

the shock of the moo



There are a lot of Macs in Scotland — but there are a lot of paint-boxes, Matisse's and computer image systems as well. In fact, North of the Border, the video graphics scene is booming, with its major proponents at art colleges and facilities houses produc-

ing high-quality work on a par with the supposedly pace-setting South. Tim Maguire provides a nine point guide to Scotland in the Nineties.

1

FAMILIAR OPENING PARAGRAPH

With endlessly rising interest rates and an imminent economic collapse predicted on all sides, an article about the Scottish video graphics industry at the moment ought to be full of gloom and despondency. After all, in London, corporate production companies are beginning to lay off staff and commercial production has slumped for the first time in over a decade. So surely, then, Scotland, a marginal region in every sense of the word, should be doing its share of suffering too? Apparently not. According to the Scots themselves, business is booming.

SOUND BYTES "Buying Matisse transformed our business overnight," Doug Bogle, Mirage.
"Paintbox? Oh God, yes it's important! It's up and running twelve hours a day, six days a week," Allison Bye, Scope.

2

FACILITIES — THE BIG PICTURE

The four big facilities houses — Scope, In-Video, Picardy and Pullman Scotland — all employ full-time graphic designers, and although the industry is still small enough to be populated almost entirely by the graduates of one art school, it accounts for a rapidly growing share of facilities turnover; as budgets shrink and live action becomes prohibitively expensive, the paint systems come into their own.

BIZ What percentage of your turnover do graphics contribute?

At least 10% In Video

At least 30% Scope

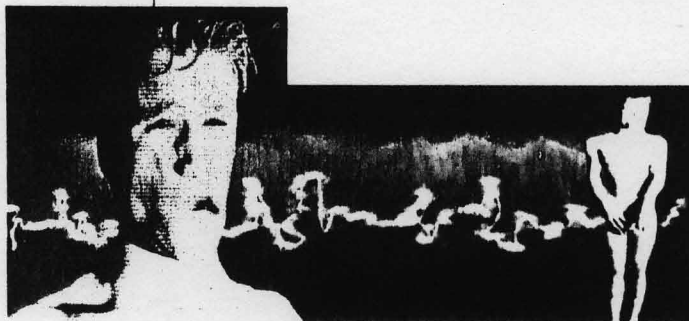
At least 40% Pullman

At least 50% Picardy

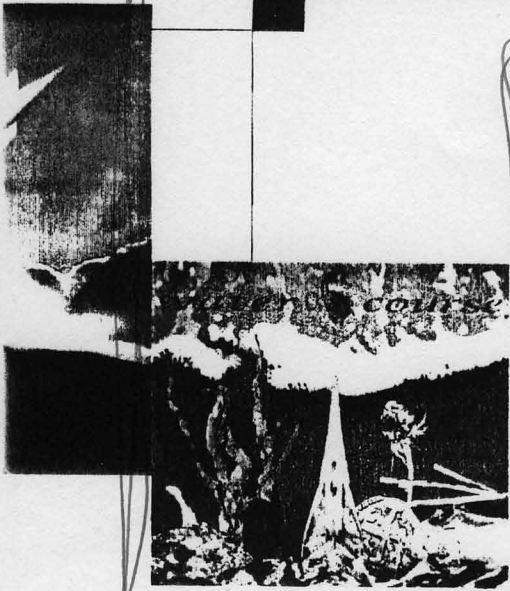
THE BEST JOB I EVER HAD Alister MacDonald of Picardy Television won a commercial from Mallinson Turnham Productions against competition from Soho 601 on the strength of his matte work.

MOST RIDICULOUS TITLE AWARD 'Journey to the Zero Defects Barrier'. Pullman's second job for Genrad, which is a 55k 3D animation to be shown in a sensurround environment which looks like a space shuttle.

