REWIND | Artists' Video in the 70's & 80's

Interview with Catherine Elwes

Interview by Dr Jackie Hatfield, 15th March 2006

JH: Which of your works do you consider to be key and why?

CE: I suppose, if we only go back as far as the videos rather than performances, then the *Myth* tape, made in 1983, was probably an important piece because it brought together a number of different concerns that I had. One of them was the feminist argument about the body and its functions, particularly obviously the female body and its functions. I was part of a movement that was trying to reclaim the territories of the body that we felt at the time had been colonised by a masculine culture. I was one of a number who were looking at menstruation, pregnancy and this was lactation. So it was the end of that particular process. There were other artists, like Susan Hiller, who had done her pregnancy piece that was quite important to me at that time. Mary Kelly was doing the *Post Partum Document* with her son. She was charting this evolving relationship with son. So there the feminist concern on one side and there was the reclaiming of the body and its functions and trying to find a positive image of it where we had always assumed that the male culture was creating all the negative images of those functions. But the other thing was to try and do it through the use of video. Mary Kelly was using theory and photographic images, Susan had used photographic images, so I went to try and do it with the camera. But the problem with lactation or with the image of the modern child is that it's a highly sentimentalised image and it was Mary Kelly who had said that to me. She said you won't find an image of a mother feeding a child that isn't a sort of recreation of the Madonna and Child, which as we all know is part of the Judeo-Christian religion, which has oppressed women for centuries. That's what she said to me. "How are you going to find something that isn't falling back into that mould?" So I spent a lot of time looking for an image that would say something about that experience and quite by accident, I started to look not so much where the child was feeding but at the other breast and so the image of this loan breast in the middle of a monitor appeared. There was another set of concerns and that was how do you make an image that is highly emotive or potentially sentimental, how do you make that work within a fine art context. I was quite influenced by minimalist painting oddly enough. I tried to apply a sort of minimalist aesthetic to it and so this simple sort of target shaped breast was basically a circle within a square if you think of it that way. Martha Roslyn had said that the problem with women's art at that period was that nobody could really get to the conceptual idea because they couldn't get past the content, because the content was so dramatic and radical at the time. So what I tried to do was to combine this emotive image with a very, very simple formal idea, which was a circle within a square. So the image is of a child's hand, then teasing milk out of the breast. Susan Hiller thought that it was my Kleinian piece. She called it my Kleinian piece.

JH: Why?

CE: Because Freudian analysis had always revolved around the significance of the phallus, the presence or absence of the phallus, and that the female is a kind of castrated male. But Melanie Klein had looked at the relationship with the breast. If you think of it logically, you are certainly aware of a breast long before you are aware of any kind of third term, any kind of phallus or phallic significance at all. So, as I understood Melanie Klein at the time, she felt that the development of the child was based on its initial relationship with the breast and its ability to deal with the absence of the breast, of the withdrawal of the breast and obviously the nurturing that went with it and the food. So Susan Hiller saw *Myth* as that. Other people tend to interpret it slightly differently. Many people were fairly shocked at this image of a milking breast, because it wasn't in anyway tied to the eroticized images of breasts that existed in the culture aimed at the excitation of masculine desire. In fact most heterosexual men found it quite revolting to look at interestingly.

JH: Is that what they said? Have you asked them?

CE: Yes. I first presented this as part of an exhibition staged at the Royal College of Art, as a way of trying to save the Environmental Media Department, called Cross Currents that Chrissie Isles curated. One of the students sat, and because it was an installation, she watched the reactions of people. She said that gay men loved it. They sat and watched it for hours. The heterosexual men hated it and felt quite aggrieved by it or that they felt it was an aggressive piece and they said things like, "Whatever next? Ejaculating penises?" It was that sort of reaction. So they were obviously quite threatened by it. She didn't tell me how women reacted to it but she tended to observe the men more than women. It didn't fit the mould. It wasn't there for their pleasure at all and in fact if anything it went back to being a very ancient, very primal experience that it was referring to and I think it was quite unsettling for that reason.

JH: Who wrote about it? Was it reviewed?

CE: Not much. It was shown a great deal. There were some reviews later on in various publications. Mike O'Pray wrote about it I think. But if there is any sort of retrospective, it's that piece that they show. I know that there were some discussions about whether or not it could be shown on Channel 4. The verdict was no. It couldn't be shown on Channel 4. It was considered to be too provocative or too difficult. They wouldn't show it so they showed something else.

JH: How do you think the climate has changed, the cultural climate for women?

CE: I'll tell you who has written about it and that's Heidi Reitmaier. She wrote about it and compared it to something of Tracey Emin's work. I think Heidi made a comparison between my work and Carolee Schneemann's work and some of the work by the YBA women.

JH: You talked about Channel 4 and how *Myth* was seen as un-broadcastable. How do you think it's changed? Do you think that the climate has changed for the better in terms of censorship of images like yours, where you were dealing with a language that was different from the male-dominated, patriarchal language? Has that changed?

CE: I don't know. The trouble with it now, is that the body and its functions have been colonised by television as well, but really as a surface phenomenon. You see operations. You see everything on television. Operations are no longer particularly radical because of that German guy, is seen doing his dissections on television. These are televised man and it's become a kind of pornography of the body that we see every day. It's become sensationalised so that it doesn't have the same significance. You could show *Myth* on TV now and I don't think anybody would batter an eyelid.

JH: You think so?

CE: I'd be surprised. I haven't seen it interestingly. I haven't actually seen a milking breast on television. Maybe there are still some taboos. I think that the difficulty with showing things like that now, is that the whole context of a feminist art movement and feminism itself no longer exists. It's likely that something like that might well, quite easily, be recouped and sucked into this whole spectacle of the body, which is such common currency on television now. I think you'd have to almost rebuild the context for it. It exists as a historical moment that we are talking about. I don't think it could function now.

JH: You don't think feminism still exists?

CE: Not in the same way

JH: You mean it does exist, but not in the same way?

CE: I don't think so, no. Do you think that it does?

JH: I don't know. I see feminism still existing, but not in terms of that historical moment of a huge energy by women from all sorts of fields.

CE: I made that piece at a time when many feminists were saying that you can't use the body, that it's so over-determined as an object. It's been ruined in a sense for feminist use. And so I was trying to find ways of re-presenting the body, which didn't then just replicate what we considered to be sexist images that were everywhere. But of course they weren't as ubiquitous as they are now. That's the thing that I find quite difficult to come to terms with perhaps is that if anything, culture has become more highly eroticised: that young women feel that they have to become erotic objects before they become anything else and that the situation is far worse than it ever was when I was young. I think that the pressures are even greater on women to conform to a sort of eroticised image and even when they are powerful it has to be allied to the high heels and the aggressive cleavage or whatever else, that the accoutrements of the Vamp seem to have been allied to female power in a contemporary context. That was something fairly new and I think it's very tough for women now.

JH: Do you think the gallery space is a place for women to exercise their questioning of that? I think it's interesting because your work was shown in a gallery space and obviously it was radical within the gallery space at that time. Perhaps now, thinking, "how would it be perceived in the gallery space", would it still be radical or have that next generation of artists like Tracey Emin, created that shock factor of feminism in a way. Would it be an easy place to show that work now, or would it still be radical like it was when you showed it in the eighties?

CE: Well the other thing that I think about now, is that when I made that piece there weren't that many women in galleries. You didn't see much women's art in galleries. People like Margaret Harrison were publishing the statistics and showing that as in many other walks of life, women were as underrepresented in the art world as they were everywhere else. I think that that is something that has changed. Sarah Kent will tell you that the statistics show that even though there probably isn't piety, at least that the presence of women in galleries is much greater than it ever was. I was listening to Rachel Whiteread on the radio the other day, on *Desert Island Discs* and she was talking about her mother and how she remembered the collective that put together the 1980 *Women's Images of Men* show at the ICA, used to meet in her basement, in her mum's basement. She remembers being surrounded by these strong women saying "We will show at the ICA and We are discriminated against and everything is going to change" I was one of that group and it's quite interesting to hear that clearly, at least in one case, we can be sure that the example of her mother and that what her mother fought for, was something that she was able to pick up and develop further. Part of what she achieved is thanks to what her mother did. I think she is a pretty rare. It's a rare thing for a young woman who is that successful to actually acknowledge the work that was done by the previous generation and the generation before, as we were not the first.

JH: That's true

CE: So, you are right. It wouldn't have the same impact simply because the representation has changed.

JH: The question was more to do with the idea that the wide culture, is quite dangerous to women. Whereas the gallery space is this place within which one can show the dangerous. It is safer than the wide culture in a sense

CE: I wonder whether I think of the gallery as being a place that's immune and somehow separate or immune to the pressures of the wider culture. I think that the ideologies of the wider culture infiltrate the gallery as they do any other space including the family as Sally Potter pointed out all that time ago. She is right that it's not separate. I think that some younger women artists have been subject to similar pressures within the art world to present themselves in a particular way, to present their work, but also themselves. Tracey Emin is her work but she is also an image of an artist, of a particular kind. She is a commodity herself. I think that there has been a pressure for women to opt to exist in both of those notes or to operate in this kind of bio-modal way if you like. Whereas we were very invisible as somebody like Carolee (Schneemann) wasn't because obviously she was her work. Her persona was her performance self and it didn't switch off when her performances ended. She performed her life. But for an awful lot of people, the work was what was visible. As individuals they were much less visible. They certainly weren't personalities. There was no cult in the feminist personality in those days, whereas I think that now it's individualised. I suppose that's the difference. So Tracey Emin can say something about her work, she can say something through her work, but she also has to say it as a marketed personality, whereas we tried quite hard to say things collectively as a group. We were foolishly remaining as anonymous as we could and it was quite interesting with that particular show at the ICA in 1980. We were a collective of about 5 women, including Pat Whiteread and there was pressure from the ICA for one of us to become the spokeswoman for the whole enterprise. They tried to put some pressure on me to be that person and we always said "No, we are a collective, we take it in turns to speak and we speak for each other, we are one voice." The result of that, is that periodically, other women have spoken for us since we found or discovered at any rate that other people have claimed what we did as theirs, simply because not one of us ever claimed authorship of that event.

JH: Who would have done that though, galleries?

CE: It has returned to us. Certain individuals have claimed a rather larger part than they actually played, simply because not one of us stood up and said "This is my event." We wouldn't allow ourselves to be marketed in that way. It could be to our detriment. We may all regret it bitterly now, but at the time that's what we did. So I think that's a slight difference. I think that the women artists within the gallery system have to be very public in a way that we weren't, partly by choice and partly because we were never given the opportunity. I think that's difficult to negotiate. I don't know how Tracey Emin feels about getting older, for instance.

JH: Yes, because there's a conformity as well with the idea that she can be one person in the gallery space and then someone else within the wider net media. She behaves as a bit of a vamp really in the wide media. She was hysterical at one point, and she was marketed as a hysterical woman when she got drunk on a chat show.

CE: I think that's the problem in a way and it's perhaps unfair to home in on Tracey Emin. But, where there are similarities, particularly in the early work, is where she was talking about her personal experience. She was talking about her abortions, the men she slept with and all of those areas that would have been seen to be private and therefore not the proper business of the public act or a public place, or fine art. Which is just to do with more generalist concerns. I think the difficulty with the way that she's been represented or her work has been represented is that has personalised it. It has individualised it. It has shown her experience to be the result of an individual flaky woman as opposed to the way that we were trying to understand our personal experience in terms of a political system. Why is it that we all of us grew up feeling that our bodies were all wrong or we were not good enough? Where was that coming from? It was coming from a patriarchal system that placed in a particular role relative to men etc so we made the analysis. It was a political analysis of the personal. The personal was political, whereas I think that in the contemporary art world, the personal is personal. It's personal to her. The problem is hers, not a problem of the wider organisation of society. It's not an ideological problem.

