REWIND | Artists' Video in the 70's & 80's
Interview with David Hall

Interview by Dr Jackie Hatfield, Friday 9th December 2005

DH: I started working with sculpture as a student in my first college from about 1957, then continued at the Royal College until 1964, and then right through until the last thing I did that you could crudely classify as sculpture, which was, in a sense, my earlier work, in 1970. But there was a time in the mid sixties where I shifted ground. Essentially what had happened was a number of things. One is that I was working with sculpture. The sculpture was getting more minimal. I mean with a little 'm'. It was getting very limited in its construction. I got more and more interested in ideas and less and less in stuff, in material. So the later work in sculpture, were considerations about manipulating concepts of distance and so on. Hence there were big floor works, where you just looked across them. There were no verticals in those floor works. It was about coming to terms with the perception of any given space and any given environment and interrelationships; as opposed to making objects, which stood for themselves. But, in a way, what I wanted to do was make environmental works. This was the mid sixties, a time when I had a show in New York, in 1966.   I met a range of artists. I briefly met Warhol, but I also had discussions with people like Robert Morris. I got to know Roy Lichtenstein very well. All of them were doing quite different work but the point about that experience was that it was influential in that I could pair away the trimmings. There was a lot of baggage with European Art, or at least with my art, which had come out of the European thing. I think I would have to confess is that the Americans at that time in the mid sixties, hadn't ever had that baggage in the first place. If an idea was there, it was done. Like that. No more. No less. There were no extras. No worries about peripheral concerns. All of this sounds a little abstract, but I think it's significant. I was in this show called *Primary Structures,* which was the first major Minimal Art show on and in New York in 1966. I came back after that, and probably it had given me an impetus to think a great deal about the whole position of where my work was. At that time I also got involved in the beginnings of *Artist Placement Group* with John Latham and others: Jeffrey Shaw, Stuart Brisley and Barry Flanagan. A very mixed bunch of about six or seven people would have little think-tanked meetings every week or so discussing really the kind of place of art in terms of context. I think if you start wanting to widen context you also have to start to consider what it is that you make and how you make it. It wasn't sufficient to make sculpture in the way that I was doing. There was a call for work, which would interact more with a broader context. A sculpture works quite well in the confines of a gallery, but when you are thinking in terms of a wider place, a wider non-gallery place outside, you are dealing with all sorts of factors. I think the work in a way then becomes, truly speaking, a conceptual event rather than a physical thing. It goes beyond the physical. In some ways, it had to go beyond the physical statement. Simultaneously, at the same time, and I suppose it's interrelated really, while I had a show in London in late '67, early '68 of big floor works, there was a frustration, not with the work, but with the context again. It was confined always to the art and to the art elite. In other words, people that came to see it were people that were already in tune, to some extent, with

looking at contemporary art. I was much more interested in widening my brief in terms of audience. It seemed to me that with film and video, people looked at cinema, people looked at the TV. That aspect, seemed to me, to be a more relevant place in the mid to late 20th century for art experiment and art extension beyond the gallery, which is what I was, then, becoming very interested in. In a way it was logical to start working with moving image technology. I wasn't really and still I'm not that interested in technology. What I'm interested in is the culture in which ideas ferment and develop and exhibit. That culture seemed to me to be mostly stimulated, dominated even, by moving image media of various sorts. Preceding moving image, the transference took place away from object art or at least sculptural work. The thing that I forget sometimes to mention is that it was a stepping-stone from object or sculpture, into photography and then photography into film, and then when video technology became available on to video. The photography thing happened because, like everyone else, I took photographs of the sculptures. One does for catalogues, for publication, for my own record. The more photographs I took, the more I looked at the photographs, the more I realised that although they were of the piece, the reading of a photograph was quite a different phenomenon to the actual experience of the sculpture. There's no way that the two could really ever be that synonymous, they weren't that close even in terms of experience. So I actually got interested in the issue of illusionism. The belief in the photograph was something that intrigued me. The way in which photographs were believed to represent, when in fact they are really only a kind of membrane that is just somehow indicative of the three dimensional. or in big fat quotes, the "real experience". They became another real experience, they themselves were an experience and so I began to manipulate photographs so I have actually made pieces for photographs as photographic pieces. I don't mean taking pictures like a photographer takes pictures to record some place, event, person or whatever. I actually was interested in the business of the manipulation of the illusion in photography, which is slightly different. So I made some photographic pieces, which had the appearance of looking at a sculptural statement, like the sculptures I'd made previously, but then, they were only seen from a particular viewpoint. They were only seen from a particular viewpoint as all photographs are. It's very difficult to try and describe what I did with them. One occasion I remember was actually a bit later. I was doing a number of these things in about '66, '67, '68. I only treated them as an experimental moment, a moving moment. I didn't see them as artworks specifically for a gallery, or indeed anywhere. They were my own experiments, my own notations really. But there was a show later, in 1970, which was really the end of one thing and the beginning of another for me, called *British Sculpture Out of the Sixties*. I did this piece where I actually took stuff out of the ICA, rather than putting it in. I actually sanded away the paint. There was a painted floor in the ICA in the Mall. Before it was properly finished, where the bar is now, there was no bar. It was one big stretch of floor. It was rather crude flooring, which they painted. They kept putting coats and coats of paint on to somehow try and unify it. It was a bit of a mess. I sanded away the paint in the configuration of a piece of work that was actually in Japan on show simultaneously. The piece had been made three or four years earlier. I'd sent it to Japan, and what I did, was take away the paint in this configuration on the floor, in the ICA. So it was a kind of a negative piece. What I enjoyed about this, and this is where we are into this unfortunate word again: 'conceptualist' thinking, was that people would come in and look at the other objects from the seventies, from the sixties that were on view, and would stand on this space, not even noticing it because their expectation was of something else. It wasn't that it was something they rejected, it's just they didn't

notice it, because it was a negative statement, but I thought, a rather important one. At that same show I included some prints of these photographs of various things where I'd taken sticks out into the countryside and placed them with off-bits of string and all sorts of things; and I made certain shapes, which only worked in the photograph. They wouldn't work as soon as you moved away from that fixed camera position, that monocular vision. They disintegrated. Well, it didn't disintegrate, but it was a negative piece of the piece in the show and so on. So, in a way, one was going through a phase of discovering alternative ways of approaching artwork. Generally the pieces were non-physical. They were quite ephemeral, but there were records as well. Interestingly they weren't just simply records of a performance or records of an event. The actual photograph, each statement, was in fact the photograph. It was the photograph itself, in the terms of photography was the record, but those pieces were then shown in about 1970. During that period, this very important lump of time between about 1966 and 1970, it seemed to me quite logical to start to think in terms of using film, movie stuff, because there was this greater belief in a moving image film with sound, because it was analogist to reality, in way that a photograph is just a static instant record or recognition of a moment. Film, most importantly existed in time. It paralleled real time. It paralleled our time as you lived and breathed and watched it. It had what I call, a "time-life". Because there was also sound in it, that has paralleled real life, we have this facsimile of reality; but it was in fact a total construct. That was what interested me the fact that we had this strange oppositional thing going on between dealing with reality as a viewer or participant, and dealing with this totally artificial construct, which was the film. Conventionally it was used as simply a way of recording reality, whether it was a documentary or a recording of drama, the expectation was that you would relate, in the conventional field, the Hollywood thing or whatever, would relate to the illusion. You would accept the illusion without question. It was suspension of disbelief. I was very fascinated by manipulating those expectations.

JH: With this issue of sculpture, you are talking about it as a very wide notion. It could be floor, and it could be an experience, so would the photography be a sculptural object?

