

HARTNEY

1972-73 First used a portapak to document the reactions to a tactile encounter with sculpture in the Tate Gallery by blind physiotherapy students. While I had use of the equipment, made my own experiments. Working in the Tate Education Dept., saw and lectured on video tapes by Gilbert & George, Joseph Beuys, Richard Serra and others. I was already familiar with U.S. and U.K. independent film: Snow, Brakhage, Gidal, LeGrice, etc. At the Tate I organised three screenings of artists' films under the title 'Film as Structure'. This was the first time the Tate had shown artists' films in their own right, rather than as documentary support to exhibitions.

So I started making my first experiments with video as a conscious 'art form', and produced some pretty terrible tapes derivative from Richard Long and Jan Dibbets. The facilities available were very crude - no editing, poor quality pictures. I also worked with students, producing installations involving the inevitable delay-loops, feedback, etc. Met Dan Graham.

1974-75 Worked for G.L.A.A. Little practical work with video, but became well-informed on its use in a number of contexts: documentation, community applications and artists' work.

1975 Took up my present post, and for the first time had extensive access to increasingly sophisticated equipment and facilities. Had to learn the technical side of things fast. Saw the Video Shows at the Serpentine in 1975, and the Tate in 1976. Experimented constantly in evenings and weekends, and accumulated a quantity of recordings, none of which satisfied me sufficiently to try and show them publicly. Used video extensively in the local community, but at this stage regarded this work as quite separate from art video.

1977 "STATELESS" Using some footage made some time previously, I re-edited and re-recorded sections together with fresh material, and put together a finished tape. This was my first attempt at something which remains a constant goal: a video work in which references to the video process itself are given a metaphorical function, to generate speculation on issues outside art, usually political or social questions. By optically re-recording still-frame images from a faulty monitor, I produced a slow scanning rhythm, which perfectly reproduced, at a perceptible speed, the basic characteristic of the video image, and at the same time prevented perception of the whole image at any one time. This lent itself to speculation on general questions of interpretation and roles of imagery, as the basic image, derived from a female nude, was sufficiently unclear, and manipulated by colourising and other technical effects, so as to be open to wide interpretation. The sounds and texts which accompanied the succession of images offered clues, sometimes misleading, to interpretation first of the basic identity of the images, and later to its significance. Feminist texts were

Other projects include a complex dramatised installation for a furnished room, and an installation for three rooms with characters planted among the audience. Something I have been planning for a long time is an installation designed for TV shop windows. All these should keep me busy for about two years.

I would make use of the bursary, if it is offered, in several ways:

**SOFTWARE:** Because I feel a need to exert rigorous control over the look and structure of my work, I prefer to produce in high-band, near-broadcast quality. This involves buying 1" tape in large quantities, and also using high-band tape recorders for location work. This will mean considerable expenditure over the next year, as 1" tape costs about £40 a roll for good-quality grade. Further, the work must be dubbed to standard U-Matic format for show-copies. Total cost for projects in hand will be about £400.

**ENGINEERING:** Although I am capable of performing many of the production functions myself, the use of broadcast equipment necessitates paying qualified engineers on an overtime basis. This is a particular consideration in view of immediate projects, as almost all the production will be done on location. Fees to engineers will account for about £800.

**TRAVEL AND EQUIPMENT HIRE:** For my personal projects, I have to hire such equipment as Broadcast U-Matic machines, high-quality colour cameras, etc., usually from Brighton Polytechnic. Studio work and dubbing also involves payment of fees. I also have to hire a van to take the equipment to and from locations.

**ACTORS:** In the past, I have used non-actors. For one or two projects in hand I would like to employ a mixture of professional actors and non-actors, and also some professional singers. These will represent some considerable expenditure, and any bursary offered will be put to this use.

M.H.

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ed to comment on the exploitation of the female body in art and commercial  
ry. One aspect of this was to become increasingly important: the ironic  
composition of a highly-processed image, with indications that the source of the  
image had a mind of her own, and that manipulating the image was a manipulation of  
the person, in a wider social context.

