

Throughout the video sequence incompatible images become collateral, as with the soft flames, hail on water, and floating lily mentioned earlier. A Buddha lies in a vortex of water, a mountain boulder is upside down with sky for ground, and traffic simmers in a city street crazier and incorrigibly plural. The world is spiteful and gay - a woman gives birth in pain, a model in a leopard skin coat walks and twirls accompanied by the living animal on a lead, the Buddhas sit on rat traps. As the unsaid meaning of the poem is revealed in its music and tonality, Reeves' selected images and sounds call up absent aromas and a quality of light or being. In themselves the images read like Haiku poems.

Syncretic in its approach, 'The Well of Patience' draws on different traditions. Wine glasses are emphatically Christian while there is film from Hindu India. These are linked through the themes of life, birth, and death, the overall experience is one of completeness. Here each tradition is presented as a set of equivalences, the tripartite imagery and circular screen working together in a non-hierarchical model, where references to the wider social and economic order are implicit in the juxtaposition of sequences, a nuclear power station, a whaling ship at sea, black and white footage enabling the artist to work both through and across time.

1. 'The Way of Zen' Alan W. Watts, Pelican 1976.
2. 'Gestalt Counselling in Action' Petruska Clarkson, Sage Publications 1989.

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19:4:90 TELEVISION INTERVENTIONS

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The notion of 'intervention' implies the taking up of some position which intends to challenge accepted ways, power structures, the mainstream, etc. Whilst it might be wholly unfair to say that the '19:4:90' project was invested with a radicality it did not in fact possess, it is not incorrect to say that the pluralistic nature of TV embraces acceptable critical stances but denies dissent and creativity. '19:4:90' set itself a difficult task.

The '19:4:90' project avoided calling itself art, realising that people might be 'telly-literate' and more open to material if it wasn't attached to a label. This was 'innovative television' (much more fashionable than 'video art') which used a form of popular culture in order to underline the problem that lots of people with all kinds of potential are denied access to TV — for some it might be to thwart expression and to marginalise art, for others the repression is not so benign — those disenfranchised from 'media coverage' in terms of their own voices. Getting stuff onto TV involves a long journey of control and censorship, and it takes a great deal of ingenuity, resilience, and professionalism to carry through good ideas.

The '19:4:90' project involved several 4 minute pieces transmitted by Channel 4 during the spring months of Glasgow's Year of Culture. It included work by **Pratibha Parmat, Rose Garrard, Stephen Littman, Stephen Partridge, Alastair MacLennan, and Peter Missoten**. The forerunner to the project is **David Hall's** "7TV Pieces" which he made in 1971 and which were broadcast on Scottish Television (in the days when at least one member of staff recognised the 'other' potential of TV). Series producer **Jane Rigby**, and producer, **Anna Ridley**, stated their brief as encouraging artists to "explore the creative potential of television and production processes" and to "employ them in new and surprising ways".

One of more considered successes of the '19:4:90' was the 'Telly Pieces' project, conveniently labelled a 'youth and community project', it is also where the questions of 'communication for whom?', 'what resources?' and 'what kind of access?' entered into the initiative. The project involved 3 stages — the first of which was a series of screening, equipment and storyboarding workshops with various groups throughout Strathclyde. Eight pieces were made on 10-band format of which 2 entered into the third stage, broadcast standard.

'Crisis, What Crisis' by **Carswell Short** and **David Sinclair** dealt with the threat of the large number of nuclear armament bases on the West Coast of Scotland. **Allan Trotter** and **David Black's** 'Another Victim' was also set on the West Coast, in Greenock, and its theme was one of unemployment and industrial dereliction. It was one of the few in the whole '19:4:90' project which dealt with the reality of life as it is lived today by many working-class people. It seems pertinent, therefore, if not ironic, that it chooses a medium in which the mass act of viewing represents the shattered fragments of human communities re-grouped into the pseudo-community of late capitalism, a situation of one-way communication.

'Telly Pieces' was about those who are normally the subject of a documentary actually making TV themselves. The role of the professionals (in this instance, **Doug Aubrey** and **Jak Milroy**) was that of providing direction without too much directing.

TV carries with it the paradigm of our culture — incessant consumption. The question is, 'why intervene?'. The answer lies somewhere in **Anna Ridley's** belief that you have to take risks and to defend that kind of work which is coming in from a different angle. Two quotes from **David Hall** also go some way in setting out the critical agenda (written in 1978):

"... socio/political work is undoubtedly necessary and beyond dispute, but in many cases the method, structure, treatment (not content) is handled in a way which is directly analogous to that traditionally employed by the very establishment it implicitly, often overtly deploras . . ."
"Video as art largely seeks to explore perceptual and conceptual thresholds, and implicit in it is the decoding and consequent expansion of the conditioned expectations of those narrow conventions understood as TV."

The role that artists play is not to parade some kind of neutrality, but to articulate and build up a critical context which can also resist TV rather than celebrate it. This necessitates alternative methods of production and distribution working in tandem with initiatives such as '19:4:90'.

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