

DW: How would you view contemporary Expanded Cinema?

SC: Well there was the show that Jeffrey [Shaw] was in, in Berlin, called Vom Funken Zum Pixel, (From Spark to Pixel) which Richard Castelli curated. And it was fabulous. It had a beautiful piece by Ulf Langheinrich, which used post random synthesis. Fabulous piece. There wasn't a duff piece in the show it was absolutely superb.

DW: And that was recently, was it?

SC: November last year. At the Martin Gropius-Bau. I think Richard was trying to tour it but – expensive show. It had some gorgeous... lots of kind-of engineered things. There was a piece [VISP by Christian Partos] which was probably about 10-15 metres long. Maybe three metres high. These ropes with lights travelling down them – apparently travelling down them – actually the LEDs. And the whole thing's spinning at really high speeds and is producing these geometric abstractions out of these, maybe 15 or so ropes. Rope lights stretching produces a huge amount of wind. Just a sense of big motors you know, danger you know. Fantastic rugged structure. Really beautiful. Really mesmerising and there were hundreds of school kids in there.

DW: A real spectacle.

CS: Yeah. Absolutely. And really beautiful. It had this sort of hand-crafted feel about pieces of wood. It was just an exquisite piece of work. So, a lot of things along those lines. A few of those pieces were almost like engineering art.

DW: A kind of kinetic theatre?

CS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And then other pieces like a beautiful little murder mystery enacted on a tabletop set with these shadows moving across it – also by Christian Partos. Characters doing things. But they were just tiny little shadows. Three or four centimetres high in a little set about half a metre by half a metre.

DW: How did they do that?

SC: I don't know. I was quite mystified by it. And it was really beautifully realised. And there was a little projector in the ceiling and it used this rake on the projectors you know 45 degree rake. But it didn't seem to explain everything because the shadows appeared to be inside the set. Not sort of, in the beam.

DW: Hmm.

SC: No, I don't know how it was done. And the scale next to these massive things. To have this tiny thoughtful piece to engage on a more or less narrative basis. It's really a treat.

Jeffrey [Shaw] had a piece with Jean Michel Labruyère, *Si Poteris narrare, Licet*, where – huge, big dome; a user in a little control tower in the middle, with a headset – I don't know if it had been polarised, it certainly had a motion sensor. It's more or less tracking your eye movements and revealing that part of the image. Vast frieze. Filled the whole dome with this baroque spectacle and it had a history of colonisation, slavery. Actors in – you'd get a spot that was maybe a metre high, [in the] maybe eight metres dome and you'd get – you'd see a character enacting a scene in a niche in a gothic cathedral, and there'd be another one next to him doing something similar, but slightly different. And a layer below would have kind of animals acting or plants growing or scenes from daily life: extraordinary – it was actually more gothic – it was designed in more gothic than baroque but the colouration and the activity was so overwhelming, it came across as this baroque spectacle. Absolutely extraordinary piece of work. And of course you could only see one part at a time so, you're just swivelling around on this big tower thing in the middle with this – I'm not sure if it was motion sensitive or eye tracking – [that] illuminated these little bits of this vast frieze. It was wonderful.

DW: Yeah.

SC: Beautiful pieces. But as you say. I can't think of many people in the UK. But then I'm not in the UK as much.

DW: No. You tend to get the kind of smaller scale esoteric pieces like Benedict Drew and Emma Hart working together on these strange – have you seen any of their work? They did a piece at the ICA the other week where you went into the ICA theatre, which had been stripped out, there was nothing in there. And they had a stage in the middle of the room. And various parts of a drum kit. And these various contraptions for projecting images and this video. And somehow – they were there and they were operating various things – they were very kind of minimal, almost empty gestures the things they were having to do. You felt like they were somehow, these empty gestures were keeping things going. But you weren't sure what the relationship was if things would break down if they stopped or how involved they would be. One part was of some film – 16mm film – running through a record player so you could see the needle scratch marks being projected onto the wall as it was happening – somehow. And another part there was a deck of CD players or CD changers, which were programmed to keep projecting and they were playing an organ which had stuff on it so it was strange. So, you get this strange kind of wealth of noise so at one point there was a brush being made to rotate and hit a snare drum

SC: Right.

DW: It was kind of Duchampian to a certain extent. Harking back to those optical mechanics. It seems related – even though the stuff you're describing is quite grand in a sense. There seems to be this interest in optical toys or optical mechanisms.

SC: Perry Hoberman did a brilliant piece. It was at the Cornerhouse. It was in one of the Video Positives. It had similar things. Like a big installation of bits and pieces of things. And it had a pressure-sensitive padding on the matting that we walked around on, and it just triggered the movements of all these sorts of things, and so lots of them were redundant optical toys like Viewmaster slides and some 9.5 movie projectors. All sorts of things. Eight track cassettes. Yes, the sort of redundant lost...

