REWIND | Artists' Video in the 70s & 80s
Interview with Stephen Littman

Interview by Dr Jackie Hatfield, 6th June 2006

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

SL: I think *Predator Cat* is the most important work that I've made since I started making video. It was the most succinct. It encapsulated all my possibilities as an artist and it created a context for imaging which I'd never really discovered in my work. I was in control. I knew how to use the technology. I'd created a multi-layered, multi-faceted work, which was also unexpected in terms of its content and its process of creating an imagistic space. It was a chance piece. It was about chance and I felt that, for me, it was a culmination of knowledge and development over a 25-year period. But, thinking about the work that I had at the beginning, I think *Mirror* was the most important work. I think *Predator Cat* is the most important work that I've made so far. However, to go back to beginning as an artist and to say what was important strategically to make me want to work in this medium, *Mirror* was obviously the most important piece of work. It was where I discovered the potential of video and understood, either by luck or by design, a sort of language, which I was in control of much more than say performance art or printmaking or a whole range of other possibilities, including painting and sculptural work. So in that sense *Mirror*, as an artefact, gave me the opportunity to create imagistic work, which I felt I was in control of and could develop an aesthetic, which was my own aesthetic. Mirror was 1979 when it was completed, although it was started in 1978. Fundamentally it had to be edited at least 11 times because the technology would always damage the videotape by erasing it when there were mistakes.

JH: Can you talk about some of the ideas that you were developing at that point? When you talk about language, can you describe what you mean in terms of process?

SL: I think *Mirror* came out of the fact that the monitor was the main dissemination medium as a playback. There wasn't video projection and it certainly wouldn't even be considered in a cinematic context, which is how I am working now.

JH: You mean as a projection?

SL: Yes, as a projection but over a wide space with scale. These things were designed to work on a large television screen, from 24, 26, 28 and then eventually 30 inch monitors. They were designed for the monitor. They were designed to work within the frame of the monitor and that became an essential component into the way that the aesthetic was devised. *Mirror* which holds in the frame a mirror of someone's reflection as well as the

journey forward created a space of movement, sound, rhythm and the propensity to change that focus between left and right spaces but always moving forward within the circular construction. It was my first piece that lasted about 4 ½ to 5 minutes. It was a durational work for me and I thought 5 minutes was a long time for the viewer to have a non-narrative piece.

JH: So you were conscious of the audience?

SL: I was conscious of the audience. I wanted to change their perception about how video or in this case early television might actually be viewed and seen. Don't forget there was an argument that televisual space at that time was an interesting political agenda in terms of getting your work on to television and showing to a mass audience an artefact.

JH: You mean in the late 70s?

SL: Even in the late 70s. David Hall had already done it with *7 TV Pieces*.

JH: How familiar were you with David Halls work at that point?

SL: I think David had actually done a talk at Coventry Polytechnic where I'd studied and other artists such as John Sanborn, Kit Fitzgerald, Ernie Gusella, David Critchley all had shown their work.

JH: David Critchley wasn't interested in television though. Are you saying that general polemics around the practice were familiar to you because you were at Coventry?

SL: Yes, and I think that gave a great start point for the debate. Also my fellow students, people like Peter Anderson, Simon Power, Chris Rushton, all the people interested in video were trying to find a language that was beyond just rolling a tape in a black-and-white Portapak. There had to be something more than just time-based work. It was about other types of possibilities of using tape infrastructure. Although I did make my first pieces using video when I first went to Coventry in 1977, where I was using the videotape deck mainly as a place to record and delay time because of the unique possibility of having 2 or 3 Portapaks together and rolling the tape through them gave an opportunity to change how you used videotape as a time-delay device. People like Bruce Nauman, Dan Graham, Ira Schneider and Frank Gillette had all used that type of stuff. I was aware of that work. At that point, for me, that was a really interesting and exciting start point. To try and change the manufacture of image making, changed my understanding. But I did not necessarily know what I was doing. I'm not saying I had a great big theory at that moment in time, but I did have a very conscious idea that I wanted to change the viewing perception of people and how that possibly could infect my work and their ideas about looking and examination.

JH: Some artists have talked about process and the language and the grammar of time and space and image. They tend to talk about it in terms of music. Do you think that you were thinking along those lines as well or would you say that that was completely untrue, and that you weren't thinking about it in those terms? Were you thinking about in a purer form, which was electronic?

SL: I'd like to say that *Mirror* was about sound and image and that it was a composition. It was not like music composition. It was a composition through the editing process. We had a particular type of editing set-up at Coventry, which were black-and-white Portapaks to a U-matic edit deck, which allowed me to control editing to a degree but it wasn't remotely controlled. You couldn't actually set it to place an edit in a point in time and space, at a particular time code number as you can do it today. It was about editing and hopefully getting it roughly in the right place.

JH: Did you consider that the component parts of the composition of moving image must include the splice and the cut?

SL: In that particular piece I would say yes. It was about that moment of cutting. It wasn't about a dissolve. It was only about cutting and about the playing around with two channels of sound. So erasing sound, adding sound, layering sound in a two channel orchestration, in one sense, allowed me to create a tonal value of sound. Because I was sometimes just cutting in sound and then on top of that cutting in images that were just images, there was a certain flow of a pattern in a type of space that occupied the viewer's perception, enabling me to create what I felt were very musical ideas, but not music. I suppose that because I could play guitar, bad piano and flute, all that musicality was starting to appear in this artwork.

JH: You mean notation?

SL: Yes, the notation. I had a sense of rhythm. I had a sense of beat, playing around with changing timeframes and beats. Running with that enabled me to create a pattern space which, when you look back at, is still relevant today. I look at that work, I show it today and I think "Yeah, that really has a sense of purpose". It still works as an artefact now and I think that is quite interesting. It doesn't feel dated in the way that we are engaging with the participant viewer now or the spectator.

JH: So there is *Mirror* and there is *Predator Cat,* and they are obviously the ends of the spectrum in terms of time because it's late 70s. Then you've got your work of the early 90s. What about any works in between? Were there any key works that embodied, or culminated some of your ideas?

SL: I have to say that my methodology of working was about collecting images and so I'd go off with either black-and-white Portapaks or colour Portapaks and collect what I felt were meaningful images.

JH: They had to have meaning or did you just point the camera?

SL: I'd say that I was an intuitive maker, yes. I would go off sometimes with an idea about an image and sometimes I would go out just for the chance. I liked the idea that video could capture chance moments just like a photographer and at that time I was also taking a lot of photography. I liked the idea of waiting for the right moment, the right possibility. That enabled me to think about how I would use that type of process in my own work. By the

time 1978 had arrived, in Coventry we had one of the first colour Portapaks in the country and that colour Portapak enabled me to start to develop ideas around colour, form and structure, which wasn't possible within the black-and-white domain. That also enabled me to think about how would I collect these images and what meaning would I get from trying to develop an aesthetic around blocks of ideas in terms of cassettes of videotapes. So I have a whole range of videotapes, which are just about an image or a couple of images out of maybe lots of images. Hopefully I can then transfer everything from a U-matic format onto mini-dv format.

JH: It was a bit work where you type in "dog" and you get all the films that have a dog in.

SL: Well that would be great to do, but it's a lot of images.

JH: It sounds to me as though that's what you were imagining when describe cassettes as a collective of these autonomous units.

SL: Yes, I think that would be the next idea. If I could have a year off from work, I would love to be able to have tetra-bytes of hard drive space where everything is meta-data-d to death. I could just call up images that I'd known existed. I could say, "Give me all the images with dogs", and I'd have maybe 2 or 3 hours of that material to choose the right motif, the right juxtaposition for the image I wanted to construct. I suppose going back to *Mirror*, the idea that the images were malleable like a painting didn't even enter my head whereas with *Predator Cat,* everything is designed to be imagistic in style, juxtaposed on layer upon layer upon layer and with it, even within the new software that's available like After Effects or Avid, these types of permutations are really trying to augment imagistic space. Painterly objects have really started to excite me again because they start to bring out the possibility of what video, or electronic imaging, really could really be. With the colour technology and the idea that the cassette was an autonomous image base I felt that the possibility of creating types of work around the motif became a possibility. The motif was like a particular image like *In the Name of the Gun*.

JH: Was there was an issue of scale with *In the Name of the Gun* as well?

SL: Yes, there was the issue of scale and it had life in more than one environment. Images became a motif that could be used again and again and again, throughout a cycle of works.

JH: It could be used in different contexts and in different environments?

SL: Yes, in different contexts. So for the gun image, that was first used in a theatre play in 1985 with *Hidden Grin* and it became the end shoot-out at an ICA play where 20 or 30 monitors were all firing at the audience. From then, it was devised into a single screen piece of work called *In the Name of the Gun.* From that, it was then used in the *Video Wall* project in 1989 at *Video Positive*, which I helped curate with Eddie Berg. My part of it was the *National Video Wall* project where a number of artists were invited to develop large-scale work and so the gun became this massive image on a video wall, and I felt that, in that sense, the video wall gave it an expression that in its original guise 5 years earlier

hadn't even been thought about. In this context, it had grown into something which was much more profound and much more indicative about how the gun is used in media and how it was used in a way that creates ideas around consumption.

JH: Was that purely because of the scale?

SL: It was because of the scale, yes. But I still feel that *In the Name of the Gun* was a seminal piece of work for me, because it was first published on the day that the United States invaded Grenada. I feel that since that time, it has actually been a metaphor for me about other invasions. I still think it has meaning in relation to the world that we live in today. I felt that in one sense the work had gone beyond just its timeframe of 1987.

JH: Isn't that what you would hope for all your art works?

SL: I hope for all my art works to be like that, but not all my art works are like that. They get dated because of the subject matter, the control that you had brought to them and the understanding of whether the work could actually be considered. I suppose the little pieces of work that became important, were pieces like *I Really* that then developed into *The Long Search for the Necessary Tool,* which was a video opera. Then that developed into things such as *The Winner,* which was a single screen version for dissemination to festivals. They were all quite indicative of the type of motifs that I was trying to explore. They were very humanistic about the world that we lived in and why the world was like it was. In that sense I ended up with a range of material that was being used again and again and again to create certain types of painterly motifs, through imagistic moments.

JH: When you talk about images in the way that you do, and in the way that I know your work, you weren't looking at narrative but you were still using representational images. You did use representational images quite clearly, that had narrative meaning in themselves. You are talking about them in terms of motifs. But the notation system that you used, which you talked about as editing and time and space, would you say that those abstracted the meaning of the narratives? What is your feeling about the relationship between the subject matter that you took on and the structuring?

SL: Narrative has fascinated me but not from the sense of just telling stories. I was interested in the motif, but that motif as an imagistic motif juxtaposed against other images to create a layering of images. Obviously things like Low Band U-matic and High Band U-matic aren't the most quality based imagistic environments to try and make that work and so degradation of quality became paramount. It gets worse as you transfer it again and again and again and so the image that I was trying to formulate created issues around content. If the images had a story attached or some sort of narrative implication, I would try, through myth and legend, to undermine that. I wanted to be in control. I wanted to be in control of what the image said to the spectator.

JH: What do you mean when you talk about myth and legend?

SL: I was thinking of people like Roland Barthes or people like Susan Langer. How do you know what an image really means? How do you know what something in the real world really means? How do you make the signs and symbols function as an idea in the work?

JH: Was that a conscious thing that you were doing? I didn't think that was the case with *Predator Cat*? Would you say that you were talking about a particular period of psychoanalytic film theory where works were heavily laden with theoretical discourse either before or after they were made? Sometimes you can see work as being so overweighed with theory that the work doesn't seem to exist. Are you talking about that period and how you dealt with that?

