Northumbria Research Link

Backwards into the Future: an exploration into revisiting , re-presenting and rewriting art of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

by

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An appraisal submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by published work.

Thesis abstract:

This thesis examines the production, exhibition and dissemination of my art practice in two specific historical and cultural contexts: one at the point of production in the late 1960s and early 1970s in London; and two, as it has been re-contextualized and re-written by myself and other writers and curators particularly from the 1990s. These works which were produced for a number of key exhibitions and venues include: *Distancing Device*, 1970, 2000, 2007; *Unsigning for Eight Projectors*, 1972, 2000, 2001; *Two Cameras*, 1973, 1976, 2004; and *Western Reversal*, 1973, 1976, 2009.

These later exhibitions gave an overview of the period between the late 1960s and early 1970s and they helped to define and articulate an influential sea change in art practice and commentary. This thesis aims to critically evaluate the conceptual themes that arise from these four art works, first of all as they were originally conceived in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and secondly as they have been remade and re-contextualized since 2000. I investigate the contribution to practice-led fine art research that these represented both in the 1960s and 1970s and as they were contextualized since 2000. In addition this thesis examines why there has been such widespread interest in revisiting art of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and it explores how this impacts on these individual works as they are remade, restaged and re-contextualized for a new audience by subsequent critics and writers, as well as myself.

These art works were originally born out of an interdisciplinary practice both conceptually and practically, and there is a continuity of themes across these works which remains important to my practice throughout my career: the art work is encountered as a phenomenon where the form and content of each work cannot be separated, and it is possible to deduce themes which range across these pieces: absence, paradox, reflexivity. These operate within an overall concern with the apparatus or means of production and the space of reception.

These works were conceived during the period of time which is designated as a shift from modernism to postmodernism, and owe their genesis to both `movements`: I discuss the art works` inherent ambiguity born out of this context.

Acknowledgements

Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Contents

List of Illustrations

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with revisiting the late 1960s and early 70s through the author`s experience of remaking work of that period for survey exhibitions over the last 10 years, and the implications of this practice for the initial content of the art work. It compares the initial context, ideas and themes that attended the conception of the exhibited art work and asks whether these are still relevant to a contemporary fine art audience.   It also asks why there has been so much interest in this period, by writers and curators from the 1990s onwards, and compares their different viewpoints.

The overarching aims of the thesis are: firstly to draw out the main ideas within the exhibited artwork as it was originally made, in order to position it at the juncture of modernism and postmodernism i.e. between the late 1960s and early 1970s. Secondly to investigate how much of the original content remains when the work is remade 35 years later for a new context and audience.

In Section 1, *First context: St Martin`s School of Art,* the author proposes  that the interdisciplinary, site specific nature of particular art works was indicative of a  shift to a `language paradigm` (Ferguson 1996,176), with a connection to conceptual art.  Given the selectivity and invention of memory, this is a subjective narrative  relying on memories from 35 years ago, and to this end it is appropriate that it is written in the first person.  However,  the author`s aim is to stand back and write as objectively as possible.

 In Section 2, *The exhibited work: as made in its first context,* each art work is introduced as it was originally made, alongside the ideas which underpinned it. Importantly, theory and practice emerge as integrated : the art work is

encountered as a phenomenon where the form and content of each work cannot be separated, and it is possible to deduce themes which range across these pieces. These emerge in each work in varying degrees: *absence:* defined against the modernist theme of `presence`; *paradox*: the contradictory ideas within each work, and *reflexivity* : the means of production, and the space of reception.

In Section 3*, Revisiting the art of the 60s and 70s: Why?,* the thesis investigates why, over the last 20 years, there has been an acceleration of interest in the art of the late 1960s and 1970s. Various texts are explored in order to answer this question, including essays from the exhibition catalogue of *Live in Your Head: concept and experiment in Britain 1965-75* (Philpott and Tarsia 2000). There follow brief reviews of two important and different examples of the fascination with art practice from the late 1960s and early 1970s : *Art after the End of Art* by Arthur C. Danto (Danto 1995) and *The Art of the Real* 1996 by Hal Foster (Foster 1996). Finally, the position of the exhibited art work is discussed in relation to modernist and postmodernist discourses.

Finally, Section 4, *The exhibited work: remaking, restaging , rethinking* re-introduces the four art works from section 2 as they have been remade and revisited in various ways through survey exhibitions and screenings over the last 10 years: *Alumni* 2007 and *A History of British Film and Video* at Tate Britain 2004*; Live in Your Head; concept and experiment in Britain 1965-75* at Whitechapel Art Gallery 2000*,* and the conference*: Expanded Cinema: activating the space of reception,* at Tate Modern 2009. The practical and conceptual mutations, that have occurred in the light of these recent exhibitions, particularly regarding the key themes of this thesis are considered. Particular attention is given to what may be lost in these re-contextualizations.

In conclusion, the author restates the overarching aims of the thesis laid out in the introduction. All four sections of the thesis are re-introduced in turn with the author stating what he has achieved in each of them, stating also that

within them the author has fulfilled the main aims of the thesis and finally he states his contribution to the knowledge of art practice through his art work and this thesis: his exploration into revisiting , re-presenting and rewriting art of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Between 1972 and 2003 the exhibited work was discussed by critics and curators, including: (Cork,1972, pp.58-60); (Field, S. 1972, pp.16-19); (Sheridan, A. 1975, pp.203-10); (Adams, H.1976, p. 51); (Cork, 1976, pp.161-3); (Morgan, S.1988, p.57); (Morgan, S. 1991, pp. 6-9); (Tarsia, A. 2000, pp.19-21); (Fisher, J. 2003, pp. 66-77); (Curtis, D. 2007 pp. 213-4).

Section 1

First Context: St Martin`s School of Art 1968-72

Before I was a student at St Martin`s my earliest knowledge of modern sculpture was the work I saw in the *New Generation: Interim* exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1968. Much of the work in this show was made by young artists who taught either full or part-time at this institution: this is what drew me to make an application to study at St Martin`s. However, as I was to discover, apart from art history, there was little formal teaching. It was as if the reputation of the institution was based solely on the presence of the artist/staff and that even the air you breathed, entered your thinking and practice by a kind of osmosis. This is very different from art education today, where student guidance and teaching are offered with a view to giving a mea urable experience to the client/student. At St Martin`s we were left to our own devices, but tutors were around and students could ask to see them. Tutors were mostly sympathetic and benign presences, David Hall, video artist and Roelof Loew, sculptor, were encouraging. My fellow students included John Hilliard, Gilbert and George, Richard Long, Bruce McLean and Bill Woodrow, most of whom I subsequently exhibited alongside (see Appendix 5 and 7). I experimented with materials and ideas, but I also filled sketchbooks with notes to myself. (Appendix 1). I spent a lot of time in the library reading art magazines and books.

Before 1968 *Studio International* art magazine gave a broad view of art internationally, but by the time of the January 1969 issue, there were also articles on the sculpture course at St Martin`s, an essay on sculpture by William Tucker and a symposium by Annesley, Loew, Scott and Tucker, and an article on Anthony Caro`s work. It did not appear in the least odd to me that I was reading about and learning more from my tutors and their work through the mediation of an art magazine rather than from actual contact.

The July/August edition of the same year acted as a magazine/catalogue/exhibition: 6 international critics, were asked to choose artists for this issue, with 37 contributing. This was deeply influential on my awareness of how art could be presented other than in an art gallery. Seth Seigelaub, the writer and curator who organised this edition of the magazine said in an interview a year earlier:

> The use of catalogues and books to communicate (and disseminate) art is the most neutral means to present the new art. The catalogue can now act as primary information for the exhibition, as opposed to secondary information *about* art in magazines, catalogues etc., and in some cases the "exhibition" can be the "catalogue" (Harrison, Siegelaub 1999,199).

Vaguely aware that the sculpture of Caro and most of the other artists/staff at St Martin`s could be said to be Modernist, my introduction to what this term meant came through another artist`s work. John Latham taught at St Martin`s ,a couple of years before I arrived there. In 1966 he organised an event called *Still and Chew*: a group of students was asked to chew pages of a book borrowed from the St Martin`s library, Clement Greenberg`s *Art and Culture*. The resulting pulp was treated with chemicals, which diluted it further into a clear liquid. This was then placed into a teardrop shaped vial, labelled *Art and Culture*, and returned to the library. Greenberg`s views on art were `transubstantiated` into their material essence. In *Art and Culture,* he had defined sculpture as a paradigm of Modernism in its purity and separation from everyday life:

> It is its physical independence, above all, that contributes to the new sculpture`s status as the representative visual art of modernism (…..) it exists for and by itself literally as well as conceptually. And in this self-sufficiency of sculpture wherein every conceivable as well as perceptible element belongs altogether to the work of art, the positivist aspect of the modernist "aesthetic" finds itself most fully realized. It is for self-sufficiency like sculpture`s, and sculpture`s alone, that both painting and architecture now strive. (Greenberg 1961,145).

Latham duly got the sack. I heard about this through `the grapevine` whilst a student, but it has subsequently been cited by several writers, (Morgan 1981, 201); (Philpott 2000,12); (Cork 2003,18).

In initiating this, Latham had undermined the ideological foundations of what St Martin`s sculpture department was built on: an institution developed through a respect for, and a retention of, the tradition of sculpture.  Whilst reading *Art and Culture,* I was already looking beyond Greenberg`s definitions, and by association the ethos of St Martin`s School of Art.

Contemporaneously with this conceptual widening of my horizons, an exhibition at the ICA, in London, in September 1969, excited me. This was *When Attitudes Became Form* curated by Harald Szeeman a respected curator and art collector; this exhibition had been shown earlier that year at the Kunsthalle in Berne. This was the first time anyone in England had actually seen first hand artwork by many of the artists in this exhibition: Carl Andre, Joseph Beuys, Hanne Darboven, Joseph Kosuth, and Bruce Nauman. Charles Harrison directed the ICA exhibition and also wrote a new catalogue essay titled *Against Precendents,* which was simultaneously published in *Studio International*. In this, he wrote: ` The area covered by this exhibition is not the area where painting and sculpture meet; it is the broad area of investigation now open to three-dimensional work` (Harrison, 90-93,1969).

This exhibition chimed with my own way of thinking: I was already moving away from making object-based sculpture. I was interested in the position of the spectator in relation to the artwork, conceptually and physically, and my first experiments were demonstrations of this (see Appendix 2). These early experiments with wood, mirrors and text were the first steps towards the initial versions of the exhibited work in this thesis.

I was also becoming interested in independent film, particularly through Malcolm Le Grice, who was a major figure in the independent film culture of that time and who taught part-time at St Martin`s.  I attended  screenings of Andy Warhol and Kenneth Anger`s films at the London Arts Lab, in Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and subsequently Michael Snow`s films were screened at the London Film Maker`s Co-op in Camden. This thesis will explore this explicit influence on my work by way of an introduction to some of my film work in the last half of section 2.

At the same time, I was also continuing my reading of *Studio International* and texts, such as Joseph Kosuth`s *Art after Philosophy* (Kosuth 1969), which sparked off my interest in the way artists could relate art to philosophy through language:

> Works of art are analytic propositions. That is, if viewed within their context-as-art, they provide no information whatsoever about any matter of fact (…) All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually. The `value`of particular artists after Duchamp can be weighed according to how much they questioned the nature of art; which is another way of saying `what they *added* to the conception of art`. (Kosuth 1969,136).

As a young student I warmed to Kosuth`s writing, and his often extreme pronouncements, but at that point I did not realize that his ideas were, in some ways close to Greenberg`s definitions of modernism: `In this period of man, after philosophy and religion, art may possibly be one endeavour that fulfils what another age might have called `man`s spiritual needs`(...) art`s only claim is for art. Art is the definition of art` (Kosuth 1969,137).

However, I was critical about the jettisoning of the visual that accompanied Kosuth`s `manifesto` of conceptual art. In the introduction to my final Dip.AD. dissertation, titled *Boundaries,* I wrote of the impatience which I felt at the way so much art criticism was conceived, at the way that critics established immovable boundaries around the essentially `transgressive` creations of artists (Dye 1972,1). Joseph Kosuth as artist/critic was used as an example. I felt that in his `manifesto` *Art after Philosophy* the visual was being sidelined as mere formalist decoration: `Formalist art (painting and sculpture) is the vanguard of decoration` (Kosuth 1969,137). My preference was that art could be visual as well as conceptual.

I was also exhibiting my work outside St Martin`s at this time: the student exhibition *Young Contemporaries* at the Royal Academy in London 1970 (see *Distancing Device,* section 2 p.15); *The British Avant-Garde* at the *New York Cultural Center*, May-Aug.1971; *Continuous Performance*, a week-long one - man show at the ICA, in April; and *The New Art* (see *Unsigning for Eight Projectors,* section 2, p.17) at the Hayward Gallery, London in August (Seymour 1972). Richard Cork wrote a perceptive review of the ICA show

(Appendix 1) for his column in the London *Evening Standard*. (Cork 1972), which, retrospectively may have aided my inclusion in *The New Art* exhibition later that year. Harrison had seen my work *Distancing Device* in the *Young Contemporaries,* 1970 and he also curated it in the *British Avant- Garde* exhibition in New York 1971. This exhibition, was a collaboration with *Studio International* and the catalogue for this also formed the main body of the May 1971 issue. I made a work specifically for this catalogue/issue (Appendix 4).

These relatively unexpected high-profile exposures of my work whilst I was still a student were already beginning to have an impact on my practice: I was making work specifically for new contexts. For the *British Avant Garde* exhibition, I made a work titled *Evasive Device*, with card and mirrors, developed from *Distancing Device* (Fig. 1), plus the catalogue work (Appendix 4). For *The New Art,* I also designated a page of the catalogue as a projection screen (Appendix 5). *Unsigning for Eight Projectors* (Fig. 2) was also made specifically for *The New Art*, curated by Anne Seymour, and could also be seen as a response to the experience of being in the company of those I considered to be much more established artists. My practice was being moulded by a negotiation between where it was being exhibited and my ideas about the relation of the artist to the spectator. I was realizing that there was a symbiotic relationship between my art work and my reading and writing, and between the reception of that work and exhibiting spaces. Indeed I became engaged in a kind of site-specificity: the reason my work was made was primarily a response to external factors, not the traditional production of objects in the studio, which were then removed for exhibition elsewhere. My art work was made specifically for a space; once the exhibition was over, it was dismantled.

> Dye`s work took shape in the late sixties, in an aesthetic climate that had rejected the anecdotal formalism of the British `New Generation` sculptors, in favour of alternative strategies which attended to the phenomenological and perceptual properties of art. Above all, this entailed a radical conceptual shift from the object as a transcendental entity possessing meaning in itself to a Wittgensteinian proposition that meaning was conditioned by use and context (Fisher 2003, 66).

I would also use different media depending on the conceptual impetus of each individual work: it could exist as a page in a catalogue or magazine, a piece of writing, or an installation in which different materials and time based media would co-incide.   Without naming this mode of working as such at the time, I later understood this as interdisciplinarity.

> Art objects themselves are the continuing subject of rigorous re/de-contextualization, and institutions of art, have become de rigueur subjects of much interdisciplinary thought and writing.   Art objects have now been included within the larger semiotic field of a `language paradigm` or `linguistic turn` and are transliterated as the equivalence of texts (Ferguson 1996,176).

