

This became
'The Body on Three Floors'

INTRODUCTION:

TELEVISION AND SPECIALISMS

Most areas of specialist knowledge as pursued and refined by individuals or groups of a specialist discipline are rarely referred to by television in anything but the language, a written one, of the journalist. Pictures, which may have the appearance of similitude, are used to amplify or illustrate the text. 'Populisers' of specialist knowledge in the recent past have, though maybe working with an updated script, continued to work with the compositing approaches of the leader or feature writer; from David Attenbrough to Magnus Pyke, from A. J. P. Taylor to David Bellamy, each specialism within the broadcast spectrum having its popliser.

Until recently within television scheduling, cultural provision was the only department of television which nurtured the converse to populism, elitism. Arts programming, although still subject to the limited curiosity of the passing journalist, nevertheless steadfastly preserves the tendency of the artist to mystify, either by circumscribing the visibility of the mediating process or by inventing a system of signs and meaning particular and peculiar to the art-making individual. Projects which have approached the medium and its elder sibling film with a notion of the integration of form and content foremost in mind, have not been made available to wider audiences in unexpurgated transmission. Exceptions to this, as ever, occur, being limited to the considerable artistry of famous individual producers such as Samuel Beckett, restricted though his work may be to an audience already sophisticated by literary and theatrical mediums; revered as these mediums are for being legitimate areas of outrageous experiment, they retain nonetheless on television a visual presence immediately identifiable with the stage and its traditions. The tradition of the 'classic narrative', for instance, determines much of what is heard and seen, from news items to soap opera, from a nature documentary to the Play for Today. It is not considered important to make available for the viewer the process by which the completed and rounded artifact is invested with meaning, rather to struggle with that object, the programme, and to extract sense from it, to quest after the flights of fancy of the author, and to accept the deliberations of the production team and their Director.

PROPOSAL ONE : Working Title 'PRIMATE'

Primate - the highest order of Mammals including Man, Monkeys, Apes and Lemurs.

"In the study of animal behaviour today there are two main schools of thought: those who hold that instinctual actions of animals are responses to environment, stimulated by 'releasers' such as colours, sounds and scents and those who accept this concept but also hold that instinctual actions are nevertheless innate and spontaneous and may occur regardless of external stimulus."

Leonard Williams - Challenge to Survival 1971 pp24.

THE PROPOSAL

The broad intention of this proposal is to be a research project into notions of broadcast television and the possibilities of other approaches. The research will be of a practical nature primarily resulting in the accumulation of non-broadcast format film and videotape material. This would be used in the preparation of a broadcast programme script for which the necessary technical facilities would be negotiated. The research visualisations could then be incorporated into the subsequent production or most certainly at a later stage be compiled into a format suitable for non-broadcast distribution on U-matic or film.

The Award would be regarded essentially as making it possible through practical research and experiment for the four or five specialists participating in the project to work together for a period of about six months, the budget being used if necessary to compensate for loss of earnings from normal professional pursuits.

The specialists involved include a dancer and musician, a primatologist, a zoologist and ethologist, myself as a programme-maker acting as co-ordinator, and in the near future another person with specialist knowledge of sound and music.

Needless to say, the project is not concerned with being 'about' any one of these specialisms in isolation. What is important is the element of surprise in the conjoining of apparently disparate disciplines, such that the viewer is placed in active relation to what is seen and heard. The 10-minute videotape which accompanies this application hopefully illustrates this aspect whilst revealing some of the material collected

so far, restricted as it is by the short amount of time we have so far worked together. The outcome of what we are proposing naturally cannot be illustrated. The specialisms outlined above might indicate potential, even though it could be that a particular specialism makes itself redundant as the work progresses. Some further information about the participants might nonetheless be useful before rounding on the specific areas we would wish to develop next, at this point in time.

THE PARTICIPANTS

Helen Roberts, dancer and musician: graduated in 1970 from the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, having studied piano and voice before working with Mary Fulkerson in the Dance Department of Dartington Hall, from where she graduated. Currently she lives and works in Bristol as a teacher and performer.

John Colpin, primatologist: graduated from Oxford University with a B.A. in Zoology before completing a PhD at Cambridge in primatology, which involved field work in several parts of the world. He is currently Research Assistant at Bristol University and preparing a book on monkey and human behaviour.

