Film Video

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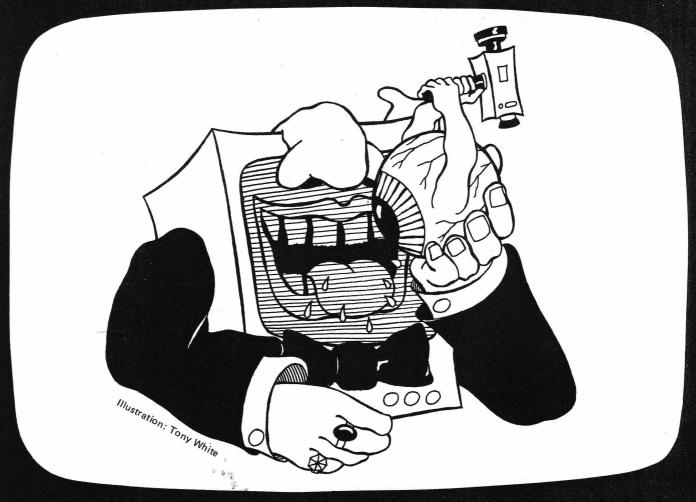
Illustration: Tony White

Serpentine Gallery "The Video Show"

Europe's most comprehensive video show opens 1 May at the Serpentine Gallery. At any one time visitors will be able to see the following:

British videotape
British tapemakers have been invited on an open submission basis to show up to one hour of material. Besides many individual artists and groups such as Interaction and the Centre for Advanced Television Studies, experimental cable stations will be represented.

International videotape
The organising committee have also invited 50 groups and individuals from 13 different countries to show tape. The exhibition will put emphasis on such pioneering work as Nam June Park's videographics, Top Value Television's documentaries and Alternate Media Centre's community experiments.

Installations and performances
Half the gallery will be used by British Participants for closed circuit live installations and performances. More than 20 of these have been scheduled, many of which will make use of a giant TV projection screen. Some of these offer a great potential for interaction between audience, artist and video itself.

A tape library will enable visitors to view tapes of their choice. Excerpts and short tapes will also be shown daily for the benefit of visitors with less time.

During the exhibition the Greater London Arts Association will be organising five seminars from May 12 – 16, and a one day conference on Community TV entitled "Video Perspectives: A critical reassessment of the role of video in community development". This conference will be chaired by Colin Young of the National Film School and speakers will include George Stoney from the Alternate Media Centre in New York. Further information from GLAA.

with these insights we are ready to go ahead.

Students become Teachers. One of the best measures of ability in a teacher is when his students can take over and become teachers. It was a good sight for me to see a final year student, Nick Hitchcock, in the T.V. studio trying out the table cloth experiment and interviewing techniques with the Greenwich Youth Theatre Project. In addition to teaching with tricks out of my bag, he has developed his own style of teaching. In this way our facilities can be opened up to community groups and schools working with staff and students.

Students have also acted as consultants. Eastlea School's Department of Social Education approached us for advice on using their recently acquired portable video camera. Six students worked with pupils of the school. The diary kept by one of our students illustrates the value of the way flow of staff and students and equipment from the Art School to the community and vice versa.

Eastlea School Project Diary

The pupils were happy to record this play, though none of them wanted to be the Director. I asked why they were so frightened to direct the play and they replied that they were never used to shouldering that type of responsibility. They therefore cleverly asked me to oblige by being their Director, I accepted.

<div align="right">Jimi Odumosu</div>

I continued the lesson by informing the pupils that our next assignment was to do some Communication Games — they however asked me if they could have a go at something else. Their spokesman, Russell said that they were going to treat us by trying their hands on "MASTERMIND" and they informed us that they have got everything worked out for themselves. What could be more exciting — it even sounded like a Hobson's Choice when we were given no option. We sat and watched them make their programme.

<div align="right">Jimi Odumosu</div>

We worked together and I was part of the Class myself. The pupils felt big, pround and happy because they realised they were making important decisions by themselves.