Bruce Ferguson`s  idea that  the artwork can be seen as the equivalence of writing within interdisciplinary thought is borrowed here: my personal `linguistic turn` was conceptual art, literature and philosophy, and these overlapping interests had a profound influence within my art practice. In section 2, I explore these influences in more detail so as to outline the main themes which link these works together. These themes, *absence, paradox* and *reflexivity,* are then key to one of the overarching aims of this thesis: investigating the initial relevance of the meaning of these works as remade and restaged in a new time and context.
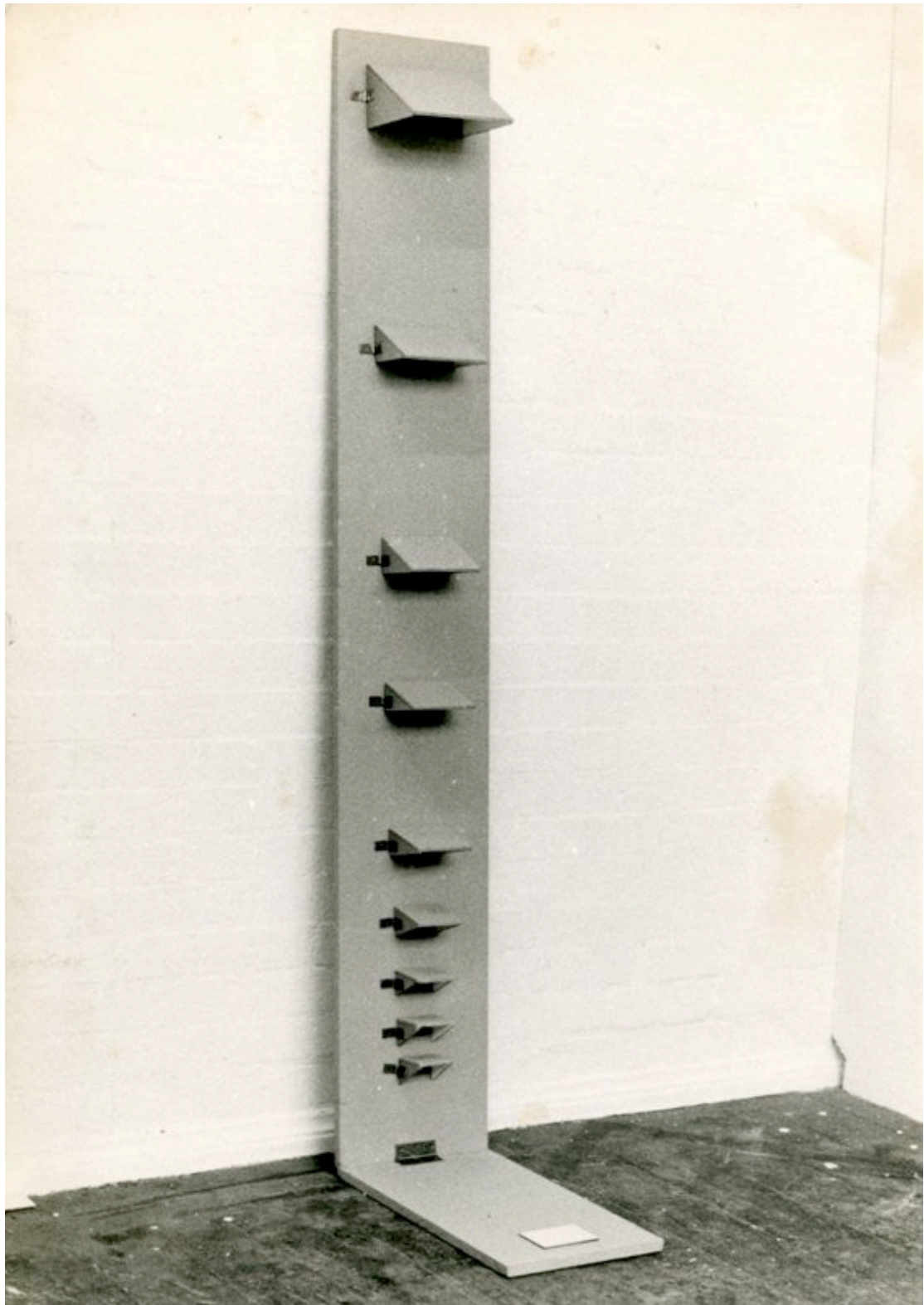
Fig. 1: Distancing Device, *photographed in my St. Martin`s studio 1970*

Section 2

The exhibited art work: as made in its first context

In section 1 I outlined the conceptual influences on my art practice as it developed whilst I was still a student at St Martin`s between 1968-72. Section 2 explores these in more detail in relation to each of the four individual exhibited works: *Distancing Device*, 1970; *Unsigning for Eight Projectors*, 1972; *Two Cameras*, 1970; and *Western Reversal*, 1973.

Distancing Device 1970 Fig.1

This work was first made for the annual exhibition *Young Contemporaries* which was curated by a panel consisting mainly of students from several London art schools. Each year the venue for the exhibition changed; in 1970 it was hosted by The Royal Academy, London. It comprised a wooden painted structure about 6ft tall and 12 inches wide, which leant against the wall. It had nine projecting `hoods` of diminishing sizes placed on the vertical section of the structure, and on the 2ft protruding `foot` was a small 3" x 4" mirror. The viewer was able to read black letters on a white ground painted on the underside of the hoods through negotiation with the mirror. The phrase KEEP GOING could be pieced together as the viewer moved backwards away from the device.

  D*istancing Device* addressed several contradictions: visually it initially operated as a modernist sculpture, but then it undermined that discreteness by engaging literally with the viewer. The paradox of this work was that to interact with this device was also to be denied by it. There was also the double movement of the message: `keep going`: this not only pushed the viewer away and denied proximity to the work, but there was also an implicit message to the artist himself.   Samuel Beckett`s doubt, absurdity and humour was a major influence on this work: his writing has a reflexivity which incorporates failure within it, so that the subject-matter of many of his works is often the inability to create, but to feel compelled to do it anyway:

> `Where now? Who now? When now? Unquestioning.   I, say I.
> Unbelieving. Questions, hypothesis, call them that. Keep going, going
> on, call that going, call that on… (Beckett 1953,1)

Distancing Device was born out of many other experiments with mirrors and
letters, where my concern with a spectator`s position was played out
(Appendix 4). It was also one of many overt attempts to incorporate language
into a sculptural object. These early works were not self-contained sculptural
entities, but conceptual propositions which were contingent on the presence
of the viewer and the siting of the work. In fact, it was no longer a
conventional sculpture, but a `device` which positioned the viewer through its
apparatus and conceptually problematized the relation between the space of
the viewer and the space of the work.

> `*Distancing Device* is a tease, in so far as, to quote the artist himself `it
> does exactly the opposite of what sculpture normally does, which is to
> draw you into it, or around it`.  The work didn`t exist until somebody
> was there, but to be `there` also meant to be thrust
> `elsewhere`….never to coincide with any nominated position (Fisher
> 2003, 68).

Distancing Device thus revealed a sense of *absence* as defined against the
modernist theme of the inherent integrity of a sculptural object. The work also
paradoxically gave contradictory messages to the viewer by first engaging
then denying their presence.   Finally the work`s form follows its function: it is
an apparatus, a *reflexive* object that acknowledges the siting of the work in an
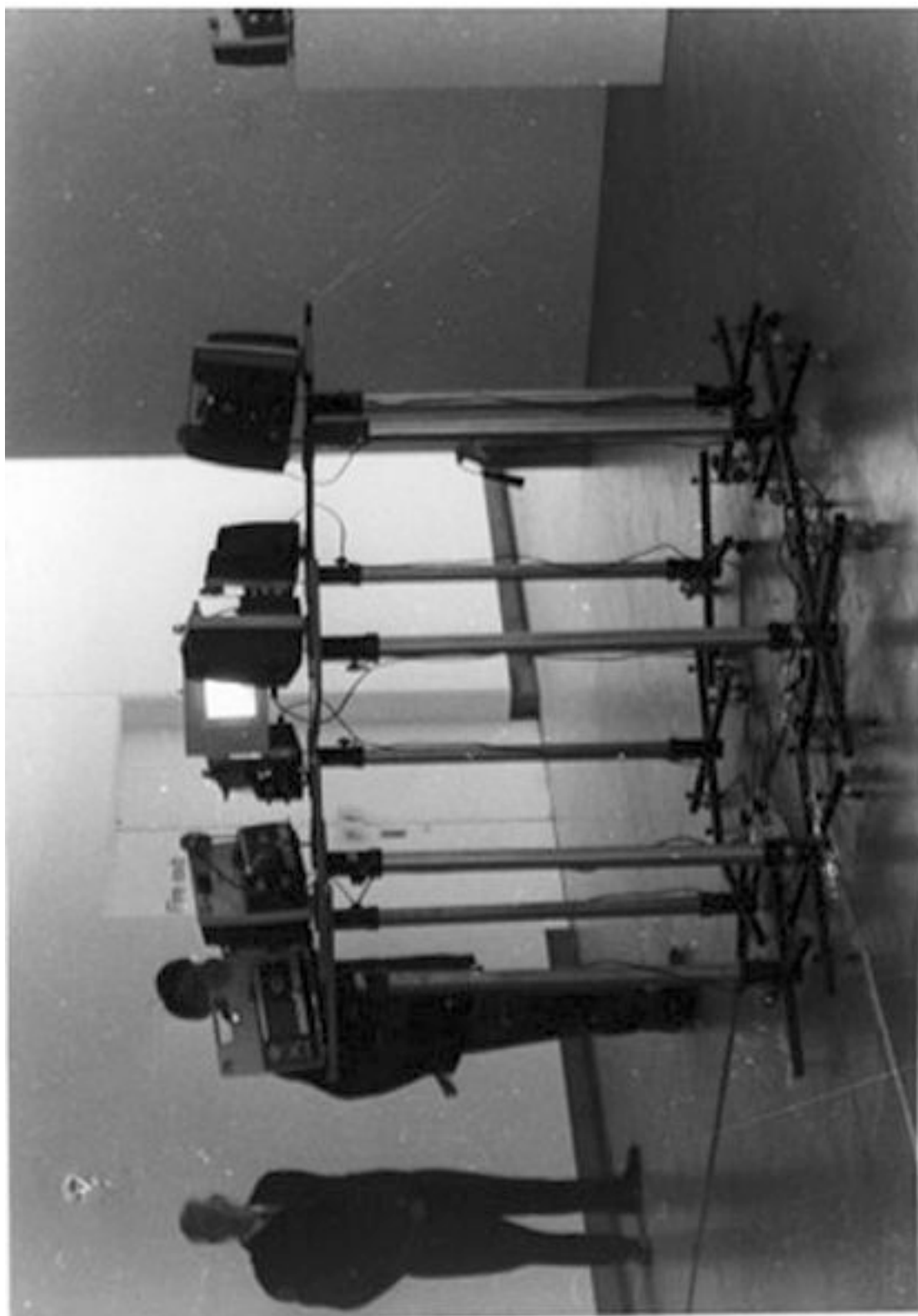art gallery.

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Fig. 2: Unsigning for Eight Projectors, *made for The New Art at The Hayward Gallery, London 1972.*

Unsigning for Eight Projectors 1972 Fig.2

Originally made for *The New Art* exhibition, curated by Anne Seymour (Seymour, 1972), *Unsigning for Eight Proj*ectors 1972 consisted of eight Super 8mm film projectors, on stands at a height of 5ft, ranged in a circular formation that faced inwards towards a small A4 sized cardboard screen suspended by a single thread.   Each projector contained a 20 -second loop of film: each loop showed an image of the artist`s hand writing one letter of his name, then withdrawing, followed by a 5 second blank gap, only to repeat again continuously.   Due to the non-synchronization of the projectors, the letters overlapped in innumerable combinations as the hand repeated its gesture.   The screen turned slowly on the thread in the gentle draught from the motors of the projectors.

This work addressed the identity-giving process of naming – as the artist`s signature gives legitimacy and value to an art work and at the same time evidences his individuality.   For me, identity was not something fixed but fluid: *Unsigning for Eight Projectors* was an attempt to visualize this as shifting and contingent, constantly being worked through. However the reality of the spatial disposition of each projector meant that the attempted signature was formed by the apparatus, not the author. This echoed something that Roland Barthes says in his essay *Death of the Author:*` Writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin.   Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing` (Barthes 1977,142).

During this first showing of *Unsigning for Eight Projectors*, someone asked me what this work was about. I recall answering that it could be thought of as the opposite of carving my name in stone. A statement sideswiped a traditional sculptural skill, whilst simultaneously referring to mortality. This scenario of writing without permanence, on a ground which slips away, was my way of visualizing identity as a signature which is always in the act of becoming: a staging of an ongoing unfinished project. Paradoxically, the name of the

artist, though fragmented and `unsigned` remains the conceptual catalyst of this art work.

> There is a subversive irony about using so much hardware to project so little in terms of image. The eight projectors stand there, monolithically, like a circle of conferring elders, while the `screen`, which would normally be equipped and ready to receive an eight-fold battery of images, hangs there in the middle, a flimsy piece of cardboard, turning inconsequentially, at the mercy of the slightest movement of the surrounding air. Dye has remarked that this work was `the opposite of having your name in lights`. Yet he is aware of the ambivalence inherent in the situation: after all, the true opposite is total obscurity (Sheridan 1975, 207).

Unsigning for Eight Projectors dealt with the *reflexive* theme of the artist`s identity coupled with the *paradox* of both denying the signature whilst also making it the theme of the installation.   The signature as metaphor for the identity of the artist was thus conspicuous by its *absence.* This work stages a deferral, while the spatial installation of the film projectors focuses attention on the means of production of the images.

The New Art was later considered to be: `Unquestionably the most important exhibition of the Conceptual period` (Craig-Martin 1988, 5). Following the international exhibition *When Attitudes Became Form* at the ICA curated by Harald Szeeman in 1969, *The New Art* was the first survey exhibition of British `conceptual art` in a public gallery in London.   Richard Cork reviewed the *The New Art*: `For the very first time, London is able to see the full range of radical developments that still remain sadly undiscussed outside the enclosed world of specialist magazines` (Cork 1972,70). Writing in the exhibition catalogue of *British Sculpture in the 20th Century*, at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1981, Stuart Morgan suggested: `Between Bryan Robertson`s *New Generation* in 1965 and Anne Seymour`s *The New Art* seven years later `new` sculpture in Britain changed beyond all recognition` (Morgan 1981,197).

The next two works, **Two Cameras 1970** and **Western Reversal 1973,** were exhibited in a different context. Before discussing these works in greater detail, perhaps I should say something about their background. These two works were initially shown within the context of independent film screenings. Malcolm Le Grice one of the main figures of independent film in England taught at St. Martin`s from  the mid 1960s and through him I was introduced to films such as Warhol`s *Chelsea Girls* (1965), Kenneth Anger`s *Scorpio Rising* (1960) and Michael Snow`s *Wavelength* (1968). These films were shown at Robert Street Arts Lab near St Martin`s in Soho.

> Malcolm Le Grice, John Latham and Barry Flanagan`s teaching at St Martin`s helped   shape some of the most important films by artists of the late 1960s and early 1970s – the so called structural film-making associated with the London Filmmakers` Co-op (Le Grice) and the conceptual and minimal film and video work associated with the emerging small commercial galleries and artist-run spaces of the early 1970s (Latham/Flanagan).  The ideas and energy of these divergent groups emanating from St. Martin`s were one of the catalysts to the explosion of activity that occurred around the turn of the decade (Curtis 2007, 25).

It is clear that the worlds of art and film were beginning to cross-fertilize in very productive ways at this time. However, watching film in an art gallery was a new occurrence and commentators were intrigued by this new cross-over from the auditorium to the gallery. The Nov/Dec issue of *Studio International* 1975, was devoted to avant-garde film in England and Europe, and the following is from an article in this entitled *David Dye Artist Filmaker*

> In an issue devoted to film the position of David Dye`s work must be seen to be an ambiguous one.  Certain of his works may be seen to belong in the area now termed `expanded cinema` - and these works have been shown in such places as the London Film Co-op.  Yet few of them can be actually `shown`, in the sense of being projected by anyone who can operate a projector.  Most require an element of `performance` on the part of the artist himself.  Again taking Dye`s work over the past six years as a whole, most of it has been shown in a `gallery` rather than in `cinema` situations (Sheridan 1975, 204).

While my use of film in installations in art galleries such as *Unsigning for Eight Projectors* was finding an audience in the `art world`, the film work made by Peter Gidal, William Raban, Malcolm Le Grice and Annabel Nicholson

amongst others at the London Filmmakers Co-op, echoed my own concern with the means of production: these artist/filmakers were developing and printing their own film and publicly screening them. They were using the apparatus of the film-making process in ways similar to my own in order to problematize the illusion of film. Arguably, printing and manipulating their own footage, however gave a more `painterly` feel to their film work than my own more `sculptural` use of film. However, I found myself showing some of my work alongside theirs at `expanded cinema` screenings.

In *The Two Avant Gardes* , Peter Wollen compared the Hollywood-influenced cinema of Godard in France and Straub in Germany with the independent cinema made at the London Filmmakers Co-op. He wrote about Le Grice, Raban, Gidal and Nicholson`s use of film and what he saw as the modernist focus on the film medium`s own sphere of materials and signification. A translation of the reflexivity of activity in painting and sculpture into purely cinematic terms, He termed this `Structuralist Materialist` film:

> Structural film-making over the last decade has thus represented a displacement of concerns from the art world to the film world rather than an extension. The way of thinking has remained one which film-makers have in common with painters and other visual artists, but an effort has been made to insist on the ontological autonomy of film (Wollen 1975, 173).

