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

MLG: *White Field Duration* and *After Lumiere* for example are really dealing with very fundamental issues of the problematics of cinema – of the way in which, the cinematic image is an indexical signifier or not. It makes those issues problematic. It doesn't actually take up a position about them, but it makes them problematic in a way that I think is creative... it doesn't have an agenda, that's like a didactic agenda, it begins from my own curiosity and uncertainty about certain things in the cinematic experience in the way that the cinema functions. It begins from that, but then explores it. It will make changes along the way of it that are to do with my response to the experience of it. They are not conceptual works in the sense of you have a concept and then you demonstrate the concept through the work. You have a problem it's a problematic position, something that is curious that is very fundamental about the problem of representation, about the recording of time, about living through a certain experience in time when you're watching it, the relationship of that to the time that is represented in the work etc. Some of the works I think have got a very challenging area of content that many audiences aren't really geared up to understanding, I think. I like those works but I wouldn't show more than one of them in a programme for example.

JH: It's interesting because you are talking about cinema. I suppose one takes it for granted the fact that the language of cinema is not necessarily technologically fixed. A few people might imagine that you fixed yourself as an artist within the 'filmic'.

MLG: I clearly distinguish between the 'cinema' as an institution, which for me on the whole means Hollywood, there is the equivalent of the film industry, the cinema industry, which is an institution where films are shown in cinemas, they have narratives and they fit into a certain kind of psyche. Then there is film or the media of cinema, that used to be film, then it became electronic, video, and it is now moving increasingly towards being entirely digital. For me, the 'cinematic' is a quality relating to the kind of experience in which the audience relates to the moving image, which is not to do primarily with the medium. For me, the 'cinematic' is more difficult to define. It is to do with the kind of experience which someone has when they're encountering the cinematic and it's to do with movement, it's to do with time. It's to do with the passage of time and duration, it's to do with scale and the way in which you become engaged through the senses with the visual and audio experience and it's not to do with the medium. For me it doesn't matter whether it's carried on DVD or videotape or film really. That is not for me a major question. It is influenced by the institution. If you are showing in the institution of the cinema or television those are institutions and they have institutional expectations, or if you're showing in the institution of the art world, in galleries, that institutional context will affect it. But, there is something that is

continuous in the way in which the audience, the user, the spectator, the kind of engagement that they have with the image and its passage which, for me, is not determined entirely by the institution. It is almost like there is a cinematic desire in us. A desire for that sort of involvement that is encompassing, spectacular, engaging. We have a desire for that and particularly the rate and passage of time. The rate at which images are changing seems to be quite important in this and even in the other non-cinematic media. I'm thinking of the internet and so on, they seem to be aspiring to that experience of the cinematic. A lot of the issues that have been of interest to me, which is to do with the spectator placing themselves, or the spectator being placed within the representation, seems to me to survive either the medium or the institution, those two are not in the end the entirely dominating factors of what I would think of as the cinematic, which is to do with the kind of experience that there is for the spectator, with on the whole, not entirely, this large-scale fairly rapid temporal change, expectation of a dramaturgy. These sorts of questions are there in the characteristics of the cinema.

My definition isn't strict it's a set of intercepting qualities. What's difficult for me is that a certain period of my own work was attempting to break the lure of the illusion in cinema. I have talked a lot about 'Brechtian Alienation' factor and the attempt to switch to a form where the spectator became self-conscious, the spectators become aware of themselves in a space separate from the experience of the film or experience of the cinematic, it was oppositional to that kind of dominant illusionistic cinema that was fully engaging the audience in a way that they had no separation from. It is difficult for me because that level of engagement is also a very important part of the engagement as well as the non-engagement. It is more the kind and level of the engagement and it is to do with something that occupies your visual field, it occupies your audio field so that you become part of the image, in the sense of being in a dream environment. It's like you move into the dream environment. You move into the space that, in a way, has been stolen by narrative, the diegetic space. Even if I want devices which bring you out of it, make you aware of the fact that you are different from it, that your life is not the life that you are engaging in the work, I still feel that the cinematic lure is to do with that pleasure that you get when you become engaged as if you are in something approaching the dream world. I'm ambivalent about it because I don't want that to be an oppressive relationship. In the early period of the work, when I was quite strong about saying the experience of the cinema is the here and now of that experience and not the there and then of the image or the there and then of the narrative. On the other side the experience of the here and now can be a highly sensual, sensory, sensuous experience. It is with classical modern art, for instance, Matisse. When you see a Matisse, the image occupies your visual field but it doesn't represent something behind the picture, it represents something that you are in the presence of. You are there because you are part of the presence. I'm trying to have it both ways having the immersiveness it is a very important part of the cinematic. If you're talking about that period of video art that was the monitor period of video art, which looks very out of date now. It looks more out-of-date than the period of projected cinema. The period of the monitor looks like a kind of very curious period in artistic history because it's built around this rather transient stage of a technology. It's like all that could handle pictures electronically were cathode ray tubes – we didn't have any other way of dealing with it. It worked for conceptual work because it was very difficult for it to be immersive. One of the reasons it worked for Baldessari and Richard Serra and those people who did conceptual works for the monitor, was because it could handle an idea but it was very difficult for it to handle an immersive experience. They got over it sometimes by making

