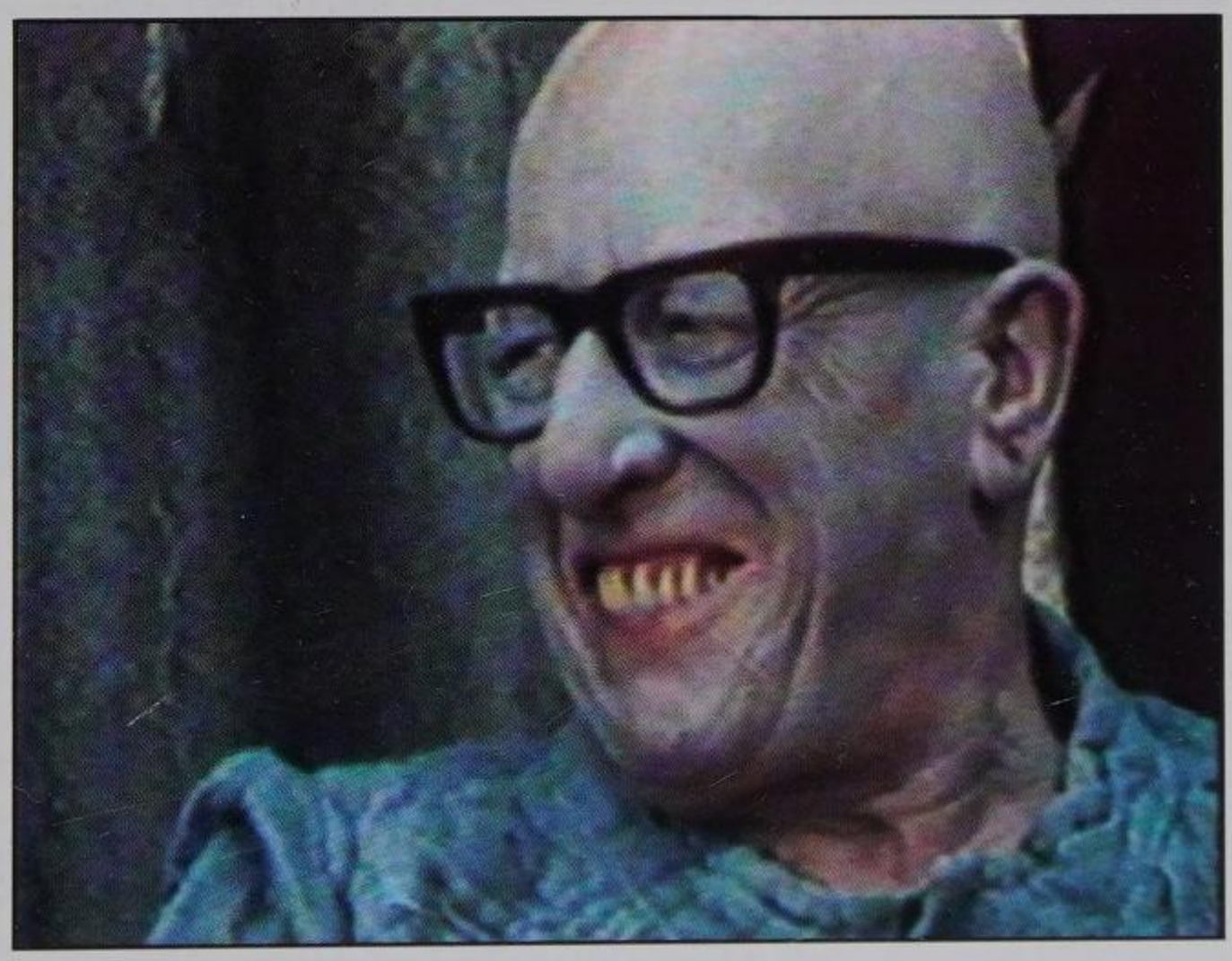


Fig. 20 (top). Clive Gillman and St John Walker (as Nine Attrition Magic), *Saboten Boi*, 1988.

Figs. 21 and 22. Terry Flaxton, *Prisoners*, 1984.

COAL NOT DOLE

THE MINERS' CAMPAIGN VIDEOTAPES

(N.U.M. endorsed)

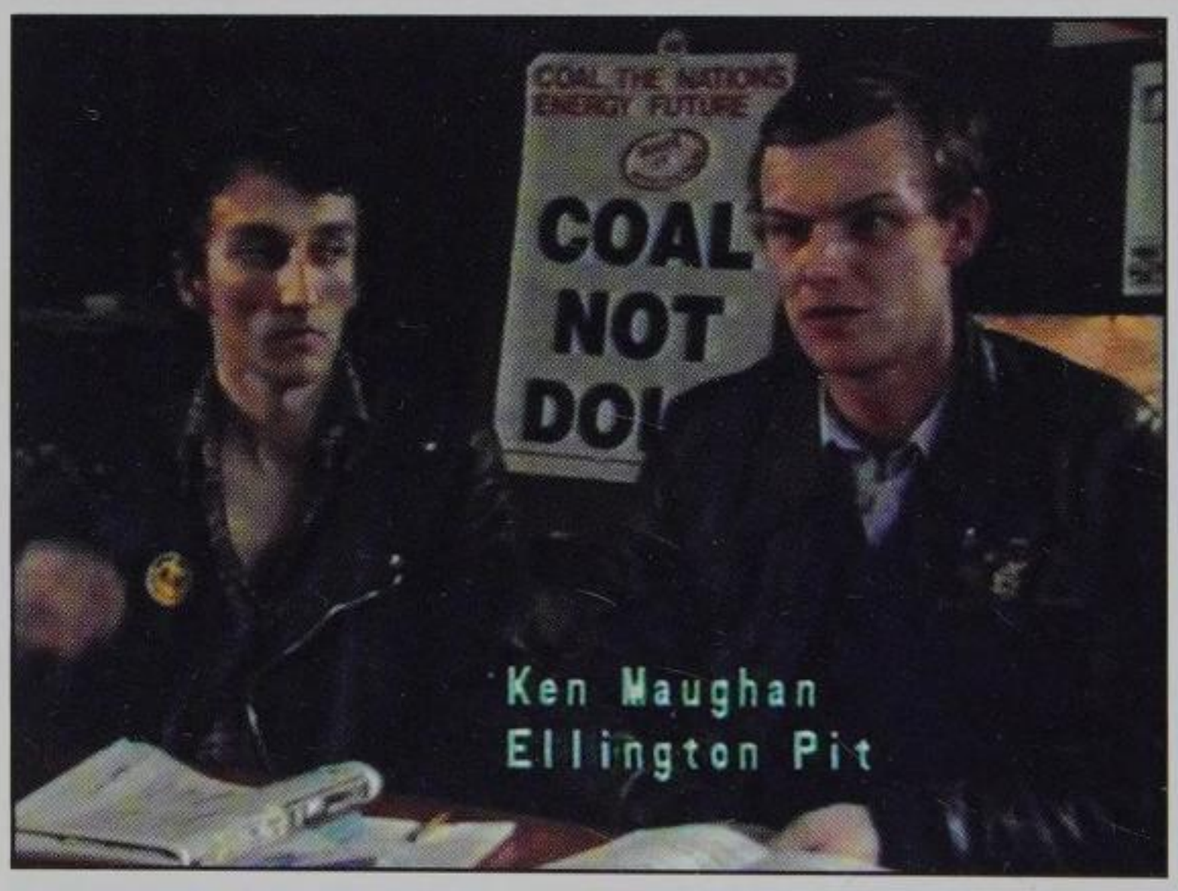
Programme titles (running time approx 10 mins each)

– THE COAL BOARD'S BUTCHERY – NO PIT IS SAFE
– REDUNDANCY – THE ROAD TO NOWHERE
– SOLIDARITY – TRADE UNIONS SUPPORT THE MINERS
– THE LIE MACHINE – MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE STRIKE
– THE STRIKE AND THE INDUSTRY – FACTS AND FIGURES (with Dennis Skinner)
– NOT JUST TEA AND SANDWICHES – MINERS' WIVES SPEAK OUT
– ONLY DOING THEIR JOB? – THE POLICE, THE LAW AND THE MINERS (with Paul Foot and Dennis Skinner)
– THIS MAN MACGREGOR – PORTRAIT OF A PARASITE

USE THESE VIDEOTAPES AS PART OF THE CAMPAIGN – ORGANISE A SHOWING FOR YOUR LODGE, CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE, UNION BRANCH, TRADES COUNCIL, COMMUNITY GROUP. – TODAY

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and the emergence of the Washington Consensus in the international political economy that would soon take on the name of globalisation. The Internet would take on much of the organising role of projects like the *Miners' Campaign Tapes*, while the art world would embrace its high level of abstraction from the functioning of the web in the proto software art of Jodi and the beginnings of interactive hypertext. For a brief period there was a flowering of practice bringing together the craft skills of technological arts, the poetic sensibility of a young generation enamoured of both craft and embodiment, and a political trajectory or atmosphere that acted as a kind of moral guide to the judgement of work and to its making. Its dispersal as a cultural moment is a symptom of the beginning of a new period in British politics, a period of small-scale and local struggles, of brief alliances, of ubiquitous media but also of the ubiquitous resistance Flaxton's tape begins to adumbrate. Everything resists everything else, and there is no centre. The distributed and ephemeral networks of the present may have nothing to learn from those times. But in terms of how to invent a political creative culture on the fly, they still reverberate, and still surprise.



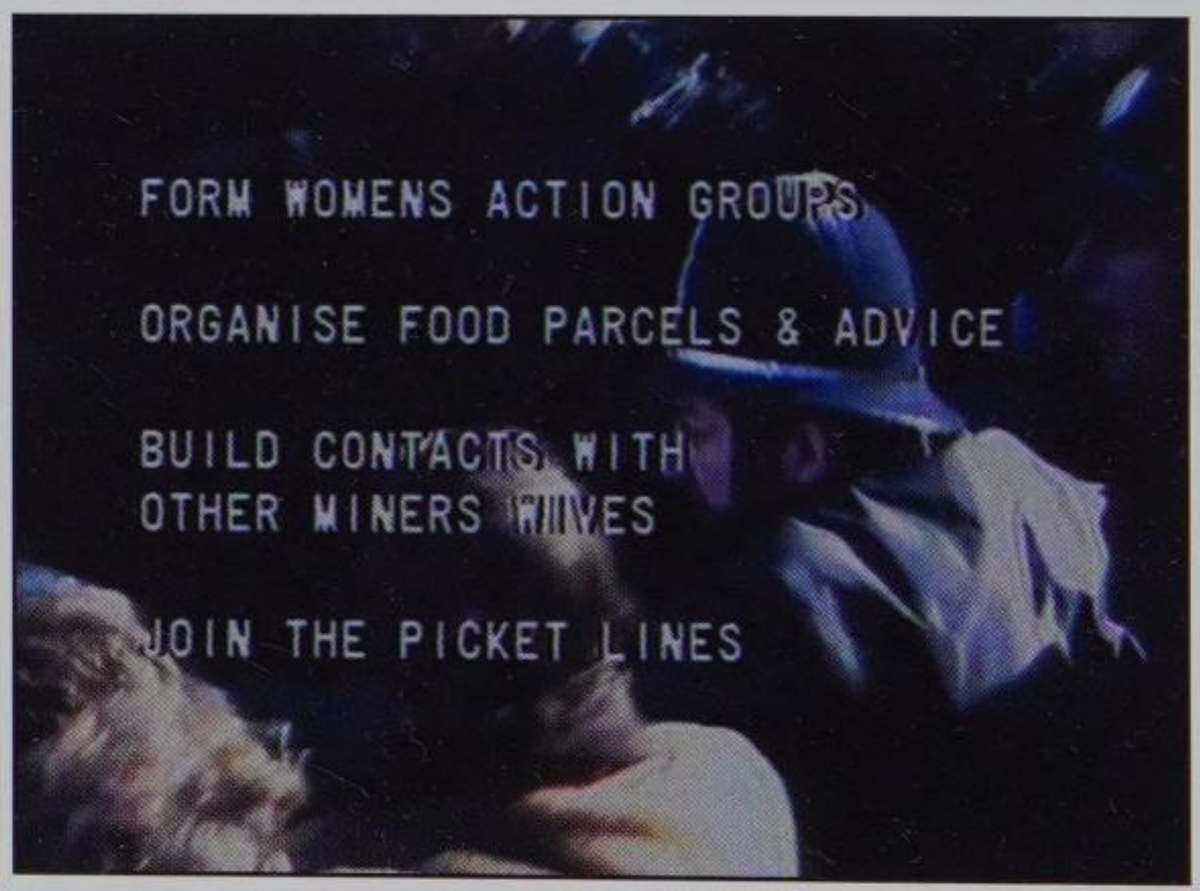


Fig. 23. *Miners' Campaign Tapes*. Images courtesy British Film Institute.

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Chapter 9/
A Brief History of Video – Time and Base

Adam Lockhart

The early days

Since the inception of video there have been numerous different video recording formats. A large number of these only existed in a laboratory and were never used commercially. John Logie Baird's early experiments with the Phonovision in the 1920s, where he recorded television signals onto phonograph discs (normally used for audio recordings), was the first method of recording an electronic video signal. However the playback of these images was not very successful at the time. Recently Donald F. McLean, an image-processing consultant, has recovered these original recordings by using self-developed software to compensate for the mechanical problems that were inherent with the playback at the time.[1]

During these experiments Baird used a ventriloquist dummy, which he used as his subject, called 'Stooky Bill' to test out his equipment. In 1990 the artist David Hall produced a work called *Stooky Bill TV*, in which he recreated the original dummy and used a reconstruction of the original thirty-line disc-scanning equipment by one of Baird's original technical team, engineer Les Smith.[2] This work consisted of the supposed conversation with the dummy and Baird about the first television images that would be broadcast, alluding to television's future impact and implications on the world.

Magnetic audio recording was first envisaged in 1878 by Oberlin Smith[3] but was not realised until 1898 by Valdemar Poulsen, a Danish engineer, with his invention of the Telegraphone. This device was the world's first wire recorder, with some later variants using metal discs. The oldest surviving magnetic recording in the world was made using this machine and is held in the Danish Museum of Science and Technology. It is a short recording of Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph, the older brother of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand.[4]



Fig. 1. Production stills from *Stooky Bill TV*, David Hall, 1990, left to right from top: Joe Barton puppet maker and operator; 89 year old Les Smith; details of 30-line scanner/camera equipment,: David Hall with Baird's original Stooky Bill at the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford.

Over the next few decades, significant developments were being made in the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany. These were primarily magnetic wire recorders and steel tape recorders which were used in the broadcast radio, business and military markets.[5] Editing was achieved by cutting the wire or steel tape and soldering or welding the edits together. It was a crude method, but effective.