- DW: It's this lost form of seeing.
- CS: Yeah. What the Canadian writer Charles Acland calls residual media. Things have got left aside somehow in the development. His is a great book. Fascinating. It's an edited collection.
- DW: How would you describe Expanded Cinema or give it some kind of definition?
- SC: [Laughs]. In a sense it could mean anything that's not standard projection, or in the case of video, monitor or projection. But then there have been moments like Stan Brakhage using IMAX. Those beautiful painted pieces. Well, if that's not Expanded Cinema, what the hell is?
- DW: Yes.
- SC: Extraordinarily beautiful pieces. So, you wouldn't want to say [unless] you had a dozen escape clauses. Half of me would want to include technological developments for their own sake, from the Lumière's 70mm screenings in the 1900s, right through to IMAX and Super IMAX. Those moments of spectacle, irregardless if you're bunging on a James Cameron movie. It really doesn't matter if it's IMAX. The content is almost negligible it's the experience that's more fascinating.
- DW: Yes. The extreme cinematic?
- SC: So, on the one extreme I think it would be about those massively immersive technologies and I think about that grand scale. Operatic Gesamtkunstwerk ['Total Art Work'] sort of ambitions. At the other end I think it would be about disassembling parts of the [process] – especially the exhibition end. So, it wouldn't necessarily be, say Brakhage again, just taking the lens off and filming without it, though it might – which I think is the production end. So, in a sense it's almost like a kind of animation. It's a way of treating the film strip [in exhibition/projection] so that it has a different content. And otherwise not manageable or thinkable content. But I think what would make it an Expanded Cinema would be more like very simple gestures like taking the projector off its plinth... and projecting onto the audience. A hardy stand-by for a decade or more. It still works. People still love to walk into the beam of a projector.
- DW: Yes they do, I suppose.
- SC: So, that would take you through to things like Rafael Lozano-Hemmer experiments with multiple shadows, for example, in public spaces. As a kind of 'disassembled'. So, it's not immersive, in fact it's on the contrary it's an extremely social experience
- DW: This is one of the things, isn't it? Do you think public space, some sense of the 'social', is how you would...
- SC: Potentially so. I think the weirdness about public space is – apart from all the long history of experiment - is that it would include things like architectural lighting experiments, like the ones that Mirjam Struppek was doing in Berlin. But it's also about the big public screens. So Mirjam, my colleague Scott McQuire and Nikos

Papastergiadis with a number of other people are involved in establishing the International Association of Public Screens. They're having their first meeting in October or November this year in Melbourne. So, it's a bit like the BBC's big screens in the UK. The big screen in the Collegium in Berlin, the big screen in Federation Square in Melbourne and so forth. Sociologically this is really interesting if they're not entirely devoted to advertising, which is the case of Governments especially in East Asia for example, the vast majority of big screens in like plazas in Tokyo, which are basically for advertising media. But if they aren't, they can be used – well, they can be multiple things. Fascinating thing for me from the media sociology point of view is seeing quarter of a million people pile into Federation Square to watch the Football when the Socceros are playing in the World Cup. They had another big screen in Lygon Street, one of the popular streets, where we've got huge Italian and Greek populations in particular. So there was the Australian teams – the Italians obviously, passionately and the Greeks, and this huge coming together in this great social event. It's hell of a lot more interesting than the sociology of a whole lot of people sitting in their own homes watching. But it's not Expanded Cinema in any sense. More interesting and closer, perhaps, earlier this year, the new Premier Kevin Rudd made an apology to the Aborigines. That was in Canberra, the seat of Government. That was broadcast live nationally and we all piled down to Fed Square to watch it, and again there was about a quarter of a million people there and what was astonishing is that you could hear a pin drop. And the street surrounding it basically is right next to the main railway station so, over there, there were people going about their city life but about a quarter of a million people absolutely silent until he came to the key words: "I have to say on behalf of the Australian people that I'm sorry." And this kind of roar of applause. It was a great social event. And I think there's something about what Lozano-Hemmer does for example as the artist who works in those spaces which potentially deals with some of those capacities. I was told how people were laying wreaths at the Public Screen in Liverpool after one of those big tragedies, the knife killing... [and] I'm sure they would have done it if they'd been up on the night [Princess] Diana died. Rather than go to some other place, they'd go to the screen because it's the obvious place where people gather for these public events. But the other weird thing about it is the opposite, I would think, is it the opposite? Yeah, the complementary, the supplement, which would be these things and the crap [hand-held] screens on here [on his phone].

DW: [Laughs].

SC: Because these very low resolution but high interaction screens are constantly interfacing with those high resolution low interactivity screens. I think one of the challenges of public spaces is to get this stuff up now, on big screens, and to get some sort of relationships between the two. Something a bit more than just 'text this number'. Something, somehow more interesting. And there are people beginning to work on it. In Korea in particular. They have a big screen with a big art project. It's at the Nabi Art Centre in Seoul. That's one of the things we're hoping to develop and foster when we get this association together. We'll pool the technical expertise from various places and share projects and get some kind of economies of scale. But that to me is one of the really interesting things. Now that you've got this third screen dimension of PDAs, mobiles, PSPs, iPods and there's a whole media revolution going on around third screen its almost all H.261 codec: basically, crap. Highly restrictive. It basically uses the same technology as YouTube, which is Flash video which is highly restrictive, which is great if you're using Flash because Flash is an effective programme, but if

you're transferring from digital video, it recodes it as if it was Flash. So, it uses vector prediction, so movement becomes really, really difficult. It just shudders. It can't keep up. It loses things and becomes blocky and kind of crashes; parts of the screen don't change for ten or 12 frames while everything else is changing...

DW: I quite like that in a way.

SC: It's a very interesting effect.

DW: A distortion of everyday life.

