

REWIND | Artists' Video in the 70's & 80's Interview with Tamara Krikorian

Interview by Dr Jackie Hatfield, 14th May 2005

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

TK: I think almost certainly the first *Vanitas* of 1977, because, the way that I researched that I discovered a lot of different elements and ideas which then I used really in all my work from that date onwards. I think that is the seminal work probably of all my works. Obviously there are other works, which have important elements in them, but I see that as being the most central.



JH: You are talking about the first single screen work?

TK: The first single screen work, for me. Obviously there are more sophisticated works and works which are more developed, but in terms of a work, which is iconic for me as an artist, that's the work.

JH: What about in relation, not just to you, but to outside of your own development as an artist? Which pieces do you think have most resonance?

TK: It's difficult to say because different people have seen different works. Most people who are interested in video have seen that *Vanitas* tape, so obviously that's the one that everybody is most familiar with. But then other people saw other works. I don't think anyone has seen all the work, as far as I remember, because obviously I was showing all over Britain. The tapes went everywhere but the installations were shown in different locations like Edinburgh, Glasgow and Birmingham and so on. So there was never an occasion when one person would be able to get to see the whole lot. I suppose it goes back to that tape, but there are other works, which I think people were very interested in as such as *The Heart of the Illusion*, which was shown at the Icon and *An Ephemeral Art*, which was shown at Third Eye Centre. So I think that there were different responses for different works, as there always are with any artists' output.

JH: Could you talk a little bit about *Breeze*? I'm quite interested in the response you got from people when they saw that work.

TK: Yes, I think that was particularly fascinating because the response was extremely positive. I actually took it into another configuration. I made it with the intention of, and I did, show it on four separate monitors in Edinburgh, which were set behind a false wall so you just got the image rather like a moving painting. I wasn't thinking of a moving painting. I was already interested in the relationship between the moving image and the surface of the glass screen, but then when I showed it in London at the Serpentine, it was suggested that it would be possible to use this extraordinary screen, the Idafor. It must have been one of the first types of projection and still black-and-white. It was a massive screen. It was absolutely enormous. I think they were looking

for material to actually put on it. Cliff Evans was working as a technician on the show. He suggested taking one of the images, and whether he put each one in succession I can't remember, but then we also had the four monitors on the ground. That was the only occasion when there was an intervention in the way my work was actually shown, but I was quite happy for that to happen at that point. I think probably later on I became more precious. It is quite interesting as an artist, when, in terms of development, you're first starting out. I was starting out as a very mature person as an artist, but I was still very open to the idea that I could collaborate with other people. Whereas, perhaps later on I didn't want people making suggestions or interfering in what I thought were wonderful ideas at the time.

JH: Seeing the works that you did, orientate around landscape, you really were one of the only artists, or the only artist, going down that route with video at that time. Looking at the contemporary works, they often tended towards a lot of feedback.

TS: There was a lot of self referential stuff, which I wasn't aware of when I was making that work. That's possibly not absolutely true, because the first video art that I probably saw was when the Scottish Arts Council organised a show, which I think was in 1973. It was a film and video show and they had filmmakers and video makers coming up to Edinburgh. It was during the Festival and it was in Charlotte Square Gallery. That was when I first met David Hall and Tony Sinden in fact, because they came up together to show their films. I don't think they showed video. I don't think David showed any video in that exhibition as far as I remember. In fact the Arts Council had actually bought video equipment. Two filmmakers went out and did reality type TV, interviewing people in the street and so on. I'd seen a lot of artists' film work but I can't remember seeing any video work before that date. I really can't. Which is quite interesting that I could even contemplate trying to use video to make art with, because I don't have a memory of even having read anything in any magazines about video art at that time. I'd have to really go back to my own archive to try and see whether there's anything there which indicates that, but I doubt there was very much happening. You'd need to check with David Hall about that because he made some of the earliest video art pieces as we know them. There were obviously others, like Hoppy (John Hopkins) and so on, but I don't think that there was much available in a general sense. There certainly weren't any video shows in museums or galleries so it would have been difficult to see it.

JH: You started in photography, and then moved into video. Can you talk about that transition?

TK: It really was just completely by chance. It wasn't thought through. I had no intentions or thoughts that I was going to suddenly start making art at all. It had never crossed my mind. Basically, I was working part-time at the Scottish Arts Council as an archivist. They didn't have an artist register at the time, and they wanted someone to organise all their documents and papers. This was all still paper files rather than on computer. So having spent a year doing that, and they'd bought the equipment for the show at Charlotte Square, Bill Buchanan, who was Head of the art department, suggested that I should use the equipment to make little documentaries on Scottish artists. So I set up first of all with this equipment and went and did these interviews. I think one of the last ones I did, was one where I actually attempted editing of my own volition, because I felt that we had got too much material. I thought I should try and put it into some sort of shape. So I began to become a little bit aware of the medium, but it was extremely

amateurish what I was doing and attempting to do at the time. Then Bill suggested that I should try and make a work for the Video show, which was coming up at the Serpentine. I was really quite puzzled when he made this approach and I said, 'What do you mean? Are you suggesting that I should make a piece of art?' He said, 'Why not? Have a go. See what you do!' So I make this piece *Breeze* and it got into the Video show. I rather suspected it was because I'd already met David Hall, who was one of the selectors, a couple of years before, but nevertheless. There were not so many people making video art and certainly not that type. It was pretty unusual at that time.

JH: What made you make it in an expanded way? Was that just intuitive?

TK: Yes it was. I don't think anyone suggested it to me. I'm sure they didn't. It's very difficult years later to actually remember why you did something, but I think I really wanted to make something that had a sculptural presence rather than be seen as a single screen piece on a monitor. That's what I was attempting to do and I think that I must have felt that. It was the Serpentine. I knew the gallery. I knew that there would be art or pieces of work there, and I just guessed that there would be an opportunity to try and make something that was more than just a single screen work. But it was all chance really.

JH: So you didn't see it until it was exhibited as a four-screen piece?

TK: I saw it in Edinburgh first of all obviously because I showed it in Edinburgh first.

JH: What date was that? Was it 1975?

TK: Yes I think so. I think it was earlier the same year. So, I saw it in Edinburgh first and then saw it in London. It was very exciting, to have suddenly made a work and to find that people were actually interested in it. It was adopted by a number of other artists as being 'video art'. And so that is how a lot of us came to work together from that period.

JH: So you were at the *Video Show* when the first meetings took place, talking about LVA?

TK: I was one of the founders of LVA with David Hall, Stephen Partridge, David Critchley and Roger Barnard. I think there were seven of us altogether, but I can't remember exactly.

JH: Did that include Brian Hoey?

TK: Brian Hoey wasn't based in London but he was involved to a certain extent.

JH: I've been told that everyone that met up just happened to meet at the Video Show and started then talking about it.

TK: That's absolutely true. It was very much the beginning of that debate first of all. Then LVA came from that. With LVA, I can't remember whether we got together that autumn or not. The video show was in May or June of 1975, but I can't remember whether we got together in the autumn or exactly when we got that going.

- JH: When you made the first piece, *Breeze*, how long did it take to make?
- TK: I don't think it took very long actually. I made it in a location that I was extremely familiar with. From the first day that I arrived in Edinburgh, which would have been quite a long time before, back in the late sixties, I used to go regularly, every weekend or any time I could, down to the botanic gardens. They are very, very beautiful and particularly so because there is an amazing view over the city from the garden. I was very, very fond of this particular pond. It was a bit bigger. It was like a small lake. So immediately, I thought about doing something and thought about this place as being a place I could work. I felt I could work there comfortably without perhaps trying to make anything too complicated. I was going to just go down there, with the equipment, set up a tripod and just try out various things and to see what the results would be. That was really what I did. I don't really remember how long I took or how many occasions I went down there.
- JH: But you didn't edit the piece. You had it in your mind presumably to go and shoot an event rather than using editing as part of it?
- TK: I think I just went and thought as a landscape photographer might. If you are any good as a landscape photographer, you'll have particular ideas in your mind and obviously the more you go on, the more you have very narrow themes that you want to pursue. Having taken a lot of photographs, I'd probably already developed a sense of what I was really interested in. So I already edited out. I didn't go down there and wonder around with the camera trying to find something, looking through the lens in a way that one could with a Portapak. You could wonder around and use the camera lens to try to discover a subject. It was more that I'd already got that in my head, I didn't know what would happen. I hadn't thought about what would happen when elements, like wind and water and how it would blow and so on, but it was quite narrowed down by the time. I got quite rigorous in a sense.
- JH: And was a similar process applied to the piece with the clouds, which you showed at the Tate?
- TK: Very much so. Even more so.
- JH: What was the piece called?
- TK: *Disintegrating Forms*. That was even more so really. When you relate it to *Breeze* it's quite interesting because, again, it's this thing about the wind blowing and the sky clearing. I think, over a couple of days I just pointed the camera out of the window and just waited to see what happened. Then eventually this particular occurrence happened. I thought it was really interesting at the time, and very limited really, in a sense. With the fact that the clouds passing, and over a period of however many minutes it is, the actual image clearing completely in a sky, if that had been done in colour, I don't think it would have worked so well. I think it was the fact that it was black-and-white.
- JH: I think that's the key point as well

