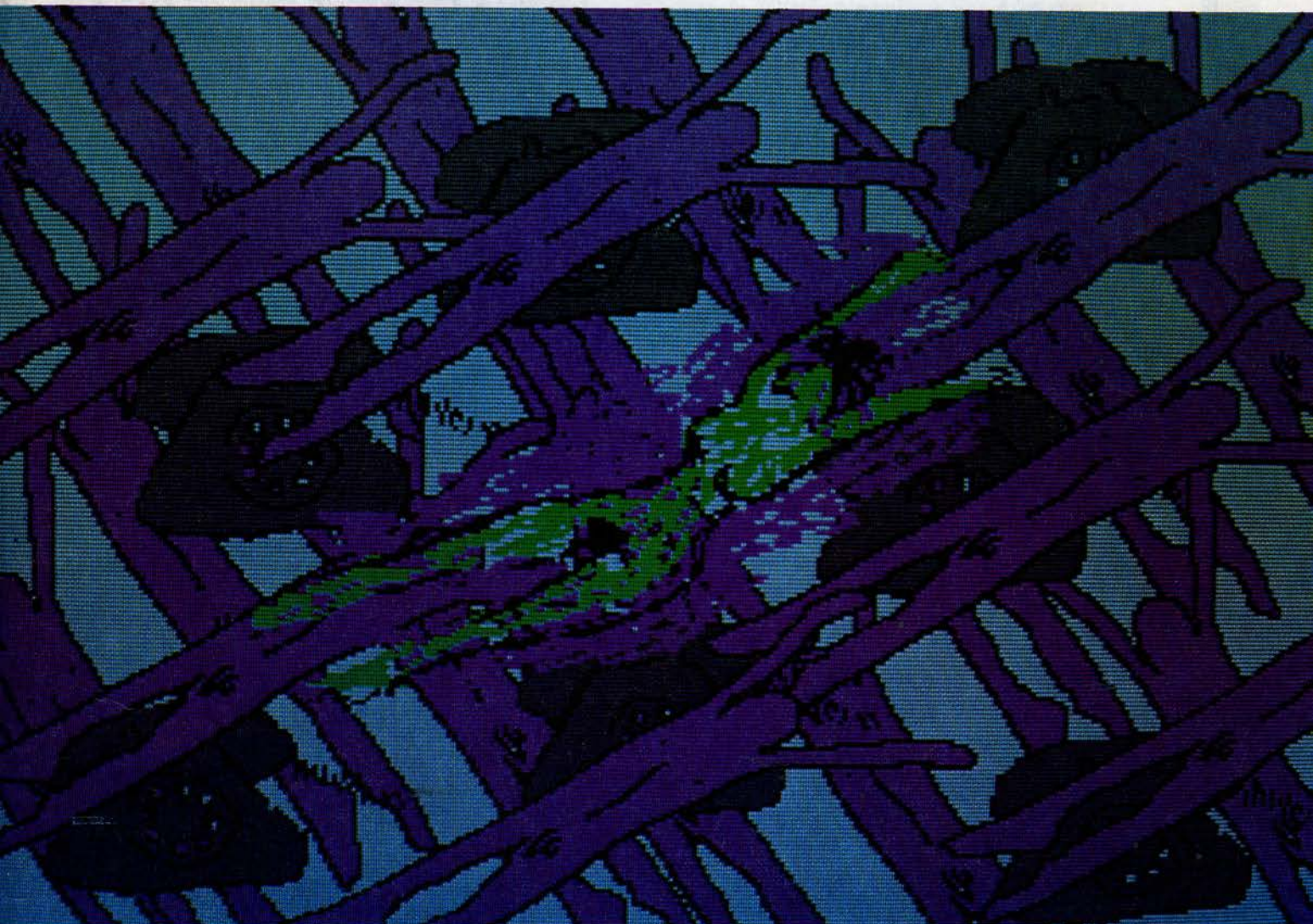


INDEPENDENT  
**Media**

May 1989  
Issue 89  
Price £1.25



Computer Art ● Retake Collective ●  
Despite The City ● Sankofa ● Short Films  
● Scottish Film and Video ● Demise of  
the Air Gallery ● Jeremy Welsh Profile  
● Satllite TV ● Video Skulptur  
● New Reviews

# JEREMY WELSH

## Part 1

Jeremy Welsh might well seem the quintessential post-modern New Man. Paterfamilias, video artist, curator, theoretician, teacher and writer, he is one of the most energetic and influential figures in British video-art today.

**A**fter seven years as exhibition and distribution co-ordinator at LVA, he recently took on the video interests of the Arts Council's Film and Video Umbrella. His artistic output over the last ten years has been substantial, covering performance, installation and single monitor video works. The themes he deals with engage with post-modern theory as well as with social issues arising from late capitalism and urban decay. The medium itself and the monolith of broadcast television have always been of central concern to him, leading to post-modern mimicry of media overload with poetic protests weaving in and out of often sumptuously layered imagery.

