



REWIND | Artists' Video in the 70's & 80's Interview with Tina Keane

Interview by Dr Jackie Hatfield, 2nd March 2005

TK: I did paintings right up until about 1974. At the Royal College of Art I was in a show, the Tibian [Chilean] Show that Guy Brett and David Medalla had put together called 'Artists for Democracy'¹. I made an installation using poetry, mirrors, a chair and a blackboard with a poem on it. '*Under the Stairs*' it was called. It was a political piece, about being incarcerated in prison. Before that, I was at mainly painting. I think I'd shown in the London Group of Painting. Our first show was for Sigi Krauss in 1970.



JH: A painting show?

TK: A painting show, painting in light. I used to make paintings that worked with a light organ, and I used to do light shows for different pop groups. Then I travelled, Tina's Light Theatre, which was a bit above my board after doing the light shows. I've always been interested in movement, light, shadow and colour; and the artists like Mollinar who use the light organ. I was very interested in doing that with my paintings. In my studio, where I'd have huge paintings from floor to ceiling. We would make an environment that you came in and could play the organ and the paintings would change colours.

Then of course we had projection. I used to borrow films from the Film Co-op and include them in our light shows with photographs. Like what Mark Boyle was doing, but we were doing it with more colours, adding text, adding photographs and adding film as well. We also did the Roundhouse once a week. It used to be a church hall. We travelled around the world with them, all around Europe. It was like a performance piece, in a way. These light shows were like installations for one night.

JH: Was it in a club context?

TK: Yes, it was really mainly working with Pink Floyd and people like that.

JH: Is that how you came across Hoppy (John Hopkins)?

TK: Yes, it's how I came across Hoppy, at the Roundhouse. We used to do all the lights at the Roundhouse as well.

JH: So it was physical theatre in the same way, or in a similar way, as an installation would be?

¹ The 'show' being referred to here is the Arts Festival for Democracy in Chile⁵, held at the Royal College of Art from 14 to 30 October 1974. The festival was the first event organised by Artists for Democracy, founded by Guy Brett, John Dugger, David Medalla and Cecilia Vicuna in May 1974.

TK: Yes, exactly.

JH: So it was a kind of natural progression?

TK: I was using slides and projection so the natural progression was video and the moving image. With the projections we used this coloured slide I think they were called Martininks. I used to go to Paris to buy them. They were translucent so you learnt how to use different chemicals in different light that would make them move and shift. You could sandwich them with a slide if you wanted to do a picture and then they would change. But there were also ones that would explode into many different colours just by putting them together using gels. Basically it was a primitive way of using still image in a form of animation, using things like gels, which you would use with photography or film. It was in between film and photography but they moved and shifted.

One of my first major installations was the *Swing piece* at the Serpentine, which was part of the Summer Show. Kevin Atherton was showing his *Coronation Street* piece, which was fantastic, he was in one gallery I was in another. There were about five of us. I was the only woman. Bruce McLean actually selected me, which was nice. I did *Swing Piece* mainly because the room I wanted, for a piece I had actually thought about doing, I couldn't have because one of the guys needed it. So I was walking across the park with my daughter who was very young and her little friend Thomas, we were always in the park, and I had the idea of swings in the park. We had these park swings installed. I used three monitors. I had a screen to hide all the wires and things like that. On one TV set it was just television, and it said 'look through your shop window screen'. On the other monitor there was an escalator coming down. On the other one we had a camera in a box on the swing. And it was reel-to-reel because we only had reel-to-reel.

It worked because the camera was linked up to the monitors, the reel-to-reel worked because you could get a little thing on the back that they had to switch it on every hour. it was live; it went straight from the camera into the monitor. It just slipped in. I can't remember the technology at that time.

JH: Those reel-to-reel decks were pretty massive.

TK: Yes but that was all hidden behind the screen. That was for the *Escalator piece*. Then we had televisions so that was no big deal. That was quite easy. Actually it was Rose Finn Kelsey's video and TV so she couldn't watch TV for a month! For the other one, we had a monitor, most probably the Arts Council's. It was most probably the Arts Council's reel-to-reel too! And a camera I borrowed from a friend for 24 hours. I put it in a box and put it on the screen, so he had to wait for 4 weeks, he was a bit annoyed actually, but it was the only way I could afford to do it because we didn't have any money. So we were working at the Serpentine but there wasn't actually money to make work. People would come along, they could swing, and the camera would pick up the person up on the other swing, which would show on the monitor. Then there was the television and then there was the escalator. So people would come and swing, business people, children etc. Children used to come and sit and watch television so it was very interactive in a way. It was an interesting thing. It's in an issue of *Art Monthly*. We got a write up, and it said: 'Kevin Atherton and Tina Keane', and I can't remember the third person they put down, 'are really a threat to art and Tina Keane has no colour

sense whatsoever!' So it was quite interesting actually, really I think it annoyed quite a few people.