Whilst Wollen wrote about a cross-over of modernist concerns from the art to the film world, my film installations were also being seen within the art world spaces of the gallery.
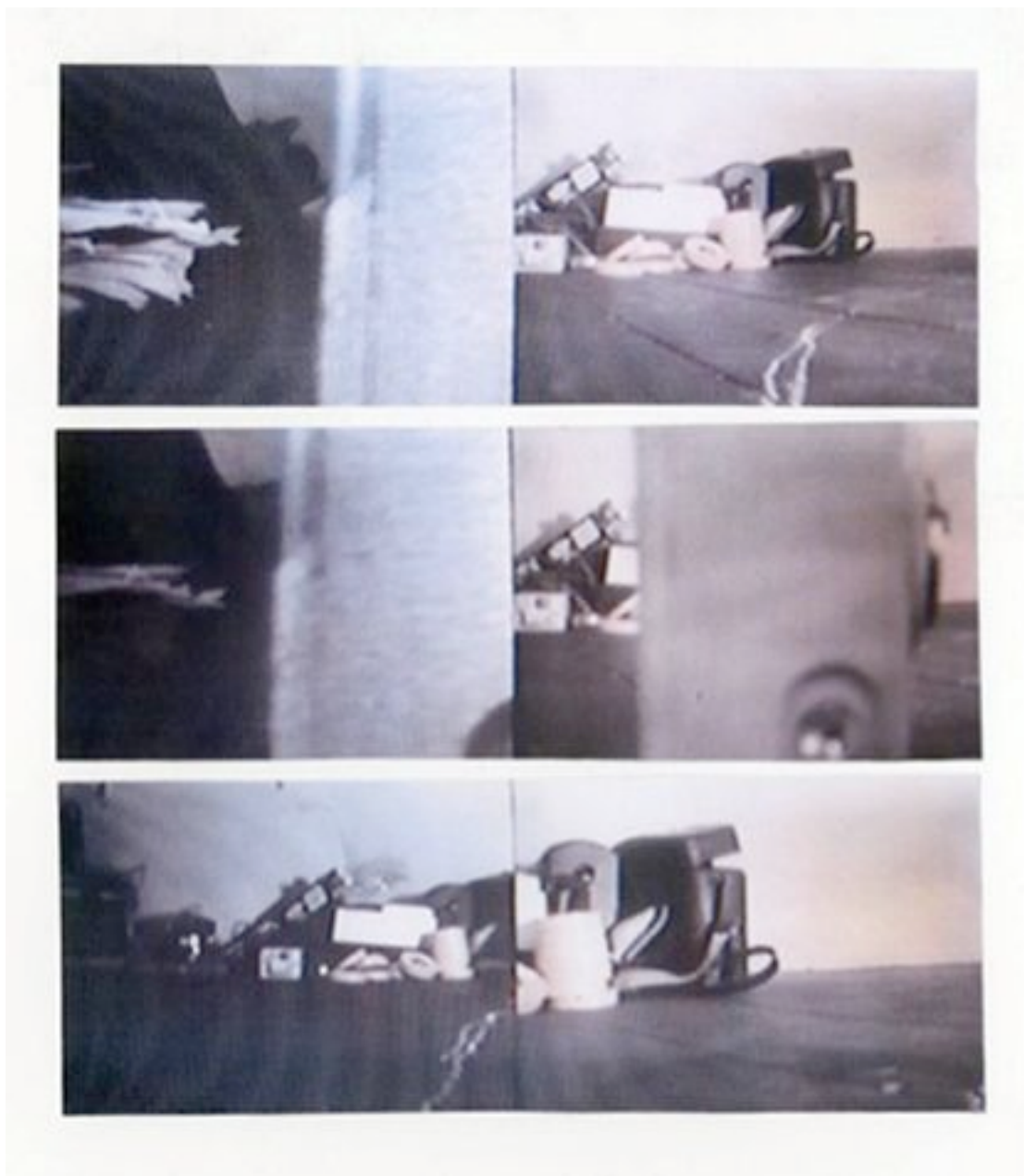
Fig 3: Two Cameras, *screened on two projectors, standard 8mm film 1970*

Two Cameras 1970 Fig.3

 Comprising a two screen Standard 8mm film made with two identical wind up cameras placed one behind the other, on the floor, Two cameras trace a circular trajectory around a room. During the process of filming, the artist picked up each camera in turn and placed it in front of the other camera, so that it partially obscured its view (like leapfrogging). This was repeated until the room had been traversed once. Glimpsed around the edges of the room was cine equipment and spools of film. In essence the two films screened side by side complete a complex spatial experience despite the simplicity of the set up.

This work addressed my ongoing concern with apparatus and means of production and these were foregrounded in this film.   Paradoxically the means of production, the cameras of the title, were also the means of censure: each camera in turn obscured the view of the other. The surrounding film equipment added a further *reflexivity* to the film scenario. My concern with the film apparatus in *Two Cameras* extended to the film originally being screened on separate projectors running side by side, but not completely synchronized, so that although the two films were of identical length, one ended before the other. There was an inherent *paradox* in this use of the illusion of film to bring the viewer back to an awareness of the `here and now` of the viewing situation in the non synchronization of the two films projected side by side. Warhol`s two screen *Chelsea Girls* (1965) and his `real time` *Empire* (1964) were key influences on *Two Cameras*, as well as Michael Snow`s exploitation of the camera zoom in *Wavelength* (1968).
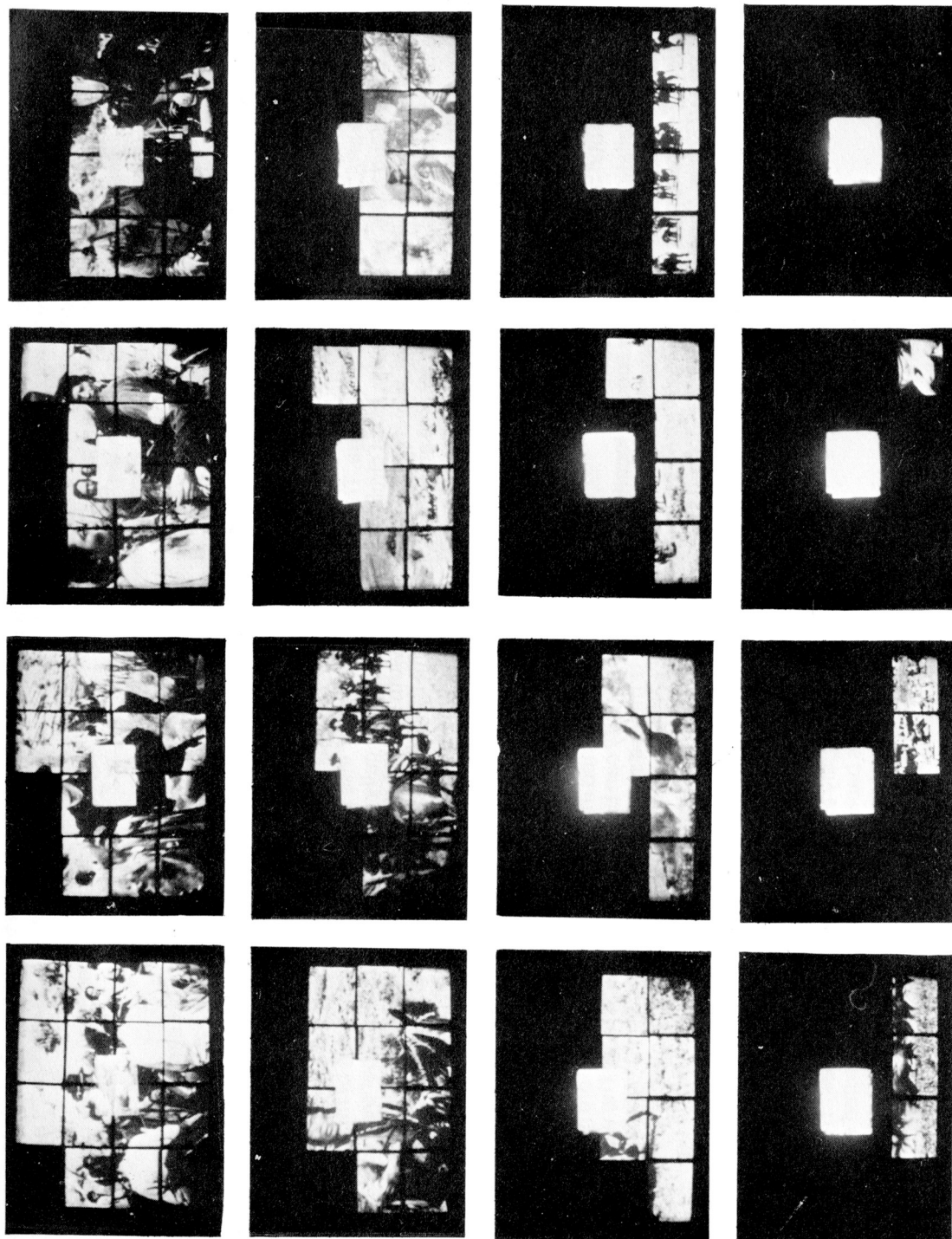
Fig.4: *Consecutive stills from a performance of* Western Reversal 1973

27

Western Reversal 1973 Fig. 4

Western Reversal 1973 was first `performed` at _Expanded Cinema_, a weekend of `film action` at the ICA in London in 1976. The device I used for the projection of this 10 minute film was a framework of 16 moveable mirrors, each mounted on car mirror swivel fixtures. This particular work, alongside others using `found film` was a way of bringing external content into my work after the reflexive use of the film medium and apparatus seen in earlier works. The subject of the film (cavalry fighting `Indians`) was denied by its projection. As the film progressed, I moved by hand the framework of mirrors slowly so that the projection was finally in the centre of the screen, and what remained at the end were shifting rectangles of overlapping light. The shadow of my hand was clearly seen manipulating the mirrors. The conventional building blocks of cinema, the narrative thrust was thus denied to the audience by a kind of implosion. Instead you were brought back to the screen and the means of projection itself. In this work, I address my position as an artist/filmmaker by transforming a narrative film normally seen in cinema auditoriums into an abstract play of projected light. Simultaneously the illusion of film - the there and then - was also deconstructed and the audience brought back to the space of reception – the here and now. _Western Reversal_ `s main themes are therefore the _paradox_ of illusion and the material in tension, the presence of the figurative transformed into an _absence_, and the _reflexive_ use of the apparatus of the mirror framework with the projector.

By using `found film` I was tapping into filmic references, familiar to a wider audience. Small `cine` shops around Soho and Charing Cross road, sold super 8mm cameras, projectors and film for the home movie market. It was also possible to find edited versions of well known silent and sound films, such as Laurel and Hardy and Fred Astaire, as well as soft core `adult movies`. The film used for _Western Reversal_ was _Blazing Guns and Bloody Arrows_ (American title_: Bugles in the Afternoon 1952,_ director Roy Boland

starring Ray Milland), the kind of western that I would see on a Saturday morning as a child growing up in the 1950s.

To sum up this section: The main themes that have emerged in each of the four works are: *absence*: defined against the modernist theme of `presence`; *paradox*: the contradictory ideas within each work and *reflexivity*: the means of production, and the space of reception.   These themes are returned to later when looking at how relevant they are to a new audience in Section 4: *Remaking, restaging, rewriting.*

Section 3

Revisiting the Art of late 1960s and early 1970s: Why?

Over the last 30 years academics and critics have become increasingly interested in art of the late 1960s to early 1970s: in anthologies that appeared contemporaneously with the artwork in the early 70s (Lippard 1972; Meyer 1972; Battcock 1973) to a sprinkling of interest in catalogue texts of the 80s (Gresty 1985; Morgan 1988) to an acceleration in the late 90s with dense research publications and anthologies (Danto 1995; Foster 1996; Godfrey 1998; Newman, Bird 1999) and finally to texts from the 2000s (Tarsia, Philpott 2000; Rorimer 2001; Lee 2004; Di Salvo 2005).

Many of these texts are critical accounts which in various ways stem from the proposition that the art of the late 1960s and early 1970s marked a pivotal historical moment when modernism shifted to postmodernism. This `moment` is problematized in some of these texts, and these will be reviewed at the end of this section. Initially it is important to critically examine key essays in the *Live in Your Head* catalogue in order to consider the question of why there has been such an interest in revisiting the art of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In 1984 the first survey exhibition to focus on the changes happening in art during this period was curated by Hilary Gresty: `*1969-72 – when attitudes became form`,* at Kettle`s Yard, Cambridge before travelling to the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (Gresty 1984) The title of Gresty`s exhibition referenced the seminal exhibition at the ICA, curated by Harald Zeeman which introduced conceptual and minimal art to the UK.   The subtitle `*Live in Your Mind`* was borrowed 30 years later for the Whitechapel Exhibition (Tarsia and Philpott 2000).   Gresty`s interest in this period grew out of her Ph.D. at the Courtauld Institute, focusing on St. Martin`s sculpture department from 1965 onwards (Gresty 1984, 3).   Most of the British artists in this show, including myself, had been in *The New Art* at the Hayward Gallery in 1972 (Seymour 1972). My work was selected for the Kettle`s Yard show, and I exhibited

photographic documentation and text of some of my film work, as well as *Unsigning for Eight Projectors* as it appeared in *The New Art* (Seymour 1972). Victor Burgin took the opportunity to write a kind of `manifesto` for conceptual art of the 60s and 70s, `*The absence of presence: conceptualism and post-modernisms`,* for Gresty`s catalogue. In this essay, Burgin defined presence as related to Freud`s idea of the fetish and its`function being precisely to deny absence, to fill the `lack in being`. This he saw as related to modernist ideas about art as in Fried`s dictum `presentness is grace`; (Fried 1968,168). Conceptual art proposed a different idea:

> What was radical in conceptual art, and what, I am thankful to say, has not yet been lost sight of, was the work it required – beyond the object – of recognising, intervening within, realigning, reorganising, these networks of differences in which the very definition of `art` and what it represents is constituted: the glimpse it allowed us of the possibility of the *absence of presence* (my italics) and thus the possibility of change (Burgin1984, 17).

One of the main reasons given for the recent interest in 1960s and 1970s art seems to be that there are perceived parallels with contemporary art that has a `conceptual` edge (Godfrey 1998, 379). This includes artists such as Douglas Gordon , Martin Creed and Mark Leckie, recent Turner Prize winners since 2000, whose work seems to owe much to earlier conceptual art whether intentionally or not. The so-called YBAs (*Young British Artists)* of the mid 1980s, are also seen to have learnt lessons from the conceptual strategies of earlier artists, particularly through the influence of Jon Thompson`s and Michael Craig-Martin`s teaching at Goldsmiths` College (Archer 2000, 29). Although this conceptual `tradition` was not marketed as part of their supposed youthful radicalism at that time.

The artists of the 1990s and 2000s are now perceived as having been influenced by the art practices of the 1960s and 1970s which prepared the ground for the current climate, where the prominence of film, video, photography, text and installation have become part of art`s mainsteam. In the catalogue for *Live in Your Head* : *concept and experiment in Britain, 1965-75,* Michael Archer writes: ` why, at the present time, we might want to think about this period rather than any other. What does this period offer by way of

example, and what are the parallels with recent experience?` (Archer 2000, 24).

He answers this question by citing the influence of the legacy of St Martin`s in the 1965-75 decade on the Young British Artists identified with Goldsmiths` in the 1990`s:

> The confrontation with past orthodoxies that was accomplished between 1965 and 1975 was specific to that time. That does not need to be repeated or done again and in this sense it would be incorrect to say that artists today are influenced by it, since that would be to say that it had become another formal and procedural strait jacket. Lynne Cooke`s contention that artists today recognise the value of participation in what is, in the broadest sense, the business of art, speaks more of some sort of productive use being made of that confrontation. Usage is not always homage, but it can be respectful, perceptive and intelligent. Above all it is through use that the continuing relevance is marked. It is a mark of the richness of ideas and of the contentious mix of attitudes present in the work of that decade, that this continues (Archer 2000, 29-30).

Many of the young generation of artists in the late 1960s and early `70s were involved in `the politics of representation` (Burgin 1984, 20), in questioning traditional ways of exhibiting art and were attempting to find ways out of the traditional gallery system. On the other hand the YBAs (Young British Artists, such as Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin) were working in an entirely different context and produced art which was taken up by `established` galleries and promoted vigorously. This difference is not explored in the essays in the catalogue for *Live in Your Head*, but similarities in working methods are pointed out between artists working in entirely different times and contexts in an attempt to reappraise and redress:

> A number of international exhibitions have recently re-examined the artistic legacy of the 60s and 70s. These have begun the task of re-evaluating the achievements of a few artists working in Britain in an international context. Although this is welcome, these same artists are still awaiting reappraisal in a British context, along with others of their peers. This exhibition seeks to redress that situation, and to clarify the points of origin of a formative generation in British art. (Philpott and Tarsia 2000, 7)

Two related reasons for the mounting of the exhibition; *Live in Your Head* emerge now: first, it attempts to give a historical background and context for subsequent British artists and, second, the exhibition curators sought to redress a situation where, in the light of other international exhibitions, an earlier generation of British artists can be given their due (see Appendix 8 for an overview of some of the published reviews of *Live in Your Head*).

In 2005 another exhibition, this time at the Hayward Gallery in London, focused on art of the `70s. *Open Systems - Rethinking Art c.1970* curated by Donna de Salvo, featured thirty-one artists from twelve countries, many of whom were also featured in *Live in Your Head*. In her introduction to the catalogue Di Salvo writes:

> Perhaps the impulse to revisit this period is one of nostalgia for its artistic innovations and redefinition of the art object. Or it may be that we admire a period in which art, culture and politics seemed to mesh so easily… One thing is certain – the innovations of then are regarded as the foundation of art now, and for this reason alone it is important to revisit it (Di Salvo 2005, 11).

Di Salvo pointed out exhibitions which looked at early Conceptual art: `*Reconsidering the Object of Art*`, Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995; `*Circa 1968*`, Museu de Serralves, Porto, 1999; `*Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950-1980`s*`, Queens Museum, New York, 1999. (Di Salvo 2005, 12) These exhibitions are contemporaneous to the texts of the `90s revisiting the 1960s and 1970s: (Danto1995; Foster1996; Godfrey1998; Newman, Bird 1999).

The number of these revisitings of the late 1960s and early 70s suggests that curators and writers are also influenced by each other`s work. The texts which have focused on this period have been particularly galvanized by what the writers perceive as the shift from modernism to postmodernism. Or as Clive Philpott wrote of the work gathered for the exhibition *Live in Your Head*: `it could be argued that the art of this decade represented as *great a rupture in the practice of art* (my italics) as had happened during the moment of cubism` (Philpott 2000, 9-10).