SL: I dealt with that in the 80s. In the 80s, my work was driven partly by theory. It was also driven partly by an intuitive process of saying, 'Oh doesn't that image look interesting against that other image" or by seeing if several images layered together created a symbolic space that I wanted to try and discuss to the spectator in some ways. My images were considered because I was interested in putting images on top of each other again and again and again, through either using boxes or mats. Even starting in 1983, the potential of creating a context where I could mix and layer images became available to me. So at that point I started to play around with one layer against another layer and that layer then created a new motif. By doing that it enabled to make works such as *I Really*, and *Mother Son,* which enabled me to think about other possibilities like what the representation means to the audience, or to the spectator. However, you need to get to the 90s to understand where I then took this idea about compositing to the next level. I started to make images that were not about representation. They were about the abstract forms. They were about scale. They were about not having a motif that was trying to dictate a certain type of symbolic space to the audience. In *Predator Cat*, I became interested in finding out how people understood their meanings that they were being shown rather than trying to detect or offer a storyline to them. So I became disinterested in the storyline. I was interested how they viewed the subject and how they immersed themselves in the subject. But, in the 80s I think I was really interested in trying to find a motif that created a symbolic space through which the spectator would narratise themselves. Whether that worked is a complex thing, because meaning, even referred meaning, is sometimes something that is not given as an easy structure. Therefore I was completely interested in trying to control what that image might mean in any part of the work and that was one of the main goals. It's unlikely to have succeeded, because it was much more complicated than just showing an image and hoping for the best.

JH: Can you talk about when and why you started to make work using video?

SL: I started making work in video in 1976 when I was on Foundation, at East Ham Tech. They had a very old quarter-inch video-deck, which I pulled out of a system box hidden in the cupboard. They said, "Oh has anybody ever used this?" My tutor, Ed Herring, said "I don't think anybody's ever used it". I said, "All right. Let's get it out and have a look". We switched it on and it still worked.

JH: Was it fairly new?

SL: I think it was about 2 years old. No one had ever used it. There was one tape and I had to use the tape. I shot people standing in front of the camera over 10 minutes or 15 minutes at a time. The idea was to try and see what that would actually do as a work. I then went on to make a piece where I had people sitting in a line waiting for something to happen and it never did. That was the half hour piece of work where they were just sitting down looking at the camera completely silent and completely static. That was quite funny. I didn't even know, at that time, that you could even edit video. It was really just something that you point the camera at and try to find a language to do something. One of the reasons I went to Coventry Poly was because by the time I went for an interview they'd actually got a video department together. That really interested me because what I wanted to do was to try and take some of this moving image stuff and think about it. They also had a film department and that meant that there were two areas of performative space that I could start to explore away from painting. So when I first got to Coventry I started to work with black-and-white Portapaks trying to create a space where video could actually manifest itself. In my first year at Coventry I was very much interested in loops. I was interested in sound loops and video loops, and I was trying to see if that was possible.

JH: Why did you head towards video rather than film or still photography?

SL: It was to do with being in control and being in absolute control.

JH: Can't you be in control with anything?

SL: No, not with film. With film I'd have to send it off to a lab. I would have to wait a couple of days for it to come back and there was always an uncertainty whether it was going to come out in the way that you wanted it to. There was also control of the equipment. The resources at Coventry at that time were manned by people who would often only let the 16 mil cameras out with a technician attached to them, rather than let you go off by yourselves. Whereas the video department just said, "Well just take the Portapak" and off you went. That limitation actually steered me towards video because of its freedom of possibility, rather than controlling doctrine. I did make films and I learnt how to make films to quite a high standard while I was at Coventry, but that didn't mean to say that I wanted to specialise in film production. Also, I was completely fascinated by the use of video because it related to a mass dissemination medium of television.

JH: Doesn't film relate to a mass dissemination?

SL: No, for me, film at that time seemed to be in the cinema. I knew about the Film Co-op but it seemed to me, that to make a film of any substantial length, you needed a whole infrastructure, which was going cost you a fortune. However, with video, as long as you've got the edit deck and a source deck, you could make anything, anywhere, anytime. For a relatively cheap cost of say £20,000 you could have that technology at your doorstep. With film, you had to buy the film stock, get it developed, then you had to go to a lab.

JH: Is that the only reason or are you talking about aesthetic reasons as well? I wouldn't have said that Super 8 was expensive and that was a domestic format. As a domestic format,

film was in circulation long before video was. So are you talking about aesthetic reasons as to why you preferred to use video?

SL You couldn't control Super 8 though. Each time you wanted to use Super 8 film as a medium you had to have a huge investment to transfer it to 16mm, so you could cut it properly. Then you could be in control of how you manipulated it.

JH: You seem to be making a comparative judgement. Apart from it being immediate for you, what made you use video? Knowing the work, and the way that you have described it, we could also be talking about processing. At one point you seemed to use video as a tool for gathering an immediate feedback. Then you shifted into another kind of aesthetic where you were using processing and editing and structuring as a means to develop the language. There seems to be two aspects to that. When would you say that shift took place? There seems to have been a shift because you weren't editing your works until you made *Mirror*, which was in 1979. What was the shift between the gathering and the processing?

SL: Well first you had to find the motifs. Then start to think about ideas that could be made as a single screen piece of work.

JH: So when did editing start to be important to you as an artist using video?

SL Basically, it was as soon as I got to Coventry where there was an edit deck available. There were lots of black-and-white tapes that were edited supposedly, including a piece of my work called *Sound and Rhythm,* which was a multi-screen installation piece.

JH: What do you mean edited "supposedly"?

SL: It was edited on half inch black-and-white reel-to-reel decks,.

JH: So you don't call that editing?

SL: Well I do call it editing but it's very hit and miss and it was also uncontrollable in the sense that everything was just a bit lucky if it worked out at all. I think the U-matic technology allowed a certain control. You had more control over your aesthetic. That was why, when the right time became available, the beginning of my second year of my Coventry Poly Undergraduate Degree, I made *Mirror*. I'd made it about 10 or 11 times because there was always something going wrong with erasing the videotape tape deck. That basically meant that you started editing something, and erased it by accident because the cut in switch and the assemble/edit switch were very close to each other. If you were editing away in and out on the fly, you sometimes processed the assemble button which would erase everything that you had done. So learning how to control your enthusiasm was partly the process of editing skill. There was no edit controller for example. That was just done on the fly and all the half inch black-and-white reel-to-reel stuff was also done on the fly as well. Why make video and not film? I made about three or four films over the duration of the time I was at Coventry, some were quite abstract – colour, light bulbs, light etc. I was really interested in light as a sculptural process and so I would have lots of interactive

lights that would be fading up and down and flowing. The first pieces that I ever did at Coventry was an installation of light, which had slide projection and 16 mil projection all on it, projecting into this huge space, creating a total art process that someone could immerse themselves and walk through. That light projection has stayed with me right up until today. My last work, *Static Statements,* goes back to this idea of total immersion and total vision of how something is viewed within a time-based environment. I had a Super 8 camera and it allowed me to shoot things but I wasn't really in control like I was really in control with video. With video I could go off and shoot something, I could try and edit it in a black-and-white environment, and then by the end of the week, I might have something to show. With film I always felt that because of the types of people that were actually within the film department, I would have to shoot the film, get the film back as rushes, and edit the rushes. Before I could even be allowed to output the rushes I would have to send it off to the lab to get a print. Then from the print, I would be able to show the work either with sound or without sound. But, it seemed to me that there was a mechanical process. The Film Co-op wasn't necessarily available where you could walk down the road.

JH: Do you mean that you were living in Coventry and the Film Co-op was in London? It obviously was available because people went there.

SL Yes, but it was still something expensive to achieve if you don't have a grant and you don't have extra money.

JH: By the time you got involved in video, did LVA exist?

SL: LVA did exist. Again, that was a spur to move more into an imagistic, video electronic, environment, rather than purely moving between film and video. Also the people around me like, Steve Partridge and David Critchley, were all working with video. I felt that the language that I best had an aesthetic for, at that time, was electronic. I was in control of what I was doing. There was a certain freedom of expression that didn't seem to me possible in film. I'd seen *Berlin Horse* by about 1979, and although I felt that that work was just magical, I started to think "Well how would you do that in video?" I spent most of the eighties trying to learn how to do it in video. I was not making a seminal work like that piece, but I was trying to learn about how to create video as an aesthetic, imagistic space rather than just symbolic, or something with dramaturgy. It was something that was allowing me to create iconic spaces. I wasn't totally sure of what I was making. I was theorising it but not necessarily within a language base. I wasn't writing about it because of my dyslexia.

JH: Can you talk about your artistic processes a little more? We've covered this a little bit, but is there anything more you'd like to say about your artistic processes and how they've changed over the years?

SL: I suppose starting at Coventry I was interested at how colour would work in a time and space environment. So, I made pieces like *You Make Me Shout* and *Crisps.* These works were to do with colour and flows of time within time processes, so the camera became an integral part of the collecting device: how did the colour in the camera work? What sort of colour temperature were you going to shoot in? How was the face going to be shot?

Could it be shot against darkened spaces? When I moved back from Coventry to London, and went to the Royal College of Art, I was interested in the way the camera would function because new technologies had been invented. There was camera called Hitachi 3030. I don't think we had a 3030 at Coventry, we had the next generation, but the Royal College of Art had this camera called a 3030, which allowed you to play around with colour and types of imagistic spaces. It enabled me to play with colour and learn about colour from a light fantastic position. At the same time, having worked with LVA, we managed to get the first of the KY 1900 JVC cameras that came on to the market. That enabled me to shoot using three-tube technology and that created a different type of aesthetic. It became something approaching broadcast quality, but still shooting into low band U-matic, then in the future, high band U-matic. So, the KY 1900 allowed me to think about creating other types of imagistic space that would be to do with colour, light and subject matter. So I started to make a piece of work called *Still Life*, which was to do with a person in a white space and how that would be bleached out, and how the imagistic content would be explored. Then I went on to make a piece called *The Smoker Tapes*, where I used an actress to create ideas around language and imagistic language. I was exploring the juxtaposition of what they were saying against what the image was. It was an investigation of the face, so in that sense, the body became part of the process. The performative aspect of the work became an exploration of how the body would be in time and space. So the camera became part of the aesthetical discovery: the notion of what was out there, how would it be recorded and then how could it be used. I'd done a period of time with a company called *Rank Phicon*, where I was doing a lot of editing commercially, I'd learnt the technology of video. *Rank Phicon* came from a company called *Audio Plus Video* in Charlotte Street, which is now *Frame Stores*. Basically, it was one of the three facility companies in London in 1980.

JH: So you had access to technology and editing?

SL: I had access to editing.

JH: Is that where you edited *The Smoker Tapes*?

SL: No, I edited *The Smoker Tapes* at the Royal College of Art. *Rank Phicon* gave me the technical skill to understand how video functioned.

JH: But you could never use their technology?

SL: I did use their technology a bit. By 1984, I was working, partly through a friend, at *VTR, Video Tape Recording*, using their one-inch technology, to explore how one-inch technologies could be possibly edited, and how images from low-band U-matic could then be processed through editing systems. That gave me a skill about high level full broadcast editing to a degree that I suppose no one else in the sector really had apart from maybe the Duvet Brothers. With *The Smoker Tapes,* I was interested in the camera and how the camera would be observing. In one sense, it made me realise the first two sections of *The Smoker Tapes* was all about cutting. It was not that different from the work that I did at Coventry. Nothing had really moved on apart from the fact that I could have a better aesthetic in terms of the camera, or in terms of the control, because I understood so much

more about video and what it actually was as a voltage or as a medium of expression. There are 4 sections to *The Smoker Tapes* and there are about another 5 sections that have never been edited. Mainly, because I just felt that they had said everything by the time it got to part 4 and that I was just repeating myself. In the first two sections, it was about editing. Then part 3 was about taking the third section, which was to do with storytelling. It is a conversation between people off-screen space. So, you can hear this daft discussion taking place off-screen, and then on-screen space, was just a subject being scrutinised by the video camera. At Maidstone College of Art they had a time-based corrector. I'd just been employed by David Hall to teach there one day a week. The Royal College of Art had still only had a U-matic edit suite and a National Panasonic edit suite, but through careful manipulation, there were three video decks of the new type five edit suite at Maidstone College of Art, which enabled me to make three machine editing so I could mix and I could layer for the first time. In a particular work it created a context for me to try out juxtaposition for the first time. It was called *Viewing in My Room.* It was someone's space, but also about the examination of someone in space and about the juxtaposition of playback, speed, layering, layer upon layering using this brand new piece of technology from cell technologies, which was a time-based corrector. It was six bit and allowed us to actually mix two tapes together quite crudely, and that created a new visual context for me. I then went on to make a piece called *I Want,* which was shown along with Tina Keane at Spectra Art Centre in Newcastle. That was a four-screen piece. But, within the screen, there were six screens. So, it became a multi-screened artefact with settees for people to sit down and watch. It lasted a long duration. It was about an hour long. There were different iconic, symbolic metaphors for the meaning of life, if there was such a thing in the work. Again, that was edited at Maidstone College of Art. Peter Cardier was a bit pissed off because I wasn't in the Royal College of Art doing my thing. I was doing it at Maidstone College of Art on a daily basis, where I developed an aesthetic around three machine editing. So that process enabled me to have the possibility of an aesthetic that was outside the conventions of LVA and other institutions. It also made me realise that I was trying to develop work as an optical printer would, but instead of it taking me months to so something as an optical printer, I could do it instantaneously. I could do it through mixing and layering and I could be completely in control.

