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Fly on tour
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23 Nov 1980.

Dear Dave,

I thought I would add a personal note on the question of Dedman/Flaxton and others like them. I understand that the ACGB Film Panels position in funding work like theirs is difficult under present circumstances. ~~perhaps~~ ^{Perhaps} because ~~your~~ ^{present} your parameters are those of video art (?) and artists/structural/deconstruction/material film. (These latter general headings also being applicable to video art). The subject matter of much artists film and video has for some time been subordinated to these material or abstract concerns of artists, but I detect a general raising of artists awareness of what they are treating, the subject, its meaning and its relationship to the medium. This is a process in which I am involved along with many other film and video makers and theorists.

To come back to the question of the existing parameters of video art, these seem to have been laid down some time ago by a very few, indeed mainly one, artist with a personal notion of what video art should be, the things it should be concerned with and way in which ~~it~~ ^{artists} should approach these subjects. I find it interesting that these same people should now be floundering around looking for new bottles for old wine while many

other, perhaps younger artists or 'newcomers' from from areas like film or performance (and print or painting) are charting new ground with video both in terms of content, its treatment, and the point of view from which it is treated.

That new work should not fulfill the brief of official video art is not surprising - video art has no real history as yet. The parameters grow wider at an alarming rate. It should be seen as a positive move not to limit the possibilities of this medium from the outside or from a reactionary dogma about what it is.

The reason I feel it necessary to write and at least intimate my concern to you is that I find many elements of Dedman/Flaxton's work analagous to my own work and the more 'objective' stance I find myself taking in relation to issues which I can raise, if not yet elucidate, in my work. Does this mean that at some point my work, and that of other artists currently on Film & Video makers on tour, and perhaps ⁱⁿ the evolving LVA library, will at some point fall outside of the Film & Video panels brief, leaving only the remnants of a purist historical view of what used to be called videoart?

I would rather hope that the panel took its parameters from what it can see happening in the sphere of the independent, small scale operation of people, highly aware of the implications of mass media, television, dominant film practise and art history, and positively altered its notion of

what it is important to fund accordingly.

I'll add an anecdotal point of information here. (by ACGB)
Dedman/Flaxton were refused funding/earlier this year with one reason given as ... the panel funds video art, as expressed by the work in the LVA library ... or words to that effect. Dedman/Flaxton's work is in the LVA library and was at that time. Their work is often hired and they are both steering committee members doing much work for LVA.

This raises the question in my mind of what will LVA do about this. Will this kind of work ever come into the ACGB's brief, analytical/material/deconstructional as it is in my opinion. Or will LVA have to set up other funding links if this kind of work is to be included in its library/distribution and funding programme? I think so called video art and its practitioners have much to learn from Dedman/Flaxton and their like, yet I see them facing greater problems than many comparative practitioners who have managed to collect the label 'artist' for one reason or another.

As I said at the beginning this is a personal note of my thoughts, but it's an issue which is growing along with the growth of video and must be confronted publicly at some point.

It was good to see you at the Co-op last Wednesday, and perhaps you can better see what

my fears are if you imagine a development in video of the embryonic slide/tape piece 'Me You Them' Would I then be making a three part documentary about Advertising, street politics, group recreation and myself?

I look forward to the symposium in January at the Co-op at which these issues should be raised, and to an organ of criticism where they can be discussed in print, and not just by a couple of grand masters of the medium. Its an evolving area and it needs as much help and input from a broad front as it can get.

I hope you see my point of view not as an attack on the panel, but as expressive of my concern about the present situation and my hope for its future development. Perhaps a much closer working link is needed not only between the panel and the organisations it funds but also between those organisations themselves. A general raising of the collective consciousness at all levels through direct consultation and reciprocal advice might be a good start....

This could go on and on so I'll stop. They're all matters for a broader discussion, publicly, which I hope will follow ^{from} activities in the future. Look forward to seeing you sometime,

Best wishes, Dave.