

26/4/82

Dear David,

I'm writing to report on the Serpentine Show over the past six weeks, as I assume that any decision regarding the future possibility of repeating this experiment will be dependent upon your assessment of the success of the first series.

Attendance has generally been a proportional reflection of the numbers visiting the exhibition in the gallery. Thus, Saturdays are less well attended than Sundays, while ~~numbers~~ numbers have gradually declined over the period, as the exhibition approaches its end. It can be assumed that visitors do not, in most cases, come specifically to watch video, but to see the exhibition, and are drawn upstairs by curiosity more than informed interest. There are, of course, those who have come specifically to see the tapes, but many of these had simply 'heard about' the show, and complained about lack of publicity: it is my belief that audience figures could have been significantly increased through wider publicity of the event.

The location is a good one, but the times of showing were not always the most appropriate. On Saturdays, 12.00 and 1.30 shows were often virtually empty, whereas the 3.00 screening tended to have a reasonable audience. It would be better, therefore, to run screenings at 3.00 and 4.00 on Saturdays, or, alternatively, to separate the two showing days completely, dropping Saturday in favour of a midweek slot.

In terms of presentation, a single monitor is not really sufficient on occasions when a large audience is present, and the use of a separate stereo sound system would have benefited some of the works. The information sheets seemed to be reasonably successful, but would have been more effective had greater emphasis been laid upon the actual content of the works, and if they had been supplemented by a brief introductory talk at the beginning of each show. The semi-formal style of screening tends to somewhat fall between two stools - on the one hand it is not quite formal enough to serve an educational purpose, while on the other it is rather too intimidating to allow for open-ended access. If the intention is simply to provide access to video work, on an equal level to static exhibits, then a continuously running tape played over a monitor in a corner of the gallery would be a more logical solution; if, however, something rather less casual is aimed at, a more structured approach is desirable. I would also suggest that a weekly change of programme would be more appropriate, as the possibility of a 'return' audience was often lost due to the same work being shown again the following week.

The proposed 'modular' scheme would provide a useful model for future shows, particularly if, for the purposes of an 'access' show such as this, selection were made on the basis of subject matter and its handling by the artist, rather than upon the formal criteria employed in the selection of this show, which many viewers apparently did not find particularly useful or enlightening. If this proposal were implemented, I would suggest that, instead of each show having a selector and a separate invigilator, there should be a presenter, who would introduce the programme verbally as well as in written form. Such a strategy would augment appreciation of the work, and would also better represent the interests of the artists concerned.

As for actual audience figures, the pattern is as follows, in approximate terms:

Saturdays, weeks 1-4: 25 - 45  
Sundays, weeks 1-4: 35 - 100  
Saturdays, Weeks 5-6: 10 - 25  
Sundays, weeks 5-6: 14 - 50

I hope that you will find these comments useful, and I would like to make it clear that, despite my reservations, I found the show useful and interesting, and it did provoke a number of interested enquiries from people who are not normally viewers of video art. Should you decide to organise another such show at a later date, I will be glad to be of assistance, and I think I am safe in saying that you could also depend upon the co-operation of LVA in any aspect of presentation and promotion.

yours sincerely,



Jez Welsh.

p.s. I would be grateful if you could let me know what is happening as regards my application for video makers on tour: in June I am showing work in Newcastle and Nottingham, and would like to fit in some extra dates to make the trip up north more worthwhile. This would be easier to achieve if I was on the scheme, and I already have one offer of a show from Steve Partridge at Coventry, dependent upon my being available through VMOT.