

REWIND | Artists' Video in the 70's & 80's Interview with Ian Breakwell

Interview by Dr Jackie Hatfield, 5th May 2005

JH: Which of your artworks do you consider to be the most important and why?

IB: I have particular favourites but the impossibility of answering that question is linked to why I have used video and why I used it in the first place. From the beginning as an art student I was trained as both a painter and a printmaker. I chose to do a split course from the beginning so, in other words, not to specialise just in one medium but in two. Within the short time of leaving, in fact while I was still at college, I began to experiment with other media. It seemed very natural to me. It was quite clear that there were some students who wanted to be painters but I didn't want necessarily to be a painter. I did a lot of paintings certainly, I wanted to be an artist and before too long I realised I wanted to be a writer as well. So, I hadn't chosen the medium I'd chosen the profession. My attitude quickly developed and was considered at the time, which was a time still of specialisation, to be an unusual attitude. But, when I eventually met other artists of my generation I realised that a lot of other people were thinking the same way. You used whatever medium seemed most appropriate to what you wanted to say. You didn't differentiate between media in terms of their particular importance. The fact that painting had a thousand year old pedigree and video had none didn't mean a thing. It was just another means of making things. It didn't necessarily even have to be visual. A telephone could be used for making art, radio certainly could. It was just another available tool. I don't think with hindsight I ever sat down, considered the medium and thought, 'this is what I want to do with it.' It just happened. Suddenly there were video cameras. Interestingly by complete coincidence somebody had written to me about a show I did in 1970 with *John Hilliard* at the *New Arts Lab*, which is where the first film co-op was set up, and this exhibition involved a lot of destruction of hard material and reconstruction. The process of the destruction and the reconstruction was recorded on video. Now, it's possible there wasn't even tape at that time. It's possible that it was just playback. But the idea of an ephemeral medium replacing a physical concrete medium was established very early. I would say that in the first place the great attraction of video was two-fold. One was that it was linked, unlike film, which I had already used, to instant playback. You could see what you were getting. Seeing what you were getting immediately struck me as being more suited to ongoing action rather than merely a substitute for film where you do take one, take two, take three and you can tell by looking in the video camera, whether that take was right. Somehow it was the immediacy of video that was appealing. When I began using video it was linked to performance. To this day, I don't differentiate between any media. When you say 'what is the most favourite?' I did last year a big video installation at the Tate called *The Other Side*. That ran for six months and was a big success. There's no doubt in my mind that that is one of my major works and is possibly the end of a really big theme that lasted about ten years. I established it with one definitive work. But on the other hand just before the end of last autumn, there are a lot of little drawings, which were done in the middle of the night, which are very



personal. They are as important but the public hasn't seen them and that makes a big difference to me. I think the work isn't completed until it's seen and so therefore I tend to judge works by their public presentation.

JH: Is the audience being part of your works as a process and as exhibition?

IB: Yes. Not in a consciously interactive way. I have always been very, very nervous of that kind of forced involvement of community art. With that exhibition at the *New Arts Lab*, the destruction of the environment there, the audience just joined in. Everybody just joined in. But eventually I was to make works like the big video projection piece *Auditorium* with *Ron Geesin* the composer, which consists entirely of an on screen performing audience. It is watched in reality when in presentation. The video has no meaning without a live audience at all. So you put the live audience in and you've got a live audience facing a filmed audience and the interaction between the two is spontaneous. It's not programmed and it is for certain that an audience is essential to my work. When I look back, I take for granted things that people would say to me. Some people might say its arrogance and other people see it more kindly as self-confidence but some see it as misguided optimism. I can honestly say that I have never written, drawn, painted, filmed or created anything in my life without thinking of another person looking at it.

There's always a viewer, a listener or a reader. It doesn't matter how personal and raw that material is. That objectivity is always there. I have always been around an audience. In a way I think there was possibly a time when that was a disadvantage.

