

Interview of David Dye by Duncan White

London, February, 2009

DW: How would you define expanded cinema?

DD: To me, it was about the viewing situation. I mean, in a way it was about space perception. It wasn't anything to do with Gene Youngblood's view – 'expanded consciousness' – but it was very much to do with real time. Real space, real time. In a way I always found it slightly contradictory because the whole thing about cinema is that there's a certain amount of illusionism in it. But [expanded cinema] went against the conventional viewing situation where you actually forgot where you were and became immersed in it in an odd way. But that doesn't mean to say that I don't enjoy that kind of viewing – it depends on the film.

Expanded cinema was also for me part of being a sculptor. I was a sculptor at St Martins 1968-72 and I was making sculpture and then finding that I wasn't satisfied with that. I had become much more involved in the question of space and time, and it seemed quite natural for me to move into using film. The first immediate influence on me in cinema was Michael Snow, and his very sculptural use of film. Most of his pieces work through the screen. But what I was also interested in at the time was the way he used photography. It wasn't until recently that I saw his gallery stuff – he was doing very sculptural things with what is normally illusionary, like photography, to me that's kind of my take on "expanded" I suppose.

DW: That cinema can be expanded through the material?

DD: Yes. Not forgetting what it was. Not ever forgetting what it was like - the painting - you never forget that it's paint; [with film..] you never forget that it's actually celluloid.

DW: So that was Michael Snow. Were there any other North American influences in your sculpture before that?

DD: Well, Robert Smithson with his writing about Space and Time. It kind of all came – lots of different influences. But I remember this installation 8 Projector Piece 1972 and being very influenced by people like Steve Reich and some other musicians, where they set up the situation and the structure and then watch it go through various permutations. I was very interested in that; when you've got a lot of projectors together, they will never run at the same speed. So, you know, you try and synchronise everything together it doesn't work. It goes out of synch. I was very interested in synchronicity and when things go out of synch. And that was a kind of big influence in a way.

DW: It's very difficult to synchronise film projectors. There is no such thing as a standard 16 frames per second. None of the projectors work at the same speed.

DD: Yes. Projectors are different, even when they're the same make and everything. The American influence? Well, I went to the old Arts Lab [Drury Lane, London 1966-68] and

saw, before the (London Filmmakers) Co-op, people like Warhol. I remember seeing the two-screen film *Chelsea Girls*. I think I was the only one who saw the whole thing **at that particular screening**. People left, you know, **even though** they had mattresses to lie on. I was fascinated by it. The use of two screens and the way that sometimes we see things, the same thing, at different angles. And that duration of it. And also the whole thing of getting beyond the boredom threshold, which I found interesting. And I think that's one of the interesting things about Warhol is that you don't have to see his films, you can just hear about them. That whole thing of not being bored, going beyond being bored. It's like that thing about expectation – you want something to happen, you want something to happen and it doesn't happen. Then what does it mean to be looking at that? And you just go into another space somehow and it's very different, you know. I found that very interesting. But a lot of people couldn't stand the slow pace. Four hours or whatever it was.

DW: What was it about the two screens that was interesting? Was it the alternative perspectives you could have?

DD: Yes. Alternative perspective but also different things at the same time – that thing about vision – about your choice of vision. What you decide to look at. **I think that** two screens would be the beginning of what you could call expanded cinema, I suppose. Where you choose what you look at, you either concentrate on one or you do a kind of ambient looking, where you kind of notice both things at the same time almost. And that's really interesting. A lot of people have done it as well, somebody like Guy Sherwin – does that beautifully, shooting the same place at different times. Sometimes you don't know that it's the same time, or how much later it is, or if it's earlier, but **it** seems to be concerned with one of the main things about cinema which is time and taking away the usual expectations about the space.

DW: As a footnote, did you and Guy work together at one stage?

DD: No. I only knew him a little. He seemed a nice guy. I didn't work with him. The only person I worked with was William Raban. His film [with Chris Welsby] *River Yar* [1972]. I shot some frames of that.

DW: It's kind of multi-authored that film.

DD: Very. But I never really worked with – collaborated with anybody. I still saw myself very much as –I tangentially connected. I knew very well about Annabel Nicolson at that time.

DW: She wrote about your work, didn't she?

DD: Yes. That's right. And I did see her a lot. I used to go to **see her at her studio** [The dairy, Prince of Wales Crescent]. There were screenings. But I wasn't part of the Co-op. I was still very much – I can't really remember dates and times. I think I was still a student then, or I'd just finished being a student. But I was very much concerned with being in the art world in a wider sense.

