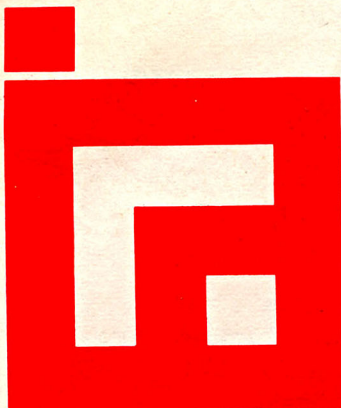


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PROGRAMME NOTES

THREE FILMS BY DAVID HALL - 4th May 1972

In the Theatre at 7.30pm: ICA Members 10p, Public 30p.

VERTICAL 1969 16mm Colour/Sound 18 minutes  
Financed by the Arts Council and distributed by the BFI

7 TV PIECES 1971 16mm Black and White/Sound  
23 minutes sponsored by the Scottish Arts Council  
and Scottish Television Ltd.

TIMECHECK 1971 16mm Colour/Sound 43 minutes  
financed and distributed by the BFI

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David Hall's first film VERTICAL has obvious links with the sculptures he was making shortly before turning to film-making, but it is not a photographed record of sculpture made in the open, or of some kind of 'Land Art', although it is in many ways a transition from Hall's preoccupations as a sculptor to a more direct use of film in his later films TIMECHECK and 7 TV PIECES. For in VERTICAL Hall uses sculptural elements like painted pieces of wood placed in the landscape to question the conventional illusionism of film-making - the screen seen as an open window through which we gaze, like the frame in a post-Renaissance painting.

In TIMECHECK and some of the 7 TV PIECES he uses direct filmic devices - the speeding up and compressing of passages of time by means of time-lapse photography or by using fast motion, and, in TIMECHECK, the alternation of sequences of breathtaking aerial photography or stop-frame filming of clouds moving across a landscape, with sequences of black film, and a deliberately disturbing interference noise on the soundtrack.

The illusionistic devices and puzzles which are introduced into the landscape in VERTICAL were designed specifically for the purpose of filming and do not exist any more outside the film. Sometimes these illusions are revealed for what they are by the approach of a human figure. White-painted wooden laths laid flat on the grass appear to be poles standing up, until a girl walks over them. Other illusions are clarified by the camera moving into close-up.

VERTICAL begins with a section of conventionally 'lyrical' images of landscape and water dissolving into one another, which we accept, at first, in the normal way of looking at a film, as if through a window. Then as visual puzzles and illusions are introduced, the effort of looking, both reveals the landscape in a new and surprisingly fresh way, and at the same time keeps us aware that we are looking at moving images projected on a flat screen and that the whole process is an illusion in the first place.

The vertical elements which recur and give the film its title, reveal and point by contrast a landscape which is predominantly horizontal. These vertical punctuations reveal its space and define it. TIMECHECK is much more complex: both physical distance and time - compressed by the acceleration of images - play an important part. If the mood of VERTICAL is predominantly lyrical and contemplative, although sharpened by the introduction of visual puzzles, the effect of TIMECHECK is more disturbing. The process of time passing is made very physically real by concentrating on the elements and their changes over a period of time, foreshortened by the technique of time-lapse photography (a single-frame exposed every two to five seconds instead of 24 times a second). And this foreshortening of time - similar to the use of foreshortening and perspective or false perspective illusions in VERTICAL - appears as equally real and physically tangible.

Physical distance is conveyed in TIMECHECK, not as in VERTICAL by using actual markers that define the extent and space of a landscape, but through filming the landscape from vastly different angles and heights. The awareness of this landscape and our judgements about its distance and orientation are made here not by perspective and foreshortening, as in VERTICAL, but by what perceptual psychologists like J. J. Gibson call 'gradient perspective' (for instance, if the lumps of earth in a ploughed field appear from a distance like grains of sand - this tells us roughly how far away we are from them). In TIMECHECK the landscape is seen from ground level, from the top of mountains, from a light aeroplane flying through cloud, so that a whole county is laid out beneath us as a

patchwork of different coloured fields. From a higher-flying passenger aircraft only the cloud ceiling is visible and from a satellite (in the film duped from material supplied by NASA) the earth is glimpsed as a turning sphere shrouded in tatters of cloud like a relief map.

Thus in TIMECHECK both time and space are compressed and telescoped and, paradoxically, at the same time made more real. Some of the images have the physical exhilaration and mental elation of romantic painting: fast moving clouds boiling over a landscape, a shadow moving slowly but inexorably across a piece of cracked concrete, a red sun plunging into the horizon like a falling star. Yet these are punctuated by other images of a different nature. The camera (and the cameraman/filmmaker) looking at itself in a mirror with a window behind looking out onto the world beyond. People pass, appear for a moment through one pane of a window, and disappear at another. Cars speed along motorways and are accelerated so that they appear only on a single frame of film, yet persistence of vision allows us to glimpse them. The insistent noise on the sound track takes over and a period of darkness intrudes, so that a space of 'real' uncompressed time makes us realise that we are watching a flow of artificial images flashed upon a screen in a darkened room.

TIMECHECK took 18 months to complete and towards the end of this time Hall was invited by the Scottish Arts Council to participate in the Edinburgh Festival last year. He persuaded STV (Scottish Independent Television) to insert a three minute film each day without any announcement, so that it would occur in normal viewing rather than an 'art' or 'art film' context. In 7 TV PIECES some were designed to "redirect attention back to the box as an object" - for instance, an old television set burning in a deserted landscape; the TV screen fills with water from a tap and then is drained again. In others attention is directed back to the process of film and television. A whole evenings TV, seen in the television room of a hall of residence at Edinburgh University, is compressed into three minutes by means of time-lapse photography, but the sound track is a 'real' three minutes sound (uncompressed) from a Feature film shown during the evening. Making another piece, Hall was filming in the streets of Edinburgh when an Arts Council man arrived to film him filming. Hall filmed him filming him and got his assistant to film him as he filmed the Arts Council man filming him. A nice touch for television, a predominantly incestuous medium. 7 TV PIECES are those that Hall wants to preserve from the original ten.

#### DAVID HALL

Born Leicester 1937. Worked in architect's office for three years. Leicester College of Art, 1956 - 60. Royal College of Art, 1960 - 64. Sculptor, until began making films in 1969. One man show: Richard Feigen Gallery, New York, 1966. Organised own show at Royal Institute Galleries, London, 1968. Work shown in international mixed exhibitions, including Biennale de Paris, 1965 (awarded two prizes) and 1967; Primary Structures, Jewish Museum, New York, 1966, and mixed shows in Germany, Switzerland, Holland and South America. Work in the Tate Gallery, London and in the Gemmeente Museum, The Hague, and in private collections in Europe and the USA. Arts Council grant to make VERTICAL, 1969. BFI Production Board grant to make TIMECHECK, 1970. Produced 10 short films for STV during Edinburgh Festival 1971. VERTICAL shown at various film festivals and rushes of TIMECHECK at Prospect Projection, Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf, 1971 (artists' films and videotapes). Helped organise Artist Placement Group and took part in Inno 70 exhibition at Hayward Gallery in 1971. Currently working on series of short films on Arts Council grant.

c PAUL OVERY 1972.