In the 30s and 40s in Germany, the Austrian Fritz Pfleumer, along with AEG and BASF, developed the first audio magnetic tape recorder called the Magnetophon, using non-metallic tape with impregnated metal particles. During experimentation they first used paper, then cellulose acetate and finally PVC as the media. This allowed the machines to become more portable and easier to edit (by using the film method of cutting and splicing with a razor blade), and lowered the cost of the recording media. Developments continued on the recorders and the tape coatings, which led to markedly improved sound quality.[6]

At the end of the Second World War, a US

serviceman called Jack Mullin took two of these Magnetophons and some reels of tape as war memorabilia back to his home in San Francisco. Like many technical exports from the former Nazi Germany, this turned out to be a decisive move in the development of magnetic recording.

Mullin began giving demonstrations of the device and was eventually discovered by the entertainer, Bing Crosby. Crosby was looking for a way to easily edit his 'live' radio shows. They were at the time being recorded on wax discs which were not very easy to edit, and degraded somewhat after each generational copy. The Magnetophon was used so successfully in the Crosby radio shows, augmented by a new supply of tapes from 3M, that the Ampex Corporation were keen to develop their own recorder. Mullin started to work with the Ampex Corporation with financial support from Bing Crosby Enterprises (BCE). This was eventually realised in the Ampex Model 200 in 1948.[7]

In 1950, Mullin, Ampex and Wayne Johnson, a broadcast television electronics expert, started work on the idea of recording video signals to magnetic tape. Developments continued at Ampex (still funded by BCE), as well as other organisations like the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and RCA (Radio Corporation of America) throughout the first part of the 50s. Many prototypes were built around this time.[8]

In 1956, Ampex eventually produced the first successful quadruplex or transverse scan video recorder using 2-inch tape. Previously, video tracks were recorded to the tape longitudinally, that is, along the length of the tape, but this meant that long lengths of tape had to run through the machine at very fast speeds, some up to 1000 cm/s (VHS was only 2.34 cm/s). Quadruplex recorded a series of near-horizontal tracks across the width of the tape using a rotating head drum as opposed to a fixed head. The technical team included Charles Ginsberg, Charles Anderson, Fred Pfost, Shelby Henderson, Alex Maxey and Ray Dolby (who subsequently formed Dolby Laboratories). This machine was marketed as the VRX-1000. It was this technology which dominated the professional video market for the next twenty years, until the release of helical-scan recorders, which started to penetrate the market in the mid-70s.[9] Although quadruplex was very successful commercially and technically, it was expensive due to the complex head drum system and precision vacuum tape guides. Helical-scan recorders provided a cheaper solution. In this method the tracks are laid down onto the tape in a diagonal fashion and are read by a rotating drum with the tape wrapped around in a helical fashion. The main disadvantage this had to quadruplex was that of timing jitter, but this was outweighed by the much lower cost. Helical-scan technology is still the exclusive format for recording to magnetic tape, including digital recording methods.[10]

Formats

Table 1 shows a list of the most important video formats that have been used in the broadcast, commercial, consumer and pro-sumer markets.

Table 1: Tape and non-tape video formats.

Tape formats	
1956	2" Quadruplex
1962	2" Helical Ampex VR-1500
1962	2" Sony Helical SV-201
1962	Macthronics MVC-10
1963	1" PI-3V
1964	1" EV-200
1965	1" EL3400
1965	1" SMPTE Type A
1965	½" Sony CV
1965	Wollensack VTR150
1967	1" IVC-700/800/900
1967	Concord VTR600
1969	½" EIAJ Type 1
1969	¼" Akai
1970	Phillips ½" VCR
1971	¾" U-Matic
1971	EIAJ Cartridge
1972	AVCO Cartivision
1972	Sanyo V-Cord/V-Cord II
1973	2" Helical IVC-9000
1975	1" SMPTE Type B
1975	Betamax/Super/HB
1976	1" Helical BVH-1000
1976	VHS

1976	VX
1978	1" SMPTE Type C
1979	½" V2000
1981	½" Hawkeye/Recam/M
1982	Betacam
1984	8mm/Video 8
1984	CVC
1984	HDV1000
1985	M-II
1986	¾" U-matic SP
1986	Betacam SP
1986	D1
1987	S-VHS
1988	D2
1988	ED-Beta
1988	HDD1000
1989	Hi8
1990	D3
1990	UniHi
1992	DCT
1993	Digital Betacam
1994	D5
1994	D6
1995	DV
1995	DVCAM
1995	DVCPRO/D7
1995	W-VHS
1995	D9/Digital S
1996	BETACAM SX
1996	HD D5
1997	HDCAM
1998	DVCPRO 50
1998	DVCPRO 50/P
1998	Digital VHS
1998	Digital VHS
2000	D9 HD
2000	DVC PRO HD
2000	MPEG IMX

Non-tape formats	
1978	Magnavox MagnaVision
1980	Laservision
1981	CED/Selecta Vision Disc
1986	Laser Film
1988	CDV, VSD and VCD
1991	Laserdisc
1996	DVD
2006	HD DVD
2006	Blu-ray

The entrance of creativity

It was not long until artists started to experiment and create works with video and its technology. Those who could get hold of the expensive early video equipment, often artists like Andy Warhol who were already using film, started to explore the possibility of video. The size of the equipment at that time was prohibitive, and so generally confined the artist to the studio using fixed cameras. It was not until 1968 that the introduction of the Sony DV-2400, also known as the Sony Rover, enabled the portability and flexibility that 8mm and 16mm film cameras provided. This was the world's first Portapak, or 'camcorder' as it is known now. It consisted of a handheld camera and a separate recording deck, which used the ½-inch Sony CV format. Playback required a separate mains deck connected to a monitor

According to the legendary story, on 4 October 1965, the Korean artist Nam June Paik allegedly purchased a Sony Portapak and immediately recorded images from the procession of Pope Paul VI through New York City. That same evening he was said to have played back the tapes at the Cafe au Go Go in Greenwich Village.[11] This event has become the unofficial birth of video art. But the Sony DV-2400, as stated previously, was not available for another two years. How it was recorded is unknown; the tapes are no longer in existence, but the likelihood is that he used a mains deck powered from a vehicle or some other source. Nevertheless it proved the immediacy of the playback of a video recording, rather than having to wait for a number of days or weeks when sending film off to be developed in a lab. The video equipment, however, was still prohibitively expensive for most artists at this time.

In the UK the photographer and co-founder of the famous UFO club John 'Hoppy' Hopkins co-formed a group along with Cliff Evans called TVX. This was a countercultural group which went on to set up the London New Arts Lab, also known as IRAT (Institute for Research in Art and Technology), in 1969. The purpose was to investigate the use of video for community and alternative cultural applications. They subsequently obtained premises in a disused fire station in Camden, London. Hop-



Fig. 2. Example of a 'Portapak' Video Recorder.

kins persuaded Sony to let them borrow a Portapak for a while in return for writing an article about the potential alternative uses of video. After he returned this machine, Hopkins was given some 1-inch recording decks by John Lennon. The Beatles had been given these by the manufacturer and had no use for them. Hopkins knew The Beatles from his time with the UFO club and as a photographer.[12]

During this time Cliff Evans of TVX was working at the BBC as a trainee cameraman and made a connection with the progressive director Tom Corcoran, who was working on a BBC2 programme called *Late Night Line-Up*. There was some studio downtime, so Corcoran asked TVX if they would like to use the studio to see what they could come up with. They created a Fluxus style 'happening' in the studio, bringing in all sorts of people: musicians, technicians and artists. The result of this was the work *Videospace 70* (1970). Although it was never broadcast, this work led the BBC to commission them to record some of the first 'visualisations' for bands; 'promos' or music videos as they are known as now. These were 'Scotland' by Area Code 615 and 'Tell Me You Love Me' by Frank Zappa.[13]

In 1974 Hopkins was now working with Sue Hall. Both were involved in a squatting community in London. One of the many evictions that had taken place at the time was recorded by Hopkins with his Portapak. He and Sue Hall edited it into a piece of work called *Squat Now While Stocks Last* (1974). This eventually got shown on the BBC *Six O'Clock News*, being one of the first 'amateur' video broadcasts on the news. This was not without problem, however. Sue Hall:

> They looked at Hoppy's camera work on the eviction that he'd shot and they complained that it was 'hose piping', by which they meant letting the camera around while the action occurred instead of doing what people did with film in those days, which was to move from frame shot to frame shot, even in the news. But if you start analysing this in the present day, you can see that everybody 'hose-pipes' all the time. What was considered to be poor practice, or bad technique, by the BBC news people then, is just absolutely normal now. Nobody would think of mentioning it at all. So, it's just to show how things move



Fig. 3. Peter Donebauer with BBC outside broadcast van at the Royal College of Art in 1974.

around in terms of judgement but also that our work was taken up from the very beginning though not in a way that we could necessarily control.[14]

It is quite interesting today that any footage whatsoever will be used on broadcast television, particularly on the news, without any consideration for quality control. Mobile phone video, time-lapsed security video, videos from the web, anything that has captured an event is accepted. With the surge of the Internet, anyone can upload video to websites like YouTube and Vimeo, using free and potentially unlimited distribution through social networking sites. The lack of quality control is even more noticeable. This freedom of distribution, though, stops television companies editing work and removing essential parts which might normally have been censored for political, social or other reasons.

Fig. 4. Peter Donebauer recording *Entering* in 1974 at the Royal College of Art.



Also in 1974, Sue Hall, still involved with the squatter community, recorded the violent arrest of a young black man called Ben from a house at Prince of Wales Crescent in London with her Portapak. The man was accused of being in possession of stolen goods; at the same time ten to fifteen squatters were taken away on a police bus and charged with various offences. This tape was accepted as evidence at a court of sessions in South London and was played to the jury.[15] This led to Ben being acquitted and it established legal precedent for video tape as defence evidence. All of the accused squatters were also acquitted, due to police report inaccuracies in relation to the video evidence. This tape survives as the work *Bens Arrest (Reportage Squatting Used in Court)* (1974).[16]

Hopkins and Hall finally set up Fantasy Factory in 1974. This was an open-access video facility for use by community groups, community arts projects and artists. With the help of funding from various sources they purchased equipment to form a ¾-inch U-matic colour edit suite. This excellent resource continued to facilitate these groups into the early 90s, until digital editing took over and Fantasy Factory eventually closed. Hall and Hopkins are still active on a freelance basis.

In the 70s a number of artists who had previously used film started to move towards video. David Hall, a sculptor and experimental filmmaker, made the works *TV Interruptions (7 TV Pieces)* (1971) for Scottish Television. These were seven short (two to three minute) pieces that were broadcast unannounced on ITV in the Scottish Television region during the Edinburgh Festival. This was the first time in the UK that a video artwork had been broadcast on television. The first broadcast nationwide in the UK was in 1974 on the BBC2 programme *Second House* with Peter Donebauer's *Entering* (featuring sound by Simon Desorgher). Strangely, this was an outside broadcast from the video studios at the Royal College of Art due to the BBC studios not being set up in a way that would allow the kind of abstract work Donebauer was creating. According to Mark Kidel in 1976:

> ... he could not use (the) BBC equipment, because he bends the tools of the trade, extends their possibilities beyond the intentions inherent in their design.

> Whereas he had encountered few difficulties at his usual workplace, the Royal College of Art's TV studio, a BBC studio was too inflexible with its specialist design and a layout ideal for the needs of conventional broadcasting.[17]

Ironically the Royal College of Art's TV studio had been donated to them by Lew Grade from ATV in Birmingham. It was a redundant first generation colour studio that ATV had replaced.[18]

David Hall created the first time-based art degree course with an emphasis on video at Maidstone College of Art, Kent (now University College of the Creative Arts) in 1972. Other art colleges and art departments at polytechnics closely followed, offering video facilities for students on fine art related courses.

In 1975, *The Video Show* at the Serpentine Gallery, London, was a major milestone in the history of British video art. David Curtis describes the exhibition:

> In the summer of 1975 'The Video Show – first festival of independent video', held at the Arts Council's Serpentine Gallery in London, was the first substantial British survey of this still-new medium. Under a poster-headline proclaiming 'Television has been attacking us all of our lives, now we can fight it back' (the words of Korean/US video-pioneer Nam June-Paik), it, too, pursued an inclusive selection policy, bringing together tapes by many community and political groups, work by international artists such as Dan Graham, William Wegman and the Vasulkas, and installations and performances by rising British stars such as David Hall, Susan Hiller and Tamara Krikorian. The month-long programme included a repertory of tapes shown on monitors. ... the Serpentine show was widely reported in the art and even daily press.[19]

There were a few important events one year later in 1976. The modern art journal *Studio International* published its 'Video Art' special edition in May/June. This included contributions from David Hall, Roger Barnard, Hall & Hopkins, Mark Kidel, Stuart Marshall, Stephen Partridge, Tamara Kirkorian, Brian Hoey, Peggy Gale, Rene Bauermeister et al. That year also saw a major exhibition in the Third Eye Centre (now Centre for Contemporary Arts), Glasgow called *Video: Towards Defining an Aesthetic*. This featured work from the artists David Hall, Stephen Partridge, Brian Hoey, Roger Barnard, Stuart Marshall, David Critchley, Tony Sinden, Trevor Pollard, Ian Breakwell and Tamara Krikorian amongst others.

London Video Arts (LVA), now part of LUX (along with the London Film-makers' Co-op), formed in 1976. This was set up primarily for the promotion, distribution and exhibition of video art. It was not until 1984 that they secured permanent premises and obtained video production equipment, in the form of a U-matic edit suite. Founder members included David Hall, David Critchley, Stephen Partridge, Roger Barnard, Tamara Krikorian, Brian Hoey, Pete Livingstone, Stuart Marshall and John Turpie. As part of LUX this organisation continues to distribute and exhibit work. By 1984 Stephen Partridge had arrived at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee and set up the Television Production Board and then the Television Workshop, which provided production facilities and technical support for artists.

On 10 March 1976, furthermore, BBC2 broadcast the video art special of the arts programme *Arena* which was the first television programme in the UK about video art. This opened with a cut-down version of David Hall's *This is a Television Receiver* (1976), and was subsequently introduced by Hall. The programme was conceived by Anna Ridley and produced by Mark Kidel, with Ridley producing *This is a Television Receiver*, which was performed by Richard Baker, a prominent newsreader at the time. The programme also contained work from Peter Donebauer and the American artists Scott Barlett, Joan Jonas and Peter Campus.