DW: OK. So, is that why for you expanded cinema, your idea of it, is this field of film and art which emphasises the gallery side of things? You seem to be interested in how the cinema and the gallery relate.

DD: It's very interesting because but there was a time where galleries wouldn't show films and you had to go about hiring stuff yourself. I think the interesting thing is the way that now somebody like Steve McQueen is seen as an artist but really – I saw something of his recently at Baltic **Gallery in Gateshead** and it reminded me of early expanded cinema. It's extraordinary, mirrors around **the walls**, lights and everything. It's like being revisited in a mainstream big gallery. And I think the Wilson twins' [Jane and Louise Wilson] multi-screen installations – an amazing amount of equipment, and machines; galleries are now willing to put up the money for those kinds of works, but **in the early 70s**, that wasn't the case. So it was always kind of seen as underground. Connected to things such as Art Labs and Co-ops, so in the early days it was like that.

DW: Were you drawn more to the gallery or the cinema? Or were you using both?

DD: No, I wasn't drawn to either of those. Interesting, the word at that time anyway, was media

DW: Context.

DD: Context, yes. Although it has to be said that was looking for different things in different places – well, I was enjoying the activity within the film world if you like. And I was also enjoying the activity offered by the more perceptive art world and the things that were happening then as well. I moved around a bit. I didn't want to be pinned down.

DW: I was going to ask you about the Expanded Cinema Festival at the ICA in 1976 and whether you remember much about your involvement in that. This is the brochure.

DD: Oh yes. [Looks] That ['Set up for the projection of a porn movie / notes on a projected work 1975', ICA catalogue] ended up, strangely enough, being shown in a gallery. The Robert Self gallery. This was my idea, but it didn't get put on. There was also one [installation] at the Hayward Gallery. It was similar, the Hayward Gallery one. This ended up being shown, I think, at the next one they had at the Hayward Gallery, but I can't remember when that was. I think it ended up being installed in the Robert Self Gallery in 1976 or something like that.

DW: So, did you install something else instead of this?

DD: I showed *Western Reversal*. I did a performance of *Western Reversal*.

DW: But you did diagram proposals for quite a lot of displays in galleries.

DD: I did. I did a lot.

DW: So, was it almost displaying the film as an idea, as much as making the film?

- DD: Yes. Yes. It was also a way – I mean I filled notebooks with all those kind of things to get ideas out very quickly. I never thought of them as works in their own right. I used to use them as ideas like blueprints that you could set up any time in the future.
- DW: Were you interested in what other people had set up or just what you had set up. That you were giving someone else an instruction to a film?
- DD: Not really. No like a score. A score for different music. I think it was a way of making something that was a potential work. Because of the ephemeral nature of things I was interested in that. I know [Dan] Graham did diagrams and models because I was always into the spatial aspect of things. And I thought a diagram was a good way of showing how that works before the event.
- DW: And your statement as it were for the exhibition is quite interesting. Do you remember?
- DD: Oh! I don't think I do. Pause. Was that the one about the Greta Garbo film?
- DW: Yes.
- DD: Yes I remember that.
- DW: The final scene.
- DD: Yes. I do remember that well. Because what I used to do – I was still at college then – you know, because it's difficult seeing old films. Now you get it out on DVD all the time. I was interested in older films and they had that at the old Curzon in Piccadilly, they were doing an afternoon of showing Garbo films. So I went along to see *Camille*. I like old Hollywood films. And what caught me really was – in a way, it's that thing, suddenly you're drawn in at the key point - the ultimate point of the film - when she dies and the death scene is supposed to be very moving and everything. This mad woman for whatever reason had a bee in her bonnet and probably mistook Greta Garbo for a German [laughs] and proceeded to do this rant.
- DW: And it's something that happened.
- DD: It actually happened. That's the interesting thing when you write like that you think nobody's going to believe me. It's real and the interesting thing is that to me it sounded like a performance. It was like – just a real live performance. Something in real life getting in the way of cinema. I was kind of rather taken with that. It fitted with my view of something to draw us back to the auditorium after the, mesmerising screen icon. And suddenly, woof, and then the film was over [laughs]. So it was quite amusing. Other people were really annoyed but I was really amused by it. Because I felt that suddenly we had been taken back into the real world and somebody else's viewpoint. It was really interesting. It was like a comic being heckled but they couldn't answer back.
- DW: That's the fascinating thing, somebody responding to the film as to a real person.
- DD: Yes, exactly. That too, yes.