JH: Do you think that a video deck in 1989, compared with an optical printer?

SL: Yes I do. Between 1983 and 1995, I think videotape systems were comparable to an optical printer if controlled in the right way. I felt that they gave you a certain type of freedom to play. You couldn't play with film because it was so expensive and it meant that you would have to decide how long you could afford basically. If you had a multi-layered work, it was going to be an expensive process. I felt that the only way you could really discover multi-layerism, was to play with video, even though it may not be like a film aesthetic, projected on a screen. I felt that in the future, these technologies would be available, and they would be able to show work in a projected or cinematic environment. In 1983/84, David Larcher started to first use video and through my help, he started to make *Granny's Is*. David also helped develop an aesthetic because of the way he used his film knowledge from playing with optical printing. He was using it directly in the editing suite, and he automatically changed the way I felt about certain layers of images. So, we were feeding off each other. I was showing him new techniques, and he was showing me

possibilities by just playing with the editing process. That play, I think, was essential with the early work that I made.

JH: Can you very briefly describe how long some of the works took to make? Was it over a long period of time? You've mentioned David Larcher, and his work is almost interrupted by exhibitions, because of his sense of process. How do you see the process?

SL: I think David Larcher taught me that you didn't have just to have a deadline for a piece of work. I learnt from him, that work is continuous. It can be modified again and again and again. I liked that idea. I thought that made things much more liberating than they potentially could be. It was liberating knowing that work doesn't have to have an end point, that it could have different guises. If you look at the images from *I Really,* they go all the way through until I stop using them in *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* in the Video Wall piece. At that point, I decided "Well these have really done everything they could possibly do and that's enough" but in that, I've made 5 or 6 pieces using a combination of that type of material. I thought that was a liberating process. In terms of length of time, *Mirror,* took 11 months to make. *You Make Me Shout,* took three months to make because I'd learnt what I did wrong, and I'd learnt how to achieve things. *Crisps* took 2 months to make. *Please Turn Over* took 3 weeks to make. Then there is a whole heap of other pieces of work that I've never shown anybody because I always think they are completely unresolved and they took one week, two days or 5-6 weeks. But, when we get on to the 80s stuff, I think there were 3 or 4 key pieces of work that in terms of time management had different periods of time. *I Want*, which was exhibited for my final degree show at the Royal College of Art and then subsequently at Spectro and other places, that took two and a half months to make with quite dedicated amounts of time spent on it, maybe two or three days a week. It was quite a solid process from 10 o'clock in the morning till 10 at night, without breaks and using an edit suite to its limit. But other works like, *I Don't Feel That Quick,* took two days to edit. It really depended on the type of material and what you were going to try and get out of the material. That was the main process. Something like the Video Wall took much longer, because knowing that there were three stages in that process, there was the making of the video work, then there was the compiling of that material on to a show playback format, and then the programming of the video wall so that could take much longer, and it did.

JH: Did you have any particular ideological reasons why you wanted to use video?

SL: Yes I did. I felt that it was about a transformation of how people saw images in the world. I felt that art had been predominantly controlled by a painterly or a sculptural aesthetic and that the new media of the future would be electronic in form and in subject. I wanted to try and find an environment where I could explore that construct, composition, and compositing of these pictorial images that I was trying to grapple with at the time. Politically, I was also quite oppositional to the Thatcher government in terms of what they were trying to portray in terms of their ideological information into the world. I wanted to make work that was oppositional to that, very much oppositional. I felt that the work tried to create an idea around that opposition. Don't forget there was the miners' strike. There was the whole idea about the nuclear bomb. Everything I was doing, was trying to create an understanding of opposition to that fabric in society.

JH: Did funding stifle or enable you to achieve your ambitions?

SL: I think funding for me started in 1981. I received an Arts Council Award for a project proposal for a piece called *The Column.* I got £500. *The Column* was an installation, but quite an unsuccessful installation in the end. It wasn't inevitably resolved in the way that I imagined it to be.

JH: Did you exhibit it?

SL: I semi-exhibited it, but it was only a pre-cursor to *Picture Memoirs*. All the ideas that were scrapping within *The Column*, ended up in *Picture Memoirs,* which was a much more successful piece.

JH: So where was *The Column* exhibited then?

SL: It was shown in the AIR basement just as an idea on three or four screens.

JH: But that amount of funding enabled you to shift from college type work to making work as a paid up artist?

SL: Yes, but I'd already had a sort of semi-success earlier on. David Hall had taken my work to Warsaw in 1980. He took *Mirror.* I was also in The Serpentine Gallery Summer Show of 1981 selected by Stuart Marshall. So a lot of my student pieces had actually been exhibited in a professional context, by the time I had just left college.

JH: You would have been part of the early generation of output at that point, so there would not have been a massive market?

SL: No, there was not a massive market. There weren't that many people doing video.

JH: You say you are one of the second generation. When people say that, I always find it strange because, to me, it implies waves of people. One forgets that before that, there was cinema and there was the television experiment. There were so many other things happening. So, it's a strange thing to say, but I think it's fair to say, that there were very few people making video art works during the seventies. You started out at the late seventies, so you were fortunate in that you were one of the first artists to use video.

SL: Yes, I think I definitely was. I'm an in-between interloper between the seventies artists and the eighties artists. I've never really seen myself purely as an eighty artist.

JH: I don't think many people do. If they are artists, they are artists. I don't think artists position themselves into a bracket in that way. You were funded in 1981, but you'd had work shown before then. So you were getting works seen.

JH: Had you left the Royal College in 1981?

SL: No I'd only just gone to it. I went there in September or October of 1981. I also got a job at LCP, two or three days a week, running the video section of their film department

JH: Wasn't Brian Hoey there?

SL: Brian Hoey was there but I was the technical support person. There were a lot of people there but not a lot of them would seem to be teaching many of the students. I ended up doing a lot more teaching.

JH: Did Peter Donebauer work there as well?

SL: Yes, we had one of Peter's Videokalos machines on the shelf. I thought it was quite fascinating because it was a technology that could be used to do a dissolve and it could also do imagistic environments to space it.

JH: Did you see it work?

SL: Yes, I made it work. I was making it work at the college for 18 months. Then I decided that I should concentrate purely on my academic work, as I had to write my thesis, so I decided to stop doing that.

JH: Had you seen Peter using it?

SL: No, I hadn't seen Peter use it. I was using it to try out experiments. I also edited some of the first dance tapes that had ever been recorded outside the BBC. I was one of the first people along with Peter Anderson to record dance in situ and we had a mixture of editing suites. We mixed them live, so a lot of the dissolves we did live. But, we were still quite novice at the process so we had to do a lot of back editing.

JH: So, you were using the Videokalos to do that then?

SL: Yes, it allowed us to do a mix. We used it as a crude mixer. Then we time-base corrected all the work. We could then re-edit and improve the output of the material on low band U-matic.

JH: Did you have any other funding?

SL: Because I became a student I wasn't able to have any other funding from the Arts Council until I left the Royal College of Art. But I did get a bit of funding in 1982, because I showed work in different venues and I got fees. In 1984 I won the Arts Council in Brighton Video Fellowship, which was £3000. Then I received a further £800 to finish off certain works including *The Long Search for the Necessary Tool*, which was then shown at the National Review of Live Art and then The Midland Group. It was first shown at the ICA.

JH: Which was it shown at The Midland Group or The National Review?

SL: It was shown at the Midland Group, but just after the National Review. It was shown through the contacts I had with the National Review.

JH: Did you have any other major amounts of funding?

SL: Yes, I had other major amounts of funding. The dance works were funded by The Gulbankian or The Arts Council of Great Britain.

JH: Were those funded through the dance group?

SL: They were funded through Dance Umbrella. Then through the eighties, I received quite substantial pockets of money £1500 - £2000 here and there. They all enabled me to make large scales pieces of work. I think the culmination was winning money for work on the National Review of Live Art, and then along with Eddie Berg, receiving a large amount of funding to stage the first Video Positive.

JH: How did you get involved with the Video Positive show?

SL: Eddie Berg rang up David Curtis and asked who could help him arrange a show in Liverpool. I think David Curtis suggested Steve Hawley, myself or Jez Welsh as possible collaborators. I think Jez and Steve Hawley were unsure about it. I think Jez was doing something else at the time. So Eddie Berg got in contact with me and we had a meeting at end of 1987, to try and discuss the possibility of a large event. He was uncertain how large it was going to be. I suggested that if he wanted to make a really big impact into the national scheme of things, it would be good to it at the Tate, The Blue Coat and the Walker Gallery.

JH: What was Eddie Berg doing then?

SL: He had done something in 1987 or 1988, which was called Video Positive. It was screenings at one of the venues in Liverpool. He'd set up a little organisation to run that.

JH: So he wasn't doing it in galleries then?

SL: He wasn't doing it in galleries. It was in a cinematic environment.

JH: It was 1989, when it was finally shown. How did you sort of come up with the Video Wall idea?

SL: Well for me at the time because I'd used the Video Wall in commercial work that I'd done for corporate clients like Granada and other people. It seemed obvious that no artist in this country had actually done any aesthetical development on this. So, I proposed the idea to Eddie. I thought, if he wanted to do a show, why not make the show as big as we possibly could make it? We approached the Tate and the Blue Coat and they accepted the idea. Then we applied ourselves to getting funding, and from that we invited artists through a national open submission for the work to be screened.

JH: It was an open submission and yet the artists that were screened were mostly British weren't they?

SL: It wasn't just British work. Canadian work was also shown because the Canadian Arts Council at Canada House also supplied funding. We showed about 6 to 8 artists from Canada who had already shown on a video wall, so we got funding from Canada House as an extra pot of money. We got money from the Arts Council to run the National Video Project plus we got local funding from Liverpool Council and the local Arts Council. Samuelsons Communications provided the video wall for free, which was worth a vast amount of money in terms of time and space. It also wasn't just that they gave us the video wall. Because of what I wanted to do with the video wall and because I knew it was technically possible, they rebuilt the video wall to allow it to have two images going into it rather than a single image. That development then changed the whole design of video wall technology. Other companies then realised the potential of having a multi-channel input structure to a video wall. That was then seen within Electrosonic's work. They then developed that into their video walls. So, there was a bit of two-way research and developed. It was a technological development, and they saw the potential of how they could exploit that. That was quite good because it meant that artists were supporting commercial industry. So, it was a two-way thread.

JH: How many artists were involved?

SL: There were about 8 in the UK. The Scottish Arts Council also funded an artist to be part of the National Video Wall Project so there was a collection of money coming from different funding schemes to be juggled. In that sense there was a potential. The interesting dynamic was to try and devise a staging process, which would encompass everybody's needs. That became the way that we constructed the three blocks of walls, one of 16 and two of 9. David Hall decided that he didn't really want to show in that context and asked if he could have a block of monitors of 15, which were reversed.

JH: He did *A Situation Envisaged: The Rite II*?

SL: Yes, and for that he had taken earlier pieces of work that he had done and transformed them. Both Steve Partridge and myself helped David to make the piece of work formally, in terms of creating the images to help him achieve it.

JH: Was there any other funding that you received? Do you feel happy that you got enough funding?

SL: I'm always going to say that I never got enough. Compared to some artists who got money at an astronomical level, I think I just got a mediocre amount.

JH: But you also got more than a lot of artists?

SL: I got a lot more than a lot of artists, but over recent years I haven't received that much at all. I haven't applied myself to doing it and I think that's an interesting phenomenon.

