

# STUDIO International

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## Video Art

Jan Debbaut

**Belgian Video Art**

Peggy Gale

**Video Art in Canada**

Roselee Goldberg

**NY Video Art and Cable TV**

David Hall

**British Video Art**

Sue Hall and John Hopkins

**The Metasoftware of Video**

Wulf Herzogenrath

**Video Art in West Germany**

Mark Kidel

**British TV and Video Art**

Richard Kriesche

**The State of Austrian Video**

Stuart Marshall

**Video Art, The Imaginary  
and the Parole Vide**

Hein Reedijk

**Video in the Netherlands**

David Ross

**Artist's Television  
in the US**

Contributions from: Barnard,  
Bauermeister, Byrne, Campus,  
Hall, Hoey, Krikorian, Lange,  
Leggett, Marshall, Partridge





'Modern Modern Modern Routine'  
'This is an advertisement'  
'Modern Modern Modern Routine'  
'Modern Modern Modern Routine'  
'Modern Modern Modern Routine'.  
'This advertisement has advertised the text of a work by the artist David Troostwyk'.

The advertisement was spoken by a woman in a tense, slightly hurried manner, and the commentary was by an older male voice, suitably flatter. The piece lasted approximately fifteen seconds and throughout the three-hour late-night show – starting at midnight – it was repeated nine times. The idea, the advertisement of that idea, the turning of the idea into a radio commercial and the repetition of that commercial was the work itself. The broadcast was one of a series of five texts applied to various other forms, all of which are concerned with advertising an idea. Seemingly unconcerned with commenting on advertising as an 'evil' socio-manipulative industry, unconcerned with taking a moral position, the success or validity of the piece depended on its ability to encourage the listener to tackle or focus on the nature or structure of the ad itself. In other words, the ad primarily 'advertised' or referred to itself. What seemed the issue was that:

- Troostwyk had chosen to operate within the perimeter of commercial radio (Capital is London's commercial station, the programme is 'low-brow' middle-of-the-road pop music for night workers and insomniacs) as an artist or private individual rather than as an advertiser with a commercial proposition. He had bought time and yet had not used it to 'sell' but rather to promote an advertisement of an idea.
- He had 'annexed' the programme itself, *ie* although he only bought approximately two minutes we became aware of structures other than his. He had retrieved time to his advantage.
- Although he had chosen two simple but highly emotive words as the core of his idea, he had – underneath its overt simplicity – paradoxically produced a highly complex piece loaded with implications.

The broadcasts were within a web of sound ranging from *Go Now* by Manfred Mann and *I Love to Love* by Tina Charles to repeated and pre-taped news on deaths in Northern Ireland. I quite rightly leave the last word to the DJ who, at 1.55 am, bravely tackled this odd ad: 'It's nice to hear inventive advertising every once in a while, so infrequently do people bother to take the plunge into something inventive ...'

### Changes in Arts Council policy

The Performance Art Committee has been disbanded. Originally established in 1974, partly as a result of the Experimental Projects and New Activities Committees (1971-74), it was one of the sub-committees of the Art Panel. Its function was to service the needs of 'Performance Artists', and in its short but busy life (it handled an annual budget, at its peak, of £45,000), it had a reputation for being accessible and for representing a wide range of interests.

The new approach is streamlined. A new steering body, The Special Applications Committee, has been established. It will consist of two members from the Dance, Art and Music Panels and one from Literature. Internally, it will be serviced by an officer who will refer to the director of a department. It will engage specialist advisers from time to time to report on the work of experimental artists. Its function will not be to award grants but rather to assess applications that do not easily fit into the existing panel structure. (Hence the mixture of panel members, partly co-opted to *liaise*.) It will then offer detailed advice to the panels who will decide on all grant aid.