DH: Would the photograph itself be a sculptural object? I don't know. It's a photo piece is the only way I could describe it. That would be the term. The point about those is that they would be indicative of some experience, which actually didn't exist. It couldn't exist. It only existed in the photograph but because it was a photograph. Your expectation was that in some way it was depicting something beyond itself and this dichotomy. This combat almost, psychologically, was what interested me. It was the in between stage. It was between sculpture. It was between the physical and the sense of physicality. There are arguments about that. I used to talk a great deal about sculpture, but that's slightly preceding this move into these more ephemeral apparitions almost of seeming reality, and yet they were physical in the sense that you had this thing on a piece of paper. It was a photograph on a piece of paper, but that's as far as that got. It was 'idea art' really, and in some senses preceded what came to be known as conceptual art. I'm talking about true conceptual art. That term is irritatingly used so widely now to the point of meaningless because conceptual art as identified in the very late sixties and early seventies, was idea art truly. There was no product. It was simply a statement of an idea in the most minimal form. It was an indication of something that you as the viewer or participant, viewer is probably the wrong word in a lot of cases, had to somehow latch on to. You had to pick up the idea

through the most limited means, whether it was a piece of text, which was often the case, or the odd photograph, which was indicative of some other thing beyond itself. That's as far as it went. The first film I made was about 1968 and was a twin screen. I made twin screen thing called *Motion Parallax*. It was black-and-white. I drove a car around Richmond Park, or someone else drove the car, and I was operating the camera, stuck out of the window of the car, filming as we drove along. *Motion Parallax* is a phenomenon that we all experience. When you're riding on a train, if you look out of the window, the things closest to you are quite blurred. But the sun perhaps, on the horizon, appears not to move at all. The things nearest to you rush by and so you get these different kinds of apparent movements of textures and objects in a landscape as you move through it. What intrigued me was that at the time with this particular piece, if you moved along as I did with the camera, the camera was an object moving through space, but when the resultant film was projected it was static. The projector was static so it appeared that the landscape was moving. It had everything in reverse roll. It was a very simple obvious thing. That happened all the time and again in kind of so-called "conventional" filmmaking, but it wasn't really looked at as a statement in itself. So what I did I had these two reels of film, which were shot in slightly different places, at different times, running side by side, and you got this sense of trees and things almost becoming animated because they appeared to be rushing by in front of something slightly further back, which appeared comparatively static.

JH: Why did you do a twin screen?

DH: Because, had it just been single screen I think you would have seen it in a quote: "documentary" sense. Because there were two, with slightly different viewpoints, and different speeds of various objects and textures going into the distance simultaneously next to one another, the juxtaposition of those two, hopefully, would bring to mind the issue I was trying to raise about the perception as seen through a movie camera, It was a reversal of roles to that which is actually, really, going on. The camera became the object moving in space. It seemed to me to be a necessary thing to do, to make it twin screen. I did that. Then a bit later on, I got a grant from the Arts Council. I think it was the first Arts Council grant to an artist to make a film, and I made a film that I called *Vertical*, which in retrospect is in some respect a hotchpotch of innumerable ideas, probably too condensed for each one. Any one could have made a little film in its own right. What I tried to do, was make a number of marks in a landscape. So, again it was to do with what I was talking about earlier with the photograph, but, in a way the illusion was even more convincing because there was sound. I actually used natural sound so hopefully you felt you were inside this window frame looking out onto the world, but in fact you were looking at a flat screen. It was about that juxtaposition, all the time the reading of your desire. It was about your desires to want to see three-dimension, to look through this window on to the world. The configurations I made in the landscape by using bits of white paper, a stick or whatever, I actually moved them around. Clearly this could only occur from a monocular, single viewpoint and it could only occur because they were on a flat screen. They could only be seen in flatness. So there was a juxtaposition of apparent three-dimensionality and flatness. The whole film was about raising questions about one's perceptions of the world through these media. It was raising questions about one's perception.

JH: With the context of screening, I've seen *Vertical* in various, different contexts. The last time I saw it was with a collection of other works in Camden, which was packed. It was

absolutely packed. There must have been 300 people. It reminded me of thinking about that piece in terms of how seeing it on its own is different to seeing it against other art works in the cinematic context. I wonder what your intentional context for that piece is. Is it the cinema space or is it the gallery space? I'm interested in terms of being the viewer or the participant.

DH: What you've got to remember is that in 1969 when it was finished, galleries weren't showing artist films. There wasn't anywhere. There was Arts lab I think, and perhaps the Film Co-op, but generally galleries weren't showing film. I wasn't that especially concerned about showing in a gallery actually. I would have liked it to have been shown in the Odeon in Leicester Square. Actually the first time it was showing in any significance, was OK. It was to some extent an exclusive venue, but it was still a cinema. That was the National Film Theatre in the NFT1, which is the biggest cinema there. It was packed, but I do remember it was a very mixed audience, and a very surprised audience. In some respects, it had the look of a travelogue. I purposely did that. It wasn't the sort of obvious artist film from the outset. The opening two or three minutes had the feeling of: "What have we got here!" That work was purposely intended to induce the sense of this belief in whatever was about to come, which of course was disrupted by the images. It was very important to kind of create this dichotomy. I would say that although it was absolutely nothing to do with that, one piece that I had seen almost at the same time, probably just before making it but I don't think there's any similarity in any way shape or form, was Mike Snow's *Wavelength*. That had been shown at the Arts Lab in something like 1967 or 1968. That was the first time I'd seen any so-called artist film that at least certainly anything that I found very impressive. What interested me subsequently about that was that there were complaints, without going into too much detail, by certain people in the English Filmmaking Scene. They felt it was a bit compromised because there was a hint of narrative about it. There were moments where people appeared and I think somebody got shot. I don't know, things happened which were absolutely nothing to do with the formal developmental thing of the long zoom, but that I found was what was so fascinating about that work and subsequent works by Snow. There would be this dichotomy between a formal statement of some visual aspiration about the business of looking at film, enhanced by this odd moment where he would bring in an apparent classic conventional narrative ingredient. That seemed to me to strengthen the work and not to weaken it as has been argued. I'm not claiming this to be a comparison at all, but it's just to illustrate that thing in *Vertical*. I think it was an awkward film apart from *Motion Parallax*, which was a very simple statement and much more minimal statement, extremely minimalist statement compared to *Vertical*. It was trying to shift around in film and find out what could be done. The fact that I used this kind of apparent travelogue as a lead in seemed to me at the time, to be a way of doing something similar to what that bit of narration in Snow's work did. But that's the only similarity. They are very, very different works. What's important to say I think is that, because I'd worked as a sculptor and then I was working with people, like in the Artist Placement Group, thinking about ideas and extensions and moving away from gallery art and away from object making and into dematerialisation. All those now, well-known terminologies, we didn't think of them at the time. The idea was to try and kind of extend and broaden the context for the work, and actually think in terms of events and ephemeral moments as the artwork rather than plonking down objects in front of viewers. All of that was going on.

JH: Leading into the use of video and electronic technology, was that a natural transition and experiment that you were doing at the time?

DH: Yes. It was natural and important in different ways. There was no video equipment. There's a whole issue about video. It is endlessly talked about that video started in the mid sixties in America. Well, I've since discovered that the first Portapak, as one of the key things: the portable tool, the first one was actually not on sale until something like 1968 in New York, so how did Nam June Paik do his Pope thing in 1965? No one knows. I've actually talked to people I know in New York and they don't either. I haven't talked to Paik, but it's a strange conundrum. Apart from rumours of the Beatles giving a machine they got in America to the Arts Lab, I think Hoppy (John Hopkins) would know more about that than me, I wasn't aware of any video equipment being available till about the turn of the seventies in Britain. With my partner, Anna Ridley at the time, I bought one of the first Portapaks from Dixons. Probably the first one they actually had in on commercial sale. It was from Dixons in Soho, I think in 1971, or even 1972. Prior to that it was something called "C Format", which was a faster moving tape. You had to have loads of tape just to record a few minutes. It was a very fast moving reel-to-reel machine. That was used in the Hayward Gallery in 1971. There was a thing called INO Seventy, it was an APG show. The Artist Placement Group took over the Hayward Gallery and I re-showed the things I'd done for Scottish television in 1971 on the C format that were actually originally made on. They were shot on film, but they had to be. Because I wanted to make them on video, therefore I count them as video. I was refused the use of video that was available, external to broadcasting in those days, by Scottish Television. The Unions, who were very much stronger in those days, God bless them, wouldn't accept work made on low format video, which was the only thing available outside of broadcast. But they would accept 16mm film. So I made those pieces as *TV Interruptions*, unannounced. I consider them video because ultimately they went on video to be broadcast. They transferred them to 2". They used heavy 2" video in those days, RCA stuff. But, more importantly culturally, I saw video and TV as synonymous. That's where video came from. Video hadn't been around long. It had been a lot shorter than we think actually in broadcast. Only a few years earlier everything went out live on television. The RCA and so on developed this massive wide tape, 2" tape and even wider I think initially. They developed some machines in America, which were then used worldwide in broadcasting and it was only because of the Vietnam war and so on that these smaller reel-to-reel machines were developed for military use inevitably, like so many things. Then Sony and others developed them to sell, to be used as a public, non-broadcast medium.

JH: Want made you want to move from film to video?