<div align="right">Jimi Odumosu</div>

At the end of the day, I formed a firm opinion about these children. They were willing to learn and if given the proper teaching, enough and good equipment, and some encouragement, they would perform wonders. They have aptitude for what we did. They have a wonderful imagination.

<div align="right">Jimi Odumosu</div>

'Social-Cultural Application of Television Technology in the UK'

The research is part of a pan-European series of studies on video; compiled as part of forward policy planning for the five year period 1975-80, in the field of Socio-Cultural Development. The main audience for these studies is Government officials in the member states of which there are 18 (including the states in the Common Market). The purpose of the research is to inform Governments of the work being done at grass-roots level in the various states, so that when applications are eventually made for public funding it is more likely to be made available.

The report presents a series of 12 case studies which were carried out with a selection of leading edge video-users. Included were: 6 Voluntary Groups or Organisations; 2 commercial operations; 1 Local Authority; 1 artist; 1 Home Office Community Development Project; 1 Arts Association (Yorkshire); 7 of the case studies were from Greater London and 5 from provincial centres.

The case studies are laid out systematically in 5 main sections:

1) **General** (finance, structure, overall aims, dependencies)

2) **Video** (types of activity and aims, equipment, examples of activity and working methods, evaluation/criteria/research, attitudes towards other video users, constraints and needs).

3) **Government Policy**

4) **Mass Media** (broadcast TV)

5) **Researcher's Comments**

The extracts below are taken from the sections headed "Detailed Findings"; "Recommendations of Respondents"; and "Recommendations".

The full report can be obtained free from Mr. Jean Rat, Council for Cultural Co-operation, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

Detailed Findings

1) Members of the Voluntary groups are receiving wages of between 20% and 50% of the national average wage i.e. they belong to an economically depressed sector of the population. Life-style tends to be communal and self-organised. These trends are associated with a strong social programme, which is shared with other users not econmically depressed.

2) Some groups use film. Film and Video are not seen as mutually exclusive but, rather, as different media each with its potential applications.

3) Most groups use ½" monochrome video equipment. State-of-the-art ½" editing is a skilled activity not easily performed by laymen. This is a constraint on the use of the medium which could be removed with automatic editing systems, not yet generally available. Two users, the artist and the distributor, require direct access to broadcast-level technology and distribution in order to function properly.

4) Video emerges as a broad-spectrum tool. 30-40 specific and well-defined applications are briefly described. They in turn fall into a number of general categories with overlap, as follows:-

a) **Community Development,** including advocacy and mediation, leisure activity, participation, documentation. (More than half of all applications fall into this broad category).

b) **Education,** including media education

c) **Creative medium**

d) **Provision of a resource** to the public and other video users

e) **Work with children** in play situations

f) **Distribution medium**

g) **Input to broadcast**

h) **Training**

i) **Aid to Justice** in the presentation of evidence.

j) **Research Tool**

k) **Use in presentation for Obtaining grant-aid**

Desired or proposed applications tend to reinforce the sets of applications in 4 above, and also show definite emphasis on innovatory uses of the mass media (broadcast and cable-TV). There is a growing realisation that *democracy, participation, access to decision making, and use of the mas media* are inextricably linked. In other words, to make changes in one of these variables is to affect all of them.

6) Aims of videousers range from the direct generation of social change (dealing with specific issues satisfactorily, restructuring small parts of the system etc.,) to indirect, longer-term goals (media education, propagandising about video, etc.) and, in one case, the creation of abstract art.

7) Video as product for distribution is seen by most users as 'futuristic'. But there is a minority who already realise the importance of product distribution both for information dissemination and feedback, and for creating independent income. It would be advantageous to establish distribution channels for low-gauge videotape.

8) Attitudes towards other video users are on the whole co-operative. 1974 saw the founding of the Association of London Independent Videogroups, the Independent Filmmakers Association (open to video users) and the Association of Community Artists (open to video users) Some inter-group friction is generated by competition for resources.