DW: It reminds me of early, primitive films or the early form of film, where people were responding to the filmic representation of people for the first time in cinemas...

DD: Yes, responding.

DW: Like Uncle Josh Goes to the Movies. Uncle Josh is caught responding to what he's seeing as if it's something he should be emotionally engaged with somehow, on a very physical level...

DD: Later on I made a piece called *A Letter to Rita*. It was about Rita Hayworth – a slowed down clip of film that I had found. I basically talked to the screen – I had this soundtrack where I talked to the screen. And I was kind of – it was almost like a love letter. She comes into this foyer, or lobby, picks up this letter and starts reading it and smiles. And my voice over is my letter to her.

DW: When did you do that?

DD: Oh, '73 The interesting thing for me now is at that point was there were little shops where you could buy all kinds of bits of film. Like the one for *Western Reversal* is a black and white cowboy movie called *Blazing Guns and Bloody Arrows*. Ray Milland in the 1940s. And you could buy strips of film. And I used to use those for my work. It was found film, basically, whereas now people do it all the time. And you know, on YouTube you get all sorts of inventive things going on. I saw something recently, it was *Mary Poppins* as a horror film. Have you ever seen that? It's hilarious. And they've taken certain clips from it, and it comes across like, *The Exorcist* or something. People reacting to each other and her coming through the mist. It's weird and with some music. It's very threatening. And it's a lot easier now to do that to play around with found material.

DW: Would you rather use found material than make your own?

DD: No, that was just what was available at that time. And I shot some stuff off TV as well. Because of the different synchronisations you got this bar going up, which was really irritating. With Super 8 film if you point at TV, I don't know if TV's different now, it always has these bars [laughs]

DW: It records at a different rate.

DD: That's right. It records at a different rate, but also a different system, it's not film. I don't know how it works. I kind of made use of that. You've done your research haven't you? [laughs]

DW: So, I wanted to talk about this piece in here which you made somewhere else, which seemed to be about pornography and...

DD: It was another found film. A very soft porn film...

DW: What was the interest in pornographic material?

DD: Part of it was just the fact – if somebody had said to you that they heard you were a filmmaker, they immediately assumed that it was pornography. It's that whole thing of the voyeuristic aspect of film immediately seems to come to people's mind.

DW: Why else would you want to make films?

DD: Yes, exactly. And also, I was heavily involved in – also at that time I was reading *Screen magazine*. I just got into that. Quite heavy going. And that came out of me starting to get interested in theory, albeit in a rather magpie way where you pick and choose and don't take it all in. Whatever seems to suit you. It was the French film theorist. I can't remember his name now. But he was talking about the camera being like a roving eye. It was very much an idea of film as voyeuristic and tied into the gaze. It wasn't Lacan it was somebody else. [Christian Metz?]. Anyway so that seemed to be perfect subject matter for that. So I thought why not tease people with this? So what I did with that one was a slither of mirror on a spool, a backward spool of a projector, which wasn't projecting anything. But it was deflected off that so what you got was like a radar, thing you know, like a radar going like this. It was revealing bits of it. It was frustrating because the people were moving and the image was moving like a clock – it was reasonably slow motion – like a clock hand going round and it was in a way connecting all those – trying to connect visually all those things together. And the piece had a soundtrack with me intoning certain phrases from this guy's writing. About throwing light on – the way that throwing light on can mean intellectual enlightenment as well as a torch in a room. I was trying to connect the intellectual with the sensual, if you like. So there were lots of ideas behind that. I'm not sure if that worked as a piece, or if the soundtrack even worked. But I think the visual *aspect* was quite interesting.

DW: I am very interested in your use of mirrors. But before that I wanted to go back to the *Letter to Rita*. Was that a live soundtrack then, or had you recorded it?

DD: I recorded it. I think I've still got it – it was just on a cassette, a Casio thing that I placed in front of the screen. I just had to put it on to synchronise it so I knew exactly when to press play. It wasn't too much of a problem. It didn't need to be perfectly synchronised. But I actually pressed it when she started opening the letter a few seconds earlier.

DW: So, your use of mirrors. There seems to be that development from sculpture to film that's almost through the mirror somehow.

DD: It was actually. Yes.

DW: The mirror and the film frame seem to be kind of related in some way.