the immersive experience through multiplication, for example, like Video Garden, Nam June Paik, or David Hall, taking a large number of monitors, they actually made a physical sculptural experience. It was immersive, through a combination of those monitors.

JH: What about participatory video? Because that was something that film couldn't be.

MLG: That was a different matter, where the exploration in video was about video as a feedback system as in some of Dan Graham's work and *Video Corridor*. It was where the spectators saw themselves as they passed through on a live video or on a loop delay video. There weren't so many of those but those works interested me a lot. What was happening was not to do with the image but to do with the system and to do with video as something where the spectator was reflected back into the work. Those works tended to be sculptural works with video as a component within that sculptural experience, I though those were much more interesting. They weren't about immersiveness in the image, the immersiveness was in the sculpture and in the experience of the system. I thought they were much more interesting works and in fact the works that I did with video, were much more like them. They weren't videotapes, none of the works that I did with video were video tapes, they were video set-ups and that interested me. It was interesting also that that problematic was something that fed back into film: particularly with William Raban's *2 Minutes 45 Seconds* where he used film as if it were a video feedback system. In my own re-filming from the screen works, which was quite a number of them: *White Field Duration, After Leonardo*, and *Don't Say*, which I don't show anymore but is still around, these were films where the video experience of the feeding back, bringing one time into another, not documentation, as a document, became a problematic in the cinema. It was curious in the cinema because the cinema wasn't a one-to-one instant feedback. It was a feedback that was always separated by some time process of developing, printing, re-showing, re-filming, it is like it stretched that video process out, that was very influenced by that capacity of video to feedback into the live experience.

I didn't get interested in single-track video until it was easily accessible high quality, relatively high-resolution, colour images, which would take a blowing up to large scale. It was only when video became a kind of equivalent for the level of immersion and quality that you could get with film that I became interested in single-track. Now, I don't care. I happily make things on Mini DV or DV Cam, because you can blow it up on to a screen.

My work has had more response in the art world outside of Britain than it has in Britain. Which I think now has a kind of lost middle history when we were doing work, it's not just me I'm talking about. There was William Raban and Gill Eatherley and lots of other artists at the time, doing work, which in a way had a philosophical framework within the art world rather than within the cinema world.
The kind of philosophical base on which we were working, the issues to do with representation or something were much more issues that grew out of the art world than they were out of the world of cinema even though cinematic theory was much better and more advanced than art theory, the real issues of the work related to the art world. At the same time this was really a radical intervention and a real challenge to the art world, there was not one single museum or collector in Britain that said: 'This work is really important and we want to embody it in the museum context'. Nobody was

discussing it in the art world. I was discussing it. We were our own critics and our own theorists but nobody else was paying any attention to it.

Now video and film, has its place in the museum but the work that broke the ground is still utterly ignored. It's neither here nor there whether I think my work is of long term high quality, but there is no question in my mind at all that when I put what I was doing against what other artists of the period were doing in the 60's and 70's; the work like *Berlin Horse, After Leonardo, After Manet, After Lumiere* and *Threshold*; if you put those against the other art works of that period they stand up as being something that ought to be seen as part of that art history of the period. Yet, I still have not got anything in the Tate Collection. It is extraordinary to me. It's not that I think I'm that great, it's just that if I were an objective critic from the outside I would be saying: 'Something was going on here, it clearly has had an effect and it was clearly part of the history, we must have this represented.' Yet nobody is doing that.

It was, in its early stages quite deliberately provocative. It was anti-cinema and it was anti-art. I'm thinking of *Castle 1*, I'm thinking of *Rohe Film* (Raw Film) by Birgit and Wilhelm Hein, *Upside Down Feature* by Gidal. There was a kind of provocative attack on art values, it was not unlike Dada. Again you can't have it both ways, you can't attack the art institution and then expect to be completely accepted by it. So in that sense, it's not too unreasonable if you challenge it to that degree. On the other hand looking at it in retrospect, though it was challenging at the time, nonetheless it also had a huge amount of the positive art values.

