

AN ENGLISHMAN ABROAD

Stephen Partridge

Stephen Partridge left London in January 1984 to take up an appointment as Lecturer in Video and Computer Graphics at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, Scotland. He was charged with the responsibility of setting up a facility and input into academic courses but quickly found that the possibilities and tasks were endless...

I was very aware when moving up to Scotland that it would be very easy to assume a superior attitude about independent video and offend everyone immediately. I knew that there was not a lot of activity in video in Scotland but I didn't know why. A decision to keep a low profile and look and listen, seemed the best strategy. Immediately it was refreshing to be away from the competitive protectionism of the London scene and within a matter of weeks contacts were established with the Scottish Arts Council, the Scottish Film Council, The Third Eye, and numerous other agencies and especially individuals.

The really encouraging aspect of this initial period was that the initiative was coming from the Scots themselves, rather than from me. An important old friendship and new working relationship was established with Tom McGrath, the Glasgow playwright and former Director of the Third Eye Centre, simply by the good fortune that he was starting as Writer in Residence at the college (hereafter known as DJCA). Disappointments followed when in February 1984, Mike Toobey, then visual arts co-ordinator of the Third Eye, convened a one-day-conference on video in Scotland, and I was then faced with the reality of how difficult it was to make video in Scotland for the individual artist. There were a number of film workshops grossly underfunded in comparison with their southern cousins, some community groups who had the odd portapak, and some individual artists who had tried and failed to get access to the colleges of art in Edinburgh and Glasgow. There followed a number of meetings in Dundee to establish some sort of nationwide video association and

local co-op which eventually failed.

Meanwhile DJCA was honouring its commitment to the medium with astonishing zeal and pace. What started out that year as a small service with four ageing VHS portapaks and a U-matic edit suite cramped into one tiny room, ended up as a recognisable video facility, with two edit suites, two U-matic ENG kits, a properly equipped workshop, new VHS portapaks, but more important than equipment very good access terms to students and artists was encouraging people to make work. The Fine Art Department were taking the introduction of video to the course very seriously and a number of students were responding.

Since then Colin McLeod has joined the staff and set up the first Post-Graduate Course in Electronic Imaging with 12 students from a wide variety of backgrounds and from all over the U.K. The CNAA has ratified the Fine Art School's BA (Hons) Time Based Media, allowing students to major in video/performance/installation. The facilities have grown to include five edit suites, from 3 machine high-band with Convergence computer assisted time code editing and twin DVE, through a second three-machine lo-band edit suite, a single frame animatics suite with time code Paltex controller and Neilson Hordell rostrum, a VHS off-line edit suite with 'burnt-in' time code capability, and various computer graphics installations soon to be augmented with Paintbox.

Another important development at the college was the establishing in June of this year of the Television Workshop. I felt that the ad hoc support we had been giving to artists and independents needed a more formal structure to give both a higher profile and to encourage external sponsorship. Individuals may join the workshop and then enjoy reduced hire rates in 'down-time'. In association with the Scottish Arts Council we have established three project-based awards up to £1,000 each for Scottish artists to use the Television Workshop, and a similar scheme is hoped to start next year with the Scottish Film Council to cater for independent film/video makers.

There is now a small but growing

community of artists working in video across the central region of Scotland. Opportunities for screenings and exhibition are not so good however, and in recognition of this, initiatives on this front tend to come from the artists themselves. The most important example of this was *Glasgow Events Space *1*, staged at Glasgow's artist-run Transmission Gallery in February of this year. Doug Aubrey, a video/performance artist and fellow exile, joined Transmission's organising committee and persuaded them to stage a month-long video show. Along with other artists and students from DJCA he put together the first major show of video/performance/installation seen in Scotland since the Scottish Arts Council/Third Eye Centre exhibition in 1976. Extra funding was arranged with SAC and Viewplan PLC, and DER sponsored the show with generous equipment loans, including a 24 monitor videowall. A series of 'trailers' was made for cablecast on Clyde Cablevision who also interviewed many of the artists for their weekly arts magazine programme. There were video installations by Stephen Littman, Zoe Redman, Alister MacDonald, Pictorial Heroes; a film installation by Jane Rigby; live performances by Joj Goslan, Kevin Atherton and Tony Judge; and video tapes from Australia courtesy of Projects UK, and many individual artists.

Pictorial Heroes' installation *Faction* was subsequently shown at the McLellan Galleries in Glasgow, and selected for the Royal Scottish Academy Show later this year.

A follow-up show *Glasgow Events Space *2* is taking place at the time of writing, featuring live performances from Richard Layzell, Charlie Hooker; New films by women; Super 8 from Scotland; and videotapes from Germany.

Ian Haddow, a Perth-based video and performance artist, toured North America in 1985 and upon his return put together a compilation tape of video work entitled *Made In Scotland*, which he offered for distribution in the USA and Canada. Since February of this year it has been hired by 14 different venues and the Museum of Modern Art in New York have bought a copy for their

archives. Bookings for the work run on into next year when a second compilation will be put together.