It's a personal problem and that's the way also that television programmes promote emotion as being. "If only you can pull yourself together. All you have to do is have a positive attitude towards your problems. Go have a bit of surgery and you will come up being a totally different person." Well of course you won't because whatever it was that created the problem in the first place is still there, i.e. the political system. We still live in a patriarchal society whatever anybody else says. There is no post-feminism. Nothing's changed, nothing significant in terms of the way that women are viewed and the way that women view themselves. I don't think that very much has changed.

JH: Yes, there is history repeating itself and now you can see that through hundreds of years of history of feminisms that have existed, although they didn't call it that. So I would agree with you there definitely. Are there any works that are important to you, of your own works and the development of your practice, that aren't necessarily more widely acknowledged by external viewers?

CE: There was a huge change in my work at a certain point because one of the things about my own approach to video was that I was very suspicious of words. I was very suspicious of the spoken word and the written word. I was really using video like a painter. I was looking for images. I was looking to create an atmospheric in which things would happen and meanings would be created but I was very weary of pinning them down with any kind of text or any kind of narrative, although they were narrative based. The work was all revolved around feminine experience as I understood it, as I observed it and I experienced it, but there came a moment when I shifted, when I changed direction in the nineties. And that coincided with the death of my father. There are threads that go though but from the outside it looked as if it suddenly changed. I made a documentary then and I started looking at masculinity rather than femininity. I became interested in the image of the soldier and of the war hero. The link with the earlier work is that it came out of an observation or a concern with a private relationship with an individual: with a relationship with a parent or within the family, a family relationship. That relationship was the relationship I had with my father. So it began from the personal. It came from inside and then started to look out further. The other thing was this use of text, which I found really difficult to make the shift from or of bringing my verbal, if you like, my verbal self into the work because I've always written. I've always spoken about art but I'd never included words in my actual practice. So that was a big shift. It was a huge shift and it also changed the way that I work because I went around and did what you are doing, which is to interview people, to find witnesses. I started thinking much more about oral history. The way that people construct themselves through their narratives of history, through recollection. Another work I made, what for me was quite a conventional piece of work, was a rather strange film, as Jez Welsh calls it. Jez Welsh has written extensively about it, a piece that was called *The Liaison Officer*. He called it a video-film. It was the telling of a story about events in my father's life during the War.

JH: Did your father tell the story or was this after your father's death?

CE: It was after my father had died because it seems to be fairly common that we don't ask our parents questions until it's too late. So we don't become interested in our parent' lives until they've gone and in my father's case, he was very silent on the subject of what did during the War. “Daddy what did you do in the War?” was a question most people answered at some point but because he’d been in the SAS and had signed the Official Secrets Act and because it was also not the sort of thing that an Englishman did of that particular class, you wouldn’t. He was an incredibly modest person. He also thought that it would be very boring to all of us, “Is that all right?” you know “It’s really not interesting at all. You wouldn’t be interested,” he said. So he never talked about it but he did actually leave an account of a particular operation that he took part in, in Northern France and that was my starting point.

JH: And you wrote that down?

CE: It was published yes. It was published in 1945. He dictated it to my mother in a park apparently. So we had that. We also had a document that had been written by someone who parachuted into France with him. So that existed but for the rest I had to go and interview a lot of people. Some of them are very long way away and mostly French because he had been a liaison between the British and the French. So it was a long journey.

JH: So you were building a picture of him and his narrative through talking to other people as well as having just the testimony and text from him?

CE: That’s right. It was building a picture of a person I didn’t know at all because my experience of him was as a very distant figure. He was mostly in uniform and a bad temper. My mother sort of protected us from him and vice versa so I didn’t really know who he really was at all. Also we hadn’t got on at all when I was a teenager because I think that there is a huge gulf between my parents’ generation and my generation because the sixties happened in between. There is much less of a gulf between myself and my son because there hasn’t been any great social upheaval during that time. We listen to the same music and we talk in a ways that I certainly never talked to my parents.

JH: Were they happy that you went to Art School

CE: No, it was a disaster. I was supposed to make a good marriage. Meet somebody suitable, get married and have children. I came from a class that didn’t consider the career of girls in the family to be of an issue at all. The only thing that mattered was that you made a good marriage. That you didn’t loose your virginity before you got married and so the last place in the world that my parents wanted me to go was Art School. My dad used set me up with dates with boys from that awful school for soldiers, Sandhurst. He used to set me up with Sandhurst cadets and they always behaved far worse. They were appalling. They’d jump on you within 5 minutes where at least the art students were rather better behaved. But, they had this image of Art School as being a place that was of loose morals and depravity and a place that I would be corrupted. It was a difficult thing for me to do I think.

JH: So this piece led to ongoing works?

CE: It did. What happened is that in collecting narratives around a particular event, I also then collected stories that went off at a tangent, so that each witness, if you want to call them a witness, told me their story as well as answered questions about my father. As a result of which, I now have this quite substantial archive, I suppose, of interviews. What I've been doing is to gradually work through them and try to make a piece of work about each individual that I encountered. People were very, very generous with their time and their stories so I am really building a series of memorials. They are all dieing one by one and there are only two of them left of the people that I consulted so I have a sort of sense of duty perhaps, but at the same time one of the problems in this work is, given that I rejected narrative in my work in the early years, I've now reintroduced narrative into my work. It raises the question how does one now tell a story? How do you begin to tell a story and how do you tell it in such a way that it doesn't present itself as being an un-opposable truth? But it presents itself as a story within a whole raft of possible stories about a particular event. How do you tell the story in a way in which your investment in the retelling of that story is also declared in some way so that why am I so interested in my father's past, why am I talking to people who were like him, because he is not there anymore. What's my relationship with those people? To what extend am I leading what's being said in one case? To what extent is my witness trying to tell me stories that he thinks I want to hear? Is he feeding me back an image of my father that he thinks I'm going to like and so, because he's trying to please me and make me happy? With the complexities it, there's more work in this area amongst social historians than there is amongst artists. You are sitting on the other side of this camera and we don't see you. We don't know why you are asking me those particular questions. What's your investment? What are you trying to prove through these interviews? What is your agenda? So there are all of those sorts of questions and how do you then represent that story particularly in a gallery, in which people don't sit and listen? It's not a place where the automatic behaviour is to sit down for 20 minutes. It's not like a film where you go and you pay your money. You're strapped to your seat in a darkened space and you are entertained for a period of time and you are prepared to listen. People's attention span is very short, particularly in a gallery where the people are still looking at pictures, even though they are looking at video installations. So what do you do? Do you fragment the stories into little digestible chunks, which is one of the things that I tried to do, so that in, for instance, *The Boy Scout Soldier* it's a very long piece. It goes on for about an hour or so but he tells the subject and tells lots and lots of little anecdotes that are strung together. So, even if you are there for a minute, if you manage to sit through at least a minute of it, you will come away with a story. If you sit and listen to the next one, then you've got two stories. But there is an accumulative narrative that is created and the longer you stay, the more you understand. Do you have different modes? Do you have some text that's read? Do you have voice? Do you have actors? What's the function of the imagery? To what extend do you draw people? Or do you simply sit in a gallery as some people like Stuart Brisly will sit, and have people coming one by one and tell them a story and then say, "OK you can go away now"? Do you use the life story telling element to re-tell these rather mythical stories from the past? Then there is the other big question for me, in all of these, War. The series is called War Stories. It's trying to come to terms with my own pacifism, which was quite difficult to sustain when you are an army brat, and I was. I had an army childhood and my father was a soldier all his life and I was violently, if it's not too much of a contradiction, violently opposed to violence of any sort and horrified by it/

JH: But did your father embody that for you? Is that why you think that you may have been rejecting the whole of what that means?

CE: Exactly and it becomes very complicated. You are rejecting a certain brand of masculine and when I think of it, I suppose conventionally, I tended to think of it as being the epitome of everything that I hate about masculinity, or everything that I try to combat in a sense. But of course it's part of me as well. in the same way that my father is part of me also. The whole thing revolved around a question I remember in my first piece, that I used to say to my dad when I was a kid, that I didn't think I would ever have been as brave as him and I would never have jumped out of airplanes. I would have been too frightened. If I had been him I would have gone to Australia where I would have been safe. This is what this little 6 year-old girl used to say to her father and he'd say, "No you wouldn't! No you wouldn't". That stayed with me and I thought "Well would I or wouldn't I?" There is a sense in which my generation has never been tested in the same way that my parents were tested. We don't know what we are capable of doing. We don't know what we would have done if that situation had occurred in our lifetime. We don't. This notion of whether you would have been brave or not, whether you would have been brave or been a coward, I think boys grow up with this sense in the same way that we grow up thinking "I must be beautiful at all costs, I must be desirable". I think that boys grow up thinking, "I've got to be tough, I've got to be brave" and there are many, even contemporary, sort of street rituals in which boys test themselves. If you talk to anyone who joins the SAS now, they are doing it because they want to find out what they would do in those circumstances. I think that they are testing themselves at some level. An institution like the army exists in which men can find our whether they are cowards, what they are made of, and what kind of metal is in their soul.

JH: You don't think it's a way for some of them to be educated as well?

CE: It could be because there are no alternatives or there are social reasons why boys join the army. Yes, often it's a choice between borstal and the army. For many people it was. It could be that. But had you got into the army, why then put yourself forward for the SAS? Why would you do that? In order to guarantee that you will be in a situation in which you will be tested and we've never been tested. I would never willingly put myself in a situation where I will be tested in that way and yet my father did.

JH: In a way, you have tested yourself because you've gone into an area of practice, which has been dominated by men. You've gone into the art world, and in a funny kind of way, you are in the SAS. Maybe psychologically, it's the same thing.

CE: Well that's very perceptive of you. You are right of course and I fought my own fights in it, but we just fought in a different ways.

JH: But you've written about that. In your text that you wrote about *War Stories*, you've written about that. You've described the fact that you have this part of your father in you. He is your father, so you know that you are this person who is quite dogged and determined in a similar way that he must have captured you.

CE: …and bad tempered…

JH: Oh yes you do say that as well.

CE: …and I'm just as capable of losing my temper.

JH: You talked about narrative and you said that you shifted from doing work, which wasn't distinctly narrative, to this work that you've been doing since the nineties, which you say is narrative. What do you mean by that, because seeing your earlier work, to my mind it's narrative or has a narrative in it. Certainly *Kensington Gore* is very narrative to me.

CE: That's true you are quite right, I'm not consistent in what I say. That one used text that's true.

JH: You are saying text when you are talking about words?

CE: Text as in words, yes.

JH: Didn't you imagine images not to be narrative? How were you thinking about it?

CE: You are right that *Kensington Gore* uses text and that was part of the new narrative movement of the time that people like Stuart Marshall, Maggie Warwick, and all kinds of people had instigated. It was a sort of Brechtian reintroduction of text, but in a very self-reflexive way. It was almost text in quotation marks that you did things, you mimed and you got people to say things with different accents. So it was very textual in that sense. I think that I was very influenced by the Gedals of this world. But people who were around at the Royal College when I was there, like Stuart himself, we didn't want to pin down meaning in a way, which would make it impossible for a viewer to construct their own meanings or interpretations of what they were seeing. The idea was to leave it to suggest. I suppose that's what I was trying to do. I was treading a kind of a fine line between saying everything and saying nothing but suggesting things that would lead you in a particular direction. But often you didn't know how people were going to react to the images that you created, particularly that breast image. I had no idea how people would react to that. And in *Kensington Gore* I cut a throat. So you tried to leave a kind of margin of interpretation in the work that would allow for the spectator to be in an active role in the creation of the meaning of the piece. The piece wasn't yours. The meaning was created in the act of looking at the work and it was the viewer who created the meaning in conjunction with the work itself and the intentions of the artist. So it was a sort of melange of elements that created the meaning and shifted the minute somebody else looked at it and brought with them other interpretive tools to the work; their own experience and their own upbringing and all the rest. I always felt that using spoken text, unless it happened to be only poetic and ambiguous, that the minute you use spoken text you were fixing the meaning. So that's why I was avoiding words because I felt that they fixed the meaning. In some way that closed the work. That shut the work down and therefore made it much more difficult for a viewer to act on it in any creative way. That was the point. But I suppose that in a way it's quite a narrow way of looking at things and that actually it's possible even with text to open up meaning as much as you would with an image that was devoid of any text or voice.

