

selection and framing identified by Chomsky, in other words the viewpoint of the establishment. In news and current affairs, you never get to see the *means* or *relations* of production and you never, with very few exceptions perhaps, get to hear the viewpoint of the embattled minorities, or for that matter the marginalised majority. Imagine a scenario where half the news was given over to citizen report teams, autonomous from the corporations control, choosing and editing their own material.

*Not Channel Zero* is a project under the wing of Black Planet Productions, a 3 year old media collective who set up in New York in response to a lack of media production and representation for blacks and latinos. Their production *The Nation Erupts* was produced in the aftermath of the acquittal of the white police officers caught on video beating up black motorist, Rodney King. This was merely the tip of the iceberg which has as its basis an inherently racist judicial system based on white supremacy. The dismissal in court of the most vicious part of the assault on the basis that it was out of focus points to an embedded and blatantly irrational bigotry which has shaken the myth that Americans live in a just and good system.

Like *The Gulf Crisis Project*, *The Nation Erupts* had the effect of documenting the discontent at the heart of American society. Through a nationwide call for entry, the 55 minute video captures the voice/s of the public—black, latino, white, Asian—whose overriding message seems to cry '*This Far and No Further*'. It also embraces the reality that racism is a white construct of the establishment to promote the lie that people of colour are all divided: this, combined with the invisibility of blacks to the mainstream culture and their construction as 'other', helps justify racism from a white perspective. As one contributor says, "*I can explain to my kids why people loot, but I can't explain racism. You tell me that?*"

The video is interspersed with quotes and graphics, for example, *Not Channel Zero's* Top 11 reasons to loot or riot, or their paraphrasing of the Situationist commentary on the

Watts riots of 26 years previous: '*Looting is the response to a society whose only abundance is that of commodities*'. The effects of the King trial and the resulting riots also induced another Situationist turns of phrase, that of the 'Reversal of Perspective', away from the perspective of power and towards the consciousness of total change, or at least, the necessity for it. Ironically, the video was due to be transmitted by Channel Four in the *Resistance* series, but copyright problems prevented this.

The limitations of broadcast have to be addressed and other distribution methods developed. Censorship restrictions or professional engineering standards should not prevent the free circulation of media. Multiplication of the sites of struggle is heralded by the availability of new technologies, which was the inspiration for the series. In addition, the book develops many of the themes within the programmes with a dozen or so informative articles.

It is not so much a question of 'to everyone their own camcorder or cable station', but in getting information out and of speaking out for the truth. *Channels of Resistance* helped contribute to an affirmative culture rather than simply an oppositional one (that which defines itself always in opposition is subject to dismissal and assimilation). Participatory media is not just a proposition, it is being enacted. As for the self-determination of culture and language, perhaps there is lots to learn from the Inuit. ∞

Malcolm Dickson

## Semblances

*Producers; Fields and Frames, 1993*

*Semblances* is a touring package of video and new media works by women artists. Subsidised by the Scottish Arts Council, the selection of women artists extends beyond Scottish boundaries as this package includes work by established artists such as Judith Goddard, Kathy Rogers and Cathy Vogan, alongside work by artists recently graduated from the Scottish-based Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, including Nicola Percy and Jo Pearson.

This package is a timely reminder that 'all-women' programming is still a necessity, not a misguided detour into the realm of tokenism. The accompanying marketing material self-consciously addresses this sex-specific strategy of packaging work by women artists as exemplifying a '*positive and pro-active selection*', not a '*women's ghetto*'. It is a sad sign of the times that such positive attempts to promote women artists work have also to self-consciously counter the all too expected criticism that is usually railed against women-specific programming.

Compiled under the umbrella title *Semblances*, the works deal with a range of connected themes such as the dream—the imaginary and the visceral.

Both *Speed of Life* and *Bedful of Strangers* by Cathy Vogan combine abstracted computer-generated imagery and sound, along with more derivatively constructed material. Both are segmented into sequences constructed around the centre of the televisual frame which becomes the primary site by which all editing changes are motivated. In *Speed of Life*, the imagery and sounds spill forth from this central vortex in rapid succession, moving from the initial sequences of darkness ("*In The Beginning Was Light...*") to the lighter, pastel colours of the later sections which play with images of Eastern deities and draw on images of the sea as a metaphor for life. *Bedful of Strangers*, dealing with the scenario of the nightmare and death, combines editing changes around the centre of the frame with the fragmentation and overlaying of computer



Nicola Percy  
Video still from  
*Bitter Root, Sweet Fruit*

generated imagery with actuality footage to conjure up a bizarre spirit world of ghoulish phantoms and paganistic gods. The issue of morality is underwritten through the more outrageously ghoulish, seen at one point where a skeleton outstretches its arms, to the use of actuality footage where the artist herself is seen skirting the fringes of the sea. Both pieces operate as an electronic visual analogue of some stream-of-consciousness experience. Whilst **Jane Wagman** explores similar subject-matter, this theme is tackled in more literal terms in *The Task of Dreaming*.