JH: So how have you funded your work?

SL: I've funded it mainly from through the academic environments of research, where I've received pots of money of up to £2000 over the last 6 years. Maybe 3 out of the 6 years I've been in receipt of money and that has been adequate.

JH: And you've had access to technology over the years?

SL: I've have had access, so in a funny way funding didn't become an issue. It hasn't really become an issue the same way as it might have done if we kept with the technologies of the eighties. The technology of the computer has enabled me to continue editing my work. It has fundamentally been paid for by the academic environment and in that sense, it has changed the methodology that I apply. Small cameras like the camera that's actually recording me here today has also transformed the way that I understand and make use of image making. But, over the 80's, I think I was really in receipt of good amounts of funding. I received funding for staging exhibitions, developing exhibition spaces, and showing work. I got money for making work so in that sense, I can't grumble. There are people that received great amounts of money, huge amounts of money and I've never been in that receipt of that sort of funding, but maybe I didn't need it. Maybe in the end, because I had access to a certain level of technology that might have been too greedy. But, in relation to having the time and space to be an artists to give me the freedom just to sit down and make pieces of work, I've never had that amount of money.

JH: But your ideas about that have shifted though in the last five years haven't they?

SL: Until 15 to 10 years ago, up until 1995, I think you had to be in an Art School to give you the freedom of technology, because that's where the technology was. That's why I ended up in the art school I suppose in the first place. Without the art school I could never had made any of the work in the way that I have done or in fact the amount of work that I have made. With the funding schemes though, my last receipt of an actual Arts Council Grant was in 1998 and that was for *Predator Cat*. How that manifested was most probably because it was the last videotape edit that I've ever made. I don't make videotapes anymore.

JH: So you had funding for that from the Arts Council, but you also had support from the University of Westminster?

SL: I had support form the University of Westminster and the Kent Institute because they gave me a Sabbatical for three months. And I think that was the only time in my career when I've had three months off, not to focus on anything but art. I thought that was an amazing process. But now, when I look at the systems that are available to me, I have the technology at home. I have the means of production at home and I think that has changed the amount of work that I make, the type of work that I make and the type of goals within the funding streams.

JH: How has the work that you've made shifted?

SL: Well it's made me less imagistic for a start. I'm very interested in process. I'm very

interested in developing computer-generated images, which are around chaos and around accidents where I don't know how to resolve the framework. There's an accident in the work itself. There's some interactivity taking place like silk-screen printing when you put colour on colour on colour. There is the different level of transparency, which I'm not completely in control of. I like that process because I think the early 80's work was all about videotapes. It was about how the videotapes were slightly different in tape lengths, how they would rewind at different rates, and how they would create different juxtapositions in the way that they played back images. It's very hard to do that when you are on the DVD deck or on a computer because they are very rigid. They don't go out of sync in any possible way. So, I was looking, and have done since about 1995, for ways of trying to create images that had an edge to them, and that were outside absolute control within the editing confines.

JH: You are playing with digital artefacts. That's what you are doing?

SL: Yes.

JH: What was your preferred context for the dissemination of your work? Did you have any preference?

SL: I like going to media festivals and showing work there. I felt that that was the most exciting place to go because you would meet new people and you could actually listen to whether they like or hated the work. It also meant that you could meet like-minded artists who were working within the electronic field. That was quite a good space. The gallery or the white cube as it's been called recently, in the 80's it wasn't called that, gave me a space where I could explore multi-dimensional multi-facets of imagistic juxtaposition. Because it was in a public arena, it was actually the part where something could be tested in a way, which enabled you to examine whether the general public could understand the work, whether the work was going up its own arse or whether it was in an environment where it was too obtrusive. I like the gallery but I think the gallery shifted after 1990. That generation of 80's artists stopped showing effectively in the gallery. I don't know why that was.

JH: A lot of the 80's artists never really exhibited in a commercial gallery space. So when you are talking about galleries I'm interested in what you mean, do you mean state funded galleries? Do you mean artists run galleries? Or do you mean commercial galleries?

SL: I mean state funded galleries. I was always showing in places like the Midland Group.

JH: Those were artist-run collectives funded by the state, but run by collectives?

SL: Not the Midland Group, the Midland Group was a gallery, but it was funded by the state.

JH: But the artists ran it?

SL: No they were administrators

JH: So the state ran it?

SL: Yes, and ICA and Riverside Studios. Places like Transmission in Glasgow were more like artist run galleries.

JH: You also showed in ACME and Space and AIR Gallery?

SL: Yes, all of those were funded by the state.

JH: Generally speaking though, they were run by artists weren't they? Wasn't AIR Gallery run by artists?

SL: No, it was run by Robert McAlpine. He was a full time administrator. He offered LVA the basement of the AIR Gallery.

JH: What about the shift between the 80's?

SL: I think the 80's people were showing in state funded organisations totally and I think when the Arts Council shifted funding, they changed the role of those galleries and made them less prominent.

JH: Which was when?

SL: I suppose it was 1991/92 with the invention of *Splendour of the Garden*, which was a strategy developed by the Arts Council. It was a whole doctrine about where arts would be in the 90's. There was a conference in Brighton where I showed a second video wall piece of work. That was when the shift really occurred because the state funded organisations were reduced to half a dozen centres of excellence. They were reduced in such a way that their show programmes changed. Also, at the same time other galleries started to become interested in, or cultivate, ideas around video. I wasn't really engaged in that process. Other artists took the initiative and started to work with gallery owners, and in a funny sort of way, I wasn't that interested in a privately run gallery space.

JH: What difference did it make?

SL: I suppose there's no difference, but within a state funded gallery you are doing it for the people, funded by the people. Whereas in a private gallery, you are selling your commodity and that's what the main aim of the work is. I never really felt that my video works, already funded by the state, should be sold in a particular way through another process. Obviously that's a romantic idea and maybe foolish in its understanding but I still feel that. I still feel that I am an experimenter who experiments with images and I take risks with them, formally as well as subjectively. I'm not certain that galleries would be interested in that work. They've certainly not been interested up until now. No one's sought me out to say, "Come and show at the White Cube" or something like that.

JH: Is that because they were not interested in the process? Surely they would be interested in an artist that calls the artwork an artefact.

SL: It might not be the right artefact though. I'm not certain that I am the right artist for that type of artwork.

JH: You don't have a principle not to produce an artwork?

SL: I have principles about producing art works. It's taken me a long time to realise that the white cube spaces that do exist, that are now promoting video or moving image work, can be a vehicle of dissemination in a true sense. However there are other dissemination technologies that are starting to appeal much better. It was quite interesting because I recently showed at the National Review of Live Art after about 15 years, and that experience of showing within a state funded environment was quite exciting. I showed a large-scale installation and that installation was outside the parameters of a white cube space.

JH: Do you mean outside the parameters of a white cube commercial gallery space?

SL: Yes

JH: When we say, “white cube” we are talking about one thing, which is a space. You’re talking about it as an ideology, which is about social ideology. I wouldn't just call it the white cube and assume that it is therefore a state run space. The white cube is a space where you show stuff. When you refer to a commercial gallery space that's a very specific aspect in the art world, but quite a number of the artists in the project had an aversion to it, because they have principles about where they show their work, which isn't about selling an object or selling an artefact as such. It's about something else.

SL: I suppose that the change in technology means that the artefact has now developed into a much more mature selling commodity. You could sell things on DVD for example.

JH: You've still got to have a market.

SL: There are markets for them. There weren't markets 20 years ago.

JH: I'm not sure whether that's true. How do you know that?

SL: Because given the right packaging and the right promotion there are markets that could exist if you wanted them to make work for that trajectory, for example mobile phones. There are new trajectories, which start to think about dissemination again, like mobile phones and the Internet.

JH: What is your preferred vehicle for dissemination? Do you have any preference for monitors, preference for projection, or preference for something smaller like a mobile phone?

SL: I don't know if I have a preferred output now, at this moment in time. In 1980 there was only the monitor or there was a film that was projected through a projector. That was the

choice that I had. My choice was at that time was through a video monitor or multiple video monitors. I was very interested in multiple video monitors, and multiple videotapes all running at slightly different speeds, or changing at slightly different rates. I was very interested in the way that a camera could be used within that process and be part of the surveillance of watching and looking. So in that sense, in the 80's, I was still very interested in the monitor. By the mid 80's I had already shown work using video projection and it seemed to be where images were going to go in the future. Therefore I started to make work based around the idea that they would be projected rather than screened on a monitor.

JH: Which works are you referring to?

SL: I'm talking about things like *In The Name of the Gun*, and from about that time onwards, although all the earlier stuff like *Mirror* work extremely well on a video projector.

JH: But you didn't make it for a video projector, you made it for a monitor, so is that a contradiction?

SL: I made it for the monitor but I tested it on a video projector and still worked.

JH: So you don't care where it's shown? You're happy for it to be output in any context or any format? So in 20 years time when there's no video or no electronic media, you'd be very happy for it all to be put onto 35mm, and projected onto 35mm?

SL: Well that would be quite interesting, not that I think that film is going to last that long. I wouldn't mind it in a 140mm projection, but then we could count the pixels on it quite easily. I think one of the interesting things about REWIND is that it will move everything from an analogue voltage format to a digital format.

JH: Do you mean the cloning of it?

SL: Yes, in that sense the time is right for that process to be articulate. It's had a life as electronic signal, now it's changing its life.

JH: Did you achieve your ambitions regarding dissemination?

SL: No.

JH: Why? What would you have liked to achieve?

SL: I would have liked to market the work better than I have done.

JH: Did you exhibit the work everywhere you wanted to or would you have preferred to show it in another context or somewhere else? Is there somewhere that you haven't shown it that you'd like to show it? Not that you haven't marketed it although obviously that's a valid reason to say, "Well that didn't achieve my ambitions." Did you want mass dissemination rather than it being shown in one cinema space?

SL: Given the context of television and its flow pattern, in the 80's I really wanted to show work on television. I did do that with *Big Time* in 1990, with the British Part of the *Nineteen for Ninety*.

JH: Did you make any other artwork specifically for TV?

SL: No I didn't make anything else.

JH: Was it funded by Channel 4?

SL: It was funded by Channel 4, the Arts Council and Fields and Frames. There were other works that were shown, like *The Winner* and other pieces. *The Winner* was actually part of The Right to Reply title sequence for about 4 years. That was quite funny.

JH: Did you get paid for that?

SL: Yes, it was crap money but it was still shown every Saturday.

JH: Was it like shots of people in a crowd or something?

SL: It was actually *The Winner*. It was people going like this and that. There were lots of different bits of images, slightly augmented with a man cut out, which Dean Stockton actually added to the work. There was quite an interesting process and it had numbers all over it and nuclear bombs and things. But in a funny sort of way the work itself had transformed into an artefact for a title sequence. I quite like that. In fact it gave it more life than the original artwork that was for the gallery or for the cinema or for some exhibition space. In that sense, it was quite revealing. On a 4-year period that was a much better return in terms of people seeing it, even though they didn't know it was my piece of work and how it was manifested. I think *Nineteen for Ninety* was a true eye opener. How the production company made it was quite interesting. They invested a lot of money in people's time to explore and develop images, but in the end, Channel 4 still took it as a flow opportunity and instead of making it work as Interruptions, as the premise of the whole idea was, they slotted it into time. They sign-posted it. They sign-posted the work as it was shown on television, "Oh here's another artist intervention!"

JH: Why do you say it was an intervention, because it wasn't? Looking at the work, David Mach's piece was possibly an intervention, but I wouldn't have said that any of the other pieces were really intervention at all. Why would you say that they were interventions?

SL: The original idea was that they were meant to be shown over the course of a month. They were meant to be shown daily, and that you never knew which one was going to take place at any one time. They would be shown within a period that would be designated as an artist intervention.

JH: But it becomes a contradiction in itself.

SL: In the end Channel 4 decided that they would do it over one week at slots of time, not necessarily within prime viewing time. They decided to show work that they felt would be easily consumed at peak time and not easily consumed other work was then shown outside of that time. So, your piece of work could end up being on at two o'clock in the morning. I don't call that an interventionist scheme. I call that control by the broadcast.

JH: Then none of it was intervention.

SL: It was when the idea was drawn up.