JH: I think that's interesting. I can relate to you completely, certainly coming from feminist perspective, that text and the written word or the spoken word, have particular cultural meanings attached that are quite fixed.

CE: One of the things that I didn't like and that was a problem when I was doing performances, about voice, was my posh accent. There was no way that I could make my voice anything other than solidly middle class and boom! That instantly fixed the piece in a way. It fixed the meaning of the piece. "Here is a toff girl". I remember doing a performance in Newcastle in the Basement, and not only was I a southerner but I was a toff. The audience at the Basement threw beer cans at me. It was amazing. I was pelted with beer cans and told to: "Go back down south you something, something toff!" The whole class system is now perhaps more complicated than it was but certainly at the time when I was making those works, the fact of my middle class-ness was a real issue. It was a real problem for the sort of left wing politics that I was involved in. Dave Critchley once said to me, when he was at LVA and I was part of it, or trying to be part of it, "What we need around here Cate, is some nice working class girls" So I shortened my name. I got rid of the double-barrelled name. The voice spoke a class position before it did anything else and in the same way that Martha Rosler said that audiences couldn't get past the content of feminist work to get to any other, I felt that people couldn't get past my voice let alone anything else. So I think it was a real problem.

JH: Yes it's different for Americans, isn't it because it's not so easy to fix their class. It's such an issue in the UK.

CE: Yes. So I think voice did that. Gender did that. These were all markers that I felt were shutting things down before I'd even started. It's like shackling yourself to all this. The weight of the meaning of the images, or the sounds that you were using, were almost unbearable. You couldn't manipulate them. You couldn't do anything with them. It was so over-determined which is why I didn't want any voice. I didn't want my voice. I didn't want any text. I didn't really want any image of woman that wasn't obstructed to a degree that it could begin to say some of the things that I was trying to say with it. It was a bit like that awful nightmare when you are running, and you are running through mud, and you feel the weight on your feet, and you can't seem to get anywhere. Using existing languages in the late seventies was like that. It felt like that.

JH: Where were those works made? Where was the *Myth* made?

CE: That was made at home as so many of my pieces were made at home.

JH: So did you have an edit suite at home with facilities and things like that?

CE: Well in most, London Video Arts had facilities, which they would rent to you reasonably cheaply. I didn't use them because I had access to art school facilities for quite a long time and even when I left college I almost immediately got a job in an art school so I used their equipment. I remember editing *With Child* for instance, at one of the colleges in the North of London that some kind person said that after hours I could go down there and edit the piece, and that's what I did. I used to go up there every weekend and in the evenings, but the Arts Council gave me a grant and with that grant, I bought a Series 5 edit suite, which I still have. That's basically what you needed. So I was able to acquire the basic tools early on and since I became a completely institutionalised person, I've worked in art schools from then on. So I always had access. It was still expensive and it was very expensive in the late eighties to get access to any kind of post-production effects but then Channel 4 came along. Channel 4 gave me enough money to buy time at a post-production house, for instance, to edit *Spring*, which was a Channel 4 commission. So, I did the whole series called *The Three Seasons,* which were landscape pieces, they were domestic landscapes shot in a garden. The facilities aspect of it was that Channel 4, when it was first formed had a remit to support experimental work. Rod Stoneman was the commissioning editor at the time, and I got, what to me then, was the most enormous grant. I'd never had a grant that size before or since, actually. It was a huge grant and they just left me alone. Rod Stoneman gave me the money and said, "Go away and make some work". It was wonderful. I was getting complete freedom to make what I liked. They only ever broadcast one of them though. But with that money I was able to buy time in a post-production house to do *Spring* for instance, which was littered with effects because it was a piece about effects. Otherwise I wouldn't have been able to do it at all. I mean nowadays of course everybody can do it.

JH: It depends what you want to do. Technology's changed. If you wanted to use compositing technology it's expensive.

CE: I'm lucky that my needs are very simple then. It is very rare that there's something I can't do. But at that time the arts courses in the seventies and eighties provided the facilities for artists to make work. They were very, very important at the time and I think Channel 4 did a huge amount as well and the Arts Council, which was constantly funding individuals.

JH: Can you talk about when and why you started to make work using video?

CE: Partly because it was there. When I was at the Slade we got video equipment in about 1976/'77/'78. It was when I first saw it and it became available to me. I was interested in it because I was doing performance at the time and because a number of artists were using video as part of their performances. People like Tina Keane. I was interested in the way that she was using it because what she would do would be to have a live re-lay image of herself on a screen juxtaposed with her physical presence. I think Tina will forgive me if I am misinterpreting her but my interpretation was that she was contrasting a live image with a processed mediatised image of herself; and the contrast was extraordinary. So that's where I first saw it and began to experiment with it. I was interested in it because, curiously for me, , it had the ability to pull together a whole lot of little talents that I had. I'd worked as a make-up artist at the BBC. I was trained as a make-up artist so I'd spent some time doing that. I liked to tell stories. I loved the fact that I could erase it if I didn't like it. I liked the fact that I could make images in complete privacy. I didn't need a crew. It literally fed back to me. The feedback mechanism of the video was absolutely unique. The filmmakers didn't have that. There was the instantaneous replay of the image. It was like working with a mirror and given that many of us at that time were trying to redefine what the image of a woman could or couldn't be, then this self-scrutiny was possible with video in a way that it wasn't with film. It is like Vito Acconci was always looking at the back of his head and you couldn't do that. You couldn't look at the back of your head on a piece of film.

JH: Tamara Krikorian did a piece like that.

CE: Looking at the back of her head?

JH: Yes, with a small mirror.

CE: It was a way of investigating identity. We were using it as a kind of mirror. I think that the dangers of narcissism are ever present in many of us. One did indulge in a kind of narcissistic behaviour, which I always hoped was a kind of political analysis and a rigorous formal sense and sensibility as well. It also gave me, I felt at the time, a kind of control over the image that I didn't think I had when I was performing live, because everybody in that audience could interpret what I was doing in anyway they chose depending on where they stood. It was perfectly possible for someone to stand or lie on the floor in front of me and just stare up my skirt if that's what they wanted to do. Then they would construct a performance that was totally opposed to what I was intending to do perhaps. I'd gone into performance thinking that it was a liberated space. I still believe that it is actually, for women to work in, for all the reasons that Sally Potter gave all those years ago. I think it's a very, very radical area for women to work in but personally I was getting frustrated. I am such a control freak with the lack of control that I had over the image that was finally broadcast and that finally became public, but with a video I felt that I was able to control precisely how long an image of this bit of me at that moment would be visible. I would surround that image with, how I would contextualise that image. I felt I had far more control, particularly with this ability to erase instantly. I could then decide what would remain at the end, what would survive the recording process. Whereas I couldn't control what was happening in performance. That's no doubt the huge weakness of mine but that's probably one of the reasons why I turned to video.

JH: Did you use video with performance as well?

CE: I did yes. They were called the *Tennis Dialogues*. It was an idea I pinched from Kevin Atherton. He pinched one of mine so I thought it was only fare that I could have one of his. He did a series of pieces, I think, that culminated in a two monitor installation in which there was an image of Kevin on one screen and an image of Kevin on the other screen. And the two Kevins were screaming at each other. They were having this almighty row. I think that he'd done some previous works in which he scripted it quite tightly so that he, live, would have a conversation with his pre-recorded self on the screen. He did it quite cleverly so I thought, "Oh yeah that's interesting. I'll take that and see whether I can do something with it". I was interested in trying to re-create quite a theatrical idea. It was a conversation between the child that I was with the woman that I was in the present. I recorded by using out of focus shots. I took the focus out and dressed in a particular way. I had an outsized tennis racket that I held awkwardly high up the handle and recorded a discussion or just recorded a narrative dialogue, a monologue almost, though it was a dialogue and then with my live presence, interacted with that monologue from the child. I was demanding to know why did she do this or why did she do that. It was kind of a representation of schizophrenia I suppose, or the possibility of two very opposing characteristics existing in the same person. But it was also a commentary on Catholicism and a Catholic upbringing as it related to femininity and what Catholicism does to you. So I did that piece and then I updated it for a piece that I did at the ICA, which was another performance in which I basically set up an argument with myself, but the thing that held it together was this game of tennis. I was smashing a ball against the wall. It was the words kept coming back to me in the same way that the ball kept coming back to me. That was it. Somewhere or other I have a video recording of myself when I was in my twenties and the idea was to use that in a live piece when I am in my fifties. Of course I haven't done it and the tape is no longer playable. It's a black-and-white reel-to-reel tape.

JH: Can you talk about your technological processes and methodologies for the artworks? Was it intuitive process?

CE: I think it was press play and record and that was it until I pressed stop. Initially you didn't do anything, other than record and the piece lasted as long as the tape lasted because we didn't have any editing. Then a very crude form of editing became available in which you used two pieces of chalk and you lined up two machines to where you wanted to make the edit. You'd have to just wait until you saw the white chalk mark and then you hit a button on a little console and one edit would happen when you played it back. Of course it was pretty hopeless. So that meant that the early pieces were really like performances to camera. You performed, but everything that you did had to happen in camera and live so the recording time was equal to the viewing time. We set up quite complicated systems sometimes with two or three cameras. There was a piece, another one of these lost pieces, called *Cate and Shauna Play Quietly,* where we had two cameras, three monitors and everybody was using them. They did a live trick of the "never-never" image, when you pointed a live camera at its own image on a monitor and the cameras would have moved between the different positions. It was all very complicated. Lots of people did very complicated live video set-ups with a hall of mirrors. Many of those pieces were a kind of hall of mirrors.

JH: In working within the gallery space specifically could you talk a little bit about your interest in that context? Did technology take you from the white gallery space, into another context, for example television or even the cinematic/black space?

CE: Yes I suppose both in a way, because I've always felt that many other artists were much more engaged with the sculptural aspects of video, like David Hall and I did do a number of pieces that took account of that. In the sense, I tried to hide the monitors within different structures, so with *First House* for instance, the monitor and all the equipment were hidden inside a small house. Then with *Wishing Well* everything was hidden at the bottom of a well. It was a pretend well. I didn't actually drown the equipment. You could drown the image, but not the equipment. So the dimensions of the sculpture were determined by the dimensions of the equipment that I was using. But I think that on the whole, I tended to use video like a little cinema and I showed my works along with everyone else at the AIR gallery in the evenings in the darkened space full of works.

JH: On a monitor?

CE: It was on a monitor, yes. David was making pieces that made reference to the fact that the image was enclosed in a three-dimensional and we were looking at the screen on the front of the box. I tended not to do that. I probably was using it in a fairly conventional way I guess but it was a magic box for me that I could make something appear and disappear on a small screen. But in order for that magic to work, it had to be dark. I wanted people to believe in the image. So, I was perhaps, less than many of my colleagues, involved in the technology quite in that way. I just thought it was magic. I thought it was wonderful the way that I could conjure things and manipulate them. It took care of this problem about colour also, because I was never any good with colour.

JH: Because it was black-and-white?

CE: Yes, either there wasn't any or the camera just did it. The technology just sorted out colour. I didn't have to worry about it. If I wanted to make it a bit more red then you could take the camera apart in those days and fiddle with the colour bounce so you make it a bit more red or a bit more green.

JH: But the technological process wasn't a restriction to what you wanted to do presumably?

