

Vanitas

Videotape black and white

10 minutes 1977

I have taken the idea from a French painting, attributed to Tournier, in the Ashmolean museum, Oxford. The title of the painting is Allegory of Justice and Vanity. A Seventeenth century lady is seated, holding a mirror, which is facing the spectator. In the mirror are reflected a number of still life objects, including a skull, a candlestick and other items denoting the transience of life.

Vanitas is a self portrait of the artist and at the same time an allegory on the ephemeral nature of television. Apart from conventional still-life objects such as jewellery and flowers, the mirror reflects as TV. A series of TV announcers appear on the TV monitor, edited in with shots of the self-portrait figure, which is describing the iconography of the 'vanitas' subject. The shots of the announcers are portraits. And the reference to transience relates to the information which they are giving out.