I think certainly in the seventies there was a deliberate ignoring of the audience by artists especially in the concept art. There was an international circuit of galleries and art in which basically half a dozen people in different cities were the only people interested. With the exception of very conscious efforts to go outside of the gallery system like *Gerry Schum* for instance with his video things, there was an acceptance that it was an elite, in-crowd activity. It's now gone to the other extreme where populism and dumbing down is the norm. It's appealing often to a lowest common denominator. It is better that it is, but sometimes one gets a bit fed up with the over exposure. There can be a kind of nostalgia when there are only half a dozen people who really know what you're talking about. But in a way it is good that the publicity has increased public interest in art so greatly. It might mean phoney things like *The Turner prize* and things like that, but it doesn't matter if it brings awareness. The only trouble is that inevitably what happens is that high standards drop.

There was time when I would tell anybody that I was anything except an artist. I used to get in terrible scrapes. I used to just tell them I was things I knew bugger all about, like a car mechanic.

There was great intolerance and philistinism in England. Basically the attitude, you could tell by the eyes. It was either, 'Oh fucking poof eh?' or it was, 'Why don't you get a proper job?' It was the one of the two, and a lot of it was because of the generation and the social background where one came from. Like, security when I grew up in the 50's a definite idea that there was this secure way of life and an insecure way of life. Then of course along came *Thatcher*, security went out of the window. All those jobs that were 'jobs for life' weren't any more and certainly the insecurity of being an artist was faced by a lot of people without the ability to operate as self-employed people that artists have got. So people used to say used to say that. Then, with the awareness of

art that has come about, people go to the other extremes now. They say 'Well what do you do?' and I say it straight away, 'I am an artist and a writer.' 'Oh Wow! That must be great.' They think you live in a loft, drink with *Tracy (Emin)* down the Golden Heart every weekend. And, 'You don't need to take drugs do you? No, you don't need to take drugs, no!' It's cheap. But then we realised how naive the thinking is because eventually you have to pull people up because people say 'Gosh I wish I could do that, I'd love to be an artist!' And I say 'Well would you? Would you really?' I say 'Look, most people get out of it by going clubbing and drinking jelly vodkas and slamming themselves up and down on a dance floor and taking a lot of E's' I said 'That's just because their lives are boring, and surely you don't need to do that as an artist. But uppers have downers and if you're going to intensify your feelings you're going to intensify the bad as well as the good. Now, do you want to intensify the bad?' And people say, 'Well it wouldn't be all bad would it?' and I would say 'Well no, but it does. You see things more clearly and you see the horrors more clearly as well.' I said also, 'You despair. You can despair more intensely.' It has changed a lot over the years. I think now that we have a curious situation very similar to the one that slightly preceded me when I was an art student. It was just beginning to change when I moved in. Within five years there were artists working in all kinds of ways. But painting was taken for granted as being the main medium in art colleges.

It is like a concert I was at, at the *Barbican*. One of the acts was a sax player who was playing phrases into his saxophone and feeding them into a delay sequencer, and then feeding them back and then recording over them. He built up the performance with one instrument into effectively 20 or 30 instruments.

It wasn't a novelty, one has heard it before, but nevertheless it's not necessarily how everybody is going to work. In the concert in fact the second act didn't use any of that at all. But all that is, is video instant playback in audio form. It's what was taken for granted from the beginning. Whereas, *Mike Leggett* and I used to do these big performances in which we'd film the performances. Mike would film as we went along. We'd print that up and project it back in the next performance. You couldn't literally do that on the spot whereas with video, you suddenly could. That's one end of it, its link to performance, its immediacy, its instant playback and therefore interesting possibilities for playing with the concept of present time and past time. Apart from that I didn't think of video ever in those sculptural terms of installation or anything, like building up loads and loads of monitors etc

JH: Like *David Hall* was doing?