JH: Do you think it was the technology that annoyed them?

TK: Yes, some people thought that it was dangerous to walk into a gallery where people could swing but there was lots of space. It was all worked out. So that was my first main installation piece. Then a woman showed it in Venice. It went to a small gallery in Venice as one swing, and then it became a videotape called *The Swing*. So a lot of my work actually comes out of the installation performances, so I did a video performance with a swing. The guy who ran the gallery in Venice actually had all this new technology and he made my first video, *The Swing* - that was in 1978/'79. I remember where I was in-between; it was Edinburgh Arts in 1976, that very hot summer. I had said 'Oh I really need a holiday' to someone and they said 'Oh the Arts Council are doing these Edinburgh Arts grants' so Rose Finn Kelsey and I thought up an idea, and we filled in the form and things like that and they gave us a very small grant to go to Edinburgh Arts with Richard De Marco. Three weeks touring around, it was fantastic. It had said 'You mustn't do anything that you've ever done before' so Rose brought her stills camera and a tape recorder, and I'd borrowed Alexis Hunter's Super 8 camera. So I took a Super 8 camera and that's when I first made my first film, *Shadow of a Journey* on the boat from Skye to Harris. It was an amazing journey, it really was, and it opened a whole load of things up. Later in the year Rose and I did the performance, *The Visitation* where we put the tapes on. We made a little film, Rose and I, in my studio, of a tea cup with tea leaves in. Then we projected a Super 8 projection onto the wall. We then sat it at this table with tablecloths and the wet teacup and things like that. I was the woman who had passed with a big black hat and the coat. Rose was wearing her silver raincoat. She was the woman of the future. Then the tapes were of 'now'. All these people were just talking about old wives tales and singing and things like that. Rose and I just sat there having tea. So, that's what we did. Just had tea, and listened to these tapes. Everybody sat there. That went to one of the first women's shows in Berlin, in 1977. We did it there, which was quite good.

JH: Going back to *Swing*, how did the public interact with it?

TK: The whole thing about *The Swing*, was it was real swings. You could come and sit on the swing, grown-ups too. I think it's in the book. I took a photograph of these businessmen, playing on the swings while they were swinging backwards and forwards. Children were swinging and different people used to swing on it. I suppose it was an extension of the playground. I lived in Notting Hill, by Hyde Park, even as a child because I was born in Warwick Avenue, we used to walk with my mother across the canal bridge to the Round Pond. When I was young I played in the Round Pond with my cousin and we used to sail our little boats and things. I think the Serpentine, at that time, when I was a young kid, was a tearoom where I used to have tea with my family. So the Serpentine to me was actually something I knew very well. It was very strange. Then I'd go with Emily and Thomas and Jane, to park and play on the swings. They used to play on the swings. So all I did was bring the swings into the gallery.

JH: Was there a gender issue about the way that the work was received?

TK: No, I don't think that the Serpentine show annoyed people because I was a woman. Rather than gender, I think it was because it was huge. If you think of park swings, there were three of them. I hadn't thought about it really until I saw this big scaffold and swing with three monitors! I wanted to do something that was the complete opposite to a David Hall piece and bring in the domestic because I had a child. Basically a lot of my work at that time my daughter was involved in it because she was always with me.

I can't remember if I was having the women's group meetings in my studio at that time. I can't remember if it was 1975 with Spare Rib. I think it was, because Alexis and I were going to meetings with Mary Kelly. I think it was the beginning of the women's workshop of the Artist Union. I keep forgetting my history source, it's so diverse and so many people I've worked with. I was very conscious, in a way, of the woman's role, so maybe that was the politics of the practice. I was using myself and I was using my daughter in my work as material, but as process really.

JH: The art world was very conservative, and it still is I suppose, but at that point in time, I remember galleries being very conservative, so I can imagine a piece of work like that would be quite radical.

TK: Oh it was. It was very radical. It is quite interesting that when you are young you don't really realise that you're being radical or not. It was only 'Oh that's a great idea!' We didn't feel any restraints on us, because in the winter it was the main painters, mainly the boys, who would have their big retrospective shows. Mark Boyle and people like that. We were just given a space for the summer shows. They did this for quite a few years. I really think it's such a shame it doesn't happen now because it was a great opportunity. As I say, I remember Kevin Atherton doing his *Coronation Street* video. It was a brilliant piece where he is on the monitor. He had two tables in a big space and two monitors, and that was all. He was talking to the other monitor like I'm talking to you now, saying to the characters in *Coronation Street*: 'Hey, why do you say that? 'What do you mean you do that?' He has this extraordinary accent. He was talking to *Coronation Street* and it was like they were talking back to him. We were doing these extraordinary video pieces really which didn't make much sense to anyone, and of course his was about television and soap operas.