CE: It was very easy to use and I found film very difficult. To me it was mathematics. You had to understand about light meters and exposures and various ways in which the stock was graded. The minute I saw numbers, I thought, "I can't do this", whereas with the tape all I had to do was press "play" and "record" and there it was. Then I could start to manipulate the image in a much more plastic sort of way. It was almost like clay. I could move things around. I could design, almost, what was inside the frame: what passed through the frame and when it happened and when. For me, it was much more malleable and straightforward. OK it got more complicated later. The technology got more complicated, but initially it seemed to be blissfully simple. We were like children with a new toy. You could make it happen.

JH: Did you see a lot of work of other artists, international artists as well as British Artists, because you were part of the British community?

CE: Obviously I saw the work of my piers and also of the people who taught me, so I saw Stuart Marshall's work, I saw Peter Gidal's work, I saw Stuart Brisley's performances and the documentation that he made of those performances.

JH: Stuart Marshall was teaching you as well?

CE: Yes, he taught me at the Royal College. Brisley taught me at both the Slade and the Royal College. I saw Kevin Atherton's work that he was doing with video and performance. Stuart was well connected in Canada and he brought over work by people like Colin Campbell and Lisa Steel. The other person I'd seen was at a show in 1983 called Brand New, New York at the ICA, so quite a lot of American work came over, and Vito Acconci's work came over. Although, I don't know whether it was in that particular show. So I saw some of his stuff and decided I didn't want to make work like that. I saw Carolee Schneemann's films. I saw *Fuses*. There's one person I admired very much, the American video artist who worked in Holland, Nan Hoover. I saw Nan Hoover's work and I was quite captivated by that. Because she was making images of the body, perhaps she was, in a way, the inspiration for *Myth*, for just looking at the breast. That's because she used the close-up, the macro function of the lens, to make these amazing body pieces that were very, very close, tiny, tiny details of the body. But because it was very basic black-and-white imagery, they looked like lunar landscapes with this strange soundtrack that she created. so that you looked as if it was perhaps the dawn of the world or the dawn of time. There was something really quite mesmeric about it as well. But, she crept around the edge of her own body and that's the way she avoided the problem of producing stereotypical representations of a woman. So I found Nan Hoover a huge inspiration at that time. Internationally, Americans there was *Vertical Roll* by Joan Jonas. I'd seen *Vertical Roll* and quite a lot of conceptual work that was coming out of America. William Wegman, we all giggled at the Wegman tapes, which were clever, witty thesis.

JH: Were those seen generally through? Were those seen at the ICA or LVA?

CE: I can't remember. It's possible that it was mostly LVA. It was mostly at the AIR gallery or some of those spaces organised by people here.

JH: What about people like Nina Sobell or the Kipper Kids?

CE: I just thought The Kipper Kids were silly.

JH: You saw that stuff though, those artists?

CE: Yes, there was quite a lot of daft performance. There was a lot of posing. There was Bruce McLean doing his nice *Style Analysis of the Raincoat and the Trilby*. They were clever. They were good but I couldn't quite relate to them. I liked it but it didn't relate exactly to what I was thinking about. I was always less interested in theatrics. I was very suspicious of anything that was overly-theatrical, totally unaware of the fact that I was extremely theatrical myself. But, at any rate that was my position that I wasn't interested in theatre. The ICA was interesting for a long time because it showed quite a lot of performance. Marc Chaimowicz was performing in places like the ICA. Then after we did the shows, the women-shows at the ICA, from then on, after *About Time*, it became about theatre. It was wacky theatre rather than what I thought was a pure notion of performance art was.

JH: The women-shows, could you talk a little bit about what the motivation was behind them? Why did you want to do those shows and where did that come from?

CE: It was at the height of what could be turned the Women Artist Movement. We really did believe it existed. There were a number of women artists groups around the country, people like Kate Walker in Birmingham, there was the Women Artist Collective in London and that consisted of Rose Finn-Kelsey, Tina Keane, Sonia Knox, myself and Annie Right later on. There was a gallery called Women's Arts Alliance or it was a women's space and it had a women only gallery, women only drumming lessons etc. So, Jackie Morreau and I were part of the collective that was involved. We weren't running the gallery but we were part of some aspect of it there. So it was in the air but there was still this problem of women being under-represented in just about every single major survey show in the country and people like Margaret Harrison were publishing the statistics on a regular basis. It arrived at a moment when figuration, of every sort, had really, not exactly been outlawed but almost, it was almost extinct. Anyone who painted in a figurative style was considered to be definitely not in fashion. And many women were working in a figurative style whether it was photography, video or were working-figuratively painters. So there seemed to be a combination of the fact that they were women, the first thing was that they were women therefore they were invisible, but the second thing is that they were figurative painters and figurative painting was not current. It was not currently fashionable because the galleries were full of conceptual, or colour field or abstraction of every kind or pattern painting. So we saw that there were two levels of invisibility that were affecting women's careers. The other thing was that there was a woman, Nina Jennings who was part of a collective of the Women's Arts Alliance had become particularly incensed at the very poor record that the ICA had of showing women artists and even more incensed when she saw that they were about to stage a major retrospective of Alan Johns' work.

JH: What date was that?

CE: It was 1978. So, Nina staged a demonstration inside the ICA and challenged the gallery to put on an exhibition of women's art to readdress the balance.

JH: Did she do that on her own or was that really a group of women?

CE: A group of women went down there placards, the lot. They challenged and said, "How can you a) show this appalling stuff which is insulting to women in every conceivable way and secondly why do you never show any women artists?" The answer that came back, it was Bill McAllister, I can't remember his name exactly, and he said, "Well it's because the work is not good enough." Show me some decent work by women artists and I will put on an exhibition" And so she said, "Right" so she came back to the Alliance and she said to all of us, "Well this is the response. He says that there's nothing to show. The quality isn't there. That's why they're not showing it." So that was the challenge. So I got together with Jackie and Pat Whiteread and Nina initially and we spent two years looking for this invisible work. We went from women's kitchens, which is where most of them were working to the occasional studio, to the back bedroom and found a huge amount of work. We also co-ordinated the general call for people to send slides and we went round and put together what we though was a very strong argument in the shape of a slide show of a range of women's work. Nobody had heard of any of these women. We went round the major galleries. The Serpentine turned us down and two or three other places turned us down and we finally went back to the ICA. By then Sandy Nairn was the curator there. We weren't completely stupid so we managed to get a few influential supporters like Sarah Kent and Lisa Tickner and I think that that reassured Sandy that it was not going to be a bunch of amateurs, as he saw it. There was a strong show there and he agreed. But, he agreed on one condition and that was that it wouldn't just be one show it would be three shows. The first one would be *Women's Images of Men*, the idea being that women look back at men, and make images of men. There'd be a second show, which I curated with Rose Garard, that was called *About Time* and that was 21 women working with film, video, performance, and installation but the third show would be curated by a heavy-weight who was Lucy Lippard. She did a show called *Issues*, which was issue-based works. So there was a series of three exhibitions, one after the other at the ICA in 1980, which caused a sensation at the time and *Images of Men* broke all the attendance records apparently. People like Waldemar Januszczak absolutely trashed the show in the first week. It then proved to be fantastically successful and he completely changed his mind and wrote a really positive review by the end of it. At first he said it was a sea of pieces, that's all he could say. It was wonderful. We wrote an analysis of the press response to the shows, and it's in the *Images of Men* book that Jackie Morreau and Sarah Kent edited a couple of years afterwards. So it was phenomenal. It was quite something, a landmark I think is the word.

JH: Can you talk about how your artistic processes have changed over the years? You initiated that with the war stories: the shift between, what you described as narration with text, from the previous work. Do you use similar processes now to how you started out when you started to use video with practice?

CE: I think the way that I go about things is probably very similar. I start with something that affects me always, something that affects me directly. It sounds a bit selfish doesn't it? Or self cantered? But, if I don't have some kind of strong investment in whatever it is that I'm making, if I'm not trying to discover something through it then it becomes for me journalism and I'm not interested in doing that really. I need to feel that I will change my mind. I will have a different view at the end of the process than I did at the beginning. I start with a series of assumptions, put it that way, with a set of assumptions and I use the work in a way to test those assumptions. I imagine that motherhood is about this. Certain bodily functions are about that. In making the work I discover that I was wrong but actually it's more complicated or more difficult. I think that a lot of the work that I did when I was young was highly reactive to the way that I was brought up, to my Catholicism, to this imposed religion that I was brought up in, to my gender, to the army, to all of the grand narratives, the master narratives that I was reacting against those in the same way that everybody else was. That demanded a certain rather direct approach it. I felt the sense of urgency. I had to say things that hadn't been said. I had to speak out where I'd clammed up in the past. I needed to. I think I still have that. There's that sense of my role in the family was always to say and to do the work and I still say what everybody's thinking and nobody dares to say. I felt an urgent need to speak and so therefore used a medium that was very direct, that was instantaneous. Video happens straight away. I got impatient with painting. It took too long for me to say what I needed to say. I suppose that I tended to thinking about black-and-white. I struggled with many of the issues but I saw things in a fairly black-and-white way: men - bad, women – good. I think that what's happened now that I've reached a certain age, is that I'm rather going back over the same territory, but perhaps with a slightly more open-mind. It's odd to think that actually I got a closed mind early on, but I needed to have at that point. It was important to have at that point or to have a singular vision or a very clear purpose. It's possible now to go back and look at those things again, like for instance the militarism or the image of the soldier, the whole notion of militarism and violence, conflict, to look at those things again and think about them as more complex issues particularly in relation to myself, given the relationship that I have with the subject that I'm approaching. I'm not planning to do this but we did talk about the possibility of even looking at Catholicism again, looking at religion again. You and I were both brought up as Catholics. Particularly in a contemporary context, religion is being used as a pretext for the precedent violence of one group against another again. It's coming around again but it's being used in that way. Why? Why on earth do people believe these ridiculous myths? I might look at some of those things again and perhaps use more than one medium to do it. For instance in the last piece that I did, it was called *Pool Story*, it was possible to use wall pieces, which I hadn't done for a long time. I used to use photographic pieces with text alongside the moving image, combined with sound. So, it was possible to have different elements, to open up the media that I use and at the same time, not to instantly take a position in quite the way that I used to. It's to go into it with a much more open mind.

JH: With some of your early works you are in the work itself. With these works are you still in the image or is it an element in you, which speaks or not?

CE: It's a really interesting important and very difficult question because the issue that then comes up with this point is whether you are prepared to do what I'm doing now, which is to show what I look like now. It's to show in contrast to the images of myself that I recorded 25-30 years ago. I'm old and this change has taken place. It's not just that it's take place in me as in everybody else but it means that by the standards that society sets upon us as women, I have started to fail. When I was young I was, not that I ever thought it, but I was positively charged in relation to expectations of youth and beauty, whereas, now I would tend to be negatively. My reaction when I was young was to remove myself from the image as far as I possibly could. I wanted to be there but not be there and to put something in its place. All of the women of my generation were trying to find a way of being visible, to find some kind of device that would make it possible to have a presence without resorting to images, which we find oppressive. Well, curiously I am in exactly the same predicament now. I don't want to be a negatively charged sexual or erotic object in the way that I was a positively charged one before, anymore than I was a positively charged one before. So what do I do? The partial solution that I found was quite similar to the old one but that I use my hands; possibly because I don't mind them. They are one of the few parts of my body that I don't feel particularly negative about and interestingly, in a recent conversation with Carolee Schneemann she told me that she doesn't feel good about her hands. She doesn't use her hands. She'd put them away even though she was speaking to me. She'd put them away. But, she can use other parts of her body that I can't, that I couldn't bring myself to even think about using. But I can use my hands. So, if you notice that in all the work from probably the early nineties onwards, my hands are there all the time. They are either manipulating objects or they are touching someone. With many of the people I was interviewing, with or two of them in particular, my hands are always there with their hands or touching them or stroking them. I'm there. I'm also within the role. Stuart Brisley said so. He came and saw one of the pieces that I did, I think it was *The Boy Scout Soldier*. He came along and had a look at it and he said, "Ah yes!" he said “I know where you are. You are the “Oomph” factor.” I said, “What do you mean the “oomph” factor?” He said because you can always hear me in the background going “Oomph! Oomph! Oomph”. So I’m there and it’s the role of listener. It is an interesting one that: the person who listens. It’s a traditional role for women to play, to be the listeners and the interpreters. If you think of the role of the Virgin Mary, you would pray to the Virgin Mary to intercede for you, to speak on your behalf to him up there. I can’t remember who did this, but somebody wrote something very interesting about echo and the role of women as an echo. But also the person who not only listens and interprets but represents. So, I tried to shift my role to that of a voice, but also to someone who listens and re-interprets rather than someone who sits in front of the camera to become an image that I didn’t feel, again, that I could manipulate sufficiently. Jane Parker made a very interesting piece of work called *Almost Out* and I understand that she won’t allow excerpts of this work to be shown.

