

REFLECTING. 1986.

A Video Tape by Jeremy Welsh.

Running time: 28 minutes.

Produced between 1983 - 1986.

Edited at London Video Arts.

Music: Keith James & Mike Nolan
Claude DeBussy
Jeremy Welsh

Written, shot and edited by Jeremy Welsh.
Digital Video Effects programming by James Gormley.

Made with support from the Arts Council of Great Britain and Greater London Arts.

On Reflecting:

In many ways, this video tape marks the end of a ten year cycle that started in 1976 with a series of performances entitled, in the spirit of the times, 'Installation/Action No. I, II, III, IV...etc. Sometimes solo pieces, sometimes collaborations with other artists, these pieces continued until 1980. The last performance in the series, 'Alienation', was a fairly literal interpretation of the Marxist model of the alienated industrial worker, with an underlying theme of personal alienation that ran through all of my work in the 1970's.

In 1981 at the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, I made an installation and performance that approached themes of image and identity, and was an attempt to break the formal structures of earlier work, not least by acknowledging the two dimensional image (in this instance large drawings and slides) as a viable medium for the development of my work.

Since 1981 I have produced video tapes that have variously dissected, rejected or redefined the obsessions and the formal and theoretical concerns of my 70's work, and that have attempted to adjust to a new frame of reference. For many artists schooled in the early/mid seventies, this process has been a painful one: in the 70's an ideological message could be completely blunt and literal (if somewhat naive in retrospect); if an art performance that dealt with social or philosophical issues was long, boring, painful and ultimately unsatisfying, this was only because life itself may be long, boring, painful and unsatisfying for many people in a fragmented capitalist society. Now, in the Post Everything 80's, politics has grasped the Pleasure Principle and Art has gone looking for a broader audience. No more long boring performances, please.

Dealing with paradox has become a common hazard since I devoted myself to video in 1981. An early tape, 'Insomnia', serves as a good example: in order to say anything about Insomnia, and in order to explore a broad interpretation of that idea as a philosophical condition, it had to be quite long, repetitious and consequently, run the risk of boring its audience. Then, on the other hand, a three minute, fast cut video with a poppy soundtrack can easily

be bracketed with Rock Video and dismissed as trivial, disposable. Ofcourse, the point is not to worry about these things, but it's easier to say than do.

Now, Reflecting, the video tape, 1986. At 28 minutes, the longest tape I've made, and quite possibly the most 'difficult' for an audience. It is structured around a number of texts: quotations from writings by theorists Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio; narrative fragments written by myself; an extract from an interview conducted in 1984 with the Yugoslav video artist Dalibor Martinis on the nature of the image in television, art, contemporary society. Many of the images used are derived from, or made with reference to a number of earlier works in Performance, Installation and Photography. There are a series of photographs from a 1978 performance; clips from several previous video tapes including 'Insomnia' (1981) and 'Tense' (1983); extracts from a super 8 film made in 1977. The central theme of Reflecting is an exploration of links between Image, Memory and Identity. Without describing the tape in detail, a pointless act, nothing much more can be said. So, in conclusion, a quotation from the text of the tape: 'Images gave him the world, and in exchange he gave himself to the image: a merging with, more than a sacrifice to.'

Jeremy Welsh. June 1986.