I was always very interested in the idea of seeing oneself on a monitor, long before the surveillance camera. The reflection as I say, was in the mirrors and how you could use mirrors to actually change things, like I did in *Playpen*. So it's very hard to say. No storyboard for that piece at all, but then it went to Venice and got changed again and then it became a video. It did its own cycle but it was because it was going to different places and different people were interested in it in a way so it had its own momentum really. I think it had its own life and became different works. People pick up on things. So that was 1978 / '79. 1979 was an interesting year because when we did the *She piece*. The *She piece* is quite an important piece because it was the Hayward Annual. Nobody was in the Hayward Annual but they had a little performance section. Which, actually Liz Rhodes was in charge of. I was asked to do a performance and Hannah O'Shea was too, and some other people.

JH: Was that after Helen Chadwick?

TK: No, Helen Chadwick came after that. She came literally after that. She had just left art school or she was still at art school at this point. No, it was the one before that. It was the Hayward Annual, we did our performances and I decided to do the piece *She*, which used slides. Slides of the Crown Jewels in negative, that Rose Finn Kelsey had taken from underneath her coat because you weren't meant to have them. I thought *She* was the whole idea of the shop window, that's what came out of the Swing Piece as well. I was very interested in shop windows and I took loads and loads of slides that I still have to this day of shop windows and how they looked. And a neon, I was very interested in neons. I always have been since a child. I thought 'Oh I'd become the model'. There I was dressed in my dark glasses and I think at that time I used to have long hair. I had it cut short and then I dressed in a short skirt and high-heeled shoes. I was the model. Then I read these poems. The poems were projected on to the wall as well and there were two cameras and two monitors. What was happening was that the camera picked me up and threw my image onto the wall as I performed. Then the slides came up. It was a mixture of those. And I had two neons. I had my first neon made, called *Mail Order* and *She*, that was on top of the TV set, which was also a picture in the book. And I was posing like I was a shop window dummy.

JH: How did you maintain the confidence to carry on making work in that context?

TK: I don't know. I think maybe I was a little arrogant. Well that's what I wanted. I was very interested in the shop windows. I was interested in the street and neon. And also, going back to light shows, I've always been working with light and I'd be shooting my film and had started using video. In a way I was already using the idea of light. Light has always been in my work, it's very, very important to me; and poetry at that time. I haven't actually written a poem actually since *Deviant Beauty* in 1996. For some unknown reason I haven't managed to write any poems recently. A lot of my work wasn't so much about story boarding, often they came from poems. The *She* piece was a poem and I had the words projected: 'Look through your shop window'. I can't remember the words now. Then I read the poem, right at the end, to the audience. It also goes back to a mirror piece of Hopscotch in Artists for Democracy², which was a poem. Emily was in it, and she was doing the Hopscotch.

JH: So with video, do you think in using that technology, it was also a political act?

TK: Oh, definitely it was, yes. I mean video wasn't really accepted in the art world at all. It wasn't art was it? It wasn't at that time at all.

Sometimes things were so spontaneous you didn't really think about them. We did things at ACME, like wandering through the streets. Like doing Hopscotch all over the streets, and along notice boards. We'd do all these drawings, as well. We did a performance in Covent Garden with a mirror on my back. Funnily enough when I look at some of my early work, and Valie Export, although I didn't even know her work, or even know of her, there's a connection there which is very interesting. I think it was about women in technology and how we would use the camera. We used it in a totally different way to male artists.

JH: How do you mean?

² This is likely to be 'Shadow Woman', a live event with film presented by Tina at Artists for Democracy (by then known as the Fitzrovia Cultural Centre) in Whitfield Street on 24 April 1977.