JH: No she doesn’t. She wants it to be seen as a whole,

CE: It is ninety odd minutes long because she uses duration to create meaning very cleverly where an extract wouldn’t work. So, given that, I can’t prevent you from using an extract of this tape if you want to that could present me in a particular way, which might not be the way that I want to be presented.

JH: There is a difference there. You’re right principally, but we are artists. We understand. We are empathetic to artists and we present people because in a good light. The danger being that in 50 years time, one could argue that you can’t control what happens. I’ve had this conversation with other people. How can you control it? Obviously you see the transcript and you see what’s highlighted so if anybody does object then obviously they can say so. The only place we are using the interviews is on the database so the only danger would be if we weren’t empathetic as artists. Obviously you rely on that.

CE: But I don’t think you can avoid being selective. I don’t think you can avoid it. There are moments where I’m sounding incredibly boring so you could just extract those bits and put that down, or you could find a bit where I’ve been mildly amusing or mildly interesting but whatever you select, and whatever anybody accesses for the 30 seconds that they access it, is going to encapsulate their vision of me at that moment. They wouldn’t necessarily go any further and that’s why Jane won’t allow extracts. It’s impossible not to and I’m not even suggesting that I would control the way that you use this tape because I’m giving it to you freely and whatever I say is yours to use, otherwise I wouldn’t do it. So given that, it was almost safest for me to remove myself to a level or to a presence which I felt ok about regardless of what anybody extracted or heard and regardless of the point at which somebody then entered the work. It maybe that it’s cowardly and a cowardly position to take and that I am in a sense going along with the taboo against the presentation of age as an image in a youth obsessed culture. It may well be and I would confess freely to high levels of cowardice when it comes to being exposed in that way or for the things that I don’t like to be, for the marks of my aging to be exposed in that way. But I’m still looking for other ways in which it’s possible to make meaning in a work without that impinging on the readings that a viewer might be able to make.

JH: I can see what you're saying. I think it's an issue. I think that is being debated within the social sciences, issues of historiography and whose reading is it and whether it's the subject and so on. It's an argument. It's the sort of never ending piece of string really. That argument never ends. The only thing that one can do, my responsibility for doing the interview for example, is that obviously the research questions of REWIND and wider research questions are answered, or at least addressed. Then those are reflected within the framework of what is selected. Also, I wouldn't want to present anyone in a lesser light. Everyone has something to say.

CE: I don't think it's more or less or better or worse.

JH: I'm just saying what my motives are, so that my motives, like you said before, we both have reasons. We both have motives. We bring them to this interview and we are both witnesses to this moment. So, those are just what my motives are but I suppose the danger is in 50 years time, or even someone clicking on the interview, going back to Jane Parker's reasons for not wanting snippets of her work to be shown, it's the same thing really. One could say "Oh no I want the whole thing to be seen" You could say that. It's possible.

CE: You could but I'm too good an editor to ever impose that

JH: The questions were risen before about the editing and I think it's a fair point.

CE: You are right. Some people insist. Some oral historians may well insist on every "um" and "er" and repetition and moments of boredom. I'm not a great advocate of that. I've edited too many texts. It's indigestible.

JH: Did you have any other particular ideological reasons why you wanted to use video?

CE: The only one I missed out, and the one that Tina (Keane) used to insist on, was that video had a shorter history. It had a very short history. It was non-existent. It was clearly tied to cinema history but it was a medium which she felt, or that various people felt, was not overburdened with patriarchal precedence, It was not like painting which was synonymous with painters who were always men. Video art had not yet been monopolised by men, therefore there was a sense that it was possible to make it our own, if we were quick enough, if we could get in there quick enough. I think that's quite right. I think that I used it for that ideological reason if you could call it that. It had the potential as a language to be appropriated by women at that moment.

JH: I think it was the same in the States, I think it was the same globally actually.

CE: Well it was the first new medium, if you think about it, since film. There hadn't been anything. Television was the new medium. Also, the point that even though in terms of art historical terms there was very little history. There was very little historical baggage, but there was television. There was a popular cultural medium that one had to contend with, which was broadcast television. It was freer in one sense but it was also fairly loaded in another.

JH: It's interesting that you say that because, it was loaded with the cinematic or the wider cinematic history, but also there's an issue about class and pluralism within the televisual. I wonder whether the televisual media as a cultural tool was more open than other forms than certainly gallery spaces and the art world. Painting and sculpture were very closed shops really, but the televisual in itself did it not have that. Is it more pluralistic as a medium to share with video?

CE: I didn't think that so much. I thought that television was the place in which ideologies were reinforced and were ossified almost like that *the black-and-white minstrel show.* It's true also and I know that lot's of people have argued that there was very, very radical television. Also there was really quite innovative television being made like *The Singing Detective,* Dennis Potter and all. Even Poliakoff is re-running at the moment so there was the radical drama, whether or not that positioned women in radical position, I think not. I think that Denis Potter's relationship to women was a troubled one and that it wasn't particularly revolutionary for the female characters who were really quite conventional. I didn't think of television and it was curious to then work in television after because the make-up department was all female. All the make-up girls were female and we were known as "the powder puff girls".

JH: That's so derogatory.

CE: Exactly, it was awful. They won't be using it anymore but at that time it was. There were very few women producers. There were very few women directors and I remember the first female camera operator at the BBC rooms, the first girl who came in and they were absolute bastards to her. Some of the studio cameras are very heavy and there was somebody called "a cable basher". There were these huge cables that trailed behind the cameras and there was somebody whose job it was to move the cables around so that they didn't trip over the next camera and they made her carry the heaviest cases and the heaviest cables to try to get her to the point where she gave up. I remember this happening systematically, her male colleagues, the male camera operators, doing this to her. So I thought of television as being the ultimate bastion of sexism, at least as an institution.

JH: It was a manifestation of technological manifestation by the sounds of things, as an institution whereas…

CE: Yes, it was male dominated the same way as anything. And the product of television seemed to me to reinforce what I saw as a patriarchal society. I didn't believe that we were making significant inroads into the form and content of television. I saw it as the enemy in the same way that the structural filmmakers saw Hollywood as the enemy. Most video artists saw their work as counter-cultural as Stuart Marshall would put it, it was a critique of the mainstream.

JH: Of the mainstream art work and broadcasting?

CE: Yes, broadcasting and television.

JH: Did funding stifle or enable you to achieve your ambitions?

CE: I was just very lucky. That's what people always say. The art schools provided facilities. They were very expensive to buy. The arts schools provided facilities for artists, for both the students and their tutors and because it was such an young medium the people who taught us video had only been doing it for a couple of years themselves so, all of us were supported by the art schools earlier on. Stuart Marshall set up the first experimental department in Newcastle more or less at the same time, I believe, that David Hall was setting up his department in Maidstone. And we were all beneficiaries of that system. I also managed to stay at art school for eight years. I was a perpetual student because I kept leaving and coming back and leaving and coming back. I also got access to North East London Polytechnic.

JH: Was that where you taught? Did you teach there?

CE: No, a very nice chap there let me use the facilities after dark. Then I got small grants from the arts council and that was sufficient to buy myself some basic equipment, which is all I needed at the time. Then Channel 4 funding helped me to buy the effects that I wanted at the time. So, I can't say that lack of funding was a problem, although it was an expensive medium and people like Chris Meigh-Andrews set up little production companies and worked commercially as a way of funding his own practice and as a way of acquiring the machines that he needed to make his work. I didn't do that. I relied on existing facilities.

JH: So where did you teach first of all?

CE: I taught first at an American school. An American college called Richmond College, which was near the Royal College. Then I went to Coventry where I taught for a number of years. It was quite a long time, about seven years.

JH: Did you work with Steve Partridge at Coventry then?

CE: Yes, I taught there when he was there. I think I caught the tale end of his time there. I taught at Leicester and then finally at Camberwell and that's where I've been ever since.

JH: So you worked in the academic community. What made you go into working in the art schools? Was it just a natural intuitive movement or did you want to be part of that academic community?

CE: It was partly because of access to the equipment. It was access to the equipment and to the community. Most of the people who were working as video artists at that time were connected to art schools in one way or another. We were all part of LVA as well so if you were in an art school you had access. If you were part of LVA then you had access to the community and therefore the debates and Dave Critchley was distributing the work. Chris Andrews for a long time was the chair of the committee that we were all part of LVA. So, those were the two institutions. I know other people did it differently and other people did it through the Front Choice Workshops around the country that Channel 4 initially funded. There was a whole community video movement. So, that was a separate one and then there were people who took the semi-commercial root like Chris and various other people who worked commercially as well.

JH: Were you part of LVA earlier on as well?

CE: I wasn't one of the founders. That was the generation before. It was Tamara and David and obviously Stuart Marshall.

JH: It's funny how it's talked about as generations.

CE: Yes, we were generations. I was the second generation.

JH: It's quite strange that though because it's not so clear-cut I don't think.

CE: I know where it is. I know.

JH: Do you think it is though?

CE: Yes, I am second generation.

JH: Why do you think that though?

CE: Because I was taught by the people who found it LVA. Tamara didn't teach me but she was teaching when I was a student. David Hall was teaching when I was a student. Stewart Marshall taught and I am the same generation as Nina Danino and… and the same generation as Steve Hawley and Chris Meigh-Andrews and now we've taught another generation. We were the middle generation like the middle child, the troublesome middle child.

JH: Where does Steve Partridge fit into this because he was one of the founders?

CE: He was one of the founders yes.

JH: But you see him as a first generation or a second generation?

CE: I see him as first really, he looks young but he is the first generation. The *Monitor* piece of his was one of the very, very early pieces from this country. I didn't know what was his involvement with LVA was. Was he part of it?

JH: He was one of the founding members

CE: Well there you are, he is the first generation

JH: It's just interesting how you talk about it in that sense and I know that people have written about it in that way, but I wonder whether that's exactly how it was or not because, I don't think the film tech makers talk about themselves that way.

CE: I can see the generations in there as well. Peter Gidal, Malcolm LeGrice and Steve Dwoskin are the first generation. Obviously there was the generation before like Margaret Tait and further. It depends how far back you want to go but I see the first generation as a structural materialist filmmakers at the Film Co-op and then there was another generation, which is Nicky Hamlyn's generation. The book that he produced really shows the transition from the first to the second and the way that the second generation tried to move the argument on, and tried to develop the ideas of the first generation but not to be too tight to it. They reintroduced pleasure and notions of narrative into experimental filmmaking where Gidal wouldn't hear of it. So yes, I see those two generations clearly. What's less clear to me is what happened afterwards, beyond.

JH: I don't see it as generational personally. That's my viewpoint but then I suppose if you are a part of it then that's how you see it. I think things have become amorphous since, what you call, the second generation. After that I'm not sure.

CE: After that I don't know.

JH: I don't think it works that way. Where would you place John Latham? Where would you place Hoppy (John Hopkins) and Sue and people like that?

CE: Well Hoppy and Sue are the first generation they were the first generation agit-prop and the community video

JH: Are they pre-first generation

CE: Yes

JH: John Latham was about before everybody else.