IB: Yes, David was basically making sculptures with television sets to begin with and then he started to work with single monitor pieces. But interestingly, with the single monitor pieces, the connection is the same as mine, which is television. Once, there were many artists in the Seventies and Eighties who saw video as a complete alternative to television. They didn't like television. Television had rejected artists. There were no artists' works for television at that time. There were documentaries about it, but the broadcasting authorities thought that this medium belonged to them. Then along came artists and started using the video camera anyway. They were a long way ahead of their time because it took the 80's and the 90's before the kind of camcorder stuff started to get on to television. Then when *Anna Ridley* came along, the idea became established first of all with *David (Hall)* in the Scottish things and then subsequently with me and others at *Channel 4*. The artists used the medium and the medium now

was not videotape. There had been compilations of artists' videos put on to television. This was different. This was using broadcast television as the medium. Now even those individual videotapes that I made in the 70's and the 80's, there were all kinds of different ones, but the three best know are *The News*, *In the Home* and *The Sermon* and each of those was quite consciously made as no budget, single camera videos.

JH: Were those pieces produced by *Anna Ridley*?

IB: No, they were all produced independently.

JH: But Anna produced the *diaries* with you?

IB: Yes, they were done later in the 80's. I did a very early version of the *Diaries* with *Dave Parsons* in the 70's, which has rotted away unfortunately.

It's an interesting hybrid because it uses film techniques like telecine into video as well as live talking heads. But each of those three tapes, although they were not made for television, were directly influenced, and a pastiche of, a particular television genre. *The News* was of the news broadcast. *In The Home* was a kind of crummy soap opera and *The Sermon* was the late night religious monologue. Each one was taken to an extreme, which would not get on television. Now the irony is that eventually they all ended up on television, the medium that they were a pastiche of. They looked quite good but certainly none of them were for projection.

It was the idea of what you would normally see on a domestic TV set. I don't think there were a lot of video artists in the seventies who specifically made any reference to television at all. The reference was very much to the technology, to the physical reality of the medium that they were using. They were not televisual references. It took another generation for those references to become specifically the scratch video stuff that came in later, which was directly referenced to sampling. So, mine was a kind of satirical reference. The two attractions of video were its immediacy and instant playback at one end to the extreme and at the other extreme was its relationship to broadcast television. I'm always very, very surprised at how much television people watch. I watch so little. I watch two programmes a year, that's about it. I will watch a football match or a boxing match or test match but I have no interest in it.

JH: Do you think that broadcast television was seen as a conceptual or artistic medium?

IB: I think there were two things. When I made the videotape *The Sermon*, that was using one camera on a tripod, fixed. That was it. It could go in and it could come out. You couldn't do anything else. However, when I made *The News* and *In The Home*, they were in a very tiny television studio in Carlisle. Suddenly I could do a tracking shot. I could do a pan. I could light things. I think there was an attraction to the artist of being able to use better equipment and facilities than they could normally access. Certainly in my case the main attraction of television was not its aesthetic attraction. In fact, eventually I ended up doing more work for television than any other artist, but I then began to realise how limited a medium it was, when compared with others. Everybody in broadcasting thinks it's the bees-knees. It's the culmination. It's like opera or something. Everything is rolled all into one. It's not at all. It's a terribly technically limited medium. Its range of lighting is very narrow compared to painting, which has

chiaroscuro, or a deep shadow. Everything on television is over lit. It has no great depth of field compared with film or even some stills photography. So therefore everything tends to get fore-grounded and it's very difficult to spot background detail in the way that you can see in a film. That's without crop and pan. In a film you can see somebody coming over the horizon, you'd hardly notice them on television. The medium is the transmitter itself. It's a box, a monitor, which has no more presence than the nearby electric fire. It's not just a matter of size; it is a matter of scale. It has no sense of presence in scale. I realised that it doesn't supersede all other media but I then thought, 'OK, it's got all these things wrong with it, what's it got right with it? What is its peculiar particular quality that makes it a unique media? Is it a unique media?' And I said, 'Yes, it is. And its unique property is its accessibility for the viewer.' It doesn't matter how much publicity there is about art. I had a show last year at Tate Britain for over six months, so a lot of people will have seen that show, but there's no way that a million people will see your work simultaneously at one time.