- TK: I think with me, it was a toy and interactive. I don't think we took it that seriously. I wasn't going out to make a big video.
- JH: I think it's interesting because interviewing individual artists everyone has an individual understanding of how they used it. One can't imagine how any kind of dogma evolves around anything when you speak to individuals because everyone has such a diverse way of thinking.
- TK: Maybe it didn't. Maybe the dogma of it comes afterwards, with the writing. I think a lot of things happened spontaneously, like I was. I was very close friends with Rose Garrard, and Kerry, and Ann Bean. Ann Bean was in the warehouse doing the most craziest things. Nina Sobel who is still one of my closest friends. I still stay with her. We all showed in New York together. And Nina was doing a telephone piece at the ACME Gallery. There were all these sorts of things going on, but they weren't documented. We were experimenting really. I think a lot of work didn't come out of me thinking I'm making sculpture or installation; I'm making performance. Therefore I don't think I ever expected my work to be lasting. I wasn't making a big statement. I wasn't making a big sculpture and I wasn't making a painting. It was about process. So that's why one piece goes to the other, it was about process at that time. It was very conceptual really, just moving and finding things.
- JH: So it was spontaneous in lots of ways.
- TK: You had the Serpentine, and you had your space so you worked with it. They were old black park swings. Funnily enough I saw the woman from the show the other day actually. She ordered the swings from the swing people, proper 'swing people'. It was all done professionally. She was brilliant. She was great, but right at the end, after the opening, she said: 'Do you know Tina, there are two things I dislike most in the world – swings and video' so I said 'Well you've done incredibly well, because you let me do what I wanted to do'. She was brilliant and she was young and it was for young artists. It was to experiment, and so we did.
- JH: When you started using the technology it's interesting in terms of the process. When did you start using video technology and editing it?
- TK: Well first of all, with *Playpen* I didn't edit it. It was all edited in camera because I didn't have any editing facilities. Yes, because I could edit my Super 8 at home. I could even make sound tapes that I used to make on a little Sony Walkman. In my studio there was a space between the door and the stairs, which had a lovely echo chamber. When I did my piece with the mirror for Artists for Democracy³, it was a sound tape that I had managed to make not by editing, but by recording from one tape to another at home, reel-to-reel. It was amazing, and very grungy, but I've always managed to do that. But with editing you had to have facilities. It was when I made *Bedtime Story* that I learnt to edit. That tape was made I think in the eighties actually, *Bedtime Story*. Then in 1982 I was invited to teach at St Martins and get in the video equipment.

³ See footnotes 3 & 5.

JH: Was there any resistance to that?

TK: No, the reason why they had employed me was because I could do both film and video. They employed me because I could do both. But no video was there at all. I remember when Sandra wanted to do something with video but didn't know how to copy it, she would put a monitor under the rostrum camera. Some of the things that we did were so wonderfully bizarre. I remember, things like filming and Isaac getting very excited and saying: 'oh, lets do a circular movement' and things. We'd put the camera on to one of those wheely chairs and we wheeled it around, things like that. All the time it was process and innovation really. We used to discover things. Then we got a 'two machine' in and then I had to learn to use and edit on 'two machine'. That's how it started. It was no longer reel-to-reel. We had lots of Portapaks at St. Martin's though. We got lots of Portapaks in.

When we had some money, I used to go to LVA and I used to do all the effects. I'd make up the effects. I'd spend hours and hours and hours, especially when I made *Faded Wallpaper*, it took forever. *Faded Wallpaper* I think started in something like 1984 when Laura Mulvey had a studio at London College of Printing. We had all things like chroma key, the lot, but didn't know how to use it. So we played with the machines. We had two cameras running, a Super 8 running. We would video that, to try and get the effect of Sandra coming through the wallpaper. Sandra Lahire and a woman, a friend of Sandra's from the Royal College of Art who did Performance Art. We spent the whole day and recorded absolutely everything. Still then I'd go back to LVA and work out the things, also on edit two machine at St Martins. Before all that actually, I was making *In Our Hands, Greenham*.

So we went to Greenham shot all this footage, things like that. Everything, all the photographs I had, were all photographs of hands doing this and that. Hands seemed to be the most important thing, for the whole demonstration. We were holding hands around the fence. It was all about communication and hands and linking up. So I thought I would make this video with hands, using video technologies and Super 8. That was the first time technology was used. It's 40 minutes. So we shot Super 8, got Sandra to move her hands, and we projected the Super 8 on to it. Then this woman's name I forget, at JVC, she was doing the video camera and doing the mixing. There is very little editing in there actually. Then we put the sound on, and right at the end of the tape is this fabulous bit actually, which I love where the Super 8 camera's battery went. It would just go into nine minutes and when you switched it on it'd go 'tudum, tudum, tudum', and that has come out as brilliant footage of the police on horses and a woman lying on the ground. It was amazing. It was a very political piece. I remember showing it at a video festival at Bracknell. I showed the tape and it was crazy sounds and this woman talking. It took me quite a long time to make, it was a very intensive tape, it was 40 minutes long. Then there was a big discussion and someone told me: 'oh the guys were very upset. Why did you use hands like that? You can't see what's going on'. They watched it for 40 minutes, but couldn't understand why I'd used the hands. I tried to explain why, I thought it was very important. It wasn't just the footage. It wasn't of someone being there, it was about the link up. It was about how the hands represent all women around the world. I think about it, but nobody had never really seen technology used like that.