JH: I think there's an interesting issue there. There was a moment at which the concept of intervention worked with David Hall. His is the only work that did achieve what it was set out to do. It was pure concept. He understood the context more than anybody. He was able to make those artworks, which did what they said they were going to do on the tin. Whether they were announced or not is irrelevant in a sense, because although he did have a principle for that, then maybe that principle was an idea too. Certainly with the 1976 work, it didn't matter because it was still an intervention. It didn't matter what time you showed those works, they were still going to intervene in the flow. If you look at Raymond Williams the flow is 24/7. It's not like it's a different flow at 5 o'clock from what it is at 7 o'clock or from midnight. It's not. It's the same all the way through.

SL: When you get things shown is all to do with audiences.

JH: But that's another issue. We are talking about the concept of flow.

SL: If it was meant to permeate throughout the whole day, and it was meant to be over the course of a month, and that everybody was given different timeslots, then the audience that would potentially see it would be greater than if you give them one opportunity.

JH: But that's another argument. You refer to the term "intervention", but they weren't interventions. The idea of intervention is very specific, and it has only worked with David Hall.

SL: I agree with that, but I think Channel 4 changed the parameters because there was a change of commissioning editor.

JH: So when you made the work, you made it as an intervention?

SL: Yes.

JH: I don't think it matters what time you put that work on, whether you put it on unannounced or whether you put it on announced, or wherever you put it on. If it was on the BBC, anybody could have seen it but it wouldn't have even got crossed their minds that it was a television intervention.

SL: I agree with that because the television had changed by 1990. The issue for me is that when I was asked to submit a project it was under the guise of intervention because it was

Nineteen for Ninety. They re-showed David Halls work. It was in that vain. It was that trajectory of concept as a start point. That's how I considered it, as I made the work. I had that, at a back of my head, as I made the work.

JH: I had a conversation with David Curtis about the television works that he was involved in funding with the Arts Council, John Wyver and Channel 4. One of the questions I asked was what the artists thought they were doing with these works. If you truly had interventions then you'd have a dozen artists making really quite extraordinary interventions into television like the Gerry Schum pieces or like David Hall's concept.

SL: I made a television piece that was using the technology of the time because that's what I was interested in. It was an intervention.

JH: David Curtis said that he was going down a completely different road. He was just interested in the space of the televisual to put artists on, not intervening but just literally as a showcase. To me that is more honest.

SL: I think that it comes down to a start point, and it brings us on to how Channel 4 actually get initiated in the first place. How did it arrive at its political agenda? When you had its original director, he set the agenda that he wanted to publish work by artists in a certain environment. His tenure as chief executive of Channel 4 was driven to make workshop environments, which actually made work for television as published outcomes. But when Michael Grade came to head up Channel 4 he stopped that overnight. The workshop movement was destroyed. That meant there was a change in terms of commissioning editor. There was a change in how the output of Channel 4 would actually disseminate work. They reneged on their idea of intervening over a month, which we were sold originally as the proposal. They did it in a week because the controller of Channel 4 had decided to change the parameters of how work would be commissioned, what sort of channel it will be and what sort of interventionist ideas he was willing to accept. He renegotiated the idea. That was one person changing the whole workshop sector.

JH: Are you saying that then when you and the other artists set out to make the artworks, the concept was intervention? You set out to make an interventionist piece like a DADA piece, which was going to intervene in the flow? But, halfway through the production process you had to change what you were making?

SL: Yes because the control had changed. The controlling factor was that the role of television as I understood it in 1988 was different by the time I completed that piece of work in 1990.

JH: So you are saying that it was a shift in terms of what you were able to do as artists?

SL: Yes absolutely

JH: But you would have made that work in that way regardless. What you described was something different. You said that he changed the parameters in terms of when things were output, but you didn't say he changed of parameters in terms of what was actually produced.

SL: No he didn't change the parameters...

JH: So the artists had control over that!

SL: We had control over the output of the work that was made, but at the same time there were political issues about the dissemination process that were changing as we were making it.

JH: But you didn't have to change the artwork?

SL: The artwork was changed.

JH: Some people did. When they made work for Channel 4, they had to compromise. But you didn't have to change your work. You didn't set out with one idea like David Hall's running tap, and then change the idea into being something completely different, because it had to become part of the flow.

SL: No, because the work itself was a flow piece. It was a moving flow. But, they tagged it at the beginning and at the end, which I didn't envisage as being part of the work. I thought the work would start and that was how it would be controlled, used and created. I felt that the method of dissemination was now in the control of the publisher rather than in terms of the concept proposed to the publisher. The concept of the proposal was radically changed by the controller of Channel 4.

JH: Can you about the televisual process? Is that something that you were pleased to be involved with as an artist or is it something that you wouldn't like to do again? What was it about that process that you enjoyed?

SL: I did like the process. It was interesting. The process in terms of the crew structure that was imposed on the workflow, the making of the work and the timeframe of the work in terms of using particular formats, was interesting. A lot of the work was shot on Betacam, but some images were shot on high-band U-matic or low-band U-matic. There was a certain element of that, that reminded me of earlier work and I wanted to be quite autonomous in terms of the images that I was creating. I felt that some of those images weren't going to take place through the crew process. I had to do it myself because a lot of it was a bit like photography. A lot of it was just waiting for that moment and not really knowing when the moment was going to come. Some of those images were designed and used as a reflective process. Also I had a photographer involved in the work as well. We did a lot of work where MFI was used as a place where the ultimate home could exist. We took still photography rather than just taking video. They then had to be digitised into the system. The offline structure was very much like how I would use an offline structure with lots of different tapes all combining to be made one. Then I would try to work out how to edit this stuff in a long line environment where there would be an editor who would be in control of the system and me saying "These numbers to do this first"

JH: Did it basically enable your process? Was it sophisticated compared to what you had available?

SL: No

JH: So the television environment didn't give you the access to the broadcast type technology that was there?

SL: It gave me Betacam technology to do better layering systems.

JH: So without it you wouldn't have had access?

SL: No. I had low-band and high-band U-matic. Betacam was not, at that point, a common place within art schools and so Betacam was as a format much more superior than U-matic. It meant that we could do 8 layers without any worry of quality loss whereas with U-matic it would already be muddy and fuzzy and not that good by layer three or four.

JH: We are talking about pre-digital?

SL: Pre-digital, yes. A lot of the digital effects were all done through digital time-based correctors and digital-effects generators, so there was no loss of quality every time it went through a layer. In that sense, that aspect was an interesting use of an edit suite outside of what I've used in my own terms.

JH: So the piece that you made for *Nineteen for Ninety* was *Big Time*. Did you make any other works during that period that were using layering and what you discovered through that process?

SL: Every piece of work that I'd made from about January 1983 onwards.

JH: But how did you have access to compositing technology at that time?

SL: We had vision mixers and we had the ability to multi-generate, multi-layer videotapes again and again.

JH: Where?

SL: At Coventry Polytechnic, at Maidstone College of Art, at Duncan of Jordanstone in Dundee.

JH: So there was an investment in the technology?

SL: Yes, there was the investment. There was also LVA. There was a whole range of possibilities and organisations that could offer that resource. Obviously some contacts in the industry enabled me to work at a much higher level than U-matic one-inch quads etc.

JH: Were there specific facilitators or curators who were important to the exhibition or broadcast of your work?

SL: Obviously there was *Annalogue* i.e. Anna Ridley. There was Jane Rigby and Steve Partridge being *Fields and Frames*. LVA, before 1987, was a big distributor of my work. After that time it wasn't. It wasn't mainly because in 1987, I left LVA to pursue other things and basically they didn't appoint me to do a particular job and that meant that the organisation was definitely changing its constituency of personnel. Supposedly it was meant to be more professional but in effect it became more restrictive.

JH: Restrictive in what sense?

SL: It restricted who would it show, and what work would be publicised. I think up until 1987 it had an open submission, anybody who could submit a tape.

JH: But didn't the same work get distributed nevertheless? People who knew each other in LVA were distributing each other's work and didn't necessarily distribute outside of that? So once it shifted, you had the context of accountability where someone had to say, "Yes, I curated that." Before that, they didn't. They just put their friend's work in.

SL: I think it was a bit more sophisticated than that. From 1980 until 1987, my objective within that organisation was to make it as plural as possible so that all work would be selected.

JH: What was your job there then?

SL: I did exhibition. I helped run the workshop.

JH: Was that voluntary work?

SL: Yes, it was voluntary work. I tried to initiate an agenda around the way that people made video. That meant that we tried to create a workshop environment where LVA had a focus: trying to promote video. Then it was video art as an exhibition/dissemination process. Because we had the edit suite, LVA made money, which could actually facilitate a much wider aspect than say The Filmmakers Co-Op, which didn't have that means of production. They had their optical-printer, but LVA were doing at least £300 or £400 a day from the use of the edit suite. They kept their edit suite running until about 1992/93 when it was radically changed.

JH: But LVA's remit was distribution. It wasn't for production facilities was it?

SL: Yes it was. As soon as it got the workshop grant from Channel 4 it was facilities because that was part of the process. That's why we got the money.

JH: So what was Chris Meigh-Andrews' *Three-Quarter Inch Productions*? That was still in LVA wasn't it?

SL: It was a private company.

JH: One of the reasons why he talked about setting that up at that time, was that LVA didn't have the facility to edit. So when did LVA get its facilities to edit though?

SL: I think it was between November 1983 and January 1984. I think it must have been from around August to December of that time.

JH: Lets go back to the issue of distribution and curation. You've said there was a shift in the way the things were done. Before the management was changed you were involved and it was a bit more fluid with who showed what. Then after that it become more administrated. Did they have to become more accountable because of their funding?

SL: I think accountability is a quite an interesting term. I think the argument at the time was "We don't have the space to have everybody on the shelf." That's quite interesting.

JH: So after that point in 1987, they didn't distribute your work?

SL: No, and they haven't done since. They offered *Predator Cat* in a showcase environment but I think that only went to two venues outside of the Pandaemonium Festival. It's not actually in active distribution. Their understanding about methodology of active distribution is likened to who goes and interacts with them in such a particular way.

JH: You were taking about specific curators or facilitators who were important for the exhibition and the broadcast of your work.

SL: In terms of exhibition, then Nicky Milligan was quite an important curator who allowed me to show work at National Review of Live Art but also curate my own shows through the National Review of Live Art. Obviously there was Eddie Berg up until 1989 and slightly after that. There was a collaborative structure about the way that exhibition would be promoted in the country. The Arnolfini instigated buying my early work as part of the National Scheme of Video Artists on Tour. Video Library, set up by the Arts Council and David Curtis primarily, also meant that the work was lodged at the Midland Group, the ICA, the Arnofini and The Third Eye Centre. That was quite an interesting period. These centres meant that the work was starting to get accessibility. David Curtis's initiative at the time, Video Artists on Tour and Filmmakers on Tour, were quite a good way of getting your work seen within a gallery context, within art schools or within film schools. The Arts Council funded people to go out there and actually show their work and talk about their ideas. That meant there was a good touring scheme about the way that artists would interact with students.

JH: So you had your work on that?

SL: Yes. I think that was a very positive process. Eventually however, it became too successful. It was costing too much money and they cancelled it. It proved that something generating a context can be successful, but then it can be too successful.

JH: How was it too successful?

SL: The artists didn't have any money to run it.

JH: So it was because the Arts Council had to put matching funding, and the more people wanted it, then the more it cost?

SL: Yes, I felt that that was a very positive method of getting the work out.

JH: The artists got a fee as well didn't they?

SL: We got a fee, yes. It also meant that different ideas were being exchanged in the art schools. I think that was very fluid. You can't really get that now. You can employ a range of sessional people, so you may have some special guests coming, but you don't necessarily have someone who's been funded by the Arts Council to promote art.

JH: What about other artists that helped or supported you?

SL: A whole range of people supported me. Industry people like Arthur Johnson enabled me to use equipment and resources. They had a role. Other people at Sam Con helped develop my aesthetic by allowing me to use high-end kit. In return, I did things for them. Other people who helped me to develop, were people from Dance Umbrella, like Rodney Wilson and Stephanie Jordan. There were whole groups of people trying to develop aesthetics in dance and live art. Stephen Rogers unfortunately died in the 80's, but he was a great inspiration in terms of trying to develop ideas around moving image and experimental performative work. In that sense there was a group of people that were quite influential. Of course there was *Impact Theatre* who I made a lot of documentation about.

