REWIND | Artists' Video in the 70's & 80's
Interview with Peter Donebauer

Interview by Dr Jackie Hatfield, 20th September 2004

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

PD: Quite a difficult question, most of the works that were finished and known are important, so there aren't that many of them, there aren't hundreds, there's maybe a dozen, they fall into different periods, but the beginning and end of the first period was probably *Entering* and *Merging Emerging*, there was then something I did for EMI called *Water Cycle*.. something when I was first at Diverse called *Brewing* which was important, and then *Mandala* which was probably very important because it's the latest, so those are the key ones…they represent quite distinct periods.

JH: What are the reasons why those, is it because each piece is important to you for the same reason?

PD: When they're actually done, they're usually addressing something that is of importance to me, they're mostly based around processes, so I've usually focussed in on processes one that really grabs me, so they're all important in that sense. The tapes that are finished, because of the way I work they're the best of several tapes I've done around that process and theme so the others are discarded, they don't exist any more. So that's why they're important because they represent my responses and my involvement with different processes.

JH: Are there works that are important to you and the development of your practice but that are not necessarily more widely acknowledged as important by external viewers or within written texts for example?

PD: I've had very little back response back from external reviewers or writers….partly because I think I've not been in the mainstream of art practice in terms of my aesthetic concerns, so can't really answer that question…I mean there's probably one that I don't tend to promote much because it was done very spontaneously called In Earnest there is probably one that fulfils that category apart from student work…

JH: Now is the question about how they were produced.

PD: It's a terribly difficult question because as I said on my preamble do I start with the spiritual focus do I start with the art do I start with the technology?
It may pre-empt one of your later questions, but it needs a preamble, when was at the RCA there was no video there was just film, and while for some reason I got interested in the fact that the emotional content of the film was very determined in my view by the music that was added on, but the music was the last thing that was ever done you had to script, shooting, editing, all those things and then the music was put on at the end,

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and experiments have proved that by putting different music on you completely changed the whole emotive experience of the film…I mean there have been experiments done on that it seemed to me kind of crazy really because all that work and effort and planning and processing and work and then a slightly different music track would completely change the emotional subjective reception of it…extraordinary.. so I was very interested in getting the music right back to the beginning part of the film making process so that the two were working in sync with one another…at that age I was very moved by music… and I was struggling with various devices and techniques to do it with film but of course film is this delayed processing editing process, so it was really quite hard and I wasn't really getting very far to be honest, and then video came along and portapaks arrived and hey presto you had what I would call a live medium rather than a planned, recorded thought out over conceptualised …and edited one, so that's really where my work started. The key aspect of it therefore developed quite quickly... I developed a performance ethic where I worked live with musicians so that the imagery and sound were produced at the same time.

JH: If we can go onto process now, if you can talk about when and why you started making work using video.

PD: The very first thing I did which wasn't a finished piece was I experimented with a monochrome portapak and I was trying to find some way to link what I call this performance aspect of video and music, so I built a little device, it was influenced by a man called Hans Jenning, who experimented with vibrating water films and I built a device with something used for embroidery actually, where I stretched a very thin film of water over a loudspeaker basically and was completely intrigued different types of music created different patterns quite dramatically..which was interesting of itself… so did quite a lot of experiments with a black and white portapak during my second year at the Royal College, but they weren't finished pieces, more like a sketchbook, a video equivalent of a sketchbook

During the course of the year one of the tutors in particular the technicians at the Royal College, they'd just been given a colour studio from Lew Grade at ATV in Birmingham….it was the first generation of colour studios and it was redundant and being replaced and the Royal College was given it, and frankly they didn't know what they were going to do with it because not many of the students were geared up to.. had gone there thinking they were going to do broadcast television… so once they saw what I was doing they said hey we've got big colour studio can you do anything? That was the start of it really I got my devices and my fellow performer Simon Desorger who I worked with for many years in there, I began to sense what I could do with that…and very quickly turned into what some journalists dubbed 'electronic painting' because I was able partly with the mechanical device the transducer device, and partly by manipulating the controls of the colour studio I was able to paint and create different effects patterns, shapes colours hues – and that 's where it all started….I had developed on.. there's a little diagram which describes it better basically the musicians seeing what's produced and hearing obviously what he's producing, and I'm doing the same I'm seeing what I'm producing and hearing what he's producing and the two have a partial link through the transducer, which helps probably less necessary with some of the work that I've done later but it was very fundamental then, so it was a live performance situation, he worked with entirely electronics at that stage because of

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control issues but later we brought electro acoustic instruments in particular and other transducer devices into the performance.

