
VIDEO

Report by David Hall

Tate Gallery's first video show

Since as early as 1959, when Wolf Vostell first realised the potential of television in his happening *Ereignisse für Millionen*, there has been a steady growth of TV art throughout Europe and the US. This important

development has escalated more recently and been given support almost everywhere in the form of finance and individual and group shows. Many major events have been held in galleries and public museums and it is worth noting a few significant examples.

Nam June Paik held the first video show in New York at the Café Au Go Go, Greenwich Village, in 1965. In 1968 the Nicholas Wilder Gallery in Los Angeles showed Bruce Nauman's *Video Pieces (a-n)* and Gerry Schum founded his TV Gallery in Düsseldorf. A year later the Howard Wise Gallery in New York put on the first US group show entitled *TV as a Creative Medium*, and at the same time a large video studio was built for artists' use in the Museum Folkwang at Essen. 1971 saw the unique appointment of a Curator for Video Arts at the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse; the Electronic Kitchen (later The Kitchen) opened as a video theatre in New York; and the Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf included a substantial amount of video work in *Prospect Projection*. The 1972 Venice Biennale and Documenta 5 both showed video, as did the Biennale de Paris in 1973 and '75. The Neue Galerie Landesmuseum in Graz, Austria, held a comprehensive show of work by Austrian, Italian and Yugoslavian artists and started its own video collection in 1973. In the same year the Everson Museum organised a large travelling show, *Circuit*, which went to many museums throughout the US and on to Cologne.

Since then, during the last two years, there has been such a proliferation of major exhibitions that it must suffice to mention only that there has been subsequent coverage in Paris, Brussels, Cologne, Syracuse, Long Beach, Knokke Heist and an important conference at MOMA in New York.

Through all of that time there has been only one comparable show in Britain, at the Serpentine Gallery last year. Nevertheless, despite its late arrival on the world scene, there were two important organisational factors very much in its favour. Firstly, it included a representative selection of international work unlike others which, with few exceptions, have invariably been biased toward American products (certainly there has been no significant exposure of British video abroad, and to my knowledge virtually no Europeans have been included in American shows). Secondly, it provided the very first opportunity for the exposure of some important British tapes and installations. However, in retrospect I would add that it might have been better to have shown slightly less of everything and allowed for a more coherent view of the various critical issues.

This last point looks as though it may be remedied in part, at least in respect of British video art, with the organisation of the current Third Eye Centre show in Glasgow (see below), and now with news of the first video show to be held at the Tate Gallery in May. Unlike its counterparts elsewhere in the world, the Tate has either been totally oblivious of video developments over the last decade, or has simply chosen to disregard it as an autonomous art form. I can only ever remember it appearing once in a show there, and that was in a *supportive* role to a Beuys event; and Beuys is in no way a video artist. Neither are Gilbert and George, who have been the only people to sell a recording of themselves to the Tate's Modern Collection.

The proposed show is not, however, indicative of sudden enlightenment and radical policy changes by top curatorial staff responsible for programming shows in the main galleries. It is (yet again) the progressive and enterprising Terry Measham who has initiated the idea through his Education Department 'downstairs'. I say yet again since it was he who first showed film as art there, whilst the other Tate people gave it little consideration.

The event, which will be organized by Measham's colleague Simon Wilson, will principally consist of live installation works by British artists such as Barnard, Hoey, Partridge, Marshall, Krikorian and myself. Finances are apparently very limited, but I am pleased

that priority has been given to this very important area of video activity. It is one which has no immediate analogy to other forms, as tape has to broadcast TV and even film. Closed circuit installations have the unique capability of affording 'same-time' exploration and extension of temporal, spatial and behavioural relationships. Present and immediate past-time sequences (taped delays) can be interrelated, even overlapped. Behaviour patterns can be replayed in seconds, and perhaps most unique of all, participants can relate to their same-time image. They become intrinsically 'functional' to the piece; the viewer is simultaneously the viewed in a process of self-referring consciousness.

Work in this field has been executed elsewhere for a number of years, mainly manifesting itself where financial support has permitted it, *ie* in America. An important example was Ira Schneider and Frank Gillette's 1969 piece *Wipe-Cycle** (an undoubted precursor to similar, more recent work by artists like Dan Graham). Others have been Paik, Nauman, to some extent Oppenheim, and notably Peter Campus. In Europe there have been equivalent pieces, though less technically ambitious and rewarded with considerably less attention, by Kriesche, Boehmler, Weibel, etc.

Apparently there will also be a small selection of pre-made British tapes on show at the Tate, and the event, which is scheduled for three weeks, will commence on 18 May. For programme and other details contact Simon Wilson in the Education Department.

Glasgow show

The Scottish Arts Council's video show, which I announced in the Jan/Feb *SI*, will be virtually under way when this issue appears (starting 16 March through to 21 March inclusive at the Third Eye Centre, 350 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow). It is, as I stated before, well worth a visit as the first ever British group show devoted solely to video art. I now have more details to hand and they are as follows.

