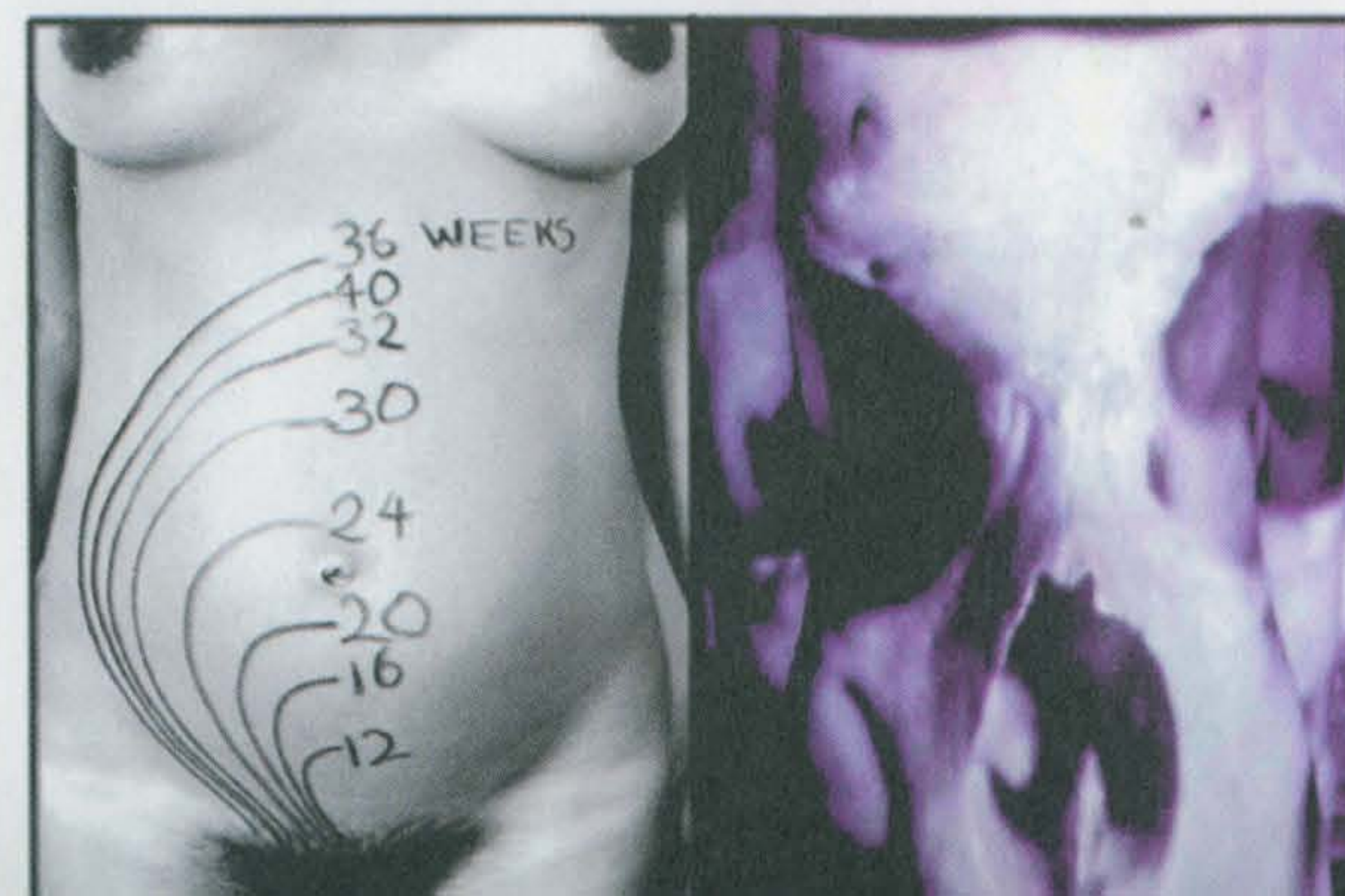




Left, Intangible Bodies, digital print and etching series, 1999. A collaboration with Elaine Shemilt.

Below right, Chimera, installation, composite, 1998.

Below left, Chimera, 1998. A collaboration with Elaine Shemilt.





something you see as diverting you from your art, as it were? Or is it a stimulus?

S: Well, everybody gets fed up with aspects of their job, so to speak, and I'm no different. But I've always seen it as symbiotic process. I think it's unproductive to separate the two: my work is both things, they feed off each other, and if I had my time over again and didn't have that involvement, I think I'd miss it. It's probably possible now not to be involved in an educational institution if you're working in new media (video, digital imaging or whatever) but it's still quite difficult and there'd only be room for a few people in any particular country. We talk about research now, because everything's been re-defined, and that's both false and true. It's true in that we're a team - the other staff as well as the students - in discovery and learning, so there's a very positive aspect to this, beyond the necessities of having a job and remuneration.