JH: I was going to ask you a question about the dates, I was wondering what dates this happened.

PD: I was at the Royal College from the autumn of '70 until the summer of '73, so portapaks came into the college in the summer of '71, so I first started using those in the autumn of '71 through '72 and then I would have used the colour studio from the autumn of that year through to the next year, '72 to '73…I may have fragments on VHS of some of those experiments.

JH: The process, that was important that you had access to that technology the laboratory…

PD: I was completely privileged….I mean who else in the world had a full broadcast colour studio to play with and they simply didn't know what to do with it. It was just sitting there. Some people did try some and things in there it was quite useful for teaching people some lighting.

JH: But you were using it as a pure medium?

PD: I was very quickly developing a fine art aesthetic having gone in to do film and TV and really enjoyed my photography course, I actually went in there as a university graduate with a science degree and I rapidly came out with what I would call a completely fine art attitude relationship involvement. It wasn't until my last year until Steve Dwoskin and Peter Gidal joined,

JH: Did they understand what you were trying to do?

PD: No their head was in a completely different space, they were fairly conceptually I seem to remember, structuralist, at least they sort of were in some kind of art domain, but not the kind of free expressive experimental area that I….

JH: But it was electronic and they were film?

PD: Yes absolutely, no conceptual video at all, and the painting department, painters have always struggled with my work most of them because they produce very static images so this explosive moving colour in time makes them giddy on the whole, they're just looking at one image for weeks on end, so this twenty four frames a second most of which are changing over several minutes….

PD: Musicians love it; my audience has mainly been musicians even though I consider I'm working in a fine art area

JH: The fact that you worked with performance and the live element too.. is almost akin to a gig…

PD: Yes. It was, I've always been tempted because it would have made my life hugely much easier commercially to work with popular music, I simply don't find, that they're

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mainly concerned with lyrics and song they're very concerned with themselves and ego as well lets be honest, and I say commercially I was tempted many times, and I would have had more fame and probably done quite well in that direction but it simply wasn't what I was trying to do, so I ended up.. with… because of the electronic nature of the music there were a few contemporary musicians and composers interested in electronics for itself at that stage as well as the electro acoustic things…

JH: I was going to ask you about the technicians there, presumably they helped you? Did they understand what you were trying to do?

PD: Not in an art sense, lovely man called Reg Clough who died many years ago… he loved it I think he'd come from Marconi or somewhere, he'd come from an engineering background to run this television studio, he hadn't come from broadcasting. So as is often the case in art colleges from my experience, the technicians are the people you learn most from and who often respond more freely to what you were doing. So, he was hugely supportive and interested and he used to be fun and he used to like the challenge. My favourite story actually relating to Reg was later on another work and I was busy, I was just about to record the first takes on a piece I was doing, and suddenly every monitor completely lost focus, and he immediately got embarrassed and was rushing around and saying I don't know what's causing it, and he eventually did find it was a sync problem one of the various sync components had gone down but meanwhile I was saying don't do anything don't change it, this is fantastic, I remember it absolutely clearly and he said I've got to fix this … so it was a good process, he had to know why it had gone wrong I was completely delighted, it completely changed my aesthetic, I mean I simply hadn't thought of throwing the image out of focus until that particular moment, because you don't these broadcast cameras cost £30,000, £40,000 a piece they are designed to give you completely faithful reproduction and although at one level I was using them for abstract imagery, funnily enough, I was delving into the electronics of them I hadn't actually thought of doing anything optically…than just putting it out of focus.

JH: Where did the *Videokalos* come in?