9) **Constraints:**
   a) Lack of resources is mentioned most often. Video funding, from the Home Office (Community Development Projects) and the Department of Education and Science (through the Arts Council and British Film Institute) and a handful of local authorities has so far been piecemeal and largely inadequate. Even if policies were clear, the resources available would still be inadequate.

   b) Regional allocation of resources is disproportionately weighted towards the South-East region, which includes London. This also applies to availability of information.

   c) Professional and administrative resistance to acceptance of a new medium and the skills of its associated workers is based partly on ignorance (lack of information), partly on negative attitudes (fear of innovation), and partly on the lack of a receptive structure (only covert and informal feedback channels).

   d) Lack of access to broadcast, which is seen as a natural extension of the video field. Although the newly-invented Time Base

Corrector overcomes technical objections, resistance by media professionals and the broadcasting Trade Unions must still be overcome. The possibilities are very large, expectations are very low.

Recommendations of Respondents

1) This is a summary of recommendations which can be found in more detail in actual case studies.

2) Universal support should be given for every citizen's access to the means of expression, which includes the means of production whether non-broadcast or broadcast, and the means of distribution. This should be a right guaranteed by law.

3) Provision of the means of production in a widespread, decentralised manner throughout the whole territory of the U.K. may be more easily approached if existing facilities — TV stations, educational institutions, voluntary bodies, etc — are *redescribed* as public resources available under mutually tolerable conditions. Then, the provision of means of expression and communication becomes the provision of new resources and the co-ordination of existing resources.

4) Funding policies must be overhauled and better co-ordinated, be they for the arts, social change, education, participation in local government, etc. There is strong criticism of arts funding as-a-whole which is seen as elitist and out of touch with the reality of the streets. Present levels of funding are inadequate for the demand.

5) Restructuring of broadcast TV to allow better citizen representation on controlling bodies, more decentralised access to programmes and equipment, and formal feedback channels monitoring the needs of communities. Greater variety in programmes must include the presentation of alternatives over a wide range. Allocation of the 4th TV channel would give an opportunity to implement solutions.

6) Short term changes must be supported by long term measures in media education, both in and out of the educational system.

7) Without high-level commitment by the Government and its Departments, no fundamental changes can take place. Innovative steps that could be taken at

Departmental level include the promotion of new information, resource co-ordination, more equitable allocation of regional resources, raising the level of funding. This last point must be tackled at Departmental level because existing resources available from lower levels of the system are on too small a scale.

8) It is evident that the meaning of 'democracy' is expressed in such concepts as 'participation', 'access to the means of expression', as well as the ability to cast a vote for a political candidate.

Recommendations

1) The following recommendations, based on the experiences of the video workers encountered in the course of the case studies, necessarily fall within the meaning and spirit of Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10th, 1948, viz:

   "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers".

2) **Explicit policy decisions must be made at Government Department level to fund, support, promote and encourage the development of socio-cultural applications of video and television, both broadcast and non-broadcast, and including long-term media education both within and without existing educational institutions, in so far as this provides the basis for implementation of Article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights.**

3) **This is seen as a matter of urgency,** for the following reasons:

   a) Nowhere in the UK is video officially classified as an activity in its own right. Many video workers are severely economically depressed, and video funding is inadequate. Only explicit decisions at Government Departmental level or higher would cause restructuring of lower administrative levels to take place which are necessary for the provision of adequate funding.

   b) Decisions on this level would have a major effect on the climate of opinion among the professionals whose attitudes are controlling influences: administrators, broadcasters, union members, media critics.

   c) The UK is lagging behind initiatives made in some other

countries: Australia (setting up of Video Resource Centres), Canada (Challenge for Change), France (National Centre for Audio Visual Animation), USA (funding on a large scale by New York State Council for the Arts).