H: Dialogue For Two Players from 1984 is a kind of deconstruction of some of the key elements of contemporary TV - obsessed as it is increasingly by 'fly-on-the-wall' and the confessional. You're probing issues such as when is somebody being him/herself, when is somebody acting, can somebody be unaware of a camera?

S: This was a first opportunity, brought to me by Anna Ridley, to do something actually for broadcast television. I had all sorts of ideas of what I might do, but I was anxious that it shouldn't be a piece of "video art" in that sense, with quotes round it. I picked one of the classic forms: two people, the talking heads, the interview. If you watch Newsnight, for example, the interviewer is supposed to be revealing the content, of whatever the story is, a topical story of some kind - but in fact there are all sorts of games being played, of role playing.

H: Where do you feel your work is positioning itself at the moment? What are you currently exploring?

S: That's never easy - to talk about work I'm still making... but I'd say there are two areas for me at present. One has involved looking back, and that's the work I began with David Cunningham some three or four years ago: the CD-Rom *This is a Sentence*, 1999, is an encapsulation of that. The other is my new collaboration with Elaine Shemilt, which is taking me into different media - both electronic and traditional printmaking, for example.

H: Describing one of your own installations, you wrote once about "a visual patterning in time."² That's a revealing

phrase: time is very crucial in your work. The notion of time being stretched or contracted is one that you have worked with a great deal - even the pieces which might appear to be about words, or language, perhaps the issue is really that of time and how you put those words through distortions by altering the time allotted to a sound.

S: I discovered, only about a year and a half ago, that I have a condition called synaesthesia. I'm still doing some reading on it, and it can be quite an alarming condition in its extreme form. A lot of people have it quite mildly, a few people, like me, have it a little more strongly. I guess it's quite a useful thing for an artist to have. It's hard to explain, but, for instance, when you look at a word, you have a sense of shape, colour, form, sound, texture - all associated. It's not to do with how it looks on the page, it's a kind of metaphor. I think it's that which influences the way I look at images, the way I shape them, and cut them in time. It's not necessarily a classic montage technique, in the sense of story-telling. Of course, my work is non-narrative, abstract - but there again, if you look at a piece like *Dialogue for Two Players*, there is content, there is a political message. It's the same with *The sound of These Words* from 1990, although it's much more abstract... I'm a political animal, as I've said. So, in *Dialogue*, I'm revealing the power of the form, that classic TV form: there is a deception going on in the sense that a viewer cannot know absolutely what is fact, what is interpretation, what is propaganda - the form has the ability to aid that deception. And there's a manipulation going on in the piece - of the protagonists, the players - by the artist. I reveal myself in the piece (I'm in shot) but I don't reveal what I'm doing, that I'm in control of the situation.

H: The point has been made, by Catherine Elwes amongst others, that women artists have brought personal material to video art - something which male artists mostly don't do. She says specifically that "skill" is one of the ways the male asserts mastery.³ Do you take that as an accusation of formalism in the work of artists such as yourself?

S: Well, yes, I think it is. But if you look at David Hall's work, for example, it's not just formal. It's more multi-layered than that, and in my view it's the more powerful for it. Television is already full of documentary and exposition and explanation and mediation - but at the end of the day, you just consume that stuff and are you left with any insight? An artist tries to make you think, make you draw your own conclusions and though the means to do that might seem merely formal, it's in fact more of a challenge

to the conventions and assumptions.

H: The accusation here is perhaps that male artists by and large keep themselves out of their work; they're wary of the vulnerability which other courses of action might imply. Do you think there's a tendency in your own work towards the 'observational,' a kind of cool "looking at" - an almost voyeuristic approach? Is that tendency something you try to challenge, or undermine?

S: I try to signpost that problem. I want to try to give an indication that this is part of the male psyche, the male gaze... I'm putting it there, you can find it in the work... but I think that to put the personal in the work in an obvious way is not a solution. You end up with something which is very similar to current TV, but which lacks the production values.

H: "Video Diaries" for example?

S: In some ways those are preferable. They don't try to position themselves as art, but they make good television. I like the frankness of some of them and their playfulness.

H: Do you think programmes like that are a consequence of artists' work? They do at least depart from the traditional smooth seamless approach, you are aware of the camera being there - you know, it's sitting on a table, maybe...

S: The approach is referential towards the camera's presence, that's true. It's a combination of the technology allowing that form and yes, I'm sure you're right, there has been a contribution from artists' work in helping that development. There are power-shifts happening in television, and with new media generally, there's a sense of major change. And that's good.

H: Yes.

S: Even if there's no resolution!

1 Hugh Stoddart. Text accompanying 'Display - Displaced' exhibition at Ikon Gallery, 1981.

2 Steve Partridge. Text accompanying 'Display - Displaced' exhibition at Ikon Gallery, 1981. Exhibition included first UK showing of 'Study in Blue', 1979.