PD: That was much later… I did various experiments at the Royal College of Art and one of the pieces there in the Degree show was picked up by a producer from the BBC and he asked me, you probably want to come back to this, he asked me if I could do it again to Broadcast standard, and also it was a bit long he thought for television at that time, it wasn't that long it was only about 16 minutes but he wanted it he thought possibly half, so he said could I do it again could I do it shorter.

JH: So he was thinking of broadcasting it as an artwork?

PD: Yes in the context of an art magazine, it was a bit like, not the South Bank Show, Arena or something, it was called Second House, it had Alan Yentob he was the main executive, Melvyn Bragg who was the presenter on it.… So I went back, I was being funded by the Arts Council at that point, so I went back into the Royal College Studio and re did it and I got funding and worked in the studio for two years after I left the college making pieces and again the same technician Reg Clough said to me at one point…I've heard there's people doing interested technical things in America and building synthesisers this sort of stuck in the back of my brain, and I was beginning to

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grapple anyway, with the fact that I didn't know how was my work going to progress, because getting access to a broadcast colour television studio was a) expensive b) difficult, and was I just going to be stuck making things at the Royal College of Art for the rest of my life as the only colour studio in the country that I could get affordable access to and it was the combination of that and bumping into an electronic engineer called Richard Monkhouse, he worked for a company called EMS who built sound synthesisers, they're the British equivalent of Moog. It came out of these various threads that I decided I would try and build something that would liberated me from colour studio and brought all the elements of what I found to be important to image making into a device that I could use external to the Royal College Studio.

JH: And this would be the *Videokalos*?

PD: Which I'm sitting next to….this is the only version that's surviving to my knowledge.

It's not really a synthesiser, it's easier to describe it as such, it synthesises colour essentially, I called it IMP at one time, an image processor, and I was feeling mischievous, and it was an easier name to get across than *Videokalos* but its basically a complex processor it generates all the pulses and syncs that are necessary in the studio, it allows you input of up to five cameras, I use optical sources, I don't actually synthesise images as such, they can be black and white or they can be coloured, you've got a lot of control over colour and either case you can either colourise if its monochrome or manipulate…live yes…and then its got a very complex keying panel in the middle with multi channel keying so you can inlay different parts of different images into other images, according to different criteria and then at the back end it's a vision mixer fairly like a standard vision mixer as well so you've got a four bank vision mixer two of which can act as preview so you can be working to get your next image up whilst ones happening here and then you can mix the two together live so and then one that ones flowing you can be mixing yet others and manipulating then so there's quite a lot of potential control and its all the elements that I found from the broadcast studio that were key. And it actually was completely liberating because I can take this and just work with one camera or two cameras like in this room here or I can go into a monochrome studio which there were quite a lot in art colleges I did that quite a lot and turn it into colour or I could go to colour studio at the Royal College of Art or later in broadcast edit suites and interface with that because it'll lock onto syncs if you're in a broadcast environment its made to broadcast spec so you can lock onto broadcast syncs and perform with it, so its pretty versatile, and that was brief highlights of the journey of how it came about.

JH: What date was that?

PD: I got funded…'74 I had the BBC commission and I was being funded by the Arts council for a year and two pieces came out of that, that was the first time Video was funded I think by the Arts Council, then the next year '75, the BFI funded me for two years and it was definitely the first time they'd funded video and they found it slightly problematic because of the live element of what I was doing, it was sort of two stages away from film for them, a) it was electronic, and b) it was live, which was completely alien to film culture really. But they were very pleased to be involved, I mean a lot of people at that time, not in the art world specifically but in the kind of funding bodies and indeed the art colleges were very interested in what I was doing because they could

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see it was extremely innovative at an aesthetic and at a technical level, as I've said, no-one sees the spiritual side of it. It's too much to ask maybe…

JH: Maybe that's intuitive, maybe they do.

PD: Yes maybe they do It's hard to talk about.

JH: Yes hard to articulate.

PD: Yes I think its hard for me to articulate, somebody said that to me well if you can't even articulate that side too well how do expect your viewers to.