There is one other reason why there has been such interest in art of this period and why it has had such a profound impact: it is a generational impetus. Hal Foster in his introduction to *The Return of the Real* argued that prominent historians such as Michael Fried, Rosalind Krauss and T.J. Clark shared a deep conviction in modernist art, whereas

> Critics formed in my milieu are more ambivalent about this art, not only because we received it as an official culture, but because we were initiated by practices that wished to break with its dominant models….. the angel we wrestled with was Marcel Duchamp by way of Andy Warhol, more than Picasso by way of Pollock. Moreover, both these Oedipal narratives had passed through the crucible of feminism which changed them profoundly (Foster 1996, xii)

According to Foster, one would have to have been initiated into the art of the 1960s and 1970s at a formative time in one`s life, preferably at roughly the same time as it was taking place.  While this may be true for Clive Philpott, it is not so for Andria Tarsia who is a generation younger than Philpott (Philpott and Tarsia 2000).   The possibility that curators and writers are influenced by each other`s interests is persuasive, but there is no convincing way of mapping that influence. Attempts to give a history to some aspects of recent art by researching its antecedents seems to be a more likely reason, and goes some way to answering the question as to why there is an interest in art of the 60s and 70s at this point in time. In addition, the reason for its resurgence in recent years could be due to the growing impetus to archive art practices:

> As interest in archives increases, so does the demand to access them: researchers want to research in them; writers want to write about them; artists want to appropriate them and historians want to historicize them. Curators too have bought into the archives agency as the new feeding ground from which exhibitions are researched, supplemented and constructed (Hearn 2008, 146).

Hearn`s essay is one of many in the anthology *Arkive City (*Bacon 2008) which grew out of linked conferences in Ulster and Newcastle in 2008 under the title *Performing the Archive.* These conferences, the anthology and subsequently a website, originally arose from the research Kerstin May developed in her role as Research Leader of "Art and its Locations" in

Interface: Centre for Research in Art, Technologies and Design at the University of Ulster.

Whatever the different reasons for interest in art of the 1960s or 1970s, it would seem incontrovertible that the `rupture in art practices` (Philpott 2000, 9-10) has galvanized many prominent writers into producing detailed and elaborate texts, particularly since the mid 1990s. In order to explore perceived moments of change, writers in an academic environment use conceptual tools from other disciplines to clarify their ideas. Two of the most important texts published in this period were: *Art After The End of Art* : *contemporary art and the pale of history*, 1995, by Arthur C. Danto, and *The Art of the Real*, 1996, by Hal Foster.   For Danto, the end of art occurred in 1964. His book details why he thought there was such a dramatic occurrence and it then proceeds to write a philosophical account of what `art after the end of art` actually means for art practice:

> That is what I mean by the end of art. I mean the end of a certain narrative which has unfolded in art history over the centuries, and which has reached its end in a certain freedom from conflicts of the kind inescapable in the Age of Manifestoes (Danto 1995,   37).

Danto argues that this narrative ended for him during an exhibition of Andy Warhol`s Brillo Box sculptures.  What excited him most about this work was the question: `wherein the difference lies between them and the Brillo cartons of the supermarket storeroom, when none of the difference between them can explain the difference between reality and art` (Danto 1995, 35).  For Danto, the `question what is art?` could now be reformed into: `if there is no interesting perceptual difference between a work of art and not a work of art, then what is the difference that makes it a work of art?`

> Once the question is brought to consciousness at a certain moment in the historical unfolding of art, a new level of philosophical consciousness has been reached…. A philosophical definition has to capture everything and so can exclude nothing. But that finally means that there can be no historical direction art can take from that point on. (Danto 1995, 36).

In the future, there will be art after the end of art, but this will be *post-historical* art, and the objective position for *post-historical* art is that nothing is to be replaced (Danto 1995, 37). This gives the contemporary artist nothing to work against, nothing to replace: art of the past is now not redundant but `available for such use as artists care to give it` (Danto 1995, 5).   For Danto, it`s not literally the end of art, but the beginning of philosophical reflection in relation to art: the question as to why any object whatsoever is a work of art is the question that, for him, ends the history of modernism.

Hal Foster adapts a post-structuralist approach in *Return of Real: the Avant Garde at the End of the Century* (Foster 1996).   In this he introduces the idea of two axes operating in art practice: on the one hand the vertical, temporal, `diachronic` or historical axis of modernist formalism, on the other the spatial, `synchronic`, horizontal axis of avant-garde practices. The first is associated with the philosophy of Hegel, as `vertical` philosophy, the second is associated with Nietzsche:

> Nietzsche`s philosophy begins to make the very distinction between subject and object problematic; indeed subject and object are metaphysical categories, they presuppose the notions of unity and identity.  They are categories of a `vertical` philosophy (like Hegel`s). The singular aspect of all `vertical` philosophy is the separation in it of the truth of the concept from the reality to which it refers… The `vertical` axis of objective truth is thus overturned by Nietzsche in favour of the horizontal axis of values… Horizontality in thought opens the way to thought as creative, as a form of poetry (Lechte 1994, 103).

For Foster, these two axes are at play in current art practice, with sometimes one getting the upper hand, sometimes the other and sometimes in uneasy combination (Foster 1996, xi).   Rather than seeing the art of the 1960s and 1970s as signifying a break, Foster posits a dialectic between historical modernism and the `neo-avant gardes` as he calls them which have arisen since 1970 (Foster 1996, 4-5). For him, the idea of a postmodernist rupture is more productively thought of as a return to the historical avant-garde, a time when the horizontal spatial axis still intersected the vertical temporal axis, a time when the two axes were in a productive tension:

> Ideally co-ordinated the two moved forward together, with past and present in parallax. Today as artists follow horizontal lines of working, the vertical lines appear to be lost (Foster 1996, 202).

According to Foster, a contemporary artist`s work needs to produce creative tension to be successful. This is produced not only by awareness of past avant-garde strategies but also by modernist philosophy, less a break with tradition, more a shifting of ground under the feet of the artist and writer.

At St Martin`s, the changes that my art practice underwent could be seen in hindsight as an inevitable development rather than a break. Retrospectively, in my openness to embrace the influence of other artists` work, my reading of philosophy and literature, and my interest in film, it could not have been otherwise. As I wrote in section1, p.13: my art practice was becoming interdisciplinary, although I was not aware of the term at the time.

> Interdisciplinarity is not the calm of an easy security; it begins *effectively* (as opposed to the mere expression of a pious wish) when the solidarity of the old disciplines breaks down – perhaps even violently, via the jolts of fashion – in the interests of a new object and a new language neither of which has a place in the field of the sciences that were to be brought peacefully together, this unease in classification being precisely the point from which to diagnose a certain mutation. The mutation in which the idea of the work seems to be gripped must not, however, be overestimated: it is more in the nature of an phenomenological slide than a real break (Barthes 1977, 155).

Barthes`s description of a `phenomenological slide` seems to get closer to my own experience of the changes my own and other artists` practice underwent during the late 1960s and early 1970s, rather than Philpott`s `rupture in the practice of art `(Philpott 2000, 30) and Danto`s `end of art` (Danto 1965, 32). Foster`s account of the `horizontal and vertical axes in tension` (Foster 1996, 35) does however echo the paradox of my own work. In this, the main themes that emerged from the art work discussed in section 2, were to varying degrees: *absence* - defined against the modernist theme of `presence`; *paradox* – the contradictory ideas within each work; and *reflexivity* - the means of production, and the space of reception.

Discussing Lyotard`s idea of paralogisms (with reference to a viewers encounter with the peculiar mental experiences engendered by a work of conceptual art), Jameson wrote:

> …in other words, perceptual paradoxes that we cannot unthink or unravel by way of conscious abstractions which bring us up short against the visual occasions. Bruce Nauman`s installations, say, or even Sherrie Levine`s representations of representations are like infernal machines for generating unresolvable yet concretely visual and perceptual antimonies that eject the viewing mind once again into the bewildering stages of the paralogical process itself. (Jameson 1991,157).

If, following Jameson, paradox can be seen to be an integral element to the objects of conceptual art, then all four exhibited works within this thesis could be designated as postmodern.

As we saw in Victor Burgin`s essay on the *presence of absence* outlined in section 3, absence as defined against the modernist idea of presence is a postmodern position, a stand against one of modernism`s main tenets `presentness is grace` (Fried 1968,168). Pamela Lee in `*Chronophobia: on time in art of the 60s* 2004, wrote of Fried`s seminal essay:

> Thirty years after the fact, *Art and Objecthood* (Fried 1968), may read as one of modernism`s last stands, a fierce polemic against the plodding, in your face banality of minimalism. But to the extent that this perspective is one of hindsight we might reverse its temporal flow and argue for the *anticipatory* status of the essay. In its defensiveness about the sculptural medium and its relationship to time, it anticipates, if phobically, the integration of media as a function *of* time (Lee 2004, 40).

My art work defied the modernist meditation on a discrete object (Fried 1968) in installations which used the duration of film as a key element. The durational means and site specific recognition of the space of reception seen in *Unsigning for Eight Projectors* or *Western Reversal* are also postmodern methodologies which have been familiar in the contemporary art field over the past 30 years (see recent Turner Prize winners on page 25).

If *Distancing Device* is a postmodern object or `infernal machine`, there is another paradox in my use of Samuel Beckett, ` Certain writers may create plays without anchoring them to particular forms, but Beckett is not such a writer. In each case he writes with a specific medium in mind. Those who have worked with him… have commented on Beckett`s acute sense of the problems and possibilities of the form in question` (Ben-Zvi 1998, 242). Medium specificity or *reflexivity* is a core precept of modernism and this is seen in my connection to structural film making (see section 2, p.21) and to the importance of means of production in *Unsigning for Eight Projectors, Two Cameras* and *Western Reversal.* Whilst modernism in art practice is perhaps easy to define, postmodernism is not.

Frederick Jameson in his introduction to *Postmodernism : or the cultural logic of late capitalism* 1991, is loath to give an easy definition:

> As for postmodernism itself, I have not tried to systematize a usage or to impose any conveniently thumbnail meaning, for the concept is not merely contested, it is also internally conflicted and contradictory. I will argue, that for good or ill, we cannot *not* use it. But my argument should also be taken to imply that every time it is used , we are under the obligation to rehearse those inner contradictions and to stage those representational inconsistencies and dilemmas; we have to work all that through every time around. *Postmodernism* is not something we can settle once and for all and then use with a clear conscience (Jameson 1991, xxii).

Perhaps the internal paradoxes of my art work echo Jameson`s view here and in attempting to define my work as postmodern in this thesis is also to reveal it as retaining modernist elements. This `positions` the exhibited art work as moving away from modernism, but not yet fully postmodernist: on a cusp, born during a period of transition.

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Fig.5

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Fig.5 and Fig.6: Distancing Device, remade 2000 in the exhibition St Martin`s Sculpture Dept. 1964-71 at Tate Britain 2007 next to work by Tony Hill and Bill Woodrow, in foreground Roelof Loew.

Section 4

The exhibited art work: remaking, restaging, rethinking.

This section revisits the work introduced in Section 2 where the aims were to investigate the main themes arising from the four artworks as they were first made. The aims of this section follow on from Section 2; to explore whether the meanings of these works are relevant to a new context and audience 35 years later.

Distancing Device 2000-2007 Figs.5 and 6.

Distancing Device was first remade for *Live in Your Head: concept and experiment in Britain 1965-75* at the Whitechapel Gallery in 2000, then in 2007 Tate Britain borrowed the work for a display of work: *St Martin`s School of Art 1964-71* that drew from the archive of Frank Martin, Head of St Martin`s from 1952 until the late 1980s.

> The Advanced Sculpture course at St Martin`s School of Art was set up in the late 1950s under the leadership of Frank Martin, it employed and/or taught a significant number of subsequently well known figures. The six sculptors who contributed to Whitechapel Art Gallery`s 1965 exhibition were all associated with the course and had been taught by Anthony Caro…. Subsequently students reacted against what was seen as an increasingly rigidified teaching structure (feeling, in Richard Long`s words, that `the language and ambition of art were due for renewal), their work acknowledged this tradition (Archer 2000, 28).

The Whitechapel Gallery offered to remake *Distancing Device* as it had been destroyed in the 1980s. A photograph of the original work from 1970 (Fig.1), acted as a reminder, and a cardboard mock up was made in order to ascertain the correct measurements for a working drawing. The remade *Distancing Device* of 2000 looked identical to the original, down to the shade of grey it was painted (Figs.5 and 6). While most writers in the catalogue for *Live in Your Head* undertook a broad overview of the period covered by the exhibition, one of them gave *Distancing Device* a context in relation to other artists works`:

> Individual letters in the phrase `K-E-E-P G-O-I-N-G` are placed in vertical succession under nine hoods, arranged perpendicular to a

wooden column. At the base of the column, a small mirror reflects each letter as the viewer backs away from the work. Tim Head and Michael Craig-Martin invite you into their work; Dye gently pushes us away. Art is not to be found in a particular object installed in a gallery but, as Ono`s `Grapefruit` publication, in everyday life.  Furthermore, if works such as McLean`s water and ice sculptures occupy an ultimately finite spatial and temporal dimension, Dye`s device is somehow unbounded. (Tarsia 2000, 19)

Crucial to the arguments of this thesis is how does this understanding of *Distancing Device* in 2000, compare to the main themes that it embodied for the artist in 1970?   The original work was born out of a reaction to modernist `rules` of self sufficiency and absence of duration. This `battle` would no longer seem relevant to a contemporary audience: modernist-looking works of art may possibly be seen as referencing modernist styles in a postmodern way*. Distancing Device* was intended to be seen as a conceptual apparatus, an object rather than an art work . In a contemporary context this object appears to be seen as directing the viewer away from itself to everyday life (Tarsia 2000,19). Its status as both device and art work have been merged and may be considered as a regular occurrence in contemporary art: it could be argued that any object displayed in a gallery is now implicitly accepted as an art work.   The use of text within art is also a familiar strategy used by contemporary artist, such as Fiona Banner and Christopher Wool, in whose works even the simplest text has ambiguous resonance when presented in unusual ways.

Whilst `Keep Going`   was `gently pushing` the viewer away, it was not thought of by the artist as an infinite *away* : the word `unbounded` used by Tarsia brings to mind `the  sublime` in art works. The *away* of *Distancing Device* was originally considered in a more generalized and abstract way.

Distancing Device finds a use elsewhere in the exhibition: most large public galleries now run educational programmes for children, and the Whitechapel is well known for these. Given the conceptual nature of *Live in Your Head,* I was amused to see a pack for children available, comprising a card which could be folded up into a box, a piece of reflective card and stickers, and with questions about the piece on show.   Artist Jo Stockham conceived this pack

and I was surprised that conceptual work like mine and that of other artists could be used to entertain and, through that, educate. The last sentence printed on the card reads `We hope you had fun.  Remember to keep making things and keep asking questions.  In other words… K-E-E-P G-O-I-N-G`. Samuel Beckett`s words from his novel *The Unnameable* (Beckett 1953,1) had been transformed, through the remade *Distancing Device* 2000 into a message for children – keep asking questions.  The original conceptual rigour and solipsism of this work was lost in this children`s `educational` context, so it remained for the catalogue to deliver the original concepts of the work back to a viewer/reader.

In *Live in Your Head,* my work was amongst 64 other artists work in a large gallery on two floors, in the display, curated by Clarrie Wallace at Tate Britain in 2007 I was one of around 12 in one large area. The context being , as the information sign read: *St Martin`s Sculpture Dept. 1964-71: an alternative history.*  I was informed that one of the  reasons for this show was that Frank Martin`s archive had been gifted to Tate Britain so they wanted to give it some kind of context in a display.   A sketchbook from my student days (*Fig.7)* was also displayed, opened at a page of drawings for *Distancing Device*. This was one of seven which I had earlier donated to the Henry Moore Foundation archive. One sketchbook was borrowed for this display and it was strange seeing it exhibited in this way: in the context of a research archive, normally accessed by one person at a time.   However to exhibit two pages only in this way in a glass case is to perceive the sketchbook as an object for viewing rather than for perusal. This gave me an uncanny sensation of feeling like a ghost: posthumously viewing an exhibition of my work in the future – as if this notebook was simultaneously mine and someone else`s. Given my ideas around authorship, this sensation was unexpected. With reference to *Unsigning for Eight Projectors* 1972, I wrote that this art work visualized identity as shifting and contingent: as constantly being worked through (p.18). This sketchbook also belonged to my younger self, but no longer mine in the present: I had changed and moved on. So why did I experience such a close connection to a sketchbook from 35 years ago, and still feel as if it belonged to me, when that was obviously no longer the case?   Working through ideas

in sketchbooks is a private process, and to see it exhibited this way felt like an inexplicable yet distanced exposure, as if I were a student once more; as if time had folded back on itself, erasing the intervening years. I was surprised to learn in July 2010, that two of my other sketchbooks from the Henry Moore Foundation Archive had been displayed in an exhibition: *The Developing Process* curated by Sophie Raikes at Leeds Art Gallery, but I did not see this exhibition, although it seemed an appropriate theme and context for the sketchbooks (Appendix 6).   In view of the `performative` nature of most of my art work in which I had been fully involved, the feeling of the sketchbooks being no longer under my control was unfamiliar.