There's no other medium where a million people, as did watch my TV things that I did with *Anna*, can see your work simultaneously. It could be somebody in the middle of the Scottish Highlands, 150 miles away from an art gallery and they have access to the work. Now that's unique. That's how I approached making works for television. That was my opportunity to address the nation as it were. Whereas I think that some artists were not so much interested in that at all.

When I was making things for television with *Anna* I imagined myself in people's living rooms and I was talking to them one to one. Although I was aware at the back of my mind there might be a million one-to-ones, I was essentially addressing the one. One of the things that television found most difficult to cope with on my programmes and some viewers found disturbing was how close I came to the screen. My face filled the screen so that you didn't see my ears. You could get a little bit too close for comfort for people in their living rooms, but then, like *David Hall* said, you walk into a pub and you realise that people are watching your programme under totally different circumstances. They haven't sat down and given you their attention. You are not a guest in their living room. You are a background irritation perhaps. So in the same way, you don't know when your work goes off through the rental system, how it's going to be seen at all. You don't know whether it's going to be, for instance, just screened, stopped and started, talked about by a lecturer or anything like that. You don't know. They were the two contexts for me and because other works of mine would be shown in galleries, then occasionally video works would be as well, as a work by *Ian Breakwell*.

JH: You wanted people to sit and watch it, and not turn off.

IB: No, I did definitely. I reacted very strongly. There was certainly a very elitists attitude in the 70's, which was, 'We are a small club'. There was a bit of that in the video community as well. It was not assumed that the small workshops and things in *Butlers Wharf* and this, that and the other could be extended. There wasn't an effort to extend them. Whereas now, you couldn't keep people out of a bloody empty warehouse. They just want to flock in, the crummier the better. But there was not that realisation then. I think it's concurrent with that. We don't necessarily need an audience for this was a feeling that therefore we don't need to meet anybody half way. I've always disagreed with that because I've seen occasions where people have gone to try to understand or appreciate a work of art and they haven't known what the hell they're looking at or how to read it. Many artists would say, 'Well it's not up to me. It's up to them.' I have always said, 'Well the context is half of the work.' As *Duchamp* said, 'A work of art means

nothing until you've got the viewer.' Therefore you've got to go half way. You must not compromise the work, but if the person hasn't got the slightest handle on what it is they are looking at, then you are doing them a disservice. People think they know what they are looking at when they are watching television, so you are half way there already. Just like my *Diaries*. My *Diaries* take a totally different standpoint to the first person *Samuel Pepys*' diary but everybody knows or thinks they know what a diary is. They don't say, 'Diary? What's that?' You can then quickly subvert what it is that they think the thing is, so you don't expect to be totally alienated when you see television and although one of the interesting things over the years, is the way that the so called broadcasting standards have altered. First they used to say, 'No artists work can go on television because it is not broadcast standard', but then originally they used to say 'You can't shoot anything on television on video tape, it's got to be on film.' I wrote a thing in the early seventies saying, 'Broadcast standard is crap'. One day a Concord airliner will crash and if the only person in the world to see it crash is drunk, and he's got an upside down video camera, and he has fallen over, and there's just a vague blur, that will be used on the front page of every newspaper in the world.' What happened was even more bizarre. The guy was going at 70 miles an hour in a car. Once the camcorder came in, the idea of the hand held camera and things like that came in. I suppose also surveillance TV and things began to change. I recently did a tutorial with a student who had a website where you could watch paint drying. She was painting her room and you could watch the paint dry. Now all right, that's a bit ridiculous but television isn't too far away from that. I have always thought that television would eventually become like moving wallpaper. Part of it is a kind of corporate publishing empire. I think eventually there will be ambient TV. Now they are so afraid of space. They will not let an image rest for a second. Everything is so fast cut, and yet as television stretches 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you cannot fill that amount of time with fast cutting. The medium is going to go ahead of you. You're going to leave things on screen for a long time I think eventually. When I was working in Australia in 1990 everybody was waiting for *Nelson Mandela* to come out of prison. I happened to be watching a TV channel. They had got one camera and it was fixed on the front gates of the prison waiting for them to open. That was it. He was two and a half hours late coming out so all they had was a couple of big gates on the screen. Every now and again someone would say 'The latest update is that we're just going hold things here until he comes.' There was nowhere else to go you see. The prison was in the middle of nowhere. There was nobody else to interview. Then at one point the cameraman went off for a sandwich or something, and he tipped the camera down on the tripod so it was just showing the grass. That was what was on screen. I said, '*Andy Warhol* eat your arty heart out!' If this subject matter is important enough the visuals can be as minimal as you like. It doesn't matter. I think that eventually we'll be seeing the early days of television when people used to have a lot of space.