Installations will be by Brian Hoey, who in my view created the most successful installation at the Serpentine to involve complex temporal juxtapositions; Roger Barnard, who produced a discreet and probably the most contemplative piece in that same genre; Steve Partridge, who is developing his own invention which enables variable structuring of a programmed video switcher between multiple cameras and monitors; Tamara Krikorian; and myself. I shall probably present one or other of two new proposals. Both are participatory works: one based on the interface paradox between a 'primal' perception (water reflection) and a live monitor image; and the other a tentative exploration of an observer-triggered camera 'shutter' and vidicon burn-retention peculiar only to video cameras (this will be a live extension of a tape I shall be showing, *Vidicon Inscriptions*).

Tapes will also be on show from the above artists, and particular scrutiny should be applied to two new works by Steve Partridge, *Monitor I* and *Monitor II*. Other tape makers include Clive Richardson, Mike Leggatt, Steve James, Mike Upton, Trevor Pollard and Ron Carr. Some, who have asked for special multi-monitor arrangements for showing their work, include Stuart Marshall, David Critchley, Tony Sinden and Ian Breakwell. I shall be particularly interested to see the promised new works from Richardson, Critchley and James.

In addition there is to be a small, highly select foreign section with notable tapes from the Swiss René Bauermeister (showing his new work *Video-Coincidence*); Austrian Peter Weibel; Canadian Doug Waterman; the little-known but to my mind very important American Jim Byrne; and hopefully work from New York by Peter Campus and the original, superbly structured frame-slip piece, *Vertical Roll*, by Joan Jonas.



Steve Partridge *Monitor 1* video tape 1975

Tamara Krikorian, the organiser, has given the show the tentative title of *Video – Towards Defining an Aesthetic*. A good one, especially at a time when at long last British video art looks like it may be on the threshold of formulating a coherent stand.

Symposium

Prior to the show at the Third Eye Centre there is to be a video symposium, *The Future of Video in Scotland*, at the Glasgow Film Theatre, 12 Rose Street, Glasgow G3 starting at 10.30 am on 13 March. This will involve discussion on all aspects of independent video. It is to be chaired by Stuart Hood, a keen advocate of decentralised television, and currently Professor of Film and TV at the Royal College of Art. The panel will include Jim Pearce, who runs the Yorkshire Arts Association communication centre in Bradford; Anne Duffy, video activist for the Quality of Life Experiment in Dumbarton; Richard Rheykish, who is preparing a report on TV access for the Scottish Film Council; Su Braden, active in community arts matters and critic for *Time Out*; hopefully Hein Reedyck, co-ordinator of video activities at the Rotterdam Arts Foundation; and myself.

During the afternoon starting at 2 pm there will be tape showings covering the whole range of video, from community to art tapes. Unfortunately seating is limited and admission is by arrangement only, therefore contact Tamara at the SAC or John Adams, Scottish Film Council, tel. 041 332 9988.

Tape shows at the Architectural Association

The Communications Studio at the AA, 34 Bedford Square, London WC1, is allowing its facilities to be used for open video tape shows one evening per month. This has been organised by Sue Hall (no relation) who teaches there and who has been working in collaboration with John 'Hoppy' Hopkins on his numerous video projects over many years. The series of showings has the blanket title of *Fantasy Factory Presents . . .*, and anyone interested in this rare opportunity to publicly show their wares, or anyone interested in knowing what is going on, should contact Sue at 42 Theobalds Road, London WC1, tel. 01 405 6862 (after 1 pm).

Two such presentations have already occurred and both happen to have been of work by foreign artists; Nina Sobel, an American who has just moved to London; and Stephen Jones, an Australian. I found Sobel's earlier tapes were a little too caught up in the conceptual/performance documentation syndrome so popular in much current American work, but her information tape on a more recent installation, *EEG Video Telemetry Environment*, starts to move away from this by showing an exacting interrelation of participants and technology. Briefly, two people sit facing their own image on a monitor, their immediate

interactions are recorded on an electroencephalograph machine (used medically to chart brain waves), these are transposed on to an oscilloscope and the intermixed wave patterns are superimposed on the monitor. They are able to witness their own physical relationship (as video image) simultaneously coupled with the mental/electronic counterpart.

Stephen Jones, a member of a very tiny minority of video artists in Australia, showed two tapes. The first was very much out of the glossy synthetic videographics cult that comes with access to too much sophisticated equipment (it *is* possible). The initial intentions may have been good but any structure was lost at the outset and I just floated very much at the surface of an old psychedelic dream. The second seemed much more purposeful. It attempted to expand the possibilities of 'concretely' shaping the video output by partially converting the accompanying audio modulations *onto* the video track. Hence the effective integration of two senses which normally only parallel each other.

* 'The most important thing was the notion of information presentation, and the notion of the integration of the audience into the information. One sees oneself exiting from the elevator. If one stands there for eight seconds, one sees oneself entering the gallery from the elevator again. Now at the same time one is apt to be seeing oneself standing there watching *Wipe-Cycle*. You can watch yourself live watching yourself eight seconds ago, watching yourself 16 seconds ago, eventually feeling free enough to interact with this matrix, realising one's own potential as an actor'. Jud Yalkut on Schneider and Gillette's installation, *Arts Magazine*, Sept. 1969.