Anna Ridley had been working with the BBC from 1968, originally as a designer and later as a producer. She had also been collaborating with David Hall and Tony Sinden, appearing in David Hall's *This is a Video Monitor* (1973). After persuading Mark Kidel to produce the *Arena* programme she tried to persuade the BBC to do more work like this. She eventually



Fig. 5. Stephen Partridge in the edit suite at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, 1986.

realised that she would have to leave in order to achieve her ambition of bringing artists work to television. With the creation of Channel 4, Ridley set up a production company called Annalogue. This company eventually facilitated television production on Channel 4 for artists such as Ian Breakwell, John Latham, David Cunningham, Rose Garrard, Paul Richards, Michael Nyman, Stephen Partridge and Dean Stockton amongst others. She co-produced with Fields and Frames Productions *19:4:90*, the series of short works created for the Glasgow City of Culture in 1990. In 1993 she once again worked with David Hall to produce *TV Interruptions 93* (five pieces, approximately one minute each) for MTV, which were shown internationally throughout 1994. With Ian Breakwell, she produced three successful series: *Ian Breakwell's Continuous Diary* (1984, twenty-one episodes), *Ian Breakwell's Christmas Diary* (1984, eight episodes) and *Public Face: Private Eye* (1988, five episodes). Ian Breakwell:

> When I was making things for television with Anna I imagined myself in people's living rooms and I was talking to them one to one. Although I was aware at the back of my mind there might be a million one-to-ones, I was essentially addressing the one. One of the things that television found most difficult to cope with on my programmes and some viewers found disturbing was how close I came to the screen. My face filled the screen so that you didn't see my ears. You could get a little bit too close for comfort for people in their living rooms, but then, like David Hall said, you walk into a pub and you realise that people are watching your programme under totally different circumstances.[20]

By the early to mid-80s a second generation of video artists were starting to emerge. Video as an art form was becoming more and more accepted and exhibitions were becoming commonplace. Anne Wilson and Marty St James became the first video artists to display work in the National Portrait Gallery, albeit not without criticism, in 1990. Their work *Video Portraits* featured various personalities like Duncan Goodhew and Julie Walters. It was not until 1994 that the medium received an official accolade when Douglas Gordon, an artist using video, won the Turner Prize.

Video today, it seems, is now having its boundaries blurred and merged with film into

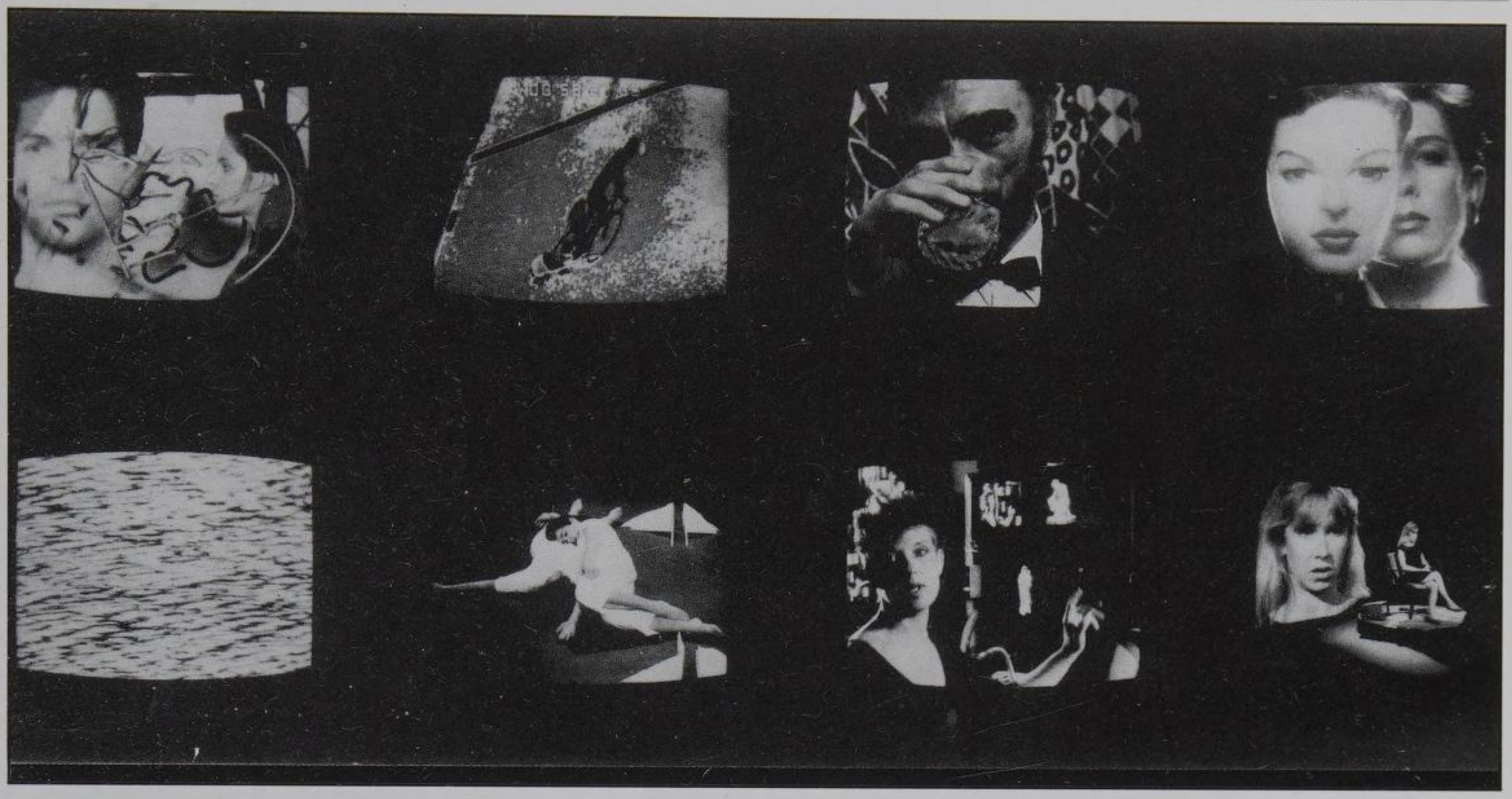


Fig. 6. *Dadarama* series for Channel 4 TV, produced by Anna Ridley 1984.

Left to right top: Paul Richards & Micheal Nyman, *The Kiss*; John Latham, *Targets*, (*Daves' Bike*); *Ian Breakwell's Diaries*; Rose Garrard, *Tumbled Frame*; Bottom, *Closedowns*, (*Ripple*), David Cunningham; *Spaces Four*, Rosemary Butcher, Rose Garrard, Stephen Partridge, *Dialogue for Two Players*.

the single idea of the moving image. Up to the early 90s, experimental film would not be accepted in video festivals and video would not be shown at film festivals.[21] Although the argument of the technical and aesthetic differences between film and video still rages on, with the current generation of makers there is no more rivalry between the two that existed before. Both have become interchangeable with the other in the minds of the public. People talk about showing a film or filming a piece of work where no Steenbeck or photographic film is found in any part of the process and the work is output on a video projector or monitor. These public perceptions have been fuelled by the continuation of the video media's attempt to emulate film. David Hall recognised this in 1976:

> Electronic devices have inevitably been evolved to mimic film techniques, and they include 'clean' cut edits, wipes, fades, dissolves and negative/positive features. All of them are intangible facsimiles of an alien and essentially concrete/mechanical process.[22]

With the future direction of digital media uncertain and the explosion of the Internet in the mid-90s, the future definition of video in its current form is unclear. However, the enthusiasm for re-exhibition of 'old' work seems healthy and new technologies should be seen to help and not hinder the exposition of historical work.

Recovering, preserving and re-exhibiting 'lost' and 'old' video works

> 'Documentation is evil!' the choirmaster told his charges earlier. He's said the same thing to every ad hoc grouping that has turned up over the past few nights, to 'perform' one of the 17 written scores that hang on a wall of the gallery. ... adventurer, seeker, son of the manse, maker of myth, music-business provocateur and – perhaps most notoriously, in the ultimate act of Zen auto-destructive purging – burner of a million quid in banknotes. His latest project is an act of sabotage against the current obsession for archiving the minutiae of artistic activity. Ironically, though, Drummond's long-term collaborator, Gimpo, is filming the entire event.
>
> [From Neil Cooper's review of Bill Drummond's 'The17' performances][23]

Whether or not one agrees with Drummond depends on one's position, but to not preserve or document a work creates a mythology and a



Fig. 7. Various video formats received by REWIND: ½" EIAJ, 1" Type C, U-matic and ½" Cartridge.

legend which may work to the artist's advantage (see, for instance, the Nam June Paik and the Pope's visit to New York story, earlier in this chapter). Alternatively, it could mean that the work is lost forever, forgotten and never talked about or seen again. The artist's intention may be that the work is ephemeral and 'of the moment' but surely the temptation is still there to preserve it in some form. Today, events can be more easily documented and recorded using throw-away technology such as mobile phone cameras, without any thought to keep the recording in the long term.[24]

In the early days of artists using video, the tapes and technology were expensive so they were used much more selectively. The tapes were re-used and recorded over, thus potentially recording over something considered important. This was prevalent at the BBC where the policy was to re-use the 2-inch quadruplex tapes to save money, causing episodes of programmes like *Top of the Pops* and *Doctor Who* to become lost. Some of these tapes were rescued after an insightful technician, working at the BBC at the time, hid the tapes in a false roof.

The constant change of video recording formats over the years, and the unavailability of older playback decks has caused a large number of works to be rendered obsolete. This has, in some cases, caused people to discard work, believing it to be lost. Others have diligently migrated work constantly over the years onto the latest format. Some have even in hindsight considered that they should have exposed their video recordings to film stock, which by today's standards appears more durable.[25]

The majority of work submitted to the *Rewind* archive has been on 1-inch Type-C, U-matic (low-band, BVU and SP), ½-inch EIAJ, ½-inch CV, Betacam, Betacam SP, MII and 2-inch quadruplex. These were in various conditions depending on storage and use of the tape. None of the tapes received had been stored in proper archival conditions and most were in the possession of the artist themselves.

It was decided that we should try to source

Table 2: Comparison of digital formats for archival purposes.

	DV	DVCAM	DVCPRO	DVCPRO50	Digital S	Digital Betacam	D1
Compression	5:1	5:1	5:1	3:3:1	3:3:1	2:1	None
Colour Sampling	4:2:0	4:2:0	4:1:1	4:2:2	4:2:2	4:2:2	4:2:2:4
Data Rate (Mb/s)	25	25	25	50	50	90	270
Track width (microns)	10	15	18	18	20	–	40
Tape Width (inches)	¼	¼	¼	¼	½	½	¾
Cost US$ (1,000s)	2–4	4–18	20–30	10–40	10–20	30–50	> 120

the best copies of these works. 'Best' meaning that the tape would be in a reasonable technical condition and the image and sound were least degraded compared to the other copies that might exist. These may have been from the original master, some from a later generation, some from the original format and some from a later format migration. The availability and ease of access to the original tapes sometimes hindered the process and so due to time constraints compromises sometimes had to be made to allow a work to be rescued by using a later generation copy, which may have been inferior. Some artists, like David Larcher, had different versions of the same work, which kept evolving over the years. The compromise here was that a snapshot in history would be made at a certain point, to allow a good example of the work to be preserved. Other artists had been innocently using their original masters as exhibition copies and not making sub-masters. These were obviously much degraded.

The works were migrated to the current archival standard for the preservation of standard definition video, Digital Betacam, commonly known as Digibeta. Although it has its critics, it provides a good level of compression, colour sampling, data rate, track width and tape width compared with other current formats and remains reasonably priced compared to formats like D1 (see Table 2 for comparisons). The use of a digital media for the preservation of analogue is also under scrutiny, but it is unlikely that analogue video will be supported in the future. DVD is not a suitable format for archival storage due to its high compression rates and the short life span of recorded discs.

The future preservation, storage and migration of these Digibeta tapes will be taken care of by the Scottish Screen Archive, which is part of the National Libraries of Scotland. This is a national collection with continuous funding which should safeguard the collection for the foreseeable future.

Sticky shed

A well-known problem with magnetic tape, both audio and video, is the sticky shed syndrome. This is a problem that occurs when excessive moisture from the atmosphere weakens and breaks down the plastic binder layer that holds the metal oxide to the base film layer of the tape.

When one attempts to play a tape that has been affected by this condition, the tape will emit a high frequency squeal, it sticks in the playback deck, the heads become clogged due to the shedding oxide, erratic changes in speed of the tape transport occur and in some cases the excessive friction will stop the tape from running through the machine. It has been thought by some, that tapes affected by this are lost and cannot be played again. In fact there are those who have disposed of some tapes believing that their work cannot be retrieved. However, in most cases this problem can be reversed.

The United States Patent No. 5,236,790, filed by the Ampex Corporation in 1989, details this problem and provides a solution:



Fig. 8. Incubator used for videotape heat treatment.

> The process of this invention involves dry heat treatment (of the tape) for relatively long periods of time. The temperature which has been found effective in the present invention is at least 50° C, preferably at least about 54° C. The time which has been found effective ... is about 3 hours, preferably at least about 8 hours and in some instances as long as at least 24 hours.[26]

This process, in effect, drives out the moisture and returns the tape to its previous playable condition. The experiments carried out by Ampex filed in this patent were on ¼-inch audio tape. For video, due to the larger tape width, the heat treatment or baking time should be scaled up, with the temperature remaining at least 54 degrees Celsius.

For *Rewind*, the majority of the ½-inch EIAJ and CV open reel tapes we received were affected by this condition. After some experimentation, it was found that the small-size reels required twenty-four hours and the large-size reels required forty-eight hours. These were heat-treated in a scientific incubator where the temperature could be controlled within ± 1.5 degrees Celsius. This process achieved good results and led to the successful transfer of works by artists such as Kevin Atherton (*In Two Minds*, 1978), Marty St James (*Mr and Mrs*, 1976), Stephen Partridge (*Dialogue for Four Players*, 1978), and Ian Bourn (*B.29 Three Nights In*, 1979).

There are some critics of this process who believe that this can damage the tape in other ways[27] and a few myths that say the tape can only be played only once, enough to retrieve a copy. These may be true in some cases, but it was found that the tapes could be played for a few months with no obvious degradation and, according to the Ampex patent, they can be baked again if the sticky-shed problem re-occurs.[28] The *Rewind* project may have been the only opportunity that these works had to be transferred. The same could be said for the restoration and conservation work that is carried out on paintings. The chemicals used and the scraping will invariably cause damage, yet they are a necessary process if the work is to be shown in a state as close as to the original intention as possible.

Transfers

When the transfers to Digibeta took place, it

was very important that there was dialogue with the artist. Ideally they were present for the whole transfer process or at least they would leave explicit instructions about each work. The reason for this differs from use in the broadcast community in that there may be entities in the work that look like mistakes or 'bad practice' that would normally be removed or adjusted by a broadcast technician. However, sometimes these entities are part of the work and sometimes they are not. For example, David Critchley's *No Record* (1981) has colour bars at the start that would normally be removed and replaced with new ones set with the appropriate levels for the transferred version. In this work they are meant to be there but this would not be known unless there was a dialogue with the artist. Another example is a piece by Judith Goddard called *You May Break* (1983). This piece of work has over-exposed sections and subsequently video levels that are not 'broadcast safe'. Again, in most cases these levels would be reduced and adjusted to normal levels, but in this case the intention was that the image would be bleached out and so the abnormal levels were left untouched.

It should be noted that colour bars, which may or may not appear at the start of works could only be used as a guide for setting the video levels in many cases. The technical ability of the artists and the access they had to good technicians at the time varied a great deal, so good technical standards and good practice were either present or not depending on the artist. The lower standard of technical ability did not always detract from the work; it was often fitting to the work's aesthetic or character.

If a work was damaged or degraded enough that a section of it could not be recovered then this important dialogue with the artists was again called upon. An example is *Clapping Songs* (1979) by Tina Keane. The video images on the tape for the first 90 seconds were no longer there for one reason or other. This was possibly a copy generation issue, but the audio was still recoverable. Rather than remove the start of the work completely, which would detract from the piece it was decided, in conjunction with the artist, to insert black where the image was completely degraded but to still maintain the audio.