If I could persuade Jez to focus on one issue, it would be that aspect of his artistic personality that produces moments of extreme sensitivity, those quiet reflections on the condition of masculinity that were so evident in his recent installation *Immemorial* at the Video Positive Festival in Liverpool. As I have already proposed in *IM 79/80*, the deconstruction and reconstruction of masculinity is potentially the most radical way forward for sexual politics in art. Jeremy Welsh was more cautious as we spoke at length about this and other issues that his wide range of interests encompass. The first part of this interview deals directly with his work as an artist, while in next month's issue, Part II sets out his vision of the future, tackling post-modernism, technology and that thorny question: why British artists do so badly abroad.

**Catherine Elwes:** Can I ask you about your early work? *Insomnia* (1980) was the first tape of yours I saw.

**Jeremy Welsh:** It came out of a series of performances I did around 1975. They had very '70s titles, *Installation Action* numbers 1 to 5. They explored the relationship between the performer and the situation/context. Although they had a strong sculptural element, they were very much about process and action. They were almost always improvised within a loosely defined structure. By 1980, the works were becoming increasingly self-destructive

and very intense. They reached a point where they were positively dangerous, not just physically, but dangerous psychologically. I ceased to have any purchase on the original ideas for the works nor any control over what they had become. I had created a sort of monster. It had totally taken me over. I had to break it. The first stage of withdrawal involved not making any work for some time. The next stage was to find another context, another form to work with. Video seemed ideal because it allowed the performance aspect to continue but it gave me a distance from the work. I was able to look at it, change it, control it. *Insomnia* was the end of the old regime and the beginning of the new.

**CE:** What form did the new regime take?

**JW:** What interested me about video, was that it was an electronic recording medium that could pull together all the elements of sound, picture, music and action that I was working with creating a hybrid format. Early on, I had been involved in rock music, but I decided I wasn't interested in becoming part of the music business or dealing with the mass spectator sport aspect of that culture. But I was still interested in the processes of musical composition. Michael Nyman was an old friend and I had always been interested in his music. *In Re Don Giovanni* (1982) was a tongue-in-cheek pop promo for Nyman. At the time, he called his music 'theoretical pop music', so I called the tape 'theoretical pop video'.

**CE:** Tell me about *These Days Everyone's a Conceptualist* (1981).

**JW:** That was the first piece I made that was specifically about editing. The images were all found or constructed but not scripted in a conventional cinematic, television way. I made a series of tableaux produced in front of the camera. They were designed to create optical illusions, mechanically with rotating objects - mirrors, etc. These days you can do it with the touch of a button in an edit suite. The title of the piece came from an interview I heard on the radio with a pop musician who was

saying that in the 80's, musicians were Renaissance beings, essentially conceptualists dealing with the media as a kind of field. I was amused by this idea of us all being conceptualists, so the images in the tape were reconstructions of cliched ideas from '70s conceptual art to do with time and process etc.

**CE:** Did you have a clear view of your relationship to broadcast television at that stage? Was it an antagonistic one?

**JW:** No, it wasn't. I didn't share the antagonistic view that early video artists had in the '70s. I always found the media an interesting form although something to be suspicious of. The first major run-in I had with them was in 1977 when I had an exhibition that included a piece called *Physical Alphabet*. It was a series of photos of me posing as the letters of the alphabet. It got picked up by the Sunday Times who did a big banner headline 'Artist turns himself into the alphabet'. On the one hand, they were taking the typical dismissive attitude to contemporary artists, suggesting that I was basically a bit of a fool; but on the other hand, the piece was published in the paper and seen by millions of people.

**CE:** What about the relationship of your imagery to broadcast images? Your work always seemed to me to be about media saturation. The layering, the fracturing, the collage of different images constantly changing - like a metaphor of what you see in an evening's viewing. Was that a conscious critique?

**JW:** I was trying to address issues around the media and capitalism, being particular conscious of the political changes that were happening in the late '70s. Not just the emergence of Thatcher, but the decline of socialism under the last Labour government. I saw the way capitalism was replicating itself through media, marketing and consumerism. It was something I wanted to attack. The first way of attacking it was through very nihilistic anti-art, anti-culture, anti-everything performances. As the logic of that began to run out, I started to