JH: In terms of supporting your work, did you sell your work or did you work as an academic in the art schools?

IB: In the seventies I did quite a bit of part-time teaching. By the eighties I'd started to phase that out and although I had no private means, if you're struggling to raise 50 quid to make your videotape, you've not got any private means, but I didn't want the full time job in the art college. Some people can do it, very, very few can sustain their own work and do the full-time job. It usually takes over. I didn't want to do that. I just wanted to carry on being an artist and writer so I began to do an increasing number of

residences and fellowships starting in the 80's in 1980/1981 with Cambridge. Therefore I would have financial security for a year and they would cover the activities that I did during that time.

I would do short term fellowships or residences. I did quite a lot of lecture visits to colleges and then basically live on my wits. I was with a gallery. At that time it was *Angela Flowers Gallery*. They sold some of my work, but not a lot. They sold drawings; collages, photographic work. I did show film and video in that gallery as well. You would be surprised to realise now, but there was no gallery outlet for video at all. Although I didn't differentiate between the media, so drawing is no more important than a video, the galleries certainly did.

JH: What about *The Sigi Kraus Gallery*?

IB: He would show video, but he wouldn't be dealing with it. Nobody was dealing with it. There were already artists making video works, *Gilbert and George*, *Barry Flanagan*, myself and people like that, but the galleries weren't dealing with it, with the exception of *Gerry Schum* who never had a gallery anyway.

JH: He didn't! He didn't have a gallery?

IB: No he didn't have a gallery, he went straight to television.

JH: He called it a gallery, but it was a 'television' gallery?

IB: Yes. The galleries weren't dealing with videos as objects, as things, as editions. They weren't seen as being like an edition of prints. I think that is in part, because of the short-sightedness of the galleries, but also because of the origination of video from artists who saw it as an alternative to the gallery. People like *Nam June Paik* who bought the first video camera. He saw it as the complete opposite of the gallery system and the dealers and the Fine Art object. This was the accessible democratic tool that anybody could use. It had nothing to do with a one-off and that translates directly into the kind of rental system of first through the *Film Co-op* and then *London Video Arts* whereby tapes were rented.

JH: It was mostly single-screen tapes wasn't it?

IB: They were, yes. They would be shown in colleges, festivals and cinema techs. You could just hire them through the post. It was an extension really of the sort of film society system. It was definitely not in any way related to the gallery system. Galleries don't do rentals. They sell or they don't sell. It has taken a long, long time for the galleries to accept that video is a work in its own right. A lot of that has been since the limitation of the edition. Also because of the increasing use of video for installation, therefore it belongs in a gallery as opposed to on a TV monitor. I think that made a big difference. It's only recently, in the last couple of years, that the Tate for instance has really begun to seriously buy video installations as major works.