- TK: I think so, very much so. It's hard to say, because by the time colour came in, I think that people's idea about how to use video was then influenced by, previous work by the more sophisticated methods used in television. So nobody, could have started out at that stage, the way that perhaps I was working with it and some of my colleagues at the time.
- JH: Do you think that initially in the early stages, many of the artists using video were actually being influenced more by the art world than television, which has perhaps invaded the technology way of thinking about it?
- TK: I didn't think so, because if you think about the way David Hall's work evolved and if you think about going back to New Generation Sculpture and so on, the minimalism, which then lead to some of his film work and so on, I think there was a natural move in that way. Perhaps you could say that it was echoed in other parts of the art world of turning towards the material itself, towards self-referential things. But I think that actually what was happening in video was really quite different to what was going on in sculpture and painting at the time. That's why I think there was such a problem for the people who were not involved with it to actually accept it. They couldn't see the connection, although a lot of those artists started off as sculptors or painters or whatever. It's hard to say now. In my own case, I hadn't trained as an artist, but I was still working from a fine art position, historically and in other ways really.
- JH: In your own case, would you say that the televisual mass media was an aspect of some of the process? Or were an aspect in terms of the thought process?
- TK: Definitely. As soon as I had gone beyond the photographic approach to it, I became much more aware of the medium itself and then began to look across towards television. I was thinking about what television is and what it's about and how it came across, not just in terms of content, but, particularly, in terms of the form. That happened very, very quickly. Whether I was influenced by the other artists, I was working alongside, I'm not sure. Or whether that was just part of the whole thing about looking at work in a self-referential way, which just happened to be the way everybody was working at the time. I can't quite remember that.
- JH: Some artists thought television was the same as video or was the same technology as video, would you agree with that?
- TK: I think that the crossing point, and the difficult point, came much later on in the mid eighties, or early eighties, when there was a temptation and money available through Channel 4, for example, to make things that weren't really video art anymore, but there were artists who actually were tempted to do that. I think that was a very, very difficult period for a lot of people. I think that's when I began to find it very difficult because you had to make a decision about how you were going to work, whether you were going to remain a gallery artist or whether you were going to become a television artist. That is really what some people, I think, moved towards. If you did that, then you probably would end up making television. I remember a lot of interesting debate at that point about which way to go. If you remained in the gallery world, people were still not accepting it. So the opportunities for showing, and certainly the opportunities in terms of selling or being subsidised were negligible.

- JH: Was it a tough world for an artist in that area?
- TK: It was very tough. It was difficult.
- JH: It wasn't exactly easy to be an artist in any context.
- TK: It never really is.
- JH: The context is key to that shift. From what you're saying, with David Hall, the context of the televisual was a key aspect of his whole process and the form and the material. He is probably the only artist who's really taken on the material of the televisual and intervened in the context of it. So, might you say then that you make a choice of being a television artist and that's a very specific place? So you chose the gallery, as a place to exhibit, is that true to say?
- TK: I think it chose me actually. I feel that sounds rather strange but I didn't really think about it. Everything seemed to be happening and the more I think about it everything happened really fast. I didn't really think about where the work was to go, somehow I got swept up in an enthusiasm, with my own enthusiasm and other people's enthusiasm. I just took whatever opportunity was going. I didn't think "Now, I'm going to negotiate this or I'm going to apply for money to that, and I've got to do this, and I want to show my work somewhere". It was just that one thing happened and people would just say, "Well how about this" or "We're going to have a show here would you like to show?" or "Do you want to work with us on this?" I'd just go along with it basically. Perhaps it was in a rather unselective way.
- JH: Were there a lot of opportunities for showing work in the gallery spaces?
- TK: Well there wasn't a huge amount. We did it somehow. Obviously there was a group of us who were pushing it together. I think that's really what it was. LVA really started as a sort of collective, so together we pushed really hard, and between us, we were not only organising events, which we all did, I organised things in Scotland and so on, but we were also writing all of us. And we were trying to get other people to write. Then we were also teaching. So there was a network really of up to ten artists, to start off with, who were really pushing the whole thing, and we were supporting each other.
- JH: Why was the writing important?
- TK: It was central really. It's an interesting point because other artists didn't work like that and they were perfectly successful without it. Perhaps a number of us were naturally people who were interested in critical writing anyway, and perhaps some of us had been doing it in other contexts, I certainly had been. I'd done a lot of writing up to that point. Stuart Marshall wrote, David Hall wrote. I think it was important and I think it was interesting the fact that we all had that. It went along with the way that we were trying to develop a critique. It was essential really to establish a critique. But we were doing it all for ourselves because no one else really wanted to do it basically. There were a few people to be fair, Richard Cork, for example was hugely supportive at that time, although I remember having quite a strong debate with him. I think it was Aspects magazine. On the one hand he was very supportive. He did that whole issue in Studio International. But then sometimes, he'd go off on the wrong tack and needed

to be pulled back. But he was actually the only critic at the time who did lend his support to the work. That was very valuable at a time when most people were totally dismissive of it.

JH: So you were fighting for it within the whole context of the art world?

TK: Yes

JH: Was it similar for the artists using film?

TK: Yes very similar, because they were in exactly the same position. I wonder really whether they were. I don't know whether that's the way people like Malcolm Le Grice see it now. I don't think they were quite as embattled in a sense.

JH: I think that it was slightly different because of the cinema space. There was a different agenda around the space with the artist. The filmmakers might see it in a way that the artists using video, had more opportunities in the gallery spaces. They had less, but then that was their choice. They chose to be in the cinema space, in that black space, whereas, the artists using video, could be in the gallery because you can show video within the gallery context with the lights on, in a white cube. There's a whole issue around that, but in terms of the philosophical debates there were very many similarities.

TK: There were very many, certainly, in terms of all of the materiality of the work. It was identical actually, except for the different medium. The same issues were being used, and were being thought about. A number of artists were working with both media for quite a long period before they actually gave up and concentrated entirely on one medium or the other.

JH: I wonder why the artists using video and writing philosophies around video, which were equally as strong and sometimes dogmatic, why those didn't resonate and evolve and in a way that the filmmakers were able to? There was Peter Gidal, and there was Malcolm Le Grice who was writing books. I wonder why the artists using video didn't have books being written? It's a contentious question really, but I wonder if you had a view on that?

TK: I don't know the answer to that. I wonder whether things would have been different. Whether Stuart Marshall's texts would have been published more as books later on. But, if you think about it he died very young actually. I think that in my case I was writing a lot but I also wrote on performance for Art Monthly and various things like that. I had a lot on my plate, with trying to make the work, and teaching and writing.

JH: So you were teaching at Newcastle?

TK: And Maidstone, yes.

JH: And living in Scotland?

TK: Yes. It was quite fully charged.

- JH: There was loads of energy around video during that period.
- TK: Yes there was.
- JH: You organised a big conference in Glasgow?
- TK: Yes, I did. It was in 1976, I can't remember exactly, and we did a show: Video Towards Defining an Aesthetic at the Third Eye. That included work by David Hall, Steve Partridge and David Critchley. There were a number of works shown, and I think I showed *Breeze*, but in a very simplified form because we didn't have a huge amount of money. It was a question of spending what we could on a few pieces rather than trying to show everything. I'd totally forgotten about that, that's quite interesting.
- JH: The conference?
- TK: And the exhibition, yes, because it was related. It was slightly different. The conference was slightly more orientated towards community video. I worked with a guy, who at that time was working at the Scottish Film Council. He was very interested in having a video-conference. We compromised. I'm sure David Hall spoke of that, but there was a whole range of different people who spoke. In fact someone really interesting came up for that conference if I'm not mistaken, Stuart Hall who was a very interesting cultural commentator.
- JH: Did you have any particular ideological reasons why you wanted to use video, either at the beginning, or as you continued to practice using the technology?
- TK: Certainly I didn't at the beginning. I think it would be pretentious of me to even suggest that. I've described how I got into it and it was all chance, but later on I thought about the possibility of moving into film. I thought about the possibility of performance, but again I got ideologically locked into video. I didn't want to compromise the possibilities. I think that was after having made the first *Vanitas* tape and those tapes of that time, I got very, very interested in the medium and I wouldn't have really chosen to work with anything else. I still wouldn't I'd have to say. All these years later I still think it's a fascinating medium.
- JH: In what way? Do you mean in a material sense or a political sense?
- TK: I think in the material sense and political. Well, you can't say that now. At the time, politically, it was interesting because it actually had accessibility and simplicity of access, if you could get hold of the equipment. You could actually switch it on and get going with it, whereas with film, you still had to learn a bit more. You had to learn about video, really, but in the first instance it would be possible to make something, to switch it on and use it. Of course that was what was so attractive for people working with community groups and so on, because it could be an instant... means of instant recording. So it is important from that point of view and it still, I think, continues to be from that point of view. Others have got a lot more to say about that than obviously I need to, but you can't deny the fact. I can't remember who it was who said that it was a very democratic means of recording and access.

- JH: The evolution of video as a medium changes all the time, it's a language that shifts and changes. Can you talk a little bit about the shift? For you at the time, would it be black-and-white to colour, because that would have been a huge shift?
- TK: It was. It was enormous. It was extremely exciting, the idea that you could use colour. I remember particularly that I was influenced by filmmakers in that I saw colour as something I would use as a particular thing in itself, not that somehow the camera could simply record in colour. Bingo, off you go, because everything is going to be in colour. I was very interested in using colour as a signifier in the work. I would say film directors, probably people like Godard, and there was a Russian director whose names completely escapes me, I can't even remember the film now, but it's somehow coming to my mind, where the colour was actually used as a means of indicating certain political and other aspects within the work. That's really what I was attempting to do in the heart of the illusion. It wasn't just 'It's great because I've got access to these wonderful colour cameras and I can record all this in colour'. I wanted to actually use the colour in a symbolic way. I think that comes through in all the work that I made subsequently.
- JH: Definitely. Definitely. It's a really interesting piece. I'd like to have seen it as installation. Can you talk a little bit about the expanded work? The installation work and why you chose to work that way, and not in the single screen way?
- TK: I was always very interested in sculpture, and I was very interested in architecture from a very early age. I was interested in working within a space, so whatever work I was making, even though it was about images and about television, I wanted to see that place very specifically in different configurations within a space, rather than restricting it to a television. I felt that however much you experiment and try to make a work that was different, you were still watching it as you watched television, whereas once you've expanded it into several monitors or projection or whatever, you were breaking that tie, although you might still be actually talking about television in the work.
- JH: What about with the audience? Were there considerations about the audience within the space and how viewers might view the work?
- TK: Certainly because, I tried to control that very, very much in the work by the way that I placed it. With *Heart of the Illusion*, the fact that I placed the monitors very close to the wall, with their backs to the gallery, and you could only see the programme in the reflected image in the mirror, and sideways on, meant that I was actually controlling the means of viewing it. That is actually what's happening still, it's about control. Television is about controlling. It's a controlled means of communication.
- JH: But so is cinema. Or is it different? At that time, there was definitely a distinction between cinema and television in the way that people perceived those public displays, which I don't think exist anymore. As an artist, one tends to see it differently now. It was a very specific moment in time at that point.
- TK: Yes. I suppose it's all controlled in a way as the artist, as the author, as the producer, as the director. You are always controlling. In a way, I think cinema is like that. Really the director is controlling what you see, not just through editing, but in their choice of everything, the camera shots, the dialogue and whatever. It's exactly the same with

video. It isn't the same, I don't think, with painting. I suppose maybe it is because it's an edited idea.