DH: In working with film, obviously one was hearing about video and as I say there wasn't a lot around, even in America, until the early seventies. I think it's a myth. People would claim that but as far as I am concerned there wasn't a lot about. Also, people who worked in Europe as well began to work in Germany and wherever wanted this stuff. It was really on the cusp of the seventies that suddenly there was this flood. It was a mini-flood compared to now, but of open reel-to-reel video equipment available to corporate and private non-broadcast use machinery. You asked me how is it I moved to video, well simply because it became available, but not just simply because it became available, because it was instant. You didn't have to shoot blind through a

camera and send off a reel of film to a laboratory and a week later, if you were lucky, two or three days even luckier but usually getting on to a week, before you could see the result and then there was absolutely nothing you could do with it, you could scratch it and do all those kinds of things, but actually in terms of the exposure, and the film, and the image, there was nothing you could do with it.

JH: Not even through the optical printer?

DH: But then you'd be doing another copy of that from the camera. You couldn't do anything with the camera copy. You could manipulate that in a physical sense and, or optically re-print. You could re-print, yes, and you couldn't with video except the thing about video was that you could shoot and you could see it there at that moment of time that you were shooting it.

JH: So its simultaneity?

DH: Yes. In an absolutely instant moment, you could record the thing and watch it. You could watch it as you were recording it, which you couldn't with film. I could look through a viewfinder on film. But you could actually watch yourself on the monitor when you were recording so you could see what you were getting there and then. You could watch it instantly afterwards, but even more important than that, because of that there was this interactive potential for doing things.   You could interact with that moment of time with yourself, with whoever in frame or whatever, you could not do that with film. It was these things that really attracted me as much as anything to the use of it.   Also that it had the feeling of television. It was television in a sense. It was seen on television sets. It wasn't grand. It wasn't a spectacle.   I quite liked that because there was an intimacy about it. It was a very different experience because you were dealing with the screen, which was roughly mirror size. It was average mirror size. You could see yourself. You could see events going on in a relationship. You had a relationship with it, which was equal. You weren't subsumed. You weren't dominated by the cinema spectacle; that I found interesting. Unfortunately because of video projection now, and so on, we tend to have, I think often, lost that potential. Or, the potential is there, but it's not often used for this intimate interaction.

JH: You were interested in the cultural, social spaces within which the works were placed. It must have been a perfect opportunity with Scottish TV, to put artworks out into this conduit. Could you talk about that process and how that came about with the *TV Interventions*?

DH: What happened at a specific moment was that the Scottish Arts Council invited me to take part in a show that they were calling *Locations Edinburgh*.   It was the first time a very go-ahead young curator was behind it called Alistair Macintosh, who wanted to do a show outside of the gallery.   When I say this was the first show outside, I think it was the first show outside of an establishment gallery set-up. Clearly there have always been artists who would do things external to galleries and but this was a first kind of official situation in which something was organised, which would make a point about work that went beyond, or was best seen beyond board. It extended itself into a broader context and that was very interesting. I was asked to do it. You could do anything you liked and people were invited. Some people hung things across streets in Edinburgh. It was at the time of the 1971 Edinburgh Festival. Other people did

things in derelict shop windows and some people did things on the water, on the canal, and so on. That was the moment when it occurred to me that the widest possible context I could reach would be television, if it were at all possible to get the television institution to accept this. Not only that I wanted to do it, but that I did not want it to be seen to be television, in the sense of me making television for television. I wanted it to be seen as, in some way an interjection because I thought that it was very important that it would create a problematic for the viewer, which I think is actually what art should do. I don't think it should concede to the soporific view, which a lot of television was and still is. It was about placating and surfacing expectation. I wanted in some way to raise questions about that expectation. It was important, very important that a) these things would appear, in the nature of the beast, the actual piece themselves would be unlike mostly what you would expect in 1971 broadcast television, b) that there was no indication of where they came from, who made them, and what they were about. They would just appear and vanish. C) was that it was a bit of a struggle with the programme controller who, I was surprised, was extremely accommodating, in agreeing to have this happen on Scottish Television.

JH: Who approached them? Did you approach them?

DH: Well I think we, i.e. me and the curator of the Scottish Arts Council, approached Scottish Television

JH: And that was Alistair Macintosh?

DH: Yes. We were surprised that they were accommodating, I don't think they knew what was coming really, the only thing they clearly didn't want was pornography and stuff. I said, "No way it'll be that" Then the first thing they put out there was a voice saying "This is by an artist" and I immediately rang up Glasgow because I had to shoot the film in one day and edit it in the afternoon. It was all a complex to whatever went on. I did 10 pieces in 10 days. I had to ring up Glasgow because it had to be shipped off to Glasgow to be broadcast and say, "Look I don't want any voices or any announcements. I don't want anything to be said, or any credits or anything. It was pretty tough for an artist. Most artists love to have their names splattered over everything as the auteur. But no, it was most important that this was a surprise, a mystery. I didn't have much opportunity to see them because we were working every day on a new one. I can't remember how it went. I would literally in the evening be thinking about what I might do the next day, trying to work out an idea. The next morning I would shoot a piece. This being on 16mm film, there was no way I could get stuff processed in Scotland. So at lunch time I drove like a maniac out to Edinburgh airport, put the exposed film in a can down to I think Kay's Laboratory in Soho, and at the same time collected the print that I'd sent the day before, drove back to a little studio I hired in Penicuik, which is outside Edinburgh in the mountains, where I edited it and put it together with the sound. I sent off this tape spliced rush print, really basically with a separate soundtrack for magnetic track marked to synch up, off to Glasgow late that afternoon and it was shown the next day. Then I would go off - a wreck - in the evening, thinking about the next day. This would go on. So it was shooting in the morning, collecting stuff at lunchtime from the day before, putting it together and posting it in the afternoon. It went on for 10 days. I cut it on film and then it was put on 2" or whatever they did then. I don't know what they did to be honest. It might have

gone straight off Tele Cine out, but I doubt it because they were played a number of times randomly through the day, each one.

The chances are that they put it on video, but I don't really care if they put it on video or not, the main thing is it came out of video because it's a video signal. Television signal is a composite video signal. It's not a film signal. It was about looking at a TV set, an idea on a TV set.

JH: With the *TV Interventions* in 1971, you said there were 10 pieces. What were the three other pieces? Why did you choose only these seven? What was the story with the others?

DH: I didn't choose to do seven. I retained 7 and the other three were the least interesting ones. I don't know where they are. I may have one somewhere but probably in my many rusty cans of film. They maybe around somewhere but I can't even remember what they were. One I think was a straw-burning piece, that's all I remember, I can't remember the other two. But there were 10 initially. I think I went there with the idea of doing it; and it all gelled very quickly actually, to end up doing these short roughly three minute pieces. I have a feeling that I had ideas about a much longer single piece, or maybe two pieces but then it occurred to me that it would probably be wiser and more effective really to actually do short inserts, which kept recurring so that it would catch more people. They were shown randomly, they weren't scheduled. Because Scottish TV is an independent ITV company, they show commercials and I guess what they did was put them in commercial breaks. On the whole from what I remember, they weren't with commercial films. They were just in a break. Normally they are three minutes roughly, commercial breaks, so it filled one of those breaks, or one of those breaks often two or three times a day, quite randomly. I think I only actually saw two of them broadcast because I was just too busy to actually get to see anything, but it just so happened, I rang up and I think I said, "Look, I know it's not scheduled but can you tell me when X and Y" and they said, "Oh yes, such and such" and there's two little anecdotes I can give about that. One is that I went to an old gentleman's club in Princess Street in Edinburgh and the TV was on and it's when the *Tap piece* was going come on. They had a TV on all the time and they were all sleeping or reading newspapers, dozing and then suddenly the TV began to fill up with water and the newspapers dropped, they all woke up and looked amazed. They were disgruntled and then it finished, and they all dozed off again. That seemed to me to be actually quite a positive thing. It was the sort of the thing I was looking for I think. And the other occasion was when I went to a TV shop, where they sold and repaired TVs, and I said "Look I've got a piece coming on TV in a minute can I have a look" they said "Oh yeah, go downstairs and have a look at it". I went downstairs, some engineers were working on repairing stuff and were all very enthusiastic. But it was the last piece, the *Two Figures* piece, I remember it beeping and it went on and on and on and on. At the end of it, there was so much anger in their faces I had to leave by the back door. But again it just used all those expectations. If anything is more than 20 seconds, people lose patience, especially with television. 20 seconds now is the longest single shot you'll find on telly usually, and that, was a thick shot of me sitting at a table. Of course it's about time and not time in the sense that I'm sitting there and you're not sure whether I am actually. Is it a photograph of me static or not? Then there's the beeping as time is ticked away and that's where I think it gets irritating. Then you get the other figure, running in and out time-lapsed, very fast, which again is a complete shift of timescale, time warp. It's the juxtaposition of those two. As a piece, I think it's

quite good, but all I'm saying in terms of expectation on the part of most people is that it's a bit difficult.