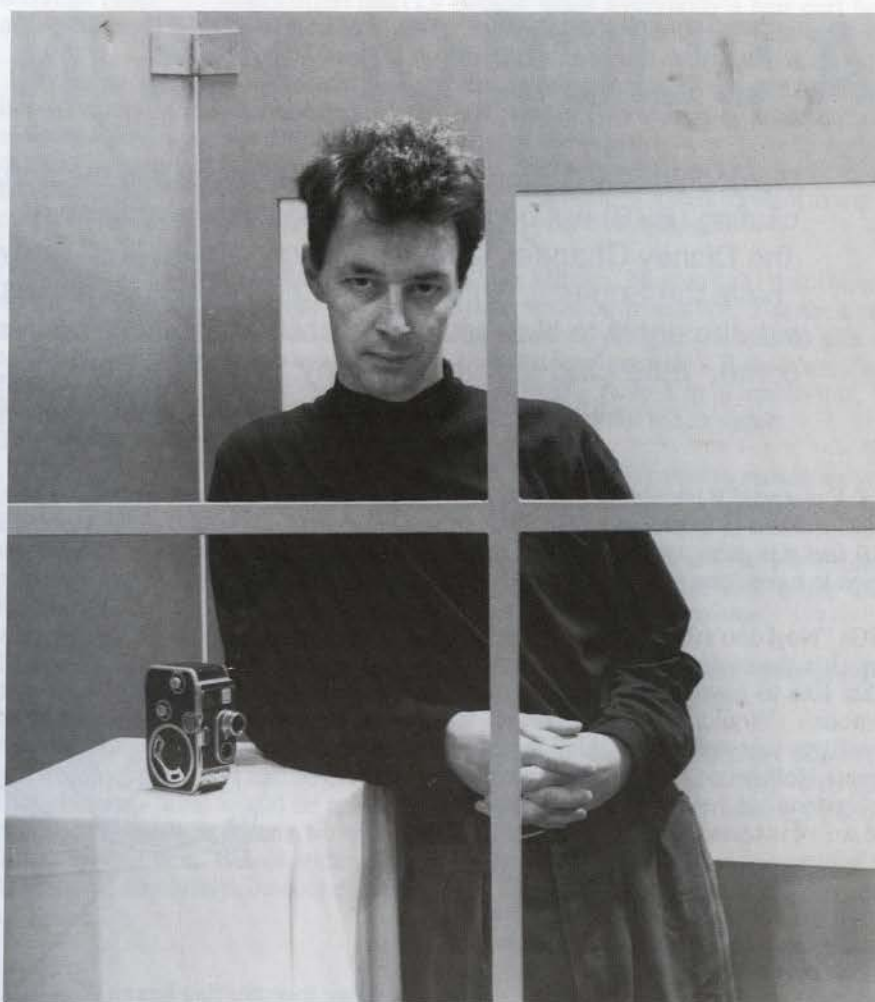
look at other methods of addressing those issues. Collage was a technique I had used since I was a small child. I thought of the early multi-media performances as a form of collage in space and time. Then when I began to work with video, editing offered a system of electronic collage. I have always been interested in the deconstructive potential of found or reconstructed images. Collage or montage may seem the ultimate post-modern tool, but it was also a modernist strategy and goes back to the cubists.

**CE:** My worry with collage as a strategy, particularly as it appeared in scratch, was the problem or re-assimilation by the media, by television itself. TV began to mimic it. It became a fashion, a style. Now youth programmes use odd camera angles, soft shots, emphasising the presence of the camera the way artists did in the '70s as a critique of the realism employed by broadcast TV.

**JW:** Scratch had a particular dynamic which made it easier for it to be assimilated in that way. But I don't think it's inherent to the form. It's happening to everything else now as well. The entire history of the world is open season for the media to reappropriate and repossess.

**CE:** Some time ago, David Ross wrote that the only position left for the artist to occupy within television was the personal, to make a personal statement as a challenge to the pervasiveness of the corporate voice. Your installation *Immemorial* in Liverpool seemed very personal in that it was to do with you and your family history, the continuity of your father, yourself and now your son. Does this mark a shift towards the use of more personal material?

**JW:** I had wanted to do something about my father since he died in 1986. Dealing with his death was difficult because of being male, and the way males are expected to behave in society. My mother was still alive. I was somehow supposed to be her son and at the same time partly take on the role my father had previously occupied which I found a strange and complicated idea to deal with. I wanted to make a piece around how I felt about my father, what I knew about him and a lot of things I would never have been able to say to him, or to anybody else while he was alive. The birth of my son made it gel, made it possible to think about. I realised that I was just another transitional part of human history. Here was another face coming along. It's strange that I felt this more acutely with his birth than with his sister's. I don't know if it was purely because he was a male child or whether it was a combination of factors. Alice was born when I had a full complement of parents and some surviving grandparents.



But Laurie came along when I was the oldest male member of the stock. So, yes, at one level, the piece was an attempt to deal with more personal things. But using old family documentation made me think about post-modern arguments around representation and the nature of the image. I didn't find it necessary to foreground these arguments, but they were very much there in the structuring or ghostly remains of things that had very little to do with the reality of human beings, of human consciousness.

**CE:** But they remain a reality insofar as you remember the people they represent?

**JW:** Yes, and the memory of the person is more real than the image. The image is an abstraction of the memory of the person.

**CE:** I've observed that it's more difficult for men to make work based on personal material than it would be for, say, a feminist.

**JW:** Yes, it's almost not allowed. When I had just finished editing *Immemorial*, I showed the single-channel version at a college where I was teaching. I got some strange reactions. One male tutor who had recently had a child really related to it, but other male tutors were quite hostile. They

considered it beneath a man's dignity to expose these sorts of things through his work.

**CE:** Do you think it's easier to make a piece like that now than ten or fifteen years ago? We are supposed to be in the age of the New Man. For instance, it's more acceptable for men to participate in the care of their children.

**JW:** I know what you are saying, but I think the New Man thing is largely a myth although a lot of men have shifted their consciousness entirely due to the thinking and influence of women. But much of the image of the New Man is hype, as is the New Woman created by the media. It's more to do with personal success and materialistic self-fulfillment rather than a radical re-thinking of gender roles... Current systems of taxation and benefits are designed to perpetuate traditional family structures and working patterns. Things seem to have got worse in this respect... The changes are mostly cosmetic.