JH: It's within the specialisms that we have already defined. Its difficult perhaps within our Western culture because we have certain ways of talking about things certain ways of talking about art, certain ways of talking about technology they sort of seem to be demarcated already that anything else on top of that complicates it even more.

PD: My Indian mentor who I should mention, Parish Chakraborti he spent many years in his youth in a seminary in the Himalayas, steeped in Hindu Buddist Tantric practices, he just loved it so yes the people that had a knowledge and experience of it could see it in the work.

I really had no difficulty getting funding because it was very innovative, almost immediately after the BFI I then got funded for a further two years, I was the first person to be Gulbenkian Foundation funded…and its one of your later questions have I worked other artists or helped other artists I genuinely feel I opened up funding channels or helped because I suppose it would have happened anyway, but I was the first to open up several funding channels for other people, but I was pretty well funded if you include the BBC commission and then I was commissioned by EMI after that, so in a sense there was never enough, but I had something.

JH: There is a question about 'how long did the works take to make', I think it can trigger off discussion about the performativity of the works.

PD: The obvious answer is eight minutes!! But its not actually true, it was at least weeks in gestation and planning possibly months, I really can't remember now to be honest, but along that period of time, a month, two months at least. I'd work with Simon (Monkhouse), we'd agree what, you could use the word narrative, I think structure is probably better the unfolding in time, the shape, what the inspiration if you like, if it was inspired by something what that was, and then we'd talk about, as best one could what the elements of that, or what would be the feeling, composing music's probably the best thing,… but basically with video the structure of time is more important than what's on the screen at any one time or it is for me… so there's quite a lot of pre planning in terms of what the overall structure was going to be what the dynamic what the process of it what, what the feeling of it was at different stages and then I would work up the types of visual components that might suit that always including the transducer in those early works anyway, but then other visual elements and they became more as time went on. Then probably I think most of them were three days in the studio three days setting up, getting the cameras to do things they're not supposed to getting various feedback things going which I used a lot to make the image have

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complexity somewhat like you'd have a simple basic theme in jazz or an improvisation situation then you make more complex the themes always there and then you often end up back with the them, jazz was pretty influential actually. So three days getting it right and the last probably afternoon of the three days we'd go for several recordings sometimes things would go wrong. Sometimes we would just need a bit of practice … but then the pieces that are seen and known are simply the best takes….it felt right.

JH: How did you move from making single takes having explored and experimented with improvisation in the studio lets say to doing something which was a live event with the performance aspect to it?

PD: The live thing came along much later *VAMP* came along later after *Videokalos*, once I got that and had been working in colleges and doing demonstrations and making a couple of pieces with it, we suddenly realised we had the ability to perform it live for an audience. Simon (Monkhouse) as a performer was always interested in doing that, I'm not a performer so I was always a little coy…and certainly it needed this…so this came along during the BFI period '75 ish I built a prototype and then these professional ones I think a year later, and then presumably '76, '77, '78, I can't remember without looking it up – I decided to form a live band, group, called *VAMP* (video and music performers), an acronym, and they were all electro acoustic jazz influenced performers… my electronic colleague Richard Monkhouse who helped with the synthesiser performed on what I called digital because he used oscilloscopes and patterns so that we had a live pattern as one of the feeds…trying to create enough visual imagery when you had an audience was quite difficult, so we used pre recorded feeds, and Richard was on digital, and I don't think I used the transducer… so it was a somewhat limited palette but I've got recordings of that which I don't think I've shown live….and I did those in various places where I could get funding or access… with good musicians, Simon Stool, works with Lawrence Cassley people like Barry Guy who is well known on double bass a well known jazz improviser.

PD: We sold out we did things at the ICA and the Ikon in Birmingham they were the only galleries that could afford to fund it themselves, they were sold out, both times I think it was projected at the Ikon, we did it on monitors at the ICA, but it was interesting you see because it was the music director who put it on, it was part of MusICA …within a music context.

JH: If you can talk about your artistic processes and how these have changed over the years – over the period that you've been making work.