JH: Where did you meet Tony Sinden?

DH: At the BFI, I think, in the cutting room. I was cutting *Vertical.* I got money from the Arts Council to make *Vertical* and I got money from the British Film Institute to make a film called *Time Check*, the longest film I've made, it was about 45 minutes. Both of those I cut at the BFI production board cutting rooms. It used be in Lower Marsh, in Waterloo, in those days. He was there doing his own film, another film.

JH: From the 1971 pieces, did you get any feedback? Apart from seeing the audience react like that, did you get any critical response from the art world? Were they made visible in any other way apart from, obviously, the broadcast?

DH: I'd done the ten and they'd been broadcast, but then within a year, I put together the seven I'd chosen as a kind of compilation and decided to kind of show them. But, I showed them as films projected, which in retrospect I shouldn't have done really. In fact the British Council in those days bought quite a number of copies and had them distributed around the world but as films. Some of them work quite well as films but I think things like the *Tap Piece* and, even the *Burning TV* really should be seen as they are on TV sets, on monitors, because they are about the box. I think it's wrong that people have said all these works are about sculpture and that they are about them being the box. I don't think they are. I think two or three of them definitely are, yes.

JH: Had you started at Maidstone at that point? Were you teaching anywhere during that piece?

DH: Yes. I had left the Royal College in 1964 and I was teaching already the odd day a week at Maidstone and Kingston, and about a year later at Saint Martins.   I was teaching at those three colleges through the late sixties. I was teaching sculpture, but towards the mid to end of the sixties, because I was interested in these other things, I guess I got students interested too. So even though I was still within the sculpture department at say Maidstone and Saint Martins, people at Saint Martins like David Dye and Tony Hill, were students of mine. They were in sculpture officially. There was no film per se department, Malcolm Le Grice was teaching in the painting school. But at Maidstone there was nobody except me, and I was doing it through sculpture. There were one or two students I worked with within sculpture. I didn't go down too well with the sculpture lecturers but, there were two or three students working before I actually took off with my own workshop, come pathway, come course, which happened in 1971/72 but for about two or three years before then, there were students working with film and then later with video of course when that became available. We bought some of the first video equipment, I'm sure we bought the first for the use of fine art students specifically, not as equipment to document stuff but actually as media for experiment. It was very much more free. It was a fine art pathway and that meant one would encourage students to get on with their own thing, have tutorials. In the first year we had certain projects I suppose, but on the whole it was set up to encourage personal work with a fairly rigorous tutorial system. I just had a room, because officially, I was in sculpture but it became official. I think initially we called it Film, Video and Sound Workshop as a kind of annex or adjunct to sculpture really. We just used a little

upstairs room, which was a staff room actually in the sculpture school. And we had initially managed to confiscate a 16 millimetre Bolex camera that photography had had locked away for years. I managed to get that and that's all we had really. We got tape recorders but it was just an endless fight to get equipment really to build on it. It was a battle. During that time, soon after starting Time Based Media, I managed to get the Arts Council to agree to give bursaries because there were becoming more and more artists out there wanting to work with video; or had worked a bit with video but hadn't got the facilities. We managed to get the Arts Council to pay for some bursaries: one a year, to work at Maidstone. I think you need to check on dates, I can't tell you off the top of my head. I suspect that was late seventies. My attempt was to try and pull together people from other art schools that were getting interested in working with video, and I think it was a year or two after I'd started at Maidstone that the thing at Newcastle started. Stuart Marshall was there. He came down with some students and people from LCP came and on one occasion, I remember, we had a quite a good session where students would show work. It was like a little symposium, but it would be quite good because you'd get exchange instead of the isolationist thing you get with each college in its own house style. I don't think we had particularly a house style but there tends to be a tendency towards that with any course, especially with something as new as this to exchange ideas about it. So we'd bring together a number of newly emerging courses in moving image, specifically in video, down at Maidstone.

JH: How you managed to get *This is a Television Receiver* shown on BBC 2?

DH: I was actually commissioned to do it. It was the first ever programme on video art, it was certainly the first Arena that tried to tackle it, and they wanted someone to introduce it. So, I actually appeared stuttering throughout. People interpreted it very differently historically but that's interesting. I was rather nervously trying to talk about experiments with video in 1976. I was the link-man through it, me, sitting there. *This is a Television Receiver* opened the show and again I said, "I don't want any intro." I didn't want any credit or anything initially. I still have it on tape, although it's falling to bits the whole programme, I think there's probably a copy in Dundee anyway. But, what I thought was really quite nice, even though I asked for no intro, was that a voice-over link, like they have between programmes, said "And now for the very material of television" or words to that effect, and that was pretty well it. Then there was a little bit of a tinkling Arena music, and then Richard Baker saying, "This is a Television Receiver". It just started into his monologue. It was in four sections. I showed the first two sections at the very beginning and then there was a break and I think Mark Kidel, who was the producer, his voice over was talking a bit about what the programme was going to do and then they carried on with the other two sections. I would have preferred that my piece ran for the whole 8 minutes, but I guess again that was too much for TV to accept, but at least I got the first 4 minutes with this very surprising image of the most well known newsreader breaking down the illusion through what he was saying. The point about that was although, it wasn't introduced or at least there were some indicative words but there wasn't really any kind of introduction; that was good. It was a surprise. It was still, nevertheless, in the art gallery of the air slot. It was still within that context. It was predetermined. People went to Arena expecting to some extent something a bit different, a bit arty, a bit experimental even, possibly in whatever it is the subject they were covering, because it was like the art gallery or cultural venue on the air. So there would be an expectation of something like that.

Unlike the 1971 TV pieces where they were just put next to Coronation Street or whatever, and it was much better, I preferred it like that. You've got to remember, with the sixties, there was a lot of sense of revolution, the 1968 things in Paris and the Post-Vietnam War. There's all sorts of stuff going on out in the world,. that probably contributed to that feeling. I'm treading on slightly dangerous ground here, people used to position what I was trying to do then, as counter-cultural. I would question that and that upset the apple cart a bit because I don't think it's a matter of being counter-cultural in the sense of usurping all values in an anarchistic way. I just wanted art to have a place, have a part of, have a piece of the action out there in the world, outside of the confines and protection of the gallery. Now it's back within the protection. I think it is a protection. I think it's a protectionist system now and it's another one of a number of corporate compartments. That activity resides if you are not on the city banking or doing something else, then you are an artist working in the corporate confines of the art: the gallerist's market, which is very boring. I don't find it exciting. It's rather nice if you want to make some money and I 'd like to do that, but I never have since I stopped making sculpture, which I did make some money at. But, ideologically I feel happier doing what I've done since then. But now, it's very difficult to talk about these alternative ideologies within the culture as we know it. It seems to be all neatly packaged and tucked away in its own little drawer again as it was in the Pre-war, Salon Culture.

JH: In coming away from the televisual works, to installation, you then shifted back to what you had been doing with sculpture before. You started going back to spaces or contexts in that way.

DH: I don't think I was going back. I think it was parallel really. The work for television and incidentally although I've made other single-screen works like *This is a Video Monitor*, and a number of other works as single-screen works, I've never really been interested in them as much I was in the single-screen work for television, for the reasons I've just been talking about. But, with installation, which I think went on in parallel because I made installations from the outset, the first ones were *60 TV Sets,* which I made really before hardly any video equipment was available to do anything, so I used live broadcast but that was for a while, so it was a video installation at Gallery House in 1972 in the survey of the avant-garde in Britain. I don't think I've ever said this before, but that was an intervention within the art gallery, such as it was a small art gallery part of the Goethe Institute where there was other moving image work on show, but it was all nicely programmed and done in a linear way. Then, in the next room, was this absolute racket going on with 60 television sets blazing away at as high a volume as I could get away with. Actually, technicians who'd supplied all the TV sets from down in Shepherds Bush, were asked to come and keep them running. I know they couldn't run them because they were too old and in a mess, but these guys would come up every day from Shepherds Bush to see if they could get them running properly, and that made it a performance piece. So it was kind of a performance / installation piece. It created a hell of a racket and then we fused the whole gallery with the electricity. It was a bit unfair on the filmmakers and others who were showing stuff in another room somewhere, it wasn't really meant to be unfair on them, but it was meant to jar your preconceptions about what your expectations of a gallery where normally one went into a rather quite place, viewed artworks in an almost religious way and then left again. This thing was blazing away, it was blazing away with the new culture of media, which television in 1972 was beginning to get very loud and big. Everybody had TV sets. It

was the place where you saw what was going on in the world. Somehow that seemed to me to be important to bring into the gallery and that's why I used the innumerable, as many as I could get. Then a bit later on at the Serpentine show, in 1975 it was enlarged to a *101 TV Sets*. It seemed to be a useful number really.