Gilbert and George would say to *Nigel Greenwood*, 'Here are our works, here are our sculptures'. Some of the sculptures were large arrangements of post cards on the wall. Other sculptures were big multi pound photographs, and another one was a videotape.

None of them in the conventional sense are sculptures at all, but that's what they called them. They don't say 'Here's our video, for rental'. It's just an artwork as they see it. There was a difference there. So it was a combination of the galleries not being that interested and the artist not forcing the gallery to see the things in a different way. I think the continuation of the idea of distribution, outside of television, being via the model set by the *Film Co-op* rental distribution meant that a lot of those video artists apart from in alternative spaces and a few public festivals and museums; I don't think any of them had any connection with galleries. Well, virtually none of them, except for me. I always did have a gallery because I wasn't a video artist. I just used video every now and again like I might use printmaking every now and again. Therefore my work was always in the same way that *Gilbert and George's* was, it would be seen as another artwork. Then along come a generation in the eighties of younger artists and there was a time when *Anna* started to get artists' work on television and artists' work, one after the other, started to come up. You thought this was going to continue but within a couple of years it became obvious that *Channel 4* was going to radically dumb-down and it was going to take some time for the BBC to catch up. Meanwhile, when one was going to waste a lot of one's time preparing proposals for television, which they didn't, basically want, there was also a sense of resentment, certainly on my part, at the amount of time that making work for television took up. Once you were into a three-month production you can virtually do nothing else. I began to really resent the fact that it was keeping me out of my studio and working on other things. It becomes a dominant medium. So obviously, it was not going to be through television. Then a younger generation of artists came along.

Interestingly, the next big break with 70's to 80's video, comes when the younger generation of artists say, 'Fuck television, we're not interested in television. And we're not interested in renting our tapes. We're not interested in that *LVA* way of doing things. Why should we wait for *Channel 4*? We've got an empty warehouse lets just bung it on the wall'. Instead of people watching things on television sets or seated in rows of seats, suddenly things get stuck on a bare wall. There were no seats, just people lying on the floor or leaning against walls. Suddenly a whole different way of looking at and presenting video came about, which had not been known before. Sure, I had done installation things, a few other people had done as well, involving projection but the idea of just 'bung it on the wall and fuck the funding' was new. Suddenly there were videos everywhere and in every gallery space you'd walk into it was there. At that point, that was when a lot of those artists who had by-passed the gallery system in the past, started to get resentful because they'd been over looked. Nobody knows who they were because they stayed within those shrinking video art genres. It takes something like *Shoot-Shoot-Shoot* or, specifically *Live In Your Head* to make people aware of what people were doing with film. There still hasn't been the kind of show that would bring the same awareness to video. It's very difficult to say what the reaction be if there was a show like that. There was some video in *Live In Your Head*, but not much. If you had a show that gave the same attention to films that did, but gave it to video, I really don't know what the reaction of the current generation of young artists would be to it. I'm surprised at how there seems to be a big gap between those students and young artists who really don't know anything, they really don't know the history of the art or where it is coming from at all, and those that do, who are in a minority. But they are easily the most interesting. They have a surprising interest in what you'd think might be the crudest early work. They sit watching *Richard Serra* slamming that piece of lead into his hand for bloody hours. They are fascinated by it

because it's what people don't do now. We are in such a sophisticated techno thing now compared to the rawness of that. I don't know whether there's that same fascination with 'what is this medium?' anymore.

I could say video is taken for granted now in the same way that painting was. There are conceptual and aesthetic reasons for making a work on video for a gallery. The piece I made for *Tate Britain* this year, *The Other Side*, could not be made for any other medium. It couldn't be shown even on television because it is double sided. It's a sculptural, physical build that it is projected on, which is essential. The ability for the audience to move around and circle the piece is all part of it. This is a piece which is neither suited to television, videotape or anything like that, it's a gallery piece.

JH: Do you think you achieved your ambitions regarding dissemination and how you wanted your works to be seen?