JH: Sound is a really important part of your process.

- TK: Yes sound is, totally. I enjoy making sounds and composing them. Also you see Emily at that time, with the *Clapping Song*, came home from school and was singing all these songs. I said: 'Can you sing that for me please?', and we processed it. For *Demolition / Escape*, it was sort of like breaking down the sound and speeding it up, which was quite new for sound tracks at that time. I think those two works are really important for me because I go away through the actual sound, slide tape which I used in the She piece. Then how slide tape becomes video. In a way I see video as always being a method of showing work. I don't think I used process in video until the 80's when I learnt how to use the machines. I always used it as a transportation of ideas. Not as a process. I just copied things on to it. But in the 80's of course, both *In Our Hands Greenham* and *Faded Wallpaper*, are totally process tapes in the uses of technology, and how through the technology, one can get across ideas. With the *Madness*, all I kept thinking when I read the book was: 'How can I we get an image to come through the wallpaper?' It really fascinated me. It took ages and ages to work it all out. It was about four different layers and it was the same with, *In Our Hands Greenham*, 'Is this not just an ordinary film? How can I get the meaning and the experience of all these women who are round a huge diameter of fence that went for miles and miles and miles all holding hands?' The videotape for me was a continuum of their hands.
- JH: You could process the imaginary through video in a way that perhaps you wouldn't necessarily, at that time, be able to do with film?
- TK: No, you couldn't do it with film. With Super8, you've got your film, which is just straightforward. With the film and then with the use of the video, you could actually process exactly in the imagination and the experience as well, just by the technology. That's where technology, for me, became like a paint box. It was like painting. You could manipulate it and the light. That is what fascinated me. Once you got into the digital technology and the analogue; and the mixture of the analogue and the digital, which I still think it is best, you could do so many different things because it did actually produce light.
- JH: Since you talked about sound and you talked about mixing, do you think that the video technology is similar to sound mixing?
- TK: Yes I do, and I suppose I edit to rhythm quite a lot. For instance, the last piece I edited recently was taking all my colour fluorescent images. I made it for *Sketch*, for a DVD that they put out into the market place. It really worked. I love that piece. It's only about nine minutes. I edited it to the rhythm of the moving tight ropewalker and the clown. It goes with music and it works very well. But then, that takes me back to light shows, when I was working with images of lights and sounds, so I've been doing that most of my life.
- JH: Did you ever get funding from the Arts Council or anywhere institutional, because that was the major supporter of some artists?
- TK: *Neon Diver* and *Deviant Beauty* were two TV films. I was on the panel two or three times, but I never really got much money out of the Arts Council because I didn't really need it. I was commissioned to do things in the galleries, but for films, I needed it. I did get my print grants in the end but I was lucky, really and truly lucky. The fact is, I had

all the equipment in St Martin's, which I used in the holidays. It was good too because I learnt to use the machines and therefore could help the students as well. It was a bit of both. That's why I could work in the way I work, because I had that technology. Otherwise I don't think I could have made most of my works. It also made me slightly independent as well. Funding was really diverse in a way for me: British Council grants, the travel and the work touring. I did this amazing tour of Australia of my work doing performances in 1990 all paid for by the British Council. That was fantastic! Also in 1989 I was in Japan. I was there for a month. I selected people's work and put a programme together and a paper together. It's called '*In the Box*'. It's about TV and video. I showed work in Tokyo and then we went to Fukui where we were part of the Fukui International Video Festival. That was all paid for, and everybody's tapes we showed got paid £100. So my work has been taking me almost around the world.

I think I'm a political artist. I have always been political but I'm just naturally political, but I don't allow my politics to change the aesthetics of my work. My work would actually speak for itself. I work on many, many different levels. I work with the idea of beauty, movement, light and colour; all the things that I've always loved as an artist and as a painter. But I love that a conceptual side is how you can weave different ideas of notions through the work, but also that the work doesn't actually say with neon lights: 'I am political'. It is much more subtle than that. My work is about levels. You can look at my work and you can see *Neon Diver* and you can say 'Oh my God, it's completely crap in lots of ways and it's voyeuristic it's this, it's that' but actually, if you looked a little bit beneath what's actually going on in *Neon Diver* and some of the songs that are in *Neon Diver*, it's actually quite political piece. I wanted it to deal with the whole idea of what my enjoyment as a child was. Watching black-and-white TV and films, I always liked that, and swimming. I've always enjoyed swimming pools and swimming, so when I was a kid, I used to swim in Hampstead Pond, but you can't now. It's very hard to explain that question. It is political but it's not overtly political. The politics are actually part of the materiality of the film. I think it is still like that. I question things. My works are also about questions. If you take something like *Deviant Beauty*, it is about death and it's about decay. It's about the androgynous woman and it's about gay politics. It's about many, many things, but it's not out there knocking on the nose. I think in a way my work is quite devious in that way. My work is quite seductive and through seduction you can actually convince people. I don't believe in convincing people by hitting them over the head, I think it is another way round of dealing with it. I suppose those are ways that I think about my work. And fun, I love fun, I love to laugh, you could have fun, but you can have an edge to your work. It can be beautiful and all those things I like to have in my work. You might say: 'well that's a bit theatrical Tina' fair enough.