**Catherine Elwes**

... to be continued.

# SCOTLAND

## The State of Independents

Doug Aubrey, of the video production group 'Pictorial Heroes', on the state of film and video in Scotland.

It has been said, rather unfairly, of Scotland that it is a 'land of last stands and lost causes'. Quite which category the writer of this article fits into, along with other 'exiles' based in, or passing through, Scotland, is open to debate.

Which category the native film and video maker occupies is even more ambiguous, particularly at a time when much emphasis is placed on the word 'Independence', evidenced by the country's growing militancy (read POLL TAX), internationalist outlook and cultural Renaissance. Glasgow, in particular, has embraced 'Art' and 'Kulture' in a big way and is destined to become the cultural city of Europe in 1990.

Hype and 'High Art' aside in our wonderful design-led republic, a fair assessment of the current situation could be summed up thus: If you combined all the resources of the LVA, Bracknell Media Centre and several others under one roof, adding some hardware more commonplace in Wardour Street - then you might approach the kind of facility available to the nation's videomakers through the Television Workshop in Dundee.... Then, divide up the co-ordinated resources of the London Film Co-op and spread them throughout the Scottish mainland and islands - and forget to tell anybody where they are and you'd confront the difficulty facing a budding filmmaker!

Resources and (goodwill?) aside, if you were then to add up the total amount of money the ACGB and BFI have available for artists, film and videomakers in England, reduce it by about 97%, then divide what's left by several hundred eager hands, you might go some way towards describing the current standing of the Scottish scene amongst supposed 'reactive' funding organisations and realise that somewhere - someone's got their sums wrong....

Further equations in our Scottish film and video maths class: if you multiplied the average LVA audience by 10, you'd understand that there is an audience for work outside of a few English cities (distributors take note) and that the work being pro-

duced and shown locally is just as good and just as significant as that read about regularly in this worthy publication.

Finally, when you consider the number of tapemakers and artists who have directly benefited from the resources, creative and cultural climate in Scotland (hands up Kate Meynell, Steve Littman, Dan Reeves and Simon Robertshaw/Mike Jones and go to the back of the class), then you might start to understand the potential, the talent and the problems that the Scottish scene confronts.

The fact is that, apart from not being able to add up and in spite of the creative accountability of the country's own tape and filmmakers, a false economy exists. Granted, the situation in England is only slightly better - probably about 97% better in real terms... When one considers both the quality and standard of production being made at The Television Workshop in Dundee by both students and professional tapemakers alike, it becomes apparent that a real misnomer exists.

But what of other resources? With a few exceptions, they suffer from a lack of funding - albeit for maintenance and expansion, let alone production. Many workshops, equally, restrict themselves (possibly justifiably) to outmoded 'community' or workshop-based productions. (Read Dull but Worthy). Many are dominated by full-time co-ordinators who appear both insular and suspicious of new initiatives and who, even worse, seem actively opposed to such developments. In purely practical terms, many independents seem unwilling to travel to places like Dundee to exploit the facilities and bodies available. (Back to your places, all those named above...).

The educational and professional sector, as in England, see training as their priority - but for what and to what ends? These groups, whether they be in education, the workshop sector, or in the 'proper' film industry and broadcasting, talk continually about training operators for the 'industry' - an 'industry' (in Scotland's case) dominated by restrictive practices, outdated

modes of production and an almost Ludite attitude towards new video technology - a reaction not uncommon in other parts of the UK and used, more often than not, to disguise a lack of understanding of the potential of the video/television medium in particular.

In Scotland, there is regrettably little talk of what these operators might be making, how they might make it and where they are likely to get the funding to develop ideas, let alone undertake a major production of any kind.

The answer is simple (so any 'Young Pretender' is told) - GO SOUTH!

Where new initiatives are being formulated, particularly with the international attention being focused on Glasgow in 1990, an opportunity exists of redressing the imbalance and problems outlined above. Transmission - the 'veteran' venue in staging video and film events in Scotland, is now seeing its legacy developed through organisations such as Eventspace, who are currently planning regular screenings of work throughout the year 1990. Also planned are a number of 'installation-based projects' aimed at presenting work both in and out of the gallery context, via a project titled 'Video In: Video Out'.

Transmission itself now has a new, larger venue, a new hot-blooded committee and plans for the future which encompass installation, performance, film and video screenings, alongside more conventional painting and sculpture shows. Likewise, the Third Eye Centre, has, at long last, begun to respond to current initiatives and has suddenly 'discovered' the area for itself, principally through its video component in the National Review of Live Art - albeit a once-a-year event.

Within the workshop sector, the Glasgow Film and Video Workshop is currently undergoing a process of perestroika, initiated principally by its co-ordinator, Ken Gill (formerly of Projects UK), while The Television Workshop in Dundee continues to be responsible for some of the most

interesting work to emerge in Britain in the past few years. Via its post-graduate course in Electronic Imaging, in particular, Dundee is generating an international standing both in the 'Art of Television' and 'Television as Art', with its influence becoming apparent in everything from 'sting' design for music shows, through to title sequences, new drama-based productions and documentaries.