SC: Yeah. People are getting to use it for that. A lot of the most interesting work – like the Royksopp *Remind Me* video. It uses what's available. If that's the palette, that's what we use. We only have 256 colours: there's no point in us trying to use more. So we'll just use them, which is very sensible way of doing things, like if you're an etcher you're really going to use black. Use black. See what you can make. But trying to get those interfaces, I think, is really intriguing. So, in a sense sociologically we're either going towards these kind of massive screens of high resolution or we're going towards this personalised fragmentary, deeply individual experience. Me and my little toy. Which is even more intensely individual than these desktop screens or laptop screens. I think that's one of the really interesting things about the notion of Expanded Cinema – personally I would say that kind of phenomenon, the hand-held image probably is not. But it's developed in the same period of time then along side things like Viewmasters and those other toys, hand-held visual toys – game consoles and things. And they seem to be the opposite expression of a very similar process. So, that big, large immersive high res and these low res but high interactive are very personal ones. I think because they're opposite each other, it's interesting to use the one that isn't Expanded Cinema to try and think what Expanded Cinema is. That's a particular bee in my bonnet at the moment. I find that kind of interesting.

And then I guess it would also be about – the other expansion would be - in time. They'll be looking at these endless movies, for example. Or extremely slow movies. From things like *Memories of Medieval Manhattan*, the [Brian] Eno film, through to a number of things going on at the moment, in which endless animations and poem films are also planned in that degree.

DW: 24-hour cycling.

SC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But where you take the temporality of film and open it out so it doesn't have that kind of structure of beginning and end. So, I guess that would also have to be a part of it. It also precursors a performance thing. But it also happens with – sort of light show technologies for example. In many of those there's no real reason why you should stop until the electricity gives out.

DW: [Laughs]. So, they're these kind of perpetual machines?

SC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Digitally, it's perfectly possible like the – *Every Icon*, by John F Simon. In other words – it's now been running for a number of years. It's 32 by 32 chequer board and it's going through black white, black, white, black, white in every possible permutation since 1997, till it's gone through the entire screen and in the process generated every logo ever made. And it will run slightly longer than the

expected life of the universe, because you know that famous story about putting rice on each square of the chequer board... There is a terminus but its 32 times 32 to the tenth or twelfth or something. An endless process.

DW: Is it online?

SC: Yeah. Yeah. <http://www.numeral.com/eicon.html>. But a lot of that pixel based art is very much in that vein; you can set about rhythms to make pixels run through particular permutations, just mathematical permutations, and effectively get endless animation from them.

DW: People use interactive art as a way of creating the ideal of an interactive scenario one that is unlimited – that when you enter something there might be an unlimited amount of outcomes or experiences.

SC: I've never been convinced by that argument. I think the – I mean in games-design you basically have to have a response for every action. And the way you increase the number of possible events is to allow the users to mould the game. So, they can introduce new characters and that sort of stuff especially with the big online environments, that's what you rely on people [to do] – like the same principle as Second Life. There's nothing there until people build it. And I think much is true of the World of Warcraft parameter, everywhere tonight they rely on the users producing the content, so that there's always something else to do. But the narrative engines are almost like the physics engines again, except you set them up – they roll. And typically there have to be goal-driven, so that you get to the end of the level, and go onto the next one. You have access for achievement. What a number of them have done – I'm going back many years – going back to the 80s – what a number of them have done is use random number generators as part of the repertoire. So more of them use artificial intelligence now; there more A lives, but random number generators will almost do the same thing, because they can just change stuff. But it's a truism of interactive media that the most trustworthy random number generator is the human user. You never know what stupid thing they're going to do next. They always turn up with something you haven't thought of. And so I think for a lot of interactive artists, the human user is the random factor.

DW: Otherwise all you are doing is creating a determined environment in which you act – no matter how many choices you set up, you are still setting up choices that I have to choose between.

SC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes you go right - this happens, so you go left - that happens, you go left - you have two more choices; you have a tree and branch structure. But at a certain point you have to get up into the position where '...and they win'.

DW: Yeah. And they understand how it all works.

SC: Yeah. So, it's a balance between gratifying the expectation that there will be a conclusion, along with providing enough novelty on the way, so that people don't get bored with it. But I think – I'm trying to think about this stuff I saw last weekend at this animation conference. If you think of the live action drama as the typical film, in the heart of the culture; in terms of production it's the most highly controlled; a studio set,

actors, camera movements, everything else, time. Now, one opposite to that would be documentary, where you break off that sense of control, but then the other direction would be animation. But then in animation, in a sense, what you're doing is intensifying the level of control. There's absolutely nothing that's put in an animation that isn't put there.

DW: I see what you mean.

SC: So, then what a lot of animators do is use you in all sorts of ways - from drawing from life observation through to the kind of Pollock random-scribbling as a way of accessing the unconscious and so forth - is find ways to get away from intention. From that point of view a machine-generated animation is actually another way of getting away from the artists intention / controlling factor in animation, and generating alternative stuff that you otherwise would not have thought of.

DW: Hmm.

SC: For setting up those kinds of random – not necessarily random – but certainly contingent or responsive parts of activities can give you some really, really different things, like the classic example is Jodi's rewriting the code for Quake or Doom, I forget which. So, instead of generating the game-world, they were generating abstract art. But it's basically the game engine – it's an emulation of the game engine. But they've instructed it to draw cubes and squares. So, that's what it does. An extraordinary, non-occurrence in a certain sense. But on the other hand it generates a vast quantity of art. I think Eno has another project now 'a thousand paintings'... It's another kind of generative process, which is machine driven process which just produces works of art.