JH: I don't know. It's difficult with painting. I think with any art, I suppose, you could say that.

TK: But in any case that's exactly what I was trying to do. I was definitely controlling. From the beginning I think I was trying absolutely to control the means of viewing whatever I was doing. Going back to *Disintegrating Forms*, which I showed at the Tate, in the Education Room, that was actually placed on one of the plinths. I think was about 8 or 9 foot high. You really had to look right up if you happened to enter the room. It was really a strange one for the audience because if you happen to turn up and the screen was blank, and you were looking up 9 foot into the air. Obviously that's the sort of thing everybody is doing. People have done lots of work like that, but that was quite controlling because I could have had it just at normal eye level, but I didn't.

JH: So you weren't making it easy. You wanted the viewer to work for what they saw?

TK: Yes. Definitely. That was true of things like the *Vanitas* installations, where there'd be the image of a still life on the screen, which looked as if nothing was happening at all. But, if you actually gave it time and you did stay to look, you might have thought 'Oh well this is just a two-screen video installation like a piece of sculpture in the middle of the gallery so I'll just walk past it in a way that I'd walk past a piece of sculpture and not look at it properly', but if you stopped, then you'd realise that it was actually in real-time. There was a durational aspect to the work and that you know, you'd see the butterflies and the bubbles, and suddenly you'd realise it was this different work to the one that you'd thought it was. I was very interested in that. I'd worked for a bit selling catalogues in couple of the *Arts Council Galleries* in Edinburgh, and had actually observed people coming into the gallery and not looking at the work. It became quite an obsession of mine. People used to rush round the shows, for example, there was a show of 11 Dutch artists at the Fruit Market Gallery. It was very conceptual work and people would come in, get very angry, rush around the gallery, come rushing up to me and say, 'What's it all about?' I'd say, 'Why don't you go back and try and look at it and then come back and talk to me afterwards.' I think, that was a lead for me into saying 'Actually people really don't look at art', except the cognoscente. People just tend to walk in. They want an immediate gratification and if they don't get that then they pass it over. But then, had that come, I'd ask myself at the time, from the way that we are conditioned by television? It was changing its information so rapidly that we no longer had the patience to stop and really gaze, and look carefully, and try to find out for ourselves. I think that was a very important factor in that early work.

JH: Yes because it's more than some of its parts. It's so multi-layered in terms of its meaning and very rich if you care to look for it, but it's whether the audience cares to spend time with it. 'Durational work' requires a different perception and a different investment in its viewing. Did you get some funding from the *Scottish Arts Council*, initially?

TK: I can't really remember. I think it might have been a £100 or a couple of hundred pounds. You wouldn't get very far with that nowadays. Maybe buy a few tapes.

- JH: I suppose it is cheaper now, but the equipment was extremely expensive.
- TK: The only way that someone like myself could make the work at the time, and I think everybody was in the same situation, was really by using college equipment. But that was an understood part of the practice, basically, because you were teaching part time, often working long hours. Then one had the privilege to be able to stay on and use the equipment. Otherwise it would have been impossible. There wasn't any other way I could have done it.
- JH: That's what you did? You basically used the technologies through the art schools that you worked at?
- TK: That's it. Perhaps we shouldn't be revealing that, but I think most video artists have done that in their careers.
- JH: I think it's really important to acknowledge it.
- TK: I think so, because it was important for the students as well, but you didn't do that in their time, you did it in your own time. In terms of exhibiting the work, it was all done on a shoestring. Basically, if a gallery wanted to show your work you would send them a spec of what equipment you needed, and it was up to them to get hold of the equipment and to pay for it. That was it basically, and any other material you had of course. I just borrowed those myself. But I think I was also in a slightly different position. I was living in Scotland and they didn't have any grants for video artists in those days. Obviously later on there were. There are quite a lot of well-known Scottish video artists now, but at that time, no one in Scotland was making video art. So I had to make do with what I could. It was fine actually, and it was fine for a very, very long time until everything started getting much, much more expensive. Then it became much more problematic in terms of funding the work.
- JH: Do you mean when the technology changed?
- TK: The technology changed, and I suppose things just got more expensive. By the mid-eighties or early-eighties I just found it quite difficult to make it happen.
- JH: Perhaps because of the sophistication of the technology it shifted. It's odd because I suppose one tends to think of it as being more accessible as it moved on but it's true, actually.
- TK: Well it was, but then you had to. It's irrelevant now but it was fine if you'd maintained your contact with the college, you could keep on working. But if that was broken for one reason or another, in my case it was because I moved, then that became a problem. When I moved down to South Wales, I broke that. I was teaching much more as a part-timer rather than a regular part-timer, so it was much more difficult for me doing odd days here there. I was doing a lot of assessments and MA stuff and so on, but I didn't have the regular contact with one or two departments. Then I had to beg.
- JH: That's such a key issue in relation to how artists were able to continue practicing.

- TK: I think it's central actually, and I'd be very interested to know about other artists, but I suspect that caused a lot of people difficulty, if they didn't manage to maintain that regular continuity with one department, or something like that. It would be much more difficult to go on with their practice.
- JH: But there was LVA, and you were central to LVA for a very long time?
- TK: Yes but that was in London. I was either in Edinburgh 400 miles away or in Cardiff, 160 miles away. So that was never really an option for me to work there. Well it would have been but I would have had to go to London. Because of the personal nature of my work, I always had to be fairly near where I'd made the work.
- JH: Why?
- TK: It was difficult at that time. Maybe it could have evolved. I could have worked out ideas where I didn't need things. Objects could have worked in a more abstract way, but I think I was always dependent on certain things or places, which were sort of very close to me.
- JH: That's a fair point. It's a really good point.
- TK: It's difficult to remember it all, but I think that's the case.
- JH: I think it's a really important point because it's the language. If you can't have access to that then it makes it difficult to make anything. The filmmakers had a different situation where they had their optical printer. So the means of their production for a certain period of time was quite safe but with video, the technology shifting so quickly, I think is a really, really key issue. So you supported your work yourself, and you worked in the colleges. That's how you were able to make the art works that you did. But did some of the galleries also support the work?
- TK: They only supported it through the fact that they hired the equipment. I don't ever remember getting an exhibiting fee. Nowadays, certainly the galleries here in Wales, will negotiate a fee. Often together, the artists in the gallery will work on fundraising for a particular project or installation. But I don't remember that ever happening and I certainly don't remember having any money for shows at Third Eye or anywhere. But, they would be helpful if I needed equipment, in borrowing it and so on. But it was all done completely on a shoestring.
- JH: The Video Show must have been amazing. I have a catalogue of it and it's absolutely huge. It's like a completely amorphous, mad monster.
- TK: It was extraordinary. I don't really know how they got it together. Obviously I know David Hall was involved in it, but Sue Grayson Ford, who was the director of the Serpentine at the time, I remember saying to her not so very long ago, 'That was an extraordinary thing that you took on'. It was a very brave thing to do in a top London gallery at a time when people in the art world were very disparaging.
- JH: But were they disparaging?

- TK: The obvious galleries, I don't think were interested. Actually, to be honest, it was worse than that. They were not interested and actually that went on for years. I don't want to say too much because I've got a lot of friends in the gallery world, in London, and who have been involved as curators and so on. I'm very fond of them but I do know that they really tried for a long time to ignore it, whereas in the end, they had to accept it because it's become the norm. It's become central now to practice.
- JH: It has at the moment. The Americans took it on a little earlier, but I suppose it was the Blue Chip artists and they still look on artists that sold artefacts. So it wasn't just video per say.
- TK: Well apart from Bill Viola who remained completely true. I'm not aware of his having sold other things outside his video work.
- JH: I think he sold some little drawings or something but mostly it's video. Tony Oursler and Gary Hill, there are quite a few. The Donald Young Gallery, is a specific gallery, so there are some specific galleries that have supported just video. But I suppose earlier on, it was also drawings. I suppose the artists that had made sculpture or something else, happened to make video. Then they just exhibited their video.
- JH: Largely, your works were shown in galleries, but can you talk about which galleries?
- TK: Yes. Well there were a number of galleries. Because I was living in Scotland, I had just a handful of opportunities to show there, most particularly, the show that I had at Third Eye in whichever year that was, 1978 or 1979. Then I had a show at *the Fruit Market Gallery* slightly later and that was with the Scottish Arts Council. They were fantastically supportive from the beginning. I had a unique relationship with individuals. I'd like to say something just about that just before we go on to the other galleries because I think that what was very, very interesting at that time. I don't think that could ever happen now, because the structures of institutions like the Arts Council have become incredibly rigid. Years ago people used to say 'Oh the Arts Council!' but I think that there was much more opportunity for individuals within the council to actually influence, and be very directly involved with different practices as say David Curtis was when he was at the Arts Council in London. At the Scottish Arts Council, there were a number of individuals working from within the visual art department, who had tremendous energy and imagination. They were hugely encouraging to artists both from Scotland and from abroad. They gave people a lot of support way beyond, what they would normally have needed to, and even put themselves out and on the line for artists, whereas I think you would find that much less likely now. In any case I think that the Arts Councils have become far less hands-on. You've lost that layer altogether and maybe that the support is coming more directly from galleries than what happened at that time. There are other places that I showed which, again, all depended on individuals. At the Icon Gallery there was a very lively director at the time who was prepared to take risks. It was very much to do with who happened to be in charge and whether they were really interested in showing work, which hadn't been seen before and which might be provocative.
- JH: You showed in Italy at the Galleria Del Cavallino.