3 Catherine Elwes, 'The Pursuit of the Personal in British Video Art', in Julia Knight (ed), 'Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video Art', 1996.

A Personal Chronology

Background, Black Skirt, videotape, 7 minutes, 1979.

The general information contained in the following personal chronology is drawn from 'A Chronological Guide to British Video Art' in Julia Knight (ed), *Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video Art*, 1996, and is reproduced with the kind permission of the Arts Council of England and the University of Luton Press.

1969
Land Art: Fernsehgalerie Schum, Piccadilly, London (September).

To accompany the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* at the ICA, screenings of Gerry Schum's TV Gallery production *Land Art* are presented on video at the Reed Showroom in Piccadilly. Artists' works (originated on 16mm film) but made for TV are shown without introduction or explanation.

As far as I can remember, this was the first artists' work using the medium of TV that I saw. It's certainly influenced my desire to work with video and I think this exhibition was very influential on British video art. (Mick Hartney).

Self Burial: WDR TV, Germany (October)

British artist Keith Arnatt, in collaboration with Gerry Schum, presents a series of photographs, broadcast without introduction or commentary as 'interruptions' to the scheduled programming.

You really must mention *Self Burial* by Keith Arnatt, a work made only for (and only existing on) television as part of Gerry Schum's TV Gallery. We re-created the piece by Arnatt for the 1990 TV *Interventions* Exhibition and used it to interrupt the broadcast pieces. (Jane Rigby).

1971
TV Interruptions: Scottish TV (August/September).

Ten short experimental pieces by David Hall are commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council for the Edinburgh Festival. Seven of the ten are broadcast unannounced by Scottish Television during transmissions in August and September. These works, later distributed as *7 TV Pieces*, have come to be regarded as the first example of British artists' television and (even though originally shot in 16mm film) as an equally formative moment in British video art. Video tape version is shown at the Hayward Gallery in November as part of the Artists' Placement Group show, *Inn70: Art & Commerce*.

My TV Interruptions were on film (not video) – the reason for this was because STV would not accept non-broadcast standard video recordings at the time and the union would not accept a non-union director using their studios. I therefore had to produce the work outside on an acceptable format, i.e. 16mm film. However, the intention was very much that they were TV works. (David Hall).

1972
In the Spring David Hall establishes the Audio-Visual Workshops at Maidstone College of Art (now Kent Institute of Art and Design) which offers video provision within fine arts for undergraduates and outside artists. Later a number of video artists are awarded working fellowships with the aid of Arts Council bursaries.

Stephen Partridge enrolls on Fine Art Course at Maidstone College of Art. Tutors include Mike Upton, Marc Camille Chaimovitz, Stuart Brisley, Bruce Maclean.

It is historically important to recognise that, out of necessity, most video art production took place in art colleges, particularly in these early years. (David Hall).

A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain: Gallery House, London (October).

Exhibition of objects, performances, film, conceptual works etc., including the TV installation, *60 TV Sets* by David Hall and Tony Sinden. Although no video is directly involved (the TV sets are tuned or mis-tuned to broadcast signals, and all parameters of picture quality variously utilised), this is an important precursor of British multi-channel video installation work.

1973
Open Circuit: Scottish Arts Council Gallery, Edinburgh (August). Exhibition of video, photography and film curated by Lesley Greene and Robert Breen, including an ongoing performance installation by David Hall, using video equipment.

In December, the Arts Council of Great Britain's Artists' Films Committee makes its first award for experimental video to Peter Donebauer. During the 1970s, further video awards and bursaries are made to a number of artists, including Donebauer, John Hopkins, Brian Hoey, Stuart Marshall, Stephen Partridge and Elsa Stansfield, as well as to video festivals and organisations. This becomes the Artists' Film and Video Committee in April 1979. David Cunningham joins Foundation course at Maidstone College of Art.

1975
Stephen Partridge graduates from Maidstone College of Art and in October enrolls on the Environmental Media Post-Graduate Course at the Royal College of Art under Peter Kardia.

The Video Show: Serpentine Gallery, London (May).

The first major international independent video show in Britain, organised by Peter Block, Sue Grayson, David Hall, Stuart Hood and Clive Scollay and featuring installations, performances and single screen works. British selection included Roger Barnard, Ian Breakwell, David Critchley, Peter Donebauer, Mike Dunford Evans, David Hall, Susan Hiller, Brian Hoey, Sue Hall, and John Hopkins, Steve James, Tamara Krikorian, Mike Leggett, Peter Livingstone, Stuart Marshall, Alex Meigh, Will Milne, Paul Neagu, Stephen Partridge, Lis Rhodes, Clive Richardson, Tony Sinden, Reindeer Werk. After the show a selection of British work tours several UK galleries.