Fig. 9. Judith Goddard, *You May Break* 1983.

Optimising and preserving versus restoration

In the *Rewind* project the object was not to restore work, but to preserve it with some optimisation. Restoration work can be a lengthy process, sometimes employing frame-by-frame editing to remove problems like dropout, scrolling, rolling and dropped frames. This work can be carried out in the future on the preserved copies. It is important at this time to 'rescue' as many pieces of work as possible from the obsolete formats while operational playback decks are still available.

Some optimisation work took place, but this was generally limited to the repair of occasional dropped frames, removal of large glitches, colour correction, video and audio level adjustment and some noise reduction. Other problems that arose with many of the pieces were due to skew errors that were present. These may have come from the original, from an edit or from a generational copy. In the past, viewing these on CRT (cathode ray tube) monitors did not pose a problem because they were hidden in the overscan on the monitor, that is, they were behind the frame of the monitor. Presently, with the use of plasma screens, LCD (liquid crystal display) monitors, video projectors and viewing on computers, they all tend to under-scan, therefore revealing the whole image and the occasional problematic skew error. This problem can be removed by cropping the video image to create a solid edge. Again,

these repairs were only completed with cooperation from the artist.

Some people believe that old video work that has deteriorated should be left alone with no repairs, optimisation or any restoration done. This is because they believe that the deterioration adds to the character of the piece, much like the dust and scratches on old film material or vinyl records. This may be true in some cases but not in others. The original intention of the work should always be considered before embarking on any renovation. On the other hand there are some who have considered improving work using contemporary technology that was not available at the time. A balance has to be found between these two poles. If a work is to be technically 'improved' it should be cited as a different version of the piece. The purpose of the *Rewind* project was to achieve a historical record and so technical improvements that could not have been done at the time of creation were not used.

Perceptions

It is interesting the perceptions that people have when they see work again for the first time after twenty or thirty years. Some of the artists may not have seen their own work for a long time because of the lack of access to playback decks to view the tapes on. Others have deliberately chosen not to look at work again and some have destroyed their work completely. Steve Hawley was nervous about watching his work *The Chemistry Set* (1987), for the first time in twenty years. From his memories he thought the piece was really bad and he did not want to deposit it in the *Rewind* archive. After viewing, this turned out not to be the case and the piece was accepted into the archive.

Sean Cubitt, when watching a piece of work from the 70s that had been transferred from ½-inch EIAJ tape, remarked that he couldn't believe how grey the image was.[29] Obviously the work was as it was but being used to highly contrasted images for so long, one forgets what these images were like in the past; more dark grey and light grey than black and white. Interestingly, there were works that people thought looked technically 'better' than they remembered even though they were untouched.

Re-working

One artist who had destroyed a number of his earlier works for personal reasons was David Critchley. Most of his work was retrieved from other copies held with distributors such as LUX. One piece called *Pieces I Never Did* (1978–79) was originally a three-screen piece but was also edited down to a single-screen version in 1979. The only known remaining copy was the single-screen version.

It was decided in conjunction with Critchley that we would attempt to re-create the original three-screen version from the existing single-screen version. The emphasis was to make the re-creation as authentic as possible to the original.

In the original version, Critchley is seen on one screen describing a number of pieces of conceptual work that he would like to make but then says he never got round to making them. On the other screen a close up of his face screams 'Shut Up!' intermittently and on the other, one of the pieces is seen being acted out that he didn't make. After this, the piece that he had previously been describing appears on all three screens but slightly out of sync with one other, creating a sort of rhythmic or Doppler effect with the sound and vision.

The single-screen version is the same length and contains all the various elements as three-screen version does, but these are interspersed between each other. These elements were extracted and separated into the three separate screens (or channels) in a lengthy process that was done under specific instructions and supervision from Critchley. There were parts where a section was lost when the single screen version was made. These sections were replaced with repeated parts or a blank screen was inserted where appropriate.

The original intention of the three-screen version was that every time it was played it would be different, that is, the playback decks would be set off at different times. This was important for the previously described out-of-sync section. Although this performative type of



Fig. 10. David Critchley, *Pieces I Never Did* 1979; Revised as single screen version in 2007.

screening could still be done, it was decided that a simulation of this would be created on a single screen (three screens on one). This would be for convenience in certain screening situations and as an example of how it should be shown.[30]

Stephen Partridge's *Dialogue for Four Players*, which was rescued from ½-inch EIAJ, was similarly made into a single screen simulation from the four original channels.[31]

In 1986 the scratch video artists the Duvet Brothers started touring a live multi-screen show. This consisted of three playback decks and however many video monitors or televisions they could get hold of or use in the particular venue they were at. These monitors were arranged on scaffolding.

It was decided that a simulation of the show they performed in the Limelight Club in London on 30 September 1986 would be made. This simulation would, again, be a single-screen piece to act as an example of these shows.

This was created in full conjunction with the Duvet Brothers: Rik Lander and Peter Boyd-MacLean. The show consisted of a number of their scratch pieces including *War Machine* (1984), *Man or Dog* (1985) and *Harry* (1986). The three original tapes or channels were split across the screen in an arrangement that re-



Fig. 11. Stephen Partridge, *Dialogue for Four Players* 1978; Revised as single screen version in 2007.

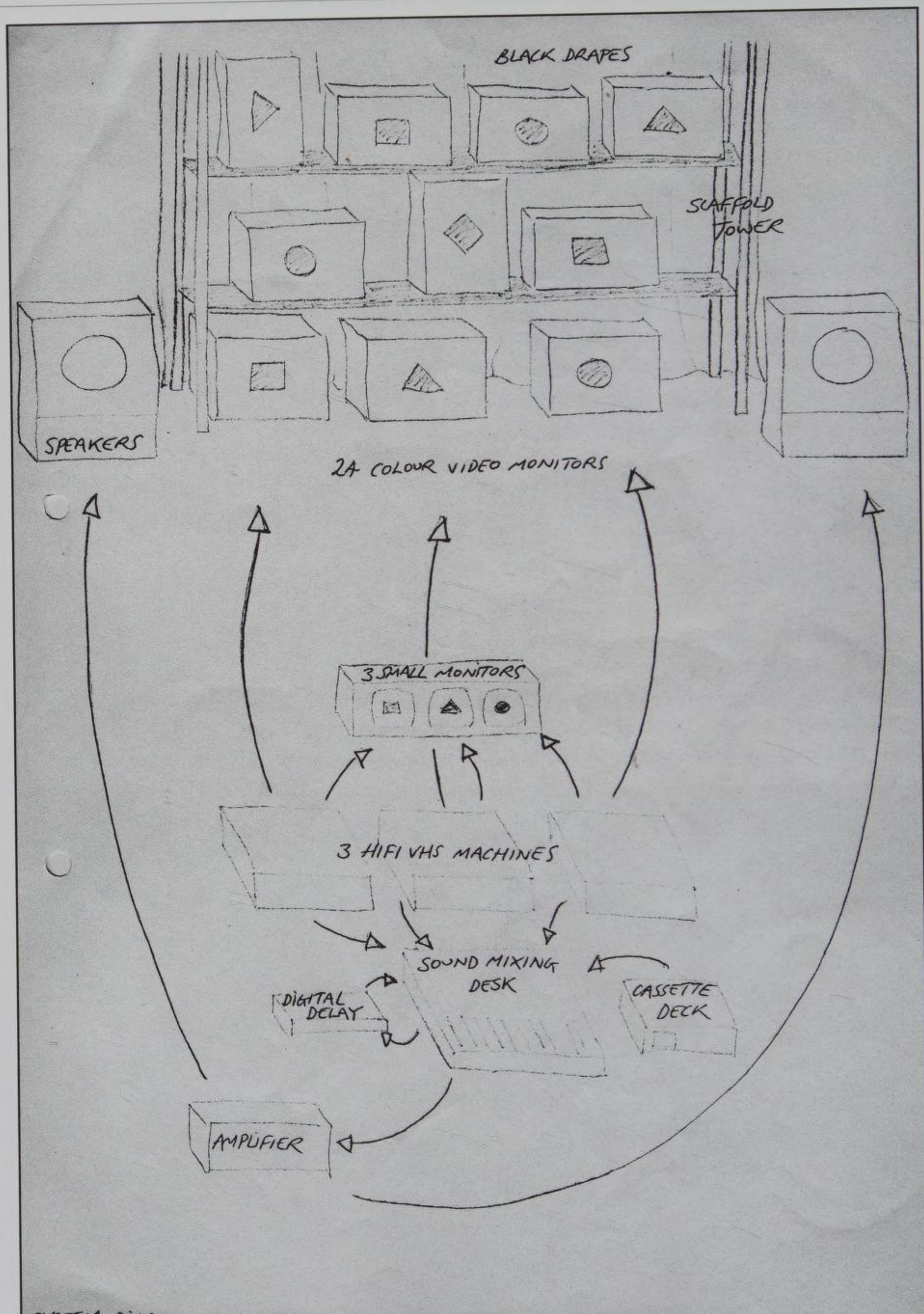


Fig. 12. System diagram for Duvet Brothers' live multi-screen show, including monitors on scaffolding.

sembled the monitors on the scaffolding, but also cutting to only one channel and two channels to re-create the effect of the viewer looking at only one or two screens. The parts of this that were lost or damaged were removed or repeated where appropriate. Some of the music was re-inserted into the soundtrack where it was damaged or degraded on the original tapes.

This newly completed Limelight simulation



Fig. 13. Duvet Brothers, *War Machine*, 1984; simulated as single screen for Limelight Show, 2008.

was screened alongside a programme of works by other scratch video artists, such as George Barber, Gorilla Tapes, Kim Flitcroft, Sandra Goldbacher as part of *Rewind* at Dundee Contemporary Arts, April 2008 and subsequently at Streetlevel Photoworks, Glasgow, March 2009.

For the first time in over 20 years the Duvet Brothers re-performed the Limelight Multiscreen show using original VHS equipment and CRT monitors at the DJCAD Visual Research Centre, Dundee Contemporary Arts in November 2010. This performance subsequently became an exhibition.

The Ian Bourn piece *B.29 Three Nights In* (1979) was successfully transferred from ½-inch EIAJ tape. However, it was found that the original camera tapes or rushes (also on ½-inch EIAJ) were in better condition than the finished piece. The image on the camera tapes was sharper and had better contrast. A decision was made to re-construct the piece using these tapes with Ian Bourn present throughout the process. The edits for each section were carefully inserted with frame-by-frame accuracy, as close to the original version as possible. This was a lengthy and involved reconstruction but resulted in a piece that was indistinguishable from the original, but with improved image quality.

Re-exhibiting

Before the widespread use of video projectors in galleries and cinemas, most, if not all video art works were shown on CRT monitors. This was mainly due to the fact that there was no other alternative. CRT video projectors have been available since the 60s, but artists rarely used them until the mid-90s with the availability of LCD projectors. Artists used video wall technology, which was prevalent in the mid to late 80s and early 90s, extensively, but this technology still used arrays of CRT monitors as the output.

The demise of CRT televisions, computer monitors and video monitors has serious implications for the re-exhibition of early video art works. A number of the major electronics manufacturers have either ceased production of CRT devices or have scaled production down to a minimum and many high street stores have stopped selling CRT televisions altogether. Sony discontinued Trinitron tubes in the US in

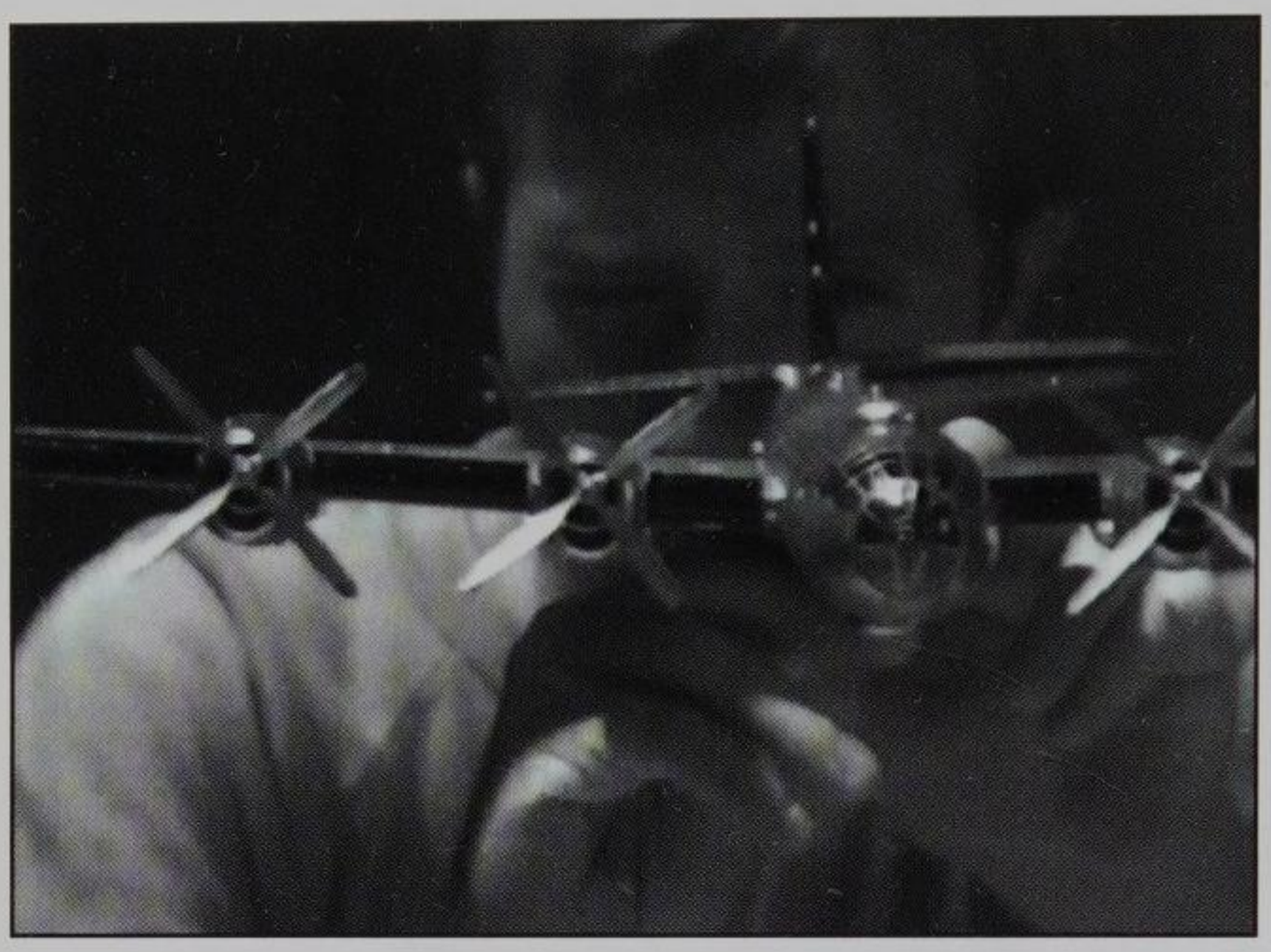


Fig. 14. Ian Bourn, *B29 Three Nights In* 1979.