JH: Can you talk about how you got involved with live art and why? How did you get involved with dance and live art?

SL: It was a bit of mixture of both, as to what came first, the dance or Impact. In 1981, I first came into contact with Impact Theatre through Zöe Redman. I was working at one of the Half-moon Theatres in Mile End. There were two Half-moon Theatres, a small one and a very large one. In the small one was this group called Impact Theatre who were down from Leeds. I got chatting to them and we started to talk about how to document their pieces of work. They did a play called *Certain Scenes*, which we didn't record, but I suggested to the company and mainly Pete Brooks that it would be nice to do their next project as a video piece. I was working at The London College of Printing, where there were 2 cameras that I used, plus the LVA camera. That enabled me to do a three-camera mix at the same time. That was just at the end of 1981, early 1982. Meanwhile Dance Umbrella, just slightly before that invited people at LVA to try and record a three or four camera shoot of live dance outside of the BBC context. Up until then most dance had been recorded through the BBC and it was very formal. Because Dance Umbrella wasn't within the traditional canon of the Royal Ballet or the National Ballet etc, they had to look for someone else to shoot it. No one had ever done it before. Dave Critchley asked me if we could do it and I said, "Well technically, yes, we could. We have a portable vision mixer

and we could mix three cameras together as a live event and then do a post edit to clean it up a little. He asked how many decks we would need. I thought we would need about 4 or 5 video decks just to be on the safe side. He said, "OK, can we get them?" and I said, "Well I've got one at Maidstone and there's one at LCP. We've got one at LVA and I'm sure we could get one from another place" and we did. We got them all together and we did it on low-band U-matic with a three camera live mix. I mixed it. I made the talk-back system and we achieved it. That's how I started making live art dance. We recorded six dances. We recorded one for Lorrie Booth. With Second Stride Company, which was Richard Alston, Sue Davis and Ian Spink, we did a dance with each of them; and we did 2 dances with Janet Smith. So, in all, we did 6 works. The most experimental has been Lorrie Booth, which Peter Anderson and myself made together. It was quite a difficult durational process because it was done over a two-month period. We followed him around the country.

JH: What date was that?

SL: It was vaguely late 1981, early 1982.

JH: Were you using the processes as a way to make a work in itself, or would you say that the dance company just wanted documentation.

SL: They just wanted documentation, pure documentation. I felt that I had to do that first in order to learn how to mix. Doing something live is much more complicated than people imagine because you've got to think about three things. You've got to think about giving directions to the cameras, you've got to be able to mix it and you've got to plan, quite far in advance, what camera angles you need. So you have to think about the strategic use of cameras and how those cameras would function across an imaginary plane within a visual space and how you create a presence and language. From that, Pete Anderson and myself went on and we did quite a lot of dance works. We did some more for Dance Umbrella. We did Rosemary Butcher. We did a whole range of people. We made quite interesting stuff. The culmination was that I did dance works for London Contemporary Dance and Ballet Rambert. Some of them were more experimental than others, like the contemporary dance, however, within the live art environment, there were three areas of specialisms. There was live art, there was visual theatre, as they called it, and there was performance art. There were also other streams of dance and theatre, so we had a whole gambit of different people asking us. We became known as people who could actually do live mixes and documentation. It wasn't very profitable but there was a whole stream of things that was possible. With Impact we did *Useful Vices* in 1982, which was shot in a warehouse. We mixed live a three-camera event made up of vignettes of events. It was not the whole show, but a vignette of the event, which clearly gave me the expertise to then edit something together into a document that I could then move forward. I then tried to develop some more work for Impact and we did a piece called *Place In Europe* followed by a piece of work called *The Carrier Frequency*. *The Carrier Frequency* is a piece that is a both seminal in terms of its theatre production but also seminal in terms of video making as well. It transformed the artwork into an autonomous event outside of the theatre space. That was quite interesting process. It was shot with 4 cameras, live at the ICA, in December, in freezing cold conditions. The work was split into three sections and we

managed to record each section to create a context for an imagistic space. It transformed it into what I suppose Eisenstein would call, parallel editing and parallel juxtaposition of images. So that really made an interventionist process into making images for camera, for dance, for theatre. Therefore, from then on, I started to make a lot more intervention into theatre works.

JH: What do you mean by that?

SL: I started to make more control over how the images would be shot. I had control over how they would be framed within the environment of the screen space rather than just pointing a camera, and hoping that something's going to be there. I intervened quite a lot.

JH: Do you mean you intervened in the performance?

SL: Not in the performance, no. We did in certain pieces of work like *Surfing on the Short Waves* when the ICA rang up and said that we've got two weeks to make a piece of work. They said, "We would like you to work with Tim Buckley and Blue Jean Tyranny and make a piece in two weeks"

JH: What do you mean you intervened?

SL: In that piece of work, *Surfing on the Short Waves*, we shot the material beforehand in the Arts Theatre. Then I edited it into an hour-long piece of work. Then we performed that piece of work on stage. So, I was mixing it live. People could see me mixing it live. They could see what was happening live. There were three cameras live. There were 4 videotapes running. There were monitors. There were video projections. There was a whole range of different types of things. There were live performers and there were three camera operators: Pete Anderson, Steve Hawley and a guy called Richard Blakey.

JH: So was it on monitors then? The work was fed back through the monitors mixed?

SL: It was fed back through a monitor and a video projector. The ICA or Samuelson's provided a video projector for us. It was all done live and it sold out. It was quite an interesting show, as a one-off live music, live performance event. Steve Hawley danced. He danced with the dancers. I was dancing with the vision mixing. It was all about the juxtaposition of different things. It would have been quite funny to see but I think it's still quite an interesting process where we were combining media, or arts environments, to try and make cross over platforms. I think that was really exciting. It also meant that the experimentation of what was documentation, and what was an artefact, what was live art, what was visual theatre started to merge with me. I was moving between a current of different possibilities as an artist and maker of video. That was quite exciting. From Impact Theatre, people saw *The Carrier Frequency* in Europe and I was then asked to do workshops on how to shoot live theatre because they thought it added an emotional statement about the work. They saw the work and then they saw the piece. They saw it as a new art work in its own right. That was quite interesting because I had intervened thoroughly into the work and changed its historical process in terms of its intervention as an artefact. When I say intervention, I mean it the way of a director or an artist who was

just transforming from one state to another. I changed that process. I made that change. I made the decisions and the company had to then accept it or not. They did. They really liked it. They liked the look of it. I liked the look of it.

JH: What critical feedback or public attention did your work attract?

SL: There was some stuff written about me but not much. I still think it's very much the case even to the present day. Over the last few years people have been writing about me. You've written about me, Jackie, and Al Rees has written about me. I think that's quite good because it contextualises where you are in a canon of work and how that canon then relates to a historical context. In terms of a critical mass, my own writings have been about the technology and how technology has been used by artists. I find that an engaging process. I feel that it's about confidence as well. I'm not a good writer, I feel that the context of writing has changed because of the computer. It has enabled me to write a little bit more. It's time consuming for me.

JH: What have other people had said about your work?

SL: They haven't said that much really. What they have said is been usually quite reasonable. I don't think it's been derogatory, but I don't think there has been a lot written.

JH: Were there any particular works, either from yourself or others, that lead the contemporaneous philosophical or conceptual debates, that you feel are worth mentioning in relation to your own practice?

SL: I think I've had an influence on lots of different types of people, or interested people, in both experimental moving video work and perhaps even documentary, in terms of style, editing techniques, methodology, and in terms of how you convey subject.

JH: How would you be able to judge that? Are you talking about students?

SL: There are two halves. There are the people that you teach and how they then use the knowledge that you either give them, and the work that you show them, to make their own stab at things. Also, at the same time there are fellow artists that I've either helped make their work and therefore some of the ideas that I permeate, go into their work either unintentionally, or they need to have those ideas to make logical sense of the work that they are trying to make and that process. I've done that with a number of artists over the years to try to support their work, and to give their work a critical mass. In terms of my own philosophy about what I'm trying to do as an artist, I became extremely interested in post-modernism. I think people like George Barber who was interested in scratch video and its core basis of how people manipulate editing, seemed to me a process that needed to be examined much further, and much deeper in a much purer state. So a lot of my work is about repetition. In the 80's it was about accidental repetition and the way that these images are then transformed. I've used that even to the present day. I see students, in the courses that I've taught, pick up on some of those ideas, on some of those critical masses about repetition, colour, shape, form, in their own work. That's a nice flattery in

some ways, but I that can only be a start point for them in terms of their ideas and in terms of their development.

JH: Would you say that there are any works, other than your own works, that lead the contemporaneous, philosophical, conceptual debates, that you may have been influenced by as an artist?

SL: I'd have to start with David Hall. *TV Fighter* and the *7 Television Interventions*, seem to me a good starting point to how video can actually transform an idea and how certain types of imagistic spaces can be explored. After Hall, I would have to look at people like Malcolm LeGrice in terms of *Berlin Horse*, and how colour is used. How the flow of time is considered and how patterning emerges through process and through examination through the artist's eye. Then, I suppose from an early point of view, there are people like Ernie Gusella and his little one or two-minute events, which explored consumerism and the process of looking at and making humour come through the work. Then there's John Sanborn and Kit Fitzgerald. *Entropy* and *Order* are selections of work, which were so well edited using high levels of technology, which I could only imagine in 1978, compared to the one U-matic deck that was available to me. So when multi-decks were available to me, people like Bill Viola and Gary Hill started to emerge from America. They had a different aesthetic from Sanborn and Fitzgerald, so that was another level of process. I think I have to add some resonance to Steve Partridge because Steve taught me at Coventry. We've been close friends ever since and we've fed off each other with ideas about the way that images work and how they structure. *Monitor* for me, was quite a cathartic work.I owe a great deal to Steve Partridge in the sense. He tutored me at Coventry. I thought *Monitor* was an important factor in the way that I then perceived how to use video, especially when you look at things like *Mirror* and *You Make me Shout.* Steve also made *Interplay,* which was shown at the Icon Gallery in Birmingham. That had a great deal to do with colour and really turned me on to how colour could be used within the video. At that time it was a monochromic space for me due to the fact that we were using black-and-white cameras. Once I saw these new works by Steve, it became obvious that there was a whole range of new possibilities that could take place.

JH: Did you see work outside of Britain?

SL: Not until I started to travel to festivals. The first big festival I went to was San Sebastian Film Festival where I went with John Adams. John's work was quite an influential on me in terms of how he dealt with narrative and story telling. It did actually change some of my direction. For a little while I grappled with this complex idea of story telling. I made a number of works where I used story techniques, things like *I Really.* I soon realised that my strength wasn't in story telling, it was in imagistic spaces, imagistic work. I then moved back to things like *In the Name of the Gun*.

JH: So did you see any other work outside of Britain?

SL: Yes people like Bill Viola and Gary Hill. Dalibor Martinis I found quite interesting. *Juste Le Temps* by Robert Cahen, I found really interesting in the early eighties. As I went through the 80's I became interested in people like John Smith much more, and David Larcher.

Malcolm LeGrice produced a whole set of other works that I was quite interested in. People like Peter Gidal, who were quite formalist in their approach, I found very interesting even though I wasn't necessarily a formalist in terms of the imagistic styles that I was trying to do. I like the contextualisation and the process of the context. I liked how he articulated ideas around what he was trying to make. I found that a very aspiring process.

JH: Was there any particular contextual critical writing that you would agree or disagree with?

SL: Of the recent stuff, there is a lot out there that I find very macabre and very strange.

JH: What do you mean macabre and strange?

SL: Because it's not honest.

JH: Whose and what writing you mean?

SL: I mean people like Nicky Hamlyn for example. This is very strange piece of work from my perspective, as someone who taught at Maidstone College of Art and the Kent Institute. It is as if I didn't exist in the world.

JH: But that doesn't make it macabre and strange, the fact that you're not in there.

SL: It is because it's weird that someone could be erased. Erasure is something that is not part of this project, because REWIND is about making people un-erased. I think that it's funny that certain people re-write history through their language.