- TK: That wasn't an installation show. It was tapes. I think there were a number of artists, whose work David Hall organised with the Cavallino.
- JH: They were supportive of video, as far as I can tell.
- TK: They were. I suspect, but I really don't have the sort of information, that there was some relationship between that and the Biennale Archive. I've just got some thoughts about that. I think that there must have been video shown at the Biennale quite early on but I don't have records of that. So, I think that's where that came from.
- JH: Did you show at the Kitchen because there was a show there?
- TK: Again that was tapes. But I didn't go.
- JH: But you did send some work over there?
- TK: Yes, my work has been shown all over the world as far as I know, but it's always been in the context of the group showing of single screen work.
- JH: But it would be installation ideally?
- TK: Yes, and the only time, well again, I think that was only a single screen work, I showed at the Paris Biennale in 1977. Again it was *Breeze*, but shown on a mono-single screen. I can't remember exactly the details but it was, definitely. I was quite disappointed, they invited me and I'd said, yes, but actually as it turned out, it wasn't shown as an installation. It was the British Council who organised that. I probably wasn't pushy enough at the time to insist that it should be shown properly.
- JH: Steve Partridge did a piece at that.
- TK: He did. I think Kevin Atherton might have been in that same Biennale as far as I remember.
- JH: Yes, there were quite a few British artists. Do you want to say anything more about the gallery issue?
- TK: I think I've probably said all I'd need to say about it. I think there were, increasingly, individuals who were interested and supportive and so on. Bit by bit, I think people were encouraged and felt that it was possible to show video. They were encouraged by the success of the work.
- JH: What about regional issues? I'd like to get a picture of 'British' video rather than 'London' video. What was it like at the time? Were there pockets of activity across the whole of the UK, would you say?
- TK: I don't know actually, but I think it was centred round the art schools. So the main centres were places like Newcastle where Stuart Marshall was teaching. Later there was Sheffield, Coventry, Wolverhampton and Maidstone. Also there was Farnham, and I think, Brighton as well, where Mick Hartney was teaching. I think that was the picture. There may have been others, I don't know about later on, with places like Hull for

example, with its Time Based Arts. It took it on, in the sense of acting as a performance exhibiting group and so on.

JH: Were there also exhibition spaces evolving around the Art Schools, because there was the Basement Group in Newcastle?

TK: The Basement Group was very important. That was Newcastle. I can't remember exactly what the others were.

JH: Coventry had the Herbert Art Gallery didn't they? They showed video I think.

TK: Steve Partridge organised that video show. The Arnolfini might have done a little bit, and there was The Blue Coat Gallery in Liverpool. Those were the main ones.

JH: In terms of the preferred pieces of technology for your works, for exhibition your work was based on monitors. Was that your preferred technology? You weren't oriented towards wanting projections, that wasn't your ambition?

TK: They weren't available when I was working.

JH: Do you think you would have been interested in that, or was it that you used the monitors as a sculptural object, and that's what you were interested in?

TK: It's hard to say because projection wasn't available, it didn't exist or at least it didn't become available until towards the end of the Seventies, early Eighties. But it wasn't so sophisticated. It was a bit cumbersome as far as I remember.

JH: It was available in the States because Peter Campus was doing experiments with projection in early Seventies.

TK: But it wasn't anything like as slick and sophisticated as it is now. But I think I was really, attracted by the monitor.

JH: And a glass screen?

TK: The glass screen, but, I think if there'd been the flat screens that there are now, that's what I was really after because if you think about that early work, particularly *Breeze* and *The Heart of the Illusion*, I would have given anything to have had a flat screen, definitely. I was trying to make that up in some way, to try and make it seem as if it was such. So I was playing sometimes with the monitor as a piece of sculpture and sometimes trying to go towards the flat screen.

JH: But it was not like film with the projection behind.

TK: No. I think that with an ephemeral art, the one which, involved having the pupae of the butterflies inside the empty television sets, the whole objective was to force the viewer to go right up to the set. They wouldn't have been able to see it. You might have done if the butterfly was actually flying around but in some cases they were just emerging. So you actually had to go right up to the box to actually see what was going on inside it. That was deliberate.

- JH: So you didn't light it, you basically just had to go and view it?
- TK: I think it was lit inside. You still had to go because they were underneath. They were actually below. If you think of the way the shape, especially the old monitors, there was a slight edge. They were actually on the ground level of the monitor, so you actually couldn't see them from a distance. You'd have to go and have a look.
- JH: Were they fluttering about?
- TK: Yes, and they survived. I remember releasing a whole load as far as I remember. It was amazing.
- JH: Where did you get them from?
- TK: From a butterfly farm. I wrote off and they arrived in packets or something. I've got all the labels. I found them the other day. It was extraordinary. I remember being so amazed and excited by this whole idea. Probably animal rights people would have been after me.
- JH: So how did you know when they were going to hatch? Had you worked out the timing of it?
- TK: That I just can't remember at all. I must have discussed that with the butterfly farm. Maybe they sent me pupae that were about to emerge or something but I don't remember at all.
- JH: When you did the piece *Breeze*, at The Video Show how long was it exhibited for? Was it for days or a day?
- TK: I think it might have been a few days. I don't remember.
- JH: In terms of Context and Exhibition, did you achieve your ambitions do you think?
- TK: With the works generally in exhibition, yes, I think so. I think some works proved to be more difficult than others, because of lack of funds, like *Time Revealing Truth*. I think probably when I showed it at Oxford, it was as near as possible to how I wanted it to be, but I think I still hadn't quite got it to the point that I'd like it to have been. But, I think on the whole, I did manage to achieve what I set out to achieve but then in terms of the installation within the exhibition or gallery, I always set myself very limited objectives. I avoided being too ambitious, or expecting too much from the gallery, or wanting to get a lot of extra equipment. I knew that that was just unfair basically. I've never been the sort of person to demand from people. I've always been someone who tried to work with whatever resources I could lay my hands on simply. I always needed quite a lot of technical help to install things, which were practical things that people could provide. But I would never go along and say, "Well actually I need another £500 to do this other work otherwise I'm not going to do it". I'm definitely not that sort of person.
- JH: I've not met anybody that survived, that's been like that.

- TK: No, not at all.
- JH: I am sure there must be some people.
- TK: But, I've always set myself practical objectives and met them, so that was never really a problem.
- JH: But was it necessary to compromise for lack of exhibition opportunity?
- TK: No, In fact I think I had loads as many opportunities as I could cope with to be perfectly honest. If I'd gone on, I think I would have had more than I could cope with because I was being invited to show all the time, and in a way, I think I would have had to have limited it because of the way that I worked. I couldn't have churned things out so really, the body of work is very small actually for the period of time I was working. I don't think I could have ever worked in any other way. and couldn't have like some international artists, who are sort of showing in 10 different venues in a year. I could never have worked like that. In fact it would have been totally impossible. It's because the work is a critique, and in between times, I was doing a lot of thinking and a lot of writing which would lead then to a piece of work. It was like something evolving very, very slowly. Then the final work was actually quite simple to make but the gestation was actually lengthy. All the effort was going into the research and process.
- JH: Yes, process as a huge aspect of practice, is only just really being recognised properly.
- TK: It is the most crucial part. All artists are involved in that, and some people can get through that process faster than others. But I think the research aspect from my point of view was also tremendously important. Maybe I went through a lot of material before I actually got to the things that I really wanted. I'd get diverted very easily because I've got a lot of different interests that go way beyond art. So I'd get diverted very, very easily to other avenues and end up in all sorts of libraries all around the country looking at sort of old documents and things and then forgetting exactly the purpose of my investigation.
- JH: Sounds healthy to me.
- TK: Well it's great if you've got the time to do it.
- JH: Coming back to the issue about television, you said the artists that were keen to show televisually, became televisual artists. Were you not attracted to that context?
- TK: I think at the time I felt that the ideas would be compromised. Since a lot of the ideas had been about television, and about its nature and so on, I couldn't quite see how I could make work which, continued along that route and were then shown on television. Well you could do that as a provisional thing. Some of David Hall's pieces have been shown on television but if you'd carried on along that route then you were going to compromise the whole of that debate. He might have another view. I don't think he has because if he had done, he would have made more work for television. I think it's quite an interesting question but that's what I felt. I didn't want to get drawn into becoming a television artist. I definitely didn't want to do that. It wasn't that anyone asked me to

make a piece of work for television but there was money available through Channel 4 and it would have been possible to make those applications to get the money, but I really quite deliberately avoided that.

JH: I suppose there is a difference between artists' work on television or television artists and intervening in, which David Hall did and his works did. That's what they were about. That was their context he probably could have made lots of more work, if the opportunities had been available. But, I don't think they were available at the time.

TK: They weren't. They were only available through specific contacts.

JH: He wasn't interested in that?

TK: No. I think he could have. People like, Rod Stoneman, who was commissioning editor. I think Rod was probably quite open to possibilities at that early development of Channel 4, but how much he would have had to compromise the work and the making I've no idea really.

JH: I know that David Hall was also interested in the numbers of people in the audience and being able to show to so many people as well. There's an issue there that the gallery wouldn't necessarily reach the same audience, because it was a gallery audience.

TK: They are very limited. I wonder how many people saw some of the pieces that I made in the galleries. It would have been quite small audiences actually.

JH: They didn't resonate.

TK: I wasn't necessarily concerned about that at the time, myself. I don't think I was actually, which I should have been because I've spent the subsequent 20 years totally involved in helping people make art for public places. It's quite ironic. But, certainly at that time I don't think I even thought about it. I was more interested in the whole idea of getting people to look at art and to look at things in a more precise and closer way. It was about perception and various things related to that.

JH: Were there specific facilitators or curators who were important to the exhibition of your work, either through processing or the gathering or the exhibition of the pieces?

