

BURSARY APPLICATION

by

Steve Partridge

I have been working with video for the past three years and my development has been in three main phases:

- i) familiarisation with the medium, learning its potential in a technical sense. Making some video tapes
- ii) then I became interested in the whole gambit of communication mediums and read a lot on the subject of television; at the same time becoming aware of the works of foreign video artists, much of which left me unimpressed with some notable exceptions. My own tapes were by now video per se rather than recordings of some separate artistic activity, extremely self referential and probably rather boring to the uninterested. At the end of this period I produced two tapes INTERLACE and MONITOR which I consider as complete works in the traditional sense, all other tapes being too sketchy and experimental.
- iii) the third phase overlaps the second; I became increasingly dissatisfied with the video tapes I had done and was seeing and importantly the sceptical reception which video art enjoys (heavy irony) in this country. This added to my interest in the sculptural possibilities of the medium led me to cease my work in video tape and concentrate almost exclusively in large and small scale installations and eventually to devise and construct my own piece of video hardware for such installations, culminating in the Tate show.

My tape work, then, has been largely concerned with the video process per se. I have tried to manipulate and modify process-generated imagery into some understanding and reflection of the medium and the space in which the medium exists in spatial and social (in terms of audience expectation and perception of the TV set) manner. The tapes have all struggled in some way with the identity and the aesthetics of video and television.

The great thing about video installations is that while they tend to be very purist in terms of spatial and temporal problems, they also interact with the spectator in an extremely symbiotic relationship. No spectators, no piece, just a collection of hardware. The audiences in Scotland were particularly interesting on this point and it was very refreshing to see people actually enjoying art, taking as little or as much as they wanted from the work and giving the same back. This may seem to be of secondary importance to many video artists (and for that matter most artists) but I feel it to be essential if one is involved with a mass communication medium and intends to alter peoples perception of it.

The aspect that I became most interested in with closed-circuit installations was the characteristic which only video enjoys as a medium: that of switching. It is possible using a video switcher/mixer to switch from

camera to camera, dissolve, wipe, fade all in Real Time, whilst the same effects in film cannot be achieved without an interruption in time. Most installation work seems to have ignored this property, instead being endlessly concerned with time delay loops which seems to me to be a rather superficial tricky property of video. The switcher enables the artists to intervene strategically in an ongoing process. I became fascinated with this property, and eventually devised an automatic large-scale video switcher which was built for me by a technician at the RCA taking some six months. My automatic video switcher (AVS) has 8 inputs and 8 outputs and is programmed by control pulses which are recorded onto sound tape and subsequently decoded by a multiplex encoder/decoder and fed to the AVS. The AVS then selects the indicated input (camera). Any number of cameras can be selected at any given moment and the switching inbetween can be from a fraction of a second to a couple of hours. There is a matrix switchboard between the inputs and the outputs so that any camera or number of cameras can be chosen to feed any output (monitor) or number of outputs.

Thus this machine provides a facility for innumerable compositional variations on a live space time configuration of monitors (the configuration also being unlimited) I can score a varied time structure which determines the temporal sequence. The matrix enables me, along with the configuration and placing of monitor to camera and thus the spectators enforced vantagepoint, to infinitely vary the juxtapositions of images as they appear in space.

I hope this has given some idea of what I have/am doing with video. For the future I would like to be given the opportunity of doing more installation - with the AVS which has only been seen once at the Tate under unsatisfactory conditions and in an experimental stage. This, of course, costs a lot of money. I have approached the Acme Gallery, who have declared their interest in showing the piece in the new year. The cost of hiring hardware for say a week at a small gallery like Acme for this type of installation would be in the region of £300 per week. This appears to be a lot, but consideration must be made of the peculiar nature of video installations. All the work on the piece and the exhibition of the piece is done at the same time, ie the week of showing, unlike most art, which has a long preparation period and then is finally hung or shown in the gallery. With video installations it is impossible to experiment with the actual piece unless it is being shown as there is no equipment pool on a large scale available to video artists in the UK to do this kind of experimentation. So all the work is done at the same time, apart from questions of concepts and plans etc. I hope I have made this problem clear. Up to now the Arts Council has only shown video installations in group shows which has been, in my opinion, rather unsuccessful. The only installations done on a one man basis in this country have been by Dan Graham - an American. Group shows of video work tend to show the medium in a poor light; they tend to look like some sort of manufacturers trade fair. No one has had the chance yet to see a piece in isolation in a small London Gallery so that people can make a clear judgement of the state of British video art.