DD: Yes, because I was making sculpture using mirrors. Where you would view the sculpture through the mirror, or view a word through a mirror, or the *projected* anamorphic process, a stretched *projected* image where you looked in a mirror and suddenly it was coherent. I always liked that because you could define projection lines. You could do that with projection if you project something you can make it stretch. It's a very interesting phenomenon. The flexibility of the light and so it seemed quite a natural thing, but actually the first piece I ever did where the mirror came together with the film was *Mirror Film* which came deliberately from a piece that used to be at St Martin's on a window and I think subsequently got removed in the refurbishment. It was

there for a long time. For quite a few years, 20 odd years, I think. I fitted in one of the panels of glass at the bottom a piece of mirror, which had the middle point masked out. So the outside **view** seemed to float on the inside. That was quite effective. It was right at the top of the stairs on the fourth floor, near the sculpture department studios where I was. And it was one of those things where it changed all the time because of the light outside and the light inside **through** day and night.

What was also interesting at the time was the idea of negating things, going back to making a tension between things. And so it negated the window because you couldn't see outside completely and it negated the mirror because you couldn't see yourself in it completely. But you got this strange space that kind of hovered between the two. That seemed to work quite well for me. So I thought: if that works, why don't I try filming into a mirror with somebody on the other side scraping away the silver **backing**. So I got a friend to do that, and we were on the fourth floor of a house and there was a ledge outside and trees outside and it was darker inside so you got this effect that suddenly my image as a filmmaker shooting the film, is rubbed away. Until he - larger scale of course, because he's nearer the camera - puts up another mirror. ..So, you get the sky reflected, then you get the top of the house and then the mirror and all that. And then suddenly I reappear. It's like a loop. I'm back again. It's to do with bringing the camera in, and a reflectiveness I suppose. That was the first film I **made**, because it was like a record of a sculpture that I worked on. I never really thought about that, but that's what made me remember it. That's how I went from using mirrors. I like using mirrors because that whole thing about the ephemerality of a mirror, it doesn't keep what it reflects. Whereas celluloid, supposedly, keeps what it reflects.

DW: Smithson says something similar in his essay 'Mirror Travels in the Yucatan.'

DD: Yes that was the fascination too. There must have been that influence as well of what he felt about mirrors being there and not there. He looked into the area in terms of Mexican mythology and. I didn't really pick **that** up that much but I was intrigued by the way he **placed the mirrors in different sites**. I must read that **text** again –it's a long time since I've read that article. But it was very influential on me.

DW: And is there also something about the mirror and the film image? Traditionally, in film you capture something in an image. Whereas in a mirror it shows a reflection. Or it shows whatever is in front of it. It seems to come out of that interest in sculpture at the time of the subject. Of the viewer being the subject.

DD: Yes, yes. A lot of my work was to do with the placement of the viewer. Looking back some of it was quite didactic. A lot of my work at that time I called "devices". There's one called the *Distancing Device* [1970] which you might know.

DW: I've read about it.

DD: It was at this **exhibition** of St Martin's alumni at **Tate Britain last year**. A few people I was at college with, and that work was in it. It was .. rather a strange device like a periscope or something. You had to look into the mirror to see the letters underneath on this plank. And it looked like a minimal sculpture but in fact – it had the letters telling you – you had to move back to make sense of the word, you had to keep going, you had to go backwards. So mirrors were used then. It's like a device. Like mirrors are used in cameras, I suppose. I don't know if they are **used** now **in digital cameras**.

DW: So it's a kind of distancing device. It's moving away from the object. Rather than the image being drawn towards it. To see something better by getting close up to it.

DD: It was like the other way round. It's a kind of conceit and there are all sorts of reasons why I did that at that point. I mean one of them is a slightly jokey thing about – I don't know who it was who said – "that sculpture is something you trip over as you back away from a painting." [Laughs] That was in my head. But also the Samuel Beckett thing about keeping going. A lot of that time I made work about artistic blocks in a way. And the work often came out of that. And that's just another little strand. You know like going back to basics, just see where you can start from again. *Barthes Writing Degree Zero*, which I read at the time. I don't know how important these things are – these connections that you make – who can say. A horizon, or a chart, and you've got the work and you can see all these little threads and influences, in retrospect. Not at the time. You just do it. Especially at that age I felt that intuitively it was the right thing to do..

DW: So *Western Reversal* also uses mirrors. I'd like you to describe how that works. How that came about.