2007 and ceased production completely in 2008.[32] Trinitron technology provided superior picture quality to that of other CRT technology, achieving higher contrast, improved brightness and better colour saturation. The most noticeable aspect was the increased black definition that enabled a sharper and clearer image to be displayed. Trinitron CRTs use an aperture grille made of a series of wires to focus the beam from the electron gun. This is opposed to the method of using a shadow mask in standard CRTs that uses a metal plate with holes. The aperture grilles allowed more light to pass through. Sony first introduced this technology in 1968 with the KV-1310 television and held sole rights until 1995.[33]

Although there are no technical problems showing early video art works on other display devices, there is a problem when the physicality of the monitor forms part of the aesthetic of the artwork. The most obvious examples are in David Hall's pieces *This is a Video Monitor* and *This is a Television Receiver*. Both of these pieces contain a narrative that describes the physicality of the object the video image is contained within. It would be very strange to watch *This is a Video Monitor* as a projection. Similarly, Tamara Krikorian's work, particularly her installation work, relies on the CRT monitor's aesthetic, as does Tony Sinden's *Time Upstairs* (1977) and *Behold/Vertical Devices* (1974).

Behold/Vertical Devices also relied on certain features or quirks of the CRT monitor:

> A line of small ... video monitors are placed side by side on a sloping 9" builders plank, that extends from ground level to the seat of a ... stacking chair. The monitors are turned on their sides, changing the normal framing/viewing position. A single video tape feeds the installation with a continuous panning shot of a lone figure

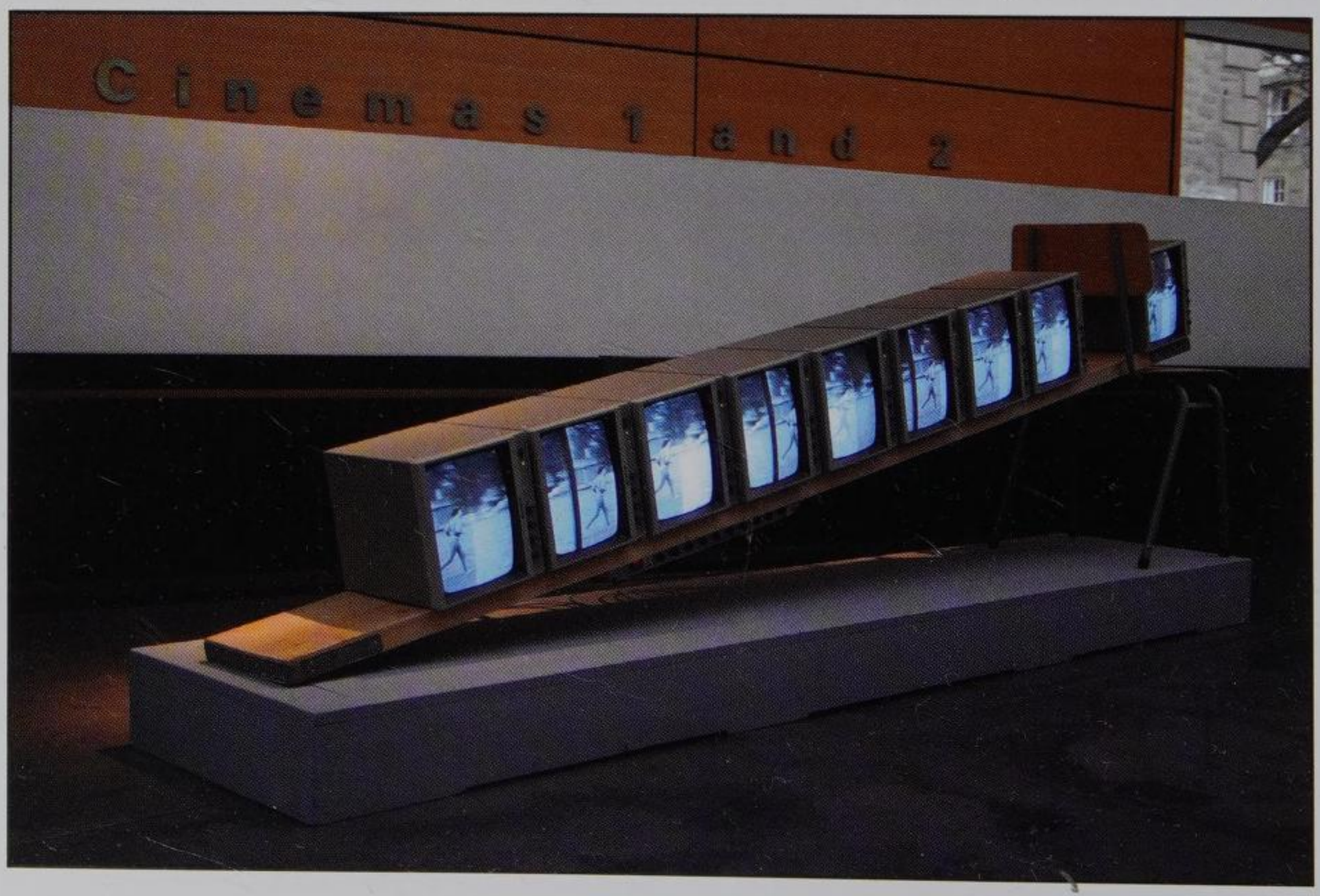


Fig. 15. Tony Sinden, *Behold Vertical Devices* 1974; exhibited at REWIND Soft Launch, Dundee Contemporary Arts, April 2006.

> running in a landscape. The vertical hold of each monitor is preset to allow the video image to 'drift' and create its own 'unsynchronised' movement. [Tony Sinden][34]

Although this piece could possibly be re-created somehow with other display devices like LCD monitors, they would not have the vertical-hold feature that CRT monitors had and even then, not all CRT monitors had that feature. The scrolling effect that was obtained by adjusting the vertical-hold setting would have to be simulated, but by doing that it would remove part of the purpose of the work.

When *Behold/Vertical Devices* was re-exhibited at the *Rewind* soft launch in April 2006 at Dundee Contemporary Arts, Sinden supplied the whole work as a package with the original devices. He did not rely on the gallery to source the technology. Although it now plays from DVD and not tape, it does not change the work, so is acceptable. Sinden was very prudent to have done this. The physical objects in the artwork was akin to a piece of flat-pack furniture, including an assembly manual, numbered monitor positions on the plank and Velcro strips ready for monitor attachment. This aspect of the work received many compliments. It is becoming more and more noticeable that the technology and not just the videotapes should have been archived by the artists if they play an important part in the work.

Another example is the piece by Stephen Partridge called *Monitor* (1975). This piece still works well when shown on different display devices other than was originally intended, however for it to be seen in its original context it requires the original monitor. Partridge has retained a monitor very similar to the original one used in the piece.

There is a case emerging that artists' video archives should set out to collect early and obsolete display equipment, not just playback decks. The actual video piece itself is important but for some artists the display device is equally important. The majority of effort tends to be only focussed on the video. This tends to be the case in television and film archives where the understanding is not with the art world but with the commercial heritage world where the final display device does not matter so much. More and more, these old technologies are disappearing, failing and the expertise for repair diminishing.

Up to the early 90s, video cameras employed kinescopes or tubes to record the image. This is now done with charge-coupled devices (CCDs), which have completely superseded the use of tubes. There were a few types of tube used, one of which was the vidicon tube. One of the failings of tube technology and



Fig. 16. Tony Sinden in 2006 with *Behold Vertical Devices* assembly pack.

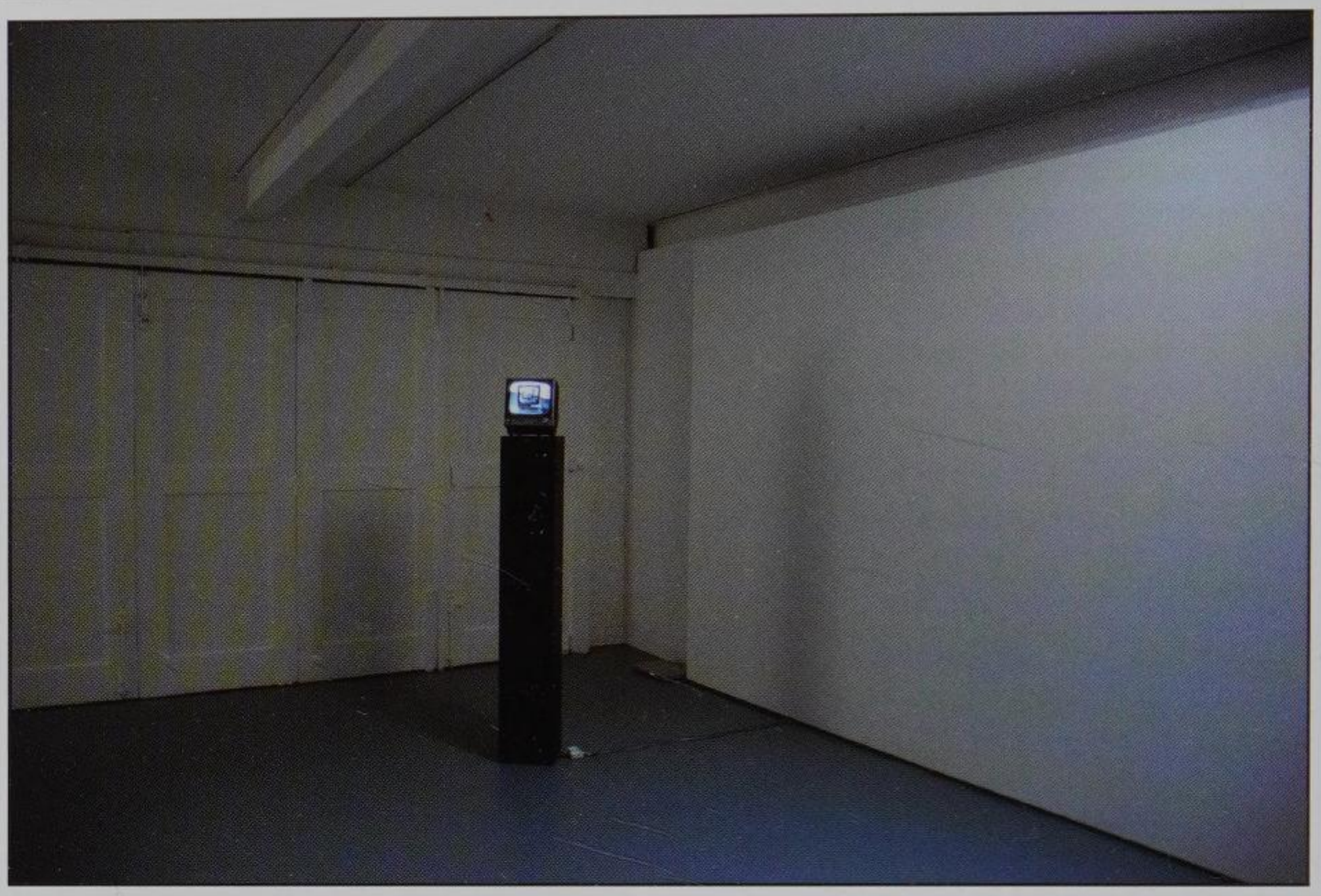


Fig. 17. Stephen Partridge, *Monitor*, installed at Doggerfisher, Edinburgh, 2008, featuring original Sony monitor.

particularly vidicon tubes was the burn-in of the image. This was particularly noticeable where bright or over-exposed images were present, leaving 'ghost' images and light trails.

David Hall made two pieces of work called *Vidicon Inscriptions (Installation)* (1975) and *Vidicon Inscriptions (The Tape)* (1973–74). Both of these works used this burn-in failing. The latter is a single-screen videotape with this effect recorded. The former is an installation piece that relies on the effect being live. The installation consisted of a monitor, a vidicon camera, bright lights, a Polaroid shutter and a photoelectric switch. The idea was that a participant would stand in front of the camera and lights, the shutter would then open exposing the vidicon tube, it would then close after a few seconds leaving the 'ghost' or after image of the participant on the screen.

Hall still has possession of the equipment for the installation but the camera no longer functions. Camera tubes are essentially cathode ray tubes like those used in CRT monitors and so have a limited lifespan or lose their brightness over time. It has been increasingly difficult to obtain fully working suitable tube cameras to allow this piece to be re-exhibited.

The German artist Imi Knoebel in 1971 along with Gerry Schum created a piece called *Projektion X*:

> Projektion X, was made at night while driving by car through the sleepy city of Darmstadt. A powerful projector mounted on the roof of the car threw a gigantic diagonally tilted cross of light through a black painted slide onto the passing facades. The projection was recorded continuously from a fixed position by a video camera that was also mounted on the car and fitted with a special lens that was not yet commercially available.[35]

The camera picked up various visual impressions and features from the street and the giant 'X' that changed form and shape depending on the object it was being projected on. Light trails from the streetlights and the 'X' were visible, again, caused by the use of a tube camera.

Although not lost or extinct, this piece was remade in 2005, taking the same journey through Darmstadt. This remake, however, was in colour (the 1971 version was in black and white) and it used current technology. The image is much clearer and sharper than the original and in particular does not contain the characteristic light trails, providing a whole dif-

ferent aesthetic. It is almost like a new and different piece of work.[36]

If a work is completely lost, then a remake may be the only way for it to survive. But this opens up issues of whether to be true to the original, using as much original equipment as possible, with some simulation used where necessary or making a completely new version with the latest technology as in *Projektion X 2005*.

The artist John Adams made a piece of work circa 1978 called *A Kick in the Eye*. This work featured two CRT monitors positioned on plinths about 6.5 metres apart. These two monitors were fed a video signal via a unit that switches the video signal successively to each monitor at two-second intervals. A third monitor was positioned at the centre of the other two at the same height but rotated sideways in portrait form rather than the usual landscape form. Hokusai prints were shown on the two outer monitors and Japanese erotic art was shown on the central monitor. The vertical scan was collapsed on the central monitor to a strip of about 5 mm wide. When looking directly at the central monitor the viewer would only see the 5 mm strip, but when the alternating images appeared back and forth on the outer monitors, the viewer would move their eyes between the two, as in watching a tennis match, which revealed a virtual floating image from the central monitor. This phenomenon was achieved because the monitor was still scanning 625 lines at 50 Hz as normal and when the eye flicks past, each of the 625 lines registers in a different position on the retina, producing a virtual image in space.

This work would not be achievable with contemporary displays, hence it is another work that would require either the original equipment, or some sort of simulation. Even still, later CRT displays did not have the option to collapse the vertical scan. To repeat this the monitor would require technical modifications.