'Fusion and the Electrical Powers', Lei Cox



Edinburgh Nights: Alister MacDonald, 'Watercourse': Lei Cox

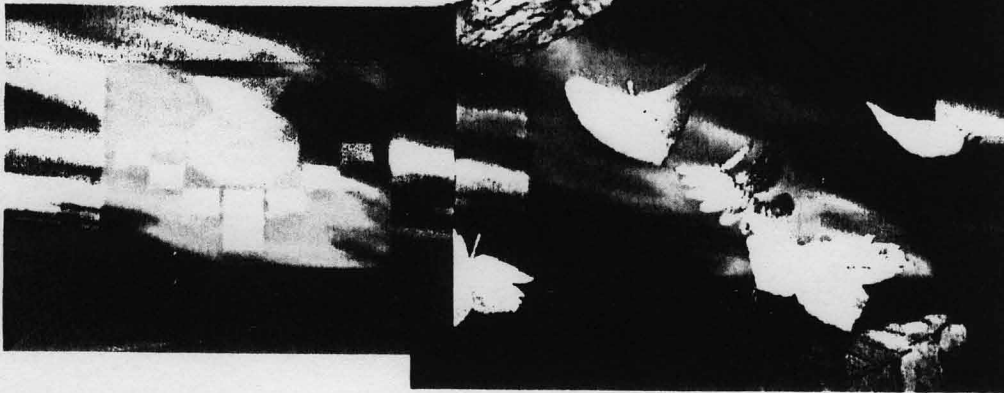


5 **WHERE ART MEETS THE REAL WORLD** Many designers use their day job to fund their 'art practice'; perhaps surprisingly none of the ones I spoke to resented the constraints of the commercial environment, nor did they feel that they were in any sense prostituting their skills.

ARTWORK IN PROGRESS Lei Cox (freelance designer with Eynomo, and part-time tutor at Duncan of Jordanstone) is working on a 6 channel, 30 monitor installation for the Greg Nash dance company, scheduled to tour the UK next year. John Butler is using Pullman's downtime to complete his epic eco-political 3D satire *Leisure Society*, while Allan Robertson and Doug Aubrey (aka Pictorial Heroes) are trying to get a grant from the Scottish Arts Council to complete their work in progress, *Utility and The Swiss Army Knife*.

ART LINES "I've got an imagistic early piece about pyjamas and rabbits somewhere about," Alister MacDonald, Picardy. "A lot of people think I'm psychotic when they see my work," Lei Cox.

"I've made a cow helicopter and at the moment we're taking a flight through a shopping centre," John Butler.



3 **CLIENTS** Facilities managers think they know nothing; the designers themselves are much more forgiving. However, although fashionable live action/2D animation is becoming more common, there are still plenty of takers out there for spinning sofas and airbrushed chrome double glazed window replacements.

"I don't mind them at all — I don't express myself through graphic design, I have no ambition to work on the next British Rail commercial — I'd rather do Tunnock's Teacakes," John Butler, Scope.

4 **BROADCAST NEWS** Since his appointment as Head of Graphics at Scottish Television, George McGee has reduced the average age of his department from 50 to 25. He regularly commissions work from talented outsiders like painter Stuart Parker who produced an animated title sequence for the late night *Way Out West* series.

Picardy Television provided facilities for the BBC's coverage of the 1989 Edinburgh Festival, allowing videopaint artist Alister MacDonald to collaborate with BBC designer Simon Smith on a series of 2D animated stings for *Edinburgh Nights*, BBC Scotland's festival programme.

6 **TOOLS** Quantel and Spaceward share pole position, but there is an eclectic mix of other 2D and 3D systems in use. The local market won't support Harry, but Pullman may be installing a suite down south.

KIT CHAT "Cubicomp is very user unfriendly; the advantage of that to me is that no-one else wants to use it. On the other hand, although people used to knock it, the Pluto we had at College was actually really good; it's fault tolerant," John Butler.

"Videopaint has its own VTR control, so it's brilliant for animation; its 3D package is workable, it falls down a bit on titling, but it's an excellent Special FX machine," Alister MacDonald.

Television Companies

BBC Scotland Queen Margaret Drive, Glasgow 041-339 8844

Scottish Television Cowcaddens, Glasgow 041-332 9999

Grampian Television Queens Cross, Aberdeen 0224 646464

Facilities Companies

Pullman Scotland Newlon Terrace Lane, Glasgow 041-226 3851

In-Video Broadcast 51 York Place, Edinburgh 031-557 2151

Picardy Television 4 Picardy Place, Edinburgh 031-558 1551

Mirage Television St Mary's Street, Edinburgh 031-557 1883

Kit List

Quantel Paintbox Spaceward Matisse

Quantel Paintbox 2 - Airfile

Quantel Paintbox

Spaceward Matisse 3D, 2 - Cubicomp 3D

Spaceward Matisse 3D Dubner Paint Factory

E V S Videopaint 3D

Spaceward Matisse 3D