TK: The most important grouping, that helped to promote the work, was LVA itself. I was part of that, but I have to acknowledge, totally, the support of all the initial artists who were in that grouping. The two people who helped me the most were David Hall and Stuart Marshall. They were absolutely unique in terms of the way they encouraged loads of people. But in my case particularly, I think I couldn't have done what I did without the two of them. Or at least, I would have done something entirely different. Maybe I wouldn't have done it at all. I think that's probably the case actually.

JH: But the meeting was fortuitous, at the Video Show.

TK: Well it brought everybody together.

- JH: The people who were at the video show that you met, and first set up LVA. Who were they?
- TK: Roger Barnard, David Hall, Stuart Marshall, David Critchley, possibly, Steve Partridge obviously. I can't remember, but I think Brian Hoey might have been involved in it. I don't remember others, but there were others. They were the key people really. In terms of other people who were very encouraging at the time, there were people at the Scottish Arts Council, Robert Breen and William Buchanan and Leslie Green in particular and Tom McGrath who was director of the Third Eye Centre at the time and Bridget Brown. In both cases, they gave me shows on my own, which at the time was quite something to have a video artist showing on their own. Then I remember, also Air Gallery. I can't remember whether Robert McPherson was running Air Gallery, but that was in Shaftsbury Avenue at the time. In fact, there were a lot shows and a lot of different video artists at Air during quite a two or three year period. So there were quite a few people, now I come to think of it. But that was later, that was just turning into the 80s and the early 80s really. Not at the time when we were starting art.
- JH: In the initial aspect of LVA, what actually happened?
- TK: I can't entirely remember. I remember how we were in the Serpentine Show for a few days and somehow we must have started talking. I can't remember how it was. It wasn't my idea to set up LVA. I don't know whose idea it was. It could have been David Hall's. It could have been Stuart Marshall's. It could have been Steve Partridge's. I've no idea but suddenly something happened and the suggestion was that we should meet to talk about it. I don't remember when that first meeting was but I do remember that we quickly moved to meeting in a funny room above the Venus Video Club in Old Compton Street. It was up a funny old wooden staircase. All these strip clubs were all around. It was a tiny room and we would all pile into it and then argue like mad. We were endlessly arguing and shouting at each other. I think David Critchley was quite central to trying to get it going, as far as I remember at that time, if I'm not mistaken.
- JH: I assume it was everybody that was involved somehow there.
- TK: But we couldn't all be there because I was in Scotland. I was commuting. I went to Maidstone first in 1976 and started teaching in 1976, and it was around that time. It was either just before that LVA was set up or simultaneously.
- JH: But why were you propelled to set up LVA rather to fit into the co-op that existed which was moving image?
- TK: They wouldn't put up with us. That's why. They didn't want to know us
- JH: Didn't they?
- TK: No. That's the whole thing. I'm sure, absolutely sure, they didn't want to know. They were absolutely disinterested.
- JH: So they wouldn't have wanted to collaborate in the project?

- TK: I don't think so. I don't know because I was slightly outside all this at that time. I was so far away and because I hadn't come through the art world. But, people like David Hall obviously had come, so there must have been some natural antagonism all the way through. I'm pretty certain they wouldn't have been interested in showing. Maybe we did actually. I wonder whether we didn't show stuff there.
- JH: But David must have shown something because he made film works?
- TK: Yes he did, but I wonder whether we didn't have one or two early shows at the *Co-op*?
- JH: To try it out, to see what happens? I'll ask David because that might be an interesting thing to know.
- TK: It would be very interesting. I have a feeling we might have had the odd show. I'm beginning to think of it and I sort of have this memory. Where were they then?
- JH: There was the whole mixture. There was the Arts Lab.
- TK: This was after the Arts Lab, because I remember the Arts Lab, and that was long before. The Arts Lab was the 60s. I remember the Arts Lab back in 1967.
- JH: But that area, physically, from what I understand from Hoppy and Sue, is that Prince of Wales Terrace housed lots of different organisations, which included Arts Lab, The Musicians Collective, The Co-op and lots of other little community groups. TVX was there and then it became Fantasy Factory, but before that, it was IRAT. There were all of these going on, so I was just interested in how or why LVA didn't then automatically gravitate or be part of that whole community?
- JH: Why didn't LVA automatically gravitate, or be part of that whole community which was already there?
- TK: Yes, why did we end up in Old Compton Street? Well it was convenient, that's all.
- JH: Were there other women? Wendy Brown was involved. Wasn't she involved with Brian Hoey? They worked together didn't they?
- TK: They worked together at Biddick, but I don't remember if she had a central role at that time. She and Brian organised the shows at Biddick together, but I don't remember her involved in the core group that got LVA going. I may be wrong. I don't want to exclude anyone, but it's just the things that I remember.
- JH: So you all set it up. I've got somewhere the details about how that kind of worked and functioned. How long were you central and part of that organisation?
- TK: I was certainly on the committee for quite a long time. There was a committee set up. It might have been five years, but I've no idea.
- JH: What was the focus? It seemed to be distribution.
- TK: The first was distributing the tapes.

- JH: Not having a place to show the work?
- TK: That wasn't the first focus. The initial signals were that we just felt that we needed to set up our own distribution system to distribute the single screen works. So, for anybody like Cavallino or Kitchen or Biddick or wherever, it could be organised through the central system rather than through each individual artist. It was a means of promoting out collective work. Then it was also maybe initiating some wider shows itself, and then it went on afterwards. It went on to develop into other things. I wasn't involved with it later. I can't remember how long I was involved with it. I've really no idea now. It could have been four or five years actually, because I remember going to loads of meetings when I could. I wasn't obviously in London all the time. There was also writing letters to get money. Generally, there was a lot to do really.
- JH: David Critchley took over at some point because then he became salaried.
- TK: Yes he did, definitely. I think then it changed. It evolved really, which happens eventually to all organisations or collectives. It has to happen really.
- JH: In terms of the community of artists around London, there was the focus of LVA being in London, even though the artists were from all over the place, from all over the country. That community intermingled and interspersed and there must have been, in a similar way to the Co-op, a place even it is just an imagination where there is a community of people supporting each other.
- TK: Yes, it was very important. It was hugely important. I think that was more important than LUX. I remember going to the opening and it was obvious that everybody was hugely excited. We all thought, and I thought, 'Gosh what a wonderful thing that one's got to this point!' and all the rest of it. But now, looking at it in hindsight, I think it was a disaster actually. There was something else, which I was talking about that's happening in here, in Wales. First of all, the idea of bringing two organisations together and creating a monster, I don't think you'll get interesting art out of that. I think a terrible number of mistakes have been made in the last 10-15 years because people have thought that with the lottery money, there'd be huge opportunities for creating these amazing buildings with lots of facilities, but nobody really thought about how you'd actually administer that and whether really you'd be able to maintain the energy and imagination which came out of these much smaller groupings where although people were having to struggle financially and physically, they had the support of the artists, whereas immediately, they get behind glass and steel constructions. People stand at a distance. I thought of LUX 'Oh that's LUX type of thing'. If I'd been in London and I wanted to make work, I would have gone and hired whatever I needed to hire. But I didn't immediately feel that this had the immediacy of the room in the Venus Video Club in Old Compton Street. Not that that was practical at all. There's a tremendous difference and a gap between those two places. I think, in a sense, you should land up somewhere in between rather than trying to create something, which is actually rather artificial. I think with LUX what they really needed was not what it became. LVA and the Co-op separately could have continued in quite small office spaces; what was needed was a sort of common space for showing the work. But this was turned into something else and it was just too expensive.

- JH: It did become a monster.
- TK: It's far too expensive, the cost of running something like that.
- JH: There are just endless amounts of staff. If you've ever been to the building, I used to go there and it was full of people. It was amazing.
- TK: We had a similar instance with a big fine art centre venture here in Cardiff a few years back: CVA. It was exactly the same. They set it up with lottery money and forty members of staff. It closed in eighteen months. I didn't know if they were all full time, but there were at least 15 or 20, all full time. And it closed within eighteen months they just couldn't sustain it. It was a nightmare. It's been a nightmare ever since.
- JH: But Chapter Arts still exists so it's kind of odd that something else would be set up.
- TK: It was specifically to be a Visual Arts Centre, not incorporating other art forms. So I have my big reservations. I think that with things that grow organically, you just have to let them grow gently. But immediately when you precipitate something in the arts, I don't think it works. I really don't. 'Oh Gosh, we've got millions of pounds so we suddenly do something absolutely fantastic!' Well no, you don't actually, that isn't how it happens.
- JH: LUX was complicated anyway but it became this place where there were some ideas being tested out, rather than being about commercial galleries and commercial stuff. Yet the philosophy of the practices that they were dealing with was coming from another place, which was not about being a commercial gallery. So I think it was it was doomed, in that form anyway. It exists now
- TK: But in a much more healthy way. It was maybe a bit of a struggle again.
- JH: I'm not sure that they are not distributing any video works. Philosophically what we are talking about is video. People assume we are talking about film. It's still video but they are talking about it in film terms rather than in terms of other philosophical agendas. So what ideas and other artists' work influenced your work?
- TK: I always have been passionate about art since I was very young. I obviously had seen a huge amount of work both here and in Europe. At that particular point when I started making work, I was really into minimalism. I was definitely into minimalism and conceptual art without question. So you can take whatever you want out of that. I think reduction and exclusion and getting down to very small details. In terms of artists who influenced me, it's difficult to say. It is not because I deny that I was influenced, because I think I was influenced by so many people that I find it actually really hard to trace one person or another. Obviously in the tighter community I've already mentioned the people who influenced me. The people that I was actually working with, influenced me but in a wider sense of other artists, there were just loads and loads of artists that I was interested in. I mentioned to *you* specifically in *The Heart of the Illusion*: that reference to using the blue of Yves Klein's *Blue*. I was very aware of references like that. Obviously with the *Vanitas* paintings, that was my whole interest in art history and delving into the past like an archaeological thing of researching backwards and then to bring something into a completely contemporary medium and

context. So I can't be too specific. I don't have favourite artists. There are artists who I admire enormously. There are people like Bill Viola. Bill Viola's work I became aware of after I'd stopped making my own work, which is quite strange really. He was making work at the same time but I didn't know his work at that time. And I saw lots of things like Joan Jonas' *Vertical Roll* and I saw a lot of Nauman's work and all those people but they definitely didn't influence me in any way. I was just interested in them. Acconci, I was interested in performance art and so on. It's hard to tell really because quite often you take in lots of influences and you distil without actually even being aware of it, especially if you've always looked at things. That's one thing that I've continued to do even up to now. I really do believe as an artist that you really need to be looking all the time. This idea that somehow that's not important; there are some artists who hardly ever go into a gallery. I just don't understand that. I think it's absolutely critical. You've got to be 'at it' the whole time. Whenever you can. It's a duty that you've just got to keep finding out as much as you can: looking, testing yourself, questioning.