2B Butler's Wharf: London, (November)

A group of artists, including Kevin Atherton, David Critchley, Alison Winkle and several others, sets up a collectively run gallery space presenting video, film and performance work on a regular basis until its closure in 1979.

As an artists-run venue 2B Butler's Wharf deserves a mention in any history of time-based work and regularly presented video work by British and overseas artists in the late 1970s. (Kevin Atherton).

2B Butler's Wharf was the place where people met who were into this sort of work and Steve Partridge would be along there every week, David Hall would turn up and so on. (David Critchley).

1976
Arena: Art and Design: video art special, BB2 TV (March).

Programme conceived by Anna Ridley, produced by Mark Kidel and presented by David Hall, which broadcasts tapes by British and American artists and included a specifically commissioned piece by Hall, This is a TV Receiver.

Video art aside, David Hall's presentation style, as a moment in TV history, is quite unique. His 'ums' are political, every loss of concentration a real affirmation of his disgust at TV's towering unreality and superficiality. (George Barber).

I first came across video in 1976. I replied to an advert which blankly asked "Do You Want To Learn Video" – I didn't know what it was, but it sounded good. Of course, at that very time Anna Ridley had raised video as an issue on the famous Arena programme of the same year. (Terry Flaxton)

Video – Towards Defining an Aesthetic: Third Eye Centre, Glasgow (March).

Exhibition of installations and single screen works organised by Tamara Krikorian and Lesley Greene, and featuring work by Roger Barnard, Ian Breakwell, Ron Carr, David Critchley, David Hall, Brian Hoey, Krikorian, Stuart Marshall, Stephen Partridge and Tony Sinden.

One of my memories of this exhibition was a group of kids riding their bikes into the building past the installations and getting really excited when they discovered the instant feedback quality of video and saw themselves on the monitors. (Tamara Krikorian).

The Video Show: Tate Gallery, London (May/June).

Video installations (presented in the lecture room, not in an exhibition space) by Roger Barnard, David Hall, Brian Hoey, Tamara Krikorian, Stuart Marshall and Stephen Partridge.

It is significant that the early work was championed by the head of the educational department of the Tate Gallery, Terry Measham, and when he left the artists themselves found it necessary to arrange and seek funding for exhibitions, screenings and the creation of new work if it was to survive. Hence the importance of London Video Arts (as was) and individuals such as Brian Hoey and Wendy Brown, Tamara Krikorian, Stephen Partridge et al. (Anna Ridley).

Studio International, international video art special issue (May/June).

Contributions and statements on British and international video work. Co-edited by Richard Cork and David Hall.

London Video Arts (LVA) founded (Summer).

Organisation initiated by David Hall and formed by artists for the promotion, distribution and exhibition of video art. The first steering committee includes Roger Barnard, David Critchley, Hall, Tamara Krikorian, Stuart Marshall, Stephen Partridge, together with Pete Livingstone, Jonnie Turpie and Brian Hoey.

The catalyst for this group of people getting together was the 1975 Video Show at the Serpentine which is where we all met for the first time. We talked about how to proceed, what we were going to do, there wasn't anywhere to promote this work in an organised way. (David Critchley).

Artists Video – An Alternative Use of the Medium: The Galleries, Washington, Tyne and Wear (October).

International video exhibition organised annually for the next four years (at Biddick Farm Arts Centre) by Brian Hoey and Wendy Brown, and a major regular focus for the emergent video art community. The first event includes work by Doron Abrahami, David Critchley, Peter Donebauer, Cliff Evans, Brian Hoey, Tamara Krikorian, Stephen Partridge, Tony Sinden and others. Artists featured in subsequent years include Peter Anderson, Lindsay Brufton, Keith Frake, Terry Flaxton, Mick Hartney, Stuart Marshall, Alex Meigh, Marceline Mori, Huw Parson, Marion Urch and Roger Wilson.

Stephen Partridge leaves Royal College of Art and starts part-time Lectureship in Video and Performance at Lanchester (Coventry Polytechnic).

1977
Documenta 6: Kassel, Germany (June-October).

International contemporary art exhibition includes two video tapes by David Hall, *Vidicon Inscriptions* (1974) and *Relative Surfaces* (1975).

Dixieme Biennale de Paris: Musee d'Art Moderne, Paris, France (September).

Includes installations by British artists Tamara Krikorian, Stuart Marshall and Stephen Partridge.

1978
Video Art '78: Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry (May).

International exhibition of installations, performances and single screen works organised by Stephen Partridge and including British works by Kevin Atherton, Roger Barnard, Lindsay Brufton, David Critchley, Keith Frake, David Hall, Brian Hoey, Tamara Krikorian, Stuart Marshall, Alex Meigh and Partridge. Tapes from