I started as a painter but just as I was leaving the Slade, in 1964, I started to experiment and want to break out of strictly painting and into other forms of working, I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do. I did some photographic work. I started to be interested in art and technology in a general sense and I lead up and worked with a number of people who were interested in art and technology. I was interested in sound and music and I made contact back again with AMM, which was a music group. I joined, and was one of the first members of the Computer Art Society in 1966 I think. I was first teaching at Ealing but I was offered a job at St Martin's in 1964 or 1965. When I got to St Martin's I started to think I'd like to do something with film and I started some 8-millimetre work and started to raid the dustbins of Soho. I'm not quite sure why but it was part of a general tendency to be trying to work in different ways from painting. I also got a job at Goldsmiths with Andrew Forge who was the Dean there temporarily. At Goldsmiths there was a very interesting new video department in the educational section. They had a big deck system, it was 1 inch I think but not Portapak. It was reel-to-reel, black-and-white, and nicely set up and run by someone, I'm sorry I can't remember his name, who was very sympathetic to experiment and trying things out. It was a mobile and flexible system on trolleys. I went in there and did a number of experiments including re-videoing off the screen some of the work that I did on *Castle II*. When I was working on *Castle II* some of the early work. I was just projecting this material and trying different things like matting and using faders and so on. I did some big pieces like that. In 1967 or '68, I did an event at the Arts Laboratory in Drury Lane. It was two weeks working with a group of people including Mike Dunford, some actors and performers. We were using video equipment, they loaned. It was extraordinary that they did it but they were prepared to loan this video equipment that had about two or three monitors, two cameras, a recording desk and a mixer desk. They loaned it to us for two weeks. We did theatrical improvisations, there was a group of theatre people

who were into improvisation and we did a whole series of events where we wrote the scripts for it all or just improvised. I did three things for video there, but all of which were not for video recording. They used a video tape recorder but it wasn't about videotape. Fortunately they're documented. One was a mixer piece where I had two people sat in *Tableaux* and I simply mixed it very slowly.

The other thing which I did, partly through the Computer Art Society and partly through someone who came through to me from St Martin's somehow. I still don't remember or know how. I think I had met someone from the Science Research Council they were interested in seeing if he could do something with an artist. Gore had said 'You are interested in computers, aren't you?'. I met this man in a pub and he had a grant from the Science Research Council. He must have been in a University, I suspect in London University and he got me access to the computer at the Atomic Energy Establishment in Didcott. Well, I went down to Didcott, and I had to learn to programme. I had to sit and type things into punch cards and it was very, very lengthy process. I had nine months of working on this and I produced about 8 seconds of black-and-white very low ellipses. It wasn't that I wasn't interested but it was in that sense, for me, like video, and was too early for it to be able to satisfy the things which I was excited by in film. What I was excited by in film was this kind of vibrant pace, scale and audio and visual experience, which I couldn't get at that time from video or the digital. So, my not working in film and video and digital was really entirely to do with the timing and the state of that technology at the time when I was doing it. Now, for me there's no distinction. A lot of people are making a big fuss about digital video at the moment and they are saying to me 'Why aren't you making film?' There is still this film purist thing, which because of my early work with the materials of film, they attach me with that camp of the materiality of film. While in truth, it's not something that's fundamental to the issues. It's fundamental in that in any one point, you're working the reality of the medium, and the reality of the way in which that is experienced by the audience is its reality and so the medium is important in that respect, and remains so, but it's not for any intrinsic-ness of the carrier. That remains in a way that cinematic concern, filmic concern is kind of arbitrary. The concern with the monitor is for me an arbitrary thing. The best monitor work is the one that acknowledges the glass front, like *China Girl* by Richard Serra. It acknowledges the glass front of the screen. It acknowledges that that is where it is, or, it acknowledges the process by the feedback. So the medium is totally important in that it's the basis of the experience. You can't create an experience that isn't in tune with the conditions of the medium, so it remains important. But it's not of itself the intrinsics of the medium.

JH: Can you talk a little bit about the shift from when you started making video works, and when the technology had moved to the point where imagistically, it had reached the point where it was acceptable for you as an artist?

MLG: I think it was around 1983 or 1984 when the Sony Video 8 camera became available. There were two things, I bought the first big Sony Video, which I've still got and I went out and shot some material with it and I came back and looked at it on my television screen, I thought, 'I like this. I like the image. I like the colour quality. I like the effect of it. I like the resolution of it. I particularly like the ease of that process'. As filmmaker, for a large part of what I did, I did the printing and processing. It meant I spent very long periods in dark spaces, completely black with the printer. I spent a long time and used one way or another a fairly high level of resources to do sound mixing, picture control