JH: That's what history is though.

SL: History is that but in a funny way, we want people to be honest. I don't think people are necessarily honest in their writing. People are selective in terms of the work they've seen or what they regard as being important work. It's quite interesting that people select certain works because that's what they remember.

JH: But it has to be a little bit more scientific than that when you are writing a historiography. It can't be just about what you remember, otherwise there wouldn't be much left. The purpose of that particular book wasn't a historiography. I think your description "macabre and strange" is interesting because it's a sort of uncanny-ness, which the book does try to embody. So, hasn't it succeeded in its objective? Because you are describing it in a way that is a narrative, that is true to its form.

SL: If you are part of a process and you are a full-time member of staff, and you are actually directing and influencing the students that he includes in his book, more so than a sessional member of staff that occasionally comes in one day a week, I think that is rather macabre.

JH: What you are saying is that generally, it was a book that included students that you taught, but it doesn't acknowledge you as a teacher?

SL: Yes

JH: Apart from that particular major book, is there any other critical writing that you would agree or disagree with or that you would like to mention that influenced your work perhaps? What about Peter Gidal's writing?

SL: I think Peter Gidal's writing, Malcolm LeGrice's writing, and David Hall's writing influenced me more about video in its context. Talking about context was important. Stuart Marshall was more interested in broadcast as a dissemination structure, especially in his 80's works. I found myself disagreeing quite vehemently with some of the issues that he raised at that time. But Stuart moved on and he developed a critical mass outside of the artefact. He was interested in television and I think his whole agenda shifted towards television.

JH: That's interesting because I would have said that Stuart Marshall was one of the people that really did rattle the philosophy of the electronic medium, if there ever was one. Why would you disagree with what he had to say? There's nothing in what he said that was disagreeable in the art sense.

SL: No I don't think that he was disagreeable. I felt that Stuart was always on the trajectory to try and find that process to get to where he was. He'd moved. He'd shifted quite early on from one state to another. I think his work had changed radically from being formalised work to being story-telling work in some aspects. I know that for a fact because, I was a student at Coventry, and he was editing his work at Coventry. Steve Partridge allowed him to come up and use the resources to make a piece of work. We watched the work. His polemic had already started to shift. I think that's because the debate about Channel 4 and about the new broadcast areas had surfaced. There'd been a case with Peter Wollen with *The Two Avant-Gardes*. It was all trying to create a context for the artwork, the art environment for television, for the workshop sector. There was a whole range of wrath about the new polemic of publishing through broadcasting. I think that changed the way that people understood and used television. Therefore they were gearing themselves up to either be part of that, in some sort of process or to be against it.

JH: You wanted to be part of that though didn't you?

SL: I quite liked the idea of showing work in an unfetted way but I soon realised by about '84/'85 that you couldn't have that unfetted-ness. It was always going to be controlled. I suppose my last stab of that was *Big Time* when the control was completely taken away from the producing company towards the publisher. The publisher controlled it. At that point I lost complete interest in television as a means of production. I think the arguments that were outlined in *The Two Avant-Gardes* by Wollen had been bastardised to such a point that most of the workshop sector has been closed down. That golden age, if there was a golden age, just disappeared by the end of the eighties. Therefore, there was a shift in the way that television was going to pursue artworks for television.

JH: Are there any particular philosophical debates you agree or disagree with?

SL: In about 1969, I first saw Eisenstein's work and Vertov's work. Vertov's work and the way that Eisenstein created images in the 1920's were good start points for the way that I wanted to explore images. They created a visual language, which I started to look at, re-examine and re-appropriate because it gave me a vehicle of dissemination, which created a context for the type of work that I wanted to make. The writing that Eisenstein did in film sense and all those books that he wrote became quite influential on me in the late seventies. I started to think about what those books would actually represent in terms of a video language, if there could ever be a video language of equality, in terms of creating context and critical mass. I think it's quite interesting that for someone, who is quite a dyslexic person, it is quite hard to write about critical ideas and formulate those critical ideas into arguments, which are both coherent and relevant to other people. Often the theory is in my head but not actually on the page. I felt that a lot of my ideas were expressed through what I actually made and how that actually transformed and how that was then expressed to other people. I also felt that this parallel editing structure that Vertov and Eisenstein had set up in the 1920's, needed to be re-examined in the way that it could be re-used within a video language. It gave me a sense of how images could be constructed to create meaning. It gave me a language that I could readily use and understand. That doesn't mean to say that I mimicked their language, because fundamentally they were writing and developing narratives. I was dealing in some sort of space, which was exploring images as motifs and occasionally using words but not necessarily creating meanings through those words. In the way that that examinations took place, I realised that there was a whole manner of critical text about the form and about colour, that were both there in terms of paintings and in terms of sculptural work that I was interested in. My installation work became an attempt to try and create totality in the way that people would be absorbed into. That absorption is something that I was really interested in the 80's. I think in the 90's it got lost and now with the whole new language about the cinematic and about the way that the viewer articulates the notion of spectacle, there's a terminology about the way that you can create statements around the way that people see video or digital media in an expansive way.

JH: Why do you see film as being any different to video in terms of its perceptual meaning? Certainly in terms of looking at language, Eisenstein wasn't specifically dealing with film. He used a universal language. Why would you say that?

SL: I suppose it's to do when things are made and how they are made. Undoubtedly Eisenstein and Vertov were using a technology of film to create those works and their context of dissemination was always going to be cinematic. They were always going to show it in a darkened cinema space.

JH: I've talked to artists about that with ACME and the AIR Gallery and they showed work in black spaces. So, that concept of the cinema space or cinematic space existed in the seventies as well. It didn't just stop in 1950, or stop as soon as someone decided that there was a video monitor. It might have stopped in your perception of things but in the wider scale of things it's never stopped has it?

SL: It's the scale of the work, in the first sense.

JH: The cinematic isn't to do with scale.

SL: In this context, in 2006, it's to do with scale because there's a different formulised process of how video projection works. But, in the 70's, I felt that the video monitor was the screen space that we were dealing with. That screen space was just as available in the home environment.

JH: So you saw it as a container? It was not a sculpture. It was a container?

SL: It was a container, yes. Placing multiple containers with multiple images was a bit like the language of multiple framing that Vertov did, but not in the same way because it was joined together in Vertov. As the technology of video became much more available to me you could create the same sorts of illusion in the image that Vertov had achieved through optical printing and Malcolm Legrice obviously had done 10 or 15 years earlier with *Berlin Horse* and other films that he was making around that time. As the technology became accessible to me, the types of imagistic spaces that I could explore expanded and could relate to the cinema work of Eisenstein and of Vertov, which is something that I wanted to aspire to as an artist. Before then, in things like *Mirror*, I couldn't do that because I could only ever do a cut. In a funny sort of way, that's one of the reasons why, unless you had a vast amount of money in film, I moved towards the video environment. I had a more autonomous process of actually achieving some of those non-linear spaces, or linear spaces, between multiples of images.

JH: What ideas and other artists work influenced your work or who has inspired your work?

SL: People like Mondrian definitely now, but even I suppose when I started to use square boxes in the early things like *The Winner*, *I Really, The Smoker Tapes,* and in *Viewing in My Room,* they were all part of an expression of ideas that enabled me to ask, "where did I see these images before?" They just didn't come out of nowhere. Vertov created a montage of things together, but I'd already been working with images in printmaking and in photographs, where I was doubling up images together. I could express that through the video materiality of the technology, creating a certain type of formal work by theorising that work. Why did I do a square box or a round box? There's only so much you can do with a particular type of editing environment. I think it took me a long time, up until about 1997, when I started to use and develop pictorial mass that I'd actually developed to really understand how I could use imagistic spaces, outside of the patterning of the visual effect systems, that were being used by the technology itself.

JH: What other ideas and artists influenced your work?

SL: Definitely Cubism and also DaDa-ism. People like Picasso and Marcel Duchamp were all influential in the way that I started to develop ideas. I quite liked the idea about time and space. Time and space seemed to be quite an important factor in those artists work: how to discuss time, how to discuss the way that images worked in time. I don't think cinema necessarily dealt with that. It wasn't until I watched things like Belle de Jour by Buñuel, but also Godard and Cocteau and his use of going through mirrors. It was about changing one dimension into another dimension. For me those films were quite influential in terms of

discussing time as an artwork, but I wasn't interested in the imaginary. I was interested in real facts about objects, and how those objects really created symbolic meaning. I was interested in what symbolic meaning they meant or represented to me as an idea, about the way that they could create some sort of metaphoric statement to other spectators and other people. Also, when you think about people like David Hall and how he articulated the materiality of video, and how people like Frank Gillette articulated ideas around displacement of time, all these issues, in the early part of the 70's, created a really interesting mixture of context and formal ideas that needed to be pursued further. They weren't necessarily in your face ideas. Often they were quite simple. You just had to look at Wegman's work in the mid-seventies to realise that a simple idea can have a profound meaning to the way that people responded and bore witness to conceptual ideas around time and space, especially pieces with his dog, Man Ray, and the tennis ball.

JH: Do you mean the single tape pieces?

SL: Yes. Those works created a certain framework of investigation, which I thought created a context for work to be investigated at the end of the 1970s. I suppose the 80's gave me a platform to try and investigate some of those core agendas. The theories were quite important. The Video Art book of the 70's was a really quite inspiring piece of text for me, because it had a number of key texts in it from an American perspective, although not necessarily from a European's perspective. The only text that I could find that was safely within my field was the Video Art book of Studio International, 1976. There were a number of key texts in that. I felt that the LVA catalogue of 1984 addressed some of those key texts. That was a chance for other people to write about video but it was quite low level. It was a small amount of text, offering some key moments but not really creating a chance where articulation could really be developed. The book that you've just edited, *Experimental Film and Video,* has been one of the first opportunities where key polemic texts have been bought together about video and film. Julia Knight also created a reasonable context for re-looking at the context of video at that time in the mid 90s. The articulation on understanding a lineage of video production was a good text. Al Rees' book, also created a context from the very start to the present day-ish, but with many things left out of course.

JH: The problem is you can't write about everything. You just give a flavour. That's the problem with the form of the book, whereas possibly with databases, it changes the shape of the historiography. It can be disseminated. It's a different process. With a book, it is limiting because you can only do so much and it depends on the person doing it.

SL: I think there has been a limited booklist on the history video.

JH: I think it was either taken at the time of the tide or it wasn't taken at all. If it didn't happen and the artists that were part of it didn't make it happen during that period then you can't blame anybody else. Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot, who did the video anthology, were artists. So, their collective energy put that book together. You can't really bemoan the fact that it doesn't exist. It didn't exist at the time when you were there as well.

SL: The 1984 LVA catalogue was the only thing that had any text in it.

JH: You can't really look at the distribution catalogue as being the seminal text.

SL: No, but it did have text in it. I think the 80's was very sparse in terms of critical text about video.

JH: Lots of people did write. Tamara Krikorian wrote and David Hall wrote. Stuart Marshall wrote and Dave Critchley wrote some things.

SL: Yes, but they didn't write books. They weren't writing books. Perhaps they were writing key texts in Art Monthly.

JH: But they saw it as part of the art world.

SL: They saw it as part of the art world. I suppose people like Malcolm with his books, Peter Gidal and even David Curtis' books of the 70's, did create a context for film which could apply to video in its moving image culture, but there was still a phenomena in the way that the text related to a materialistic film language, which I think was different from a video language that David Hall was trying push, that Stuart Marshall was trying to push and maybe what people like Catherine Elwes and Michael O'Pray have started to write about. There weren't key texts developed in the 80's. I think David Hall wrote key texts in the 70's but he didn't continue writing key texts for some time.

JH: Would you like to say anymore about your inspirations?