Mike Leygett, film-maker: graduated from Regent Street Poly with the Diploma in Photography and Cinematography: two years with Rolls Royce Film Unit, two years with B.B.C: involvement with London Film-makers Co-operative through to experimental film-making jointly with teaching part-time in the Colleges of Art in Somerset, Exeter and Newcastle. Currently teaching at Exeter College of Art, living in Bristol, working through the Bristol Film Workshop.

The three of us meet and work each week at the Bristol Community Dance Centre, along with others in a class run by Helen Roberts, the work being only slightly connected with dance performance which she presents with two other dancers.

Jane Henriques, zoologist: completed formal study in animal behaviour (ethology) with a PhD thesis on play and the domestic cat. She subsequently taught in the U.S.A. and has more recently been employed as a freelance researcher by the B.B.C. and I.T.V.

The involvement of a Music/Sound specialist is imminent, dependent on funding and would involve either Max Patterson at Dartington or Chris Garratt in Exeter.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The quotation from Leonard Williams' book indicates a theoretical position we are currently dealing with and which describes a state of separation between instinct and conditioning, a description not uncommon amongst the works and artifacts of our Culture, itself traditionally divided into Arts and Sciences.

We have so far asked questions about the nature and function of play amongst primates and made visual record of this specifically in relation to physical movement. The approach Helen Roberts takes in the dance class extends from the "release and contact" discipline developed by Mary Fulkerson from other more specifically performance dance activity. Fundamental to the approach is muscular relaxation, rather than tension and tautness associated with much Contemporary Dance. 'Standing stillness', 'balance', open and folding movement, characterises the preliminary stages of a class: walking, running, rolling, jumping and bending are some of the simple but complex movements included.

Relaxation and non-spiritual meditation on a 'body-image' lead into a period of improvisation and then to conclude the class, a session working with another or other people in body contact, re-establishing and re-working the earlier principles and their conclusions in joint exercise.

Conversations out of class reflected upon "mind and body" and for many of us the new experiences of 'physical concentration', 'thought and movement' and 'individual improvisation'. Play emerged as a primary activity within the sessions, particularly during contact work. At this stage in the conversation 'the primatologist' made reference to play amongst other Primates (not including bishops), and our collaboration began.

Performance emerges from this didactic 'internalised' work at a much later stage and from the viewer's reflexive position involves a choreography structured on dimension rather than scale, duration instead of tempo, anticipation rather than expectation and repetition as opposed to pattern. Sound is not always heard in conjunction with a performance and where music is heard does not usually construct a set of rhythmic cues, rather becoming another layer of meaning within the overall event in the same way as the costumes or the props become additional layers of the montage.

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LEONA ANAIS 1982: MIKE LEGGETT

Leonard Williams also observed in his book how "the unconscious mind is a phylogentic reservoir of instinctual power and imagery" which leads to speculation into how this can on the one hand lead to innovative progression as individuals and as a social group, or on the other hand lead into the ossification of ritual and is utilised simply for the exercise of power by a dominant group.

Enquiry into these questions using television and televisual methods rather than the traditionally more conceptual means expressed in a paper such as this, could reveal in an entertainingly educative way some of the more basic and fundamental structures latent within every lived experience.

The technical means will draw broadly on all the various equipment formats utilising film emulsion and videotape and an equally broad experience in the use of these tools and materials. Economy naturally would dictate the use of Beta or low-band U-matic and audio cassette for non-broadcast recording purposes. Super 8mm at 25 fps single system or sep mag sync and high-band U-matic could possibly be re-used for broadcast whilst 16mm Eastmancolour sep mag and 1" C format would form the basis of material that definitely would be required for subsequent transmission being used, for instance at points in the project where one-off events were occurring. The final programme script would most likely be orientated toward completion on broadcast standard videotape.

The accompanying videotape might illustrate this approach though it is only based on three early sessions of recording. Of the work with which I have personally been engaged over the years, there are particular films and tapes which would help to illustrate some of these points.

Bristol Bands Newsreel 1980 : a research project with final production and exhibition on 8mm (25 fps), later transferred to U-matic.

Image Con Text: 1979 : tape/slide, 8mm, 16mm and videotape presentation/lecture, in the process of transfer to U-matic.

Vistasound : 1981 : 16mm colour film, optical sound, 45 minutes, grant aided by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

Compilation Videotape 1973/75 : U-matic, 30 minutes.

Resources local to the West Country will be visited, such as the Woolly Monkey Reserve at the Murrayton Sanctuary near Looe in Cornwall, administered by the zoologist we refer to, Leonard Williams, the zoos