DW: Which kind of has a heritage in art itself. Doesn't it? You think Warhol's factory you think of artists using those kinds of methods of mass production to a certain extent.

SC: Yeah. Who's the Situationist painter who used to sell paintings by the yard?

DW: [Laughs] I don't know. But the Situationists created things like writing machines didn't they? And generated poems by giving it...

SC: Yeah, yeah. That's an interesting history. That goes back to the 1920s. Really intriguing. Cinema I suppose. But then the interface between the written word and cinema is itself a kind of interesting topic.

DW: [For me] It's a bit of a pre-occupation actually, there all sorts of connections...

SC: On sort of that Kittler stuff... I've run into someone else who's interesting in that way. Who was that? Rather in the show-off way that people do – I said: "Oh, have you read my piece?" It's in a very obscure collection; it was called *Preliminaries for a Taxonomy on Screen Writing* and it was extremely preliminary!

DW: [Laughs].

SC: It had some really basic things, for I was thinking about students at the time. This was a serif and this was a sans. That kind of thing. For a taxonomy, is it moving? Is it

moving left to right? Is it moving on a z axis? But I wanted to look at a few things. I was really interested in subtitling and remain so. I think that's a really interesting technology. There's a particular scene I liked in a 1930s Renoir film *Le Crime de M Lange*, which was – it must have been subtitled even back then. And there's a 360 degree pan, not the very famous one in that film, but there's another one inside this guy's bedroom; you see him writing a story – he sort of writes his pulp novels; and as he's writing he's telling the story: "Arizona Jim rode out into the desert with his six gun and there he met Dead Eye Pete" And in the meantime it's just going round this really ugly cold water flat, in a cheap apartment in Paris. But the voice keeps going and of course the subtitles keep going across the screen so the visual impact is really quite strange because you've got this kind of written dialogue between Dead Eyed Pete and Mexican Jim – and an unmade bed cold water night stand with jug.

DW: Completely unrelated.

SC: Absolutely. And they're fabulous. Then of course there are all the artists who have used the written word on the screen, Godard, Snow, Greenaway and so forth.

DW: Yeah.

SC: And the great titles person Saul Bass. The only writing I ever found was on Saul Bass. Jim Hillier in the same place did an essay on Godard and his use of the written word. But I think there's been very little...

SC: ...I have a real bugbear with biennial video art and it's that four-square projection onto white paint. There's clearly people who don't know or care or want to know about projection as a media. They all use it – but they don't actually care.

DW: Hmm.

SC: [Better were] all those experiments of projecting onto steam or onto water; streams various sorts; onto corrugations – all of those – the use of keystones. Hooykaas and Stansfeld did a beautiful keystone piece for one of the early Video Positives [Liverpool]. The People Show did an extraordinary one with two projectors onto a corrugated space. So, if you look at it here, you see one landscape. If you look at it here you see the big city. And if you're sitting in the middle you get vertical stripes. And then artists who really do know and care about it and do four-square like Stan Douglas, the Canadian artist, always silvers his wall. Always uses proper screen paint. So, you actually get high reflectants and high resolution off the reflected image. But see this kind of shoddy – John Roberts talks about this new philistinism, and sees it as a break with the perfection of the paint and things like that – but to me it just seems shoddy and insulting. The working class that they're supposed to be talking to don't like shit, they like Manchester United.

DW: [Laughs].

SC: They don't want to watch a really third rate team have a kick-about: they actually want to see the best bloody players in the universe playing at the top of their game. To think that doing shoddy work through the workers is like the intellectual equivalent of speaking 'mockney'. Yeah, it's a bit of a rant there, but I think also that that's part of it;

that sense of what projection is. Like dome - very wide screens, circular screens, multi-screens. But in particular I think it's moving out from the screen as such, and moving onto whatever other surfaces we can project onto, and see what that does.

DW: ...projecting onto buildings?

SC: Exactly.

DW: Projection is a kind of cultural medium in itself. Would you say?

SC: Yeah. But I think it's also those 'neighbouring' media, which are not – on one level - the obvious neighbour, just because we call it Expanded Cinema, is cinemas. But the other [form] is things like the Expos. Things like Son et Lumiere and those other kind of...

DW: Charles Eames and that kind of...

SC: Yeah, exactly, the building [light combinations] – the Zeppelin field at Nuremberg; these are kind of – those city of light motions, those appear in architecture in presentation media; commercial media; the billboard. All of these are places where a lot of the other 'neighbours' are. And in a sense the difficult thing is less about – but there's still obviously the question of boundaries – and how much do we include manageably in a project.

DW: I see.

SC: But I would think that it's more risky to say that you might place a boundary at the point where - say - film begins, and there's somewhere between production experiments and experiments in projection. That's where Expanded Cinema begins. But I think it would be just as interesting to say that it continues up to a point where it becomes pure commercialism. So, something like say, Jennifer Steinkamp the huge projection she did in the Fremont Street experience. Have you seen those?

DW: No.

SC: You can get them online. She has a fabulous showreel. It's a huge showreel so it takes quite a while to download. It's quite an extraordinary thing. She does a lot of gallery work, which is very big, very beautiful animated projections – often of geometrical forms. And she did a similar one for this four block long – it's a mile long - covered street in Las Vegas. It's a big kind of shopping/dining and you know, sort of entertainment complex.