Whilst the operation of these works depends on the phantasy scenario of the dream or the surface phenomena of actually dreaming, the interiorised world of the psyche and the subconscious is tapped as a damaged source of trauma in **Claire Jones'** *But Daddy You Promised*. The analysis of a young woman's troubled childhood relationship with her father is explored through a constant stream of questioning, analysis and unresolved conflicts through live-action monologue. Using standard televisual codes and conventions of the fade-in, camera pans left to right and overhead shots, this very exacting and carefully constructed piece is made strange as the monologue, delivered in the guise of a young woman, is in fact uttered predominantly through the voice of a young girl.

The coherency of the viewing experience and the position of the spectator, so carefully established in Jones' work, is radically challenged in both pieces by Jo Pearson—*Unfit* and *Do What You Like, I Don't Care*—which deal with abortion, epilepsy and control respectively. The intense speed of the edits and repetition of the imagery along with the sound presents a visual and audio system which challenges not only the notion of a coherent viewing experience but also reiterates a loss of control articulated through the body. This informs the visual imagery in both pieces seen in *Unfit*, where a woman's naked body becomes part of a medical scanning system; and in *Do What You Like*, a woman tries to control a bouncing ball. Pearsons' work is at once provocative, challenging and visually innovative.

The notion of a hermeneutically centred spectator and a coherent system of meaning, is, to an extent, similarly challenged in the highly impressionistic work *I Love This Place—Keep Driving* by **Magali Fowler**. This piece explores the activity of non-stop car driving, US-style, as a somnambulist exercise where the boundaries of the self become blurred, like the landscape. "It's like looking through a magazine... you pick out... maybe one detail or two... all these places look the same... it's like a face you can't remember". The various narrative voices reiterate the uncertainty and lack of focus of the visual track.

It is this act of looking and the specific pleasures derived from this which informs *Bitter Root, Sweet Fruit* by Nicola Percy. The theme of 'the look' constructed as a source of male voyeuristic pleasure is established in the opening sequence of the work which references the art-historical genre painting of the female nude. Here, live action tableau-vivant reconstructions of classic nude paintings by Ingres and Velasquez with their backs to the viewer (and therefore unaware of being 'looked at') are visually disrupted as the video monitors framing these images topple and crash precariously within the frame. The gaze of the viewer is returned by a contemporary nude who proceeds to tear up a nude photograph of herself. This act of defiance is echoed later as the once motionless art-historical nudes turn to face the viewer. An alternative code of visual pleasure is constructed in the closing sequences of the video. Here staged scenarios of lush, sumptuous fruit which ultimately decompose are juxtaposed with hands cupping, overlaid images of seeds, blood and a white rose in full bloom. Images of fecundity and fertility combine the pleasures of the visual and the tactile.

The works collected in this package explore the hidden world of the psyche and the imaginary, predicating the (female) body through these interiorised concerns, thereby posing a challenging range of viewing experiences from the coherent to the visceral and experiential. ∞

Helen Cadwallader

## Live on Public Access in Amsterdam

In a time when well-equipped TV hobbyists can produce relatively slick-looking programmes for access TV, some artist initiatives have begun to add a more anarchistic element to the Amsterdam cable by going live for long chunks of time. These marathon length programs are produced on an almost improvisational basis, and reintroduce many of the quirks and roughness of early cable experimentation.

Although in Europe most cable TV networks are exploited by state-run "public" corporations, most of these tend not to bother with public access at all. With some access policy for grassroots producers for about 10 years now, Amsterdam has had a rather uniquely accessible local cable network. An open channel was established in a time when cable pirates hacked into the freshly installed network with low-budget softporn interrupted by hand drawn advertising for unpainted furniture and the likes. In a rather typical move, the authorities co-opted a popular breach of the law by offering pirates a chance to "go legal" on the open channel before being taken out of the air altogether (after all, regulation rather than suppression has been the Amsterdam way of addressing legal issues like drug abuse for some time now).

The official policy for Kanaal 4, officially operated by the SALTO Foundation since 1988, is to give access to any organisation producing programmes of local interest, stimulating local participation, or representing the pluriformity of the Amsterdam community. Any form of organisation fulfilling one of these criteria has the right to broadcast non-commercial programming for about \$75 per time-slot of at least 2 hours (depending on the time of day). Often SALTO provides access to basic production facilities at very low rates, sometimes it will provide financial support to program makers. And in spite of a somewhat rocky history, the channel has grown into a respectable blend of local, cultural and minority programming, also drawing a great number of viewers with Turkish and



De Hoeksteen Live at the KunstRaai 1993