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

TK: No I don't think I did at all. There wasn't any reason for that. I think that with everyone that I was working along side, we all worked as individual artists, although we were showing together and we were supporting each other. I can't remember any of us actually working collaboratively in a partnership.

JH: I think David Critchley, with 2b Butlers Wharf, had worked with a lot of people that he worked with there. Did you show any work at 2b Butlers Wharf? Was that a context?

TK: I did once, yes.

JH: What was it like at the time, being part of the community or collective?

TK: I can't stress how important that was. That was absolutely critical. I think that as time went on, that fragmented. We didn't stay together really for all sorts of reasons. It wasn't just because I didn't live near everybody else. Everybody drifted off into their own spheres. I'm not saying that was a bad thing. It was inevitable in a way but it changed a lot of things definitely.

JH: What did it change? Just the support group?

TK: The support group, yes.

JH: The dialogue? Do you think?

TK: Yes definitely.

JH: Were there any collective goals of that community?

TK: I don't think so, I don't think we thought that way, except just to get the work shown. It was rather basic actually.

JH: So you must have felt that there was a lack of opportunity in some respect I suppose?

- TK: At the beginning, there was definitely.
- JH: Do you think it was about trying to change the perception of the art world about what video was?
- TK: Yes, definitely, absolutely, without question.
- JH: So did you facilitate other artists' works?
- TK: In a sense I did when I organised events like that first show, at that early stage, in Glasgow, Video Towards Defining an Aesthetic. But I have to say that I didn't. Except that of course I was teaching, so you could say that there were a lot of potential young artists who came out of that.
- JH: But for 20 years you've been facilitating.
- TK: Yes I've done that. I've certainly done my bit, more than my bit. That's exactly what I've done ever since I stopped making my own work. I facilitated other artists. I helped them to make work really.
- JH: You've been based in Wales, so have you been doing that in Wales?
- TK: Yes, not uniquely with Welsh artists, with artists from all over actually, including artists from abroad. So, there's been a massive amount of very, very, very interesting and fascinating work. I found that just as rewarding, helping someone else to realise something quite complicated and against a lot of odds. Working in public is quite a different thing to working in the way that I was working in a gallery where you were in a much more protected environment. You are really exposed if you go and make a work and stick it outside. You are exposed in every way, not just to the general public, even to the group who were commissioning you. The role of the person as but the go-between, which I am and my colleagues are, is absolutely crucial in that process.
- JH: Is it the Welsh Arts Council?
- TK: No we are called Cywaith Cymru Artworks Wales. We are, basically, a national organisation for public art in Wales, but we work right across the whole series of different activities. It's not just about commissioning; we do lots of residences in hospitals and schools and so on. We do temporary exhibitions in all sorts of environments like the Botanic Gardens in Carmarthenshire or various things. Then we commission specific works for artists for special events. Then we run schemes for artists to make work that they want to really make themselves. It's quite a complex thing.
- JH: That's amazing, so it's been running for 20 years?
- TK: Well it's been running slightly longer. I think it started in 1981, something like that. It is very interesting work but demanding in a different way. A number of my colleagues are practicing artists, so I think it needs an artist or someone who actually really understands the practice to be able to facilitate. I think it would be very difficult for someone who didn't have that background to really be able to make the work happen.

- JH: So are there any moving image works or any video works? Or is it mostly a mixture?
- TK: That's what I was thinking about the other day, 'Oh God what the hell has happened. Somehow we haven't done that!' It's very interesting. There are some quite interesting reasons for that. We are doing a lot now. The last two to three years there are a lot of projects, which involve digital works particularly.
- JH: Is that digital stills or digital moving image?
- TK: Both. There is a lot more stuff but I think it's because of the way that we tend to work, not from the artist point of view, we are not artist agents, we are actually as I said, the go-between. So we're working with people out there and host organisations who are keen to work with an artist and who've got their own ideas about what they want to see happen and we try to change their views and give them other ideas and so on, but sometimes, they desperately want to work with a painter or they desperately want to work with someone who works with you know landform. So it's not good saying to someone who wants to do that, 'You've got to have a video artist'. So there haven't been opportunities and we've initiated a lot of projects ourselves, but we haven't ever initiated a video project. It is rather interesting and I can't tell you why. Now you are asking me, and I'm beginning to think 'Why the hell didn't we do that!'
- TK: When I started it was actually The Welsh Sculpture Trust and it was very much more restricted, in terms of the idea of just promoting sculpture in public places. I didn't have any flexibility in the early days to do anything except to move down along that line.
- JH: Could just talk a little bit about your early influences and where you grew up and how that influenced your practice?
- TK: There's a lot to say about that really. The question of landscape and natural forms are the most early influences. I was born in Dorset. Dorset is a fascinating county. Well, every county is fascinating but it is particularly interesting because it is full of old iron-age forts. They are really quite significant ones, ringed with very high hill forts which all are above six-seven hundred feet. The whole of my childhood was spent with my parents going to picnics on these hill forts with the rings around them and so on. And also on this little farm that my grandmother had, which was tiny. I think there were six cows and 30 chickens and a stream and everything. So from a very, very early age, and at that time, this was a hell of a long time ago, back in the late nineteen forties, people didn't worry about where children went. I was allowed to just go off and roam around the fields on my own, I mean there was no sort of care about something happening, I just used to disappear. I've thought about this so many times since. I just became very, very close in a way that a child does to the land. It's a difficult thing to explain if you haven't had that experience. You never regain it as an adult, you can't. It's something absolutely important. Unless you are a farmer, you'll never ever be able to recapture that. It's fascinating. It's something quite sensual and also sometimes frightening. But that's where I started. Always being very close to things. I was quite privileged in that respect. We lived in London but we used to go down to this farm and we'd spend the whole Summer, six or seven weeks, down there. We also had Easter and Christmas and so on. So that was really I think the biggest influence and has continued to be in a way. So I suppose, at certain points I've tried to include that in the

work. But then what I've done is make it clear that in a sense, you become removed from that very quickly. It's very, very, very difficult. Even people who retire to the country will never capture that because actually what they do is like my dad who lives in the country very near to where I was I was born. Immediately you became encased in your car because the shops are not near by. You have to drive off to the nearest town four miles away. You rush around the supermarket just like everybody else. You rush back again into your house. You go for a walk but then you don't have time. You can't spend all day. You are in a hurry. It's like glimpses. So it has all become removed in a way. That's fascinating. Increasingly I become more and more fascinated in that and I keep thinking 'What am I going to do with that? Am I going to write about it?' In fact that's the way that the whole of life in Western Europe has gone. Basically we have been removed completely from our roots.

JH: From the agricultural. From the physical, existential roots.

TK: Being removed further and further from the land is symbolic and it's not just about my own experience. It's the way that it realises that society has gone. It is reflecting that. Somehow I'm conscious of it through my own history. I don't suppose I'm making a comment, or maybe I am, because in doing that, I think it comes through in the illusion and probably you will remember them. That's my work.

JH: *The Heart of the Illusion*

TK: That image of the 360-degree turn within the landscape towards Berkeley Nuclear Power Station, takes you through that same process. It's exactly reflected from what looks like an idyllic English landscape through to the very stark image of the unmistakable nuclear power station. They are always are such hideous structures and God knows why they hadn't managed to construct something that looks a bit more sort of pleasing within a beautiful landscape, like on the Severn or Dungeness. I think landscape probably is the most central part of my whole thinking. All the time when I am up and out, I am looking outwards rather than looking inwards. Yet a lot of my work is about trying. It's like containing and preventing people from looking outward. I think that's quite curious. Yet all the time I myself want to be looking out and beyond and not to be confined by brick walls and townscape. I think my work actually doesn't allow that to happen. It's doing the opposite a lot of the time, it's actually closing in completely.

JH: Isn't it highlighting the contradiction between the technology and landscape or the technology and the existential?

TK: Yes it is.

JH: So you're focusing the viewer in on that key issue with the work?

TK: Yes. But of course the things that I am saying now, I am saying after the fact. I'm talking about a work, which was made in 1979 or 1980. I don't know that I was thinking exactly like that when I made the work, but it's what I'm reading into it now. It is being ones own art historian. It means that you go back and look at it and start reinterpreting it.

