

## 7 TV PIECES

When I made sculpture in the sixties I photographed it. But two dimensional pictures had very little to do with my work. However if people didn't see the sculpture they more or less believed that they had if they saw the photographs. They made judgements about it, they were used to that from looking at photographs. I decided that they were probably more important than the sculpture and turned to making only photographs.

I then decided that the illusion was even more convincing when it moved and had sound, and I started to make films. But I wasn't always interested in making the illusion convincing, if it was convincing it would be like looking at something else, not a film (like believing this was me in a mirror). I used illusion only as a means to see itself. If I had denied using it altogether it would be very convenient and 'truthful' to the mechanics and process of film, but illusion would still be there because people wanted it to be. They expected that from looking at films. I became even more interested in their expectations. But I didn't want to give them what they might expect.

Having made a number of films I soon became interested in television. TV as a medium was a very different proposition. Viewing TV was not a special event with a captive audience like film, but it reached everyone. A TV set was an object, small, intimate, and at home. And with TV, people mostly got what they expected. My interests in film transposed to TV. But the context was very different and the work had to respond to that. TV art was something else.

7 TV Pieces were my first works for TV, and are a selection from the original ten, conceived and made specifically for broadcast. They were transmitted on Scottish Television during the 1971 Edinburgh Festival. The idea of inserting them as interruptions to regular programmes was crucial and a major influence on their content. That they appeared unannounced with no titles (two or three times a day for ten days) was essential. To get a TV company to agree to show them, and with these conditions, was a coup. Since then such work is at best usually identified by 'credits', at worst it is encapsulated as 'experiment' and packaged in the safety of an arts feature programme. No threat to 'normal' TV.

These transmissions were a surprise, a mystery. No explanations, no excuses. Reactions were various. I viewed one piece in an old gents' club. The TV was permanently on but the occupants were oblivious to it, reading newspapers or dozing. When the TV began to fill with water newspapers dropped, the dozing stopped. When the piece finished, normal activity was resumed. When announcing to shop assistants and engineers in a local TV shop that another was about to appear they welcomed me in. When it finished I was obliged to leave quickly by the back door. I took these as positive reactions.

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. – David Hall