and editing on the steinbeck. Now I had the opportunity to work with a medium where the relationship between the making of the image and the seeing of the image was brought much closer. It satisfied something for me about bringing my making practice closer to the way I was living my life than I had with film. There was a big separation in film between the making of the film and the other conditions of your life. It had to be in a very special kind of category. Now I was beginning to get interested, not in my life as an autobiographical thing but in there not being that hard separation between what it was that was going on in my mind and was going on in my vision and in my normal passage through life, and what I was thinking about doing with the art work. Again from my point of view I'd already, a long time before, known that what was interesting to me was not the production process itself but the experience at the point of viewing the work. I have talked about it a lot and I still think it was a genuine theoretical position, not just wishful thinking. It was the condition, the moment of the spectatorship, which was what interested me, or bringing the experience of the work much closer to that moment. So the minute that the image from the video had a chance of working with the sort of quality and resolution that you could get with film, even when I was making film that was going against resolution, it may seem curious that I'm talking about resolution, but something of the kind of quality of the colour and so on, I found myself being more interested in the video. I was very tired of the alienation that I had from the process through the processing of film. I'd made three long feature length pieces for television on 16-millimetre film: *Emily, Finnegan's Chin* and *Blackbird Descending.* Each of those was a big production; I was working with professional facilities, I had budgets for them and I was working with large numbers of people. I was working in a territory that was very influenced by the kind of de-constructionalist semiotic questions of the time, I was very influenced by those theoretical questions and I came to a conclusion at the end of making *Finnegan's Chin* where I thought: 'I'm really not sure that I'm going in the right direction with this work'. I looked back at the work that I'd done previously and looked at the earlier pieces like *Berlin Horse* and thought 'Actually I was right to be going in that direction'. That was more radical than what I was doing with the sort of play with narrative and play with the language of cinema. So, the video also linked up with that question. Video allowed me to, in a way, to think much more small scale, much more without dependence on any external funding. There was a real possibility of having the whole making process under my own control with my own equipment. At the same time the digital began to become more popular. It was almost at the same time when, I had got my Atari computer and started to be able to do things with the computer in a relatively simple and engaged way. In a visually and audio engaged way, that for me, matched my idea of the cinematic and I could do that at low cost. So I started to work with the computer and the involvement of video with the re-consideration of working with the computer and the digital. Even though it was analogue video that I was producing with a Video 8, in fact it was already going through a digital frame store. Already all the equipment was using a digital frame store. My editing equipment was using digital frame store so the digital was already coming in even with the analogue. I had engaged with the whole process of making and putting together of the video and then, because of the digital a lot of the things that interested me about image transformation, which I was doing in film through printing processes, I could take up and in some ways take further using the digital process. Gradually that issue of the image transformation of its self in a digital way is not so interesting for me at the moment but I did find that I could do with video, everything that I was interested in doing with film,

I found that I could do it more easily and much more quickly. I could cover a lot more ground, more quickly with video. I could produce lots and lots and lots of pieces of video and I could do it much more quickly and easily. The main thing I liked was the experience of the image. I actually enjoyed it.

JH: Because projection was not around in those days, was it?

MLG: It wasn't, but it was sometimes. It's not absolutely straightforward. Even the computer work I was projecting. I used a video projector, and I was going straight from the Atari to a box, which was projecting it. The first versions of the piece which is called *Arbitrary Logic*, which was originally called *Osnabrück* because I showed it at the Osnabrück Film Festival, that first version was done on a video projector. Whenever I could, I showed it on a video projector. I actually bought a little box, which translated the RGB from the Atari directly up onto a video projector.
        I did one live piece with the music people in Harrow, where I had a midi guitar. I translated the midi signal into both sound and a controller for the image and that was on a video projector. I was always looking at the scale. The reason it was complicated is that the first main work I did was almost entirely produced on video. That was: *Sketches For a Sensual Philosophy*, though there were sections of that that had been shot on film. That was done for TV. It was produced on tape with the expectation that its main presentation would be on TV. I had got quite interested in the TV image, not the video image, the TV image.

JH: How has the technological change affected your practice?

MLG: There are very fundamental things that come as a result of the technological change, which makes high resolution, high quality representation cheap and available. It puts us in an environment where we are increasingly producing representational images far in excess of the time we've got to view them. Here we have a condition where two cameras are running on me, but by the time we finish a run for three hours. That will have produced six hours of tape. So the representation time is already double the actual time of the event itself. The cost of the technology is expensive but by other standards, it is not terribly expensive. So in one way, that devalues the special-ness of the representation.

JH: I don't agree with that though, because it is contextual. Everything is contextual - because the value of it depends on its context.