DW: Hmm.

SC: She used projections off the roof. About forty or fifty projectors. All synched to give this extraordinary continuous space of these evolving geometric forms. Flying saucers and all sorts of things. You know, it's non-representational but it's very spacey and really beautiful - kind of West Coast neo-geo, gone animated and large. So, at that point I think you would have to say 'is that art or is that commerce?' In fact you won't get an answer from her. Because there's a certain point where those two things are really not separable inside the discourse of West Coast / Vegas. And it's the same with say, Nam

June Paik; he'd famously say: "I'm a poor man, from a poor country, I have to be entertaining." So, a great deal of what he was doing was aimed simply at being entertaining and nice.

DW: [Laughs].

SC: By then everything, obviously not the whole story, but it was a very large part of what he did.

DW: There's a different relationship with spectacle there. That's the thing.

SC: Yeah. And there are pieces of his – I saw one them in the art fair in Chicago about ten years ago with a model T-Ford. He'd bought a model T-Ford. Gutted it and then put all these TV's everywhere. Really, lovely and completely meaningless, I mean there was some vague thought about...

DW: This was Fordism...

SC: Yes there was something. *Good Morning Mr Ford*, I think it was called. Tied into his mythology and so forth. But it was so clearly built to be sold. It was a size that you could put into a living room if you happened to be a millionaire in the USA. And I swear to God that was what it was for. I never saw it exhibited anywhere else. It doesn't appear in most of his catalogues and things. I think it was built to sell. So, there's a moment there I think there's a moment and place very close to that and say – like a lot of Paik's work, like *Good Morning Mr Orwell* classically would be, I think, a really interesting way to draw on to a set of limits, like proliferating onto millions of screens in domestic spaces. Is that a limit point? And you think it probably is. And then his large sculptures like the big one in Seoul the big Tower of Babel sculpture, I think would definitely be inside an Expanded Cinema notion. But I think the Model T-Ford would be going off on a different direction as a purely commercial venture and I think that piece by Jennifer Steinkamp is another interesting limit case to say: "Is that in or out?"

DW: Well, it's interesting isn't it? I would beginning to think that Expanded Cinema often operates at these junctures, especially these economic junctures these junctures 'between' – because to my mind, so much of art is involved in itself as an economy. In the same way that cinema is an economy. And Expanded Cinema seems to look for those spaces where that economic context breaks down or is up for grabs a bit...

SC: Hmm.

DW: Or tries to push those boundaries of where... Because so much of the early kind of performance-related work is ephemeral and it can't – to some degree it defies commodification. You can't buy a performance by Malcolm Le Grice, for instance, because they happen once and that's it. So, it has this kind of critical edge to it in that it tries to defy these economic definitions of what we mean by art, and what we mean by cinema, and how influential the commercial economic conditions are in terms of how these institutions work, culturally, I mean.

DW: I don't know what you think about that?

SC: I come from enough of a Marxist background to always be ready to talk about that.

DW: [Laughs].

SC: I suppose one of the reasons why it's so interesting to work with art objects or processes, as a theoretician is that they very, very rarely conform to what you think they should. So, you go in and say: "Right I'm going to do a Marxist analysis of scratch video, it's going to be all about the commodity form". And you get in and realise that it just doesn't work. So, there are two possibilities, one which is that the artwork is wrong, which is just the typical response. Charles Harrison wrote a wonderful thing about Max Ernst's *Europe After the Rain*. And he said: "He may have got his history right, but he got his art wrong." I think the opposite is frequently the case with theorists and historians. We either get the art right or the history right, but we very rarely manage to get them both. And so we try and force the art into the history, which is a very typical move. Less perhaps into a theory but more into a historical trajectory so I must admit I'm guilty of about the stuff I'm writing at the moment about George Barber's work. So much as I might spend untold quantities of time trying to force things to conform to Marxist models one of the things that is attractive about particular works I mean, really specific works and how they're made and how they operate; how they circulate, is whilst on the one hand the art world is clearly a market; clearly shares the commodity structure; it has really recognisable elements and peculiarities like – it hung on to handicraft production like after the year of industrial manufacture. And then it plays with problems about that specificity from Warhol onwards. Then it plays with the commodity form by refusing to be a commodity and then it refuses to exist as anything other than an ephemeral puff of air or a concept. And in any one instance of these things you find something like a John Latham – chewing the Greenberg digestive. That has an endless set of reverberations that you can't exhaust by saying: "He's eaten a book, which is a product of the Capitalist process and demonstrated that is merely wood pulp and..." That's not it. Laying claim to knowing the position of Greenberg and 1965 or 1966 whenever else he did it. That doesn't really, really help either. Not to understand why it's so funny and why it's still interesting 40 years later. We need to bring, because it's part of what we're paid to do, we need to bring as much theoretical expertise and sophistication as we possibly can; we need to be on top of not only all the stuff that is happening now, but all the really important methods [and images from the] more distant past. But we actually need to be more actively involved – one of Deleuze's better lessons – we have to be actively involved in searching out the paths not taken. I'm not a big Deleuzian by any means, but he did make us go back and read Leibnitz or Spinoza.

DW: Hmm.