JH: What was the show like?

DH: It was a bit chaotic because nothing had been done like it before. It was a circus. People quoted all sorts of things but it doesn't really matter how critical or derogatory they were. It was actually a very important and a seminal event because apart from anything else, to cut across all of that, what did happen was a bringing together artists from around Britain, who had hardly spoken to each other or didn't know each other, who work with video or were beginning to think they would like to work with video or had done one piece in video, together. It was from that that I suggested we might have to get something together, an organisation of some sort, to accommodate and help and encourage artists working with video, and provide equipment and venues for showing it and so on. So, in a sense that Serpentine thing was the start of something, I think, really quite significant in Britain. There hadn't been anything like it before, but as to the exhibition itself, it was meant to be and it was in many respects all-inclusive. You got community groups showing documentaries that they had made about whatever was going on up in Hackney or something, and we got people from abroad bringing stuff like that. It was an open submission show and it was really difficult because you wanted to allow everybody to come in, and most people got in but it was an ongoing chaos really to try and fit it all together in some way and programme it. We managed to programme a list; I say we because I was on the organising committee, we managed to programme installations throughout. I can't even remember how long the show was on for, it was at least a month. It might have been longer.

JH: Some things took a day to setup didn't they?

DH: Oh yes. There, were some short ones. There were little video performance pieces. I did two pieces, I did that *101 TV Sets* and *Progressive Recession* and each had a week. They were set up for a week each.

JH: There's that great image of that one with a Girl Guide group.

DH: I used that image because again I feel it's quite important to show that that wasn't your average dedicated gallery audience, it was just a bunch of kids but they loved it. But, having said that you asked much earlier what I think my important pieces are, I think for the time actually that was quite an important piece. I didn't use any recording equipment it was just a question of rewiring. How you wired up one camera to a monitor, what progression through a corridor that wiring occurred, and I think it shows very clearly the wonder of what was possible with video in an interactive way. There was no way you could have done it with film because it was all live. The whole piece was live. There was no recorded anything in it. It was totally unique in that way. If I can say totally unique, it was unique. Actually, I thought that one up a year before in 1974 but the first time it was shown in the Serpentine, which was 1975. I think the show was chaotic, but in the end productive because it did stimulate a lot of interest beyond that.

JH: At that show there was a coming together of like mindedness and the group of you initiated, together, the setup of LVA.

DH: With LVA, I was one of the founders but in modesty I think it was I that suggested we needed it initially. I suggested this would be a good idea and that happened. Out of 2b Butlers Wharf was a setup, which showed artist performance pieces and sound. They used a big space they got hold of, a group of artists in Butlers Wharf, on the Thames, near the Tower Bridge. I used to go occasionally to those events. In about 1975/ 76 when they started to do those, we would then go to a thing I think it was called the Bricklayers Arms, a pub right on the end of Tower Bridge afterwards and have drinks and talk about the evening showing and everything, and it was there that the group that had got to know each other through the Serpentine Show would meet at 2b Butlers Wharf and then in the Bricklayers Arms afterwards. I remember one particular evening saying to a couple of those people: "Really we ought to have a situation, which could help pull together and promote this work in video because it's really quite fragmented." People were fragmented. People were doing their own thing but it needed funding for equipment preferably, and it certainly needed venues to be organised to show it. I'm not meaning private galleries because they certainly weren't interested in those days, but it needed somewhere so that it could be seen. That was the birth and then people came, about 5 or 6 of us came together, as the founders and from that evening onwards, it was born. But then we had the massive problems of funding it, which was a rather slow and tedious problem.

JH: Did funding stifle or enable you to realise your ambitions in your work?

DH: I don't think there's ever going to be enough funding. You never properly realise ambitions. There's always got to be more money even if you get 50 million pound Hollywood budgets.

JH: So are you satisfied with the funding that you received?

DH: No, I think the funding was diabolical actually. One had to fight a lot, we had to fight all the time for money, for things like getting London Video Arts off the ground. Unnecessarily I think, because I think the ground had been trodden earlier both in America and in Britain. To have to go through the same ritual when it was quite clear that the people involved were quite professional and quite serious and knew what they were talking about. To have to reiterate arguments that clearly had been gone through with Film Co-ops and other organisations in other art or artist placement groups and all those other things. To have to go through the same ritual with funders like the Arts Council, which probably is more to do with personality than the actual need. It seemed to be a bit of a waste of energy and time when in fact all one wanted to do was to get on with the work. It was quite evident that things had been happening. They were happening anyway because of art schools. In the early days, I was quite dependent on the art school that I taught at to, in effect, fund work because I couldn't afford it in those days. I could now, but I certainly couldn't then not at the prices that were asked for early video equipment and film equipment. So, obviously I used the college equipment as did most staff as well as students to produce work. Even if you were on the lowest level, the technical level, the most mundane level colleges in the early days, were absolutely crucial and were in effect the funders of early work. I got some funding personally from the Arts Council to make a few films. I got some funding from the

British Film Institute to make one biggish film, but that was about the beginning and end of it. I got some funding to travel from the British Council. I got some work purchased by the British Council and the Arts Council but that's it really. Then of course I got work funded directly from commissioning from television. Perhaps I haven't sought it enough, I have occasionally sought it, sometimes it's been rejected, or unjustified, but generally speaking I've managed to get along without it on the whole.

JH: With LVA, obviously there was quite a bit of funding from the Arts Council. They gave you core funding.

DH: In the end, yes. I was only involved the first few years when we had the initial struggle to set it up. There are other people who could probably talk about the detail of that better, like David Critchley, who was involved right through into the eighties. But I know myself, I would go and champion it in the earliest days, the very early years, for the need for funding, to the Arts Council. I would argue that it was the Arts Council above all, who should be responsible for this since this was artist work. It wasn't so much of The British Film Institute remit, I thought, because although they had supported experimental work, generally they were tending towards more conventional filmmaking. Although the production board had done some interesting funding, but for film, where this was a fine art activity, I thought the first port of call should be the Arts Council and I fought quite hard at meetings to make the case for that. In the end yes, we got money, but it was a very, very slow process, and it was very small amounts of money: enough to get a catalogue together, then enough to help towards setting up some initial exhibitions at non-commercial galleries like the ACME and AIR gallery. By then, it was 1978 when we got that bit. LVA was set up in 1976. The first gallery show, the first venue showing, was at AIR.

JH: Why was there a resistance do you think from the Arts Council?

DH: When we talk about the Arts Council, we are talking primarily about what was the Artist Film Committee. After a struggle, and after a time, it became known as the Artist Film and Video Committee. I think there was a clear preference to devote whatever funding was available to filmmaking. I'm not sure that video work was given really the adequate interest in it. It was difficult because it was new. There is a thing about film as film. When I say "film as film", I mean filmmaking in terms of artists' filmmaking history. There had been a history for a heck of a long time, not so much in this country specifically, but with the era that Man Ray, Eggeling and people that worked in, there is a history from really the turn of the turn of the twentieth century of artists dabbling with film. But, of course video was a technology and therefore as the attributes and special uniqueness of it, people weren't particularly aware of, on these committees. So in a sense, it was partly a process of educating them as well as simply asking for money and saying "Look this is the product". We had to actually talk about the whole concept of why working with this medium was in itself special and different to any other medium and so on. There were all sorts of issues at stake in those funding meetings and of course there was the endless claim that there's never enough money to go round. But, by then, as far as I can remember and I may be corrected here, there was a reasonable amount of funding going to filmmaking organisations. It meant perhaps, again other people may know better than I, pilfering money from one activity to help to support a new other activity. There were preferences and there always are, because

with anything like that there is a subjective element guiding decision making. There is never anything matter-of-fact and scientific about it. That made it more difficult, I think.

JH: You are an artist who has written about work and has a history of writing and making that work resonant through text as well. Can you talk about any of the critical feedback that you would agree with or disagree with that was happening contemporaneously to your own?