DD: How did it come about? I can't quite remember exactly, except I bought the film to go with this device. Because I used to play around with mirrors and project things into mirrors to see what happened. Then I made a framework of mirrors and moved them around before I decided what to do with that. So I made the [grid] framework to hold swivelling mirrors. Oblong mirrors, up to 16, which imitated the ratio of a projected film image. Then I thought what can I do with this? And I don't know how it came to me.. I think it was to do with the idea of moving outwards. Moving outwards and making sense or the idea of narrative again in the way everything at the end of a film in mainstream cinema supposedly, maybe not so much now, all the loose ends are tied up and you reach a point, like a detective story everything falls into place. And I thought: why don't I use something conventional and in a way see what happens in with this. Symbolically, in a way, everything becomes more and more blurred [as he manipulates the mirrors onto which the film is projected] and all you're left with is this shifting rectangle of overlapped light. And you can't read it – it becomes quite abstract. So I decided to use the *Western*. At the time I was thinking of the idea of Hollywood cinema kind of progressing and, you know, always tying up loose ends. And I likened it to – you make sense, broadly, of the idea of encroaching across land, and taking land from people. So a kind of encroachment across the States and the genocide of the Indians and everything. Maybe that was my most political moment. Also, I thought instead of that, it's film, it's cowboys and Indians, and more Indians are being shot by the cavalry but the actual stuff - light - is actually going inwards and becoming something entirely different. I mean, it's slightly spurious now looking back to lay that on it. But that's what I was thinking at the time. But now it's probably quite a pleasurable experience. But it is called *Western Reversal* and the title may be what that means.

DW: So, was there an interest in narrative at all?.

DD: Well, it's interesting, before I came along and I saw that you were interested in narrative in expanded cinema, I was going to say, the short answer is "there is no narrative."

DW: It's what I usually get.

DD: Having said that, it's that thing about reacting. You can't be negative about something unless you actually know about it. To react against it. So in a way the subtext of expanded cinema, or what I did, could be seen to be connected to the mainstream. So for *Western Reversal* it was, and maybe the *Letter to Rita* and maybe another piece which I did which was using advertising, where I use that same framework [of mirrors] where I project adverts from TV [so they] ..so they kind of move and expand and contract. A bit like a mirror ball. That was another piece that I hardly ever showed.

DW: What was that called?

DD: Commercial Break. Because I was breaking up commercials. [Laughs] It's a bit obvious. Back to your question about narrative. In a sense, if something has a beginning, a middle and an end, there is always some kind of narrative. But I'm always interested in the way that mainstream cinema often has a narrative but there's also a subtext, or the content emerges quite a bit differently. I was particularly interested in that Australian film which is backwards – it's a recent film; the one with Guy Pearce, and he writes tattoos on his body and as he...

DW: *Memento*.

DD: *Memento*. I was fascinated by it. I've only seen it once and actually couldn't get my head around it, about how it all fits altogether because it's backwards but you are watching it forwards. And I was very interested in that. That's fascinating, the use of time. And somebody might have done that, years before; used time in that way; it's like an eternal recurrence. The idea of eternal recurrence rather than a beginning, middle and end; just when it's finished is when it starts again, and it just goes on like that.

DW: But in a way all narrative is a kind of repeating pattern, isn't it?

DD: Yes, yes.

DW: I suppose that's how loops work.

DD: Absolutely.

DW: Even if they're quite abstract to the degree of something Guy Sherwin does...

DD: Yes there's a repeated pattern, but in terms of narrative, telling a story, because of the real timescale when you see *Western Reversal*, it tells a different kind of story perhaps. Like it's not the conventional type of story. And it's a bit like writers writing – and maybe it's a bit conventional now, where people interweave different narratives. You have to be on your mettle about trying to keep all those different things in your head. Somebody might start from the beginning of a film and go to the end of the film, and might also, at the same time, start at the end and go to the beginning. So you get these

two different times going on at the same time. I think it's the whole thing about playing with time, the idea that the story doesn't have to have a beginning, a middle and an end **in that order**. That's a take on narrative, I suppose. But I do remember reading **in Screen magazine** about what they called the hermeneutic code in cinema, **[it's role in]** telling the story, and there were lots of analyses of Hitchcock and how he built up suspense; it's the Hermeneutic Code of what comes next: "oh that little bit of information is important and I'll carry that in my head for later, to build up a whole picture" if you like. I remember it being called a hermeneutic code but I think it refers also to any kind of writing, any story. Where you draw people in, listening. What's going to happen there. And Christian Metz, you know who I'm talking about now. Christian Metz is the person I forgot. He suddenly came into my head. So that whole thing, I was quite interested in that. Not in a very deep way but it seemed to suit my frame of mind, to be questioning.