JH: But what's wrong with that?

TK: The idea of art, the concept of 'art'. I come from a 70's art, when it was dead, dead serious. It also a wonderful time too, because it was very political. There wasn't very much money around, but there were many, many possibilities. There weren't many restrictions, because you had your High Art scene and then you had the avant-garde and we just enjoyed ourselves. We made art, played with it, did this, learnt that. We were part of the avant-garde.

We were all young artists being able to play and work things out, not having to worry about whether it sells or not.

How do you survive? I think that's it. A reason I have survived is through teaching. I couldn't have survived without teaching, not in this area of work. I would have had to go back to doing and selling paintings and get myself a gallery. I think in some ways I was very lucky to find myself doing the job that I love. Film, video, it was all the equipment I needed. Not a lot of money, but I didn't need a lot of money. I think it was a totally different time then. There were lots of debates and discussions and arguments. There was also the Woman's Movement. That was very important for pushing ideas.

The Woman's Workshop belonged to the Artist Union. It was Mary Kelly and other people who were involved in that. In the end it was me who decided to pull the Women's Workshop away from the Artists Union because of the politics of it when Mary Kelly, Margaret Harrison and a couple of other people made an art work about women in work. All the works we were meant to be doing were projects like those types of project. I was not interested in making that type of political art or project. That's when so many things happened. That's when I got my studio, where I always held meetings of the Woman's Group. This guy, I think it was John Ramsay, said to me: 'For God's Sake Tina, stop going on about woman's movement blah, blah.' I had a very close friend of mine who was a painter and she wasn't interested in this at all, she was always doing her painting but Lona and I were very, very keen on it. We stood outside the Hayward Gallery with our banners, there were only six of us. I don't think the arts council were too keen on us because we were standing outside the Arts Council doing our banners as well. The Hayward gallery had a sculpture show of men only. We thought this was disgusting. It was in 1972. Then the Arts Council had done something or hadn't done something so we were outside there. I must have been a great big pain in the arse actually. Then I was in my studio, we were calling in the meetings and this guy said to me: 'Tina, your studio is just full of rubbish. You haven't made any artwork and I don't see why you need a studio.' So I replied: 'Well, I can't make any artwork at the moment. Do you know why?' I said, 'I have nowhere to put it.' He just looked at me. In Covent Garden there was this big gallery, it was a bit like Hoxton was before. Not so much now, like it was in the earlier days. And he said 'OK, there's a gallery, make some work and have an exhibition'. This was 1974. So I thought, 'This is brilliant!' So what did I do? I opened it as the *First Women's Art Show*. I got all my friends in and we did this big exhibition, I've got the poster of it still to this day. We did the art show and Peter Wollen and Roy showed their first film ever on a sheet that was moving in the wind. Mary Kelly and Margaret Harrison who were very clever, never put any work into the show but got into the catalogue. It was called *Upside Down Right Way Up* or something. It was daft but we had our show. We were very busy. Then we took the show to Essex University and all the work got smashed. We were very political and very aware of the boys. We were so busy, involved in it all. I wasn't teaching then of course. I would have been surprised if I had been allowed in the gates.

JH: Did you have a preferred context for your work?

TK: Well I mean I started off with the Ziggy Krauss gallery. I had a gallery, but then I did painting, I did painting in light. No, I just wanted a space. Spaces are quite important

to me actually because I did my rain painting out on the street, I did things in the street quite a lot.

JH: As well as the actual painting?

TK: Yes, I did my rain painting because it kept raining for days and days. So I put all this paint on the road in Covent Garden.

JH: So it was on the road, not on a canvas?

TK: No, it was on the road. Then I put some plastic onto the road and jammed it all together and that was the documentation of it.

JH: Where the rain hit the paint?

TK: Yes, it took nearly a week for the paint to disappear. It went like rainbow colours downstream. It was really nice. It was raining and windy, one of those rainy weeks. God it could have done with some colour and I could have done with some light. That was in Covent Garden in a space that was being turned into studios and artist places. We had our page in Spare Rib. I used to have all the meetings and Spare Rib people and art history group, in my studio in Notting Hill because I had the baby, I didn't use a babysitter. Griselda Pollock was part of it, all these people.