However, central to the Dundee output has been the work of its artist videomakers, exemplified on a recent compilation tape pragmatically titled *Made in Scotland 2*, which contains work produced in Dundee over the last few years, with many of the artists represented now known and based throughout Britain. (Names including Liz Power, Clio Barnard, Dave Kelly, Leicox, Steve Partridge, Sandra Christie, Richard Couzins and Cavin Convery, to select but a few).

With a less high profile, other workshops, meanwhile, pursue more direct cultural imperatives, with the Gaelic-speaking Fradharc Ur, based on the Isle of Lewis at one extreme and the 'De-classed Elements' working from a housing scheme in Drumchapel, Glasgow, at the other. The Lothian Video Users group (administered by Pete Gregson) are currently staging events and producing work on a more 'grass roots' level, and offer their facilities at very low prices, to encourage a wide variety of groups and individuals to find a voice, of sorts.

While considering activity within the 'Athens of the North', the activity of the Collective Gallery in Edinburgh, under the auspices of Louise Crawford, deserves a mention in despatches. Its recent screenings include the work of Jeff Keen and Anti-Clause 28 campaign tapes. Other Edinburgh-based workshops include Video in Pilton and the Film Workshop Trust, under the auspices of David Halliday.

In some cases, video has successfully managed to permeate many of the major galleries and exhibitions in Scotland (much to the annoyance of the Scottish art world). Pictorial Heroes, as an example, were award winners at the Smith Biennial 87 (a major exhibition of contemporary art) and a precedent hopefully to be continued by others at this year's event. Of the large galleries showing international art, the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh is currently host to an installation by Marie Jo Lafontaine, seen at last year's Documenta show in Germany.

Forthcoming events of significance include the Edinburgh Fringe Film and Video Festival in May; an even bigger video section in the National Review of

Live Art (surely it's now time for autonomy and an event in its own right - organised and co-ordinated effectively by those based in Scotland?). Also of interest are 'Site and Positions', co-ordinated by Eventspace and the 'Re-claiming the City' project, planned for October this year, both of which intend to have film and video elements (including installations and a pirate TV station amongst their proposals).

On a broadcast level, *21 TV Pieces* is currently being developed by the producer/artist Jane Rigby and Anna Ridley (of Dadarama fame). This project is of international significance, and is a direct development from a series of interruptions produced 20 years ago by David Hall and shown on Scottish television. This ambitious project, which will include work from artists throughout Europe, is destined for the nation's TV screens, via Channel 4, in 1990, as a major contribution to the City of Culture exhibition. It will then go on tour as an exhibition and possibly be sold to other TV stations throughout the world.

Many of the original protagonists in fostering an interest in the area in Scotland now either work full time within the 'commercial' sector or fund their work through commercial activity. Some are now beginning to explore new areas of television practice, where ideas and potential can be realised and 'down time' negotiated on sophisticated resources (notably Chris Rowland and Alan Robertson).

In terms of informed critical debate and writing, *Variant* magazine and the eagerly awaited *Variant Video* (both edited by Malcolm Dickson) are gaining important recognition as a vehicle both within Scotland and throughout Europe as a platform for the exchange of ideas. Also in development is a new magazine, *Cinema Expanded*, details of which are currently unavailable.

While attempts to create a lobby group to put pressure on funding organisations are gathering momentum, the key to all these initiatives to date is that they have been brought about by the commitment of a few smaller groups and individuals, often working in unpaid isolation and who receive little or no recognition for their achievements. It's ironic that neither the Scottish Film Council, nor the Scottish Arts Council, have a video officer and that their contribution remains woefully lacking (in spite of their proclaimed 'reactive' nature). The Scottish Film Production Fund, for instance, does not feel 'qualified' to assess or fund non 'mainstream' productions and, on the whole, is made up of dinosaurs from the commercial film industry (to whom experimental means *Gregory's Girl* and 'low budget production' starts with 5 noughts on the end).

Equally, as forward-thinking and internationally-based initiatives are being developed here in Scotland and Scottish(ish) work is gaining international exposure, isn't it about time the ACGB opened out its funding policy to include non-English-based makers and initiatives? After all, it is an Arts council of Great Britain (and a British Film Institute, come to think of it).

To consider or attempt to evaluate the Scottish scene in regional isolation is both a parochial and nationalistic folly. Conversely, the arrogance, restrictive practices and limited issues of the centre need to be challenged and London-based artists, administrators, writers and funding organisations need to start recognising and taking issue with those North of the Border - rather than simply seeing the place as a great source of imagery and excellent resources for those with the funds to exploit them.

Ignore what's made in Scotland at your peril; it's crucial, it knows itself, it's watchable and it won't go away. In the meantime, we'll try and get our calculator to work and our sums to add up...

**Doug Aubrey**

## CONTACTS

This is not intended as an exhaustive list - others can be reached via those listed below.