CE: Maybe, I don't know. I think of Hoppy and Sue as certainly being the earliest community video artists in this country and obviously there were lots of people in other countries, like the Americans. But I was just looking at some of their work, the other day. It's absolutely amazing to see what they recorded. It's got patter of nostalgia to see policemen with tall helmets.

JH: Oh yes, you watched *Ben's Arrest*.

CE: The evicting of somebody from a building.

JH: *Ben's Arrest* is where they have the young black guy and they put him in a van

CE: There's another one where they are evicting people from the buildings

JH: Yeah that's *Squatters' Right.* I think it's called.

CE: You look at it now and you smile because it's a bygone era. There is this terrible nostalgia attached to it now, which you didn't have at the time of course. The Miners' Tapes is something that I'd really like to look out. I've never seen them. I don't know where they are, I don't know who's got them. Mike Stubbs might know.

JH: Have they not got them? Hoppy and Sue?

CE: I don't know. I thought it was LVA that edited them. Mike will tell you if you want to know about that.

JH: Were you part of other artist's community groups as well? Could you talk about being in the Women's Artist Collective.

CE: There was the Women's Artist Collective, which I always felt rather a minor member of really. I arrived there slightly late in the day with Annie Right. I worked with Annie Right. We did quite a number of photographic pieces together and she went off to live in Holland. But, obviously we were part of the collective at the Women's Arts Alliance that ultimately staged the exhibitions in the ICA, in 1980, *The Women's Shows*. Then I was on the Council of Management at London Video Arts as well. So I was part of that and that was probably enough at the time. It was a time of collectives. You joined things. There was a Women's Group at the Royal College and there was a Women's Group at the Slade and I was involved in all of those.

JH: Were you on the Arts Council Panel as well?

CE: Yes, I did that for a long time. I think I served twice on the Arts Council Panel. And I was on the Southern Arts Panel. So, I served my time on those two.

JH: The women's groups were wider community groups, but did they s ever cross over with the art people or were they just separate organisations?

CE: There were people who were members of the Women Artist Collective, for instance Tina Keane was in that collective and she was involved in other things. There was the Cinema of Women and there was another women's group that distributed women's work. Jane Parish was the person, I've forgotten what they were called but there were a number of collectives. I tended to affiliate myself with LVA rather than with them and I distributed my work through LVA. But then also my work was distributed in Holland as well and also B-Tape in Canada had my work, so that there were a number of distributors. Video-In in Vancouver had my work.

JH: They distributed the single-screen work?

CE: Yes

JH: Was there anyone that distributed the installation work?

CE: No, that came later. Initially it was just single-screen work.

JH: But they did distribute the installation work afterwards? Did that happen?

CE: No

JH: No it didn't happen?

CE: Not really no. The installations that I did, I did it myself. I would do a piece some way or other and it wouldn't have anything to do with LVA. It was independent of them

JH: What was your preferred context for the dissemination of the work?

CE: I really liked the Film and Video Artists on Tour Scheme that the Arts Council ran. It's not always possible to get people to respond to what you do, at least initially and I am very impatient. I want to know exactly what people think of me really, and they aren't always in a position or prepared to speak about what you present. The thing about the Artist on Tour scheme was that the Arts Council would pay half of your fee or your travel to an art school, where you would present to students and then the students were obliged to respond to what you did. There would then be a dialogue with an audience and I always enjoyed that very much. I suppose I like to be in a position where I do get a sense of how the piece has worked for other people. A gallery is an obvious context now. It doesn't matter which gallery really, as long as people come. And probably the numbers don't matter either, if it's the quality of the dialogue that matters. I was commissioned to do some work by ArtSway down in the New Forest and I thought, "My God this place is just run by sheep! There isn't anybody here." but actually people do come, not in enormous numbers, but the people who come respond. I guess that the other context that I've really maintained through my curatorial work, is through the UK Canadian Film and Video Exchange, which I've been doing for a number of years. It was Stuart Marshall who did the first Canadian exchange in 1984 or something. We revived it a number of years ago. It's a bi-annual event that we do between here and Canada and we put together programmes of work, which we show often in a gallery but as a screening. We actually maintain the notion of the screening as an interesting way to experience work, your work is seen in the context of other work and it's seen by a group of people at the same time. So it becomes a kind of communal event. The artists are often almost always there or the curator or somebody is there at the end, who can then interact with the audience and get some feedback on the work. I'm doing a similar project with some Australian curators at the moment as well. I suppose, what I like are a combination of installed work and screenings, because screenings are live events. That live element is something that I still find very vital. It's something that I learn from and without that, you are really talking to yourself.

JH: In the context of the televisual broadcast and artists from the second generation, are you one of those artists who gravitated towards that, or was your preferred context not broadcast?

CE: It wasn't. It was not in the sense that Stuart Marshall made a clear decision to take the issues that he wanted to work with into a broadcast context. I didn't do that. The opportunity to make work for television presented itself with Channel 4, but I don't think that I thought hard enough, perhaps, about what would happen to the work in the context of broadcast. It was only suddenly that I discovered when it was broadcast what would happen to the work. I am sadly ashamed to say that I don't think I considered it very carefully and I assumed that everybody was going to be watching the television the same way that people would watch a monitor in a gallery. I think I was completely wrong about that. It's possible because the Eleventh Hour was always put so late at night that those who persevered were the insomniacs of the country who stayed up that late. It was possible to create a space in the living room, in the sitting room, which was equivalent and inspired the equivalent attention that you would give in the gallery, and I think quite a lot of people thought it was possible to do that. But, what's interesting is that Channel 4 never did any kind of market research to find out how audiences reacted to those. I asked Rod Stoneman "Where's the research? Did you not do audience research?" and he said, "No". They didn't do it. It wasn't their policy so actually nobody really knows how any of those pieces that were finally broadcast were perceived. Nobody knows how they came across or what their meaning was in a broadcast situation. It was very difficult for the person who made it, to see it in any other way than the way that they've always seen it. It comes across on a television screen and you read it the way you want to read it, but you have no idea how other people are perceiving it. One of the discussions that I had in my book was about whether artist video changed television in any way. Whether there is this notion of the "televisual", which I used slightly differently. The televisual is really the visual display of television, it's the colours, it's the graphics, it's the movement, everything that keeps you watching. And what's curious is that much of that aesthetic is something that didn't exist before artist video: the fracturing of the image, the flying images, the multi-screen or a lot of the conceptual jokes. In *First House* I got Bruno to tap on a window, which I then made into the window of the house that I built. So, he was tapping on what looked like the inside of a television. Many years later I saw that as a little indent that the BBC did when somebody came up and tapped on the screen. So, that's just one example of many in which ideas that were developed by artists, then became the standard fair of the spectacle of television. Although originally they were seen to be strategies of deconstruction or deconstructive strategies, they just became the star. Television had the capacity to recoup and reabsorb artistic experimentation or radical practice by artists.

JH: Do you think it's because people working within the television environment, within the media environment had seen the artists work, or do you think it's because the ideas around that nature were generally embedded in the technologies.

CE: I think it's probably both because lots of art students ended up working in what then became the experimental arm of institutions like the BBC. Maybe then, they became better at it than artists. Their experiments, some of them I think, are brilliant. They are brilliantly done and a lot of commercials use very clever visual tricks to sell their wares. But any sort of political edge or anything that was really genuinely challenging of the system of beliefs or ideologies, is stripped away and what you're left with is the trick. I think that's the difference. Now, I believe that if you ask Rod Stoneman, in fact I think he says it in an article, he thinks of artists' experimental film and video as having a "homeopathic effect" on broadcast television. So a small amount of artists television had an enormous effect on the style and look of television subsequent to it's initial broadcast. So, I'm not sure. There's no way of actually proving any of that but just at an anecdotal level, when I was making *The Three Seasons* for Channel 4, I did quite a bit of the post-production at a place called TVI in Soho and apparently David Larcher was also working there. All of those of us who'd got commissions from Channel 4 did a lot of our post-production in TVI. But, apparently the people who make commercials and some of the television people would come down after the artists had been and say to the same editors "Show us what they've done" because it was always the artists who were saying, "Can't you make it do this? And what if you plug this into here? And what about that little effect that you used on that one, I think that we can do something different with it" So they had direct access and they actually asked for it. There were lots of artists whose ideas they then sold to television, like Tony Hill. That amazing wheel that he built that carried the camera 360 degrees and it appeared to go down into the ground and come back somewhere else. He held that for a long time apparently and then eventually he sold it to a television company

JH: Yes. He did get money for that but some artists didn't.

CE: That's right. They just drew directly and sucked everything from the history as well. So, I don't have a definitive answer but those are some of the ideas.

JH: So did you achieve you ambitions with dissemination or with the visibility of your ideas and your work?

CE: I don't believe that anybody would say "Yes". No, I don't think so, clearly not. I would have been happier for the work to have been shown more and more widely. The curious thing is that part of this whole process that you are engaged in means that there's a lot of retrospective exposure. Works that have been hidden for years are now coming back. They are being re-appraised and brought back to the public attention so we are almost getting a second chance at least with the early work. I suppose, because I've always operated in different levels, I have multiple strategies. I've been a curator and a writer and a critic as well as somebody who makes art. So, if you take my practice overall and the various kind of modes that I operated, then yes, I suppose the answer is yes. But, in terms of my own practice it's probably partly because I didn't focus on it, because I was interested in the whole apparatus of production and distribution and audience, because I was interested in creating an audience. In order to do that I had to also become a curator and because I was interested in documentation and the recording and the history, and the making of a particular history. It was one thing to become visible, but you become instantly invisible again if nobody ever writes about you. If you don't make it into any of the history books, it's just a fact. So I had to be a kind of Jill-of-All-Trades, which means that I didn't work on my own work as much as I would have done. I have lots of friends who focused entirely on their artistic practice. I suppose I was actually more like a lot of people. A lot of practitioners now, are artist curators. I notice that. They describe themselves as artist curators while we all had to be artist curators in those days out of necessity. Unless we controlled both the exhibition and the distributions and the documentation of our work, it didn't happen, it didn't exist.

JH: But you are one of the people that really wrote about the practice. You were one of the few writing.

CE: Yes, one of the few. That's true

JH: And certainly one of the very few women who spent time doing that. So, I think it's a real legacy that you've done that, because the voice is there for people to be able to look at. Some of the texts listed, people would be able to access those texts retrospectively. When did you see writing as being a really important part of the critical appraisal of your practice?

CE: It was right from the start, because the images of men's shows got a huge amount of critical attention, both in the art journals and also in the newspapers. In the mainstream, the tabloids wrote about it. Everybody wrote about it. So there was no way that it could be forgotten, because it had had such an enormous impact. The next show was *About Time* and because it was performance and film and video, it was much more marginal in those days. It wasn't the way that it is now, where every gallery you walk into has got a moving image projected somewhere or a monitor flickering away in a corner. As I have written frequently, it's the default medium of the 21st century, whereas in those days, it was a very, very marginal practice; performance even more so. It was particularly marginal with performance because there was no way of reprising it. You couldn't go back and re-experience a performance. It was ephemeral. It was a one-off. So, unless those performances were written about, documented and published somewhere, they never happened. So we began with the *About Time* show by writing about each other's works. So, I wrote about Rose Garrard, and she wrote about me. Somebody else wrote about Rose Finn-Kelsey. We published in pretty marginal magazines like Pies magazine, Feminist Art News or whatever it was at the time. But that's what made me realise that it has to be documented. It's the same with my book. How do you sell a book? It has to be documented. It's got to be peer reviewed. Basically, it has to be reviewed. So that's why I began. It was all part of the process of making the practice of women artists visible.

JH: Were there specific facilitators or curators who were important to the exhibition or the broadcast of your work, either through processing to technology or exhibition?

CE: Who are the key people? Stuart Marshall to begin with because, as far as video was concerned, Stuart was very important because he took a collection or selection of work to New York. I can't remember the title of the show but it was at the Kitchen.