DH: In Britain, there was very little, if any, writing other than by artists initially. I think it's important to say this. With experimental filmmaking there was a bevy of would be, and indeed, professional writers who had gravitated towards experimental film work in it's early days and were writing very eloquent and knowledgeable and well informed critiques. But with video, there wasn't any, which in a way is what drove me to try to do it. I don't think I'm a very good writer at all, but I think it was necessary to make claims. The first thing I did was write a rather lumbering piece about the Serpentine 1975 Show, in Art and Artists, but people were keen I did it. From that to Studio International, which Richard Cork was editing in those days, in the middle of the 70s. He asked me if I'd do a column on video art which I thought was very progressive because we'd only really had just come on to the scene. The equipment had only been around four or five years, let alone artists working with it and doing anything significant. He was really very progressive and it's a tragedy that only 2 or 3 years later the magazine collapsed, or at least in that form. The proprietor funder or whatever decided he wanted something more quaint and antiquated and this was too contemporary and too progressive. But it was a rather big and wonderful magazine and it dealt with innumerable subjects in depth. It did a whole series on avant-garde film, it did a whole magazine devoted to performance, to sound work and then we did the one on video art in May of 1976. I wrote a column from, I think, 1975 through to when it collapsed which was probably four or five years later. I have to check that one out. I've got everything, or most of it. It was a monthly column. But then in 1976 we did this Special Video Art Issue, which I suppose, I effectively co-edited with Richard Cork. I got in people from Europe and America to write, people I knew of, and I wrote a piece in that. We had got individual British artists to do a section, half-page or so, each. But other than that there was the monthly column. In that I was mostly pushing for funding and advertising shows that were coming about and talking about individuals' work. I think on a couple of occasions there was a much bigger section devoted to video. Apart from the Video Magazine of May 1976, there were other months where I was allowed or asked to do a couple of pages rather than just a column. I was able to get involved. I also wrote tiny little paragraph pieces for Timeout when we did the shows at AIR and so on because in those days there was no video. Now if it says video, what they mean is DVD or commercial video or music video or something video, but in those days the word video didn't mean anything because there were no camcorders or way of domestically recording anything or playing anything. That's very important to remember. We were in the days then, when most people in the street didn't know what video meant, other than probably it was something to do with television, or to do with the signal, which literally is what it is, just the description of an electronic signal. But, it's used now in a much more loose form and to mean many things. But then, nobody knew really what video work was, so I approached Timeout and said "Look we're doing these shows and why don't you have a video?" They said "What? What's that?" but in the end I was able to put perhaps a little photograph and a little plug and

write a little bit about what experimental video was, and advertise these shows that we had at these non-commercial galleries through that period. It was quite a key time, the mid seventies, for the emergence of artist work in video.

JH: What were the key academic centres or art school at that point? There was Maidstone.

DH: I can't really name them in historical order, in terms of when they started but broadly speaking there was Maidstone, there was Newcastle, there was Ron Haselden at Reading, there was Dave Parsons at Wolverhampton, initially, and then there was Coventry a little bit because Steve Partridge first went to Coventry I think in something like 1975. That started as Lanchester Polytechnic, as it was known, in Coventry

JH: Dave Parsons was a filmmaker though. Did he do video as well?

DH: Yes, he did some video, but that's true, primarily he didn't. North East London Polytechnic he was at. He's always worked with film, him personally. But they encouraged video as well and of course Saint Martin's but it was primarily film. I remember going on a CNA visit in about 1982 when they were asking to have their own degree in film, video and something-something, and talking about it as a broad base course, but they didn't get it, because they really had very little if any video equipment. I was assessing it and I felt terrible, but I had to refuse them. It's not just them, everybody had their problems with CNA and all the rest of it, but on this occasion they were claiming to do this broad course dealing with all manner of moving image media when in reality it was primarily still a filmmaking setup. So, they didn't get it. But everybody was reasonably affable about that.

JH: Which particular works do you feel led contemporaneous debates of your own or of other artists?

DH: Whether any individual works led debates, I don't think that happened really. I think there were debates about approaches. There was medium specific work, quite clearly stuff that was actually concerned, I would always argue not just technologically specific, but also culturally. That is work, that at least I was interested in, that reflected the culture of moving image, and video moving image, which primarily was television and the whole culture surrounding that. The culture of the medium and the technology of the medium were integral considerations, or apparently so, in the work; right through to work that was like performance work, which was really just using it as an artist video. It wasn't video art. I made these claims, I wouldn't do it perhaps quite so much, or quite so strongly now, but a lot of work was talked of in the context of video art when really it was merely a documentation of performance. Equally though, one has to admit there was a lot of performance work which was on the cusp, where it was only meaningful through video. Through the system of recording, certain considerations were made of what a performance was trying to say, that ironically you couldn't actually get to by simply seeing this performance live. It needed that durational thing. It needed that time, that consideration of maybe repetition or whatever, some means of editing, some means of replacing, replaying parts and all the rest of it. It was emphasis that you could give with a close-in live camera at the time, which you couldn't get viewing it in an audience, in a performance. There were all sorts of ways in which you could manipulate a performance to say things, which could only be said through the

recording facility, that couldn't be quite said and read in a live performance. So it's very difficult, but there are many facets and compartments and areas of potential, within using the media, where the edges are quite blurred. Where you can go from what I used to call "video art proper" through to just artist video, meaning video that was merely a recording of some event.

JH: So would you change your mind about those earlier definitions that you made?

DH: Well yes and no. Yes in the sense that, I suppose through time, possibilities have got more complex. Many more artists are involved in it therefore they are throwing up all sorts of potential ways of looking and reading video in a way that initially one didn't have. The more people that are at it, the more variance become apparent, the more ways in which things can be said and the way, it is meaningful still, as so called "video art", grows. But then again I think it's too readily still used as a convenient term now. In terms of the gallery world, that is the commercial / museum gallery world, you rarely hear the term film art used of all this moving image work. It's usually called video art and its a much more latter day term than film. It wasn't called film art, it was called artist film or experimental film in the old days. It only became known as film art when video art as a term took off to distinguish them. But "film art" is not used very much now. Video art somehow sounds more catching. But nevertheless, with video, I think it's unreasonable to use the term video art willy-nilly, even though the medium itself right through to the digital forms that are thrown up, I think quite realistically, can use the word "video" as an embracing term. "Artist video" sounds nit picking, but I actually think it's more relevant to use that term. There are some parameters that you can draw and say, "This is what video art is" I would say what video art is, and then there are other things, which are using video technology, but that's as far as I would take it.

JH: Are you saying though that video art should be a historical term, because you are talking about a very specific way of thinking about materiality of video, that is a historical thing because that's not necessarily how it is now, it's changed?

DH: It isn't how it is now, no.

JH: So is video art, in itself, a historical term, the same as you might say experimental film might be historical?

DH: Maybe it should be, yes, otherwise it becomes so nebulous it could be anything. That is that kind of nebulousness that bothers me. I don't really want to compartmentalise on the one hand, but on the other hand I think it's useful in linguistic terns to recognise parameters, when you're using terminologies. Otherwise, what's the point of terminologies?

JH: But also, you have a particular position because you are involved in the critical debate of that period. So, you have an investment in that as well. You are recognised as an artist, not as an artist that made video but an artist who clearly was passionate about the materiality and tools that were used in this medium. That's right. That's very good and that's important. In a sense, I see everything as a progression from my sculpture. I see it as a linear development. It's a development in that sense because time passes, but I think there are links in the thinking throughout which cross-refer all the way through. On Lux Online, on one or two little things, I've written about odd pieces,

and I've said that working moving image work, some of the thinking was parallel to what I was thinking in terms of sculpture. I don't think it was a direct link because there's such a difference between using material stuff and using this ephemeral thought process, and the time life thing that is the experience of film or video. But I think there are parallels, which I would claim have gone through the work. I don't see that shifting. Sometimes I think maybe I should just forget all that and make a nice solid narrative piece, but I don't. On the contrary, I'm feeling more inclined to go back into history. I think there's a lot yet to be said that should have been said or isn't said. Don't ask me what because it's not the moment to ask, but I just feel that I see stuff now and I think "Yeah but..." because there are a lot of synthetic Cubism. There was a move on, so called, from cubism where they missed the point of cubism, or they didn't miss the point, but they wanted to do something a bit different, but it has had the look of it, but it was superficial. I think there's a lot of work now, and I've got to be careful what I say, that has a superficial feel and look of earlier work. It is great in a way, because they have recognised its existence, but I think a lot of that work, still doesn't really quite hit the nail on the head. I think it has missed the point.

JH: What other ideas or artists' works, other than obviously Michael Snow, were inspirational for you.