PD: I guess my works essentially are usually about process, they're processes that have moved me enough to want to dance with them in some way or express my reaction to them. I mean classically *Entering* is about birth, two friends were having a baby, I was in my mid twenties, the first time I had really experienced that process it coincided with my own real discovery of my own creativity having come from social science psychology so it was also a metaphor for birth or rebirth in a creative sense… that's probably as much as one can say about it because the work hopefully speaks about it better than I can.

PD: You need some sort of… I don't really know how abstract painters work, I've known some, the ones I do know vary, because of the time nature of the thing one has to

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have some sense of structure it has to come from somewhere and I found the best key was the process that moved me.

JH: Can you talk about changing technologies and how these have impacted on your work and artistic objectives.

PD: To take a later work, one that I've said was important *Brewing*, which I did at the Royal college, I think that was influenced by two things, one that I was in the documentary environment and the other was again through my friend Simon, many years before we visited this wonderful amazing brewery called Hook Norton brewery in Oxfordshire, the whole process is driven from an original Victorian steam engine which sits on great flagstones at the basement of the building, when they're brewing, it pumps the brew to the top of the building and all the various processes happen by gravity and this steam engine shakes and the whole building shakes, its a visceral experience, here was a process that really moved me it was great fun and dynamic, and I thought it would be great to document that process, that not a particularly spiritual one, brewing, it's more a poem really, it has elements of documentary, I shot the material in a documentary fashion… We were then mid eighties, eighty four, the way we did that we normal documentary footage…visual elements… the sound was recorded digitally which was very unusual those days, it was '84 and even more unusually we sampled it, it was very early sampling, and Simon re-created sound from the samples and when we created the final piece we performed it in an edit suite, so it was more constructed, it was done in sections rather than one live take, post production editing had moved on by then, a decade later. So we performed sectionally using 'kalos, in the edit suite, so it was still live performance, but not the whole thing in one go… so the sound was performed by re-creating sound. It sort of sounds like what was there, but doesn't sound like what was there. I was very interested at that time in doing the same thing in lots of industrial scenarios, and I did try quite hard and should have been in a position to persuade someone like Channel 4 to fund me but I couldn't get funding. That piece has had very little exposure for some reason, which I don't actually understand…. I probably didn't have strong enough motivation to do it in five times in five different places…That's why I think I'm doing what I'm doing the underground film I was exposed to back in 1967, '68, from America there were some poems in there some little visual things in there that were actually quite poetic.

JH: We talked about changing technologies and how they've impacted on your work.

PD: I think *Mandala* ought to feature then, because clearly its hard to ignore digital, but I actually don't like digital very much this is a nice analogue device here…

JH: Why don't you like digital?

PD: Too many reasons really again it's a bit like film, it's very easy to construct it but not very easy to perform with it in my opinion. Yes our cameras are all digital, and it's almost immaterial really at one level from my point of view, they just produce an image. A friend of mine immediately emailed me and said 'time for digikalos'. My only real use of digital was with *Mandala*, which was over 10 years ago now, where I used digital processing to produce base images, tiny little patterns, but most things beyond that were done with analogue, there's a mixture of analogue, and digital feedback…I was using digital processing in the post production suite, which made the image more

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complex and gave it a different character its much sharper and more precise than a lot of the early work, and the meditative aspect is very much to the fore in that work.

JH: I think it's an interesting point about analogue, that there is something philosophically different with electronic analogue technologies that are real time, you were working with real time, you were working with feedback, something spontaneous, like an organ or an instrument.

PD: If music had to be like film, if you'd had to play a note on a guitar or even a chord or a little sequence but couldn't hear it, if you had to send something off to a lab and got it back 24 hours later, where would music have got to in the last two or three thousand years, not very far. Film to me is a very clunky medium in that particular sense because it doesn't respond to you immediately. Video was a total revelation, I was completely turned on by video, more than anyone else I ever met, because it was live, I could do it live it was as fast as my nervous system it's exactly like a musical instrument, turn the knob, you change the colour change the shape if you could get control of that you've got an instrument and you've got the art form that all other art forms that others are supposed to aspire to which is music. Music is incredibly powerful people have dreamed about this for over 150 years to use technologies to paint with colour. This enables certainly the abstract end of the art a complete revelation.