IB: No I don't think so. I wouldn't feel completely satisfied, but I have tried the various outlets that there are. I've tried the rental system, I've tried the gallery system, I've tried the television and that's about it. I have tried those different outlets for the medium, which is known as videotape and just as I said earlier on, 'no one medium is any better than any other', I don't think one outlet is any better than any other either. Each has its own particular quality. I think to this day the quality of broadcast television remains its widespread accessibility. The quality of the gallery is that it enables you to make a work, which can be experienced physically and cannot by definition be shown on television, whereas a lot of artists' work shown in galleries could just as easily be shown in television, for instance. A lot of it has nothing whatsoever to do with filling space. Sometimes, I wouldn't necessarily blame the artist. I would say that the context has changed. I think that in the early eighties for instance when there were a lot of artists' work getting on television, then the video works say of *Gillian Wearing* would have found its natural home on *Channel 4*, as slightly quirky television. It's got nothing to do with being projected on walls.

So with those three systems, the rental system is nice and democratic, but the kind of network for it has gone now. There is no Film Society anymore. But people are watching films and videos more than ever before, but what they are watching are DVDs, or they are downloaded and they are watching them on their computers. The world of video art has not crossed into that at all. There are no online galleries, there is nothing.

It is a totally overlooked area. A lot of my friends happen to be improvising musicians. A lot of them originate from the *London Musicians Collective*, next door to the *London Filmmakers Co-op*. So there is this small clique of people who never went beyond what we were saying earlier about a wider audience not being sought until television intruded. Now *London Improvising Musicians* are still like that to this day. There are tiny clubs, and they know they're never going to make the break through into populist stuff, and a lot of them don't want to. But my friends who are improvising musicians, they've been at it for 30 or 40 years and through conventional outlets, which are equivalent let's say to the *London Filmmakers Co-op* or *LVA* distribution system, i.e. sale or return in shops, they might sell 10 records a year worldwide. Since the Internet they sell 500 a year of the same record

JH: So people download it?

IB: Just from the web site. 500 is fuck all, but somebody in Hungary gets it, somebody in South America gets it, and it's easy. It is access and it stands to reason, that if you've got a million people, there are maybe 10 people interested in improvised music. If you've got 10 million people, you've got a 100 people interested in improvised music. And it would be the same with video art I think.

JH: Were there specific facilitators or people or curators that helped you achieve your ambitions with disseminating your work?

IB: Not within the gallery world, there hasn't been. I don't think that within the commercial gallery world in England there has been, before the mid to late eighties, any particular gallery dealer. *Gerry Schum* actually worked with very few people, and he didn't seem to notice there were any women in the world at all. I don't think Gerry Schum ever worked with a woman artist, ever. But there was nobody in England who you would say 'Well, yeah, that gallery if you're doing video that's who you should talk to.' *Nigel Greenwood* would probably be the only one we could, but then there were the galleries that were identified with that just happened to have those artists who worked with either film or video as part of their work. *Nigel Greenwood* would have *Gilbert and George* and *Angela Flowers* would have me. In later years of course that all began to change so that when I eventually moved to *Anthony Reynolds Gallery* for instance, the first show that I did happened to be huge paintings. But if I say to Anthony 'The next show is a video piece' then that's accepted. It's another work by me. So opinions are divided, there are still some people who don't think video should be in that gallery world of limited editions and big prices. Anthony sold a couple pieces by me last year that were of equivalent stature. One was a multi-panel wall drawing and the other was *The Other Side* installation to the *Tate*. He would judge both of those equally as art works. This is what you've got to pay, and if you are talking in that or in thousands, it is a world away from the original video conception of it being the production cost of a bit of plastic.

The galleries didn't sell video, they kind of showed it as a favour for the artist. It was years and years before museums started to buy them. They were quicker off the mark in America but the *Tate* is taken a long time. The *Tate* still has a videotape budget, which has a ceiling on it. So under that budget they might buy for instance an old tape by *Steve Partridge* or something like that but that's totally different. It's a videotape that happens to exist and that's very different to video installation, which can only be shown in a physical space.