SC: And that's no mean feat, because they'd become just backwaters for academic historians and philosophy and they were no longer alive. I think in the same way Adorno makes you to go back and read Heigel, who'd otherwise be left out of the inner cult. People don't really read Kant anymore but Lyotard made us do it. I think those sort of tasks are really important, wonderful achievements, and they make it much more possible to think with a full panoply of the possible tools in the box. I'm really locked into the Western role, which is a sad generational truth. No, not really, because a lot of the artists you're talking about were not locked into the Western tradition at all. Jeffrey [Shaw] for example, is extraordinarily learned in Eastern philosophy.

DW: Hmm.

SC: And it plays an enormous part in his work and it has done for almost his entire working career. So, being able to bring all those things along and I think also the – and this is a kind of real bee in the bonnet and I maybe in a moment in the minority here, but software studies is a really good indication of what's next. So rather than exclusively devoting ourselves to textual permutations and theorisation I think it's really, really important to understand what things are made of. And that art historical movement where we binned the whole Courtauld tradition and said we won't have to deal with that anymore, we won't have that kind of antiquarian knowledge about pigments and scumbling and wet on wet, and it's gone so far now that people don't actually know what things are made of. As a result a great deal of art is being made of not anything in particular. There's a Thierry de Duve phrase: 'it's made of n'importe quoi – no matter what'. In a certain sense, and with Beuys it's made of things, which have a real significance. But then with many other artists the use of household paint doesn't mean anything. It's just paint. They haven't actually thought about this stuff. And it's partly because the critics aren't interested in what this stuff is. They don't want to know if it's acrylic or aniline or what kind of pigments and colours are in it; how they function; how they function after light; how they age – they don't want to know. So, the artists don't care about it either. It becomes a tail. A vicious circle. I think it's really significant that media artists in general, really do know about their medium. Film artists know about grading. Those sorts of heroic tales of building the optical printer at the Filmmakers Co-op. People knew about film and they were prepared to experiment and do whacky stuff with it and do all the wrong things. No problem with that. They actually knew about it. They knew what would happen if they put too much water in the dye. They had an idea of what would happen, at least then what would actually happen. Some would say of David Larcher's early films, it's quite random and quite psychedelic and quite beautiful but he knew what it would do, and then did these other things.

DW: [Laughs].

SC: I think that level of understanding of what the affordances are of our toys; it's something critics really ought to be doing. Not every single one but as a body. I think we need to have people doing that kind of stuff, like having Adam Lockhart writing about the REWIND collection, who knows about what machines became available when, to which groups of people, and what they were capable of and what they were not capable of. It also leaves us with the second critical test which is description. Because a lot of old machines aren't doing it, I mean very, very quickly, like machines like these desktop machines, go out of date in a matter of three/four/five years within seven or eight you won't find one that still works. So, I've thrown away – finally when I left New Zealand – I threw away my archive machine. Recycled my archive machine. But now I have nothing that will take any of the peripherals that you used to have. there's no scsi ports anymore. There's none of the old 7 point bus, no 88 buses – external 88 buses – so all of those bits and also things like artist CD Roms and everything that was done before that all the work that was done on that optical hyper stack.

DW: Laser disc.

SC: Well, there was the Laser disc as well, five inch floppies – floppies in general – I can't remember when I last saw a floppy now. But software that you used to run Apple had a hypercard, it was called. A lot of people were using apple cards as an early interactive tool and it's only in archives that you'll find machines that still run it and they won't last that long. Magnetically they won't last long, optical media will last even less. Pixar, God bless them, you know they lost most of Toy Story? And they were trying to reconstruct it. They'd actually printed the code to film because they know the computers they've got no matter how often they transfer it back it up and so forth, nothing like as trustworthy as printing the damn code out and storing it on celluloid and microfilm. So, that's what they've done. That's the backup copy of Toy Story. It's valuable stuff because it's got all the code for Buzz Lightyear, which had a big after life in the television series, but an even bigger one as a toy.

That's bizarre, they were trying to buy the rights to some proprietary toy. Real toy but they couldn't get it. So they had to invent Buzz Lightyear and of course, it became a major toy. But the design is all in that code. And if they've lost the code they've lost another figure light. Though the archiving problems are immense as well. But that also means that you know if you do show – if they do find a way of showing an archival work on a digital screen, contemporary screens have none of the same colour gambits same colour performances or illuminations or brightness performance as the screens that they would have been made for say, Sony Trinitrons in the late 1980s. They're just different. Totally different. 35mm has stayed pretty much the same but 35mm is maybe getting towards the end of its working life as a public presentation media, as cinemas gradually begin to move to cinema data projection. It's just too expensive to haul these big boxes of film, much easier to pipe in digital. But that means that the colour responses are going to change. So, that's a big issue, especially – there's a lot of work on this being done on a daily basis in streets not far from here where they're doing video transfers and DVD transfers of films especially when they're doing big numbers like Lord of the Rings where there's a lot of fidelity being chased by the production company. Or things like the transfer of Lawrence of Arabia. Trying somehow – say in the case of Lawrence of Arabia – three strip Technicolor values onto DVD in such a way that the play back on screen which are way too bright, especially to screens like plasma's and LCDs. It's a huge issue. So, I think we need to describe really, really carefully what we see, when we see it. With contemporary art works because there's no way the next generation will see it the same way we do if they see it at all. What are the lighting conditions; what kind of colour range; how fast do things respond in interactives. There's another great experiment another great website Jon Ipolito has put together one of the curators of the webbing and they did a show called – God, what's it called? – they took for example Grahame's [Weinbren] *Erl King*, very early interactive. It's all dead now because the machines would have gone but they exhibited what they had with the original machinery and then they did the emulation on contemporary machinery and so they built a virtual computer inside. Put up a touch screen more or less of the same dimensions and the same characteristics. But the huge difference, I think Grahame would say the same, is that the response time is incredibly faster, compared with what it was in the 80s. In the 80s you could put in three or four commands by the time it got round to actually responding to the first one, which meant that you got all these other suspected glitches. These multiple commands start interfering with each other and you'd get these odd, the hands off inter-action as part of the experience. And you can't do that anymore. So, I think there's an incumbency on us to actually get the most accurate descriptions that we most possibly