MLG: Yes, but automatically the cost of the representational system meant that we used it very sparingly and so even if it wasn't good, it still had a sort of a built in value from it scarcity value. In some ways this medium is no longer precious, I mean it's embodied in a number of specific things. Film is silver halides. It's a rare material and it has a photochemical process, which is very expensive. Video is iron oxide, an extremely available material. Electronics is based on the silicon chip. There is no more abundant material on this Earth than silicon. There is a mass of the stuff. It's in virtually every material. It's everywhere and it's not an expensive material, so you are not dependant on expensive materials for the recording. It's sort of fundamental that video is no longer special. The capacity to produce high quality images and still-photography through the digital and through the electro-magnetic recording system is available now to every tourist walking on the street. The amount of video material and the amount of

photographic representation being made far exceeds any of our capacities to see or process it. With this massive proliferation, the quality factors are not in the 'special-ness' category, they are somewhere else. They are in the 'it ain't what you do it's the way that you do it' category. It's very much now in the question of what you do with it and you can't rely on its rarity. Access to a production system that was elitist, is not elitist anymore. It is no longer elitist to be able to make that material. It's available to everybody at a kind and quality, which we previously only assumed to be available in a very elitist system. That is why William Raban is working on 35-millimetre. He's working on 35-millimetre because, working with film, now the only good reason for doing so, is to work on 35 or 60 or 70-millimeter. The only good reason for doing it is because you know you still have a space that gives you a quality factor that you can actually see the difference. I can't see, in the main, sufficient quality distinction between 16-millimetre and digital video to make me want to work in 16-millimetre. The gap between them is just so small.

JH: In terms of just the shooting, it is interesting because going back to process and the work that you've made, you made textural work where you used whatever technologies were available, and have woven an imaging texture through your work. With shooting, the technology of digital is more sophisticated than film has ever been in terms of its imaging capacity.

MLG: Yes I agree. There's a rule and there's a range available to you in it that is not available to you in film, except by enormously roundabout methods. You could just about simulate it in film.

JH: But that's where the digital technology is interesting beyond the filmic.

MLG: Well it is, but in a sense I wouldn't want to put the rationale for using one medium rather than another into the technological territory that it opens up. I mean I still think there's no reason why I shouldn't be able to produce as interesting a piece of art work using match sticks than using 35 millimetre film. I know it's a ridiculous argument but the point that I'm making is that in the end you can't define the value and quality of the work by the novelty of the devices that you use. I use certain sorts of devices but I only use the devices that suit my artistic purpose. I recently made a piece called Digital Aberration, it was like a self-punishment piece because my dogma was that to do anything with the digital you have to be able to programme and generate all the material and transformations yourself otherwise you're just carrying forward the creativity that's embodied in the development of the technology by the scientists. So I decided I would make a piece where I used all of the cheap effects from pinnacle, or every cheap transitional effect. I made the sound track by using a piece of software I found on a Cornflakes packet. It was a piece of free music software. It was actually a sequencer, but set up really for kids or teenagers to use. It was very, very cheap and not sophisticated like expensive sequencers, so I decided I'd make the soundtrack using it. It was completely off the shelf sort of stuff, the absolute opposite to my dogma. Unless that piece does something interesting artistically you can't say that there's any struggle in the kind of issues of how you produced the images. The technology, in a way, is absolutely unimportant it's only in the end what you do with it and whether you make something interesting, enjoyable and engaging. It goes beyond questions that matter to you and to people around you. Does it matter? It is much more difficult to actually argue whether something matters or not. Re the question of the technology,

I'm stimulated by some of the things you can do with the new technology that you couldn't do with the previous technology. I'm stimulated, I find myself thinking, 'Yes that would be nice to do!'. But I'm also very resistant when I do it in that I ask myself at the end of it, 'Does that do something that actually is artistically interesting?', whatever that means.

JH: Did funding stifle or enabled you to realise your ambitions?

MLG: It's a big question. I started working without any funding at all and part of that led me to working with David Curtis. Instead of looking for individual funding, we were looking for funding to set up a workshop; and we set up the London Filmmakers Co-operative Workshop. First of all I got a little bit of money but I didn't need very much, from the Arts Lab to build that first set of equipment, which was intended for me and other people to use, but it was really too fragile so it was only me using it. Basically we're talking about pennies. It was nothing. It was £20 or £30 that sort of amount to buy an old projector and all that stuff. Then we got funding from this American financier Victor Herbert who brought the Living Theatre to London. He was living in Paris but he gave us £3000 to buy the workshop equipment: the professional printer for Ex-Lab and the processing machine. We set that up in Wardour Street.

JH: How did you find him? Where did he come from?