JH: Do you not see video as part of the digital culture?

PD: No I don't, no, I might change my view on this, I know people lump the electronic arts together… I guess its how it unfolds in your own life basically, I've lived through it, we had all these analogue technologies, I didn't think I'd begun to explore them really I done some instruments I'd done some tapes, not many people were realising the live capabilities of it and in a sense digital set that back…its almost back to where you've started with film…I haven't found, perhaps because I haven't been working creatively in my own ways recently, which I intend to change, I haven't found digital particularly easy, it also can be very hard edged.

JH: So you've covered the questions, which were, 'did you have any particular ideological reasons why you wanted to use video?'.

PD: Ideology has absolutely nothing to do with my art practice in my opinion.

JH: Well not in terms of politics, but in terms of the fact that you liked the immediacy of the technology.

PD: Oh yes, I don't call that ideological.

JH Maybe that's the wrong word.

PD: It's the wrong word for me; I tend to associate it with political positions, with social concerns, all those things that are fine for other people, but not my thing.

JH: That's ok it can be no.

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The question about 'was video central to your work and if so why?', again you've touched on it a little bit, but there might be something else you want to say about that?

PD: It turns me on.

JH: I'm going to go onto funding, did funding stifle or enable you to realise your ambitions?

PD: It completely enabled, I was very fortunate, because it was so new and innovative I got funded by everybody…the Royal College of art were very supportive,… I got funded for a year by the Arts Council, I got funded then immediately for two years by the BFI, I'm not sure if they funded video after that but they did with me, I then got funded for a further two years from the Gulbenkian Foundation and within that I got a commission from the BBC and EMI at the end. Most of the big funding bodies that I approached, there were a couple of things I didn't get, I didn't get a bicentennial fellowship to meet some American Film artists, they didn't fund me to do that which was a shame, I had galleries all around the UK who wanted to put it on and it wasn't a lot of money. '78, probably '78 .. I got funded when I was at Diverse, to do a Holography bursary…I didn't like it as a medium… it might have been Goldsmiths…there were six artists, quite different type of artists, I was the electronic artist…I got funded quite a lot, I taught in art colleges…several colleges had me for extended periods.

JH: I was interested in your transition from making art works, and being funded as an artist to working in industry, when did that happen? It's a specific question to you really.

PD: Not many people understood that at the time, I'd just finished a big conceptual piece for EMI they were going to release video disc, I was the first person I think to be asked to make an album for release on video disc, they partnered me rather than Simon because his work's not very accessible they partnered me with Carl Jenkins and Mike Ratlidge who were remnants of a band called Soft Machine who were sort of a popular music group but they didn't have lyrics. I came up with a concept that EMI liked and they commissioned me. I was always uncomfortable with the art world anyway, so I actually thought I was going to do that. At that particular time Channel 4 started. A BBC producer called David Graham had taken time out from Panorama, to research electronic production of graphic elements, at that time this was 1980 not that long ago, the way they did television credits was they put things in front of a television camera, and they rolled the credit past the camera.
He found my synthesiser and me down in Brixton, he asked me if I could bring my synth down to BBC centre to do a graphic link of a panorama programme. Which I did. Channel 4 started I put some ideas into Channel 4, so did David, Jeremy Isaacs who ran Channel 4 rang David up and said "we've been looking for someone to make an alternative news programme which goes against the normal agenda of the news, will you do it?" David rang me up because he was then a friend and said should I do it…I rang him back and said Yes of course you should, and he said to me I thought you'd say that…he knew I would say yes subconsciously and he then said to my horror, will you join me? So I said yes. We did forty six half hour programmes within one year…

What happened was as I mentioned earlier, Mark Kidel of the BBC producer for this arts programme said can I re make it, I said, no problem, he said well we'll get you down to the BBC studio. Off I went to the BBC as a sort of VIP. What I found was of course I couldn't do it there. The studio was in one place, the engineering controls at

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the royal college were just here, it was 150 yards away. It completely summed up broadcast for me. The producers who were all Oxbridge, and they sat with some artist technician craftspeople up in the vision mixing room, which was separate from the studio, the real engineering thing of it where all the control is done, they were engineers, an alien breed, it sort of summarised it, they were completely separate processes.