The Arts Council might have made an announcement sooner than it did. As it was, rumours, disquiet and alarm grew, producing concern. This led to the 'Conference Concerning Performance Art' being held at the ICA in March. Attended by fifty people, it defined

its main concerns as:

- Doubts re lack of information regarding the new structure and their future position.
- It questioned the validity of the new committee and queried its future criteria.
- It questioned the Arts Council's current position on Performance. A shift of attitude re status?
- It queried current policy on representation.
- It sought an assurance that, whatever the structure, future needs would be served, and it sought a meeting.

Although the new structure is more logical, and may be fairer 'across the board' of experimental work (whatever that is), it obviously needs careful monitoring. (As a specialist advisory body it will equally service all panels, whereas PAC was mainly linked to the Art Panel.) In the short term performance artists (see Jan/Feb *Studio* for definition) may suffer financially, but then historical factors had put them in a relatively favoured position. What matters, surely, is that whatever structure is adopted attitudes should be jointly developed towards solving this recurrent dilemma of assessment and of funding awkward and/or unusual work.

Queries to: The Steering Committee, 'Conference Concerning Performance Art,' c/o ICA The Mall, London, SW1. Or: The Secretary, Special Applications Committee, The ACGP, 105 Piccadilly, London, W1.

### New Contemporaries at the Acme Gallery

The Acme Housing Association has for three years been providing cheap studio and living space in short-term GLC property in East London. It is now extending its organisational skills to opening a professionally-run non-commercial gallery, where else but in Covent Garden? A policy of multi-functional usage has enabled them to offer a helping hand to the New Contemporaries, who were looking for a home. It is the first time the student show has attempted to cope with the strange beast 'live work', and details are currently being finalised. Video and film may be shown elsewhere (as are painting and sculpture). Performance will definitely happen from 31 May to 5 June (programmes will be available) at The Acme Gallery, 43 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, WC2. Tel: 01-240 3047.

### PS

In the last column I suggested that those students whose 'finals' will feature performance send in brief information. Owing to problems of timetabling, I shall now be considering a small feature in the Autumn.

At the ICA Ted Little has been co-ordinating a mixed programme of activity, Sunday evenings at eight. They include: 23 May: Colin Barrow; 28 May: Rose English; 13 June: Dis Willis; 27 June: Harry Kipper.

Sally Potter will present films and performance at the Film Co-op on 15 June at 8 pm, and will be working with Rose English at the Roundhouse Downstairs, 28 June – 3 July.

## VIDEO

### Video events in Glasgow

**Symposium: The Future of Video in Scotland, 13 March**  
**Event: Video – Towards Defining an Aesthetic, 16 – 21 March**  
**Third Eye Centre**

### Report by Tamara Krikorian

It may have surprised those unfamiliar with the Scottish scene when these two events were announced. David Hall has documented the development of video in Scotland, which involved the Scottish Arts Council,

the Scottish Film Council and Third Eye Centre, in the Jan/Feb issue of *Studio*. Nevertheless, it should be underlined that there has been a commitment in Scotland which at times has been lacking elsewhere. The under-developed area, regretfully, is on the community side of video, apart from the projected Vale of Leven cable experiment, but I suspect that video is only one small part of a slower development of the community services in Scotland. I would like to record here the reasons for holding the Symposium.\*

Both the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Film Council felt that assessment should be made of the existing facilities, the future needs of video users in Scotland and their own commitment to these. The Symposium was proposed with the idea that people coming to it might not know what video is, and on one level it was designed as a simple briefing.

Stuart Hood, Professor of Film and Television at the Royal College of Art, was the chairman and he opened the Symposium by defining the nature of video. The aesthetics of TV and video were discussed by David Hall; after which Su Braden described a particular community arts video project on the Aylesbury estate in London. Ann Duffy, who is Video Activist for the Quality of Life Experiment in Dumbarton, revealed its plans for the Vale of Leven Community TV project, which has just got the go-ahead for a six-week cable experiment in the Dumbarton area, from the middle of May, using the Wolsey cable link. The activities of the Rotterdam Arts Foundation, which is supported by the City of Rotterdam, were introduced by Hein Reedijk. They have an important video section, and have been working on both artists' projects and with community video for several years. They also have two studios and the facilities to go out and involve themselves in the community, and were responsible for documenting Prospect '74 in Cologne. This led to the subject of resource centres and citizens' access, discussed by Jim Pearse, who runs the Yorkshire Arts Association Communication Centre in Bradford – set up last year on a low budget to offer facilities to anyone interested in working with video, film and sound – and Richard Rheyneish, who is currently preparing a Video Survey on access in Scotland for the Scottish Film Council.