DW: So was there a kind of interest in not just the stories, but a kind of story of cinema within the film. The social or cultural relationship that cinema implies and that are imbedded in those films?

DD: Partly, partly I mean with the Western thing the cowboys and Indian film already by the time I sourced it was seen as outdated. It was like, in a way, an old view of the west. Americans were now bending over backwards to be politically correct about Native Americans. It's different now, a different climate, but already it was kind of connecting things. The idea of decoding advertisements, which was coming through at that point, all seemed to connect and in a way it was a critique of Capitalist society, Peter Gidal's **work was** more succinct. Yes [laughs] or maybe not. I don't know. But because he was very political. But I was kind of political with a small p I suppose. Did you say social conscience then?

DW: Yes, it was implied.

DD: I remember **seeing** a Murnau film [*Sunrise*1930's]. Wonderful film. I don't know if you've ever seen it? It was at the BFI – with a piano player it was the most amazing experience **in of** a film that I've ever had. It's fantastic – that was the beginning of cinema. It was shot in three sections. A tragic section, a kind of happy section, with a little bit of tragedy and then a kind of carnival section and then a tragic section – it was weird. It was quite extraordinary – that whole thing about the early stage of the cinema, where the visual was – where people had **to** make do with bringing things across through the visual, more than the soundtrack. Nowadays, you the soundtrack seems to be the overriding factor **nudging** people what to **feel** by having a particular **soundtrack**.

DW: Ironic, being a soundless film that was structured around movements of music with those different sections.

DD: Yes **but** just in terms of what you're saying about social consciousness.

DW: The kind of cultural relationships imbedded in the films themselves?

DD: Yes. It was always seen that Hollywood was the mainstream but **it** was really influenced by people like Godard. Godard was fantastic for me, as well. I remember enjoying what now seems a very dry exercise in his films. But they fed something in

me – the whole use of sound and image and dialogue and captions. The way he took something from silent cinema like captions and used them really interestingly. That was European cinema, which I always loved and I always felt closer to European cinema, having grown up with Hollywood films, of course, you can't get away from them and they become imbedded in your consciousness. But having said that I can enjoy **them** – one of my all time favourite films is [Hitchcock's] *Rear Window*. Just the fact of what it's about; the voyeuristic thing that has been analysed to death by people. But also the fact of the whole set. I remember seeing it at the time and I thought it was a real place. But it was a set. And that wonderful thing of the whole set and the sound in that film is incredible because of the distant sound you can just hear is almost like hearing things from a distance. And that was amazing. And also the sense that it was a set and there was a bit of so-called reality **within** the set, which looked like the outside world (**a street outside the flats**). And it was also part of the set. I always found it complete, how you become much more interested the more aware you are of the fiction of the film...

DW: So, your own *Western Reversal* was about deconstructing film?

DD: Yes, but in a very simple way.

DW: I've asked you about narrative. I also wanted to ask you about some of the two screen or double screen work – *Towards/ Away From* [1973]. Why were you interested in using two screens; what was the interest in using two images rather than one? Two frames rather than one?

DD: I think for me it came after my work with two cameras, which I think you've got at the archive, where it's got two single 8 cameras – never mind about Super 8 – single 8 cameras going around in a circle in my room one blocking out the other. That used two identical cameras. They were wind up cameras so they only had three minutes 20 seconds or whatever and they were just going round. And also the light was different in each of them, with two different cameras, also the way they came across. The way the image came across was slightly different. And one is obscuring the other so you see the back of one camera while it's filming. They're leap-frogging over each other around the room.

DW: Is that projected then as a double screen?

DD: Yes. Side by side. I think you've got a copy of it. But it was put on to a single screen. The Arts Council, I think also **needed** that, when they wanted to show **Towards/Away From more conveniently**. I reshot it onto 16mm and then they put it onto digital format. So, I was very aware of this non-synchronisation and I wondered if it was just like filming my feet. One foot over the other – and synchronising. Actually, the initial idea stemmed from a sense of ambivalence about institutions. The first two screen piece showed my feet [walking] away from the Arts Council because I was – they were subsidising me. I did Filmmakers on Tour. I'd get paid to go round colleges and do screenings. It was quite nice for a while. It didn't pay much but it got your work shown to students. So I did this shot one foot going towards it and the other foot going away from it. So at one point when it's going across grass – the park - Green Park – it looks like it's all right. But then when the two grounds become different – can't quite make sense of it. But then it does also do the strange thing of **-starting off** like this and then it

goes out of synch and then you get these two feet **moving together** It's really odd. But it's only three minutes long. I did a later one where I cut in different footwear – sometimes there's me with boots, sometimes there's me with sandals on. Sometimes there's other people's feet. So, you know, I think it's been used in ads. Not that anybody's seen it to use it. I think that kind of strange thing of cutting and time can be used quite a lot in film. It is difficult to read.