There are some artists who are interested in showing their work in new ways using new technology. It is important, though, that doing this does not diminish the meaning of the piece. As mentioned previously the works *Pieces I Never Did* (David Critchley) and *Dialogue for Four Players* (Stephen Partridge) were made

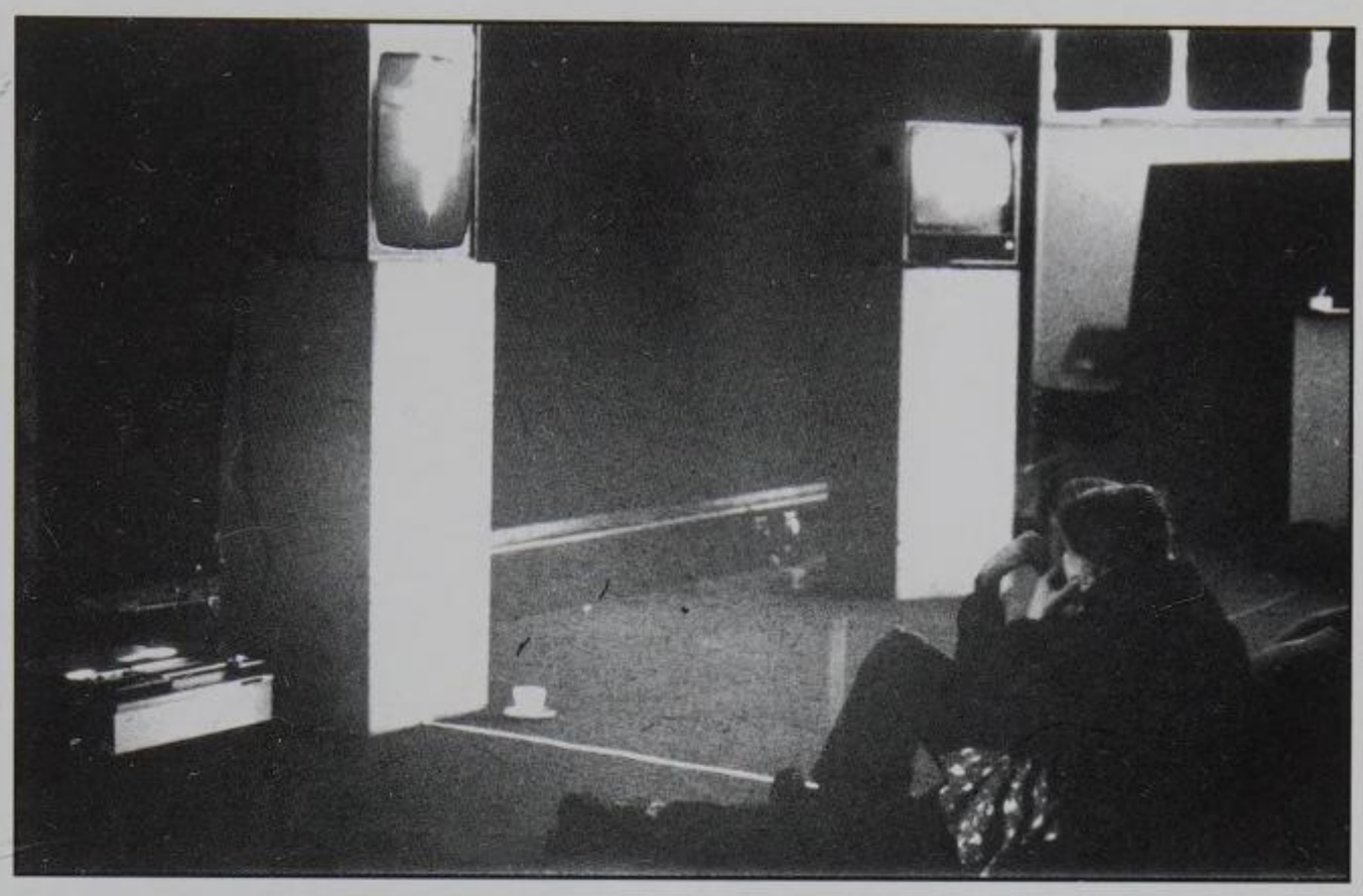


Fig. 18 John Adams *A Kick in The Eye*, 1978; Coventry School of Art Media Centre.

into single-screen composite versions or simulations. This allowed these works to be shown in a cinema context, rather than the usual gallery space. Furthermore these two works were shown in the gallery at Dundee Contemporary Arts during an expanded video screening, along with *Nmutter* (John Latham, 1984) and *In Two Minds* (Kevin Atherton), arranged by Rewind in November 2007. These were projected on two, three or four opposing walls of the gallery, depending on the requirement of each piece, with the sound coming from each individual wall. This was the first time these works were presented in this form.

Kevin Atherton's *In Two Minds* consists of one channel of himself having a conversation with another channel of him in 1978. This was originally shown in the Serpentine Gallery, London in 1978 on opposing monitors. Up to around 1981 he would also perform a live version of the piece where he would omit one of the channels and replace it with the 'live' Atherton. In April 2006 at the *Rewind* Soft Launch, he performed this piece with a new script, with the fifty-five-year-old Atherton talking to the twenty-seven-year-old Atherton on the video. He also did a subsequent complimentary performance where the 'live' fifty-five-year-old spoke to the supposed eighty-one-year-old Atherton on video in the 'future' with Atherton acting and dressed as an old man. The reinvention or evolution of this work does not remove anything from the original piece but what it does do is to keep it fresh and alive, opening the doorway for further versions and interpretations, while the original meaning and theme remain.

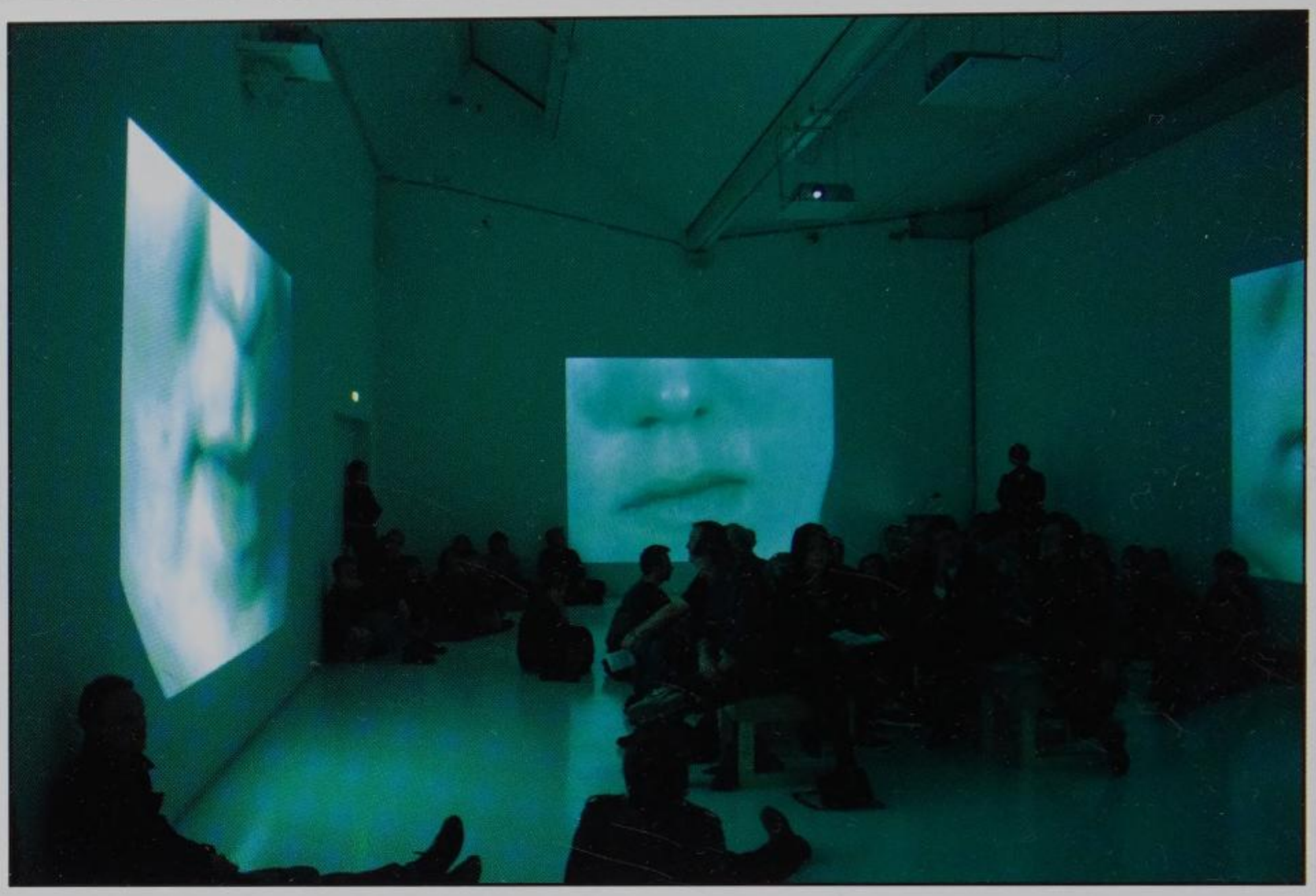


Fig. 19. Stephen Partridge, *Dialogue for Four Players* 1978; four-screen projection, 'Lost and Found: Recovered Works, Dundee Contemporary Arts, 2007.

Fig. 20. David Critchley, *Pieces I Never Did* 1978/79; four-screen projection, 'Lost and Found: Recovered Works, Dundee Contemporary Arts, 2007.

In the future, when legacy technology is no longer available to show certain video artworks, compromises will have to be made to enable these works to be shown. Good video documentation taken now will assist in re-exhibition and may be all that remains of the work in the



future. The intentions and reservations of the artist must be respected, continued and not diluted when they pass away. Remakes and simulations are helpful but do not surpass the original.

The use of video clips on the web is controversial for some artists due to contextual reasons and for copyright fears, but others have no problem. Obviously this is limited to single-screen work, unless installation documentation is shown. Some artists may not want just clips of the work shown but the whole piece in its entirety. Clips, though, could be seen as similar to a visitor at a gallery who may only watch two or three minutes of a longer piece or a section halfway through.[37] Attitudes are changing towards work being shown over the web though, with more of the older artists noticing the advantages of allowing their work seen by the wider community.

Online virtual art galleries are emerging on web community sites such as secondlife.com, allowing visitors from anywhere in world to visit the gallery. Improving technology will enable more and more work to be shown in similar environments, where eventually a virtual re-enactment may be more true to the original than could be reconstructed in real life.

Synthesisers and manipulators

Back in 1963 the BBC television series *Doctor Who* was first aired. This was unique not only for the programme content but also for its title sequence. The music was composed by Ron Grainer but arranged and performed by the BBC Radiophonic workshop with employee Delia Derbyshire as the main protagonist. The theme music, which is now iconic, was created before musical synthesisers were available, so the Workshop used equipment it had collected over the years to put together the sweeping and pulsing electronic waveform sounds. This equipment was mainly old electrical test tone devices and oscillators designed to test electronic circuits. The output of these devices were all recorded to magnetic tape, manually adjusted to exact timings and manipulated as was seen fit. The magnetic tape was looped, spliced and re-attached, sub-mixed and then finally



Fig. 21. Peter Zinovieff with VCS3 Synthesiser at EMS Studios, Putney, London, early 1970s.

mixed using multiple tape decks, and so the enigmatic *Doctor Who* theme was finally born, one of the first electronic signature tunes on television.

The early *Doctor Who* title imagery was credited to Bernard Lodge. This was one of the first times that visual feedback[38] and slit scan[39] techniques were used on television together, thus creating the well known 'howlaround' and 'time tunnel effects' in the title sequence. Although never described as such, this title combined with the music was probably one of the first abstract video art pieces or at least led to such work being created by artists. This work was further developed in the 1966 titles by the outcome of experiments by Lutz Becker and Ben Palmer at the BBC.

Some of the incidental music and sound effects in the early *Doctor Who* episodes were composed and performed by the *musique concrète* and electronic music pioneer Tristram Carey. Along with Peter Zinovieff and David Cockerell he formed EMS (Electronic Music Studios) in 1969. Zinovieff the founder was the first person in the world to have a digital computer in a private house that he used for sequencing tone generators, and also the first known person to create a digital audio sampler,



Fig. 22. EMS Spectron Video Synthesiser

both unbelievably in the 60s. David Cockerell was an electronics expert who had a flair for technical creativity and problem solving; by the 80s he was working with Akai on the first affordable range of digital audio samplers, of which he designed almost the entire range. These samplers became a mainstay with many musicians up to the late 90s.[40]

EMS became the British equivalent of Moog Synthesisers. They designed and built, amongst other devices, the VCS3 synthesiser. Musicians such as Roxy Music, Hawkwind, Pink Floyd, Giorgio Moroder and Kraftwerk used this famous product and it is still in use today with some musicians.

Richard Monkhouse was originally employed by EMS to work on a waveform display device that would allow the representation of audio spectra. This device was never released, however his experimentations at the time ended up in the creation of the EMS Spectron (formerly Spectre). The EMS Spectron was one of the first video synthesisers[41] and generated much interest in both broadcast and creative circles. The device was capable of producing self-generated signals via the voltage control oscillators (VCO) and direct input of a video camera which could be manipulated using delays, colourisation and could be routed through various circuits via the unique pin patch panel which was also found on the VCS3. It was used by the French artist Robert Cahen (*Sans Titre*, 1977; *L'Eclipse*, 1979; *Trompe l'oeil*, 1979; and *'L'Entre aperçu*, 1980), Monkhouse's own work (*Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, 1977 and *Transform* 1978),[42] lightshows for Tangerine Dream and the German television broadcaster ZDF.