DH: The only thing I'd seen prior to that completely different take was in 1966, in New York, when I went to, I think it was, the Anthology Film Archive Play. I get confused whether it was that, but it was an experimental film show, where I went in with this friend of mine, another sculptor whose wife actually happened to be pregnant at the time. She wasn't there, but she was going to have the baby soon, and we walked into Brakhage's *Window Water Baby Moving*. Of course, my friend Derek collapsed. He fainted. That was impressive in that it was a shock. Here was an artist working with film and it had quite an impact of sorts, but it didn't have any specific impact on me in terms of work I was doing. But it did prove that it could be impactual, in a way that I hadn't quite experienced with commercial film. Since then, I suppose back to Snow, the two things that I have found most significant, as many people have I'm sure, were *Wavelength* and *Back and Forth*. In terms of video, most of the American works were significant. In 1972/1973 there were things like Joan Jonas's *Vertical Roll*. I can't be more particular than that. I can't name names more than that. I can name lots of names but I can't think of anything that I would think was key, influentially. I think it's more to do with specific works. I think it's had a lot more to do with attitude and objectives in general.

JH: Was there a philosophical centre to LVA? Was it different from the very strong centre of the Filmmakers Co-op, which seemed to have a very focused type of practice?

DH: As far as LVA is concerned, there weren't that many shows historically. It was a very short run period in my experience. I became less involved later on. I was ill and all sorts of things so I tended to drop out. But, initially there were two years and no shows, before there were any shows in 1978. Then, they weren't as regular probably as the Co-op. I don't think that's altogether an excuse, but I think it's something to do with it. I think certain individuals, as with the Co-op or anywhere else, had declared certain interests quite clearly. I think that happened with one or two people, and I think there were differences amongst individuals from the outset in LVA, which I'm not so sure you had that clarity of difference with the Co-op. I think you had certain individuals who

were very dominant and forceful in their point of view. The rest of the artists tended to be rather quiet and just got on with it. They probably reflected in some cases what the dominant factors were on about, but others just did their own thing. With LVA, obviously I wrote things and said things myself. I probably was the old boy. I still am of the lot, but there was, I think, a healthy dissention as well, almost from the outset with what I was seen to believe in, sometimes in a philosophical sense. I think LVA was probably more of a facility than anything else. I think there was a philosophical rigour dotted around amongst various individuals. I would have a go at people like Stuart Marshall. We had our differences he and I, it was apparent as time went on in things that were written and so on, which I think is very healthy. I'm not sure that one got extreme differences in critical literary output from the Co-op, I don't know. It seemed to me, there were two or three people that were very much in accord, or clicked much closer and stayed that way. The rest just did their thing quietly. With LVA, I think there was a more open interchange and probably even opposition between points of view. On the other hand I think there were similarities in the work as well. It's vague, I know, but I think the most important thing about it was that… that it was set up to provide the where-with-all, not just technically but in other things like venues and collecting work together for distribution. All of that seemed to me really the first thing, the most important thing.

JH: Was there an issue about the venue? It's interesting when you say that LVA was set up almost like a facility or an organisation, but it didn't have a space for exploration. Why was it set up like that?

DH: It was set up without a space, because a) it just didn't have the funding for it, and b) maybe it was just the view that it didn't need the cinema space for projection in those days. We were dealing with small monitor things. Having said that using ACME, or AIR, or one of those galleries, they replicated in some way a cinema-like setup. But they were more flexible than that. I just think it was simply that we didn't have the funding for it. It was a struggle initially to get the money just to do a catalogue and a bit of money to help collect distributable tapes from artists, and then some money to help towards putting shows on at whatever venue we could find. I don't know how much desire there was to have a space specifically for it, either. That identifies it as this underground venue, as in, "We're doing this underground thing!" or whatever. It was wanted to be more open ended. The prime concerns, probably, were to have tapes together and then to distribute them. To make them available to wherever, mostly to colleges in those days, but at least that they were available for rent on the one hand. The other thing was facility. If we could possibly manage it, it was for a facility of equipment, which was obtained after a long struggle to get the money. I think those two things – the idea of making and distributing, and facilitating those two aspects was probably more important than having a clubhouse. I don't think that that was seen to be requited. Perhaps if there had been a more homogenous philosophic, agreed objective to it all, a clubhouse would have been a useful thing to do.

JH: Why are you using the term "Clubhouse"? I just see it as a gallery space.

DH: The Co-op wasn't a gallery space. The Co-op was a cinema

JH: No, but you don't have to have the space as a cinema

DH: No, you don't have to, but it's a very expensive thing to run a space. The membership wasn't very great initially. There were probably many more filmmakers, later on working with film and they could contribute to the upkeep and running of the thing, as well as a lot of pressure in terms of getting funding from the arts council, and the BFI for the set-ups for the Co-op. But, we started up with only half a dozen or so people. Gathering tapes from all over the world to distribute was the prime aim, and then hopefully, to get equipment to make work with. In between that, was the thought that we should show some of this work, and hence at the time, there were these non-private galleries like AIR, which were seen to work quite well to do the job.

JH: It has always puzzled me, because it's an important to have a space to explore ideas, especially ideas of the technological that are often difficult to set up. When you look at *Vidicon Inscriptions*, or when you look at *Videvent*, for example. Those are ideas that must have taken a long time to make. Certainly with Brian Hoey's *Videvent*, it took quite a few years to make that work. It's got images of him outside testing out the equipment and things like that. I think it's an interesting thing that artists didn't really need to have a permanent space, at that time. It's not a critique.

DH: I don't think I need one now, actually. I haven't needed one since I stopped making sculpture in a sense. I'm very interested in installation work. I still have lots of ideas for installations, but they suddenly blossom when you are asked, or when you are given the opportunity. In other words, when someone says "We are doing this exhibition" or "This exhibition is coming up, will you take part? We'll commission you." It can be very expensive. Then those ideas just in the head subsequently on paper, come into fruition. Obviously it would be useful to have a space to be able to endlessly experiment with some of those ideas. It is necessary for some people, but on the whole, I found that when there's been a demand, then I come forward with the product. I don't think there's anything wrong with that at all. When I was working with sculpture, I had a studio. I was making sculpture. I was making objects. With video, maybe it would be a good thing to have a big space, to project and play around with stuff. I didn't need it when I was teaching because I used the studios, wherever I taught. Because of equipment, the problem of costs and everything, it seemed to be much more logical just to use the setup that you happened to be in doing whatever you were doing, teaching-wise. But then, going back to those first 20 years, the most important were art schools. They've been accused of being philosophically modernist, that was the legacy of the art schools. We have to break away from art schools. The Americans always say, "We've got to break away from art schools". In America, you are either a professorial academic type or you are an artist. You can't be both. There are many that are both, but there's an embarrassment for being both, particularly in America in a way that there isn't quite so much here. It really is very weird actually in the States, I find. That's another story largely, because I think artists think they are much more successful if they do it just as art, because they can succeed in living by selling their work. But, with this kind of work, in this country, it's only really comparatively recently that people are being able to live off selling this sort of thing. So the art schools were very important to sustain the living of artists, and also to sustain facilitating them with equipment. I think you have to be an active artist in a teaching situation. Otherwise, what's the point? Also, it's good if you can be seen to be doing it in situ. It's all very well being a painter with your own studio in Camden Town and teaching in Liverpool or something three days a week, but nobody actually sees you at it. The good thing about

video is often the two were enmeshed: the student activity and the staff's activity. It seems to me, quite healthy and proper. At least it was then.

JH: That answers my question about where the philosophy was taking place relative to what is clearer defined, as the Co-op philosophies.   It was more dispersed, but it took place within these centres, within the art schools, for people like Stuart (Marshall) and yourself

DH: To come back to the philosophic issue, I'm not so sure, as you keep saying, that there was one with the Co-op or other setups of film. I think it was just that certain individuals were quite loud. I mean it in the nicest possible way, but they were quite loud with their points of view and that gives the apparent feeling that there was this umbrella philosophic approach. Having said that there may be some truth in it because there's an almost obsessive keenness amongst many for a certain materialist filmic approach to the material of film, which oddly enough, I see that as more like painting or sculpture, or like painters and sculptors than I do with people working with video. Somehow video is more incorporeal, more conceptual.   You are dealing with a conceptual thing. Initially one was concerned with specifics, the material specifics. I think that that was soon necessary for somehow searching out a vocabulary for this new medium. We were looking for a vocabulary. I don't think we were looking for answers, or philosophic stands, I think we were just looking for vocabularies, which were peculiar and applicable to video and were different to film or indeed any other of the plastic arts. So that seems to me to be more what it was to do with. This was more ephemeral to work with and therefore, if it's possible to draw a parallel, perhaps the philosophic stand was more ephemeral. In other words, you couldn't identify it with such clarity. It was a common objective because you didn't have common materiality in such a sustained and obvious way, as with say sculpture or painting or even film. I think the whole process is more vague, but that makes it richer and more exciting that there wasn't quite the common ground in it. I maybe talking completely at odds with everything I don't know but I had something to do with that.