This tape was regarded in some quarters as no more than a lightweight piece  
of electronic abstraction - a verdict which annoyed me, as I was resolutely opposed to  
that approach to video. However, I had also rejected what I thought of as the 'phenomenon'  
approach: using video simply to reveal its own workings. While I respected and welcomed  
the rigour introduced to video art by work of that kind, I felt it suffered from the  
law of diminished returns. In addition, I was acutely conscious of the differences between  
low-gauge video and broadcast television. As I wanted to make specific references to the  
nature and assumptions surrounding broadcasting practices, I felt that my work should  
have a corresponding complexity - or at least embrace the possibility of such complexity  
as an option - without apeing TV conventions, or notions of 'entertainment' in its  
crudest sense.

In the same year as 'Stateless', I made an installation employing three monitors  
fed by a camera pointing at the viewer. Between the camera-and-monitor complex, and the  
viewer, were hung mirrored strips, which rotated in currents of air, creating a complicated  
set of feedback relationships. Scanning across the structure, the viewer would see a  
fragment of reflected face, a fragment of face in the monitor, a reflection of the monitor,  
a reflection of the monitor as viewed by the camera, and so on: all of them in constant  
motion and shifting relationship. I now regard this as rather a lightweight piece of  
work, although it was certainly visually interesting. Other works done in this year were  
preoccupied with viewers' expectations and their subversion by changing, editing and  
otherwise disrupting normally predictable events. 1978 "WITHDRAWN FROM EXHIBITION".  
This ten minute tape was originally made for the exhibition 'Art for Society', at the  
Whitechapel Gallery, where it was displayed on a continuous basis with a text. It was  
an exercise in ironic radicalism, as I felt that the visual arts, in their traditional,  
gallery-bound forms, could have little social impact in the face of the dominant  
forms of TV, film and advertising imagery. In each of seven episodes, an advertising  
poster is subjected to hypothetical erasure: through use of chromakey, the poster  
image is replaced by the view behind the hoarding. A simple-minded work, it is  
redeemed for me now by the incidental details, touches of humour, and by the use  
of single-word captions at the start of each section, which induce a problematic  
approach to each image.

"Orange Free State" is discussed separately. It remains for me the only work in  
which I have come close to the density of thought, sound and image I would like to  
achieve.

1979 "State of Division" was produced in a great rush, on the eve of the first  
London screening of "Orange Free State", although its visual form derived from some  
experiments I had made a few months previously. The text and general mood are heavily

influenced by Samuel Beckett. Beckett and Kenny Everett are possibly the two strongest influences on my work!

In a way this tape was a continuation of aspects of "Orange Free State", particularly in the manner in which the characterisation is informed by the video post-production. By this I mean that the protagonist (played by me) realises that he addresses an audience through the medium of video, and that his presentation is not naturalistic. So although editing, mixing and so on are imposed on his observed behaviour, the behaviour itself (the pro-camera event) is conditioned by those devices. My concern was, and is, to create a personality on the screen which has identifiable human emotions and reactions, but which is also partly generated by the condition of being a television signal. This is obviously an exaggerated version of the experience of professional TV 'personalities', but it enables me to make formal gestures which go beyond simple commentary or pastiche. There are tapes by other artists (e.g. David Hall's 'This is a Television Receiver') which emphasise the artificiality of the TV construct in very elegant and forceful terms, but I would like to take account also of the fact that at the camera/microphone end of the process there is a real person, who is subjected to real changes by the process.

Later in 1979 I produced a complicated installation, "Mixed Doubles", which is still being refined and developed. Using a variable configuration of one colour, and a number of black and white monitors, it juxtaposes an off-air recording of a banal TV game show, which is edited and otherwise modified, with a recording of normally inaudible studio technical instructions, and with extensively re-processed shots of faces, which leave after-images on the monitor screens. These latter images gradually 'bleed' into the central colour signal until they take domination of the screen.

During 1980 I have experimented extensively with chromakey techniques, and with the use of graphic devices to divide and analyse the screen geometry. Two short tapes emerged from this as reasonably viewable. "Anchored State" is derived from a portapak sequence of the stranded 'Athina B' on Brighton beach during stormy weather. I made three separate tapes from the original at three different rates of scan, and then re-combined them using luminance keying devices, so that three time scales can be observed within the same overall image. It makes a few incidental points about the function of photography, and the notion of 'spectacle' as well as the fundamental process of video. The sound is entirely synthetic, derived from pink noise combined with a much-retarded square wave signal, and hand-edited to one second pulses, which are then multi-tracked in a staggered configuration and remixed.