- JH: Do you think that happens with the video works? Do you think that artists have gone back and reinterpreted or re-read things?
- TK: I think all artists do that with their work. I'm sure that all serious artists will go back and look at old work, and maybe work from even 30-40 years ago depending on how old they are. They'll often use things which at the time they didn't think were important, then suddenly they draw out something from a piece of sculpture or a painting or whatever it is, and suddenly think: 'Well that's curious that I used that idea but at the time maybe I didn't use it in this particular way, but I'm going to reuse it now. I'm going to take it out and turn it into something else'. I think most people do that. Unless they have a rejectionist view of life, which is if they don't really want to know of anything that's in the past including their own past. In which case, they rubbish their own work and some artists actually burn their work. But I think a lot of people do tend to go back.
- JH: So when producing and exhibiting work did you feel you were responding to a larger movement, maybe an international movement? If so, how might you define it?
- TK: I suppose that working as a video artist, one was working within an international movement because there weren't very many British artists who were working in video. Our reference points were artists, particularly I suppose, the American artists. But then our work was quite different to the American artists. We were working alongside them really. In parallel I would say, rather than actually being influenced by them. I don't think that there were any other obvious influences at that time coming from other places.
- JH: How was it different to the American artists?
- TK: It's difficult to say. Maybe it was closer than one thinks. We felt that somehow our work was quite different, but whether it actually was in reality, I'm just not clear. I can't remember enough about the American work to know whether that was true. Did they make self-referential work? I can't remember. *Vertical Roll* was a very, very influential work for a lot of British video artists. I remember that was a seminal work. Everyone picked it up. When I see it now, I just think it looks rather obvious, but at the time it was quite surprising as a piece of work.
- JH: What was the response to the work internationally, when you showed it at these different places?
- TK: I wasn't there so I don't know, but from what I know, it was well received. I know there was particular interest. Stuart Marshall used to tell me that there was particular interest in Toronto, in Canada. I think also at the Kitchen. I can't remember who was running the Kitchen at the time, but she was very supportive and very interested. There were two or three shows I think at the Kitchen of British video artists work. They were very keen. There was nowhere really in Europe apart from the Cavallino or Gerry Schum. I don't know if David Hall ever showed there, I've no idea. but that was slightly earlier. There may have been other things, which I wasn't involved with, so I'm not the best person. But there may be other people who showed in the other parts of the world. I've no idea.
- JH: Were there any reviews of the work sent to you?

- TK: Well apart from a magazine, no I am not aware of it.
- JH: Did you work with other artists or technicians during the process of your work?
- TK: Yes I did. I Particularly worked with Stuart Marshall. Stuart Marshall helped me, particularly, on the first *Vanitas* tape, which was a very, very complex piece of work. It was quite difficult to put together. He was an enormous help and support. I'm pretty certain that Colin Smith at Maidstone helped me a lot in the early days in putting various things together. Then I made *The Heart of the Illusion* at a place, which I don't think exists anymore, called Spafax Television. It was a commercial film company in Wiltshire. So a lot of people helped me a lot. I was very lucky in that respect because again, it wasn't money, passing hands, but it was people helping in kind. It was quite central. I wouldn't have been able to make most of those works without help.
- JH: I suppose exhibiting them as well. It was quite cumbersome equipment, it wasn't like a kind of painting.
- TK: Indeed. I couldn't have done it without the lot of technical back up in the galleries and so on. I couldn't have done it otherwise. And also I've never been very good at carrying heavy things, not because I'm a woman but just because I've got quite a slim frame. I can't lift heavy monitors, I've never been able to do it. I've always had to use other people to help me make things.
- JH: How do you feel about the issue of gender because, having read different reviews of your work, your work is always used as: 'This is the first woman that made the...' Do you find that rather irritating?
- TK: Over time I've just come to accept it to be perfectly honest but it really wasn't an issue with me at all. Catherine Elwes and I talked about that at length, but it just was not an issue with me. I don't know why. I think that I am from a slightly older generation than the artists who got very involved with feminism. They were the next generation really. When I started making video I just wasn't conscious of that sort of debate at all. Then when I got to know about it, it slightly irritated me for a whole range of issues. I did have my own political position, which was about a different politic. It was definitely of a Marxist leaning and about anti-capitalism. It was there from very early on. *Vanitas* is absolutely about that. I was passionately interested in a much wider politic. That's not to say that that was anything better. I'm not trying to say I was better because I did that, but that's just what I happened to be interested in. I wasn't really interested in feminist issues. I couldn't get involved. I really couldn't get into them. I just didn't find it interesting basically. I followed the debate from the edge. There were obviously other artists teaching at the same time as myself, at Maidstone particularly, who were totally involved and immersed in it.
- JH: Who was that then?
- TK: I can't remember now who was teaching there. I suppose to some extent, although not totally, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Tina Keane and people like that. They had a show at the ICA. In fact I did a whole interview about that show.

- JH: Is that the one that Cate Elwes had organised?
- TK: Yes and Rose Garrard
- JH: With Mary Kelly and people like that?
- TK: That's right. I thought the work was great. There was some great work in it. I don't know what it was, I wasn't trying to be difficult, but I suppose I was so caught up with this group, actually as it happened, that were all men. But with another other issue, which was really about video, media, politics, anti-capitalism and so on. If I'd wanted to I could have absorbed feminist issues in the work, but it just didn't happen, and I just wasn't really taken with it.
- JH: So those were read out of it subsequently?
- TK: That's fine, they can read what they like, but that's not what my work was ever about.
- JH: But your work was dealing with a wider political issue, which was a global issue, an international issue?
- TK: Exactly. I just happened to use myself because it was convenient. With *Vanitas*, immediately, I found that painting it just had resonance. It was so extraordinary and immediately I began to discover what the implications were. I got so drawn into that. But all those paintings were not of women they were of men. The originals were all male artists, apart from the first one that I found in Oxford. I just translated them and I used myself because it seemed the obvious thing to do. I think that's what art criticism is about. It's what the individual person writing sees in the work. It's more often than not, what the artist intended, but that's what's interesting. To have a debate about the work and also to have debates at different times about the works, because different people will put different interpretations on it.
- JH: As a person reading the work, and I hadn't spoken to you when I saw it, for me, as a woman I think the image of you is a very iconic image and very strong image. So, one of the reasons why the work has resonated and is powerful, *Vanitas* in particular, is because of that and the contradiction between those.
- TK: Yes, I accept that, I think that's absolutely fine and valid. I wouldn't fight against that, but it's not why I made it. I didn't make it as a feminist statement. That's really the point I am making.
- JH: But it's inherently there.
- TK: It's inherently there and you can't avoid it, but if I'd made it and had a male model, then it wouldn't have had the same meaning.
- JH: No, that's absolutely true.
- TK: It's about the self-portrait of an artist as an ephemeral subject. It's about mortality. So it has to be of the self-portrait of the artist.

- JH: But it just happens to be, that in the artistic context of the time, there were not many images of women within the art world.
- TK: That's absolutely true and it's also that it has survived. That's the other thing that's extraordinary about it, whereas a lot of the other work hasn't been written about as much, or taken up as much. It's a fascinating discussion. I've had quite long discussions about it with a lot of different people.
- JH: There are some key issues about critical feedback and contextual philosophies, for works that have resonated through time. There are two issues that I want to address. One is the issue that galleries did not take up British video until much later, and what your view is on that. Then I'd like to cover some of the philosophical discourses of the time. So the first question which is, why do you think, and this might be a contentious question, that British Video wasn't been taken up until recently; having missed a generation or two, of artists?
- TK: It's very strange. It has only happened really in the last seven or eight or nine years with people like Douglas Gordon and so on. I don't think I know. I have a view. I'd like to know, but I really don't know what the answer is at all. Was there suddenly a promotion of certain artists? Were the galleries suddenly interested? How did that all happen? Where did it all come? It suddenly happened and because I perhaps wasn't so focused, at that point, on that movement, on what was exactly going on, I just suddenly was aware. I thought "Gosh what's happening? This is quite bizarre."
- JH: It's the American artists in my view. Talking to David Hall briefly, as well, it seems the American artists were being promoted, because they were seen as the new next wave.
- TK: They've been in the intervening period. There were several shows in London of Bill Viola's work for example, which were quite sensational, and everybody went along and venerated him and so on. But there was very little else that I can remember of any great significance. Then suddenly, you've got all this other stuff appearing on the scene.
- JH: I think it is that the American curators, by promoting the artists they did at that time, validated it.
- TK: That's probably true but it's rather awful that the English curators needed that in order to persuade them that that was what was important here. I think it is possibly true. It would be very interesting to ask a few people what happened, but I think some people would still resist it. I don't actually want to mention names but I've been close to quite a few curators and I actually think that they would still say that they are not really interested in video art, but they've shown it.
- JH: Because everyone else does?
- TK: Yes. It would be very interesting to explore exactly what triggered that and what allowed that attitude to change. Did it happen abroad before it happened here? Was it the big shows like the Venice Biennale, like Documenta and so on, which suddenly started showing a lot of video? Because they did. It was suddenly a big thing and in

fact people were coming back saying, 'Well I only saw video there' and I said 'Oh really! That sounds really exciting.' I could see long faces.

JH: I suppose it's not very good if you are a painter.

TK: No, it's not good at all, as I know from a lot of my friends who are painters. I don't know the answer at all. I've no idea what did validate it. Also, how the gallery system can cope with that. How many of the London galleries really do show video on a regular basis? They don't. There are not many of them. There are only one or two

JH: The Lisson sells Video.

TK: But that's probably to continental collectors, not to British collectors.

JH: I think some of the galleries sell to museums. I think the Donald Young Gallery, with Viola, as far as I know, sells to museums. That's how they started to develop the market in terms of selling, because they can sell great big things.

TK: I think there is still a problem there. The galleries are never really going to be able sell it and especially not installation work.

JH: They say they do. I've talked to various different people about that and they say they do. They sell editions. They might sell four DVDs. What they don't say is 'it's got a half-life'. It's a very short half-life, not like a painting. They don't say that. I talked to The Lisson about it. They had some Tony Oursler for sale and I was interested how much it would cost to buy, because I had little drawings and then they had the art works, which were projections. They sold the equipment as one aspect of the sale, but then they sold the signed DVD, and that was what you bought as an artwork.

TK: So how much was it?

JH: Ten-fifteen thousand.

TK: For a DVD?

JH: For a DVD and a plaster object.

TK: Was it unique?

JH: I think it was a one-off. But my question to them was, 'How do I know it's a one-off', and also, 'What happens if this sort of breaks down and doesn't work? What happens when the DVD wears out?' They said, 'Well you'd get another one'. You'd have to go back to the artist, and as you bought it, I suppose you'd have a special dispensation to get another. But it sounds a bit messy because what happens if he's wiped it off his hard drive?

TK: You'd be unlucky.

JH: All these questions are not being answered.