On a personal front, the stimulation of a fresh environment has helped me to complete four new pieces. In 1984 I was able to get access for at least 500 hours to a Quantel Paintbox which was at the college for a year, and used this to complete *One Thousand and One Boy's Games*, a work based on a poem and the drawings of the painter John Yeadon. A commission through Anna Ridley and Channel 4 in 1984 was also completed and transmitted in 1985 entitled *Dialogue for Two Players*. In 1985 I directed a series of 'videodramas' written by Tom McGrath for the cable TV

market, and this year made a new piece in collaboration with singer-composer Mary Phillips and composer-producer David Cunningham called *Video Voce (The threes in the four)*.

Of course there are problems working in Scotland, a sense of isolation sometimes; video is not really accepted by the art 'establishment' as a whole. There is a lack of a real funding structure, and regular exhibition venues. Information from the rest of the UK and abroad often fails to reach us until it is too late to make deadlines for festivals etc.

Even with the problem of distance from the all-powerful South East, many artists

have found to their surprise what a rewarding experience it can be coming up to Scotland either to do a visit at the College, exhibit some work, or even make some work using the TV Workshop, and we welcome initiatives from all quarters. If you are interested in more information, you can write to:

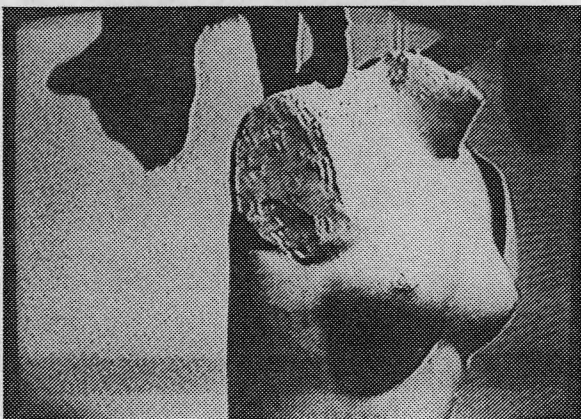
Malcolm Dickson, Transmission Gallery, 13 Chisholm St, Trongate, Glasgow G1 5HA

or

*Stephen Partridge, The Television Workshop
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art,
Perth Rd, Dundee*

INFERMENTAL: Volume 5, The Image of Fiction 1985

INFERMENTAL is an international video magazine initiated by GABOR BODY in 1980. The Image of Fiction was edited in Rotterdam by Leonie Bodeving, Rob Perree and Lydia Schouten, and features 39 short video tapes from 12 countries. The selection is divided into five one hour programmes, each with a group title.



VIVENUS, Eric Lanz

Programme 1. THE HERO

Klaus Boegel, Helden, Baarn
Manfred Hulverscheidt, Tschak Tschak, Berlin
Ulrike Rosenbach, Aufwärts zum Mount Everest, Cologne
Lydia Schouten, Beauty becomes the beast, Rotterdam
Dara Birnbaum, Fire, New York
Michael Smith, Go for it, New York
Byron Black, Blue-blind, Pak See
Geoffrey Shea, Coupe du Monde - part one of the sport series, Toronto

Programme 2: DESIRE

Gabor Body, Walzer, Cologne
Marty St James/ Anne Wilson, True Life Romance, London
Herbert Wentscher, Everything's just fine, Ebringen

Eric Lanz, V/Venus, Geneva
Mark Wiclox, Calling the Shots, London
Kees de Groot / Frank Morssinkhof, Cosmic Sperm, Amsterdam
Xavier Villaverde, Sexo Macumba, Madrid
Leonie Bodeving, L'Ansia Letale, Amsterdam
Yello, Pinnball Cha Cha, Zurich

Programme 3: NARRATIVE VIDEO

Herbert Wentscher, Everything's just fine, Ebringen
Sascha Wonders, Like Paradise, Moscow
Richard Hefti, Imagination, Amsterdam
Nigel Rolfe, Island Stories, Dublin
Joan Jonas, Double Lunar Dogs, New York
Kit Fitzgerald, To Sorrow..., New York

Programme 4: ELECTRONIC IMAGERY

Elizabeth van der Zaag, TLC, Vancouver
Herbert Wentscher, Everything's just fine, Ebringen
Hanno Baethe, Flugsand, Berlin
Yello, Bostich, Zurich
Jaap Drupsteen, Nederland C, Amsterdam
Alfredo Pirri, Senza titolo, Rome
Ingo Gunther, Rotoram, Dusseldorf
Jan Bultheel, Tango de Perro, Brussels

Programme 5

Ricardo Fuglistahler, Nightsoil, Hengelo
Servaas, Fish from Holland, Amsterdam
Gary Hill, Tale Enclosure, Seattle
Nan Hoover, Watching Out, Amsterdam
Yello, The evening's young, Zurich
Dedo, Media vita in morte sumus, Amsterdam
LLurex, Ironland, Berlin