MLG: Well it's a very long story. It's an interesting one. He was interested in the experimental and radical arts. He came to the Arts Lab in Drury Lane through Jim Haynes. He talked to David who pushed him over to me because David knew he was interested in doing something about the film movement in London. I just talked to him and he said that he was owed £3000 from an Australian painter called Boyd. If I went up to Boyd's house up in Hampstead and told him that I was picking up Victor's £3000 he would give it to me, and so I did. I went up to Hampstead and they were having a party. They invited me in, it was during the afternoon, drinking wine. I left with an envelope with £3000 in cash and went to Kay Laboratories. They were offloading some of the equipment they didn't want. I went to Hadlands and bought a processing machine. I set that up, physically with Fred Drummond at the Arts Laboratory the second one in the fire station in Camden. It was quite a feat really, but that was the basis of it. It cut the cost of making film. So we were just working on very low costs. At the same time the Arts Council was starting to fund documentaries about artists and then artists making work about their own work. Artists were making films about their own work, but it wasn't filmmakers, it was artists who were painters and sculptors making work about their own work. I was the first of the people who got a grant as a filmmaker/artist to make a work and I made *Threshold* and *Whitchurch Down*. Curiously I felt a heavy burden that I was the first one and it had to be successful. Actually I did *Threshold* and for some reason or other I thought I wasn't sure about their response to *Threshold*, so I thought: 'OK I'll give them two films instead'. So I gave them *Threshold* and *Whitchurch Down*, because I was more sure about *Whitchurch Down* than I was about *Threshold*. As it happens, *Threshold* is the more interesting work but I did feel a heavy kind of load from being the first person to do that. I think the work that came out of it was fine, but it wasn't different at all to what I would have done even if I didn't have the money.

I had two Channel 4 Commissions: the first one was for *Sketches for a Sensual Philosophy* and the second one was *Chronos Fragmented*, both of which were done

with Rod Stoneman as the commissioning editor. I thought that the attitude there was fantastically good. I never felt any pressure. I may have been lucky and come into these things at a time when there was a sympathy to what I, and people like David Larcher, were doing. But, I never felt that I was under pressure to do anything different to something that I wanted to do.

JH: Going back to funding again, can you talk about how you supported your work across a period through the academic sector?

MLG: I don't think it was accidental. I always wanted to be independent to myself really. I always preferred the idea that I wasn't going to other people for funding, as far as I could. I still don't want to. I like the idea that I can do the production on my own funds and so for me, I felt I had more freedom by working as an academic and choosing for myself what I did in my own production, than I did going through this process of trying to raise grants.
        Apart from anything else, if you really are serious about that, it takes a huge amount of time. A lot of filmmakers spend half their time raising the money. More than half the time is spent in putting together the project and I never wanted that, I wanted the projects to come out of my own life. As a result, in some ways, I don't know when a project begins and ends anymore. I'm continuously shooting and I edit bits and pieces and put them together, but that is the sort of practice that you can't do if you have to put in a script.
        With academia, again maybe I've been fortunate, but the academic work that I've done has always been very close in interest to my own interests, certainly all the teaching that I did at St. Martins, from 1964/65/66, when we started to set up the film department there. From that point through to 1984 when I went to run the college at Harrow, everything that I was doing academically was directly related to the issues and philosophy of my work. There was no schizophrenia, and the relationship between the students and other teachers was a two-way system.
        People used to talk about a painting 'school' like the Flemish School and Impressionism as a school of painting, well I think that the early period of experimental film in Britain in the 60's – 70's was a school in that sense. It was around the Film Co-op, but it was also a school around St Martin's and around North East London Polytechnic with Guy Sherwin. It was actually a movement where there was a real inter-connection of ideas and where concepts and so on were being produced.
        I produced a lot of work when I was at Harrow, both the Channel 4 pieces were done during that time, all of the Trials and Tribulations were done in that time and then the time as Head of Research at Central St Martin's I did all the multi-projection video work. So, it never interrupted my work and it meant that I had a secure financial base. I was never scraping around looking for money for things and I was able to live sensibly with a family and bring my children up and have a relatively normal life without the interruption in that.

MLG: In a funny way video was more accepted institutionally within the art gallery scene than film was. This was another curious thing at that point.

JH: Video artists would dispute that point but I think it's relative.

MLG: Well it was. There's no question about it. I was writing my column for Studio International. If the galleries and the art world were interested in anything, what they

were interested in was video and they were interested partly because showing video in the galleries looked more sculptural and the few collector dealers like Kasmin thought that they could market it. People like Gilbert and George and so on, made video tapes which were then sold by their dealer.

JH: It's interesting, which artists were included, because I think what you said about the fact that galleries have never been particularly interested in the filmmakers, I think that video artists in the 1970's would say the same thing about themselves. I think it's interesting that video artists have been put together as an institution with the filmmakers. I use the word institution loosely. As a collective of people, one could call that the underground, there were only a few video artists that were taken up by galleries, they probably made other things as well, but were already part of the gallery system.