Fig. 7: *One of my sketchbooks from 1970 displayed in a case at the St.Martin`s Sculpture Dept. 1964 –71 exhibition at Tate Britain 2007.*

St Martin's Sculpture Department 1964-71:
An Alternative History

'What I learned at St Martin's is that all one can intelligently tell a student is what not to do'
Garth Evans (sculptor)

This display considers the transformations to sculptural practice in the Sculpture Department of St Martin's School of Art, London between 1964-71. Under the inspiring leadership of Frank Martin, it became the most important centre for sculptural innovation in Britain. The Sculpture Department is most commonly associated with the formal innovations of sculptor and tutor Anthony Caro, but this display focuses on the work of students who challenged traditional notions about the form and meaning of the sculptural object.

New approaches to sculpture and its teaching flourished throughout the 1960s. With the support of a new tutor, Peter Kardia (born Atkins), students began using diverse practices with no traditional connection to sculpture. They were more interested in the creative process than the final product and the artwork was often an event rather than an object. Photography became indispensable, first to document these new activities and as a sculptural medium in itself.

These students challenged the idea of sculpture as a traditional art form with a rightful place in the gallery, moving sculpture from the studio into the real world. Their work, which ranged from bicycle rides to performances, challenged the viewer to consider questions regarding ephemerality, time and decay and above all interrogated the relationship of art to life.

These students challenged the idea of sculpture as a traditional art form with a rightful place in the gallery, moving sculpture from the studio into the real world

This display has been devised by curator Clarrie Wallis and Hester Westley

British Art Displays 1500 – 2007
Supported by BP

30

Fig. 8: *The information panel for the* St. Martin`s Sculpture Dept.1964-71 *exhibition at Tate Britain in 2007.*

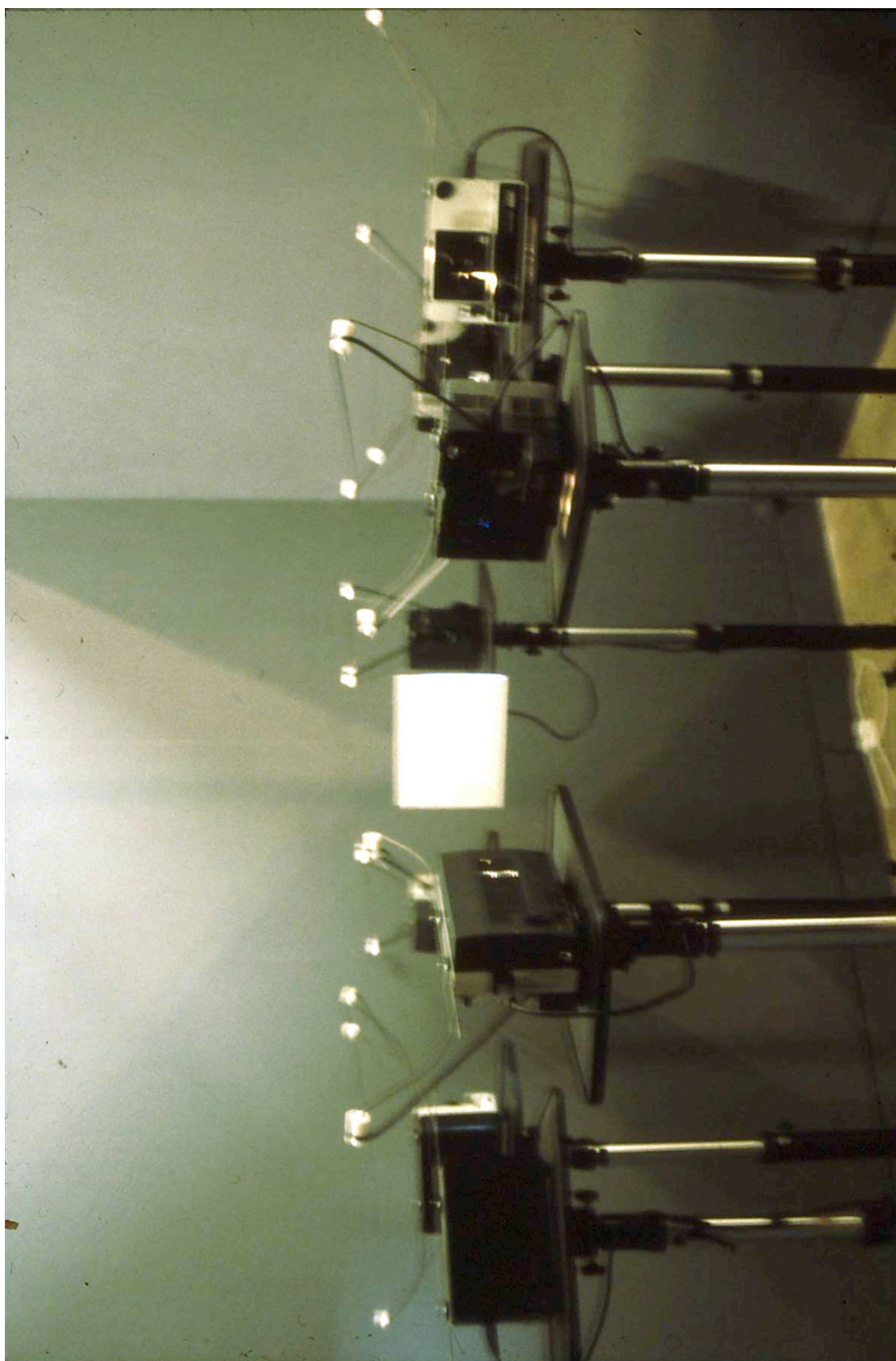Fig.9: Unsigning for Eight Projectors 1972, *restaged for Live in Your Head, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2000*

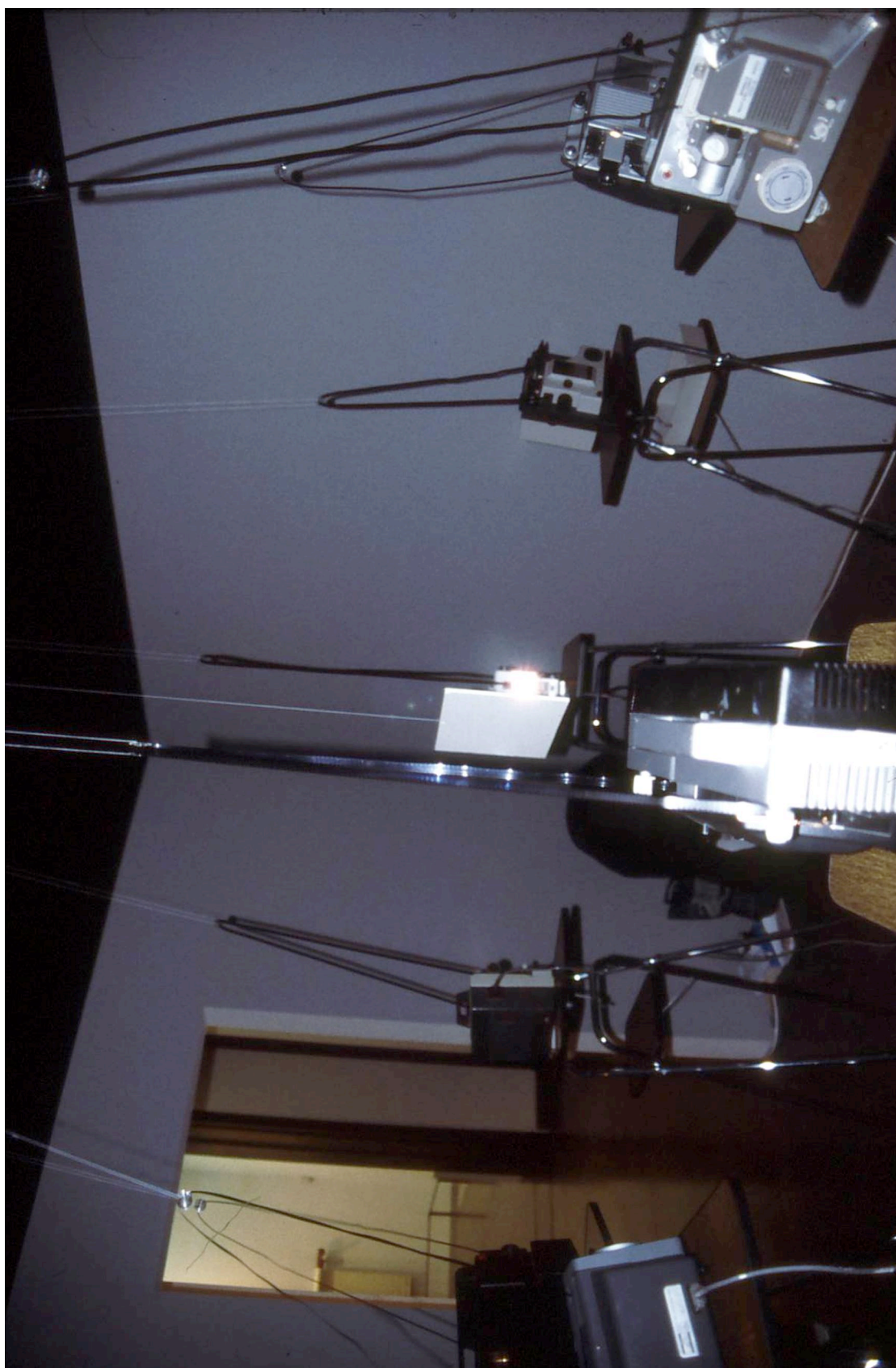Fig.10: Detail: Unsigning for Eight Projectors1972, restaged for Live in Your Head, Whitechapel Art Gallery 2000.

Fig.11: Unsigning for Eight Projectors 1972 and 2000, *restaged for Live in Your Head, Museo do Chiado, Lisbon 2001.(see also Appendix 9 and DVD)*

Unsigning for Eight Projectors 2000-2001 Figs.9 and 10.

Unsigning for Eight Projectors was also remade for *Live in Your Head: concept and experiment in Britain 1965–75.* Whitechapel Art Gallery, London 4 Feb.- 2 Apr. 2000 before travelling to Museo Do Chiado in Lisbon in 2001 (*Fig. 11).*   For the Whitechapel exhibition, a new piece of apparatus was added to *Unsigning for Eight Projectors* which was not part of the original 1972 presentation of this work: wire brackets with runners were used in order that the film loops were fed more robustly into the mechanism of the projectors. This helped to protect the fragile film and the original inconvenience of replacement loops through breakage (Figs. 9 +10). The walls enclosing the work were painted grey, rather than white, thus dampening down any light coming through the entrance to the space and muting the shadows which were previously a part of the original installation in *The New Art* at the Hayward Gallery in 1972, (Fig. 2). This time I wanted the screen and projection to be more of a focus rather than dispersed through the shadows thrown on to the four walls of this space. The implications of the changes which I and other artists have made when restaging art works are commented on later in this section.

When the exhibition moved to the Museo do Chiado in Lisbon the following year, it was necessary to borrow Super 8mm projectors from a museum collection of them (Fig.11).   Unlike its Whitechapel staging, not one of the Super 8mm projectors matched: *Unsigning for Eight Projectors* in its 2001 incarnation was unintentionally also becoming an archiving of Super 8mm projectors: each projector was of a different age and make, and drew far too much attention to the apparatus in the installation. This problem signalled the difference between this work as encountered now in a contemporary context and how it was seen originally.   Super 8mm film and projectors are now old technology; my original theme of bringing attention to the *reflexive* means of production has through time, added a different and unlooked for dimension to the work. Super 8mm film had been superseded in the home movie market by video and then DVD, so the connotations of this work, particularly with the

sound of the motors of the projectors, could be seen as nostalgic for the 1970s. This work also stages an ongoing deferral of the signing of the whole of the artist`s signature; it is conspicuous by its *absence*, and this could relate to a more contemporary concern with celebrity culture and its ephemerality.

The mood of this work was also something which was not considered when it was originally made, nor its aesthetic dimension. It was surprising to read in a review of *Live in Your Head* by Philip Hensher for the *Independent* 09.02.00 that `Although  much of the show will make a traditionalist`s blood boil, anyone prepared to be relaxed about it will find plenty of simple, undemanding beauty. I particularly liked David Dye`s mysterious, whirring piece for eight film projectors and a revolving card.` Undemanding beauty is not something that I would have expected as a response to *Unsigning for Eight Projectors* but Hensher`s words are nevertheless pleasing.

TATE
BRITAIN

A Century of Artists' Film in Britain

Programme: ① ② ③ ④ 26 January – 18 April 2004

Conceptual Film: Actions
The works in this sequence were all shaped by a single idea. Their execution involved the recording of a simple action or actions; sometimes this is performed by the camera alone, sometimes with visible human participation.

Films showing in this section:

2.48 Yoko Ono and John Lennon *Apotheosis* 1970
3.08 David Dye *Two Cameras* 1971
3.12 John Hilliard *From and To* 1971
3.16 John Blake *Untitled (Juggler)* 1970
3.21 Mark Neville *Jump Film* 1996

2.48
Yoko Ono and John Lennon *Apotheosis* 1970
18 minutes. Collection: Yoko Ono

The idea of filming the 'release from earthly life' that is an apotheosis was apparently John Lennon's. But the simple structure - one idea, one action -- is consistent with Yoko Ono's many other films. The camera rises from the ground in the Market Square in Lavenham, Suffolk, passes John and Yoko, and continues to ascend until the film runs out.

Biographies:
Yoko Ono was born in Japan in 1933. Ono had already contributed a number of films to Fluxus events in New York, before travelling to London in 1966 to take part in the Destruction in Art Symposium. Remaining in London, she made her celebrated feature *No.4* 1966 (a longer remake of an earlier Fluxus work), before embarking on even more ambitious films with her new partner John Lennon. John Lennon was born in 1940 and died in New York in 1980.

■ top

3.08
David Dye *Two Cameras* 1971
3 minutes. Collection: Artist

The *Two Cameras* which give David Dye's work its title perform alternate leapfrogging actions as they pursue the same course across a floor. Despite the simplicity of this idea, the image which results as the films are projected side by side presents a complex spatial experience.
Biography:

Fig.12: Two Cameras*, as shown in the programme for A Century of Artist`s Film in Britain from the Tate Britain website of 2004.  Currently viewable in the St. Martin`s Film and Video archive.*

53

Two Cameras 2004 Fig.12

Two Cameras 1973 was initially a Standard 8mm two screen film which was transferred on to DVD in order to be shown at the Tate Britain as part of the programme *A Century of Artists` Film in Britain 2003-4.* This was a programme of films by 130 artists shown continuously in a specially constructed viewing space with seating. The programme was divided into four sections which changed every three months between the period 19 May 2003-18 April 2004.

Two Cameras 1970-2003 was screened in a short programme on rotation between October 2003 and January 2004. This two-screen film was transferred on to DVD: the original non-synchronisation of the two projectors, different for every showing, is no longer a factor in the DVD transfer. In its 2003 manifestation *Two Cameras* is no longer shown in `real time`, but is projected as a DVD recording of a previous showing.

 St Martin`s makes a reappearance here  for a different reason to that in section 1: my connection with David Curtis`s *Independent film and video archive,* which is housed there.   David Curtis had championed artists` film and video for decades. He wrote about my work for his book *A History of Artists` Film and Video in Britain* 2007. *A Century of Artists Films in Britain* 2003-4 became the impetus for this book.

> During the early 70s, other artists, less involved or not involved at all with the Filmakers` Co-op were also exploring different ways of exhibiting film …Unsigning for Eight Projectors (1972) shown in The New Art at the Hayward Gallery that year was possibly the first continuous film installation seen by a large public in Britain (Curtis 2007, 213).

