

KALEIDOSCOPE

Mineo Aayamaguchi at the ICA, March 88

"Aayamaguchi is video art's equivalent of an Impressionist; the central concerns of his work are light, colour and form...".

Jez Welsh in ICA booklet to accompany *Kaleidoscope*.

Scheduled alongside Graham Youngs *Accidents* installation - an understated and quirky work - in the ICA's corridor space Mineo Aayamaguchi's new 25 monitor installation, sited in the roomy Lower Gallery, is initially impressive with its "video wall" effect and hyper-real colours, patterns and textures. Overcoming the first impact of the piece, however, there is a sense of uncertainty about quite whether what's on show is anything more than an occasionally spectacular diversion.

While Jez Welsh insists that the artist's intention is quantitatively different from the way other artists

use the form "for emphasis, for dramatic effect, to multiply the output of information of imagery" the 'stuff' of *Kaleidoscope* tends to contradict this as an array of colourising techniques, swooping camerawork and vividly psychadelic imagery combines in the work. Foremost in this constantly changing spectrum of images are the gleaming surfaces of water - a puddle in a city street, the oily swirls of a river - and footage of flowers transformed by Aayamaguchi into electro bright patterns of abstract colour. (The swirling bursts of colour are reflected in the gleaming mirror-like fragments of metal which add a further element to *Kaleidoscope* as they lie on the gallery floor facing the bank of monitors).

Although the effect of this surging range of image and pattern is intermittently engaging, *Kaleidoscope* is less effective than previous works by Aayamaguchi in that the contem-

plative aspect of the Japanese artist's style seems subsumed to a more hectic and 'busy' handling of the installation format. (Aayamaguchi's 1986 installation, a nine-monitor work at the Air Gallery, entitled *Beyond Colour* was possible. With *Kaleidoscope* both the imposing size of the installation and the breadth of the artist's vision is offputting rather than encouraging)

While *Kaleidoscope* has its moments and Aayamaguchi certainly deserves the gallery space of the ICA, if only in recognition of his consistency of vision and determination to produce that most difficult form of video-art, the installation, it's a piece which only partly succeeds. Part of the problem is Aayamaguchi's concern to describe, transform and create formal designs out of the world rather than focusing on a specific aspect of that world.

Sometimes less can mean more - Graham Young's domestic mini-dramas exemplify this - and more can mean less. In the case of *Kaleidoscope*, I think we have the latter.

Nik Houghton