DW: Disorientating.

DD: Disorientating. So that's why...

DW: You wanted to have that vision about that permutation.

DD: Yes. But first it started out as a conceptual thing. Two feet walking away from each other then I played with it a bit more and it wasn't just my feet but other people's feet. Different surfaces would have been walked on as well. I never really explored that much, but in a way I used to get ideas, and the first take was it.

DW: It reminds me of Richard Long's work somehow. I don't know if that involves...

DD: The walking. Yes. I enjoyed his work.

DW: Not a direct...

DD: Not a direct influence. The other two screen piece I was interested in was *Overlap* 1973 where one image zooms in and the other zooms out. A fixed projector and a mobile projector. But what is interesting in this is the way in which the projector moves in the way that a camera would move.

DD: Yes. Well that first came about – the first version of that which was called *Confine*, 1972 which was to do with a notion of identity, initially. I filmed a photograph of myself and it was interesting because it was influenced by Michael Snow's *Wavelength*, which zooms into a photograph. But you don't perceive it's that to begin with. With *Confine* I also used a photograph, which is zoomed in not on camera but by moving forward with the projector. The image scale remains the same. It's a very small image from a distance – say that coffee machine over there – it'll be an 8 by 10 image but from a distance the dimensions of the screen this little image in the centre, but if I just left the projector static the photograph would get bigger and bigger and bigger and fill the screen. I moved slowly forward with the zoom, to keep that fixed – there was actually a masking tape of a dark frame on the wall, and I kept the photograph within that. So, the blow-up, the close-up, never became a close-up. And that was intended as an anti-egocentric gesture. Instead of the zoom on the camera you were moving the projector. So, the projector echoed the movement of the camera.

DW: So again. Close to the image but at the same distance in a way.

DD: That's right. I may have complicated that with *Overlap*. I wanted two images. And one is zooming in and one is zooming out. But trying to keep a central point the same. So you get the strange double thing of – at some points – you're not quite sure which is zooming in and which is zooming out. And one when I'm moving with the camera and

the other with the **static** projector I used to go up to Hampstead Heath in the summer when I should have been in the studio – and I noticed there was a raft at the end of the swimming pond –and it seemed to suit: just something nice and static in the middle of the fluctuation of the water around it and so I used that and the idea of the raft being a kind of fixed point or something you swim towards to have a rest I zoomed **in** on the corner of the raft **and shot** another **film** where I zoomed out from it. And then they combined together to make the work. I have never known how it looks because I was always in **the performing of it**.

DW: Well, yes that's one of the interesting things about expanded cinema, that often the making of the work doesn't end. It almost starts again with the projection.

DD: Yes. Exactly. I got shots of it. And I did a still version of it, which I made up to the overlapping images so I got a large image and a small image. I had it made up into a static piece. It wasn't that satisfactory though. I think you miss the point of by seeing it made as a stationary piece. Because it was very much about trying to make sense of something that is actually inherently disorientating. It was rather like – it happens a lot in film now and it happens in Hitchcock – the zoom and pulling away.

DW: Deep focus.

DD: Deep focus. They use it all the time. It was used in *Jaws*, it was used in *Vertigo* it made that strange staircase scene – moving away from you and coming to you at the same time. And in a way I was quite interested with that I think, how that would quite work. The tension between those two movements.

DW: It's really engaging almost physically with space and time. Yes and I suppose the last thing is this kind of Overlap which goes on in the performance in a way. It's not about installation it's about something else.

DD: Yes, it is a sort of performance. Low-level performance but it's a performance.

DW: Do you see a kind of tension between that – the fixedness of an installation and the liveness of the performance - or are they just two different aspects to your work.

DD: They're different aspects to my work. I mean somebody else could even do that performance. There's not that many film installations that I've done, thinking back. They just seem two different things, because the performance is obviously shorter, so you can only experience it in that time, whereas an installation **the audience** can come and go **as they please**. It's just a durational difference I suppose. But having said that, the *Eight Projector piece* was very much about overlapping images. Synchronicity and non-synchronicity, but if we're doing that for a longer time-span I suppose, and in three dimensions rather than [two] – because the screen **was revolving in this installation**, **and catching the image and not catching the image and stretching the image and overlapping the image**, whereas *Overlap* was more on **a single plane**.