can. Well I can see that Tony Sinden there. When Tony was putting up his horizontal interference piece. [Behold Vertical Devices 1974] – he's got all his original kit. Extraordinary. So beautifully made but we had this big discussion. Him and me and Adam [Lockhart] and the other technicians. And Steve as well, Steve Partridge, about whether his screens had gone grey. Now they have undoubtedly, because there's an ageing process in screens – just chemically they old CRTs – they change chemically over time. But it's also a question of what we remember. Was it actually that dark? If you think of old TV sets, when they were turned off they generally were a light grey, in their default mode. So, what you say to yourself. They're not black like these [modern] screens. So that the achievable black was probably a dull grey, probably somewhat darker than those antique screens are now because they've changed colour over the years. So, what do we remember as black? Partly it will be about how bright the whites were, because by punching up the white you increase the black, which is a psychological, one could say of perception; about the way the eyes operate. ...A really good example of this in the critical responses to 1935/6 film of Rembrandt, that Charles Laughton was in. And the critics at the time were saying: "It had Rembrandt lighting." And it's really inexplicable because it's really, really grey. ... So there's a kind of gestalt going on. But unless you describe this stuff particularly well there's absolutely no way contemporary archivists are supposed to know what the hell they're meant to do with a print like that when they re-master. Unless you actually say: "It's got really good black." Or the blues are washy.

DW: Hmm. Is there a sense that Expanded Cinema has this kind of material history about it?

SC: To some extent, yes. Expanded is a lot of the time about interventions and disruptions of technology. Including the film strip and the electronic launch. Putting magnets on screen to... and I was thinking of something like [Anthony] McCall's *Line Describing a Cone* [1973] – I've just seen a couple of his new pieces in Melbourne. They depend really rather intensively on what kind of smoke you use. And how long you can stay there depends on what kind of smoke is used. So, the type and duration of your experience both technically, are dependant on something quite extraneous to the content of the art, and the archive part of it or archival part of it. I think that is true. The fact that everyone smoked at the Co-op made a difference.

DW: That's the thing. Please light up just as it's about to start.

SC: Yes. [Laughs] So when Malcolm was doing re-filmings I'm sure the fog in the room was an element, maybe a relatively marginal one. It's going to have been one. There's an amazing photograph of Hollis Frampton working on some digital work he worked on with a large spliff. Just this dangling ash over this large piece of expensive equipment. Ah no! So, the materiality - both the sort of planned, but also the contingent materiality - which I think is critically important to that notion of playing with, or escaping from, the control of the studio type of production and the controlled environment of the cinema projection, and so on. And however that's happening, it's always going to address in some sense the contingency of the actual moment in time, especially if it's got a social component like events in public spaces, or the performative type of works. And for me, yes, but I'm rather passionately materialist. And getting more so as I get older. And more literally materialist rather than using it as a polite way of saying Marxist.

- DW: Yeah. Yeah.
- SC: Which we always did. But no, I think I actually mean materialist.
- DW: The way things are made up.
- SC: Yeah. And their capacity for glitches. The way the glitch can become part of the work and so forth. Christian Macrae from Swinburne University was doing a paper at the weekend partly about glitches in games. He's got quite a collection of game glitches where instead of doing what they're supposed to do like die, these characters suddenly break up to several parts and flail about madly. Somebody pointed out it was like really like Daryl Hannah's performance when she's killed in *Blade Runner*. Maybe it's because she's pretending to be a robot.
- DW: Yeah.
- SC: They're really uncanny things. He's just compiling them at the moment but I think there will be a moment when I think Stellarc would be the kind of person to do this, produce an artwork entirely made of glitches and bodies would fall apart and so on.
- DW: When things break down.
- SC: Absolutely. It's download time and it's comet tails. It's the way that DVDs stutter – get the big blocky clustering. It's all of those – I was trying to remember the name of the artist yesterday – didn't manage – a New Zealand artist did a beautiful piece called *DVD Crash*, which is a series of car crashes but he also crashes the DVD so that in slow motion this kind of building blocks of the car and the landscape sort of fall apart into each other. It's an extraordinary work. And it's exactly that. It's building a work out of the dispersal of the problems of the medium. So, it's very like *the Film in Which There Appear Edge Lettering, Sprocket Holes, Dirt Particles*, etc. (George Landow, 1966) In many respects the same kind of principle. Although it has much less medium specific than its whole intention.
- DW: The obvious thing to ask about is the material specificity and the relation between film and video. Even now you get people saying – I don't know – there is philosophically as well as materially a real distinction between the two, and how that relates to Expanded Cinema because Expanded Cinema tends to be this technologically hybridised process, which makes... Tony Sinden always said when he was interested in Expanded Cinema in the late 60s he was interested in using as many different things as he could. He didn't see those kinds of issues: of film and video and life; it's all together.
- SC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I'm not going back to medium specificity but I think it's rather about the appropriateness of the media for whatever it is you're doing. So, with Chris Welby's landscape films, projecting on to water made all the sense in the universe. Yes, and when you see it you think: "Gosh, what on earth else could he have possibly projected onto?" Or that – the beautiful piece that was made in Germany in the disused mine, where they projected on steam and the old showers. You know the piece? And of course you project onto steam. And it's not because you have to and because it's medium specific or something, it's because that's what it works for. That's what it's