The *Tate* bought a large work by me a few years ago called *The Walking Men Diaries*. It's not a video piece. It's a huge wall piece. I had said all along that I did not want that work to go to a private collection if it ever got sold. I wanted it to be on public display. It was a public work. It was about a public. It was something, which would engage a wide number of people. There would be great interest in it. I wanted it to be in a public space. Now whether that public space was via a private dealer such as *Saatchi* then I don't mind, as long as it was there on display. What I didn't want it to do was to go on to somebody's wall in a penthouse and never be seen by anybody else. Similarly with videotape I would be unhappy if the video went through the gallery system into a collector's vault without being visible. But there's no reason why they should do that. There have been attempts in the past to make things as limited and precious as that, and I think that the artist just has to insist and say, "No! This is not just for one person".

Therefore if you do that, then I think a lot of the objections that artists might have to the gallery system having replaced the original democratic, go by the board because you say, 'Look, part of the deal of selling *The Other Side* to the *Tate* is that they show it for 6 months and hundreds of thousands of people get to see it. Far more than would see it through the rental system that you wish to apply democratically.'

I can remember to this day the first time I ever went to a film society, which was at *Derby College of Art*, and normally the cinema was Hollywood or it was Rank, and it was what was shown at your corner picture house. The criteria of going to see it was, what it was about? Was it a Western or a Musical and who was in it? So I went to a film society and up on screen comes this credit saying, '*The Seventh Seal*, a film by *Ingmar Bergman*'. I thought, 'What does it mean a film *by*?' That's like *The Castle*, a book *by*. I thought, 'That's exactly what it fucking is!' I had no idea that a film was directed by a person, I just didn't know that. I didn't think 'Oh it's a film by Hitchcock.' Actually *Hitchcock* is the exception, Hitchcock was the first one where people identified the film with the person who made it. But you can take all these famous directors down that everybody talks about - *Von Sternberg* and *Howard Hawks* and *Billy Wilder*, nobody had a bloody clue who these people were. *Some Like it Hot* was *Tony Curtis* and *Marilyn Monroe*, what's it got to do with *Billy Wilder*? And so I realised that a person made the film like a person made a book and then I think *Warhol* was a big influence you know. Personally I am not a great fan of *Warhol*, I think he's got a lot to answer for in terms of dissipation and dumbing down, but the idea of 'OK! Fuck it! Let's make a film!' was hugely influential and on a lot of artists. All you needed was a camera and some stock. You go out and shoot a movie and so that was an example to me at the time. Then of course the *Filmmakers Co-op* gave me the opportunity to actually print it up.

I went to one of the first two or three meetings of the *London Filmmakers Co-op*, which was held in *Better Books Bookshop*. It was hilarious because *Bob Cobbing* who ran the bookshop used to draw the blinds. Then we'd set up a screen and that was that. Although I was later to discover that *John Latham* had made a film a couple of years previously, nobody had actually made a film

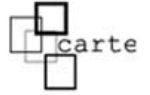
We watched a film each week. So *Steve Dowskin* was the film in question. The projectionist also was the sound track person, which was *Ron Geesin*, which was how I met *Ron* for the first time. *Dowskin* would be there and *Simon Hartog*, a couple of Americans, *Dave Curtis* maybe, but no more than six people, and the ambience interestingly was not technology, the ambience was books. That was what we were surrounded by. The *William Burrows* book on the counter was coming somehow from the same place. A lot of people don't realise that there was that, whereas for instance, the French Cinemateque, there was no equivalent. That was very much surrounded by film. That was what informed them but it wasn't what informed the early Film Co-op. Of course the first Arts Lab was surrounded by poetry, exhibitions, brown-rice, all kinds of shite. Only when they moved to Robert Street to the place did you get the identification of the place with equipment.



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