

Vanitas or an illusion of reality

2 channel installation

First shown at the Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry 78.
Subsequently in a revised form at the Fruitmarket Gallery,
Edinburgh in 1979.

Two monitors were placed back to back on pedestals approximately 8" from a wall. A mirror, identical to the screen size was fixed to the wall opposite Monitor 2. Monitor 1 facing the spectator showed a still life in a single shot lasting one hour. During the hour live butterflies and bubbles appeared in the shot. The monitor screen turned to sepia. Monitor 2 facing the wall and mirror showed a single shot in colour also lasting one hour, of the artist holding a hand mirror. Changing shots of the newsreaders were reflected in the mirror. Certain 'memento mori' Dutch paintings would have a portrait on the front and a still life/memento mori subject on the back.

When first shown at Coventry, the second shot was incomplete -in black and white and without the newsreaders and was placed centrally in the gallery with a large mirror opposite each monitor reflecting both screens simultaneously.

The strongest illusion in the work is that each shot appeared as a photograph until live butterflies and bubbles appeared in the still life and the newsreaders in the portrait. As in the vanitas tape- the self portrait of the artist-had the quality of a living sculpture or tableau vivant.