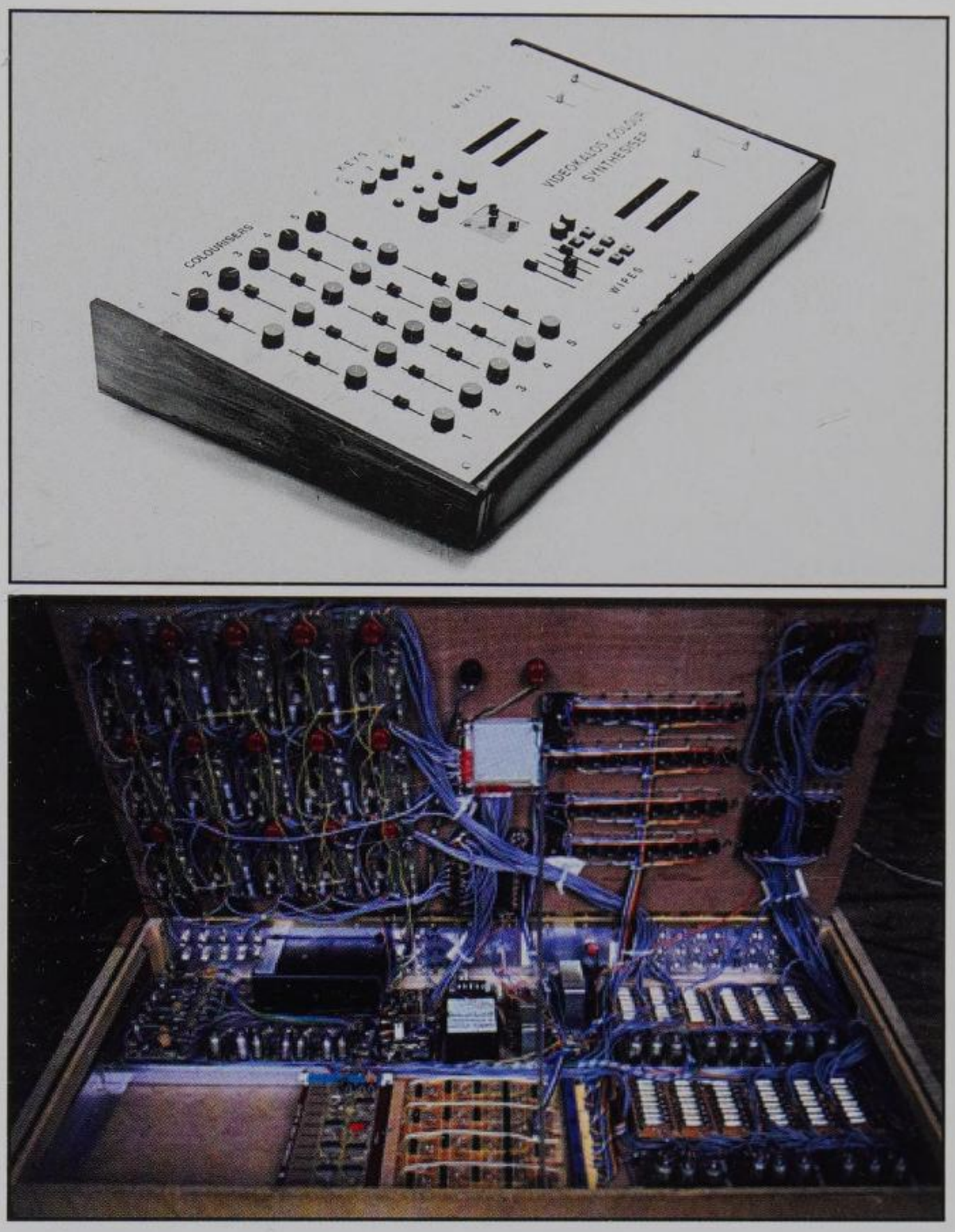
During Monkhouse's time at EMS he met the artist Peter Donebauer in 1974. This led to a collaboration that began with the design and build of the Videokalos image processor. The development of this did not create anything new, but it combined various features into one portable unit, whereas before they existed as bulky individual entities. The Videokalos was envisaged to process an input signal that would normally be from a video camera; it was not a synthesiser as such because it did not generate its own signals. It combined a video mixer, a keyer and wipe generator, a multiple colouriser, a genlocked sync-pulse generator and encoding/decoding cards.[43]

Donebauer used the Videokalos on many of his recorded works including *Merging Emerging*, 1978 and *Moving*, 1980. But it was the portability of the unit that enhanced the possibilities of creating live work that gave the Videokalos the edge.

Donebauer and Monkhouse along with musician Simon Desorgher and others, including at various times Brian Hoey, Barry Guy, Roger Heaton, Lawrence Casserley and Michael Ormiston, formed VAMP in 1978. VAMP or Video and Music Performance was, and still is, an improvised and abstract visual and avant-garde music performance group where the musicians and the visuals influenced each other to create a live experience of work which had only previously been done solely on single screen, and so thus exposed the 'workings'. Donebauer and Monkhouse would manipulate images from oscilloscopes and other such devices via vidicon tube cameras (see earlier in this chapter) using the Videokalos and other bespoke devices. These performances took place at, amongst others: Biddick Farm Arts Centre, 1978; the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1980; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 1980 and more recently in Tate Britain, London as part of *Analogue: Pioneering Video from the UK, Canada and Poland (1968–88)* in 2006.

Others to use the Videokalos include the artist Chris Meigh-Andrews, who utilised it on a number of works including *Horizontal and Vertical* (1978) and *The Distracted Driver* (1980), as well as the Duvet Brothers.

Peter Donebauer formed the television production company Diverse in the early 80s, which developed into an award-winning factual and documentary programme maker. In the mid-80s Rik Lander worked at Diverse as a broadcast engineer. In the evening when all the staff had left, he and Boyd-Maclean would sneak in and use the facilities throughout the night,[44] experimenting and creating work that eventually became part of the genre known as scratch video.[45] Scratch video was started as the visual equivalent of scratching vinyl records: repeated loops, taking previously recorded material out of context, use of found footage, off air material, feature films and mixing these all together with contemporary music as the canvas.



Figs. 23 and 24. Videokalos Video Image Processor.

George Barber, another scratch video pioneer, claims that the editing technology in the early to mid-80s was a major factor in this emerging video art genre. The Sony Series V U-matic editing suite, was a turning point; Barber claimed in 1990 that it was probably as important for scratch video as any of the cultural contexts of the time:

> ... the Sony Series V has one trick, and still does, that sets it apart from all the others. One can edit live – even the latest U-matic SP suites, and certainly not the machines of higher professional standards, can do this. This facility more than any other shaped a lot of the work, especially mine.[46]

Even now, non-linear software such as Adobe Premiere, Apple Final Cut Pro and Sony Vegas does not lend itself to live editing. VJ (video jockey) software such as VJamm does, however, allow live mixing and limited processing of a number of sources.

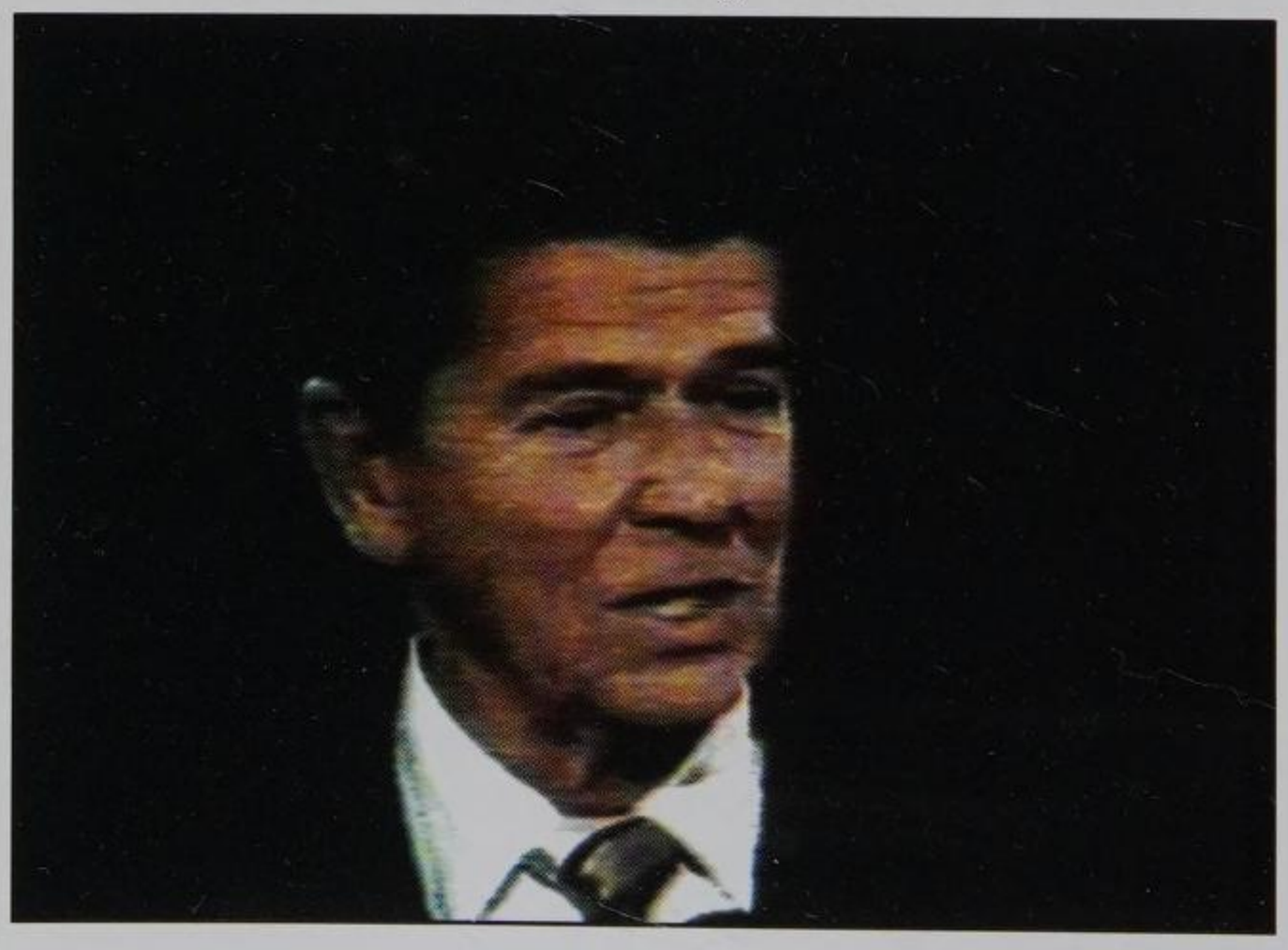


Fig. 25. Duvet Brothers, Peter Boyd MacLean (left) & Rik Lander (right), mid-1980s.

Scratch was very politically influenced and work such as *The Commander in Chief* (1984) by Gorilla Tapes (Gavin Hodge, John Dovey and Tim Morrison) showed how smart editing could change the meaning and context of a speech by the then-US President Ronald Reagan, by using various different recordings, and re-ordering and re-organising parts of them to create a new speech. Similarly the Duvet Brothers' *War Machine* used these methods to reference the so-called 'Star Wars' anti-ballistic missile programme.

The Greatest Hits of Scratch Video, Volume 1 and 2, 1984–5, produced by George Barber, is a compilation of British scratch video and features the artists Kim Flitcroft and Sandra Goldbacher, Jeffrey Hinton, the Duvet Brothers, John Scarlett-Davis, John Maybury, Gorilla Tapes and George Barber.

Fig. 26. Gorilla Tapes, *The Commander in Chief*, 1984.



Scratch influenced and was influenced more by fashion and contemporary culture than video art had been before. It was more fitting to screen the work in nightclubs rather than in galleries or cinema spaces. According to Prof. Michael O'Pray, speaking at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1996, it is the most widely seen independent video ever, being featured in the *Sunday Times*, *Face*, *Honey*, *19*, *NME*, *Melody Maker*, *Sounds*, *Time Out*, *City Limits* and *Zig Zag*. Extracts were shown internationally on BBC1, BBC2, BBC Bristol, KQED San Francisco, MTV, RAI Italy, Canal Plus, Channel 7, USA Cable Network, *Night Flight* and ORF Austrian TV.[47]

Also emerging in the 80s were computer-based technologies by companies such as Quantel and Fairlight. Quantel released the first Paintbox system in 1981 and the Harry system in 1986. Paintbox was a computer graphics workstation, revolutionising the production of video graphics and used extensively by artists in the 80s and early 90s. David Larcher's works *Granny's Is* (1989) and *Ich Tank* (1983–97) made extensive use of Paintbox. The system is still available now, updated of course, but does not run on dedicated hardware as the original did. Harry, which grew out of Paintbox, was the first true digital non-linear editor and effects compositing system. It provided eighty seconds of uncompressed continuous D1-quality digital media recorded to hard disk. Although by today's standards this seems very short, it was revolutionary at the time and provided the facility to allow the layering of multiple images without the loss of image quality.[48]

In 1979 Fairlight released the Fairlight CMI (computer musical instrument), the world's first digital sampling keyboard. This was very popular amongst musicians and gave an alternative to the analogue synthesisers that were around at that time. The company then produced the Fairlight CVI (computer video instrument) in 1984, which was less expensive than Paintbox and so became popular with artists. It was used by Clive Gillman on some works and also Steve Hawley on *Trout Descending a Staircase* (1987). Colin Scott used the device in the early stages of the production of the seminal *Stakker – Humanoid* (1988–89), which combined a sampled music track and visual graphics, both

created by Scott. This was released as a record and also as a video piece.

These devices did force a certain aesthetic into the work and not everyone liked that, according to Stephen Partridge:

> Yes, it (Fairlight CVI) had too much of its own imprint in the work. I spent hours playing with it but never released any work from it. It was fun trying to work it, but somehow, somebody else's authorship seemed to be imprinted on it all the time.[49]

Various other graphical manipulation and processors appeared in the 80s, such as the Abekus and the Ultimatte, but due to the high cost of these and the cost to hire facilities many artists used home computers like the Sinclair ZX Spectrum and the Commodore Amiga. The Amiga was used quite extensively due to its low cost and could carry out many of the functions of the earlier Quantel Paintboxes. Clive Gillman was an avid Amiga user:

> I think I bought my first Commodore Amiga probably about 1987, and made works with the Amiga all the way through to 1990–91. I originally used the Commodore Amiga as an image generation tool and then started to make works that were completely interactive. So the works they actually ran off the computer, rather than using the computer as a tool for generating imagery that would then be used in linear video.[50]

The artist George Snow successfully self-programmed various computers in the 80s to act as video processors and graphics generators, creating unique works such as *Dogs* (1995), *Shuttle Disaster* (1986) and *Motorway* (1992).

Since the 80s technology has become more and more powerful and much less expensive. This has allowed the artist to carry out functions that could only be dreamed of around twenty to thirty years ago, on a limited budget



Fig. 27 (upper). Duvet Brothers, *War Machine*, 1984.

Fig. 28 (centre). Steve Hawley, *Trout Descending a Staircase*, 1987.

Fig. 29 (lower). George Snow, *Motorway*, 1992.

and in the confines of their own home or studio. Furthermore, with the advent of major advances with nanotechnology and biotechnology one can only imagine what might be round the corner. These early adventures, though, still provided the benchmark for the video technology that we know and use today.