TK: That's very interesting because I think if I was making a contract to buy something like that, with, for example the work I do in public art, I'd really want to know about it. How long this thing is going to last for? It maybe fine, you could say, as the person selling it, 'I'm selling you this DVD for ten thousand pounds, but I can only guarantee that it's going to exist for ten years. If it fades after that, you're paying ten thousand pounds for ten years worth. I'll take the risk that if something happens to it before then, maybe I'm going to have to provide you with another copy'. I think there would have to be some sort of clear deal.

JH: Yes, some sort of written contract, like a written deal. I wasn't ready to take out my chequebook and sign my life away at that cost, but I'm sure that with the Violas, they send them to museums and they are sixty to seventy grand, or something like that. But it is really interesting. There's an interesting artist, to digress very quickly, called Robert Whitman. He mostly makes performance work. He is a contemporary of Berger and Rauschenberg. The thing is that those artists, his contemporaries, are sold everywhere because they make objects. But Whitman' has not done that so therefore, he's not promoted within the commercial gallery system. He doesn't make artefacts to sell. He is a key example of how that works, and one of the reasons perhaps why people like David Hall hasn't sold, because his work is of a moment. The other issue is the philosophical context of your work. Can you talk about how that was important and where the dialogue took place within the community of artists that you were contemporary with?

TK: Just where I started out, there was a whole possibilities between a dialogue with people, obviously, like David Hall and Stuart Marshall. I was obviously spending a lot of time with both of them at that time because I was teaching with them. I could go to Newcastle and stay at Stuart's house and we'd talk half of the night about the work. So there was quite a big debate building up. But then there were other influences through other artists that I knew in Scotland and talking about art generally. That was to do with influence in terms of developing my own language, but that was something obviously that I did myself through the research.

JH: What I'm trying to understand the context for the practice and the intellectual context. That's what you're saying about Stuart Marshall and David Hall being key and that dialogue and debate and where that takes place. I suppose the work evolved through that?

TK: Yes but then you talk about other things as well. You don't just talk about the work. On that particular day, you might be very angry about something that happened in politics, so you might spend an hour and a half raging about what Mrs Thatcher had done or had not done or what Thatcherism was about or not about. There was a lot of stuff going on. We did talk a lot about other things, or about literature, or about a film that one of us had seen. I was very, very influenced, the more I think about it, by the French Avant-garde, and so I might say to Stuart Marshall, 'I've just seen' whatever it was like *Numéro deux* by Jean-Luc Goddard and then we talk about it. We would talk about that rather than talking about our work. We would dissect it. There were a lot of different discussions going on. Obviously they were related to things that were current at the time. It was a mixture of very interesting work, interventionist work and other stuff. It was all about the way that everything was closing in, through more and more material politics. Politics and materialism, I felt, were causing things to close down,

and in a way, they were closing down the debate as well. I think, certainly, by the end of the seventies there was much less political debate. When you think about it, what was happening in the sixties over that ten-year period, it was such a complete change. By the time you got into the early eighties, very few artists were interested in politics anymore. I may be wrong, but I don't think there were very many.

JH: The climate changed, definitely. But, in terms of video, did the politics of the material, not necessary materialism, but the material itself shift?

TK: I think it probably did. I think when the equipment got more sophisticated, people were less conscious of the material of the medium. I wonder whether that's not what worried David Hall as well. I would be quite interested to know what he would say about that. I seem to have a memory that he was quite sceptical, while some people were thinking 'Isn't it wonderful because we can work on this wonderful new equipment, in colour.' He was holding back and quite reserved because he was fearful in a sense that people would be become seduced by the technology and the ease with which they could produce images to the point that they would forget about the medium. I think to some extent that that is what happened to a lot of people. In a way that's really what's happened in, I'd say, 80% of the video art that you see now. Actually it is really just being used as a recording tool. I don't know whether you'd disagree with that, but that's my own view of it. A lot of it is just a means of putting it in the camera and a lot of it is about performance rather than about video at all. Curiously enough the more sophisticated the video technology becomes, I think lots of artists have actually moved away from the technology, fearful of it in a sense, rather than engaging with it.

JH: I've written about it. The view I have is that, from what I know, having experience of video across a period of time, and the confusion as well; is that the early, early work and the early dialogue often was focused around medium but it's shifting sands. It's shifting because video is a shifting medium. It's being changing ever since it was invented as a technology. So fixing a philosophy around specificity is slightly problematic in the first instance, because there is no specific aspect of it, because it's always changing. So the philosophy could have been based around something of shifting sands, which I think is what video is. It's not only shifting sands in terms of its technology but in terms of the way that artists use it. I think Stuart Marshall had a real handle on that but unfortunately he died. But his writings were very much talking about that aspect of the artworks, and also the technology as being a kind of amorphous thing or a thing that changed all the time. So I think the argument about it being medium specific is slightly problematic in the first place. The Americans were doing it as well, it wasn't just a general zeitgeist, but I think, to become fixated on that is slightly problematic. I'm not sure that David Hall was though. I've talked to him about it.

TK: I think he was at the very early stage

JH: Yes, but I think he's been misunderstood a little bit, perhaps?

TK: He could be. I do think he was in the early period because, after all, I was teaching with him as well. It wasn't just about seeing his work. But in terms of the actual approach to the work and establishing a philosophy, he wasn't dogmatic, but I think he was encouraging of certain ways of thinking.

- JH: Yes, I think that resonated at Maidstone actually, even when he wasn't there. I always found that difficult, because coming into it later it seemed very out of date.
- TK: If it went on, it would be out of date.
- JH: It did go on. It did go on for ages. But it was 'true imagistic' or something like that. But what is that about? It's a complicated argument. One of the things is that I think video is a mixed form anyway. That's one of the interesting things about the project because we are able to investigate that aspect of individual artists practice and their view of it retrospectively. They've probably re-written it though. Or amended it perhaps. Would you say that that was a period. It wasn't a myth, but that was actually a fact that for some artists at that time, it was a very key aspect of thinking about the art works as material in the same way that it might be with sculpture.
- TK: Yes, definitely, without question. And it was quite different to another area of practice, which was a computer-generated thing. That was completely different. There were artists in America like the Vasulkas, but there were equivalents here. I suppose Brian Hoey to some extent went into that as did Peter Donebauer and people like that. I always thought that was rather different, whether it actually was or not in effect, but I'm sure David did to.
- JH: Different in what sense?
- TK: It was different in the sense that they were using the technology to interfere with the image, rather than using the camera.
- JH: The Vasulkas used the camera as well, but I know what you're saying: the component parts of it, the appropriating parts of it, the elements of colour or whatever. I think it's another kind of practice, or another art form maybe.
- TK: That is what I'm saying. I think that that was quite different.
- JH: From David Hall specifically?
- TK: Yes. It was totally different. I seem to remember that, but I can't remember if it was the first or the second show at Biddick. David Hall was quite scathing about some of the work that Brian Hoey had actually included in that show. He felt that it didn't relate, because he was so hard-line. It didn't really relate to what he thought was a pure practice. I'm sure of that. He might deny it now, but he was definitely at the time very critical.
- JH: It's hard in retrospect because it was late modernism. So having been a sculptor he was influenced heavily by that period.
- JH: Can you talk about the differences between the processes of *Vanitas*, and how you moved from the single screen to making the expanded version of *Vanitas*.
- TK: I did a huge amount of research. I made one single screen work, which then became the bible for other works. So it was like unpicking that tape. Having taken a lot of effort to construct it, then to unpick it and take it to pieces and then to create installations out

of the elements of the work. I think lots of people have done that, I don't think it's a unique thing at all. I'm sure loads of people have piled a whole load of ideas, symbolism and whatever into one piece of work and then suddenly realised that that was quite a rich process, and that the result was dense and therefore they felt able then to take it apart. That's really what I did then, to create these more sculptural pieces out of those different elements. But then I think the original idea changed. It evolved into a whole load of other discussions and debates. That's really what happened to that piece of work.

JH: How long did it take to research and produce that first piece of *Vanitas*?

TK: I made it in 1977. I think it took probably three or four months.

JH: So that was the first single screen version, but then you made another two multi-screen versions.

TK: But the others were easier to make. I didn't have to do the research for the others. In fact, I didn't have to do research at all. It was just then a matter of thinking about what the work was to be and how it was to work as an installation. That was the puzzle. I didn't actually have to go back and research any material but just simply select, carefully, which elements I was going to include and which not to include. I'd set up my own language by doing the initial research. Then I used all of that and kept moving on with it. I don't think I ever did such intensive research as I did for that first *Vanitas* tape. I can't remember ever doing that again actually.

JH: So what came next from the first piece, was the second *Vanitas* piece. There were different names, *Vanitas* or *An Illusion of Reality Version 1*. That was 1978 and it was a two-screen piece, shown in the *Herbert Read Gallery*. That was with the bubbles on the second monitor.

TK: Yes. Then the next thing was ephemeral because, obviously, then I got really interested. It's very interesting how you can easily get diverted as an artist. The butterflies became a fascination. Having used the butterflies once, I wanted to use them again. Probably I was being pulled away from the video aspect at that point into wanting to make something with the butterflies. It was still an ephemeral art and was still about television, and it was still a *Vanitas* piece of work, because my image was still there in the work, and the butterflies were there, and so was the television.

JH: So that was the live pupae piece?

TK: That's it. That was the fourth.

JH: That was the *Vanitas* piece that was two screens?

TK: That's it. The fifth one, is the *The Heart of the Illusion*. So five works came out. Four works that came out of the first work

JH: And *The Heart of the Illusion* was 1981?

TK: It was quite a long period, four years.

JH: *Interruptions, Disintegrating Forms* and *In the Mind's Eye*, which is a sixteen-minute single screen piece, Where did you make those pieces?

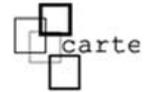
TK: Those three, I made while I was at Maidstone. I made *In the Mind's Eye* at Maidstone, and must have used their equipment. *Vanitas* I definitely made in Scotland because I remember that Stuart Marshall came up with the equipment. We made it in Edinburgh, and I made *Unassembled Information* on my own in Edinburgh as well.



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