calling out for. So, I think there's many pieces like that Judith Godard's piece with a Wimshurst [spark] generator [*Reservoir* 1993], which used a stroboscope as well, with three drips of water – streams of water coming down from a tiny pipe and a stroboscope so that she could catch the drops in mid-air.

DW: Wow.

SC: But the proximity of the – and it was also a projected element – the proximity of the electrical and the water – it was all about the creation of life Frankenstein all these things. And it was genuinely frightening. Wimshurst speeds up and then it goes crack and flashes of lightening go off. Awful noise. Great waft of ozone. Genuinely frightening. And all of those materials actually come together because they're supposed to. If you were to do it with some other material it wouldn't make any sense.

Mona Hatoum did a piece. For me it would be another limit point of Expanded Cinema because it hasn't got any filming technology. It's called *The Light at the End* [2002]. They walk down a narrow tunnel slightly narrowing as the roof lowers. False perspective. There's three vertical bars of light at the end – red light – and as you get closer and closer it gets warmer and warmer and then you get really close and realise that they're electric filaments. But what's really stunning about them is the smell of dust. You know burning dust that you get from those old single bar filament fires.

Which of course is human skin. And without her having to do anything else... all the political reverberations, the ethical memories. Think of your situation. She's a Lebanese artist, [but] we all think Palestine. You know. Pick your place. It's an extraordinary work and to me it was extraordinarily cinematic. Even though there's no movement in it, in a certain sense. Light in time I suppose.

DW: Light in time. Is that how you would define the cinematic image?

SC: It's actually Bill Wees's title. *Light Moving in Time*; [1992, University of California Press] his book about experimental film. And I think it's – apart from the obvious – not having sound in it, which is probably quite true for a lot of work that Bill looks at, nonetheless, it comes down close. But I think for Expanded Cinema you would also want to say: "It's light and sound moving in time and space". And I think, from a post-structural post Lefebvre point of view you would also want to be saying "It's not only moving in time and space but it's actually creating it".

DW: Producing the space.

SC: Yes. That's not necessarily true in every art work. Some of them have inhabited, particularly site specific, types of spaces, for example. But external ones depend on it being nighttime, so their temporality is contingently produced. But yes, if you wanted something slightly more subtle; but as a place to begin I think it's a really, really good one. And then it does let you describe *Line Describing a Cone*, for example, as cinematic, should you wish to. Some of the most fascinating experiments in cinema have been about stillness, or very selective movement; or about a repetition, that is effectively still. It may or may not be interrupted. So, I think there's probably a kind of expanding scale of expanded. There will be interventions that where you think: Well, it's like Jacobson said of poetry "It's language with some extra rules." You could say that

Expanded Cinema is cinema with extra rules rather than fewer. That was the ideology. You got rid of the rules. But rather think it's about additional ones. If the audience arrives then project the film on them. Or Malcolm's one. You keep repeating the refilming until there's no image left. And then you're done. Or David's [Hall] *This is a Television Receiver* [1976], which goes [re-videoing] until in effect you've lost everything by the time you've got to the third iteration. Those have been very small. And then there have been increasingly large scale ones where multiple projectors are wandering about in public spaces, under the sky; all with portable screens. But then there are these other ones. There used to be a group who used to do a Son et Lumière type of thing in London. Years ago in the 80s. Housewatch. Projections from inside, to produce a kind of non-cinematic, cinematic event involving moving images and probably stills and almost certainly words as well, if I remember rightly, the vocal projections. And how much the still would come in and where you would draw the line with the movement of the still would include photo projections.

DW: Yeah.

SC: It's your awareness of time.

DW: It's an analytical seeing. Isn't it?

SC: I think with viewings it's very experiential. It's about not waiting for things to happen. It's giving up waiting for something to happen. Just experience of time itself. Probably even more so, obviously so, with not so much [Nam June] Paik's *Zen For Film* [1964/5] but the *TV Buddha* [1974]. Interestingly, [John] Cage was reported to have said that he didn't really like *Zen For Film* when he first saw it, but when he came back after it had been on tour it had all got scratched and dusty, he thought it was much better film. That's very Cage and that's very wise. Paik tells it against himself so...or used to. And that's also about the material specificity of it. It's like Peter [Gidal] always insisting on showing the edges of the frame rather than using a properly cut aperture plate. There is something really deeply contingent about that. There is kind of an edge beyond which the control stops.

DW: It's kind of the production and the reception boundary get's broken down. It's not being produced. Seeing it is almost the act of production.



## **British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection**