

## GLASGOW EVENTS SPACE

REVIEW by Tom Mcgrath

Pictorial Heroes, Sardonic Hearts, Euphoric Voices, One Thousand and One Ideas for the Recession, The Structuralist Heathen Meets Media-Dupe Man - these are some of the titles on display at Transmission Gallery, Chisholm Street, Trongate, Glasgow - until the end of February. The show is called Glasgow Events Space.

There is a TV monitor in the window, and when you go into the space you see a bank of TV sets, a layout of chairs, a small stage, a mike stand. A young man in a checked shirt is putting the kettle on. The atmosphere is friendly and relaxed. Its in here that you can look into the video library and there's information all around the place, pinned to the walls, layed on ledges, sharp new information from the new world you have just entered into by coming through that door, the world of video art.

The passageway beside the chairs leads you to the entrance to a second space. Walk through there and you may never be the same again. Nothing scary, ofcourse. Basically what you are looking at is just an arrangement of TV screens. But its something more than you would see in the shopping centre.

On my first visit, people were talking to me as I walked into the space. All the time they talked, I was distracted by what I was seeing. TV screens showed images on either side of me, with a bank of monitors at one end of the room. Some of the pictures had words superimposed on them. One TV was mounted inside an old chest, another...I can't remember it all. What stays in my mind is that the ground beneath my feet in this TV room looked like the streets of Glasgow. There was a kerb and a brickbump road. For a moment I had the impression I was waiting for a bus, but this was quickly dispelled by the pile of computer paper that was wrapping itself around my feet, and the scrape of the computer printer nearby.

Gradually what was happening in the room came into focus. There was a camera, a BBC micro, a screen showing what the camera was picking up. The computer was engaged on an enormous printout. What it was printing out was a visual image. I looked down and saw my own face gradually forming over several sheets of computer paper. What it was printing out was an image of everyone who entered the room. In the midst of all this there sat a goldfish in a bowl, the camera aimed straight through it.

That was my first visit, and that was in the evening. My next visit was late morning and one of the artists took me into the space. This time a set of TVs were arranged at one end of the room, forming a pyramid that balanced with a grill that let in light from the street outside. In front of the TVs, there was a long rectangle of what looked like some shiny black material which inversely reflected the images above.



A baby was crawling around on the centre screen. On another screen a woman. In the background a man kept vanishing over the horizon. This is the work of an English woman artist about the birth of her baby. The shiny black material turns out to be water dyed black, reflecting the white screens ethereally but precisely. This is a quieter, more meditative experience than the first. The room is cold in the morning, which seems to help the mood.

After that it seemed right to sit down and have a look at what was in the video library. The man in the checked shirt was very helpful. The tapes ranged back in time to William Burroughs and looked forward with Billy Bragg. There were also pop videos. But what was of most interest to me was the work by artists, particularly those living in Scotland and actively involved in the creation and running of the show. They are of a generation which grew up with the television set as a dominant factor in their lives. It is understandable that they should want to express themselves on the screen. With some the subject matter is noticeably Scottish, with others, political, sexually or otherwise. Occasionally a tape seems to have no subject matter at all.

What is impressive is the amount of fluidity and precision they have achieved in the television medium. The quality of the imagery they put upon the screen is new and unexpected, and full of implications as to a different way of seeing things from that which is normally presented to us. Even their awareness of the shape of the screen itself is different, and several times the use of screens within the screens seemed to be opening up new layers in visual presentation. Yet all the time you have the sense of a particular person talking to you. Its not BBC or STV or even Channel Four, its Janice Bloggs and she made this tape about the muscles on a woman in Dundee. Or its Pictorial Heroes who don't want to put their own name on their work because they don't believe its good to glorify the individual, but everybody knows its those guys from Maidstone.

This is the opposite of the mass media. This is personalised television. The opposite of broadcast, narrowcast. It is like hearing a poem read by a poet at a reading as opposed to finding it in an anthology somewhere. And much of the work seems to have developed out of writing. But, though nobody likes to call it video art, it is mainly within art schools that these new approaches have been spawned. Hence the tapes display a high degree of visual literacy and awareness. Almost a visual equivalent to jazz.

Glasgow Event Space continues to the end of the month, with an events programme at night as well as a series of video installations during the day. I dare you to go.

Tom McGrath