**The Television Workshop**  
c/o Steve Partridge and Leicox  
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art  
Perth Road, Dundee  
0382 23261

**Glasgow Film & Video Workshop**  
c/o Ken Gill, Dolphin Arts Centre  
7 James Street, Bridgton, Glasgow G40  
041 554 6502

**Lothian Video Users Group**  
c/o Pete Gregson  
EVTC, 36 North West Thistle St Lane  
Edinburgh EH2  
031 225 6518

**Eventspace**  
c/o Doug Aubrey  
317 Onslow Drive, Glasgow G31 2QQ  
041 554 5643

**Transmission Gallery**  
King Street, Trongate, Glasgow  
041 552 4813

**The Collective Gallery**  
166 High Street  
Edinburgh EH1 1QS  
031 220 1260

**Edinburgh Fringe Film Festival**  
c/o Louise Crawford  
11a Forth Street  
Edinburgh EH1 3LE  
031 557 2721

**Variant Magazine/Video**  
c/o Malcolm Dickson  
The Data Attic, 37 Union Street  
Dundee DD1 4BS

# VIDEO-SKULPTUR



## Retrospective and new works 1963-1989 Cologne 18 March - 23 April 1989

**T**his exhibition is probably the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken in Europe of three-dimensional video art. I use that latter term advisedly, for while we customarily use the term 'video installation' to distinguish between single channel video-tapes, and work which employs multiple screens, or specific viewing arrangements, the curators here applied a further distinction, which refines the criteria of the selection. With 45 artists represented, the work distributed through five spaces around the city, the exhibition is at least twice the size of the important 'Luminous Image' show presented in Amsterdam five years ago. Moreover, while that survey confined itself to new work, Video-Skulptur takes the rare and welcome step of including, and where necessary reconstructing, important work twenty or more years old, which many of us have known of only through descriptions or inadequate photographs.

So we can encounter here ground-breaking work such as *Wipe Cycle* by Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider, *Iris* by Les Levine, and *Heuschrecken* by Wolf Vostell, all from

the late sixties, alongside more recent works such as Beryl Korot's *Dachau*, from 1974, and Bill Viola's beautiful *He Weeps For You* of 1976. At the same time, we can survey a range of very recent works from around the world, from the exquisite abstractions of Roos Theuws to the explicit political and social comment of Antonio Muntadas and Lydia Schouten. 'Around the world', in this context, does not include the British Isles, an omission which this visitor noted with a mixture of indignation and embarrassment. More on this later.

Cologne is particularly well-placed to originate this exhibition, in terms of both its location and its history. The site of the longest-established Contemporary Art Fair in Europe, it has seen a cluster of commercial galleries spring up around the town, many of which are displaying - and selling - important work by major international artists. During my visit, exhibitions in progress included work by William Burroughs, David Salle, Marie-Jo Lafontaine, etc. In the shadow of the Cathedral stands the dramatic architecture of the new Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, and inside that

is the legendary Museum Ludwig, probably the largest collection of American Pop and German New Painting in the world.

Within fairly easy reach of Cologne are some important centres for video art. To the north is Dusseldorf, where Beuys was Professor of Sculpture, and Nam June Paik, U-figure of video art, is visiting Professor. To the southeast is Kassel, home of 'Documenta', which since 1977 has had a prominent video component; while to the northwest in the Netherlands is Maastricht, where the Jan Van Eyke Academy has generated much significant activity under the aegis of Elsa Stansfield.

Cologne's broadcasting station, WDR, has long been responsive and supportive towards experimental art. In the late fifties, both Stockhausen and Nam June Paik were in residence in its Electronic Music Studio; a decade later, the station was enterprising enough to commission the historic *TV Gallery* collaborations between Gerry Schum and numerous avant-garde artists, which were highly influential upon the particular character of European, and especially Brit-

ish, video art in the seventies.

Many of Paik's early performances were presented in Cologne, in the atelier of Mary Bauermeister, including the historic encounter with John Cage, during a performance of *Etude for Piano*, when Paik leapt into the audience to scissor away part of Cage's clothing, and then concluded the performance from a phone box some distance away. Paik had his first major retrospective in Cologne; many of Germany's important video artists, including Klaus Vom Bruch, Ulrike Rosenbach, and Marcel Odenbach, live and work in the city. During the run of Video-Skulptur, the local video art tape distribution library, 235 Media, organised screenings of its entire, very impressive, catalogue, with work from the USA and Canada, Japan and Australia, as well as the expected German, Dutch and Belgian artists, in luxurious viewing conditions at the Paragon Gallery.

The credentials of the co-curators of Video-Skulptur, Dr. Wulf Herzogenrath and Edith Decker, are impeccable. Herzogenrath has, for many years, been a knowledgeable and energetic champion of time-based arts. As Director of the Kolnische Kunstverein since 1973, he was responsible for Paik's 1976 retrospective, and for the comprehensive survey of experimental cinema *Film as Film*, which came to the Hayward in London in 1979, among a long list of prestigious exhibitions. He has written books on Paik and German video art, and curated the video sections of two recent Documenta shows. Edith Decker has a background in sculptural projects, and has also written a monograph on Paik, concentrating on his video work. They have co-authored a splendidly-produced book accompanying this exhibition, which enlarges its scope to constitute a comprehensive reference volume for video installation work.