 As mentioned in my earlier section on *Two Cameras* 1970*,* I had moved between showing in galleries and cinema/arts lab. type spaces. *Two Cameras* had never been shown in an art gallery before and for *A Century of Artists Film in Britain*, the practical considerations of repeated showings of film were important, and new technology resolved the problems of the fragility

of Standard 8mm film apparatus over lengthy periods of screening. However, the texture of the original film and the sound of the original projectors: the performative element in the space of reception was absent.   The original *reflexivity* of the use of two separate film projectors was also no longer an element in this reincarnation of *Two Cameras.* What remained was also re-contextualized alongside many other artists in a broad survey exhibition. *Two Cameras* had in some ways become a shadow of its former self.
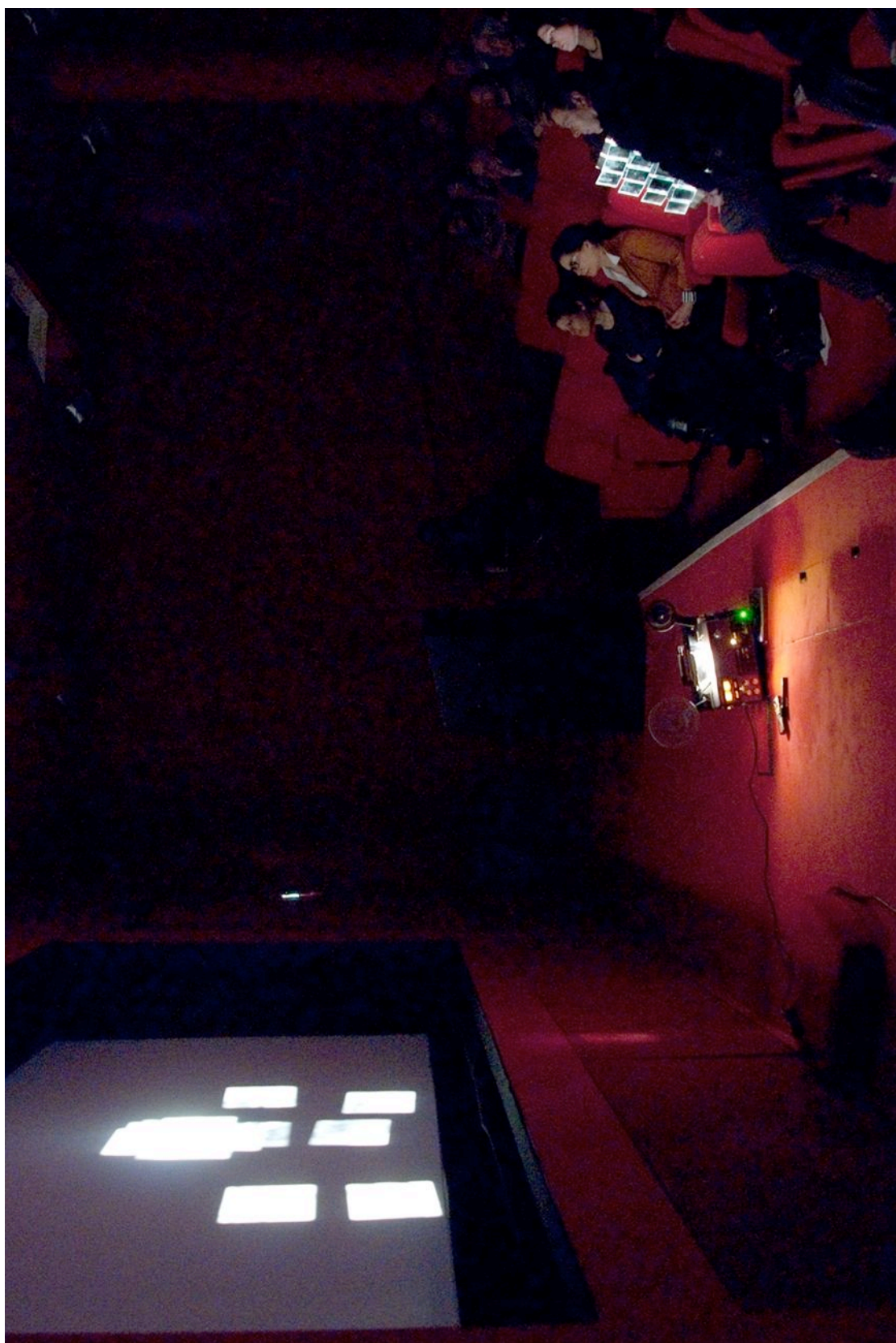
Fig 13.

Fig.13 and Fig.14: *Western Reversal* 1973, *restaged for Expanded Cinema: activating the space of reception, in the Starr Auditorium at Tate Modern, 19th April 2009. (See Appendix 10)*

Western Reversal 2009 Fig.13 and Fig.14

A ten-minute performance/projection shown as part of *Expanded Cinema –
activating the space of reception* a 2 -day conference with sceenings at Tate
Modern on 17⁺18 April 2009.   This work had not been `performed` since
1976. As a result the frame with moveable mirrors needed to complete this
work had to be remade. The Starr Auditorium in the Tate Modern in which the
screenings were held is a conventional auditorium, so I had to place the
projector on the stage facing the audience, with the mirror frame placed on a
seat in the front row (Figs.13+14). It was necessary to adapt the
`performance` to the space and timing of the event: with the beginning of the
projection through the mirrors spaced almost at random both on the red walls
and on the white screen. (The first incarnation of this work, (Fig.4) placed the
image in a tight grid formation).   This time the mirrors were manipulated so
that all the fragments of images moved slowly on to the screen in order to
reveal the whole of the image in an approximate grid-like formation. They
were then moved again so that the 16 parts of the image overlapped in the
centre of the screen. The projector was then adjusted to give an out- of -
focus, unreadable image, which then changed from black and white to colour.
This change of image occurred because another film followed *Blazing Guns
and Bloody Arrows* on the reel.

Given the critical dictates within conceptual art in the 1970s, the
formal/conceptual tightness of the framework of this work seemed necessary
to me then in order to allow it to operate within its own frame of reference. I
certainly would not have seen the addition of an out -of -focus colour film for a
few minutes as an appropriate ending. However I now enjoyed these slight
adaptations, or loosening up, of this `performance` at the beginning and
ending, and they seemed appropriate to the space and time in which the
`performance/projection` was occurring. The *reflexive* use of the space of
reception and the focus on the apparatus of the projector and mirror frame
remained true to the original `performance` of this piece precisely because of
my response to the space of this auditorium. The film *Blazing Guns and
Bloody Arrows* becomes *paradoxically* both abstract and figurative through the

same apparatus. There is also a new element of *absence* in this restaging: the hidden subject -matter of the colour film at the end of the reel.

Within a `performance` work such as *Western Reversal* it seems acceptable, even expected, that this is one version, as with a play or a piece of music. The origin of the work is a kind of score or script, and the actual work itself is re-interpreted.   I enjoyed this particular manifestation of restaging my work, as it offered new opportunities and ways of thinking that I did not foresee: I was recreating it in time, so it seemed to have a life in the present rather than remaining a relic of the past. During the installation of *Live in Your Head* I was not the only one to adapt previous work for a new context: Michael Craig-Martin`s *Six Images of an Electric Fan* originally made for *The New Art*, (Seymour 1972) and   consisting of an electric fan with white streamers, is only viewed within an enclosed space via a series of holes and angled mirrors. For *Live in Your Head* the white streamers were replaced with multi-coloured ones, which echoed some of the colours of his later paintings.

Gerard Hemsworth`s letraset piece attached directly on to a wall also changed from white, which was the only `colour`, other than black, available for the original piece.  For *Live in Your Head*  a dusty pink was used, updating it while implicitly referencing a  colour to be found in Hemsworth`s later paintings.

Who but myself would have noticed these small changes?   Perhaps, if their memory served them well, those who saw the original work at the time it was first shown. If their memory served them well, that is. What was lost in translation here was the monochrome, low-tech feel that permeated the art of the 70s as it has been recorded in documentation. This can be seen in the illustrations in many of the anthologies closer to the period (Lippard 1972; Meyer 1973; Battcock 1973). Many of the changes I mention above are minor in relation to the whole of the art work, but durational art such as theatre or music thrives on adaptation and variation as the work moves through time. Given the chance to direct a familiar play, directors usually update a production in an attempt to make it more relevant to a contemporary

audience. This is expected and part of the enjoyment is seeing similarity in difference. Perhaps, because it is a rarer occurrence in the art world, I did not really think about these restaging and remaking factors at the time I first made my work. This gives rise to a hypothetical question: if *Unsigning for Eight Projectors* were to mutate into a restaging on future technological apparatus, would the art work become a shadow of its former self or be a translation into a new language?   The aim in the 60s and 70s was not to involve myself in the performing arts in an explicit way as I did not envisage restaging my film installation pieces in the years ahead.

Walter Benjamin`s essay *The Task of the Translator* is a useful text to support this hypothesis of the ongoing life of an installation remade again and again in the future:

> For in its afterlife–which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and *renewal* (my italics), of something living – the original undergoes a change. Even words with fixed meanings can undergo a maturing process (Benjamin 1955, 73).

Afterlife in these terms can be seen as renewal rather than death; one might say that my remaking of work in new contexts is to re-vitalize them rather than to exhume them. However, Benjamin then goes on to suggest that in spite of this renewal in the act of translation something always gets left behind, and that is what cannot be translated (Benjamin 1955, 75).

It follows from this that what is lost to the viewer in the remaking of my work is its original background of meaning, or context. . Although this may be given by commentary in catalogues, writers and curators have their own versions of the original context.

> One can without question imitate the work and the style of the work of an earlier period, what one cannot do is live the system of meanings upon which the original drew in its original form of life (Danto 1975, 203).

 This quote from Danto would imply that whatever meanings get left behind in remakings of work can never be retrieved completely. You cannot turn back time, but you can re-imagine it *as if* it were a possibility. This is where the

artwork mutates in historical, survey or retrospective exhibitions, becomes something other than at its origins. Not only does the artist reformulate the work, but texts in journals, catalogues, essays and books further modify it.

> Thus the work of art finds itself located in the disquieting context of its display, in the messiness of the world of received meanings. The exhibition brackets out the work of art and sublimates it to its own narrative ends as a minor element in a major story. (Ferguson 1996, 183)

Our knowledge of art may be re-formulated so that often within the interdisciplinarity of these texts, infused with the influences of various modes of thought such as philosophy and literature, the meanings of art works are constantly shifting.

The main themes identified in Section 2: *the exhibited work, as it was made in its initial context* I outlined as: *absence, paradox* and *reflexivity*. Can these themes still be considered to be important to the understanding of an art work in its recent remakings and restagings?   In terms of the materiality of the art works, contemporary art audiences are familiar with installation art work. Tony Godfrey remarks in his final chapter of *Conceptual Art* (1998) that `the art world in the 1990s was awash with works which looked remarkably like those made thirty years earlier.  What is the difference?`.   He compares work by various contemporary artists with earlier conceptual artists and writes that more recent work is: `arguably done better than in the 1960s, but normally to less point, in so far as the *idealogical context and medium are not questioned to the same degree*` (my italics) (Godfrey 1998, 382).

If that is the case, does that leave my questioning of representation, my concern with the *absence of presence* introduced by Victor Burgin in Section 3, p.27 (Burgin 1984,17) as no longer of interest to a contemporary audience? There has been much debate in recent years around such a question, often raised by the original conceptual artists of my generation. Tony Godfrey writes of the disquiet which was expressed by Terry Atkinson of the *Art and Language* group in 1997 at the way that Conceptualism had been subsumed

under the category of the visual, especially in the Paris and later Los Angeles retrospective:

> Had not Conceptual art been posited on a critique of `the visual`? Perhaps making an exhibition inevitably portrays it as a movement of things rather than a time of debate… But a more sophisticated understanding of visual and material culture, influenced especially by Barthes, Foucault and a re-reading of Freud, has led in recent years to a far less censorious attitude to the making of actual objects and representations. Today, therefore , we no longer find such a rigid dichotomy between conceptualization and the making of art (Godfrey 1998, 389).

This emphasis on a `time of debate`, rather than a `movement of things` is obviously detailed in texts such as *Art After the End of Art* (Danto 1995) and *The Art of the Real* (Foster 1996) in Section 3 and, in the catalogue essays cited in section 3 and, by implication, this thesis.   The question of conceptual art being co-opted into exhibition display was the subject of William Wood`s essay *Still You Ask for More: Demand, Display and `The New Art`,* in *Rewriting Conceptual Art* (Newman, Bird 1999). In this essay Wood regards The New Art exhibition (Seymour 1972)  as a pivotal moment in the process when `the ephemeral and the transient aspects of English Conceptual art were officially recognized and arguably recuperated in the form of stable, fixed and often nationalistic artistic identities, and more or less permanent, rare art objects` (Wood 66, 1999).

As my art work was forged at a time that is considered so important to the subsequent development of younger artists (see Section 2), I welcomed the chance to show this work to an audience that is familiar with contemporary conceptual art, but may be unfamiliar with its `history`. But this is not without its problems: `Conceptual art was an attack on the art object as the site of a look… and  if the intention was to subjugate the visual, ironically it is partly a `look` which this art has bequeathed to us` (Prince 2009, 6). After comparing art work such as Darren Almond`s use of serial photography in his work *Tuesday (1440 minutes)* 1996 with John Hilliard`s *Camera Recording its Own Condition of* 1971, Prince`s article ends with a short analysis of Martin Creed`s work:

These younger artists excavate the past to gain access to tools which turn out to be not equipped for the present, or at least not for the intended job. But maybe that is the point. The current conditions may preclude what they require but resisting them is its own statement. Martin Creed is probably the closest contemporary British link to the earlier work, with his taxonomical framework, pseudo-philosophical propositions and his gesture of reinventing the vocabulary for an art language. His work might be an elaborately constructed conceit to stave off irony, and thereby restore the pioneering spirit of experimental enquiry which seems to have come naturally to the artists of the 1960s and early 70s (Prince 2009, 8).

The themes which emerged from the `experimental enquiry` of the art work in section 2: *absence,* defined against the modernist idea of `presence`; *paradox* - the contradictory ideas within each art work; and *reflexivity* - the means of production, and the space of reception - are these still relevant to a contemporary art audience? This is a key question in relation to the overarching aims of this thesis, which is to explore the relevance to a contemporary context of key themes produced by the art work of 35 years ago. In one sense they are relevant to a sophisticated audience of commentators, practitioners and academics. They are relevant as part of a history of art practice which is conceptually driven.   But what of the borrowing of a `look` as Mark Prince puts it?   Arthur C. Danto, cited on p. 49, wrote that the art of the past is not redundant, but that it is now : `available for such use as artists care to give it` (Danto 1995, 5). However, the art of the past may not only be borrowed for its look. There has been a use of earlier forms of technology amongst students and artists recently, perhaps a reaction to the hands-off nature of digital technology. In an article titled `Reel to Real`, in *Art Monthly*, Colin Perry notices that many recent artists use Super 8mm and 16mm apparatus for film installations:

Clattering and whirring film projectors are once more in vogue within contemporary moving image practice. Stumble into any number of galleries, triennials, conferences and academic talking shops, and you`ll find them there, chattering away in their own pre-digital tongue. The filmic medium has an archaic death grip on artists` practices despite the obvious appeal of newer technologies… But are we to measure ourselves by the past? Or is it ok to ape avant garde styles… Expanded cinema/structuralist film and Fluxus dared to imagine the possibility of film beyond the maw of Hollywood`s gaudy strictures. Elizabeth McAlpine`s exhibition *Flatland* 2009 depends on 8mm loops

of film snaking through stacks of projectors and invites a reading based on 1970s style apparatus theory and materialist distanciation. However these critical methods seem toothless today` (Perry 2009,1).

Perry goes on to justify this by writing that the fundamental difference between structuralist film and contemporary practice is the fate of subjectivity in the wake of such theoretical texts as Laura Mulvey`s seminal *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* 1995, and these have reformulated the possibility of such representation.   Later, he asks: `Why, if the cinematic is no longer our culture`s lingua franca, should artists continue to use film at all?` and his answer is that : `One continual appeal, however, in the 1970s as now – is the material presence of film, which unlike the `immaterial spectacle or the garrulous chatter of modern digital media suggest that the body has something to kick against, grasp and re-order`(Perry 2009,4). This would suggest that the use of film as a reflexive medium is still relevant to some artists working today, perhaps less as a look, and more as a reminder of the means of production of images.

Conclusions

This thesis has been concerned with revisiting the late 1960s and early 1970s through one artist`s experience of remaking work of that period for survey exhibitions over the last 10 years.   Part of the discussion involved the question of what this means for the original content of the art work. It investigated the original context, ideas and themes that attended the conception of the exhibited art work and asked whether these are still relevant to contemporary fine art practitioners and audience.   It also asked why there has been so much interest in this period, by writers and curators from the 1990s onwards, and compares their different viewpoints.

In section 1 I outlined the art school context in which the exhibited work was first developed together with the influences which subsequently shaped it: language, philosophy, literature and film.   Section 2 introduced the exhibited art work as made in its first context and the main themes of each of these works were found to be: *absence* - defined against the modernist idea of `presence`; *paradox* - the contradictory ideas within each art work; and *reflexivity* - the means of production, and the space of reception. I was familiar with these themes at the time of making each of these works, but the investigation within this section revealed that these themes range across all of the 4 exhibited art works, *Distancing Device* 1970*; Unsigning for Eight Projectors* 1972*; Two Cameras* 1970*;* and *Western Reversal* 1973.

Section 3 addressed the question of why there had been such an interest in revisiting the art of the late 1960s and early 1970s since the 2000s, and finds a number of reasons, by investigating the viewpoints of various curators and writers. This decade is frequently perceived as a time of `a rupture in the practice of art` (Philpott 2000, 9-10) or `the end of art` (Danto 1997, 9). I see this period as marking a phenomenological shift through the beginnings of interdisciplinarity in my art practice (Barthes 1977,155). This section also gives more substance to the often repeated view that the late 1960s and early 1970s was a highly influential decade which impacted on subsequent art practice and art writing (Godfrey 1998; Newman, Bird1999; Philpott 2000).

Finally, each exhibited art work was described as containing both elements of modernism and postmodernism and I argued that they were positioned on the cusp between these two designations. Finally, in Section 4 I asked what it meant for the art work to be re-contextualized with the remaking, restaging and rethinking of the exhibited art work and investigated what it may mean for a contemporary audience. Walter Benjamin`s idea of *afterlife* is then used to discuss what may get lost in the translation of the art work in the re-contextualization after 35 years. This section also asked if the overarching themes of the art works - *absence, paradox and reflexivity* - are still of relevance in this new context and notes that recent art work by young artists seems to be finding a relevance to some of these themes: sometimes in terms of the look of earlier art, sometimes in terms of the use of the apparatus. This use of the older technology of the film projector is seen as a reaction to `hands off` digital technology.

As this narrative explains, my art practice has dealt with a recurring set of questions beginning in the 1970s. What has been particularly interesting is to see how these central questions remain of concern in the 2000s. Writing this thesis has led me to consider that the exhibited art works have added to the knowledge of art practice, not only in their first context – as part of an influential period in art, but also in their remaking and restaging; and these occurrences became the catalyst for the rethinking formulated within this thesis.