The afternoon was given over to viewing tapes, which perhaps was the most important part of the day. Again the emphasis was on trying to present as wide a range as possible. Material included tapes made by children on the Aylesbury Estate in London; pilot programmes for the Vale of Leven Cable project; tapes from Rotterdam; and there was also a selection from 'Video – Towards Defining an Aesthetic'. But perhaps the most subtle of all, two projects, one by Elsa Stansfield and Elsa Madelon Hooykaas, a two-screen piece called *What's it to you?* made in co-operation with the Third Eye Centre last November on the Barrows in Glasgow, and *Stone, Sheep and People*, a tape by Malcom Green and John Wheeler at Loch Eriboll in Sutherland. These successfully brought the discussion back to the level of what video is all about: a tool which, if skilfully handled, offers an alternative to the broadcast mode. It allows the users insight into the situation in which they are involved, and an insight into the medium itself. A possibility of analysing, re-assessing and eventually re-directing TV itself. The Loch Eriboll piece did this, and quite unselfconsciously. Malcolm Green and John Wheeler lived with this community and simply recorded the impressions of its people, creating a portrait about their way of life and of the fact that this community, where nobody is under the age of sixty, is in imminent risk of disappearing. It is possible to claim that this could be done just as effectively with film. But I do not think that this is the case, as the subject was about time: time passing, people living in a dying community, and this seemed to relate to the mechanics of video where it is convenient to let the tape run on in real time.

If one is to go beyond the interminable discussion about community versus art, it must be towards a re-appraisal of the medium itself, and this is where the

open session at the end of the day left one with an inconclusive feeling about television – what we expect from it and what it is all about. One myth which should be suppressed is that video is anything other than TV. This would surely dissolve the smugness and paranoia on both sides and provide a more open situation.

'Video – Towards Defining an Aesthetic' was and continues to be about an analysis of the medium. Our brief was to define video art, but realising that this meant nothing except artists and video, we searched for the area in which artists were directly involved with the medium; and the obvious presented itself in the concept of self-reference. In choosing the title, one was quite deliberately avoiding the word art, suspecting a revolt and a misinterpretation of the basic concept. 'Aesthetic' in this context equals the distinctive qualities which set video/TV aside from film, continuing the dialogue started by Robert Arn in 'The Form and Sense of Video', *Artscanada* (1972) and Allan Kaprow in 'Video Art: Old Wine, New Bottle', in *Artforum* (1974); and in being highly selective we set out to detach ourselves from the general video label. David Hall, Steve Partridge, Brian Hoey, Roger Barnard and Stuart Marshall were the main installation artists. There were also changing performances of multi-screen pieces by David Critchley, Tony Sinden, Trevor Pollard and myself, and a continuous showing of tapes by Ian Breakwell, Ron Carr, David Critchley, Cliff Evans and David Hall among others.

Third Eye Centre, where the show took place, is a unique space, and in a sense the show was designed for that space. But it turned up a lot of unexpected observations about space: the presentation of art objects inside and outside a gallery, questions about whether installations should be treated sculpturally or whether they should be placed in a totally public situation. It seemed also to indicate that art for the people is not just about people making their own art. It is about seducing them on one's own ground – a not too fashionable notion, I suspect, but nevertheless true if art without compromising itself is not to become effete. But in being highly selective and flying a provocative banner the show was in no way élitist, and I think that this is where previous events went wrong. In not setting out their aims clearly and turning themselves into fairgrounds of electronic wizardry, they have failed to move the audience. A piece like Brian Hoey's *Videvent*, placed in the main entrance of Third Eye with people wandering in from Sauchiehall Street, riding bicycles and doing handstands in front of it, made so much more sense than setting it up in a straight gallery environment, and this is true of all installation pieces. David Hall's *Vidicon Inscriptions* worked well in the gallery, though perhaps again, presented in a more public place, it would become less of an art work and more direct. One attacks it physically, it flattens one and records the image, lastingly burning it on to the tube. Observers can watch it like a play and a casual passer-by will be able to read the situation as it was ten minutes ago. This seems to be a brilliant attack on television, on accepted art forms and a passive audience.