MLG: But no filmmakers were taken up. Some video artists were taken up but no filmmakers. I can't think of a single case in the 70's and 80's. It was only in 90's that filmmakers were taken up like Tacita Dean and Douglas Gordon. But there were no filmmakers and there were quite a lot of video artists or artists using video that were taken up into the gallery situation.

JH: But why do you think that is?

MLG: I think partly it was because video looked much more like a sculptural activity and also could take place in an un-blacked-out gallery. You know the monitor could run in an un-blacked-out gallery. It had its own light source. That was of major importance really, and that's how you saw them. I went round lots and lots of exhibitions, particularly in Germany, where you'd have monitors in the space. You didn't have to black the gallery out. If you did film you had to black the gallery out, and it's a contained space, whereas the monitors were out there, and amongst other things. You could exhibit them amongst other things, so it was more amenable to exhibition.
        Also, there was this short-lived thing that a few dealers thought that they could make money out of selling videotapes. They didn't in fact, even from the best-known artists. They didn't make money out of it and Kasmin (Knoedler) gave it up.

        I think I was always personally inclined to analyse and discuss what I was doing. When I was at the Slade I was very taken with the influence Harold Cohen who was an intellectual practitioner. He was a painter, but he encouraged thinking about and articulating what you did. In some ways he was the most influential of the tutors that I had and it suited me. I think I'd always wanted to discuss and analyse my work. In fact the truth is it's not unusual amongst artists really. You find stuff written by Leger and it's not unusual. Artists will sit and talk about their work, they theorise about it, but they often don't write the theory down. It's a sort of contemporary myth that in a way artists don't do theory. It's partly because in the art world you get a division of labour between the practitioners and the critic and in the art world there are a lot of art critics. There were no critic promoters of our work as experimental filmmakers in the 60's and the 70's, there weren't any. There was After Image but After Image insisted on promoting American work. It hardly paid any attention to British work at all. I was always in dispute with them: 'Why on earth aren't you…?!' but they never wrote about what we did. Mainly Peter Gidal and I wrote. We did promotional things for the Co-op by writing

for Time Out: 100 / 200 word pieces, encouraging people to come to the shows. David Curtis wrote his book.

The other big thing I guess was writing the monthly column for Studio International, which I did for 4 years. It was a long time. I did a long stint: once a month virtually for 4 years. There was a lot of material there that was not just about my own work by any means. I was looking at work all around including video artists and so on. Partly it was promotional. The Time Out stuff was promotional. The book was historical and theoretical. The other writing tended to be theoretical: 'why are we doing what we are doing, what's the concept... what concepts are involved in it...?' but there was still no promoter. There is still no one. There is Al Rees and Michael O'Pray, but all the others are filmmakers or video artists. The artists are still doing the writing in the main but who is writing about this work that isn't an artist? Again that's not true in the art world in the main. It's the absolute exception in the art world. Mark Lewis, for example, is a filmmaker. I don't know whether it's something about film or video that encourages it.

JH: Were there any particular contextual critical writings that you would agree or disagree with?

MLG: Broadly speaking I think I agreed with Peter Gidal. Peter and I got lumped together although in fact our positions are different, and certainly our work is quite different. Broadly speaking I was in sympathy with what Peter was writing. It had that sort of rigour, or even austerity of theory, which I thought was very important at that time. I was very taken, though critical of it, with Christian Metz. I think that his work was very interesting and though I didn't agree with it, it was incredibly original and thought provoking. I found that the dialogue was stimulated for me, by answering Metz or trying to answer Metz. I'm not too taken with the films. The theoretical work that I did at that time, on the territory of the spectator and the psychological energy shift in the condition of the spectator. I think that theoretical work is really interesting. I like that theoretical work that I did, and that was in answer to, and stimulated by, something started by Metz. I think that having to answer the questions that in a way Metz was posing, he didn't pose them as questions but they were unanswered issues, for me, that came from Metz's analysis and having to, as it were, struggle to see what I thought was wrong with Metz, led me to a much better understanding of what goes on psychologically in the construction that we make as spectators within the cinematic. How one shot relates to another, what is actually happening psychologically, who we are identifying with and where our identifications are lying? By struggling with that, I really learnt a lot and I like that theoretical work. Some of it is very clear. If I read Concerning the Spectator Placement in Film now, I wouldn't make very many changes to it. It is fairly clear.

On practice, I am concerned about the sort of conceptualism. But again, it's not the first generation of the conceptual, which had more edge in a way, because it was more problematic. Now it has to be grasped and it is 'idea'. You get ideas and once you got the idea that in a sense is the completion of the work. It's very easy to complete the conceptual work. There's a form of completion in it and I'm not interested in completions. I am interested in experiences that get in there and keep bubbling around. I'm not in sympathy with some aspects of that post-modernist position. Also post-modernism in the sense of eclectically playing with context, that shifts away from the responsibility that as an artist you produce something, which you stand behind.