In addition, I would like to make some new video tapes, but this time in colour on Sony U Matic $\frac{3}{4}$ " equipment. I must try to explain why I am so precise on the equipment:

- i) Nearly all the tape shows I have seen have contained a large majority of poorly produced and executed black and white work by British and European artists, set against highly-slick productions from our American friends. This has meant that while a lot of the European tapes have been very good in terms of idea and concept they have been overlooked by the public and even the art world because of their amateur appearance, whilst a good deal of the American work has been poor in concept but favourably received mainly because of juxtaposition.
- ii) The new tapes I intend to do will be much more concerned with television. Questioning and hopefully altering our perception and expectation of this menacing medium. To do this I must work in colour and on good equipment so that there is a similarity in the 'look' of the work with that of the networks. There must be a seduction and a deception.
- iii) Finally, Sony U Matic though not the finest equipment is needed because of its flexibility and its acceptance as a world-wide standard of distribution. For this reason the RCA's video facility could not be suggested as the answer to my problem. The LCP is very soon getting a Sony U Matic editing system and recording facility which I have been offered to make use of, but I would still need money to use commercial facilities in London to make final edits and masters etc costing approx £25 per hour, this time would of course be kept to a minimum.

I do not know whether you want detailed proposals of the new ideas for tapes and installations, these I could furnish in the case of installations but not in the case of tape proposals as I need first of all to experiment with the equipment before I can finally choose the ideas I have in mind.

CV & FILMOGRAPHY

Born Leicester March 1953.
took B.A. At Maidstone College of Art 1975
Royal College of Art 1975 -76 Dept of Enviromental Media.
Resigned from the Rca in June for a multiplicity of reasons and
accepted a position of Part-time lecturer in Experimental
Video at Lanchester Polytechnic, Coventry starting Sept 1976.

FILM

Rond and Round 1974-5 10mins Super 8mm Sep Mag track
Slide Installation ; Triad shown at ICA Jan 1976 multi slide
projection piece.

VIDEO

Tapes;

- Red Leather/Yellow Leather 1974 8mins
- Crosspoints 1974-5 5mins- 30mins
- Easypiece 1975 6 mins
- Scrutiny 1975 12mins
- Overdose 1975 5mins
- Snow Scale 1975 7mins
- Interlace 1975 15mins
- Monitor I 1975 10mins
- Monitor II 1976 10mins

Installations:

- Installation No 1 (Scotland)
- Installation Nos 2- 5 unexecuted
- Installation 8x8x8 (TATE)

EXHIBITIONS

The Video Show Sepentine Gallery May 1975

3rd International Open Encounter On Video Palazzo
dei Diamanti Ferrara Italy May 1975

Arnolfini Bristol June 1975

4th International Open Enc. CAYC Buenos Aires
Argentina Oct-Nov 1975

Festival of Expanded Cinema I.C.A. London Jan 1976

5th International Open Enc. I.C.C. Antwerpen Belgium
Feb 1976. (Sponsored by the British Council to take part
in Round table discussions to represent British Video Art)

Video; Towards Defining an Aesthetic Third Eye Gallery
Glasgow March 1976

Installation Show Tate Gallery London May 1976

London Film Makers CO-op June 1976

2b Butler's Wharf London November 1976

Art st's Video: An Alternative use of the Medium Washington
New town October 1976

LECTURES

St Matins School of Art Dec 1974

Brighton Poly March 1976

London College of Printing April 1976