Appendices

From my notebook 26th January 1970   David Dye

My own work has largely been an accelerated, naturally derivative catching-up with the present. Looking back it seems, over the last three years or so, to have developed as such:

a)   Objects directly gleaned from the `New Generation` syndrome, painted wood
       sculptures. Geometrical configurations frozen in the act of
       becoming something. No questions asked.

b)   Soft objects, kapok, cloth etc. With organic associations. Very
       subjective, trying hard to be individual.

c)   Structures which had alternative positions, and therefore seemed
       closer to real life for me, using relatively flexible materials.

d)   Structures which had alternative positions and which existed only
       because of their surroundings, ie fixed to the wall, floor. These
       being photographed, the photos were then considered by me to be
       the work. A lot of questioning going on.

e)   Experimentation with photography, a view that the record of a past
       event is as valid as an event now, as an experience. A suspension
       of value judgements.

f)   An exploration into the nature of what constitutes an art experience.
       A wish to communicate much more clearly.
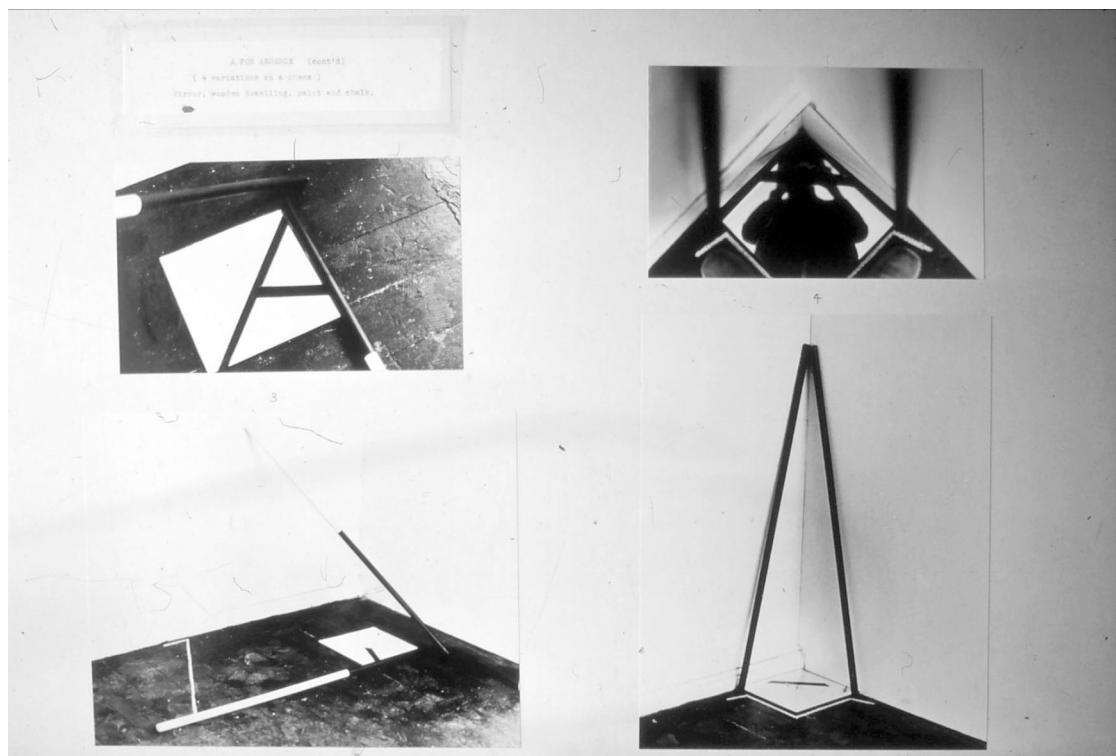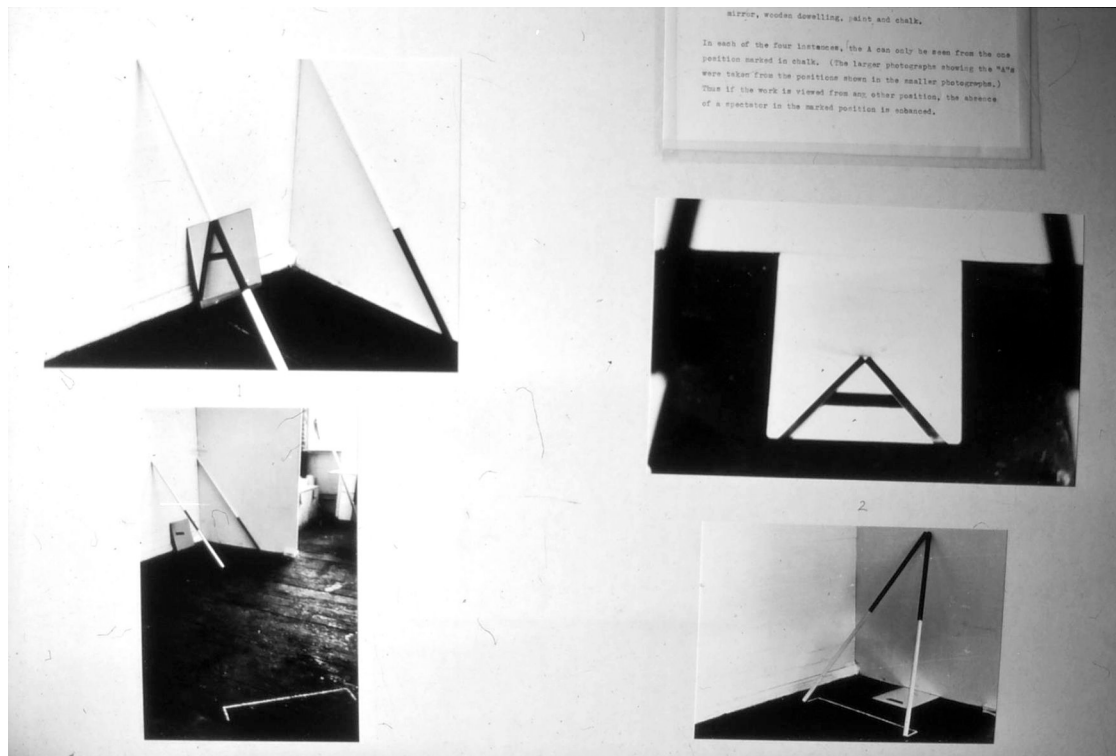
Appendix 2: *Documentation of* A For Absence, *in the studio at St. Martin`s School of Art 1969: (4 sculptures) wooden dowel, black paint, chalk and mirrors.*

The Artist Seeking the Potential of Film:

I hope film buffs, and all those who claim that cinema is a far more viable creative medium for the century than art, have been visiting David Dye`s one-man show at the ICA.  Not because it proves that art is still on top: such squabbling is basically irrelevant, and ignores the simple premise that every medium depends for its vitality upon the abilities of individual practitioners. No, Dye`s admirably precise and cogent work is worth examining because it represents one way in which an artist`s mind can conduct an inquiry into the nature and potential of film… The most self explanatory piece was, for instance left running the whole time (*Cross Reference Loops*) as if in admission of its role as a useful key  to Dye`s overall concerns. Two projectors, placed some distance apart in opposite directions, both showed a film consisting of texts which asked the spectator to watch the celluloid itself, as it ran out of each projector in a continuous loop along the wall behind and back into the projector again. The loops therefore occupied the wall-space in between the two projectors, and the texts directed attention to a sequence of numbers placed on the wall at strategic intervals to mark the progress of the loop in its journey around a complete circuit. Every part of this didactic structure, referred, then, to every other part, demonstrating the mechanics of film with great clarity.   It made you aware of the whole process rather than the end-product image on a screen and exposed the all important element of time as well… An elegant demonstration of paradox through the resources of film was thus achieved, and it proved the artist`s ability to operate with intelligence and ingenuity within a field which experimental film-makers doubtless consider to be outside the range of art.  This was the excitement of Dye`s exhibition: the realization it offered that the boundaries between the two media of expression need not be tightly sealed off, that both sides can converge and yet succeed in defining their priorities with exactitude.
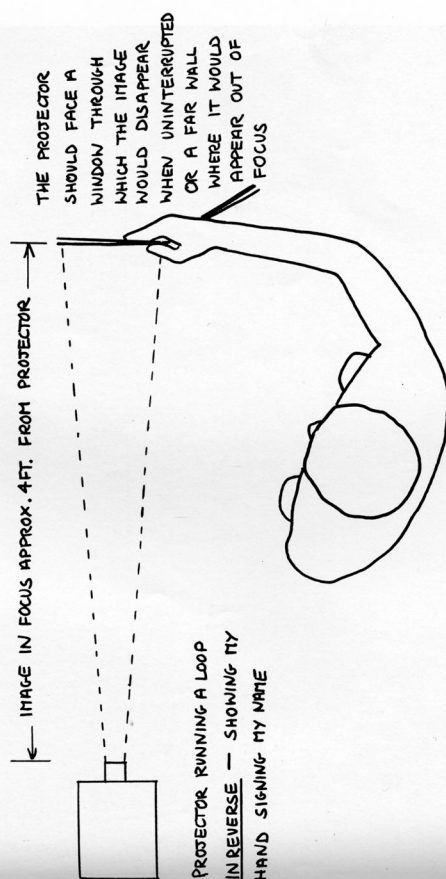
Appendix 4: Top image: the two page layout for the catalogue/magazine issue of Studio International for The British Avant-Garde at the New York Cultural Centre 1971. *Bottom image: a reader in the process of turning the page.*

Appendix 5: *Artists page in* The New Art *catalogue 1972*

The New Art

(CATALOGUE 1972)

Keith Arnatt
Art-Language
Victor Burgin
Michael Craig-Martin
David Dye
Barry Flanagan
Hamish Fulton
Gilbert and George
John Hilliard
Richard Long
Keith Milow
Gerald Newman
John Stezaker
David Tremlett

Hayward Gallery
August 17-
September 24 1972
Arts Council of Great Britain
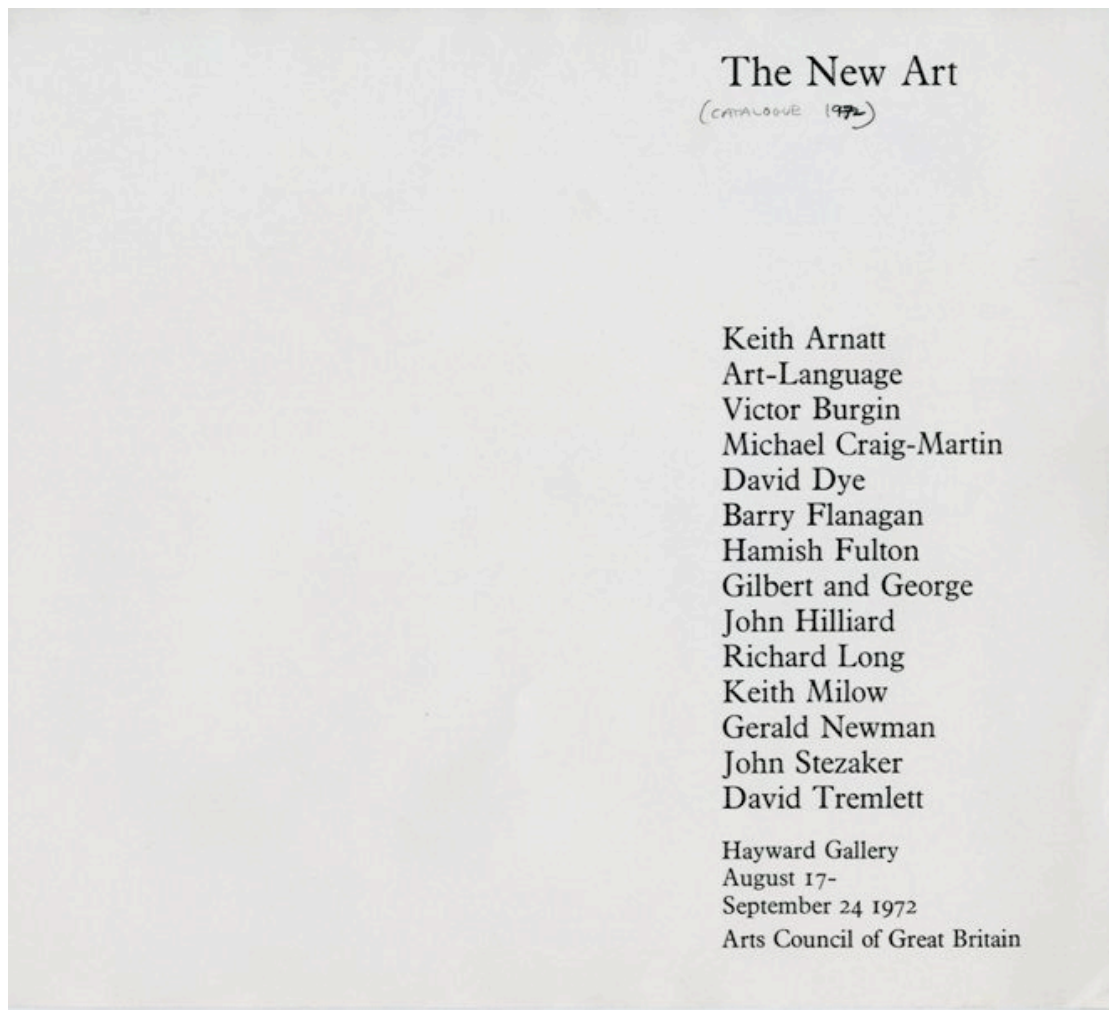
Contents page of The New Art *Catalogue 1972*

Appendix 6: *Image from* The Developing Process: the sculptor`s education in drawings and photography*. Leeds City Art Gallery, 10.10.09 – 10.01.10. Curated by Sophie Raikes. Photo: Jerry Hardman-Jones. Two of my student sketchbooks are in the centre of the case in the foreground.*
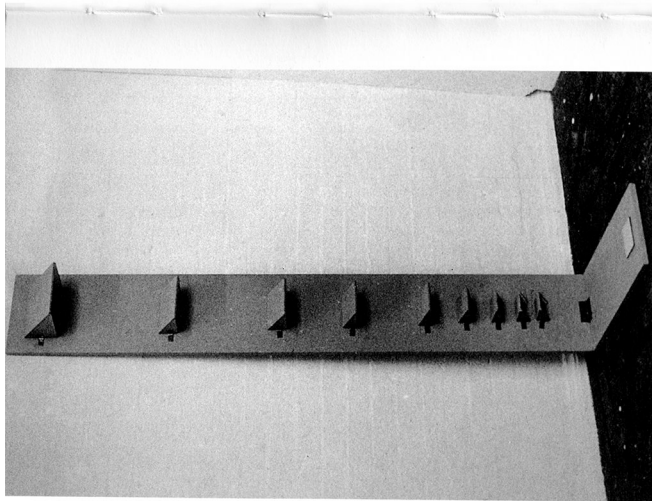
Contents

Appendix 7: *Contents page from the catalogue of* Live in Your Head: concept and experiment in Britain 1965-75, *Whitchapel Art Gallery, 2000.*
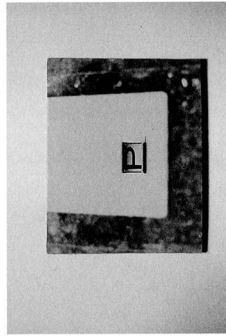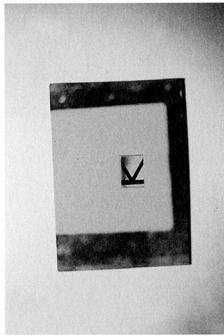
Unsigning for 8 projectors 1972
Eight Super-8 films, projectors and stands; cardboard and thread
Dimensions variable
Installation for *The New Art*, Hayward Gallery, London, 1972

This is one of a number of works in which Dye plays with ideas of negation and cancelling out. Here, each film depicts Dye's hand signing a letter or letters in his name, projected out of synch and in reverse. As the images overlap they cancel each other out, as the cardboard screen turns, the projections hit adjacent walls and become distorted.

Distancing Device (details) 1970
Painted wood and mirror, 213.3 x 30.5 x 60.9 cm

Each hood on the vertical column hides a letter. As the viewer moves away from the work, these can be read in succession in the mirror at the foot of the column and spell K-E-E-P-G-O-I-N-G'. Dye's early works are characterised by the use of mirrors, which he abandoned soon after making this piece in favour of film projections and installations.

Distancing Device (detail) 1970
Painted wood and mirror, 213.3 x 30.5 x 60.9 cm

Mirror Film still 1971
Arts Council Collection, Hayward Gallery, London

Frameline 1975
Photographic print

David Dye

Born 1945 at Ryde, Isle of Wight. Studied sculpture at St. Martin's School of Art 1967–71 and taught at Brighton Polytechnic in the '70s. Currently teaches Visual and Performing Arts at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle.

Selected solo exhibitions

1972 Institute of Contemporary Arts, London
1975 *Frameline*, installation for Lisson Gallery, London

Selected group exhibitions

1970 *Young Contemporaries*, Royal Academy, London
1971 *The British Avant-Garde*, New York Cultural Center, New York (cat.)
1972 *The New Art*, Hayward Gallery, London (cat.)
1972 *British Thing*, Henie-Onstad Foundation, Hovikodden
1973 *Critic's Choice*, Arthur Tooth & Sons, London (selected by R. Cork)
1973 *Independent Film Festival*, ICA, London
1974 *Project 74, Kunst bleibt Kunst*, Kunsthalle, Köln
1974 *Beyond Painting and Sculpture*, Arts Council touring exhibition (cat.)