I'd been used to video going down cables and being recorded on tape, we do it all the time, we still do but actually it had been de-materialised, and it had been beamed backwards and forwards across 8 million people whilst they were getting on with their normal lives and it was recorded, and a) it was better and b) it had been through this amazing de-materialisation, and it was what made me so cross, I'm sorry to say, with David Hall. They were talking about materiality of videos and monitors and I had just had my mind blown quite literally by the fact that my work had been de-materialised and then materialised better technically than I had seen it myself, and I realised that I was some distance away from the other people in British Video art at that time. It really did make a big difference.

The big thing about what I'm doing, I felt, I still feel so privileged, with painting with light, think about all those poor people making stained glass… that's just to get that magic of that light coming through it, video you're actually using light, that's why I love Turner so much, he was trying to paint light, at the end of his days. It's amazing; you can actually paint with light.

I had always stipulated that I wanted them, the BBC the presenter, to ask the audience to switch the lights off and that caused an absolute total furore within the BBC it went from the producer to the executive producer and I said 'what's the problem' and I got an answer which was: they didn't want to disrupt the audience from their experience of being locked onto watching the BBC television programme. There was a fear, literally there was a fear, and if they asked the audience to do something they might stop watching television. Once they were up and disconnected and actually perish the thought they might actually get up and change to another channel, they really did not want to do that. So I said well I'm simply not having it shown, but they simply wouldn't do it, so we compromised at the end, Melvyn Bragg hadn't a clue what he was doing. It was before MTV, there were only three channels, so what he said was: 'we've had many letters from listeners'; they first of all blamed the audience who had asked to see something different 'and the artist suggests that you might dim the room lights'.

You were asking me about how I like the work viewed in darkened spaces so galleries were problematic, so when I had control and took them round and showed them it was fine… and again darkened spaces so people can get into the mystery of it and loose their association with the room, cinema does it and we take it for granted, a lot of artists at that time found that very wrong. Context. You must keep it all but cinema does it; it's darkened so you do lose yourself in it.

I have my own view on this which I haven't written about, I have very strong feelings, broadcast television reinforces our collective view of where we are in the world and who we are, and that whole notion of an abstract piece at that point severely undermined that, ok yes we had abstract work in galleries and things, but that's art, that's in galleries, this is in your living room, and to suggest these realms of reality

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quite literally that aren't reinforcing our day to day normality is quite threatening for many people and its socially threatening as well and its quite self conscious, television is our reflection on the whole of the way we live, it reinforces the politics, the sociology, the relationships we have.

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

PD: Mark Kiddel was absolutely crucial at that point, my work was broadcast along with some other artists by Mark Kiddel and Anna Ridley. An Arena programme it was '75 or '76 about two years after my broadcast, it was an Arena programme, I think the piece they showed of mine was *Struggling*.

JH: Can you describe if possible what other ideas and other artists inspired the work?

PD: I was very struck by Kandinsky, because he was the first person to really paint abstract pictures in the world. His work was rather cosmic. I think abstraction has always tended to have that link. He made all the right connections to me. Concerning the Spiritual in Art, he wrote, and a complete pioneer, so Kandinsky was incredibly important. I always liked Turner he was trying to paint light, by the end of his days he wasn't painting subjects he was painting light.

JH: Did you collaborate with any other artists?

PD: Absolutely with Simon as I say because it was performed, not really with visual artists, Brian Hoey who I've mentioned performed with me up at Biddick Farm with one of the early *VAMP* performances but he played the guitar he wasn't doing the visuals.

JH: Or technicians?

PD: I've always used technicians, Richard Monkhouse obviously again I've mentioned him as the designer of this and did the digital with *VAMP*…very inventive visually, Reg Clough I've mentioned… and Mike Ray who was a later engineer at the Royal College, briefly was an engineer at Diverse and who edited and did the music on *Mandala*.

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