Steve Partridge's *Installation 1* also depends heavily on involving people, as does Roger Barnard's *Corridor*. Stuart Marshall placed his piece *Privileged View* in a room on its own, and here one was deliberately turned away from the aggressive role and made almost painfully conscious of being the viewer. Observation was another element, particularly in David Critchley's *Another Triangle* and Trevor Pollard's *Car Car*, which were shown at the Serpentine last year but which seem to gain strength by being in a more strict gallery environment. Tony Sinden's *Be/Hold/Vertical/Devices* is also about observation, and is a splendid development of a consciousness of the mechanism: a time-lapsed horizontal hold of a man running, it refers to Joan Jonas's *Vertical Roll* or a photo by Eadweard Muybridge but nevertheless is extremely powerful.

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sense they present themselves closer to our expectation of what television really is: a box with a talking head, carefully timed, edited, packaged, verbal, overtly non-visual and depressingly low-brow. The tape-makers selected here deliberately set out to exploit our expectations, reverting to a Dadaist attack on the medium. A subtle change of situation, as in Ron Carr's *Typewriter* or *Suburban Suburban*, or of presentation, in David Hall's *This is a Video Monitor*, can undermine one's whole unthinking confidence in the broadcast system. This is also true of Ian Breakwell's *Some Extracts from the Diary* – pure poetry and why not? Other tapes included a new piece by David Critchley, *Zeno to Zero*, new work by Steve Partridge, *Monitor 1* and *Monitor II*, and by Steve James, and some brilliant observations in a compilation by Cliff Evans. There was also work by five foreign tape-makers still sticking to the basic concept, and this included new work by René Bauermeister and Peter Weibel. I said before that viewing tapes is a problem, and reflecting on this carefully, one must provide a variety of situations both public and secluded for viewing. A video 'lounge' seems the obvious answer, but what about people looking at football in the window of the Radio Rentals shop in the High Street?

This event has changed my basic assumptions. People are aware of the medium, but they do not know how to react to it. A comment which I heard recently, in a discussion about the presentation of community TV, was that programmes should not be too long as people might switch off. The answer is, we must coax them into switching off, into being selective and not just passively sitting there. It's time for a re-appraisal, not just of licensing, of citizens' access, of political affiliations, but of the aesthetics of television. In no way are these two events to pass as one-off situations: they must be the beginning of a serious dialogue about the nature of television, in which not only video users but also professional broadcasters take part.

\*Tamara Krikorian organised the Symposium and Event at the Third Eye Centre.

## DAVID HALL WRITES:

### Video Bursary

The Arts Council of Great Britain, in collaboration with the Royal College of Art, is again offering its annual video bursary worth £1,000. The purpose of the bursary is to enable video-makers to have access to a colour TV studio (using 1-inch tape at the RCA) to pursue their own work – with technical assistance if necessary. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line communications broke down, I did not receive the information in time for the last issue of *SI*, and the deadline for applications was 26 April. However I would make a plea to the committee involved in the selection (which is probably going on right now) that they give close, unbiased attention to work concerned in altogether more exploratory pursuits than was exemplified in their decision last year. Some of the best British video work does not, by virtue of its highly tentative approach, have the instant glossy appeal associated with that of broadcast TV, and I suspect this is often a barrier when confronted with the comparatively 'unspectacular', yet often deeply involved, efforts of artists normally working with the minimum of resources.

Incidentally, I am totally amazed that the AC can only manage to find £1,000 for this venture compared with their offer of £4,500 to photographers on a similar bursary!