SL: In terms of the inspirations for myself, I think a lot of the ideas I tried to permeate were generated by my own investigative processes. I see that as perhaps a strength and also a weakness as well because I was innovating image construction as well as images themselves. I found I considered these processes as exploratory testing how things might function. I didn't know how the sea juxtaposed against a cup would look until I tried it out, or how a train moving across a number of monitors, running from three or four videotapes would create patterns of images and whether it would work with a musical opera. I had no idea until I saw it running all together. Yet, I had a sensibility about the way these combinations of images would function. I knew that they would work. I had a real figurative control over them. Then I harp back to *Nude Descending a Staircase* by Duchamp. I'm getting close to that process of creating a multi-dimensional image construction across a bank of screens just like *Nude Descending a Staircase* but not in the same way. It's only now I feel that I have the controlling factor of technology to even attempt an artwork that could even be remotely regarded as something devised in painting or painterly worlds. In my *Digital Boogie-Woogie* piece of 1997, I really tried to explore Mondrian's articulation and Kandinsky's articulation of colour, form and object. They start to immerge as both ideas around the video playback technology as well as about the digital and about how the articulation of those ideas can be transformed from one formal set of principles into another set of formal principles.

JH: Did you collaborate with any other artists on any of your works?

SL: I did on a numerous occasions. *The Long Search for the Necessary Tool,* made in 1984, was in collaboration with a composer called Jeremy Paton-Jones, which was a 75-minute opera. In it's first showing, it was shown with about 20 screens. Its second showing was with 36 screens. But, it wasn't ever done with video projection or multi-screen projection in a large-scale format.

JH: Is there anybody else?

SL: Steve Hawley and Peter Anderson. Peter Anderson and I made a lot of dance videos and live artwork. He was a collaborator for about 10 years, so in one sense we developed dance moving image work together, and developed a language for recording and shooting that stuff. We edited the same work. We worked collaboratively across both direction and editing processes, so it was a mix and match of our work. Steve Hawley and I made a piece called *Surfing On The Shortwaves,* which had a number of incarnations. It was mainly a live art piece but then it was also as a two off-screen piece, a single screen piece, a document. It had different forms and was shown at many different festivals and processes. I've worked with people like Zöe Redman, Marion Urch, Kate Meynell in the past and then even people like Steve Partridge, David Larcher, all helping to try and create their artworks.

JH: Can you distinguish between artists that you've facilitated and artists you have collaborated with? You've collaborated with Peter Anderson, Steve Hawley and Jeremy Peyton-Jones. Did you collaborate on artwork with Marion Urch?

SL: I did the camera operation and the directing of photography on *The Long Road*.

JH: But would you necessarily call that a collaboration? You worked on it as an artist like a lot of artists, over many years, helped other people do their work.

SL: *The Long Search* and *Surfing on the Shortwaves* are pure collaboration between artists. But with Marion Urch, these works were more than just being a technical support. I contributed to the editing technique. With Zöe Redman, a piece called *Still Life* was a collaborative piece, which we worked on together. That piece was also part of the British-Canadian exchange. *Still Life* had two incarnations, both as a single screen and a multi-screen piece of work. In the single-screen piece it was developed as a cutting piece. It wasn't a piece where there were dissolves or any sort of imagistic juxtaposition. It was purely a cutting piece and the technique used in the work was to basically white out everything, so everything came from white. It was not until 2000 that I made *The Quiet Word* with Peter Brooks. *Overseen-Overheard* with *Hidden Grin* in 1985, were obviously pieces of works that used my images and my influence in terms of the subject matter and the way that it was controlled. I did some work for Ballet Rambert and for London Contemporary Dance, so in that sense I made pieces of work for working with the dancers.

JH: So, which artists did you help and facilitate make their works?

SL: I suppose the key people were people like Marion Urch, I supported her in making *The Long Road.* My editing skills were used in that piece. Kate Meynell, Zöe Redman, David

Cunningham, Steve Partridge, Simon Robertshaw, Mike Jones, Judith Goddard plus lots of others people.

JH: Were you a part of any community or collective organisation of artists?

SL: Going back to University at Coventry Polytechnic, I was involved with a thing called the Events Week, which enabled students from around the country to come to one centre and display time-based work like performance or video. I was part of a group of people that organised that. In fact I was the main organiser for the Events Week for a while. It ran until about 1984. It was quite a good way of actually bringing current debate into the art school because they had guest artists come up. There was a whole range of people. A lot of performance-makers started their professional careers at the Events Week. People like John Adams, we first met there, Mike Stubbs and Jon Bewley all came to the college. They all started to have connections at the Events Week. Then as the 80's moved on, I was involved with London Video Arts from about October 1980 as a volunteer.

JH: You didn't have a paid role there?

SL: No, I didn't have a paid role until about 1983/'84 when I ran the workshop.

JH: Is that what you did as an on-paid role as well?

SL: Yes, but no one got paid until about 1983/'84. I was also an exhibition organiser. I ran the exhibitions.

JH: Did a lot of people do that? Was there more than one person doing exhibitions.

SL: Not really. David Critchley and myself did it in the beginning from about 1981. Then as he got more involved in the administration, I took over and Jez Welsh helped.

JH: Did you go to the Video Show in 1975?

SL: Yes I did go to the Video Show at the Serpentine and at the Tate as well. I was a student in London, so it's interesting that I didn't know these people then and that I found myself meeting them all at Coventry. That was really strange. I didn't realise that I was going to be part of that movement, or a tail-end of that movement, when I went to College.

JH: Do you think you were part of an international movement?

SL: Yes I do.

JH: How did you perceived it then and how do you perceive it now?

SL: I think in the 70's, I perceived it as making alternative television or alternative art.

JH: Do you were thinking that other people around the world were thinking along the same lines?

SL: Yes I do. From my context, which was from a Fine Art course, I found it quite difficult to understand Fine Art Video, if there was such a thing.

JH: That's an interesting point. Why do you think that there was an alignment towards television rather than alignment towards painting then?

SL: I think it's a political gesture in terms of the politics within art. It is in its fabric of art. I think most people viewed ideas in terms of camps of ideas. These camps of ideas were very strong through certain types of organisations or people. Painters assumed that they were going to go on to Cork Street. If they were never going to make it in Cork Street, they were going to have a studio or they were going to disappear off the face of the earth. Steve Partridge had introduced me to LVA quite early on in the process. LVA was a camp of a group of people that gave you a sensibility about where you might want to align yourself, just as there was the Co-op camp. There were camps in the Co-op camp as well. There wasn't just one camp. LVA at the time, when I first joined, seemed to be a plural camp on quite a broad range of material. Over the 7-year period that I was with them, it fractured very much along the workshop movement, the trade union movements, documentary movements and video art. Then there were fractures within narrative or pluralism and ideas around formal work or story telling work. So it reflected the shifts in technology and who was coming in to that environment.

JH: More than anything, you could argue that it reflected the shifts in technology, but would people coming in reflect that?

SL: Fine Art students were definitely there at the beginning. By the middle of the 80's, media students were coming into LVA and asking for their work to be on the shelf. So there was a different sort of sensibility in the packaging of the work.

JH: That's interesting. So, the social supervening necessity of the media students that came in wanting their work distributed, shifted LVA's sensibility?

SL: Yes

JH: Was that because it saw that there was a market for its distribution?

SL: Yes. For example Mark Wilcox's work, *Calling the Shots,* I never saw as an artwork in its own right. I saw it as a media-type student and yet that was played and sold quite well through the LVA distribution network.

JH: Would you say that that was to do with the burgeoning number of media students?

SL: Well, there weren't that many, but you could put Terry Flaxton and Penny Debman into that group as being students that come from you know a media type degree and were using LVA as a conduit to get their work disseminated and to show their work.

JH: But they might think of themselves as artists?

SL: I think Terry always had a mixed issue about that. He wanted to be s to an artist but he wanted to be in television.

JH: So you are saying that there was a bunch of pure artists, who only wanted to make art?

SL: Yes, and I suppose I would put myself in that camp.

JH: And that they were a minority when it came to the 80's? Then you had another kind coming in?

SL: Yes, and they changed the flavour of LVA, because in the 1970's LVA was set up to distribute artworks.

JH: So you think LVA shifted during a particular period when media students came in with their tapes?

SL: The issue was not just to do with media students, but people who were working within the workshop environment.

JH: So, as an artist and as someone involved with LVA towards the end of its first era, you feel that the philosophy shifted and that was the end of the end really? At that point there was a massive influx of non-artists, or people coming from outside of these media schools that weren't part of the art school movement?

SL: Yes. There was no problem with that, but the organisation was set up to promote art.

JH: Didn't those people see their work as art?

SL: No, they didn't see their works as art. They used the mechanics of a distribution network that was promoting art to give themselves prominence within media centres. There were no easy means of distribution apart from the Co-Op or LVA.

JH: So you are saying that the golden age of LVA only lasted from 1976 to 1979?

SL: 1981 or '82. After that its goals had been shifted by Channel 4's perspective money.

JH: Yes, the edges are blurred. If you start up with a premise like that then there are blurred edges when it comes to distributions when everything changes. The technologies were shifting and of course any philosophy is going to change if you are going to hook it on to that. Could you say that about the Co-op though?

SL: No. The Co-op never changed its premise. But then, media students weren't making films. They were making videotapes.

JH: In responding to a larger movement, did you see that as something global or were you seeing it as American, Canadian and European because that was your context?

SL: That was my main context, but I did go to Poland and I did go to Eastern European places and I did show my work in those contexts.

JH: Was there a movement in those places as well?

SL: Yes, but it seemed to be much more blurred actually, than it was here where theatre, dance, live art and video were all in different institutions.

JH: What are your most current works or works in progress?

SL: I've just done a piece at the Tramway for the National Review of Live Art, which I haven't showed in for about 15 years. That was a piece called *Static Statements*. It's a piece of work that I've been working on for about two and half years. The idea behind it was to develop ideas around myself, the language I have to use in terms of health and in terms of visibility in my life. So, it was a self-portrait about health and the journey of my health over the last 28 years. What was interesting about the piece was that I'd used my archive of video footage of myself throughout the 28 year period, starting with a piece called *Crisps* where I'd shot myself to camera in 1979 and took it all the way through to 2006, with images of me and of my growing grey beard. So there's this journey of self-portraiture throughout the work: the timeframes of me existing in time and space. I think video is really unique in that journey because there I was, not starting off knowing that I was going to use this in 1979 and then re-use it in 2006.

JH: But you recorded that moment of time and space?

SL: I recorded that moment in time and space and I've re-appropriated it again. I think that's really interesting. It's really started to change what I would have been doing next in the work and how I will function in that. Also I combined other elements of notation in video that I've been doing throughout my life, so it made me restore all these images into an artefact and the dimension of the artefact were much bigger than I'd ever made before. It was 5 screens. It was over 30 feet in size. It was big and people would be immersed into it. Given the right context, it would be shown in an enclosed spaced and maybe be all over the walls in the space. It would be multi-sound directional. In the context of the Tramway, it was against one flat wall and it was a just shown as a wide screen cinematic installation. That was quite intriguing. I look forward to developing different versions or variants of it over the next coming months.

JH: How has the process shifted from your first piece, *Mirror,* piece to that piece? Do you think there's any similarity, whether it's a shift, or whether it's distinct in its process comparatively?

SL: I think *Mirror* proved that taking a time to make a piece of work doesn't event your arriving and end result. Making *Mirror* was a long learning curve for me in terms of how you can make work and question if the work is controlled enough to be able to regard it as an outcome. Then with 28 years of experience at my fingertips making the piece for the Tramway, it was possible to consider what could work and what wouldn't work as part of the visual motif that I was trying to explore. It took me much longer to make the final

version of it than I anticipated because part of the work was dealing with my blood-sticks that I used to control my diabetic blood and to give me a number of my blood condition. I was cutting each one of these out and placing them into a video context. Instead of taking me five minutes to do, it took me more like 30 minutes to achieve each one. 100 blood-sticks took a very long time to achieve. There's only so much you can do and patience you can achieve within a day before you go catatonic. I needed to make that image first before I could next move on to the main play of combining and layering the work. In that sense there's much more control because I know what would work as a image. But, because the technology in my domain is so much more sophisticated, I was trying to push the boundary of the image much further and therefore it took much longer aesthetically, and both critically and theoretically to contextualise the work in my head before I could make it…

JH: Do you see any continuity in the two works?

SL: There is continuity. There's no doubt there. There is definitely a 'me image' in how I make images function. Steve Partridge had always said, "I can walk into your art. I can walk into any room and know it was you that made that piece of work" I think that's quite distinctive. Other people might say it's because it's very personalised in form, but I think that gives me a distinct style as an artist and I am quite pleased about that.