"Implied Statement" required less effort. It combines five versions of the same sequence of movements, using the object moved as the chromakey source which facilitates the combination. I like it for its visual qualities, but decided to add another dimension through the soundtrack, which provides a linguistic correspondance to the visual process.

I am currently working on a tape which imposes complex editing structures on an otherwise fairly mundane sequence of activities.

The preceding notes are necessarily a brief summary of my activity in video art. It should be remembered that during the same period I have been engaged in a great deal of video production in other modes: community use, documentary work, and so on. I have also worked with film and tape-slide, though not with the same intensity. All these activities have informed my personal video projects, as well as distracted me from it. Ideally, I would like to engage in full-time research and experimentation, leading to consistent production of video art, but economic realities do not permit this at present.

It may be apparent that I have not worked steadily on one aspect of video, preferring to employ a number of different techniques or approaches, even within a single work. This may be because I do not come from a background of painting or sculpture, although I have certainly been influenced by those disciplines. Also I am temperamentally attracted to complexity rather than simplicity, to subtlety rather than explicit statements or gestures, to questions rather than dogma.

Although I am familiar with much of the structuralist and semiotic theory which has informed independent film and video in recent years, I find it difficult to work from a purely theoretical stance. Much of my work originates with a technical or visual device, for which I then search for an appropriate set of images or events. The sound is usually the final consideration, but all the elements jostle against each other until some kind of balance ensues.

M.H.

October 1980

CURRICULUM VITAE

MICK HARTNEY

BORN: 1946, London. British citizen.

EDUCATION: 1957-65 Local grammar school  
1965-68 University of Sussex: B.A. in English & American Literature

PROFESSIONAL: 1968-72 Various jobs, including publishing, van driving, and two years teaching in secondary schools.  
1972-73 Studied for postgraduate qualification in History and Theory of Art. Lecturer, Tate Gallery Education Department  
1973-74 Visual Arts Officer, Greater London Arts Association  
1975-present Head of Audio-Visual Media Unit, Faculty of Art & Design, Brighton Polytechnic

ART ACTIVITY: Became aware of contemporary art in 1960, when taken by a friend to Picasso retrospective at Tate. From this point art was a central interest in my life. Only practical training was at secondary school and part-time classes at Camberwell School of Art. Around this time (1963-65) began to work with photography, and developed an interest in 'avant-garde' cinema sparked off by seeing 'Un Chien Andalou' and 'Entr'acte'. Came to Brighton to study and met Jeff Keen, presented screenings of 'Underground' films at University. Published and designed some small books which were really filmscripts. Produced a programme for local radio.

After university scabbled to make a living, and almost abandoned idea of producing art, though maintained an intensive interest, and got a job with Art & Artists magazine. Post-graduate study came as release from secondary school teaching. Worked on secondment to Tate Education Dept., organised 'Film as Structure' in May 1973. Lectured on new developments in art, including film and video. After working for G.L.A.A. decided I wanted a practical involvement with film/video, and took present post.

LIST OF SELECTED SCREENINGS

MICK HARTNEY

1977: Gardner Arts Centre, University of Sussex  
Brighton Open Studios  
Maidstone Open Video Week  
Artists' Video, Washington, Tyne-and-Wear

1978: Whitechapel Gallery, London  
Brighton Open Studios  
Artists' Video, Washington, Tyne-and-Wear

1979: Acme Gallery, London  
London Video Arts  
Brighton Open Studios  
Brighton Contemporary Arts Festival  
Kunstlerhaus, Stuttgart  
The Slade School of Art, London  
The Kitchen, New York

1980: New 57 Gallery, Edinburgh  
Europe 1980, I.C.A.C., Lyons  
De Appel Gallery, Amsterdam  
Teatr Studio & Galerie Studio, Warsaw  
South West Arts Independent Film Tour  
Wolverhampton Polytechnic  
Lanchester Polytechnic  
Fantasy Factory Tour of Australia