Notes

1. Don F. McLean, *The World's Earliest Television Recordings* (URL: http://www.tvdawn.com).
2. Photograph of Les Smith, *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/uploads/medium/DH060s.jpg), fourth photograph from top.
3. Mark H. Clark, 'The Magnetic Recording of Sound', in Eric D. Daniel, C. Denis Mee & Mark H. Clark (eds), *Magnetic Recording: The First 100 Years* (New York: IEEE Press, 1999), 7.
4. Mark H. Clark & Henry Nielson, 'The Telegraphone', in Daniel et al., *Magnetic Recording*, 15–29.
5. Mark H. Clark, 'Steel Tape and Wire Recorders', in Daniel et al., *Magnetic Recording*, 30–46.
6. Friedrich K. Engel, 'The Introduction of the Magnetophon', in Daniel et al., *Magnetic Recording*, 47–71.
7. Don Rushin, 'The Magic of Magnetic Tape', *The History of Magnetic Tape* (URL: http://web.archive.org/web/20040603153341/www.tvhandbook.com/History/History_tape.htm).
8. Finn Jorgensen, 'Early Fixed-Head Video Recorders', in Daniel et al., *Magnetic Recording*, 137–152.
9. John C Mallinson 'The Ampex Quadruplex Recorders', in Daniel et al., *Magnetic Recording*, 153–169.
10. K.F. Ibrahim , 'Magnetic Tape Recording', *Newnes Guide to Television and Video Technology* (Oxford: Newnes, 2007), 422, 434–436, 441.
11. Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art: The Development of Form and Function* (Berg: Oxford, 2006), 16.
12. Sue Hall and John Hopkins, 'Interview with Sue Hall and John Hopkins by Jackie Hatfield, 17 November 2004', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Sue%20Hall,%20John%20Hopkins/SHJH506.pdf).
13. Email statement by John Hopkins to the author, June 2008.
14. Hall and Hopkins, 'Interview'.
15. 'Film Tape Allowed in Court', *The Guardian* (23 August 1974).
16. Ibid.
17. Mark Kidel, 'Video Art and British TV', *Studio International* (May–June 1976): 241.
18. Peter Donebauer, 'Interview with Peter Donebauer by Jackie Hatfield, 20 September 2004', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Peter%20Donebauer/PD504.pdf).
19. David Curtis, *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain*, (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 20.
20. Ian Breakwell, 'Interview with Ian Breakwell by Jackie Hatfield, 5 May 2005', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Ian%20Breakwell/IB505.pdf).
21. Dieter Daniels, 'Video/Art/Market', in Rudolf Frieling and Wulf Herzogenrath (eds), *40 years Videoart.de – part 1*, (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 43.
22. David Hall, 'British Video Art, Towards an Autonomous Practice', in Studio International, May–June 1976, 248.
23. Neil Cooper review of Bill Drummond, 'The17' performances at Hatton Gallery, Newcastle, 22 April – 20 May 2006, in *Map Magazine*, Issue 7, Autumn 2006.
24. The amount of information created, captured, or replicated exceeded available storage for the first time in 2007. Not all information created and transmitted gets stored, but by 2011, almost half of the digital universe will not have a permanent home. John F. Gantz et al., 'The Diverse and Exploding Digital Universe: An Updated Forecast of Worldwide Information Growth Through 2011, *IDC/EMC*, March 2008, p. 2.
25. Hans Dieter Huber, 'The Embodiment of Code', in Frieling and Herzogenrath, *40 years Videoart.de*, p. 63.

26. Desmond A. Medeiros, John L.S. Curtis et al. on behalf of Ampex Systems Corp., ;Restored Magnetic Recording Media and Method of Producing Same', United States Patent No. 5,236,790, 17 August 1993, column 3, lines 45–55.
27. Vidipax LLC, 'Magnetic Tape Deterioration: Tidal Wave at Our Shores', *Vidipax: Preserving Yesterday for Tomorrow*, (URL: www.vidipax.com/tidal.php).
28. Medeiros and Curtis on behalf of Ampex, Restored Magnetic Recording Media, US Patent No. 5,236,790, column 4, line 35 onwards.
29. Prof. Sean Cubitt, *Rewind* Launch Public Lecture, University of Dundee, delivered 7 April 2006.
30. Since this re-edit, *Pieces I Never Did* has been shown as a three-screen composite at BFI Southbank, London, August 2007 (part of *LVA – Video Art contra Television – 70s*, curated by David Curtis); Fieldgate Gallery, London, November–December 2007 (as part of *Analogue and Digital*, curated by Chris Meigh-Andrews). The live multi-screen version was performed at Brentford CLC, London, July 2007 (to an invited audience); Candid Arts, London, September 2007 (curated by Peter Todd for LUX); Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, November 2007 (as part of *Lost and Found: Recovered Works from the 1970s*, curated by Adam Lockhart); 'Polytechnic' exhibition at Raven Row Gallery, London, September–November 2010.
31. This was screened alongside *Pieces I Never Did* at BFI Southbank in August 2007 (as part of *LVA – Video Art contra Television – 70s*, curated by David Curtis) *Rewind at Stills*, Stills Gallery, Edinburgh, August–October 2009.
32. Jesus Diaz, 'Obituary: Sony Trinitron Timeline Shows Why It Will Live Forever In Our Hearts', *Gizmodo*, 3 March 2008 (URL: http://gizmodo.com/363191/sony-trinitron-timeline-shows-why-it-will-live-forever-in-our-hearts).
33. Sony Global, 'Superior Quality of Trinitron TV Screens Leads to Computer Display Applications', *Sony History*, 2008 (URL: http://www.sony.net/Fun/SH/1-25/h1.html).
34. Tony Sinden, 'Description of Installation Pieces', Typed Document, late 1970s, British Artists' Film and Video Study Collection at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London.
35. Christiane Fricke, 'Projektion X', in Frieling and Herzogenrath, *40 years Videoart.de*, 122.
36. For an equivalent digital transformation see Vivian Sobchack, 'Nostalgia for a Digital Object: Regrets on the Quickening of QuickTime', *Millennium Film Journal* No. 34, (Fall 1999), 4–23 (URL: http://mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ34/VivianSobchack.html).
37. Gillman talks about time spent on video works in galleries. Clive Gillman, 'Interview with Clive Gillman by Stephen Partridge, Emile Shemilt and Adam Lockhart, 28 November 2006', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk/documents/Clive%20Gillman/CG510.pdf).
38. Visual feedback is created by pointing the input video camera at the output monitor and can be manipulated by different positioning, movement and the use of electronic and physical filters.
39. Slit scan technology is achieved where a slit, cut in a black slide or mask is moved in front of a camera lens (or the camera is moved) creating a distorted image. This is used in both moving and still image capture. It can also be seen in the end scenes of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and the warp drive scenes in the original *Star Wars* trilogy (1977–83).
40. Matthew Bate (dir.), *What The Future Sounded Like*, Porthmeor Productions/Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2006.
41. Other early video synthesisers include the 1969 Paik/Abe, 1968 Truquer Universal by ORTF, 1970 Eric Siegel machine, 1968 Number 0 and Direct Video Synthesiser by Stephen Beck, and the 1973 Rutt/Etra Scan Processor.
42. *EMS: Electronic Music Studios* (URL: http://www.ems-synthi.demon.co.uk/); Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art*, 135.
43. Ibid., 136.
44. In a conversation with the author in October 2009, Peter Donebauer revealed that he knew the Duvet Brothers were using the facilities but turned a blind eye to it.
45. Rik Lander, 'Interview with Rik Lander by Maggie Warwick', *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s* (URL: http://www.rewind.ac.uk).
46. George Barber, 'Scratch and After: Edit Suite Technology and the Determination of Style in Video Art', in Philip Hayward (ed.), *Culture, Technology and Creativity in the Late Twentith Century* (London: John Libbey, 1990), 115.

47. *Luxonline* (URL: http://www.luxonline.org.uk).

48. Karl Paulsen, *Video and Media Servers: Technology and Applications*, Oxford: Focal Press, 2001.

49. Clive Gillman, 'Interview with Clive Gillman'.

50. Ibid.

End Note

In March and April of 2012, at Ambika P3 Gallery (University of Westminster, London), 1001 cathode ray tube televisions of all sizes, shapes and ages pulsated, strobed, fought and interacted with each other on a large expansive floor. This was David Hall's last incarnation of his 'TV Sets' pieces he originally produced along with Tony Sinden – *60 TV Sets* in 1972, *101 TV Sets* in 1975 and now *1001 TV Sets (End Piece)* in 2012.

This behemoth of an exhibition featured these 1001 TVs sprawled all over the huge subterranean ex-concrete testing lab floor, pointing upwards in all directions whilst being held by an apparatus of scaffolding and net. All of these TVs, like the original works, were tuned to analogue broadcast TV channels. Every TV was like an organism displaying the image in it's own way. Some were scrolling, some were over saturated, some were only half tuned, some colour, some black and white, some fuzzy and some burst into flames, perhaps displaying aspects of TV suicide, pre-empting their imminent death. Meanwhile, the soundtrack to the piece was the loud cacophony of sound emanating from each set at all angles, again, with their individual characteristics.

Overarching the expanse were the signal cables branching down from the roof in a tent like formation, feeding each TV with analogue signals picked up from the ether via an external antenna. This whole piece, almost like a modern day rendition of the aftermath at the Tower of Babel, shows Hall's roots as a sculptor whilst maintains his fascination in the materiality of the television. What was to happen next, however, was perhaps the most intriguing episode in the life of this piece.

On 18 April the last analogue broadcast television signal in the UK was switched off at the Crystal Palace transmitter. This turned the



David Hall, *1001 TV Sets (End Piece)*, Ambika P3 Gallery, University of Westminster, 2012. Image courtesy Michael Maziere.

piece into a sea of white noise from each screen, and the audio became a loud hypnotic hiss. There were, though hidden amongst all the noise, three monitors playing out Hall's *Stooky Bill TV* (1990). These had been playing for the whole exhibition but only became pronounced when the signal was switched off. 'Stooky Bill TV' was made using the original apparatus that John Logie Baird invented for the first TV broadcasts. The work involves an imagined conversation between Baird and the dummy he used for his experiments (Stooky Bill), about how the public might react to the concept of television. This now acted like an epitaph to the switch-off of the analogue signal, heralding the arrival of digital. It also represented, in a way, all things analogue in technology. The natural world, however, is still completely analogue in the way it senses, grows, functions and receives data so the output from digital technology has to emulate analogue to allow us to interact with it. Analogue may be dead, but it will still live on. End Piece.

Adam Lockhart

About the Contributors

Sean Cubitt is Professor of Film and TV at Goldsmiths, University of London, Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne and Honorary Professor of the University of Dundee. His publications include *Timeshift: On Video Culture*, *Videography: Video Media as Art and Culture*, *Digital Aesthetics, Simulation and Social Theory*, *The Cinema Effect* and *EcoMedia*. He is the series editor for Leonardo Books at MIT Press. His current research is on genealogies of digital light and on ecocriticism.

Malcolm Dickson has curated numerous projects including a photographic retrospective of John Hoppy Hopkins, the talks series 'In Search of Space' (2009), the visual arts programme of 'Radiance: Glasgow's Festival of Light' (2007) and 'Infinitude: new media artworks' at the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow. He has organised two international conferences on video culture in 2005 and 2006; 'Timeloop', video art from Germany (2008; see www.dotcrawl.org). The exhibition 'Lost and Found: Video Installations from the 70s and 80s' (2010), was presented in partnership with Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and is a key outcome of the *Rewind* research project. Street Level has also presented a programme of scratch video in collaboration with *Rewind* in 2009. In the 80s and early 90s Dickson was central to some of Glasgow's key artists run initiatives, including Transmission, Variant, New Visions Festival and EventSpace, as well as exhibiting his own work. He helped establish New Media Scotland in the late 90s. Recent articles include 'Coals to Newcastle' on the origins of artists' initiatives in Glasgow, and 'Everything is Round: the Video Environments of Stansfield/Hooykaas', accompanying the exhibition 'Revealing the Invisible' (2010).

Dr. Jackie Hatfield was an artist and writer specialising in expanded and participatory cinema. Editor of *Experimental Film and Video*, an anthology of artists' writing, interviews and essays by filmmakers, video artists, and pioneers of interactive cinema, published in Winter 2005 by John Libbey. She contributed essays and co-edited two critical books around women's use of technology in art practice, *Desire by Design* and *Digital Desires*, and published articles concentrating on expanded cinema and other under-explored histories of experimental film and video. She organised a major retrospective of artists' moving-image from the late 60s to date, *Experiments in Moving Image* in London 2004 with Stephen Littman at the University of Westminster's 'Old' Lumiere Cinema, Regent St. She was appointed as the *Rewind* Research Fellow and Lecturer at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design in 2004 and won her own major research award (Narrative Exploration in Expanded Cinema) by the AHRC shortly before her untimely death in 2007. This latter project led to the major publication by the TATE in 2011, *Expanded Cinema (Art, Performance, Film)*.

Mike Leggett has been working across the institutions of art, education, cinema and television with media since the late 1960s. He is Visiting Fellow in the Creativity and Cognition Studios in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology, the University of Technology Sydney, within which his post-PhD research continues to explore the precept of visual mnemonics in the development of interactive digital hypervideo. He has a Masters of Fine Art from the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales in Sydney, where he lives with his spouse and two children. He has film and video work in archives and collections in Europe, Australia, North and South America and has practiced professionally as an artist, curator, writer, director, producer, editor and teacher. He contributes to journals (*Leonardo*; *Continuum*), magazines (*World Art*), online 'zi-

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Stephen Partridge is an artist, academic researcher and the principal investigator on *Rewind*. He was in the landmark video shows of the 1970s including *The Video Show* at the Serpentine in 1975, the *Installation Show* at the Tate gallery in 1976, The Paris Biennale in 1977 and the The Kitchen in New York in 1979. During the 1980s and 90s he exhibited widely and produced innovative broadcast projects for Channel 4 and the BBC (*Television Interventions* and *Not Necessarily*). He has also curated a number of influential video shows: *Video Art 78* in Coventry; *UK TV* New York; *National Review of Live Art* 1988-90; 19:4:90 *Television Interventions*; and the touring tape packages *Made in Scotland I,II, Semblances , Passages*. He has lectured since 1975 in a number of art colleges, and established the School of Television & Imaging at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design (University of Dundee). He is presently Professor of Media Art and Dean of Research at DJCAD and researching early Italian Video art activity through a further AHRC-funded research project Rewind*Italia*: 1968–1994.

Dr. Emile Shemilt is an artist, curator and writer. He studied at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, University of Oxford; and received a PhD from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee in 2011. He was Research Assistant for *Rewind | Artists' Video in the 70s and 80s*.

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developed in collaboration with engineer Isaac Dimitrovsky.

Brian Winston is the first Lincoln Chair of Communications at the University of Lincoln, United Kingdom. He was a Pro Vice Chancellor for 2005–06 and the former dean of communications. He is the former head of the faculty of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Westminster. He is a former dean of the College of Communications at Penn State University (State College, PA) and former chair of cinema studies at New York University. He was also the director of the Center for Journalism Studies at the University of Wales College of Cardiff Winston was also a founder member of the Glasgow Media Group and a co-author of its first two books *Bad News* (1976) and *More Bad News* (1980). In 1985, he won an Emmy for documentary script writing. He has worked on television current affairs and features and as a print journalist. He is also known for being one of the first to write on the subject of documentary and ethics. His book *Media Technology and Society* was named the best book of 1998 by the American Association for History and Computing. His publications include *Claiming the Real* (1995), *Technologies of Seeing: Photography, Cinematography and Television* (1997), *Media Technology and Society* (1998), *Lies, Damn Lies and Documentaries* (2001) and *Messages* (2005).

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REWIND |



British Artists' Video in the 1970s & 1980s

Rewind: Artists' Video in the 1970s and 1980s derives from a four-year research project into the history of an art form that has become the hallmark of contemporary art. Based on an archive of interviews, ephemera and archive copies of tapes and installations from the pioneering period of British video art, this anthology brings together some of the leading scholars in the field, backed by an expert panel, to lay the groundwork for a history of the people, activities, institutions and interventions that made of video art the one true avant-garde in the United Kingdom in the 20th century.

Rewind is the founding text for the history of British video art; draws on a unique archive of oral history and personal experience; and opens up the archive for contemporary artists, curators, media historians and archivists. The primary audience for the book lies in art history. Secondary areas include the growing field of media art history, archiving and conservation, media history and film and media studies. There is international interest through the global Media Art History and Leonardo/ISAST groups and the many parallel research projects underway in fifteen or more countries worldwide.

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