JH: You moved from doing painting, which is an object, to something transient. What was that move?

TK: I think it was a very much a political move because painting was so vain and it had such an old history, while video and performance art had such a short history. There was no history to it, so women could do it. It didn't have the backlog and the history of the art world. We could work inside, outside, in the studio, outside the studio. We could go wherever we wanted to. Edinburgh Arts' taught me that.

JH: But you were selling work in the galleries. So it is interesting that you chose this other 'thing'.

TK: It was a real political move at that time. It was an ideology. We had set up Artists for Democracy⁴ in 1975 and I did the first show. We put on film shows and Dave [David] Medalla was waving the red flag. We had amazing shows there, film shows, performances. Alice Hughes would come and do things there. That's how I first met her, she was at Chelsea, a student of Dave Medalla. We had linked up with the art schools in some way and found that we all knew each other somewhere on the line. It was of course the politics of Artists for Democracy. My gallery became Artists for Democracy, there were some very interesting installations there.

⁴ "Artists for Democracy (AFD) was founded by Guy Brett, John Dugger, David Medalla and Cecilia Vicuna in May 1974 to support liberation movements throughout the Third World. Its first event was the Arts Festival for Democracy in Chile, held at the Royal College of Art from 14 to 30 October 1974 and supported by some 300 artists from all around the world. In November 1974, AFD members squatted an empty shop premises in Whitfield Street where they organised exhibitions and events until 1977 (by then known as the Fitzrovia Cultural Centre). Tina had one of the first shows there, a solo installation, in February 1975, and presented a live event with film, *Shadow Woman*, on 24 April 1977." Lynn MacRitchie, May 2022.

I love work. I like ideas and I like trying to make the ideas work. I am a very visual. My memory is very visual. If I've been taken somewhere, I can always find my own way back. I visualise it. I visualise things and I'll edit it in my head. So if I ever have a tape, and I'm really worried about my edits, I'll walk along the street, I'm surprised I don't get run over, and I'll be moving my images around in my head from one to the other, back and forth. I am very much an imagistic person. That's how I work.

I have a few favourite works because they mark different times of my life. *Transposition* I think is a very important work to me. It's a very meaningful work, it's so deep and it's worked as an installation. It worked as a double screen, when I showed it at the Tate, and it works as a performance. It's so dense. When I see that work, it takes me through many different aspects of my life. I think that's very important work for me. I think that one of the works I really love and show now is *Hey Mack*. You only make that sort of work when you're young. It's such a punk film and it's still so relevant today. The band as a performance group singing, were so wonderful. I'm so pleased that I managed to capture that moment in time and to put it on to film so that really young people can see that energy and that cleverness and how to use politics in a very extraordinary and lively way. Of course *Shadow of a Journey* is my first film and when I see that film to this day I still feel love for it. When she sings, it's very nostalgic. I think *Shadow of a Journey* really takes me back to my roots. I'm not Scottish, it's Celtic but it takes me somewhere. I don't know where but my inner soul knows. It reminds me of my mother. I made *Demolition / Escape* with Emily singing the soundtrack and I still like that installation. When the installation is set up, I haven't set it up for a long time now, I think the last time it was set up it was in Germany in the 90's. I don't know how important it was but a very interesting piece because it really did sculpt monitors - is bouquet of flowers. I did it for the Royal College of Art. That's where Maureen saw it and asked me to do a piece in her gallery. When we were in Edinburgh Arts, we found the cross on the grave of the last witch to be burned which was in Dunning. I thought 'Wow!' Then I filmed it, on Super 8 and I made an installation with it. In the film installation it was the flowers flowing down the river. I used wild flowers because it was nature. When I put it into the installation itself, the video space, not as a film, I took the last bit of *In Our Hands Greenham* with the horses and made a quote that this was an actual presentation of a bouquet of flowers to the women of Greenham: that they also had been called witches. That piece I think is quite important. It's only been ever done once.

And there's also *Escalator*, but *Escalator* is a good piece, it's gone to lots of different places. I like *Escalator* though it doesn't seem so personal. *Escalator* is not to me a personal piece; it really is quite a political piece in a way. Again it's about the 80s, it's about the yuppies and the non-yuppies, above and below. That was inspired by every day going to work and seeing this woman sitting in the tube station. There were homeless people around. When I was asked to do a piece at the Riverside I was very into escalators. It was the only piece in the gallery, it was really, really difficult at Riverside; a very strange space. So I said: 'Can I use the centre?' So I just used the centre with eleven monitors up and eleven monitors down on scaffolding. We didn't have the technology then, so I had to learn how to cut the image into the escalator. That took quite a while. I did that at St Martin's.