JH: *British Video* I think it was, or something like that.

CE: He was very, very good at that and he took my work to Canada. He was the founder of the UK-Canadian Video Exchange as it was then. He did the first one. So he was taking my work to Canada, and he took it to New York. LVA of course was absolutely crucial because they distributed it. There was a time when I was Top of the Pops at LVA. My tapes were being hired more than anybody else's. They used to publish a sort of little upgrade. It was great, I didn't have to do anything. It just happened. Who else was important? Jez Welsh was. He was the distribution manager at LVA, so he had a lot to do with distributing all of our work. When he left, things went, quite in that respect. It was interesting that his presence made a difference and his absence had a negative impact on many of us.

JH: How long did he spent there?

CE: I can't remember. My vague memory is that he must have left mid to late eighties, around that time. I think he wanted to do something that wasn't possible in this country at the time. I think he had an idea of curating specific artists or rather promoting the work of specific artists. It was something he felt he couldn't do or wasn't allowed to. It wasn't possible for him to do it at the time and maybe that's why he went. So, he was important presence and absence. Curators? Well Sandy Nairn for the Women's shows. I was always curating myself, but people I've worked with like Maggy Warwick at the Canadian High Commission, has been fantastic over the years we worked together. We've done bi-annual events. We've done three and we are about to do the forth, which we are doing. Lisa Steele in Canada has been part of this project for years and she worked with Stuart Marshall before us. She has been fantastic. That's now something that's beginning to change because I'm now working with people in Australia. There's somebody called Simon Wright at the Dell Gallery, at Griffith University in Brisbane. There are curators at the Queens Art Gallery as well. The other person has been Mark Segal because he curated some of the more recent work and made it possible for me to make some of the more recent work.

JH: Where's he?

CE: ArtSway in New Forest. He is the director of ArtSway. It's an art centre in New Forest. He Is very good. He's a very interesting guy. And it's an interesting place because it's one of the few places that combines an interest in media or in moving image, nature, and landscape, because of its setting, with a political agenda as well. He is one of the few curators around that's still political I think.

JH: Political in what way?

CE: He has a political awareness of the social implications of the work, all the ancillary issues of gender, of race, and the all the things that became so unfashionable. Mark is actually still interested in how those things impinge on the work or what they are implied by the work. He is interested in work that addresses that in some way.

JH: It's interesting that you say that about it being unfashionable. Is that what you think?

CE: Yes

JH: Do you mean that issues of gender, race, class and such are not politicised?

CE: The "f" word is feminism. You don't mention feminism. How many women do you know will stand up and say that they are a feminist these days? And how many of those who used to say it, will still stand up and declare that their concerns come out of the concerns of feminism? Very few I think.

JH: But the issues of class and gender and race are still very prevalent? They affect people. It's the same with issues of feminism, which still affects people.

CE: Yes but I think they are not fashionable. There's something called relational aesthetics now, which has taken the place of what used to be political art. I don't really know how political it is. I don't know whether it's exactly the same thing, but that would be another discussion perhaps with the Jeremy Dellers of this world. Actually he was asked by a journalist about the work that he was doing. There was a particular piece recently, in which I think he went to the hometown or the home county of the American President, of Bush and interviewed people, the local store manager and the coffee shop lady and all the rest of them. He was asked afterwards whether this work was a critique of Bush's policies particularly, and he said, "No, no, no, it's not political. It's not political in that way. I'm not making a critique" So what does one say? It's okay that the work is not political. It's something else. I'm not sure what it is. A very nice woman reviewed my book recently, a younger woman, a young curator herself and writer, and she criticised my book for being too feminist. She criticised it for having a lack of focus, on account of the overwhelming discussion of feminism throughout. There is even in a section, apparently, devoted to a discussion of masculinity. She claims that I talked about feminism only and what was intriguing about that, was that she clearly needed to disassociate herself from my feminism. She didn't want anyone to think that if she liked the book it meant she was a feminist. I found that quite interesting because she obviously enjoyed the book. But three times in this review, she made a very public display of not being a feminist and criticising me. Actually, the feminism is one chapter in the book. There are many, many other issues that are discussed throughout, but obviously she was worried that she, herself, would be seen to be feminist in some way. So, she had to say, well it may well be true. It's something that I've declared, but that's one of the ways that I look at things.

JH: Things come in waves and maybe it's just that whatever generation she is actually in, is in denial of the feminisms that existed before them in some ways or other.

CE: I don't know you'd have ask younger women than me

JH: I know from speaking to students, having talked to a lot of students, I think that always, gender and feminism was on the curriculum and it was never rejected. I don't think that there was any point at which it was rejected by women. They might call it something else. They wouldn't necessarily call it feminism, but being pro-women and wanting women to be visible, I think it's about terminology.

CE: My guess, or my sense, is that they believe they have a right to everything that their male colleagues might aspire to. There's no doubt in their minds that they could do as well as they want to. But, I suppose it's possible that later on the question might then arise, "Well why didn't they do as well? Or why don't they do as well? I think in the art world, things have definitely improved, although it is relative. It has, absolutely, relatively improved. And they can see it. They have the role models. They can see women in prominent positions. Tracey Emin is an important person in this respect. I don't know if she is a great role model, but she is a role model. She is a model of success. So young women can think, "OK I can do that." perhaps differently.

JH: Were there particular art works of yours that lead any contemporaneous philosophical or conceptual debates?

CE: That's a hell of a claim to make if I could say: "Yes absolutely". The only thing I can do is to reiterate what Jez Welsh said. He claims, and I wont say that it was me, that feminist work had quite an impact on the work of male artists working in film and video. He believes that it made it possible for them to approach the personal in a way that they hadn't before. One of his pieces that might be an example of that, is the piece about his father, himself and his son, that he showed at Liverpool. I think it was at the Blue Code, but I'm not absolutely certain, it's a beautiful piece. It was one of the *Video Positive* pieces that he did. I can't remember what it was called but he was able to interrogate his own masculinity through a very loving kind of analysis of his father's relationship to himself and his own relationship to his son. It was how he was trying to change the patterns of fathering that he'd experienced, which he obviously experienced as being very restrictive and at some level maybe even oppressive. He was trying to find a different way of fathering his own son or parenting his own son. At the same time the piece was a kind of memorial to his father. I think that he will say that that work in particular, or that is an example of work, by a male artist who thought that he could work much more subjectively without any big ideas, either formal ideas or any kind of technological fetishism attached to it. It's a beautiful piece of work but he will tell you that that was influenced by feminist work and I think that you can find other examples. My observation was that it maybe so that Jez did a piece like that and there are lots of men who made, perhaps, one piece like that. But, for whatever reasons, they tended to abandon that style of work in favour of something that was either more academic or more visual, more technological, more pictorial or even conceptual; because obviously either they resolved all the problems in one go and that was it: "I've done fatherhood now! I've done my relationship with my dad and now I'll get on with the nuclear fusion or something", or it was actually too problematic for them to go very, very deeply into that. If they did, they would be threatening their own masculinity, which is based on not showing feelings or is showing strength, or is being logical and prioritising reason over anything else. They just couldn't present themselves like that more than once. Time had moved on. The time to do it had gone and other priorities were overtaking the theory and practice of art and they had to move with that. It was too vulnerable a point. I'm speculating, but it is interesting to know it. Most of those male artists only made a piece like that once.

JH: How do you think first generation women video artists influenced the second? I'm thinking about Marceline Mori and Tamara Kirkorian. Marceline Morri had more of a feminist agenda from what I can gather from her practice.

CE: Marceline yes, it was more subjective. It was quite poetic in a way, her approach. She was interested in mirrors and so she was making a reference to the mirroring perhaps of the medium itself or its ability to mirror the individual as a mirror of the soul even. The fact that she was using the technology at all I think was an inspiration and that she was David Hall's partner and that she held her own within that relationship, at least for a time, was quite an inspiration to us. Tamara is interesting because she always rather denied that she was a feminist. If you ask her, she'd say, "I'm not. I wasn't. It's got nothing to do with that." Whenever I've asked her or tried to manipulate her work into my vision of the world, she would always resist and say, "No, that's not the point". But actually curiously enough, she was the person who interviewed all of us after the *About Time* show. She was commissioned and presumably agreed to interview us, so she was interested in it and stood as a wonderful example to all of us. She was interested and also she, I think, was clearly worried about the representation of femininity, because she used all of these devices to avoid any kind of overly eroticized image of herself. It's the cameras often looking at the back of her head. You only see a fragment of her face in a mirror, that it always tangential. It's always round the back and that her presence was her voice rather than her body, therefore her thinking, therefore her ideas, therefore her intellect. I remember being very impressed by that. She was rather immobile. She was slightly like a statue at times and it's in Vanitas where you just see her and there's a television in the background or she turns herself into something static. It's a device that Martha Roser used as well. Even though she was naked, she was just standing there like a specimen and didn't do anything to attract the attentions of the audience either. After a while you were standing and looking at her nakedness. It doesn't titillate anymore beyond the first thirty seconds. As long as she stays still it won't. And it was the same the case also, in Jane Parker's *Almost Out*. It's that her mother just doesn't move. She is sitting on a chair, like this, except that she is not wearing anything. She's about the same age as me, I would say actually. So Tamara had that stillness about her, which was a very important strategy at that moment: her refusal to gyrate. She didn't pout. She didn't pose. She wasn't doing what Madonna was doing which is what an awful lot of women artist do now. They do an awful lot of pouting and posing. So Tamara, even though she wouldn't have called it that, she wouldn't have called it a feminist strategy, actually I think it was. I would dispute her. I can say, yes, I think it was.

JH: Things get taken up after you've made them as an artist anyway, and they can be completely re-read. So why not? I read those as feminist works. When I first saw them, I thought that. That was probably partly because placing yourself in front of the camera, as a woman, as an artist, those are political gestures. And that is part of the work.

CE: Yes, exactly. Having the "tamarity" to do it. A lot of people used to say that just making art within a male art context, was itself a feminist act.

JH: So was there any particular contextual critical writing that you'd agree or disagree with?

CE: What was I reading? Judy Chicago of course, and Lucy Lippard. Both of their books were American imports that made a lot of difference over here to one group of feminist artists. Then there were other writings. There were people like Griselda Pollock and Lisa Tickner who took slightly different tack. Mary Kelly did that an analysis of the languages of art. It was a deconstruction of that language and it was critical to a feminist practice, which was rather different from the way that Lucy Lippard and the people that she supported approached it which, was much more a celebratory kind of radical feminism. So they were the Marxist feminists, the radical feminists and both had their literatures and their supporters and their advocates. I always found I was sort of slightly stuck between the two. I understood the importance of the analysing language, but I didn't feel that that should prevent me from using it. I always believed that it was possible to use images of the body, but not any images of the body, to use stories but not any stories and not told anyhow. One had to be very, very aware of the ways in which languages were currently being used and that that changes all the time. You have to maintain that awareness. So I was structural to that point, trying to understand the structures of language. Early on I read all sorts of other things. We were reading about shamanism, those are people who are interested in performance, and there was an anthropologist that we all read in Purity in Danger, Mary Douglas. She was very important to people who were using substances: blood, faeces, milk, matter out of place and the substances, which can't be classified and therefore they are taboo. All of Mary Douglas's work was really influential at that time. I guess like everybody, I was reading psychoanalysis and feminism too. Lacan was hugely influential on feminist thinking earlier on. I got very impatient with it in the end and I suppose in my own way rejected it. I think the mistake that we all apparently made according to Juliet Mitchell was that we took it literally and that what we had to understand was that this whole notion of the Oedipus Complex and that phallic significance was symbolic, not actual. Its relationship to the body was non-existent. There was always this slippage. It was assumed that a phallic symbol was actually referring to, but it's to do with the structures of power, the organisation of power and that the phallic symbol is only a symbolic of the locus of power within a patriarchal society. So, I'm thinking maybe it was my misreading but at any rate, I just somehow felt that there was another level of existence that co-existed with all of this, that was actually resistant to it. This was the way that women relate to one another sometimes through story telling, through jokes, through laughter, through the various rituals of mothers and daughters and all sorts of things that are passed down in a different way. There's some sort of little story about men and women playing a game of football. The women are allowing the men to score all the goals but what they don't realise is that the women are playing a different game. So all of those kinds of things were important.