That is something you're producing you're not commenting. I'm not interested in art that comments that expresses its subjective relation to the culture. I'm interested in the construction of culture which is a slightly different position.

JH: Can I ask you about the relationships between the institutions of the Co-op and LVA?

MLG: It was a bit accidental I suspect that the Film Co-op became established at a time when the whole notion of the co-operative was a political conception. It was very idealistic and ideological, that notion of the egalitarian standpoint. The idea of workers owning the means of production and all of that stuff, it wasn't accidentally called The Co-operative. It was a really debated philosophical ideological position. There was a musician's co-op, which had a similar kind of ideological base. I don't think LVA came in the same sort of way although it had some parallels. It was an artists' run organisation also. I don't know if this is true or not but it was more of an issue of access to production system in film than it was in video. Video as a technology was the beginning of owning your own equipment for the whole production process. Although that wasn't true in editing, it was, and became, increasingly so. I think there were some different factors involved in video. Also video was desperate to establish its own autonomous credentials: video said: 'we are not film', and 'video is different to film'.
It was a parallel to what film was saying, 'we are film, we are not cinema'. This was the time when there was a concern to establish the autonomy of an art form, and to find its own autonomy as a medium. That has shifted now because everyone is accepting hybridisation. In fact video wasn't monolithic, video had a number of different aspects to it, from the community video, the videotape, the instant feedback systems, sculptural uses, the monitor as a sculptural item, already right from the beginning, video was a very broad hybrid aesthetic form. There was a desire amongst the artists to establish its credentials as an autonomous medium, and a lot of the discussion that I had with video makers at that time, including people like Mike Leggett and so on was about: 'what is the distinction between film and video?'

JH: Did you feel when you were producing and exhibiting your works that you were responding to or part of a larger movement or collective gestalt?

MLG: Yes in a general sense but not in a specific sense. In the general sense certainly, when I started making film at the end of the sixties. The period from about 1964, '65, '66 was a time of considerable upheaval in lifestyle and in political position. It was very idealistic. There was a clear separation when one still treated Russia as being, in some sense, an alternative. I grew up post-war, when there was a real shift with The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, rock music and the way people dressed. It was a complete change.
Within five years during the 1960's, there was a massive change certainly in the surface of lifestyle. And then there was the sexual revolution with the pill and all the contraception and the change of people's attitude to sexual relationships. It permeated right through the middle class. It wasn't quite as radical a shift in the political sense because the British establishment remained, but even that was undermined. Society became more mobile. You could shift through the layers of society much more and I was part of that. It had its effect in the arts, and in the breaking of the traditional barriers within media.

JH: Would you say that material became political? One could argue that modernism happened quite late for film and video, but there could also be a reason for that. It was a political act for an artist to be making film or video, in the sense that prior to that, artists had bronze and that was 'sculpture'. They also had painting etc. They were the traditional arts. Sculptors were moving away from making bronzes and so material itself was seen as oppositional to it.

MLG: I think we over-rationalise that if anything. There's a difference between motivation and reason and rationale. The motivation was more 'broad' than it being political. We had this debate when we did the Interfunctionen Show in Barcelona. I started to talk about the political aspect but it did occur to me that it was as much to do with lifestyle, as it was to do with politics. Rock music was at least as important as left-wing politics. We argued very strongly about what I called the 'politics of perception'. Were politics the confrontation with actuality and material? That was the same argument that you are suggesting. I think of modernism as a political position. On the whole I go along with and I still go along with but I think it was an oversimplification of what our motives were because I think our motives were more multi-form than that.
They were a lot to do with just energy and expression and pleasure. I think there was a lot more of that opening up of the psychological rather than the question of the political. The opening up of the psychological was at least as important as the question of the political position. I think we rationalised, in a slightly puritanical way, some of the political aspect to it. So yes, I go along with that. I think it is a political act and it's a political act that doesn't have a specific political message. That goes back to what I was suggesting earlier, we are in the business of creating life models. We create the perceptual life model. We are not reflecting it. Also at the same time even Peter Gidal, who is much harder on this than I am, has always said that the work doesn't illustrate or stem from the theory. It's not a demonstration. The work is not a demonstration of the theory. That's really quite important. However dogmatic you are in your theoretical debate, however rigid or strict you are, you mustn't mix that up with what you actually do in your work. I don't interpret my own work. If I'm talking about it, I don't talk much about the symbolic meaning of it because this is, in a way, not for me to do.