JH: I see the history of the practice has been different from the writing. The practice is always amorphous, because artists move about in a non-linear way and try lots of different things out. So I completely agree with you but I think it's about how you marry the critical written histories, which were at one point quite dogmatic about the materiality of either video or film at the time.   I can see the reasons why that happened because one imagines fighting for one's language or searching for a language.

DH: Searching for a vocabulary I think, "language" suggests you are able to piece all this vocabulary together and make absolute sense, so there's total common ground. I don't think there's ever been total common ground.   But, if you can imagine vocabulary, which is the subsets of whatever makes up the language, the sub-particles. Just finding those initially was necessary. But one had to be dogmatic. For your own sense of being it was important. I was then, in like the turn of the seventies, with some completely other new and totally untried medium. It was totally untried. There was no history at all, apart from television, which was extremely dominant. You were looking for alternative ways of using it and reading it you. You want to find the particles, which you could juggle in a way that was different to television. And it was finding those particles, that vocabulary. That was the interesting and exciting thing initially.   There is a problem with sculpture and/or installation used in this work, but I

think on the whole my multiple screen work, if you like, has been sculptural because I've always tried to consider the formal element of putting together some kind of construction of these parts so it works as a gestalt, as a whole. It's different now with projection. Everything is clean and wonderful and glossy, but earlier on, one saw a lot of work, which people concerned about the interaction, between various screens in a display and called it an installation, which it was, but the wires and the machinery and everything wasn't necessarily considered as part of a whole. I wrote a piece about this in 1990 in *Signs of the Time*. You were meant not to see these bits and pieces, you were meant only to see the screens. It's rather like watching television, you are not meant to see that it's a box. You are meant to see it as this floating screen somewhere in your head, and that there's nothing outside, which of course is ridiculous. Nothing's ever in a void. Wherever you see a television screen, before I saw a sculpture, I saw it in its context. I can never see it entirely separate from that context, in some kind of magical art void. So the same is true to take it on into sculptural installation work. I would like to think I consider the whole in an installation as a totality. As an experience and not just pick up on parts that are convenient, and hope that you don't notice the rest because you do, or other people do, or some do and some don't. To me it was important to take responsibility for the totality. I take responsibility for what's on the screen, so I should take responsibility for the totality of the piece, and whatever constitutes that whether it's bits of wood, chairs, wires or whatever. If not, I hide them. It's like this is a sculptural event. It's a sculptural statement once it's free standing in a space. I guess some work is less so, so it might be called installation, because it hasn't quite attained sculptural quality.

JH: What about *This is a Television Receiver,* because how can it ever be shown again, and do what it was intended to do?

DH: It can't basically. I suppose it could go on television again, but it's so old now that probably no one remembers Richard Baker. It's a bit like a performance piece. It's a one-off. The moment that it happened was the moment that it really happened, and ever since then one's shown it as a historic moment. You just had to explain and hope that people could imagine it in the context of other TV programmes, which they never really can. They can try, but they can't really. It's not like seeing it occur, because in a way, all of the things I've done for TV, have been enhanced by their position in relation to the context that is the other programmes either side of them. That's what they were meant for. I think they are strong. I think they were at their strongest when they were seen in that original relationship with the ongoing popular medium and that they juxtapose with it. That juxtaposition is half the work. The other half is what actually goes on in the piece. What we are seeing now, after the event, is only half the work, because we are not seeing it. I think that the answer to your question is, yes, I think there is room for intervention but I think one would have to reconsider entirely what it is in a total global sense. What is it one is up against, by the nature of what you do? To go right back to the beginning, to the things I did in 1971, I took account of what the kind of television programmes were, not individually, but what I felt the sense of the reading of TV programmes was at that time. In a sense I arguably made work accordingly that worked in juxtaposition to those. I think you would have to do that now with whatever is going on now. Hence I think the work would have to be considerably different to what one did 30 or 40 years ago even. But I don't think it's ruled out. I think what the problem is, is that, although it is always difficult, it's even more difficult to get a slot now. And, the nature of the slots is difficult. Art programmes, or art-gallery-of-

the-air programmes are still made, but back to that issue, with the 1976 Arena, it's seen as a kind of safe haven and therefore there's the ability to do things more experimentally, but it's more difficult because there is the expectation on the part of anybody who wants to go to that programme. They are going to get that thing like they do when they go to a gallery. It's the same sort of thing. I'm much more interested in, as I said, the perfect situation: just slotting in the most unexpected place with the most unexpected piece. That would be much more difficult now even though there are arts programmes. I'd much rather just appear somewhere in the middle of nebulousness. That seems to me much more important and much more powerful a place to make a statement. It's a much more powerful statement in the right place. It's being in the wrong place at the right time that you want. Everybody talks about the right place at the right time. I always quite liked being in the wrong place at the right time.

JH: What about the MTV pieces? What are your feelings about that because when you talk about nebulousness, MTV is a nebulous context. How did those pieces fit with your ideas about intervention?

DH: There was no announcement at the beginning, but they insisted on something at the end so in fact what I did was build in a title, which was part of the work. It wasn't the title of the work because they are only one minute long, four of them out of five, one was a minute and a half and then my name at the end of it. So, you knew who it was very quickly, in a second flash at the end. But, there was this title, this word, this whatever at the end. How did they work? I don't know. I didn't get a lot of feedback. I got these various people saying to me in the subsequent years that they'd seen them. I think the point is with them that none of them are anything like music videos, which is what MTV is about. In a way they purposely weren't a cut every tenth of a second and "bam", "wallop". Most of them, although only a minute long, hopefully seemed extended time rather than compact. But, they were very different things as well. It was fun. I hadn't done anything like that for a number of years, so in a way each one was quite different in its intention, but each one was also, hopefully, seen as a contrast to what was mostly going on either side of them on MTV. *Stooky Bill*, I would never do anything like that again. That was on in 1990. That was on Channel 4. That was like raising a political question really about the validity of television at all. I don't know how many people get that. Unfortunately, when it's put on in a show, they just talk about it as though it were an actual recorded conversation that Baird had with his dummy, which of course is rubbish. They don't say "an imagined" or "hypothetical" conversation. they just say, like the Bexhill thing says, "a conversation between John Logie Baird". I thought, "What? Yes it was, but it was more than that." That was on Channel 4 and I suppose the impact of that was just that formally, it was so different to television, it was this 30 line image suddenly, vertical image in the middle of the screen quite different to the television that was going out to either side of it. Hopefully that would grab you, which you get when it's shown even in a gallery, but probably more so seen with the nebulous flow either side of it. But then, inside that, is this discussion. It's very short. It's only four minutes but I thought hopefully, fairly powerful implications for the whole of television because it raises questions from the outset. The implication is that it is raising questions from the outset as to what is this all about and where is it going to go. Is it going to go this way or that way? Did it go to be the kind of dummy TV, which *Stooky* is saying it would be? I think it probably did actually. It could have gone in different directions from the outset, there are all sorts of ways if you think about it that television could have evolved. Instead it became this essentially corporate

money making venture of 90% slap-stick, humour, which is fine for fun and soporific. There are some good programmes as well but there's a vanity in television. It's like *Stooky* says, people want to see themselves. I just tried to do something layered with pseudo political questioning of television. I don't know how well that comes across but it was fun to do.

JH: There is a question about collaboration, you have talked briefly about Tony Sinden, are there any other people that you want to mention?

DH: No. I worked with him. He assisted me on those '71 pieces but I think there's a distinction because they were essentially all my ideas. On the *60 TV Sets* and *101 TV Sets*, they were listed as collaborative things. I've worked with people like David Cunningham, who has done sound for me very, very wonderfully well. He did the 1990 installation, *Cultural Eclipse, A Situation Envisaged.* The sound in that is a cacophony of sound, but it's actually quite a composed flow. He did the MTV pieces. When I say he did it, I did it or I instruct him what I wanted, but there's his thumbprint on it in each case. With musicians, we had a couple of people who were in with the piece I did with Tony Sinden, *Edge.* There's a strange little jokey western music sound that a couple of friends play guitar on. Obviously I worked with people like Anna Ridley, who produced *Stooky Bill TV.* She effectively produced *This is a Television Receiver* although she was "officially" a designer at the time at the BBC. She was quite influential in terms of that programme happening. Mark Kidel was officially the producer, but Anna was quite an important element in pressing for that to happen internally. I think it's important that she should be recognised, not just for me, but for working with other people as well, long before a lot of other people took on producing artist work for TV.