Herzogenrath is keen to emphasise the choice of the term 'Video Sculpture', rather than the more common category of 'Installation'. He is interested in work which does rather more than just multiply banks of images. Each piece included articulates the space it occupies, or induces the viewer's mind, in a unique manner. Bruce Nauman's 1969 piece, *Live Taped Video Corridor*, for example, coerces the viewer down its claustrophobic passage with two images of itself on monitors at the far end. But only one monitor registers the viewer's appearance in the space; the other image, taped, remains deserted, inviolable in its temporal distance. The video element acts as a meta-statement on the viewer's relationship with the space, co-existing with, rather than dominating or controlling, the sculptural element.

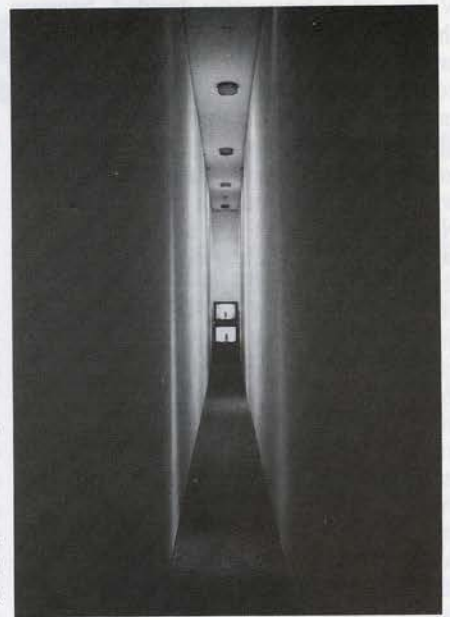
Similarly, the very recent piece, *Materia*

*Prima* by the Italian artist Fabrizio Plessi, leaves its 20 television sets supine, inactive, their capacity for communication only potential. Surrounded by slabs of marble as though hatching from a quarry, the stillness and absence of signal force visitors to consider the mass of remembered and conjectured televisual baggage, and garbage, they bring with them to the work. Both these pieces are presented in the Kunstverein, where most of the historical work - and in the highly volatile context of video it does not seem absurd to apply the world 'historical' to work only fifteen years old - is concentrated. Here, early work by Paik, Douglas Davis, and Peter Campus provide an overture to seminal pieces by Friederike Pezold, the Dutch artist Servass, and Mary Lucier. Lucier's *Untitled Display System* of 1977, with its spidery profusion of lines laser-burnt into the camera tubes, is just one example of a work given new significance after a decade of Post-Modernist and Neo-Expressionist ferment in the art world. A return to formal concerns is suggested by more recent conjunctions of sculpted material and image created by Graf/ZYX and Helmut Mark.

Nearby, in the Kunststation St. Peter, the church where Rubens was christened, and where exhibitions and concerts are celebrated alongside the Mass, two works startlingly animate the hallowed space. Next to the very font where Rubens no doubt bawled through his immersion, the rippled spectral image of Ulrike Rosenbach flows across three screens, the pastel shade of *Or-phelia*. This work was seen in London last year as part of the Edge 88 New Art festival, but its setting here lends it qualities of mysticism and liturgy. Close by, an example of Rubens' more mature output has been replaced in a chapel by Gary Hill's *Crux*. Five monitors delineate the cross, depicting the artist's head, hands and feet: not nailed and bleeding, but floating miraculously through a sunlit forest. The result seems at first shocking, almost blasphemous, but ultimately devout, a work of joy and meditation.

In the industrial north of the city, a huge warehouse has been put into service as an art gallery by the DuMont Schauberg newspaper empire. It's rather as though Rupert Murdoch were to open a rival to the Hayward Gallery in Wapping, but for the purposes of presenting most of the new work in this survey, the space, with its utilitarian construction, and decidedly non-reverential atmosphere, is splendidly appropriate.

Most museum curators hate video art: not only does it demand constant technical attention, but it often makes noises, and art is supposed to be silent. This can cause problems even for enthusiasts, as an array of videoscultures can create



aural havoc. In the cavernous DuMont Kunsthalle, where a dozen works share the open-plan central space, while as many more occupy cubicles around the walls, Herzogenrath and Decker have addressed the problem with a new infra-red sound transmission system. This broadcasts the audio element of each piece within a tightly defined zone, to be received via hand-held receivers, similar to those used to provide commentaries in conventional exhibitions.

The system enables the visitor to concentrate on an individual work, or simply to wander through the show, listening in when a particular piece engages one's interest. This state-of-the-art stratagem works reasonably well, though it's possible to cheat the process and mix into one installation the soundtrack from a neighbouring piece, often with interesting results. More importantly, the system doesn't seem to run to stereo, so where audio landscaping is important to a work, the organisers have reverted to conventional loudspeakers and an effort to isolate the piece.

FANTASY FACTORY, WC1  
01 405 6862 2767

## EDITING

Courses: 2Mcn, 3Mcn, 2day hands-on intensive  
March, April, May Beginners/Advanced  
→ Discounts up to 50% given for non-profit work  
→ 'How to' Books: Phone for list.  
→ 20th Tech room/DVE/Cap. gen 8 tonk. 3Machine U-matic. All occasions 10'.

# BVU-SP

Video art is frequently derided, because the technology is so prominent, and threatens to smother the content. Frequently, of course, the technology is the content. No-one should confuse the products of the electronics industry with the uses artists make of them, even in the reflexive mode which characterised the art of the 70's. Nevertheless, there are some indications here that technological developments can enable artists to achieve both more complex and better-defined forms and statements. The use of video projectors, for instance, has liberated the medium from the prison of its miniature scale, and indeed from the confines of monitor box. This freedom enables Tony Oursler, in particular, to present, in the passionate ecological tract, *Spillchamber 2*, a dazzling variety of images, none of which resemble conventional television. Where traditional monitors are used, improved precision of relative timing enables an artist like Marie-Jo Lafontaine, in *Victoria*, to impart to the otherwise identical monochrome images, of machismo foreboding, a rippling asynchronicity which heightens the tension of the piece.

Even some older work, like Dan Graham's *Present Continuous Past(s)*, of 1974, can benefit from this effect. Its mirrored room contains in one wall a monitor screen, linked to a camera. This views and relays to the screen not only the image, delayed by six seconds, of anyone who enters the room, but also the screen's own reflection, so that the delay is compounded in a theoretically infinite recession. In earlier versions of this work, the vital delay was effected by a tape loop passing unreliably between two elderly open-reel video recorders. Here, sophisticated micro-chip circuitry has replaced that cumbersome device, not only improving the legibility and survival prospects of this most elegant of video works, but also giving the movement of the delayed image a curious, dream-like quality which is wholly appropriate

in a work which so directly confronts immediate perception with memory and anticipation.

A suggestion of extraordinary possibilities for the future is provided by the only true inter-active work in the show, Jeffrey Shaw's *Narrative Landscape*. Although many video sculptures, like Graham's, incorporate the presence of the viewer into the work, new combinations of computer and video-disk permit their active participation, and exercise of choice, in seeking a route through the structure of the work. This is familiar territory for children raised on video games: it is quite a different experience in a context of contemplative exploration and revelation. Shaw's piece, although awesomely well-conceived and presented, is already quite primitive, compared with recent innovations. It would have been good to see in this show the work of Peter D'Agostino, or of Weinbren and Friedman, who are producing interactive installations of epic proportions: perhaps they belong to the video art of the 1990's.

I missed as well, with a pang of patriotic disappointment, any work from Britain, although a few British artists (David Hall, Tina Keane, Eno, Mineo Aayamaguchi) get some mention in the catalogue, which spreads its net even wider than the show itself. Now I know for sure that there has been video-sculpture made by British artists which would not have disgraced itself in this show; some indeed, whose presence would have improved it. The absence of any work by Urch, Littman, Welsh, Goddard, Maynell, and others, is incomprehensible. It may be that we simply do not attract attention to the good work made by British artists, with sufficient hullabaloo or support.

It is almost inconceivable that a show of video of this scale and scope could originate in Britain, given the current climate for funding and industrial liaison. The

Video Positive show in Merseyside in February, though touted as the biggest ever in Britain, was positively miniature in comparison. No one in Cologne, not even Dr. Herzogenrath, had heard about it. British arts administrators and curators would do well to visit Video-Skulptur, to see what is possible in the presentation of video art - given funds, benign regard from Sony, and curatorial dedication. It's not too late - although it will have finished its run in Cologne by the time this appears in print - it will be shown in toto in Berlin, in August and September of this year, where it will be just part of what promises to be a mammoth retrospective survey of video art in all its forms.

Even more urgent is the need for those British artist-animateurs with a more specific interest in video to learn a couple of European languages, spend a few bob more on postage stamps, use the international telephone service and travel a bit, to raise the currently near-nonexistent profile of British video art abroad. If that could happen, it might then start to be taken seriously by both the public and private sector at home. See you in Berlin.

## Mick Hartney

'Video-Skulptur, retrospektiv und aktuell 1963-1989' by Wulf Herzogenrath and Edith Decker, the publication which catalogues and accompanies the exhibition, is available from Nigel Greenwood Books, 4 New Burlington Street, London W1X 1FE. Tel: 01-434 3797. A 60 minute video tape with documentation of the exhibition, and interviews with curators and artists, is available from Dumont Video Editions, Dumont Buchverlag, Cologne. Price 78 DM + p.p.

'25 Years of Video Sculpture, Video Installations and Video Tapes' will be presented at the Congresshalle Berlin, as part of the 39th Berlin Arts Festival, from the 27th August to the 24th September 1989.

### 3 MACHINE LOW-BAND & VHS EDITING FULLY EQUIPPED SONY SERIES 5 EDIT SUITE

3 MACHINE WITH EDITOR @ £250 per day  
3 MACHINE SELF DRIVE @ £160 per day  
2 MACHINE WITH EDITOR @ £180 per day  
2 MACHINE SELF DRIVE @ £90 per day  
VHS EDIT SUITE SELF DRIVE @ £60 per day

DISCRETIONARY COMMUNITY RATES FOR  
VARIOUS PROJECTS

TELEPHONE 01-249 4909

10a BRADBURY STREET, LONDON N16



4LUX

VIDEO  
PRODUCTION



4LUX

VIDEO  
PRODUCTION