It went to Sao Paolo and the Video Biennale. Apparently it fitted in just well because it was exactly the same scene there, but that was much later.

It was really good when LVA was in Soho and some of us used to work there, I remember Steve Littman working there, I'd do night shift one night and then he'd be the morning shift. We would be working around the clock sometimes, and people used to come in and have coffee or pick up a camera or get a videotape, so lots of people would meet, it was fabulous. Isaac Julian was working there. Loads of different people worked there. In and out we were, whereas with the Film Co-op, the filmmakers would be in the Film Co-op doing their films and editing. But, we would go to the screenings. What was really nice about the Film Co-op was they used to have a coffee bar so you could watch all the films and then if you didn't like the shorts or you had seen them before you could go next door and have a chat, have coffee, then go to the pub afterwards. It was a community that was interlinked in that way.

JH: Do you think video was seen as an inferior technology or even a cheap form of film?

TK: Yes I think it was seen as inferior in some ways. Film was more important, because it had its background and it had its history. It was a long history and it had been written about. Malcolm Le Grice is interesting because Malcolm was already beginning to use video, or not video but digital, early on. He is into music too so he was working with that.

I had a lot of stick because I had mixed video with film. Someone said to me once: 'Well Tina, that's not film, that's mixed'. It wasn't acceptable. It even happened recently in Holland. This guy was very interested in my films, I sent him some tapes and he said 'Well, we can keep them in the archives but we don't want to distribute you because they are not videos. A lot of your work is film'. That was only about a year ago. So it still is a bit of a problem in that sense.

JH: Can you talk about processing the work?

TK: I edit all my films even though in *Neon Diver* I worked with someone who did the machines and I did the editing. That was because quite a lot had to be done, and it also had to be done quite quickly. It was quite nice because he could be paid as well. He was a filmmaker who teaches at St Martin's in graphics. *Deviant Beauty* and all of my other work, I edited entirely myself. That was the first time I edited with someone. It was also because it was my first TV film and I had the money to pay someone. I had lots of different ideas and I wanted technical things that I really needed. He was much faster than I was to do them but I directed him where the cuts should be. To me it was very important that I edit my own films because the editor can take it into a completely different realm and give it a whole different meaning.

Alex Meigh was the first person to teach me how to edit and she worked with me on the documentation for Lilian Lijn's piece of work in Milton Keynes. Lilian Lijn was putting up a huge sculpture in Milton Keynes and wanted me to film it, so I got Alex Meigh to come. She shot it with video and I shot it on Super 8. I can't remember what year that was but it must have been the early 80's. She made film and videos and Chris Meigh-Andrews used to work with her a lot.

JH: Which works do you consider most important?

TK: I made my first video in late 1974 early 1975. I was at the Royal College of Art and managed to use the Royal College's Rostrum Camera. Before that I'd been using mirrors quite a lot, and I realised that video was very similar to using the mirror. I made a tape called *Hands* with Lynn MacRitchie, Silvia [Stevens] and Roberta Hunter Henderson was there as well. There were about four of us. It was going to be a performance piece, which we were going to do in Paris. We did actually go to Paris but it didn't work out that way. That was our first video, which I've still got, called *Hands*. It was a political one. It was using photographs. We were playing a game of cards with photographs of different women's hands ⁵.



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⁵ "The work Tina refers to throughout this paragraph is the collaborative video project *Hands*, commissioned for the Femmes Films Festival, Paris, 23-29 April 1975. The artists involved were Roberta Hunter Henderson, Tina Keane, Sonia Knox, Lynn MacRitchie and Sylvia Stevens, who had met at the Arts Festival for Democracy in Chile in 1974. Lynn MacRitchie had video recorded the Arts Festival for Democracy in Chile and was the only member of the group who had used video. The group developed the concept of playing a card game, with a pack made up of images of women. They agreed that Lynn MacRitchie would shoot and edit the video of the performance using equipment loaned by the Royal College of Art, where she was finalising the edit of the AFD Chile festival tapes. Tina was not involved in the recording or editing process, and no rostrum camera was used. The images were photographed from found sources (e.g. magazines) by Lynn MacRitchie who also developed and printed them to make the 'cards'. The *Hands* video was shown at the Femmes Films Festival in Paris on 26 April and then as a multi monitor installation and simultaneous performance at the Serpentine Video Festival on 13 May, both 1975. The REWIND archive includes the video tape Tina refers to here as *Hands*. This appears to be a re-edit by Tina of a copy of an early version (made before the final edit) of the authorised *Hands* tape shot and edited by Lynn MacRitchie. This copy was reworked without the knowledge of the original group at an unknown, likely much later date." Lynn MacRitchie, May 2022.