JH: Around video, Stuart Marshall was writing and David Hall and Tamara Krikorian.

CE: Sean Cubitt wrote an awful lot and the other guy was Philip Hayward who wrote a lot about video. *Picture This,* his book is called. He is an Australian artist. I tried to catch up with him when I was there and we missed each other.

JH: Apart from Stuart Marshall, did the writing tend to be round the technology? Stuart seemed to cover a very wide cultural range. Was there anyone else that did that?

CE: Different people had different things to say, sometimes in rather more minor publications. There was a performance magazine and there were always articles about video in there; sometimes written by me, sometimes by my piers. Then there was a video issue of Studio International and there was a performance issue of Studio International. A lot was written in catalogue. There were a lot of catalogue essays. So it was fragmented.

JH: *AND* was pretty good for some texts about video. Ian Breakwell did some.

CE: *Undercut* did an issue of video. It was bits and pieces. It wasn't systematically theorised the way that film was.

JH: It's interesting the way that you describe it as "systematically theorised"

CE: Yes, Maybe that's what you are doing now. You see the minutes. It's better late than never or that we are beginning to do it. We are beginning to try to do it. Obviously, later on there was lots of writing around Moving Image, but earlier on there was very little, very little

JH: What ideas and other artists' work influenced your work or who has inspired you? We have talked about Lisa Steele and seeing some of the works from the States and Canada and works you didn't weren't into: Vito Acconci's work etc, but I wondered if there was any other general inspiration?

CE: There was Bill Viola and his early work. When I went to New York with Stuart with that show we went to Electronics Art Intermix, and I saw the work that Viola had done in the desert, called *Chott el-Djerid*. I thought it was wonderful, absolutely wonderful. I still think he hasn't made anything as good since then. I was very, very interested in the ways in which he used natural elements to create effects or rather to change the image: to allow heat, and rain, and snow to disturb the image. There's always that wonderful thing of the heat rising from the desert and the figure is walking along and is broken up into fragments. I was very impressed by that. I was very interested in Mary Lucier because she was self-reflexive technological video. She was allowing the sun to burn a trace on the tube, just pointed the camera at the sunrise. It was called a "hot spot" originally on the tube, but it was an indelible mark that would be there forever. Whatever you shot afterwards, the trace of the sun would be there.

JH: *Vidicon Inscriptions* was based around the tube. We were trying to recreate it for show but it proved to be impossible. The phosphorus on the camera tubes deteriorates. It has a half-life.

CE: So you can't make a mark anymore?

JH: If you found the right camera it will still be possible but apparently the phosphorus deteriorates. But, yes the burn, if you keep it on a light source bright enough, eventually it will deteriorate. So she must have used that. She would have pointed it at the sun and gradually burnt a hole in the phosphorus.

CE: It was the trajectory of the sun, from sunrise to sunset. It was across the river in New York. So, you could see the sun moving across but it left a trace. And that trace remained when the tape ended. It was there forever. It was what, was then considered to be, forever inscribed on the tube of the camera. So, she was doing very interesting things there. There were all sorts of other people in America. There was John Sanborn and Mary Perillo who were making fast, rapid-fire edit, scratch pieces over there, which I disliked intensely. I liked Mary Perillo very much. I thought she was great. John Sanborn was a character and we met him when we went over there. But, I thought "No I don't want to make work like this either". I wasn't interested in all that trickery. I thought it was flash and superficial really. So that was a few. If you were asking me what I wasn't interested in, I was definitely not interested in that. There were some artist-actors, who were very good at telling stories on tape. They would tell absolutely wonderful stories. Somebody who does it very well in this country, is the person who worked with Stuart Marshall, who did *The Pedagogue*, Neil Bartlet. Neil Bartlet is a wonderful raconteur and I mean Jez always says that video is a medium of argument. You can put an argument across. It's a discussive medium. So Neil Bartlet knew exactly how to talk to a camera. He knew how to tell a story. There's an American who also did it very well and did a whole series of these wonderful stories to the camera. So, I think the ability to tell a story with video was something that I found very intriguing. I didn't use it. I didn't quite know how to. Perhaps I didn't quite have the confidence to use it that way. Maybe one day I will, but I admired people who could do that. I admired Martha Rosler of course, the *Semiotics of the Kitchen* was a fantastic influence: her analysis of domesticity and turning it into something horrid. I think that in *With Child,* I was influenced by her because in *With Child* there's a moment where I pull a doll away and I stab it, or try to stab it at the same time. So, with one hand I'm trying to kill it with the other I'm trying to save it. I think that probably came from Martha Rosler and her knife moment or Slasher moment in *Semiotics of the Kitchen*. *Vital Statistics of a Citizen Simply Obtained* has a wonderful title. She is measured by a retinue of white-coated technicians who measure everything, including the length of her vagina, and make a note of everything. She's just standing there very passively. So this notion that stillness was a form of resistance was interesting in Martha Rosler. I quite liked Cecelia Condit. She was really strange.

JH: Was she in the Electronic Arts Intermix?

CE: Yes, she would have been. Her work is another violent kind of work. It's rather like the SCUM Manifesto, The Society for Cutting up Men. There was a lot of television parody in the States, a lot of people were doing that. There were a number of them, but Cecelia Condit was one of them. Her work was like awful little soap operas. Very, very pretty girls who were doing terrible things to men. They were following them around and they always ended up cutting them up, and putting them in plastic bags and disposing off them with this jolly little music over the top. There is wonderfully ironic work from the States, which I've enjoyed very much. The humour seemed to come from there more than from us I think. I'm trying to think who else I found interesting. There must have been others. Paik of course, but I don't know if I was that interested in Paik. I like the Vasulkas, although I didn't know about at that time. I learnt about them subsequently, the same with Vera Frankel. Colin Campbell I liked and Mick Hartney's *State of Division* I liked hugely because that's another example of an artist or a male artist who made a piece that was about the pressures of being male over what society expects of a man and how difficult it is to sustain a performance of masculinity. That piece did it very, very cleverly I thought. It spoke about that predicament. But it was a one-off again. He didn't explore it any further than that. I like Critchley of course, and Steve Hawley I like very much. There was Stan Douglas but I suppose he was later. Dara Birnbaum was almost like the founding mother of UK Scratch, because her television appropriations, I still argue, were the first ones. They came over on that show, *The Brand New, New York Show* in 1983 at the ICA. I think it was a combination of that and what was what was being done by DJs in nightclubs that produced UK Scratch. I was always a bit of a critic of Scratch. Jez is a great advocate and supporter of Scratch and Guerrilla tapes. The Guerrilla tapes were the possibly the most interesting to me of the Scratch artists of that time. It was something of a British phenomenon although there was a US equivalent in the shape of John Sanborn. I didn't like what they were doing at all. I think it's more interesting now than I did at the time. Again I thought it was superficial. I thought it was wallpaper. I thought it was uncritical but it wasn't always uncritical, for instance *The Commander in Chief* by the Guerrilla tapes really was a very, very clever deconstruction of a Ragan speech. It's a very political work and an anti-war piece. It's a straight anti-war piece, very, very brilliantly done.

JH: Did you collaborate with any other artists on your works?

CE: Yes, Annie Wright. I did a live work with her called *Male into Female,* where we impersonated men for a day with the help of some of my skills from the BBC make-up department. We did quite a number in fact. I did an exhibition with her that we took to some other country. It started at the Alliance and it toured. I think after that I found it quite difficult to collaborate with people. I worked with Iain Robertson for a while where he would work with me or against me a lot of the time. After that I didn't collaborate. I would ask people to help which is different and all kinds of people have helped. Chris Meigh-Andrews helped. My son has helped endlessly, his father helped and just people all the way. Jean Matthee helped me a lot when I was a student. And her partner then took a lot of the photographs. So there had been lots of collaborators along the way but I think I only ever strictly speaking collaborated with Annie all those years ago. I did actually collaborate with an architect called Pierre d'Avoine. We did a public art piece at Leeds General Hospital. We made a huge banner that went down 5 stories of a car park. It's called *Car Park Greeting*. It was made in the nineties. That was a very interesting, interesting experiment. It is something that I wouldn't repeat too many times. It's very difficult collaborating. So the answer is no, I haven't. I have had numerous, very, very generous helpers. I've had lots of collaborators in terms of curating of course, which is different. I'm working with Chris Meigh-Andrews at the moment on a project called *Analogue*. People also involved in that are Maggie Warwick, Lisa Steele and Vtape, also Peggy Gale is working with us on that. I'm working with three other artists at the moment towards a show. We are all doing our own work, but the theme is *Between Land and Sea.* I've collaborated with my editor Susan Wilson who is fantastic and I'm going to write a book with her now. I have a new editor as well, so I've collaborated with more people in terms of my writing than curating, than in my own work.

JH: When producing and exhibiting the work, did you feel you were responding to a part of the larger movement?

CE: Yes, the first one was the feminist art movement, which was critical for me. Obviously, I felt that I was a part of it. I don't know if you can call video art a "movement" but part of the experimentations that were going on in the UK, in video, I was very much a part of that. I was part of the system of distribution. I was part of the system of funding as I was on the Arts Council panel for a number of years. I'm now part of the academic development with the work that I do academically.

JH: Were you part of an international movement of feminism or an international movement of video artists?

CE: The international feminist one is, interestingly, less so, curiously. I don't think that I took part in any international feminist shows. It was mostly in the UK. I certainly met, Carolee Schneemann. She stayed with me when she was in London. I met Orlan years ago.

When Annie and I were invited to take our show to a women's gallery in Denmark, there were groups of women artists there that we stayed with and spent time with which was great. But I was never invited by anybody in the States at all. The traffic tended to be in this direction. The hospitality worked better when you were giving it rather than receiving it.

JH: Did you facilitate other artist's work?

CE: Yes, right from the beginning I guess. Right from the early days of the *Images of Men* show, I was making it possible, or helping, to show the work. When I was on the Arts Council panel I was helping to fund the work and subsequently, even now I'm one of the assessors at Nesta. I help to decide who to fund again or advise on who to fund. I also assess AHRC applications. I'm still doing it. There is the actual hands-on help for people. I've written about lots of people's work and I thoroughly enjoy that because it's based on conversations, a bit like ours today. But, it's one of the most fruitful kinds of writing for me. I've written recently about Tamara Krikorian and I've written about John Smith and I've written about Steve Hawley and all kinds of people. I interviewed Bill Viola years ago. So yes, through my writing I have a lot, a great deal. But actually hands-on, I've probably only ever really helped Chris Meigh-Andrews with his work, by constructing a stream through my kitchen works for him. I've helped Chris and Annie when we were collaborating but I think that he is probably the only person I could think of that I've helped directly.

JH: And what are your most current works or works in progress?

CE: Well it's the continuation of the *War Stories*. The next one I haven't got a title for yet, but it's based on a conversation that I had with one of the French SAS veterans who died recently. While he was alive I shot an interview with him, which is all about killing. When I was a small child I asked my father whether he'd killed any Germans during the War because we were living in Germany. I said, "Daddy, daddy did you kill any Germans in the War?" He said, "Yes" And I think I then asked him how many and he never answered, either he never answered or I don't remember his answer. Somebody recently said to me that he probably didn't answer, because the answer was he didn't know how many, because often you don't know. I was never able to ask him anymore than that because you just didn't ask your father those kinds of questions. So many, many, many years later, I asked somebody else those questions. That piece of work is based on that conversation about killing, which is probably what I'll call it, but it's also set in a particularly exotic landscape so, the landscape is very important to the conversation. That's the piece that I'm going to do next.