DW: I wanted to ask you about stretching and catching the image and the use of puns.

DD: Yes. I **often** like using puns. I'm a great fan of someone like Duchamp and his playful way with language. Creating a tension, something against itself. Like *Projection/*

introjection 1972, where the projector through [mirrors], is turning the light-beam back on the projector. Images of the projector. So, you think after that, where else can you go? There were other artists around which I was very interested in like Vic Burgin's photographs – he was in *When Attitude Becomes Form* – I think, he did it subsequently where he would photograph a floor at an angle and the black and white photographs would be blown up to exactly the same scale and then put across the floor. So you've got this one-to-one relationship between the representation and the reality. And I think John Hilliard did something similar where lots of images of the corner of the stairs were pasted over the stairs. It's very much concerned with self-referential language and about going back to the means of production. so, as with titles that do two things at once. The pun.

DW: Well in *Western Reversal* and the two different meanings of Western.

DD: Yes, because I love words – some of my early works are around language and shifting language and I love language and writing and what people do with language. So I found that quite interesting. Titles for things just came out of the air you know. Sometimes I just start with a title [laughs]. I can't remember which ones started with a title but it has been known. A title would grab me first. Come on let's make a work out of a title. It didn't happen often but...

DW: So have you done much writing over the years?

DD: I've done more recently. I'm currently in the beginnings of doing a PhD about my recent re-showings of work, which is a commentary. I could never do a proper PhD, that would be too many words for me – but in a way this might be difficult because this might be too little because you have to really nail it down and I know that's always difficult with PhDs. But it's a commentary on the fact that I've been re-visiting older work over the last 8 or 9 years and being asked to remake work and asked to reshow work. In a way I didn't realise that I would be archiving my own work so soon. It's very strange, and I thought something should be written about this, so that's what it's going to be, and I haven't quite fine-tuned the initial case that I have to do. I've also done reviews in the past, years ago but because I teach I find myself having to read a lot, being quite good about analysing and going over people's writing and helping them with structure and things. I've supervised a couple of PhDs and I've found myself going more along those lines, I suppose.

DW: To kind of wrap up. Do you find that expanded cinema is still a term that is relevant to your work now, or do you see it as very historical?

DD: It's a difficult one, but I mainly see it as historical. Although I'm aware that there are people still running with it, if you like – taking up the ball and running with it, and sometimes I come across some student's work and they're using Super 8 film. I remember seeing Degree Show work at Chelsea School of Art and this student had set up shelves with about 20 old projectors on – and really old. Some were hardly working and some were slowly and what film there was going through on loops was just coloured gels. So he was creating these ongoing higgledy piggledy colour images, which was rather nice. But I'm not quite sure why he was doing it. It was almost like a formal exercise. What was more interesting was the fact that he was using Super 8 and putting them all together. It became almost like a strange archaic thing to do.

DW: These are almost obsolescent instruments.

DD: I think it's interesting you can still get Super 8 and the Widescreen Centre is fantastic and a lot of younger artists are using Super 8 still and buying up the old cameras and the old projectors. So, that's still going on. In terms of expanded cinema I'm not sure there's a movement I'm aware of. It's very different now. Also there are these other people that I ran into at the day conference at Chelsea when Guy Sherwin showed some work. There is a young generation who are fascinated by it. And they're doing their thing with it. I'm not that up on what's actually happening. Although I might think it's historical, they probably think it's fairly current.

DW: In terms of your own practice?

DD: In terms of my own practice. Possibly. Except it's a strange thing. Being requested to re-make work you find yourself within that process and the work lives in the present moment again. It's very odd. Other works in the 80s, where I used ultraviolet light in installations. Having somebody help me make it because I always used to do everything myself and having an assistant helping me, it's almost like going through the motions because you're not as close to it in a way. You kind of are and you aren't. This is the strange thing about the past and reinventing it, or reimagining it. You're reimagining it while you're making it. And it's very interesting, but I think that's something my PhD will deal with. In some ways it prevented me moving on. However, I have moved on from that period where lots of other works come from— but seem to be informed by that period in the early 70's. It's not necessarily what I would call expanded cinema, as such. Now you've said that it's given me a doubt. Even when I was making objects, later on in the '80s, the objects were often with mirrors and I play around with mirrors still. And it was about the viewer and it was about illusion so you could say that it was a kind of offshoot of earlier work, so it does relate to expanded cinema in my terms.



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