4) Such policy decisions as are urged above would fall naturally into the larger field cited by many of the respondents, that of **public information policy**, dealing with the development of democracy, participation, access to decision-making, duties of the mass media, secrecy.

5) **Further Research is needed into the financing of possible solutions** where they are required at different points in the system as a whole. The case studies have yielded a variety of operational models, most of which depends on financial support from branches of the Establishment, but many of which depend on financial support from branches of the Establishments, but many of which are also self-supporting.

In particular we point out the following as deserving priority:

1) The setting up of more resources available in a widespread manner to the public at large, in association with:

2) The establishing of video distribution, including access to broadcast TV

3) Innovative solutions for the unused broadcast channel based on the wealth of suggestions received

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Planning Your Local Environment

by Michael Norton

From the late sixties onwards there has been an extraordinarily rapid growth in the community action movement. Groups have formed to fight major redevelopement proposals such as the oil refineries on Canvey Island, the Third London Airport, Piccadilly Circus, Covent Garden and the Battersea Riverfront; often these groups develop into much broader involvement in the local community, becoming an important force in the planning of their local environment, running their own community newspaper, organising neighbourhood festivals outings for the elderly, play facilities, starting an advice centre or even running their own community centre. Similarly tenants and residents associations have been springing up to keep an eye on the management of their estate, as well as getting involved in local planning and organising local amenity facilities.

It is not just the vociferous and the active who have become involved. Major planning issues such as the ringways affect an enormous number of people, and it is the response to these that has resulted in rich and poor, old and young taking a more active part in the determination of their environment. There is still a good deal of apathy. Most groups have wide tacit support, but when it comes to doing the work, they rely on a small band of the really committed.

People involved in community action can be an extremely useful resource in planning and related issues. They know more about their local environment, they care more and they are prepared to put in a good deal of work. The Skeffington Report advocated more participation. The Government response was to set up the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act provisions for public participation in Structure Planning and Local Planning. Councils up and down the country are having to involve the public. To many it is just a bore, a necessary but useless duty. Some are seeing the benefits of greater contact and communications, and not only around conflict issues.

The growth of this grass roots concern with the environment has been accompanied by the creation of a whole new range of jobs to stimulate and act as a resource for community development. The Home Office has provided intensive activity in selected locations with its Community Development Projects, several local authorities now have participation officers to encourage public

participation and the formation of new groups. Schools are beginning to see that they must relate to the community and there is a more active approach to environmental education.

A new profession, that of community worker, has emerged, and social workers and probation officers are becoming much more concerned with community involvement.

With all this activity, there has been surprisingly little opportunity for training in the basic skills for effective community action, or for the interchange of ideas between members of local groups and those who are professionally involved as architects, planners, community workers and teachers. Also there is a growing split between those who teach community work and those who are involved in their own neighbourhoods. There is seldom the chance for the trainee community worker, planner or architect to learn to produce his own community paper, help organise a neighbourhood festival, find out ways of getting local people to identify their problems and press for solutions and ways of getting more people involved. What training there is, is largely academically inclined, and only available within particular professional courses.

With all this in mind, I ran a course last Autumn at the Institute of Contemporary Arts entitled 'Planning your Local Environment'. There were two main objectives: the first was to look at various aspects of community participation and involvement; and the second was to provide opportunities for learning some of the basic skills of community action. The emphasis throughout was to be on doing things, rather than on theoretical discussion; after all it is a much more valuable educational experience to learn to print a poster and then go and flypost it, than it is to talk about the problems of producing publicity material.

The format of the series consisted of eight Tuesday evening sessions, each of which lasted around 2½ hours; there were a number of assignments to complete in between sessions; and there were several projects and training workshops in silkscreen printing and video, which were 'optional extras'.

The series was completely free of charge. The ICA contributed the space and handled the promotion of the series. The silkscreen and video workshops were held at Inter-Action, a community arts organisation in Kentish Town. About 100 people turned up to the first session, in a

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