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Richard Long, 'The Artist Seeking the Potentials of Film', *Evening Standard*, 4 July 1972
Annabel Nicolson, 'Artist as Filmmaker', *Art and Artists*, December 1972
Simon Field, interview with David Dye, *Art and Artists*, December 1972
Alan Sheridan, 'David Dye, Artist/Filmmaker', *Studio International*, November/December 1975
Arte Inglese Oggi 1960–76 (cat.), Palazzo Reale, Milan, 1976
1965–1972: When Attitudes Became Form (cat.), Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge, 1984
Mark Currah, 'David Dye', *City Limits*, no. 441, March 1990
Stuart Morgan, 'The Big O: Stuart Morgan in conversation with David Dye', *Art Monthly*, March 1991
David Dye (brochure), Cleveland Gallery, 1992
Out of Darkness: Steps, by David Dye (brochure), Tullie House Museum, Carlisle, 1995

Statement

The things I make I think of them as devices. As visual things they are just objects – like a typewriter just serves a function. It looks like it does mainly because it's functional.
I'm also interested in negating images. I see the whole world as saturated with imagery. I'm concerned with doing less imagery, not more. Yet I'm aware I'm still using imagery. I'm still using film, the convention of film.
AS You showed some mirror pieces at the 'Young Contemporaries' at the Royal Academy in 1970.
DD It was projecting hoods with a mirror at the bottom, and as you moved you read different letters. In fact there was only one way of reading it correctly and you had to move about. It was a 'distancing device' which was mainly an objectification of how I felt at that time about what it means to be an artist, which was to distance yourself from people in order to create. I was trying to do exactly the opposite of what sculpture normally does which is to draw you into it, or around it. The work didn't exist until somebody was there.

David Dye (interview with Anne Seymour in *The New Art*, 1972)

72

Artists page from the Live in Your Head *catalogue 2000.*

Appendix 8

Everything and Nothing was a feature article in *Art Monthly* No.234 by Andrew Wilson, published in Feb. 2000.   This was a review of *Live in Your Head*: *concept and experiment in Britain 1965-75* at The Whitechapel Art Gallery 4 Feb-2 April.

Wilson mentions the omissions of particular artists and what he terms the wrong-headed inclusions of others. He also wonders why only British artists are shown when the art of this time was an international phenomenon. He does concede that the curators had encyclopaedic ambition, but that the exhibition can only serve as an introduction to a period and a collection of sensibilities.

> Where *Live in Your Head* does succeed is in making work available again that has, over the last 25 years, been too well hidden from sight. However, this gain is at the expense of a degree of historical confusion signalled by the jumbling together of different categories of work from different times. With so many artists presented together the exhibition discards a picture of history and embraces a pluralist and heterogeneous disorder`.

After listing some of the varying sites of enquiry approached in the art work on show he then illuminates the different approaches within each category: `For instance, the use of text has often been taken as providing one means of identifying a conceptualist practice (wrongly, as it is not the text itself but the use to which the text is put that counts).   However, installing work by a concrete poet such as Henri Chopin near to an Arnatt text or to Victor Burgin`s photo and text panel *Sensation 1975*, gives a stark indication of the ground the exhibition covers.`

 Wilson also gives short shrift to the catalogue texts and their takes on the material in the exhibition, and dismisses them for being divergent. He also takes issue with the title: `By refusing to explain the meaning of the exhibition`s title or even to define their use of the words `concept` or experiment in the subtitle (…) the result is the dehistoricisation of the exhibited work and the burying of their intrinsic meanings.`  He then goes on to give the context for the work, which the catalogue, he finds, fails to provide: `It is as if all this experimentation happened in an aesthetic and social vacuum: as the Summer of Love, the events of May 1968, the Vietnam war, the troubles in Northern Ireland, the rise of sexual and race politics, or censorship in the face of the permissive society had all never taken place, (except from the evidence provided by a few singularly isolated works such as those by Atkinson, Araeen, and Harrison, Hunt and Kelly).   For an art that was resolutely social in its self-identification this is some omission. Lacking any grounding such as this in the social sphere, the notion of `experiment` or `concept` is easily devalued`.   Wilson sees the installation, like the exhibition itself as `presenting itself as an unsorted and an as yet uncategorized archive. It is for the visitors to sort and make of it what they can.`

Wilson`s review focuses on what he sees as *Live in Your Head*`s sins of omission, whilst several reviews were more positive in their approach.

Richard Dorment of the *Daily Telegraph* 09.02.00 gives a perceptive overview of the exhibition: `If I were to try to isolate one characteristic common to all their work, it is that the artist performs only one part of the creative act. The viewer completes the process the artist begins, using not only his eyes but his intelligence and imagination`. Dorment`s is also one of the few reviewers to mention *Unsigning for Eight Projectors*:

> If, as I assume, the blank screen stands in for Dye himself, this is a new kind of self-portrait. Each of the projections can be seen as an attempt to build up or inscribe upon the tabula rasa of his consciousness a secure sense of his own identity. But in trying to impose a self on a void he constantly fails, frustrated by the shifting, unstable nature of external experience, or perhaps by his dependence on the projections of others for his sense of self.

While Richard Dorment is of an age to have, perhaps, seen much of the art work in *Live in Your Head* the first time around, it is interesting to cite a review in *The Independent*, by Tom Lubbock, who by his own admission missed out on conceptual art by virtue of being a child between 1965-75. He found the exhibition hard to recognize as recent history, but realizes that the period in question: `was a quite recent cultural moment – radical, pivotal, a questioning of definitions, a breaking down of barriers`, but he wonders why all that has been effectively obliterated, and answers that

> `perhaps the work deserved to be forgotten through embarassment or memory of the work deliberately suppressed so that subsequent artists can appear more original than they are? Or maybe it just wasn`t ever meant to last, maybe it wasn`t meant to be commemorated either, and this sort of memorial display is quite against the spirit of an art that was defiantly now or never. Here is an avant garde art that isn`t sold to accessibility and takes a pretty dim view of pop and media culture, that is positively not trying to be a collector`s item. It isn`t the work that matters here but the ethos of its making (…) the sense of art as an open country, without set directions, and destinations, without Saatchi, without the Turner Prize, without photo-spreads in Vogue`.

For Richard Cork, *The Times* 09.02.00, it is a powerfully nostalgic experience as the work in the exhibition (mine included) reminds him of his `raw 22 yr old graduate self who was pitched into the middle of this restless innovation when the *Evening Standard* made me it`s art critic… Many of the alternative avenues investigated between 1965 and 1975 have been energetically revisited and developed. The international success of young British artists in the 1990s owed a great debt to the experimental openness running right through this timely, well deserved survey.`

Finally, one noteable aspect of all the 10 reviews I collected is that they all give space to John Latham`s *Still and Chew* work from 1966 (described on page 9 of the thesis). This performance piece now survives as an archive made by Latham: a case containing all the chemicals used to break down the chewed pages, together with the labelled phial of clear liquid alongside an actual copy of Greenberg`s *Art and Culture*. This work caught each reviewer`s imagination as exemplifying the spirit of the times.

Appendix 9: Unsigning 2004: a further restaging of Unsigning for Eight Projectors, this time with six, for Legerdemain (with Mike Golding): Globe Gallery, North Shields.

TATE MODERN
Expanded Cinema

MODERN
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EXPANDED CINEMA –
ACTIVATING THE SPACE OF RECEPTION

Friday 17 April 2009, 10.30–18.00
Saturday 18 April 2009, 10.30–18.00
Sunday 19 April 2009, 10.30–18.00
Starr Auditorium, Level 2, Tate Modern

This conference investigates an expanding field of film and video art from multi-screen, immersive, performance-based live-projections through to interactive, digital and virtual reality multi-media events.

Coined in the mid-1960s by Stan VanDerBeek, but with its origins in the experiments of early twentieth century avant-garde filmmaking, media technologies and performance art, Expanded Cinema is a film and video practice which activates the live context of watching, transforming cinema's historical and cultural 'architectures of reception into sites of cinematic experience that are heterogeneous, performative and non-determined.

Works identified as Expanded Cinema often open up questions surrounding the spectator's construction of time/space relations, activating the spaces of cinema and narrative as well as other contexts of media reception. In doing so they offer an alternative and challenging perspective on filmmaking, visual arts practices and the narratives of social space, everyday life and cultural communication.

The conference is part of an Arts & Humanities Research Council funded project entitled Narrative Exploration in Expanded Cinema set up by the late Dr Jackie Hatfield. Conducted by Duncan White, David Curtis and Stephen Partridge, the project – based at the British Artists Film and Video Study Collection at Central St Martins College of Art & Design (University of the Arts London) in collaboration with Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, Dundee – seeks to explore the various histories of Expanded Cinema and their impact on the question of narrative, space and time in experimental film and art practices.

The conference website has already published a number of papers and interview transcripts that have been generated by the Narrative Exploration in Expanded Cinema project during the past 18 months. These include Duncan White's interviews with Carolee Schneemann, William Raban, Guy Sherwin, Peter Weibel, Malcolm LeGrice and others; and a streamed record of our previous public event The Live Record at BFI Southbank in December 2008.
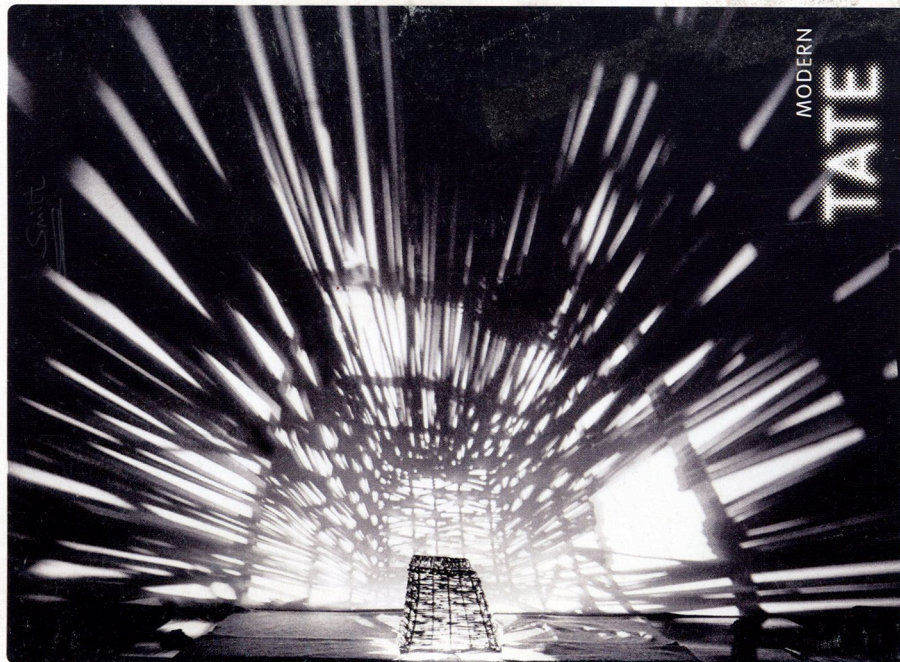
www.rewind.ac.uk/expanded/Narrative/Home.html

Arts & Humanities
Research Council
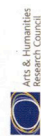
MODERN
TATE

Visit www.tate.org.uk/modern/film

Tate Modern, Bankside, London SE1 9TG
Nearest ⊖ Southwark / ⛴ Bankside Pier

Appendix 10

TATE FILM
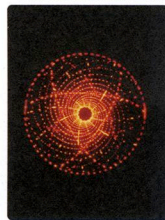
Still from Allures 1961 by Jordan Belson.
16mm film, colour, sound. © Jordan Belson Courtesy Center for Visual Music

Jordan Belson *Allures* 1961 8mins

An early masterpiece of Non-Objective Cinema. Belson wrote, 'I think of Allures as a combination of molecular structures and astronomical events mixed with subconscious and subjective phenomena – all happening simultaneously. The beginning is almost purely sensual, the end perhaps totally nonmaterial. It seems to move from matter to spirit in some way'.

Jud Yalkut *Turn, Turn, Turn* 1966 10 mins

Sound by USCO. Preserved with the support of the NFPF. A kinetic alchemy of the light and electronic works of Nicolas Schoffer, Julio Le Parc, USCO, and Nam June Paik.

SWTB *Single Wing Turquoise Bird Light Show Film* 1971 5 mins

Film document of light show performance by Peter Mays, Jeffrey Perkins, Michael Scroggins, Jon Greene, Larry Janss and Rol Murrow, including film footage by David Lebrun, Pat O'Neill, and John Stehura. 'Always evolving visual-kinetic equivalents of the psycho-social climate... a movie in which each image emanates its own projector' Gene Youngblood

15.30
Live Medium

Steve Partridge *Monitor* 1976/2009 6mins (performance)

This is the first performance of a work made in 1975–6 now recontextualised and realised as a live performance. The original work was a series of 'live' performances interleaved with successive playbacks within the television frame, like the russian dolls, one image within another. The space is simultaneously conveyed as virtual within the video feedback loop, and actual by the performance.
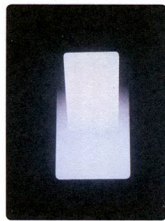
Gibson+Recoder Untitled 2008, 16 mm projector performance.

Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder *UNTITLED* 2008 (performance) Double 16 mm projector performance, electric humidifiers, glass, mixed media, original score by Olivia Block. approx. 45 mins

Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder's *UNTITLED* takes two frames of light and methodically works with their edges to an evocative sound design by Olivia Block. The piece literally creates an installation environment in the theatre, making the finale an entirely physical experience. Gibson and Recoder experiment with the possibilities of the projector and the light itself, from booth to screen, over our heads and back to our eyes. – Sundance Film Festival

17.00
UK Multiscreen

A performance and rare twin-screen works by UK artists

David Dye *Western Reversal* 1973 Super-8, 6mins (performance)

A 1950s B movie cowboy film is projected through a framework of 16 moveable mirrors. One by one the mirrors are slowly moved so that each fragment of the projected image overlaps in the centre of the screen. The narrative slowly becomes unreadable as the film progresses and the image is imploded into a rectangle of shifting light.

Annabel Nicolson *To the Dairy* 1975 4mins (single screen)

'In the dark room, single images succeed each other in continous motion towards the Dairy, where she and the other english filmmakers stayed in an area of demolition. She penetrates with the camera in rapid flicks, hesitates at single things, and glides on in a staccato flow'. – Helge Krarup [Denmark] 1976. A record of the Dairy, birthplace of much UK expanded cinema filmed by one of its pioneers.


EXPANDED CINEMA
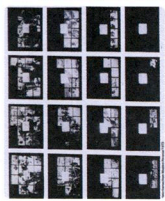
David Dye Western Reversal 1973

Malcolm Le Grice *Yes No Maybe Maybe Not* 1967 sil 8mins (two-screen)

'The images which are used have been chosen for meanings and qualities they imply. But the impact of the film comes through the way in which they are transformed in the printing – mainly involving certain kinds of positive-negative superimposition. There is no thematic or narrative aspect to this film...it is almost entirely a present visual-movement experience'. Malcolm Le Grice

Ron Haselden *Double Portrait* 1974 sil 3mins (two-screen)

A study for a two-screen film in which members of the audience are invited to film themselves with a 16mm camera. The abutting screens form a partnership and it was envisaged as an ongoing, developing work. This project reflected my interest in working directly with audiences and it continues today with a number of large scale outdoor performances in cities throughout Europe. 'Expanded Cinema' evolved at a time when photography, performance and dance were rapidly rising to the surface as media in their own right, to challenge many established criteria in those fields. The environments in which it took place and negligible budgets with often hand-processing of film-stock contributed to it's energy through shows in art galleries, warehouses and abandoned spaces which were far more adaptable and liberating than the cinema or theatre. Events often took place with not much thought to preserving the actual materials involved, but rather that it would be the ideas that would persist for the future. Ron Haselden

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Gill Eatherley Dialogue
Courtesy of Gill Eatherley & LUX, London
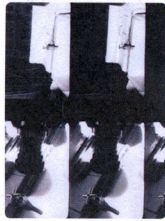
Gill Eatherley *Dialogue* 1973 10mins (two-screen)

Two cameras are used to explore the view from a window and then within a room, the camera operators closely follow and complement each other even frequently observing each other directly. The film traces the two cameras' attempts to imitate each other's action – thus making some of the subjective responses of camera handling more explicit. Malcolm Le Grice

Tony Sinden *Can Can* 1975 10mins (two-screen)

Can Can was made for projection in the cinema, the twin-screen version projects a dichotomous relationship that almost mirrors itself. Two prints of the film are projected simultaneously on the screen side-by-side: one print is reversed, the projectors unsynchronized, allowing the image/s and sound track/s to drift. Each time it is projected it is different. At the time I was interested in exploring the encounter of film: removing the projected film from the projection box and projecting it from the auditorium: extending a dialogue between the moving image, audience and surface of the screen. This period marked a transition in my film and video making: moving from cinema to the gallery, opening the door to installation: producing film-video concepts for a different audience and environment. Tony Sinden

18.00
End

Appendix 10: *The cover and pages of the catalogue for* Expanded Cinema: activating the space of reception, *3 day conference and screening -17th -19th April 2009.*

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